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OPERATIONS OF COMPANY C, 38TH ARMORED INFANTRY BATTALION,
(7TH ARMORED DIVISION) IN THE CAPTURE OF BURGELN, GERMANY
(RUHR ENCIRCLEMENT), 29 MARCH 1945, (CENTRAL EUROPEAN CAMPAIGN)
(Personal Experience of a Company Commander)

Type of Operation Described: ARMORED INFANTRY RIFLE COMPANY IN
THE NIGHT ATTACK AND CAPTURE OF A TOWN DURING THE PURSUIT

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INTRODUCTION

This monograph covers the operations of Company C, 38th Armored Infantry Battalion, 7th U. S. Armored Division, in the night attack and capture of the town of BURGELN, GERMANY, on 29 March 1945, during the encirclement of the Ruhr.

In presenting this monograph, it is the desire of the writer to focus the attention of the reader, initially, on the Ruhr area, so that the proper background may be provided upon which may be developed a better understanding and appreciation of the part played by the smaller units during the encirclement of the Ruhr.

The Ruhr industrial area is comprised generally of a roughly shaped, rectangular area extending approximately fifty (50) miles from ESSEN, GERMANY, south along the east bank of the Rhine River and east from the river approximately seventy-five (75) miles. (See Map A) (1) This area is located in the valley formed by the Ruhr River, which runs east and west through the northern sector of the Ruhr industrial area with its eastern end joining with the Rhine River. Included in this area are such towns as ESSEN, BOCHUM, DORTMUND, HAGEN, DUISBERG, DUESSELDORF and others. (2) South of this built-up area is a rolling, hilly country approximately sixty (60) miles square and to the north a stretch of plains. (See Map A) (3)

The Ruhr area had long been recognized as the great industrial center of Germany, producing the bulk of her crude steel and coal. (4)

Attention was given to the strategic importance which Germany placed upon the Ruhr when Hitler in his blitzkrieg (5) plans of 1940, provided for the occupation of Holland as a precautionary measure to prevent

(1) A-1, (Map) p. 135; (2) A-1, (Map) p. 121; (3) A-2, p. 315;
(4) A-3, p. 514; (5) Lightning, mechanized war.

the landing of British troops there and its consequent threat to the Ruhr. (6)

By January 1945, General Eisenhower had decided that the allied main effort would be made across the Rhine in the north and that a strong secondary attack would be launched in the south, thereby providing the means for an encirclement of the Ruhr. (7)

By 22 March 1945, with the Allies in control of the west bank of the Rhine and with two (2) armies holding bridgeheads east of the Rhine, the stage was set to execute the long planned double envelopment of the Ruhr which would go down in history as the largest successful encirclement ever accomplished. (See Map A) (8)

THE GENERAL SITUATION

Identified enemy units, opposing the allied armies and disposed to defend the Ruhr area, consisted of the Fifteenth and Fifth Panzer Armies and the First Parachute Army. These units were under the command of Field Marshal Kesselring. It was evident that the enemy had guessed the intentions of the Allies' main effort in the north and had shifted the bulk of their troops in that direction. (See Map A) (9)

For days prior to the actual crossing of the Rhine in strength allied strategic and tactical air had bombed and strafed enemy troop concentrations, supply installations, road nets, transport and communications in the Ruhr area thereby isolating the enemy and preventing withdrawal or reinforcement.

The Second British Army launched a successful crossing of the Rhine in the north at three (3) different sites on 23 March, but its armor was unable to break out into the plains north of the Ruhr as soon as anticipated and was delayed until 27 March. The Ninth U. S. Army crossed the Rhine early on the morning of 24 March and headed due east through the heavily built-up sectors of the Ruhr with a view toward a (6) A-4, p. 48; (7) A-3, p. 740; (8) A-1, p. 130; (9) A-1, p. 131.

possible link-up with the First U. S. Army operating out of the Remagen bridgehead.

The First U. S. Army broke out of its Remagen bridgehead on the morning of 24 March and, in a classic example of the use of armor during the exploitation and pursuit, raced for sixty (60) miles east and southeast by 28 March. *frank*

On the night 23 - 24 March, the Third U. S. Army crossed the river, advanced rapidly, captured DORMSTADT and headed northeast for a future junction with the First U. S. Army.

The Seventh U. S. Army crossed the Rhine on 26 March near WORMS and made contact with elements of the Third U. S. Army shortly thereafter. (See Map A) (10)

Thus, with five (5) armies across the Rhine in strength, 28 March ended with the encirclement of the Ruhr well on its way. The Ninth U. S. Army in the north was becoming the northern pincer and the First U. S. Army the southern pincer of this gigantic double envelopment.

The discussion which follows shall be confined to action and events within the central portion of the southern arm of this pincers movement, namely, elements of III Corps, First U. S. Army.

THE SITUATION OF THE 7TH ARMORED DIVISION

The 7th U. S. Armored Division assigned to III Corps, First U. S. Army, and commanded by Major General Robert Hasbrouck, had been committed through the 9th and 99th Infantry Divisions on 26 March and raced out of the REMAGEN bridgehead eastward. It was spearheading III Corps in this operation with elements of VII Corps on its left (north) flank and V Corps on its right (south) flank. (See Map B)

The 7th Armored Division, with all three (3) combat commands committed, utilized secondary roads to advance by task forces of tanks and armored infantry. Utilizing this procedure, it traversed very
(10) A-5, p. 1113, 1128.

See Map A

rugged terrain but was able to retain the impetus and momentum of its advance through by-passing enemy minefields, strong points, and road blocks organized along the FRANKFORT autobahn (11) and other primary avenues of approach. Directions were changed often and by operating in numerous small parallel columns the enemy was kept completely off balance and unable to keep our armor bottled or stopped. (12)

It was during this drive that the division encountered a new twist in the enemys' employment of weapons, that is, antiaircraft guns fired against our infantry. (13)

By 28 March, the 7th Armored Division had reached and cleared the town of KAPPEL and was halted on orders from Corps calling for a change in direction of advance to the north to begin on 29 March.

(See Map B) (14)

The division's objective in the drive north to begin on 29 March was the Ederstau See and its controlling dam. (See Map B) The division plan called for combat command R and combat command B to start out on the afternoon of 29 March for this objective, utilizing task forces operating over parallel routes.

See Map B

Combat command R was commanded by Colonel Francis P. Tompkins and was divided into three task forces for this operation. These were, Task Force Beatty, Task Force Brown, and Task Force Griffin, each named for the task force commander and composed of varying ratios of tanks and armored infantry.

For purposes of this monograph, consideration will center on only one of these task forces, namely, Task Force Griffin and the area around KAPPEL and to the immediate northeast. (15)

THE SITUATION OF TASK FORCE GRIFFIN

Task Force Griffin was commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Marcus S. Griffin, commanding officer of the 38th Armored Infantry Battalion, and consisted of the following units:

(11) National highway in Germany; (12) A-6, p. 25, 26; (13) A-8, p. 45; (14) A-7, p. 48; (15) Personal knowledge.

38th Armored Infantry Battalion (less Companies A and B)

Company A, 40th (Medium) Tank Battalion

One platoon, (light tanks), Company D, 40th Tank Battalion

One platoon, 814th Tank Destroyer Battalion (SP)

One squad, Company B, 33d Armored Engineer Battalion

200th Field Artillery Battalion (SP), (105-mm artillery outfit
attached from Corps)

One Tactical Air Control Party (from 9th Tactical Air Force) (16).

The task force had been assigned a route of advance to begin the afternoon of 29 March from KAPPEL, skirting the southeastern portion of MARBURG, presently occupied by the 3d U. S. Armored Division, then east along a secondary road to BAUERBACH, north along another secondary road to GINSELDORF, then passing through BURGELN, continue north to REDDEHAUSEN. (See Map C). At that point, new routes of advance would be assigned by combat command R. Task forces Beatty and Brown were to operate on the right of Griffin on routes passing through the town of KIRCHAIN. The mission of all task forces was to clear out all towns and enemy resistance along their routes of advance. (17)

Enemy resistance encountered in the past had been sporadic, running from extremely light to fanatical. The principal type of resistance encountered thus far had been road-blocks and minefields.

Most of the elements of task force Griffin had operated together on previous occasions which greatly facilitated plans and matters of coordination.

The order of march of the task force for this operation was to be a single column on the road consisting of a platoon of tanks from Company A, 40th Tank Battalion, mounting a platoon of armored infantry from Company G, 38th Armored Infantry Battalion; the squad of armored engineers; the task force commander and the tactical air control party; the remainder of Company A, 40th Tank Battalion, mounting the remaining infantry of Company G; the platoon of tank destroyers; Headquarters (16), (17) Personal knowledge; Statement of Lt. Colonel Griffin.

Company, 38th Armored Infantry Battalion and Medical Detachment; Service Company, 38th Armored Infantry Battalion; and the attached self-propelled field artillery battalion. (See Figure 1) (18)

The plan of the task force commander was very simple. It called for dispatching a platoon of light tanks from Company D, 40th Tank Battalion and the assault gun platoon from Headquarters Company, 38th Armored Infantry Battalion, as a reconnaissance force to precede the task force over the route previously designated. This reconnaissance force was to have one (1) of the assault guns equipped with a loud-speaker and carried with it an interpreter from Headquarters Company, 38th Armored Infantry Battalion. This force was to proceed to the first town, call the burgomeister (19) through the loudspeaker and demand the surrender of the town. A refusal would mean the subjecting of the town to artillery and tank fire upon the arrival of the task force which was following by approximately fifteen (15) minutes. Should the burgomeister accede, he would be carried by the force to the next town along the route and sent into the town to demand its surrender. The procedure was to be repeated until a town was reached which refused to surrender and would necessitate the commitment of the task force. (20)

THE SITUATION OF COMPANY C, 38TH ARMORED INFANTRY BATTALION

It will be remembered that Company C, 38th Armored Infantry Battalion, was a part of task force Griffin. In order to follow properly the events which transpired, a brief description of the organization of the company is necessary.

The company was organized along the same lines as all other armored infantry rifle companies and consisted of a company headquarters, which included administrative, mess and maintenance personnel, three (3) identical rifle platoons and an antitank platoon. Each rifle (18) Personal knowledge; (19) German town Mayor; (20) Personal knowledge.

platoon was comprised of a platoon headquarters, one (1) headquarters squad, two (2) rifle squads, a light machine gun squad (actually two (2) light machine gun crews), and a 60-mm mortar squad. The antitank platoon consisted of a platoon headquarters and three (3) 57-mm antitank gun squads. (See Figure 2) The company possessed twenty (20) half-tracks, each, mounting caliber .30 or caliber .50 machine guns, one (1) 2½ ton kitchen truck and three (3) 1/4-ton trucks with 1/4-ton trailers. Communication while mounted was provided by SCR-508 and 510 radios while the company commander and each platoon was equipped with an SCR-300 for dismounted action. (21)

The company commander designated the first rifle platoon to ride the leading platoon of tanks, exclusive of the first two tanks in the column. They were to be followed by the second platoon riding the second platoon of tanks and the third platoon the last platoon of tanks. The company commander and his command group rode on the tank company commander's tank for purposes of liaison and coordination. The remainder of the company headquarters, the antitank platoon and the company's vehicles were all to follow at the rear of the column with Service Company, 38th Armored Infantry Battalion. (22)

The company possessed only one (1) officer at this time other than the company commander. This officer was Lieutenant Brokaw who commanded the first rifle platoon. He had just joined the company the day before, having been transferred from Headquarters Company of the battalion where he had commanded the assault gun platoon. Therefore, the company commander knew little of this officer's ability or experience. The second rifle platoon was commanded by its platoon sergeant, Technical Sergeant Lee. This platoon had lost its platoon leader the day previous when he had been wounded during action involving his platoon which had been riding the leading tank platoon that day. The third rifle platoon was commanded by its platoon leader. (21), (22) Personal knowledge.

sergeant, Technical Sergeant Cook. (23)

The company had followed what had almost become an SOP in preparing for this type of operation. Each rifleman carried a cartridge belt and two (2) bandoliers of caliber .30 ball ammunition. Experience had proven that since the company employed "marching fire" and its consequent rapid expenditure of ammunition so often, this method of providing ammunition for the individual rifleman did not burden him excessively when he was riding a tank. In addition, each rifleman carried one (1) white phosphorus and one (1) fragmentation type hand grenade attached to the "D" ring of his web pack suspenders. Submachine guns were taken from half-track drivers and given to riflemen in exchange for rifles or carbines. Everyone in the company carried a full canteen of water and one (1) day's emergency D ration. Additional rations, water and ammunition were carried in Service Company vehicles at the rear of the column. Each rifle platoon was required to designate and arm a bazooka team. Spare batteries were carried by SCR-300 radio operators in 60-mm mortar ammunition bags. All company light machine gunners were equipped with a single asbestos glove, appropriated from unit kitchens, for use in firing the weapon from the hip in assault fire. Resupply of the company was to be accomplished during brief night halts when directed by the task force commanders. (24)

The morale of the men of Company C was good despite their incessant riding of tanks since 26^M march. During this period, they had repeatedly demonstrated their efficiency and ability by quickly disposing of any enemy resistance encountered and had provided for the uninterrupted advance of the armor. However, fatigue, dust, the hot fumes and confinement resulting from this prolonged period of riding tanks had made the men restless. A noticeable effect upon discipline appeared. The men had been warned about accepting food or drink passed to them by civilians along the route and the noncommissioned (23), (24) Personal knowledge.

officers instructed to be alert to interfere with any such efforts made. This is mentioned here as it was not too long before the importance of this measure was brought home rather forcibly. (25)

Just before the task force moved out on the afternoon of 29 March, the company commander of Company C received a radio message from the task force commander passing on information concerning the enemy received from the division G-2. The substance of this message was to the effect that a civilian source had reported approximately 100 enemy troops from DENMARK had detrained at BURGELN the night before and were heavily armed with panzerfausts. (26) (See Map C) This enemy force, it was further stated, had forced the local civilian populace to assist in unloading ammunition and in preparing intrenchments. (27)

This information indicated immediately to the company commander that plenty of resistance could be expected at BURGELN.

The task force moved out and the commander's plan worked admirably for the first two (2) towns along the route, BAUERBACK and GINSELDORF, but when the burgomeister from GINSELDORF was sent into the next town of BURGELN, he did not return. (See Map C)

The reconnaissance force, without waiting for the arrival of the task force, then attempted to take the town with the loss of three (3) light tanks from enemy panzerfausts. They then deployed, continued firing into the town, and notified the task force commander of the situation by radio. It was 1830 hours when the task force arrived on the outskirts of BURGELN and the light was failing fast. (See Map C)

The task force commander ordered the leading tank platoon and the artillery battalion to shell the town. This was done until flames had started throughout the town from the terrific volume of fire. Then the task force commander ordered the leading elements of the

(25) Personal knowledge; (26) German infantry antitank weapon; bazooka;
(27) Personal knowledge.

column to barrel on through the town, evidently under the impression that the intense shelling had driven the enemy out. The leading tank had just crossed a railroad embankment on the outer edge of the town when it was disabled by enemy panzerfausts. In so doing, it had become an effective road block for the remainder of the column since the road was very narrow. (See Map C) (28)

The company commander of Company C had dismounted from the tank he had been riding when the column halted and went forward to try and get a better view of the terrain.

In the weak remaining light he noted a small village about 300 yards to his front with its two (2) story houses astride the dirt road on which the column was halted. A steep railroad embankment lay perpendicular to the road and approximately fifty (50) yards short of the first building of the town. In the dim light it appeared as if the railroad crossed over the road and the leading tank was burning in the road between the railroad and the first building of the town. Further on, ahead of this tank, were the burnt hulls of the three light tanks from the reconnaissance force which had been knocked out. The railroad embankment was too steep to permit a crossing elsewhere, thereby, canalizing the movement of the task force armor to the road. (See Map D) (29)

Darkness had fallen and the fires in the town seemed to burn brighter than ever. It was at this moment that the task force commander contacted the company commander of Company C personally and ordered him to take his company in and clean out the town so that the column could proceed. He informed the company commander that he would try to effect recovery of the disabled tanks from the road so that they would not obstruct the way of the column once the town had been cleared. (30)

The company had dismounted as soon as the column had halted and was deployed now with a file on each side of the road awaiting orders. (28), (29), (30) Personal knowledge.

Based upon his hurried and limited reconnaissance, the company commander had made his plan. He called the rifle platoon leaders around him and issued an oral order. The first platoon would attack on the left of the road cleaning out all houses in its zone and proceed for a distance of 300 yards the other side of town. The second platoon would do the same thing in its zone on the right of the road. The third platoon would be in support following closely the first platoon and maintain contact with the rear elements of that platoon. (See Map D) The platoons would move out initially astride the road with squads in column for purposes of control. The company commander would move between the first and third platoons. Company medical aid men were with their assigned platoons and a medical jeep with litters was parked near the task force commander's vehicle.

No further firing had taken place on either side when the platoons quickly took up their assigned positions and formation and moved out into the attack. (31)

THE CAPTURE OF BURGELN

The men initially started forward rapidly but as the leading elements of the company approached the railroad embankment the movement slowed down while the first and second platoons carefully crossed the embankment checking for the presence of any dug-in enemy. There was a pause of a few moments while the platoons were reconnoitering the embankment. Experience had taught them the tragic results of overlooking a thorough inspection of such positions before passing through them. Strangely enough, not a shot had been fired as yet. The embankment was covered with quite a network of intrenchments, but all seemed unoccupied. This proved puzzling to the men and they moved forward from this point with a great degree of caution. (See Map D) (32)

As the company approached the town, flames from the burning buildings lent an eerie aspect to the entire scene. Leading elements (31), (32) Personal knowledge.

of the company, nearing the first houses within the town, were aware of the intense heat from the fires. The men were silhouetted against the light furnished by the flames and the company commander was hoping and silently praying that the leading platoons would reach the cover afforded by the first houses quickly, thereby minimizing the length of time they were exposed.

It had become evident by now that the second platoon would reach the first house in its zone before the first platoon reached its first building since the distance to the house was considerably shorter than that of the first platoon. In fact, leading elements of the second platoon had initiated a sudden rush for their first house.

The thought had persisted in the mind of the company commander that it was strange that no enemy fire had been received by the company as yet and he had just about decided that the enemy must have withdrawn from the town during the artillery and tank fire when the familiar sound of a German Schmeiser machine pistol, commonly called a "burp gun", was heard. The burst had seemed to come from in front of the second platoon and it was followed quickly by a series of muffled explosions and rattle of small arms fire. Figures could be seen darting into the first building in the zone of the second platoon and in a few moments the company commander received a report from Sergeant Lee on his SCR 300 radio stating that the second platoon had taken the first building successfully, killing one (1) of the enemy and wounding another within the house. Sergeant Lee further reported that he was surprised at the extreme youthfulness of the enemy encountered thus far, estimating their ages at about sixteen (16) or seventeen (17). This was a considerable change from the Volksturm, or peoples' army, we had been encountering heretofore. Complaining of the unbearable heat from the buildings, Sergeant Lee advised that his platoon was now headed for the next building in its zone. (See Map D) (33)

(33) Personal knowledge.

It was difficult to understand how anyone could continue to utilize and occupy positions in buildings in flames such as these, but it certainly was a good indication of the type of enemy we were meeting.

As mentioned before, the first platoon had a little further to go to reach their first building. When they had reached a point about twenty-five (25) yards from the building, the cracking of enemy small arms fire was heard. The fire was coming from the house directly to the front of the first platoon and the platoon immediately returned the fire. One squad was sent out to the left in an encircling movement, taking advantage of the darkness existing on the outer edge of the town, in an effort to approach the house from a flank with better concealment. (See Map D) (34)

While this squad was moving in on the flank of the house, the company commander's attention was diverted momentarily by the sudden movement of a silhouetted figure from the first platoon staggering and moving, without attempting to secure any cover, down the center of the road toward the houses. The exchange of fire between the first platoon and the enemy occupying the building continued. Before any warning could be shouted to the individual so foolhardily moving in the road, he crumpled suddenly and fell in the road. The company commander cursed to himself over the stupidity of a man so foolishly and needlessly exposing himself, but his thoughts were interrupted by the explosion of hand grenades and bazooka rounds from the vicinity of the flanking squad. This squad, from the first platoon, entered the house and short bursts of fire were heard coming from within the building. A report was received from Lieutenant Brokaw that the house had been taken by the first platoon with three (3) enemy killed in the basement and two (2) wounded on the first floor. He, too, remarked upon the youthfulness of the enemy and advised the company commander that (34) Personal knowledge.

he was leaving part of his platoon in the vicinity of the house and leading the remainder forward in a dash for the next building which was about seventy-five (75) yards from the first. (See Map D) (35)

The company commander contacted the task force commander by radio and advised him that a toehold in the town had been secured by the company and that they were now proceeding further into the town. (36)

For some time small area fire and explosions had been heard coming from the zone of the second platoon, but the company commander had lost visual contact with the platoon when they had moved ahead. Upon contacting Sergeant Lee by radio, it was found that the second platoon was making good progress, having cleared several more houses and were now nearing the center of the town near a bend in the road. They had had four (4) men wounded thus far and had just taken ten (10) prisoners whom they were sending to the rear. Sergeant Lee was advised of the first platoon's position and their somewhat slower progress and was cautioned to have his men watch their firing to the left of the road. (See Map D) (37)

Sergeant Cook was ordered by the company commander to move his third platoon to positions in rear of the house just taken by the first platoon.

As the company commander moved past the burnt hulls of the light tanks, he noticed that each tank had been hit several times by enemy panzerfausts and in each instance in different portions of the tank. (38)

A new fire fight had broken out to the front of the first platoon. The platoon had not moved from its positions in the vicinity of the house and the company commander attempted to locate the platoon leader to see what was causing the delay. Upon arriving at the house held by the platoon, he recognized the figure which had been hit in the road previously and saw that the man was dead, having been shot through (35), (36), (37), (38) Personal knowledge.

the throat. It was learned that despite orders and warnings to the contrary this man had accepted intoxicants from civilians throughout the day and was in no condition to fight when the company dismounted from the tanks. He refused to remain behind when his platoon moved into the attack and so had met his death as a result of negligence and lack of alertness when it counted. (39)

Lieutenant Brokaw was found by the company commander on the inside of the house unconscious and shot through the chest. An aid man was administering to him and told the company commander that the officer had been hit as he attempted to jump from the window of the house and lead his platoon to the next house. (40)

The task force commander was notified by radio of the situation and requested to send a litter to the house to evacuate the wounded platoon leader.

Realizing that his present plan was inadequate in that it needed more speed, the company commander decided to change his plan. The platoon sergeant of the first platoon was ordered to reorganize his platoon hastily and both the first and third platoons were moved to the left flank of the town. From this position they were deployed in a skirmish line extending the length of the remainder of the town on that side of the road with the third platoon on the right. (See Map D) (41)

Sergeant Lee had reported by radio that the second platoon had almost cleared the entire town in their zone and was instructed to move his platoon for a distance of 300 yards the other side of town upon clearing the last house. He was also advised at this time of the company commander's new plan for the employment of the first and third platoons. (See Map D) (42)

The first and third platoons were led by the company commander in the flank attack on the remaining houses. Moving quickly under the concealment offered by the darkness on that side of the town, the two (2) (39), (40), (41), (42), Personal knowledge.

platoons were soon near enough to begin their assault on the houses. Following the firing of bazookas and the tossing of grenades, both platoons rushed the remaining houses almost simultaneously. The houses were entered and following a brief but intense fire fight, during which both platoons received a number of casualties, the buildings were cleared. The enemy, later identified as elements of the 166th Infantry Division, had also suffered numerous casualties and losses through capture.

The first and third platoons moved down the road on the far side of town and contacted the second platoon. The task force commander was advised that the town was clear and thus, the capture of BURGELN was successfully completed following almost two hours of fighting.

(See Map D) (43)

ANALYSIS AND CRITICISM

In reviewing this operation, there are several points worthy of discussion.

The task force commander's plan to have a reconnaissance force precede the main body of the task force along the route of advance was, in my opinion, a good one. However, this reconnaissance force, it will be remembered, consisted only of a platoon of light tanks and an assault gun platoon. A notable weakness here was the omission of infantry to provide security for the armored element of the reconnaissance force, particularly, in view of the information which had been received concerning the enemy at BURGELN. This omission resulted in the loss of three (3) light tanks from enemy panzerfausts. Had a platoon of armored infantrymen, or even a squad, from Company C been included in this force, it is possible that these losses may have been avoided. The infantrymen would have been able to provide close-in protection for the tanks. By the same token, the reconnaissance force commander should not have attempted to take the town without infantry.

(43) Personal knowledge.

The radio message received by the company commander from the task force commander transmitting intelligence concerning the enemy in the vicinity of BURGELN is an excellent example of prompt and timely dissemination of information from higher headquarters. However, I am inclined to believe that this intelligence was not utilized properly by its recipients. With this intelligence, the tanks should not have been permitted to lead the column in an effort to break through the town without first having the dismounted infantry precede and provide close-in flank protection for the tanks. The result was the loss of the leading tank in the column and its subsequent blocking of the road.

In view of the necessity for the hurried employment of Company C and the lack of available time for planning and reconnaissance, it is felt that the company's plan for taking the town was adequate. However, as was soon discovered on the ground, an approach or direction of attack from the flank of the town would have provided more concealment and space for maneuver.

The individual who became an unnecessary casualty as a result of lack of self control and discipline emphasizes the need for constant, close supervision and control of men by officers and noncommissioned officers to prevent them endangering themselves or their unit.

The enemy proved that, although disorganized by pursuit operations, his capabilities should not be underestimated. The disabling of four (4) tanks, creation of numerous casualties, and delaying the advance of a much stronger force for two (2) hours is conclusive evidence of the discipline, morale, and training of the enemy.

LESSONS

As a result of this operation, some of the lessons learned are as follows:

1. Overconfidence is likely and may become dangerous during the pursuit.
2. During the pursuit all units employed should be made as

self-sustaining as possible.

3. During the pursuit frequent changes of direction should be employed utilizing secondary roads to by-pass organized enemy resistance and to confuse and deceive the enemy.

4. In the pursuit infantry platoons riding the leading platoon of tanks should be rotated frequently for the same reasons that scouts are changed often.

5. Tanks should be accompanied by supporting infantry for close-in protection when employed on independent missions, due to the extreme vulnerability of tanks to enemy infantry tank hunter trains.

6. Infantry should precede and provide close-in flank protection for tanks during a night attack and attack of a town for the same reason as above because of the limited visibility.

7. In the attack of a small town or village it is desirable to attack against the long axis of the town or village since this approach permits the entering of the maximum number of buildings by the most men at the same time.

8. In pursuit operations, frequently night attacks with little or no preparation are necessary to maintain the impetus of the advance, thereby prohibiting the enemy the opportunity to reorganize.

9. Hand grenades, submachine guns and bazookas are excellent weapons for attacking the enemy within buildings.

10. More thought should be given to the employment of bazookas in pairs and threes, from different positions and firing at pre-selected parts of a tank simultaneously.

11. Artillery and tank fire alone will not dislodge a determined enemy. Assault by infantry is necessary and must be closely coordinated with these fires.

12. All intelligence received by commanders should be utilized in formulating their tactical plans.

13. A small unit, properly trained and disciplined, with an aggressive determined spirit and confidence in its weapons, can successfully delay and impede the progress of a much larger force.