

IV. WAITING TO GO HOME

DURING the first two months of its stay in Germany, the Division carried out a rigorous training schedule in spite of the handicap caused by cold and snow in a mountainous country. Exact close-order drill, parades, and ceremonies were held to restore a peace-time standard of smartness. Much time was also devoted to extended order, particularly to battalion and regimental maneuvers. Demonstrations of a battalion attacking a position with the aid of auxiliary arms were staged. In this type of exercise live ammunition was used for all weapons from rifles to 75's. For the benefit of commanders and staffs, two division terrain exercises were conducted by the corps commander, and one terrain exercise for each brigade was conducted by the division commander.

During the last week in February, the training schedule was made lighter, and the emphasis was shifted to entertainments, athletics, and education. Before this time canteens and club rooms had been opened at every station for both officers and enlisted men. Now the scope of the work by the Y. M. C. A., Red Cross, and K. of C. was enlarged by the assistance of the military authorities. Athletic, welfare, and school officers were appointed in all organizations from the Division down to battalions.

Every organization was encouraged to train entertainment troupes and put them on the road, and the theaters in every town were occupied several nights during the week by first-class vaudeville performances. Afternoons were devoted to athletics and games. A divisional football team was picked and trained, and the divisional championship in boxing and other sports was determined after a series of competitive matches. Practically every one in the Division was given an opportunity to attend a school in keeping with his previous educational opportunities. Post schools were established to take care of those who had not finished their elementary studies. More advanced pupils went to the divisional high school at Traben, where courses were given not only in such orthodox subjects as algebra, English literature, and the languages, but also in bookkeeping, shorthand, farm management, and animal husbandry. Vocational schools under the direction of the Division furnished opportunity to obtain a technical education in various trades, from cobbling to automobile repairing. Men willing to remain in France after the departure of the Division were allowed to go to, and study the methods employed in, huge French industrial plants. The farming and stock-raising course given by American instructors in France also attracted a large number. An opportunity for higher education was afforded by the detail of a number of officers and men to French and British classical universities and scientific colleges, as well as to the A. E. F. University at Beaune. The total number of officers and men of the 90th Division attending school during March was 3169.

As G. H. Q. adopted a very liberal policy in granting leaves after the armistice, every officer and man had an opportunity to see some parts of France other than the battle zones before returning to the United States. The most popular leave area for the officers was the Riviera, while the majority of the enlisted men were sent to the Savoie area, near the Swiss border. In addition to the regular leave period every four months, shorter leaves to visit Paris for three days and to take boat rides up the Rhine from Coblenz were allotted very generously.

A competitive spirit was inspired in all ranks by publishing the rating of organizations made as a result of inspections by the corps and division commanders, by the holding of horse and motor shows, and by contests in drill and musketry. The standard of all transport was considerably raised by the horse and motor shows. The divisional horse show was held on March 14, on an island in the Moselle River just above Berncastel-Cues. A large grand-stand was built for the occasion, the field was decorated, and music was furnished by a band of seventy-five pieces. Major-General W. G. Haan, the corps

commander, was present. The Division carried off the honors in the 7th Corps show, and maintained its reputation in the 3d Army show. Beginning about the middle of March, special emphasis was laid in training programs on musketry instruction, and after a series of competitions 209 officers and men were chosen to represent the Division in the rifle, automatic rifle, pistol, and musketry competition held on the D'Avans rifle-range near Le Mans, France, in May. A platoon of Company I, 359th Infantry, represented the Division in the musketry contest. These men remained in France after the departure of the Division, and attended the Inter-Allied Games at Pershing Stadium, near Paris.

The final inspection and review of the Division by General John J. Pershing, commander-in-chief of the American Expeditionary Forces, was held on April 24, 1919, in a field near Wengerohr. The 179th Brigade was moved by rail to this vicinity the day before the review, and the other troops were concentrated by marching. Only the two infantry brigades, the 315th Engineers, and the 315th Field Signal Battalion passed in review. Owing to the softness of the ground, the remaining organizations were inspected in place. Music was furnished by the consolidated bands of the 180th Brigade and the 165th Field Artillery Brigade.

Following the review, General Pershing decorated the organization standards and presented Brigadier-General U. G. McAlexander with the Distinguished Service Medal and individual men with Distinguished Service Crosses. Then the entire Division was assembled to hear the commander-in-chief's farewell remarks.

The total strength of the Division on that date was 928 officers and 19,847 men. There were 49 officers and 657 enlisted men on leave, 50 officers and 864 enlisted men at schools and colleges, and 20 officers and 532 enlisted men sick.

To the 315th Trench Mortar Battery fell the privilege of being the first unit of the 90th Division to return to the United States. On January 9, 1919, the battery left its billets at Andel, Germany, after having been there for only about two weeks, and entrained for the embarkation center. It was over four months before the remainder of the Division was favored with similar orders.

The 90th Division was the fifth division to be withdrawn from the Army of Occupation. The 42d Division was the first to go, and moved by train from its billets on the Rhine to Brest, during the period of April 4 to 11. The 32d, 33d, and 89th Divisions followed in the order named, and on May 17 the first trainload of 90th Division men, cheering wildly, pulled out of Wengerohr, Germany. The movement was made in twenty-one trains, the last train leaving on May 22, the engineers and trains being the last units to leave, as upon these organizations fell the brunt of driving the transportation necessary to placing the other units, together with their baggage, upon the trains.

The Division was moved direct to St. Nazaire, the port of embarkation, all units arriving at that port by May 25. The same high standard which had characterized the work of the 90th Division both in and out of the trenches was again demonstrated in their preparations for departure and their conduct while en route; and the division commander, on May 25, received the following telegram from the commanding officer of the advance embarkation center S. O. S. at Treves:

"A E S 6508 following telegram to CG SOS is furnished for your information quote 21st and last train 90 Divn left for St Nazaire at 6 hours three minutes 22nd inst. Med Examination and examination of records this Divn were probably the best of any Divn so far leaving Third Army Condition of equipment and property was excellent discipline excellent and condition of billets when vacated

excellent with a few minor exceptions Entire preparation and movement of this Divn have been highly satisfactory and reflect great credit upon the Division unquote.

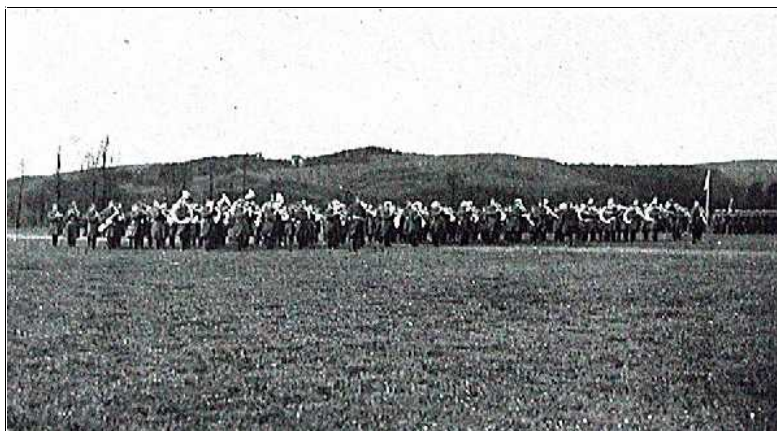
CONRAD 623 pm”

Captain A. J. Moquin, division zone major and billeting officer, was left behind with a number of town majors and 1st Lieutenant Carl L. Gidley, assistant division disbursing officer, for the purpose of making final payments for all billets occupied by the troops and the settlement of all claims against units of this Division made by the inhabitants. Captain Moquin had thoroughly trained his organization previously, and completed this work so expeditiously and thoroughly that shortly thereafter a communication was received from the commanding general, 3d Army, to the effect that although the 90th Division had been the fifth to leave the Army of Occupation, it was the first to complete the settlement of its accounts and affairs.

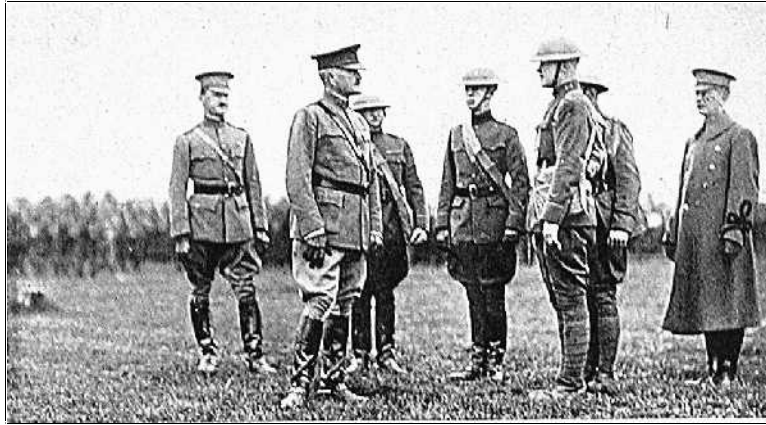
The 90th Division ceased to function as a division when it left Germany, the embarkation center at St. Nazaire dealing with all units direct. The first units sailed on May 26, and the ensuing week witnessed the departure of all units of the Division from France. As the ships sailing from St. Nazaire possessed limited accommodations for officers, as compared with their accommodations for enlisted men, a number of officers were detached from their regiments and sent to Brest for transportation to the United States as casuals. Troops from the 90th Division were debarked at New York City; Boston, Massachusetts; Newport News, Virginia, and Charleston, South Carolina. After remaining for an average period of about four to five days in camps at the debarkation centers, they were sent to various demobilization camps throughout the country. The majority of the men were sent to Camp Bowie, Texas; Camp Pike, Arkansas; Camp Travis, Texas; and Camp Dodge, Iowa.

A few of the organizations of the Division paraded in a number of Texas cities before reporting at the demobilization camps. After reaching these camps the men were quickly discharged, and the speed with which they appeared in “civies” was measured only by the distance to their homes or to the nearest clothing store.

The personnel of the 90th Division, as soldiers, ceased to exist. The soul of the 90th Division continued and will remain.



Consolidated band of 250 pieces



Colonel Sage, 315th Engineers, and staff



Reviewing the 165th Field Artillery Brigade



Reviewing the Horse Transport
Four views of General John J. Pershing's review of the 90th Division at Wengerohr, Germany



Major-General Charles H. Martin and staff, in front of Division Headquarters at Berncastle, Germany, April 28, 1919.



Major-General Charles H. Martin



Dedication ceremonies at Pershing Stadium, near Paris, June 22, 1919, opening day of the Inter-Allied Games.
French troops are forming up in the arena, followed by "Pershing's Own."
Some men of the Division remained in France for the games.