

LANDAU, GERMANY

day 27

By the time the sun rose on the morning of Thursday, March 22, Combat Command B, along with the reserve command Combat Com-



Present day Landau

mand R, was well on its way directly east eight miles out from their ultimate destination of Landau. Combat Command A, having split from CC B at Kaiserslautern in order to capture Neustadt, was moving due south toward Neustadt to ap-

proach Landau from the north.

Progress for CC B was very slow as the retreating Germans set roadblocks that had to be removed or blown from the roadways and plowed aside by Sherman tanks.

This region of Germany was an agricultural region. While still late winter, the potato fields of southern Germany would normally be manicured and noticeably worked. These fields were lying fallow and partially destroyed. The years of war had taken a toll in every aspect of German life. Virtually every able-bodied man had been taken into the German army. Many of the boys 14–18 years old were encouraged to join the Hitler Youth. January 26, 1945, under Hitler's orders, the Hitler Youth were officially conscripted to "man" the anti-aircraft artillery in and around the cities so that the adult men could be utilized for other more daunting duties. If the war continued much longer, this would be an even more desperate year for food sources.

In the early years, only the excess field produce was required to be given to the war effort. In these later years, anything that was grown would be confiscated by the German army. Self-sufficient German families had within a handful of years been reduced to little more than subsistence farmers. Endless fields once teaming with rows of

cabbage and potatoes in this region of Germany were now overgrown with tall, dry grasses reaching through patches of snow trapped in shallow depressions.

The farther the 10th traveled east, the more the forest transformed into flat fields. Sporadic small-arms fire and artillery were being encountered, which were easily dealt with by the armored division. Soon, anti-tank artillery and German infantry became visible across the barren unkempt fields making them optimal targets for the highly experienced gunners in their Shermans. The fields west of Landau became littered with destroyed German artillery. Acres and acres of once fertile fields now contained so many bodies that one could barely walk from one side of the field to the other without having to step over a dead German soldier.

Late afternoon on March 22, CC B together with CC R (reserve unit) entered Landau from the west while CC A timed their convergence simultaneously from the northern approach. Landau had been captured.

On March 23, the 10th Armored Division found themselves so far to the south that they were now completely out of the 3rd Army boundaries. In fact, they had physically crossed paths on the road with the 6th Armored Division, a move

that would have confounded most any other army. But this was no regular army. On that day, it was determined by higher command that the 10th Armored Division would be immediately reassigned to the XXI Corp of the 7th Army. The 6th Armored Division would now take its place in the 3rd Army. Essentially the 6th Armored had moved too far north, and 10th Armored had moved too far south, so they simply switched armies. The 7th took the place of the 3rd and visa-versa.

Often we think that a division, any division, is permanently assigned to and stays with the same Corps throughout a conflict. The reality is that in a massive war such as WWII the clearing of the Saar-Moselle Triangle, divisions were constantly on the move, and the Tigers of the 10th Armored moved as quickly as any, covering great distances. Divisions were assigned and reassigned according to where they were most needed and would do the most damage to the enemy in the shortest amount of time possible.

The 10th Armored had succeeded in capturing every objective ordered by General Patton and his 3rd Army. In addition it had captured 8000 German troops and had cut off escape routes of 50,000 other German soldiers.

From Landau, the Tigers headed north to Ludwigshaven. The days were warming as the month

of March neared its end and the 10th had come out of the mountainous area. Snow was being replaced by a cold rain. On the odd night there was still a freezing rain, and they'd wake to find ice melting from the gun barrels. Sometimes even a thin ice layer would envelop the tank itself except over the warm engine compartment.

The sun would rise though, as it always had. Each day seemed slightly warmer as the soldiers were ordered to move faster and farther. Rest, especially sleep, was very rare now. The German 1st and 7th Armies were being devastated, and the pressure had to be continued and increased at every opportunity in every way.

Although this was a war against Hitler and his Nazi régime, it also became a war against Germany itself. Every citizen was impacted by the war in some fashion. There was no such thing as pin-point bombing. No smart bombs in that era. No way of waging war on only the government and its officials. This was one of the last wars where it was understood that civilian hardship could mean a quicker end to a war, thereby saving countless lives.

The 10th made its way north to Ludwigshaven and took residence in an array of houses and official buildings. Finally the battle-weary soldiers would have an opportunity to resupply, sleep, and

eat warm meals for four days. They were allowed to rest for the first time since leaving Trier nearly one week earlier.