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THE OPERATIONS OF THE 1ST INFANTRY DIVISION AND THE 30TH  
INFANTRY DIVISION IN THE AACHEN OFFENSIVE  
2 - 21 OCTOBER 1944.  
(RHINELAND CAMPAIGN)

Type of operation described: AN INFANTRY DIVISION IN THE  
ATTACK OF A SERIES OF FORTIFIED POSITIONS AND A FORTIFIED CITY.

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ADVANCED INFANTRY OFFICERS CLASS NO. II

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<u>PAGE</u>
Index . . . . .	1
Bibliography. . . . .	2
Introduction. . . . .	5
The General Situation . . . . .	7
1st Infantry Division Mission - Plans . . . . .	9
The 30th Division Mission - Plans . . . . .	11
Progress of Battle 2 - 9 October. . . . .	11
Surrender Ultimatem . . . . .	17
Progress of Battle 11 - 21 October, The 30th Infantry Situation . . . . .	18
1st Division Attack of Aachen . . . . .	21
The Surrender of Aachen . . . . .	27
Summary . . . . .	28
Analysis and Criticism. . . . .	30
Lessons . . . . .	33
Map A - General Situation, 2 October 1944	
Map B - 1st - 30th Division Direction of Attack	
Map C - 30th Division Attack	
Map D - 1st Division Attack	
Map E - Aachen Attack - 26th Infantry	
Map F - Front Lines, 21 October 1944	

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THE OPERATIONS OF THE 1ST INFANTRY DIVISION  
AND THE 30TH INFANTRY DIVISION IN THE  
AACHEN OFFENSIVE, 2-21 OCTOBER 1944.  
(RHINELAND CAMPAIGN)

INTRODUCTION

This monograph concerns itself with the isolation and reduction of Aachen, Germany, during the month of October 1944, by the 1st Infantry Division and the 30th Infantry Division, United States Army.

In order to properly orient the reader it is believed necessary to discuss briefly the location and history of Aachen as well as the events leading to the U.S. forces arrival at the outskirts of this large German city.

Aachen had a pre-World War II population of some 160,000 persons and is located approximately one mile east of the juncture of the Holland, German, Belgium border. The border between Germany and Holland extends generally north from the juncture, while the Belgium-German borders swing to the east just below Aachen before turning south toward Luxembourg. This causes Aachen to be bounded on two sides by national boundaries. This is an important factor for the reader to keep in mind as the Siegfried Line ran along the German frontier and extended in depth well past the eastern approaches to the city.

Aachen is a very old city, dating from medieval times. Its buildings were constructed of heavy stone or masonry and as such was an obstacle in itself, in ad-

dition, the Germans had fortified the city as a portion of the Siegfried defense line.

The Siegfried Line was an elaborate system of fortifications erected by the Germans on their western frontier. The idea resulted in a continuous chain of heavy steel and concrete emplacements situated in groups that were mutually supporting with excellent prepared fields of fire, fine communications and well camouflaged. Each emplacement, or more commonly referred to as a pill box, had the following characteristics: 20 to 30 feet by 40 to 50 feet horizontally, with walls and ceilings 4 to 8 feet thick. They were not constructed to house any large weapons, in fact very few pill boxes were large enough to house a 105 mm cannon. Another serious limitation was fields of fire, which were limited to 40 - 50 degrees laterally. The Siegfried Line being defensive in nature, was strongest both laterally and in depth at locations along the German frontier where the natural defenses were the weakest. Aachen, being located on relatively flat terrain, and lacking in other natural barriers was one of the strongest points in this man made line. To further strengthen the defenses, the Germans had the area well mined and had placed both tactical wire and anti-tank obstacles between the clusters of pill boxes. It was a difficult position for other than determined troops to breach. (Personal knowledge)

The Allied Armies had invaded Europe, swept across

France, Belgium and Holland and on 2 October were deployed along the German border facing the defenses of the Siegfried Line. The 1st Infantry Division had penetrated the outer defenses of this line and was deployed on the western and southern approaches to Aachen.

The fortified Siegfried Line, the long supply lines extending to the coast of France and the weather at this particular time of the year created a formidable obstacle to the invasion of Germany. The one factor in favor of the Americans was their recent victories over the German forces, and as a result the American soldier's morale and offensive spirit was of high order. The opposite was true of the Germans. They were pushed so hard and consistent in their retrograde movement from the west, that they were not allowed sufficient time to properly coordinate a defense, with the manpower available to them in the Aachen area.

THE GENERAL SITUATION  
(MAP A)

On 2 October 1944 the right flank of the XIX Corps was a short distance northwest of Aachen and was occupied by the 30th Infantry Division. The units of the VII Corps were deployed to the south with the left flank position being occupied by the 1st Infantry Division. The boundary between the two divisions ran generally east-west, just north of the outskirts of Aachen and the same line constituted not only the division boundary, but also the VII and XIX Corps boundary, and the First and Ninth Army bounda-

ry. (1)

(MAP B)

The scheme of maneuver was an envelopment of Aachen by the 1st Infantry Division assisted by the 30th Infantry Division. The latter was to penetrate the Siegfried Line north of Aachen and continue to the east in the direction of the Rhine River. The 1st Infantry Division was to contain Aachen on the west and south, move east around Aachen then turn north and effect a juncture with the 30th Infantry Division, thus completing the encirclement of the city. Air support for both divisions was to be provided by the 9th Air Force. (2)

It is difficult to give a picture of the enemy situation in other than a narrative form as it was greatly affected by prior events. The Germans had lost many of their finest troops in Africa and the Allied sweep across France and Belgium not only deprived them of a great number of their remaining effective troops, but a vast amount of their supplies and equipment as well. This resulted in the Germans creating units from any source of manpower available. Air Corps and Navy personnel and service troops were placed in infantry units with a minimum of infantry training and rushed west to the Siegfried Line in an attempt to stop the Allies at the German frontier. By such reorganization, they were able to outnumber the Americans in the Aachen area. (3)

(1) A-2, Map; A-3, Map; A-4, Map; A-5, Map; A-15, Map; (2) A-2, p. 1; A-3, p. 2; A-5, p. 1; (3) A-1, p. 1; A-15, p. 57.

It is considered appropriate to point out at this time, that the 1st Infantry Division as well as the First Army was forced to spend almost a month on the German frontier, partly due to a lack of logistic support. Whether or not it could have been supplied is a <sup>note</sup> question not included in this study, however, this elapsed time did allow the Germans a few sorely needed weeks to reorganize and move units from the east to their western boundary.

1ST INFANTRY DIVISION MISSION - PLANS  
(MAP B)

To accomplish the division's mission of blocking the approaches of Aachen from the east, south and west, it had the following combat units available:

Organic Units

16th Infantry Regiment  
18th Infantry Regiment  
26th Infantry Regiment  
5th Field Artillery Battalion  
7th Field Artillery Battalion  
32nd Field Artillery Battalion  
33rd Field Artillery Battalion  
1st Reconnaissance Troop  
1st Engineer Battalion

Attached Units

103rd Anti-Aircraft (AW) Battalion  
745th Tank Battalion  
634th Tank Destroyer (SP) Battalion  
87th Chemical Artillery Bn. (Co's. A & B)

957th Field Artillery (155 How) Bn.  
188th Armored Field Artillery Bn.  
1106th Engineer Group (Hq & Hq Co.)  
237th Combat Engineer Battalion  
238th Combat Engineer Battalion

The physical location of front line units in their attack positions are shown on Map D. (4)

The missions of the front line units were as follows, the main effort was to be made by the 18th Infantry on a narrow front to the north in the direction of Crucifix Hill. The 1st Reconnaissance Troop was ordered to screen the left flank of the division and to maintain contact with the XIX Corps on the left and the 1106th Engineer Group on its right. The 26th Infantry was ordered to hold its present position, demonstrate actively to the north in its sector and at the same time to protect the left flank of the 18th Infantry. The 16th Infantry was ordered to hold its present position, demonstrate actively to the north in its sector and to assist the advance of the 18th Infantry by fire. The 1106th Engineer Group was scheduled to assist the deception by feints toward the southern outskirts of Aachen. Division Artillery was held under division control.

The 9th Air Force was to precede the attack by medium bomber strikes and to keep fighter bombers on air alert. The latter was directed to attack targets of opportunity before and during the attack. For the most part, the weather in September was unfavorable for air support and

(4) A-5, Appendix C.

it could not be expected to improve for any lengthy period of time during October. (5) This estimate proved to be correct.

THE 30TH DIVISION MISSION - PLANS  
(MAP B)

*Pot*  
The mission of the 30th Division was to move east, force a crossing of the Worm River, penetrate the Siegfried Line and form a juncture with the 1st Division northeast of Aachen. The division proposed to accomplish the mission by attacking with two regiments abreast, preceded by both air and artillery preparations. The attack was scheduled for 1 October 1944, but due to unfavorable weather conditions it was postponed until 2 October. (6)

PROGRESS OF BATTLE 2 - 9 OCTOBER  
(MAP C)

The 30th Division launched an attack on the Siegfried Line at 1000 hours, 2 October 1944. The 117th and 119th Regiments attacked abreast and were met by heavy resistance. The attack was preceded by an intensive artillery preparation and bombing attacks by the 9th Air Force. In the latter instance, the planes dropped <sup>napalm</sup> (napalm) bombs. The bombardment did not neutralize the Germans as the attacking troops received artillery, mortar and heavy small arms fire in their advances. In spite of this resistance the two regiments made progress and had established a small bridgehead across the Worm River by 1450 hours. The crossing was made

(5) A-3, p. 2; A-5, p. 1; (6) A-2, Section III, p. 1.

over foot bridges, previously constructed by the engineers and the latter immediately started construction of a bridge to support heavy vehicles. The heavy bridge was completed by 1900 hours and both tanks and tank destroyers crossed the river to support the infantry. The center of the bridgehead was in the vicinity of Palenberg, approximately  $7\frac{1}{2}$  miles due north of Aachen. *not shown map*

On the first day of the attack the assaulting troops made a penetration of the German lines of 1200 yards, crossing the Worm River and working their way into the fortresses of the Siegfried Line. <sup>Not shown</sup> This advance amounted to making a river crossing and several successful infantry attacks on a series of fortified positions, in a period of less than twentyfour hours. It was a good days work. (7) The attack was resumed on 3 October, the penetration was widened, which allowed units of the 2d Armored Division to cross the river to assist in the attack. The troops forming the bridgehead advanced to the east against heavy resistance, and by nightfall had widened the penetration another 1500 yards and occupied the German city of Ubach. (8)

By 4 October the Germans had evidently decided that a main effort was being made in the 30th Division sector and had moved troops from the south and east to counteract <sup>not shown</sup> the advance of the Americans, as on this day the division received its first heavy counterattacks since crossing the river. Progress was slow, however the division did advance some 800 yards to the south. Combat Command B,

(7) A-2, p. 1; A-6, p. 1; (8) A-2, p. 1; A-6, p. 2.

of the 2d Armored Division had occupied Ubach on 3 October and attacked out of the city on the morning of the 4th. They met heavy resistance, were not able to maneuver due to the limited space available and as a result of these two handicaps were not able to advance. (9) The attack was resumed on 5 October and ground was gained to the east in face of steadily increasing pressure from the Germans. This culminated into heavy counterattacks on 6 October resulting in the Division losing ground during the day, however, by nightfall the Division had regained the lost ground, captured the Villages of Merkstein, Hoffstadt and generally advanced their north-south line to include Worm.

The prime objective at this time was to isolate Aachen, therefore the 2d Armored Division was directed to make its main effort to the south and southeast to assist the 30th Division in effecting contact with the 1st Infantry Division. Accordingly, on the morning of 7 October the two divisions made a combined drive southward toward Alsdorf and Merkstein Worm. Apparently the direction of this attack surprised the Germans as the Americans did not meet serious opposition and at the close of the day had occupied the villages mentioned above and advanced their east-west line 3000 yards closer to Aachen. (10)

During the night of 7 - 8 October the Germans placed additional fresh troops in the line and on the morning of 8 October launched a determined counterattack in the direction of Alsdorf. They succeeded in recapturing Birk and

*with success*  
(9) A-2, p. 2; A-6, p. 3; (10) A-2, p. 2; A-6, p. 6-7.

entering the City of Bardenburg. An intense battle raged throughout the day and the forward progress of the Germans was not halted until 9 October when they were repulsed, and American troops entered Bardenberg and the outskirts of Wurselen where the attack again bogged down. (11)

Air was not active at this time due to weather conditions, however, the Artillery performed a magnificent job during this phase of the battle. Particularly so, during 8-9 October. The latter's fires were in a large way responsible for breaking the German attack during the two days mentioned. During this period observation was poor, rain was falling and the XIX Corp's after action report stated, "the weather was such that even cub airplanes could not fly". (12)

It is considered appropriate at this point to bring the engineers in for their share of credit in the advances of the 30th Infantry and 2nd Armored Divisions. While the Infantry reduced many fortifications unassisted they also by passed others. The engineers followed the Infantry and demolished the pillboxes left behind. Several methods were used, the first one being to place explosives inside the concrete fortifications and demolish them, however, it was found that large cement blocks were left scattered in the vicinity which afforded effective shelter for the Germans in the event of a successful counterattack. The engineers then began welding the steel doors shut and using bulldozers to cover the embrasures with a heavy layer of earth. This

(11) A-2, p. 2-3; A-6, p. 6-7; A-15, p. 58; (12) A-2, p. 3.

method proved most effective in preventing the future use of the emplacements. The engineers also served as combat troops in both the 30th and 1st Division areas.

During the period 2-7 October the activities in the 1st Division's Area consisted primarily of repulsing German counterattacks, active patrolling on both sides, Artillery and mortar fire missions, and preparations for the attack. The attack order <sup>2 "minutes"</sup> less time of attack had been issued, the 18th Infantry had moved into its preattack position and the units involved awaited the final order stating the time of attack. (13)

Both the Germans and Americans were making use of front line propaganda and one interesting incident occurred on 2 October in the 26th Infantry's sector. Their report is quoted to give the reader an idea of the type of propaganda used by the Germans. "About ten o'clock at night the enemy revealed the limits to which the Germans were ready to go in their propaganda efforts to slow up our attack. Opposite the K and I Company Posts, a German public address system was set up and some swing music played with up-to-the minute selections of popular tunes played by such bands as Benny Goodman, Artie Shaw, Duke Ellington and songs by Francis Langford, Dinah Shore and Martha Tilton. Then in excellent English the German announcer talked about the States and the good times to be had back there. Every effort was made to induce homesickness to listeners to convince the listeners that the Allies were fighting a losing

(13) A-3, p. 16; A-5, p. 9; A-15, p. 58.

war: Russia will gain and the British will gain and Americans will have only casualty lists and debts to show. New York City was being systematically reduced by the Luftwaffe and other great American cities were already in ruins or would soon share that fate. Music was then played followed by the announcement that it would be an excellent idea if the Americans let up on the shelling and allowed everyone to have a good night's sleep. The 3rd Battalion crews at the captured German mortars then fired a concentration upon the German positions and that ended the broadcast."

(MAP D)

*See heading*

The 1st Division was ordered to attack effective 8 October and the 2nd Battalion, 18th Infantry launched the attack at 0400 hours 8 October. The early hour was decided upon to enable the troops to clear a barren hill immediately to their front prior to daylight. The battalion was supported by fires from the 16th Infantry, Division and Corps Artillery and Air attacks. The 16th Infantry also made a diversionary attack in the direction of Atsch and took positions to protect the west flank of the 18th Infantry. The 2nd Battalion attacked toward Verlautenheide and two and one half hours later, they were in the Village and commenced clearing it of enemy. They received several counterattacks but were able to repulse the Germans and hold the ground gained. The 1st Battalion passed through the 2nd in Verlautenheide and attacked in the direction of

Crucifix Hill. They succeeded in taking the hill by 1600 hours and consolidated their position. The 3rd Battalion made a diversionary attack to protect the regiments left flank and by nightfall had occupied a position just south of Crucifix Hill. (14)

The fighting on 9 October was heavy. The Germans were frantic in their attempts to stop the Americans and launched several counterattacks, however, they were on a piecemeal basis of a company or less in size, and generally supported by tanks from one to five in number. The counterattacks were repulsed and the 18th Infantry made some progress during the day. Evidently the Germans were bringing reserves from the east and throwing them into the battle. Their Artillery fires increased which indicated they had also moved in fresh Artillery units. The Luftwaffe made an appearance and attempted to harrass the attacking troops, they were not in large numbers and their efforts did not materially affect the battle. (15)

#### SURRENDER ULTIMATEM

The Commanding General of the VII Corps directed the Commanding General of the 1st Division to serve a surrender ultimatum on the Aachen Garrison demanding surrender to avoid destruction of the city. This ultimatum was delivered to the German Command<sup>ant</sup> in Aachen 10 October by two Lieutenants of the 26th Infantry. The terms of the ultimatum, among other items, allowed the Germans twenty four hours to

(14) A-3, p. 18; A-5, p. 9; A-15, p. 58; (15) A-3, p. 20-21; A-5, p. 10; A-15, p. 58.

surrender and/or remove civilians from the city. The terms were broadcast to front line German troops by American public address systems, broadcast over the Luxembourg radio, dropped into the city from airplanes and fired into the city inside artillery shells. The German Commandant indicated to the American Lieutenants that the Garrison would not surrender and they so reported to their superiors upon their return from the city. The VII Corps and 1st Division then proceeded with plans to reduce the city.

Early on the morning of 11 October, many white flags or sheets could be seen hanging from buildings in Aachen, however they disappeared soon after daybreak and a few German soldiers who made their way to the American lines and surrendered, reported that the Garrison Commander in Aachen had taken drastic steps to have all white flags removed and to stop any surrender actions or talk on the part of the Aachen populace. In any event the twenty four hour period elapsed without the Germans accepting the terms of the ultimatum. (16)

#### PROGRESS OF BATTLE 11-21 OCT. 30TH INFANTRY SITUATION

When the German forces in Aachen failed to surrender the 30th Infantry Division increased its effort to close the gap between the 1st Infantry Division and itself, however strong enemy reinforcements were moved in from the east, the weather was bad, which eliminated air support and progress was slow. The American Artillery continued

(16) A-3, p. 27; A-5, p. 16; A-7, p. 5.

to operate and was credited with the destruction of 20 enemy tanks, 12 of these being reported as knocked out by 105 mm Howitzers. (17) The Artillery also aided the attack by harrassing fires and concentrations placed upon German reserves and counterattacking forces. The Artillery role is mentioned at this time to bring out the point that Artillery can function effectively with a minimum of observation. In such an event it is necessary of course, to have a thorough and accurate fire plan.

The division made little progress 11 November but did succeed in recapturing Birk under the cover of a heavy early morning fog. The Germans had captured the village the previous day by a heavy counterattack.

On the night of 10-11 October the troops were withdrawn from their foothold in the northern portion of Bardenberg, the Artillery then proceeded to shell the city during the entire night. The attack was resumed in the morning and by 1330 on the 11th of October American troops had driven the Germans from Bardenberg and established contact with their adjacent units. (18)

The 12th of October found visibility excellent and the Air Corps was able to operate effectively. Maximum use could also be made of the Artillery support as the majority of the firing missions could now be observed. However in spite of this added support the ground troops did not make any material progress as the enemy was also able to utilize their Artillery and fresh reserves. One

(17) A-2, p. 3; A-6, p. 9; (18) A-2, p. 3; A-6, p. 9.

in effect was counterbalanced by the other.

The 13th, 14th and 15th October was much the same story. Slow progress was made against dug-in tanks, artillery, mortar, and small arms fires. The enemy was also free to apply the principle of economy of force in that the Americans were attacking south and had by this time indicated to the Germans a definite pattern of the direction of attack, therefore they were able to expend the major part of their effort in stopping the Americans on a narrow front.

On the afternoon of 15 October the XIX Corps attached the 99th Infantry Battalion to the 30th Infantry Division and ordered the division to establish contact with the VII Corps troops northeast of Aachen on the 16th of October, one day later. (19)

16 October found the 30th Division with a new plan of action which consisted of strong demonstrations to the east on their left flank and middle sector. This ruse apparently caused the Germans to move their troops to counteract what they believed to be a major effort in that sector, meanwhile the main effort was made to the south by the 119th Infantry supported by tanks. The Infantry advanced and by 1815 a patrol from Company F, 119th Infantry had crossed into the 1st Division sector and made contact with Company "K", 18th Infantry of the 1st Infantry Division on Ravelsberg Hill. (20)

During the period 17 October to 21 October the 30th Division consolidated its positions in the Wurselen Area

(19) A-2, p. 4; A-6, p. 11; (20) A-2, p. 4; A-6, p. 12.

and by mutual consent between the VII and XIX Corps, the XIX Corps assumed responsibility for clearing out the pockets of resistance in the northern and western sectors around Aachen. This mission was given to the 1104th Engineer Combat Group, who completed the task on 20 October, having seized and destroyed 150 pillboxes of the Siegfried Line. (21)

This phase of battle demonstrated the effectiveness of wholehearted cooperation and teamwork between the Infantry, Armor, Artillery and engineers. Armor played a major role in spite of many unfavorable conditions, such as lack of visibility, mined areas and other antitank defenses. The most limiting factors were the lack of space for maneuver and wet soggy terrain.

The XIX Corps and the 30th Infantry Division passed to the control of Ninth Army at 1200 hours 22 October 1944.

#### 1ST DIVISION ATTACK OF AACHEN - MAP E

The morning of 11 October found the 1st Infantry Division occupying the high ground <sup>not shown</sup> northeast of Aachen as well as the Villages of Harren and Verlautenheide, however a gap existed between the 30th and 1st Division troops which allowed the Germans to supply the Aachen Garrison as well as reinforce the line with troops to oppose the American drive. The Germans continued to counterattack along the north and east fronts with limited success for limited periods and they gave no evidence of accepting

(21) A-2, p. 5.

the surrender ultimatum, therefore it was decided to reduce the city of Aachen. (22)

Corps Artillery of both the VII and XIX Corps began shelling the city. The IX Tactical Air Command began sending fighter bombers over the city on both bombing and strafing missions. The 1st Division Artillery also began shelling the City. By the end of the day VII Corps Artillery had fired 169 tons of Artillery shells on the beleaguered city and IX Tactical Air Command had dropped 300 tons of bombs.

(23) The 26th Infantry reported that the dust haze and smoke caused by the explosions made observation extremely difficult and it was late in the afternoon before they could send a patrol into the city. The remainder of the division spent the day in repelling local counterattacks and mopping up local pockets of resistance. The intense bombing did have a salutary effect on some Germans, as prisoners reported that many of the troops would like to surrender but were prohibited from leaving the city by armed German officers who would promptly shoot any persons attempting to leave. Several pillboxes outside the city ran up white flags rather than face such an intense bombardment of their particular locale. The 18th Infantry reported to division headquarters that a steady stream of German reinforcements were coming in from the east and air was not available to attack the Columns, however, Artillery began harassing fires which succeeded in impeding their movement, but did not succeed in stopping their advance to support and relieve

(22) A-3, p. 30; A-5, p. 17-18; (23) A-3, p. 34; A-5, p. 18.

the front line German troops. (24)

The 3d Battalion, 26th Infantry was given the mission of first clearing the factory area to the city limits, this area is shown on Map E and is located in the north-eastern outskirts of Aachen, secondly to clear Observatory Hill of enemy and last to secure the high ground of Lousberg. Once this mission was accomplished the battalion was not to move except by authority of 1st Division. (25) The battalion attacked on the morning of 12 October, progress was slow but steady and by nightfall they had accomplished the first task of clearing the enemy from the factory area.

The 2d Battalion, 26th Infantry was assigned the mission of attacking into the city and given the cemetery as a forward objective, accordingly on the morning of 13 October, two companies of the battalion supported by tanks entered the city. The 3d Battalion continued their attack to the west to accomplish their second assigned task. Progress of both battalions was slow, the forward progress could be measured from house to house.

It must be remembered that the houses were constructed of heavy stone in many instances and could successfully withstand fires from either tank or tank destroyers. Wide use was made of Rocket launchers and flame throwers and a self propelled 155 mm rifle was assigned to each the 2d and 3d Battalions from the artillery for the purpose of destroying this type of house and/or building. (26) By

(24) A-5, p. 19; A-3, p. 37; (25) A-5, p. 21; A-7, p. 6;  
(26) A-5, p. 21; A-7, p. 6.

1700 hours the battalion had reached the base of Observatory Hill.

The Germans were offering stubborn resistance and using many ruses to outwit the American forces. A few instances were: the Americans had been in possession of Crucifix Hill several hours before they discovered a cleverly camouflaged peep hole on the top of the hill which was entered from a tunnel directly underneath. Inside the City of Aachen American troops would clear a sector and later find it occupied by German troops. It was found the Germans were utilizing the city sewerage system and coming into the open through man holes located to the rear of the Americans. It then became necessary to locate every man hole and the passage ways blocked to prohibit this practice. (27) To further alleviate any trouble from the rear, all Germans to include civilian men, women and children were evacuated as each block of houses were captured. The soldiers were processed as prisoners of war and the civilians escorted to collecting stations outside Aachen. This procedure left a dead city in the rear of the 26th Infantry troops. →

The weather had cleared and close in air strikes were now possible. The Infantry marked the targets with red smoke while the planes circled in the air. If given any time, measured in seconds, the enemy would throw blue smoke into the same area to confuse the Air, so it can be readily seen that the units attacking inside Aachen found many per-

(27) A-7, p. 7; A-3, p. 44.

plexing problems. The ingenuity of the American soldier, while sometimes lacking in foresight was able in the end to overcome the obstacles encountered.

From 14 October to 20 October the 1st Division spear-headed by the determined offensive spirit of the 26th Infantry progressed from house to house and block to block reducing each building as they progressed. They captured the Cemetery, Observatory Hill and made steady gains toward the Lousberg Area - very effective use was made of the air, artillery, flame throwers, heavy mortars and the S.P. 155 mm guns. <sup>utilized</sup> The latter were only used in necessary instances because of the limited ammunition available. Enemy air became active during this period, however they were most effective against the holding troops rather than the 26th Infantry as friendly air drove them off and maintained a cover which prohibited their causing any further damage to our troops. Steady enemy ground pressure was maintained and the Germans continued their series of piecemeal counterattacks supported by mortar and artillery fires. These attacks were overcome and the 2d Battalion progressed through the city. The 3d Battalion continued an attack in the Lousberg area and by the evening of 20 October the noose was being drawn tighter and tighter around the Germans. They continued however to offer stubborn and effective resistance.

16 Oct 1944

The 26th Infantry was not able to continue the attack and at the same time consolidate their gains, due to the infiltrating tactics of the German defenders of Aachen.

As a result, on 19 October the 2d Battalion, 110th Infantry of the 28th Division was assigned a defensive mission of holding the area formerly occupied by the 26th Infantry in the southeastern outskirts of Aachen. This action released a company of the battalion to assist in the attack. The right flank of the 26th Infantry was not properly protected and the VII Corps decided to cover the gap in the American lines by a task force consisting of one battalion of medium tanks, less one company, and one battalion of Armored Infantry from the 3d Armored Division. This force was constituted 19 October, labeled "Task Force Hogan", and assigned the mission of protecting the right flank of the 26th Infantry and seizing the northwest portion of Lousberg. (28)

On the morning of 21 October both battalions resumed the attack in the Lousberg area which is in the northwestern section of the city and by mid-morning the German Commander evidenced a desire to surrender. The trap had finally sprung and the end of the day found the first large German city under American control.

The 16th and 18th Infantry Regiments were in a position east of Aachen and spent the period 11 - 21 October in repelling German counterattacks and attacking toward the north to effect a juncture with the 30th Infantry Division. The latter was accomplished 16 October on Ravelsberg Hill and effected an isolation of the City of Aachen. The Germans bitterly contested the closing of this gap and the two

(28) A-5, p. 27.

regiments were hard pressed in maintaining their role of holding troops awaiting the investment of Aachen by the 26th Infantry. In any event, the two regiments were able to maintain and consolidate their positions which prevented reinforcements going to the aid of the Aachen defenders.

The 18th Infantry Regiment was receiving heavy counter-attacks all during the period 11 - 20 October, and as a result the 26th Infantry was alerted by the Commanding General, 1st Infantry Division to be prepared to break off their attack in Aachen and go to the aid of the other two regiments, on Division order. (29) This order pictures the difficulties encountered by the 16th and 18th Infantry Regiments during this phase of the battle. Such an order increased the difficulties of the 26th Infantry and raises the question as to whether or not an order of this type is a suitable one for troops heavily engaged in the attack of a fortified city and opposed by numerically superior forces.

#### THE SURRENDER OF AACHEN

The German Commander, Colonel Wilch, sent word to the 3d Battalion, 26th Infantry, at approximately 1100 hours, 21 October, that he wished to surrender the city. Lt. Reynolds and Lt. Bashme, were sent to contact Colonel Wilch and make the necessary arrangements for a formal surrender. A proper ceremony was held in which Colonel Wilch delivered a touching speech to his troops and formally surrendered his garrison to Brig. General George W. Taylor, Assistant

(29) A-7, p. 6; A-24.

Division Commander, 1st Infantry Division. The city was then cleared of German troops for the subsequent entry of American Military Government personnel who in turn operated the city government under American control. (30)

A digest of Colonel Wilch's speech is quoted from the 26th Infantry report, which is indicative of the German government's attitude to fight to the end, but at the same time indicates an attitude of defeatism on the part of the German soldiers doing the fighting.

"1155 hours, 21 Oct 1944

Dear German Soldiers:

I am speaking to you on a most painful occasion. I was forced to surrender because we had run out of ammunition, food and water, and therefore saw further fighting was useless. I am acting against orders, for I was supposed to fight to the last man."

This surrender moved the American front lines to the east of Aachen and placed the city entirely under American control. (Map F)

#### SUMMARY

This monograph has dealt primarily with the Infantry Division's role, however the Engineers, Artillery, Air, Armor and Tank Destroyers played a very prominent role in this battle. Air activity was curtailed due to atmospheric conditions which for days reduced visibility to almost zero, however, when weather conditions allowed, which was during

(30) A-3, p. 61; A-5, p. 40; A-7, p. 11.

the final phases of the battle, the air gave close in support to both the attacking and holding forces.

Tanks accompanied the Infantry in practically all instances of attack.

The Engineers performed their primary role as well as a role of combat troops.

Artillery performed a magnificent role with their supporting fires.

Mortars, particularly 4.2 mortars as well as rocket launchers and flame throwers were effectively used.

The 26th Infantry captured 3,473 prisoners of war during the month of October and in turn suffered 500 casualties, 75 of whom were killed in action and 9 missing in action. (31)

It can be readily seen that a numerically inferior force overcame a force much larger and occupying an organized defensive area that was thought to be impregnable by its German builders. This was accomplished by wholehearted cooperation among offensive minded troops. Tanks, tank destroyers and Infantry spearheaded the attacks, neutralizing pillboxes by tanks and tank destroyers placing direct fire at the embrasures, while the Infantry closed in with grenades, explosives and individual arms to effect the capture of each pillbox. They were followed by engineers who removed mines, antitank obstacles and rendered pill boxes ineffective for further use. This action was, of course, preceded by Artillery fires. Air assisted whenever conditions of visibility allowed.

(31) A-7, p. 13.

Artillery fires of the light and medium caliber guns did not have any material effect on the well constructed concrete emplacements of the Siegfried Line, however, they did force the Germans out of firing trenches into the pillboxes where their fields of fire and observation was limited, thus allowing the Infantry to close in. 155 caliber shells had some effect on the emplacements, but it was found that direct hits by high caliber flat trajectory missiles was the most effective means of reducing pillboxes. The Artillery served its role of supporting troops best by their prearranged fires to any point in front of the assaulting troops, thus allowing almost immediate fires on any point desired. The fire plans were maintained current with the situation and coordinated between Division and Corps Artillery, in this manner a devastating fire could be laid on a particular spot very quickly and this pre planning was primarily responsible in many instances for repelling enemy counterattacks. The ability of American troops to quickly organize a newly captured point into a defensive position with a coordinated fire plan to include protective fires of their organic and supporting weapons, created an obstacle the German troops were not able to overcome.

#### ANALYSIS AND CRITICISM

An analysis of this operation can best be made by a brief discussion of how both the Germans and Americans applied the principles of war.

1. principle of the objective. This principle was

definitely applied from the top command to the lowest echelon, however, to a greater degree by the Americans. All echelons of command and services cooperated to a high degree in the objective of penetrating the Siegfried Line, isolating Aachen, and reducing it after the German forces failed to surrender.

2. Principle of the offensive, this principle was probably the greatest factor in the Americans favor. Their offensive spirit built while overcoming the Germans in western Europe was of such a high degree that superior numbers and a heavily fortified line could not stop them. The exact reverse was true of the Germans. They were on the defensive, delivered their counterattacks on a piecemeal basis and hastily moved forces to stop advances which turned out to be only feints, thus allowing penetrations in other parts of their line which ultimately ended in their forces being surrounded, and in turn being killed or captured. The Germans had the means available but they did not properly use them, with the probable exception of their fast waning air power.

3. The principle of Mass. It can be said both sides had the possibility on an equal basis for applying this principle, however the Americans applied it at the right place at the right time while the Germans did not apply the principle well. Their frantic efforts to halt the Americans at the wrong places on too many occasions neutralized the effect of this principle.

4. The principle of economy of force. The Americans

applied this principle exceedingly well. The Germans did not. *How.*

5. The principle of movement. The Germans possessed the means to apply this principle while the Americans were confined to small areas, particularly for tanks, and had the Germans applied the principle intelligently at the proper time, the outcome of this battle could have been much different.

6. The principle of surprise was consistently applied against the Germans very effectively which in effect kept them on the defensive. They never knew the intentions of the Americans and were consistently caught off balance by American feints and main directions of attack.

7. The principle of security. The opposing forces applied this principle in varying degrees and on an equal basis.

8. The principle of Simplicity. The American forces applied this principle mainly through the medium of rehearsals. While awaiting the attack order, the units of the 1st Infantry Division conducted rehearsals from air photos and captured maps which contained detailed information of the Siegfried Line and the defenses of Aachen. The thorough understanding of proposed operations by all concerned caused this principle to work in the American's advantage to a much greater degree than for the Germans. In fact, the tactical and personnel situation deprived the Germans of any simple plan to defend Aachen.

9. The principle of Cooperation. It is not known how

well the Germans applied this principle. The Americans applied it generously and well. It is quite obvious from a study of this phase of the American campaign that all echelons expended their efforts in attaining the common objective, the capture of Aachen. It can be readily seen that unity of command and loyal adherence to the responsible command by individuals and units, created a unified effort that a fortified line manned by experienced soldiers could not nullify.

### LESSONS

1. An offensive minded force with the means at hand can overwhelm a much larger force, with the means at hand, but lacking in determination and morale.

2. Cooperation between commanders and units will result in coordinated effort and in turn win battles that would otherwise be lost.

3. Adequate intelligence is required. When the Germans were denied this factor, they were unable to present an effective defense.

4. Both defensive and offensive actions must be organized in depth.

5. Unity of Command is necessary for a proper offense or defense.

6. Piecemeal attacks or counterattacks are not effective.

7. A fire plan requires careful coordination of all fires, Air, Artillery, Mortars, Machine Guns, Antitank

weapons and final protective fires.

8. An objective, once taken must be immediately organized for defense, to include fires on final protective lines and fires from all available supporting weapons.

9. Close cooperation can exist between ground and air personnel, and with proper coordination the air can bomb in a city within 300 yards of front line troops with complete safety.

10. It is necessary to effect the complete destruction or neutralization of a pillbox or fortified position upon its capture to prevent its future use by the enemy in the event of either a successful counterattack or counter-offensive.

11. Heavy, high velocity missiles with a flat trajectory are the most effective artillery weapons against concrete or masonry emplacements.

12. The proper use of engineers, artillery, tanks, air and infantry by commanders concerned, creates a formidable team. Commanders should give serious thought to this factor before deciding to use any one of them in other than their primary role.

13. Artillery can furnish effective support regardless of visibility, if fires are properly planned and coordination effected prior to an attack.

14. Air cannot be depended upon to furnish close support to the Infantry as they are affected by weather conditions. The target must be clearly visible to the

pilot, however when visibility is good the air is an effective arm for close in support.

15. Fixed defensive positions serve only to slow an enemy drive, not stop it.

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16. All persons in the military establishment should be familiar with the principles of war and apply them as far as possible in every situation, be it a large or small operation.