

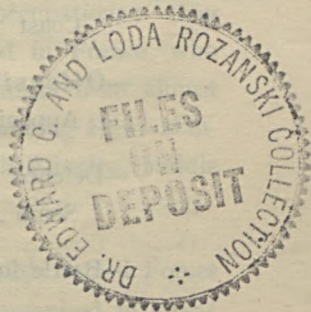
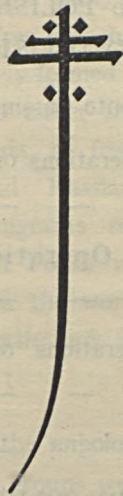
3rd POLISH
CARPATHIAN
INFANTRY
DIVISION
A SHORT HISTORY

Great Britain
1946

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A SHORT HISTORY OF
THE THIRD POLISH CARPATHIAN
INFANTRY DIVISION



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INTRODUCTION

AFTER the tragic events of September, 1939, though the Polish Armed Forces had been defeated and the whole territory of Poland had been occupied by Germans and Russians—the Poles did not abandon the hope of a further struggle to recover the freedom of their country. This fight could only be waged from the territory of the Western Allies. In response to the proclamation of the Polish Government issued on Free French soil, new Polish units were organised. The newly-formed Armed Forces included those Poles who escaped either from internment camps in Hungary and Rumania, or from Poland itself, both during the German and Russian occupations; they included, too, Polish emigrants settled in France, who had been called up, and Polish volunteers from almost every possible country in the world, among them Manchuria, China, Japan, North and South America, Middle East and Germany.

The main centre of the re-born Polish Armed Forces was FRANCE. Smaller groups were organised in Great Britain (Polish Air Force) and in the Middle East (Syria) where there was formed the Independent Polish Carpathian Infantry Brigade Group which developed later on into the 3rd Carpathian Infantry Division.

INDEPENDENT POLISH CARPATHIAN INFANTRY BRIGADE GROUP

THIS is the story of the Independent Carpathian Infantry Brigade Group.

Formed in Syria by an order of General Wladyslaw SIKORSKI, the Polish Commander-in-Chief, issued on 2nd April, 1940, the Carpathian Brigade Group became a part of the French Army of The Levant. Colonel G. S. St. KOPANSKI was appointed its Commander. As a result of the capitulation of France, the Brigade, which consisted of two Infantry Regiments, one Reconnaissance Regiment and Artillery, with a total strength of 3,500 officers and men. After dramatic experiences with the French C.-in-C. in Syria, General MITTELHAUSER, who wanted to disarm it, the Brigade moved with full equipment to Palestine and put itself under the command of the British Commander-in-Chief of the Middle East Forces. On the 2nd October, 1940, the Brigade was transferred to Egypt under the command of General WAVELL. At first, the Brigade was employed in the construction of fortifications in the ALEXANDRIA area, afterwards it took over the defence sector of MERSA MATRUH and SIDI BAGGUSH.

On the 21st August, 1941, the Brigade arrived in the defence area of TOBRUK and took up its western sector where it was in constant battle until TOBRUK was relieved by General RITCHIE'S offensive. On the 15th December, 1941, the Brigade fought a successful battle at GAZALA against superior enemy forces and after took part in the capture of Bardia. Subsequently it was employed in the occupation of Cyrenaica and after that it carried on defensive fighting until the 17th March, 1942, when it was withdrawn first to Egypt and next to Palestine for reorganisation.

The casualties the Brigade sustained during the desert campaign amounted to:—

Killed	.....	7 officers		132 other ranks
Wounded	.....	43 „		424 „ „
Missing	.....	1 „		14 „ „
TOTAL	.....	51 officers		570 other ranks

FORMATION OF THE THIRD POLISH CARPATHIAN INFANTRY DIVISION

MEANWHILE, the Polish Army under General ANDERS arrived in Palestine from Russia. The Independent Carpathian Infantry Brigade Group was included in this Army. Following the reorganisation of General ANDERS' Army, which since then took the name of 2nd Polish Corps, the Independent Carpathian Brigade Group was enlarged into a Division, the 3rd Carpathian Infantry Division, which assumed the traditions of the Brigade.

The 3rd May, 1942, is the date of its birth. In October of that year the Division, together with the 2nd Polish Corps, moved into Iraq to protect the oil wells and, at the same time, to be trained. This training was carried on in the Lebanon (August, 1943) and in Palestine (autumn, 1943).

In August, 1943, a change took place in its command. Major-General St. KOPANSKI was appointed Chief of the Polish General Staff in LONDON, and the command of the Division was given to Major-General DUCH, its present G.O.C.

ARRIVAL OF THE THIRD POLISH CARPATHIAN INFANTRY DIVISION IN ITALY

IN connection with the decision of the British military authorities to use the 2nd Polish Corps as a part of the Eighth Army on the Italian front, the 3rd Carpathian Infantry Division moved into Egypt, between the 17th December, 1943 and 15th January, 1944, and was sent over by sea to Italy as forward element of the 2nd Polish Corps.

The concentration of the Division took place in the area of BARLETTA-S. SUGUSTINO-CANOSA and, on the 1st February, 1944, it took over from the 78th British Division the defence sector of AGNONE-CASTEL DI SANGRO, on the SANGRO river. As heavy artillery it received the support of the 76th British Medium Regiment. The Division stayed on the river SANGRO until the 13th April, 1944. During that period it was fighting only patrol actions and making sorties into German lines. One of the more remarkable among these activities was the patrol on the night of 27th/28th March when eleven German prisoners were captured and a new German Division, the 114th, identified. General LEESE, Commander of the Eighth Army, sent to the Divisional Commander a telegram of congratulations on this achievement. This was the first message of congratulations received from the Commander of the Eighth Army on Italian soil. During later fighting the Division was to receive many similar messages.

Battle of Monte Cassino

MEANWHILE the plan of General ALEXANDER'S offensive against ROME matured. The 2nd Polish Corps was given the job of assaulting the strong defences of MONTE CASSINO. General ANDERS decided that the attack would be made by two Divisions of the Corps, side by side. The 3rd Carpathian Infantry Division received the task of attacking directly the defence area of the famous Monastery (hills 593, 569, MASA ALBANETTA, the Monastery of MONTE CASSINO). The 5th Kresowa Division was to strike on the north flank.

The preparations for the assault lasted till the first days of May, by which time both Divisions took up positions for the assault in the assembly area. On the 11th May, 1944, at 23.00 hours, following a heavy artillery preparation, the battle started. The attack of the 3rd Carpathian Infantry Division met with the fury of the German defence conducted by the elite troops of the 1st Paratroop Division. Nevertheless, the Division took some of the assigned objectives, among them the key position on hill 593. The German counter-attacks compelled the Division to abandon the hill. Then followed the regrouping of the Division and on the 17th May, 1944, at 08.00 hours, a new attack began which led to the capture of the assigned Objectives and the Monastery itself on the forenoon of the 18th May.

From the 21st May to the 25th May, 1944, one of the battalions of the Division took part in the battle for PIEDIMONTE on the Gustav Line.

The measure of the effort of the Division during the battle for MONTE CASSINO is its casualties which were :—

Killed	31 officers	327 other ranks
Wounded	72 „	1,207 „ „
Missing	— „	16 „ „
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TOTAL	103 officers	1,550 other ranks
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Offensive Operations on the Adriatic Coast

AFTER the battle of MONTE CASSINO the Division withdrew for a short rest. The 2nd Polish Corps was moved to the Adriatic coast with the task of chasing the enemy towards ANCONA. On the 15th June, 1944, the 3rd Carpathian Infantry Division relieved the 4th Indian Division in the area TREGGIO-S. VITO and, on the 17th June, 1944, began its drive along the Adriatic coast overcoming at first the difficulties arising from destroyed communications and minefields and, later on in the area of the river CHIENZI (30th June), the steadily increasing enemy opposition. The Division breaking through these obstacles captured in the first days of July CASTEL FIDARDO and OSIMO. Along with the rest of the 2nd Polish Corps, the Division took part in the battle for ANCONA, thus bringing about the capture of this important Adriatic port.

After taking ANCONA the Division continued its pursuit of the enemy, fighting successful battles for

S. LUCIA and SCAPEZZANO (seized on the 9th August 1944) and further on to the river METAURO (25th August, 1944).

On the 1st September, 1944, the 3rd Polish Carpathian Infantry Division, side by side with the 1st Canadian Division, assaulted the Gothic defence line. Having broken through the line, the Division withdrew for a rest after two and a half months of fighting on the Adriatic Sea.

The following losses give evidence of the Division's effort during that period of fighting:—

Killed	21 officers	321 other ranks
Wounded	75 „	1,095 „ „
Missing	3 „	79 „ „
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TOTAL	99 officers	1,495 other ranks
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Offensive Operations in the Appenines

AFTER resting, the Division began operations in the Emilian Appenines. This was a period of strenuous fighting fought not only with selected German troops but also against a jagged terrain, the destruction of communication lines and bitter weather conditions.

From the 25th to the 30th October, 1944, one battalion of the 3rd Carpathian Infantry Division took part in the operations of the 5th Kresowa Infantry Division on CAMINATE and PREDAPPIO NUOVA, Mussolini's birthplace.

At the beginning of November, 1944, the Division was ordered to start offensive operations in a mountainous country south of FORLI and FAENZA. The purpose of the offensive was to facilitate the attack of the British troops on these two towns. A number of brilliantly victorious battles were conducted mostly by night, at FORNACE (6th November, 1944), at MONTE LECHIA, MONTE GATTONE, DOVADOLA (8th November, 1944), MONTE CASSOLE, S. ANTONIO (14th November, 1944). After a heavy battle fought on the 21st and 22nd November, 1944, for MONTE FORTINO-MONTE PIANO, the Division routed the excellent troops of the 26th Panzer Division, helping thus the 5th British Corps to launch its attack on FAENZA. For this battle the Commander of the Division was specially congratulated by the Chief of the Eighth Army, General McCREERY, whose appreciation of the fighting efficiency of the Division was contained in the words: "Well done, indeed". Having taken MONTE RICCI on the 23rd November, 1944, the Division passed to an attack in the area lying north-west from FAENZA. In this offensive, which started on the 6th December, 1944, and lasted till the 17th December, the Division captured BRISIGHELLA, 275 hill, BESDONE, LUMISANO, and reached the SENIO river south of RIOLO DEI BAGNI. On the 17th December, 1944, after almost two months of fighting, the Division retired for a period of rest which lasted till the 5th February, 1945.



Defence Operations on the River Senio

AFTER this rest, the Division took over from the 10th Indian Division the defence sector along the SENIO river. There it stayed until the 10th March, 1945, when it was withdrawn, one brigade at a time, to prepare itself for the spring offensive of the Fifteenth Army Group, which was to start in the first days of April, 1945.

At the end of March, 1945, the newly-formed 3rd Carpathian Brigade was brought up to the defence sector of the Division. This Brigade had been organised during November, 1944, and December, 1944, from the Polish soldiers who, having been enforced into the German Army or TODT labour units and who had gone over to the victorious Allies.

Battle for Bologna

IN the framework of the spring offensive of the Fifteenth Army Group the 2nd Polish Corps was given the mission of starting an attack from the FAENZA area in the general direction on BOLOGNA. The 3rd Polish Carpathian Infantry Division was assigned the main task of breaking through the strongly fortified German zone, stretching between the river SENIO and the river SANTERNO, and of paving the way for the 2nd Polish Corps in the general direction of SOLAROLO-MEDICINA. In the evening of the 9th April, 1945, the Division launched the attack, side by side with the 2nd New Zealand Division

attacking on the northern flank of the Division. The attack was supported by the 7th British Tank Brigade, the 51st Royal Tank of the 7th Assault Brigade, the 1st Polish Tank Regiment, and numerous artillery of the 2nd Polish Corps with the 15th British Field Regiment (S.P).

The attack of the Division was completely successful. The German defences were broken through and the way opened up for the advance of 2nd Polish Corps in the direction of Bologna.

The 3rd Polish Carpathian Infantry Brigade should be treated separately. In the framework of the offensive of the 2nd Polish Corps the Brigade led an attack along the road No. 9, FAENZA-BOLOGNA. It seized, in succession, CASTEL BOLOGNESE, IMOLA, CASTEL S. PIETRO and, on the 21st April, 1945, at dawn, after forcing the IDICE river, entered the town of BOLOGNA, the first allied formation to do so.

With this offensive the Carpathian Infantry Division ended its combats with the Germans which it had started as the Independent Polish Carpathian Infantry Brigade Group in TOBRUK, and pursued in Italy, shoulder to shoulder with the soldiers of Great Britain and the Dominions, thus rendering true the historic cry of the Polish Army: "FOR OUR FREEDOM AND FOR YOURS."

The following casualties were recorded during the whole military activities of the Division from TOBRUK to BOLOGNA :—

Killed	..... 71 officers	1,089 other ranks
Wounded	..... 272 „	4,101 „ „
Missing	..... 5 „	119 „ „
TOTAL	..... 348 officers	5,309 other ranks

which puts the total casualty rate at 5,657, i.e. 50 per cent. of the average strengths of the Division during the fighting in Italy, and approximately 130 per cent. of the battle strengths of the fighting infantry.

BADGES WORN BY SOLDIERS

OF THE THIRD POLISH

CARPATHIAN INFANTRY DIVISION

SOLDIERS of the 3rd Polish Carpathian Infantry Division wear the following badges :—

(1) On sleeves :—

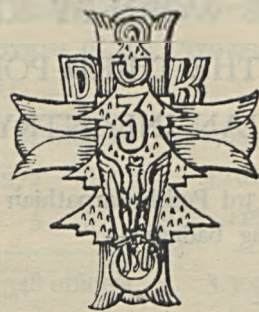
(a) On the left arm—green pine tree, symbol of the Carpathian Mountains from which the Division took its name, on a white-red shield. Polish national colours; this is the distinctive sign of the Division.

(b) On the left arm—silver mermaid on red shield: emblem of the city of Warsaw and the distinctive sign of the 2nd Polish Corps.

(c) On the right arm—golden cross on white shield on black ground. This is the sign of the Crusaders and the badge of the Eighth Army, granted for life to the 2nd Polish Corps.

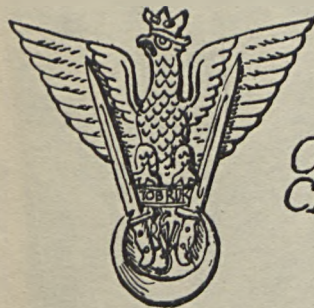
The above-named badges are shown on the cover of this pamphlet.

(2) On the upper left-hand pocket of the jacket (blouse) :—
The honorary badge of the 3rd Polish Carpathian Infantry Division.

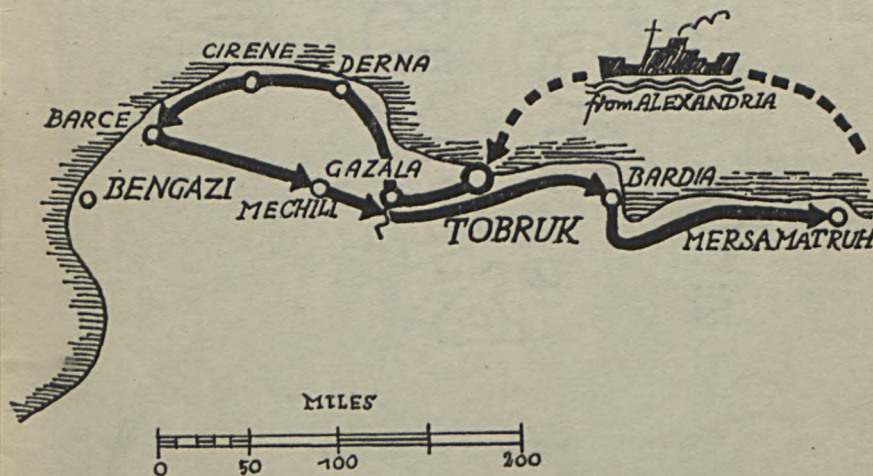


The symbols used in the badge:—

- (a) The principal motif of the badge is the Cross (symbol of faith, suffering and victory) of MONTE CASSINO, where the Division fought its bloodiest battle of the Italian Campaign.
- (b) A miniature of the badge of the Carpathian Infantry Brigade Group from which the Division took its origin.
- (c) The inscription: 3 D.S.K. (3rd Carpathian Infantry Division).
- (d) On the reverse side of the badge—the pass-word: FAITH—ENDURANCE—VICTORY, to which the Division was true during the whole Italian Campaign, fighting in difficult conditions till complete victory. Loyal to this pass-word the future generations that are to serve in the Division will be trained and will fight, increasing thus the strength of the Nation and the authority of the Polish State.



TRAIL OF THE INDEPENDENT CARPATHIAN BRIGADE CAMPAIGN in LIBYA



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