

II. THE MARCH INTO GERMANY

AT 5:30 A. M., November 17, the 3d Army began its advance in the direction of Luxemburg. It was a crisp Sunday morning – all important events in the A. E. F. seemed to be inaugurated on Sunday – when the advance guards of the 3d Corps on the left (2d, 32d, and 42d Divisions) and the 4th Corps on the right (1st, 3d, and 4th Divisions) crossed the line established on November 11. Exactly one week later, also on Sunday morning, the 7th Corps began the forward movement, with the 90th Division on the right, the 89th Division on the left, and the 33d Division in reserve. The 5th Division furnished line of communication troops. The army aggregated approximately 250,000 men, and was commanded by Major-General Joseph T. Dickman.

The armies of the Allies moved toward the Rhine simultaneously, following up the withdrawing German forces. The sectors from Holland to Switzerland were originally allotted as follows: Belgians, British, French, Americans, then French again. The Belgians were on the extreme north and were to occupy Brussels, later Liege, and then the left bank of the Rhine opposite Düsseldorf. Adjoining them on the south were the British, who advanced in the direction of Namur, Spa, Malmédy, to the bridgehead at Cologne. The French armies, which came next, had a wedge-shaped sector which came to a point at the line which had been the German frontier before the war. This wedge was through the heart of the Ardennes, with Bastogne in the center. The axis of march of the American army was through Luxemburg and thence along the valley of the Moselle River. On December 1 junction was made with the British 2d Army on the north. The principal French sector was south of the Americans and included Alsace-Lorraine.

Marshal Foch regulated the advance of the armies so that certain lines would be crossed simultaneously on specified dates. The line to be crossed by the foremost elements on November 25 included Metz, Briey, Longwy, and Charleroi. Line No. 2, to be crossed on December 1, included Saarbrücken and Sierck in the French sector, and coincided with the Luxemburg-German and Belgian-German frontiers on the American, British, and Belgian fronts. The advance from this frontier through Rhenish Prussia was regulated by similar lines.

The period from the time that the 90th Division took up the march on November 24 until December 21, when Division Headquarters were established at Berncastel, Germany, was one of almost daily marches. The marches were conducted practically the same as under peace-time conditions. While all units put out advance-guards and observed all precautions for security, the dispositions seemed more like training maneuvers than an advance into the enemy's country. The strictest march discipline was enforced, and great stress was laid on the correct formation of the column and the appearance of the men and transport. Each regiment had a uniform style of pack, and the organizations vied with each other in their attempts to present the smartest set-up.

From an operations standpoint, the principal features of the march were the securing of information regarding routes and billets in time to prepare march tables, the selection of the best roads without unduly scattering the command, the allotment of billeting areas near the roads, the distribution of adequate road maps, and the marking of the routes. The area assigned the Division by the Corps included two main roads. The general principle followed, therefore, was to assign one road to each infantry brigade (the artillery followed later), and to route the 343d Machine Gun Battalion and the 315th Field Signal Battalion as billeting conditions dictated.

The 315th Engineers preceded the remainder of the Division by one or two days for the purpose of making the necessary reconnaissance of roads and billets and plotting this information on road maps. This plan worked successfully, although some difficulties were encountered in the sudden discovery at the eleventh hour that the best towns had been taken by the army or corps or by troops of other divisions. The marches did not impose great hardships on the men, as they seldom exceeded eighteen kilometers.

The German roads were in excellent condition. However, in the last stages of the advance, as the Division passed through the mountains of the Eifel, the steep grades became a serious matter. The most important of these was just east of Strotzbusch, where it was necessary to double teams and use infantry in order to get the regimental transport over the hill. A change in the orders of December 12, due to the fact that the French took over the southern half of the Coblenz bridgehead, made it necessary for the Division to countermarch a short distance, and the 179th Brigade was forced to recross the formidable gulch.

The supplying of the troops was greatly facilitated by the existence of excellent railroad communications, as railheads could be readily shifted to keep up with the troops. However, this constant changing of railheads naturally involved much labor on the part of all officers and men connected with the system of supply. The drivers of the supply train slept in their trucks throughout the move – whenever there was a chance to sleep!

The line of march into Germany is shown by the following table of dates on which Division and Brigade headquarters were established at successive towns:

Division Headquarters				
St. Jean	November	24-November	29	
Rodange	"	30-December	2	
Bettembourg	December	3		
Rernich	"	4-	"	6
Konz	"	7-	"	8
Wittlich	"	9-	"	10
Bertrich	"	11-	"	13
Daun	"	14-	"	20
Berncastel	"	21		

179th Brigade				
Vezin	November	24-November	29	
Rodange	"	30-December	2	
Moutfort	December	3-		
Canach	"	4-	"	5
Biwer	"	6		
Euren	"	7		
Ehren	"	8		
Wittlich	"	9-	"	10
Driesch	"	11		
Lutzerath	"	12-	"	13
Daun	"	14		
Hillesheim	"	15-	"	20
Daun	"	21		

180th Brigade				
Marville	November	24-November	29	
Villerupt	"	30-December	2	
Aspelt	December	3		
Remich	"	4-	"	5
Saarbours	"	6		
Konz	"	7		
Schweich	"	8		
Wittlich	"	9	"	10
Aif	"	11-	"	13
Daun	"	14-	"	21
Wehien	"	22		

165th Field Artillery Brigade				
Mouzay	November	24-December	12	
Bettembourg	December	13		
Rodange	"	14-	"	15
Mondorf	"	16-	"	18
Weiten	"	19-	"	22
Kenn	"	23-	"	26
Berncastel	"	27		

The route followed was an extremely interesting one. In the reclaimed towns of France our troops were received with the greatest enthusiasm. Towns were decorated with flowers and greenery; banners bore words of greeting; and at gatherings of all the citizenry, commanders were presented with bouquets and flowers. The Americans were acclaimed as deliverers. In the little town of Epiez the town council changed the name of the principal Street to "Rue President Wilson," and of another street to "Rue General O'Neil," in honor of the division commander.

The Division said good-by to France in the vicinity of Longwy, where there were still to be seen evidences of the German artillery bombardment and incendiarism during the first days of the war in 1914. The first stop in Luxemburg was made in the densely populated, rich industrial region just across the border from Longwy, where the contrast between the prosperous little neutral grand duchy, untouched by war, and the devastated, battle-scarred regions of France was very marked. The most curious sight to all the men was the appearance of the young Luxemburgers in civilian clothes. The reception accorded the Division in the greater part of Luxemburg was very enthusiastic, despite the fact that the people had already shouted themselves hoarse in welcoming the divisions which preceded the 90th through this area. As the German frontier was approached, however, the people were found to be more like the Germans in custom and speech, and the former exuberance was replaced by an air of indifference.

The foremost troops of the Allies had crossed the German frontier on Sunday, December 1, but the 90th Division did not reach this line until nearly a week later. The 180th Brigade crossed the Moselle River over the bridge at Remich and entered German territory on December 6. On the following day the 179th Brigade, less the 357th Infantry, crossed the Sauer River, the boundary line between Luxemburg and Germany, at Wasserbillig. The 357th Infantry crossed at Grevenmacher. There was little indication that this was the land of the enemy. However, advance billeting parties were required to carry arms while engaged in their duties, and trucks were not allowed to move except in

convoys of sufficient size to be able to defend themselves if attacked. It was soon seen that these precautions were unnecessary. German officials were almost servile in their desire to please the new rulers, and the inhabitants were either obediently indifferent or profuse in their desire to satisfy the wants of the occupying troops.

December 11 was the date set for the arrival of the American and French forces on that portion of the west bank of the Rhine between Worms and Rolandseck. The British armies, following a shorter route, were scheduled to reach the left bank by December 9. While the general movement was carried out as originally planned, one battalion of the 359th Infantry and some other troops were rushed to Coblenz in advance, in response to a call from the citizens, who feared that disorder might break out after the withdrawal of the German troops. Hence the first American detachment arrived in Coblenz on December 8. On December 13 the Allied armies crossed the Rhine simultaneously.

On arriving at the line Bremm-Lutzerath on December 12, the change in the army area referred to above, by which the French took over the southern half of the Coblenz bridgehead, halted the further advance of the Division. It had been planned that the 90th Division would continue the advance to a line Nachtsheim-Klotten, but on December 14 the Division moved northwest in the direction of Daun to clear the area which had been assigned to the 4th Division. It was expected that permanent winter quarters would be established in this region, and dispositions were made accordingly.

The headquarters of the 90th Division and the 180th Brigade was established at Daun; the troops of the 180th Brigade in the Daun-Mehren area; the 179th Brigade P. C. at Hillesheim, and the troops in towns along the road between Junkerath and Dreis.

However, this arrangement had continued only a week when the withdrawal of the 33d Division from the 7th Corps to Luxemburg brought about an extension of the divisional area to the south, which necessitated a readjustment of troops. The boundaries of the three brigades were made to correspond with the political boundaries of the German Kreises of Daun, Wittlich, and Berncastel. Division Headquarters was established at Berncastel. The 179th Brigade occupied the Kreis of Daun, with headquarters of the brigade in the town of Daun, headquarters of the 357th Infantry at Hillesheim, and headquarters of the 358th Infantry at Gerolstein. That portion of the Kreis of Wittlich not occupied by the 7th Corps was assigned to the 180th Brigade for administration, but most of the troops of the brigade were billeted in the towns along the Moselle River, with brigade P. C. at Wehlen, the 359th Infantry headquarters at Urzig, and the 360th Infantry headquarters at Zeltingen. With this enlarged area, billeting officers set out with the aim to find "a bed for every man." While this ideal was not realized, all non-commissioned officers were provided for, and every private who was not fortunate enough to fall heir to a bed formerly occupied by an able-bodied German was furnished with a bunk and a bed-sack filled with clean straw. A total of 110 towns were occupied by divisional troops.

Owing to the fact that the last unit of the 165th Field Artillery Brigade, which had been ordered to join on November 16, did not reach the Stenay area until November 28, the artillerymen did not arrive in their area in Germany until about a week later than their doughboy friends. Brigade headquarters was established at Berncastel on December 27, and by that date the three regiments had occupied the towns allotted them in the Kreis of Berncastel.

This arrangement remained undisturbed during the remainder of the Division's stay in the Army of Occupation. The area which had been assigned to the Division, while 75 kilometers from the Rhine, was as interesting as that occupied by any troops of the Army of Occupation. There is no lovelier portion of the Moselle Valley than in the region of Berncastel-Cues. Made rich and famous by the

terraced vineyards which cover the hillsides lining the river banks. Further to the north are the picturesque mountains of the Eifel, filled with many spots of historic interest, such as the volcanic lakes, the traces of Roman civilization, and the castles of medieval origin. The only other division in the Army of Occupation to occupy territory south of the Moselle after the withdrawal of the 33d was the 89th Division, which billeted in the area between the west boundary of the 90th Division and Luxemburg. Joining the 90th Division on the northeast was the 4th Division; between the 4th Division and the Rhine were the 42d and the 3d Divisions. On the right bank of the Rhine, in the fan-shaped sector forming the north quadrant of the bridgehead, were the 2d, 32d, and 1st Divisions, respectively, from left to right. These three divisions established outposts thirty kilometers from Coblenz.

Practically the only important military activity of the Division during its period of occupancy, aside from training, interior guard, and routine duties, was the guarding of stations, bridges, and other sensitive points along the railways running through the divisional area.

On December 30 Major-General Charles H. Martin arrived and took command of the Division. It was very appropriate that General Martin be assigned to the 90th Division, for the reason that, as senior instructor of the first Officers' Training Camp at Leon Springs, he had had a large share in laying the real foundations of the Division. The spirit which he had inculcated in the young officers during the period of their candidacy became the spirit of the Division.



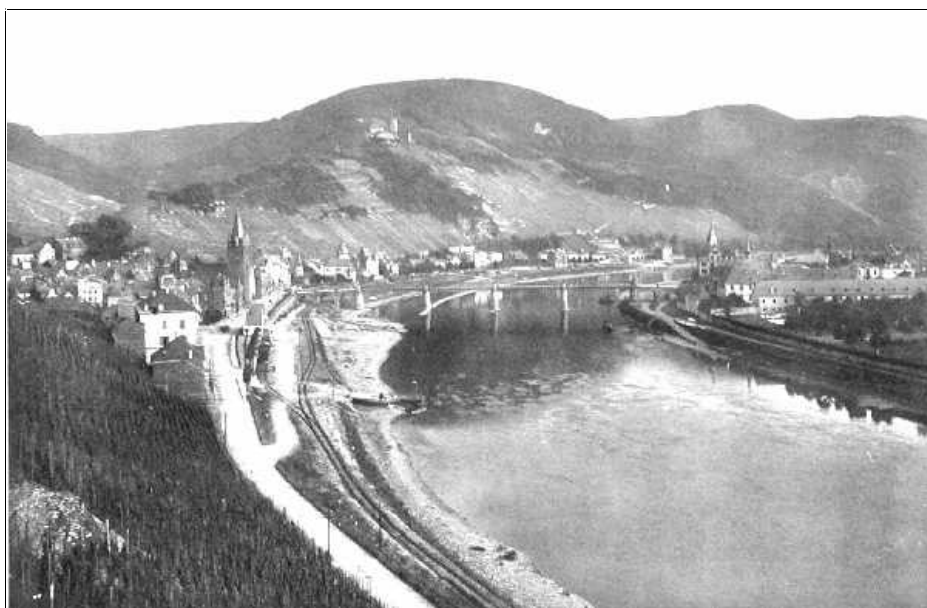
The 360th Infantry crossing into Germany at Remich, Luxemburg.



The 315th Field Signal Battalion passing through Beuren, Germany.



Colonel Howard C. Price presents General U. G. McAlexander to Brigadier-General J. P. O'Neil for decoration, December 26, 1918.



The towns of Berncastel (on left) and Cues (on right) on the Moselle River.
Headquarters of the 90th division was located at Berncastel.

