

## *The Last Months of the 17th SS-Panzergrenadier division "Goetz von Berlichingen"*

*Published in „Siegrunen“ Magazine – Volume 6, Number 1, Whole Number 31,  
July-September 1983*

**F**rom 24 to 27 December 1944, the "GvB" Div. underwent a brief period of refurbishing in the Saarland at Neunkirchen, St. Ingbert, Homburg and Spiessen. During this time the remnants of the SS-Panzergrenadier Rgt. 38 (SS-PGR 38), were incorporated into the SS-PGR 37, with II. Btl./38 becoming III./37. An entirely new SS-PGR 38 was formed from a SS-PG Training/ Replacement Rgt. and it came under the command of SS- Obersturmbannführer Vincenz Kaiser. On 26 December, the divisional HQ was at Kohlhof near Preussisch Limbach.

The 17th SS Div. was put on alert on 31 December and was sent to the Medelsheim, Altheim and Gailbach area in preparation for a counterattack (Operation "North Wind") towards Gross Rederchingen and Achen. "GvB" was one of 8 divisions assigned to the attack by Army Group 'G,' and it was to lead the righthand or western assault force. The divisional HQ was established at Neu-Altheim with SS Armored Recce Detachment 17 (SS-AA 17) on the right divisional border, with links to the 36th Volksgrenadier Div. (36th VGD). SS-PGR 37 was located directly southeast of Altheim with its command post in Muehle.

### **The Year 1945**

**1 January:** An armored attack force from the 17th SS Div. "GvB" broke through the American lines and made a rapid 5 km advance to the town of Achen. More than 700 soldiers were taken prisoner from the 44th U.S. Inf. Division. Strong enemy counterattacks on the divisional flanks prevented any further expansion of the breakthrough area. III./SS-PGR 37 got stuck trying to take Hill 382 and took substantial losses. With the help of 3 tanks the battalion finally got moving along a road embankment at about mid-day. Late in the day the enemy brought up strong reserve forces and by the morning of 2 January, the "GvB" Attack Group "Kaiser" was ordered to return to the original battle lines.

#### **2 January: 17th SS Divisional Command Chart on this Date**

**Div.'I Commander:** Standartenführer Lingner

**Chief-of-Staff (Ia):** Major von Bothmer, replaced by Sturmbannführer Krelle

**Div'I Adjutant:** Hauptsturmführer Wieman, replaced by Hstuf. Tucek

**SS Recce Detachment 17:** Stubaf. Wahl SS-PGR 37: Staf. Fick

### 17. SS-Pz-Gr Div GOETZ VON BERLICHINGEN

Emblem: A mailed or metal gloved fist taken from the legendary namesake of the Div., the Landesknecht, "Goetz von Berlichingen", known as the "Knight with the Iron Fist", a reference to Goetz' use of a prosthetic metal hand after losing his real one in battle.



Cuff band and ID shields.

SS-PGR 38: Ostubaf. Kaiser

SS-Artillery Rgt. 17: Ostubaf. Klaphake

SS-Engineer Btl. 17: Hstuf. Mueller

**SS-Flak Detachment 17:** Stubaf. Braune

**SS-Panzer Detachment 17:** Hstuf. Hohmann

**SS-Panzerjaeger Detachment 17:** Hstuf. Venzke

**SS-Signals Detachment 17:** Stubaf. Wiederhold

**Divisional Resupply:** Ostubaf. Sarnow

**Divisional Medical Detachment:** Stubaf. Dr. Pries

**Divisional Maintenance and Repair:** Hstuf. Funke

**Liaison Officer to the 9th Flak Div.:** Lt. Bierbaum

**3 January:** Offensive generally stalled. Battle lines run through Gross Rederchingen, Bettweiler, Urbach, Weisskirchen and Nussweiler, about 1 to 2 km in front of the original jumping-off points. II./SS-PGR 37 carried out an attack on the Schlossberg and the town of Frauenberg was retaken.

**4 January:** An enemy counterattack was broken up by effective fire from SS-AR 17. III./SS-PGR 37 attacked the Schlossberg and captured the hill. After some street fighting, Rimlingen was lost to the Americans.

**6 January:** More enemy counterattacks are repulsed. The "GvB" battle lines now ran from in front of Erchingen to the north of Rimlingen, to the west of Urbach and to Weisskirchen.

**7 January:** With the support of rocket-mortar fire, a "GvB" task force moves back into part of Rimlingen. The strength of the enemy in the town was estimated to be at around one battalion.

**8 January:** With the help of tank support, "GvB" soldiers reach the center of Rimlingen.

**9 January:** The American troops in Rimlingen were trapped and encircled in the western part of the town. An outside relief attack was repelled by the W-SS soldiers. While inspecting the positions of the SS-PGR 38, the divisional commander, Staf. Lingner, crossed into the wrong side of the "fluid" lines and was captured by U.S. troops. Oberst Lindner from the Army High Command Reserve Officer's Pool was immediately dispatched to take over "GvB." Also on this day, SS-AA 17 was stiffly engaged in the Obergailbach sector.



**Officers of the Division, left to right: Brigfhr. Lammerding (CO, 38 SS Div. 'Nibelungen'), Ostubaf. Klingenburg (CO, 17th SS Div. "GvB"), Ostubaf. Fick (SS-PGR's 37 and 38), Ostubaf. Kment and unknown Stubaf.**

**10 January:** Most of the enemy occupiers of Rimlingen were able to break through the German lines to Bettweiler. An American counterattack was then shattered by the "GvB" Division. SS- PGR 38 was pulled out of the foremost lines and replaced by SS-PGR 37; in ten days of continuous action it had taken heavy losses. SS-AA 17 (recce) was also pulled back. At nightfall, in very cold weather, the 17th SS Div. went fully over on the defensive. Operation "North Wind" was called off. In front of the "GvB" positions were elements of the 1st French Armored Div. and the 44th U.S. Inf. Division.

**11 January:** The Wehrmacht Communique made note of the fact that Rimlingen in Lothringen (Lorraine) had been recaptured. The day was marked by spotty, static positional fighting on the "GvB" front. Due to a shortage of adequate winter clothing, much suffering was reported (including frostbite) due to the intense cold.

**13 January:** "GvB" becomes part of the XIII. SS Army Corps along with the 19th VGD under Generalmajor Britzelmayr, the 559th VGD under Gen.Maj. von Muehlen, the Volkswerfer- Brigade 18 and the Volks-Artillerie Corps 40. The new Corps' chief-of-staff is Ostubaf. Albert, who was formerly the 1st Staff Officer of the 16th SS-PG Div. "RF-SS."





**Stubaf. Braune, CO SS-Flak Det. 17.**

**15 January:** On this day the Knight's Cross was awarded to Oberscharführer Gottke from 3./SS Flak Det. 17 by Oberst Lindner. The Knight's Cross was also awarded to Untersturmführer Papas, the adjutant of SS-AA 17, for his actions in the vicinity of Reinheim-Habkirchen.

**16 to 21 January:** A generally quiet period in the "GvB" sector, marked by some exchanges of artillery fire. Shortages of ammunition and rations were reported. Salvage work was carried on and the motor vehicle repair troops were kept particularly busy.

**18 January:** III./SS-PGR 37, with a meager operation strength of 11 NCOs and 32 men (no officers!), is withdrawn to begin reformation.

**21 January:** Staf. Fritz Klingenberg, formerly the commander of the SS-Junkerschule "Toelz," assumes the command of the 17th SS Division.

**22 January:** Bad weather. There was snow in the morning which melted in the afternoon. Little movement on the roads. No enemy air activity or infantry patrols reported.

**23 January:** SS-Oberstgruppenführer Paul Hausser becomes the supreme commander of Army Group 'G' (Southwestern Germany); it is the highest command position to go to a member of the Waffen-SS.

**30 January:** Parts of the 6th SS Mountain Div. "Nord" and the 276th (Baeren) Inf. Div. become the left-hand neighbors of the 17th SS Div., replacing the 2nd Mtn. Division. Stubaf. Gwodz becomes the commander of the SS-AA 17. The men of the division contributed a total of 1,303,321.66 Reichsmarks to the fund to aid East German refugees fleeing from the Soviets. The unit with the highest per capita contribution to the fund was 2./SS-Medical Det. 17; its donation averaged 375 RM per man.

**2 February:** Stubaf. Wahl, who had commanded SS-AA 17, became the 720th recipient of the Oakleaves to the Knight's Cross.

**10 February:** The "GvB" Div. reports its strength on this day at 334 officers, 2,231 NCOs and 10,687 men.

**14 February:** An enemy air attack on the divisional command post in Altheim caused some casualties. Some fighting against the 44th U.S. Inf. Div. is reported. The enemy tactics –scout raiding parties –indicated that an offensive was likely.

**15 February:** At 00:00 hours (midnight) a strong enemy artillery fire fell on the entire divisional sector. At 0630, the American attack got underway. Supported by tanks, the 44th U.S. Inf. Div. broke through the German lines by 1000 hours, between Bellevue-Ferme and Eppingen. Rimlingen was partially encircled and a "GvB" battalion was more or less isolated. In the evening, Erching and Guiderkirch were evacuated with the objective of later recapturing them. The American forces with about 50 tanks, had been able to clear about 2 km of ground on either side of Rimlingen.

**16 February:** The "GvB" Divisional HQ relocated to Walsheim. The enemy gained only a little ground. An emergency 2- company battalion was created from the SS-Flak Det. 17 and thrown into action around Bliesbruecken under the leadership of Stubaf. Braune. There was much static, positional fighting as the enemy began to regroup. The formation of emergency units from artillery and supply troops began.

**17 February:** The enemy waited until evening to continue the attack; the divisional HQ moved to Boeckweiler.

**18 February:** III./SS-PGR 37, after being rebuilt, moved into defensive positions on the right wing of the regiment, giving up its former positions to II./SS-37. An enemy attack on the 19th VG Div. created an increasingly dangerous situation. On this day the 17th SS Div. reported a strength of 314 officers/2,077 NCOs/ 9,406 men/or 11,797 in total, along with 29 still functioning tanks.

**19 February:** 559th VG Div. was relieved by the 2nd Mtn. Division. 17th SS HQ moved to Gruenbergwald, north of Boeckweiler.

**20 February:** Divisional orders-of-the-day paid tribute to the deeds of the 9./SS-38 (Hauptscharführer Kirst) and 11./SS-38 (Ostuf. Dr. Proske). 9th Co. had been carrying out sharpshooter duties on behalf of the division, and one member of the unit, Uscha. Kuehn, was singled out for having made 20 confirmed (witnessed) hits as a sharpshooter from 20 January 1945 to 15 February 1945.



**Ostubaf. Jopp Fick (SS-PGR 37).**





**Ostubaf. Vincenz Kaiser (SS-PGR 38).**



**Staf. Fritz Klingenberg, Divisional Commander.**



**22 February:** 2nd Mtn. Div. left XIII. SS Corps to join LXXXII. Army Corps.

**23 February:** Brisk enemy air activity, but little ground fighting reported. Shortage of ammunition and supplies for the "GvB" heavy weapons units are noted; this was especially difficult for the SS Flak Det. 17.

**28 February:** 16th VG Div. inserted in the lines as the left- hand neighbor of the 17th SS Division.

**1 March:** Corps Orders-of-the-Day honored the assault troop led by SS-Junker Niess from I./SS-PGR 37, which had occupied Urbach on 11 February.

**2 March:** SS-AR 17 was reformed into four detachments (Abteilung) as follows:

I. Abt. (1st & 2nd Batteries) under Hstuf. Moeller

II. Abt. (3rd & 4th Batteries) under Hstuf. Nagler

III. Abt. (5th & 6th Batteries) under Hstuf. Hieronymus

IV. Abt. (7th, 8th & 9th Batteries) under Hstuf. Fitzner

**12 March:** SS-AA 17 completes refurbishing and is once again at the disposal of the division.

**14 March:** Assault troops from SS-AA 17 raid Rimlingen and bring back 70 prisoners. Large quantities of a U.S. Army propaganda flyer directed towards the 17th SS Div. are discovered.

**15-16 March:** The enemy advanced to the northwest and crossed over the Blies River bridge, mostly cutting off the "GvB" Flak battlegroup and part of 2./SS-AA 17 in the process. American forces also broke through to the right and left of the 17th SS Div., causing the bulk of "GvB" to fall back in a hard, fighting retreat against elements of the 3rd and 45th U.S. Inf. Divisions. SS-AA 17 fought until 19 March at Blieskastel, then relocated to Walshausen on the 20th, where it continued in combat action. "GvB" still suffered from severe fuel shortages.

**17 March:** SS-Flak Det. 17 was sent to join the 9th Flak Div. to protect Homburg from enemy air raids.

**18 March:** The enemy reached the area between Idar-Oberstein and Bad Kreuznach. On 20 March the Americans would attack through Kaiserslautern-Landstuhl towards Homburg. The right wing of the "GvB" Div. came under strong enemy fighter attacks near Schnittshausen.

**19 March:** The enemy captures Landstuhl. "GvB" shifts to a northwesterly-southeasterly defensive axis, with the divisional HQ in Waldfischbach. Relocation to the "West Wall" was ordered.

**20 March:** Enemy forces gained a line running from Contwig to Nieder und Oberauerbach and the south part of Battweiler. A strong American attack near Contwig was driven off by the 17th SS Panzergrenadiers with the help of the armored recce and Flak detachments. At midnight the divisional supply services headed back for the Battweiler-Nussweiler line, to be followed shortly by the rest of the division.

**21 March:** The 17th SS Div. was engaged in stiff fighting around Waldfischbach. Later in the day, "GvB" fought around Dahn and Hinerweidenthal and in tank blocking positions northwest of Rinnthal and north of Allersweiler on 22 March. On this day the entire XIII. SS Corps had its communications cut off with Army High Command and no news got through. The "GvB" HQ was located in Herxheimweiler.

**22 March:** The "GvB" Div. continued to withdraw through Busendorf, Klingenmuenster and Rohrbach, while the enemy crossed the Rhine to the south of Mainz. The HQ was in Bellheim.

**23 March:** A powerful enemy force attacked the "GvB" Div. from the southwest in the vicinity of Germersheim. The division then regrouped around Bellheim and attempted to defend a line that ran from Herxheimweiler to Rheinzabern to Jockgrim. SS-PGR 38 was engaged in the sector between Ottersheim and Bellheim. After running out of fuel, SS-Flak Det. 17 was forced to abandon nearly all of its heavy weapons and vehicles. SS-AR 17 was in a similar situation and suffered severe material losses. The HQ staff estimated the effective divisional combat strength on this day to be around 800 men, some of whom were engaged defending the Germersheim bridgehead.

**24 March:** Staf. Klingenberg was killed on the left bank of the Rhine at Herxheim where he had been supervising the rescue of men who had been badly wounded through a misplaced barrage from the SS-AR 17. He was temporarily succeeded as divisional CO by Staf. "Jopp" Fick from SS-PGR 37. The "GvB" HQ was located on this day in Germersheim.

An enemy tank advance along the Ruelzheim-Germersheim road split the bridgehead near the latter town in two. One group of 17th SS Panzergrenadiers defended an enclave south of Sondernheim along the Hoerdts-Germersheim road, while the rest of the division remained in the town of Germersheim, where the HQ of XIII. SS Corps was also located.



**Oscha. Gottke receives the Knight's Cross from Oberst Lindner on 17 December 1944.**



**Stubaf. Wahl, CO of SS Panzer Recce Det. 17.**

**25 March:** All intact portions of the 17th SS Div. fell back over the Rhine bridge at Germersheim. SS-PGR 37 remained behind and covered the withdrawal in stiff fighting. After the bridge was destroyed, the men of SS-PGR 37 had to cross the Rhine in assault boats under the covering fire of the last "GvB" tanks. The main body of the



division went into Army reserve for a very brief period of refreshing and re-equipping. Part of SS-AR 17, the SS-Flak Det. 17 and the SS-Panzer Det. 17 were withdrawn to be reformed. In addition the division received a new commander with the arrival of SS-Oberführer Georg Bochmann, who had previously been in charge of the 18th SS PG Div. "Horst Wessel." 17th SS Div. also left XIII. SS Corps and became a temporary component of the XIII. Inf. Corps (Heer).

**28 March:** SS-AA 17 and III./SS-38 were back in action at Eberbach and 3 enemy tanks were destroyed. The principal opponent seemed to be the 63rd U.S. Inf. Division. "GvB's" right hand neighbor was now the 553rd VG Division. From this date until 2 April, the 17th SS Div. was on the march back to the Jagst River positions. "GvB" was notified by Generalfeldmarschall Kesselring (C-in-C 'West') that it would receive 4,000 fresh replacements from the March Group "Schaffmann." This unexpected bonus boosted the divisional size back up to nearly normal (around 11,000 soldiers).

On this day the divisional HQ dispatched a radio scouting party of platoon size under Ostuf. Hinz from SS-PGR 38 into the Openwald (Forest), behind the enemy lines to eavesdrop on American radio transmissions. It was hoped from this to get a fix on the enemy troop movements. Due to equipment failures, contact was only made with two U.S. infantry regiments for one day. The scouting party then returned to the division with little or no losses.



**"GvB" Knight's Cross holders, Ustuf. Kuske and Ustuf. Papas.**

**1 April 1945:** The "GvB" Command Structure on this date:

**Divisional commander:** Oberfhr. Bochmann

**Chief-of-Staff (Ia):** Stubaf. Krelle

**Ordnance Officer:** Ostuf. Scheithauer

**Divisional Adjutant:** Hstuf. Schuetze

**SS-PGR 37 CO:** Stubaf. Baeuerle

**Regimental Adjutant:** Ostuf. Kittel

**I. Btl. CO:** Hptmn. Bitsch

**II Btl. CO:** Stubaf. Krehnke **III. Btl. CO:** Ostuf. Nauroth

**SS-PGR 38 CO:** Ostubaf. Kaiser, replaced by Staf. Fick

**Regimental Adjutant:** Hstuf. Kukula (murdered in American captivity)

**I. Btl. CO:** Hstuf. Sachse

**II. Btl. CO:** Ostuf. Kaschner

**III. Btl. CO:** Hptmn. Beutner

**SS-AR 17 CO:** Ostubaf. Klaphake

**Regimental Adjutant:** Ustuf. Hoppe

**I. Abt. CO:** Hstuf. Moeller

**II. Abt. CO:** Hstuf. Nagler

**III. Abt. CO:** Stubaf. Urbanitz

**IV. Abt. CO:** Dissolved

**SS-AA 17 (recce):** Stubaf. Gwodz

**SS-Pz.Abt. 17 (tanks):** Stubaf. Hohmann

**SS-Pz.Jg.Abt. 17 (anti-tank):** Hstuf. Wagner

**SS-Flak Abt. 17:** Stubaf. Braune

**SS-Engineer Btl. 17:** Hstuf. Mueller

**SS-Signals Btl. 17:** Stubaf. Wiederhold

**SS-Feldersatz Btl. 17 (replacements):** Stubaf. Kuehler

**Special Btl. Klepmeier:** Hptmn. Klepmeier

**Special Btl. Schliechenmair:** Hstuf. Schliechenmair

**Authorized Divisional strength:** 456 officers/2,792 NCOs/ 10,323 men. Total: 13,571

**Actual Divisional Strength:** 315/2,032/8,966. Total: 11,313 The divisional HQ on 1 April 1945 was located in Neuenstadt/ Kocher.

**3-12 April:** During this period there were continuous battles for the Jagst River crossings against the 63rd and 100th U.S. Inf. Divs. and the 10th U.S. Armored Division. SS-PGR 38 underwent very difficult fighting from 6 to 11 April between Jagst and Kocher, near Jagtsfeld and Heuchlingen. The left hand neighbor on the left bank of the Neckar River was the 246th Inf. Div., then came the SS-PGR 38 from Neckar to Herbolzheim. On the regimental right was the SS-PGR 37 and the SS-AA 17 around Kressbach.

**6 April:** Divisional supply services located mostly to the southwest of Schwaebish Hall with the medical detachment and main field hospital at Schwalbach. "GvB's" right hand neighbor was now the Engineer Rgt. "Rosenheim" and the left hand neighbor was the 559th VG Division.

**8-9 April:** The battles for Jagst and Kocher had proven to be a clear defensive success. As a result the enemy side began to get more brutal and a large number of captured soldiers from the "GvB" Div. were shot or beaten to death by the GIs.



**Oberführ. Georg Bochmann, last "GvB" Divisional Coomander.**





**Ostubaf. Baeverle, last CO of SS-PGR 37.**

**10 April:** A substantial enemy air attack was made on Neuen- stadt on the Kocher River.

**13 April:** The Army High Command ordered the 17th SS Div. to the Nuremberg area. Its positions were assumed by the 98th Inf. Division.

**14-15 April:** "GvB" was assigned to the LXXXII. Army Corps while 2nd Mtn. Div. was sent back to XIII. SS Corps. It was becoming nearly impossible to keep moving around the divisional heavy weapons. On 12 April most of the "GvB" Div. had been in the vicinity of Crailsheim; by 15 April it was in the area around Ansbach.

**17/18 April:** 17th SS Div. was fighting in the Mainhardt-Hall area. SS-PGR 38 reached the outskirts of Nuremberg with SS- Flak Det. 17 going to the south of the city. Part of SS-AR 17 was in action with XIII. SS Corps at Crailsheim. Unfortunately most of the local defenses in Nuremberg remained unoccupied against the American advance from the north and east. The Flak batteries had to break out to the west to rejoin the rest of the division.

**19/20 April:** Part of SS-PGR 38 (including I. Btl.) fought the 3rd U.S. Inf. Div., first in the northern outskirts of Nuremberg and later in the southwest suburbs. Alongside the regiment were some Army units and the SS-Kampfgruppe "Dirnagel" (formed from the SS Flak Training and Replacement Rgt. in Munich). There was also some

fighting for the Reichswald between the canal and Reichsdorf. The enemy units were from Patton's Third Army, which the "GvB" Div. had fought against in Normandy.

**20 April:** Fighting reported around Oberroth-Gaildorf, with the 1st and 4th Batteries of SS Flak Det. 17 finally back in action, after being reformed. Counterattacks by SS-PGR 37 twice frustrated enemy attempts to cross over the Altmuehl River. There was further fighting around Neumarkt/Oberpfalz and Altberching, with the latter town changing hands 13 times! Together with the refurbished 416th Inf. Div. and the 36th VG Div., "GvB" assumed blocking positions to the south of Nuremberg. After an attack by SS-PGR 37 on the Nuremberg Autobahn, SS-Flak Detachment 17 shot up 7 tanks and 12 trucks on the road and dealt heavy losses to an enemy infantry battalion at Weinsfeld. Since the fighting around Nuremberg, the CO of SS-PGR 38, Ostubaf. Vincenz Kaiser was listed as missing. He was replaced by Staf. Fick. After the war the bodies of Ostubaf. Kaiser and around 200 other members of SS-PGR 38 were exhumed in an unmarked mass grave. Autopsies showed that all had been either beaten to death or shot in the head at close range. Also among the dead was the regimental adjutant and temporary commander of I./SS-38, Ostuf. Kukula. It was later learned that this massacre—one of the bloodiest in the history of the U.S. Army –was carried out by soldiers from the "Rainbow" Div. (42nd U.S. Inf. Division). Naturally no one was ever brought to trial for this atrocity and the exact facts of the matter remain conveniently suppressed to this very day!

Also on 20 April, SS-PGR 37, now led by Ostubaf. Baeuerle, was engaged in hard defensive fighting around Freystadt, Bavaria. The 17th SS Div. was again subordinated to the LXXXII. Corps under Gen. Tolsdorf; it was the Corps' only fully motorized unit.

**21 April:** A correspondent for the New York Times wrote the following on this day about the battle for Nuremberg: "A mishmash of 32 German units, civilians and Volkssturm men together with the famous 17th SS Inf. Div. attempted to defend the city against our overwhelming superiority."

**22 April:** SS-AA 17 recorded its 10th consecutive day in close combat.

**23-24 April:** A fighting withdrawal to the Danube begins. When the 17th SS Div. reached Donauwoerth it found the bridge over the river already destroyed. "GvB" briefly occupied the "Danube Positions," but they were defensively worthless against any attack from the west. Part of the SS-AA 17 joined the 38th SS PG Div. "Niebelungen" near Regensburg. After crossing the Danube, this detachment only had 6 armored scout cars left. Also on 23 April, the 17th SS Div. received a mention in the Wehrmacht Communiqué.

**24 April:** SS-Flak Det. 17 shot-up an enemy pontoon bridge that the Americans were attempting to place across the Danube. The SS troops then permitted the repair

of the bridge, then they shot it up again! The Detachment also reported the destruction of 6 enemy tanks and 18 trucks.

**24/28 April:** Retrograde fighting through the Beilngries-Eichstaett area to the vicinity of Munich. The 17th SS Div. was back under the control of XIII. SS Corps fighting against the U.S. 7th Army. In Eberstetten, the Americans massacred another 17 "GvB" POWs, including a medic from SS-Flak Det. 17. 1./SS-Flak Det. 17 lost most of its weapons, vehicles and supplies to an enemy tank force at Dietersheim. SS-PGR 37 occupied the western outskirts of Munich, acting as flank security for retreating units. Afterwards the regiment had to carry out a very difficult march to Penzburg. The award of the Oakleaves to the Knight's Cross to Ostubaf. Kaiser was announced, even though Kaiser was listed as "missing." It was backdated to 18 March 1945.

**29/30 April:** "GvB" was in the Starnberg-Penzberg-Bad Heilbrunn area. SS-PGR 37 was engaged in heavy fighting for Penzburg and an enemy armored spearhead was destroyed.

**30 April:** The retreat goes through the Bad Toelz area and the town was declared an "open city." SS-PGR 37 defended terrain to the northwest and southwest of Toelz. Enemy tanks and infantry broke into Bad Toelz during the "GvB" withdrawal over the Isar River bridge. This ended the "open city" status of the town and very violent street fighting took place between the Americans and the soldiers of SS-PGR 37 who were covering the divisional retreat. The pullback to the Alps was now in progress.

**1 May:** Still another 4 captured "GvB" soldiers were murdered by members of the "Rainbow" Div. in Oberpfammern.

**2 May:** The mountain valley to the south of Bad Toelz was defended by SS-PGR 37, near Lenggries, and SS-PGR 38 (Fick) around the Tegensee. Four enemy tanks were destroyed at the Isar River bend near Fall. It proved impossible to defend the bottleneck to the valley with weak forces for the next four days.

**4/5 May:** The 17th SS Div. was reassembled around Achensee in the Achen Valley. The divisional HQ and the command post of SS-AR 17 were located in Glashuette. There was no significant combat activity at this time. SS-PGR 38 and SS-AA 17 went into well protected positions in the Maurach Hills towards Jenbach. SS-PGR 37 was in place to the north and northwest, around Kreuth towards Lenggries. A tank destroyer troop from SS- PGR 37 shot up some more American tanks on the Isar bend near Fall. The last 3 armored scout cars from SS-AA 17 were kept ready for action near Innsbruck.

**6 May:** Oberstgruf. Hausser, as commander of Army Group 'G,' was instructed by the C-in-C 'West,' Generalfeldmarschall Kesselring, to order a disciplined



surrender of all the troops under his command. An Austrian resistance movement in the "GvB" sector, which was given extensive "Allied" propaganda coverage, scarcely put in an appearance.

**7 May:** The 17th SS Div. received the news that the XIII. SS Corps was in the process of surrendering. The "GvB" Div., represented by the chief-of-staff, Maj. Krelle and SS-PGR 37, represented by Stubaf. Krehnke (in Kreuth), made arrangements for the capitulation of the 17th SS Div. to the 4th U.S. Inf. Div. and the 10th U.S. Armored Division.

**8 May:** At 1300 hours, the surrender of the XIII. Army Corps (Heer) began. "GvB" received instructions to surrender all weapons by 1200 on 9 May. At that time the bulk of the division was to enter captivity.

**9 May:** The division marched into an improvised POW camp at Rottach-Egern on the Tagernsee under Ostubaf. Klaphake. Officers and field military police were allowed to retain their weapons. "GvB" arrived in Rottach at 1500 hours and the divisional vehicles were then impounded.

**12 May:** For relocation purposes, the still intact "GvB" Div. was removed to the area southeast of Munich; the HQ staff was in Baldheim. The divisional supply and support troops continued.