

HEADQUARTERS 80TH INFANTRY DIVISION
APO #80, U. S. Army

G-2 AFTER ACTION REPORT

1 - 30 April 1945

<u>INDEX</u>	<u>PART</u>
GENERAL SUMMARY	I
BATTLE OF KASSEL	II
ATTACK OF ERFURT, WEIMAR, JENA, GERA AND CHEMNITZ	III
ADVANCE ACROSS ISAR RIVER	IV
SPECIAL SECTIONS	V

I - GENERAL SUMMARY

April 1945 proved to be one of the most active, productive and colorful months of the 80th Infantry Division's history. The course of combat carried the Division North from WIESBADEN to KASSEL, with its great arsenal; thence South and East to GOTH A and along the Reichsautobahn at breakneck speed through the rail center of ERFURT; WEIMAR (birthplace of the German Republic) with its BUCHENWALD concentration camp; JENA with its ZEISS works; GERA, key traffic center of GERMANY; and to the outskirts of CHEMNITZ, Germany's textile capital. Then a switch to the South brought us to rest in the Nazi shrine of NURNBERG. From here we attacked South to REGENSBURG; crossed the "Blue" DANUBE and continued pursuit South across the ISAR River vicinity LANDSHUT.

Enemy resistance was comprised of elements and remnants of a few veteran divisions and innumerable miscellaneous units, slapped together in one last defensive effort before capitulation. Key terrain features were defended with suicidal resistance to the last.

It is noteworthy that German artillery was almost non-existent. Several moderately heavy concentrations were received during the attack of KASSEL but elsewhere only light and scattered artillery was received.

Considerable tank activity was experienced during the first half of the month. Enemy air activity was a daily occurrence. Major use was made of demolitions, road cratering, blown bridges, defended road blocks and mines in an effort to prolong the coming of the inevitable hangman's noose.

During April the 80th doubled its previous PW total count, processing 32, 318 prisoners through the division cage. Worthy of note in this connection was the utter disregard by PWs of security consciousness - enlisted men and officers alike.

II - BATTLE OF KASSEL

(1 - 5 April 1945)

April 1st found the 80th Division South of KASSEL on the Third US Army and XX Corps left flank. Opposing our forces were elements of the 166th and 356th Infantry Divisions plus many miscellaneous units including replacement, anti-aircraft and Landesschutzen battalions. Fierce resistance from enemy small arms, automatic weapons, mortar and direct fire weapons met our attacking forces North of the EDER River. Towns and key terrain features were used as strong points. The enemy made use of blown bridges and other defensive works to slow our Northward advance to KASSEL. NIEDER-ZWEHREN, WELTERODE, DENNHAGEN and GUZHAGEN were captured during the day.

April 2-3 the attack of KASSEL continued against stubborn and determined enemy resistance. The enemy counter-attacked with five tanks and an unknown number of infantry at 030920B from Northwest VOLLMARSHAUSEN. This attack was quickly repulsed without loss of ground and with heavy losses imposed on the enemy. During the afternoon of 3 April, resistance slackened somewhat in intensity as our forces entered KASSEL proper and cleared two thirds of the city by dark. Over 1300 PWs were captured during the day and the remaining pockets of resistance in the city were being mopped up. Two bridges over the FULDA River were captured intact and many towns were cleared throughout the Division zone of advance.

At 041230B, General Major (US Brig Gen) ERKLEREN, Commanding General, of the KASSEL Garrison, surrendered himself and his remaining 400 men to our forces. This culminated the battle for KASSEL.

As our attack continued to the North and East, strong points of resistance were encountered Vic NIEDERKAUFUNGEN, N IHRINGSHAUSEN and SIMMERSHAUSEN where dug in tanks and infantry slowed our advance. At 041645B, an estimated 200 enemy infantry counter-attacked from vicinity SIMMERSHAUSEN but were repulsed. During the day a bag of 3047 prisoners of war were captured raising the total number of PWs captured during the KASSEL operation to 5,954.

On 5 April at 0045B an unknown number of enemy counter-attacked our positions from the vicinity of SIMMERSHAUSEN. The attack was broken up by artillery fire before contact was made. Enemy tanks supported by infantry, continued active on the division front. Heavy small arms and automatic weapons fire was received from dug in positions on the high ground vicinity SCHANZE HILL, HEILIGENRODE and S LANDWERRHAGEN. Moderate artillery fire fell on our forward elements during the day,

III ATTACK OF ERFURT, WEIMAR, JENA GERA AND CHEMNITZ

(6 - 17 April 1945)

6-7 April no contact with enemy was made during the 80th Division's move to a new sector East of GOTHA, preparatory to one of the most important

and effective driven through Germany in the Division's colorful history.

On 8 April the 80th continued the attack to the East. Small groups of enemy infantry were observed along the Division front. Small arms and bazooka fire were received from South of GIERSTADT (J1675). Enemy tanks were observed on the Division front and enemy air was active throughout the day.

April 9-12, small arms, automatic weapons, anti-aircraft and mortar fire met our forces attacking the North, West and South approaches of ERFURT. The ERFURT garrison consisted of a divisional size combat team under the name of FELLER. CT FELLER consisted of CT OPITZ, CT CRAU, 71st Pz Grenadier Replacement Battalion, 405th March Battalion, Z.b.v. 124 Airport Ops Co, Alarm Co HINDERSLEBEN and other miscellaneous units.

Stiff and determined resistance was encountered; two enemy counter-attacks of infantry and armor were launched from the South against KILIANI and a third was received at the Southern outskirts of ERFURT at 111745B. All counter-attacks were repulsed and by nightfall of April 11th, our forward elements were fighting their way into the Southern outskirts of the town, clearing the town of enemy the following evening after fierce fighting during the day.

On 12 April at 1300H, WEIMAR, seat of the defunct WEIMAR REPUBLIC, product of World War I, surrendered without a fight to the 319th Infantry after the following ultimatum had been given the commander of the garrison defending the town:

HEADQUARTERS AMERICAN TROOPS
before
WEIMAR

11 April 1945

To Commander of Troops, District of Weimar, German Army.

The Third American Army advances once more triumphantly. We propose to pass through this district and through the historic city of Weimar.

Inasmuch as our superiority is now overwhelming, as your high leaders are requiring you to fight needlessly, the honorable but unconditional surrender of Weimar and of the troops in its vicinity is demanded forthwith.

Therefore, in order to save the city of Weimar unnecessary destruction and to prevent the further shedding of blood, you will accept this offer at once. Send an emissary at once to the place directed by the bearer.

The rules of the Geneva Convention will be strictly adhered to in all matters. An affirmative answer must be received at the place directed by the bearer at 0830, 12 April 1945 or Weimar will be destroyed.

The American Commander of Troops

13 April our forward elements approached the outskirts of JENA, a key industrial city of central Germany. Local strong points and defended roadblocks harassed our advance with small arms, automatic weapons and bazooka fire. By evening JENA had fallen to friendly forces.

14 April our forces approached the perimeter of GERA where stubborn opposition was encountered until the town was cleared in the early afternoon. Considerable sniper fire was met from isolated bands of enemy in woods and key points along our axis of advance and in scattered localities. Direct fire weapons harassed our forces in the Northern portion of the Division zone. A large enemy ammunition supply point estimated ten kilometers square, was captured in the vicinity of TAUTENHAIN.

15-17 April, the 80th Division continued its attack to the outskirts of CHEMNITZ. The enemy offered fierce opposition in GLAUCHAU with small arms, automatic weapons and bazooka fire. A particular strong point developed in the GRUENBATTEN Hotel which held out until late afternoon of 15 April. CRUMMITSCHAU was cleared of enemy during the day. As our troops advanced closer to CHEMNITZ more deliberate enemy defenses were met, consisting of defended roadblocks, blown bridges, mined roads and enemy in dug in defensive positions. On 17 April our patrols to the outskirts of CHEMNITZ met small arms and automatic weapons fire. An ultimatum was sent by courier to the CHEMNITZ Garrison Commander to surrender; the ultimatum was returned unopened.

18-28 April, the 80th Division remained in SHAHL Reserve in the vicinity of NURNBERG. Here in the Nazi Shrine, the 80th CXC Detachment arrested several old-time party figures. To start the series, Kurt HENNOCH, party member #200, was found in the local jail paying the price of disaffection. When he returned to NURNBERG in 1919 from fighting the Bolsheviks in ESTONIA, he found five men who had formed a modest organization to help restore the city to its pre-war prosperity; these were Kriminal Inspector PEY, Otto STAHL, L. Ludwig KAKFER, BINES, and MERZ. They soon persuaded young Julius STREICHER to become their spokesman. In a few years they joined forces with a promising organization of the same ideals being formed in MUNICH by one ADOLF HITLER.

HENNOCH showed the way to the home of Otto STAHL who was arrested there with his nephew Fritz. The latter was the proud possessor of the Blood Medal (Blutarden) for his part in the '33 putch, more successful than the one in which he and HITLER had participated at the MUNICH beer hall in 1923. Both SHAHLS had long since been dropped by the wayside by the Nazi leaders who had gone on to do things far beyond the dreams of the original NURNBERG five.

Next arrested was Ludwig KAKFER whose racial philosophies had given birth to such ideologies as the Superman myth, the persecution of Judaism, and the enslavement of Europe's minorities. He was led to the PVE still professing his belief that the Jews had betrayed humanity and sold Jehova down the river.

PEY, BINS and MERZ were all found to have gone the way of all good Germans, either by suicide or slaughter, leaving only STREICHER unaccounted for. CX agents reached his luxurious country estate while it was still intact. Julius and his young bride of ten days had flown off in his airplane for a honeymoon, and perhaps death tryst, in the National Redoubt. The story of his end remains to be told.

IV - ADVANCE ACROSS ISAR RIVER

(29 - 30 April 1945)

29-30 April the 80th Division launched an attack South toward the ISAR River. Only light and sporadic resistance was offered as many towns were cleared of enemy. All bridges across the ISAR in the division zone were blown by the enemy in an effort to stall our advance. In our assault crossing of the ISAR River on 30 April, only light resistance consisting of small arms and automatic weapons and self-propelled guns firing on our forward elements from Southeast of the river was encountered. All towns North of the river in the division zone and MARKING in our bridgehead across the ISAR were cleared of enemy at the close of the period.

V - SPECIAL SECTIONS

Public Relations Section

O/C - Captain Bernard Didninsky

In addition to routine releases the Division Public Relations Office prepared 5 radio programs and 4 news stories. Routine duties included the release of 50 human interest stories, 728 decorations, 449 citations and 51 promotions submitted to appropriate agencies.

CIC Detachment

O/C Det - Captain Thomas McMillen

The 80th CIC Detachment enjoyed its busiest month during April, 1945. Operations embraced the important and historic cities of KASSEL, GOTHHA, ERFURT, WEIMAR, JENA, GERA and NURNBURG. Among those arrested were several members of the Gestapo and Abwehr, Nazi officials on the Gau and Kreis levels, the SD chief of GERA, and a handful of early Party fanatics at the Nazi Shrine of NORNBERG. In all, 2383 arrestees were evacuated through PW channels, breaking down as follows:

Wehrmacht members in civilian clothing	140
Political prisoners for internment	451
Security arrests	89
Agents and suspects	3

IPW Team

O/C - Captain Paul Lossner, Jr.

Total number of prisoners processed during the month of April: 32,318. Even through the Division had succeeded in doubling its take during the month of March, it was able to do so once more during the month of April, so that it can be said the 75% of the prisoners have been captured since the Division has been fighting on German soil.

A great number of the prisoners captured during April had been committed in last minute stands and belonged to Repl Bns, AA Bns, school and administrative units.

During this month, the division also captured several General Officers including General ERXLEHEN, commanding general of the KASSEL garrison. The caliber of troops encountered deteriorated on a sliding scale from remnants of veteran divisions to 20 minute combat teams.

The security unconsciousness of PWs increased in the same proportion so that the interrogators specialized on officers and toward the end of the month interrogated no less than Field Grade officers, with unexpected results.

OB Team #34

O/C Team - Lt Armand V. Paolino

Aside from the usual weekly publications the following subjects were written up by the team during April:

- 1 April - 356th Infantry Division
- 1 April - OB Estimate of Garrison of KASSEL
- 1 April - 166th Infantry Division
- 2 April - Miscellaneous Order of Battle Notes
- 10 April - OB Estimate of Garrison of ERFURT
- 12 April - Special Interrogation Report
- 25 April - OB Estimate of NATIONAL REDOUTS
- 25 April - OB Estimate of Enemy Units on XII Corps Front

A member of this team took part in a special interrogation at the Division Clearing Station which resulted in the location of Higher German headquarters. At numerous times services of this team were furnished to the Division CIC Detachment, which at one time, led to the discovery of a plot to blow up the Autobahn bridge at GERA; the plot was thwarted.

MII Team #444-G

O/C Team- Lt Erich R. Denzer

During the month of April, this team was attached in part to 80th CIC Detachment and IPW Team #75. At various times during the month MII furnished valuable information from civilian sources as to the location of important civilian and military installations in the towns of ERFURT, WEIMAR, JENA, GERA and CHEMNITZ.

PI Team #69

O/C Team - Captain Michael Darbin

During April many sorties of the 80th Division zone of advance were received, annotated and distributed to the divisional units. Six mosaics were made from basic cover received of the area East of GOTH. A road study of the Reichs Autobahn from GOTH East to JENA was completed from obliques received of this area.

Mosaics were prepared of ERFURT, WEIMAR and JENA and a study of the water supply system of ERFURT was made. Five sets of photos of the GERA area were received on 13 April, which sets were interpreted, annotated and distributed. Little evidence of organized defenses were found from these photos which were used mainly for road bridge and terrain studies.

14 April five sets of photos were received of the area in the vicinity of LIMBACH. 20 April, 11 sorties were received of the XX US Corps area South from NURNBERG, and studies of the terrain, roads and bridges were undertaken for the Division Engineers. A study of the DANUBE River from KEILHEIM to STRAUBING was also completed for the Engineers.

Due to the marshy terrain on the North side and steep banks of the South side, a study of the ISAR River crossing was made from verticals and obliques. 29-30 April photos of the INN River were annotated and distributed. A river study was made for the Engineers. Interpretation of photos revealed no organized defenses in the Division sector with the exception of a few unoccupied AA positions and flak towers surrounding industrial areas South of the INN River.

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