

## INTRODUCTION

The beginning of April found the 90th Infantry Division mopping up behind the spearheading 4th Armored Division in the breakthrough up the HESSE Corridor. RCT 359 (minus its 3rd Battalion) was still attached to the latter. Both Divisions had driven a lancet deep toward the heart of Germany and supply lines stretched far behind them. Both flanks were exposed as the Germans reacted against units trying to exploit the drive and engage them in stiff fighting, slowing their progress.

XII Corps was ordered to seize the communication centers vicinity ARNSTADT while XX Corps on the left would seize those at ERFURT and WEIMAR.

On the 31st of March, then, XII Corps assigned 4th Armored Division the mission of capturing OHRDRUF and GOTHA with 90th Division following.

11th Armored Division on the right was to seize ARNSTADT and KRANICHFELD with 26th Infantry Division following. 71st Infantry Division remained in Corps Reserve.

The 4th Armored Division with forward elements approaching EISENACH was beginning to swing East and the Division (-RCT 359) was prepared to mop up behind them. Forward elements of 357th and 358th Infantries were generally 6 miles short of HERSFELD. The Division CP was at BERNSHAUSEN. 3rd Battalion 359th Infantry in Division Reserve was positioned at BAD SALZSCHLIRF with Company L at BERNSHAUSEN. 90th Reconnaissance Troop was guarding prisoners for Corps.

1 April 1945

As the Division was already on the heels of the armor, the planned movement forward was halted to give rear elements of the 4th Armored Division a chance to clear. Further, 11th Armored Division, ordered to bypass FULDA, swung into the 90th Division zone before turning East at HUNFELD and was given road priority.

The regiments were therefore directed to push forward reconnaissance with inner zones. 2nd Battalion of 358th Infantry was ordered forward to cover the Division right flank at BOLKS, ROTHENKIRCHEN, and EINSRERFELD, while Company G 357th Infantry plus TDs moved to block the left flank at BEIERSCHAUSEN, ASBACH and the intersection of the Autobahn Southwest of HERSFELD. Both units were in place by 2200.

CT 359 moved out at 0500 to follow 4th Armored Division. The forward elements traveled some 33 miles before halting behind CCA who were stopped by a blown bridge over the WERRA River near HORSCHER. [Page 1]

As the rear of the lead march serial (1st Battalion) passed SALLMANNSHAUSEN, fire from the town across the river was received. Some of the unit detrucked and returned the fire with small arms, 50 caliber machine guns and antitank guns. The town was set afire, and the column moved on.

1st Battalion was attached to CCA and assembled at WILLERSHAUSEN, 2nd Battalion assembled at WOMMEN while the regimental CP and attached units halted at MARKERSHAUSEN.

Division Artillery air patrols were active. Two ME 109s jumped one liaison plane East of HERSFELD but the plane escaped serious damage. Another Cub was hit by enemy antiaircraft units but made its way home.

90th Reconnaissance Troop was released from Corps prisoner guard detail and rejoined the Division.

Now came disquieting information that sizable enemy forces had cut across the axis of communication to the rear, blocked the MSR [Main supply Route] North of HOCHSTADT and were harassing and ambushing supply vehicles.

A convoy of four Division Quartermaster trucks was ambushed near STOCKHEIM as they took a secondary route. Two men were killed. One was wounded and captured and later abandoned. The fourth soldier was captured and held for four days until troops of the 71st Infantry Division recaptured him.

Seven trucks from 712th Tank Battalion Service Company left NIEDERAULA to pick up gasoline from the gas dumb. About 1900 they were ambushed near WALLERNHAUSEN. One truck turned around and escaped. In the fight which followed, one soldier was killed, two were wounded and captured (but later abandoned and recovered) and three others were taken prisoner and recaptured the next day. The rest of the 14 men escaped and returned to the unit. Two of the vehicles were recovered the following day.

In the early evening XII Corps requested a Battalion to guard approaches to the Corps Forward CP at LAUTERBACH. 3rd Battalion 359th Infantry was assigned to this mission and moved out as the period closed.

2 April 1945

Starting at 0700, the Division pushed on 14 miles before Orders from Corps halted the advance and changed direct and to due East.

Orders and an overlay reached the troops shortly after noon and directed mop-up to the WERRA River preparatory to crossing it and continuing East. Once more the 90th was to be on its own with nothing in front. [Page 2]

357th Infantry -- Patrols from the 1st Battalion began immediately to work towards the river which they reached without resistance. A bridge, badly damaged, but passable for foot troops, was found at DANKMARSHAUSEN. Immediate crossing was recommended and approved. Troops of Company C led the way over the rickety structure until the entire battalion was across.

Civilian reports that DIPPACH held only three enemy troops proved thoroughly unreliable as a blast of small arms fire poured out of the town. Artillery was laid on the town and it was taken by assault of Company B and C with 2nd Platoon, Company C, 712th Tank Battalion. This platoon forded the swift-flowing WERRA River at 1730 and moved in sections of two tanks each with infantry fanned out on either side. Marching fire of all arms was used as the attackers crossed the flat approach to DIPPACH. Roadblocks at the railroad underpasses at the edge of town were reduced by direct fire and by running over them. The town was entered in 1830 and cleared shortly thereafter. The close infantry-tank coordination was illustrated by the infantryman who substituted for the assistant gunner and one tank and gave excellent performance. Following capture of DIPPACH, LEIMBACH was occupied by Company A. The Germans now aimed high velocity fire from the vicinity of BERKA and the East.

3rd Battalion moved up on the left and began crossing the WERRA River while 2nd Battalion and Task Force MAGER blocked to the North.

358th Infantry -- 2nd Battalion continued to secure the right flank while 1st and 3rd Battalions turned East toward the WERRA. At 1645 a Company K patrol captured 44 PWs at BENGENDORF after a skirmish. The battalion then continued against scattered resistance to the River.

1st Battalion seized a railroad bridge across the river late in the day. Only foot troops could cross.

174 PWs were captured by the regiment during the day.

359th Infantry -- Enemy fire delayed construction of a bridge at PFERSDORF and 1st Battalion crossed in assault boats, accomplishing this in late morning. The Germans opened up with self-propelled gun fire from the high ground to the Northeast. Artillery silenced these guns.

After a bridge was completed at PFERSDORF and the armor had crossed, 1st Battalion moved to KRAUTHAUSEN and then to MADELUNGEN. Here one tank was lost, but the town was captured at 2350.

In late afternoon, 2nd Battalion crossed near SALMANNHAUSEN. Companies F and G found the town clear and moved on to the high ground to the Southeast.

90th Reconnaissance Troop -- Reconnoitered on the right flank of the Division, meeting small arms fire as they reached UNTERBREIZBACH. Most of it came from the high ridge West of VACHA. [Page 3]

The situation in the far rear areas remained fluid, and 71st Infantry Division was put to clearing up the sector. Another Division Quartermaster convoy of 4 trucks was ambushed by Panzerfaust and small arms fire in vicinity of STOCKHEIM, Germany. The lead truck plunged ahead and escaped. The other three halted and all the occupants but one were surrounded and captured. They were turned over to the Burgomeister of STOCKHEIM who released them. The one

soldier who escaped was picked up three days later by the 71st Division as they combed the woods. Four of the trucks involved in the two ambushes were subsequently recovered.

3rd Battalion 359th Infantry reached its area at 0400 and remained under Corps control. Battalion CP and Company I were at BLITZENROD. Company K was at HARTMANSHAIN and Company L Southwest of HARTMANSHAIN, blocking roads at the junction. 3rd Platoon, Company B, 712th Tank Battalion was attached and joined the Battalion in early morning. Together with infantry riding the tanks they combed out an area about 28 km, moving through HERBSTEIN. This mission netted 72 prisoners.

At 1800 they returned to BLITZENROD and set up a defensive position. Other than this the Battalion had no enemy contact.

As a result of enemy harassment of supply routes, elements of the light tank company, 712th Tank Battalion, elements of 773rd TD Battalion, and elements of 537th AAA Battalion were called upon at intervals to escort convoys to the rear for the next several weeks.

Enemy air was very active over Division units. 73 sorties were flown. 3rd Battalion 357th Infantry, was strafed by 6 planes as they moved up on the Division left near HERSFELD. No damage resulted. A Division Artillery Headquarters vehicle was damaged by an ME 109 later in the day at the same spot. 40 enemy planes strafed and bombed 915th FA Battalion causing nine casualties. 7 enemy planes were destroyed and two probably destroyed by supporting anti-aircraft.

Division CP FRIEDEWALD at 1740B.

3 April 1945

Corps orders were to attack East across the WERRA River and secure the line BERKA-VACHA. Further attack was on order.

357th Infantry -- 3rd Battalion completed its crossing of the WERRA after midnight and moved to DIPPACH without incident. Before 0730 L and K Companies attacked BERKA. The victory was easy. The town was taken by 0755.

1st Battalion moved East to the ridgeline. Their patrols filtered further as the advance waited additional orders. These came at 1115. The objective now was the railroad track about 15 km East of the WERRA. The Division Commander shortened this objective as it was beyond effective artillery support. A bridge over which to displace artillery was still not in. Engineers began construction at WIDDERSHAUSEN. [Page 4]

The action of both 358 and 357 had ruptured the enemy's attempts to form an MLR. 90th Division now straddled the WERRA River over which no American soldier was to have passed. 2nd Battalion continued its blocking mission on the 358th's right flank without being engaged.

All was not milk and honey, however, as the regimental CP found itself caught in a web of encounters. First, in midafternoon a group of about 35 bypassed enemy attacked the CP at HEIMBOLDSHAUSEN from the high ground above the railroad station and yards. They were quickly rounded up by a hurriedly gathered force of tankers, truck drivers, MPs and CP personnel. Later in the day at 1830 one enemy plane roared over the area. AA engaged, and hit it. The plane began a crash dive along the railroad and apparently jettisoned its bomb before plunging to the ground in flames. The bomb hit a boxcar of black powder. The resultant blast dug a 50 foot crater, leveled five houses blew the roofs off some 20 or 30 others and broke most of the windows in the town. Several men were pinned under the debris as buildings collapsed upon them. Three died -- 1 officer and one enlisted man from 712 Tank Battalion, and one attached to medic. 29 other tankers, another medic, one TD man and 49 soldiers from 358th Infantry were additional casualties. 56 of these were evacuated but the bulk were returned to duty. The regimental CP moved to ROHRIGSHOF.

359th Infantry -- Remained attached to 4th Armored Division. As word came that the CT would be returned to Division control upon relief by elements of a 89th Infantry Division, the regiment planned to remain in place. However at 0900, Companies C and B moved out to STREGDA where they captured 145 prisoners. 3rd Battalion continued to block the road net in vicinity of Corps CP.

Attached 537th AAA batteries were busy as the GAF flew 12 sorties. Four enemy planes were downed. AA gun positions in vicinity of Division CP at ERIEBEWALD were strafed and AP bombs were dropped. One officer and four EM were wounded. One 40 mm gun was damaged by enemy fire.

1055 PWs were processed during the period. 4-120 mm mortars and 3-20 mm multiple mount AA guns were captured or destroyed.

4 April 1945

357th Infantry -- 3rd Battalion blocked in place on the North flank, while 2nd Battalion was committed on the left of 1st Battalion. Both units moved against dissolving opposition until 2nd Battalion struck the outer ring of the EISENACH defense at MARKSUHL. Here, despite heavy artillery fire including 8" guns, the enemy force held out until the entire battalion was committed to capture the town hats 2320. Company G then continued to move towards BURKHARDTRODA. [Page 6]

Near MOHRA fighting flared up briefly and then died again as 1st Battalion knocked out two self-propelled guns with artillery and took the town.

On the left, the 89th Division, moving up to relieve 359th Infantry, made unnecessary the block by 3rd Battalion 357th Infantry moved to ETTENHAUSEN in late afternoon.

358th Infantry -- Moving also at 0700 with 1st Battalion on left and 3rd Battalion on right, 358th Infantry continued its attack against scattered pockets of resistance. Among other towns, 3rd

Battalion captured MERKERS in which was discovered the salt mine housing the great gold hoard and art treasure of the Reich.

Not until several days later was the enormous wealth that had been captured fully known. Subsequent investigation revealed that the subterranean chambers contained 100 tons of gold bullion (believe to be all Germany's Gold), 5 billion German marks, \$2 million in American currency, 4,000,000 Norwegian pounds, 100 million paper French francs, 110,000 English pounds, and a miscellany of Spanish, Italian, Turkish and Portuguese currencies.

Among the art works were 1000 cases of paintings and statues, totaling some 2000 paintings, including works by Raphael, Rembrandt, Van Dyke, Durer and Renoir. 1500 priceless tapestries and thousands of engravings as well as 120 cases with original GOETHE collection from WIEMAR rounded out the valuables.

Great quantities of most waffle uniforms, including electrically heated equipment, were also stored here.

359th Infantry -- 2nd Battalion sent Company B Southwest 2 contact 357th 3rd Battalion. This was accomplished in early morning. The regiment then began assembly vicinity HONEBACH upon relief by 89th Division. 1st Battalion moved to GROSSENSEE. 2nd Battalion assembled that BERKA. 3rd Battalion, relieved by Corps, closed in at KLEINENSEE.

Division CP opened at KIESELBACH at 1639.

5 April 1945

357th Infantry -- G Company occupied BURKHARTROD at 0600 without opposition. 2nd Battalion then remained in blocking position on the North flank. At 0700 the regiment pushed out with 3rd Battalion moving on left of 1st. All organized resistance was gone. Reports indicated the enemy had fled North and Northeast. The advanced move rapidly. So fast, in fact, that 3rd Battalion was at ETTERWINDEN and 1st Battalion 2500 yards Northeast of WALDFISCH before they could be halted by Division order at 0845.

358th Infantry -- Attacking 0700, 3rd Battalion captured BAD LIEBENSTEIN and the high ground beyond. 2nd Battalion passed through 1st Battalion at WITZELRODA to take SCHWEINA and the ridge to the East. Here Division halted the regiment. [Page ?]

B Company captured ABTERODA without trouble at 0930. C Company on the right took GASTERODA at 1030 but hit a snag in capturing VITZERODA. Accompanied by four tanks, the company move through the woods Southeast of GASTERODA toward Hill 340. This bald ridge west of the town was stoutly defended by 100 SS Troops. They opened up on the attackers as they stormed out of the woods and climbed the open slope. Machine gun and small arms bullets and Panzerfausts hit into the assaulting force. Mortar fires burst around them. Panzerfausts smashed into three of the tanks, disabling two. The crew escape. The infantrymen were less fortunate. A number were casualties. Fighting continued until evening when

resistance slackened. Artillery and flanking tank fires turned the trick. The company remained in contact throughout the night. In the morning they occupied the position.

On the left, 3rd Battalion moved virtually without opposition. 20 mm and AA fire were encountered as Company I moved into HAUSPREITENBACH. L Company occupied GOSPENRODA while K Company took HRSCHLITT.

2nd Battalion, which had been held to West of the River on Division order, was released and moved from HONENBACH across the battered bridge at DANKMARSAKUSEN into DIPPACH. All elements were assembled by 1800.

The bridge at WIDDERSHAUSEN was completed in 1535 and command transportation and artillery were shoved across.

358th Infantry -- Because of the enemy defense at the railroad bridge, 1st Battalion crossed B and C Companies at 0600 behind 357th in their area. B Company then swung south and cleared HERINGEN, LENGERS, HARNRODE and PHILLIPSTHAL in turn. Company C turned East at HERINGEN and attacked OBERZELLA. Efforts to take the town were unsuccessful until a coordinated attack was launched with A Company at 1900. This company had crossed on the railroad bridge at 1300. They started to follow C Company, but ran into enemy in the woods and had to fight their way clear. After the fall of OBERZELLA, Company A continued on to the high ground beyond.

VACHA with a captured order showed was a critical point in the German defense, offered more trouble. 3rd Battalion crossed the ULSTER River and eliminated UNTERBREIZBACH with artillery after the civilians there, impressed by the SS, tried to stave off the attack with small arms. The Battalion reached VACHA about noon. The town and high ground adjacent to it were defended by an estimated 500 troops, -- Wehrmacht, Volkssturm and SS -- employing small arms, automatic weapons and anti-aircraft guns. Fires hot and heavy were exchanged throughout the day as the assault elements fought their way into the town under a shower of enemy mortar and 20 mm fire. This came from the high ground on the left. By 1800, however, the backbone of resistance was broken. The town was cleared by dark. Over 200 prisoners were captured. Company K remained in VACHA. Company I pushed on to DORNDORF. Company L moved abreast just South of the town. [Page 5]

90th Reconnaissance Troop -- The troop had been operating on the front and flank of 358th Infantry, clearing towns and maintaining contact with the 26th Infantry Division on the 90th's right. The troop captured 119 prisoners and recovered at STEINBACH 15 American soldiers who had been captured in the fighting at VACHA.

Although the Division now was halted out of enemy contact, the troop learned of an Allied Prison Camp in the vicinity of FRIEDRICHRODA. A recon car and 1/4 ton truck with a 712th light tank moved out ahead of the line to investigate. They found the camp, freed 200 British and Canadian PWs and took 30 German prisoners before returning.

359th Infantry -- The regiment had been directed to stage forward to vicinity VACHA in early morning. This area was advanced to LEIMBACH-LANGENFELD-KAISERODA-HERMANNSTRODA. Enroute in early morning, 2nd Battalion was tagged as reserve for 357th Infantry and shifted its course to ETTENHAUSEN where it closed at 1300. Cannon Company under Division Control was sent to SCHLITZ to guard trains of enemy materiel in that area. 3rd Battalion was directed to guard trains from KAISERODA to BAD SALZUNGEN. At 1840 Division notified the regiment that it would be attached to 26th Infantry Division in the morning to relieve elements of the 11th Armored Division at ZELLA MEHLIS.

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The Big Picture was rapidly changing. The boundary between the XII and VIII Corps, which was now on the left, was set as the WERRA River. All movements now were aimed to secure by dark, 8 April, a new line from which a coordinated thrust to the Southeast could be launched. For the Division this indicated an attack through the heavily wooded and hilly THURINGER WALD. This was the heart of NAZI Germany, being one of the first areas of Northern Germany to become fully dominated by the Party. Corps ordered the 90th Division at 1800 to screen until relieved by elements VIII Corps and then to assemble South of the WERRA River. One RCT (359) was to move by motor to the 26th Division on 6 April to relieve 11th armored division in ZELLA MEHLIS-OBERHOF area and patrol to the Northeast and East. Following further readjustments, it was anticipated the Division would get a new zone on the Corps left in the area held by 359th Infantry.

6 April 1945

358th Infantry -- 358 assembled in vicinity of BAD SALZUNGEN following relief of 2nd and 3rd Battalions by elements of the 87th Infantry Division.

357th Infantry -- The regiment, uncovered on the North by advance of the 89th Division and passed through by the 97th Infantry Division, assembled South of the WERRA in mid-afternoon. 2nd Battalion 357th Infantry was alerted to move to SCHMALKALDEN to secure the town and set up a roadblock in preparation for the Division advance through that area. At nightfall the [Page 8] regiment was directed to take over the guard of the MERKERS salt mine using elements of the 712th Tank Battalion as necessary. 1st Battalion with the light tanks of 712th, was assigned this mission.

359th Infantry -- 359 began its motor movement to join the 26th Infantry Division shortly after noon. 915th FA Battalion and 345th FA Battalion accompanied the CT. 2nd and 3rd Battalions closed at OBERHOF late in the day. 1st Battalion reached ZELLA MEHLIS at 1730 and established guards on arms and munitions factories there.

Division CP opened that BAD SALZUNGEN at noon.

7 April 1945



The day was relatively quiet for the bulk of the Division. 1st Battalion 357 reverted to Division Control as the MERKERS mine was discovered to be an extensive labyrinth, covering many miles with numerous entrances. 2nd Battalion 357 completed its move to SCHMALKALDEN by 1700 without incident. 343rd and 344th FA Battalions displaced to vicinity LAUTER and HEIDERSBACH respectively in order to support the impending advance of the Division as well as releasing trucks to transport the infantry of the following day.

359th Infantry remained attached to the 26th Division and had several small encounters with defended roadblocks as patrols moved out to the East. Approximately 50 Germans attacked OBERHOF shortly before midnight. This force was eliminated as 20 were killed and 30 captured. No further threats developed.

The Division plan was to assemble in vicinity ZELLA MEHLIS on the 8th, pass the 358th Infantry through the right of 359 and continue the attack with these two regiments, with 359 remaining on the left flank. The regiment would revert to Division control at this time. 357 (-) was to assemble vicinity ZELLA MEHLIS as Division Reserved.

8 April 1945

The move to the new area began in early morning, for the most part over the bridge built at BARCHFELD by 1135th Engineer Group, and was completed without trouble in early afternoon. Division CP opened that ZELLA MEHLIS at 1000B.

The new zone of the Division looked tough. It was mountain country, heavily forested, with evergreen trees towering a hundred feet in the air. In some places snow lay in patches like waste paper thrown about. The mountain roads, carved out by the steep slopes or chopped through the thick woods, offered little opportunity for bypass and were conducive to roadblocks. It was ideal terrain for delaying action, and the Germans made the most of it. But it was through terrain such as this that the 90th Division gained the accolade of the Germans as the "Forest and Mountain Division". [Page 9]

359th Infantry -- Following and artillery preparation at 0640, 359th Infantry launched a new attack with 3rd the 1st Battalions. The latter sought to occupy the high ground East of GOLDLAUTER, which it did without serious opposition. But 3rd Battalion, on the left, met trouble. Right from the start they had to fight their way forward. By using marching fire they were able to advance to the crossroads 2400 yards South of GEHLBERG. Here a definite strong point stalled the advance. The Germans directed mortar fire from GEHLBERG and small arms, machine gun and bazooka fire from the crossroads. Withdrawing slightly, the battalion smashed the strong point with artillery. A TOT also was laid on GEHLBERG. Following reduction of the crossroads, the 3rd Battalion proceeded slowly in face of small arms fire from defended roadblocks. By nightfall Companies L and I were on the high ground 1500 yards West of the road running North from STUTZERBACH. K Company remained at the crossroads South of GEHLBERG.

2nd Battalion was instructed to block roads South and Southeast from OBERHOF and used their attached tanks to overcome resistance in the area.

As 1530 the 90th Division assumed responsibility for the sector and RCT 359 reverted to Division Control.

After relief at 1720, 1st Battalion moved to an area near the tunnel 4000 yards Northeast of ZELLA MEHLIS.

AT Company 359 continued to guard small arms and office machine factories in ZELLA MEHLIS.

358th Infantry -- 358th Infantry closed in their assembly area near GOLDLAUTER in mid-afternoon and began immediate passage through the 1st Battalion 359. This movement hit a snag as enemy were encountered at the crossroads approximately 3000 yards East of GOLDLAUTER. The fight, involving principally C Company 358, lasted several hours. But finally driving off the resistance, the 1st Battalion continued, swinging Northeast to its own zone on the regimental left. They captured STUTZERBACH where they remained for the night. Enemy resistance appeared on routes leading North and Northeast. Routes leading East were lightly held in defended.

2nd Battalion had a skirmish with enemy infiltrators but advanced along the regimental right to the railroad tracks Northeast of SCHMIEDEFELD. Only slight resistance from small arms and automatic weapons was encountered.

3rd Battalion assembled at HEIDERSBACH and then sent K and L Companies forward to STUTZERBACH to tie in with 1st Battalion and block the regimental North flank.

AT Company guarded 6000 DPs in 11 concentration camps in and around ZELLA MEHLIS.

357th Infantry -- As the regiment prepared to follow the Division, they were halted by verbal orders of the Corps Commander. The immense [Page 10] wealth of the MERKERS mine had now been appraised and the entire regiment less the 2nd Battalion was assigned to guard the numerous tunnels which honeycombed the area. They passed to Corps control at 1200B. accordingly, A Company plus HMG and a section of light tanks (712th Tank Battalion) occupied the factory area at MERKERS. B Company with MGs and light tanks was at DIETLAS. C Company was at DORNDORF. 3rd Battalion placed Company I at LEIMBACH, Company K at ALLENFORF and Company L at KIASERODA. AT Company covered the factory area and shaft just South of STADTLENGSFELD. Cannon Company took over the guard on trainloads of enemy equipment between BAD SALZUNGEN and VACHA.

2nd Battalion of 357 moved to ZELLA MEHLIS, to outpost that town, and to become Division Reserve. They closed just before dark.

90th Reconnaissance Troop with two platoons Company D, 712th Tank Battalion remained behind to guard bridges at TIEFENORT and BARCHFELD.

9 April 1945

As the situation now stood, the 90th occupied the desired line on its right flank abreast of the 26th Division on the South. But on the left, the 87th Division, with instructions to hold their advance, left that flank open. Accordingly, 359 was directed to push out to the required line abreast of the 358th Infantry but to refuse back on the left until such time as the adjacent Division came forward.

As the chief thorn in the 90th Division side was GEHLBERG, the 2nd Battalion 359 was directed to take it out. They moved to the crossroads South of GEHLBERG and attacked North in column of companies, G, E, F, at 0830. Company E secured the high ground Southwest of GEHLBERG while Company G maneuvered for the high ground East of the town. As they approached their objectives, the enemy engaged them with small arms and machine guns. Company G clean this up and moved on into town about noon without further resistance. F Company followed into town. 1st Battalion was alerted to stage forward to GEHLBERG so the 2nd Battalion could continue to seize MANEBACH and block to the North. 3rd Battalion, meanwhile, had resumed their advance which again met scattered resistance. They plugged on, however, and L Company crossed the MANEBACH road to occupy Hill 861. K Company turned up the main road but were stopped 1500 yards South of MANEBACH. Company I blocked the roads 1800 yards West of and paralleling the MANEBACH road.

Companies E and G motor-marched to the road junction South of MANEBACH detrucked and moved through Company K to capture the town at 1925. Some small arms fire was received.

1st Battalion closed into GEHLBERG at 2030.

358th Infantry -- Consolidated its positions in preparation for attack for the next day. [Page 11]

357th Infantry -- Remained on mine guard less the 2nd Battalion which stayed at ZELLA MEHLIS as Division Reserves.

The Air Force bombed ILMENAU and destroyed many heavy-duty German vehicles. A suspected ammunition depot in a woods East of GEHREN also was bombed and tremendous explosions resulted.

10-14 April 1945

Now the Division was set for the general advance which was finally scheduled for 10 April. On the left the 87th Division, though not abreast, had been given the "go" signal. On the right the 26th Division waited for jump off with the 90th.

The story of the next five days is pretty much of a pattern. There was fighting, in some instances, hard fighting as at ILMENAU and OEHRENSTOCK. But for the most part, it was scattered and locally determined. Some SS, some Hitler Youth, some Volksturm were encountered and ground under. Countless roadblocks, many undefended, were met and destroyed. But the big fighting was over, for now the towns were giving up again without resistance. As our troops advanced, Mayor after Mayor came out to surrender his town. By the close of day on the 11th no organized enemy line existed in the Division sector. The

infantrymen mounted trucks, tanks and TDs to search out the vanishing enemy. 358th Infantry rode rough-shod through GROSS BREITENBACH, GRAFENTHAL and LOBENSTEIN and reached the SELBITZ River on the 13th. 359th Infantry swept through GEHREN, LANGE-IESEN and KONIGSEE to the SAALE River on the 14th. All towns in both regimental sectors were entered and cleared.

90th Reconnaissance Troop, relieved of its bridge guard at 0600 on 10 April, rejoined the Division. In the afternoon of 11 April the troop was given the mission of reconnoitering the Division front and moved off through KONIGSEE where they captured 7 prisoners. The troop continued to scour the area in front of the Division and late on the 13th seized a bridge intact 4 km south of BLANKENSTEIN. After dark on the 13th they were driven off once, retook the bridge and held off an enemy column. Company E 358th Infantry and 2 platoons 773rd TD Battalion relieved them in early morning of the 14th.

All other bridges investigated along the SELBITZ and SAALE Rivers were out. On the 14th, 358th crossed the river Southeast of LICHTENBERG. 2nd Battalion moved first. G Company captured BLANKENBERG, a jeep bridge across the SAALE and 65 prisoners. 3rd Battalion followed 2nd and pushed East blocking to the South at the same time. By dark the Regiment held a bridgehead 30 km square.

Following their relief, the 90th Reconnaissance Troop pushed to the North and East cut the of BERLIN-MUNICH Autobahn at 1600 after an encounter with 50 infantrymen at BERG. [Page 12]

During this period the Division CP kept pace with the infantry by displacing five times. The CP moved from ZELLA MEHLIS to STUTZERBACH on the 10th. It opened at noon on the 12th at GROSS BRIETENBACH. At 0900 on the 13th set up at OBER-WEISSBACH. Here the operational maps were scarcely unwrapped when the CP moved again on that day to PROBSTZELLA where it opened at 1700. Next day, the 14th, it shifted once more, setting up at LOBENSTEIN at 1630.

By reaching the SAALE River the Division had broken clear of the THURINGER WALD. Now the only large town remaining between the Division and the Czech border 30 km West, was HOF. It became the Division's next objective. Corps established a restraining line just beyond the town.

357th Infantry -- This regiment meanwhile was the hubbub of activity as plans were laid for removal of the gold and art treasures of which it was at. Many notables had visited the mine, including Generals Eisenhower, Bradley, Patton and Lear.

At 0900 on the 14th loading of the gold on 10-ton trucks began. The labor continued as the period closed. Jeeps were disassembled lowered into the mine and reassembled to assist in the work. Two crews of 50 men each alternated.

Back in the Division, 1135th Engineers were working to. Their interest was a bridge at BLANKENSTEIN. It was completed in early evening, but work on the approaches delayed its

use until midnight. It was intended that 358th Infantry use it first until 0645 when 359th Infantry would take over.

15 April 1945

358th Infantry -- From midnight until 0645 vehicles and supporting weapons for 358 rumbled across the bridge at BLANKENSTEIN. The taking of HOF was assigned to the 358th's 3rd Battalion. After a stubborn fight at KODITZ, the Battalion reached the outskirts of HOF. The attack began shortly after noon and raged until after dark when the town was rather well occupied but not wholly cleared. The Germans put up a stout fight and aggressively used small arms, machine guns and Panzerfausts, but to no avail. They were steadily compressed into a smaller and smaller area in Northeast HOF. K Company seized a bridge intact and pushed across the SALLE River. More than 1000 prisoners were taken as the Regiment chocked up 1192 PWs for the day. They also seized an airfield at 0935995 with 18 enemy training planes and 2 JU-80's in excellent condition as well as a parachute factory with an estimated 2000 parachutes at HOF.

90th Reconnaissance Troop was already in HOF on the left as 3rd Battalion came up. Seeing white flags flying, the troops had entered the town without resistance. Then the shooting began - small arms and Panzerfausts. [Page 17] fighting was heavy. One light tank was immobilized by Panzerfaust. The infantry took over assisted by some of the light tanks. After dark Company L relieved the troop in their portion of HOF. The troop reverted to Division Reserve.

2nd Battalion captured HIRSCHBERG with Company E and swept their zone North to their boundary and West to the river. It held this area while 359 pass elements through, then resumed advance to East of HIRSCHBERG.

1st Battalion crossed the SELBITZ River bridge and continued to protect the Division right flank. After moving to vicinity of KODITZ the Battalion was given the mission of tying together the 3rd and 2nd Battalions.

359th Infantry -- Leaving the 2nd Battalion to screen the regimental sector, 359 moved 1st Battalion, 915th FA Battalion and 3rd Battalion in that order across the BLANKENSTEIN bridge starting at 0725. Both Battalions swung North and proceeded to comb out their areas. They were then directed to go East to the main road through ZOLLGRUM, TANNA and GEFELL. This was accomplished before dark. 2nd Battalion was released from its screening mission and assembled in the vicinity of FROSSEN. Company E moved to BLINTENDORF for use by 3rd Battalion has reserved if needed.

357th Infantry -- All night the movement of the gold continued until 0600 when the last of the bullion was safely stowed on the trucks. Then began removal of the art treasures.

At 1015 he attached tanks and TDs were ordered to report to Division 100 miles distant at LOBENSTEIN.

At noon Corps advised regiment that it was released to Division minus the 1st Battalion. Movement would begin on the 16th. 1st Battalion would remain until all of the art treasures

were packed and removed from the area. Departure time for the regiment was set at 0900 on 16 April.

16 April 1945

Corps had established the HOF-PLAUEN road as a restraining line. For better positions the units needed to secure the high ground just beyond and this became the objective.

359th Infantry -- on the Division left, the adjacent unit was still having trouble coming forward. 359 found it necessary to remain echeloned back to maintain contact. 2nd and 3rd Battalions pushed out while Company G on 2nd Battalion's left kept pace with the 87th Division. Company F on the right stayed abreast of the 3rd Battalion.

1st Battalion moved in zone of the 2nd and blocked roads to the North until uncovered by the 87th. By end of the afternoon, both 2nd and 3rd Battalions were holding the high ground beyond the restraining line. 1st Battalion assembled in regimental reserve at 1730 as the 87th Division had come [Page 14] abreast of the 2nd Battalion. Company A went to MISSLAREUTH, Company B to ROTHEN-ACKER and Company C to REUTH.

358th Infantry -- 3rd Battalion mopped up HOF in early morning. Then moved out to take LEIMNITZ and the high ground to the East. 2nd Battalion moved up on the left. 1st Battalion entered HOF to make a thorough police of the city.

357th Infantry -- Leaving the 1st Battalion still on guard under Corps control at MERKERS, the 3rd Battalion and balance of the regiment motor-marched to LOBENSTEIN, then crossed the SAALE River at BLANKENBERG and moved into GORITZ. 3rd Battalion continued to UTTERSREUTH. 2nd Battalion remained at BLANKENBERG prepared to move forward the next day.

Divisions, CP moved to HIRSCHBERG where it opened at 1430.

In line with Corps Directive Number 107, Division FM Number 77 outlined the following plan:

Division would consolidate and defend in depth the present position.

Units would send strong reconnaissance patrols to the front.

Division would be prepared for further movement South or Southeast.

357th Infantry was directed to relieve 2nd and 3rd Battalions 359th Infantry at 1200 on the 17th. 359th Infantry 1st Battalion would remain in place as 357th's reserve.

17 April 1945

The day was relatively quiet as units organized their positions. Patrols to the East made enemy contact and had several firefights. G Company 359th Infantry brought back 75 PWs from LAUTERBACH. 358th Infantry gathered up 774 PWs. Their I and R Platoon captured a bridge intact at VIEDERNBERG. Relief of the 359th Infantry by 357th Infantry went smoothly and was complete by 1915. 359th Infantry assembled in the vicinity of BLINTENDORF.

Division now had new instructions. As the Army boundary was shifted to the South, the 328th Infantry (26th Division) on our immediate right was to be relieved by us and we in turn would be relieved on the North by 2nd Cavalry Group.

To accomplish this it was decided to relieve 357th Infantry with 359th's 1st Battalion. 357th Infantry would then relieve the 328th Infantry and 2nd Cavalry Group would relieve 1st Battalion 359th Infantry. 90th Reconnaissance Troop would establish a screen approximately 3 km in front of the Division left flank.

1st Battalion 357th Infantry was relieved by Corps and reverted to Division control but remained at MERKERS until next day. [Page 15]

18 April 1945

On this day the 90th Division became the first Allied troops to enter CZECHOSLOVAKIA and the first to cut Germany in two.

358th Infantry -- In preparation for advance on the 19th, the I and R Platoon struck out at 0600 to gain contact with the enemy and clear any enemy from the zone. Following them on 0800 were one Company from the 3rd Battalion and one from the 2nd Battalion both reinforced with armor. At 180955 a 3rd Battalion patrol cross the border into CZECHOSLOVAKIA near PREX against small arms resistance and captured some prisoners. 2nd Battalion patrol crossed the border at 181115B April 45.

On division left the 90th Reconnaissance Troop pushed East at 0700 and stayed abreast of the 358th Infantry patrols. They engaged in a firefight in vicinity of POSSECK and captured some 80 prisoners.

In the afternoon 359th Infantry regrouped in preparation for the attack with 3rd hand 1st Battalions facing Southeast towards REHAU. 2nd Battalion assembled in the vicinity of REGNITZLOSAU.

357th Infantry -- By 0900 relief of the 2nd and 3rd Battalions by 1st Battalion 359th Infantry was complete and the regiment started for their new assembly areas near MARTINSREUTH preparatory to relieving the 328th Infantry. They closed at 1130 and began the relief which was delayed only by 3rd Battalion 328th Infantry being engaged at FORBAU. By late afternoon all elements were relieved.

At 1930 the 1st Battalion returned from MERKERS and closed at KONRADSREUTH.

359th Infantry -- Continued rehabilitation of troops and maintenance of vehicles except for the 1st Battalion which went on line to cover the Division left flank, relieving 357th Infantry. 2nd Cavalry completed relief of 1st Battalion and 90th Reconnaissance Troop as of 1630. 1st Battalion moved to GEFELL.

The problem of guarding enemy installations was becoming a large-sized headache. Since the 11th April, 773rd TD Headquarters with various attached troops had been performing this duty as an Interior Defense Command. Now it was decided to maintain a less fluctuating organization. Cannon Company 357 and 359 and AT Company 358 were turned over to the TD Commander for exclusive use as security guards which relieved the regiments of this responsibility in areas they left behind.

Now everything was in readiness for the new advance to the Southeast on the 19th. Division's plan was to use 358 on the left closest to the Czech border and 357 on the right. 359 would be initially in reserve and would be staged forward. The 26th Division would be on the 90th's right. 2nd Cavalry Group was originally on the Division's left. [Page 16]

But since the redirection of advance paralleled the Czech Border the Cavalry actually was on the left rear of the Division and the Division flank for the most part was open. Here trouble could be expected, and a maneuver was planned to meet it. As the assault units pushed forward, the reserve unit would establish blocks to the North and East until relieved by 2nd Cavalry. This allowed rapid movement of the forward elements and at the same time gave the necessary protection. The week's fighting followed this scheme rather closely. In general, opposition was light but the vicinity of the Czech Border was noticeably sensitive and reacted violently to investigation. Progress in this zone was considerably slower, and the Division much of the time was echeloned well back on the left. In some places the enemy fought furiously, employing mortars, machine guns, small arms and Panzerfausts. A few enemy tanks and SP guns prowled around until knocked out by Division Artillery or air support. The terrain again was rugged and roadblocks numerous, especially through the thick woods. 315th Engineers did yeoman service in clearing these and lost several men from heavily booby-trapped and defended blocks. During the month of April the Engineer Battalion cleared a total of 131 roadblocks.

The enemy's defenses, though aggressive when contacted, was not fixed. The Germans made only one counter-attack during the entire period. Their tactics appeared to be only to harass and delay, as if to stave off the inevitable end. Blown bridges became more frequent.

Movement of the Division was controlled by Corps phase lines but averaged in general 15-25 km a day. On the 20th, Corps ordered advance limited to not more than 3 miles a day. This brake was lifted late on the 21st, however, and the Division units drove on as fast as terrain and tired troops would allow. By the 26th they had covered over 120 km.

19 April 1945

358th Infantry -- 1st Battalion captured REHAU at 0930 and went through hoping to reach SELB. This was not to be, however, as enemy tanks and TDs appeared short of SCHONWALD. Organic artillery fired on them and other vehicles and marked this target for fighter-bombers. Three of the enemy tanks were destroyed by this action. B Company then moved on to clear REICHENBACH. C Company took SCHONWALD at 1800. The Battalion halted for the night about a half-mile from SELB near VIELITZ. Division Artillery pounded SELB to soften it up. 3rd Battalion advanced through heavy woods to an area 2000 yards South of OBER



WEISSENBACH where it halted for the night. 2nd Battalion covered the regiment's East flank and closed for the night in vicinity of REICHENBACH. [Page 17]

357th Infantry -- The regiment found only scattered resistance and 3rd Battalion moved quite rapidly despite booby-trapped roadblocks. By continuing after dark the Battalion reached WUNSIEDEL which it entered without opposition.

On the regimental left, 2nd Battalion had rougher going. Heavy woods, roadblocks and the need for maintaining contact with 358 slowed the advance considerably. Near HEBANZ, supporting tanks with F Company engaged enemy halftracks which withdrew before they could be destroyed. The Company took the town without resistance. Company G was stymied by a defended roadblock 1500 yards out of HEIDELHEIM. Faced with approaching darkness, the Company elected to contain the block and eliminate it in the morning hours. Company E moved to GROSS WENDERN.

As the 3rd Battalion pulled away from the 2nd a considerable gap was created. Company B moved into HABNITH to keep this closed. As 3rd Battalion closed at WUNSIEDEL, 1st Battalion minus B Company displaced from KIRCHENLAMITZ to OBER ROSLAU for the night.

Plans for the next day called for 3rd Battalion to cross over into the left zone and take MARKTREDWITZ. 1st Battalion would continue in the right zone. 2nd Battalion, would cover the regimental left until 358 could come abreast.

359th Infantry -- Regiment moved by shuttle marching and closed for the night at REHAU minus the 2nd Battalion which was assigned the mission of blocking to the East vicinity GRUNHAID and maintaining contact with 2nd Cavalry Group.

Division CP opened at KIRCHENLAMITZ at 1430B.

20 April 1945

90th Reconnaissance Troop was pulled from Division Reserve and given the mission of reconnoitering on left of 358th Infantry. Other than this there was no change in the Division lineup as the attack was resumed in early morning.

358th Infantry -- 1st Battalion jumped off at 0630 to capture SELB. They gained entry following a smashing TOT by three Division Artillery Battalions -- the 915th, 344th and 345th. By 1015 1st Battalion was through the town and to ARZBURG which A and C Companies captured in a coordinated attack while B Company took ROTHENBACH. 80 PWs were captured at ARZBURG out of the estimated 200 defenders. Division Artillery caused many enemy casualties.

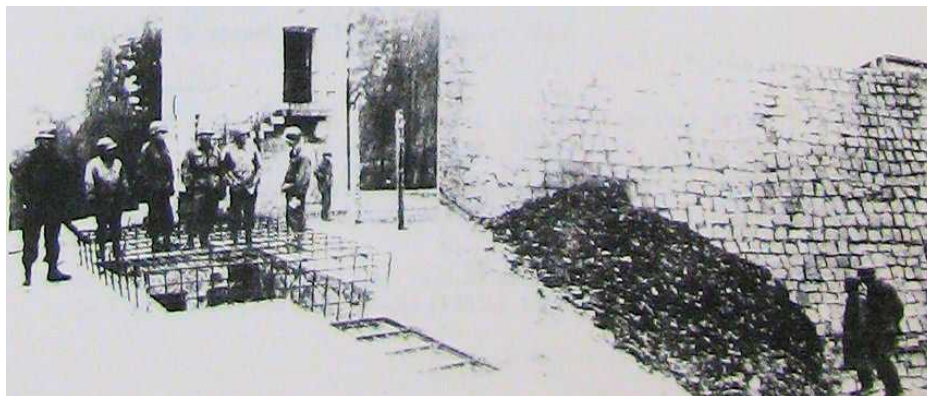
3rd Battalion began its attack 0730. It plowed under some stubborn resistance to gain a position Southwest of ARZBURG by 1800. [Page 18]



INFANTRY MEN OF THE 90TH LOAD UP ON TANKS AT LOBENSTEIN... ROLL THROUGH WURSBACH AS BEATEN WEHRMACH MEMBERS LOOK ON IN WONDER AND REMINISCENCE.



SLIGHT PAUSE FOR ROADBLOCK REMOVAL IN CZECHOSLOVAKIA. BELOW: SCENES FROM FLOSSENBURG GERMANY'S CONCENTRATION CAMP. BODIES WERE PILED AT ONE POINT (LEFT) AND SHOES OF THE VICTIMS AT ANOTHER (SHOWN AT RIGHT)



21 April 1945

Both 3rd and 1st Battalions continued a rapid advance against sporadic resistance. 90th Reconnaissance Troop captured TIRSCHENREUTH and 1000 Hungarians including 2 Generals, in late afternoon. The town had 800 German wounded in hospitals. 1st Battalion moved in to occupied the town for the night. 3rd Battalion cleared through FALKENBERG before it halted.

2nd Battalion continued to protect the East flank with roadblocks. E and F Companies settled for the night at MITTERTEICH while G Company said roadblocks in the vicinity.

357th Infantry -- 1st and 3rd Battalions continued to the Southeast at 0730. The only hostile action encountered was Panzerfaust fire about 2000 yards South of FRIEDENFELS. This struck a TD on which some B Company men were riding, injuring eight.

By late afternoon, 3rd Battalion was at WINDISCHESHENBACH, 1st Battalion vicinity of WILDENREUTH and 2nd Battalion in vicinity of REUTH.

359th Infantry -- 3rd Battalion moved to relieve 2nd Battalion 358th Infantry and block the area from ARZBERG to SCHIRNDING which had not been cleared. They met resistance just beyond OBOHWITZ but overcame this and entered SCHIRNDING at 1600 where they received small arms fire. In addition, the Germans laid down heavy mortar and machine-gun fire on the troops in the town from the high ground around it. The Battalion answered with AT guns using both HE and WP and finally stopped the enemy fire. SCHIRNDING was cleared by 2200.

1st Battalion moved to KONNERSREUTH after its clearance by 358th and launched an attack on WALDSASSEN. They took this town at 1500 without resistance.

2nd Battalion was relieved at SILBERBACH by the Cavalry and moved to KONNERSREUTH. Company F continued on to SCHOTTENHOF to block roads to the North and East.

Fighter bombers working in front of the Division attacked and destroyed 3 enemy vehicles.

22 April 1945

358th Infantry -- 90th Reconnaissance Troop was attached to block roads along the regimental East flank, starting at TIRSCHENREUTH.

1st Battalion moved South out of TIRSCHENREUTH, captured LIEBENSTEIN and continued on to take PLOSSBURG. Here 3rd Battalion relieved it and A and B Companies assembled for the night in SCHONKIRCH. C Company remained at LIEBENSTEIN. [Page 20]

3rd Battalion after relieving 1st Battalion, continued on to close for the day with Company I between PLOSSPERG, ELLENBACH and PUCKERSREUTH and Company K in reserve at WILDENAU. Still blocking, 2nd Battalions staged at TIRSCHENREUTH in the afternoon. In

late afternoon the 90th Reconnaissance Troop was ordered to FLOSS and cleared the town by 2300 without resistance. Picked up 3 prisoners there.

357th Infantry -- Both 1st and 3rd Battalions resumed the advance in column of companies and moved without interruption. 1st Battalion halted about 3 km Northeast of WEIDEN with 3rd generally West of FLOSS.

Company K observed American vehicles in FLOSS and sent a patrol to investigate. Being fired upon, the patrol captured several PWs who said 70 enemy troops with American jeeps and 2 1/2 ton trucks were at GRAFENREUTH. A larger patrol was sent to this area and found the vehicles abandoned in the woods Northwest of the town.

The day closed with Company A at THIESSEIL, B at BECHTSREITH and C at MAZTLESRIETH. The latter sent a patrol of tanks and infantry into UNTER MUGLHOF and MUTTER HOLL to investigate a reported large number of enemy. They were there -- 250 of them in the village square waiting patiently in formation to surrender. Their rifles were neatly stacked.

Other Germans were less anxious to give up and a contact patrol of 4 men from Company A to 3rd Battalion was ambushed. Three of the men were captured, the 4th seriously wounded and left for dead. The regimental I and R platoon, sent to investigate, hit the same ambush, but drove off the enemy and recovered the wounded man.

359th Infantry -- During the morning the Battalions patrolled the woods in their areas. Regiment formed a Task Force Russell whose main elements was AT Company who relieved F Company at SCHOTTENHOF at 1420. 2nd Battalion remained at KONNERSREUTH as regimental reserve. 2nd Cavalry Group relieved the 3rd Battalion at SCHIRNDING. The latter assembled at MITTERTEICH at 1755.

Division CP opened as WIESAU at 0830.

23 April 1945

358th Infantry -- The regiment move now in column of Battalions with 3rd Battalion leading. 1st and 2nd followed in order, blocking to the East. Only sporadic resistance was encountered. The infamous concentration camp at FLOSSENBURG was captured. 1160 of the 16,000 original inmates remained and were liberated. An ME-109 factory was captured here.

3rd Battalion halted for the day with leading elements at WALDTHURN. Company I outposted from NEUENHAMMER to OBER BERNRIETH. [Page 21]

1st Battalion blocked roads in vicinity of FLOSSENBURG while 2nd Battalion set up for the night in the vicinity of WILDENAU.

357th Infantry -- The rate of advance now was dictated by the speed with which other troops could take over along the Czech border as the 90th moved Southeast. This was a slow process

due to the shortage of troops and it being necessary to rein in the Division right flank although resistance there was practically nil.

At 1100 Division gave Regiment the green light and advance was resumed at 1300. By midafternoon 1st Battalion's C Company had secured MICHLDORF and 100 PWs. Company A was in KAIMLING.

By late afternoon Company I had reached WALDAN its objective. K Company halted in TRESENFELD and L Company in ALBERSREITH. Hearing of enemy in VOHENSTRAUSS, Company I sent a patrol to investigate. The patrol hit enemy in force and withdrew. Artillery was laid upon the town in preparation for attack the next day. The regimental plan for the following morning proposed to pass 2nd Battalion through the 3rd to continue the attack.

359th Infantry -- 2nd Cavalry Group took over as far as TIRSCHENREUTH. Thus relieved, 359th Infantry placed 1st Battalion to block from TIRSCHENREUTH to ODSCHONLIND. 3rd Battalion shifted to PLOSSPERG.

2nd Battalion in regimental reserve assemble that LENGENFELD.

Division CP opened at NEUSTADT at 1015B.

Corps Operational Directive Number 110 ordered the advance to continue Southeast to join the Russians at the German-Austrian border.

The 90th Division was specifically directed to continue the advance and block passes along the Czechoslovakian border to prevent the debouchment of enemy forces from Czechoslovakia. Particular emphasis was to be placed on the passes at HOLL, FURTH and MESTYS. Corps also notified Division that 5000 Germans with white flags would pass through the 90th's area from NYRSKO to CHAM to surrender to the 26th Infantry Division in the morning.

24 April 1945

357th Infantry -- Using G Company to spearhead the attack, 2nd Battalion moved against VOHENSTRAUSS at 0730. The enemy resisted with small arms but the town was overrun by 0845. The Battalion determined to seize the bridge as BURGTRESWITZ before the enemy could blow it. A platoon of 712th tanks followed by a platoon of 773rd TDs with infantry mounted set out with all possible speed and without the usual advance patrols. The road was rough and narrow through hilly country having many natural defenses. The column was fired on several times but kept moving, returning the enemy fire with the armor's 30 caliber machine guns. [Page 22] about 2000 yards short of the objective, the lead tank rounded a sharp curve and faced five Panzerfaustmen at point-blank range. The Germans let go their missiles and one shot hit just below the periscope and killed the assistant gunner. The driver and gunner were wounded. Nonetheless the driver backed the tank 75 yards to the rear out of the way. The armor swung their guns into action and firing from the woods soon ceased. One TD was hit in the battle without damage. The crew of the damaged tank was evacuated and the column moved boldly on its way. As a result of this decisive action the bridge was seized intact and

undefended. Apparently the enemy had relied on the ambush to stop the attack. When the infantry later searched out the woods, 25 dead SS troops were found at the point of the attack. There was no other serious opposition although the infantry picked up 100 prisoners as it moved forward. At PULLENRIED 250 Germans surrendered to 2nd Battalion without a fight.

1st and 3rd Battalions moved without resistance, the 3rd blocking in rear of the 2nd.

For the night halt, 2nd Battalion's forward elements tied in with 1st Battalion's leading company at TEUNZ.

358th Infantry -- Enemy efforts to hold the VOHENSTRAUSS-WAIDHAUS Road resulted in sharp engagements by 3rd Battalion South of PLEYSTAIN, at LOHMA and 2nd Battalion at WAIDHAUS. Some casualties resulted to the regiment, but the defenders were eliminated. 3rd Battalion moved to ESLARN. In the vicinity of PLAYSTEIN, 2 American prisoners from 357th Infantry, captured two nights before, were released. The third soldier had been wounded and evacuated.

After relief by 3rd Battalion 359th Infantry, 1st Battalion 358th Infantry motored 15 miles to PERENTSCH. Company A established roadblocks here while B Company outposted ESLARN. Company C closed into ESLARN and 0100 on the 25th. Division now told the Regiment to hold its positions until relieved by 2nd Cavalry Group and then to block successively behind 359th Infantry who would attack through them.

359th Infantry -- The Regiment continued its successive reliefs of 358th Infantry and blocks to the East. 3rd Battalion took over the sector from ODSCHONLIND to FLOSSENBURG. 2nd Battalion relieved 358th Infantry elements between FLOSSENBURG and NEUENHAMMER. 1st Battalion remained at TIRSCHENREUTH until relieved by elements of 2nd Cavalry at 1400. The Battalion was then trucked to PLEYSTAIN from where it marched to an assembly area at BURKHARDSREITH. 3rd Battalion was relieved and moved to ESLARN, arriving shortly after midnight. The plan now was for 359 to pass through 358 in the morning and continue the attack to the Southeast towards SCHONSEE and STADLERN. 3rd Battalion would be on the right, 1st Battalion on the left, 2nd Battalion would remain in reserve at FLOSSENBURG prepared to move motorized to ESLARN at 0600. 90th Reconnaissance Troop was attached to secure bridges at SCHONAU, SCHONSEE and TIEFENBACH. [Page 23]

Division CP moved to LEUCHTENERG where it became operational at 1600B.

25 April 1945

359th Infantry -- 90th Reconnaissance Troop fanned out in front of the attacking 3rd Battalion. By 1000, despite several brushes with enemy, the troop was at SCHONSEE. The bridge was intact and they captured 120 prisoners. By this time I Company had reached OBR LANGAU without resistance and K Company was at GINEINSREITH. K Company was motorized and pushed on to WEIDING, relieving the 90th Reconnaissance Troop and then on to SCHONSEE. K Company followed by I Company left WEIDING at 1400 and reached SCHONAU at 1550. The Battalion pushed on to TIEFENBACH where 2nd Battalion moved through to continue the

attack and 1720. They met roadblocks, short of TREFFELSTEIN but went on around them. G Company pushed him on to SCHAFEREI while E Company advanced to BIBERBACH. F Company remained at TREFFELSTEIN. 1st Battalion, met organized resistance in its advance and had no trouble reaching STADLERN. Upon being relieved there by 358th Infantry, the Battalion moved to SCHONAU for the night.

357th Infantry -- 1st Battalion climbed on tanks and TDs and moved off rapidly. At WINLARN at 1000, Company C freed 3000 British prisoners of war. A and B Companies hit GRASSERSDORF at 1015 and moved on to the phase line where they were joined shortly by Company C.

At noon Division ordered the 1st Battalion to go to CHAM and block the road net there to prevent any attempt by the enemy to move South into the "Redoubt Area". 11th Armored Division, racing toward Austria in front of the 26th Infantry Division, had cleared CHAM, but had moved on. 1st Battalion closed into CHAM by 1700.

In view of the above, 3rd Battalion was dispatched to continue the attack. By midafternoon the Battalion had reached SCHWARZACH River just East of ROTZ where it stayed the night.

The I and R Platoon was sent to SCHONTHAL to seize the bridge there and was joined later in the day by E Company. Company F stopped at KRITZENAST on the SCHWARZACH River while G Company moved from BIBERBACH to HILTERSREID.

358th Infantry -- At 1100 Company C made a foray across the Czech border to capture EISENDORF, EISENDORFSKA HUT and FRANCINA HUT. No opposition was met as 150 Labor Service Troops surrendered en masse at EISENDORFSKA HUT.

The 42nd Cavalry Squadron relieved the 1st Battalion in 1900 and then moved to ESLARN. After being passed through by 359th Infantry, 3rd Battalion 358th Infantry set up blocks at FREIDRICHSHANG and STADLERN. [Page 24]

2nd Battalions staged to vicinity of SCHONSEE.

Division CP opened that OBERVIECHTACH at 1515.

For several days the Division had averaged over 1000 prisoners daily. Today brought in another 1200 making almost 20,000 for the month and raising the Division total over 60,000.

26 April 1945

359th Infantry -- During the early morning hours the strong German patrol attacked the troops outposting vicinity SCHAFERIE. Elements of Company G, 359th Infantry, 2nd Platoon of 90th Reconnaissance Troop and 2nd Platoon, Company D, 712th Tank Battalion were involved. Two of the light tanks were knocked out by Panzerfaust before the Division Artillery dispersed the attack.

Before moving off in the morning it was necessary to comb out the woods near SPIELBERG which delayed 2nd Battalion somewhat. F and G Companies moved out to AST at 0840 and drove on, meeting the usual roadblocks and small delaying forces before reaching RANKHAM where they halted for the night.

3rd Battalion was ordered to clear out the woods enough to protect their left flank and then to capture WALDMUNCHEN. The Germans had a different thought on the matter and opened up with machine guns and Panzerfausts when the Battalion arrived at 1300. Despite artillery and constant pressure, the Germans gave ground slowly. They made each block a strong point. Five hours were required before the town was taken. And even after 3rd Battalion was relieved in WALDMUNCHEN by the 2nd Battalion, 358th Infantry, the new unit picked up half a hundred prisoners from the town. 3rd Battalion 359th Infantry assembled in HERZOGAU.

90th Reconnaissance Troop moved initially with and behind the infantry. As they worked South of WALDMUNCHEN roadblocks got more numerous. Finally the troops skimmed down the regimental right boundary, captured DEGELBERG (65 PWS), RANKHAM (29 PWs and 97 Hitler Youth). The troop with 2 platoons of light tanks then headed for FURTH. Again the Germans tried to make a stand. Air and artillery pounded the town and the Reconnaissance reinforced entered the town, clearing it in late afternoon. 70 prisoners were taken. 345th FA Battalion supported this action.

1st Battalion 359th Infantry was motorized and moved to FURTH to reinforce the position. Patrols from the 90th Reconnaissance Troop and tanks [moving] toward Czechoslovakia hit continuous resistance and returned. Between 1930B and 2000B, P-47s hit KLENEC. Several large fires were started in the town and 6-8 motor trucks destroyed. [Page 25]

357th Infantry -- As the mission of the regiment was to block roads as quickly as possible South and East of CHAM, elements were motorized. 2nd Battalion moved down through GEIGANT and WEIDING and ended up well spread out. E Company on the North was at ARNSCHWANG with a platoon at TRETTEG. Company F was situated at BIMBACH while Company G held the reserve position at LIEBENSTEIN.

Companies I and L, also motorized, sped through CHAM and cleared East of the REGEN River. L moved on the left, I on the right and the two companies cleared to KOTZING and BLAIBACH respectively. K Company mopped up behind and took the reserve position.

1st Battalion remained for the night at CHAM.

358th Infantry -- 3rd Battalion flattened the town of SCHWARZACH-SVARCAVA after it refused to surrender. The Battalion then pushed on to establish blocks at DOL HUT. 1st Battalion moved to vicinity HILTERSRIED. 2nd Battalion relieved 359th Infantry at WALDMUNCHEN and outposted that area.

Division CP opened at CHAM at 1515B. 1800 more prisoners were processed through the Division cage.



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In the large-scale, the Allied Armies continued to corral the Wehrmacht into isolated areas that were being pressured into extinction. On the ELBE River American forces had contacted the Russians. Near at hand was the cheering news that the 11th Armored Division had reached the Austrian border. Juncture with the Russians there was merely a matter of days. The 90th's task now was largely defensive as Corps imposed a restraining line for further advance. All three regiments were wheeling clockwise to the Czech border and the immediate job was clearance of enemy to the border and the containing of those within Czechoslovakia. What enemy were in Czechoslovakia was not certain and 90th Reconnaissance Troop was given the mission of finding out.

\* \* \* \* \*

27 April 1945

The 90th Reconnaissance Troop, probing North and Northeast of FURTH encountered small arms, automatic weapons and high velocity fire. The troop returned to FURTH and took a new route to VSERUBY. Here they again received heavy fire and returned. They then attempted to reenter Czechoslovakia to go to MAXOV but found enemy infantry in force and returned to FURTH. Obviously the enemy were along the border in some strength, confirming PW and air OP reports of an enemy buildup in the FURTH area. [Page 26]

359th Infantry -- The regiment mopped up within its zone and made local attacks to clear to the border North and Northeast of FURTH. Enemy small arms, automatic weapons and the Panzerfaust fire were received. Light shelling began, particularly around FURTH. Air and ground reports of enemy armor increased and gave Division Artillery many targets of opportunity. Enemy tanks and infantry were located at VSERUBY. 8" Howitzers of 738th FA Battalion fired on them, destroying three tanks and inflicting casualties on the enemy foot troops. The same Battalion smashed an enemy battery at SV KATERINA obtaining a direct hit on one piece. Bright sunshine enabled CUB Pilots to direct Division Artillery fires on numerous enemy vehicles and other activity across the Czech border. Fighter-bombers again worked Northeast of FURTH and destroyed some 20 enemy vehicles.

Following the mop-up the regiment established an MLR with 1st and 2nd Battalions about 1000 yards Southwest of FURTH. 1st Battalion outposted an OPLR which ran generally above the line SAUBERG to the high ground 3000 yards Northeast of FURTH. 3rd Battalion established an RRL through GLEISSENBERG, RANKHAM, ARNSCHWANG, RIMBACH and MOHENWARTH, setting up strong points at each of the towns.

This was in accord with Division FM #88 issued at 271100B April which assigned the Division a temporary defensive mission and outlined the MLR and OPLR. 358th and 359th Infantry were both directed to establish two Battalions online and hold one in reserve. 357th Infantry minus one Battalion was earmarked for Division Reserve with expected employment in the zone of 359th Infantry. The one Battalion (reinforced) would block and hold the Division right flank.

90th Reconnaissance Troop was to maintain an active counter-reconnaissance screen, generally in front of 359th Infantry.

358th Infantry -- 1st Battalion relieved 3rd Battalion in place on the regimental left in vicinity of STADLERN and PAADORF. 3rd Battalion assembled after relief at 1800 in the general area around a HILTERSRIED. 2nd Battalion remained in place improving positions.

357th Infantry -- The plan for the day called for 1st Battalion with 343rd FA Battalion in support to clear the valley Southeast from KOTZING to OBER and UNTER RIED. 3rd Battalion would clear the area to the Southwest and return to KOTZING. 2nd Battalion would improve its blocks to the East.

The operations of the two mop-up Battalions resulted in some 1300 prisoners. As a result of Division FM #88, the 1st Battalion readjusted its positions by putting A Company at STEINBUHL, B Company at ARNBRUCK and C Company at MOOSAU. AT Company was attached and assembled at PIRKA.

As reports of armor to the Northeast increased, Division alerted 3rd Battalion at 1700 on 1/2 hour call. [Page 27th].

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Some 2000 prisoners were gathered up in the course of the day. The process of screening all civilian males was continued and accounted for many. But most were deserters, walking hospital cases, rear echelon and service troops who purposely lingered behind to be picked up. As straggler points the Germans formed numerous Kampfgruppen to stem our advance. These disintegrated upon contact.

PW identifications and statements, confirmed by air and ground observation posts, indicated that the entire 11th Panzer Division was moving into our Division zone from the EGER area. Third US Army reported the strength of this unit as 1500 men and 10 tanks on 22 April with a possible increase of 500 stragglers and 10 more tanks. This was a woeful underestimate as later events showed. It was quite clear now that a front line in Germany no longer existed but that one was being established generally parallel to the Czech border in that country. The Division's job was to contain these forces while the Russians advanced from the East. Under no circumstances, were these troops to be allowed to escape into the Redoubt Area in the German-Austrian Alps.

Enemy activity at around DOMAZLICE increased.

The rapidly changing situation appeared to cause some indecision in higher-level planning. Consequently, the Division was confronted with several alternatives on future employment as a result of directives and changes from Corps this day. One plan envisaged the 90th being relieved by the 97th Division for reemployment far to the. This was abandoned and the Division was directed to stay where it was until relieved. Who the relieving force would be was still indefinite. One thing was certain: that First Army was side-slipping down from the North and some

readjustment would have to be made. The day closed with information that some unit -- tentatively the 5th Infantry Division would come in on the right of the 90th.

Just before midnight, 345th FA Battalion near GRUB were embroiled in a firefight with an estimated 200 Germans who attempted to infiltrate their positions. The artillery cut their fuse and leveled their guns in direct fire into the woods harboring the enemy. They killed several and caused the surrender of 150 of the invaders.

28 April 1945

359th Infantry -- The regiment continued to send strong combat patrols through the area. Several brisk battles were fought with enemy infantry and Hitler Youth. 1st Battalion captured FITCHTENBACH after a fight which netted 50 prisoners. A Company's patrol North of the town met 40 additional infantry in the woods most of whom were killed or captured before the patrol returned to FITCHTENBACH. [Page 28].

A 2nd Battalion patrol to RITTSTEIG brought back 40 PWs. Attempts to capture 150 Hitler Youth were frustrated by 60 SS troops located East and South of RITTSTEIG who drove back the patrol.

The regimental plan for the next day was for 1st Battalion to readjust its MLR to a Northwest-Southeast line through FURTH. The OPLR held by one company would run from FICHTENBACH, over the high ground 3000 yards Northeast of FURTH and down to ESCHLKAM. 2nd Battalion would remain where it was. 3rd Battalion would furnish one company to the 90th Reconnaissance Troop who were attached with a platoon of light tanks. This was to make a Task Force known as TASK FORCE DYE whose mission was to move motorized to NYRSKO clearing the woods and NYRSKO and then returning. The Task Force was to consist of two platoons and 90th Reconnaissance Troop, Company I, one platoon Company C, 773rd TD Battalion, one platoon Company C, 315th Engineer Battalion and one platoon Company D, 712th Tank Battalion.

357th Infantry -- The regiment (-) remained in Division Reserve. 1st Battalion patrolled to the East. G Company investigated HAIBUHL, ENGELSHUTT and LAM. Numerous prisoners were gathered throughout the regimental area as towns were fine-combed by screening forces.

358th Infantry -- Activity was limited to combat patrols. A reinforced platoon from Company C, following a route from PAADORF, FRANZBRUNNHUTTE and NEID, ran into enemy in the woods near FRANZBRUNNHUTTE. After suffering several casualties, the platoon returned. In the afternoon Company A, reinforced, captured 82 PWs with moderate resistance as they closed on RYBNIK.

In Operations Directive #112, Corps ordered 97th Infantry Division to relieve 2nd Cavalry Group on our left. The Cavalry, at first scheduled for employment on the Corps right flank, was now to come in on 90th Division's right in place of the 5th Infantry Division who were to assemble. Mission of the 2nd Cavalry after relief was to secure the pass North of REGEN. 90th

Division was given the new left boundary which involved relief of elements of 358th Infantry by 97th Division. Time of the various reliefs was undetermined.

29 April 1945

359th Infantry -- At 0430 the Germans shelled FICHTENBACH with Nebelwerfer and artillery. Then followed some 90 infantrymen in an increasingly rare counter-attack with small arms and Panzerfaust supported by one tank. 1st Battalion readily repulsed the effort and FITCHTENBACH remained in Company A's hands.

At 0730 TASK FORCE DYE left NEUKIRCHEN and moved toward NYRSKO. The Task Force moved practically without opposition, gathering up 149 PWs on the expedition. NYRSKO was entered at 1515 without resistance, following which the Task Force returned. [Page 29] 1st and 2nd Battalions continued to patrol, with the former meeting a defended roadblock protected by infantry, mortars, and artillery North of FOLMAVA. Company F negotiated the surrender of a German Commander, 150 troops and about 20 vehicles in vicinity of SRUBY.

Division ordered the regiment to clear out the woods and DOMAZLICE road as far as PARAZOV and BABYLON by attacking astride the FITCHTENBACH-DOMAZLICE road in conjunction with an attack by 358th Infantry on the left. Reserve Battalion was released to make this attack. Purpose of the operation was to pinch out the large wooded area in front of the OPLR and give better defensive positions.

90th Reconnaissance Troop was detached and given a separate mission of blocking the Division's right flank along the VSERUBY-KDYNE road and then probing towards DOMAZLICE.

358th Infantry -- Patrols encountered enemy small arms and automatic weapons fire in vicinity of ARNSTEIN. Other patrols met scattered resistance.

Regiment was notified that 97th would not relieve their left flank before the day after tomorrow. Division ordered an attack on 30 April astride the HOLL-KLENEC road to secure the Northeast edge of the woods.

Reserve Battalion was released for the attack. Regiment was to refuse back the left flank to the Division boundary.

The regiment planned to employ its 2nd Battalion on the right and 3rd Battalion on the left for the attack. 1st Battalion would remain in reserve vicinity AST.

357th Infantry -- Major activity was patrolling by G Company further to the Southeast as far as SOMMERAU which resulted in approximately 100 prisoners. 1st Battalion continued to scour its area.

For its part in the next day's operation, the regiment was directed to move its 3rd Battalion to ARNSCHWANG ready to support 359th Infantry if needed. Battalion's move would be made in the morning with reconnaissance undertaken immediately.

One enemy FW-190 was shot down near CHAM in early morning by 537th AAA Battalion as the pilot attempted to strafe near KATZBACH.

30 April 1945

The limited objective attack by 358th and 359th Infantry met moderate to heavy opposition and the month ended with the objective unsecured. [Page 30]

The rough terrain, heavily masked with Woods, caused great trouble and the enemy used small arms, automatic weapons, mortar, tank artillery and high velocity fire to hold back Division units.

358th Infantry -- On the left, 358th Infantry, attacking at 0800, found rough going due to both enemy and the wooded, steep terrain. Two of the 3rd Battalion's tanks were knocked out by enemy fire. In turn K Company knocked out one enemy tank with bazooka and captured the crew. Two enemy tanks and seven machine guns stalled the attack in vicinity of CAPARTICE which the Battalion finally took before halting for the night after a 6000 yard advance.

P-47s hit TRHANOV and destroyed 6-8 enemy motor trucks.

2nd Battalion faced four enemy tanks with infantry, but pushed through the woods to Southeast of CAPARTICE, not getting quite clear by dark. Then the Battalion went out of contact. As the period closed efforts were being made to reach it by radio, Regimental Staff Officers and patrols.

The regiment received definite word that the 97th Infantry Division would take over from their 1st Battalion in the morning. The 97th Division would attack through rather than relieve and 358th Infantry asked for permission to use 1st Battalion on the woods just below the Division left boundary. This was granted. Division and regiment in turn were advised that 2nd Infantry Division would probably relieve 358th Infantry within two days when First-Third Army Boundary would probably be about where 358th-359th Infantry boundary now lay.

359th Infantry -- Initially, 3rd Battalion met no resistance as K and I Companies moved out from FITCHTENBACH at 0940. Company L in reserve went to FOLMAVA. The two assault companies groped through the dense woods and finally machine gun and artillery fire near NEM KUBICH. From there on they remained engaged as enemy tanks and armored cars joined the fray. 915th FA Battalion knocked out two enemy tanks in vicinity of C KUBICE as the main road intersection just North of C KUBICE proved to be a strong point of MGs and armor. K Company maneuvered around the intersection and broke the resistance. K and I then moved forward toward BABYLON where they met a strong force of infantry supported by armor. As darkness was now shutting in, K and I withdrew to the Y fork in the main road North of KUBICE. Leaving one platoon here with K, Company I returned to FOLMAVA as reserve for next day. They brought back a half hundred prisoners. Also captured was a hospital train with

250 men of whom 200 were litter cases. Company L had meanwhile staged forward to vicinity of C KUBICE and NEM KUBICE, where it remained overnight prepared to take up the assault in the morning with K Company.

1st 2nd Battalions patrolled to their front with C Company occupying OCHSENWEID and KLOPFELBERG. [Page 31]

357th Infantry -- F Company relieved G Company and 2nd Battalion continued to patrol the valley. Enemy infiltrations persisted, and a patrol was ambushed by enemy with Panzerfausts in an area already cleared. Five casualties resulted. 1st Battalion also maintained its patrols, while 3rd Battalion waited at ARNSCHWANG.

90th Reconnaissance Troop -- As the troop approached VSERUBY, it drew heavy fire from AT guns and machine guns. Artillery was laid on the town, starting fires. But renewed efforts to enter were again repulsed and the troops withdrew making a new approach towards MAXOV. They met enemy again at MYSLIV, killed several and captured twelve. At MAXOV the enemy fire intensified and the troop withdrew to GROSS.

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April was over and nearly finished so it seemed was the war in Germany. The disillusionment and decay of the NAZI State was spreading like an abscess. The German people -- and many soldiers -- no longer willed to fight. Large towns hung out their white flags as American Troops approached and groups of soldiers readily surrendered. Now indeed was Germany's cup full and running over -- but it was the hemlock of national suicide rather than the wine of victory. Their fighting now was without sound military purpose. It was like the frantic convulsions of a madman being forced into a straight-jacket. Now indeed was Germany close to confinement and laced up as the Russian Armies, having made contact at the ELBE, swept inexorably nearer to the Western forces all along the front.

The 90th Division could view with pride its part in the ultimate defeat. During April a 300 mile sweep through the dense and mountainous Thuringer Wald and down the Czech border had accounted for many German dead, some 25,000 prisoners and destruction of 13 tanks, two SP guns, 12 airplanes and numerous other vehicles. The 90th was the first American Division to enter Czechoslovakia, thus cutting the German State in two. Its discovery of the Nazi gold reserves in the salt mine in MERKERS resulted in uncovering and capture of more than half of the reserve wealth of the German nation.

EARNEST  
COMMANDING  
BOOTH  
G-3  
[Page 32]