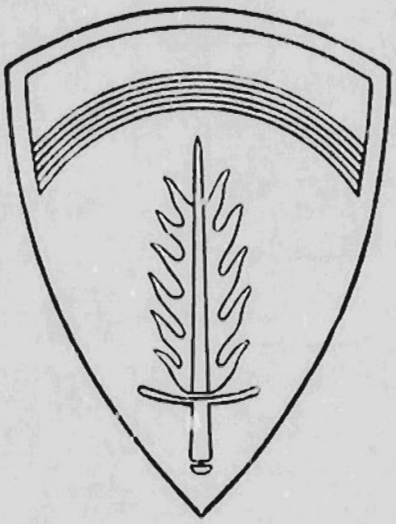
edited by Mad Dog

MS # B-138



ENGLISH COPY

EMPLOYMENT OF FIELD HEADQUARTERS 198

IN WESTERN HUNGARY AND STEIERMARK

FROM 22 MARCH TO 8 MAY 1945

HISTORICAL DIVISION
HEADQUARTERS UNITED STATES ARMY, EUROPE
FOREIGN MILITARY STUDIES BRANCH

MS # B-138

EMPLOYMENT OF FIELD HEADQUARTERS 198 IN WESTERN HUNGARY AND STEIERMARK FROM 22 MARCH TO 8 MAY 1945

By

Bormann, Generalmajor a. D.

Translator: Ruggeberg
Editor : Capt. N.T. Walker
Reviewer : Capt. N.T. Walker

Historical Division
HEADQUARTERS
UNITED STATES ARMY, EUROPE
1952

UNITED STATES ARMY, EUROPE
HISTORICAL DIVISION
Foreign Military Studies Branch
APO 164 US ARMY

11 June 1952

SUBJECT: Reviewer's Comments.

TO : Chief, Foreign Studies Branch.

1. The undersigned edited and reviewed manuscript number B-138, entitled "Employment of Field Headquarters 198 in Western Hungary and Steiermark from March 22 to May 8, 1945", during the period 10-11 June 1952.

2 . The document consists of fourteen typewritten, double spaced, legal sized pages in translation from German.

3. The document describes the operations of subject headquarters, which was an administrative unit operative in the rear areas of combat armies, during a period in which the Russian forces were marking rapid and far reaching gains against the Germans through Hungary and Austria on the way to Vienna. There is a combat narrative of a small action in Western Hungary.

4. It is not felt that this document is of any material use to any person or agency in this Command, nor of any value to higher echelon agencies.

5. It is <u>not</u> recommended that this document be reproduced for use in this command.

6. The portion of the document dealing with operations must be studied in conjunction with a suitable map in order to understand the operations described. Central Europe 1/250,000, sheets P-48 and Q-48, Geographical Section, General Staff, No 4346, War Office, 1944, are suitable for the purpose.

NORMAN T. WALKER,
Capt, Ord C,
Reviewer.

MS # B-138

CONTENTS PAGE

EMPLOYMENT OF FIELD HEADQUARTERS 198 IN WESTERN HUNGARY AND STEIERMARK, FROM MARCH 22, 1945 TO MAY 8, 1945 1

PREFACE. 1

I. INTRODUCTION 2

II. FIGHTING IN THE VICINITY OF PAPA 4

III. EMPLOYMENT OF FIELD HEADQUARTERS 198 IN STEIERMARK . . .8

Bormann
Generalmajor

Allendorf, June 17th 1946

Employment of Field Headquarters 198 in Western Hungary and Steiermark, From March 22, 1945 to May 8, 1945.

Preface:

1. The report on events in Hungary is based on map 1:250 000 and the report on events in Steiermark is based on map 1:100 000.
2. Where I have mentioned fighting actions in which I did not participate, I described them as they appeared to me officially. However, I cannot positively state whether my descriptions and my opinions correspond to the actual events or to those of the Army High Command.

I. INTRODUCTION

From the end of December 1944, my Field Headquarters 198 and its command post was employed at Papa (forty kilometers south of Gyoer). Its area was approximately as follows: Gyoer (excluded) - west of the road to Bakonyszentkiraly (excluded) - road to Vesprem (included) - Vesprem (excluded) - Band (included) - area ten to fifteen kilometers south of road to Hanoshaza (fifty-two kilometers west of Vesprem) - Marszal Canal in the direction of Gyoer.

The area was divided into four sections whose headquarters, called army post commands, were at Papa, Tet (twenty kilometers north of Papa), Zirc (thirty kilometers east and southeast of Papa) and Devescer (thirty-five kilometers west of Vesprem).

Each command had the following missions:

1. Disciplinary control of the German troops billeted in the area;
2. Traffic regulation;
3. Temporary maintenance of roads;
4. Preparation of defense against airborne attack and training of commands formed for this purpose;
5. Preparation of defense against armored attack, training of commands formed for this purpose, and construction of tank obstacles;
6. Preparation for defense of localities occupied by troop units, including alarm system;
7. Liaison with Hungarian military and administrative offices, and coordination of their measures with German plans.

All German units and staffs billeted in the area were at our disposal for missions three * to six, as were Hungarian units for mission six. These latter included mainly such rear area services as supply trains and columns, bakery companies, butcher companies, and repair companies. Civilians were placed at our disposal by the Hungarian authorities for mission three and for local fortification (mission six).

Field Headquarters 198 was under the army rear area commander 593 (Korueck 593), Generalleutnant ** Walther Krause, whose command post was at Menfoe-Csanak, seven kilometers south of Gyoer. He, in turn, was under the command of General der Panzertruppen *** Hermann Balck, Sixth Army Commander in Chief, and reported through Balck's chief of staff Generalmajor **** Heinrich Gaedke. Korueck 593 had a second field headquarters at Kisber (thirty-five kilometers southeast of Gyoer), which commanded the northeastern part of the army rear area between the Danube River, Vertes Mountains and the Bakonyszentkiraly road to Gyoer (Gyoer excluded). Gyoer was under the direct command of Korueck 593. At the end of February the front of the Sixth Army extended along a general line: eastern shore of the Plattensee - south and east of Szekesfehervar - eastern margin of the Vertes Mountains to the Danube River. The Second Panzer Army was joined with the XXII Mountain Corps in the south and with the Eighth Army north of the Danube, but I am no longer able to give the sector boundaries.

---

* Numbers refer to those given above.
** U.S. Army equivalent is major general.
*** General of Armored Troops.
**** U.S. Army equivalent is brigadier general.

In early March, the Sixth SS Panzer Army launched an attack between the Plattensee and the Velenczsee in a southeastern direction. Consequently the Sixth SS Panzer Army took over the southern sector of the Sixth Army, which was then limited to its former northern part (eastern slopes of the Vertes Mountains).

After the offensive of the Sixth SS Panzer Army failed, especially because the marshy terrain south of Szekesfehervar was unsuitable for tanks, the Sixth Army took over the combat sector of the Sixth SS Panzer Army. The latter was to take over the area south of the Danube River with a new boundary extending approximately south of Papa to Sopron.

II. FIGHTING IN THE VICINITY OF PAPA

On 22 March the Sixth SS Panzer Army was in full retreat via Vesprem to Gyoor, and the Sixth Army moved westward to Szombathely in order to avoid contact. The gap between the two armies grew larger and larger.

An alert was ordered for the southern part of the area of my field headquarters on 21 March and was extended to the whole area on 23 March. Local defense positions were occupied and the antitank defense detachments were put in readiness. After the staffs and rear services had left Papa according to plan, only the following forces were at my disposal for its defense:

1. Ninety German soldiers who were poorly trained for infantry service, I employed these at the southern exit of the town on both sides of the road leading to Varosloed. They were equipped with rifles, some "Panzerfausts" * and one or two light machine guns.

---

* Recoilless antitank grenade and launcher, both expendable.

2. Two 88 mm. antiaircraft batteries were employed for antitank defense. One was placed at the southern margin of the town, west of the road leading to Varosloed, and the other east of the town controlling parts of this road and the road to Tevel (five kilometers east of Papa) which leads around the northern part of Hill 372 and enters the town.

3. One Hungarian infantry battalion still in training from the Saint Laslo Division. This battalion was ordered to defend the eastern margin of Papa from the Nagygyimot road to the eastern edge of the town.

4. At my command post in town, I had about twenty clerks and telephone operators of Field Headquarters 198 and of the army postal service acting as reserves.

On the morning of 24 March, I received orders directly from Army Group South to form a new front line between Bakony - Koppany (sixteen kilometers east of Papa) and Papateszer (eighteen kilometers northeast of Papa), in order to close a gap between units of the Sixth SS Panzer Army. It was expressly stated that my mission as combat commander of Papa remained unchanged. During the day, I was able to close the gap provisionally, using a reconnaissance detachment of a division of the I SS Panzer Corps, a company of the Sixth Panzer Army, and the remnants of an SS battalion. With the exception of the reconnaissance detachment, I placed the troops in this sector under the commander of the SS battalion, and I returned to Papa. I found the town had been under artillery fire from the southeast since night fall, and on my arrival, the Russians attacked with tanks along the road from Varosloed. After losing four tanks, they halted the attack and fell back to Tapolszafoe. On the next

morning, 25 March, another enemy attack was repulsed at the same place and one tank was knocked out of action. From the southern margin of the town, some hours later, I observed clouds of dust moving from east to west behind the hills four kilometers south of Papa and concluded that the enemy had turned aside in a western direction. Therefore, I detailed a company of the Hungarian battalion from the eastern front line and employed it west of the town with its main strength along the roads. The day passed without further attacks, and only enemy patrols felt their way forward toward Hill 372 in the area southeast of Papa. This terrain was difficult to keep under observation because of gardens and vineyards.

In the afternoon of March 25, I received orders to withdraw the two antiaircraft batteries for employment in the Raba position. I concluded from this order that higher headquarters no longer cared to defend Papa in favor of the Raba position. Due to poor signal communications, I could not get confirmation from the I SS Panzer Corps, under whose command I had been placed at noon.

The departure of the batteries was observed by the enemy, and at nightfall he advanced again with infantry and tanks along the Tapolszafoe road and north of it along the Tevel road. At the same time, I was informed that motorized enemy forces were advancing from Nagygyimot in a northwestern direction. It was impossible to ward off the enemy advancing from the south without heavy weapons, and now I could expect an envelopment from the north or northeast, and possibly even from the west. Therefore, I decided not to accept the slowly advancing enemy attack, but to evacuate Papa. We succeeded in leaving the town towards the north shortly

before the envelopment along the Nagygyimot - Papa railroad was completed by enemy tanks at about 2100 hours. The decision to evacuate Papa was influenced by my desire to spare the town a house-to-house campaign, especially since it had suffered severely from a heavy air raid on the night of 23 March.

At first, the enemy did not continue his advance northward from Papa. Shortly after leaving the town I was informed that a German heavy artillery detachment had occupied a position south of Takasci, (seven kilometers north of Papa). To protect it, I had the remaining German soldiers, who were still at my disposal, occupy a defensive position at the road fork Papa - Takasci and Papa - Ihasz. The Hungarian battalion had meanwhile continued its march via Ihasz in the direction to the Raba sector. I personally informed the battalion commander about the situation and took a forward observer with me to the road fork. There I learned that an SS division - as far as I remember, SS Division "Das Reich" - was approaching from the north via Takasci toward Palhazarpsz (four kilometers southwest of Takasci) with orders to hold Papa. The division commander informed me at Ihasz that he planned to by-pass Papa on the west and then to wheel towards the east. But, upon hearing my description of the situation, he decided to occupy a defensive position south of the line Ihasz-Takasci. My troops, about eighty men, were to protect his flank on the march from Takasci to Palhazarpsz in the direction of Papa. During this conference, my security post at the road fork had been attacked from the rear and the left flank and had been slowly pushed back about one and a half kilometer along the road to Ihasz. There they stopped until my

detachment was relieved by the combat outposts of the SS division at daybreak on 26 March. The order given me by the division commander having been carried out, he then relieved me. The division held its position only a short time -- as far as I know until the first hours of the afternoon of 25 March -- until enemy reconnaissance forces reached the wooded area between the Marszal Canal and the Raba River, twenty kilometers west of Papa. At noon, Russian tanks crossed the Raba River via Tet (twenty kilometers north of Papa) near Arpas. Therefore, the SS division in the vicinity of Ihasz withdrew from its position to avoid being cut off.

III. EMPLOYMENT OF FIELD HEADQUARTERS 198 IN STEIERMARK

After my release by the commanding general of the I SS Panzer Corps, Obergruppenfuehrer * Hermann Priess, I gave orders to Field Headquarters 198 to march toward Szombathely and I established contact with the chief of staff of the Sixth Army at Rechnitz (fifteen kilometers northwest of Szombathely). Since the rear area commander of the Sixth Army, Major General Krause, was then commanding a division, all garrison posts were placed under my control on 27 March. I was ordered to organize assembly points for stragglers along the German boundary ** between Edlitz (seventeen kilometers southwest of Szombathely) and Halbthurm (thirty-five kilometers northeast of Sopron), and to form alert units. I installed the command post of Field Headquarters 198 at Schachendorf (thirteen kilometers west of Szombathely), and was able to reach eight

---

* Lieutenant General of Armored Forces.

** Actually the former Austro-Hungarian border.

or ten garrison commands on 28 and 29 March, which I employed for my mission. The organization of the assembly points was only partially successful, because the enemy gained ground quickly and crossed the German boundary, especially in the direction of Vienna.

On the evening of 30 March, I received orders by telephone from the army to take over the functions of army rear area commander along the Semmering railroad, from Neunkirchen to Muerzzuschlag and in the adjoining valleys. The definite boundary line of my area was to be established later and Gloggnitz (eleven kilometers southwest of Neunkirchen) was named as my command post.

This order was not carried out, because when I arrived on Semmering Mountain early on 1 April, the enemy was already at Gloggnitz. However, he did not pursue in the direction of Semmering Mountain, but turned toward Bayerbach (five kilometers west-northwest of Gloggnitz). I had my Field Headquarters see that the heavy traffic of military columns and refugees (mainly Hungarian civilians) towards the west was not detained and then organized a defense of Semmering Mountain along the line of Froeschnitz Grat - Sonnwendstein - Breitenstein with security units, until I was informed that General Punzert * of the XVIII Corps deputy headquarters had been charged with this duty. Therefore, I moved my field headquarters to Krieglach (ten kilometers southwest of Muerzzuschlag), and after establishing contact with General Punzert at Bruck on the Mur, I learned that, in addition, to his combat mission at the Semmering Mountain, he would also perform the duties of army rear area commander. On about 6 April I was placed under his command in order to

* Not further identified. /Editor/

handle the duties of rear area commander and moved my command post to Hafendorf (six kilometers northwest of Bruck on the Mur). My territory covered the area of the valleys of the Muerz and Mur rivers from Muerzzuschlag to St. Michael and up to the Hochschwab and Veitsch - Alps. At Muerzzuschlag, Krieglach, Bruck, and Leoben I installed the field headquarters of the different sectors. On 17 April, Muerzzuschlag was declared a combat area, and the town was excluded from my sector. However, my territory was extended towards the west and northwest to a point fifteen kilometers southwest of Leoben - Schladming and included the valley of the Enns River via Liezen to Hieflau. Therefore, I established new garrisons covering area at St. Michael, Liezen, Admont and Hieflau and moved the field headquarters to St. Michael.

After 6 April, I had the following main missions:

1. Supervision of the preparatory work of the combat commanders at Bruck and Leoben.
2. Supervision of all work for local defense.
3. Collection of stragglers. However, XVIII Corps deputy headquarters had formed a special organization for this work, so that I merely conveyed the stragglers to the assembly points of this new organization.
4. Control of supply trains stationed in my sector.

On about 22 April, the Sixth Army again took over the administration of its rear territory from the XVIII Corps deputy headquarters. At the same time Generalleutnant Krause was assigned to this duty, and I was placed under his command. My sector now covered: Muerzzuschlag

(excluded) - the Muerz and Mur river valleys to St. Michael - Schober - the pass on St. Michael road - Liezen (twenty-five kilometers northwest of St. Michael) - Praebichel - the pass on the Leoben - Hieflau road (nineteen kilometers north and northwest of Leoben) - Mariazell - Muerzsteg (fifteen kilometers northwest of Muerzzuschlag). Due to the situation of my sector, it was necessary to move my position towards the east and I moved my command post to Hafendorf. The area under my jurisdiction was subdivided into five garrison commands at Kindberg (twenty kilometers southwest of Muerzzuschlag), Kapfenberg (three kilometers north of Bruck on the Mur), Bruck on the Mur, and Leoben and Mariazell.

In addition to the missions mentioned for the period from 6 to 22 April (see page 9), I was now ordered to inspect the numerous tank obstacles, which had been constructed by Nazi party authorities, regarding their tactical and technical unsefulness, and to organize and instruct the barricading commands. These inspections were really necessary, but judging from the situation of the front line of the Sixth Army, it could not be presumed that they would be used within a measurable space of time. The Russian attacks had been warded off everywhere, and in the period from 20 to 25 April, a German counterattack in the vicinity of Birkfeld (thirty-two kilometers northeast of Graz) had pushed back the enemy twenty to thirty kilometers. Due to the retreat of the Sixth SS Panzer Army in both lower and upper Austria, the northern flank of the Sixth Army grew deeper and deeper, but the Army High Command shifted the 1st Mountain Division to the vicinity of Mariazell to protect this flank.

I never received the impression that the rapidly progressing

offensive of the Western Powers might influence the measures of the Army High Command in this sector. Only in the very last days before capitulation, for example, the General Staff Corps of the XXII Mountain Corps was sent by the Second Panzer Army to the vicinity of Radstadt to take over defense pointed towards the west, and an armored division (I do not know to which army it belonged) was moved to the vicinity of Salztal. Neither unit, however, joined in the fighting.

On 7 May, at 2200 hours, Generalleutnant Krause informed me about the capitulation and the order of the Army High Command stating that as many soldiers as possible were to march towards the west to the American Zone, even with loss of arms and equipment. On 8 May, at 1130 hours I set off with Field Headquarters 198 from Hafendorf via Leoben - Liezen.

signed: BORMANN