

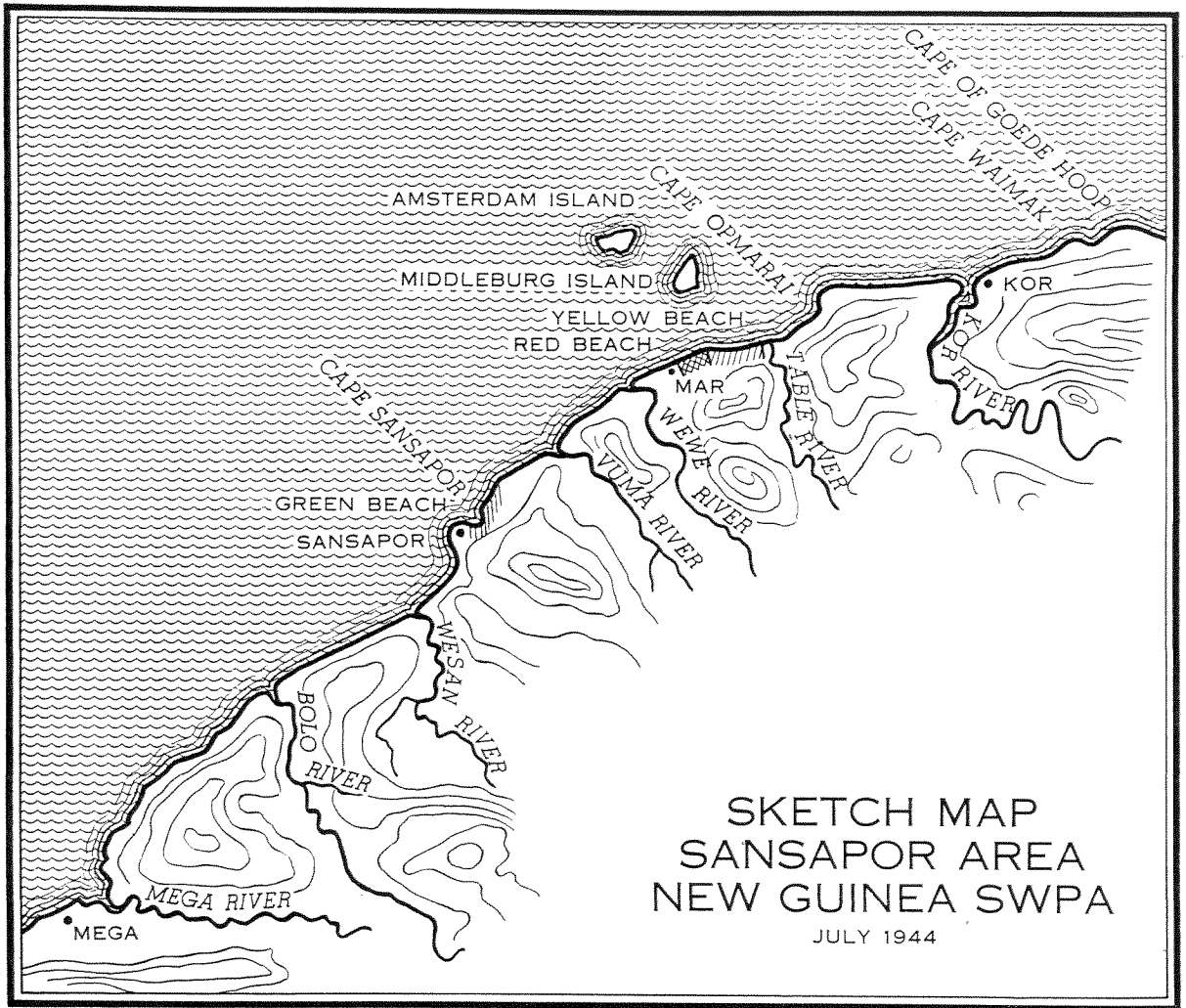
artillery battalions, who continued their constant pounding of the enemy positions, firing battery or battalion salvos into Hill 265 every three or four minutes during the entire 24-hour period. On the morning of 9 July Div Arty fired 76 battalion volleys between 0800 and 0925. Under cover of this thundering fire, Company B of the 1st Infantry, supported by tanks and artillery, worked its way up a draw on the western slope and was joined by the 1st Battalion of the 63d, which had scaled the cliffs on the northeastern slope. The remaining Jap resistance on the hill was ended by assault teams carrying flame throwers and bazookas that sealed or seared the enemy-held caves and pillboxes.

There were many men on Hill 265 who proved themselves, among them Technical Sergeant Charles S. Hiller of the 1st, who after killing several Nips in a strongly fortified position, climbed the turrets of the supporting tanks, directing effective fire on the positions while himself under heavy enemy fire; Private First Class Howard A. Gregg of the 63d, who, though twice wounded while administering first aid to a wounded comrade, finished the aid job,

then crawled back to his position to fire clip after clip of ammo into the enemy strongpoint his platoon was attacking; Staff Sergeant Clausie Grimm and Corporal Ora L. Moyer exposing themselves to constant enemy fire the better to direct the fire of their self-propelled howitzers; Private First Class Mike M. Persa of the 63d who, despite his own wounds, stayed in position when his platoon was ambushed and covered the withdrawal of the entire platoon and the evacuation of the wounded; Captain William J. D. Vaughan of the 1st who led a supply party through enemy territory to an isolated rifle company that was badly in need of medical supplies, water and ammo, wiping out considerable enemy resistance all along the route to reach the hard-pressed company.

On 12 July, the same day that Company A of the 1st advanced beyond Sawar Drome, the relieving division arrived in Maffin Bay, and the Sixth pulled back to prepare for the next operation. This time the 6th Infantry Division would go into action as a combat-hardened outfit. The Red Star was now the badge of proud, experienced fighting men.





CHAPTER 10

CAMPAIGN ON THE SANSAPOR COAST

IMMEDIATELY after the mounting of the Cyclone Task Force for the Noemfoor Island operation, the 6th Division took over the beaches and port facilities of Maffin Bay when the Typhoon Task Force was organized in the same area on 10 July 1944. Commanding General of the Task Force was Major General Franklin C. Sibert, Commander of the Sightseeing Sixth, whose mission was to effect a landing on the extreme western tip of New Guinea, secure a beachhead in the landing area, and seize and occupy additional areas deemed necessary for the construction of air and naval facilities to be used in the assaults on Borneo, Halma-hera and the Philippines.

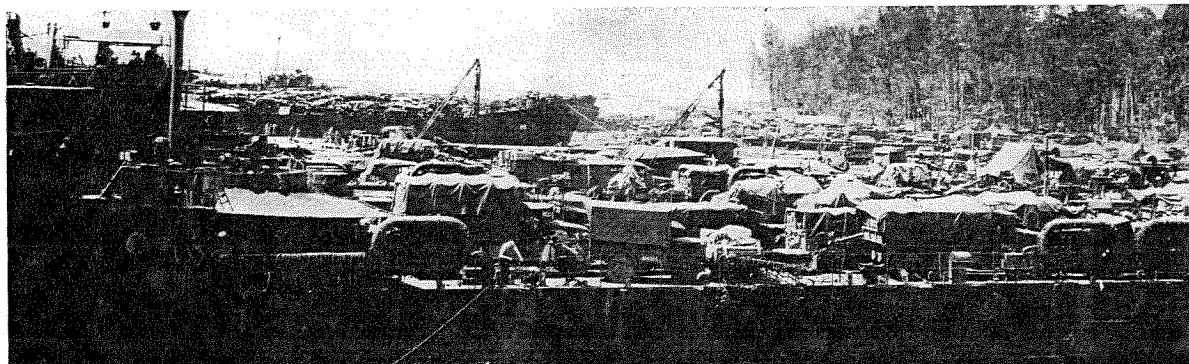
The decision was made to land the 1st Infantry on an 800-yard front east of the Wewe River. The landing on 30 July was described by *Yank* magazine as "The Picnic at Sansapor," but no assault landing is a picnic to tense infantrymen crowded in LCVs and LCMs approaching an enemy-held shore and expecting momentarily the crack of rifle fire or the blast of mortar shells. The landing was only slightly opposed, but the assault troops did not relax until the entire beachhead had been secured. Only then did the 1st Infantrymen turn to each other and grin.

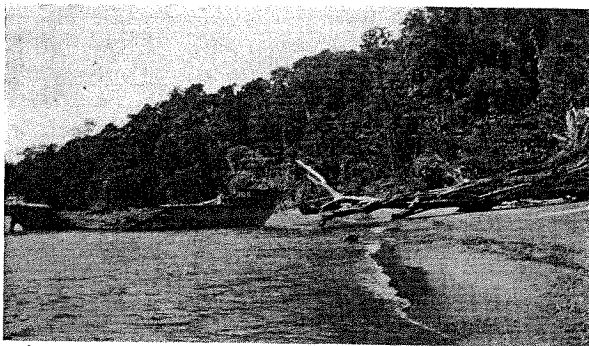
The following account of the landing was found in a Jap diary: "At daybreak, sighted enemy convoy of fifty ships between Amsterdam Island, Middleburg Island and the mainland. Convoy consisted of several warships and aircraft carriers. It seems that they entered the bay last evening. Kept observing them while breakfasting. Enemy aircraft first sighted at 0800 hours headed toward Sorong. At approximately 0830 Lockheeds and Consolidateds flew over

bay. Cruisers circling at distances of 1500 to 2000 meters offshore while landings were made between Middleburg and the Cape. Left seashore for Chicado (Mtn) at 0900 hours. Informed by native of village of Mar. Plan to have breakfast, lunch and dinner there. Desire to observe enemy activity more closely, but due to anxiety, must leave in hurry." The writer did not make sufficient haste in departing the objective area. He was one of the few Nips killed on D-day.

Thirty minutes after the initial landing, the 6th Cavalry Reconnaissance Troop was launched in amphibious tanks from an LST to secure Middleburg Island. No opposition was encountered either there or on Amsterdam Island, which the troopers secured by a shore-to-shore operation. The 1st Field Artillery Battalion and attached antiaircraft artillery units took up their positions near the beach on the mainland, while the 543d Engineer Boat & Shore Regiment, augmented by the 1st Battalion of the 63d Infantry, took charge of the beach and unloading details. Despite the soft sandy beach and the dense vegetation that bordered it, the unloading of the five APDs, fifteen LCIs and eight LSTs in the initial operation proceeded rapidly and efficiently.

On D plus 1 the 3d Battalion, 1st Infantry, which had landed in reserve and moved to an assembly area near the Wewe River, embarked in LCMs for an assault landing north of Cape Sansapor. The landing area was gutted by fire from four destroyers and three LCI(R)s (rocket boats) when the battalion landed in a column of companies at 0845. By 0950 the battalion had reached its objective without opposition. At 1030 a platoon of Cannon Com-





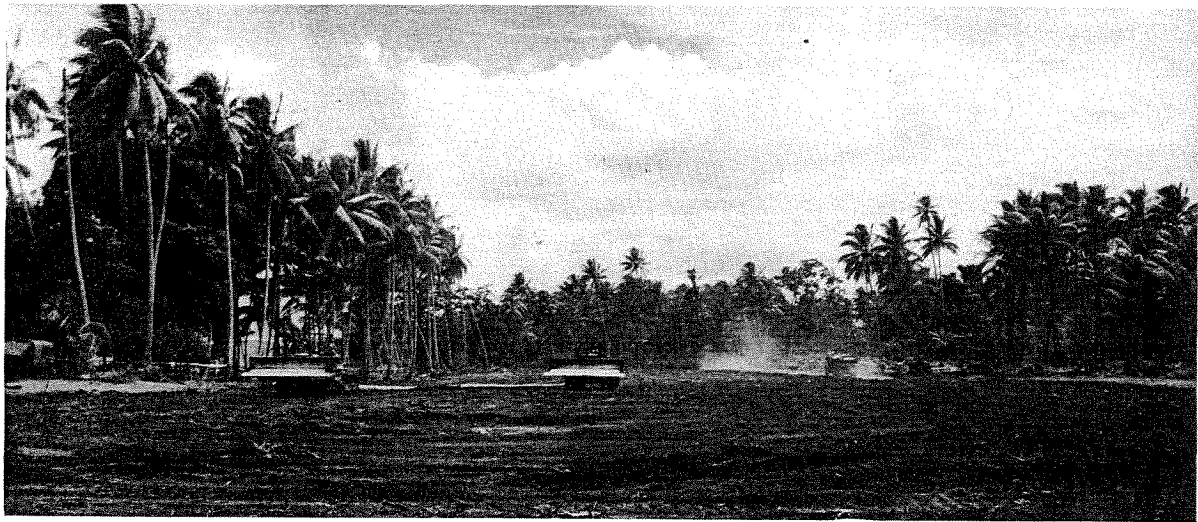
pany and the 675th AAA MG Battery were landed south of the Cape near the village of Sansapor, where hastily abandoned prepared food and other supplies indicated the recent presence of approximately a hundred of the enemy.

Intensive patrolling, which was to be continued throughout the Sightseers' stay at Sansapor, was initiated by all elements, and lists of enemy casualties began to mount slowly as stragglers were picked off by the doughs. The Sansapor area lay astride the main escape route used by Japs trying to leave the vulnerable Manokwari area for safer Sorong, and almost all of the enemy killed or captured by Red Star men during our stay in the area were disillusioned sons of heaven making a break for safety.

During the next few weeks, while airfields and naval PT bases were being carved out of the jungle, ambushes were established just beyond the camp areas and patrols were kept active. A reconnaissance patrol led by Lieutenant Howard P. Zellers, although deserted by their native guide and detected by the enemy, obtained much valuable information on trails, supply points and bivouac areas deep within enemy territory. When faulty communication prevented contact with the evacuating craft, Zellers swam out through the heavy surf and treacherous cross currents off an enemy-held beach until he could attract the attention of the crew and direct the successful evacuation of his patrol.

Another patrol led by Staff Sergeant Edward J. Konon encountered a group of about fifty Nips near the Kor River. Although only eight strong, the patrol attacked with Konon heading a frontal assault and Sergeant Wasiea J. Abraham leading a group to the flank. Although wounded in the thigh, Abraham led his men throughout the attack until the remaining Nips broke and ran. Meanwhile Private First Class Olan L. Balch, manning an automatic rifle, had crawled forward to the patrol leader, whose gun had jammed. While covering Konon and enabling him to reload his piece, Balch killed several Nips and drove the remainder into a draw. There Private Leo W. Bell took over, personally accounting for nine enemy dead.

On 10 August elements of the 2d Battalion, 63d Infantry, and the 53d Field Artillery Battalion, acting on information garnered from a recently-captured POW, moved to an area beyond the Kor River, the artillerymen going into position after a shore-to-shore amphibious move while the doughs marched overland. Objective was a large supply dump known



to be in the area, used as a resupply point for escaping Nips on their way to Sorong. An artillery preparation by the 53d, which lobbed 1800 rounds into the area, drove all the Nip defenders out of their positions, and the doughs of the 63d marched across the river to take the dump against only slight opposition. In addition to huge supplies of food and clothing, the Sightseers found quantities of weapons and ammo, took over a large well equipped radio, and established ambushes that throughout the Sansapor campaign picked off enemy groups and stragglers heading for the supply dump on their eastward journey.

Similar instances of isolated action took place regularly throughout the campaign. Red Star men accounted for over one thousand enemy killed and captured. The enemy loss was relatively small, but American gains were large, for the last major amphibious assault landing on the New Guinea coast had marked the end of the New Guinea campaign and had opened the way for air assaults on the next major objectives of the Pacific forces—the Netherlands East Indies and the Philippines.

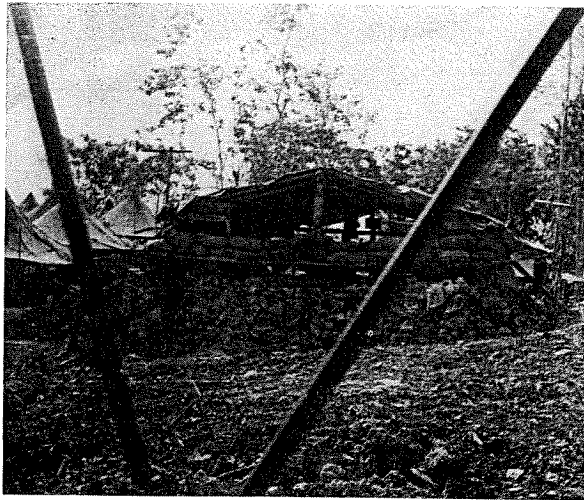
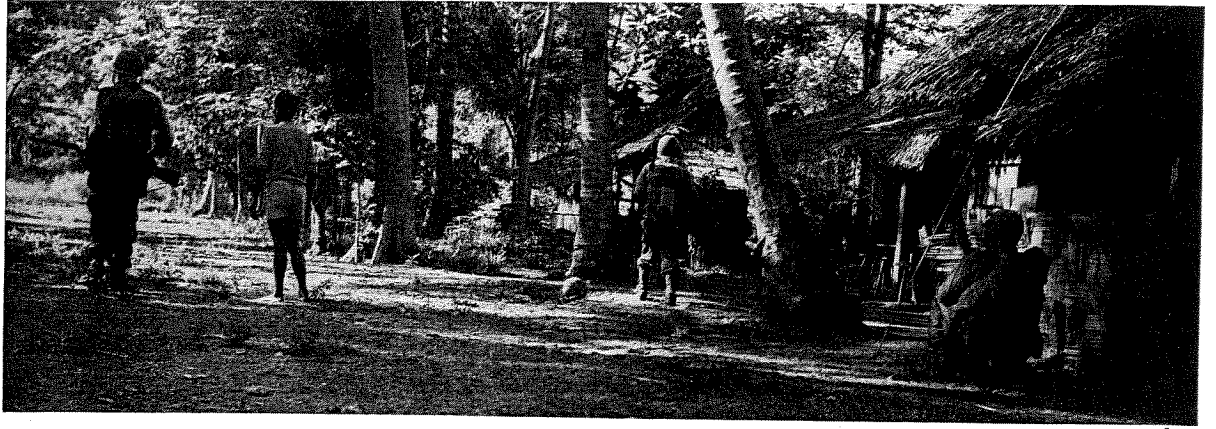
The real battle of Sansapor was directed not against the Japanese but against the tiny red mite that carried scrub typhus. When the first case of



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Co G, 20th Inf -
all mine!

Looking toward the head
of the Co street



typhus was diagnosed on 8 August, immediate steps were taken to combat the dreaded disease. Clothing was impregnated, mite-breeding areas of kunai grass were burned, and the entire beachhead area was sprayed with DDT. Before the disease was brought under control, however, more than 1800 cases had been treated by Red Star medics, who worked untiringly for 24-hour stretches or longer in treating the stricken men. During the epidemic the Clearing Station of the 6th Medical Battalion, with a bed capacity of two hundred, averaged more than three hundred bed patients. Drivers from the medics' motor pool and mess personnel helped in the ward tents, sanitation teams worked overtime on the infected areas, doctors and aid men labored without rest, until finally, during the last week in August, the minute but deadly enemy was defeated.

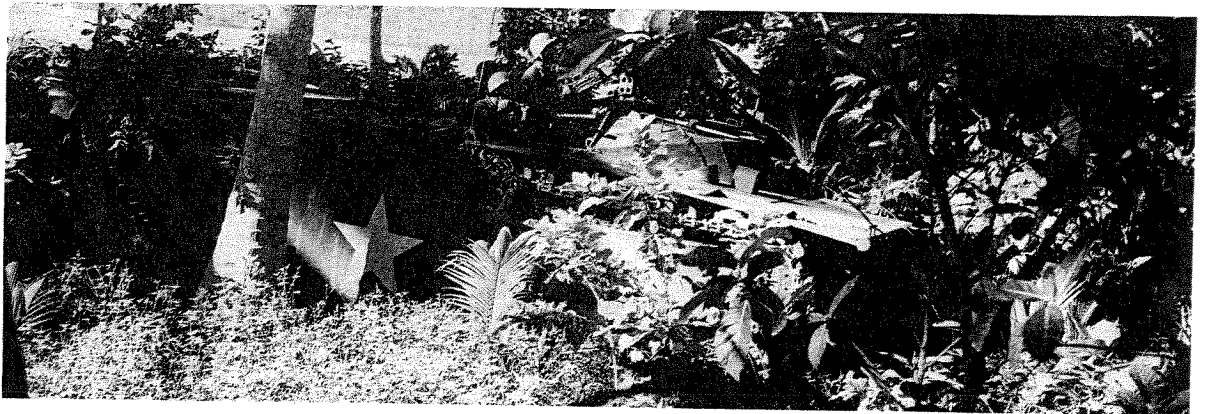
The third enemy that had to be faced and beaten at Sansapor was the jungle. While all Red Star men aided the Division engineers in constructing camp sites out of the tangled mass of vegetation, aviation engineers astounded the sidewalk supervisors, both native and GI, by completing two air strips in record time. The fighter strip on Middleburg Island took shape so rapidly that on 14 August (D plus 15) a B-24 was able to make an emergency landing there. Only a short time later, sleepy Sightseers were shaken out of bed almost every morning by the blast of B-25s taking off from the mainland strip for blows against Borneo, Halmahera, Celebes or the Philippines. C-47s also crowded the airfield, carrying in the long-awaited mail and flying out hospital patients or the lucky few who were Australia-bound on furlough.

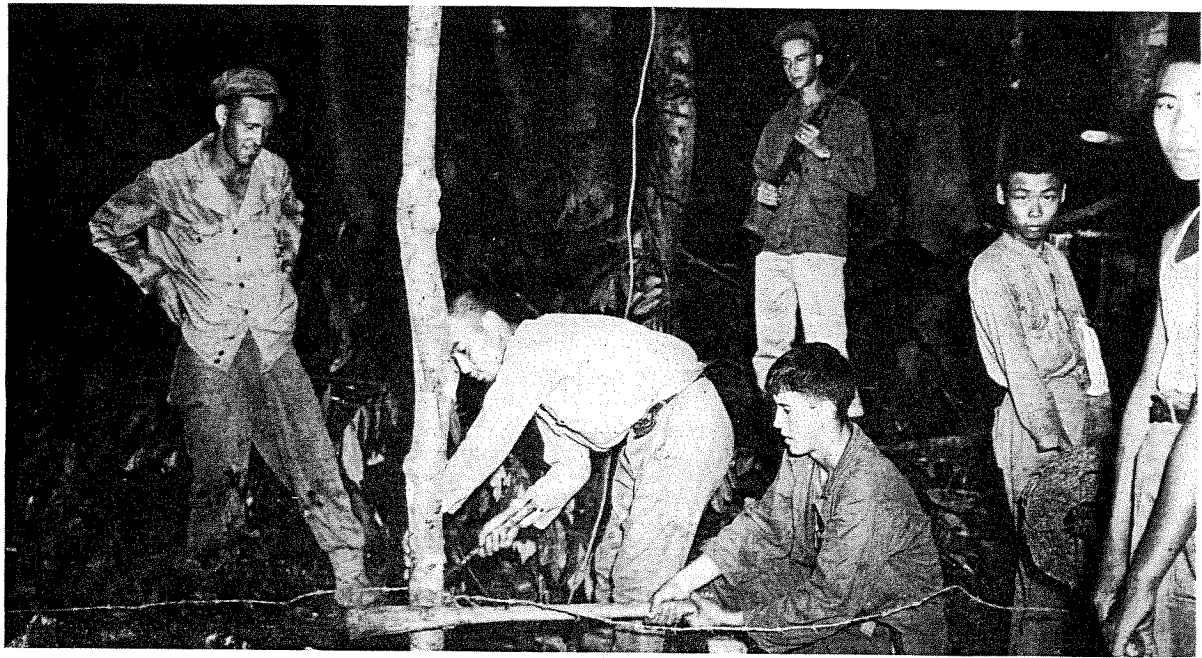
As the neat rows of framed tents began to rise out of the sandy soil, the period of jungle and small-unit training began again, this time with never-to-be-forgotten emphasis on the Able-Baker-Charlie plays that seemed to use T-formations and variations of the Rockne system for combat drill. Daily drill in the formations, plus weekly problems that took the men into the jungles and up the rugged hills that lay behind the camp area soon had the infantrymen keyed up like a trained football squad on Friday night. One day when Major Dwight B. Dickson, 2d Battalion S-3 of the 63d Infantry, was putting Company F through a particularly strenuous test run on the plays, Private First Class Glenn Bell murmured during a break, "They aren't satisfied with having just Able, Baker and Charlie—now we've got to put up with Able, Baker, Charlie and Dickson."



Recreation facilities at Sansapor were limited, but the GIs lost little time in setting out to amuse themselves. Softball and boxing tournaments within and among the units created considerable interest and caused many guilders to change hands. Movies were frequent, though the audience often sat through a show ready to jump and run when an ominous cracking sound indicated that another giant shallow-rooted jungle tree was about to come crashing down in the vicinity. Bare-breasted women and shy smiling youngsters in the native villages provided many interesting shots for Division camera fiends, and many companies set up their inevitable souvenir factories.

Some diversion was also provided by "Washing Machine Charlie," the lone Jap plane that livened up many dull evenings. Red Star men formed a cheering section, usually from the safety of their foxholes, while antiaircraft artillery outfits threw everything but sea shells at the raider. Actual enemy bombing raids were few, though occasionally Nip planes would cause considerable mad scrambling when they





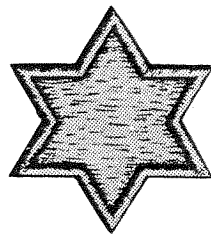
approached the camp from the south, where mountains blocked effective use of the radar, and zoomed over the mountaintop to drop their eggs among a very surprised group of men while the air raid alert signal was still sounding in their ears. During one such raid, an enemy bomber scored a direct hit on the Division CP, killing five officers and men and wounding eight others.

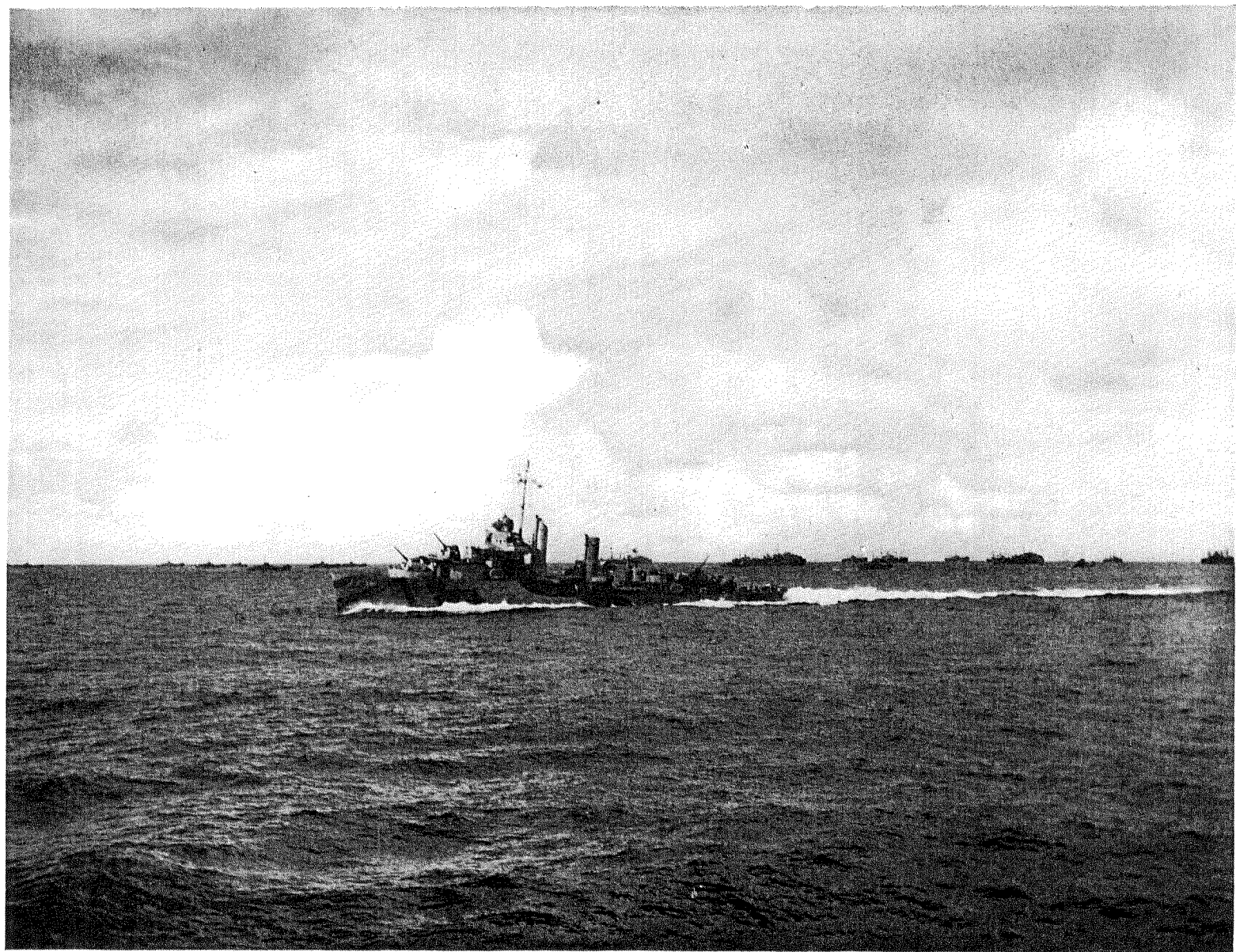
During September and October latrines were filled with rumors that the Division was going to land at Morotai or Palau or Leyte or Borneo, but it became more and more apparent and finally official that Luzon was our goal. During the last two months of 1944 training was intensified and an extensive orientation course on the Philippines was given. Division personnel familiarized themselves with Luzon's maps, customs, terrain, languages, and morals.

The week preceding Christmas was filled with packing, crating, opening of packages from home, and back-breaking work in the holds of the ships

that filled the horizon. On the 24th the Sightseeing Sixth ran a rehearsal ship-to-shore landing, on the 25th they enjoyed an old-fashioned Christmas dinner on shore, and on the 26th they completed the loading. Heavy surf up to fifteen feet in height often brought loading to a standstill and raised havoc with LVTs training for the Luzon landing, but the Division completed its mounting for the operation right on schedule.

Just before pulling out of the harbor on 29 December 1944 Red Star men had the pleasure of watching our AAA gunners shoot Washing Machine Charlie out of the skies, the blazing arc across the blue marking a fitting climax to our stay in New Guinea. There were no tears shed as the Guinea coastline disappeared in the haze, and the men lost no time in turning to card games, books, bunk fatigue, crap games and Philippine orientation lessons as the convoy turned north for another lap of the long journey home.





CHAPTER 11

THE ASSAULT LANDING ON LUZON

NEW Year's Day of 1945 found the 6th Infantry Division sailing in convoy through aquamarine waters on its way to the Jap stronghold of Luzon. The decks and hatches of most of the ships were crowded with men enjoying memories of a home-style turkey dinner while drawing to an inside straight or practicing the pronunciation of *magandang umaga po*. The men on the APA *Calloway* were less fortunate, for there the after-effects of the New Year's dinner filled the sick bay to overflowing with victims of food poisoning. There were no fatalities, but the Sykesmen on the ship will long remember the anguish of watching white-breasted birds that were to have been saved for a pre-invasion snack being thrown to the hungry sharks below.

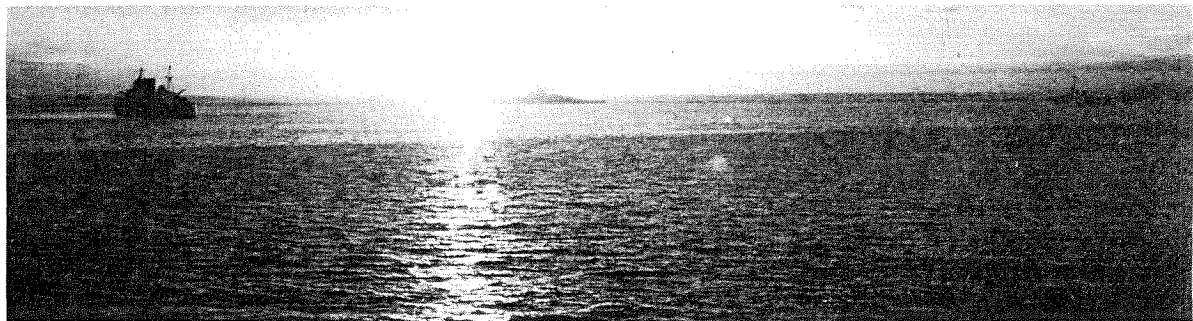
Interspersed with card games, reading of whodunnits from the ship's libraries, and frequent abandon-ship drills were daily orientation lectures on Luzon and its inhabitants, plus the G-2 estimate of Luzon and its conquerors. Red Star men heard about the ancient rice terraces of mountainous northern Luzon, the beauties of Balete Pass, the inaccessibility of Luzon's Spanish-bred women, the wonders of Manila, "Pearl of the Orient," the love of the Filipinos for their American teachers, and the fighting qualities of the Philippine Army soldiers and guerrillas.

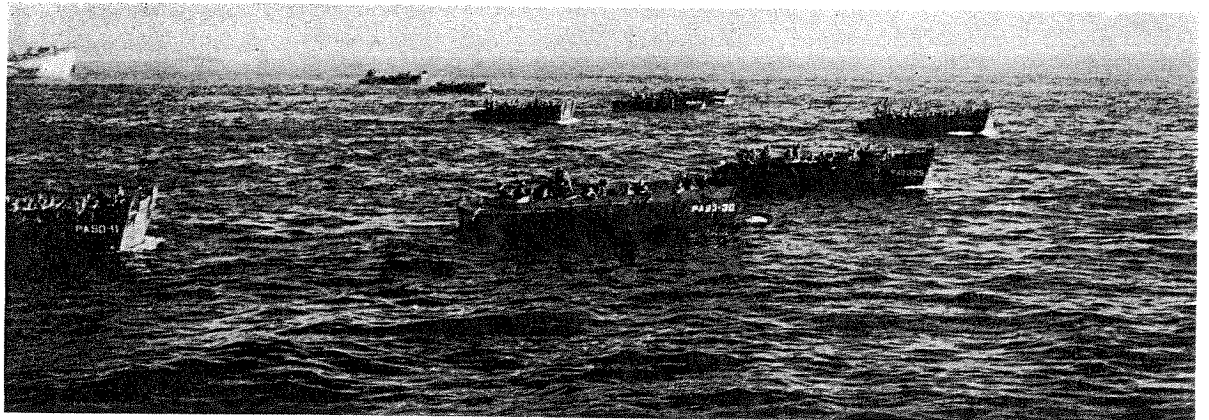
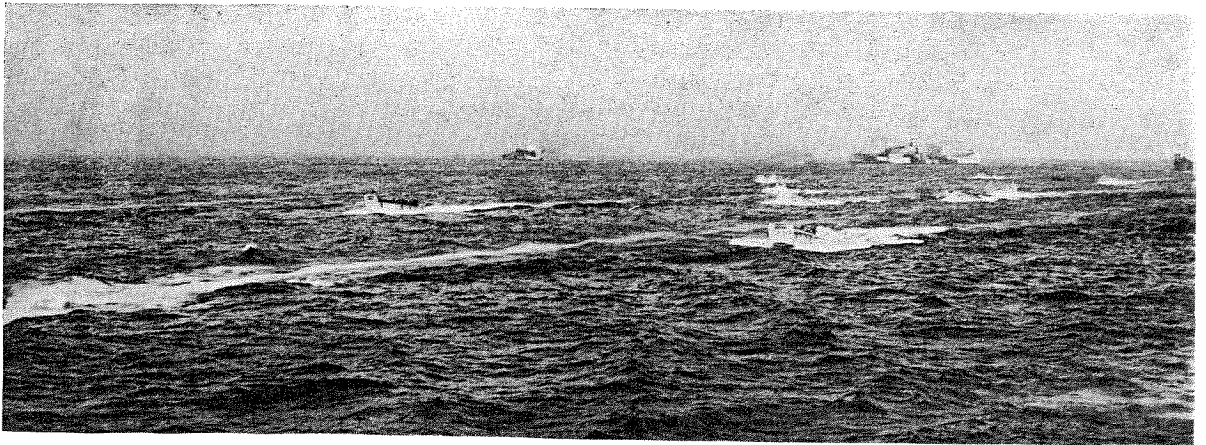
They also learned that they were facing at least 250,000 combat-wise Nips, well armed, well fed and entrenched in well constructed positions and natural caves that had been prepared for the past three years in anticipation of the inevitable counterinvasion. Available intelligence reports indicated that the enemy had probably constructed heavy defenses in the Lingayen Gulf area. There were at least 35,-

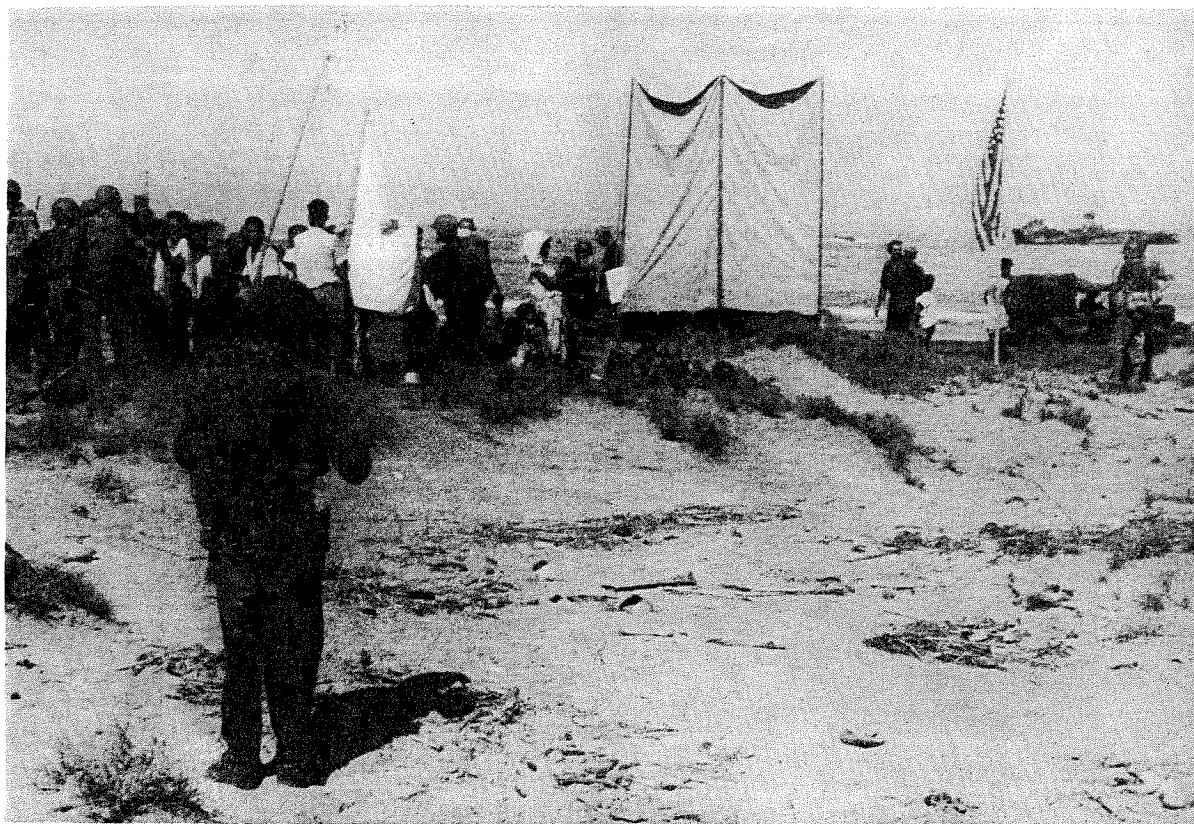
000 enemy troops known to be in the northern part of the great central plain, with 19,000 reserves including the 2d Armored Division capable of reaching the operational area within a short time.

The weakness of the Jap air and naval forces was demonstrated on the trip north. Though the convoy sailed through enemy-dominated waters, there was little interference with the task force or the covering group of cruisers, destroyers and escort carriers. One enemy bomber was shot down by escort planes near Leyte Gulf, but the passage through the narrow Surigao Strait was made without incident. On 5 January two midget subs were contacted, one being sunk and the other driven off by air and destroyer action. That night about fifteen enemy planes flew over the formation, but the tense gunners were ordered to hold their fire and the convoy was not spotted. The Sixth had its first experience with the Kamikaze when a small group of Nip planes contacted the convoy on 7 January while it was sailing through the China Sea. The call to General Quarters sent all troops below where they filled the portholes to watch Navy gunners cover the sky with tracers and ack-ack bursts. Two of the planes were turned into flaming wreckage, but a third banked into a long dive, heading towards one of the LSTs through a curtain of anti-aircraft fire that seemed impenetrable. Men whose duties required that they remain on deck scattered for cover as the suicide plane hit the vessel. Some slight damage was done to the superstructure and several men were hit by flying parts of the disintegrating plane, but the LST continued to hold its place in the convoy.

That night Red Star men who happened to be on deck at about 2300 hours were treated to an im-







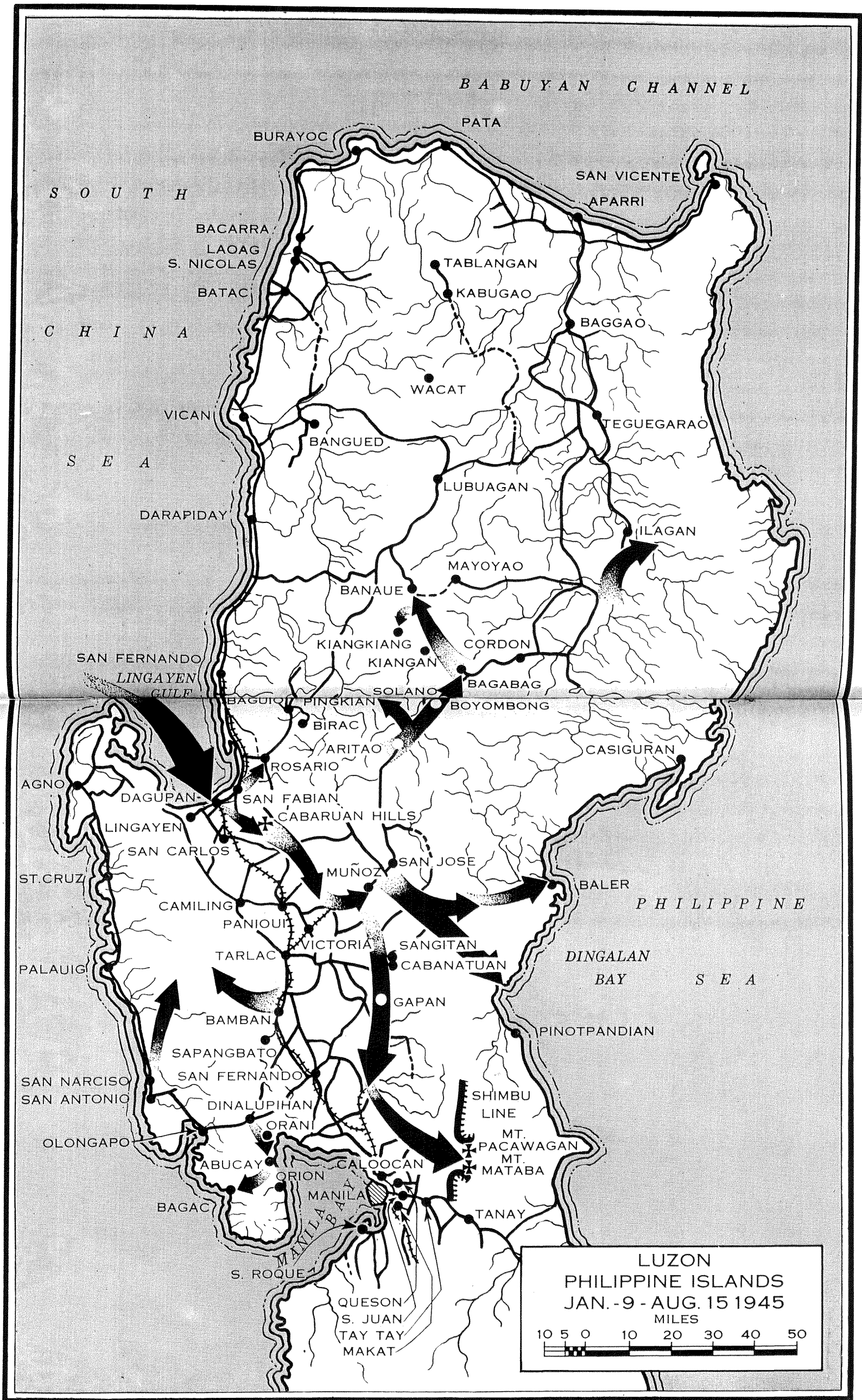
pressive display of naval fireworks. Several miles to the east pinpoints of light, like comets in slow motion, could be seen describing a lazy arc over the blue-black water to erupt into a brilliant flash of red reflected in the low-hanging clouds after it had hit somewhere just beyond the horizon. The flashes came at regular intervals for several minutes, until there was a solid cone of brilliant color. As the men watched, the light suddenly disappeared into the blackness of the night. It was not until the following morning that they learned one of the escort vessels had shelled and sunk a Jap destroyer just off Manila Bay.

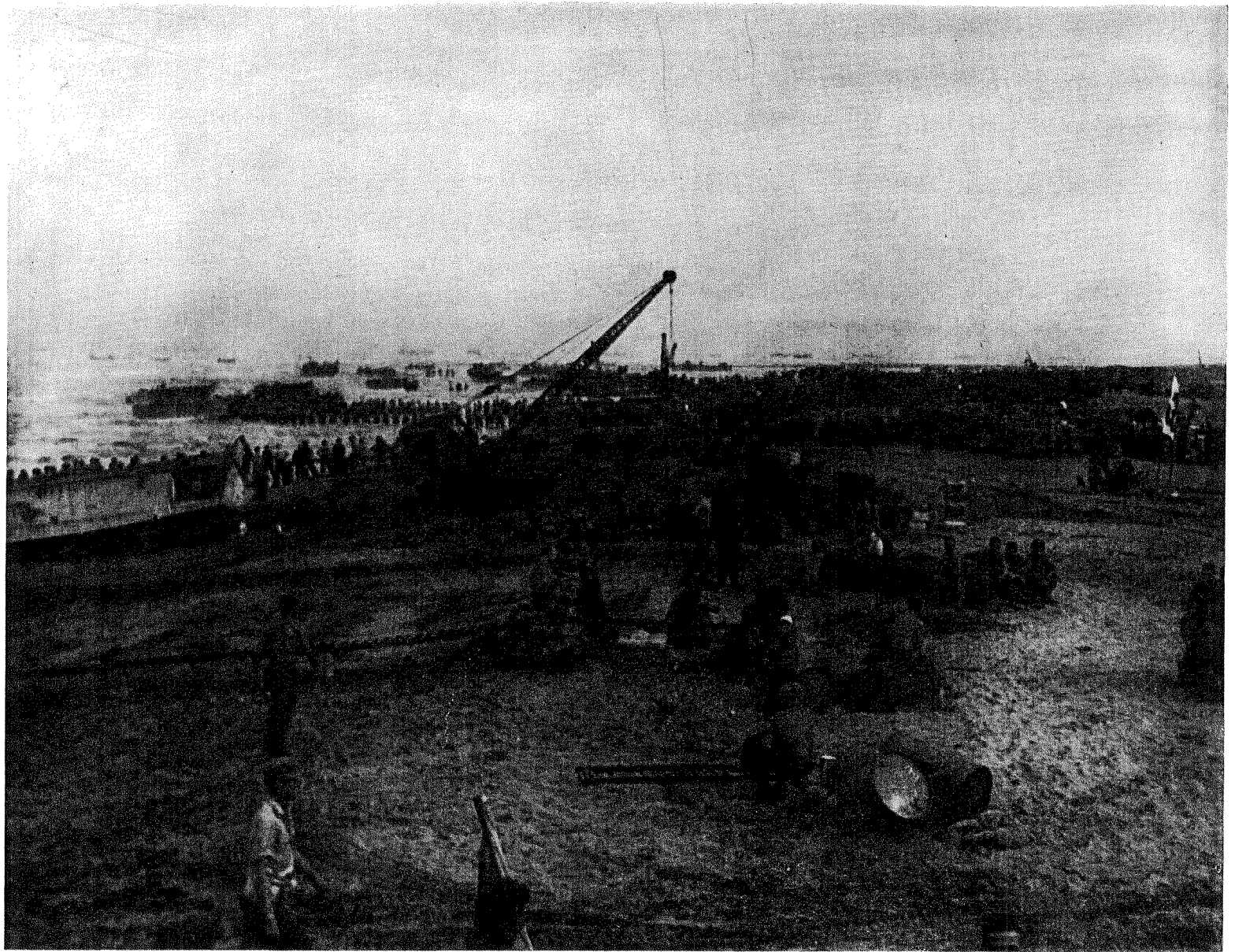
In a dawn attack on the 8th an enemy plane crashed one of the escort carriers in the van of the convoy, while GIs watched another plane make an ineffective bombing run down the line of APAs then suddenly turn and crash into the quarterdeck of the *Calloway* after antiaircraft fire had started the plane smoking. Though the damage to the vessel was superficial, several men, most of them Navy personnel, were killed, and many Red Star men were solemn witnesses to a wartime burial at sea.

In the early morning hours of 9 January the con-

voy steamed slowly into Lingayen Gulf, where flashes of fire and rumbling echoes across the dark water indicated the presence of the naval units that had been shelling the beach area for two days. As the first light of day outlined the land that would soon be a battleground, excited officers and men wearing helmets and life jackets lined the ships' rails to watch the heavy pounding by our battlewagons, the fireworks displays by LCI(R)s, the fast moving destroyers that pumped 5-inch shells into the beach, and the supporting carrier-based planes that circled lazily overhead. This was S-day of the greatest amphibious assault landing yet attempted in the Pacific, but most of the men were too interested in the show being put on for their benefit to worry about the part they would have to play in the next few hours.

At H minus 2 hours and 45 minutes the destroyers, cruisers, battleships and other assorted naval units intensified the bombardment of beach and inland installations. The men were called below for last minute instructions, then started loading into the LVTs, LCVs and LCMs that would take them to the beach. By H minus 1 hour all landing craft had







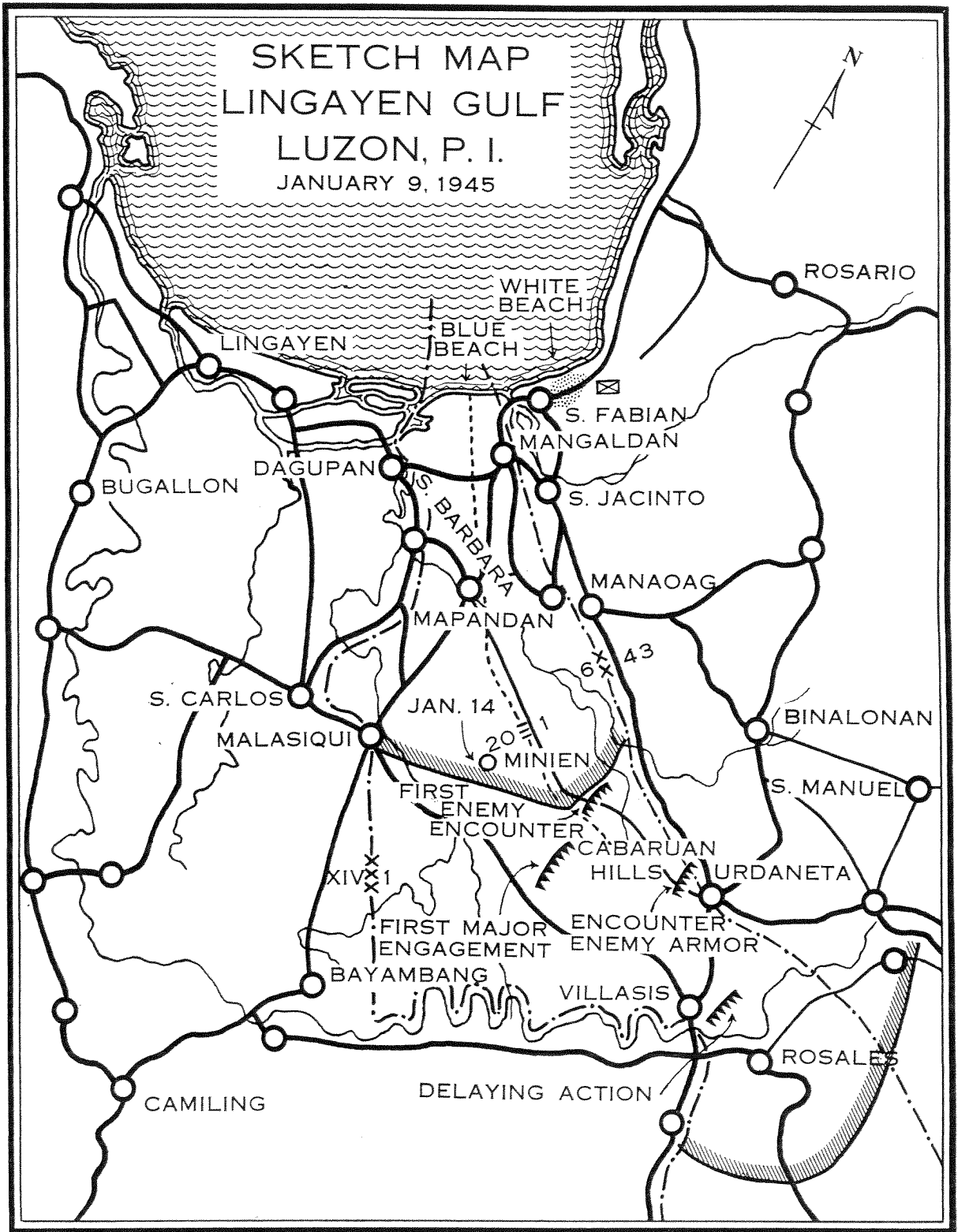
been launched and loaded. While LVTs carrying the first assault troops proceeded to the line of departure, the Vs and Ms moved in ever-widening circles awaiting their turn for the dash to land. Motors idling, the LVTs pitched and tossed in the sea like thoroughbreds straining at the barrier. The waiting men looked at the enemy-held shore that was their objective, noting the heavy surf and the five columns of smoke that mushroomed into the sky where enemy POL dumps had been hit. Then the signal, and the landing craft were off in a roar, cutting a wide swath of white as they streaked for land while tense infantrymen fingered their rifles and wondered. At H-hour (0930) the first five waves of LVTs reached Blue Beach. American troops were once more on Luzon.

The actual landing was an anti-climax. Only a few scattered shots opposed the doughs of the 1st and

20th Infantry Regiments as they moved rapidly inland, staying with the LVTs until the first objective had been secured. They roared through the fish ponds that bordered the beach and across the Binloc River, securing by 1330 a beachhead adequate for the Division's supply dumps. LSTs pulled up to the beach and supplies started moving ashore, while elements of the 6th Recon reached the battered Dagupan Bridge and the leading elements of the 1st and 20th took up positions astride the Mangaldan-Dagupan highway. By dusk on S-day this line was secure and reconnaissance patrols were pushing south to Calasiao and Santa Barbara.

Blue Beach, which extended from the mouth of the Bued River to the Dagupan River, had in the meantime become the scene of intense activity. The 1st and 51st Field Artillery Battalions had come ashore at H plus 54 minutes, set up their 105s and





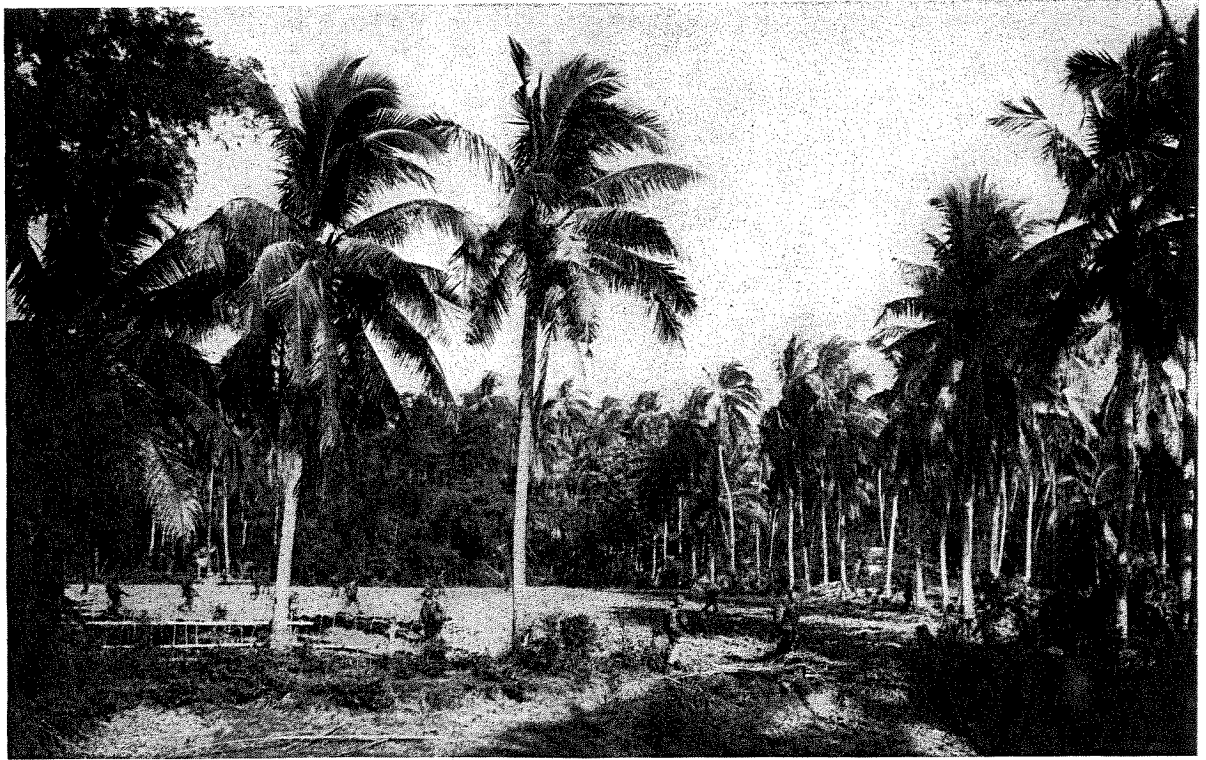


were ready to give direct support to their respective regiments by 1130. The Sykesmen's 3d Battalion, in Division reserve, went into an assembly area west of Binloc and furnished work parties to assist the 543d Engineer Boat & Shore Regiment in unloading vital supplies. Ammo, ration, POL, signal and medical dumps mushroomed quickly, and the engineers moved their Bailey bridge sections ashore and started work on the Binloc River span before night-fall. The Division's Civil Affairs Section set up labor recruiting offices behind the beach and organized three hundred Filipinos for unloading details by early afternoon. Ever increasing numbers of jeeps and trucks raised clouds of dust along the dirt roads behind the beach. Division Headquarters set up its CP at Binloc by 1445. Officers and noncoms roamed the beach trying to locate lost vehicles or equipment. Local policemen chased poorly clad Filipinos along the beach trying to recover Army clothing, food and miscellaneous supplies that they had picked up. Ships in the Gulf, so numerous that they seemed to form a bridge from shore to shore, kept their booms working overtime to empty the holds. LCVs and Ms fought the heavy surf to unload the unending line of supplies and equipment.

Only twice during the late afternoon was the work interrupted by enemy air activity. While the men on shore jumped for their sandy foxholes and slit trenches, a near-sighted suicide pilot dived his plane into one of the battlewagons standing offshore, bouncing harmlessly off the hull of the ship into the sea. A Nip reconnaissance plane provided a show late in the afternoon when it roared over the Gulf and back to shore again, leaving behind it a comet's-tail of tracers and antiaircraft bursts that never quite caught up with the plane. Occasionally the 14-inch naval guns that were hidden in the mountains behind White Beach on our left flank lobbed shells into the Blue Beach area.

When the Red Star men stopped to dig in on the first night ashore, they were a happy lot. Most of them had met English-speaking civilians for the first time in twelve months. They had been offered fresh eggs, chickens and other delicacies by the grateful Filipinos, and many had made the acquaintance of *basi* and *tuba*, the wines of the Philippines. Pretty girls dressed in western clothes had smiled as the troops drove by, and hordes of children had waved madly and shouted "Veectory" at the advancing GIs. The roads were lined with many homes, some of them well built frame or stone houses, that promised pleasant evenings in settings that the men had not enjoyed since leaving Oahu. CPs were surrounded





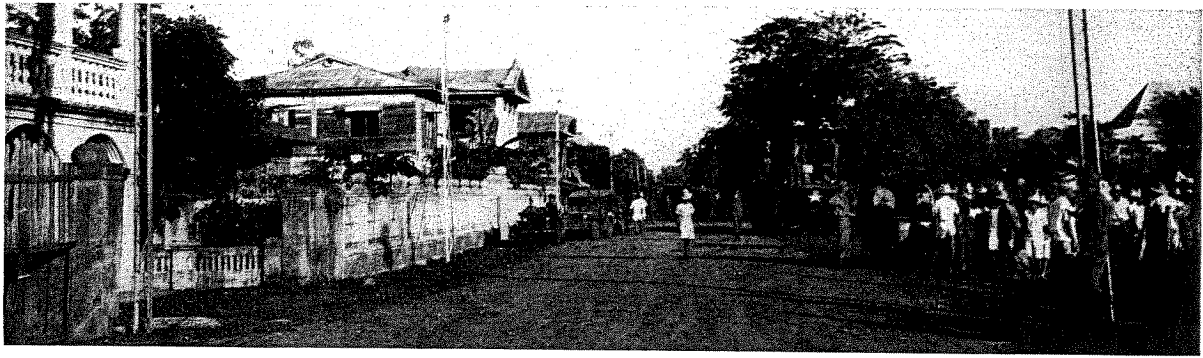
by well tilled ricefields instead of jungles, and in one day the Sightseers had walked across more open ground than they had seen in the entire preceding year. The Red Star was back in civilization, and if the enemy continued to be as elusive as he was on S-day, the men felt that they were really going to enjoy their stay on Luzon.

On 10 January, while the 63d Infantry in I Corps reserve landed on White Beach in the 43d Division sector, the 1st and 20th consolidated their positions, searching out any scattered resistance which might



have been by-passed in the rapid advance. The Red Star engineers worked feverishly on the bridge across the Binloc that would provide the forward elements of the infantry regiments with supplies and supporting weapons. Although hampered by a cave-in, a sneak air raid on the supply dump area, and the heavy surf which prevented the landing of bridging materials from LSTs, the engineers opened the supply line by 1200 on S plus 2 when a fill was completed close by the bridge site. At that hour an armored scout car of the 6th Cavalry Reconnaissance Troop crossed the Binloc River, followed by the Cannon and Antitank companies and the artillery. Before dark both the 1st and the 51st Field Artillery Battalions were in position near Mapandan and Santa Barbara, and all through the night supply trains moved across the river toward the front.

On 12 January the 6th Division ran into the first organized resistance since the landing, when a reconnaissance patrol advancing east along the Santa Barbara-Catablan road ran into concentrated artillery, machine gun and small-arms fire from well concealed positions in the high ground near Minien. At a disadvantage because of the flat terrain, the excellent visibility, the expertly camouflaged positions of the enemy and his superior numbers, the



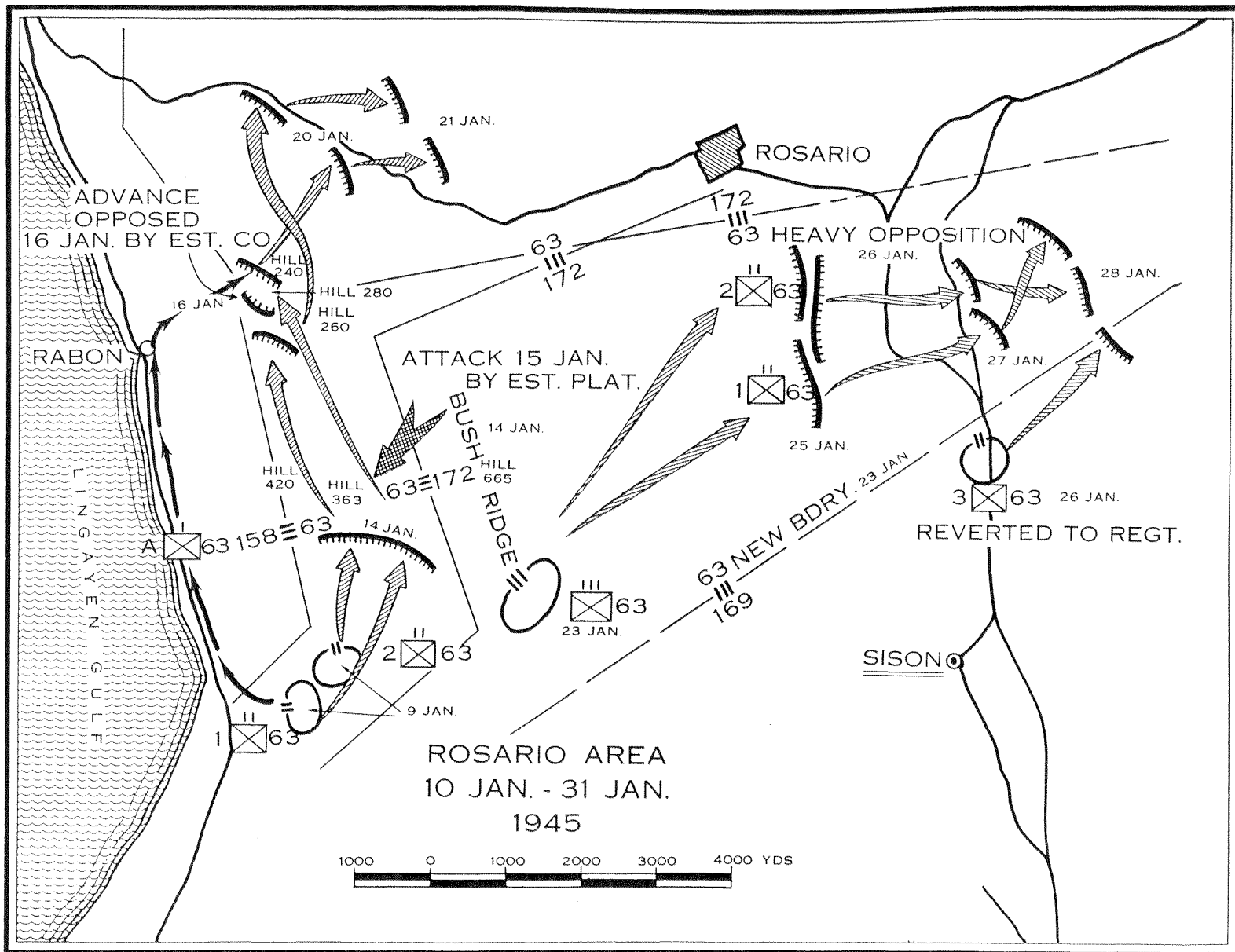
patrol was forced to withdraw. Private First Class Robert L. Cost, a 37mm gunner in one of the armored cars which had received several direct hits by enemy shell fire, remained at his post pouring antitank shells into the enemy emplacements to cover the withdrawal. The withdrawing patrol was also covered by Private First Class James D. Kennedy, who after being ordered to abandon his vehicle and seek cover in a ditch, returned to his car and dismounted a machine gun which he turned on the enemy positions. Meanwhile Private First Class William D. Cook, jeep driver with the patrol, had remained with his vehicle under intense enemy fire to assist in the evacuation of wounded. All three of the reconnaissance troopers were killed by enemy artillery fire before the evacuation could be completed.

On the following day the 2d Battalion of the 1st

Infantry moved against the enemy strongpoint, storming up the high ground and digging out of their deeply entrenched well camouflaged positions a reinforced Jap company left behind as a covering force by the retreating enemy. In the initial assault when his company commander and executive officer became casualties, Lieutenant Arthur B. Bestul, though himself wounded, assumed command of the company and led it through withering machine gun and sniper fire in a successful assault on the enemy positions, refusing to be evacuated for medical treatment until the following morning. By then the mission had been completed, and the line from Catablan to Malasiqui was secured.

With the 3d Battalion of the 20th released from its beach party labors and the Sightseer's main supply road in full operation, the Division was now in readiness for further advances towards the Agno River.





CHAPTER 12

THE PURPLE HEART VALLEY CAMPAIGN

THE Sightseers of the 63d Infantry, 53d Field Artillery, Company C of the engineers and Company C of the medics had relaxed on S-day while the doughs of the 1st and 20th stormed ashore in the assault waves. In Corps reserve for the assault landing, the men of the 63d Regimental Combat Team felt that they might be able to take it easy during the initial phases of the operation. But the 43d Division on the Sightseer's left flank ran into heavy opposition in the form of concentrated mortar and artillery fire. On S plus 1, therefore, the 63d was landed at White Beach to play a major role in the toughest fight of the Lingayen Gulf operation.

After reorganizing at San Fabian, the RCT, minus the 53d Field Artillery which was sent south to the area of the Cabaruan Hills, was ordered to Alacan and was assigned a sector consisting of a north-south corridor between Hills 420 and 665 and extending north on a 2000-yard front to the Damortis-Rosario road. Information on the enemy's strength and disposition in this sector was fairly accurate, thanks in part to the efforts of Captain William J. D. Vaughan of the 1st Infantry, who had been landed on Luzon by submarine on 23 November and had coordinated intelligence activities of the guerrilla forces in the San Fernando area for seven weeks before the assault troops landed at Lingayen.

Elements of the Jap 58th IMB, with an estimated strength of 5,000, were known to be occupying strong defensive positions in the hill area south of the Damortis-Rosario highway, the main defensive position being on the north-south ridge line extending north from Hill 665 west of the Apangat River. Artillery support for the Nip brigade included 105mm howitzers known to be in positions north of the highway, and heavy coastal guns located 600 yards east of Rabon, 1200 yards west of Cataguintangan and northeast of Damortis. In addition, battalion and regimental guns and mortars in large numbers could be expected throughout the area. The enemy was expected to put up a stubborn defense and if forced to withdraw would probably reassemble north of the highway and launch his counterattacks from a prepared position north of Rosario. Throughout the sector the terrain was decidedly advantageous to the defending forces. Steep hills and wooded

draws provided excellent cover for enemy guns and troops, and the opportunities for observation of our movements from OPs on enemy-held high ground assured continuous artillery fire on our troops and supply roads. The 63d was in for a rough battle.

At 0800 on 14 January the 2d Battalion moved out, followed at a distance of 1,000 yards by the 1st Battalion less Company A. They advanced about 3,500 yards during the day, securing Hill 363, their initial objective, drawing only light fire from scattered enemy positions. That night, however, at about 0100 hours the Nips counterattacked from the northeast, hurling a platoon reinforced by mortars and machine guns at the 2d Battalion perimeter. The men hugged the ground or crouched low in their foxholes to escape the heavy enemy fire, while maintaining a steady and accurate stream of fire that repulsed the Nips with heavy losses. At one section of the perimeter, where all but one of the defenders were either killed or wounded, the remaining man, Private First Class William Smith, picked up a light machine gun, stood up in the face of the intense enemy machine gun and mortar fire in order to have a clear field, and fired from the hip so effectively that the enemy attacking that part of the line were either killed or forced to withdraw.

On the following day the going was tougher. The 2d Battalion continued its advance up the valley, this time under heavy artillery concentrations that forced the men to bite the dirt frequently and destroyed their wire lines. When radio became the battalion's only means of outside communication, Staff Sergeant Manuel R. Kaufman was kept busy sending and receiving the information necessary to continue the advance. Refusing to take cover, he remained at his post until killed by an artillery shell. Private First Class John J. Purky in the meantime had volunteered to lay communication lines across terrain that was already pockmarked by shell holes and swept by small arms fire. Under constant fire he ran the lines for more than 2,000 yards, completing the mission before he was killed. After reorganization, the men advanced northward about 1,500 yards, moving through open fields or lightly wooded areas subject at all times to observation from the enemy OPs located on the adjacent hills. The intensity and accuracy of the Jap artillery concentrations first



earned the area its somber nickname—Purple Heart Valley. Behind the 2d Battalion the 1st continued to comb draws and ravines for bypassed stragglers and snipers.

The next objective, about two thousand yards east of Rabon, was attacked by the 1st Battalion, which on the 16th had passed through the 2d Battalion to continue the drive to the north. The battalion assault company, led by Captain Richard E. Hiatt, moved slowly up the hill, taking full advantage of the meager cover against the mortar, artillery and automatic weapons fire that issued from the enemy's concealed emplacements. While holding the company objective to allow the remaining companies of the battalion to pass through the defended area, Captain Hiatt, who constantly exposed himself to the enemy to maneuver his men into covered positions from which they could best pour fire into the strongly fortified enemy positions, was fatally wounded by sniper fire. Despite heavy casualties the battalion continued to advance against the reinforced Nip company that was dug into the hill while Company A, which had been in regimental reserve, trucked along the coastal road to Rabon, then pro-

ceeded east along the unimproved road that led to the objective hill. By dusk the two units had reached the top of the objective and consolidated their positions. During the night both the 1st and 2d Battalions drew heavy mortar fire, while the regimental CP was shelled by artillery and harassed by infiltrating Japs.

The attack continued on the 17th, when the 63d Infantry passed to control of the 158th RCT, the tired Red Star men moving on and on through artillery and mortar fire that never seemed to lessen. The 1st Battalion advanced to the northeast, running into heavy fire from machine guns emplaced in deep ravines. The 2d Battalion fought its way through machine-gun and mortar fire to come up on the right flank of the 1st. The advance again was slow but inexorable. At one point when an assault platoon moving against a steep ridge held by the enemy was stopped by heavy machine guns, Lieutenant Lawrence A. Dowling organized and led a flanking attack that neutralized the enemy fire. Though Dowling was killed by sniper fire, his action freed the platoon to continue toward the objective.

The objectives finally taken, both battalions con-

solidated their positions on Hills 240 and 260, some 1,200 yards short of the Damortis-Rosario highway. That evening one of the company perimeters was attacked by a strong enemy force. Staff Sergeant Michael H. Kania, realizing that a breakthrough was probable unless immediate action was taken, moved his light machine gun from a protected position to high ground from which he laid down an intense volume of fire that caused the enemy to withdraw. When the enemy attacked a second time Kania remained in his exposed position, once more broke up the attack but was killed as the Nips withdrew.

The next three days saw the accomplishment of the regiment's mission. Still encountering heavy opposition, particularly from the large mortars, the veterans of the 2d Battalion fought their way up to the high ground west of Cataguintangan to dominate the heights overlooking the objective highway. In reaching the objective, the 63d for the first time used direct fire from its 37mm antitank guns to destroy enemy fortifications. The men of the antitank company manhandled their guns to commanding ground to enable them to fire point-blank at the Nip pillboxes. Meanwhile the 1st Battalion had continued its advance to seize positions just southeast of Amlang, controlling another point on the all-important highway.

During the last few days of their first mission in Luzon, all men of the Regiment fought off weariness and fear to advance in the face of some of the most intense mortar and artillery fire encountered in the Pacific War. All the doughboys did their job well, but there were some highlights that the men of the 63d will not soon forget.

Staff Sergeant Mike J. Mogab, leading a rifle squad that was pinned down by heavy fire from enemy hilltop positions, worked his way up the rugged grassy slopes to silence a machine gun and kill its crew. Returning for more grenades, he spotted another emplacement and was firing his rifle at it when a machine gun burst from a third position caught him in the chest. Mogab rolled into a ditch and crawled back to his men, refusing to be evacuated until he had pointed out the enemy strongpoints and directed accurate fire on them, eliminating all enemy resistance to the squad's advance.

When half of an assault platoon was killed or wounded by sniper and artillery fire, Staff Sergeant William O. Boss, Private First Class Nicholas W. Houth and Private First Class Zuel S. Yarberr advanced to a point from which they delivered point-

blank fire into a well concealed enemy field artillery position dug into the side of a hill. By neutralizing the position, the three men made it possible to evacuate the wounded and to continue with the advance against the enemy. On the same day, after Lieutenant Norman W. Cooper had led his rifle platoon against stubborn resistance to capture a high enemy-held ridge, he encouraged his men to hold the high ground against a numerically superior enemy while the remainder of the company made an encircling movement to reach their objective. For six long hours, under intense mortar and small-arms fire, Cooper kept his small group in position while personally assisting with the evacuation of dead and wounded from the ridge.

Evacuation of wounded comrades caused the death of Private First Class Henry L. Erickson, who crawled forward to help carry out wounded men who were in need of immediate medical attention after his squad had run into concentrated artillery and machine-gun fire. After carrying several men to safety, Erickson was fatally wounded by a sniper, but succeeded in carrying the last wounded man to a covered position before he lost consciousness. Another man who risked his life to help his wounded buddies was Private First Class John F. Potteiger who, after administering first aid to several wounded men pinned down by artillery fire, dashed across a ridge in the face of grenade and sniper fire to within a few yards of an active enemy pillbox to drag to safety two doughboys of his platoon.

Staff Sergeant Jerry F. McNerney led his squad into position to fire on enemy machine guns that had pinned down a small unit on his left flank, allowing the men to pull back. Then, ordering his own men to withdraw, McNerney, disregarding the fact that he was directly in the crossfire of two machine guns, continued to fire on the two enemy positions until his men had reached cover. When Staff Sergeant W. T. Bain led his squad over rugged terrain in an assault against enemy positions located at the crest of a hill, he turned into a one-man assault team. Though wounded by grenade fragments, he reached the fortifications on the crest of the hill alone. Undisturbed by enemy machine-gun and knee-mortar fire, he lobbed one hand grenade after another into the pillboxes, completely destroying them and their defenders.

During a strong counterattack against a company perimeter, the enemy zeroed in on one of our machine-gun positions with mortar fire, causing the



entire squad to become casualties. Notwithstanding the heavy artillery and mortar fire that covered the area and the vulnerability of the position, Sergeant Okey Williamson crawled forward to the machine gun and put it back in action to repel the counter-attacking enemy. In another part of the hills Private First Class Douglas R. Sonner dodged grenade and knee-mortar bursts to worm his way to the top of a ridge from which he leveled sub-machine-gun fire on the enemy, pinning them down until the remainder of his platoon could reach the crest, fix bayonets and charge the fortified positions.

With all objectives of the regiment's first mission secured, the 63d Infantry could look back at seven thousand yards of bitterly contested terrain that well earned the name Purple Heart Valley. The going had been tough, for while our own artillery and

mortars had been directed at the enemy guns, in most cases it had been necessary to bring direct fire on the Nip's well concealed positions, using antitank guns, self-propelled mounts, bazookas, rifle grenades and hand grenades to blast the entrenched enemy pieces. But, though the 5-day campaign had taken a high toll in Red Star doughboys, the 63d's job was not yet done.

The new objective for the regiment was the high ground east of Highway 3. Enemy infantry was known to have been constructing positions in the general area for at least five months, with tunnels and caves used to the maximum as concealment and cover for troops and artillery. In the hills north of the Damortis-Camp One road there were an estimated 11,000 enemy troops, supported by at least sixty artillery pieces, predominantly 75mm but in-