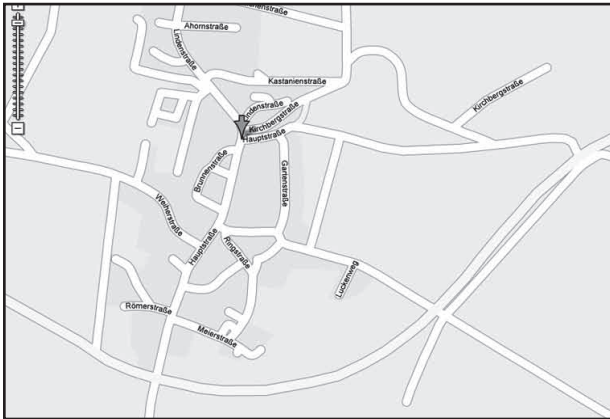


# EHINGEN, GERMANY

day 58

**S**unday, April 22, CC B and the 10th Armored Division drove deep into Bavaria and the heart of Nazi Germany, entering Echingen situated on



the Danube River about thirty-five miles south of Schwabisch Gmund.



Originating in the Black Forest with the convergence of the Brigach and Breg rivers, the Danube flows east through, or touching, ten countries prior to emp-

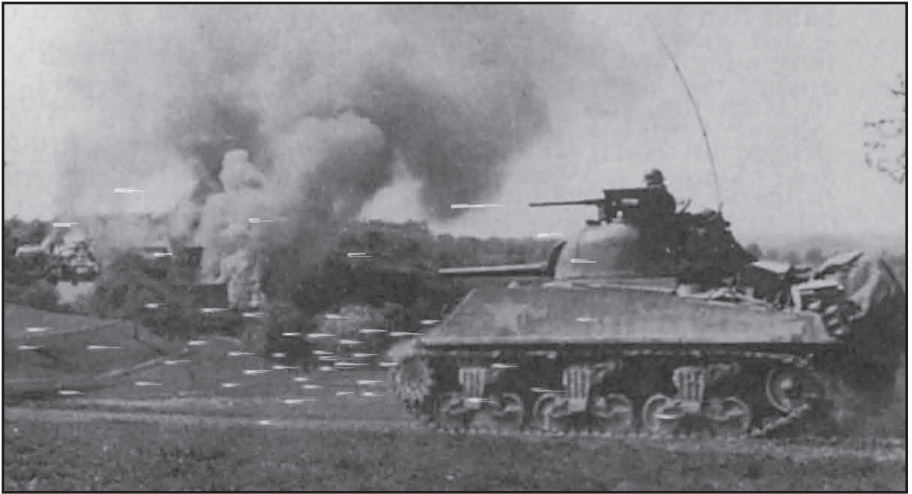
*Present day Echingen*

tying into the Black Sea. The Danube River is the next to the largest river in Europe, second only to the Volga River.

Traveling south through open fields, approaching once distant mountains with each passing mile, CC B surprised a German supply column as it topped a ridge across one of the now barren fields north of Ehingen.

As the column sped ahead in an attempt to escape, the German infantry escort turned to face the armored division. CC B immediately fanned out and aggressively returned fire. The loader and gunner in Melvin's Sherman tank had never worked faster or more smoothly. Melvin pulled the bolt back on the .30mm machine gun and depressed the trigger with his left hand while feeding the belt of ammunition into the shell port with his right hand. Hundreds of white hot phosphorous tracer bullets from the .30mm gun strafed the field at waist level along with those of countless other Shermans.

The main 76mm tank guns continuously pounded high explosive shells into the moving German column. Once the supply column had been totally eliminated, burning, exploding, the main guns were then turned on the enemy infantry immediately in front of them. The German infantry, kept at a distance, fired their remaining panzerfaust ineffectively at the Shermans. Even as the pan-



zerfaust made occasional contact with a Sherman tank, the distance was far too great for the impact to damage the thick frontal armor of the tank.

Within minutes the shelling and small arms fire had ceased. The smoke cleared. The field ahead which just moments prior had been unscathed, was now heavily pockmarked with deep depressions from the exploding shells. Dark, fresh earth was turned up over the entire surface of the field where there was once the enemy. Now the dead enemy lay both within the deep shell depressions, and over the entire surface between. Survivors, as few as there were, were collected, tended to, and left for the 44th and 103rd Infantry division to process.

Just before midnight on April 22, CC B entered Ehingen. Early the next morning on April 23, CC B captured a bridge over the Danube River, while

CC A captured two additional bridges a short distance downstream. Crossing the Danube would come quickly. Too quickly for one man.

The vision of the tank commander inside the turret was severely limited and bridge crossings were always difficult under the best of circumstances. Not only were the bridges narrow, but often the approach in either end were just as narrow, and perilous, for the wide Sherman tanks. Navigating the road under these conditions through trees and river debris required a great deal of concentration.

The commander of the Sherman Melvin was riding in threw open the hatch and stood with his upper body rising above the hatch opening. Within seconds he slumped and fell back inside the tank, limp, lifeless, a hole through the side of his helmet and blood pouring from underneath. A remaining German sniper, hidden in a lone building, had done what he felt was his duty.