

7th Armored Takes St. Vith

Tanks, Joes Win Vital Road Hub

By Russell Jones

Stars and Stripes Staff Writer

WITH FIRST ARMY n. 23—St. Vith, the Germans' last stronghold of any consequence on the Army's sector of what once was recaptured today by the 7th Armored Div.

After a house-to-house battle which lasted three hours and 45 minutes, the forces under Brig. Gen. Bruce C. Clark, of Syracuse, N.Y., had cleared it of the enemy.

Meanwhile the 75th Div. took Brauns-lauf and Maldange and was fighting tonight in Aldringen, three and one-half miles southwest of St. Vith. The 30th Inf. Div. moved 2,000 yards to points southwest of St. Vith.

Planes Blast Vehicles

Ninth TAC flew 466 sorties today against an estimated 2,500 enemy vehicles, after having a record day yesterday along the road north of Prum to Bonn. It claimed 652 motor transport vehicles destroyed, 749 damaged; 28 armored vehicles destroyed, 19 damaged; 3 railroad cars destroyed, 178 damaged; three locomotives destroyed, one damaged; one fuel dump and one ammunition dump destroyed, railroad breaks in 11 spots, and destruction of six gunsites while three more were damaged.

Seventh Armored's attack started at 2

PM with simultaneous drives by task forces under Lt. Col. Richard Chappius, of Lafayette, La., coming down the Malmédy-St. Vith road, and under Lt. Col. Marvin L. Rhey, of Chicago, coming from the patch of woods 1,500 yards straight north of St. Vith.

The task forces, made up of tanks and armored infantry backed by parachute troops commanded by Lt. Col. Richard T. Seitz of Leavenworth, Kan., pushed into the outskirts of the town in the face of small arms fire from Germans dug-in on the eastern edge and with artillery fire hitting them from the vicinity of Wallerode, 4,000 yards to the east.

THIRD CLEARS ITS SECTOR

PARIS, Jan. 23—Third Army forces, paced by the four-mile advance of the 17th Airborne Div., drove the enemy out of all Belgian territory today between Houffalize and the Luxembourg frontier. American artillery joined fighter-bombers in blasting fleeing German convoys which choked the snow-packed roads toward Germany. The remaining salient in Luxembourg was tottering under Third Army blows north of Diekirch.

In the graveyard of the Ardennes was buried the striking force of three powerful German armies and the hopes of the German High Command of a stalemate in the West.

While the German withdrawal was even and methodical, the fact that armor and transport were being rushed out in daylight was evidence that mounting Allied pressure had made the German position west of the Siegfried Line critical.

In Holland, attacking British troops extended their right flank toward Heinsburg, an important road center, and captured Valdenrath, Laffeld and Ob-springen as well as a string of four villages lying between these towns.

In Alsace, powerful French forces continued their attack along the Mulhouse-Thann road.

In Again



Last Out, First In —7th at St. Vith

By a Staff Correspondent

ST. VITH, Jan. 23—The Seventh Armored Inf. was back in town tonight, one month to the day from the night they evacuated after holding five days—three days longer than they had been ordered to—and knocking the German break-through so far off schedule that other First Army units were able to get farther west where they stopped the threat.

The last Seventh Armored outfit to pull out of St. Vith that cold night of Dec. 23 was an armored infantry battalion under Lt. Col. Richard D. Chappius, of Lafayette, La. Today Chappius commanded

the task force which spearheaded the attack on the town.

Bitter Fight Going and Coming

The Germans were swarming over the Seventh's positions when they evacuated St. Vith and Chappius had to fight hard to get out. Today, although the Germans are retreating, they had to fight to get back in. The armored infantry led the attack, jumping off from Hunningen, 1,000 yards up the Malmédy-St. Vith road.

When they moved off the road into the fields, some of the men seemed to disappear into shadows which left tracks as they struggled over the snow. They were the men with the new snow suits. Others were yellow blotches in the white glare because their suits were stained with many wettings of snow melted in the dim heat of foxholes.

The infantry moved slowly, ducking briefly during the intermittent screaming of the Nebelwerfers—six-barreled mortars—hitting the road junction behind them, the road in front of them, and sometimes hitting them. They were armored infantry but right then they were like any other infantry—plodding toward the enemy with only their weapons to protect them.

Supported by Tanks, Paratroopers

Behind the infantry were the tanks and parachute troops under Lt. Col. Richard J. Seitz, of Leavenworth, Kan.

The infantry and the tanks and the parachute troops moved against the town, dipping out of sight in the hollows of the rough ground, coming up on the hills, going through the woods and finally disappearing for good into the houses on the edge of St. Vith. And while they moved, the constant roar of artillery and mortars was punctuated by small arms fire, the rapid staccato of German guns breaking through the heavier rattle of the Americans'.

The Seventh's armored infantry took St. Vith again.

FEB. 1, 1945
 BELGIUM
 DEAR MOM, THIS IS THE OUTFIT I AM ATTACHED TOO.
 CHARLES