

Sunday Punch

"In Spite of Hell or High Water"

Special Supplement

23 May, 1945

Somewhere In Austria

XX CORPS - THIRD U.S. ARMY

A SUMMATION OF ITS SENSATIONAL ACHIEVEMENTS FROM THE FALL OF METZ TO THE MEETING WITH THE RUSSIANS

During the past week SUNDAY PUNCH has published a series of Press Releases prepared by XX Corps Public Relations Officer for world-wide publication. This series sums up the sensational achievements of XX Corps and provides an accurate history of its part in the latter phases of the War with Germany, closing with the link-up with the Russians at the Enns River, Austria, on the day hostilities officially ended in Europe.

For the convenience of those who might have missed issues of the original series, the complete set of articles is reproduced in this one Special Supplement. This first article covers the promotion of General Walker, and the dash of XX Corps from Normandy to Metz.

GENERAL WALKER PROMOTED; RECEIVES STARS FORMERLY WORN BY EISENHOWER AND PATTON

Lieutenant General Walton H. Walker, XX Corps commander, received from General George S. Patton, Jr., the three stars which the Third U.S. Army commander wore through the campaigns of North Africa and Sicily, and the battles of Normandy, France and Germany. The stars, originally worn by General Dwight D. Eisenhower, were presented to Patton upon his promotion to Lieutenant General.

At a formal ceremony on the Danube River on the day the "Ghost" Corps made its historic crossing (April 27), General Patton pinned the now famous stars on General Walker's uniform.

General Walker, a West Pointer and a native of Belton, Texas, has gained an impressive record as commander of the XX "Ghost" Corps which spearheaded the Third U.S. Army's drive across France and Germany. After the sensational drive across France, to the XX Corps fell the task of reducing Metz and its ring of 43 inter-communicating fortresses which the Germans thought to be impregnable. Despite adverse weather conditions which grounded supporting aircraft for practically the entire operation, General Walker's armor and infantry forced crossings over the swollen Moselle in a powerful pincer movement which resulted in the capture of the stronghold on 19 ~~NOV~~ FEBRUARY, 1944, after 14 days of fierce fighting. Metz had not previously been captured by military force since 451 A.D.

The Corps followed its quick successes by pushing what remained of German resistance back across the Saar River and then turned its attention to the Saar-Mosell Triangle. On 19 February, 1945, armor-tipped columns crumbled the Siegfried Line anchored at Thorn on the Moselle, and plunged to the top of the Triangle to smash the bulk of

three German divisions. In another surprise maneuver, General Walker sent a column across the Saar and up its East bank to seize a bridge intact and attack the key communications city of Trier. The city fell on 3 March 1945.

The end of the Saar-Moselle operation marked the beginning of a great campaign which delivered the blow that broke the back of the German armies between the Rhine and Moselle Rivers. On 13 March 3 infantry divisions of XX Corps jumped off in an attack from the Saarburg bridgehead against heavily fortified positions in the Siegfried Line. After three days of furious fighting, the line broke and General Walker poured his armor through the breach to uncover the entire Siegfried Line from Trier to Saarlautern. Stunned by the speed and power of the thrust, the enemy surrendered by the thousand. Most of the Germans who attempted to retreat Eastward were either killed or encircled. The drive across the Palatinate to the Rhine River resulted in the capture of over 45,000 prisoners.

On 28 March, XX Corps launched successful assault crossings over the Rhine in the vicinity of Mainz, and over the Main River near Hochheim. Armor and infantry crossed the 1896-foot "Sunday Punch" trestle bridge, the longest constructed in the ETO, to drive on straight into the Heartland of Germany.

 SAAR-MOSELLE TRIANGLE SMASHED BY
 LT. GEN. WALKER'S XX CORPS

WITH XX CORPS HEADQUARTERS in Germany -- The promotion of Lieutenant General Walton H. Walker, XX Corps commander, elevated to three-star rank the military leader whose Army Corps smashed through powerful Siegfried Line defenses to take the triangle formed by the convergence of the Saar and Moselle Rivers, thus paving the way for large-scale attacks which brought the Third Army up to and across the Rhine River.

Since the capture of the fortified region of Metz by the "Ghost" Corps on 21 November, 1944, and the subsequent pursuit of the enemy East to the Saar River at Saarlautern, it can now be told that the Saar-Moselle Triangle was a threat to the left flank of XX Corps and the Third Army. The German break-through in the Ardennes brought the Triangle into the strategic picture as the area through which the enemy might thrust another powerful drive to encircle Third Army divisions attacking Rundstedt's "break through" forces from the South. B-

The enemy defense of the switch line position which had its anchor on the Moselle at Thorn was held by two Infantry Divisions and the 11th Panzer Division. Limited objective attacks by the 94th Infantry Division of the XX Corps, forced the enemy to commit all their local tactical units, plus the usual assortment of heterogeneous fortress and machine gun battalions on the line.

General Walker's plan called for a clear break-through by the 94th Division at the base of the Triangle before committing the 10th Armored Division.

Just before daylight on the morning of 19 February, the 94th Division launched its attack. Its initial successes made it apparent that a complete break in the switch line and a seizure of the dominating high ground at the base of the triangle could be accomplished by late afternoon, and the time was ripe for armored action. An attack order was sent to the 10th Armored Division to jump off on the morning of 20 February. It caught the Germans with complete surprise! Advancing in two columns on parallel roads that ran the length of the ridges forming the backbone of the Triangle, one armored column (Combat Command "A") drove straight for the tip of the Triangle at Tawern, while the other (Combat Command "R") hit north along the banks of the Moselle River.

Although the Germans resisted stubbornly from the pillboxes of the Siegfried Line and erected numerous road blocks which they covered with heavy artillery and anti-tank fire, the speed and power of the Ghost Corps' drive quickly collapsed the enemy's defenses. The high ground in the vicinity of Tawern was gained and the cathedral spire in the city of Trier could be seen in the distance. Heavy artillery

fire was laid on it.

Taking advantage of the confused state of the enemy, General Walker ordered a task force of Combat Command "A" of the 10th Armored Division, which was driving in the center, to turn right and head for the Saar River. The force reached the vicinity of Kanzem and Wiltingen on the morning of the 21st of February to discover the retreating Germans had blown both these bridges which spanned the Saar River.

By the time the 94th Division and the 10th Armored Division reached the West bank of the Saar, the two enemy Infantry divisions were practically destroyed. In addition to many thousands killed and wounded, the operations resulted in the capture of 11,754 German prisoners and the destruction of a great amount of enemy tanks, guns and material.

 LT. GEN. WALTON H. WALKER'S XX CORPS
 CAPTOR OF KEY GERMAN CITY OF TRIER

WITH XX CORPS HEADQUARTERS in Germany -- It can now be revealed that the key city of Trier, at which the entire German defense system between the Saar and Rhine Rivers had its Northern anchor, was captured by armored columns of Lieutenant General Walton H. Walker's XX "Ghost" Corps.

General George S. Patton, Jr., Third Army commander, described General Walker's action as "fighting by ear" to spring a series of surprises on the enemy manning the powerful Siegfried defenses in the Saar-Moselle Triangle and overwhelm the bulk of 3 divisions.

Located at the tip of the Triangle where the Saar and Moselle Rivers converge, the historic city of Trier was the hub of important military rail and road nets which fanned out to the fighting fronts of the South and West. High mountains, two wide rivers and a deep belt of pillboxes and dragon's teeth provided a defense arc more than 30 miles in depth. Its strategic position was further accentuated by the enemy break-through in the Ardennes sector to encircle Bastogne and attempt a thrust into the heart of France.

The attack launched by XX Corps on 20 February against the base of the Saar-Moselle Triangle culminated in one column of the 10th Armored Division reaching and occupying high land in the vicinity of Tawern from which the cathedral spires of Trier could be seen.

A river crossing had not been contemplated and no engineering preparations had been made. However, fast staff work and engineer procurement made assault boats and bridging equipment available to both the 10th Armored Division and the 94th Infantry Division by dark of the night of 20 February. The 10th Armored Division attacked East across the Saar River in the vicinity of Saarburg and pressed rapidly North towards Trier.

The 94th Infantry Division's crossing, which had not been considered the main crossing, had proceeded satisfactorily. The success of the Southern crossing was aided by the diversionary blocking efforts of the 5th Ranger Battalion. The Rangers crossed the Saar River, infiltrated through enemy lines and cut the Irsch-Zerf highway over which the Germans might have rushed up reinforcements. During its nine days of action, the 5th Rangers captured 700 prisoners and killed or wounded an additional several hundred. They wiped out practically the entire 136th Regiment of the German 2nd Mountain Division.

The 10th Armored tanks passed through the 94th Div. bridgehead at Serrig and Taban to meet the Armored Infantry at Irsch. By this move the armored attack on Trier was expedited. The two bridgeheads were joined by the 94th Infantry Division and two bridges were constructed at Saarburg, giving XX Corps a sound line of communications and supply to its divisions.

By fast action the 10th Armored Division seized a bridge intact over the Moselle River at Trier and took the city 2 March, 1945, as the 94th Infantry Division expanded the Saar bridgehead to the East.

The capture of Trier set the stage for the operations in the Palatinate and the drive into the German heartland.

UNCOVERING OF THE SEIGFRIED LINE BY
XX CORPS PAVED WAY FOR GREAT PALATINATE
VICTORY AND DRIVE TO GERMAN HEARTLAND

WITH XX CORPS HEADQUARTERS in Germany -- Lifting of the press-stop placed on several Third Army units during its sensational drive across the German Palatinate to the Rhine River, now reveals the stellar role played by Lieutenant General Walton H. Walker's XX "Ghost" Corps which, in addition to heading the thrust into the heart of Germany, prepared the way for the entire operation.

On 2 March, XX Corps had successfully completed the reduction of the important communications center of Trier to climax the campaign of the Saar-Moselle Triangle. During this operation, the Corps smashed the bulk of three German divisions to secure the Northern anchor of the Seigfried defenses in that sector, and deny the enemy strongly fortified corridors through which he might launch a large-scale counter attack. General Walker's forces had cleared an area three miles wide and 26 miles in length along the North banks of the Moselle River, East of Trier and Alf. In spite of determined enemy counter-attacks, the 94th Infantry Division of XX Corps expanded the bridgehead across the Saar River in the vicinity of Saarburg.

For 10 days ending 17 March, XX Corps armor and infantry were engaged in furious fighting East of the Saarburg bridgehead where the enemy launched determined counter attacks in a frenzied effort to push the Americans back across the Saar. Enemy action was particularly fierce in the vicinity of Zerf and Pellingen where the 6th SS Mountain Division was thrown into the fight. The main Seigfried defenses in this area extended from Trier to Saarlautern and the Germans elected to defend this last barrier West of the Rhine River with all the strength they could muster.

On the 13th of March, General Walker gave the attack order which set in motion the 94th, 26th, and 80th Infantry Divisions Eastward against strong enemy forces entrenched behind improved natural and man-made obstacles. The 65th Infantry Division staged a diversionary attack from the Saarlautern area which provided cover for the main effort in the North. For three days the Infantry hammered incessantly against stubborn resistance, and on the 16th of March it breached and uncovered the Seigfried Line. The 10th Armored Division was thereupon committed and exploited the break-through to seize St. Wendel by the following day.

The back of the German Army in the Palatinate was broken. The 65th Division pressed its attack to completely over-run Saarlautern and then drove East. By 20 March the 80th Infantry Division had captured and cleared Kaiserlautern. The XX Corps was on its way to the valley of the Rhine.

As the enemy situation in front of the Ghost Corps rapidly disintegrated, the 12 Armored Division was attached and committed on the North flank of the Corps through elements of the 94th to follow the Autobahn North of Kaiserlautern to reach the Rhine River. The 94th and 80th Divisions were motorized and moved through the Saar Valley and Palatinates, capturing spectacular amounts of enemy stores, important installations, supplies and equipment. The 94th Division, plus a combat command of the 12th Armored Division, entered Ludwigs-hafen 22 March, and cleared the city of fanatical defenders on March 24.

With enemy resistance in a completely disorganized state, the XX Corps pocketed thousands of bewildered Germans and, on 21 March, the 12th Armored Division reached the West bank of the Rhine.

During this operation XX Corps captured a total of 43,000 prisoners, bringing the number of enemy captured since the organization became operational to more than 81,000. Along with an inestimable quantity of guns, vehicles, ammunition and supplies seized or destroyed by the Corps, it was now clearly evident that German strength on the Western front had been reduced to a weak, disorganized force which was not match for the powerful Allied tide poised to descend upon it.

SPECTACULAR NIGHT ASSAULT CROSSING
OF RHINE BY XX CORPS IS REVEALED

WITH XX CORPS HEADQUARTERS in Germany -- The cloak of secrecy which blacked-out the surprise crossing of the Rhine River by the "Ghost" Corps was lifted to reveal the operations of the battle unit which the Germans referred to as the "20th American Panzer Corps", the command under General Walker which uncovered the Siegfried Line to pave the way for the swift occupation of the Palatinate by the Third United States Army.

Remnants of the badly mauled German Army which managed to escape the XX Corps onslaught between the Saar and Rhine Rivers hastily organized their defenses for a determined stand on the East bank of their last remaining important river barrier. Before the enemy had time to make any large-scale defensive preparations, General Walker rushed the 80th Infantry Division of XX Corps to the Rhine River in the vicinity of Mainz and gave the order for an assault crossing at one o'clock on the morning of 28 March 1945. Simultaneously, an attack was launched across the Main River, a tributary of the Rhine on the eastern shore, to establish a bridgehead in the vicinity of the town of Hocheim.

The enemy poured heavy artillery and small arms fire on the XX Corps Infantrymen in a frantic but vain effort to break up the attack. After about two hours of heavy fighting, the "Ghost" Corps won a bridgehead on the heartland of Germany and consolidated its forces for the drive deeper into enemy territory. At three o'clock the Germans launched two strong counter-attacks which were both repulsed with no loss of ground.

The assault crossing of the Main River met with equal success and XX Corps Infantry in this zone quickly maneuvered to engage the enemy defending the city of Hocheim. The city was captured and cleared by 9:15 that morning. Although resistance was disorganized and scattered, heavy enemy artillery fire was laid on the bridgeheads throughout the day as Naval assault-landing craft and ponton ferries plied back and forth.

At noon XX Corps Engineers started construction of the 1896-foot "Sunday Punch" treadway bridge across the historic Rhine River. Within a short time XX Corps armor was pouring across the longest treadway bridge in the ETO!

The armor-tipped Corps advanced from the Rhine and smashed enemy attacks to capture the important city of Weisbaden by 7 o'clock that night. Other towns and cities taken during the day included Wicker, Delkenheim, Wallau, Kostheim, Massenheim, Madenbach and Epenheim. The perfected team play of armor and infantry was now in full motion.

On the following day, General Walker moved his battle headquarters into Weisbaden so as to personally direct the divisional operations from the east side of the Rhine, where he directed the 65th Infantry Division be passed through the bridgehead, together with the 5th Infantry Division and the 6th Armored Division; so as to continue the XX Corps attack north towards Kassel. The city of Frankfurt was all clear of enemy resistance by noon of the 29th of March. At 7:30 that night XX Corps Engineers completed a bridge across the Main River at Frankfurt.

In addition to enemy materiel destroyed and captured, XX Corps took more than 26,000 prisoners during the five days operations, 28 March to the 1st of April, 1945.

LT. GEN. WALKER'S XX CORPS MADE GREAT POWER
DRIVE ACROSS GERMAN HEARTLAND TO GATES OF CHEMNITZ

WITH XX CORPS HEADQUARTERS in Austria -- In one of the outstanding examples of team work between armor and infantry, Lieutenant General Walton H. Walker's XX "Ghost" Corps launched a power-drive from the important German city of Kassel on 11 April 1945, which ripped through bitter enemy resistance to capture scores of towns and cities

and place the Corps within striking distance of the city of Chemnitz. It can now be revealed that this historic campaign, which saw the employment of two armored divisions in close coordination with two infantry divisions, completely smashed all of the German forces facing the Third U. S. Army in the XX Corps zone.

After capturing Kassel on 4 April, the 80th Infantry Division was teamed with the 4th Armored Division in the vicinity of Gotha. In the Northern half of the Corps zone, the 6th Armored Division and the 76th Infantry Division were poised to launch a parallel thrust to the East. At 8 o'clock on the morning of 11 April, the twin armored attack was launched through screening infantry. One column over-ran all resistance to reach Erfurt where the Germans had set up strong, organized defenses. The armor by-passed the city while the infantry pulled up for the attack. An ultimatum demanding the surrender of Erfurt was turned down, and General Walker gave the order for a devastating artillery barrage which all but leveled the city.

Before Weimar, the birthplace of the German Weimar Republic, the burgomeister of neighboring Troistedt was sent into the city on a bicycle with a surrendering ultimatum, and instructions to return with a reply within two and a half hours or the Americans would attack. Just as the artillerymen were preparing to load their pieces the white flag of surrender appeared from the top of Weimar's tallest building.

Many important documents were discovered in Weimar at the palatial estate of the notorious Nazi leader, Fritz Sauckel, who, in addition to being Gauleiter of the political district of Thuringen, held the post of Commissioner General of labor supply. A vain, unscrupulous man, he is reported to have been responsible for sending 300,000 workers from France into Germany within three months.

In a forest a few miles Northwest of Weimar, the XX Corps over-ran one of the most infamous "National Monuments" within the German Reich, the Concentration Camp of Buchenwald. Here was discovered the horrible evidence of unbelievable terror and brutality which the Nazis inflicted upon their helpless victims. The accounts of men of many nationalities pieced together a gruesome picture of the starvation, murder, cremation, and dissection of helpless humans by the Germans, all of which was accentuated by the cold, methodical scheme of the Nazi crimes and depravities. 2,000 citizens of Weimar were ordered to Buchenwald for an inspection tour of the camp where they could see the wholesale suffering and torture that had been taking place only a few miles from the serenity of their homes. Of the remaining 21,000 prisoners, they saw that almost half of them were nothing more than living skeletons. They saw the death cells, the incinerators which consumed as many as 600 bodies per day, the bodies of hundreds who had died during the night from disease and starvation, the children deliberately infected with typhus, and the vermin-infested barracks in which the men were forced to live. They also saw the lamp shades and book covers made from tattooed human skin to please the fancy of the wife of a former camp commander!

With the surrender of Weimar, the powerful columns continued East against the weakening opposition until they reached Jena, home of the famous Carl Zeiss lens and camera works. When the surrender ultimatum was turned down, the infantry followed a heavy artillery barrage in the city where they engaged in fierce house-to-house fighting until the city was reduced at 3 o'clock, 12 April.

The armor-tipped XX Corps advanced eastward to the Weisse River where the 76th Infantry Division established a bridgehead in the vicinity of Zeitz. The infantry attacked with the 6th Armored Division at 9 o'clock on the morning of 15 April, in the face of heavy fire from anti-aircraft and 88 mm guns. By midnight the city was occupied by the Americans.

On the right flank the 4th Armored Division thrust swiftly from Kunitz to capture a bridge intact over the Mulde River where it established a bridgehead within artillery range of Chemnitz. Another column of the 4th Armored swept further east to seize three more intact bridges over the river, and powerful armored and infantry units rolled across in preparation for the assault on the prize city of Chemnitz. On 16 April the surrender ultimatum to the German commander of troops within the city was returned unopened, and shortly be-

fore the scheduled to jump off, the "Ghost" Corps received orders to swing south and drive across the Danube and into Austria.

In the seven days of this campaign, the XX Corps drove 150 miles into the heartland of Germany to capture 47,000 prisoners, and to destroy or capture great quantities of enemy guns, vehicles and valuable supplies.

XX CORPS ENDS ITS HISTORY-MAKING
CAMPAIGN OF EUROPE IN AUSTRIA

WITH XX CORPS HEADQUARTERS in Austria -- On April 18, 1945, Lieutenant General Walton H. Walker's XX Corps poised to deliver the Sunday Punch which was to put to an inglorious end all German resistance in its zone of operations and establish contact with Russian forces advancing west from Vienna.

Fresh from a triumphant thrust into the heartland of Germany which brought the "Ghost" Corps to the very suburbs of the city of Chemnitz, General Walker's armor and infantry assembled for a drive Southeast from Nurnberg, which was captured only after heavy fighting.

A powerful task force composed of tanks, mounted infantry and the Rangers pierced enemy lines East of Nurnberg, and advanced rapidly South towards Regensburg on the Danube. The enemy at Neumarkt met the XX Corps advance with heavy fire from tanks and self-propelled guns. The battle developed into intense house-to-house fighting before it fell to the 65th Infantry Division on April 25. At Etterhausen the Germans attempted to halt the Corps columns with heavy artillery and bazooka fire, and fought fiercely for four days until they were forced to withdraw across the Danube.

A surprise assault crossing of the Danube by the infantry resulted in the disorganization of the enemy troops South of the river. The 71st Division encountered strong opposition in its zone, but succeeded in taking an airport and the hundreds of Luftwaffe personnel and Hungarians who were defending it. On the 27th of April, Regensburg fell to the 65th Infantry Division.

The 13th Armored Division was thereupon committed and ordered to proceed South towards the Isar River. At this point the weary and endlessly pursued enemy could offer little in the way of opposition. Two bridgeheads were established across the Isar River, and after repulsing two hostile infantry attacks proceeded to the Inn River at Obernburg. The "Ghost" Corps had reached the Austrian frontier!

Armor and infantry poured across the river in hot pursuit of the enemy. Germans were now surrendering by the thousand, and resistance had been reduced to the point of ineffectiveness. The flood of power reached and overcame the great Austrian city of Linz, and spread to the South along the West bank of the Enns River. Shortly after the Corps reached the Enns, contact was established with the Russian Corps driving from the East.

On 9 May, 1945, on a bridge over the Enns River, Lieutenant General Walton H. Walker, commander of the XX Corps of the Third U. S. Army, clasped hands with the commander of the Russian Corps whose troops faced those of the "Ghost" Corps.

The military operations of these two famous Allied Army Corps which formed a powerful vise to crush German resistance in Austria, reached a dramatic climax when the two victorious commander marked the successful completion of their respective missions in this historic meeting.

A guard of honor composed of veterans of some of the greatest battles ever fought formed the background for the event which took place the day hostilities officially ceased in Europe.

An exchange of personal and Corps flags by the commanders highlighted a formal ceremony which included the presentation of military decorations in the names of the American and Soviet Governments. General Walker was presented with the Order of the War for the Fatherland, 1st Class, and Brigadier General William A. Collier, Chief of Staff of the XX Corps, received the same Order, 2nd. Class.

Thus, from the fall of Metz to the linkup with the Russians, X X Corps blazed a brilliant path of victory which will be indelibly en-
scribed on the pages of military achievement.....T h e E n d.

23 May 45