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NORMANDY

GZEGHOSLOVAKIA

MISSION ACCOMPLISHED!
OPERATIONS 50th INFANTRY DIVISION
MONTH OF MAY - YEAR 1945

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INTRODUCTION

As the month opened, the Division was holding a 50 kilometer front along the Czech border from SCHONBACK (U8869) on the right to just E of SCHONAU (P5207) on the left. The 90th's role was temporarily defensive to hold the German forces in Czechoslovakia and prevent their debouchment into the Redoubt Area. Enemy forces confronting the 90th Division included the 11th Panzer Division and miscellaneous units including Hitler Youth and SS Troops.

On the left of the 90th Div was the U. S. 97th Inf Div. This unit was sideslipping S and preparing to take over part of the 358th Inf area. On the 90th's right, 2d Jav Gp was assembling to capture the REGEN PASS.

April had closed with 358th and 359th Inf making a limited objective attack to pinch out a large wooded section on the left of the Div sector. This attack was not quite concluded. Fighting was not easy in the dense wooded hills which marked the Czech border. 3d Bn 358th Inf was halted at CAPARTICE (P6603). 2d Bn 358th Inf on the right was somewhere S of there and out of contact. Both Bns were trying to gain the edge of the woods near KLENEC (P6705) and CHODOV (P6903). 1st Bn on the regimental left was refusing the flank while awaiting relief by the 97th Inf Div.

359th Inf's 3d Bn was halted just N of C KUBICE (U7198) prepared to resume its attack to capture BABYLON (P7100) and PAREZOV (P7101). The other two Bns were holding a NW-SE line just beyond FURTH (U7091) with 1st Bn on the left and 2d Bn on the right.

357th Inf had its 3d Bn in mobile Division Reserve at ARNSCHWANG (U6987) prepared for immediate employment. 1st Bn was holding the regimental (and Division) right flank. 2d Bn had Co F employed between the 1st Bn and 359th Inf. The rest of 2d Bn were located vicinity of HOHENWARTH (U7880).

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358th Inf - Shortly after midnight radio contact was reestablished with 2d Bn and their position definitely established. E and G Cos were at the edge of the woods with Co G on the right. F Co was at PEC SMOLNA (P6901).

At 0800 both 2d and 3d Bns resumed the attack. Opposition was light as 3d Bn took KLENEC while 2d Bn cleared CHODOV in mid-morning. With the objective taken, 3d Bn relieved 2d Bn. The latter returned to vicinity of AST (U5698). K Co remained at KLENEC, I Co occupied CHODOV (P6903) with a platoon at PEC SMOLNA. L Co went to SOFIENHUTTE (P6402).

Meanwhile 1st Bn was being relieved by passage of elements of the 97th Inf Div. Following this the Bn set out to clear the regimental left flank. By 1700 B Co had captured VALTIROV (P6309) and Co A occupied N POSTREKOV (P6506).

359th Inf - 3d Bn continued its attack at 0800 with strong combat patrols. K Co reached PAREZOV at 1020. 1st Bn designated Co C to clear the woods E of OCHSENWEID (U7494). 2d Bn improved their positions and patrolled to the E.

90th Rcn Tr - maintained active patrols along the Division front.

Div FM # 90 established a revised defensive zone in view of the pending relief of 358th Inf by elements of 2d Inf Div, 1st Army who were to move in on the left. A new OPLR and MLR were established and 359th and 357th Infs were directed to clear to and hold the new line. The intra-regimental boundary required the relief of elements of 2d Bn 359th Inf by 357th Inf. 3d Bn 357th Inf in Division Reserve was to be released to the regiment as soon as 358th Inf could be assembled in Division Reserve following its relief. 90th Rcn Tr was ordered to maintain contact with the enemy from MAXOV (U7696) to HYRSOV (U8405) with no advance N of 97 grid line.

357th Inf - As 42d Cav Sq moved up on the Div right flank, 2d Bn 357th Inf moved down the valley to the vicinity of LOHBERG (U9178) to tie in. This same action freed the 1st Bn which assembled at KOTZING (U7377) after the Cavalry was disposed. Before being relieved, 1st Bn captured a German General reported by civilians to be in the area. As 3d Bn was still in Division Reserve, it was decided to use AT Co and part of 1st Bn temporarily to relieve those elements of 2d Bn 359th Inf in the new zone of 357th Inf as outlined in Div FM # 90.

2 May 1945

359th Inf - 1st Bn moved through the 3d to continue the attack to the E. 3d Bn combed the woods to the N after which they reverted to Division Reserve in vicinity of FURTH. 2d Bn on right started early and encountered heavy mortar and artillery fire as they neared VSERUBY. The Bn Arty Ln Officer and his party were captured

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on Hill 505 (U8093) when they moved out ahead of the infantry.

1st Bn's progress was very slow. The woods was thick with foliage and Hitler Youth slithered like chameleons across their front, firing, disappearing, then firing again elsewhere. Finally F Co was sent to help out.

The 2d Div unit after relieving 358th Inf did not come abreast on the left. 3d Bn 359th Inf was therefore left in place to cover the N flank.

By nightfall the regiment was on the new line in the center but both flanks tapered back. Plans were made to complete the operation in the morning. Late that night Division phoned that 2d Inf Div would commence to relieve the regiment on the morrow.

357th Inf - AT Co had relieved the S part of E Co. B Co now completed relief of the N part. Division ordered another Co sent to RITTSTEIG (U8685) and Co A was assigned this mission.

3d Bn was released to regiment at 1730 and they immediately began to relieve 1st Bn, finishing by 2045. 1st Bn was assembled in vicinity of ARRACH (U8279) by 2245.

358th Inf - During the day the regiment was relieved by the 38th Inf, 2d Inf Div and assembled as Division Reserve 3 miles NE of CHAM.

3 May 1945

359th Inf - 1st Bn pushed out to its objective at 1015. Then all offensive action ceased. The mayor of VSERUBY surrendered his town as German troops had left the previous night. 38th Inf, 2d Div relieved 1st and 3d Bns while 9th Inf, 2d Div prepared to relieve 2d Bn the following morning. E and F Cos were assembled with G holding the line until the relief could be accomplished. The regiment minus 2d Bn assembled vicinity KOTZING.

357th Inf - Using 3d Bn on the right and 2d Bn on the left, the regiment marched across the Czech border without resistance and established on the OPLR. Division notified them to expect relief next day by elements of the 2d Div and to assemble vicinity of VIETACH (U7566). At 1830, 30 enemy attacked elements of Co I at TREMLOVSKY (U9486) and knocked out one TD with a Panzerfaust. 6 enemy were killed and two captured. One TD man was injured. No other casualties were suffered.

358th Inf - Remained in Division Reserve. 1st Bn changed areas in mid-afternoon to vicinity KOLLNBURG (U7462) closing at 1900.

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THE 11TH PANZER DIVISION SURRENDERS



AT THE CZECHOSLOVAKIAN TOWN OF
V SERUBY . . . GENERAL EARNEST DICTATES
TERMS TO THE ELITE GERMAN UNIT'S
COMMANDING GENERAL, WENDT WEITERSHEIM.

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Corps had ordered the entire Division to assemble in reserve in a large goose-egg around VIETACH (U7566). Several happenings intervened to change these plans. For one, the 11th Panzer Div surrendered enmasse. For another, late at night, Division was ordered to use one RCT to seize and clear REGEN PASS on 5 May for a combat command of the 4th Armd Div which was to spearhead an attack to the E towards PRAGUE.

2d Cav Gp was having considerable trouble in moving through the thick woods. OCS students were putting up fanatical resistance. During the day one platoon of cavalry was cut off and wiped out. This incident was to have its repercussions for the 90th.

359th Inf - Shortly after daylight, the G-4 of 11th Panzer Div entered the lines of Co G 359th Inf under a white flag with a view to unconditional surrender. He was blindfolded and taken to the Division CP at CHAM where the surrender was arranged.

The enemy unit would come in by two routes -- one through VSERUBY (U8195) and the other through RITTSTEIG (U8685) -- beginning at 1700. Preceding the troops at 1600 would be the CG and his staff who were to quarter and administer their own troops in two assembly areas vicinity KOTZING.

The rest of 2d Bn 359th Inf was sent back to their old location to receive the surrender. 3d Bn was directed to take charge of the group coming through RITTSTEIG. Both Bns established small arms collecting points at the place of entry into our lines and posted guards on the routes to the bivouac areas. Co D 712th Tk Bn was attached to 2d Bn for perimeter guard at their assembly area. 90th Rcn Tr was attached to 3d Bn for perimeter guard. 204th Engrs established a water point at each bivouac area. Cub planes were used to sight the approach of the surrendering units. Enemy wounded were evacuated through medical channels and sent to German hospitals.

At 1600 General von Weitersheim, CG of the 11th Panzer Division, came in and was met by General Earnest, CG of the 90th Division, at VSERUBY. The terms of unconditional surrender were confirmed. The columns started coming in at 1700 and continued throughout the night.

357th Inf - The regiment assembled in its portion of the Div assembly area and awaited orders. These came at 2105B when Division notified regiment of the mission received from Corps: Beginning at daylight one RCT to clear the way for 4th Armd through the pass at MESTYS-ZELEZNA-RUDA (Q0074).

2d Cav Sq would screen on the left flank.

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4 May 1945 (Cont'd)

The regiment made its plans: 1st Bn would lead off and would clear from MESTYS to the road junction approximately 7 Kms N of the town. They would then block this area. 3d Bn would follow and would sweep a zone to the E and SE above the SE road which the armor would use. 2d Bn on the tail would clear the road itself and the immediate vicinity.

358th Inf - The regiment continued in Division Reserve. The balance of the unit closed in the Div assembly area during the day.

5 May 1945

Early morning brought Corps Operational Directive # 115. The full mission assigned the 90th Inf Div was:

- a. Initiate advance to N on PRAGUE through REGEN PASS daylight 5 May with one combat team.
- b. Clear route to DOBRA VODA (Q1577) and cover debouchment of elements of 4th Armd Div.
- c. Remainder of Division to follow closely Armd elements, clearing enemy along route.
- d. Protect Corps left flank N of Cavalry screen.
- e. Reconnaissance elements only cross line "D" except on Corps order. (Phase Line D was set as the road from PILSEN (L0642), LNARE (L3713) and PISEK (Q6598).

357th Inf - As the situation in the new area was none too clear, and was marked the previous day by heavy fighting by the Cavalry, a reconnaissance party including the regimental CO, S-3, and Bn commanders at 0500 preceded the motor column to determine the final entrucking point.

1st Bn moved at 0630. 3d Bn at 0730 and 2d Bn at 0815. The column went through ZWIESEL (Q0161) then N through EISENSTEIN (U9872) and MESTYS-ZELEZNA-RUDA (Q0074).

1st Bn detrucked a half mile from the road junction (Q0377) NW of MESTYS and advanced on foot some 3000 yards on the other side. By mid-morning they had established their blocks. Co C on the right was anchored at ST BRUNST (Q0580) and cut the main road. B Co held the center while A Co occupied the left flank echeloned slightly behind Co B.

3d Bn detrucked at the junction, marched to ST BRUNST and attacked down the ridge to the SE. Cos I and K advanced abreast with I on the left. The reserve Co followed Co I on the open flank. At ZHURI (Q0779) came catastrophe. As has been pointed out, the situation was fluid, and seeing two M8s and jeeps in the town, the company approached boldly. But instead of friendly Cavalry, fanatical German OCS held possession of the vehicles which had been captured from the platoon of Cavalry ambushed the day before. As

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one platoon of Co I moved into the open the two scout cars opened fire as other enemy blazed away with small arms. Ten Americans were killed and ten wounded. Embittered by this heavy loss so late in the war, the company closed on the town without benefit of artillery fire and wiped out the opposition in close-hand fighting. 24 enemy were left dead and 76 captured. In addition to the two M8s, four 1/4 ton trucks were recaptured. The Bn moved on. Entrenched enemy at ST HUTE (Q0980) were disposed of by artillery. There was no further opposition as the companies closed on their objective with Co L at DOLEJSI (Q1481) and K and I extended to the W.

While 3d Bn was engaged on the left, Co G, mounted on tanks, led 2d Bn down the main road proper. They hit one group of 50 entrenched enemy whom they dispersed. From there on only straggler fire was encountered as the Bn rounded the bend at DOBRA VODA (Q1577), where they dropped off Co E. Cos F and G occupied positions near HART-MANICE.

At 1400 2d Cav relieved 1st Bn of its blocking mission. A Co moved to ZHURI, B Co to ST HUTE while C remained at ST BRUNST. The day's operations ended at 2100.

Plans for morning contemplated 1st and 2d Bns taking up the attack, which would pinch out the 3d. This Bn after clearing the nearby woods would assemble in reserve.

358th Inf - After talking to Corps in late morning, the Div Commander ordered 358th Inf to move at once to an assembly area vicinity of GLASERWALD (C. 277) prepared to go thru 357th Inf or attack to the N. Corps sent a truck Co to transport the regiment which closed in its area at 2230.

359th Inf - Throughout the night the procession of 11th Panzer Div continued. By agreement with 2d Inf Div, lights were allowed to expedite movement. The German vehicles were in a sorry state. Many were in trouble or without gas and had to be towed in. By 0300, however, the German foot troops were plodding down the rain-soaked roads to the assembly area along with horse-drawn vehicles.

At daylight the left column was practically closed but in 3d Bn's areas troops and vehicles straggled in all day with the last element arriving about 1730.

The entire regiment was assigned the mission of handling the surrendered unit. Vehicles were categorized and pooled. Ration dumps were established from the supplies carried by the Panzer Division. Interior German guards were arranged and a perimeter of American guards established. A count was taken of personnel and equipment.

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5 May 1945 (Cont'd)

The final count showed:

a. Enemy Materiel Captured

700 trucks
 300 sedans
 120 Volkswagen
 155 motorcycles
 85 armored half-tracks
 25 half-track prime movers
 15 SP guns (all types)
 6 Mark IV Tanks
 5 TDs (Mark IV chassis & Mark V guns)
 1 Mark V Tank
 24 81mm mortars
 6 120mm mortars
 4 150mm Inf Howitzers
 2 150mm Howitzers
 5 105mm Howitzers
 2 75mm AT guns
 14 20mm AA guns (single mount)
 2 20mm AA guns (multiple mount)

b. Personnel

110 PGR: 43 Os, 345 NCOs, 969 EM
119 PGR (kg): 33 Os, 250 NCOs, 644 EM
15 PZR: 39 Os, 506 NCOs, 955 EM
Rcn Bn: 18 Os, 154 NCOs, 426 EM
Sig Bn: 10 Os, 62 NCOs, 210 EM
Engr Bn: 14 Os, 48 NCOs, 245 EM
Field Res Bn: 25 Os, 168 NCOs, 463 EM
Supply Trains: 18 Os, 115 NCOs, 602 EM
Medical Bn: 25 Os, 65 NCOs, 320 EM
 GRAND TOTAL: 9,050

Although obviously short of armor and artillery, the strength of the unit came as a surprise. Previous estimates had set the figure at 1500 - 3500 total.

These figures raised the Division total of prisoners captured to over 80,000, tanks captured or destroyed to 501 and SP guns captured or destroyed to 195.

At 2230 Division notified 359th Inf to be prepared to move to the vicinity of NYRSKO (U9290) sometime the next day.

Division CP opened at ZWIESEL (Q0161) at 1530B.

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In the adjacent units, 2d Cav Sq had swept up to KLATOVY (L0203) where they captured 1500 PsW. 42d Cav Sq was still committed S of the 90th cleaning an extensive wooded area.

On the left 2d Inf Div had reached DESENICE (U9589).

On the right 5th Inf Div were having trouble in their wooded sector and had not come abreast of the 90th.

6 May 1945

Corps ordered 4th Armd Div to start rolling at 0600B. CCB was to pass through the 90th while CCA would debouch through the 5th Inf Div. The objective was PRAGUE.

The day's objective for the Division was a general line marked roughly by a road from STRAZOV (Q0092), PICH (Q1386) and KASPERSKE HORY (Q2477).

357th Inf - 1st and 3d Bns moved abreast at 0730. Opposition was light and both Bns were on the phase line by 1130. At PICH 1st Bn freed 400 British PsW. Further movement was held up until the 4th Armd had passed through as they had road priority and supporting artillery could not displace. By mid-afternoon, however, the road was clear. The artillery readjusted and the advance continued without opposition. Forward elements halted at MOKROSUKY (Q1590) Co B; LESISON (Q1690) Co C; ZIKOV (Q1586) Co E; and OLSOVKA (Q1785) Co G. 3d Bn assembled near TESOV (Q1481). Some 900 prisoners were gathered up. A few snipers were active in the area as Div MP was killed near DOBRA VODA.

358th Inf - 2d Bn drove E and captured bridges across the OTAVA River and REJSTEJN (Q2176). 3d Bn circled on their right and headed SE, E and NE to capture KASPERSKE HORY. They met some opposition at several small towns enroute. Over 1100 prisoners were taken --- mostly voluntary surrenders.

359th Inf - The regiment moved at 1500 by way of HAIBUHL (U8380), RITTSTEIG (U8685), NYRSKO (U9291) and STRAZOV (Q0092). 1st Bn remained here while 2d and 3d Bns assembled vicinity of VITEN (Q0191). Plans were laid for attack to the N and NE using 1st and 2d Bns with 3d in reserve.

7 May 1945

Though not unexpected, the end came abruptly. Scarcely had the three regiments moved out in attack when Corps called to stop all forward movement. Later in the morning by TWX came the memorable

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7 May 1945 (Cont'd)

message announcing the cessation of hostilities:

"A representative of the German High Command signed the unconditional surrender of all German land, sea and air forces in Europe to the Allied Expeditionary Forces and simultaneously to the Soviet High Command at 0141B Central European Time 7 May 1945 under which all forces will cease active operations at 0001B 9 May 1945.

All offensive operations by Allied Forces will cease. Troops will remain in present positions...Due to difficulties of communication there may be some delay in similar orders reaching enemy troops so full defensive precautions will be taken...No release will be made to the press pending announcement by the three governments."

EISENHOWER

s/0923

Following receipt of the above, a general defensive position was outlined and troops readjusted to comply. Division CP crossed the Bohemian border to open at SUSICE, CZECHOSLOVAKIA (Q2086) at 1610B. Units sent patrols two miles to their front. By nightfall Div was redispersed with all three regiments on line generally along the road SE out of KLATOVY (L0303) to STRIBRNE HORY (Q2197) then bending from HRADESICE (Q2597) to RABI (Q2792) to HILLS 739 (Q3084), 738 (Q3283) and 844 (Q3481). Several 357th Inf men previously captured at BEAU COUDRAY in July were recaptured. 2d Cav Gp recovered the Arty Bn Ln Officer recently lost by 359th Inf.

The last shot of the war in the Division was fired this day by a BAR man in K Co, 358th Inf. Between 1100 and 1130 he fired 40 rounds at enemy infantry in the woods at Q2779.

8 May 1945

This was a day of waiting, of accumulating Psw, and of preparations for the post war phase of occupational duty.

9 - 17 May 1945

Although operations officially ceased at 0001B, units of the 90th Div remained on line for several days as rather an anti-climax. On the 10th, 358th Inf with 344th and 345th FA Bns were moved forward to the restraining line between NEPOMUK (L2315) and LNARE (L3713) when it appeared that German and White Russian troops, compressed between the American and Russian forces, might try to force an exit into the American Zone. By agreement of higher headquarters the trapped German soldiers were Russian prisoners.

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9 - 17 May 1945 (Cont'd)

The other two regiments were placed on 1 hour alert to assist if needed, but remained in place. The sizeable German units approaching were kept under control and no fighting ensued although small units and individuals attempting to infiltrate caused some harassment.

Patrols from 357th Inf and 359th Inf ranging far out in front of the lines with orders to contact the Russians made contact in the afternoon of the 10th with elements in contact with the 4th Armd Div.

On the 14th 358th Inf was relieved by 2d Cav Gp. Corps ordered Div to move to occupational area vicinity WEIDEN, GERMANY. V Corps would take over the present area. The Division Artillery began immediate move to its new area occupying the Kreis of BURGLENGENFELD and NEUNBURG. On the 15th, 357th Inf, 358th Inf and Division CP moved to their occupational areas. The 357th Inf with 773rd TD Bn attached set up in Kreis KEMNATH, TIRSCHENREUTH and NEUSTADT. 358th Inf with 537th AAA Bn attached, occupied Kreis NABBURG, OBERVIETACH, VOHENSTRAUSS and WALDMUNCHEN. Division CP opened at WEIDEN, which was exclusive to 357th Inf, at 1415B.

On the 16th, 359th Inf with 712th Tk Bn motored to their occupational areas: Kreis AMBERG, SULZBACH-ROSENBERG and ESCHENBACH.

On the 17th May last elements of the Division were relieved by V Corps as 90th Rcn Tr which was blocking the Czech - German border on the Czech side was relieved, together with security elements of 357th and 359th Infs. They closed in their new areas the following day.

* * * * *

Now it was over. And the record of the 90th Inf Div was a kaleidoscope of brilliant achievements: The Division had fought through every kind of weather -- choking dust, chilling rain, knee-deep mud, pounding hail, waist-deep snow; over every kind of terrain -- hedge-row, plains, forests, rivers and hills.

It battered its way free from the bloody hedge-rows of NORMANDY and fought in hot pursuit over the plains of Northern France. It sprang the trap which shattered the German VII Army at CHAMBOIS in the FALAISE GAP. Then it reced on to the MOSELLE River; probed the METZ Forts; left them and plunged across the rain-swollen MOSELLE; overran the MAGINOT Forts including mighty KOENIGSMACHER; joined hands with the 5th Inf Div to encircle METZ; then charged N and assaulted the flooded SAAR River at DILLINGEN. Pulled out of here to help counter Von Runstedt's staf at the ARDENNES, the Division launched a surprise attack SE of BASTOGNE which sheered off an enemy salient, then flogged the retreating enemy forces relentlessly as they tore for cover behind the SIEGFRIED West Wall. The Division took no rest

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and gave none as it cracked through the West Wall before halting for a short breather. Hardly stopped, it jumped back into action to run rampant to the RHINE. There Division turned SE and assaulted across the MOSELLE a second time to plummet on and capture MAINZ. It crossed the RHINE -- behind the 5th Inf Div on a bridge -- forced a crossing of the MAIN in assault boats -- and surged on through disintegrating resistance until it cut Germany in two by being the first American Division to enter Czechoslovakia, then swept down the Czech border, captured the German 11th Panzer Division, until the War's end found the 90th across the Sudetenland inside BOHEMIA itself. In 11 months the Division had made an assault landing, fought five major campaigns. It had 318 days in action broken by three, brief so-called "rest" periods which were devoted to training. Together with its normal attachments -- 712th Tk Bn, 537th AAA Bn and first the 607th TD Bn and later the 773rd TD Bn -- it had met Germany's best and Germany's worst. The record showed the result: 83,437 prisoners captured; 501 tanks, 195 SP guns and 134 airplanes captured or destroyed.

Victory was costly. The record showed, too, the price paid: 3,624 EM and 247 O dead and 16,663 EM and 831 O casualties. But these sacrifices were not in vain. For on V-E Day 1945 the 90th Infantry Division like the Allied Forces could say: "Mission Accomplished".

EARNEST
COMDG*Booth*
BOOTH
G-3