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THE OPERATIONS OF THE 2D BN. 329TH INF. (83D INF. DIV.)
HURTGEN FOREST AND ROER VALLEY, 10-17 DEC. 1944
(RHINELAND CAMPAIGN)

Type of operation described: BATTALION IN THE ATTACK

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<u>PAGE</u>
Index.....	1
Bibliography..	2
Introduction.....	3
Geographic Features.....	5
Plans for the Initial Attack.....	6
The Initial Attack.....	9
The Capture of Gurzenich.....	12
The Defense of Gurzenich.....	16
The Attack to the Roer River.....	18
Analysis and Criticism.....	19
Lessons.....	21

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INTRODUCTION
(see maps 1 & 2)

This monograph covers the actions of the 2d Battalion, 329th Infantry, 83d Division during its drive out of the Hurtgen Forest to the Roer River. It starts with the relief of the 4th Division on the 11 December, 1944, and ends with the capture of the west banks of the Roer River at Duren on the 17 December.

It is the purpose of this introduction briefly to orient the reader on the events that lead up to this action.

On 1 December the 83d Division, then on a defensive front in the Duchy of Luxembourg, was directed by 1st Army order to move immediately to relieve the badly depleted 4th Division of its sector in the Hurtgen Forest, Germany. This order further provided that the 4th Division would relieve the 83d Division of its sector in Luxembourg. This interchange called for a regiment of the 83d Division to relieve a regiment of the 4th Division; then that regiment of the 4th Division was to relieve another regiment of the 83d Division; and so on until the relief was completed. This exchange of sectors was completed on 11 December with the relief of the 8th Infantry, 4th Division by the 329th Infantry, 83d Division. (1)

During this same period the 9th Division relieved the 1st Division on the left of the 83d Division sector. (2)

These reliefs were made to add new impetus to the 1st Army drive to the Roer River. This attack had been in progress for a month. During that time the 4th Division, fighting hard against stubborn enemy resistance, had been greatly reduced in strength and badly needed

(1) A-1, p88; A-2, p61. (2) A-1, p89.

reorganization, rest and replacement. On the other hand, the 83d Division, during this same period, had been operating on a fairly static front in Luxembourg, and was at full strength, completely equipped, well trained, rested, and ready for battle. (3)

The mission of the 83d Division was to continue the attack through the Hurtgen Forest and on to the banks of the Roer River.

The 329th Infantry was to be committed in a heavily wooded sector on the left portion of the division front. (4)

The 2d Battalion would be on the left flank of the regiment and in contact with the 9th Division.(5)

On 9 December, 1944 the 2d Battalion of the 329th Infantry moved by truck from Luxembourg through Belgium, and on 10 December entered Germany. The battalion spent the night in bivouac near Gressenich, Germany, and on 11 December relieved elements of the 8th Infantry, 4th Division that were located on the 1st Army front astride the Schevenhutte-Duren road about 1500 yards west of the eastern edge of the Hurtgen Forest. This gave the 2d Battalion a heavily wooded sector, about 1000 yards wide, lying midway between the town of Gressenich, to the rear, and the city of Duren, 7 kilometers to the front. (6)

Despite all efforts to preserve secrecy, the troops of the 2d Battalion were apparently not successful in concealing their movements to and from the front line positions. During the relief, and before the men of the 2d Battalion could dig in, the enemy shelled the front lines inflicting a number of casualties on the two forward companies of the 2d Battalion. (7)

By 1400 hours on 11 December the 2d Battalion had completely occupied its area and had started patrolling into the enemy defenses. A strong line of enemy positions was located along the eastern edge of the firebreak, some 400 yards to the front. Exact locations of the enemy's machine guns

(3) personal knowledge, self. (4) A-2, p59. (5) A-3, p64. (6) A-3, p63.
(7) eye witness, self.

could not be determined. The underbrush and trees offered the Jerry every advantage for concealment of his troops and weapons. (8)

Later in the afternoon a warning order was issued calling for an attack on the next day. It would be a tough fight, driving through rain-soaked forest, but the Battalion Commander was sure his men could do the job. These were well-conditioned, battle experienced troops. They had fought in Normandy and Brittany, and had, since then, been on a fairly quiet front in Luxembourg. During the stay in Luxembourg all companies had been re-equipped and retrained and were now ready for the tough fight to come. (9)

GEOGRAPHIC FEATURES

The ground in the battalion sector sloped gradually up to the edge of the forest at Hof Hardt, then gently down to the Roer River. A dirt road ran generally east through Gurzenich and again east to the Roer River. A firebreak, about 150 yards wide, was located about 400 yards east of, and parallel to, our front lines. Another dirt road was located about 600 yards east of, and parallel to, the firebreak. This road ran north and south from Sehlich through Hof Hardt to Gey. Hof Hardt proved to be a group of three buildings located on a road junction.

Gurzenich was a typical farming community with the majority of the buildings located along the road to Duren. In the center of the town was a circle and around this were the town hall, the church, and a few stores. So, we picture a long narrow town, bulged in the middle, with its long axis running northeast and southwest.

The area around Gurzenich consisted of flat, open country. The Germans had dug trenches all over this flat open area surrounding Gurzenich.

Heavy rainfall and poor drainage had turned all the roads in the
(8) personal knowledge, self. (9) personal knowledge, self.

area into rivers of mud. Under this mud the enemy had planted his teller mines, thus denying the battalion the use of the roads. Since it was next to impossible to detect mines under this soupy mud, by-passes had to be cleared through the forest and marked with white tape. This mud condition, coupled with low temperatures, exposed all the troops in the area to the dreaded "trench-foot". To reduce this threat the troops were told to remove their shoes, exercise their feet, and change their socks twice a day.

The trees overhead provided excellent concealment but absolutely no cover. Enemy artillery and mortar shells, bursting in the trees, rained steel down on the heads of our troops. Log huts, built by the troops of the 8th Infantry, provided adequate cover initially, and captured German dugouts were used on the next day. But, while moving forward in the attack, the men had to take a terrific pounding.

It can be seen that the battalion's attack would take it over various terrain conditions: first, a dense forest; then, open ground; and, finally, through buildings in a house to house fight to reach the Roer River. (10)

PLANS FOR THE INITIAL ATTACK

Late in the afternoon on 11 December the Regimental Commander ordered a co-ordinated attack by the 1st and 2d Battalions. The regiment was to attack at 1000 hours, 12 December, capture Hof Hardt and the north-south road running through Hof Hardt, and be prepared to continue attacking east toward the Roer River on order. This order called for the 2d Battalion, attacking on the left flank of the 83d Division, to capture Hof Hardt and the edge of the forest in its zone. (11)

Upon receipt of the regimental order, the 2d Battalion Commander, realizing there was ample time, decided to call his company Commanders and staff members for a conference. As a result of this conference the following conclusions were reached:

(10) personal knowledge, self. (11) A-3, p64.

I. Fields of fire were limited, and observation was very poor so the battalion would: (12)

(a) lay assault wire to supplement radio communication and assure control;

(b) attach heavy machine guns to rifle companies;

(c) assign artillery and mortar observers to be with the assault company commanders;

(d) designate phase lines along easily identified terrain features for control purposes;

(e) hold the artillery and mortars "on call" until observations could be obtained.

II. All troops would carry heavy loads of ammunition since resupply would be difficult due to the condition of the road and the presence of teller mines in the area.

III. The effectiveness of the enemy artillery and mortar fire bursting in the trees ruled out any time-consuming maneuvers. It was decided that the best bet would be to close rapidly, take up the fire fight, dump our own artillery fires, and assault frontally.

With these considerations in mind the Battalion Commander issued his attack order which read about as follows: (13)

I(a). The enemy is known to hold the area between phase line II and phase line III in strength. (see overlay)

(b) The regiment attacks east at 1000 hours, 12 December. The 1st Battalion will attack on the right. The 9th Division will attack on the left. The 3d Battalion will be in reserve behind the 1st Battalion. The 322d Field Artillery Battalion will be in direct support of the 329th Infantry.

II. This battalion attacks east along the road to Duren at 1000 hours
(12) eye witness, self. (13) eye witness, self.

to seize Hof Hardt and the edge of the forest in its zone. Zone of action: (see overlay). Formation: two companies abreast; "G" Company on the right; "F" Company on the left; "E" Company in reserve. Artillery and mortar concentrations will be fired on call.

III. (a) Company "G", on the right, attacking on a 400 yard front, with its left flank on the Duren road, will seize Hof Hardt and that portion of the edge of the forest in its zone. The 1st platoon of Company "H" will be attached to Company "G".

(b) "F" Company, on the left, attacking on a 500 yard front, with its right to include the road to Duren, will seize Hof Hardt and that portion of the edge of the forest in its zone. The 2d platoon of "H" Company will be attached to "F" Company.

(c) The mortar platoon of "H" Company will support the attack from its present positions and will be prepared to displace on order. Priority of fires to "F" Company. One observer party from the mortar platoon will report to each assault company as soon as possible.

(d) Company "E" will be in reserve and will move on order behind "F" Company. "E" Company will maintain contact with the 9th Division on the left and the 1st Battalion on the right and will be prepared to attack through the zones of either forward company on order.

(x)1. On capture of the battalion objective, each assault company will immediately dispatch patrols to contact the units on the flanks.

2. Phase lines: (see overlay)---All companies to report crossing of phase lines.

IV. Extra ammunition will be issued to all men prior to the attack---carry all you can handle. Location of aid station and ammunition dump:---(see overlay).

V. Both attacking companies will lay assault wire as they advance. Location of battalion CP:---(see overlay).

Before 1000 hours, 10 December all the troops in the battalion were given their orders and knew what was expected of them. Aerial photographs of the terrain, with overlays showing the phase lines and the battalion objective, had been issued to all the officers. The blanket rolls were collected, and the men were issued all the extra ammunition they could carry. In short, the preparations were complete, and now the battalion was ready to move out. (14)

THE INITIAL ATTACK (DECEMBER 12)

At 1000 hours on 12 December the battalion jumped off as planned. On reaching phase line I, both "F" and "G" Companies came under machine gun, rifle, and mortar fire from enemy positions along phase line II. The men of both attacking companies hit for cover and attempted to take up the fire fight. It was impossible to place effective fire on the enemy lines due to the limited fields of fire caused by the dense scrub growth that covered the area. The intensity of the enemy fire obviated any further advance until such time as the enemy positions were either destroyed or neutralized. (15)

"F" Company's Commander contacted the Battalion Commander, informed him of the situation, and asked for an artillery preparation on phase line II. The Battalion Commander arranged for a 10 minute artillery and mortar preparation of phase line II and III to start at 1120 hours, and to cease with two rounds of white phosphorus per gun at 1130 hours; all supporting fires would then lift to phase line IV and fire a 5 minute preparation there. (16)

"F" Company's Commander was instructed to have his men wait under cover for the preparation to begin, and then to have his men creep forward through the brush as far as possible and assault the enemy positions

(14) personal knowledge, self. (15) eye witness, self. (16) telephone call to Lt. Col. Sharpe by self, 1050, 12 Dec. 1944.

when the smoke rounds landed. Each platoon leader in "F" Company was contacted and given the following instructions: "We get an artillery preparation at 1120 hours. When it starts, creep your men forward to within assault distance. When the smoke rounds land, charge, and keep going to phase line III. Hold there for further orders." (17)

During this same period, "G" Company had been equally unsuccessful in advancing against the enemy's prepared defences. The Battalion Commander contacted the "G" Company Commander and told him of "F" Company's plan. "G" Company was ordered to attack in conjunction with "F" Company at 1130 hours. (18)

Between 1100 and 1120 hours the mortars and artillery were registered on the target, and promptly at 1120 hours the preparation began. Enemy fire soon slackened to sporadic machine gun bursts, enabling "F" Company to slip forward to within 75 to 100 yards of the enemy. When the phosphorus rounds burst over the enemy lines, "F" Company's leaders leaped to their feet, ordered the charge, and the whole company front surged forward. The men moved right into and through five machine gun nests and a platoon of enemy riflemen. Most of the enemy met death; nine prisoners, all wounded, were taken. (19)

Leaving the 1st platoon to mop up, "F" Company reorganized quickly, pushed on through to phase line III, and then rapidly to phase line IV. Hof Hardt was captured easily when a platoon of enemy infantry, completely surprised, surrendered without a fight. (20)

In the meantime, Company "G" had no success in its attack at 1130 hours. The enemy positions to its front could not be neutralized.

After "F" Company's successful charge, "G" Company's Commander ordered his support platoon to swing to the left through "F" Company's zone and attack the enemy from the flank. This platoon, moving in from the north

(17) (18) personal knowledge, self. (19) (20) eye witness, self; A-3, p64.

across the enemy flank, destroyed 3 machine gun nests in log bunkers and killed or captured all the enemy defenders. After this action, Company "G" quickly reorganized and moved on up to the battalion objective, going into position to the right of "F" Company. (21)

After Hof Hardt had been taken, Company "E" was moved up behind "F" Company to protect the battalion left flank. One platoon of this company was used to carry ammunition and supplies to the two forward companies.

Patrols from "F" and "G" Companies were dispatched to both flanks to contact the adjacent units. At about 1600 hours contact with the 9th Division was established on the Hof Hardt road, and at 1700 hours the 1st Battalion was contacted on the right. When these contacts were made, defensive fires were co-ordinated, and the battalion "buttoned up for the night". (22)

A platoon of the division engineers, plus the battalion A and P platoon, worked all afternoon clearing mines and draining mud off the Duren road; by evening a supply route had been cleared to Hof Hardt. Up this route came a hot meal for the men, more ammunition for the next day's attack, and communication wires from the Battalion CP to the Company CP's. (23)

Casualties during this action were heavy. The losses in American killed and wounded totalled about one hundred men and officers. The Germans lost about two hundred men; over one hundred of these were killed. (24)

The night of 12-13 December was fairly uneventful. One enemy patrol tried to enter Hof Hardt and was driven off. The 2d Battalion patrols contacted the enemy along the edge of the woods to the right front. Twice during the night heavy barrages by enemy mortars were dropped along the front, causing a few casualties. This was the extent of the night's activities. (25)

(21) statement by Capt. Hugh Bates to self, 12 Dec. 1944.

(22), (23), (24) personal knowledge, self. (25) personal knowledge, self

DECEMBER 13-14
THE CAPTURE OF GURZENICH

On 13 December 1944 the battalion was ordered to attack at 0800 hours from its position along the edge of the forest to seize the town of Gurzenich. (26)

The Battalion Commander decided to attack in a column of companies; "G" Company leading, followed by "F" Company, and then "E" Company. The plan called for Company "G" to attack directly east across 700 yards of open ground to secure a foot-hold in the woods to the front. The remainder of the battalion would support "G" Company's move by fire from positions along the edge of the woods near Hof Hardt; it would then cross the open ground after "G" Company entered the woods. The Battalion Commander also arranged for an artillery preparation along the edge of the woods, and a smoke mission on the left flank to obscure enemy observation during this maneuver. (27)

Promptly at 0800 hours the attack jumped off. Company "G", under cover of the smoke screen and artillery preparation, moved across the open ground and into the woods, meeting no resistance. The rest of the battalion closed rapidly on Company "G" and reorganized according to plan. At this time Company "F" was ordered to deploy to the right flank and to the rear, thus securing the rear of the battalion. (28)

Company "G" now resumed its attack through the woods toward Gurzenich. Company "E" followed Company "G". This attack pushed steadily forward against slight resistance, and, by noon, the edge of the woods east of Gurzenich was reached. (29)

When the forward elements of Company "G" reached the edge of the woods, they were fired on by the enemy located in buildings on the outskirts of Gurzenich. The Commander of Company "G" immediately called for artillery and mortar concentrations on these buildings. Under cover of this fire, the company pushed on in and gained a foothold in the town. Stopping only

(26) A-3, p64. (27) personal knowledge, self. (28) eye witness, self.
(29) personal knowledge, self.

long enough to regroup, Company "G" continued the attack up the road toward Duren and, by 1700 hours, had captured about half of the town of Gurzenich. (30)

During this same period Company "E", still behind Company "G", had deployed to protect the flanks and rear of the attacking troops in Gurzenich. Company "F", after a foothold in the town had been secured, was moved up to the western edge of the forest to continue its mission from there.

At 1700 hours the Battalion Commander called a halt for the day in order to organize a defense before darkness set in. The defense was as follows: (31)

Company "G" with one heavy machine gun platoon deployed to the front;

Company "E", with one heavy machine gun section in support, deployed to the left flank and rear;

Company "F" moved forward into the town and, with one heavy machine gun section, deployed on the right flank;

the command group and the 81 mortar section were placed in the center of the perimeter.

Once again ammunition supply was a problem. The whole area over which the battalion had advanced was heavily sown with teller mines. However, the engineers and Battalion A and P platoon succeeded in opening the road into Gurzenich during the night, and by morning resupply was normal again. (32)

The battalion had driven a salient into the enemy's defenses. It was out on a limb with both flanks and front exposed to counterattack. Realizing this, the Regimental Commander sent the battalion additional strength consisting of a platoon of medium tanks and a platoon of tank destroyers. Needless to say, these reinforcements were received with open arms. (33)

The 14 December saw the battalion again attacking through the town of Gurzenich with "E" and "G" Companies attacking abreast, "E" Company on the left, "F" Company deployed to protect the rear.

(30) A-3, p65, statement by Capt. Hugh Bates to self. (31) personal knowledge, self. (32) A-4 (33) personal knowledge, self.

Both "E" and "G" Companies used a column of platoons in the attack, thereby being able to protect the flanks while attacking to the front. This sort of formation lends itself very well to an attack in a town where almost all the buildings are on one street. (34)

The enemy fought hard for every house. Close combat was the order of the day. Most of the time the enemy was in too close for artillery or mortar concentrations to be fired. Even when these fires were possible, they had little effect since the enemy had excellent cover in the buildings. In spite of this, the battalion succeeded in taking the town with very light casualties.

Here is how it was done: (35)

One platoon (actually about 2 squads), reinforced with light machine gun section, placed itself in position in buildings already held and placed aimed fire on all possible enemy positions. Another platoon, reinforced with bazookas and carrying plenty of grenades, attacked the next building to the front. When it was taken, the attack platoon then became the base of fire, reinforced with the light machine gun section which displaced forward after each successful attack. The old base of fire then became the assault platoon and leap-frogged to the next objective. This operation took place simultaneously on both sides of the street.

Due to the limited observation, reconnaissance and decisions were necessary in the attack of each building. The Company Commanders displaced forward with the light machine guns, taking the new assault leaders with them. While the new base of fire was being laid, the Company Commanders took a look at the next objective, formulated a plan, and gave the assault platoon leaders their orders. Then, on a signal, both companies again attacked.

The medium tanks were attached--one section to each attacking company. They were moved through back yards to positions from which they could

(34) personal knowledge, self. (35) eye witness, self.

support each new attack by direct fire from their cannon and machine guns.

The heavy machine guns moved behind the attacking echelons by bounds with the support platoons. These guns were placed to fire to the flanks to meet possible counterattacks.

The tank destroyers and battalion anti-tank guns had the mission of protecting the flanks and rear, and moved by bounds behind the attacking companies.

"F" Company was kept busy cleaning out snipers from outlying buildings.

This attack, as outlined, pushed slowly forward, and by 1600 hours the battalion controlled the town.

On this same day the town of Derishweiler, to the northwest, and the town of Birgel, to the south, were captured by elements of the 9th Division and the 3d Battalion of the 329th Infantry, respectively. (36)

The Battalion Commander once again organized a defense before darkness set in. He placed Company "G" on the forward edge of the town with a platoon of medium tanks in support. "E" Company was again deployed along the left flank and rear with a platoon of machine guns in support. "F" Company defended the right flank with a platoon of machine guns in support. The tank destroyers and anti-tank guns were placed to secure both flanks and rear of the battalion. (37)

At about 1700 hours on 14 December the enemy counterattacked with tanks and infantry coming up the main road from Duren. This attack was quickly repelled by "G" Company. The enemy lost one tank and about 20 of his infantry, and abandoned the thought of further engaging the 2d Battalion that night. (38)

The night of 14-15 December passed without incident. The troops ate a hot meal and had a good night's rest.

(36) A-1, p91; A-2 p63; A-3, p65.

(37) eye witness, self. (38) A-3, p66.

THE DEFENSE OF GURZENICH
15-16 DECEMBER, 1944

No attack was ordered for 15 December. The Battalion Commander was ordered to consolidate his position, clear out any small enemy pockets remaining in his sector, and hold the town at all costs. (39)

To further strengthen the defense of Gurzenich, the Regimental Commander attached Company "E" to the 2d Battalion. This company was placed on the right flank, in an extension of "F" Company's lines, and across the rear to join in with "E" Company. (40)

The only action that occurred on this day was the clearing of a few small enemy groups from houses on the right flank. Other than that, the day was uneventful. (41)

This lull in the fight permitted much needed rest for weary troops.

The battalion drew extra ammunition to be dumped on the position. Also on this day, plans were made to continue the attack on 16 December. The 2d Battalion was to attack to seize the banks of the Roer River in its zone. (42)

This attack never got started. The 16 December will long be remembered by every soldier on the Western Front;---the great German counter-offensive began that day. Although the main German attack struck further south, the enemy facing the 329th Infantry came storming out of his Roer River bridge-head in a series of counterattacks that lasted all morning long. (43)

At 0530 hours the German artillery began a concentration that completely blanketed the town. This was by far the heaviest shelling ever experienced by these veterans of the Normandy, Britta/ny, and Luxembourg campaigns. To venture forth from the protection of the houses would have been suicide. The men of the 2d Battalion waited crouched beneath windows, behind walls, and peering out of cellar windows, knowing full well that when this shelling lifted a fight was due. (44)

(39) (40) (41) A-3, p66; personal knowledge, self. (42) personal knowledge, self. (43) (44) A-2, p62; A-3, p66; A-4, eye witness, self.

At about 0630 hours, the Battalion outpost forward of Company "G" was driven in. The men who manned this outpost reported enemy tanks and infantry in strength moving up from Duren. (45)

The Company "G" Commander alerted all his troops. Men were placed to fire from the roofs of buildings and from every window of every house. Tanks and machine guns commanded the road and the back yards. The men were set--ready for action. (46)

The enemy came up the road with tanks and infantry massed. The men of Company "G" held their fire until the enemy were within 100 yards of them, and then "hell broke loose". The first blast of fire from the houses took a heavy toll of enemy dead and drove the rest to cover. Two enemy tanks were knocked out, but the enemy retaliated by destroying two friendly tanks. A vicious battle raged for about an hour with men fighting at close range. The advantage of cover favored the defense, and finally, the enemy withdrew. (47)

At 0900 hours another heavy concentration of enemy struck again, this time with a feint to the front and his main attack against the right flank in "F" Company's sector. Observers detected the enemy moving in along drainage ditches, trenches, and through defiles. Tank destroyers, machine guns, and riflemen opened fire immediately, driving the attackers to cover. Then 2 battalions of artillery, 2 sections of 81 mortars, and 1 section of 60 mortars dumped their load of coal. All but a few of the Germans were stopped cold! (48)

Some enemy managed to enter the town and were met with a withering blast of fire from rifles, grenades, and bazookas. Every one of the enemy that entered Gurzenich stopped a bullet. (49)

Meanwhile the Germans out in the fields were taking a terrific pounding from all the guns on the 2d Battalion's right flank. Finally the enemy

(45) (46) (47) statements by Capt. Hugh Bates to self, Dec. 16, 1944; eye witness, self. (48) (49) eye witness, self.

withdrew in disorderly confusion, leaving the wounded on the field. At noon 65 wounded Germans walked into Gurzenich and surrendered. (50)

It was estimated that, between 0630 hours and 1200 hours on 16 December, 2 battalions of German Infantry supported by tanks had hit Gurzenich and had been driven off. What appeared to be the start of a major offensive had been nipped in the bud. (51)

The rest of the day was spent in reorganization and resupply in anticipation of another push to gain the west banks of the Roer River.

Also, during this time, the 1st Battalion moved into Gurzenich and "B" Company rejoined its parent unit. (52)

THE ATTACK TO THE ROER RIVER

Late in the afternoon on 16 December the battalion received orders to continue the attack at 0740 hours, 17 December to seize the west banks of the Roer River in its zone. About 1000 yards separated the 2d Battalion from its final objective--at last the end was in sight. (53)

The regimental mission was to capture Rolsdorf and that portion of the west banks of the Roer River in the Regimental zone. (54)

The Regimental plan for the accomplishment of this mission was about as follows: (55)

I. The 2d Battalion would attack due east to seize that portion of the regimental objective in its zone.

II. The 1st Battalion was to follow the 2d Battalion, turn right on the road to Rolsdorf, and attack that town from the north.

III. The 3d Battalion, in Birgel, would remain in position prepared to attack Rolsdorf from the southwest.

IV. Priority of artillery fires would go initially to the 2d Battalion.

Due to the lack of cover on the open ground to either flank, the 2d Battalion Commander decided to attack straight down the road to Duren in

(50) eye witness, self. (51) (52) personal knowledge, self. (53) (54) (55) personal knowledge, self; A-3, p67.

a column of companies with "E" Company leading, followed by "F" Company, and then "G" Company.

At 0720 hours, on 17 December, a 10 minute artillery preparation blasted the buildings along the road to Duren, and at 0730 hours "E" Company jumped off. "E" Company advanced rapidly for 500 yards before being stopped by stiff enemy resistance to the front. "F" Company was immediately committed around the left flank, succeeded in by-passing the enemy, and headed for the objective. The Battalion Commander then sent Company "G" still further around the left flank, abreast of "F" Company. As a result of these flank attacks, the enemy resistance facing "E" Company collapsed, enabling the company to push on toward the Roer River. By 1000 hours the battalion was on its objective and planning a defense. (56)

The initial rapid advance of Company "E" enabled the 1st Battalion to send "C" and "A" Companies south into the flanks and rear of the enemy positions in Rolsdorf, thereby facilitating the speedy capture of that town. (57)

With the capture of Rolsdorf, the 3d Battalion attacked northeast from Birgel toward Rolsdorf in an attempt to cut off a large group of enemy in trenches between Gurzenich and Birgel. When the enemy became engaged in a firefight with the 3d Battalion, "B" Company mounted tanks and attacked out of Rolsdorf into the enemy's rear. The enemy, completely confused by this move, came out of the trenches and surrendered. This ended all resistance in the regimental zone of action. (58)

The period from 18-23 December was spent in improving the defense of the Roer River line. On 23 December the 329th Infantry was relieved by the 414th Infantry of the 104th Division. (59)

ANALYSIS AND CRITICISM

The foregoing description of this operation demonstrates that the 2d

(56) eye witness, self. (57) (58) A-2, p63; A-3, p67. (59) eye witness, self; A-3, p73.

Battalion, 329th Infantry won a clear-cut victory over the Germans. However, the following points may be criticized:

I. The battalion was committed to the front lines the day before the attack. Had the battalion been allowed to attack through the 8th Infantry lines from assembly areas in the rear, most of the casualties that came as a result of the relief could have been avoided.

II. Forward observers could have been sent out ahead of the line of departure with patrols. Thus, an artillery and mortar preparation might have been placed on the enemy initially, saving time and casualties.

III. After the enemy lines in the forest had been penetrated, no effort was made to exploit this penetration until the next day. However, exploitation might have ended in disaster, since resupply was very difficult, due to the mined condition of the area over which the battalion was operating.

IV. The enemy can be criticized for not counterattacking in strength immediately. The 2d Battalion had been allowed a whole day to organize a defense before the main counterattack came in Gurzenich.

V. The fire power the enemy used in the counterattack in Gurzenich had little effect, since all the 2d Battalion's troops were well shielded by the houses in the town. Had this same amount of artillery been placed on the 2d Battalion while it was still in the forest, the enemy might have succeeded in stopping the initial attack.

Much of the credit for this successful operation should go to the men who fought so hard for their leaders. The willingness of the men to close with the enemy in the forest clearly turned the tide of battle.

In summary of the above analysis, the successful conclusion of the operation was the inevitable result of the following factors:

- I. Battle experienced troops and leaders.
- II. Careful planning continuously throughout the action.

III. The use of fire power---every officer and man had learned the value of fire power and applied this knowledge to good effect.

IV. The absolute refusal of each and every man to give ground before an enemy counterattack.

V. Brilliant deployment of the battalion to permit continuous protection of flanks and rear during the attack.

The battalion's losses during this action were 162 men killed or wounded. Most of these casualties were suffered by "F" and "G" Companies--- each company losing about 70 men.

The enemy lost about 300 killed and about 580 prisoners.

LESSONS

Some of the lessons to be learned from this operation are:

I. Whenever possible, troops, other than those to make the attack, should be used as a covering force.

II. Careful, detailed planning makes for success in battle.

III. An enemy must be neutralized before he can be destroyed. To accomplish this every weapon at hand should be used in a coordinated effort. Under this curtain of fire infantry can advance and strike the enemy before the shock effect wears off.

IV. An attack can advance no faster than the supply line behind it can be opened.

V. The use of phase lines facilitates control when observation of the battlefield is limited.

VI. Communication wires can and should be laid to units attacking through close country.

VII. When weather and enemy action has closed routes of supply, additional engineer support should be given to the attacking battalions.

VIII. For house-to-house fighting special assault groups should be

organized and reinforced with special assault weapons.

IX. In fighting in towns the attack must move evenly all across the front so that flanking fire will not hold up the advance.

X. Although committed to the attack, a unit must be prepared to defend at all times---the danger of counterattack is always present.

XI. When a defense is installed, all supporting fires should be registered immediately so that no time is lost in delivering these fires when needed.

XII. The infantry has in its possession weapons which can generate terrific fire power. When a unit has trained every man to ignore his shovel and fire his weapon, then, and only then, can it expect to attack successfully against a determined enemy. The best way to stay alive is to keep the enemy from shooting, and the best way to do that is to shoot at him.

XIII. Esprit de Corps---a unit that won't be beaten, can't be beaten.