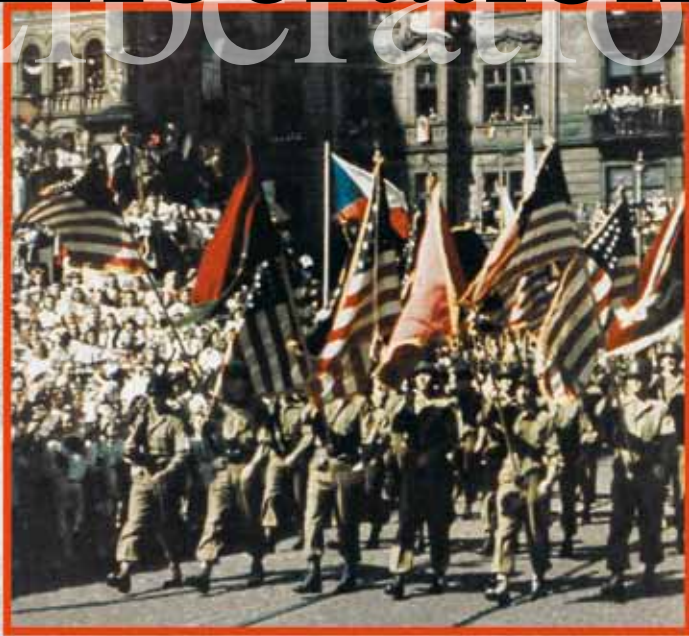


Liberation





Liberation

65th ANNIVERSARY 2010

By Rona Mendelsohn

During the final weeks of World War II, the task of freeing the western portion of Czechoslovakia fell to the soldiers of the American Third Army, led by General George S. Patton, Jr. The following article is a day-by-day account of that momentous two-week period, which is clearly etched in the memories of those who lived through it. Many Czech citizens have written to the American Embassy, sending photographs and sharing their recollections of those days in great detail. The Embassy thanks them for their generous assistance and valuable information. This account, however, has been compiled from the American side.

It was written by Rona Mendelsohn, a professional writer in Washington, D. C., after consulting more than 20 original sources, including letters, books, military records, newspaper articles, and personal interviews.

Cover and left:

After its liberation, Pilsen was the scene of a victory parade by the U.S. 3rd Army.

On **May 4, 1945**, General George S. Patton's forces were deployed along the Czechoslovak-German-Austrian border. He received a call from General Omar Bradley, Commander of the U.S. 12th Army Group, saving that "the green light is on for the attack on Czechoslovakia," and wanting to know when Patton could put the invasion into effect.

"Tomorrow morning," Patton replied.

Bradley was skeptical that the attack could be carried out so soon, but after his long acquaintance with the way Patton operated, he had reason to believe Patton would do as he said.

Patton wrote in his diary about that day: "I immediately called the V Corps and told them to get going with the First and Second Infantry Divisions and the Sixteenth Armored Division."

Major General Clarence R. Huebner was just sitting down to dinner when he received Patton's call. Patton remembered the conversation:

"I want you to attack Pilsen in the morning."

"Yes, Sir."

"Can you do it?"

"Yes, Sir."

"Fine, move fast now. We haven't got much time left in this war. I'll be up to see you. Good-bye."

General Huebner reportedly returned to his table and announced, "We attack Pilsen at daybreak."

Patton's earlier plans of deployment had paid off. He had allowed the Fifth and the 90th Divisions to open crossings at several points along the Czechoslovak-German border. "In case we had to attack Prague," Patton reasoned, "we would at least be through

the passes before anything hit us." He had also profited from the 97th Infantry Division's attack on Cheb on April 25. Other U.S. Army elements had advanced beyond Cheb to Schönbrunn.

The American Third Army, now numbering more than 500,000 men in 18 divisions, was poised and ready to storm through Czechoslovakia in the early morning hours of May 5, 1945.

Wednesday, April 25, 1945

The last offensive of the war had actually begun just as advance patrols of the U.S. First and Ninth Armies made contact with the Russians on April 25. Units of General Hodges' First Army found soldiers from Marshal Konev's First Ukrainian Army at the Mulde River, at the Elbe, and beyond the Elbe near the northwestern border of Czechoslovakia, in German territory. It was a historic and joyful meeting for the two allied armies, the first link-up of forces in the war. Nazi German was, at last, cut into two.

That same day, American bombers hit the notorious Škoda Military-Industrial Works and Airfield in flights over Pilsen.

American troops of the 97th Division followed closely upon the bombers' path. At 9:00 a.m., the soldiers moved on Cheb. Encountering heavy enemy fire from mortars, machine guns, rockets, and small arms, the Division spread into the southwestern section of the city. Mine fields and booby traps also lay in the soldiers' route, hindering their forward movement. It took nine hours for them to capture the city; but by 6:00 p.m. only scattered snipers remained.

Cheb was the first major Czech city to be liberated by American forces.



Infantrymen of the 97th Division (above and bottom right) comb the streets of Pilsen and take out of combat the last shelters of the German snipers.

Below: Pilsen illuminated by signal lights shortly before the air attack on April 25, 1945.





A convoy of the 26th Infantry Division makes its way to the village of Lažištko, east of Prachatic.

Right: The first U.S. tank reaches Sušice.

Opposite: Celebration in the square of Starý Plzenec.

With thanks to the family of the late Mirko Kren, and to all others who have kept photo material to this day and lent it for reproduction in this pamphlet.







XII Corps Division rolled southeast from the Czechoslovak-German border and on May 6 liberated Horáždovice (left), Katovice (bottom), and Strakonice (right). In Rokycany and all other towns the citizens removed the German eagle from public buildings.







On Independence Day, July 4, 1945, Pilsen was the scene of a victory parade in the presence of General Dwight D. Eisenhower (left), Supreme Commander of the Allied Forces in Europe. The Commander of the U.S. 3rd Army, George S. Patton, is shown in Horažďovice (right).



Thursday, April 26, 1945

Meanwhile, part of Patton's Third Army was moving swiftly southeastward, to the right of the First Army. In late April snow and rain, the soldiers rolled through the Sudetenland and deployed along the German-Austrian border. Then came an April 26 announcement from General Dwight D. Eisenhower, the Supreme Commander of the Allied Forces in Europe.

Eisenhower ordered Lieutenant General William H. Simpson to halt his Ninth Army at the Elbe and commanded the American First and Third Armies to halt where they were. According to a *New York Times* article of the era, it was unclear whether the order had been "dictated by the Great Powers" (Great Britain, the Soviet Union and the United States) or made "in the belief that it was a military necessity."

Despite the order, the American Second Cavalry Group also crossed the border farther south into Czechoslovakia on a well-intentioned mission. During the night, an American and two British escapees made contact with the unit, informing the soldiers about a group of approximately 350 British and American prisoners some eight kilometers ahead near the Czech town of Bělá nad Radbuzou (northwest of Domažlice). They urged the soldiers to liberate the prisoners.

Suspicious at first, the men from C Troop decided to undertake the task after getting the go-ahead from one of their colonels. The troop, reinforced by a platoon of light tanks, dashed through a wooded area along a ridge and arrived at the Czech town, astonishing the residents, who had been unaware of how close the Americans actually were.

Momentarily stalled by confusion over

maps, C Troop finally located its destination and succeeded in releasing the prisoners, whose numbers turned out to be more nearly 670. All available trucks were sent from Second Cavalry headquarters to help evacuate the men.

As C Troop was completing its mission, soldiers from A Troop rushed south to capture the horse breeding farm of Hostouň, one of the best-known in Europe. In addition to taking 200 Nazi prisoners, the troop seized 750 new aircraft engines at the site.

Friday, April 27 to Monday, April 30, 1945

During four more days, portions of the American First Army took up position along the German border and inside Czechoslovakia to the northeast. From the junction of the Elbe and Mulde Rivers at Dessau in the north to Ronšperk in the south, the American troops faced the disorganized and disintegrating Nazi Army. Their orders were "to clear a zone extending generally southeast"; the task was completed in alpine snow, rain and cold, with slippery roads impeding their advance more than enemy opposition.

The American Third Army continued to press toward Czechoslovakia to the south, east and northeast. Some groups were occupied with seizing the Železnorudský Pass into the country, while other moved farther south, from Hostouň to Zwiesel and Grafenau in Germany. Along the way, the Second Squadron of XII Corps received the surrender of 4,696 White Russian soldiers who had been fighting with the Nazis.

Other Allied Armies in Europe did their last fighting against the Nazis on April 29.

BLOOM, GEORGE
BOOTH, HAVEN G.
BOSLEY, EARL NMT
BOWE, ROBERT J.
BOWEN, CHARLES O.
BOYER, ARTHUR M.

CROCKER, RAYMOND
CUNNINGHAM, JARRETTE
CUNNINGHAM, JOHN V.
CURLEY, RAYMOND R.

MAMERON, DONALD J.
CHILDS, DONALD C.
COCHRAN, WILLIS E.

GILL, ORION D.
HUGHES, GERARD T.
JACKSON, EDWARD M.
JANDT, HERBERT H.

PRIVATE

ROHRBAUGH, WILLIAM J.
ROMMEL, AARON I.
SAJDAK, EDWARD A.
SANDERS, RAYMOND L.
SCHMIDT, JOSEPH W.
SCHOONAERT, RAYMOND C.
SCIARRINO, JOSEPH A.
SELF, WESLEY S.
SELKSON, IRWIN NMT
SEUBERLI, RICHARD E.
SHALVER, MELVIN NMT
SHELDON, HUGH C.
SHIFFEN, GEORGE I.
SHORE, CHARLES G.
SHOUPE, RALEIGH A.
SHULL, DONALD J.
SILVAS, ALBERT NMT
SMITH, BOYD V.
SOUTHWELL, RADALL L.
SPAIN, WILLIAM A. JR.
SPARKS, ROBERT L.
SPENCER, CLARENCE F.
SPENCER, JAMES E.
STAMATION, GEORGE NMT
STANLEY, WILLIAM G.
STEWART, CARL D.
STOCKMASTER, BERNARD J.
STOUT, WILLIAM G.
STROUD, R. G. (L)
STUDDARDS, JAMES R.
STULL, EARL I.
SWANMAN, LEONARD H.
SWIDERSKI, ZYGMUNT J.
SZUMINSKI, MARTIN J.
TANNER, JOSEPH A.
TARNOWSKI, JOHN NMT
TAYLOR, ROY D.
TEDDER, RAY H.
THEALL, ELBIE A.
THOMAS, JOE NMT
TIOBELLA, PASQUALE A.
TUCK, MOSES H.
VALAVOR, JOSEPH NMT

PRIVATE

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BUSH, RALPH M.
BUSCO, DANIEL NMT
BUTIGLIANO, DOMINIK NMT
SANDERS, NOLAN L.C. JR.
SCHAMPELLE, FRANK
SCHNEIDER, ALFRED

SHIELDS, WILLIAM J.
SIBLEY, LEWIS D.
SILBERMAN, BENJAMIN
SILVER, SIDNEY
SISLER, ALBERT

VAN STEENBURG, AMBROSE NMT
VINCENT, LEE A.
WAHL, JOSEPH L.
WALZ, STANLEY W.
WAREHAM, ORSON NMT
WEILAND, JAMES J.
WELCH, JOHN F.
WELLS, JAMES C.
WELLS, WILLIAM B.
WHALEN, EDWARD E.
WILLIAMS, KENNETH B.
WILLIS, MILLARD F.
WILSON, GRANVILLE O.
WITT, LAWRENCE W.
ZARNOWSKI, ISADORE W.
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ADAMS, PHILIP Y.
ALMASI, ADOLPH J.
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BROWN, FRANK D.
BRYANT, WILLIAM L.
BRZEZINSKI, EDWARD J.
BUCKBERG, HENRY NMT
BUZDIEK, ALEXANDER NMT JR.
CALLAHAN, HAROLD P.
CARLSON, RALPH G.

PRIVATE

LARSEN, TILLMAN D.
LATORRE, PETER P.
LAWSON, BERT (NMT) JR.
LEBOW, STANLEY M.
LEBRECHT, WILLIAM J.
LEECH, IRVIN H.
LEPAK, THOMAS R.
LEWELLEN, ALBERT F.
LEWIS, LAURIE L.
LEWIS, NELSON (NMT)
LIPS, STARBUCK H.
LISTER, WALTER W.
LIVERNOIS, EMILIE G.
LOMBARDO, ROBERT P.
LOWELL, LINTON L.
LUSTER, CECIL A.
LUTSKO, JAMES F.
MACKEY, JOSEPH F. JR.
MAGALHAES, ANTONIO S.
MAHONEY, LOWELL A.
MANLEY, DONALD O.
MARKLAND, HARRY C.
MARSHALL, LAWRENCE NMT
MARTEL, WILFRED E.
MARTINEZ, JOSE E.
MAURICY, CONROY J.
MAYKO, ANDREW (NMT)
MAZZA, NICHOLAS L.
MECK, JOHN W.
MEEHAN, ARTHUR T.
MELLOTT, WILLIAM (NMT)
MELTON, PRENTIS (NMT)
MEREDITH, EDWARD D.
MEYERS, ARTHUR J.
MILEWSKI, ROMAN J.
MILLER, LEONARD S.
MILLS, ROBERT A.
MOLIN, SEYMOUR A.
MOREAU, LEO J.
MORROW, WILLIAM H.
MOSHER, ELZA (NMT)
MULHANE, JOHN T.
MURPHY, PAUL R.

MURTHA, JAMES J.
MCAFFERY, DONALD
MCCARTHY, JAMES
MCCLURE, RAYMOND
MCCONKEY, FREDRICK
MCDONALD, JAMES
MCFARLAND, MARTIN
MCOQUILLIN, CLARENCE
NEUDECKER, WILLIAM
NIEWIADOMY, EDWARD
NOBLE, EDWARD W.
OHLER, DANIEL E.
OKONOWSKI, CASIMIR
OLSTAD, JOHN F.
ORR, SMILEY A.
OSBORNE, PAUL (N)
OSBURN, HARVEY
OSTROWSKI, ADAM
OVENSHIRE, PERRY
PALMER, ROBERT A.
PANNELL, FRED M.
PARKER, HARRIS
PARKER, WILMONT
PATTERSON, CYRUS
POLIZZO, PETER G.
POOLE, BASSETT
POWELL, JOSEPH
POWER, ROBERT
QUEENER, WILLIAM
RAGLAND, WILLIAM
RAGONE, THOMAS
RAHILLY, ELISHA
RAUSCH, FRANCIS
RAYL, HAROLD V.
REIMER, NORMAN
RENO, CHARLEY
RHOADS, ROY L.
RIGGS, DONALD
RILEY, CLEOPHUS
RINKA, CLARENCE
ROBERTS, WILLIAM
ROGERS, HILLIARD
ROGERS, JESSE E.

PRIVATE

NEMETH, JOSEPH (NMT)
NEMETH, WILLIAM C.

PIOTEREK, BRUNO
PLATIS, EMANUEL
PODLES, THEODORE

The Nazi forces in Italy surrendered that Sunday, with the capitulation to become effective at noon on Wednesday, May 2.

But even better news came to the troops on the final day of April: It was announced that Adolf Hitler had been found dead in his bunker in Berlin; Admiral Karl Dönitz had been appointed Führer.

Final victory for the Allies in Europe seemed at hand, but still the Americans fought on. No order to halt and await surrender had been given. And so the First and Third Armies regrouped in Central Europe even as they awaited the end of the war.

Tuesday, May 1, 1945

Continuing its limited attacks, the 97th Division arrived at Domažlice. Another regiment farther to the north launched an assault to gain better ground, while advancing and occupying Schönbrunn, southwest of Karlovy Vary.

In the South, the Second Cavalry Group cleared the Einstein Pass into Czechoslovakia while facing moderate small arms fire and reaching Prokop. The troops lined the pass, keeping the gateway into Czechoslovakia open.

Wednesday, May 2, 1945

Early the next day, further plans for handling the end of the European phase of the war began to emerge. At 2:00 p.m., Major General Stafford Leroy Irwin received orders not to cross the Danube into Austria and to limit the number of troops sent to the East.

“Apparently we invade Czechoslovakia,”

Irwin wrote in his diary. As part of the plan, General Huebner’s V Corps (First Army) began relieving the northernmost units of XII Corps. Two days later, V Corps would be transferred to the Third Army.

Gradually, the First Army was preparing to redeploy in the Pacific Theater of the war, leaving the Third Army to mop up in Central Europe. The stage was also being set for an operation that General Eisenhower had told the Russians about a few days earlier — an advance of troops up to 64 kilometers inside Czechoslovakia to Karlovy Vary, Pilsen, and České Budějovice.

It took two more days for the troops to be sufficiently in place and ready for the final push into Czechoslovakia. During those days, until the order was given to advance on May 4, reports of large-scale Nazi surrenders elsewhere began filtering in. The Russian flag flew over Berlin, and Nazi forces in Denmark had turned themselves over to Danish patriots.

As though he sensed the final demise of Germany, Admiral Dönitz declared Prague an open city, or “hospital town,” before leaving Hamburg on May 3. By that designation, he indicated abandonment of hope that it could be held as a final citadel. Yet Nazi troops still occupied the “Golden City,” and both American and Russian generals were eager to grasp the prize.

Friday, May 4, 1945

When Patton at last received the go-ahead from General Bradley on the night of May 4, V Corps and XII Corps were ready to mount the attack. Part of the mission was still vague, and Patton preferred it that way. Prague, perhaps, could be the goal.

Patton wrote: "I had instructions from Bradley, which I passed on to the Corps, that we were not to advance beyond a northwest-southeast line through Pilsen in large force, but could and should reconnoiter vigorously toward Prague."

The Second Infantry Division prepared immediately to move out in the rain. It was to relieve the 97th Division in the Sudetenland, and its first assignment was a gratifying one.

Before the changeover, the 97th had made arrangements to accept the surrender of the elite Nazi 11th Panzer Division. Beginning at 9:00 p.m., the well shaven, clean-uniformed Nazi group began its movement through the Second Division's line, to the rear. It was a mass capitulation of a panzer division, virtually intact, surrendering with all its personnel and arms.

In order, they laid down their weapons and walked into the Division's prisoner-of-war enclosure. The ground was dotted with neat stacks of rifles, grenades, and other equipment meticulously placed as the troops marched into captivity. Their commander, General von Wietersheim, went into the enclosure with his men.

The situation was considerably rougher in the Second Cavalry Group's zone, to the west of Klatovy. Nazis abruptly attacked a platoon of American soldiers that had been in the process of liberating Zejbiš. Forced to withdraw from the town, the men had one of their most difficult days of the war. One platoon, surrounded by the enemy, had to fight its way back from the city. Another platoon leader abandoned his jeep, returning to his command post on foot for help. That night, the platoon stayed in the woods outside Zejbiš.

Rescued several days later, the platoon survivors reported that two men had been killed in the fight. They were the last men of the Second Cavalry to die in action.

Saturday, May 5, 1945

With Czechoslovakia now under the Third Army's massive attacks, all troops were driving eastward. In the V Corps, the First Infantry and Ninth Armored Divisions pushed toward Karlovy Vary, while the 16th Armored headed for Pilsen. Farther south, troops from XII Corps sped toward Klatovy and Prášíly. The Fourth Armored Division reconnoitered routes to Prague, which it expected to attack in full force the next day.

This belief was most likely due to a radio report Patton heard about partisans having taken Prague. In view of the report, Patton wrote, "it seems desirable to me to push on and help them."

Pursuing that goal, an American special-services (OSS) team, headed by Captain Eugene Fodor, drove into Prague on the main road from Pilsen. On their way, they passed through a long column of Nazi soldiers, including an SS Division, marching west in search of American forces to whom they could surrender.

When the adventuresome OSS team entered Prague after an uneventful trip, the Americans were immediately surrounded by joyful Czechoslovak patriots who had liberated their capital city. Fodor was taken to the patriots' headquarters in a basement on Wenceslas Square in the city's center. There, the Commander of the Prague partisans, General František Kratochvíl, "surrendered" the city to Fodor and his team.

The Americans raced back west, through the lines of defeated Nazis, looking for Patton, and, they hoped, permission to guide the Third Army into Prague. Fodor found the Commanding General with Major General Huebner at V Corps headquarters near Pilsen, where they were planning for a combat team of the Ninth Armored Division to push to Prague.

Patton received Fodor's news with satisfaction, but it presented difficulties. His orders were to stop on the line through Pilsen. Phoning General Bradley, he asked for permission to liberate the capital city. Recognizing that the decision might have political implications that only the Supreme Commander could deal with, Bradley placed a call to Eisenhower.

Eisenhower was strict in ordering Bradley to stop Patton. On May 4, Eisenhower had spoken to General Alexei Antonov, Chief of Staff of the Soviet Army, suggesting that after the Third Army had occupied Pilsen it be allowed to move to the western suburbs of Prague. Eisenhower waited for Antonov's reply. Antonov rejected the plan, urging Eisenhower "not to move the Allied Forces in Czechoslovakia east of the originally intended line" — to avoid, in his words, "a possible confusion of forces." Eisenhower agreed to Antonov's proposition and now ordered Bradley to inform Patton that under no circumstances was he to go beyond the Karlovy Vary-Pilsen-České Budějovice line. In addition, the city of Prague was not to be touched.

While Patton waited to hear from Bradley, troops of the Fifth Division moved along the southwest Czech-German border. Reaching Volary (west of České Budějovice), the soldiers came upon one of the horrors of the

war. It appeared that a large group of Polish and Hungarian Jewish women had been removed from concentration camps in eastern Poland by SS guards and forced to march on foot toward Austria. They had been beaten and mistreated while en route; their food had consisted of grass and rotten potatoes. The group had stopped at Volary, prevented from further movement by Allied advance.

Those who died in Volary had been dumped in shallow graves; only 60 of the women were still alive when American soldiers liberated the town. These were taken immediately to the German civilian hospital and cared for by American personnel of the Fifth Medical Battalion.

Sunday, May 6, 1945

When Patton returned from church, he was called to the phone. It was Bradley, conveying Eisenhower's orders.

"The halt-line through Pilsen is mandatory for V and XII Corps, George," said Bradley. "Moreover, you must not — I repeat not — reconnoiter to a greater depth than eight kilometers northeast of Pilsen. Ike (Eisenhower) does not want any international complications at this late date."

Patton was chagrined, but he nevertheless agreed to follow Eisenhower's orders.

Meanwhile, troops of the Second Infantry and 16th Armored Divisions raced to Pilsen. Lieutenant Colonel Matt Konop had been sent ahead May 4 to place and advance party near the town. The Second Division had followed him through the Sudetenland, meeting ragged columns of Nazis, some in horse-drawn wagons, on the way. The population was hostile to the Americans, and the land,

as Captain Charles MacDonald reported, was strange, “neither German nor Czech.”

As the Second Division continued past the apathetic, sometimes sullen Nazi sympathizers and the now undefended forts of Czechoslovakia’s “Little Maginot Line,” the Americans felt that the end of the war could not be far away.

Approaching Pilsen (which had been officially liberated on the day before by the 16th Armored Division), the troops noticed a change in attitude among the population. A scattering of red, blue, and white Czech flags appeared instead of the white flags of surrender. People waved hesitantly from behind closed windows.

And then, suddenly, the soldiers were met by a cheering, flag-waving crowd of joyful Czechs. “We had crossed from the Sudetenland into Czechoslovakia proper,” MacDonald wrote, “and civilians lined the streets ten deep. It was Paris all over again, with the same jubilant faces, the same delirium of liberation.”

As the Americans entered Pilsen, the people screamed “*nazdar, nazdar.*” Flowers were strewn along the paths and into the vehicles of the troops, while young girls and old men and women ran to kiss the soldiers. Then MacDonald shuddered, despite the warmth of the greetings, as he passed batteries of 88-mm flak guns that had protected Pilsen’s Škoda plant.

At Second Division headquarters in the town, Matt Konop was given wonderful but still secret news. The war would be over almost immediately. As an American of Czech origin, Konop could still speak his native language. His commanding general, Walter M. Robertson, suggested that Konop invite civic leaders, artists and other survivors of

the war to be the general’s guests for the next night in the former Pilsen area Nazi Military Headquarters — now the Second Division’s command post. It would be a significant celebration.

For other troops in the Third Army, May 6 represented a day of rapid forward movement. The First Division met moderate resistance in the North as it advanced toward Karlovy Vary. Along the main road from Cheb to Falkenov (Sokolov), Nazi 88-mm anti-tank guns were deployed in depth — each one had to be destroyed by the infantry before the American tanks would be able to move. The Division liberated Sangerberg, Kynšperg and other towns, while the Ninth Armored Division reached Rudolec.

In the South, XII Corps Division spread over the entire territory from Klatovy to Strakonice and east to Písek, on the halt line. Other troops drove to the Moldau line in Český Krumlov, southeast of Volary. Fighting against scattered Nazi troops continued throughout the day, as elements of XII Corps defended bridges over the Moldau from aggressive enemy patrols seeking to detonate previously planted dynamite sticks.

Monday, May 7, 1945

As V Corps and XII Corps resumed their offensives, the announcement of the unconditional surrender of Nazi Germany to Allied and Soviet Forces reached the troops. Messages were immediately dispatched to the attacking units of V Corps, ordering a halt in place. V Corps had already received the surrender of Karlovy Vary earlier in the day, when the town’s mayor had capitulated over the phone.

Elements of XII Corps received word of the surrender while engaged in a fire fight with Nazi soldiers outside of Volary. Tank destroyers broke off the fight and withdrew when a courier rushed up with the message “Cease Fire.”

The Fourth Armored Division, smashing through resistance across western Bohemia in two swiftly moving columns, actually reached the outskirts of Prague. Then they, too, heard that the war was over.

But for the Second Division, another problem arose. “As we drove around the outskirts of Prague,” one soldier later wrote, “the whole goddam Nazi Army came up out of nowhere. They were screaming, howling, crying, laughing.... During that week, 80,000 Germans attempted to give themselves up, and we had to take them, all of them.”

That evening, Matt Konop performed his duties as Master of Ceremonies for General Robertson’s party in Pilsen. The Second Division Band played Czech music and there was an exchange of pleasantries between the General and his guests, with Konop as translator.

At one or two minutes before midnight, the band sounded “attention.”

On the stroke of 12, Konop announced to the guests that the hour of liberation had come.

“I will never forget the scene that followed,” he wrote. “They screamed, they cried, they hugged, and kissed. After many minutes of this, one of their men, a director of their local theater group, asked if they could get his group together and, for the first time in seven years, sing their national anthem.

“I told them to go ahead, advised the General of this and translated the lyrics. The guests sang and sang, and their voices

reached out into the street where the melody was picked up by everybody on the street that midnight, and who knows when it all ended.”

Tuesday, May 8, 1945

For General Patton, the day marked exactly two and a half years since he had landed in Africa. During all that time, he had been in practically continuous battle. His final casualty report read:

<i>Third Army</i>	<i>Enemy</i>
Killed: 21,441	Killed: 144,500
Wounded: 99,224	Wounded: 386,200
Missing: 16,200	Prisoners of War: 956,000
Total: 136,865	Total: 1,486,000

In 281 days of campaigning in Western Europe, the Third Army had liberated or captured 211,203 square kilometers of territory, including 9,025 in Czechoslovakia.



The dedication of a memorial to U.S. soldiers in Cheb. The Ambassador of the United States of America is standing next to the monument.



legenda:
 - - - - - demarkační linie



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