

MEDITERRANEAN EDITION

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YANK

THE ARMY WEEKLY



10¢
By the men
men in the



STORMING THE PO

Rout in the Valley

When the Germans fled across the Po River, they left behind them miles of wrecked vehicles, acres of ammo and many horses.

By Pfc. WERNER WOLFF
YANK Staff Correspondent

WITH THE 5TH ARMY ON THE PO—With every step toward the Po River there are more signs of the hasty retreat of the Germans. Burned-out German trucks, an ammo dump, exploded and unexploded shells are spread out over wide areas. Italians are cleaning up the fields, putting the shells in neat piles, because they want to plow their ground. Another ammo dump further on toward the Po is still smoldering; the Germans blew it up yesterday morning. People along the road offer wine, and they cheer and wave at the passing Allied troops.

In a town six miles south of the river 1,000 PWs are sitting in the main square guarded by a few GIs of the 88th Division. New Jerries are brought in every hour.

A guard walks up and asks: "Any officers in there?", and one Jerry steps out, looking about 20 years old. As he leaves the others he says to them, "Alles Gute" ("Good luck").

Prisoners shove forward to ask many questions:

"How far is the PW camp from here? Has Berlin been taken? Are the Americans across the Po? Is it true we are going to be sent to Siberia?" Another Jerry answers the Siberia question himself, turns to the guy who asked it and says, "Did you ever believe that?"

A major explains that the 88th Division took 5,280 prisoners in 24 hours, not counting those in front of us on the square, and a guard adds: "That's more than we took the whole year before."

FROM here to the Po, the sides of the roads are littered with tremendous amounts of German equipment. Many trucks and ambulances have been driven into ditches, apparently undamaged. A column of 75 German prisoners, marching in step down the highway, are led by a GI infantryman riding a beautiful chestnut captured from the Germans.

Scores of German vehicles are being driven along the highway, some hauling supplies, others just being "test run" by excited GIs. Some still have the enemy's orange markers on the hoods for airplane identification.

GIs along the road go methodically through abandoned equipment, assisted by Italians.



Italian horses abandoned by Jerrys in their flight across the Po Valley graze under a line of Lombardy poplars.

Everything is there: ration trucks with loaves of dark bread, cases of canned lard, goulash, stewmeat and issue chocolate — very good — trucks with radio equipment, tires, ordnance stuff, full gasoline cans, ambulances and medical supply trucks loaded with drugs. In a nearby field are about 50 horses, some tied to trees, most of them grazing untethered.

In another village, on the south bank of the Po, a whole convoy of smashed-up Nazi trucks are still burning. This is one of the ferry points used by the Germans to retreat across the Po. The central span of the iron railroad bridge has collapsed into the water. It must have been the work of the Air Corps, because there are German signs reading: "To the ferry." A pipeline still runs across the bridge.

TROOPS of the 88th Division are trying to establish a bridgehead at this point. To the left, the 10th Mountain Division has already made the first crossing of the Po, and not far down-stream, E Company of the 351st Regiment, 88th Division, is attempting to follow in boats.

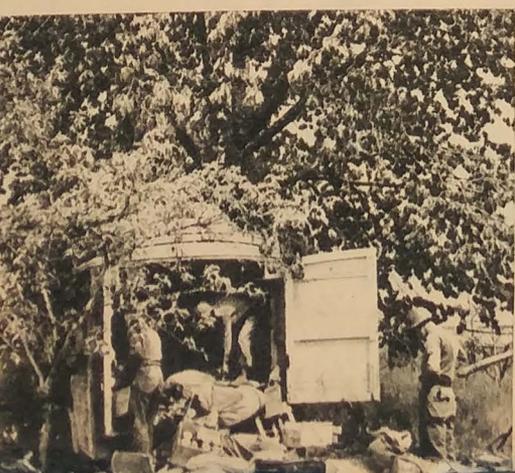
Doughboys are walking towards the river,

using the approaches to the bridge and the high embankment as cover. A 57mm gun is firing under the bridge at a Jerry position on the opposite shore. Smoke shells are dropping around the bridge to hide it from Jerry observation. Tanks are rolling up to the bank, mortars are set up, and the town of Ostiglia, across the Po, begins to smoke under our heavy shelling. Houses in Ostiglia burn fiercely, and a black column of smoke rises into the sky.

MGs just above the dam, on the American side, keep up a steady fire at Nazi dugouts on the other bank. One of the tanks directs fire at a church steeple, where enemy observers are probably watching us. Answering German machine-gun fire strafes the south bank and our men hug the ground. A few horses are running loose along the top of the bank, but nobody pays any attention to them. Platoons keep assembling on the south side, beside the bridge. Some troops—Rangers of the 351st—are already across. The rest of the GIs sweat it out, waiting for orders to jump off after the Rangers. One of them asks:

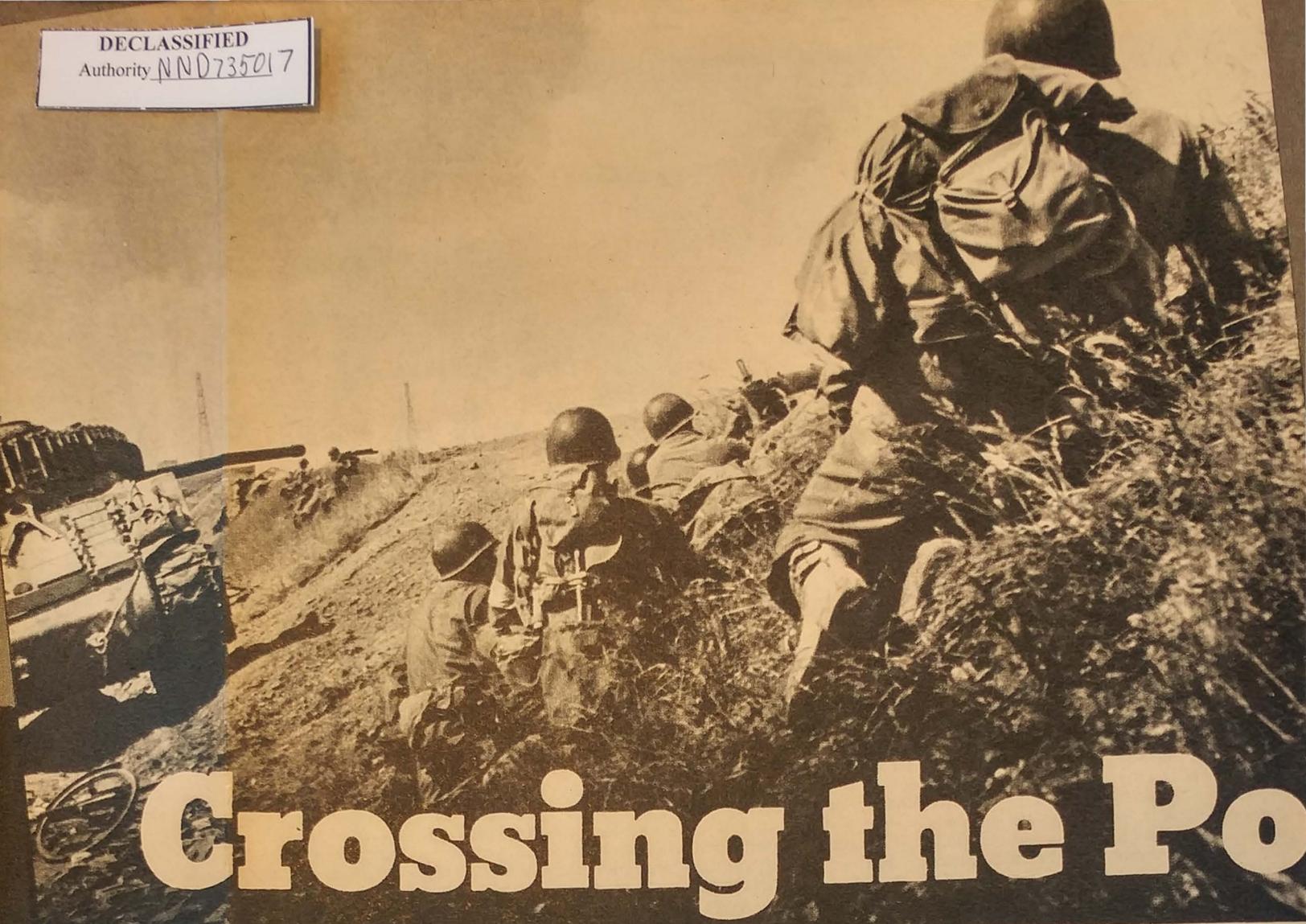
"What river is this?"

GIs examine equipment dumped by routed enemy.



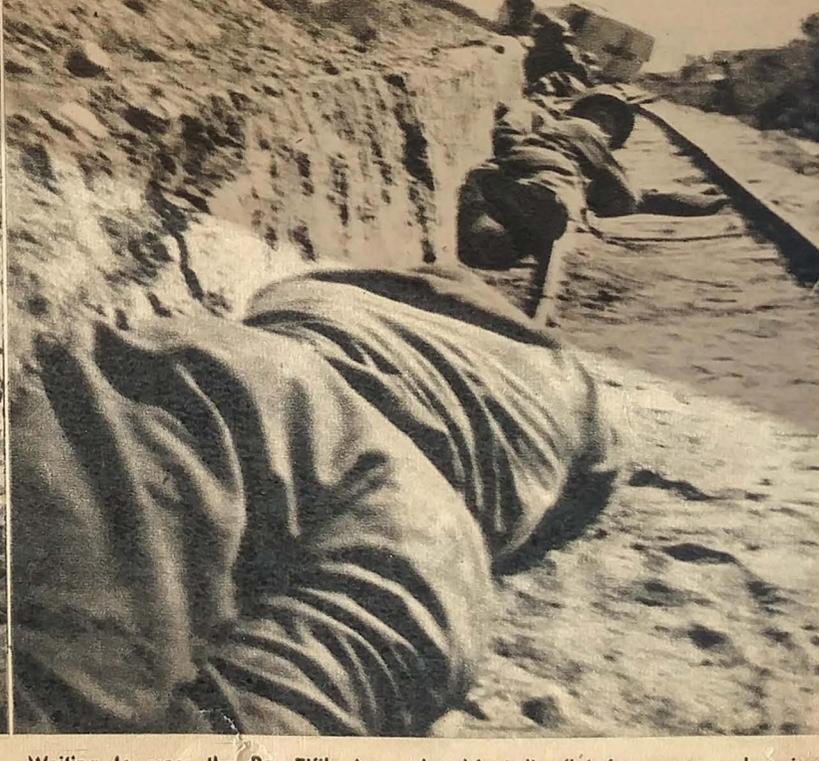
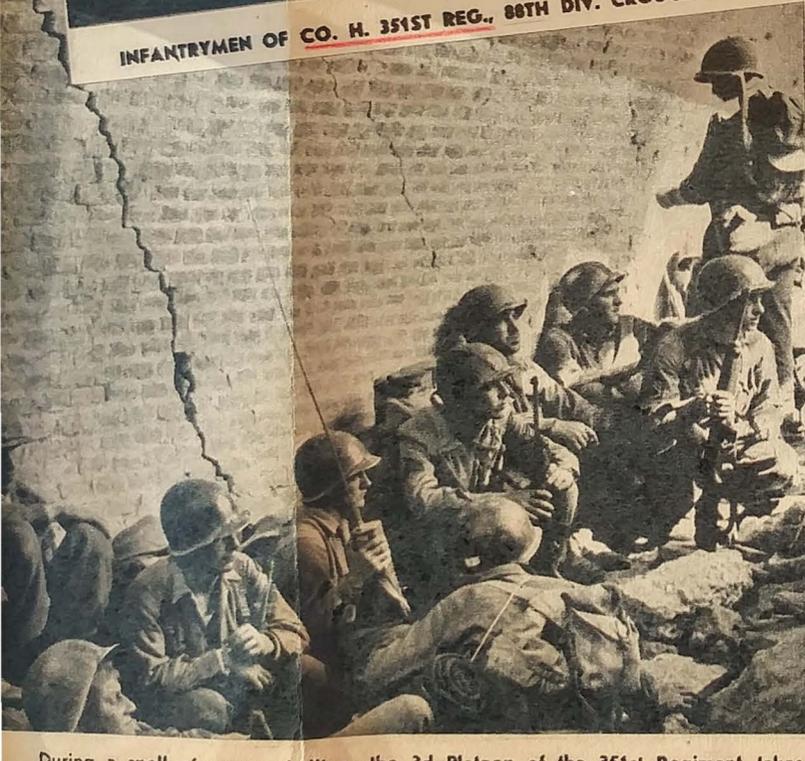
An infantryman of the 85th Division mounts a captured horse to herd a column of German PWs to the rear.





Crossing the Po

INFANTRYMEN OF CO. H. 351ST REG., 86TH DIV. CROUCH BEHIND DIKE ON SOUTH BANK OF THE PO, WHILE A TANK SHELLS GERMANS IN OSTIGL



During a spell of enemy shelling, the 3d Platoon of the 351st Regiment takes shelter—and a rest—under the brick span of a bridge. Note weariness of GIs.

Waiting to cross the Po, Fifth Army doughfeet lie flat for cover under river embankment while sweating out heavy German artillery and machine-gun fire.

Three doughs dig foxholes inside shell craters for good protection in Rovere, on Highway 12 on south bank of Po opposite German-held Ostiglia, later taken by 88th.



Observer notes extent of damage to iron bridge between Rovere and Ostiglia. Troops of 88th Div. were able to use this crossing, despite central span in water.



When Allied troops reached the Po River, the Germans were in no condition to take advantage of the defensive features of that great water barrier. The Jerry strength had been smashed below Bologna. They abandoned hundreds of horses, tons of supplies and thousands of men on the south bank of the Po while they fled in rout toward the Alps. YANK's Pfc. Werner Wolff caught an 88th Division unit under enemy gun fire during one of many Po River crossings of Allied troops.



Iron bridge carrying Highway 12 over the Po was broken, but not utterly wrecked. Rangers of 351st Regiment were first across this span in pursuit of retreating Nazis.



One of the 351st Regiment's I and R men was hit in the leg while crossing a bridge over the Po River. Generally, 88th Division casualties in the crossing were light.



Walkie-talkie men, entering Rovere under artillery fire covering German retreat, duck behind smashed Jerry tanks. They're in a Fifth Army Chemical Mortar Bn.