

CHAPTER 8

OCCUPATION

THE German surrender in Italy had heralded the beginning of the end of the war in Europe, but complete victory in Europe came only when the unconditional surrender became official at 0001 May 9, 1945. The 442d Combat Team received word of VE-Day with very little in the way of demonstration. It was with more of a sigh that the regiment put its arms down—a very tired sigh of relief that it was all over in Europe and the long chase was ended. So many had died—along the River Arno, in the cold dismal Vosges Forests and the Maritime Alps in France, and on the rocky crags of the Apennines. Victory had not been cheap. The 442d Infantry Regiment had contributed to its buying with 650 dead and 3436 wounded. The scars of battle were still to fresh and the men too tired for boisterous festivities. And there was still the Pacific to think about.

The end of the war did not mean the end of contact with the remnants of Hitler's legions, for the veterans of the 442d were destined to corral the surrendering Wehrmacht from the peaks and flatlands of Italy. Upon the surrender in Italy on May 2, the 442d stopped its pursuit of the battered enemy and regrouped into bivouac at Novi Ligure. Shedding battle dress and donning a bit of civilian-like respectability with nicely-pressed uniforms and clean combat boots, the Nisei veterans began the transition from combat to garrison duty. After a life of shaveless and bathless weeks in combat, it was not surprising that many a survivor of the outfit's four major campaigns looked as awkwardly self-conscious as a Hawaiian beachcomber in dress shoes. Aside from the 2d Battalion which left on May 6 and 8 for Cuneo to set up roadblocks and conduct motorized patrols near the French border, the Combat Team remained in Novi Ligure.

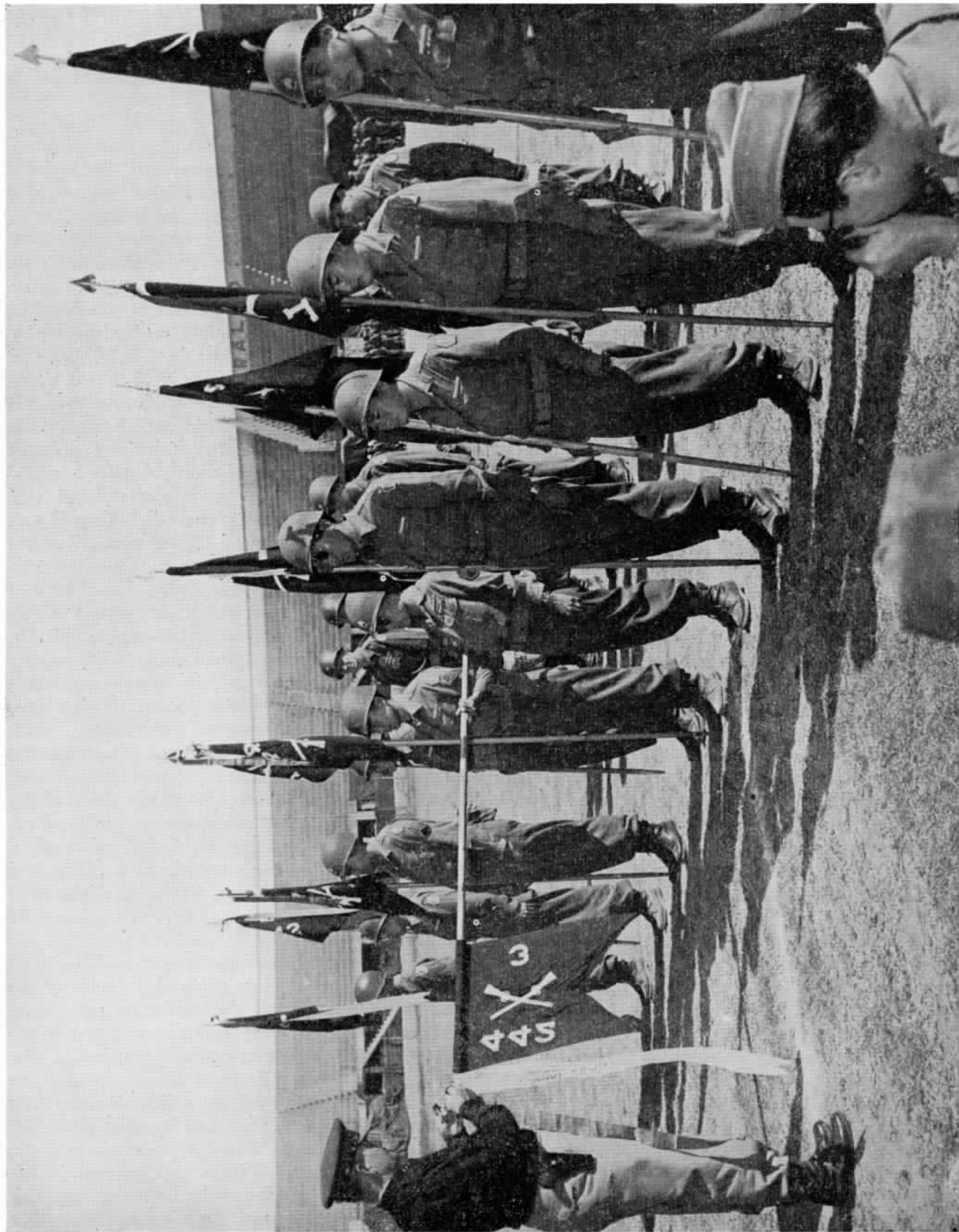
On May 13 awards were presented to the members of the 442d who had distinguished themselves in battle in an impressive regimental parade and ceremony at the Italian airfield on the outskirts of Novi Ligure by Lieutenant General Lucian K. Truscott, Commanding General of the Fifth Army, and Major General E. M. Almond, Commanding General of the 92d Infantry Division.

The period of relative inactivity in the area was

cut short by Operations Instructions #9, Headquarters 92d Infantry Division, dated 141200 May 1945, which detached the 442d Regimental Combat Team from the 92d and ordered movement to the 34th Infantry Division area for attachment to IV Corps. However, this was changed on May 16 by Secret Letter Headquarters IV Corps, which called for movement of the 442d to Ghedi Airfield near Brescia to be attached to the 71st AAA Brigade. The long ride of 125 miles from Novi to Ghedi was begun on May 16. Travelling by motor convoy via Piacenza and Cremona, the 442d passed through the luxuriant farmlands of northern Italy, a pleasant contrast to the destruction of war further south.

All elements of the regiment established tent bivouac at Ghedi Airport at the Fifth Army Enemy Concentration Area on May 17 and were given the mission of processing, searching, and guarding prisoners from the German 14th Army. Then began a life punctuated by DDT insecticide, ragged Wehrmacht specimens of soldiers and women auxiliaries, German loot from the Italian countryside varying from fortunes in horses and lire to women's silken unmentionables, and motley collections of Nazi slave laborers and Italian fascists. Processing teams, formed to search and disinfect the surrendering enemy personnel, processed approximately 85,000 PWs in eight days. During this time a guard of the Concentration Area was established and maintained. For the men not on duty, a schedule of garrison training was begun. One day passes to Milan and rest center passes to Alassio, Venice, and the 442d Combat Team Rest Center at San Pellegrino were instituted.

The homeward trek of the veterans of the 442d began on May 31, when thirty-eight men of the Combat Team possessing the highest Adjusted Service Rating scores left the regiment for home in accordance with the redeployment policies of the United States Army. To these Nisei veterans, this meant the culmination of four difficult campaigns in Italy and France. They had received their first baptism of fire in the Rome-Arno sector in Italy; they had gone on to France and suffered in the freezing cold and rugged winter battles in the thick forests of the Vosges and the Maritime Alps; they



Lt. Gen. Lucian K. Truscott, Fifth Army commander, affixes the Distinguished Unit Citation streamer to the 3d Battalion guidon

had come back to Italy for the final curtain. And now they were going home. Their part in history was done.

Those who were remaining with the regiment honored these returning comrades with a colorful regimental parade and ceremony before their departure. Among those returning were: Private First Class Irving M. Akahoshi, who was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross, Technical Sergeant Kenso Suga, who received the Silver Star, and Bronze Star winners Corporal Kenneth K. Fujihara, Sergeant Edward Y. Ikuma, Technician Fourth Grade Seitoku Kaneshiro, Private First Class Kiichi Kohatsu, Technician Fifth Grade Charles M. Miyashiro, Private First Class Mitsugi Moto, Technician Fourth Grade Shigeru Oshita, Private First Class Herbert S. Saito, Technician Fifth Grade Wilfred S. Shobu, and Private First Class Harold S. Tamashiro. Others in the group were: Private First Class Takeo Fujimoto, Private First Class Ichiji Fujiwara, Staff Sergeant Patrick K. Hagiwara, Staff Sergeant Edward K. Harada, Sergeant Tadao Ishizu, Private First Class Tatsuo Kanoura, Technician Fifth Grade Yoshimasa Kawamoto, First Sergeant Takashi Kitooka, Private First Class Harold M. Kobayashi, Technician Fourth Grade Masato Kodama, Technical Sergeant James J. Mitsuda, First Sergeant Takao Miyao, Private First Class Hideo Nakama, Staff Sergeant Edward H. Nishihara, Technical Sergeant Andrew M. Okamura, Staff Sergeant Ryo Okazaki, Private First Class Susumu Sato, Private First Class Wallace S. Shigetani, Private First Class Richard S. Takano, Technician Fifth Grade Richard R. Takara, Technician Fifth Grade Yukio P. Tanji, Private First Class Robert S. Toma, Sergeant Tatsuo Honda, Technical Sergeant Robert T. Inouye, Technician Fifth Grade Isao Ishii, and Staff Sergeant Tsukasa Yamada.

The Combat Team continued processing and guarding German prisoners at the Fifth Army Enemy Concentration Area until the middle of June. The 88th Infantry Division was designated as MTOUSA POW Command, effective June 7, 1945 (per letter Headquarters Fifth Army, AG 383.6-Y dated June 7, 1945); and the 442d Regimental Combat Team was attached to that division and detached from the 71st AAA Brigade.

June 1945 saw the elements of the Combat Team come to the parting of the ways. The 442d Infantry Regiment, 522d Field Artillery Battalion, 232d Engineer Combat Company, and 206th AGF Band, all



GIs guarding Headquarters, Enemy Concentration Area, at Ghedi Airfield

made up of young Nisei volunteers, had formed the 442d Regimental Combat Team that had trained in Camp Shelby, Mississippi, and had gone through the war together. The 522d had been left in France to participate in the eventual invasion of Germany. Now, the last two supporting elements of the 442d were sent to different assignments. The Nisei band was attached to IV Corps and closed out of Ghedi Airfield on June 9 for Milan, Italy. The Nisei Engineers who had fought alongside their infantry comrades both as engineers and as riflemen, left Ghedi for Florence, Italy.

After almost a month of processing the surrendering German Army in Italy which dribbled into the prisoner of war camp, the Combat Team again folded its tents and packed up for movement on June 14 for another assignment. Upon being relieved of guard duties at the Ghedi Airfield, the regiment journeyed on a truck convoy made up of American and confiscated German vehicles to Lecco, 61½ miles from Ghedi. The battalions made bivouac in Lecco, while the Regimental CP was established at Lecco Maggianico on Lago di Garlate in the vicinity of Lecco proper.

The 442d was designated as a Category I unit to be retained for continued service in the Mediterranean Theater and reverted to the control of Fifth



206th AGF Band holding a practice session

Army. An extensive army education and recreation program was proposed for personnel of the regiment, with opportunities to participate in unit schools, technical schools, army and foreign universities, and on-the-job-training courses. The men prepared for a pleasant stay in this beautiful lake country of northern Italy. Excursions to the famous resort of Como to enjoy the many lakes that abound in that section were begun. But on June 19, after only five days of anticipation of "a good deal," the bubble broke. The 442d Infantry Regiment was redesignated as a Category II unit to be transferred to the Pacific or Asiatic Theaters (per TWX, Hq 5th Army, dated June 19, 1945). The war came close to the unit again, and a full training program was instituted to prepare for operations against Japan. The men saw the beautiful countryside—by the numbers from company formation and through the rifles and steel helmets of the men hiking stolidly before each of them.

In the midst of a rigorous training routine, the inevitable order for movement came again. The regiment said goodbye to a wonderful countryside and a friendly Lecco populace and prepared for the long movement south. In the early morning darkness of July 7 the first group, composed of Cannon and Antitank Company, left on organic transportation and travelled approximately 270 miles to Coltano di Pisa, Italy. The remaining elements of the regiment followed in three other groups within the next three days on trucks and trains and established bivouac in the vicinity of Leghorn, Pisa, and Tombolo.

Upon arrival in the Pisa-Leghorn-Florence area, the 442d relieved the 473d Infantry. Effective July 25 the regiment took over the duties of the Pisa-Leghorn-Florence POW Sub-Command, relieving Division Artillery of the 88th Infantry Division. The Regimental CP was moved to Leghorn on July 24 and commenced operations. The regiment was scattered throughout the Pisa-Leghorn-Florence area guarding German Prisoner of War cages and military installations and supervising the utilization of POW work details. Elements of the 442d were dispersed in Leghorn, Pisa, Pistoia, Florence, and Montecatini to carry on these duties.

The army information and education programs and other recreational activities set up in the Mediterranean area were fully participated in by members of the outfit. The first group of students from the regiment went to the MTOUSA Army University

Study Center in Florence for the initial July session. Three other groups attended the succeeding sessions until the closing of the university in November. On-the-job training was also made available to the unit. Swimmers of the 442d, entered as Fifth Army Troops, captured every blue ribbon except one in winning the championship of the Fifth Army Zone Swimming Finals. A light but fast Nisei football team participated in the Ivy League of the Leghorn area, placing third with two defeats. The fast, flashy play of the 442d gridders made them the favorites of the fans in every game. The squad played two post-season games against the 351st Infantry Regiment, undefeated, untied, and unscored on champions of the 88th Infantry Division. Playing in the Christmas Day feature at the Yankee Stadium in Leghorn, Italy, the Nisei footballers handed the 88th Division champions their first defeat by the score of 7-6. In a return New Years Day engagement, played at the 88th Division's own stamping grounds in the Trieste area near the Yugoslavian border, the two squads battled to a 13-13 tie.

Veterans of the 442d who fought with the outfit in the European Theater began volunteering for combat in the Pacific against the Japanese enemy as soon as victory against Germany had been achieved. Theirs was not only a patriotic gesture, but also a personal one. Born with an incriminating "racial armor" closely resembling the Pacific enemy, they had been dogged by a stigma of racial discrimination and suspicion, consciously or unconsciously engendered since the attack on Pearl Harbor. Now with the situation in Europe settled, they were able to request action in the theater they had hoped to serve in since the formation of the Combat Team. In compliance with their expressed wishes, four officers and 194 enlisted men with sufficient background in the Japanese language were given the opportunity to attend the MIS Language School in preparation for service as interpreters in the Pacific Theater and left the regiment during July and August.

On August 5, 1945 the 442d Infantry was relieved of attachment to MTOUSA POW Command for operations and detached from Fifth Army and was attached to Peninsular Base Section. While the major elements of the regiment remained dispersed in the Leghorn area, Company H and Antitank Platoon of Headquarters Company, 2d Battalion, moved to Naples to perform the mission of guarding military installations. In connection with its assigned mission of guarding German PWs and military in-

stallations, the 442d was attached on August 20, 1945 to the Auxiliary Troops Command for operational control. The long assignment of the 442d to the American Fifth Army was ended upon the dissolution of the Fifth Army in August. The 442d Infantry Regiment, 232d Engineer Combat Company, and 206th Army Ground Forces Band were relieved from assignment to Fifth Army and were assigned to Peninsular Base Section on August 31.

The end of four years of war came on September 2, 1945 with the formal signing of the surrender papers in Tokyo Bay and the presidential proclamation of official VJ-Day. Participating in the celebration of this day, the 442d Infantry Regiment marched in the honor position in the VJ-Day parade through the city of Leghorn, leading more than 15,000 American, British, and Italian troops and auxiliaries.

Despite the end of hostilities, the 442d continued with its mission of guarding prisoners of war and military installations. However, redeployment of high point members of the regiment continued in earnest. Old combat buddies left the regiment throughout the months following the completion of the war, eventually to pick up the threads of life that were broken by the war. Many did not have their old homes to return to in California and the states on the West Coast. These gathered their families from the relocation centers and sought their fortunes in other sections of the country. Others returned to their old ways of life in Hawaii and in the states. No matter where they went, they took with them the pride and comradeship that can only come from facing death from day to day, together with men who were proud of the unit to which they belonged. War had brought strange bedfellows. It had brought Nisei from sunny Hawaii and the frozen settlements of Alaska; it had brought loyal Americans from the crude and dusty barracks of relocation camps and from snug homes in the East. The Nisei had come with backgrounds as diversified as America itself, but their loyalty was one. It was American.

All efforts were now directed by the army to secure

the peace. A niche in the plans was found for the 442d Infantry. Effective October 26, 1945 the 442d Infantry Regiment was designated as a Category I outfit and committed to aid in the Allied occupation of Europe. The regiment remained in Italy and continued its assignment of guarding prisoners of war and military installations. The 206th Army Ground Forces Band was inactivated per General Order #275, Hq PBS, dated October 25, 1945 and all high pointers of the band were redeployed for eventual discharge.

The 442d Regimental Combat Team today is not the same outfit that sweated through basic in Mississippi and fought through France and Italy. The original "Go For Broke" men, who had made the embryonic idea of a combat team made up of Japanese-Americans blossom into reality, are now scattered all over the world. Many of them have now laid aside their uniforms to become civilians again. There are others who finished their job in Europe and went to the Pacific for another go at the enemy. Many have chosen to serve with the regiment in the Mediterranean Theater for a while longer before going home. And there are those who will never go home. The only testimony of their being is the little white crosses that dot the French and Italian landscape at Epinal, Sospel, Marzanello Nuovo, Carano, Nettuno, Tarquinia, Vada, Follonica, and Castelfiorentino, and the collective gratitude of a victorious nation. New faces had taken their empty places in the ranks after each battle, to become hardened veterans in their own right. With the redeployment of the original veterans after the end of the war, other young Nisei have joined the younger veterans of the later campaigns of the 442d. Today the 442d Regimental Combat Team is a veteran outfit with young faces. But the spirit is an old one. It is the same spirit that motivated the formation of the combat team. It is the same spirit that gave the ring of truth to President Roosevelt's conviction that "Americanism is a matter of the mind and heart" and not "a matter of race or ancestry."