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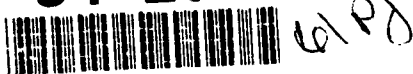
Dr. Eliot A. Cohen

STRATEGIC STUDIES  
RESEARCH SEMINAR

1993 - 1994



94-20693



1. Creighton Abrams and Harold Cohen

*The Hammelburg Raid Revisited*

Captain Tobin L. Green



2. Abe Baum

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3. George S. Patton, Jr.



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Sources:

1 & 2 - Richard Baron, Major Abe Baum and Richard Goldhurst, *Raid!: The Untold Story of Patton's Secret Mission*, (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1981).

3 - Martin Blumenson, *The Patton Papers: 1940 - 1945*, vol. 2 of 2 vols., (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1974).

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In the fading daylight of 26 March 1945, a group of soldiers huddled along the bank of the Main River near Aschaffenburg, Germany to receive instructions about an urgent, new mission. The weary troops had slept only one night in the last four,<sup>1</sup> but no complaints were heard among their ranks. The orders came from Lieutenant General George S. Patton, Jr. himself: punch through *Wehrmacht* defenses and dash sixty miles behind enemy lines to a place called Hammelburg. There the soldiers would locate a prisoner-of-war camp, liberate the Americans interned there, and return as quickly as possible.

This daring rescue attempt by a force from the 4th Armored Division remains one of the most fascinating yet enigmatic military escapades in the European theater during World War II. Extending 40 hours over two nights and one day, just five weeks before the Nazis' surrender, the hastily organized armored column slugged through the German rear to the camp named *Oflag XIII*. Rather than producing headlines and accolades, however, the Hammelburg raid was 4th Armored's biggest setback of the war. German reaction troops gradually attrited and eventually defeated the would-be liberators; all task force vehicles destroyed, and nearly all task force members either killed, wounded and/or taken prisoner themselves. Patton so feared public reaction to news of the defeat that he classified the mission "Top Secret."<sup>2</sup> This classification kept sensitive information about the operation from reporters, while suppressing internal discussion of the raid among soldiers. Patton later defended the mission when embarrassing details became public; most notably the fact that the general's son-in-law was one of those imprisoned in the camp.<sup>3</sup> Soon afterward, the incident lost news value, overshadowed by war's end in Europe.

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Much published material on the Hammelburg mission underscores historical debate over the military rationale and timing of the operation. The central question of that debate remains: did Patton order the raid because his son-in-law, Lieutenant Colonel John K. Waters,<sup>4</sup> was a prisoner at Hammelburg? Patton consistently declared he did not know *for certain* his son-in-law was detained at *Oflag XIII* until nine days after the failed rescue. Yet, considerable circumstantial evidence, much of it in the general's handwriting, suggests otherwise.<sup>5</sup> Assuming General Patton had foreknowledge of Lieutenant Colonel Waters' incarceration at Hammelburg, this fact alone does not prove that Waters' presence inspired the raid. His presence may have been incidental or subordinate to other considerations.<sup>6</sup> However, it is also appropriate to question whether Patton would have risked this operation if he did not believe Waters was held captive there.<sup>7</sup> Several of the books and articles devoted to this topic amount to either a critique or defense of General Patton's rationale for ordering a task force to Hammelburg.

But the fixation on military justification has thus far proven futile. Competing arguments about why the task force was sent to *Oflag XIII* appear as inconclusive in 1994 as in 1945. And preoccupation with motive diverts attention away from other important lessons. Some factors which help explain the outcome of this unprecedented attempt to free American prisoners of war can only be discerned from focusing on the *conduct* of the mission.

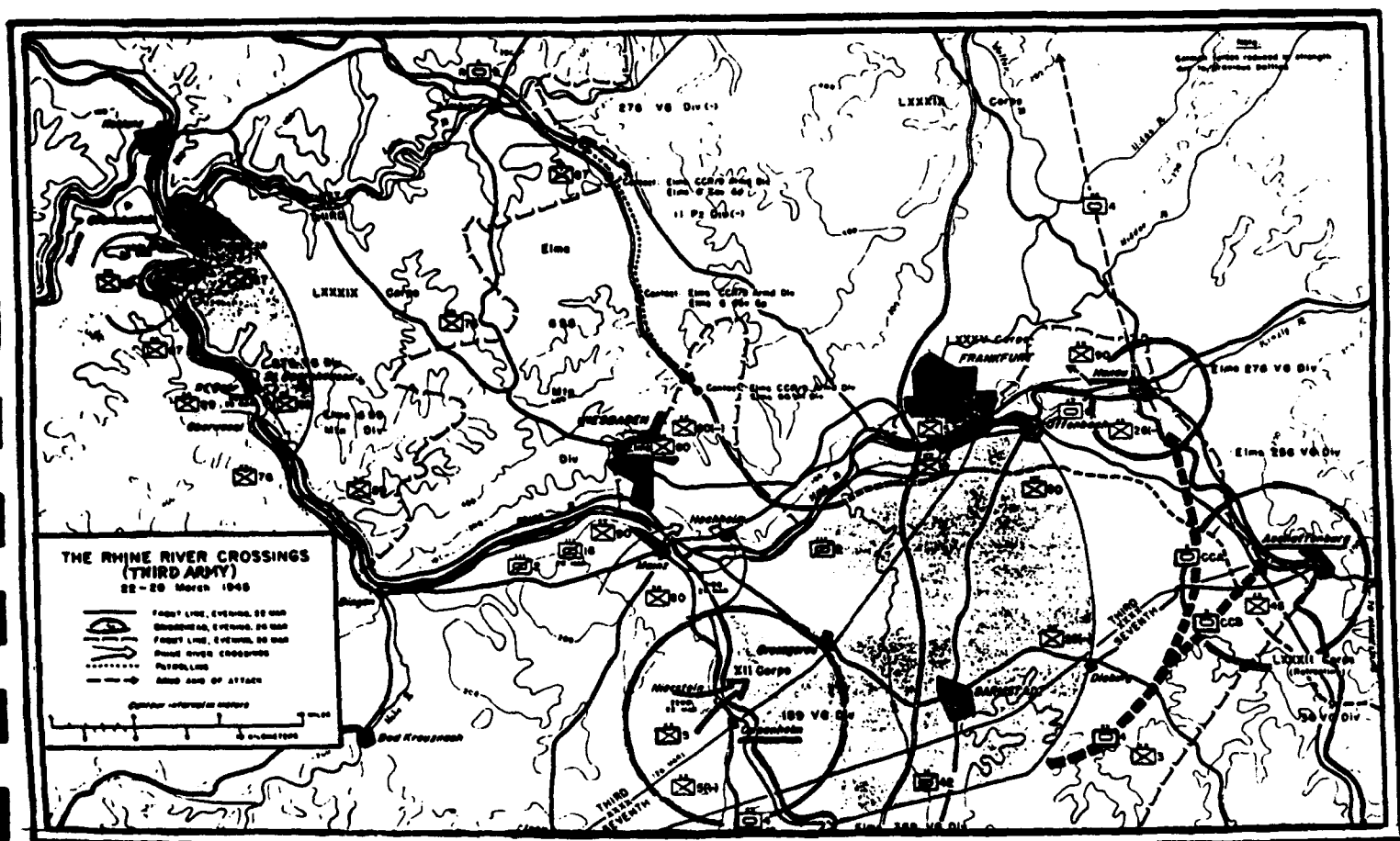
The purpose of this paper is twofold. First, I will review the preparation and execution phases of the raid, concentrating on events which significantly affected the mission's outcome. What circumstances and problems in the planning,

preparation and execution of the Hammelburg raid account for the task force's failure to accomplish its assignment? The task force included many brave and talented soldiers. But this mission required more than courage and competence for a successful conclusion. In this respect, the Hammelburg raid is a story of how errors and events conspired to overcome an exceptional unit - a triumph of Clausewitzian fog and friction over military heroism. Second, I will refute revisionist history surrounding the rescue attempt. Specifically, I take issue with the assertion that although the mission failed *tactically*, the Hammelburg raid was an *operational* success as a diversion which permitted Patton's unopposed maneuver northward after crossing the Rhine River. The evidence actually indicates that the raid on Hammelburg had little impact on Third Army's subsequent success.

### Setting the Stage

During the evening of 22 March, the U.S. 5th Infantry Division made a daring crossing of the Rhine by boat near Oppenheim and secured a foothold for follow-on units. Patton's beloved 4th Armored Division,<sup>8</sup> which had expected to lead the river crossing, was directed to pass through 5th Infantry.<sup>9</sup> After clearing the infantry division, 4th Armored sustained its attack and reached the Main River by noon on Psalm Sunday, March 25th.<sup>10</sup> The division's Combat Command B (CCB), led by recently promoted Colonel Creighton W. Abrams,<sup>11</sup> found an intact railroad bridge over the river near Aschaffenburg. Troops from Lieutenant Colonel Harold Cohen's 10th Armored Infantry Battalion disarmed bombs strapped to bridge girders as tanks from the 37th Tank Battalion (Abrams' former command) rushed to the opposite bank.<sup>12</sup> After forming a defensive perimeter, CCB repelled enemy air strikes and counter-

attacks against the crossing site into the following day.<sup>13</sup> Patton's army was again at the front of the allied offensive.



Source: Charles B. MacDonald, *The United States Army in World War II, The European Theater of Operations: The Last Offensive*, (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1973), Map XI.

### A Secret Mission

As his lead elements cleared the Rhine, Patton's intelligence section reported enemy difficulty in forming an organized resistance.<sup>14</sup> Third Army's rapid advance to the Main River presented Patton with a fleeting window of opportunity. The general believed Hammelburg prisoners would evacuate their garrison soon, but he did not know when.<sup>15</sup> If Patton's son-in-law was there, he would be moved in the near future. Shortly after learning of the Aschaffenburg bridgehead, Patton's aide,

Major Alexander Stiller, left Third Army headquarters with instructions for 4th Armored Commander Brigadier William General Hoge<sup>16</sup> to organize a task force for a special assignment.

Hoge understood that Patton wanted Creighton Abrams involved in this mission. Abrams was highly respected among the allies and feared by Germans.<sup>17</sup> He had been featured in Life magazine after breaking through German defenses to save an encircled 101st Airborne Division from capitulation in the Ardennes.<sup>18</sup> Patton saw many similarities between the relentless Abrams and himself.<sup>19</sup> In early morning hours of the 26 March, word reached Colonel Abrams of the pending mission.

#### *PREPARATION PHASE:*

##### *Leadership Dilemma*

Abrams wanted to take his entire combat command to Hammelburg. The rough equivalent to a brigade sized unit in today's Army, a combat command included armor, infantry, and field artillery assets. The organization had its own reconnaissance troops, engineers, and logistical support. With 150 tanks and approximately 4000 soldiers, Abrams believed the unit's size and capability was the minimum required to operate independently for a sustained period behind enemy lines.<sup>20</sup> His claim was not without some basis. During earlier combat action around Nancy-Arracourt in France (11-25 September, 1944), the 4th Armored Division's CCA and CCB fought between and behind the enemy with great success.<sup>21</sup> But lobbying efforts proved unsuccessful.<sup>22</sup> While it is unclear who most influenced the final decision, Patton ultimately approved sending only a small task force for the job.<sup>23</sup>

Because the task force would be on its own, the raid on Hammelburg demanded a

commander with the temperament and resourcefulness to overcome the unexpected.

Abrams decided that if he could not lead CCB on this mission, Harold Cohen would be his trusted agent.<sup>24</sup> In the latter months of the war in Europe, Abrams and Cohen formed a close partnership, with Abrams leading the 37th Tank Battalion and Cohen the 10th Armored Infantry. A climate of teamwork and cohesion characterized activities in both battalions, making the 37th and 10th more like one unit than two.<sup>25</sup> Abrams held no soldier in higher regard than Harold Cohen. The one problem with Abrams' chosen replacement was a case of hemorrhoids from which Cohen suffered. Still, the warning order went forward to the 10th Armored Infantry command post. And Abrams hoped Cohen's physical condition would permit him to lead the task force.<sup>26</sup>

Harold Cohen's hemorrhoids were in fact so painful that he used an inner tube for a seat cushion in his Jeep.<sup>27</sup> Abrams passed his concern about Cohen's ailment up the chain of command. When the news reached Patton there was a brief period when the mission was nearly canceled.<sup>28</sup> Instead, the general decided to see for himself.

General Patton arrived in the CCB area late in the morning of 26 March. He proceeded to Cohen's headquarters with Hoge, Abrams, and doctors in tow. An examination confirmed Cohen could not lead the mission,<sup>29</sup> so the general pressed Abrams and Cohen to name a replacement. The two men agreed that Abe Baum, whom they considered among the finest officers in CCB, was the next best alternative.<sup>30</sup>

Captain Abe Baum was an aggressive, rangy 24 year old from the Bronx. Less than one month from promotion to major, Baum had been with the 10th Armored Infantry since its Normandy landing at D-Day-plus-36.<sup>31</sup> Serving as the operations officer at the time, senior officers prized Baum's candor and tenacity. And if he lacked Cohen's savvy, Baum had few peers when it came to courage.<sup>32</sup>

Although Captain Baum's command experience was limited, this fact was not of concern at the time. Abe Baum's reputation, like his performance under fire, was sterling. Responding to a request from the 101st Airborne Division, Abe Baum had been detailed to Bastogne with a similar task force three months earlier. Moving his unit with dispatch, Baaum arrived there *before* the *Wehrmacht* could close the perimeter.<sup>33</sup> Yet, perhaps the most important reason for selecting Captain Baum was the unspoken one: aside from Cohen, no one was more familiar with the small amount of planning accomplished prior to Patton's arrival.<sup>34</sup> The unit had just acquired its name - Task Force Baum.

#### Warning Signs and Little Time

Patton issued only general guidance before departing Cohen's headquarters, verifying the force would be small (over Abrams' objections), that it would embark for Hammelburg that evening, and announcing that his aide (Major Stiller) would accompany the task force.<sup>35</sup> Major Stiller then presented specifics about the raid. Although Cohen, Baum and leaders from the 37th Tank Battalion had earlier discussed task force organization, this was their first exposure to the purpose of the mission and the route the task force would follow.<sup>36</sup> The devil was in the details.

From the information Stiller provided, serious questions about the raid outnumbered satisfactory answers. Although numerous prison camps were scattered about Germany, this was the first planned liberation of U.S. servicemen in Europe.<sup>37</sup> The garrison was located so far away from CCB's current position that the round trip would exceed the range of combat vehicles. Major Stiller could neither pinpoint the location of *Oflag XIII* nor specify the number of officers imprisoned there.<sup>38</sup> Because of boundary changes, Hammelburg was no longer part of Third Army's area of



responsibility, belonging instead to Lieutenant General Alexander Patch's Seventh Army zone of operations. Adding to the oddity of this assignment, 4th Armored Division would be moving north (with the rest of Patton's army) when the task force marched east. Consequently, Baum could count on little external support from his parent unit. Because the task force would be small, it had to be nimble, relying on swiftness and cunning over firepower. The armored column would race to Hammelburg, find the stockade, load up with *kriegies* (as U.S. prisoners referred to themselves), and hasten back to friendly territory. As an incidental chore, Stiller said the task force must somehow commandeer extra transportation for prisoners, and fuel for the return leg, from the Germans.<sup>39</sup> Abrams privately growled to Cohen about the terms for conducting the raid:

So we have to send them out, while the rest of us pack up and take off in the other direction. Damn, I just don't like it....We are always asking men to take risks, but they are calculated risks. They know they have a chance. This mission doesn't have a chance and we both know it. If this task force does make it back, it'll be a miracle."<sup>40</sup>

Some officers labeled the daunting challenge facing Task Force Baum a suicide mission<sup>41</sup> - but there was no talk of refusing the assignment.

Instead, CCB leaders labored in the time at their disposal to complete the plan. Abrams and Cohen built the task force around tank company C from the 37th and infantry company A from the 10th.<sup>42</sup> This core was augmented with a platoon of light tanks, an assault gun platoon, reconnaissance platoon, medical team, and maintenance vehicle. In its entirety, the force consisted of eleven officers and 282 enlisted men. 53 vehicles would carry these soldiers: ten M-4 Sherman medium tanks; six M-5 Stuart light tanks; 27 M-3 halftracks; three 105mm assault guns; six Jeeps; and one maintenance Weasel.<sup>43</sup>

Given the need for speed, the task force would follow the most direct route to Hammelburg. This route was arduous, initially forcing the column to negotiate unmarked secondary roads while bypassing heavily defended Aschaffenburg, and later confining vehicles in a long defile flanked by a river on one side and bluff on the other.<sup>44</sup> A rough time schedule called for the unit to reach *Oflag XIII* by early afternoon on March 27th, and complete the expedition late that same night.<sup>45</sup>

Because Task Force Baum would was small in size, it would need assistance to rupture enemy defenses and get behind the German front line. Planners targeted the village of Schweinheim (one mile south of Aschaffenburg), where the enemy was expected to offer only light resistance.<sup>46</sup> B Company, 37th Armor and C Company, 10th Infantry would attack the town and open a lane for the task force to sprint through. CCB enlisted the aid of division artillery as well. Three field artillery battalions were positioned to support the penetration with indirect fires.<sup>47</sup>

### Assessing the Preparation Phase

Circumstances which colored preparation and planning for this mission were not encouraging. The intelligence picture was inadequate. Although Abrams and Cohen had functioned with less information in the past,<sup>48</sup> the Hammelburg raid was a particularly hazardous venture, making accurate intelligence absolutely critical. The scheme of maneuver offered advantages and disadvantages. Constraints on force composition made speed essential, and therefore a direct route was preferable. But there was no consideration of enemy contact along the route. Task Force Baum would have to avoid the enemy to survive - stealth was another necessary ingredient for mission success. Yet, no alternate roads were planned if the primary route became untenable. Nor were any return routes identified for expeditious movement back to

friendly territory.<sup>49</sup> Portions of the route would leave the unit with no option but to fight any *Wehrmacht* troops in its path. The skeletal plan reflected no employment of air (from division) or ground (organic) reconnaissance assets to provide additional information and navigation assistance.<sup>50</sup> In sum, planning for the Hammelburg raid did not measure up to the difficulty of the task.

Task Force Baum was under-resourced as well. Participating soldiers faced a high probability of becoming separated from the main body, particularly in the event of an ambush or other enemy engagement. Damaged vehicles with casualties or troops separated from the column could be left behind. These individuals would be on their own, deep in enemy territory, on unfamiliar terrain. Yet, only fifteen maps were available for the entire task force.<sup>51</sup> Two halftracks carried extra jerry cans of gasoline, providing an emergency fuel reserve, but not enough to get the unit back from Hammelburg. The unit's 53 vehicles were sufficient for 293 soldiers, but wanting for the estimated hundreds of Americans held at the camp. If Major Stiller's (and thus Patton's) solution to fuel and transportation shortages - capturing enemy trucks and petroleum supplies in the course of the raid - reflected the Third Army commander's confidence in his favorite unit, it was no source of comfort for Baum, Cohen, or Abrams. In reality, *kriegies* who could not be carried back would have to: 1) move 50-60 miles cross-country in small groups to reach friendly lines; or 2) voluntarily return to captivity.<sup>52</sup>

The choice would be agonizing because the task force lacked items which could make the freed captives a benefit (rather than burden) to their liberators. The unit brought no spare weapons (rifles, machine guns, or bazookas) that would enable

fleeing groups to defend themselves.<sup>53</sup> There were no extra maps or compasses to help men escape westward on foot.<sup>54</sup> And while the squalid conditions facing comrades in captivity were not a secret among allied troops,<sup>55</sup> no surpluses of clothing, blankets, or foodstuffs accompanied the task force.

Added to all this was the fact that the task force commander was determined almost by default. Abe Baum was fearless, but Creighton Abrams and Harold Cohen were seasoned veterans of command. Collectively, these problems illustrate how the stated purpose of the Hammelburg raid, the rescue of American prisoners, was victimized by planning and preparation that did not contribute toward that end.

What factors account for inconsistencies in the preparation phase? Time and unfamiliarity were two likely contributors. A compressed planning cycle and external constraints placed CCB leaders (and consequently raid participants) at a severe disadvantage. The 37th Tank Battalion duty log indicates it was already five p.m. on 26 March when the liaison officer brought word to unit headquarters of a tasking to provide men and vehicles for the raid.<sup>56</sup> The entry is somewhat misleading because battalion leadership were present during Patton's brief visit and had been consulted about task organization. But the message underlines the fact that CCB officers first learned of the purpose for the mission earlier in the afternoon. Abe Baum remembers having only about six hours to prepare for the mission;<sup>57</sup> hardly enough time to address all the shortfalls cited above.

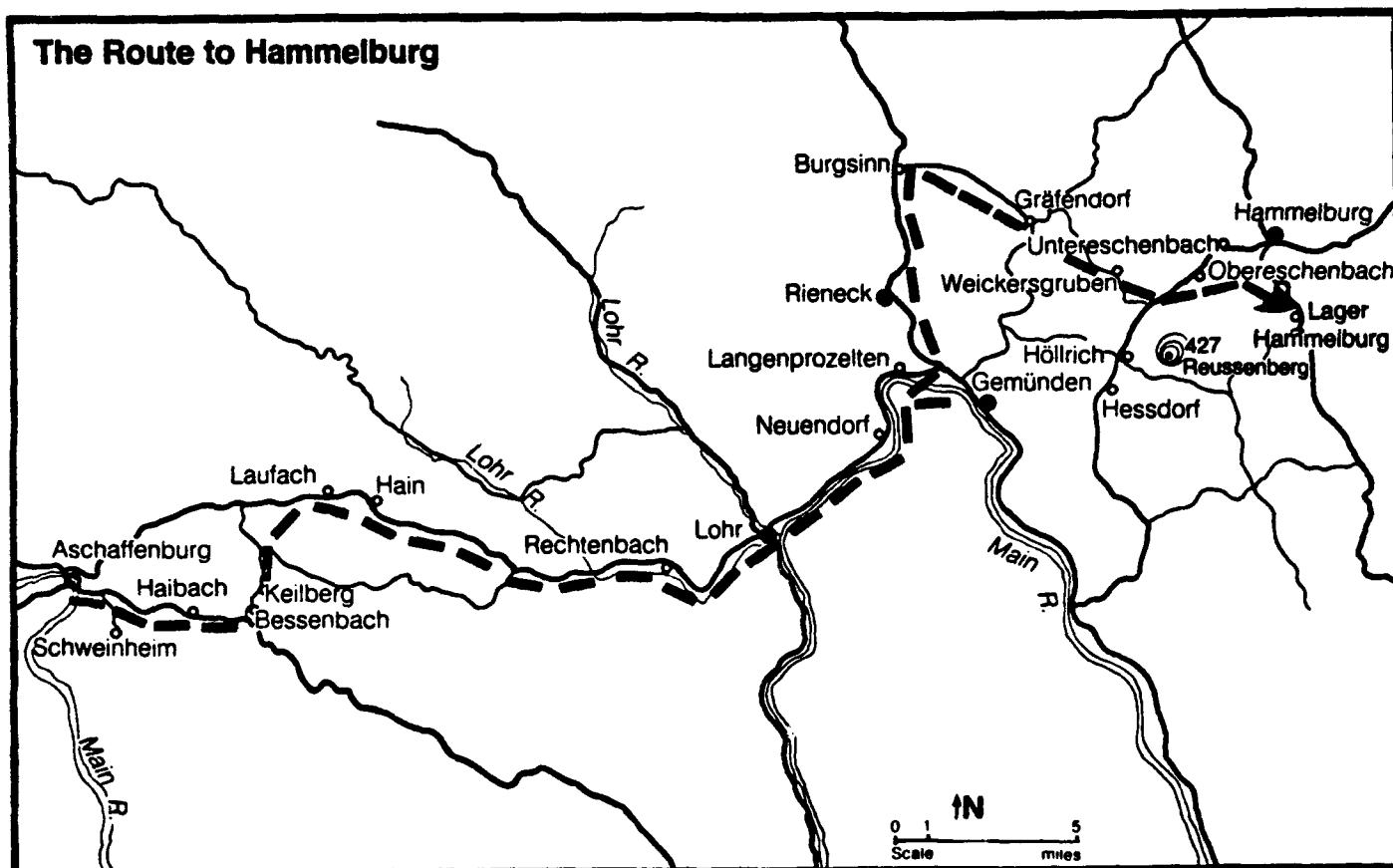
Inexperience may have also contributed to faulty planning. Over nine months of combat in Europe, 4th Armored had been on the offensive - attacking German forces, seizing towns and bridgeheads, pursuing as far and as fast as supply trains

would permit.<sup>58</sup> But the Hammelburg mission was a unique and unfamiliar combat operation, demanding maneuver and logistical coordination for which its planners were not accustomed. Preparation was made more difficult by the fact that the 10th Armored Infantry and 37th Tank battalions were not in reserve upon receipt of the new assignment, but securing the Main River crossing site captured one day before.

It would have been difficult, perhaps approaching insubordination, for a company or field grade officer to question orders from his Army commander; orders intended to save the lives of imprisoned Americans; and orders from a man with the record of success and force of personality of George S. Patton, Jr.. Even if Abrams and Cohen believed the raid on Hammelburg was ill conceived and likely to fail, they were probably reluctant to second guess their superior's campaign strategy. Nevertheless, it is troubling that historical documents record no instance during the afternoon of March 26th when any CCB leader even requested a delay in the tasking order to give the task force additional time for preparation.

In the context of World War II, there are examples in 4th Armored Division when a big gamble yielded big gains. Not long before this operation, Creighton Abrams (commanding 37th Tank Battalion) deviated from orders and blitzed his tanks through *Wehrmacht* defenses to relieve Bastogne - while neglecting to inform senior officers of his activities.<sup>59</sup> Abrams' wager paid off, but the stakes were high and the outcome not predetermined. Now the CCB commander, Abrams did not like the odds for the Hammelburg mission. He bristled at being told "how" to perform the raid. But Abrams, like Cohen, saluted and followed instructions. Decisive results sometimes mandated substantial risk. Task Force Baum would depart as ordered.

It is fair to say that most of Task Force Baum was poorly informed about the raid.<sup>60</sup> With soldiers securing equipment, loading weapons, and aligning vehicles, Captain Baum had time only to inform his key subordinates of the purpose for (and destination of) their mission.<sup>61</sup> There was no thorough briefing or rehearsal. Exactly *what* actions Task Force Baum would perform at the prison compound were not clear to anyone, including Baum. The immediate concern was getting there.



Source: Richard Baron, Major Abe Baum and Richard Goldhurst, *Raid!: The Untold Story of Patton's Secret Mission*, (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1981).

#### EXECUTION PHASE:

##### Getting Started

Corporal William Smith, a tank driver in B Company, 37th Tank Battalion remarked sometime after the raid, "The town was reported not to have much in it, but

when you hear that, watch out!"<sup>62</sup> Smith was referring to Schweinheim, and his skepticism was well founded. Rather than the insignificant enemy resistance predicted there, units in the penetration attack met determined troops from General von Schacky's *413th Infantry Division of Wehrkreise XIII* (the 13th Military District).<sup>63</sup> The attack began at nine p.m., but CCB elements soon bogged down against defenders, rendered invisible by darkness, who returned fire with *panzerfaust*, small arms, and mortars.<sup>64</sup> A penetration which was supposed to last only minutes dragged into hours. By midnight Baum could wait no longer and the task force charged through Schweinheim.<sup>65</sup> The column was finally on its way to Hammelburg, and three hours behind schedule. It was an inauspicious beginning.

The column exited Schweinheim and negotiated a series of secondary roads to bypass Aschaffenburg and reach Highway 26 (the primary route to Lohr).<sup>66</sup> The unit received bazooka and small arms fire from small villages they passed, producing some casualties but no lost vehicles.<sup>67</sup> Captain Baum tried to safeguard the secrecy of his formation, even at the expense of precious minutes. He told infantrymen to periodically dismount their halftracks and cut the wires on telephone poles knocked down by the tanks. The gamble did not pay off. German troops observed the Americans near Laufach. When the raiding party approached Lohr at dawn, they saw white sheets hanging from windows of homes.<sup>68</sup> This was not a welcome sign.

The Germans were waiting on the outskirts of Lohr. Task Force Baum lost its first vehicle (a tank) to enemy fire from a *panzerfaust* ambush at a barricade across the highway. The column extracted revenge when it surprised and destroyed a convoy of twelve Tiger tanks in the town.<sup>69</sup> But the retribution was bittersweet. As the task force became more visible, it also became more vulnerable.

Among those whose attention the Americans attracted was General Hans von Obstfelder. That same morning, 27 March, he had assumed command of the *Wehrmacht's Seventh Army*, and control over all ground forces in southern Germany.<sup>70</sup> His command post, in the vicinity of Lohr, was nearly uncovered as Task Force Baum streaked through town.<sup>71</sup> General von Obstfelder responded by dispatching reconnaissance aircraft to gain contact with the column and report on its strength and composition. He subsequently ordered troops in Gemunden to ready the bridge at the confluence of the Main and Saale rivers for demolition.<sup>72</sup> Task Force Baum had exposed a weakness in the Nazi defenses. But by nine a.m. their cover was blown, and plans were in effect to stop them.

### Targets of Opportunity

Beyond Lohr the route turned northeast, following a road which plunged into a valley and paralleled the Main River's north bank. As the task force rambled toward Gemunden, Baum encountered more unsuspecting enemy targets. Light tanks leading the column spied a cluster of trains between Neundorf and Langenprezelten in a large German rail yard. The tracks were congested with twelve locomotives, each pulling twenty to thirty cars of anti-aircraft guns, ammunition, and pillboxes. Baum's task force destroyed the trains with machine guns and main guns. The tankers next detected a handful of stationary barges on the river. The barges burst into fireballs as high explosive rounds from American armor ignited the cargo. The actions of Task Force Baum during this chance encounter incapacitated an important transportation hub, interrupting the flow of replacements forward.<sup>73</sup> Unfortunately, fireworks at the rail yard and on the river also heralded the column's arrival to Germans in Gemunden.



Baum knew Gemunden was a choke point, and therefore an ideal ambush site. According to his map, the only bridge over the Main and Saale rivers in the immediate area was at the center of town. Baum considered it a good bet that with all the trains nearby, the town was crawling with enemy troops. Sporadic 20mm, small arms, and anti-tank fire from Gemunden confirmed his suspicion as the column rolled closer.<sup>74</sup> Baum found himself in a quandary. While mission success depended in part on avoiding enemy contact, the fastest means to Hammelburg was over the bridge.<sup>75</sup> He decided to proceed as planned, but cautiously.

Halting the mile long column short of town, Captain Baum sent his reconnaissance platoon forward to investigate, supported by medium tanks. Scouts found the approach to the bridge covered with mines. Facing automatic weapons fire from buildings on the far side, the soldiers gingerly removed the mines, concealed by smoke from their smoke grenades. As Baum and tank Company Commander William Nutto discussed the situation a short distance away, tanks around them suddenly erupted in flame from anti-tank fire originating across the river. Shrapnel cut into both men, seriously injuring Nutto and piercing Baum's wrist and knee to the bone. Scouts sprinted over the bridge to secure it and return fire. Only two men made it across. Two others disappeared as the Germans triggered pre-set explosive charges on the bridge. In a few seconds, three tanks were destroyed; several men killed, injured, or missing; and the column was precariously stacked up on the exposed roadway.<sup>76</sup>

### Changing Directions

Soldiers were unsure of how to react. With no alternate routes on their maps, it required Captain Baum's personal direction to reorganize vehicles and get them

moving again.<sup>77</sup> Baum realized the task force must head north to find other bridges over the Saale and Sinn (tributary of the Saale) rivers. Just one road was available, well behind the column. More time elapsed as vehicles turned around.<sup>78</sup> Eventually, Baum had his unit rolling north, bloodied and further behind schedule.

Several events followed which briefly lifted the spirits of task force members. A three man Combat Propaganda Team from the U.S. Seventh Army, led by Technician 3rd Class Ernst Langendorf, bumped into the column as it was underway again. Unaware of how far behind enemy lines the team had wandered in their Jeep, Langendorf assumed Task Force Baum was the unit requesting his services for a loudspeaker mission. Warnings broadcast in German promptly resulted in the surrender of 200 enemy who had participated in the Gemunden fight. His task complete, Langendorf and team returned to their unit, still ignorant of their true location behind the front.<sup>79</sup> Baum, on the other hand, queried an enemy prisoner on how to proceed through unfriendly territory. The prisoner told Baum of a bridge at Burgsinn and warned him about the presence of two *Wehrmacht* divisions in the Lohr-Gemunden area.<sup>80</sup> The unit continued northward.

A second fortuitous event came as Task Force Baum reached Rieneck. Baum's radio operator (using a more powerful radio mounted on a halftrack rather than in Baum's jeep) established contact with a friendly plane. The first of only three transmissions followed; this one requested an air strike at the rail yard. Not long afterward, black pillars of smoke rising west of Gemunden confirmed that P-47 aircraft had found the intended target.<sup>81</sup>

Just before reaching Burgsinn, the Americans captured a Nazi staff car ning

containing *Schutzstaffel (SS)* General Oriel Lotz and his assistants. Baum had the general strapped to the hood of a halftrack as protection against another ambush<sup>82</sup> - a perverse kind of good luck charm (and Law of War violation).

Crossing the Sinn River at a bridge in Burgsinn, the task force changed direction again, moving east toward Grafendorf. Enroute the unit surprised German soldiers guarding 700 Russian field laborers.<sup>83</sup> With the column edging closer to the objective, Baum transferred his 200 plus enemy prisoners (including the *SS* general) to the liberated Russians. It was mid-afternoon when Baum reported his progress with the second radio message.<sup>84</sup> Task Force Baum crossed over a Saale River bridge at Grafendorf, and began cross-country movement toward the prisoner camp, following the river and a railroad line.<sup>85</sup> Baum forcibly employed the services of two local residents (an old farmer and a woodsman) for help in navigating the final stretch to Hammelburg.<sup>86</sup>

### Changing Fortunes

*SS* General Lotz managed to wrest control from the disorganized Russians and locate a phone. Having overheard the column's destination, he informed General von Obstfelder. Obstfelder, in turn, notified commanders in the region, including *Oflag XIII* Commander Major General Gunther von Goeckel, and the Hammelburg area commander. Finally, General von Obstfelder ordered reinforcements to the camp from a military *kaserne* in nearby Schweinfurt.<sup>87</sup> Knowing the task force objective, the Germans could at last coordinate their efforts against the Americans.

At Wickersgruben, a German spotter plane found the armored column. Rifle and machine gun fire chased away the aircraft, but not before the pilot had reported what combat vehicles remained (12 tanks, 3 assault guns, and 27 halftracks).<sup>88</sup>

It was also unfortunate for Task Force Baum that an enemy *panzerjaeger* company was in position to battle the Americans just east of the prison camp, near Obereschenbach. These gun crews and vehicles had deployed from Schweinfurt by train earlier that day, responding to a warning about American tanks headed their direction. The commander placed his *panzerjaeger* on terrain affording a view of roads leading to Hammelburg and the stockade. From this vantage point, the enemy engaged the armored column with flanking fire. On his own initiative, the U.S. assault gun platoon leader, Staff Sergeant Charles Graham, moved his three vehicles to higher ground and provided covering fire for the others. Baum's men eventually silenced the hostile guns. Task force tanks and assault guns knocked out three *panzerjaeger* and some ammunition carriers. From its new fighting position, Graham's platoon also identified and destroyed six trucks headed for the garrison with a resupply of ammunition for guards there. The exchange proved more costly for the Americans, however. The raiding party lost five halftracks, three jeeps, and two priceless hours in this skirmish.<sup>89</sup> Its combat strength now stood at 12 tanks, 3 assault guns, and 22 halftracks. Sixteen hours after leaving Schweinheim, their numbers in men, machines and available minutes were dwindling.

In bypassing Hammelburg to avoid further contact, the battered column unknowingly moved directly toward the *oflag* (two miles south of town) and a final obstacle.<sup>90</sup> Colonel Hoepple, though junior to the aged von Goeckel, commanded the entire Hammelburg *Lager* (a training area for replacement troops).<sup>91</sup> Hoepple ordered those soldiers at his immediate disposal, two companies of combat engineers, to organize a defensive line a few hundred yards from the garrison fence.<sup>92</sup> Baum

formed his tanks in a line and gathered his infantrymen behind the armor. The engineers proved no match for American armor, but they managed an orderly retreat.<sup>93</sup> Darkness drew near as Sherman tanks crashed through the fences at *Oflag XIII*.

## **ACTIONS AT THE OBJECTIVE**

### **Liberation**

Throughout the day of March 27th, prisoners at the compound sensed something happening in the rear area. That morning, Major General von Goeckel (the prison camp commander) notified the senior American prisoner, Colonel Paul Goode, that *kriegies* would leave the camp the following day. By early afternoon prisoners witnessed indecision among the Germans, who first moved up the departure time to that evening, and later canceled the night movement.<sup>94</sup> Rumors flourished when returning Serbian field laborers (Serbian *Oflag XIIIIC* was adjacent to U.S. *Oflag XIIIIB*, separated only by a fence line) reported hearing explosions from an American tank column heading east. Despite rising tension, the prisoner chaplain began his daily service on schedule (four p.m.) in one of the barracks. The mass, often interrupted by shells exploding nearby, continued throughout the battle for the garrison. As the worship finally concluded, their prayers were answered.<sup>95</sup>

The prisoners' immediate reaction was overwhelming.<sup>96</sup> They clamored aboard vehicles, embracing task force members.<sup>97</sup> CCB soldiers handed out their remaining rations and cigarettes to grateful recipients. But the prisoner's new freedom would be short-lived.

### **Frustration and Confusion**

The mood changed rapidly when prisoners learned Task Force Baum was merely a

raiding party, and task force members learned the actual size of the prisoner population. Rather than the estimated 200-400 officers, Baum was confronted with almost 1500 U.S. prisoners at the *oflag*, and a breakdown in discipline and organization at the camp which accompanied liberation.<sup>98</sup> "Where's the infantry?" asked prisoner Richard Baron. When he and others discovered there were no reinforcements, they also realized there was not enough room on the vehicles for everyone.<sup>99</sup> Colonel Goode and Captain Baum surveyed the chaos. Baum desperately wanted Goode to assert control over the crowd. The captain did not feel comfortable determining the fate of soldiers (many of them senior in rank) who were not his own. Colonel Goode wanted to secure his own place aboard one of the vehicles.<sup>100</sup> The tumultuous situation demanded the poise and pragmatism of someone like Goode's executive officer, Lieutenant Colonel John K. Waters (Patton's son-in-law).

Regarded as an informal leader among *kriegies*, Waters commanded the prisoners' respect and could establish order in the ranks. As Major Stiller searched in vain through the crowd to ascertain his whereabouts, Waters' was being examined by a doctor in the side of the compound. Lieutenant Colonel Waters had been wounded during the final assault on *Oflag XIII-B*.<sup>101</sup> Lying in the infirmary while the doctor treated his injury, Waters was in no shape to arrest the anarchy.

Baum eventually summoned the nerve to tell prisoners that transportation would permit only a small fraction of them to return by vehicle. Some men wanted those with experience in armor units to replace task force casualties and man their crew-served weapons.<sup>102</sup> Others said priority should go to *kriegies* too sick to walk. Most of the prisoners were left to form teams and start out on foot, or stay behind.

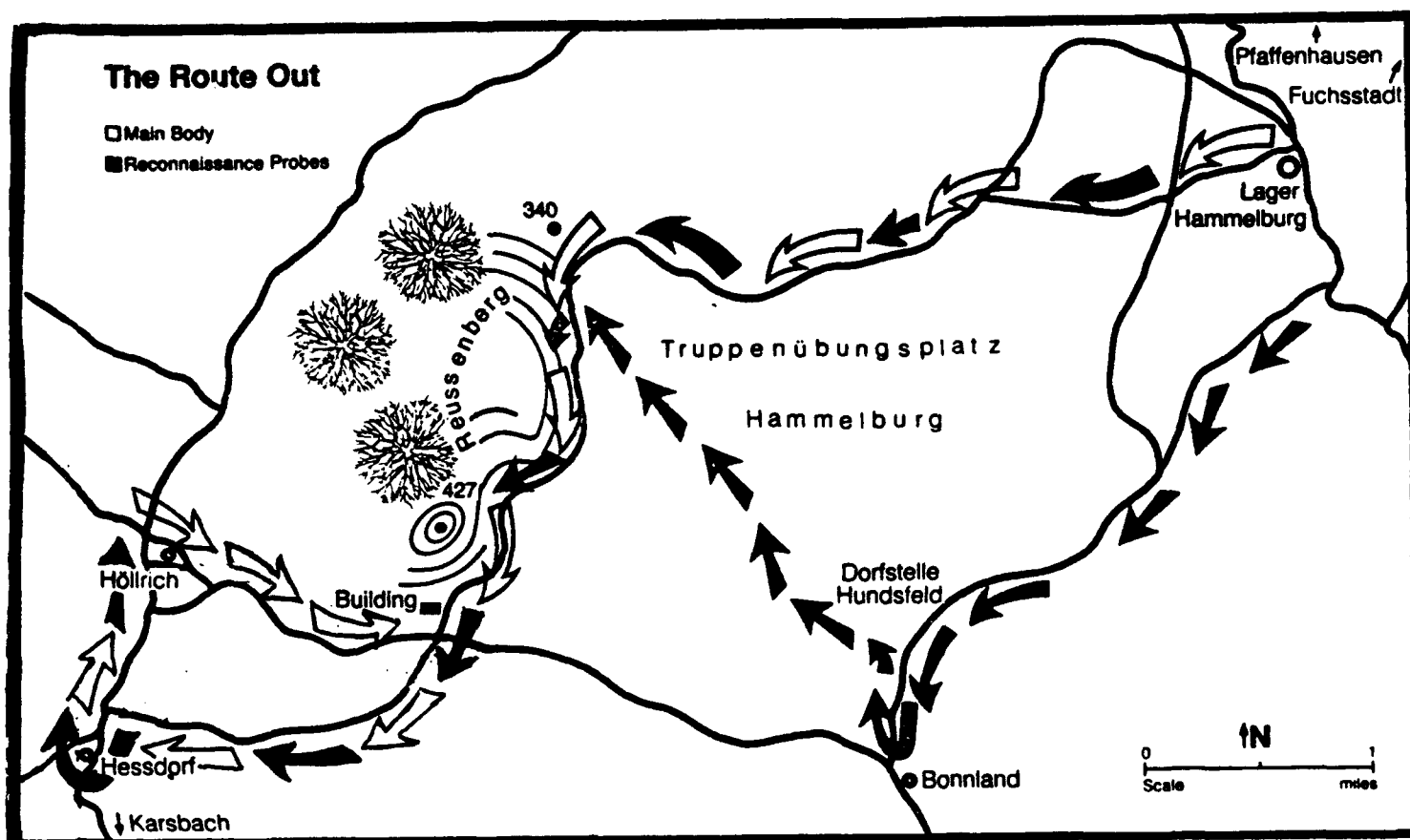
Other problems surfaced at this time. Prisoners eager to defend themselves asked for the extra weapons, but there were none.<sup>103</sup> No one searched the *oflag* for firearms, ammunition, or maps left behind by guards.<sup>104</sup> The task of escape seemed daunting to many prisoners without maps or compasses to find their way in the night, without warm clothing to guard against exposure, without food to give the malnourished energy, and without a means of self-defense.<sup>105</sup> Several hundred prisoners decided to take their chances anyway. But more than one third of the prisoners dejectedly returned to their barracks.<sup>106</sup>

Some task force members were likewise disillusioned, but for different reasons. Joe Kmetz believed the brass was to blame. Even if the rescue party had arrived unscathed, there were more prisoners than vehicles could carry. Half-track driver Harley Laepple hoped that, given the task force's depleted numbers (now at 3 Jeeps, 4 tanks and 5 halftracks lost), Baum would leave *all* the prisoners behind. Baum empathized with the frustrated *kriegies* and his own soldiers. Sent on an incredible assignment, he now had to find some means of rallying subordinates.<sup>107</sup>

Amid the confusion, indecision, and grumbling at the *oflag*, almost two hours passed.<sup>108</sup> The enemy was not idle during this time. From his command post, Colonel Hoepple (commanding the Hammelburg *Lager*) called for reinforcements in the area. In addition to Hoepple's combat engineers (who earlier withdrew from the stalag), an officer candidate school to the south in Ansbach had eighty cadets, all combat veterans. By sheer coincidence, an assault gun battalion had arrived in Hammelburg that evening (heading west from the Russian front). A *Wehrmacht* officer on leave at the time took control of the guns from their timid commander and joined in the

ambush effort.<sup>109</sup> Wire communications extending from the command post to Hammelburg, Hessdorf, Hollrich, and Hundsfield allowed Hoepple to monitor his troops' progress as they cut off all roadbound escape routes.<sup>110</sup> Meanwhile, Task Force Baum did not establish effective security around the camp or search for a safe route out of the area. The Americans were blind, oblivious to the enemy activity around them.

### GETTING BACK



Source: Baron, Baum and Goldhurst, p. 190.<sup>111</sup>

### A Route Out

Baum wrestled with the question of how to get back while approximately 200 prisoners scratched, scrambled and squeezed on to vehicles. Tanks were weighted down with up to twelve extra passengers. Drivers could not see and turrets could



not traverse.<sup>112</sup> To avoid Hammelburg, the task force would leave the stockade and travel southwest to the highway, then shift northward to find the 4th Armored Division.<sup>113</sup> There were other concerns. Would the task force have to fight to escape? Their identity and intentions were well known by now. But how could they fight with soldiers hanging from armor and sheet metal? Baum concluded the column must prevent its discovery that night by avoiding all contact with the enemy.<sup>114</sup>

### Attrition

The *Wehrmacht* did not cooperate. Instead, the Germans methodically depleted Task Force Baum's strength during the night as it bounced from one ambush to the next. The first vehicle was hit before the unit left the compound, destroyed by an unseen assailant with a *panzerfaust*.<sup>115</sup> Baum realized he needed information about the enemy's disposition. He dispatched tank company commander Nutto, despite his shrapnel wounds, in a southwesterly direction with his Shermans and some infantrymen to locate the highway. The main body waited. Some prisoners tired of the delay and filtered back to their barracks. The reconnaissance probe took an hour to reach Hundsfield, where they discovered an ambush and veered northwest to avoid the trap. Baum grew restless and sent out his scout platoon to find a route due west. Nutto's probe found the scout platoon and continued westward, followed by the main body. The trail unexpectedly turned south and crawled along the ridgeline of a large hill mass (the *Reussenberg*). The Americans had to get through Hessdorf to reach the highway. But Colonel Hoeppe's troops had already established a roadblock there. A second barricade south of the village thwarted an attempted bypass when anti-tank fire claimed another tank. Not ready to surrender, Baum pivoted the column and traveled north. As Lieutenant Nutto's tanks turned on to the highway in Hollich

anti-tank rounds ripped open the lead vehicles. Nutto was among the casualties.<sup>116</sup> The highway was just out of reach. And Baum was out of ideas - at least temporarily. He needed time to evaluate his predicament and care for the injured, before committing to another breakout attempt. Baum then remembered the ridgeline the unit had followed earlier. Its highest point, Hill 427, would provide an easily recognizable terrain feature for his disoriented troops. A discouraged but still not defeated young captain assembled his force on the *Reussenberg*.

### Annihilation

The battered survivors of Baum's raiding party consolidated on Hill 427 just after three a.m., 28 March. The situation was grim. Task Force Baum had only the 3 assault guns, 7 tanks, and 20 halftracks (most filled with casualties) remaining, in addition to Baum's Jeep. They were almost out of gas. Just 110 of the original 293 soldiers were still with the unit.<sup>117</sup> Most prisoners had seen enough. Colonel Goode enjoined them to return to the relative safety of the compound and many accepted his invitation. Only 57 prisoners elected to stay with the task force.<sup>118</sup> Baum told those still with him of a final breakout attempt at daylight, this time fighting through anything they encountered. He ordered all but 12 halftracks destroyed before dawn, after transferring their fuel reserves to other vehicles.<sup>119</sup> Injured troops were moved inside a stone barn on the hill, and a large red cross was put on its facade.<sup>120</sup> After issuing instructions, Baum had his radio operator report they were trying to get back and "mission accomplished" in a final message.<sup>121</sup>

Hoepple's patchwork of roadblocks and ambushes had contained the column in the *lager*. He knew the task force was on the *Reussenberg*, which also provided an ideal

terrain reference for repositioning *his* forces. During the remainder of the night, Hoepple maneuvered reinforcements to surround the Americans. His combat engineers (with mortars) linked up with the *panzerjaeger* from Schweinfurt. Assault guns occupied overwatch positions. And cadets infiltrated on to Hill 427 while tanks departed for Hammelburg from a *kaserne* nearby.

Captain Baum offered final words of encouragement before proceeding to his Jeep.<sup>122</sup> At the moment engines turned over, the hillside shook in a spasm of violence. The German assault gun battalion was firing south of Hill 427. To the southeast, *panzerjaeger* and combat engineers advanced toward the task force. A platoon of Tiger tanks fired in the northeast, near Obereschenbach, as more tanks moved in from Weickersgruben.<sup>123</sup> And cadets fired *panzerfaust* from concealed positions on the hill. The German response was coordinated, rapid, intense and overpowering. Automatic weapon, anti-tank, and indirect fire leveled the shelter housing wounded soldiers.<sup>124</sup> Baum yelled "every man for himself" as soldiers abandoned their burning tracks and fled for cover in the woods.<sup>125</sup> In less than 25 minutes it was over - every vehicle destroyed.<sup>126</sup>

### Assessing the Execution Phase

Task Force Baum's movement to *Oflag XIII*, liberation of the camp, and failed breakout from the *lager* illustrate the debilitating effects of fog and friction - made worse by flaws originating in the preparation phase of the raid. Clausewitz defines friction as the tendency for things to go wrong. It is the cumulative product of unanticipated events which reduce effectiveness.<sup>127</sup> Fog is the uncertainty in combat that plays on one's fears, breeding indecision or bad

decisions.<sup>128</sup> Friction and fog are intrinsic to warfare. They differentiate the execution of military endeavors from the *planning* and *preparation* preceding them.

Friction hindered Task Force Baum during the journey to Hammelburg. In spite of some desperate and resourceful fighting by the armored column, each instance of enemy contact adversely affected the size, speed and secrecy on which the unit's survival depended. Conversely, General von Obstfelder gradually removed the fog of uncertainty as Baum's men pushed deeper into the German rear. The Americans could often outduel enemy forces they encountered along the route, but they could not outrun *Wehrmacht* communications.

At the most critical point in the mission, the actions at and around the prison compound, circumstance and uncertainty coalesced to seal the task force's fate. Soldiers plan and prepare in advance to mitigate the impact of the unknown and unexpected on future operations, always mindful that their efforts will be imperfect. At the *oflag*, however, prior shortcomings magnified the challenges facing Task Force Baum. The absence of any plan upon arrival at the camp, a prisoner population far exceeding any estimate, insufficient weapons and supplies, and the loss of key personnel outside and inside the garrison paralyzed task force and prisoner leadership. Confusion and frustration were a logical consequence. Under such conditions, one can envision how some prisoners felt let down by the very men who had come to their aid. Without reconnaissance during the interval at the *oflag*, Baum missed an opportunity to learn about German reaction forces and identify which barricades around the *lager* were more sparsely manned and vulnerable.<sup>129</sup>

Probabilities never favored Task Force Baum. The unit's accomplishments in

simply reaching the *oflag* and freeing prisoners were remarkable. But preparation and planning for the raid did not address a variety of problems which, had they been reconciled before vehicles departed for Hammelburg, would have given Baum's men a better chance. Rather than mitigating the effects friction and fog, planning errors foreshadowed and intensified troubles during the conduct of the raid.

#### WHAT BECAME OF TASK FORCE BAUM?

The life of Task Force Baum officially ended before nine a.m. on March 28th, but the saga of individual participants continued far longer. Soldiers dispersed into three and four-man teams as they fled through the woods. A Nazi soldier shot Baum in the leg and captured him with Major Stiller late on the 28th. The Germans never discovered Captain Baum was Jewish. Nor did they learn Baum was the task force commander, believing instead that Major Stiller (senior in rank) was the unit leader. The Germans moved Baum back to *Oflag XIII* for medical attention.<sup>130</sup>

Most prisoners were evacuated from the compound. That morning, 28 March, between 500 and 600 prisoners who earlier had voluntarily returned to their barracks began marching toward Nurnberg.<sup>131</sup> Others also moved south once recaptured, primarily by rail. The American compound was practically deserted. Most of the wounded traveled a few miles north to medical facilities in Bad Kissingen. Only about 70 seriously injured remained behind - among them Abe Baum and John Waters.

The U.S. Seventh Army liberated *Oflag XIII* for good ten days after the raid. The 14th Armored Division's CCB reached the Hammelburg *Lager* on 6 April and knocked down the gates of the compound early that afternoon.<sup>132</sup> Resuming their pursuit, CCB left behind only a few soldiers to safeguard the injured. Ironically, 6 April was

also the day the 10th Armored Infantry and 37th Tank battalions reported all personnel who had participated in the raid as missing in action.<sup>133</sup>



6 April 1945: CCB, 14th Armored Division enters Hammelburg's *Oflag XIII*.  
Source: *The Last Offensive*, p. 419.

It did not take long for the news about Waters' to reach an anxious Third Army commander. About 15 of the soldiers who set out on foot from Hammelburg made it back to friendly lines.<sup>134</sup> Reaching Third Army territory on 4 April, two successful escapees confirmed for Patton that his son-in-law was at Hammelburg but had been wounded during the liberation attempt.<sup>135</sup> Seventh Army Commander Patch telephoned Patton on 6 April to inform him that the 14th Division reclaimed *Oflag XIII* and found Colonel Waters there.<sup>136</sup> The next day, two aircraft (with Third Army's chief

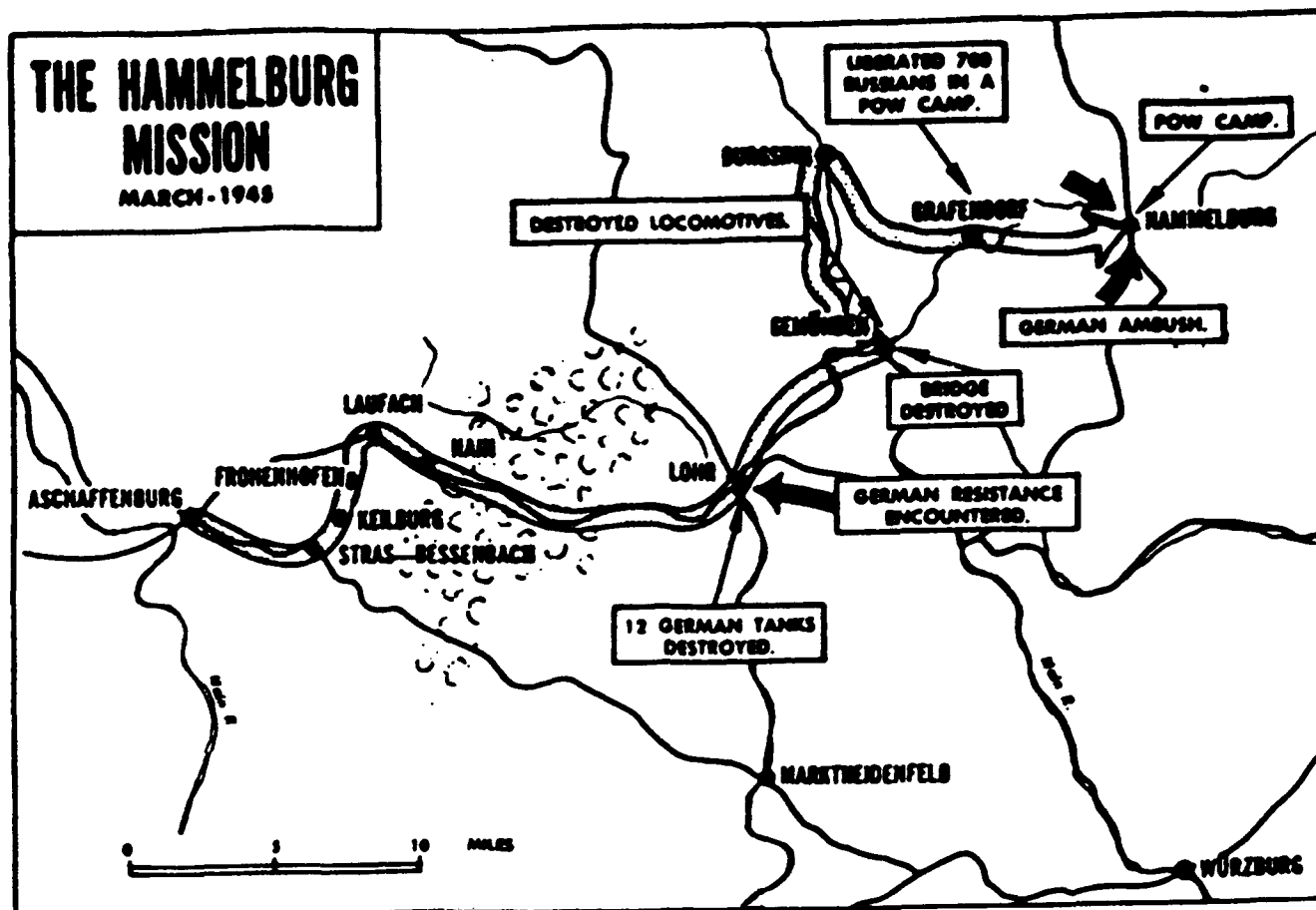
surgeon aboard) arrived at the prison camp and carried away Patton's son-in-law. Other seriously ill and injured soldiers would wait another three days for medical evacuation.<sup>137</sup>

The final U.S. casualty figures for Task Force Baum were not as dismal as many feared. Of the original 293 men and officers, only 9 soldiers were confirmed killed and another 16 declared missing. Nearly all of the remaining 268, including 32 reported wounded, were prisoners of war at some point until their return.<sup>138</sup> An complete accounting of raid participants was difficult because survivors were quickly and quietly shipped to America as they returned to friendly lines.<sup>139</sup>

The plight of Task Force Baum was not widely reported at the time or well remembered by history. Rapid gains by the allies in Germany commanded headlines. Allegedly, Patton was relieved that President Roosevelt's death on April 12th would dominate news coverage, stifling serious inquiry into the Hammelburg affair.<sup>140</sup> On May 8th Germany surrendered. In the euphoria accompanying World War II's conclusion in Europe, the Hammelburg incident quickly vanished from the public eye.<sup>141</sup>

#### *THE DIVERSION MYTH*

Despite the failure of Task Force Baum to achieve its stated objective, the mission was not entirely unsuccessful. While slashing into the German rear, the task force destroyed a dozen tanks, twelve trains, three assault guns, several ammunition carriers and supply trucks, and acquired over 200 enemy prisoners.<sup>142</sup> The unit also disrupted enemy movement schedules and provided the air force with an attractive bombing target - a German rail yard.<sup>143</sup> The column forced Obstfelder's *Seventh Army* headquarters to focus their energies on the rear (rather than the



Source: Martin Blumenson, "The Hammelburg Mission," *Military Review* XXXV (May, 1955), p.30.

front) for at least 24 hours. But the most significant accomplishment credited to Task Force Baum was its role as the critical "feint" in Patton's operational plan for Third Army's attack after breaching the Rhine.

### The Allegation Grows

The diversion explanation for the liberation attempt at *Oflag XIII* has gained general acceptance over time. Patton made reference to a deception plan at a 30 March 1945 news conference: "I felt that by hazarding a small force I would confuse the enemy completely as to where we were going." <sup>144</sup> Former Hammelburg prisoner Thomas Morton ran into Patton later at a Paris hospital. The general told Morton the liberation attempt was in truth a fake eastward to mislead the Germans about



Third Army intentions.<sup>145</sup> At another press conference in mid April, the diversion rationale was more emphatically articulated by General Patton:

The force which we sent over...was for the purpose of misleading the Germans and make them think we are going to Nurenburg [sic]... They met the 2nd Panzer Division and two other divisions, which showed that our effort to mislead the enemy had its effect because [had] he [the enemy] put these divisions up north, our efforts there would have been much slower.<sup>146</sup>

And in his book *War As I Knew It*, Patton lists deception as the first of two (along with freeing prisoners) purposes for the expedition.<sup>147</sup> Thus, it was George S. Patton, Jr. who first conceived of, and subsequently attributed to Task Force Baum, a vital diversion of German troops away from Third Army.

Other writers and veterans have also extolled the Hammelburg mission as an operational decoy. 4th Armored Division historians Bruce Jacobs and Kenneth Koyen eulogized Task Force Baum for making possible the rapid northward advance of U.S. forces immediately following the raid.<sup>148</sup> Army Lieutenant Colonel Frederick Oldinsky wrote that the official purpose for the operation was threefold: 1) deception, 2) create confusion, and 3) free prisoners, with objectives one and two achieved.<sup>149</sup> Robert Reppa, a prisoner at *Oflag XIII*, believes Baum's column disguised Patton's move north.<sup>150</sup> Harold Cohen, one of the few men still living who was both deeply involved with the mission and who knew General Patton, is also convinced a diversion was the true purpose behind the mission.<sup>151</sup> And Patton biographer Martin Blumenson praises the Hammelburg foray as, "a well-executed feint, a fine piece of generalship."<sup>152</sup>

There is controversy about the validity of deception as the true motive for the Hammelburg mission. 4th Armored veteran Nat Frankel has argued that if the raid was intended to convince the *Wehrmacht* that Task Force Baum was Third Army's

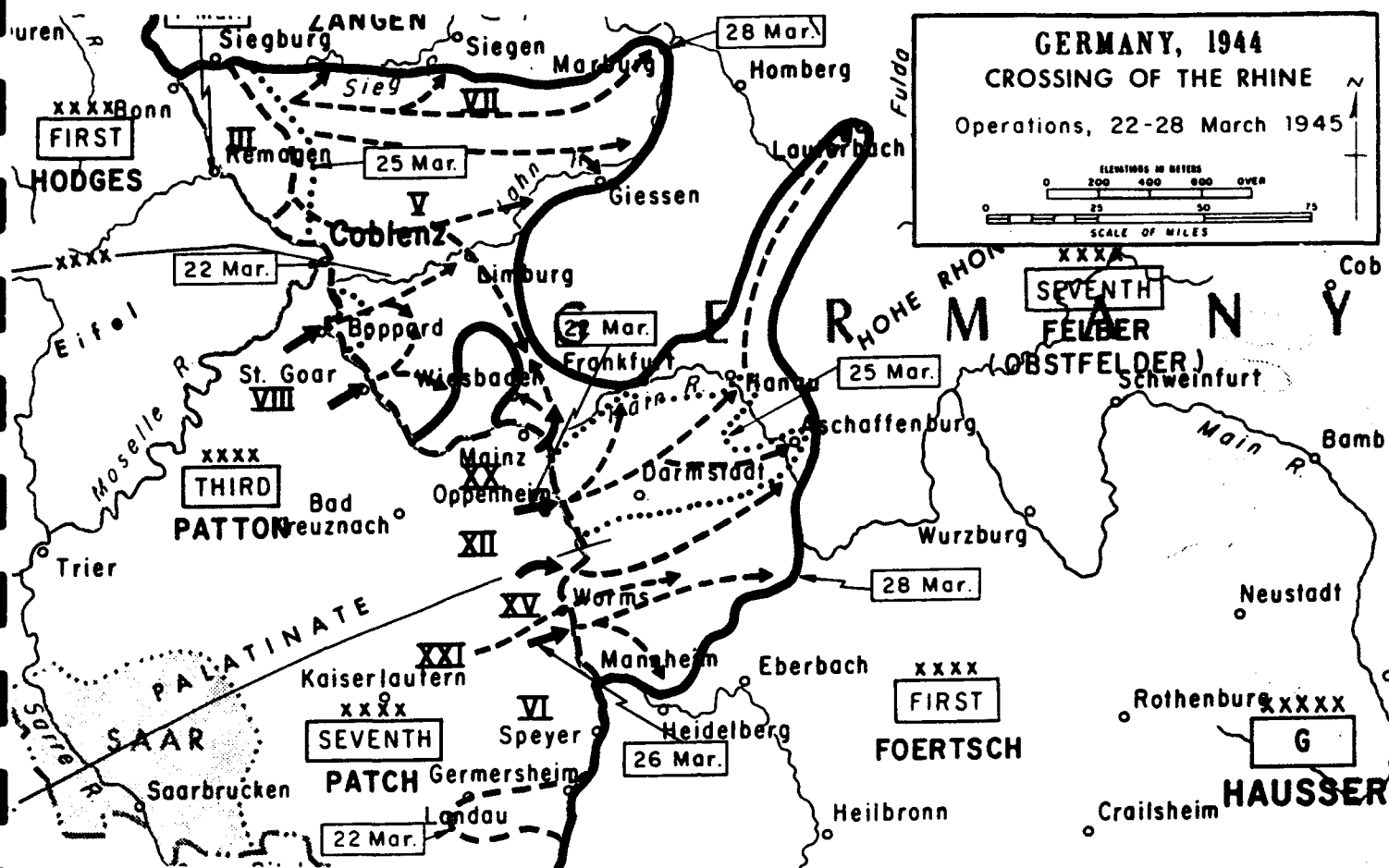
advance guard, a German reconnaissance pilot with a pair of binoculars would have been sufficient to erase any illusions.<sup>153</sup> Indeed, this is precisely what happened on March 27th outside of Grafendorf. In addition, no mention of the ostensible operational purpose of the raid (the diversion) appears before the task force's demise. There is no record of a feint as a mission objective in the journals of CCB units, no recollection by key participants of diversion as a rationale for the operation, and no mention of a feint by Patton in his personal diary or correspondence - until *after* the unit disintegrated on the *Reussenburg*.<sup>154</sup>

But if there is disagreement about diversion as a motive for the mission, authors largely agree that the raid had the *effect* of diverting considerable enemy strength from the northern portion of Obstfelder's defensive sector, opening the door for Third Army's maneuver in that direction. This consensus is in error, however. The diversion claim fails because there is no evidence showing that Third Army's rapid move northward is owed to Task Force Baum. German documents suggest the gains are more likely attributable to the Americans' surprising success in jumping the Rhine, an obstacle which nearly everyone, save George Patton, expected to be more difficult than was actually the case.

### The Situation Along the Front

The allies were categorically superior to the Nazis all along the front by this late stage in the war. The Nazis had suffered tremendous losses in men and materiel during the allied Saar-Palatinate campaign.<sup>155</sup> In Patton's Third Army zone, the German *Seventh Army* retreated to the east bank of the Rhine River in a forlorn attempt to regroup.

Patton's army established three major bridgeheads across the southern Rhine,



Source: United States Military Academy, *Campaign Atlas to The Second World War*, (West Point, New York: Department of History), Map 80.

the most important being the 5th Infantry Division is assault crossing near Oppenheim, whose immediate exploitation by 4th Armored led to multiple crossings of the Main River near Hanau (CCA) and Aschaffenburg (CCB). The German *Seventh Army's* northern wing was in complete disarray, with some units cut off by the allied attack. When U.S. Third Army began its sweep northward on 27 March, it had been 6 days since the Wehrmacht mustered even division sized opposition.<sup>156</sup> The last threads of organized resistance in the German Army unraveled after the Main River crossings.<sup>157</sup> Under such conditions, it does not appear any diversion was needed.

General von Obstfelder's assessment of his situation along the Main River was not encouraging. In the extreme north of his sector, extending between Giessen and

Hanau, was the German *XII Corps*. This corps consisted of the *11th Panzer Division* (in reality a hodgepodge collection of some tanks, artillery and trainees) and the *159th Division* (also heavily depleted). In depth was the *LXXXV Corps* and the *Panzer Brigade Thuringen* (a training unit of tanks, assault guns and *panzergrenadiers*, but lacking any logistical support or air defense assets).

The southern portion of Obstfelder's *Seventh Army* zone extended from Hanau to below Aschaffenburg, overlapping part of General Patch's U.S. Seventh Army. The south was defended by the relatively stronger *LXXXII Corps* with two makeshift divisions. The *413th Division* owned most of the forces south of Hanau and was made up of young recruits. The *256th Volksgrenadier Division* was in worse condition, with only a staff and some fragmentary troops. A demarcation line between *XII* and *LXXXII Corps* fell along the Hanau-Gelnhausen line.<sup>158</sup>

Obstfelder's beleaguered units had put up a spirited defense to this point, but were simply no match for American firepower. His dilemma was exacerbated by the High Command's repeated refusals to permit the *Wehrmacht* to fall back in good order and organize a defensive line along the best available terrain east of the Rhine - the Saale River. This insistence on contesting every inch of ground produced unnecessary casualties (at a time when Germany could afford none) and less effective resistance overall. In its defense, the *Oberkommando der Wehrmacht (OKW)* was likely worried about surrendering any ground voluntarily in the southern part of *Seventh Army* because of its proximity to Schweinfurt, heart of the German ball bearing industry, in the hopes of sustaining production there as long as possible.<sup>159</sup>

With CCB across the Main at Aschaffenburg, and Obstfelder under orders to seal

this penetration at all costs, the German general put his emphasis on CCB's bridgehead. The *Seventh Army* Commander's principal concern was not an attack in the north, but a breakthrough by U.S. forces along the Main, particularly out of the Schweinheim crossing site:

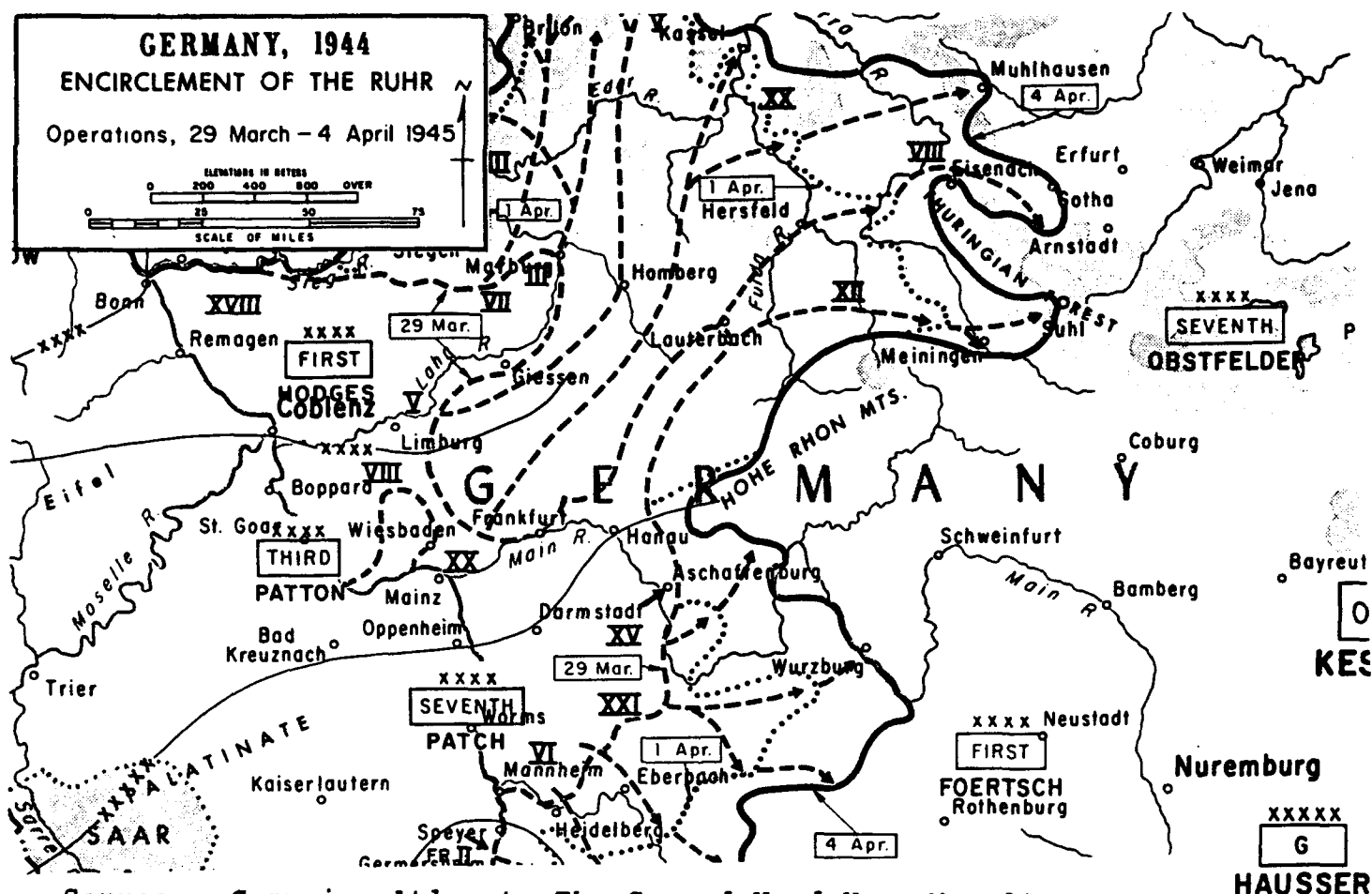
If, on 26-27 March, the 12th U.S. Corps had turned to the Southeast instead of turning to the North or Northeast, it could have pushed deep into the rear of *Army Group G* without meeting any resistance.<sup>160</sup>

Essentially what had happened during the U.S. First Army's unexpected seizure of the Remagen Bridge over the Rhine (in the north), and Patton's assault crossings of the Rhine (in the south) was the disintegration of critical German units, leaving a gap between *Wehrmacht Army Groups B* and *G*. It was this weakness that Obstfelder and the *OKW* feared Patton would exploit by driving toward Nurnberg.<sup>161</sup> Hence, the Germans used what forces they had in counterattacks near Aschaffenburg, but without success.

In direct response to the U.S. Third Army's Rhine crossings and 4th Armored Division's success at Schweinheim, reinforcements were detailed to the *Wehrmacht Seventh Army* to bolster defenses in the south. The *36th Division* (at little more than task force strength) was told to march north out of the German *First Army* sector into the Aschaffenburg area. Unfortunately for Obstfelder, its movement was delayed and the unit did not arrive until the end of the month,<sup>162</sup> too late to impede the progress of a small U.S. task force headed for Hammelburg.

When Task Force Baum began its odyssey, there was concern among the High Command that their worst fears were about to be realized, but no forces were available with which to attack the Americans. Obstfelder initially believed Task Force Baum was the point man for Patton's army and the *OKW* wanted Obstfelder to concentrate *Wehrkreise XIII* personnel to stop the penetration.<sup>163</sup> But mobile

warfare by German armored forces was virtually impossible because of "catastrophic" fuel shortages.<sup>164</sup> General von Obstfelder reacted to the speeding column with the only means at his disposal, establishing barriers and ambushes with rear echelon troops to slow down the Americans.



Source: Campaign Atlas to The Second World War, Map 81.

Third Army enjoyed enormous gains in the time period immediately following the Hammelburg raid. While Task Force Baum fought its way through to *Oflag XIII*, 4th Armored Division shuffled northward to join other Third Army forces at the Frankfurt and Hanau crossing sites over the Main.<sup>165</sup> Third Army's attack in the following days amounted to little more than a series of tactical road marches as it proceeded northwest of Fulda, into the Fulda Gap, and over the Werra River, before being restrained in the vicinity of Gotha.<sup>166</sup> Noteworthy is the fact that 4th Armored (leading the attack) did not fire a shot in the first 100 miles of the attack.<sup>167</sup>

### Absence of Causality

But Task Force Baum could not have created a diversion for Third Army because the Germans lacked both the troops and means to divert any combat power. When Third Army pushed northward, the German *Seventh Army's XII Corps* could not strike the Americans in the flank because of its inability to conduct mobile operations.<sup>168</sup> German *XII Corps* units and *Panzer Brigade Thuringen* were never ordered to Hammelburg from their positions in the north, and they did attempt to stop the Third Army advance, but were crippled by inferior maneuverability.<sup>169</sup> German troops had no recourse but to fall back on successive defensive strong points, which the Americans either bypassed or defeated with superior firepower.<sup>170</sup> Obstfelder's one hope for a serious counterattack in the north was a battalion's worth of new tanks scheduled to arrive in the *Seventh Army* zone. But the armor reinforcements were intercepted at a railhead near Fulda, and opportunistic 4th Armored soldiers destroyed most of the tanks.<sup>171</sup>

As for the units Baum tangled with between Lohr and Gemunden, it is reasonable to suspect these troops were in a weakened condition similar to those deployed along the front. Moreover, they were probably moving due east to support units near Aschaffenburg (Obstfelder's main effort) and not headed north. Had these units continued by rail toward the northern wing of the *Wehrmacht Seventh Army*, the soldiers and their equipment would have been subject to direct fire from U.S. units as rail lines paralleled the Main River between Aschaffenburg and Hanau. Gemunden, shielded from the front by higher terrain around Lohr, was a logical debarkation point for forces in the southern half of Obstfelder's area of operations.

Had Task Force Baum actually diverted German forces from the north to the

Hammelburg vicinity, the result could have been costly for the allies, and the U.S. Seventh Army in particular. Alluded to earlier, Hammelburg was located in General Patch's sector (on Third Army's southern flank). The Lohr-Gemunden route became one axis of attack for Patch's Army after it crossed the Main River.<sup>172</sup> It follows that any diversion of combat power to the area disrupted by Task Force Baum would have directly opposed Seventh Army. Any benefit for Third Army as a result of diverting troops from the north would have come at the expense of progress on its flank.

Patton's staff kept him well informed about the crumbling enemy resistance to his front.<sup>173</sup> The accelerating pace of the allied operations after the Battle of the Bulge (and principally after crossing the Rhine) confirmed the impending Nazi collapse. Given these facts, it is difficult to comprehend why General Patton would believe that the Hammelburg mission was essential for the continued progress of his army, when the enemy had done little to demonstrate they could stop the onslaught. Martin Blumenson notes that Patton believed the area through which Task Force Baum would travel was not heavily defended and there were no forces there strong enough to harm the unit.<sup>174</sup> Yet, Clausewitz offered a chillingly accurate forecast about the prospects for like endeavors over 100 years before the mission:

It is quite natural, and experience frequently illustrated this, that when an area is suddenly threatened and no preparations have been made to defend it, such capable officials as there may be on the spot will mobilize all available extraordinary means to deal with the danger. New means of resistance are created - means that border on guerrilla warfare and can easily bring it about. This point should be kept very much in mind when a diversion is considered; otherwise one may be digging one's own grave.<sup>175</sup>

If Patton's intent for a diversion was in fact genuine, he risked the lives 300 men for no consequence. The U.S. Third Army's impressive sweep around the north flank



of the German *Seventh Army* can be ascribed to the correlation of forces that existed in this area before, not because of, the Hammelburg raid.

### CONCLUSION

In a wartime interview, General Bruce Clarke told a reporter, "...the safest place to be in this war is behind enemy lines. They [the Germans] just don't know what the hell to do when you get there, and they just run."<sup>176</sup> This statement captured Clarke's opinion after commanding 4th Armored Division's CCA in the fighting at Nancy-Arracourt. Of course, General Clarke did not accompany Task Force Baum to Hammelburg. There is no question about the resolve of the men under Baum's charge. They recognized the acute danger of their mission and performed with a sense of urgency reserved for those who dare not contemplate tomorrow. But General Obstfelder, Colonel Hoepple, the unknown officer on leave in Hammelburg (who took command of the assault gun battalion), and others displayed similar qualities under proximate circumstances. Task Force Baum ventured further into enemy territory without the promise of follow-on reinforcement than had any armored unit in history<sup>177</sup> - and it ultimately paid a dear price for such daring.

Among American military misfortunes, historian Charles MacDonald reminds us that the Hammelburg affair pales in comparison to many tactical and intelligence debacles the United States experienced in World War II.<sup>178</sup> Kasserine Pass and the Ardennes are examples of costlier failures which more significantly influenced the war effort. But the Hammelburg operation should not escape scrutiny simply because its consequences were not as severe as the lamentable amphibious landing at Anzio.

The raid on *Oflag XIII* remains disquieting precisely because after examining the mission in some detail, it simply does not add up. Why did General Patton

insist the task force depart on short notice when a delay may have corrected logistical and planning shortcomings that later compounded the fog and friction associated with the mission's execution? Did Major Stiller really accompany Task Force Baum "for the thrill of it," as he told Baum, or because Stiller knew Colonel Waters and could identify him among the many prisoners?<sup>179</sup> Why did two Third Army aircraft come for Waters on April 7th, but leave behind soldiers with amputated limbs and serious gunshot wounds to languish for several days in a prison infirmary which had only one orderly to attend them? Did Patton sincerely believe the raid was a necessary diversion when his staff's intelligence reports depicted a disintegrating enemy to his front? These are all damaging indictments for which there appear to be no convincing rejoinders.

And it is here where the story of Task Force Baum comes full circle. While preoccupation with motive may detract from analysis of other aspects of the operation, no explanation of the rescue attempt is complete without it. There is no smoking gun here - no ULTRA message proving Patton knew the Hammelburg prisoners would be evacuated from the *Oflag XIII* on March 28th, and for that reason attempted a last minute raid to try and save his son-in-law. But there is the smell of spent gunpowder in the air. A preponderance of evidence leads me to conclude that the tragic ordeal of Task Force Baum ought never have happened. Although there is an inclination for many of us to interpret history in its kindest terms, one should not neatly dismiss this incident as an "aberration" or "extravagance."<sup>211</sup> For all of its historical insignificance, the Hammelburg raid is a poignant and important, if uncomfortable, reminder of potentially disastrous consequences should nepotism cloud judgement in the conduct of military affairs.

## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup>Kenneth Koyen, *The Fourth Armored Division From the Beach to Bavaria*, (Munich: Herder, 1946), p. 119.

<sup>2</sup>General of the Army Omar Bradley claims in his autobiography that Patton was worried newsmen might draw their own implications from the failed mission. Omar N. Bradley, *A Soldier's Story*, (New York: Henry Holt and Co., 1951), p. 542.

<sup>3</sup>In a 5 October 1945 press conference, General Patton attempted to quiet allegations of nepotism that surfaced after reporters learned the general's son-in-law was a prisoner in *Oflag XIII B* during the Hammelburg raid. Patton stated the liberation attempt was made because he feared prisoners would be murdered by the Nazis. "Costly Prison Drive Explained By Patton," *The New York Times*, 6 October 1945, p. 9:8. For another example of Patton's brushes with the press over Hammelburg, see Charles B. MacDonald, *The Mighty Endeavor: American Armed Forces in the European Theater in World War II*, (New York: Oxford, 1969), p. 511.

<sup>4</sup>John Knight Waters rose to the rank of full general of the Army. He served in a variety of assignments including military aide to Secretary of War Robert P. Patterson, Chief of Military Assistance Staff in Yugoslavia, Commandant of Cadets at West Point, Commander of the 4th Armored Division, and Commanding General of the United States Continental Army Command. Before retiring from the Army in 1966, General Waters was the Commander of the United States Army of the Pacific. See Alfonzo A. Narvaez, "Gen. John Knight Waters, 82; Fought in World War II and Korea," *The New York Times*, 13 January 1989, p. B:5:4, and Richard Baron, Major Abe Baum and Richard Goldhurst, *Raid!: The Untold Story of Patton's Secret Mission*, (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1981), p. 277.

<sup>5</sup>Martin Blumenson presents a thorough picture of the ambiguity surrounding this issue, including passages from Patton's notes and correspondence suggesting the general believed Waters was at Hammelburg. See Martin Blumenson, *The Patton Papers: 1940-1945*, vol. 2 of 2 vols., (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1974), pp. 664-676.

<sup>6</sup>Frederick E. Oldinsky, "Patton and the Hammelburg Mission," *Armor*, 85 (Jul-Aug 1976), p. 16.

<sup>7</sup>*The Patton Papers: 1940-1945*, p. 676.

<sup>8</sup>General Patton said of this unit, "There has never been such a superb fighting organization as the Fourth Armored Division." This unit was the only armored division (and with the 101st Airborne one of only two divisions) to be decorated with a Distinguished Unit Citation in World War II. The 4th Armored was also awarded the French *Fourragere* (the equivalent of a collective *Croix de Guerre*). *Battle: True Stories of Combat in World War II*, Saturday Evening Post collective ed., (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1965), p. 298.

<sup>9</sup>After Action Reports - 37th Tank Battalion: September - November 1944 and February - May 1945, Records Group 407, National Archives (Suitland).

<sup>10</sup>After Action Reports - 37th Tank Battalion and 37th Tank Battalion Diary: 1 January 1945 - 4 March 1946, Box 15309, Records Group 407, National Archives (Suitland).

<sup>11</sup>Creighton Abrams graduated from West Point in 1936. In World War II, he led the tank column which relieved the besieged 101st Airborne Division at Bastogne during the Battle of the Bulge. Abrams later served as the military's point man during a highly sensitive civil rights crisis in Mississippi. He commanded U.S. forces in Vietnam with aplomb even as our nation had committed itself to disengagement. In his brief two year tenure as Army Chief of Staff (shortened by his passing in 1974) Creighton Abrams began many of the post-war reforms designed to restore military professionalism and pride to the force. He was once named America's "#1 Soldier" on the cover of *Time* magazine. The current generation of U.S. main battle tanks carries his name. Lewis Sorley's *Thunderbolt - From the Battle of the Bulge to Vietnam and Beyond: General Creighton Abrams and the Army of His Times*, (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1992) is the definitive work on General Abrams' life.

<sup>12</sup>10th Armored Infantry Battalion Diary: 18 July 1944 - 30 June 1945, Box 15294, Records Group 407, National Archives (Suitland). See also 37th Tank Battalion Diary, (NA).

<sup>13</sup>37th Tank Battalion Diary, (NA) and 10th Armored Infantry Battalion Diary, (NA). See also After Action Reports - 37th Tank Battalion, (NA).

<sup>14</sup>Charles M. Province, *Patton's Third Army: A Daily Combat Diary*, (New York: Hippocrene, 1976, pp. 226-227 and George Dyer, *XII Corps: Spearhead of Patton's Third Army*, (Baton Rouge, LA: Army and Navy Publication, 1947).

<sup>16</sup>The Patton Papers: 1940-1945, p. 664-665.

<sup>16</sup>William Hoge is best remembered for his exploits in World War II as a colonel, commanding 9th Armored Division's CCB. His unit captured the *Lutendorff* bridge at Remagen, and it was this feat which led directly to his promotion to general officer rank and command of 4th Armored Division.

<sup>17</sup>The Germans were well aware of Abrams and Cohen. Enemy leaflets and billboards were reported to bear this warning: "Beware of Abrams and Cohen. Roosevelt's highest paid butchers." Sorley, p. 88.

<sup>18</sup>Reference Will Lang, "Colonel Abe," *Life*, 23 April 1945, pp. 56-64, as cited in Sorley, pp. 153-154.

<sup>19</sup>Patton reportedly said, "I am supposed to be the best tank commander in the Army, but I have one peer - Abe Abrams." Kenneth Koyen, "General Patton's Mistake," *The Saturday Evening Post*, 1 May 1948, p. 19.

<sup>20</sup>Sorley, p. 92.

<sup>21</sup>During enemy combat in and around Nancy-Arracourt, 4th Armored claimed 281 German tanks, 3000 killed, and 3000 enemy prisoners of war while suffering only 626 casualties in the division. Reference Christopher R. Gabel, *Fourth Armored Division in the Encirclement of Nancy*, (Ft. Leavenworth, KS: Combat Studies Institute, U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, 1986), p. 21.

<sup>27</sup>Abrams preference for taking a large force to Hammelburg was first rejected by General Hoge, who told him Third Army wanted a small force, and later by Patton himself. Baron, Baum and Goldhurst, pp. 14-16. See also Robert B. Reppa, *"That Raid on Hammelburg,"* Unpublished Essay for Advanced Class, The Armored School, May 1948, Permanent File HRC 384.5: Aerial Attacks and Raids - Hammelburg, (Washington: U.S. Army Center of Military History), p.14.

<sup>23</sup>Army historian Charles B. MacDonald has written that XII Corps Commander Manton Eddy directed 4th Armored Division commander William Hoge to send a small task force to Hammelburg rather than the combat command Patton recommended and both Abrams and Hoge desired. Reference Charles B. MacDonald, *The United States Army in World War II - The European Theater of Operations: The Last Offensive*, (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1973), p. 281. Patton's diary entry describes Bradley as the dominant influence in favor of a smaller force. Oldinsky, p. 13. Patton also lays blame on Eddy and Hoge in his book, "I intended to send one combat command in the 4th Armored, but, unfortunately, was talked out of it by Eddy and Hoge...so I compromised by sending one armored company and one company of armored infantry." George S. Patton, Jr. *War As I Knew It*, (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1975), p. 275. Patton does not entirely absolve himself from responsibility either, "I can say this, that throughout the campaign in Europe I know of no error I made except that of failing to send a combat command to Hammelburg." (p. 331).

<sup>24</sup>Martin Blumenson, "The Hammelburg Affair," *Army*, 15 (Oct 1965), p. 18. Harold Cohen enlisted in the Army as a 25 year old private at the request of his immigrant father. He was selected for officer candidate schooling and within two and one half years had risen to the rank of Lieutenant Colonel, leading a battalion in combat. Shortly after the war, Cohen resigned his commission. A successful businessman in both the apparel industry and advertising, he is now retired and lives in Tifton, Georgia. Harold Cohen Interview and Baron, Baum and Goldhurst, p.273.

<sup>25</sup>Relationships between the two units were so close that a 10th Armored infantry squad routinely fought with the same tank crew from the 37th. Abrams admired the courage of infantrymen who faced enemy fire without armor protection, and instructed his tank commanders to fight with their torsos exposed (rather than inside the tank turret) in part out of solidarity with his sister battalion. Infantry squads often rode along on the outside of the tank itself, while their halftrack followed behind carrying extra main gun ammunition. Harold Cohen Interview and Abe Baum Interview. The close ties were not altered when Abrams was promoted to command of CCB. He told his friend Cohen that the only thing changing in their relationship was the elimination of one higher headquarters. Sorley, p. 89.

<sup>26</sup>Baron, Baum and Goldhurst, pp. 16-17.

<sup>27</sup>Ibid., p. 17.

<sup>28</sup>LTC (ret.) Cohen states that Patton's aide, Major Alexander Stiller, carried a second message (he had delivered the warning order two hours earlier) to the 10th Armored Infantry headquarters at six a.m. saying "mission canceled" after news reached the general that Cohen, Abram's choice to lead the raid, was badly afflicted with hemorrhoids. However, the message was quickly rescinded and Patton arrived on the scene a few hours later. Harold Cohen Interview.

<sup>29</sup>Baron, Baum and Goldhurst, pp. 19-20.

<sup>30</sup>Sorley, p. 93 and Harold Cohen Interview. Cohen intimated that Abe Baum and tank company commander Jimmy Leach of the 37th Tank Battalion (who went on to command the 11th Armored Cavalry Regiment in Vietnam) were widely regarded as premier junior officers in CCB.

<sup>31</sup>Baron, Baum and Goldhurst, p. 33. Baum ended the war as one of the 4th Armored Division's most decorated officers with the Distinguished Service Cross and 4 Purple Hearts. He had not yet earned the DSC or two of his Purple hearts at the time of the raid. *The Fourth Armored Division From the Beach to Bavaria*, p. 119. Baum resigned from active duty after the war to work in the apparel business. He also was a consultant for the Israelis on logistics during the war of independence. Baum eventually settled in San Diego. Baron, Baum and Goldhurst, p. 272.

<sup>32</sup>"The Hammelburg Affair," p. 18 and Harold Cohen Interview.

<sup>33</sup>Patton was angry when he learned (after the fact) that a deal had been made to detach Baum's task force to the 101st Airborne Division without Patton's knowledge. Cohen states Patton subsequently instructed him to go and "get Baum back," which Cohen did. If this story is true, it certainly adds to the irony that many tanks from this task force would be among the first to break *back into* Bastonge a second time with Creighton Abrams a shortly after this incident. Harold Cohen Interview.

<sup>34</sup>"The Hammelburg Affair," p. 18.

<sup>35</sup>*Notes on Task Force Baum*, (NA), p. 6 and Baron, Baum and Goldhurst, p. 23. This situation was highly unorthodox. In military organizations, the most senior ranking individual is habitually in charge.

<sup>36</sup>Baron, Baum and Goldhurst, pp. 19-21.

<sup>37</sup>Sorley, p. 91 and Baron, Baum and Goldhurst, p. 24.

<sup>38</sup>Various accounts record between 200 and 900 as the estimated number of U.S. POWs at Hammelburg. Historical records place the actual number at the Oflag as 1400

American officers and about 200 non-commissioned officers. *Notes on Task Force Baum*, (NA), p. 13.

<sup>39</sup>Baron, Baum and Goldhurst, p. 22.

<sup>40</sup>Ibid., p. 24. Cohen considered the raid a suicide mission from the moment he learned the specifics of the operation. Harold Cohen Interview.

<sup>41</sup>Harold Cohen Interview.

<sup>42</sup>Abe Baum Interview and Harold Cohen Interview.

<sup>43</sup>This information is consistent with a variety of sources including John Toland, *The Last 100 Days*, (New York: Random House, 1966), p. 288 and Martin Blumenson, "The Hammelburg Mission," *Military Review*, 35 (May 1955), p. 27. Confirmation is available from the *10th Armored Infantry Battalion Diary*, (NA), *The Last Offensive*, p. 281, and *The Fourth Armored Division From the Beach to Bavaria*, pp. 118-119.

<sup>44</sup>"General Patton's Mistake," p. 1227.

<sup>45</sup>Toland, p. 288.

<sup>46</sup>Frankel and Smith, p. 142.

<sup>47</sup>*37th Tank Battalion Diary*, (NA), p.14. and *The Fourth Armored Division From the Beach to Bavaria*, p. 121, and Reppa, p. 16.

<sup>48</sup>Abrams once told a reporter he usually did not ask about the enemy situation. "If I plotted the German divisions on my map, I'd be too frightened to move." Although the quote was intended in part for good copy, it also conveys some feeling about how commanders in World War II often operated without detailed intelligence pictures. Collie Small, "The Rat Chase to the Rhine," *The Saturday Evening Post*, as reprinted in *4th Armored Division, What They Said About the Fourth Armored Division*, (Landshut, Germany: Herder-Landshut, 1955), p. 37.

<sup>49</sup>Baron, Baum and Goldhurst, p. 22. Such movement planning was not always the case. When CCB was assigned a tentative mission of securing a bridgehead across the Rhine near Koblenz at the beginning of March, the unit allocated four alternate routes to subordinate units. See *After Action Reports - 37th Tank Battalion*, (NA).

<sup>50</sup>On page 22, Baron, Baum and Goldhurst quote Major Stiller as saying Task Force Baum would get whatever air support it needed - weather permitting. But aside from the an air strike at the rail yard, the column received no protection from the air.

<sup>51</sup>*Notes on Task Force Baum*, (NA), p. 13 and "The Hammelburg Affair," p. 20. Abe Baum says these maps were not even standard military topographical maps but rather German road maps. Abe Baum Interview.

52 "The Hammelburg Mission," p. 27.

53 Although it was not mentioned in the historical record as a consideration at the time, an article in the Geneva Convention stipulates that once a soldier is captured he is no longer eligible to fight. If this article influenced decision makers at the time, it would provide a strong motivation to avoid arming the POWs after freeing them.

54 "The Hammelburg Affair," p. 20.

55 POW Roger Shinn, who experienced the confines of more than one *stalag* in Germany, commented that Hammelburg was not a particularly well off camp. "...at Hammelburg the Germans could never spare fuel to heat water for anything less urgent than delousing." The food situation at *Oflag XIII* was very bad. American officers who evacuated *Oflag LXIV* in Szubin, Poland (before Russians liberated it) and marched across east Germany said they had lost weight *after* arriving in Hammelburg. Roger Shinn, *Wars and Rumors of War*, (Nashville: Abingdon, 1972), p. 129-131.

56 *37th Tank Battalion Diary*, (NA), p. 14.

57 Abe Baum Interview.

58 Harold Cohen stated he and Abrams referred to themselves as "real estate agents" while capturing territory in France and Germany. Harold Cohen Interview.

59 Charles B. MacDonald, *A Time for Trumpets: The Untold Story of The Battle of The Bulge*, (New York: Bantam, 1984), pp. 529-532. See also Sorley, pp. 68-81.

60 This impression is shared by several authors, including Roger Shinn, who was in direct contact with task force members during the camp liberation. Shinn, p. 143

61 *The Fourth Armored Division From the Beach to Bavaria*, p. 119 and *Notes on Task Force Baum*, (NA), p. 13.

62 "General Patton's Mistake," p. 126, and *The Fourth Armored Division from the Beach to Bavaria*, p. 121.

63 Rudolf von Gersdorff, "The Final Phase of the War," Typescript, *Foreign Military Study A-893*, U.S. Army Europe, 20 March 1946, p. 17.

64 *37th Tank Battalion Diary*, (NA), p. 15.

65 Frankel and Smith, p. 144. See also *The Fourth Armored Division From the Beach to Bavaria*, pp. 121-122.

66 Baron, Baum and Goldhurst, pp. 110-111.

67 *Notes on Task Force Baum*, (NA), p. 1. Frankel and Smith, p. 146.



<sup>68</sup>Baron Baum and Goldhurst, pp. 115-118.

<sup>69</sup>Toland, p. 289 and Frankel and Smith, pp. 146-147. See also *Notes on Task Force Baum*, (NA), p. 1 and *The Last Offensive*, p. 282.

<sup>70</sup>*The Mighty Endeavor*, p.510. The former commander of *Seventh Army*, General Felber, was replaced by General Obstfelder as retribution by the High Command for Felber's failure to prevent the allies from seizing the bridge at Remagen two weeks earlier. Gersdorff, *MS A-893*, pp. 17,20. Ironically, this same event resulted in William Hoge's promotion to brigadier general and command of the 4th Armored only five days before the German *Seventh Army* change of command.

<sup>71</sup>"The Hammelburg Affair," p. 24.

<sup>72</sup>*Notes on Task Force Baum*, (NA), p. 1 and Reppa, p. 16.

<sup>73</sup>This account summarizes descriptions of the episode in Toland, p. 289 and Baron, Baum and Goldhurst, pp. 123-125. See also Frankel and Smith, p. 147. Unknown to the task force when it fired at the trains was the fact that they were scheduled to transport a German division closer to the front. "The Hammelburg Affair," p. 23.

<sup>74</sup>*Notes on Task Force Baum*, (NA), p.1.

<sup>75</sup>Baron, Baum and Goldhurst, p. 128.

<sup>76</sup>*Notes on Task Force Baum*, (NA), p. 1-2, Reppa, p. 18, "General Patton's Mistake," p. 129, and *The Last Offensive*, p. 282.

<sup>77</sup>Barum later told Army interviewers, "There were none [alternate routes] selected in advance and it delayed us for a while until we reorganized...." *Notes on Task Force Baum*, (NA), p. 7.

<sup>78</sup>Baron, Baum and Goldhurst, p. 132. Some writers consider the ambush on the west side of the Saale River a stroke of good fortune for the Americans. Had the Germans waited to blow the bridge when half of the task force vehicles were across, the unit would have been separated with little chance of reuniting. Soldiers east of the river would have been subjected to withering fire from an entire division's worth of small arms, machine guns, and anti-tank weapons. In addition, soldiers defending the *oflag* established their defensive positions oriented west, expecting Task Force Baum to approach the garrison by way of Gemunden. The troops were later surprised to see the column appear from the north (on their flank). For a better explanation reference Frankel and Smith, p. 147.

<sup>79</sup>Toland, p. 290 and Baron, Baum and Goldhurst, pp. 134-135. The latter account differs from the first in that it states Langendorf was informed by one of the task force members of his true location, and it was this revelation which prompted a hasty retreat by Langendorf and his team.

<sup>80</sup>*Notes on Task Force Baum*, (NA), p. 2 and "General Patton's Mistake," p. 129. The enemy prisoner of war told Baum of the presence of one *panzer* division (later identified as the *2nd Panzer Division* - which was in Gemunden) and another infantry division in the immediate area. Reference Reppa, p. 18. See also *The Fourth Armored Division From the Beach to Bavaria*, p. 128-129.

<sup>81</sup>"General Patton's Mistake," p. 127 or *Notes on Task Force Baum*, (NA), pp. 6,13.

<sup>82</sup>Baron, Baum and Goldhurst, pp. 138-139 and Oldinsky, p. 14.

<sup>83</sup>*The Last Offensive*, p. 282.

<sup>84</sup>*Notes on Task Force Baum*, p. 13.

<sup>85</sup>"General Patton's Mistake," p. 129 and *Notes on Task Force Baum*, p. 2.

<sup>86</sup>Baron, Baum and Goldhurst, pp. 143-146.

<sup>87</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 142.

<sup>88</sup>"The Hammelburg Mission," p. 28 or "The Hammelburg Affair," p. 24.

<sup>89</sup>The description of the exchange at Eschenbach is a summary of accounts of this event in the following sources: Frankel and Smith, p. 150; "The Hammelburg Affair," p. 24; *The Mighty Endeavor*, p. 510; Baron, Baum and Goldhurst, pp. 157-163; "The Hammelburg Mission," p. 28; and *Notes on Task Force Baum*, (NA), p. 2.

<sup>90</sup>Bruce Jacobs, *Breakthrough: The Story of the 4th Armored Division*, (Washington, D.C.: US Army Center for Military History, 1956), *Notes on Task Force Baum*, (NA), pp. 2,9, and *The Fourth Armored Division From the Beach to Bavaria*, p. 130.

<sup>91</sup>Joseph Carter, *The History of the 14th Armored Division*, (Atlanta: Love, 1945).

<sup>92</sup>Reppa, p. 18.

<sup>93</sup>Baron, Baum and Goldhurst, p. 166.

<sup>94</sup>Reppa, p. 19. General von Goeckel had asked superiors for permission to move the POWs on 23 March, fearing the allies would soon overrun Hammelburg. The *oflag* commander's desire to relocate the prisoners was no doubt motivated by a 10 March warning from the *Oberkommando der Wehrmacht's* General Jodl which said in part: "All prisoners of war have to be lead back. Every prison camp commander who allows one prisoner of war to fall into the hands of the enemy will lose his head." See Kurt Anger, "Report on Military Area XIII - PW's Matters From February to 1 May 1945," Typescript, *Foreign Military Study B-226*, US Army Europe, 23 April 1946, p. 4.

<sup>95</sup>Toland, p. 291 and Clarence R. Meltesen, *Roads to Liberation From Oflag 64*, (San Francisco: Oflag 64 Press, 1990), p. 391.

<sup>96</sup>Prisoner of war Vic Kanner's memoir describes the reaction in this manner:

The camp was a scene of wild joy as all our dreams of liberation suddenly and dramatically came true....It was a glorious feeling as we marched over the trampled down fence to the waiting tanks and halftracks....Everything that had gone before rushed crazily through our heads as this was the climax, the peak, the moment that we had hesitatingly dreamed and prayed for through every waking minute....Meltesen, p. 395.

Roger Shinn's recollection is equally moving:

We felt emotion in our throats. It was not only the glorious hope of freedom. For with this, perhaps even more than this, was the feeling that someone had come after us, that after months when we had not mattered, someone cared enough to come and get us. It felt wonderful to be Americans.

Shinn, p. 139.

<sup>97</sup>*The Fourth Armored Division From the Beach to Bavaria*, p. 132.

<sup>98</sup>Baron, Baum and Goldhurst, p. 177. On 26 March 1945, prisoner John C. Wood, Jr. reported the POW strength in *Oflag XIIIIB* at 1492 prisoners. Meltesen, p. 390. POW Robert Reppa said a contributing factor to the downfall of Task Force Baum was, "...the lack of organization and leadership among prisoners who questioned, grumbled and did not organize quickly to facilitate the return." Reppa, p. 19

<sup>99</sup>Oldinsky, p. 129, Baron, Baum and Goldhurst, p. 176, and Toland, p. 295.

<sup>100</sup>POW Roger Shinn later wrote that he looked to Colonel Goode for advice but found none. "What are you going to do, sir?" Shinn asked. "I am going with the vehicles," Goode replied, "I think I have done my duty." Shinn, p. 141.

<sup>101</sup>Waters was wounded during the camp liberation; shot in the leg by a guard (who did not know General von Goeckel had already surrendered) as he walked toward the fence with an American flag to greet the task force. Meltesen, p. 391.

<sup>102</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 392.

<sup>103</sup>Baron, Baum and Goldhurst, pp. 174-175.

<sup>104</sup>German Major General Kurt Anger, who oversaw POW operations in *Wehrkreise XIII*, identified this omission as an important mistake which made regaining control of the compound much easier. See Anger, *MS B-226*, p. 4. POW Clarence Meltesen said that at *Oflag LXIV* in Poland, maps were hidden by prisoners in case of an opportunity to use them. No such measures were in place at *Oflag XIII*. Meltesen, p. 406.

<sup>105</sup>Shinn, p. 141. Prisoner Robert Reppa described the problems at the garrison which followed liberation in a paper he wrote at the Armor Officer Advanced Course: "The lack of food, weapons, maps and compasses prompted most of the men [to return] to a place about which they knew: the stockade." Reppa, p. 21

<sup>106</sup>Toland, p. 295. One senior lieutenant colonel among those who returned to the barracks bitterly labeled the rescue mission a "Buck Rogers stunt." Shinn, p. 141.

<sup>107</sup>Baron, Baum and Goldhurst, pp. 175,179,186.

<sup>108</sup>Toland, p. 294, and "The Hammelburg Mission," p. 29. In a phone conversation, Abe Baum acknowledged some frustration in not being able to better control the situation, especially his own troops. Abe Baum Interview.

<sup>109</sup>"The Hammelburg Mission," p. 29 or "The Hammelburg Affair," p. 27. General Rudolf von Gersdorff believed that without the tank destroyers, there may not have been sufficient anti-armor capability to prevent the column from breaking out of the Hammelburg region. Gersdorff, *MS A-893*, pp. 19-20

<sup>110</sup>Baron, Baum and Goldhurst, pp. 151-152.

<sup>111</sup>This map has been slightly altered to depict the task force moving first through Hessdorf and then Hollrich. The original map in the book shows the Task Force Baum moving in the opposite direction (through Hollrich and then Hessdorf), a sequence that differs from most other accounts of the raid.

<sup>112</sup>Baron, Baum and Goldhurst, pp. 182-183. POW Walter Gill found a space on a halftrack. But after seeing the vehicle's gas gage and learning how far they had to travel, he knew the task force was in trouble. Meltesen, p. 395.

<sup>113</sup>Reppa, p. 23. Had Task Force Baum attempted to return on the route from which the came, they would have discovered that German troops earlier destroyed six bridges after the task force crossed them, and established ambushes near these obstacles. *Notes on Task Force Baum*, (NA), p. 14.

<sup>114</sup>"The Hammelburg Mission," p. 30.

<sup>115</sup>*Notes on Task Force Baum*, p. 3.

<sup>116</sup>This account of Task Force Baum's actions was compiled from information in Toland, p. 297, *Notes on Task Force Baum*, (NA), p. 3, and Reppa, pp. 21-22. There is another explanation of the breakout attempt which differs slightly from this description. The alternative view holds that two separate reconnaissance probes were sent out by CPT Baum and that these elements cleared a path all the way to Hollrich before the main body moved from the *oflag*. The latter account cites incidents of enemy contact in reversed order - with the unit first encountering road blocks in Hollrich and next the ambush in Hessdorf, before retiring to Hill 427. Reference Baron, Baum and Goldhurst, pp. 191-205. Both versions of events were constructed on the basis of information from key participants in the raid, including CPT Baum. I am ultimately more persuaded by the first account, which represents the consensus opinion near the time of the raid and was developed from interviews and reports not intended for public release. The latter account, developed by reconstructing events years later for a book, is more complete and specific.

<sup>117</sup>Oldinsky, p. 129, "The Hammelburg Mission," p. 28, and Toland, P. 297.

<sup>118</sup>See Meltesen, p. 397, and Reppa, p. 24. Martin Blumenson put the figure at 65 *kriegies* who stayed with Task Force Baum on Hill 427. "The Hammelburg Mission," p. 28. Frankel and Smith put the number between 60 and 65. p. 153.

<sup>119</sup>Both Kenneth Koyen and Martin Blumenson claim that the halftracks destroyed on the *Reussenburg* were set on fire. If their information is true, flames on the hillside would certainly have made it easier for German troops to pinpoint the task force's location in the dark, facilitating their deadly attack the next morning. See *The Fourth Armored Division From the Beach to Bavaria*, p. 134 and "The Hammelburg Mission," p. 30

<sup>120</sup>Frankel and Smith, p. 154 and Meltesen, p. 399.

<sup>121</sup>*Notes on Task Force Baum*, (NA), p. 3. This third message created a great deal of confusion in the 4th Armored Division headquarters. For some time, division leaders believed the unit was returning and out of harm's way. Baum's radio man was likewise confused - he understood the mission was not yet complete, and consequently not "accomplished." The 10th Armored Infantry Battalion log for 29 March 1945 includes the entry, "...we received word that Task Force Baum had reached its objective and was on its way back with a large group of prisoners." *10th Armored Infantry Battalion Dairy*, (NA), p. 256.

<sup>122</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 3.

<sup>123</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 3 and Reppa, p. 25.

<sup>124</sup>Frankel and Smith, p. 154 and Meltesen, p. 399.

<sup>125</sup>*Notes on Task Force Baum*, (NA), p. 4 and Frankel and Smith, p. 155.

<sup>126</sup>*The Fourth Armored Division From the Beach to Bavaria*, p. 135.

<sup>127</sup>Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, Michael Howard and Peter Paret ed. & trans. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976), p. 119.

<sup>128</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 117-118, 140.

<sup>129</sup>All roadblocks in the area around the Lager were formidable, but some were more impenetrable than others. Those in the vicinity of Hessdorf and Hollrich (where the task force tried to reach the highway) included not only officer candidates from Ansbach with *panzerfaust*, but Tiger tanks as well. On the other hand, barricades near Hundsfield (which an American reconnaissance probe had pinpointed and bypassed) were manned only by dismounted engineers. Baron, Baum and Goldhurst, pp. 191-192. Had security elements been in place to warn Baum that the task force was surrounded by roadblocks, he could conceivably have employed his troops and vehicles more

effectively by attacking the weaker barrier at Hundsfield, and avoiding the stronger position at Hollrich.

<sup>130</sup>Baron, Baum and Goldhurst, pp. 229-232, 245.

<sup>131</sup>Notes on Task Force Baum, (NA), p. 4.

<sup>132</sup>Carter, no page number. See also *Notes on Task Force Baum*, (NA), p. 5.

<sup>133</sup>*The 37th Tank Battalion Diary*, (NA), p. 2, Frankel and Smith, p. 156, or "The Hammelburg Affair," p. 22.

<sup>134</sup>*The Last Offensive*, p. 284.

<sup>135</sup>*The Patton Papers: 1940-1945*, p. 676.

<sup>136</sup>Patton, p. 286.

<sup>137</sup>Baron, Baum and Goldhurst, pp. 253-255.

<sup>138</sup>Reppa, p. 26. These casualty figures may be slightly misleading in that Abe Baum believes some of those listed as missing eventually turned up in friendly territory (which would make the overall picture somewhat better), and that the numbers do not reflect Hammelburg prisoners killed or injured during the liberation and escape (which would make the total casualties higher). Abe Baum Interview.

<sup>139</sup>"General Patton's Mistake," p. 130.

<sup>140</sup>Geoffrey Perret says Patton is reported to have worried that the press corps would turn Hammelburg into another slapping incident. However, news of the President's death lifted his spirits. "What the hell!" Patton remarked. "With the President's death you could execute buggery in the streets and get no further than the fourth page." See William B. Simpson (Burg Interview), Eisenhower Library, Abilene, KS as quoted in Geoffrey Perret, *There's A War To Be Won: The United States Army in World War II*, (New York: Random House, 1991), p. 445.

<sup>141</sup>*The Patton Papers: 1940-1945*, p. 676.

<sup>142</sup>Oldinsky, p. 18.

<sup>143</sup>Reppa, p. 27.

<sup>144</sup>*The Patton Papers: 1940-1945*, p. 667. See also Oldinsky, p. 13.

<sup>145</sup>Meltesen, p. 412.

<sup>146</sup>*The Patton Papers: 1940-1945*, p. 675.

<sup>147</sup>Patton, p. 275.

<sup>148</sup>Jacobs, and *The Fourth Armored Division From the Beach to Bavaria*, p. 141.

<sup>149</sup>"General Patton's Mistake," p. 19.

<sup>150</sup>Reppa, p. 27.

<sup>151</sup>Harold Cohen Interview.

<sup>152</sup>"The Hammelburg Affair," p. 30.

<sup>153</sup>Frankel and Smith, p. 141.

<sup>154</sup>*The Patton Papers: 1940-1945*, p. 666.

<sup>155</sup>*The Last Offensive*, p. 264.

<sup>156</sup>Province, p. 229. General Bradley declared in a press release on 24 March that U.S. forces could cross the Rhine anywhere without aerial bombardment or an airborne operation. The release noted Patton had crossed the night of 22 March at Oppenheim without even an artillery prep. This announcement provides insight as to the overwhelming allied superiority along the front. *The Last Offensive*, p. 273.

<sup>157</sup>Dyer, p. 27.

<sup>158</sup>The dispositions of *Seventh Army* subordinate units is summarized from Gersdorff, *MS A-893*, pp. 17, 20-22.

<sup>159</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 29-34.

<sup>160</sup>*Ibid.*, 15-16.

<sup>161</sup>*The Last Offensive*, pp. 373-374. Driving his army north after multiple Rhine crossings, Patton cut *behind* elements of the German *LXXXV Corps* who had turned too late to escape across the Main River. Consequently, the strength of this corps in *Seventh Army's* northern wing was significantly depleted, making Third Army's subsequent drive northward much easier.

<sup>162</sup>The *36th Division* did not assume responsibility for the Aschaffenburg region until 28 March. Gersdorff, *MS A-893*, pp. 16,22.

<sup>163</sup>"The Hammelburg Affair," p. 24, and Gersdorff, *MS A-893*, p. 19.

<sup>164</sup>Gersdorff, *MS A-893*, p. 24.

<sup>165</sup>*10th Armored Infantry Battalion Diary*, (NA), p. 255, *After Action Reports - 37th Tank Battalion*, (NA), and Reppa, p.26.

<sup>166</sup>For a synopsis of the Third Army advance from the Rhine see Brenton G. Wallace, *Patton And His Third Army*, (Harrisburg, PA: Military Service Publishing Company, 1951), pp. 180-195. By the time Patton's lead element reached the Werra River, Third Army was abreast of First Army (to the north) and threatened to outrun its flank units. Consequently, Eisenhower and Bradley saw the need to slow Third Army until Lieutenant General Courtney Hodges had First Army at full speed again. However, information from a prisoner about a major communications complex in the vicinity of Gotha convinced the generals to allow Patton to continue to that point. Not only did Third Army units find a command center and tunnel network in nearby Ohrdurf, but they also discovered the first of the notorious Nazi death camps in the area. For the complete narrative read *The Last Offensive*, pp. 376-378.

<sup>167</sup>Oldinsky, p. 18.

<sup>168</sup>Gersdorff, *MS A-893*, p. 24.

<sup>169</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 21-22.

<sup>170</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 24.

<sup>171</sup>*The Last Offensive*, p. 374.

<sup>172</sup>Carter, no page number.

<sup>173</sup>For an overview of some of the information Patton was receiving from his intelligence section about the time of the Hammelburg raid see Province, pp. 220-242.

<sup>174</sup>Blumenson cites Patton's diary. *The Patton Papers: 1940-1945*, p. 666.

<sup>175</sup>Clausewitz, p. 563.

<sup>176</sup>Wes Gallagher, "Tiger Jack's Spearheads," *Liberty Magazine*, as quoted in *What They Said About the Fourth Armored Division*, p. 14.

<sup>177</sup>Baron, Baum and Goldhurst, p. 111.

<sup>178</sup>*The Mighty Endeavor*, p. 568.

<sup>179</sup>Stiller's exposure to enemy fire "for the thrill of it" was not necessary. Generals commonly sent their aides to the front for a brief period so they could decorate them, but Stiller had served with Patton as an enlisted man in World War I. Moreover, Stiller was on one of the boats to cross the Rhine under fire several nights prior. He had plenty of "thrills" under his belt. Baron, Baum and Goldhurst, p. 23. Consequently, Stiller's explanation to Baum is highly suspect. In a September 1967 letter to the Army's Chief of Military History, General Creighton Abrams revealed for the first time that Patton's aide disclosed to him



(Abrams) and 4th Armored commander William Hoge that Waters was at Hammelburg and Stiller was going on the raid to identify and bring back Patton's son-in-law. See Oldinsky, p. 16.

<sup>180</sup>Nat Frankel characterizes the Hammelburg affair as ultimately an "aberration" of Patton's character. Frankel and Smith, p. 159. Charles MacDonald calls the Hammelburg raid an "extravagance" Patton permitted himself after crossing the Main River. *The Mighty Endeavor*, p. 509.

## BIBLIOGRAPHIC ESSAY

The majority of the research for this paper was conducted at one of three facilities: 1) The National Archives branch in Suitland, Maryland; the U.S. Army Center for Military History in Washington, D.C.; and the U.S. Army Military History Institute at Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania. For background and secondary source materials I relied upon the Paul H. Nitze School for Advanced International Studies (SAIS) library in Washington, D.C. and Van Noy Library in Fort Belvoir, Virginia.

The paper primarily rests on World War II documents from the National Archives. The most important of these are in box 24186 (*Notes on Task Force Baum*) which contains an interview with Captain Abe Baum about the Hammelburg raid shortly after his return to friendly lines. A list of documents which were valuable sources of first hand information follows below in decreasing order of importance:

*Notes on Task Force Baum.*

*10th Armored Infantry Battalion Diary: 18 July 1944 - 30 June 1945.*

*37th Tank Battalion Diary: 1 January 1945 - 4 March 1946.*

*After Action Reports - 10th Armored Infantry Battalion: July 1944 - May 1945. Box*

*After Action Reports - 37th Tank Battalion: September - November 1945 and February - May 1945.*

*Journals: 10th Armored Infantry Battalion, August 1944 - March 1945 and May 1945.*

*Reports of Operations: 10th Armored Infantry Battalion.*

*After Action Reports - Combat Command B, 4th Armored Division: 1 January - 10 May 1945.*

All of these documents can be found in Records Group 407.

The Center for Military History has a small but valuable file of information about the raid. More importantly for this paper, the center was an excellent source of knowledge about U.S. and German organizations and operations in World War II. Robert Reppa's (a Hammelburg POW) personal account of the raid is most interesting. Charles MacDonald's *The Last Offensive* is a definitive work on the last phase of the war in Europe and has a lengthy discussion of the Hammelburg mission. Christopher Gabel's pamphlet on the encirclement at Nancy, France nicely summarizes the organization and tactics of the combat command in 4th Armored Division. Worthwhile references from the Center for Military History include:

Reppa, CPT Robert B.. "*That Raid on Hammelburg.*" Unpublished Essay for Advances Class, The Armored School, May 1948. See permanent file HRC 384.5: Aerial Attacks and Raids - Hammelburg.

MacDonald, Charles B. *The United States Army in World War II, The European Theater of Operations: The Last Offensive*. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1973.

Gabel, Christopher R. *The Fourth Armored Division in the Encirclement of Nancy*. Ft. Leavenworth, KS: Combat Studies Institute, US Army Command and General Staff College, 1986.

Mitcham, Samuel W., Jr. *Hitler's Legions: The German Army Order of Battle, World War II*. New York: Stein and Day, 1985.

Jacobs, Bruce. *Breakthrough: The Story of the 4th Armored Division*. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Army Center for Military History, 1956.

The U.S. Army Military History Institute (USAMHI) has the most impressive compilation of material relating to the Hammelburg mission. This library is also very user friendly. Research staff maintain updated working bibliographies of everything in their facility regarding a large number of topics - among them the Hammelburg raid. Information about Hammelburg is classified at USMHI by type. There are many good general accounts of the raid. The best among them is *Raid!* by Richard Baron, Abe Baum and Richard Goldhurst. Martin Blumenson and Frederick Oldinsky have also published excellent articles about the mission. I recommend the following general accounts in order:

Baron, Richard, Major Abe Baum and Richard Goldhurst. *Raid! The Untold Story of Patton's Secret Mission*. New York: Putnam, 1981.

Oldinsky, Frederick E. "Patton and the Hammelburg Mission." *Armor* 85 (Jul - Aug 1976): 13-18.

Blumenson, Martin. "The Hammelburg Mission." *Military Review* XXXV (May 1955): 24-31.

Toland, John. *The Last 100 Days*. New York: Random House, 1966.

Blumenson, Martin. "The Hammelburg Affair." *Army* 15 (Oct 1965): 16-30.

MacDonald, Charles B. *The Mighty Endeavor: American Armed Forces in the European Theater In World War II*. New York: Oxford, 1969.

The personal accounts of what happened at Hammelburg come from a diverse group of sources, including soldiers who took part in the mission, the memoirs of senior officers linked to the mission, and prisoners from *Oflag XIII*. In addition to a fine a general account, *Raid!* is also a strong personal account of the mission. Roger Shinn and Clarence Meltesen provide fascinating insights about life inside the prison camp. And it is interesting to compare the distinct differences in memory of generals Patton and Bradley about authorization and organization for the raid.

Meltesen, Clarence R. *Roads to Liberation From Oflag 64*. San Francisco: Oflag 64 Press, 1990.

Shinn, Roger L. *Wars and Rumors of War*. Nashville: Abingdon, 1972.

Blumenson, Martin. *The Patton Papers*. 2 vols. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1974.

Bradley, Omar N. *A Soldier's Story*. New York: Henry Holt and Co., 1951

Patton, George S. Jr. *War As I Knew It*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1975.

Waters, John K. *Oral History Transcript*. U.S. Army Military History Institute Archives (See Volume II, pp. 270+)

One cannot appreciate the context in which the Hammelburg raid occurred without a review of what was happening inside and outside 4th Armored Division at the time. Unit histories provide such information, even if they are not always entirely accurate. Kenneth Koyen's saga of the 4th Armored has a chapter dedicated to Task Force Baum. Nat Frankel's book on 4th Armored is also very good. Joseph Carter's work on the 14th Armored Division gives the only detailed account of how that unit finally liberated *Oflag XIII*.

Koyen, Kenneth. *The Fourth Armored Division From the Beach to Bavaria*. Munich: Herder, 1946. 117 - 142.

Frankel, Nat, and Smith, Larry. *Patton's Best: An Informal History of the 4th Armored Division*. New York: Hawthorn, 1978.

Carter, Joseph. *The History of the 14th Armored Division*. Atlanta: Love, 1945.

Dyer, George. *XII Corps: Spearhead of Patton's Third Army*. Baton Rouge, LA: Army & Navy Publication, 1947.

But the most valuable material uncovered at USAMHI were captured German documents which clearly record the impressions and actions of key German officers in response to the raid and Third Army's advance. These documents make an important contribution to the historical record but have not been consulted (to my knowledge) by other authors writing about Hammelburg in the past.

Gersdorff, Rudolph von. "The Final Phase of the War." *Foreign Military Study A-893*. US Army Europe, 20 Mar 1946.

Anger, Kurt. "Report on Military Area XIII - PW's Matters From February to 1 May 1945." *Foreign Military Study B-226*. U.S. Army Europe, 23 April 1946.

Of the libraries I used for background research, the Van Noy Library at Fort Belvoir has a good military reference section on World War II. Most helpful to me, however, was Lewis Sorley's biography of Creighton Abrams.

Sorley, Lewis. *Thunderbolt - From the Battle of the Bulge to Vietnam and Beyond: General Creighton Abrams and the Army of His Times*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1992.

Province, Charles M. *Patton's Third Army: A Daily Combat Diary*. New York: Hippocrene, 1976.

Perret, Geoffrey, *There's A War To Be Won: The United States Army In World War II*. New York: Random House, 1991.

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*Battle: True Stories of Combat in World War II*. Saturday Evening Post Collective ed.. Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1965.

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4th Armored Division. *What They Said About the Fourth Armored Division*. Landshut, Germany: Herder - Landshut, 1945.

The SAIS library was used to research information from newsprint and old periodicals. The items I found of benefit for this paper include:

Koyen, Kenneth, "General Patton's Mistake.: *The Saturday Evening Post* 1 May 1948: 18-19+.

"Costly Prison Drive Explained By Patton." *New York Times* 6 Oct 1945, 9:8,

Narvaez, Alfonso A. "Gen. John Knight Waters, 82; Fought in World War II and Korea." *New York Times* 13 Jan. 1989, B5:4.

"Nazi Camp Victims: Colonel Waters, Son-in-Law of Patton, Wounded as he Tries Break to Guide Rescuers." *New York Times* 8 April 1945, 22;1.

Finally, interviews I conducted with Harold Cohen (in person) and Abe Baum (by phone) completed the research for this paper. Because both men were deeply involved in the Hammelburg mission, their insights helped me gain a clearer picture of the event and better evaluate instances of contradictory evidence in the historical record. This last piece of research would not have been possible without the cooperation and patience of both individuals, in addition to a generous research grant from the Strategic Studies Program at Johns Hopkins' Paul H. Nitze School for Advanced International Studies (SAIS) in Washington, D.C..