

SECRET

HILL 203, 21-27 NOV 1944
(VICINITY LANGERWEHE, GERMANY)

GL-121
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1st Bn, 18th Regt, 1st Inf Div

Interview with:

Capt Edward W McGregor, S-3 1st Bn*

CP 18th Regt, Vicinity Hombourg, ~~Germany~~ ^{BELGIUM}, 16 December 1944

1 - Aerial Photo 1:10,000 (APPROX)
(Coordinates on photo obtained from Map, Germany,
1:25,000, Sheet 5104, Duren)

1 - OVERLAY 1:25,000

2d Lt George E Moise, 2d Info & Hist Sv(VII Corps) 1st US Army

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At Noon 21 November 1944 the 1st Bn, 18th Inf Regt, was in an assembly area (010440) East of Hamich; the 2d Bn was committed South of Schoenthal (022468); and the 3rd Bn had taken the southern part of Heistern (009447).

The ~~2d~~^{1st} Bn was ordered at this time to pass through the 3rd Bn in Heistern and advance Northeast toward Langerwehe (030475), moving over the high, wooded ground between the Heistern-Langerwehe road and the Schoenthal-Langerwehe road, with the objective of seizing Hill 203 (022468) as an observation post for the further advance to Langerwehe.

Shortly after noon on the 21st, the ~~2d~~^{1st} Bn pushed through Heistern in column of companies, B, C, D, A, being forced to infiltrate through the village because of heavy artillery and mortar fire. At the northern edge of the town some small arms fire was encountered. The fire came from snipers left in buildings beyond the limit of the advance of the 3rd Bn and

*The interview with Capt McGregor was intended to be one of a series with others involved, but because of the time involved could be obtained the 1st Div was moved from VII Corps area and committed. As a result some of the information was lost.

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from the edge of the woods 100 yards to the Northeast.

Advancing northeast from the edge of the town, B Co was hit by both small arms and mortar fire from the edge of the woods, but advanced into the woods, overrunning what enemy did not withdraw and moving 500 yards into the woods before dark. A few prisoners were taken and some enemy dead were found, but the majority of the enemy had withdrawn. There was enough opposition, however, to force the Bn to abandon the advance in a column of companies and to send C Co into the woods echeloned back to the right of B Co, which had dug in in position. C Co was able to advance about 300 yards into the woods before digging in for the night.

On the morning of the 22d, both companies were ordered to advance to a line running roughly from northwest to southeast at the northeastern edge of the woods (021467-024465). B Co advanced about 500 yards further before being pinned down by small arms fire from the right front and across the open field on the left flank. C Co advanced about 300 yards and "ran smack into Jerry's MLR," set up to defend Schoenthal. This defense was composed of log bunkers protecting machine guns, other machine-gun nests and snipers, all operating with cleared fields of fire. C Co suffered approximately 50 casualties and was forced to withdraw 150 yards, with some men of the company returning to Heistern to report that the Co had been wiped out. In reality that part of the Co that withdrew 150 yards took up positions that enabled it to repel a counter-

attack made with the apparent purpose of infiltrating to the rear of B Co, which was ordered to hold its position because of its exposed flanks. Late in the day A Co, which had been in Heistern, was ordered to restore the positions held by C Co and to make contact with the ~~left~~^{right} flank of B Co.

A Co moved forward at 1700, and during the night accomplished its mission, establishing a line echeloning back from the right flank of B Co and contacting the latter, but only after considerable difficulty. In moving through the woods in the darkness the men of A Co frequently encountered small groups of enemy and there was much hand-to-hand fighting. One officer, Lt DiNucci, used his fists to subdue a German soldier who had fired at him with a pistol at short range but had missed.

At least 12 enemy were killed during the night's fighting, several dying of bayonet wounds. It was apparent that the enemy had attempted to move to the rear of B Co in the counter-attack repelled by the remainder of C Co that afternoon, and that small groups had remained behind when he withdrew.

On the morning of 23 Nov B Co advanced another 500 yards, stopping 200 yards from the northeast edge of the woods. A Co remained in place, and the remainder of C Co was withdrawn to Heistern for reorganization. On this day artillery fire, which was heavy throughout the engagement, was intense, and there were more casualties from treebursts than any other day. The artillery came from the northeast, apparently being sited on the high ground northeast of Langerwehe ~~position~~ (045485) and in Echtz. B company's exposed left flank had been covered by the

advance of the 3rd Bn of the 16th Regt to the west of the Heistern-Langerwehe road.

B Co was ordered to hold on its position, which was receiving considerable small arms fire from the left front, a sector directly in front of the 3rd Bn of the 16th Regt. On the afternoon of the 23rd two medium tanks from the 1st Plat of Co B, 745th Tk Bn, were moved up to the southern edge of the woods (014455) to be in position to support B Co on call. A platoon of medium tanks and attached TDS supporting the 3rd Bn of the 16th Regt had bogged down earlier in the fields to the northwest of Heistern.

On the evening of the 23rd, B Co was ordered to reconnoiter hill 203 in force, seizing it if possible, but the reconnaissance element, composed of one B Co Plat and the Bn Ranger Plat, was stopped by heavy small arms fire, most of which came from the two houses at the left flank of the woods (021468) and a small wooded patch (019468) further to the left. The two platoons suffered at least 22 casualties in this attempt.

A Co meanwhile was ordered to contact the enemy to the right, but encountered no opposition, as he had apparently withdrawn under pressure from the 2d Bn of the 18th Regt, which had seized Schoenthal.

The situation remained static during the daylight hours of 24 Nov, with the woods under constant heavy enemy artillery fire. Both the 3rd Bn of the 16th Regt on the left and the 2d Bn of the 18th on the right were also held in place, suffering numerous casualties from artillery and small arms fire.

That evening A Co moved forward to tie in with the right flank of B Co, meeting little ground opposition. The Co took up a position in the right forward edge of the woods, establishing a strong point in a small square of heavy woods (024466) well ahead of the rest of the company. At the same time the 2d Bn of the 18th Regt succeeded in clearing all remaining enemy from Schoenthal. C Co moved in to the area vacated by A Co to protect the rear of both A and B Co's. All operations were carried on under heavy artillery fire.

The following day, 25 November, both A and B companies enjoyed better observation, and A Co observers located a company of Germans apparently protecting an OP on hill 184 to the right front (034467). Division artillery placed heavy fire on this point and caused an apparent displacement of enemy guns to the rear. Partial observation of Langerwehe was possible from both A Co and B Co. This day the two tanks supporting B Co were called up to reduce the houses (021468) from which fire had stopped B Co the night of 23 Nov. The tanks advanced along the Heistern-Langerwehe road to the left of the woods, shelling the houses with HE and WP as they progressed. The leading tank got to within 100 yards of the houses when a mortar observer on the road spotted a 75 mm anti-tank gun in the wooded patch (019468) tracking it. Despite the observer's efforts to halt it, the tank proceeded to a spot off the road in the edge of the woods where there was a hard surface (020467). Here it backed off the road into position to deliver ~~its fire~~

more fire on the houses, but before it could fire, two shots from the anti-tank gun scored direct hits, killing one crew member and wounding three others. Although wounded and dazed, the tank commander extinguished a fire caused by the enemy gun. The other tank withdrew.

At 1600 on the 25th, one platoon of B Co and one platoon of A Co attacked the houses and took them successfully, killing or capturing all enemy therein. A squad was left in the houses and the remainder of the force attempted to assault hill 203, but was caught in "murderous" grazing cross fire from machine guns situated to both the right and left front. The enemy also brought fire on the ~~force~~^{force} with bazookas, rifle grenades and rifles. The men dug in on the hill, and with aid from the edge of the woods engaged in a fire and grenade fight with the enemy. They were approximately 100 yards from the top of the hill.

Later that night elements of B Co under Lt Tolbert advanced to within 40 yards of the tower on the crest of the hill, Lt Tolbert actually reaching the tower, only to find himself alone. He withdrew.

The following day, the 26th, was spent in a fire and grenade fight between forward elements of B Co and the enemy on the hill and its flanks. The 3rd Bn of the 16th Regt advanced on the left flank, removing pressure from that area and knocking out the anti-tank gun in the wooded patch without opposition. The gun had been exceedingly well ~~camouflaged~~^{CAMOUFLAGED} until it fired.

Orders were issued on the morning of 27 Nov for the 3rd

Bn of the 18th to attack towards Langerwehe along the left of the woods occupied by the 1st Bn, with the objective of seizing the western edge of Langerwehe, cutting the Langerwehe-Eschweiler road. The 1st Bn of the 16th Regt was to advance west of this and seize the village of Gut (020476) and the 2d Bn of the 18th was ordered to advance from Schoenthal and seize the eastern part of Langerwehe.

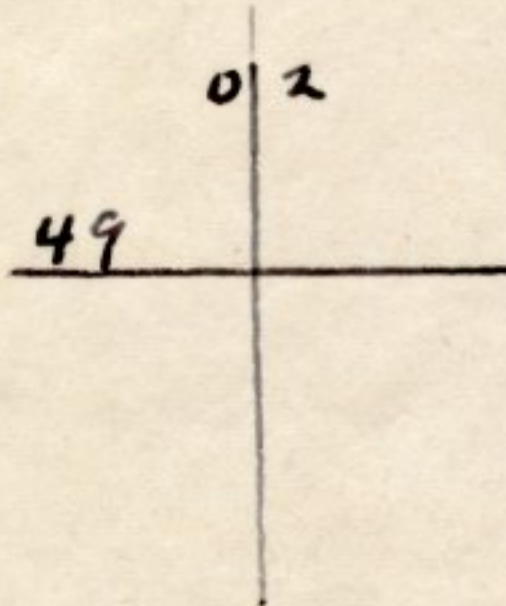
These orders made seizure of hill 203 essential, and C Co was designated to make the final assault. In the fighting on 21 and 24 November C Co had lost the majority of its key officers and NCOs, and an assault platoon was made up of battle-experienced men and placed under command of Lt Marvin, leader of the weapons platoon.

At 0730 27 November the platoon, consisting of 2 Officers and 27 EM, moved out, passing to the left of the houses that had formed an enemy strong point, ~~and~~ ^{at} assault~~ing~~ the hill from the west under the supporting fire of two medium tanks, which raked the north slope of the hill with HE and with grazing MG fire. The actual assault, which was a rifle, hand grenade and bayonet fight, lasted only 15 minutes, but when it was over there were but four EM and the two officers left. These survivors occupied enemy foxholes on the northern slope and the tanks withdrew. The hill was completely occupied by 1000, and the Bns on either side were able to proceed, although enemy artillery continued to be heavy throughout the day.

Troops who occupied the hill found that the enemy was very lightly dug in, and there was an almost complete absence of mines and booby traps. The weather was cold and wet throughout the occupation, making tank movement difficult.

Capt McGregor estimated casualties to the Bn at 400 for the entire operation.

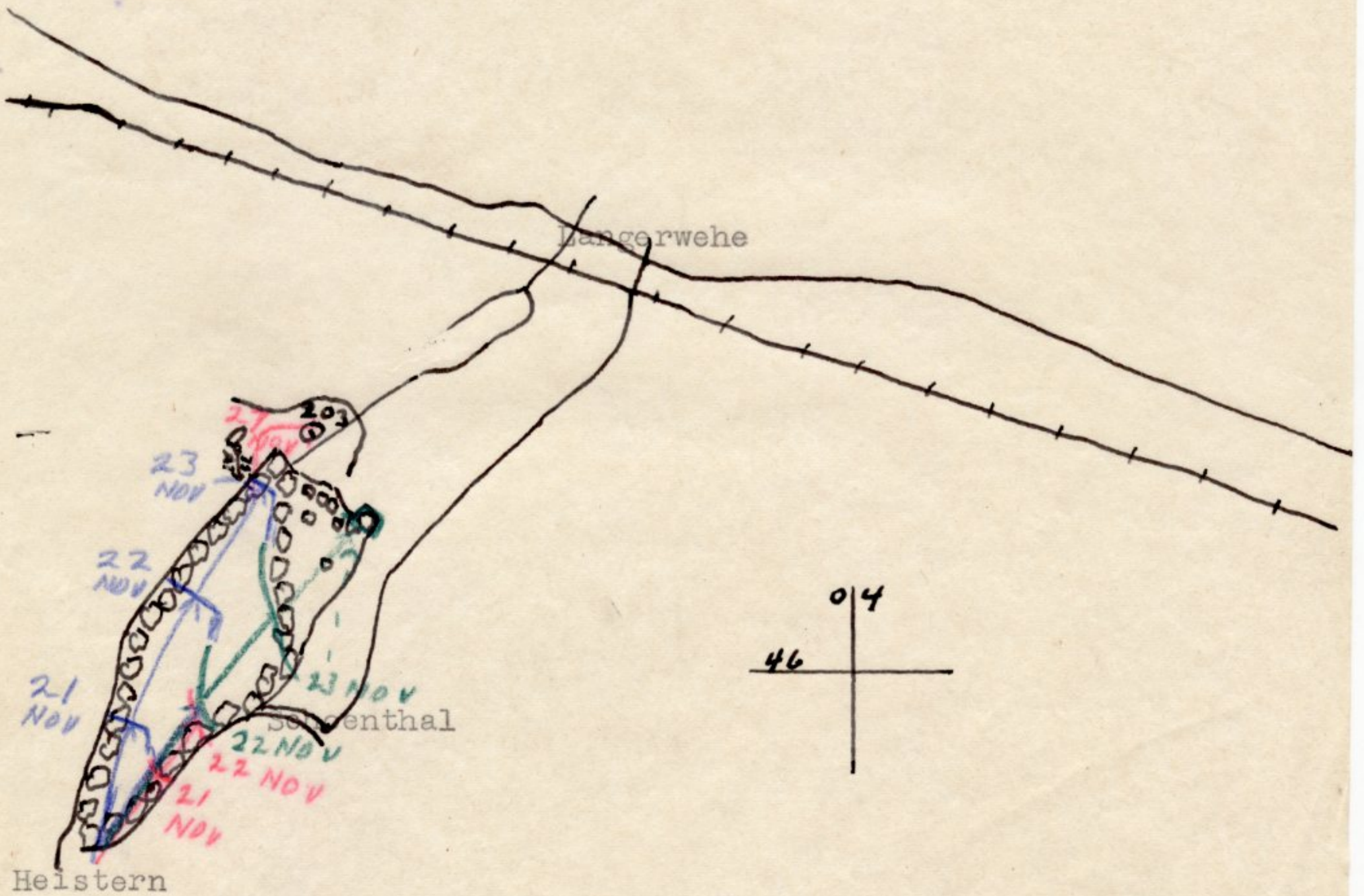
Limits of advance of A, B, and C Cos of
the 1st Bn, 18th Regt, 1st Inf Div in the
battle for Hill 203 near Langerwehe,
Germany, 21-27 Nov 44



A Co ———

B Co ———

C Co ———



EASTMAN REGULAR SAFETY

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EASTMAN REGULAR SAFETY

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(US 30/4824)21 SEPT 44(F/24)/67T/RGP 1035B

LANGERSWEHE

02

HILL 203

23 NOV

23 NOV

23 NOV

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SCHÖNTHAL

HEISTERN

