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OPERATIONS OF CANNON COMPANY, 110TH INFANTRY
(28TH DIVISION) IN THE DEFENSE OF MUNCHAUSEN, LUXEMBOURG,
IN THE BATTLE OF THE BULGE, 16-19 DECEMBER 1944
(ARDENNES-ALSACE CAMPAIGN)
(Personal Experience of a Company Commander)

Type of operation described: INFANTRY CANNON COMPANY
IN DEFENSE OF A VILLAGE

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ORIENTATION

INTRODUCTION

This monograph covers the operations of Cannon Company, 110th Infantry, 28th Division in the defense of the village of MUNCHAUSEN, LUXEMBOURG, during the Battle of the Bulge, 16-19 December 1944.

A better understanding is created for the reader by going back a few months into the summer of 1944.

In June 1944, the US First Army had successfully invaded the continent of Europe over the beaches of NORMANDY and had pushed eastward. PARIS had fallen and the small countries of BELGIUM and LUXEMBOURG had been liberated. GERMANY had been entered in several places.

It now became necessary to pause and regroup forces in order to continue the drive to the RHINE. This made necessary the grouping of several divisions for the push eastward, while some sectors were lightly held by a few troops.

THE GENERAL SITUATION

In the First Army Area, the ARDENNES Sector, held by VIII Corps, was selected as the zone to be lightly manned, while the First Army offensive was to be made to the north to capture DUREN, reach the RHINE RIVER, and take COLOGNE. (1) (See Map A)

Throughout the fall, the ARDENNES area had been held lightly to permit the massing of forces farther to the north and south for the offensive to the ROER and SAAR RIVERS. On

(1) A-3, p. 54

facing the SIEGFRIED LINE. This sector was taken over from the 8th Division in November, after the regiment had suffered heavy casualties in HURTGEN FOREST. Most of the officers and a majority of the men were replacements, thus regiment was endeavoring to train its replacements at the same time it was occupying and holding its long front. The supply of the regiment was normal.

The regiment had two battalions up on the line and one back in division reserve for training. Actually, in rifle companies, the regiment had four company strong points along the RED BALL Highway that ran along the front of the sector about two miles west of the OUR RIVER. (See Map C)

Each battalion had one company in a reserve position, which was also organized as a strong point. Each front line company had about three and a half miles of responsibility. The Anti-tank Company platoons were used to reinforce the strong points along the front. Cannon Company was to support the front in its sector as well as forming a strong point for its own protection. The regiment was supported by the 109th Field Artillery Battalion. The regimental command post was located at the town of CLERVEAUX (CLERF). (See Map C)

The plan of defense for each battalion consisted of OUR RIVER outposts, which were active in the daytime and pulled back to the parent companies during the darkness. (4)

CANNON COMPANY (See Map C)

Cannon Company, 110th Infantry, occupied positions near the village of MUNCHAUSEN. The command post was located in the schoolhouse near the center of the village while the gun positions were about 175 yards to the east. Observation posts had been set

(4) A-4, p. 47, 48, 92

up at three points east of the gun positions and were manned at all times, and it was a daily practice to take one gun and crew to a forward position for practice shooting into the German held SIEGFRIED LINE positions. This forward position was never the same as the day before but was usually about 4,000 yards forward of the CP.

Although it was not considered probable that the company would have to engage in close-in combat, a plan was made for such an eventuality. The guns were to attempt to drive off the enemy with fire as long as possible, and when this could no longer be done the men were to defend with carbines and rifles. A series of trip flares and booby traps, the latter constructed from piano wire and hand grenades, protected the positions on three sides.

The intelligence report received from regiment stated that the enemy capabilities in this area were to (1) defend in present positions and (2) make small scale raids across the OUR RIVER.

Cannon Company had an effective strength of about 90 men, a condition which existed for several reasons. A detail was back at Division Ordnance Company repairing two of the company howitzers, three men were in PARIS on leave, three men were assigned to a baggage detail for the regiment, and various other activities were in progress which reduced the combat strength of the company.

The weather was fair and soil trafficability in the area was good. The terrain near MUNCHAUSEN was rather hilly with thick woods covering the ravines.

16 December a front of 75 miles was defended by two battle worn and two untried divisions, backed by a new armored division. Such a disposition of forces was admittedly a calculated risk, but it was reasoned that while the enemy might make a spoiling attack in this sector, he could not achieve decisive results before the Allies could apply adequate counter measures. (2)

The theory of the calculated risk has been thoroughly hashed over; it is certainly true that the ARDENNES sector was rugged, had a generally poor road net, and did seem to be remote from any strategic objectives. These were the reasons why Generals Eisenhower and Bradley had thinned out this sector. This was the reason the Germans attacked there. Both Eisenhower and Bradley noted these facts and agreed that an attack in winter through this rugged territory would be very difficult. (3)

The 28th Division had been committed to combat in July. It had fought across FRANCE, BELGIUM, LUXEMBOURG, and had taken part in the assault on the SIEGFRIED LINE in September and the HURTGEN FOREST offensive in November.

As a result of heavy losses sustained in the HURTGEN FOREST the division had been moved to rather inactive defensive positions west of the OUR RIVER in Northern LUXEMBOURG. There it had the mission of holding a very wide defensive sector, as well as the rehabilitation and training of replacements who had recently joined the division.

110TH INFANTRY

The 110th Infantry Regiment was holding a front of a little more than fifteen miles along the OUR RIVER in LUXEMBOURG,

- (2) A-7, par 131
- (3) A-5, p. 96-97

Supply of most items was normal and more than a basic load of howitzer ammunition was on hand.

THE GERMAN PLAN OF ATTACK (See Map B)

At the start of the ARDENNES thrust the Germans had good information about the thinness of the American lines in that sector and knew that only four divisions covered the 75 mile stretch of front. It was Hitler's keen sense of the value of the unexpected which led him to exploit this weakness, and its indication that the Allied High Command was unprepared -- despite the lesson of 1940 -- for a large scale offensive in such difficult country. (5)

The ARDENNES area was not new to the Germans as they had gone through the same spot three times before. In 1870, 1914 and 1940 they had used the same route. It had been demonstrated in 1940 that strong armored forces faced only with light resistance could smash swiftly through the ARDENNES area. The Germans thought that the road net was adequate for supply and the country suitable for maneuver. (6)

German morale at the start of the operation was high. The goal of the operation was to capture ANTWERP, sever supply lines from ANTWERP, and destroy enemy forces north of the line ANTWERP-BRUSSELS-BASTOGNE. The plan of attack was as follows:

1. Sixth Panzer Army, with nine divisions (4 panzers) would drive across the MEUSE southwest of LIEGE and seize ANTWERP.

2. Fifth Panzer Army, driving shoulder to shoulder with the Sixth, would cross the MEUSE in the vicinity of NAMUR and proceed towards BRUSSELS.

(5) A-2, p. 279

(6) A-6, p. 11

3. Seventh Army would attack on the south of the Fifth to secure the left flank.

4. Fifteenth Army would attack on the north of Sixth Army toward LIEGE to protect the right flank. (7)

NARRATION

THE FIRST DAY (8)

Dawn came to the tune of a 45 minute enemy artillery preparation on the morning of 16 December 1944. It seemed to stretch from one end of the front to the other with no letup. However, none of the rounds fell on the positions of Cannon Company, 110th Infantry, at MUNCHAUSEN. The fire seemed to be falling along the road which ran north and south across the regimental area about two miles west of the German border.

The company immediately contacted Regimental Headquarters, 110th Infantry, by telephone, in an attempt to gain knowledge of the situation. Regiment could furnish little information except that it also was trying to find out what was happening.

The company observation posts, which were located from 300 - 400 yards to the front of the gun positions, reported that they could see nothing of any significance to their front.

All men were alerted and the company commander and one lieutenant went to the observation post located to the left front of the company. There they could see nothing. All the OP's were cautioned to be on the lookout and report quickly when anything unusual was observed. The company commander returned to the command post and breakfast was served to the troops.

(7) A-6, p. 13

(8) Personal knowledge

In a telephone conversation with 1st Battalion, on the left flank, it was learned that some activity was going on in that area and it was requested that a forward observer be sent to the 1st Battalion command post. This was done immediately and it was only a very short time before radio contact was made between the forward observer party and the Cannon Company OP.

At the same time a patrol was sent to the front to reconnoiter the woods to the south of WARNACH. The leader of the second platoon was in charge and was accompanied by a sergeant and two other men. The patrol reached the edge of the clearing and started into the woods, with the lieutenant in front, and as he rounded a small clump of trees he ran headlong into a German rifleman. The lieutenant pulled his carbine down to the level and fired at a range of ten yards, killing the German soldier. The enemy soldier was accompanied by several others who jumped for cover as soon as the shot was fired. When he saw there were more Germans, the platoon leader departed with great dispatch in the general direction of the nearest company OP. The sergeant, in spite of the fact that he carried an SCR 300 radio, managed to keep ahead of the lieutenant on the way back.

Upon reaching the OP the lieutenant told the men there to watch the particular spot of woods in which he had been. He then reported what had happened to the company commander.

All cooks, KP's, supply personnel and truck drivers were rounded up and moved to positions near the left front OP to confront any attack which might be forming in the woods. The total of this group amounted to approximately twenty men armed

with carbines and rifles. The use of these people was made necessary because a fire mission had been requested by 1st Battalion and the gun crews were now engaged in firing this mission.

When the company commander reached the OP his attention was called to two separate columns of German troops which were filing down into the draw leading to the area where the patrol had previously seen the enemy troops. It was now becoming apparent that the woods were being used as an assembly area, so the enemy troops were allowed to assemble there in hope that howitzer fire could be delivered on them. Meanwhile, the CP was instructed to have fire data prepared for the target on the near edge of the woods, and to hold the crews in readiness to fire as soon as the mission for the 1st Battalion was completed. Approximately two companies of enemy were estimated to have assembled in the woods.

In about a half hour enemy soldiers could be seen emerging from the woods and heading in the direction of the gun positions. About fifty men were allowed to come into the open before the guns were given the command to fire. Then all guns fired simultaneously. The troops in the open were caught standing up and all except two were casualties. These two were taken prisoner. (See Map C)

After several volleys on the edge of the woods, the range was raised fifty yards at a time and the entire woods was raked with a mixture of high explosives and white phosphorous shells. The enemy troops could be heard screaming and shouting as they tried to retreat through the intense fire. Altogether about 500 rounds were fired.

Friendly troops suffered one casualty when scattered machine gun and rifle fire was received on the hill. He was evacuated to the regimental collecting station.

The two prisoners were given a very rapid interrogation and sent to Regimental Headquarters. It was learned from the PW's that there had been two companies in the attack and their objective had been to capture the Cannon Company gun positions.

The first attack on MUNCHAUSEN had failed to materialize due to the intensity of the howitzer fire on the German assembly area and the perfect timing with which the fire was delivered. For the moment the integrity of the position had been maintained. Plans were immediately made to defend against further attack.

The two howitzers which belonged to the third platoon were back at Division Ordnance Company being repaired. This made the third platoon available for the defense of the left flank, which was where they were placed. The platoon was to protect the entire left flank from a point forward of the guns to the northwest corner of the village of MUNCHAUSEN, the second platoon was assigned the left half of the sector immediately in front of the guns and the first platoon was assigned the right half of the same sector. The provisional platoon, of cooks, drivers, etc., was held near the company CP for movement to any place where they might be needed.

About 1300 hours the Germans attacked again, this time from the left flank. This time no fire from the howitzers could be delivered because of the mask formed by the hill and

the buildings in the north end of the village. Two .50 caliber machine guns, carbines and a few rifles were the only weapons available for the defense. (See Map C)

The enemy succeeded in gaining a foothold in the town by taking possession of three houses in the north edge of town. However, they could advance no further. The provisional platoon was moved to reinforce the third platoon on the north edge of town. The situation was static for about an hour, with neither side seeming to gain an inch. Then the platoon leader, with a few other men, assaulted two of the houses with hand grenades while being covered by rifle fire from the remainder of the platoon. He succeeded in gaining possession of the houses and killing or wounding most of the occupants. Two or three of the enemy escaped from these two houses and entered the third house. Upon learning that the first two houses had been recaptured, the occupants of the third house attempted to pull out and escape to the north. Two of them were killed by rifle fire and the rest escaped.

Cannon Company had not been so fortunate this time, and had suffered well over a dozen casualties. Effective strength now numbered less than eighty men.

By this time it was 1600 hours and darkness was approaching. The enemy made no further attempts to enter the town that day.

THE FIRST NIGHT (9)

The night of 16 December was featured by almost incessant artillery fire during the first few hours of darkness. It seemed to come from three guns several thousand yards away,

(9) Personal knowledge

and was estimated to be 105 MM. Very few rounds landed in the village and none in the gun positions. This was due to the location of the guns just in rear of the topographical crest of a hill so that fire intended for the gun positions passed overhead and landed in the low ground to the west. One round smashed into a barn and killed a cow. The man to whom the cow belonged immediately cut her throat and was up early next morning to dress the carcass.

The company commander contacted the regimental commander by telephone and told him of all that had happened that day. He asked for some kind of antitank weapons to be used in case the Germans attacked with tanks. The Regimental CO said he would do what he could about the antitank weapons and that Cannon Company would continue to hold its place.

About 2000 hours a platoon sergeant who had been on pass in PARIS slipped into the CP. He had been gone three days and had been accompanied by two other men. He reported that the truck which had been bringing them from the regimental CP at CLERVEAUX had been hit by a "panzerfaust" about 1500 yards to the southwest of MUNCHAUSEN. The truck had been wrecked and three of the men, including the driver, had been hurt and taken prisoner. The sergeant and one other man, who was accompanying the driver on the trip, managed to escape and reached the command post by crawling several hundred yards and then coming up a draw that led to MUNCHAUSEN from the west. This was the first indication that the enemy had troops behind Cannon Company.

THE SECOND DAY (10)

On the morning of the second day, 17 December, the company commander received a telephone call from the commander of 109th Field Artillery Battalion. The colonel stated that one of his batteries was out of ammunition and requested that Cannon Company fire certain missions in the zone of the 1st Battalion. He was assured the missions would be fired as long as Cannon Company itself had ammunition.

The night before, the company had requested some antitank weapons from Regiment. These were supplied in the form of two 76 MM towed antitank guns, which were emplaced at the north edge of town, astride the road to MARNACH -- the most likely tank approach.

The wire line to regimental headquarters went out quite early in the morning. A wire crew, with some reinforcements, went out to trace the line and repair it. Upon reaching a point near CLERVEAUX the sergeant in charge was quite surprised to see a long column of enemy armored vehicles standing on the road between MARNACH and CLERVEAUX. He hastened back and reported what he had seen to the company commander. A report was then made to regiment by radio. The wire line to regiment was never re-established.

About 1030 hours the enemy launched an attack on MUN-CHAUSEN from the northeast with five tanks and what was estimated to be a company of infantry. Two of the tanks were Mark VI Tigers and the remaining three were Mark V Panthers. (See Map C)

(10) Personal knowledge

One of the two antitank guns was knocked out after firing only one round of ammunition. The crew from the other gun showed no inclination to fight and took off rapidly for the rear. However, some of the non-commissioned officers of Cannon Company caught several of them before they could get away and shoved them back up to fight with small arms.

The enemy blasted away at the CP in the schoolhouse with tanks firing round after round of high explosive and antitank ammunition. Most of the buildings on the north side of town were in flames. One Tiger tank, with a squad of infantry, succeeded in getting into the town. The tank went almost to the CP and, although hit three or four times by bazooka fire, was able to turn around and drive back to the northeast. For a time it appeared that the Germans might take the town.

The tide began to turn when a company officer slipped to within forty feet of a German tank and knocked it out with a bazooka round. A sergeant, who had been loading for the officer, picked off the enemy crew with a carbine as they tumbled out of the burning tank. Not a man in the crew escaped being killed. This same action was repeated in about twenty minutes and another enemy tank was destroyed, along with its crew. The same officer fired the bazooka and the same sergeant killed the crew.

After losing two tanks, the enemy was a little more reluctant to send forward his armor. He intensified the fire of his mortars, however, and sent more infantry into the town.

The enemy infantry was finally repelled by rifle and carbine fire and retired from the village to the northeast from

whence they had come. The company commander reported to regiment by radio and also requested some tank assistance if possible. Regiment promised to send at least a section of tanks, if they were obtainable.

Cannon Company began to reorganize in preparation for further attack by the enemy. Several casualties had been sustained in the last attack and it now became a question of how much longer the position could be held. High explosive ammunition for the howitzers was short, rifle and carbine ammunition was short, and there were no effective means to combat Tiger tanks. Wire communication was completely nonexistent.

By this time, platoon organization had almost ceased to exist and groups of men were organized into squads, under the command of available noncommissioned officers, as defensive units. Since the enemy had tried the left flank three times and had not taken the village, it became apparent that he might try the natural approach up the low ground on the right, or south, side on his next attempt. The US troops were disposed with the bulk of the men on the south side of the village. A .50 caliber machine gun covered a long stretch of ground in front of the riflemen.

At 1530 hours the expected attack from the right flank materialized. It began by two Tiger tanks moving up on the left front and, firing completely across the gun positions, knocking out the howitzer on the extreme right position. The howitzer fired back with one round but it was never able to fire again. Approximately six men were either killed or injured by the tank fire. Then the tanks moved away and the infantry attack from the south began to threaten the positions. (See Map C)

The attack was momentarily halted and the company commander, with five other men, staged a short flanking movement which hit the right enemy platoon on its right flank. This bewildered the enemy for a few minutes but did not dislodge them. Two of the five men were killed, one was wounded, and two were taken prisoner. This left the company commander stranded, with no ammunition, in the midst of a company of Germans. He lay prone behind a hedgerow and waited for darkness to come.

From the southwest was suddenly heard the roar of friendly tanks and there appeared over the hill five Sherman tanks coming single file up the road toward MUNCHAUSEN. A noncommissioned officer went running down the road to meet them and wave them on. Regiment had not forgotten to send the tanks that had been promised.

When the tanks were about 800 yards from the town, a German soldier fired a "panzerfaust" at the leading tank. Though the tank was not hit, it turned around and ran full speed in the other direction. It was closely followed by the other four tanks and they were not seen again.

The Germans overran the right side of the village and took the gun positions. However, the entire village was not taken. Cannon Company still held the west side and the center of the village.

The company commander, still marooned on the hill, waited until dark. Then he crawled down a hedgerow and came back into the village through the same low ground that the Germans had used to attack MUNCHAUSEN. After almost being shot by his own

men, he rejoined the company. The executive officer had moved the CP from the schoolhouse to another house and had blocked roads into town by overturning trucks in them. A head count revealed that the company strength now stood at twenty men. Radio operators had been unable to communicate with anyone since 1500 hours that afternoon.

Throughout the night the enemy pounded the village with mortar fire. At one time a tank pulled down to one of the overturned trucks. A German soldier started to climb out of the turret. A sergeant shot him through the head and he tumbled out on the ground dead. The tank turned around and ran out of town.

Two messengers were sent on foot at different times and on separate routes to try to contact regimental headquarters at CLERVEAUX. Neither ever came back.

Toward morning it was decided to leave the town, and at 0430 hours the company moved out to the west into the woods on the high ground along the CLERT RIVER.

THE THIRD AND FOURTH DAYS (11)

The company assembled in the woods west of town and paused for a rest. Day was breaking, so several three man patrols were sent out and told to reconnoiter for a few hundred yards and report back what they saw. This was done and in all cases the answer was the same -- German columns were very much in evidence on the west, north, and south.

The company commander selected a sergeant and three men to accompany him and went on a patrol to try to get as close as

(11) Personal knowledge

possible to the town of CLERVEAUX. They hit the road to CLERVEAUX and proceeded down it for a distance of about 600 yards. Then a burst of enemy machine gun fire caused them to take to the bushes at the side of the road. Investigation revealed that only three Germans with a machine gun stood guard at a crossroads. A few well placed carbine and rifle rounds put an end to the Germans.

The party proceeded down the road for a few hundred yards more. There they saw a column of enemy troops in half tracks coming from the direction of CLERVEAUX. It was now evident that regimental headquarters was gone, so the patrol turned and went back to the rest of the company.

During the day the company picked up scattered men from several different outfits, until the total in the party came to about forty men. The objective now was escape to the west to rejoin friendly troops.

The CLERF RIVER was a swift, narrow stream about four feet deep, with a steep bank on the west side. During the day a patrol was sent down to the river to pick a likely spot for a night crossing. They found a place which was between two German positions and was narrow enough to allow the party to reach the opposite bank without much difficulty. One German position was about 150 yards up the river and the other about the same distance down the river. The crossing would require absolute silence.

The night was very dark and there was no moon. The approach down to the river was very rugged but the men had been carefully

instructed that they were to make no noise. The crossing began and all seemed to be going well, as the men held hands to keep from being swept down stream by the water. Then, when about half the men were across, a man stumbled and was swept off his feet. A large, alert sergeant grabbed his shirt collar and pulled him across to the opposite bank. The remaining men scrambled across without incident.

The men had been told that if they became lost during the night, they were to continue west until they reached friendly troops. During the night the company executive officer and six men became lost. Several German columns were encountered during the night and after midnight the men could hear the sound of tank fire to the west.

One village after another was passed and each one was burning and deserted. Many American tanks, some knocked out and some deserted while in good shape, were passed. Morning came and friendly troops had not been found. The company had covered about fifteen miles in the direction of BASTOGNE.

It was decided that the men would stand a better chance of reaching friendly territory if they were divided into small groups. These groups were instructed to conceal themselves during the day and travel west at night. The company commander and the two men accompanying him were taken prisoner about noon of that day. Cannon Company, 110th Infantry was now a company in name only.

To sum up the results of the battle: Cannon Company, 110th Infantry, had denied the use of the road to the enemy from MARNACH to the southeast for a period of two days against

incredible odds. The enemy lost a great number of men in proportion to the casualties sustained by Cannon Company. One American sergeant, who was taken prisoner by the Germans on the second day, was retained by them in the area for a period of four days to help collect their dead. According to his count, there were between 215 and 225 enemy bodies in the vicinity of MUNCHAUSEN. It is not known how many injuries the enemy sustained. (12)

ANALYSIS AND CRITICISM

1. EQUIPMENT

The defense of the positions at MUNCHAUSEN was made much more difficult because Cannon Company had no mortars, no .30 caliber machine guns and only a very small basic load of ammunition for the .50 caliber machine guns. Had these items been available it is highly probable that a more adequate system of defense could have been set up and maintained for a much longer time. Indirect fire with 105 MM Howitzers became ineffective when masked by the cover to the front of the gun positions and no weapons were available to reach the enemy behind the masks. Mortars of either 60 or 81 MM size would have been invaluable in fulfilling this particular part of the defense mission. .30 caliber machine guns were needed for laying down final protective lines in front of the positions. While the .50 caliber machine guns were quite effective the ammunition supply ran low in a very short time. The primary mission of these guns in the Cannon Company was for anti-aircraft protection of the vehicles and the basic load of ammunition was very small.

(12) Personal statement of Sgt Rex Hertig, 25 Dec 1947

2. KNOWLEDGE OF THE SITUATION

Knowledge of the situation on the flanks and in other sectors of the regimental area was nonexistent. Very little information came from any source. More information might have given the company commander some idea of what opposed him and might have rendered him more capable of planning his actions. Nothing was ever passed down from regiment concerning the status of units of the 1st Battalion on the left or units on the right.

3. RESULTS OF PRECOMBAT TRAINING

Though a non-rifle unit, unaccustomed to close combat, the men in all platoons stood their ground against stubborn advances in each attack. This was due in a great measure to the fact that the company had been thoroughly trained in rifle company tactics along with the training ordinarily given a cannon company. Even the cooks and truck drivers had been trained for just the jobs they were called upon to do in this situation.

4. FAILURE OF THE TANK PLATOON TO AID IN THE DEFENSE

The tank platoon which had been sent forward by the regimental commander never arrived at the positions held by Cannon Company. In spite of the best efforts of a Cannon Company NCO to lead them up to the positions, the tankers turned and retreated vigorously to the southwest when fired upon by a single German "panzerfaust". It is believed that tankers who train with an infantry division are much more effective and come nearer to helping units of that division accomplish their mission than tankers who are merely attached

after both units reach combat. The tankers involved here were attached and had never been with the 110th Infantry until the move to LUXEMBOURG.

5. LOCATION OF GUN POSITIONS

The positions of the howitzers of Cannon Company were located in rear of the topographical crest of a small hill in such a position that artillery counterbattery fire landed far behind it in the village of MUNCHAUSEN and in the low ground to the west. Not one round of artillery out of several hundred fired at the positions actually landed any place near the guns.

6. THE BREAK UP OF THE FIRST ATTACK BY THE USE OF HOWITZER FIRE

The successful break up of the first attack from the woods east of MARNACH was due to the proper timing of the howitzer fire. The attacking Germans were allowed to get a few men out of the woods when the fire fell. Nearly all of these were casualties. Then the range was raised in increments of fifty yards so that succeeding men were caught before they could clear the woods. In this manner the attack was broken up before it had a chance to get started.

7. SUCCESSFUL CROSSING OF THE CLERF RIVER

The successful crossing of the CLERF RIVER at a point near German positions was due to full utilization of the cover afforded by darkness and the noise made by the rushing water in the river. The water was flowing at a high rate of speed and made enough noise to prevent the enemy troops from hearing the activity at the crossing.

LESSONS

1. In order to carry out an adequate defense of an area, units of the type considered here should be provided with mortars and .30 caliber machine guns.
2. Every unit should be provided with all available information regarding organizations to both flanks and the rear in order that the unit commander can make plans for his future attack.
3. All units back to and including division headquarters should be given intense rifle company training prior to combat and be instilled with the idea that they may sometime have to fight in close combat.
4. Supporting troops, such as tankers and artillerymen, should be given pre-combat training with the divisions with which it is intended they will fight.
5. Gun positions for howitzers, as well as mortars and other indirect fire weapons, should be located well up toward the topographical crest of hills in order to avoid enemy artillery fire.
6. Proper timing is an important factor in the use of howitzer fire for breaking up an attack before it can get well under way.
7. Noise made by the rushing water as well as the cover afforded by darkness must be used to full advantage in river crossings in enemy occupied territory.