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REPORT NO 77
HISTORICAL SECTION (G.S.)
ARMY HEADQUARTERS

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THE CAMPAIGN IN NORTH-WEST EUROPE
INFORMATION FROM GERMAN SOURCES

Part IV: Higher Direction of Operations from
Falaise Debacle to Ardennes Offensive
(20 Aug - 16 Dec 44)

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NOTES

1. How to locate complete references:

The first quotation from any given source is fully referenced. Subsequent references to the same source are abbreviated. To locate the full reference for an abbreviated one turn to the "List of German Sources" on page XVIII. The first paragraph number opposite the title in question indicates the paragraph with the full reference.

2. Use of single dash:

A single dash preceding a sentence or a part of a sentence indicates that the next reference does NOT cover the text which preceded the single dash.

3. Use of term "Sitwest":

In the present Report the term "Sitwest" stands for "Daily" or for "Intra-day" Situation Reports of the German C.-in-C. West.

The "Daily Situation Report" (Tagesmeldung) was usually issued in the early hours of the following day and dated accordingly. Throughout the present Report, however, the date given for a Sitwest is the day FOR WHICH, not on which it was issued.

ABBREVIATIONSAmerican

O.C.M.H.	Office of the Chief of Military History
F.S.B.	Foreign Studies Branch
C.R.S.	Captured Records Section (formerly styled G.M.D.S. - German Military Documents Section)
O.N.I.	Office of Naval Intelligence

German

OKW	Oberkommando der Wehrmacht Armed Forces High Command
OKH	Oberkommando des Heeres Army High Command
OKM	Oberkommando der Kriegsmarine Navy High Command
OKL	Oberkommando der Luftwaffe Air Force High Command
WFSt	Wehrmachtsführungsstab Armed Forces Operations Staff
SKL	Seekriegsleitung Naval Operations Staff
O.B.	Oberbefehlshaber Commander-in-Chief
AOK	Armeeoberkommando (used for "Army Headquarters" and/or "Army Cmdr")
Chef	Chef des Generalstabes Chief of Staff (from Corps level up)
K.G.	Kommandierender General Commanding General (used for Corps Cmdrs only)

Others

G.S.C.	General Staff Corps
G.A.F.	German Air Force

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THE CAMPAIGN IN NORTH-WEST EUROPE
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Part IV: Higher Direction of Operations
from Falaise Debaacle to Ardennes
Offensive (20 Aug - 16 Dec 44)

1. The present report deals in the main with information from contemporary German military sources on the successive measures taken by the highest German command authorities in autumn 1944 to stave off the consequences of the disaster they had suffered in Normandy. On the whole, tactical information has been introduced only where it influenced the decisions of the High Command, but due to the absence of a separate vehicle for the period 8 Nov - 16 Dec, the paragraphs dealing with that period carry also tactical and administrative information of a lower order. The report is a direct continuation of:

Historical Section (G.S.) Report No. 50, The Campaign in North-West Europe, Information from German Sources, Part II: Invasion and Battle of Normandy,

and a companion report to:

Historical Section (G.S.) Report No. 69, The Campaign in North-West Europe, Information from German Sources, Part III: German Defence Operations in the Sphere of First Canadian Army (23 Aug - 8 Nov 44).

2. Earlier Historical Section (G.S.) Reports on German operations in North-West Europe in 1944 were the following:

- No. 40 The Campaign in North-West Europe, Part I; German Defence Preparations in the West; and
- No. 41 The German Defences in the Courseulles-St. Aubin Area.

SOURCES OF INFORMATION

3. As in previous reports, the supporting evidence consists almost wholly of original contemporary German military documents which it was possible, thanks to the unfailing courtesy and co-operation of all concerned, to take on loan, have reproduced by, or inspect on the premises of one or another of the following United States agencies:

United States Department of the Army, The Adjutant General's Office, Captured Records Section (formerly styled German Military Documents Section), Alexandria, Va.;

United States Department of the Army, Office of the Chief of Military History, Foreign Studies Branch, Washington, D.C.;

United States Department of the Navy, Office of the Director of Naval History, U.S. Naval Records and Historical Division, Arlington, Va.

4. A certain amount of information has been taken from some of the many post war studies that have been prepared by former German senior officers for the Office of the Chief of Military History, Washington, D.C.

5. In all cases where a reproduction of a source document is being permanently retained by the Historical Section (G.S.), the first reference to the document is followed by the Historical Section Master Index Number.

6. Quoted matter has been underlined in accordance with the original text. Words enclosed in square brackets did not appear in the original text but have been added for clarification.

SITUATION ON 20 AUG 44

7. At the end of June 1944 Field Marshal von Rundstedt told Hitler at Berchtesgaden that the situation in Normandy was beyond remedy. On 1 Jul he proposed the evacuation of the Caen bridgehead. On 3 Jul he was relieved and superseded by Field Marshal von Kluge. One month later von Kluge was harried into launching an armoured thrust towards Avranches. He had been denied the desired opportunity to explain that his armour was far too weak for any chance of success. The attack was quickly smothered at Mortain. At the same time American armour was roaming freely through the countryside south and southeast of Seventh Army and Fifth Panzer Army, pressure from the North along the Caen - Falaise axis was growing, Allied

forces in the Alencon - Carrouges area could not be brought to a halt, encirclement was imminent. During the night 14/15 Aug von Kluge proposed a withdrawal to the Northeast. On 16 Aug he told Jodl on the telephone that the Führer's order to continue resistance could not be carried out. A few hours later the Führer countenanced a withdrawal from the pocket. On the next day Field Marshal Model appeared at the headquarters of Army Group B, presented a handwritten letter from Hitler and relieved von Kluge. Two days later the pocket was closed at Chambois. Model had assumed command in the dying hours of two German Armies. The outlook was bleak; to save the German position in France a forbidding task. (H.S. Report No. 50, Invasion and Battle of Normandy, op cit, passim). A list of the principal appointments in the West during the period under review appears as Appendix "A" to the present report.

8. Disastrous situations were nothing new to Model. He had been placed before in charge of Armies and Army Groups that had been crushed by greater force and drained of substance as a result of Hitler's private strategy. He had just lived through one of these sequences of crisis, disaster and makeshift stabilization further back. Merely the climate was different in France.

9. For in the East, by the spring of 1944 Russian skill in command had become dagger-sharp, manpower and supplies plentiful, while on the other hand the two hundred odd German and German-controlled divisions between the Gulf of Finland and the Black Sea were tired, undermanned and short of materiel. Yet, deployed on shorter lines this nevertheless still mighty force might have checked the Russian drives for many months to come. And until late in August it would have been possible - and was deemed imperative by all his generals if not by Hitler himself - to withdraw Army Group North from its exposed position in the Baltic areas, where it had been commanded to stand fast for reasons that had lost validity. As it was, ample warning signs in the central East had remained unheeded on the highest orders, Army Group North had not been used to thicken better lines further back and perhaps free suitable formations for the West, Field Marshal Busch's Army Group Centre had been smashed, and command over its remnants added to the burdens of Field Marshal Model, C.-in-C. Army Group Northern Ukraine. Excepting a case of gravest calamity on one front only, the East now had nothing to spare for the West, just as the West had nothing to spare for the East. Taking command in France, Model would have to improvise and see what the homeland could provide. Hitler however was already thinking in terms of great counterstrokes with new levies.

10. Looking at the most recent issue of the "Periodical Schematic Order of Battle of the German Army" (15 Aug 44), (981.045(D1), O.B. West section shown in translated form as Appendix "B" to the present Report), Field Marshal Model saw himself at the head of two Army

Groups (Army Group B and Army Group G*), of which Army Group B controlled the Armed Forces Command Netherlands, Fifteenth Army, Seventh Army and Fifth Panzer Army, while Army Group G controlled First Army and Nineteenth Army. Passing from the form of things to the substance it was evident that Army Group B had virtually lost Seventh Army, Fifth Panzer Army and the better part of Fifteenth Army; while tiny First Army was retreating eastwards, and Nineteenth Army struggling northwards through the Rhone valley, desperately anxious to extricate itself from the clutches of the guerillas.

11. On the Allied side the German defeat in Normandy had given rise to the hope that it might be possible to wreck the German war machine with one swift thrust along the northern route to the Ruhr and Berlin. Had such a course not been a political impossibility, and had it been feasible with Antwerp not yet open - a matter on which the writer cannot presume to offer an opinion - it might have hastened the downfall of the doomed but not yet beaten enemy. One great opportunity had already faded away, for had General Patton been allowed to push-on from Argentan to Falaise, or - later on - the forces that escaped from the pocket enveloped by a sweep to the coast on the south or north shore of the Seine below Paris, with one spearhead cutting off the slow moving infantry remnants of Fifteenth Army further up the coast, and the right wing of the invading force cutting off tottering Army Group G, the campaign in France would have been over in September, the country open to be taken at will, the creation of a new German front in the West impossible due to lack of command staffs, cadres and troops.**

*Probably because it was composed of two Armies, Army Group G in Allied literature is usually referred to as an Army Group. Actually, until 11 Sep 44, it was that neither in name nor in size. Its official designation was Armeegruppe G. (The German word for Army Group is Heeresgruppe). In the scale of German formations Armeegruppe stands for an undersized Army, smaller than an Army but larger than an Armeeabteilung, which is an oversized Corps. It would not have been expedient to call this modest force an Army Group, thereby conferring on its command staffs powers, prestige and rates of pay appropriate in the case of the huge forces designated as Army Groups in other theatres of operations.

** Like many other authors of German post war narratives, Zimmermann made this point very strongly and said: "Why the enemy neglected this opportunity I do not know". (O.C.M.H., F.S.B., MS B-308, Zimmermann, O.B. West from Atlantic Wall to Siegfried Line, "A Study in Command", English text, paras 221 - 225) (981SOM(D94))

THE DAYS OF THE GREAT VOID

(20 Aug - 16 Sep)

12. In the afternoon of 20 Aug Model received the Führer's Directive:

to hold the bridgehead west of Paris;

to prevent an enemy breakthrough between Seine and Loire towards Dijon;

to reform the badly battered Armies behind the Touques sector, armour at the south flank;

and, if the area forward of the Seine could not be held, to fall back and defend the line: Seine - Yonne - Canal de Bourgogne - Dijon - Dol - Swiss border. (Paris bridgehead to be held).

(For full translation see Historical Section (GS) Report No. 50, op cit, Appx "M")

13. The way things were going this order had to be read: "Do the best you can". For even experienced and down-to-earth Model must have found it difficult to estimate what could be done. Of three vital factors only one was a known quantity, namely the fact that there was no strategical reserve. The contemporary German Order of Battle (para 10 above) shows the Army High Command (conducting operations in the East) without the slightest vestige of a reserve - even the Army Groups had nothing worth mentioning -, while the Armed Forces High Command (conducting operations in the West) showed no reserve beyond the prospective First Parachute Army. Unknown was how much there could be salvaged from the debacle in France, and how much the homeland might provide in fresh troops and arms. Some information on the latter point was now coming to hand.

14. Not counting the nest egg of paratroops in training in the Netherlands (First Parachute Army had been mentioned in the War Diary of O.B. West as early as 28 Mar 44 (C.R.S. - 85430, W.D. O.B. West, March 1944, 28 Mar) (981CW(D82))), Model could expect the following reinforcements:

- 2 seasoned combat divisions almost immediately,*
- 3 green infantry divisions shortly,**
- 2 shadow divisions late in September,***
- 2 independent panzer brigades almost immediately,****
- 9 fortress battalions (category personnel) soon, and
- 17 assorted replacement battalions shortly.

(C.R.S. - 75145/6, A Gp B, Führer Orders and Misc Docs Jun-Sep 44, O.B. West Ops No. 6894/44, of 21 Aug 44, quoting OKW/WFSt/Ops(H)West No. 001044/44, of 21 Aug 44) (981AGpB(D2))

* They were 3 and 15 Pz Gren Divs. On 25 Aug 3 Pz Gren Div was being concentrated at Verona for transfer to the western theatre. (H.S. Report No. 27, The Italian Campaign (11 Aug - 31 Oct 44), Information from German Sources, para 40 f), while 15 Pz Gren Div was commencing its move to France via the Brenner Pass (ibid, para 35). On the German Army High Command Sitmap West for 2 Sep 44 the two divisions were shown on the east bank of the Moselle river in the general area east of Pont-a-Mousson (less one regiment of 15 Pz Gren Div, which was shown WNW Longwy) (OKH Sitmap West, 2 Sep 44) (981HC(D124)).

** They were 36, 553 and 563 Gren Divs. Beginning on 1 Sep, 36 Gren Div would move forward from the strategically situated troop training grounds at Baumholder, about 30 miles ESE Trier, where since 21 Jul it had been in the process of reorganization as a triangular division. The cadres were largely composed of men who had acquired eastern experience under distinguished command, but little had actually come back from the original 36 Inf Div, which had been decimated during operation "Citadelle" in Summer 1943 and badly mauled again in the Beresina trap in June 1944. Now it was rounding into form once more. (C.R.S. - H1/554, OKH, Army General Staff, Org Sec, Misc Orders 1943 - 1945) (981HC(D204) folios 200 and 201 of reproduction); (U.S. Army, Mil Int Div, Washington, 1945, Order of Battle of the German Army, pp. 151-152)

553 and 563 Gren Divs were also to move up as of 1 Sep (O.B. West, Ops No. 6894/44, cited para 14 above). In the event however it was 559 and not 563 Gren Div which appeared in the West. Both, 553 and 559 Gren Divs were part of the 15 "Blocking Divisions" (Sperrdivisionen) which, under the heading of "29th Wave", were being readied for employment in the East as of 1 Sep on orders which had been issued on 10 Jul 44. (C.R.S. - H1/554, Army General Staff, Org Sec, op cit) (Photostat 981HC(D204) folio 202 of reproduction)

(footnotes continued on next page)

15. All this added up to a substantial number of men but not to an integrated force capable of making an impact or creating a new front. Unless provided with seasoned cadres and skilled command staffs these troops would perish in vain. No doubt it would be possible to drum up some further stop-gap units, but nothing really substantial would materialize before the beginning of November. On 19 Aug Jodl had noted in his diary that the Führer wanted 25 new Volksgrenadierdivisions to become available in November and December, for that would be the time to become offensive again. (C.R.S. - OKW/1760, Jodl, Diary Notes, p. 36) (981HC(D50)). And on 23 Aug Guderian had issued the formal order for the formation of these 25 divisions as the 32nd Wave (C.R.S. - H1/554, OKH, Army General Staff, Org Sec, op cit, The Chief of the General Staff of the Army, Org Sec No. 1/18901/44, of 23 Aug 44) (981HC(D204) folios 167 - 169 of reproduction). But in the

(footnotes continued from page 6)

*** Shadow divisions were bodies of troops organized like divisions but without supply troops and used to reform badly shattered formations. In the more recent past orders for the creation of shadow divisions had been issued:

on 4 Jul for four divisions (28th wave) (Ibid, fol 203)
and on 3 Aug for five divisions (31st wave) (Ibid, fol 180)

NOTE: To complete the picture of the contemporary waves: 30th wave consisted of six assorted infantry divisions to be reformed in various countries (Ibid, fol 161). After the summer's debacles in France and Russia the administrative part of the German war machine was also beginning to labour under the strain. Organization orders became more frequent, but for smaller groups, and the fact that an order to organize along certain lines had been given meant no longer that the troops would reach the field in the form originally laid down. More and more the organizational picture was being obscured by a succession of changes and amendments dictated by necessity.

**** Orders for the organization of ten independent panzer brigades had been issued on 11 Jul 44. They were to be ready:

Nos. 101	-	104	by 15 Aug,
Nos. 105	and	106	by 31 Aug,
Nos. 107	and	108	by 19 Sep,
Nos. 109	and	110	by 25 Sep.

(Ibid, fol 183)

Ultimately Bdes 105 - 110 were organized along lines demanded by Hitler on 6 Aug 44 (Ibid, fol 186) (For detailed Schematic Order of Battle see fol 187). The substance of these brigades consisted of one panzer battalion with three companies of eleven tanks Mark V and one company of 11 tanks Mark IV with long barrel, and one panzer grenadier battalion of five well equipped companies.

meantime any hope to stem the Allied advance depended largely on the quantity and quality of what could be salvaged from the Armies retreating in France.

16. With regard to materiel the following was either on the way or to be despatched shortly:

416 light field howitzers)	
86 assault guns)	502 guns
144 tanks IV)	
20 tanks V)	
10 assault tanks)	182 tanks
8 special panther tanks)	
148 caterpillar tractors)	
85 prime mover trucks)	233 prime movers

(Ops No. 6894/44, cited para 14 above)

As it would take about 90 tanks to equip a single panzer division with a bare sufficiency of tanks, the influx of 182 tanks would merely ease the situation but not solve the problem.

17. To blazing defeat in the East and perilous vacuum in the West there was now being added one specific matter to vex and arouse the Führer. Paris, the symbol of France, was about to be wrested from his grip. Late on 21 Aug Model had signalled that Paris could not be defended with the forces on hand and that he had given orders to reconnoiter an emergency line north and east of Paris (A Gp B, Führer Orders and Misc Docs, op cit A Gp B, Ops No. 6390/44). Running true to form the Führer responded with an order to hold the city or lay it waste. This order (OKW/WFSt/Op(H) No. 772989, 23 Aug 44) was quoted fully and passed on by Army Group B without comment. The German text of the latter document appears as Appendix "C" to the present report; the quoted part reads as follows:

The Führer has ordered:

"The defence of the Paris bridgehead is of decisive military and political importance. Its loss tears open the entire coastal front north of the Seine and deprives us of the basis for the long-range operations against England.

In the course of history the fall of Paris has hitherto ever been followed by the fall of the whole of France.

The Führer therefore reiterates his order to defend Paris in the blocking belt forward of the city. In this connection attention is drawn to the reinforcements announced for O.B. West.

At the first indications of revolt within the city steps must be taken to intervene with the most severe measures, e.g. dynamiting of blocks of houses, public execution of ringleaders, evacuation of the city quarters involved, as the best means of preventing the further spread of revolt.

Preparations are to be made for blowing up the Seine bridges. Paris must not fall into the hands of the enemy, or, if so, only as a field of rubble."

(A Gp B, Führer Orders and Misc Docs, op cit,
A Gp B, Ops No. 6355/44, 23 Aug 44)

18. In the afternoon of 25 Aug, hours after the triumphal entry of Allied forces into Paris, O.B. West relayed to A Gp B a fresh signal from Jodl: "The Führer stands firmly by his order of 23 Aug for defence to the last". This was accompanied by the usual detailed instructions on how to accomplish the task. (Ibid) But obviously the Germans had neither the means nor the time to destroy Paris. During the preceding days Gen Inf Dietrich von Choltitz, the Armed Forces Commander of Paris, had repeatedly reported his forces unequal to the situation. That he could do little is certain, that he could have done more is likely. In any case, if he took the absence of pressure from the Army Group as a tacit invitation to use his own discretion, he was disabused and enlightened on 28 Aug 44, when Field Marshal Model lodged a formal charge of disobedience against him. (C.R.S. - 75144/25, W.D. August 1944, 18 - 28 Aug 44, passim) (981CW(D32))

19. On 18 Aug, one day after assuming command in the West, Model had made a number of demands and requests. The top item had been a demand for measures to diminish Allied control of the air (Ibid, 18 Aug). As the German Air Force had long ceased to be a factor of any consequence, this was merely a pious wish for the record. But his demands for troops, guns and tanks had been covered to some extent by the promises received on 21 Aug (para 14 above). His request for the six panzer brigades in process of being organized had been rejected, but he had been promised two. (W.D. O.B. West, op cit, 18 Aug; s.a. para 14 above)

20. One week later Model despatched a considered estimate of the situation and the forces needed to meet it. The report was addressed to Jodl with the request to place the message before the Führer. As Hitler's leading specialist in the reconstruction of collapsed fronts, Model wanted the Führer to read what he had to say, not just to hear what Jodl made of it. Briefly stated Model reported that the enemy could deliver, and might intend to deliver, one or several of the following thrusts:

- a) to the Somme by advancing northwards between Rouen and Mantes,

objective: V-1 sites and Belgian industrial basin;

b) via Paris to Rheims,

objective: the traditional invasion route to Germany;

c) to Dijon,

objective: to cut off A Gp G and reach Alsace via Belfort.

In any or all cases the Allied Airborne Army of five or six divisions might be used to open the way (river crossings).

In the face of this the German forces were burnt out and would not receive any substantial strength before 1 Sep; the Somme-Marne line was not ready to be defended; by 1 Sep the leading elements of the opponent might have advanced to the Somme, passed Paris and reached the area of Dijon.

At the moment the line of the Seine below Paris was manned by four corps commands with the remnants of twelve divisions.

Between Seine and Somme the remnants of six panzer divisions would form a mobile reserve while being rehabilitated.

Some forces would remain south of the Seine as long as this offered advantage.

Of Army Group G possibly three divisions and one panzer division might be saved.

The remnants of seven or eight panzer divisions would be grouped at the southern flank of First Army to protect the western flank of Nineteenth Army by attacks on the leading elements of the enemy.

To hold the Seine-Yonne-Dijon line would require fifteen additional divisions to be assembled in the Troyes-Dijon-Lake Geneva area by 10 Sep 44.

As it might not be possible to hold the Seine-Yonne-Dijon line it might be well to follow eastern practice and prepare successive rear positions up to and including the West Wall.

Concurrence was requested.

(C.R.S. - 75145/5, A Gp B, Weekly Reports and Misc Docs, 20 May - early Oct 44, A Gp B, Ops No. 6360/44, 2300 hrs 24 Aug 44) (981AgPB(D3))

21. The High Command did concur. In principle that is, for it had to admit that the forces required did not exist at the moment. Model was told to gain time instead by holding the Seine-Yonne-Dijon line as long as possible (W.D. O.B. West, 27 Aug). On the same day Model was asked whether he would agree to the return of Rundstedt as O.B. West (Ibid). There is no evidence of any direct connection between Model's situation report and Rundstedt's recall to service. Mostlikely the matter had been under consideration for some days. For different reasons at different headquarters, the return of the old Marshal -- who wanted nothing, but would ever follow a call to serve -- must have seemed highly desirable to all concerned. In any case Model yielded without hesitation and signalled to Jodl that he would welcome Rundstedt's return (Ibid, 28 Aug). To be sure, Jodl's inquiry, however polite in tone and irrefutable in content, had left him without any reasonable alternative:

The tasks in the West are becoming ever more extensive. The energies of the Commander-in-Chief are taxed to the utmost by the important and decisive operations of Army Group B, the defence of the Netherlands, and the rehabilitation and new formation of the shattered divisions. In addition to that, Army Group B must be led back, an extensive system of rear positions reconnoitred and organized, the administration and internal security of the remaining occupied areas taken care of, and close liaison maintained with the Navy and Air Force.

The Führer is of the opinion that all these tasks transcend the powers of any one single man who has to work with two headquarters staffs and yet can only be with one. For this reason the Führer is entertaining thoughts of recalling Field Marshal von Rundstedt as O.B. West, thereby freeing you, Field Marshal, for the crucial operations of Army Group B. I have however been directed to ascertain your point of view in advance.

The alternative solution of appointing a new commander for Army Group B is ruled out by the fact that a suitable personality to cope with this difficult task is not available at the moment.

(signed) Jodl

This message (Chef WFSt No. 773067/44) was received at the headquarters of O.B. West (A Gp D) at 0320 hrs 28 Aug and relayed to Model at A Gp B in: Ops No. 757/44, A Gp B, Führer Orders and Misc Docs, op cit. (On 5 Sep Rundstedt resumed his old command (para 31 below).)

22. In the meantime events in the field were moving swiftly, and by 29 Aug all but a handful of Army Group B's survivors of the fighting in Normandy had been dislodged from the south shore of the Seine and were moving in the general direction of the West Wall under hot pursuit. At midnight 29/30 Aug, Model despatched a Supplementary Situation Report "for submission in the text to the Führer". (A Gp B, Weekly Reports and Misc Orders, op cit, A Gp B, Ops No. 6704/44, of 2400 hrs 29 Aug 44) (German Test: 981AGpB(D3)) (Translation: 981.013(D46)). According to this report the situation of A Gp B was now as follows:

(Narrator's Condensation)

Allied Forces

The British Army Group was surging northwards from the Seine with the main weight on its eastern wing to exploit a possible breakthrough by forcing the German troops to the coast and taking the V-1 sites.

The American Army Group, with the twelve divisions in the area north of Paris-Soissons-Chalons and Vitry le Francois would move forward in northeasterly direction, while the remaining ten to twelve divisions might follow towards Rheims or move eastwards via Troyes.

German Forces

At the moment each panzer division had about five to ten tanks in working order. The infantry divisions had only single guns, the panzer divisions only single batteries.

Morale was still strongly affected by the enemy's superiority in materiel.

The low degree of mobility in the face of a highly mechanized opponent, and the lack of tactical reserves with assault guns and heavy anti-tank guns had resulted in a state of complete tactical inferiority requiring quick remedial action.

The troops coming from Normandy had few heavy weapons and generally nothing but their rifles.

After sending five exhausted infantry divisions to the homeland, the remnants of eleven infantry divisions might yield enough personnel to form four formations for which equipment would have to be found, however.

The remnants of the six SS and five army panzer divisions could be formed into eleven reinforced regimental groups as soon as reinforcements and new equipment had been received.

Operations

The concentration of all available forces in the Chalons-Rheims-Soissons area had been imperative in order to intercept the mortally dangerous American strategical thrust towards the rear of Fifteenth, Seventh, and Fifth Panzer Armies.

In the way of expedients one could:

on the right flank - withdraw to the Somme,

on the left flank - move up 559 Inf Div and 106 Pz Bde (both originally earmarked for the right wing of First Army).

Prior to the arrival of 347 and 553 Inf Divs the mobile forces in the Soissons-Rheims-Chalons area could not be withdrawn without creating a dangerous gap. Any improvement in the situation would depend on the arrival of more guns and tanks.

23. While Model was preparing this "Supplementary Sitrep", Hitler issued new instructions. According to an official note on the war diary copy of the "Supplementary Sitrep", this Führer Order reached A Gp B belatedly at 0730 hrs 30 Aug:

The American Army Group's sharp turn towards the Northeast for attacks across the Marne and Aisne threatens to unhinge the entire remaining coast defence in the West. Due to the insufficient strength of the available forces this danger cannot be met by attempts to defend positions frontally. The only possible course of action lies in mobile operations against the right flank of the Americans, thereby menacing the rear of their forces advancing towards Belgium.

Hence I order:

1. All available mobile formations (3 and 15 Pz Gren Divs, 105 and 106 Pz Bdes) are to be concentrated by A Gp G in the area Chaumont-Chatillon s/S - Langres. Debouching from the area between Marne and Seine they are to attack the deep flank of the American Army Group. 553 Gren Div and one infantry division from Nineteenth Army are to join or follow the assault group.

2. Battleworthy units of 64 Corps are to proceed in forced marches to the general area of and south of Troyes in order to cover the left flank of the mobile assault group, thereby creating a threat to the rear of the American Army Group and at the least tying down some American forces.

(IGpB, Führer Orders and Misc Docs, op cit, OKW/WEST, Ops No. 773095, of 29 Aug 44, quoted verbatim in O.B. West, Ops No. 772, of same date)

24. At this time, however, the Allied armies were advancing so rapidly that a thrust with relatively small forces from the area between Seine and Marne would have been pointless. It is well possible that Hitler's order was delayed in transit, but since nobody seems to have been greatly exercised, no heads were demanded, and apparently no investigation launched, the 'delay' may have been a quiet means of killing an order that had been rendered useless by the flow of events. - In any case, late on 30 Aug Model reported that in view of the changed situation he would launch the attack in question from the area between Aisne and Marne instead (Schramm*, Der Westen, p. 123) (981SOM(D102)). Dutyfully the attack was launched in the morning of 31 Aug by headquarters 47 Pz Corps with 3 and 15 Pz Gren Divs, but the plan collapsed when the German forces collided with American troops traversing the Argennes, establishing bridgeheads across the Maas and entering Verdun. At the end of the day 47 Pz Corps faced the task of trying to regain the lost bridgeheads and establish an emergency line Verdun - Commercy. (Schramm, Der Westen, op cit, p. 124**)

25. In northern France in the meantime Allied forces were spreading like ink on a blotter. On 31 Aug Second British Army took Amiens, thus putting an end to any German hopes for delaying action at the Somme. At the same time American forces pressing forward from the Laon-Rethel area were far past the Soissons-Chalons line where, in defence positions that did not yet exist, Hitler had wanted to buy time with the blood of formations that did no longer exist. As August turned into September it was clear that the Allies might not be brought to a halt much forward of the Westwall. In addition to merely saving the troops it was now becoming ever more important to direct them to the sectors where they would be needed most to form a new line of defence to delay the enemy wherever he would strike. For where the Allies would deliver the main blow could not be told. Indeed, which staff officer would have been bold

*Schramm, Percy, War Diarist OKW/WEST. For details see: Historical Section (GS) Report No. 69, op cit, para 59f.

**Hereafter cited: Der Westen

enough to predict that three months after carrying out history's most brilliant combined operation, an enemy admired for logistic skill would lack the means of delivering available fuel to exploit vital opportunity? Or dared foretell the strategic policy of a coalition subject to the usual strains arising from personal ambitions and from national pride and prejudice?

26. With the Allied High Command presumed free to pursue any desired course of action, to German eyes possibly the most alarming aspect of the situation on 1 Sep was the 75 mile gap between Luneville and Belfort, where a whole armoured Army might roll into Germany and turn the Westwall without meeting more than a corporal's guard. Pointing to the enemy's mobility and wealth of armour, as well as to the fact that the battle groups of A Gp G could not reach the area in question before 9 Sep, Model asked once more for three infantry divisions for the gap, plus some panzer brigades (C.R.S. - 75144/26, W.D. O.B. West (A Gp D), September 1944, 1 Sep) (981CW(D59)). However, while the requested infantry divisions could not be produced, the threat diminished as Nineteenth Army rushed 11 Pz Div ahead of all others and formed a bridgehead at Dijon. Schramm noted:

... In the midst of all the many unfavourable developments, events in this area took a better turn than one could have expected for a long time. The hope now existed - and was justified by events - that Nineteenth Army [less some elts] and at least the combat formations of 64 Corps might be incorporated into the Western front. All in all about one half million members of the Armed Forces were thus kept from falling into the hands of the enemy... (Der Westen, p. 128)

27. Developments at the southern end of the prospective new front were now offering some comfort, but it was high time to see what could be done to save the situation in the North. Reporting enemy forces with perhaps 1500 tanks moving towards Lille, and a similar force towards Luxemburg, Model asked for a new operational directive (W.D. O.B. West op cit, 2 Sep). OKW received Model's report at 2045 hrs 2 Sep (Der Westen, p. 128); Model received a new directive at 0300 hrs 3 Sep (W.D. O.B. West, 3 Sep). It is likely that the Führer Directive was almost ready for release when Model's report was received. A translation of the Directive (WFSt/Ops No. 773189/44, 3 Sep 44, signed Adolf Hitler) appears in: "Führer Directives and other top level Directives of the German Armed Forces - 1939/45" (981HC(D17), Part II, p. 172; for German text see: A Gp B, Führer Orders and Misc Docs, op cit). The salient point was a change from the idea of defending successive intermediate lines to that of falling back in obstinate delaying actions designed to gain time. But no further troops were to be lost by encirclement. Apart from this A Gp G was to assemble a group of mobile forces forward of the Vosges for an attack on the deep flank of the enemy.

4 Sep

28. In accordance with the developments in the situation and the instructions received from Hitler, in the morning of 4 Sep Field Marshal Model gave orders for:*

- a) the Armed Forces Commander in the Netherlands to leave only security screens on the coast (fortresses excepted), and to prepare a flank position along the general line of the Albert-Canal;
- b) Fifteenth Army to withdraw as quickly as possible to the line Heist-Ghent-Brussels-Namur;
- c) Fifth Panzer Army to form a defensive front from its right Army boundary to the Maas;
- d) First Army to delay the advance of the enemy in a line Maass-Diedenhofen-Mosel as far as Nancy.

(W.D. O.B. West, 4 Sep)

29. By 1400 hrs, however, the situation had taken an ominous turn. British forces had entered Antwerp and the still unimpaired formations of Fifteenth Army seemed lost. Model's cry of anguish reached Rastenburg in the form of a situation report transmitted under the top priority "Blitz". According to Model the British Army Group was delivering a main thrust to the mouth of the Scheldt in order to capture the V-1 bases and envelop Fifteenth Army. Moreover, a force of six to eight divisions of the Twelfth American Army Group had joined the advance and could be further reinforced. At least 2500 tanks were available for this thrust. - The Third American Army was poised for a thrust towards the line Luxembourg-Metz. - The condition of the German forces was bad; Fifteenth Army had a combat value of about four infantry divisions, Fifth Panzer Army of about three quarters of one panzer division plus less than two infantry divisions, First Army was somewhat better off because it had not been under pressure for about a week. The course of events in the area of Fifteenth Army could not be predicted, some elements might be able to fight their way out of the encirclement. It might be possible to hold the line Albert Canal-Maas-West Wall, but to do this would require 25 fresh divisions and an adequate armoured reserve of five or six panzer divisions. Unless ten infantry and five panzer divisions would be available by 15 Sep, the door to North-Western Europe would stand open. - The forces earmarked

*For full German text of order see: (C.R.S. - 63181/5, Appendices to War Diary Fifth Panzer Army 9 Aug - 9 Sep 44, Appx 80, A Gp B, Ops No. 6921/44, 4 Sep 44) (981PA5(D5))

for the thrust from the Vosges might possibly be strengthened by moving-in three panzer divisions from the East*. This appreciation was despatched over Model's name; the copy on hand was countersigned in the full handwritten signature of Speidel. (A Gp B, Weekly Reports and Misc Docs, op cit, A Gp B, Ops No. 6944, 4 Sep 44). (For translation see: War Office, London, German Docs Western Front, Jun - Oct 44) (981.013(D15)).

30. Still under the dateline of 4 Sep 44, and following advance transmittal by telephone, a teletype message signed: "Warlimont, by order", directed O.B. West to take, amongst others, the following steps:

to bring the garrisons of Boulogne and Dunkirk and the Defended Area Calais up to strength by moving in entire units and adequate supplies;

to place First Parachute Army under Army Group B and charge it with the defence of the Albert Canal from Antwerp to Maastricht;**

to bring 3, 5 and 6 Para Divs, as well as 88 Corps (with 719 and 347 Inf Divs) under First Parachute Army;

to strengthen that Army by moving-in ten battalions and 40 anti-aircraft batteries from forces that had been earmarked and reserved for certain internal contingencies. ***

(For full translation of this message see: Führer Directives, Vol II, op cit, OKW/WFSt No. 773222/44, of 4 Sep 44)****

* Model, who had only recently arrived from the East, knew very well that this was an almost preposterous suggestion. However, on the other hand it would be difficult to reject the thought that a sudden Allied thrust towards the Ruhr might have induced Hitler to borrow the bulk of 3 Pz Corps from Army Group Northern Ukraine, buying time in the West at the price of added risk and loss of space in the East.

** Additional material for any given day is in most cases available in the companion report No. 69, op cit.

*** For a discussion of the possible purposes of this force see: Chester Wilmot, The Struggle for Europe, Collins, London, pp. 366-367.

**** The war diary of O.B. West seems to indicate that the text of the message was received at or shortly before 0930 hrs 5 Sep 44. (W.D. O.B. West, 5 Sep 44)

5 Sep

31. In the South the leading elements of 64 Corps had reached the area east of Dijon. A Gp G therewith had succeeded in moving its forces to the area between the left wing of A Gp B and the Swiss border (W.D. O.B. West, 5 Sep). On 31 Aug General Westphal, formerly in Italy as Kesselring's C. of S., and henceforth Rundstedt's C. of S. in the West, had presented himself at the Führer's headquarters for briefing. Rundstedt appeared on the following day (Der Westen, p 126). At 1800 hrs 5 Sep he reached the command post O.B. West at Arenberg near Coblenz and resumed his old command as O.B. West and C.-in-C. A Gp D. (W.D. O.B. West, 5 Sep).

6 Sep

32. Had the Allies laid the logistic foundation for a powerful single thrust to exploit success in Normandy, and had they at the beginning of September decided to deliver such a thrust from the Albert Canal towards s-Hertogenbosch and Nijmegen, their spearheads would have met with little opposition. At the left shoulder of the break-in the undamaged German coastal divisions might have made a strong bid to cut the Allied corridor between Antwerp and Maastricht, on the right Allied shoulder (at and south of Maastricht), the battered remnants of Seventh Army might have managed to stand fast. Nevertheless, delivered smartly and in strength, the Allied thrust could have sliced far into Germany. But while labouring, the German war machine was still alive, and bitter necessity had produced masters of improvisation. Hitler in any case was primarily thinking of a future battle in November. Schramm noted:

6 Sep

...The Führer agrees with the estimate of Chief WFSt that a decisive offensive from the West is not possible before 1 Nov, and that the most important thing now is to withdraw the greatest possible number of formations in order to make them fit for commitment at that time.

(Der Westen, p. 132)

33. In examining the German reaction to the sudden loss of Antwerp it is seen that on 4 Sep the Antwerp-Maastricht sector was still devoid of German military substance. Realizing the profoundly dangerous aspects of the situation, the Germans were quick in establishing a security cordon, whilst express trains from all parts of Germany were speeding paratroops from training grounds to battle field. By 6 Sep the Antwerp (excl) -- Hasselt sector was being held by 88 Corps headquarters with the following troops:

719 Inf Div (fresh from the Dutch coast. With some bns 347 Inf Div u/c);

85 Inf Div (Lt Gen Chill, with negligible remnants of div up from Normandy, plus misc local scratch units of limited combat value);

559 A-Tk Bn and 18 Flak Bde.

(C.R.S. - 63289/1, W.D. 88 Corps,
1 Jul - 31 Dec 44, 4 - 6 Sep 44)

By 7 Sep the void between Hasselt and Maastricht had been thinly populated by Inf Div No. 176 (W.D. O.B. West, 7 Sep). This was a Training and Replacement Division (later upgraded to operational division) (U.S. Army, Order of Battle of the German Army, Washington, 1945, op cit, p. 193). At the time in question it fielded six battalions. (OKH, Sitmap West, 9 Sep) (981HC(D125))

34. The strategical significance of the Antwerp-Maastricht sector calls for a more detailed review of the circumstances. For the Germans the crucial question was how to strengthen a thin security screen and lend some depth to the defence. The only practical answer was the premature and piecemeal commitment of the budding First Parachute Army. In the absence of original evidence, Student's recollections are drawn upon below. On 9 Sep he had been charged with the formation and defence of an Albert Canal line (H.S. Report No. 69, para 55). He writes:

At this time I was assigned the following units:

[H.Q.] 88 Corps

719 Inf Div

176 Trg & Repl Div

all occupation and training units of the Army and the Air Force in northern Belgium and Holland;

approximately 20 heavy, medium and light Flak batteries of the Luftflotte "Reich".

In addition I took with me all the parachute units I had newly formed or reorganized. They were:

(a) 6 Para Regt, [2 Para Div]

(b) 1 Bn 2 Para Regt, [2 Para Div]

(c) five newly formed parachute regiments,

(d) one newly formed parachute anti-tank battalion,

(e) about 5000 parachute supply troops.

...The para units had no artillery whatever.

...6 Para Regt had suffered heavy losses in Normandy but since then had been brought up to full strength and equipment. The same applied to 1 Bn 2 Para Regt. This battalion was also a seasoned, battle tested unit. On the other hand the newly created para units were not yet ready for combat. They had been provided only with the most essential training weapons. All these para units were distributed widely over north, central and southwestern Germany from Mecklenburg to Alsace. On 7 Sep they were immediately alerted at their respective stations and moved by rail to the Albert Canal on express trains. It was only upon reaching railheads that they received their weapons and equipment, and from there they moved directly to the battlefield. Three of the new regiments were assembled to form 7 Para Div (Lt Gen Erdmann, hitherto C. of S. First Parachute Army). As already mentioned, at the time the Division had no artillery. None of the para units were motorized.... The organization of First Parachute Army and the establishment of the new front on the Albert Canal was an improvisation on the widest scale.

...The north bank of the Albert canal had not been prepared for defence. Almost everywhere the south bank dominated the north bank.

...Meanwhile the para units were arriving. Detraining areas were:

(a) Tilburg:

6 Para Regt, 1 Bn 2 Para Regt and one new para regt;

(b) Eindhoven - Helmond - Wer:

7 Para Div and one other new para regt;

(c) 's-Hertogenbosch:

the para anti-tank battalion and the 5000 para supply troops.

(O.C.M.H., F.S.B., MS-B-717,
Student, Supplement to Report
of Col Geyer, pp. 3-5)
(981SOM(D148))

35. Contemporary evidence places the bulk of 1 Bn 2 Para Regt and 6 Para Regt in the forward areas of 88 Corps on 7 Sep. On the following day all three regiments of 7 Para Div (Division Erdmann) were shown committed in the Beverloo area. Between 7 and 10 Sep various elements of Parachute Replacement and Training Regiment "Hermann Göring", as well as 1 and 2 Bns "SS Regt Landstorm Nederland"

were reported in action. Beginning on 11 Sep there were frequent references to various parachute battalions designated only by the name of the commander. A number of such battalions was apparently banded together in an ad hoc formation indiscriminately referred to as "Battle Group Walther" and "Division Walther". (W.O. 88 Corps, op cit, 7-11 Sep)

36. Two decisions made at the time of the fall of Antwerp were to have some influence on later events in the area of First Parachute Army. On 5 Sep the General of Pz Tps West directed that the personnel of 2, 116, 9 SS and 10 SS Pz Divs were to be sent to Eindhoven. (C.R.S. - 75144/37, 1 Gp D, 1 Gp D, Gen Pz Tps West, Report on Activities, 22 Aug - 31 Dec 44, Id No. 356/44, 5 Sep) (981CW(D63)). 2nd Seventh Army was directed to transfer the remnants of 3, 5 and 6 Para Divs to First Parachute Army (C.R.S. - 63289/5, W.D. 88 Corps, Vol "C" of Apps, op cit, Appx 210, undated copy of A Gp B Ops No. 70006/44, issued most likely 4 Sep, possibly on 5 Sep, and referred to in W.D. 88 Corps (op cit) on 6 Sep 44). However, this could not be done immediately, for on 6 Sep the parachute elements in question were still in a pitiful state. Before receiving some trickles of untrained replacements the total strength of the group amounted to 3500 men, mostly from rear echelons. Equipment and clothing were poor. Finally, at the time of the Allied air landing, the group was moved to the Cleve area by rail. (O.C.M.H., F.S.B., MS-B-262, Blauensteiner, C. of S. 2 Para Corps, 2 Para Corps between Maas and Rhine, 19 Sep 44 - 10 Mar 45, pp. 1-2) (981SOM(D172)).

7 Sep

37. Eindhoven was only one of the areas where the reconstruction of panzer formations was being carried on. Responsible in the Western command since 22 Aug for the execution of this task, was Lt Gen Horst Stumpff, General of the Panzer Troops West, formerly on the staff of the Inspector General of Panzer Troops (Gen Pz Tps West, Report on Activities, op cit, fol 1). On 7 Sep a liaison officer from the office of the Inspector General told Stumpff what new equipment was moving to the West. Between 7 and 15 Sep the following was to be expected:

163 tanks IV;
242 Panthers;
111 anti-tank guns on Mark IV's;
166 armoured scout cars medium;
75 assault guns;
438 heavy anti-tank guns.

(Ibid, Appx 26a)

The bulk of the tanks was coming as organic equipment of the newly formed independent Panzer Brigades. (loc cit)

38. Since returning to his old command late on 5 Sep, Field Marshal von Rundstedt had conferred with Model and examined the latest reports. On the evening of 7 Sep he communicated his findings to Keitel for presentation to the Führer. Briefly stated Rundstedt said:

The enemy had 54 divisions in Belgium and Northern France. Another 30 (including six airborne divisions) were poised in England. Direct shipment of forces from the U.S.A. had started.

Of 21 A Gp's 25 to 27 divisions eight to ten with a total of about 600 tanks were committed against the encircled formations of Fifteenth Army. A second group of five or six divisions and about 400 tanks was being assembled between Antwerp and Diest. Their allotted task might be to force the Albert Canal and advance on a main axis Rotterdam-Amsterdam. A further six to eight British Divisions with about 400 tanks were closing up to be employed in accordance with the situation.

12 U.S. Army Group with 15-18 divisions and approximately one thousand tanks was between Hasselt and Toul and moving towards the Rhine on a broad front. On its northern wing three or four divisions were following in the rear.

Indicated focal points for attacks were still:

- (a) area between Hasselt and the heights east of Namur,
- (b) Charleville - Sedan,
- (c) area on both sides of Metz, in particular south of Metz.

In the face of this all German forces were committed. They were badly depleted, in some cases crushed. Artillery and anti-tank weapons were lacking. Reserves worth mentioning did NOT exist. A Gp B had about 100 tanks in working order; considering Allied armoured strength the implications were clear.

Enemy pressure towards Lüttich on the plainly recognizable axis Aachen-Ruhr had turned into a serious threat. It was imperative, therefore, to provide immediately at least five, preferably ten divisions well supplied with assault gun units and anti-tank weapons, as well as several panzer divisions.

All forces available to O.B. West had been set in motion towards the Aachen area. That was the area of acute danger.

To prepare the western position for defence would take six weeks. This time would have to be bought in battle.

(A Gp B, Weekly Reports and Misc Docs, op cit, O.B. West, Ops No. 805/44, of 7 Sep 44) (For full translation see: 981.013(D15))

The old marshal may have been tired, but his military perception was crystal clear. Here was the potential death blow. 21 A Gp had cut off all forces west of Antwerp. 12 A Gp would take Aachen and Cologne. There was nothing to protect the Ruhr. The end was in sight. - Field Marshal Montgomery was thinking the same. - But the Supreme Command preferred a safer course, though not a cheaper one.

8 Sep

39. At noon Rundstedt received a message from Model in which the latter pointed to the serious deterioration during the last two days in the situation of Seventh Army, and demanded that the Führer be informed forthwith of the "now very grave situation". Model said the remnants of Seventh Army might offer temporary resistance between Maastricht and Lüttich, but further south was only a thin security screen and the 120 km of Westwall behind Seventh Army was garrisoned by a mere seven or eight battalions. The "Battlegroup 9 Pz Div", alerted by O.B. West on 6 Sep, had not yet come, and the leading elements 12 Inf Div could not be expected to arrive before 12 Sep. In no case could these two formations alone succeed in fighting for time forward of the Westwall and defend it later on. Unless Seventh Army was bolstered forthwith by three infantry and one panzer division, the remnants of that Army were certain to be shattered completely, leaving the enemy in possession of the desired strategic gap between Maas and Mosel. Timely support for First Army had quickly led to substantial improvement; this was the last chance to do the same for Seventh Army (A Gp B, Weekly Reports and Misc Docs, op cit, A Gp B, Ops No. 6993, 1200 hrs 8 Sep 44) (For full translation see: 981.013(D15)). O.B. West reported to Chief OTW in the same sense at 1600 hrs, and at 2100 hrs by telephone. (W D. O.B. West, 8 Sep)

40. By this time Fifteenth Army was in the bridgehead position Zeebrugge-Ghent - mouth of the Scheldt, First Parachute Army was attempting to eliminate the Allied bridgehead at Beeringen, Seventh Army was falling back under pressure, First Army's right wing was also under pressure*,

* Since 1200 hrs 7 Sep First Army was under A Gp G. (W.D. O.B. West, 7 Sep). The army group boundary extended west - east through Libramont; at the extreme left of Seventh Army was 2 Pz Div in the Bastogne area, at the extreme right of First Army was Group Pz Lehr (i.e. the remnants of Pz Lehr Div) in the Neufchateau area. (Sitmap West, 9 Sep 44)

Nineteenth Army had failed to eliminate the enemy bridgehead at Besancon and its 11 Pz Div was being pressed back towards Belfort. (W.D. O.B. West, 8 Sep)

9 Sep

41. In response to the reports on the situation at the front of Seventh Army, early on 9 Sep Hitler gave orders to O.B. West for Seventh Army to continue its delaying action forward of the Westwall. 81 and 74 Corps were to hold the Maas and the canal west of Maastricht as long as possible; 1 SS Pz Corps' right wing to remain in contact with 74 Corps. The twenty Air Force battalions becoming available on and after 9 Sep were to be used to man the Westwall behind Seventh Army (Der Westen, p. 138; W.D. O B. West, 9 Sep 44). At 1200 hrs responsibility for the duties of C. of S. O.B. West passed from the hands of Gen Inf Blumentritt to those of Lt Gen Westphal (Gen Cav as of 30 Jan 45). (W.D. O.B. West, 9 Sep)

42. Provided Fifteenth Army could be moved out across the West Scheldt it would now become feasible to defend the mouth of the Scheldt and bolster the front of First Parachute Army. On the right wing of Seventh Army a line of defence was being established on the east bank of the Maas. An attack by elts 116 Pz Div towards the eastern part of Lüttich had failed. 12 Inf Div, urgently needed for the Aachen area, would arrive during the night 13/14 Sep. There had been a deep penetration at the front of Pz Lehr Div. - South of Belfort there had been heavy attacks on 11 Pz Div, the enemy was attempting to separate the left wing of Nineteenth Army from the Swiss border and to open the road to Belfort. Without prejudice to their later employment in the attack to be carried out by Fifth Panzer Army, 112 and 113 Pz Bdes were moved to that area, (W.D., O.B. West, 9 Sep).

43. With the scene of operations moving closer and closer to Germany, and O.B. West's rear areas now extending far into the zone of the Chief of Army Equipment and Commander of the Replacement Army, it was necessary to recast command arrangements. On 9 Sep Hitler directed O B. West to assume command over the entire German western position (including the Westwall) and of all security forces in the area. Command was to pass at 0000 hrs 11 Sep, at which time O.B. West would also take over all western defence tasks previously assigned to the Chief of Army Equipment. (A Gp B, Führer Orders and Misc Docs, op cit, OKW/WFSt, Ops No. 773296/44, 9 Sep 44)

44. There was some pressure against each of the western Armies on this day, but only in the Northeast, and particularly in the sector of Seventh Army seemed the action to be of immediate strategical significance. O.B. West reported:

It can be expected that on 11 Sep the American Army Group will strive to achieve the breakthrough towards Aachen-Cologne, while the British Army Group opposite Parachute Army will endeavour to gain operational freedom towards East and North. Since according to reliable sources an enemy airlanding operation is not out of the question, all necessary measures have been taken in the Netherlands.

(C.R.S. - H22/60, O.B. West, Daily Sitreps, Sep 44, Sitwest for 10 Sep) (981CW(D53))

45. On the southern half of the western front Army Group G in the meantime had been trading space for time. The favourable starting lines for the flank attack demanded by the Führer on 3 Sep (para 27 above) had been lost, but where the situation map for 2 Sep had shown the ominous void of the Belfort gap, the situation map for 9 Sep showed a new front in process of coagulation (Sitmap West, 9 Sep 44). As we know, immediately after the fall of Antwerp the High Command had decided to employ First Parachute Army in the Antwerp-Hasselt sector, extend the command zone of Seventh Army to include the area then being traversed by the remnants of Fifth Panzer Army, and withdraw the headquarters of Fifth Panzer Army for reorganization and employment in Alsace under A Gp G. (Historical Section (G.S.) Report No. 69, paras 55-56)

46. By 10 Sep the headquarters of Fifth Panzer Army were established east of Luneville (Sitmap West, 9 Sep); on the same day Gen Pz Tps Hasso Eccard von Manteuffel was appointed to command the Army. (C.R.S. - OKH, Personnel Files, von Manteuffel) (981HC(D52)). On 11 Sep he took over the reins of command from Col Gen Pz Tps Joseph (Sepp) Dietrich, who had been summoned to the Führer headquarters. The Army's new C. of S. was Col Wolf von Kahlden, G.S.C. (C.R.S. - 63181/3, W.D. Fifth Panzer Army, Part III, 10 Sep - 22 Oct 44, 10, 11 Sep) (981PA5(D3)). Manteuffel, aged 47, had never commanded above division level, but his dossier showed such an accumulation of praise from hard-headed superiors that Hitler pulled him out of the East on 4 Sep to give him Fifth Panzer Army. Obviously Manteuffel could not do the impossible, but it is common knowledge that he proceeded to perform brilliantly and in the Ardennes far outshone Sepp Dietrich, the ham-handed commander of the neighbouring Sixth Panzer Army.

47. Despite sizeable losses of ground at several places Army Group G continued making preparations for the attack demanded by OKW. By evening the opponent had passed through Luxembourg and further south gained two bridgeheads across the Mosel above Metz. 17 SS Pz Gren Div was charged with attempting to eliminate the bridgeheads (W.D. O.B. West, 10 Sep). To bolster the meagre substance of 17 SS Pz Gren Div, on 8 Sep SS Reichsführer Himmler had given order for the immediate dissolution of 26 and 27 SS Pz Divs, all elements of the two fledgling formations to be absorbed by 17 SS Pz Gren Div forthwith (Gen Pz Tps West, Report on Activities, op cit, Appx 29, Pz Offr West, No. 1631/44, 9 Sep 44, quoting SS Main Operations Office, II Org, Ops No. 2786/44, of 8 Sep 44). In another one of the many measures designed to bring order into confusion and convert weakness into strength, Rundstedt on 9 Sep had admonished Army Group G to release to First Parachute Army the elements of that Army still in the Nancy-Luneville area (W.O. O.B. West, 9 Sep). This was cutting things rather fine, for while the situation map West for 9 Sep shows the presence in that general area of several of the newly created panzer brigades, the war diary of Gen Pz Tps West shows clearly that they were not ready for combat and that much personnel, armament and equipment were still in transit. (Gen Pz Tps West, Report on Activities, 8-16 Sep, passim)

11 Sep

48. An important step in the race to establish a new front was taken by O.B. West on 11 Sep in an order compelling all Air Force, Navy, O.T. and army elements east of the Rhine (except ground forces in overhaul) to yield-up 100% of their machine guns and 90% of their rifles, pistols and automatic weapons. For all troops between Rhine and Westwall the quota was set at 50% (W.D. O.B. West, 11 Sep). Armeegruppe G, now getting set to control the operations of three Armies on a continuous front, was upgraded to Heeresgruppe G (Army Group G) (see para 10fn above). (Ibid, 11 Sep)

49. According to the day's tactical reports, at Army Group B's front Fifteenth Army was under pressure from the South, and ferrying operations were being hampered from the air; in the area of First Parachute Army the opponent had widened his bridgehead at Neerpelt; in the area of Seventh Army there was very heavy defensive fighting SW Aachen, 1 SS Pz Corps was forced to fall back to the line Malmedy-Dorscheid and a major breakthrough was barely prevented. At the front of Army Group G the right wing of First Army was taken back to the Mosel line with rear elements on the far shore. Strong Allied concentration were noted west of Metz and south of Nancy. At the northern wing of Nineteenth Army there was heavy enemy traffic in easterly direction and

at the southern front of the Army the German lines were pierced on several places in the general area of Vesoul. There was again severe pressure on 11 Pz Div (W.D. O.B. West, 11 Sep). From the point of view of the higher direction the sorest spots therefore were Seventh Army and Nineteenth Army, and the latter in particular because it was slated to protect the rear and flank of Fifth Panzer Army during the latter's projected attack. As the day went on and the situation of Nineteenth Army was growing worse, Rundstedt -- carefully maintaining the fiction of a forthcoming attack towards the Northwest -- told Army Group G that the strong pressure from north and northeast of Besancon might make it necessary for Fifth Panzer Army to deliver first of all a thrust towards the South in order to gain a firm grip on the areas forward of the Vosges. Blaskowitz (who had to be doubly careful because Hitler detested him as much as he needed him) asked for confirmation. Well aware of Blaskowitz's precarious position, O.B. West recorded solemnly that once again Army Group G had been given confirmation of the fact that it had been given a free hand in deciding whether or not Fifth Panzer Army to begin with should move southwards. (W.D. O.B. West, 11 Sep)

12 Sep

50. At the mouth of the Scheldt the day was relatively uneventful; on the Albert-Canal Second British Army was exerting pressure; further east Seventh Army came under severe pressure in the latter part of the day. Apparently the two Allied Army Groups intended to advance northwards past the Westwall and then turn right towards the Ruhr (Sitwest, 12 Sep). In the area of Army Group G Allied forces enlarged their bridgehead at the Upper-Meuse and continued to reduce the salient of Nineteenth Army. After capturing Charmes they passed with armoured forces through the newly made gap in the Northwest and were engaged by 21 Pz Div. Further south Vesoul was lost. The Führer reiterated that the Army was not to yield any further ground and, above all, was to hold Nancy. The assembly of Fifth Panzer Army was to be speeded up to ensure that it would be able to deliver a thrust against the rear of the advancing enemy rather than spend itself in frontal fighting. The general idea was that the opponent might advance in the direction of Epinal or Rambervilliers, in which case he would be attacked from the area between Nancy and Neufchateau. 3 and 15 Pz Gren Divs, as well as 106 Pz Bde were to be despatched to Fifth Panzer Army forthwith. (Der Westen, 139-140)

13 Sep

51. At Army Group B the transfer of Fifteenth Army to the area north of Antwerp was continuing, First Parachute Army had given up the eastern portion of the Albert-Canal position. Seventh Army was unable to prevent penetration of the Westwall between Hergenrath and Aachen. Between Aachen and Eupen the opponent had reached the Westwall. At Army Group G the reality of increasing American pressure had washed out all plans for the early delivery of a strategically significant attack by Fifth Panzer Army. To prevent the worst of all possible disasters - having the front torn asunder beyond repair - Rundstedt decided to use the available forces as local fire brigades at the most critical spots:

Due to the beginning of the concentric American attack north and south of Nancy, and the continuing prosecution of the strong enemy attacks against the northern and southern fronts of Nineteenth Army, the execution of the attacks by the massed forces of Fifth Panzer Army from the area of Epinal towards the Northwest at the moment seems no longer possible. Should this attack have to be carried out at a later date, it will be imperative to keep Nineteenth Army's area forward of the Vosges as large as possible. In view of the enemy superiority this cannot be done with the forces presently committed. O.B. West intends, therefore, to commit the formations of Fifth Panzer Army to individual actions in order to restore the situation on both sides of Vittel and at Vesoul. Not before this has been done can further thought be given to the larger operation.

(W.D., O.B. West, 13 Sep)

14 Sep

52. The day's most serious threat to the German efforts to create a new front developed in the fortress area south and southeast of Aachen, where American forces obtained a breakthrough of considerable width. Various stop gap units were being thrown into the battle and the movement of 12 Inf Div to the area was speeded up. At the joint between First Parachute Army and Seventh Army the Germans lost Maastricht (W.D. O.B. West, 14 Sep). In the area of Army Group G the protruding arc of Nineteenth Army was taken back to the line Charmes-Epinal. Nancy was still in German hands,

but Allied troops had appeared in the rear of the troops at Nancy (Der Westen, p. 140). With regard to the situation at large:

to prepare for the counterstroke being projected now as before, Hitler gave orders for the creation of a Headquarters Staff Sixth Panzer Army under SS Col Gen Dietrich, who was to direct the re-organization of all armoured formations that had been withdrawn from the front in the Western Command. (Loc cit.)

15 Sep

53. On 14 Sep O.B. West had reported that the leading elements of the forces reducing the salient [Vittel area west of line Charmes-Epinal] were now separated by a mere 40 km. He had asked permission for Nineteenth Army to fall back to a line Charmes-Epinal east of Belfort, and for Fifth Panzer Army to deliver a thrust from the area east of Vesoul into the flank of the enemy advancing on Luneville. Early on 15 Sep the Führer concurred and added that the forces about to be committed in the Vittel area were to be strengthened by moving in 11 Pz Div and an additional Panzer Brigade, otherwise a success could not be expected (Der Westen, p. 141). The day passed without major developments on the Western Front.

16 Sep

54. On this day there was some loss of ground northwest of Lachen; southeast of the city the situation was relieved by the arrival of 12 Inf Div. In the area of Army Group G, Nancy was completely encircled and Luneville was lost. At the southern front of Nineteenth Army the situation was becoming less acute. O.B. West now issued orders for the attack against the deep flanks of the American forces which had pushed on beyond the Meuse between Pont à Mousson and south of Charmes. After dispersing the enemy forces at Luneville the advance was to be carried forward towards Pont à Mousson (on the Meuse, approx 50 miles NW Luneville). In order to make the armour still engaged further south available as quickly as possible, the withdrawal of Nineteenth Army to the line Nancy-Epinal-Reniremont-Swiss border west of Belfort was to be speeded up (Der Westen, p. 142). In many sectors of the Western Front the fighting had now reached German soil. Hitler made this fact the subject of a strong exhortation to all troops. There was no more room for

strategical manoeuvre, he said, every man was to stand fast or die on his post. This message is adequately known; a translation appears in: Führer Directives, op cit, Vol II, p 181; a full citation of the German text in: A Gp B, Führer Orders and Misc Docs, op cit, A Gp B, Ops No. 7466/44, 2355 hrs 16 Sep 44.

55. There was now every prospect that the worst gaps in the front would be closed; Fifteenth Army, which might have been out off but was not, would stand fast in the North, Nineteenth Army, which might have been out off but was not, would stand fast in the South. There were no signs of an imminent breakthrough of major importance. Perhaps the front would hold until a counterstroke could change the picture. It was the end of a phase, but on the next day the situation was given a new complexion by the descent of the First Allied Airborne Army in the Eindhoven-Nijmegen-Arnhem area.

DEFENCE OF THE NEW FRONT
UP TO THE ARDENNES OFFENSIVE

(17 Sep - 16 Dec 44)

Scheldt Estuary under German Control (up to 7 Nov)

17 Sep

56. Shortly after 1400 hrs 17 Sep O.B. West began to receive reports about Allied air landings in the Arnhem-Nijmegen-Eindhoven areas (W.D. O.B. West, 17 Sep). Once again, therefore, Fifteenth Army was in danger of being out off, and there was the dangerous possibility that the enemy might succeed in advancing towards Münster (Der Westen, p. 182). Particularly at Arnhem, however, the landings were somewhat of a descent into a hornet's nest. For at Arnhem were the headquarters of Army Group B (Student, op cit, p. 10; Sitmap West, 17 Sep 44), while at Doetinchem, some 16 miles to the East, were the headquarters of 2 SS Pz Corps and nearby a battle group of 2000 men from 9 SS Pz Div (C.R.S. - 180/47, Apps to W.D. O.B. West, 11 - 20 Sep 44, Appx 2237, 17 Sep 44) (Hist Sec (GS) Microfilm Reel No. 69). True, there were in the area none of the formidable formations encountered in Normandy, but nevertheless by 1640 hrs a host of assorted smaller units was converging on or making ready to move to the scene of the airborne landings. Coming from the Northwest were units of the Armed Forces Commander Netherlands, from the Northeast and East elements of 2 SS Pz Corps, from the Southeast hastily alerted forces of and from the Military

District No. VI (Westphalia and Northern Rhine Province)*.

18 Sep

57. Hitler's reaction to the sudden development was threefold. Firstly, O.B. West was told over the telephone that 180 and 190 Inf Div were being transferred to A Gp B from Military District X (Hamburg), while a battle group of 361 V.G.D. was being despatched by Military District VI. Secondly, O.B. West was directed to report on the measures taken with regard to the Breskens bridgehead. This because the Scheldt estuary "was to be kept in German hands in all circumstances". Thirdly, he was empowered to order at his own discretion the destruction of the ports of Rotterdam and Amsterdam. (W.D. O.B. West, 18 Sep)

58. Inf Divs No. 180 and No. 190, now coming from Military District X, had served for long as training and replacement divisions. At the same time they had been kept at full strength and ready to move off immediately in the event of a call for field duty (O.C.M.H., F.S.B., MS-B-195, Lt Gen Hammer, Report on 190 Inf Div, p. 2) (981SOM(D208)); U.S. Army Order of Battle of the German Army, op cit, pp. 195 and 198). As we know, the two formations in question later became useful and experienced divisions, but the fact that the German High Command was beginning to devour the regenerative apparatus of the Army, for all to see was clearly the handwriting on the wall.

19 Sep

59. According to O.B. West's situation report for 19 Sep the situation in the West presented the following picture:

(Condensation)

In the area of Fifteenth Army the First Canadian Army had launched an attack against the Terneuzen bridgehead and forced 712 Inf Div to fall back on shorter lines.

*When the significance of the increasing traffic in the air had become clear, counter-measures were taken quickly. The present report is not designed to deal with tactical detail, but it might be noted in passing that information on the German units alerted or set in motion during the early hours of Market Garden is to be found in the Appendices for 17 Sep 44 to the War Diary of O.B. West, op cit, (Historical Section (GS) Microfilm No. 69).

In the area of First Parachute Army the First Allied Airborne Army had not been reinforced materially from the air, but 30 Brit Corps had established contact with 101 U.S. Airld Div north of Eindhoven. This presented to the enemy the possibility of advancing to the Maas as far as west of Nijmegen by crossing the Veghel bridge which he had captured on 17 Sep. In consequence on the evening of 19 Sep several enemy tanks had appeared at the Nijmegen bridgehead. Counter-measures from west and east were under way and would be continued on 20 Sep.

Progress was being made in the elimination of the enemy forces west of Arnhem as a result of the concentric attack being carried out by Division **von Tettau** (i.e. an ad hoc group despatched by Armed Forces Commander Netherlands) and 2 SS Pz Corps.

At Nijmegen there had been little change in the situation but the attack would be continued on the arrival of the alert units from 2 Para Corps.

At the inner wings of First Parachute and Seventh Armies the enemy had gained ground and the forward elements of the newly inserted division had not yet succeeded in closing the new gap.

German attacks east of Aachen and at Bitburg had failed.

At the front of Army Group G there had been heavy seesaw fighting in the area between Metz and Epinal, with the main action in the Luneville sector.

Nineteenth Army was under pressure in all sectors and the enemy was approaching Epinal from all sides.

(Sitwest for 19 Sep)

60. Schramm noted that Hitler's continuing insistence on the defence of the Scheldt estuary was keeping Fifteenth Army from committing forces strong enough to cut the tank lanes to the American Airlanding Division. Considering the action to be taken if the situation at Eindhoven could not be restored, Hitler on this day was thinking of holding a line Maas-Nijmegen-Waal, which would make it possible later on to execute a thrust from Aachen via Hasselt into the enemy pocket in Holland. (Der Westen, p. 183)

20 Sep

61. At the higher levels this day was one of watchful waiting, for the future course of action would depend on the outcome of the fighting now in progress. To bolster the forces in the Netherlands, Hitler ordered the immediate despatch to Army Group B of 504 Hy Tk Bn (Tigers) and 471 GHQ A. Tk Bn. To guide the operations of the Divisions No. 180 and No. 190, the headquarters staff of 12 SS Corps was being called back from the Eastern front. North of Eindhoven the attack of 59 Inf Div from the West towards St. Odenrode failed. The formation had been unable to cut the Allied corridor and join hands with 107 Pz Bde, which was advancing from the East but had been brought to a halt by the enemy east of Son. Second British Army expanded its penetration in northerly direction and captured the railroad bridge across the Waal at Nijmegen. (W.D. O.B. West, 20 Sep)

21 Sep

62. Waiting for the outcome of the various local operations, O.B. West took time out to re-assess the situation. His own forces had a total combat value of 21 VGD and 6-7 Pz Divs. Against this the Allies had committed 39 Inf, 20 Armd, and 3-4 Airb Divs, and still in England there were approximately 22 Inf, 9 Armd, and 3 Airb Divs. Main danger points were the Nijmegen-Aachen sector, where the opponent intended to make a thrust towards the Rhenish-Westphalian industrial area, and the Metz-Luneville sector, where he intended to advance in the industrial area of the Saar and to the Rhine - Main plain. The immediate goal was to gain time, but the ultimate objective must be the decisive defeat of the enemy by means of an attack at one specific spot. (W.D. O.B. West, 21 Sep)

63. For Army Group B the most important task at the moment was to close the gap in the front north of Eindhoven, to prevent a further enemy advance north of Nijmegen, and to consolidate the situation in the entire area. In view of the fact that fresh forces could not be made available in good time, First Parachute Army would be permitted to fall back to the line Antwerp-Turnhout-Tilbourg-Veghel-Helmond-Weert. The Western Scheldt was to be held. A blocking line was to be created between Rhine and Waal as well as on the north bank of the Rhine. For Army Group C the most important task at the moment was to restore a firm link between First Army and Fifth Panzer Army in the area east of Nancy, and to prevent an enemy breakthrough to the Saar region. (Ibid)

22 Sep

64. A Gp B: With the exception of 64 Inf Div, which had been left behind to defend the Breskens bridgehead, all formations of Fifteenth Army had now crossed the Scheldt (for details see H.S. Report No 69, para 95f). - A start had been made on 21 Sep with the demolition of the ports of Rotterdam and Amsterdam.* Strong pressure from Nijmegen towards Arnhem had been repelled by pulling together local reserves. East and west of Eindhoven the enemy had penetrated German lines. O.B. West notified A Gp B of a telephonic communication from OKW according to which the Führer desired that on both sides of Eindhoven the withdrawal movement of First Parachute Army be carried out only in the event of enemy pressure. The purpose of this was to maintain as long as possible a situation that the enemy had admitted to be unpleasant. (W.D. O.B. West, 22 Sep)

65. A Gp G: Command of the Army Group had passed from Col Gen Blaskowitz** to General of Panzer Troops Hermann Balck. - The enemy was exerting pressure on many points. The Führer had concurred with O.B. West's plan for an attack by Fifth Panzer Army towards Nancy. However, the ground which had already been taken to safeguard the assembly area of the Army, had been lost again in the meantime. (Ibid)

*Demolitions virtually countermanded by O.B. West on 23 Sep as deleterious to German S-boat and supply operations. (W.D. O.B. West, 23 Sep)

** Col Gen Blaskowitz, a high-minded representative of the old army, had been tolerated only because he was needed. He had been openly in disfavour since 1939, when he had submitted pointed reports on German administrative practices in Poland (Zimmermann, A Study in Command, p. 58). Despite good work in difficult circumstances he was now being made the scapegoat for the reverses of Army Group G. - On or about 20 Sep he was abruptly relieved of his command (O.C.M.H., F.S.B., MS - A999, von Mellenthin, A Gp G, 20 Sep - 8 Nov 44, p. VIII) (981AGpG (D1)). Records show that Rundstedt had been unable to prevent his recall:

In a renewed report to OKW, OB West set forth the developments in the situation of Nineteenth Army which forced it to give up the salient forward of the Vosges. He stressed in particular that no blame could be attached to the commander of Army Group G. (W.D. O.B. West, 19 Sep)

23 Sep

66. Major activities remained confined to the area of the airlandings. With the situation still fluid and an improvement in the weather predicted, O.B. West was apprehensive of renewed landings from the air. Indeed, in the afternoon British forces west of Arnhem were supplied from the air, two battalions landed between Arnhem and Nijmegen, others SE of Nijmegen, and about 480 cargo-gliders SW of Nijmegen. The latter descent was obviously a reaction to the German threat to the corridor, but the landing SE Nijmegen might indicate a forthcoming attack on the area between Rhine and Maas. In view of this aggravation of the situation, O.B. West ordered the immediate transfer of 108 Pz Bde to the area of Goch. (W.D. O.B. West, 23 Sep)

24 Sep

67. Uttering strident cries of alarm had ever been Model's way of getting reserves. But Rundstedt's concurrence with Model's views at the time indicates that at the Western command at least the descents of 23 Sep had created a state of acute concern. At 1300 hrs Model communicated his fears and suggestions to Rundstedt. He said the situation on the northern wing of A Gp B had deteriorated since 17 Sep because the enemy had been able to reinforce himself whilst German reinforcements had been inadequate. In consequence the opponent had been delayed, but not definitely prevented from acquiring a base for a thrust to the Ruhr. Unless First Parachute Army was made strong enough to hold the endangered sector, the new airlandings might lead to critical developments. The opponent was re-inforcing the operation for the purpose of breaking also into the area between the Rhine and Maas in a sector where there were no permanent fortification. It was necessary therefore to move additional German forces to that sector, if necessary from other parts of the front. Model then described in detail the action suggested and the forces required. (A Gp B, Weekly Reports and Misc Docs, op cit, A Gp B, Ops No. 7743/44, 24 Sep 44, signed Model)

68. Rundstedt in turn advised OKW that he was supplementing his recent appreciation of the situation in the following sense:

(Note: Narrator's condensation)

Encountering strong enemy concentrations Fifth Panzer Army's attack had bogged down; a resumption was without promise and could only lead to further waste of strength.

On the other hand the renewed strong airlandings in the afternoon of 23 Sep had strengthened the surmise that the enemy intended a quick capture of the area between Maas and Rhine and a subsequent pincer movement from that area and from Aachen to the Rhenish-Westphalian industrial

district. This was the point of acute danger, by comparison all other aspects had receded in importance.

As it was therefore necessary to renounce all other plans, particularly the unpromising attack by Fifth Panzer Army, O.B. West was requesting authority to transfer parts of Fifth Panzer Army (47 Pz Corps, 111, 112 and 113 Pz Bdes) behind his threatened and decisively important right wing.

The consequent further weakening of Army Gp G would demand a step by step withdrawal to the Vosges position.

Recent developments indicated that the situation of Fifteenth and First Parachute Armies would become progressively more difficult. In view of the relatively small forces available, the defence of the German area demanded the preservation of these two Armies. A gradual withdrawal behind the Maas, Waal, and the extended Westwall seemed therefore necessary; the Scheldt estuary was to be defended in any case.

In the opinion of O.B. West the suggested withdrawals were necessary to insure a timely gathering of reserves for the big battle to be expected in the Arnhem-Aachen sector.

(W.D. O.B. West, 24 Sep)

69. Still on the same day OKW told the western command over the telephone that the Führer had turned down the requests contained in the appreciation of the same day. The order for Fifth Panzer Army's attack towards Nancy was to remain in force. Additional verbal advance orders were issued during the latter part of the day (ibid), and early on 25 Sep the whole complex of questions was covered by a Führer Order (para 70 below). At the hour when Model and Rundstedt translated their vision of an immediate Rhineland attack into jittery recommendations, they did of course not know what the day would bring. But Hitler, particularly at the time of issuing his formal directive, had learnt from the day's reports (Sitwest for 24 Sep) that there had been no major attacks and no new landings from the air.

25 Sep

70. The Führer's Order was transmitted at 0500 hrs 25 Sep. In essence Hitler demanded:

- (a) destruction of enemy in Arnhem - Nijmegen area;

- (b) southern front of Fifteenth Army and western front of First Parachute Army to be held in present lines; and enemy bridgehead south of Helmond to be eliminated or sealed-off at least;
- (c) gap between Fifteenth Army and First Parachute Army at Veghel to be closed;
- (d) Army Group G to stand fast forward of Vosges position. To permit mobile operations in area Duss-Nomeny-Luneville no panzer divisions, panzer brigades or panzer grenadier divisions to be taken away from Army Group;
- (e) in addition to formations already made available, 9 and 116 Pz Divs to go to First Parachute Army [from Aachen area];
- (f) Chief of Replacement Army to locate strongest possible forces in Northern Holland.

(A Gp B, Führer Orders and Misc Docs, op cit, O.B. West Ops No. 839/44, citing in full: Adolf Hitler, WFSt Ops No. 773518, Top Secret, of 25 Sep 44, dispatched 0500 hrs) (981AGpB(D2))

A photostatic reproduction and a translation of this order appear at Appendix "D" to the present report.

71. Instructions to carry out the Führer's demands had already been issued on 24 Sep on the basis of telephonic advance information from OKW. Nowhere during the day, however, did the German make any substantial progress. 256 and 361 VGD's were being transferred to Northern Holland, but to begin with they would be under O.B. West only for supply and in the event of an enemy landing from the air. (W.D. O.B. West, 25 Sep)

26 Sep

72. Heavy pressure against Fifteenth Army was continuing. Further east 2 SS Pz Corps reported the elimination of the last elements of 1 Brit Airb Div, thus having defeated the attempt to cross the Neder-Rijn. British pressure against the blocking line south of Arnhem was being maintained. The German attempt to destroy the Allied forces between the Neder-Rijn and the Waal was set for 30 Sep; 9 and 116 Pz Div were to participate. There were no signs of an early attack in the Aachen area. Fifth Panzer Army's attack was making progress; Nineteenth Army was still under strong pressure. (W.D. O.B. West, 26 Sep)

27 Sep

73. From the point of view of the orthodox strategist the delivery of the Allied coup de grace in the West was overdue. Once again, however, the strange combination of intuition, calculation and courage of despair in Hitler's mind had made him sense a flagging of the enemy's drive at a time when his own generals could see nothing but black clouds. - More than that, he had just set his staff to calculate the forces required for regaining the initiative by a massive thrust at the time when bad flying weather would make it possible to establish a state of local superiority in a suitable sector. (Der Westen, 255-256)

74. Whereas the two Field Marshals had been thinking of defensive action, Hitler's order of 25 Sep had demanded attacks in widely separated sectors. Rundstedt examined the situation to see what was possible, and on 27 Sep reported the following intentions for the northern wing:

- (1) 2 Para Corps to compress the enemy bridgehead at Nijmegen;
- (2) 2 SS Pz Corps (with elts 9 and 116 Pz Divs under command) to destroy the forces between Neder-Rijn and Waal;
- (3) upon completion of (1) and (2) both Corps to attempt reaching the line Waal - Maas-Waal Canal.

Circumstances forbade any other tactics than individual thrusts by strong assault groups. For an attack of the right wing on Veghel his forces were not strong enough.

(W.D. O.B. West, 27 Sep)

75. In the meantime H.Q. 12 SS Corps had arrived and assumed command of First Parachute Army's elements west of Arnhem, thus making it possible for HQ 2 SS Pz Corps to devote itself exclusively to the conduct of the operations between Arnhem and Nijmegen. OKW had given orders to transfer 256 VGD, 361 VGD, two SS MG Bns and the Recce Bn of 1 SS Pz Div to North Holland as on OKW Reserve. 766 G.H.Q. Arty Bde was to move to the Wesel - Emmerich area, 363 VGD was to follow as soon as its first battle group would be fully organized.

(Ibid, 27 Sep)

28 Sep

76. OKW told O.B. West the enemy seemed no longer bent on enveloping the West Wall from the North, but rather on cutting off Fifteenth Army and the Armed Forces Command Netherlands. With an eye to future operations, and considering the present paucity of forces, the Führer had concurred with O.B. West's suggestion to desist from an attack against the deep flank of Second British Army in the Veghel area. Accordingly O.B. West's immediate next tasks were:

1. to defeat the enemy between Rhine and Maas in the area Wageningen-Arnhem-Nijmegen-Grave;
2. to make Fifteenth Army strong enough to hold its present front;
3. to protect the life lines of Fifteenth Army against any kind of attack.

(Ibid, 28 Sep)

77. In the day's tactical developments First Parachute Army lost its bridgehead at Wageningen; in the Aachen area 116 Pz Div had been relieved by 246 VCD; on the southern wing Fifth Panzer Army's attack had met with some initial success but held no further promise. The right wing of Nineteenth Army had gained some firmness as a result of Fifth Panzer Army's attack, but in the Belfort area a premature withdrawal to the Vosges positions could be avoided only by moving-in additional forces. To mitigate that situation, 106 Pz Bde and the Pz Gren Div were given orders to move from First Army to Nineteenth Army.

(Ibid, 28 Sep)

29-30 Sep

78. Developments during the last two days of September are of interest mainly to the student of individual operations. -- O.B. West took steps to divert a considerable number of replacement battalions to depleted Army Group G (W.D. O.B. West, 29 and 30 Sep). Looking back on the events of September, the Allies could find satisfaction in having virtually ejected the Germans from France, while the Germans may have found some fleeting solace in the thought of having extricated themselves from a situation fraught with the danger of sudden collapse.

1 - 8 Oct

79. During the first week of October the Allies maintained steady pressure against all German Armies in the West, but the Germans were able to prevent any major losses of ground. In the area of Fifteenth Army, Walcheren Island was being flooded by waters coming in through dykes that had been breached from the air. First Parachute Army's counterattack in the Nijmegen sector bogged down and was abandoned. Seventh Army was under severe pressure in the Aachen area and expected an immediate Allied assault. Army Group G was under pressure at various points but managed to maintain a coherent front by yielding further ground. (C.R.S. - 75144/27, W.D. O.B. West (A Gp D), October 1944, 1 - 8 Oct, passim) (981CW(D60))

80. In the meantime much thought had been given at the highest German quarters to the strategical counter-stroke under contemplation. Since the beginning of October the sector east of Liege had come to be regarded in growing measure as the area most suitable for such a thrust. It was the same area where the breakthrough had been made in 1940; suitable reconnaissance and experience reports were on hand as far as they had not perished in the fire at the Archives in 1941. Calculations had been made of the forces that could be made available if there would be no further serious deterioration in the situation. Alternative plans for thrusts from the Netherlands, from the Liege-Aachen area, from Luxembourg, from Lorraine, and from Alsace had been weighed. A thrust from Venlo towards Antwerp had been rejected as too risky, the three last named possibilities had found no favour, but orders had been given to prepare planning papers for a thrust from the Liege-Aachen area. Almost immediately it became apparent that alternatives one and two would have to be combined. The end result was a plan whereby the entire British Army Group and the American forces in the Aachen area were to be cut off by means of a thrust towards Antwerp from the area south of Aachen and northern Luxembourg. (Der Westen, 257-260)

9 Oct

81. At the fighting front in the meantime the situation was being aggravated by the clearly discernible intention of First Canadian Army to gain control of the Scheldt estuary by all means, thereby enabling the Allies to make use of the port at long last. Considering this serious aspect in conjunction with the threatening double envelopment of the Aachen region and the fact that Army Group G was being bled more and more without receiving adequate reinforcements, O.B. West reported his situation to Jodl with the significant request that the Führer be informed of his views (A Gp B, Weekly Reports and Misc Docs, op cit, O.B. West, Ops No. 850/44, of 1130 hrs 9 Oct 44). O.B. West made the following points and requests:

[Condensed]

In the area of Fifteenth Army the most dangerous situation was north of Antwerp where the enemy wanted to seize the land bridge to Walcheren.

As the enemy's strength in the Arnhem-Nijmegen sector and at Aachen precluded the transfer of forces to Fifteenth Army, that Army would have to strengthen its right wing at the expense of its left wing. This meant a shortening of the front between Tilburg and Hertogenbosch. The right wing of First Parachute Army would have to assume a defensive posture, particularly so because the situation at Aachen might make it necessary for 2 SS Pz Corps to divert more of its own forces to that area.

Authority was therefore requested for the evacuation of the Arnhem bridgehead.

The point of greatest danger for the entire Western front as a whole was at the right wing of Seventh Army, where a double envelopment of the greater Aachen area was clearly indicated. Constant disruption of the rail communications was delaying the arrival of reinforcements. It would hardly be possible to eliminate the dents in the front on both sides of Aachen; to the contrary, the enemy might tighten his grip on the city. In accordance with the Führer's orders and at the risk of losing 246 Inf Div, orders had been issued to defend the city to the last.

At the front of Army Group G the enemy was endeavouring to unhinge Metz from the South and to gain possession of the Vosges defiles by attacks on a broad front between Luneville and Lure. Army Group G would have to continue offering delaying resistance with a minimum of forces, thereby buying time for the improvement of the Vosges position. It might become necessary to take back the Metz bridgehead to the Moselle.

The principal reason for the recent successes of the enemy had been the lack of operational reserves, which had prevented the timely concentration of defence forces where the need would arise. Quiet sectors had already been weakened greatly and could not be further denuded. It was necessary, therefore, to request the transfer of the recuperating troops of Sixth Panzer Army to the area Enschede-Borkon-Haltern-Hamm-Münster-Rhine.

In addition O.B. West asked for the immediate despatch of seven replacement battalions and for an increase in the flow of anti-tank weapons and ammunitions to his command.

10 Oct

82. The condition of temporary stalemate was plainly evident as an uneventful day at the fronts was rounded out by an uninspired routine reply to Rundstedt's situation report. O.B. West was directed to consider as his most important tasks:

- (1) to keep the enemy from gaining entrance to the port of Antwerp;
- (2) to maintain contact between Fifteenth Army and First Parachute Army;
- (3) to keep the enemy from invading the industrial region of Aachen; the city to be defended till it lay in ruins.

In addition the Führer forbade the evacuation of the Metz bridgehead for the reason that this would lead quickly to the loss of the entire Moselle line. North of Metz some ground might be yielded under pressure but with due regard to the importance of gaining time for the improvement of the rearward lines of defence. (DOR Weston, 210-211)

11-13 Oct

83. In the various active sectors of Army Group B Allied pressure was continuing; at the front of Army Group G comparative quiet prevailed. O.B. West noted in the war diary that Army Group B had no operational reserves of any kind and thus would be unable to intervene at the focal points of the expected attacks. It was therefore important to free for this purpose at least a part of the armoured formations committed at the front of Army Group G. The first formation to be shifted from the southern to the northern Army Group would be 15 Pz Gren Div. Moreover, Army Group G would have to prepare itself for the transfer elsewhere of the headquarters staffs of Fifth Panzer Army and 47 Pz Corps. (W.D. O.B. West, 11-13 Oct 44)

84. From late October to 16 December 1944 the war diary of O.B. West carried some rather cryptic remarks. This was due to the strict security regulations surrounding everything connected with the forthcoming offensive. Unavoidable entries were sometimes couched in such vague language that only after the beginning of the Ardennes offensive it was possible to discern their true meaning. During the period in

question the prospective operation was being referred to as "Abwehrschlacht" (Defensive Battle). A few hours before the beginning of the offensive, however, a special entry in the war diary placed earlier statements into their true perspective. With regard to a certain order issued in the early part of October, Schramm noted:

Special circumstances existed in the case of an order issued by Chief OKW on 12 Oct, for it served to explain and camouflage the imminent assembly of troops for our own offensive from the Eifel area, for which operation the basic outlines had become firm by that time. The [various] command headquarters in the West were told by Chief OKW that the opponents had mentally prepared their peoples for an early victory, and that it was not yet possible to shatter the enemy's expectations by means of an offensive. It was therefore all the more important to position the [strategical] reserves in a manner that would ensure full success for the impending defensive battle. In the meantime day to day casualties at the front would be made up by means of stop gap measures. (Der Westen, 211)

85. According to Schramm, in the same order the prospective activity in the rear areas was explained to the various command authorities in the sense that the Führer had decided to assemble the operational reserves about to arrive (Sixth Panzer Army, V.G. Divs, Arty and Mortar Bdes, G.H.Q. troops) as an OKW reserve behind the northern part of the western front.

- (1) The bulk of the forces would be assembled left of the Rhine behind the southern wing of First Parachute Army and the northern wing of Seventh Army.
- (2) One Panzer Corps and two to three mobile formations would be withdrawn from Army Group G by 31 Oct and placed as an OKW reserve in the area Trarbach-Trier-St. Wendel-Kaiserslautern. Two V.G. Divs would also be despatched to that area.
- (3) Uncommitted formations were to remain OKW reserves and not to be employed except in grave emergency for a counterthrust and then as a compact force.
- (4) Supplies of ammunitions, fuel, signal and engineer materials were to be accumulated in certain particularly endangered sectors and considered as OKW reserves.

(Ibid, 212)

86. On that same 12 Oct Rundstedt made a request for a third Army Group Headquarters for the West "to free Army Group B [HQ] for the focal area" (for translation of relevant war diary entry see Historical Section (GS) Report No. 69, para 142). The order for the transfer of 15 Pz Gren Div to Army Group B (para 83 above) was issued on 13 Oct. On 13 and 14 Oct the headquarters of O.B. West were transferred to Ziegenberg (appx 8 km W Bad Nauheim, in the general area of Frankfurt a/M) (W.D. O.B. West, 11-13 Oct). The O.B. West portion of the OKH Schematic Order of Battle of the German Armies as on 13 Oct 44, appears as Appendix "E" to the present Report. (C.R.S. - OKH, Periodic Schematic Orders of Battle of the German Army) (Photostat of complete document: 981.045(D1))

14-16 Oct

87. On 14 Oct O.B. West issued orders for the immediate transfer of headquarters Fifth Panzer Army with its Army troops from Army Group G to the area east of Aachen. On 15 Oct there was considerable fighting at the Beveland isthmus and near Aachen. O.B. West indirectly foretold coming events by noting that the depleted division in the Breskens pocket would be unable to hold the bridgehead without outside help. While at Aachen the situation was beyond remedy unless Allied air activity was curbed, seasoned formations moved in and sufficient ammunitions and replacements brought up (W.D. O.B. West, 14 Oct), all of which could not be done at the moment. - OKW in the meantime was quietly pursuing its own designs and announced the forthcoming despatch of 18 VG Div to Army Group B, where it was to relieve 2 SS Pz Div for rest and refitting under Sixth Panzer Army. The day was characterized by very heavy fighting at the two main focal points: mouth of the Scheldt and Aachen. The land connection with Walcheren was now considered lost, at Aachen the German corridor to the city had been narrowed to a width of 300 metres, which meant that a further reinforcing of the garrison was no longer possible. Army Group G reported growing pressure in the Dierenhofen-Metz sector and at the centre of Nineteenth Army. (Ibid)

17-18 Oct

88. The battle of Aachen was drawing to a close. German attempts to regain access to the city failed. Street fighting was in progress in the southern quarters of the city. The German garrison reported that its strength has been reduced to 1200 men. O.B. West replied by drawing attention to the Führer's order to defend the city to the last man. The Breskens Pocket was under pressure from east and south. The flooding of Walcheren forced the Germans on the island to regroup. The appearance of additional strong Allied formations in the Nijmegen area and at the Maas bridgehead was taken to

indicate the enemy's intention of eliminating the Maas bridgehead and delivering a thrust from Nijmegen towards the Southeast. (W.D. O.B. West, 17-18 Oct)

19 Oct

89. In the absence of any unexpected developments at the front, O.B. West tackled OKW on the question of reinforcements. At that time he was not fully aware of the plans for the Ardennes offensive and may well have been anxious to learn more precisely what OKW intended to do with the forces it was hoarding while he was pleading for troops. During the early part of the day he had already informed OKW about the urgent needs of Nineteenth Army; later in the day he despatched a new over-all estimate in which he made the following points:

For a front of about 1000 km he had 41 infantry divisions and ten mobile divisions with a total combat value of 27 full infantry divisions and 6 $\frac{1}{2}$ panzer divisions.

They were facing enemy formations amounting to 42 infantry divisions, 18 panzer divisions and 11 panzer brigades, all being constantly reinforced to full strength.

Casualties in the West from 1 Sep to 15 Oct had been appx 150,000 men. Transfers to other fronts and to the rear area for rejuvenation had absorbed another 86,000 men. During the same period he had received 152,000 men, so that on balance his strength had been reduced by 84,000 men. The forces on hand would not suffice to hold the front for long. What he needed was an additional ten infantry and four panzer divisions. Moreover, the formations of Sixth Panzer Army ought to be moved up in good time and not wait for the critical moment when demolished bridges and railway installations would prevent their timely arrival.*

(Ibid, 19 Oct)

20-23 Oct

90. Fighting continued at the previously reported pressure points. Allied attacks against the southern front of Fifteenth Army and air attacks on the bridges in the rear area of that Army were taken to indicate that the opponent was endeavouring to clear the rear areas for a projected eastward thrust. Moderating more far-reaching demands from A Gp B, and granting limited exemptions in special cases,

*It is possible that this demand prompted Hitler to break his silence regarding the planned offensive. In any case, the records show that the Chiefs of Staff O.B. West and A Gp B departed for Hitler's headquarters on 21 Oct and were informed of the pending plans on 24 Oct (paras 91 and 93 below).

O.B. West gave orders for the troops in the rear area to deliver 75% of their pistols and German machine guns, as well as 50% of their rifles to the troops in the fighting zone. (Ibid, 20 Oct)

91. At 1130 hrs 21 Oct the wireless station of the Aachen garrison reported for the last time and signed off. Henceforth the most important immediate tasks would be the endeavours to retain control of the Scholdt Estuary and to keep the enemy from gaining possession of what would be the rear areas for a thrust from the Aachen area. General Westphal (C. of S. O.B. West) left for a conference at the Führer's Headquarters. (Ibid, 21 Oct)

92. On the next day the commander of Army Group B issued a report in which he stressed once more the great need of strengthening Fifteenth Army and mentioned the complete failure of the "stomach" troops who had been made available as reinforcements. The report was to be relayed to C. of S. O.B. West "who is still at the Führer's Headquarters". In the meantime Fifth Panzer Army had assumed command of 12 SS Corps and 81 Corps (both forward of the Düsseldorf-Cologne line). The transfer of HQ 47 Pz Corps to A Gp B was in progress. Except for the area of Fifteenth Army, the western front was quiet. (Ibid, 20-23 Oct)

24 Oct

93. Fighting on 24 Oct followed the current pattern of pressure on Fifteenth Army and engagements of merely local nature at the balance of the front. The return of General Westphal from the Führer's Headquarters was recorded without any reference to the subjects discussed (Ibid, 24 Oct). It is generally known, however, that Westphal and Krebs were received by Hitler on this day and given a certain amount of information on the forthcoming offensive in the West. Westphal relates how in September and October the main question had ever been the time of arrival of the strong reinforcements promised by Hitler.

Despite all urgings and promptings OKW wrapped itself in a deep silence, and it was not until October 24 that the veil of secrecy was lifted. On this day I was ordered to report to Hitler's Headquarters in East Prussia, together with the Chief of the General Staff of Army Group B, General Krebs. There we were told verbally that about twenty infantry and ten panzer divisions, each with ten artillery corps and mortar brigades, would reach the West by the end of November or the beginning of December, together with numerous other army formations... but these forces were intended solely for offensive action. (General Siegfried Westphal, The German Army in the West, Cassell and Company Ltd, London, 1951, p. 178)

94. With Fifteenth Army in urgent need of support and no other practical solution in sight, it was decided to shift a battle group of 10 SS Pz Div from 2 SS Pz Corps to the left wing of Fifteenth Army. This was an acceptable risk because the opponent was known to have removed valuable divisions from the Nijmegen-Arnhem area for the attack against Fifteenth Army. Another plan to bring some relief to Fifteenth Army was suggested by A Gp B in the form of a thrust by 47 Pz Corps from the area of 86 Corps. O. B. West approved in principle. (W.D. O.B. West, 24 Oct)

95. During the day OKW announced the forthcoming transfer to O.B. West of 4 and 15 Mort Bdes and one artillery Corps. O.B. West directed that one of the brigades and the arty corps be placed in the rear area of First Parachute Army for ready intervention in the event of a major attack against the Arnhem-Aachen sector. The remaining mortar brigade was to join Fifth Panzer Army. (Ibid)

96. Allied regroupings at the front of First Army seemed to herald a forthcoming major attack. In view of the devastating effects of the first assault on the troops in the main line of resistance it would be important to form reserves. The arrival of 361 VG Div had freed 11 Pz Div for this purpose, but more strength was needed. Army Group G was asked to examine whether 21 Pz Div could be withdrawn from the right wing of Nineteenth Army, where the enemy was not very strong in numbers. (Ibid)

97. As of 1200 hrs 25 Oct the headquarters staff Naval Group West (Marine Gruppen Kommando West) would carry the designation Naval Command West (Marine Oberkommando West: M.O.K. West). At the same time the Channel Islands and the isolated fortresses would fall under its command except for operations on land, for which O.B. West would remain directly responsible. (Ibid)

23-26 Oct

98. OKW told O.B. West that a strengthening of the German airforce was not possible at the moment. In the event of a large scale enemy attack, however, strong fighter formations would be made available. O.B. West noted glumly that the extent of this support would decide the outcome of the operations in the West. Fifteenth Army remained the main target of Allied pressure. Ground was lost at Woensdrecht, south of Rosendaal and at 's-Hertogenbosch. In view of the urgent necessity of easing pressure on the Fifteenth Army, O.B. West gave the signal for executing 47 Pz Corps' relief attack from the Venlo bridgehead towards the West. Army Group B had intended to carry out the attack with 9 Pz Div alone, but O.B. West directed that the bulk of 15 Pz Gren Div be moved to the west side of the Maas for quick exploitation in case of success. (Ibid, 25 Oct)

99. O.B. West was informed that for the "Abwehrrschlacht" (para 84 above) thirteen VG Divs would be sent to the West in November, while two Para divs would be placed at his disposal. Rundstedt renewed his request for a third Army Group Headquarters, or at least a Special Staff to direct the operations of Fifteenth Army, First Parachute Army and the Armed Forces Commander Netherlands. For commander he suggested Col Gen Blaskowitz. (Ibid, 26 Oct)

27-28 Oct

100. Events of interests were mainly confined to the area of Fifteenth Army. (The principal developments have been related in Historical Section (GS) Report No. 69. paras 169-176.) Seeing that the Fifteenth Army was yielding further ground, the Führer demanded that the necessary withdrawals of the Army be carried out at the slowest tempo possible. O.B. West pointed out that the land front of Fifteenth Army was defended by troops with a total combat value of 2¹/₂ full divisions, facing enemy forces of six infantry divisions, three armoured divisions and five armoured brigades. Failure to withdraw would mean the extinction of forces that were indispensable for the re-establishment of a new front north of the Waal. Further east the attack of 47 Pz Corps had bogged down without having attracted large forces from the front of Fifteenth Army. (Ibid, 27-28 Oct 44)

29 Oct

101. On this day all attention was focussed on the plight of Fifteenth Army (H.S. Report No. 69, paras 177-184). There had been deep penetrations at Breda and Molenstraat, and at mid-morning C. of S. O.B. West asked Jodl over the telephone to obtain the Führer's consent for a withdrawal of Fifteenth Army across the Waal. Hitler indicated that the Army should remain south of the Waal, but finally gave permission to fall back on large bridgeheads in the event that enemy pressure left no other choice. Later in the day Army Group B reported further deterioration in the situation, and O.B. West in his turn notified OKW of the development and asked for new orders. (Ibid, 29 Oct)

102. A copy of the resulting directive to O.B. West has been preserved in a file of the German Naval Operations Staff (Sk1). (O.N.I., Tambach Collection, Microfilm Reel No. T 5 B, German Naval Operations Staff (Sk1). File "North Sea - Norway", OKW/WFSt/Ops No. 773955/44, Top Secret, of 29 Oct 44) (981HCN(D16)). A reproduction and translation of document appears as Appendix "F" to the present report.

On closer inspection, however, the directive turned out to contain a good deal of empty bombast. The troops were to fight to the last, large non-existing reinforcements were promised, sometime soon the Fifteenth Army would receive seventeen pieces of artillery.

103. Earlier in the day Field Marshal Rundstedt had paid renewed attention to a problem that filled his mind with uneasiness. As early as 19 Oct he had advocated that Sixth Panzer Army be moved closer to the front (para 89 above). Now he pointed once again to the enemy's obvious preparations for attack and to the difficulties of moving up reserves at the critical time. He added that subordination of the Army under O.B. West was necessary to afford him an insight into the condition of the Army and some influence on its reconstruction.* (W.D. O.B. West, 29 Oct)

30 Oct

104. The authorized withdrawals of Fifteenth Army were carried out and a new line established with some difficulty. Continued enemy pressure was expected as a certainty. The attack of 47 Pz Corps had come to an end, and 15 Pz Gren Div was returning to its role of operational reserve. Since the opponent for one reason or another had actually withdrawn one infantry division and one armoured brigade from the front of Fifteenth Army, the attack was judged to have obtained some slight success. In the Vonlo area in the meantime the projected new command arrangements had come into force, and Fifth Panzer Army was in command of 47 Pz Corps, 86 Corps and Corps Feldt. (Ibid, 30 Oct)

31 Oct

105. In the area of Army Group B all signs were pointing to an early attack on Walcheren. In the area of Army Group G the usual attacks in the direction of the Vosges passes were continuing. In addition to this the enemy had now launched an attack south of the Rhino-Marne Canal. All available units of 21 Pz Div were being moved to that area (Ibid, 31 Oct). The month of October had been uneventful, but on both sides of the fence plans had been made to break the stalemate by a mighty effort.

*When this request seemed destined to remain unanswered, O.B. West renewed his representations on 3 Nov. Finally, on 6 Nov he was notified that Sixth Panzer Army would be transferred to his command area between 7 and 25 Nov, but would remain an OKW reserve. (C.R.S. - 75144/28, W.D. O.B. West, Nov 44, 3 and 6 Nov) (981CW(D61))

1-7 Nov

106. The first week of November was the end of a phase. The two-months struggle for control of the Scheldt Estuary came to an end, Walcheren was lost Fifteenth Army was taking up positions north of the Maas and Waal, the Allied forces at the front of Fifteenth Army were being thinned out for the benefit of the Armies facing east.

107. First Parachute and Fifth Panzer Armies facing west at the Maas might have to meet the next major onslaught of the Allies. If the opponent at the Waal-Maas front showed no signs of intending to push on towards the North, considerable forces would become free for transfer to the Maas-west front. To have at least some sort of operational reserve, O.B. West gave orders for 47 Pz Corps (with 9 Pz Div and 15 Pz Gren Div under command) to assemble between Rhine and Maas in a manner permitting intervention at the western front of First Parachute Army as well as in the Aachen area. The headquarters staff of 58 Pz Corps was en route from First Army to the Fifth Panzer Army. There was incipient pressure against the Venlo bridgehead and north of Aachen. In the area of Army Group G enemy sorties against the front NE Dierenhofen were taken as forerunners of an impending attack on First Army. Good progress in construction work allowed Nineteenth Army to plan for a withdrawal to the Western Vosges position by mid-month. (C.R.S. - 75144/28, W.D. O.B. West, Nov 44, 1-7 Nov) (981CW(D61))

108. On orders from O.B. West, Army Group H would assume command on the Maas-Waal front on 10 Nov, thus making it possible for Army Group B to devote itself fully to "its real tasks in the München-Gladbach - Trier area". For the purpose of forming an Army Group H headquarters, the headquarters-staff "Armeegruppe Klotzel", including signal regiment and supply troops, would be moved-in from the East. Considered as a special danger was the presence of 600,000 able bodied Dutchmen in the area of Army Group H. On orders from OKW they would be removed to Germany. On 3 Nov Rundstedt repeated his request to have Sixth Panzer Army moved forward and placed under his command. On the same day he noted in the war diary that the enemy was bound to notice the movement of troops to the western front. To keep him guessing on the details at least, he imposed radio silence on all formations and units not actually at the front. (Ibid)

109. With Antwerp in his possession the enemy would soon deliver a massive thrust towards the Rhine. The timely assembly of operational reserves behind the prospective focal points was now a matter of urgency. On 6 Nov OKW finally gave orders for the transfer of Sixth Panzer Army to the area of O.B. West. The movement was to begin on 7 Nov and completed by 25 Nov. Under command of Army Group B the Sixth Panzer Army was to be held in locations permitting intervention in several directions. With regard to commitment, however, the Army retained the character of an OKW Reserve. (Ibid, 6 Nov)

110. On 7 Nov O.B. West issued his first directive to Army Group H. Fighting at the Scheldt and south of the Maas was at an end, what mattered now was to keep the enemy from advancing past the river barrier, On the right he must be denied access to Rotterdam and Amsterdam. On the left, contact with Army Group B must be maintained in any event, the area between Maas and Waal defended, the remaining Maas bridgehead held as long as possible. The forces available for the task were extremely scanty. They were not large enough to permit a defence of the islands of Schouwen and Goeree however desirable that might be in itself (s.a. para 111 below).
(Ibid, 7 Nov)

Scheldt Estuary under Allied Control (after 7 Nov)

8-15 Nov

111. That Rundstedt was a commander-in-Chief in name only was brought home to him once more on 8 Oct, when Hitler forced him to countermand his directive for desisting from a defence of Schouwen and Goeree. The Führer demanded the immediate strengthening of the garrison of Voorne, Schouwen and Goeree to one fully combat-worthy reinforced battalion with corresponding flak and arty elements for each island (Ibid, 8 Nov). On the same day Hitler turned down Rundstedt's request for emergency powers to commit the OKW reserves without prior consultation in the event of sudden critical developments. Except in the case of major landings from the air, he was not to commit even a single one of those units without the prior concurrence of OKW (Der Westen, 244). Nevertheless, from Rundstedt's point of view the day was not a total loss, for he was finally freed from any further direct interference by high command authorities other than OKW, and his Army Groups were instructed henceforth neither to communicate directly with any command authorities above O.B. West, nor to accept any orders not reaching them through O.B. West. (W.D. O.B. West, 8 Nov)

112. On the next day Jodl advised O.B. West of the Führer's order that above all the forces earmarked for the attack were not to be touched. Losses of ground would have to be accepted if it could not be helped, but this was not to become known below Army levels. To be held at all costs were:

the Maas position astride Venlo; the air defence area on both sides of Dueren; the Moselle position astride Diedenhofen; the fortress Metz, with contact with the Nieth position, which was to be sought also if Metz should be surrounded; and, the Nieth position as far as the border. (Der Westen, 245)

113. In addition to the injunction against committing OKW reserves, various other measures taken at that time were related to the coming offensive in the Ardennes. At Rundstedt's headquarters the projected attack was still being referred to as the "Abwehrschlacht"; at the highest quarters, however, it was known as operation "Wacht am Rhein" (O.C.M.H., F.S.B., OKW Ausarbeitung Schramm, Die Western Front, 16 Dec 44 - 28 Feb 45, p. 1) (981SOM(D93)); (Jodl Diary Notes, op cit, p. 41). One of the most important changes in command arrangements made at this time was the transfer of the Fifteenth Army Staff to Army Group B:

In connection with the further preparations for the Abwehrschlacht, beginning at 2400 hrs 14 Nov, the Fifteenth Army Staff will be withdrawn from its present assignment and transferred to Army Group B. Its former area will be taken over by the Armed Forces Commander Netherlands who, for reasons of deception, will carry on under the designation Fifteenth Army. In its new area the Fifteenth Army Staff will operate under the cover name "Gruppe von Manteuffel", whereas the Fifth Panzer Army Staff (the continued presence of which at the right wing of Army Group B will be simulated by the Fifteenth Army Staff) will be known as Feldjäger Kommando z.b.V. To veil the new role of the Armed Forces Commander Netherlands, a small staff will remain at his old headquarters and carry on current business under the old designation. (W.D. O.B. West, 13 Nov)

114. To meet the need for command staffs for the additional divisions soon to arrive in the West, O.B. West gave orders for 85 Corps Staff to be transferred from Nineteenth Army to Army Group B, and for the rehabilitation of the 30 and 53 Corps Staffs, which had been wrecked in the East (Ibid, 8 Nov, 10 Nov). 3 and 6 Para Divs, though not yet in the area of Army Group B, were placed under its command with regard to preparation and training for the Ardennes offensive (Ibid, 9 Nov). O.B. West repeated a previously issued order for the immediate and complete delivery of all captured American outfits and equipment. (Ibid, 10 Nov)

115. In the meantime, on 10 Nov, Headquarters Army Group H had assumed command over Fifteenth Army, First Parachute Army and the Armed Forces Commander Netherlands, while Army Group B was keeping a wary eye on the Allied build-up at the Maas-east front. The fact that dead Canadian soldiers had been seen at the front of First Parachute Army was taken to confirm the suspected arrival of Canadian formations in the general area of Nijmegen. O.B. West, concluding from this that 50 Brit Div and probably also 43 Brit Inf Div would be shifted further southward, instructed Army Group H to react to these measures by further thinning out Fifteenth Army for the benefit of the areas now likely to become focal points. (Ibid, 11 Nov)

116. On 11 Nov O.B. West's Intelligence Section had reported as follows:

Confirmation of the transfer of Canadian units to the area on both sides of Nijmegen begins to shed light on the whereabouts of the First Canadian Army formations that have become free. The presence of elements 2 Cdn Corps S Nijmegen, of elements 2 or 3 Cdn Inf Div at Groesbeck, and of 2 Cdn Army Tk Bde [sic] at Dreunel, confirms the expected transfers from the Antwerp area to the East. It can be assumed that First Canadian Army has taken over the entire Maas-Waal front, and that the forces of Second British Army hitherto in that sector are being relieved. Consequently two British infantry divisions and two U.S. airborne divisions will be free for commitment elsewhere, presumably at the eastern Maas front. Regroupments in the area of Second British Army are apparently still in progress, but the preparations for the attack on the Maas bridgehead seem to have been completed.

(C.R.S. - 75809, O.B. West, Int Repts
26 Sep - 31 Dec 44, Int No. 7428/44,
11 Nov 44) (981 CW(D34)).

117. Two days later it was reported that there was now a clearly recognizable enemy concentration at the front of First Parachute Army. It was thought to consist of at least five infantry divisions, four armoured divisions and four armoured brigades. Adjoining in the North was the Canadian Army with at least four infantry (resp airb) and at least one armoured division, whereas at the front of Fifteenth Army there were now only three infantry and two armoured divisions. Concluding that an acute danger to the Netherlands area did no longer exist, O.B. West supplemented his instructions of 11 Nov with orders for the immediate and thoroughgoing weakening of the forces of Fifteenth Army for the benefit of First Parachute Army. This he considered all the more urgent as the expected attacks against the Parachute Army might be accompanied by a new large-scale attack in the Aachen area. (W.D. O.B. West, 13 Nov)

118. With regard to this expected attack at the Venlo bridgehead and north of Aachen the Führer informed all command headquarters concerned of the measures he considered most important in this connection:

1. Spare own troops but inflict heavy casualties on enemy,
2. deploy artillery in depth,

3. prepare for extensive demolitions, lay mine fields and construct tank traps,
4. select locations for headquarters in such a manner that command apparatus will not be paralyzed by armoured break-throughs,
5. reconnoitre by force to obtain clear enemy picture,
6. make certain that no Maas bridges will be captured intact,
7. strengthen West Wall right up to last sector [obscure; presumably means north end],
8. thin out Fifteenth Army to gain reserves (for this purpose 10 SS Pz Div and 363 VGD to be withdrawn from front).

(Der Westen, 246)

119. While Army Group B was thus bracing itself for the expected onslaught, Army Group G was under severe pressure at Metz and on both sides of it. The Metz salient from south of Trier to east of Lüneville was defended by First Army with 82 Corps in the northern part, 13 SS Corps in the centre and 89 Corps in the southern part. Early on 8 Nov OKW told O.B. West over the telephone that the Führer wanted Metz to be made a fortress for all-round defence. The garrison was to be strengthened to a point where it could hold out for a long time if it should become isolated. Following intensive Allied artillery fire on the entire First Army front, 13 SS Corps SE of Metz came under heavy attack. On the next day pressure against 13 SS Corps continued while a companion attack was launched NE Metz. According to several critical entries in the War Diary of O.B. West, Army Group G apparently was making light of the initial losses of ground. O.B. West noted that without any doubt the enemy was about to encircle Metz and would succeed in doing so unless he was thrown back without delay. By the evening of 10 Nov it was clear that the enemy could no longer be dislodged and, indeed, was gaining further ground. In one of the rare instances of critical comments about subordinate headquarters, Rundstedt recorded the opinion that the local command authorities had failed to deal with the initial attacks in a manner in keeping with their importance. (W.D. O.B. West, 8-10 Nov)

120. On 11 Nov it was recognized that the enemy pincers movement would succeed unless the bridgehead north of Metz was eliminated. O.B. West gave orders to move-in additional units, mainly artillery, but by 12 Nov the strength of the enemy artillery had become so great that a successful outcome of a counter-attack north of Metz was out of question. At the same time further south, in the sector of 13 SS Corps,

the situation was also deteriorating, a counter-attack by 11 Pz Div had failed, and 21 Pz Div was still too weakened from recent engagements to be suitable for a serious counter-attack. O.B. West, therefore, gave orders to assume a defensive posture, yield no more ground, and maintain the line of communications with Metz. For such a purpose 36 VGD and 21 Pz Div could be used in support of the units in the area (Ibid, 12 Nov). On the next day O.B. West informed OKW of his plans for the defence of Metz. Not counting air force flak, the garrison would have a strength of 11,500 men, and ammunition for at least four weeks (Ibid, 13 Nov). When the situation showed further deterioration late on 14 Nov, O.B. West conferred with the commander of Army Group G and afterwards reported to OKW that an early encirclement of Metz was to be expected as well as a continuation of the enemy attacks from the Diederhofen bridgehead. Fighting strengths at First Army were very small, 11 Pz Div had only 800 men forward of the regimental headquarters. O.B. West had no troops to improve this situation, a further weakening of Nineteenth Army was not practicable because it would shortly come under attack itself. In consequence O.B. West was unable to withdraw 25 Pz Gren Div, 17 SS Pz Gren Div and 21 Pz Div as required for the preparations for the Abwehrschlacht. Neither could 36 VGD and 401 Volks Arty Corps be returned to Army Group B at the moment. (Ibid, 14 Nov)

121. At the front of Army Group H a certain increase in fighting activity at the Venlo bridgehead was taken as a possible forerunner of Allied major action. O.B. West therefore gave orders for the alerting of 47 Pz Corps for quick intervention in the Venlo and/or Erkelenz areas. At the front of Army Group G the attack on Metz proper had begun. O.B. West demanded that the city be held as long as possible, above all, however, First Army was to preserve an unbroken front. Intelligence had not as yet noted any drastic changes in Allied dispositions; the right wing of Second British Army was apparently being strengthened, the enemy concentrations on both sides of Metz were being maintained, despite a resurgence in fighting there was no evidence of new enemy concentrations in Burgundy. With regard to command arrangements for the Abwehrschlacht, Fifteenth Army Staff, fully camouflaged (para 113 above), had relieved Fifth Panzer Army Staff in the latter's former area, H.Q. 30 Corps was en route to Army Group H to relieve H.Q. 2 SS Pz Corps for transfer to A Gp B. (Ibid, 15 Nov)

16 Nov

122. The beginning of the last month before the launching of the German Offensive in the Ardennes was characterized by the determined widening of Allied efforts to soften up and wear down the German forces in the West. On the right wing of Army Group G, First Army was under growing pressure at Metz and lost further ground NE and SE of Metz;

on the left wing of the Army Group, Nineteenth Army was forced to yield ground to 2 French Armd Div in the North and 5 French Armd Div in the South. But the most significant development of the day was the resumption of large-scale Allied operations in the Aachen area. Massive air attacks on lines of defence and supply routes preceded attacks on a wide front. At 1710 hrs O.B. West learnt from his Chief Intelligence Officer that the northern wing of Army Group B faced an enemy concentration of five armoured and seven infantry divisions - some British, some American. Concluding that the centre of gravity of the Allied efforts was now at the northern wing of Army Group B, O.B. West immediately authorized Army Group B to commit 47 Pz Corps. In addition to this 10 SS Pz Div was to move from the area east of Arnhem to the area east of Venlo, and Army Group H would despatch 85,245 and 363 VGD's to the area behind the Maas-east front. The consequent temporary weakening of Army Group H was a tolerable risk and had to be accepted. (Ibid, 16 Nov)

17 Nov

123. Due to limited visibility Allied air activity at the front of Army Group B was somewhat smaller than on the preceding day, and by committing virtually all free reserves the Army Group was able to hold the Allied forces in the greater Aachen area in check. Developments in the area of Army Group G were decidedly unfavourable; in order to maintain a coherent front First Army had to fall back to rear positions and leave the garrison of Metz to its fate. Allied forces had already entered the southern suburbs of Metz. At the southern wing of Nineteenth Army the opponent reached the area 10 km SW Belfort. Obviously the Allied operations against Nineteenth Army were more than mere holding attacks. Rundstedt believed that he could not cope with the situation without making use of the OKW reserves, but his request in that sense was turned down flatly:

Despite all stop gap measures, representing the utmost O.B. West could do on his own, a defensive success against the enemy's large-scale attacks cannot be guaranteed. In a telephone conversation with the Chief of the Armed Forces Operations Staff, C. of S. O.B. West points to the newly arrived SS formations and the desirability of committing them before the enemy achieves a strategical breakthrough. Chief WFSt declined [to consider] the possibility of such a commitment and announced that in the case of such a development the OKW Reserves concerned would have to be removed from the area.

(Ibid, 17 Nov)

18 Nov

124. While Army Groups H and B were under moderate pressure only, developments in the area of Army Group G were causing mounting concern at the headquarters of O.B. West. The loss of Alsace and Lorraine had become a distinct possibility. The further Allied advances in the area of First Army had not come as a surprise, but a breakthrough at the extreme left wing of Nineteenth Army north of the Swiss border via Delle to Courcelles and Grandvillers raised the spectre of serious operational repercussions. O.B. West expressed astonishment at the unexpected developments in the Belfort area and demanded energetic counter-measures. (Ibid, 18 Nov)

19 Nov

125. Army Group H was forced to yield some ground at the Venlo bridgehead, Army Group B lost Geilonkirchen but on balance obtained a defensive success by foiling the opponent's determined attempt to collapse the salient north of Aachen. In the area of Army Group G, however, the situation showed further deterioration. At the southern wing of Nineteenth Army the breakthrough at Delle had been widened, and enemy forces had reached points 20 km NE and 12 km E Delle. Moreover, the opponent was approaching Belfort. When it became known that enemy forces had pushed eastwards to the Rhine at Hünningen, and to nearby Rosenau and Sirentz, the defence of Mulhouse became a matter of immediate urgency and O B. West instructed Military District No. 5 (Alsace, Württemberg and Baden) to despatch all available forces under its command to the area south and southwest of Mulhouse. (Ibid, 19 Nov)

20 Nov

126. At the front of Army Group B, Allied forces made only some moderate gains of ground north of Aachen, but the situation at Army Group G was continuing to cause concern. In the centre, American forces were approaching Saarburg (a mere 50 km WNW Strassburg), further south, French forces were getting still closer to Belfort. German counter-attacks in both areas had been of no avail. In a telephone conversation at 1445 hrs between C. of S. O.B. West and Deputy Chief WFSt, O.B. West asked for permission to use Pz Lehr Div at the Belfort gap and 12 VGD in the Aachen area. His contention was that these forces would go far to restore the situation and could be withdrawn in good time to be available for the Abwehrschlacht. Both requests were turned down. This left only the forces in the Netherlands as a possible source of formations for the focal points of the front. South of the

Maas (resp. Waal) there were now only one British division (on Walcheren), one Polish division, one Canadian armoured division, one armoured brigade and some Dutch volunteers, while the German forces, after all pending withdrawals would still consist of two Corps with a total of five divisions. O.B. West therefore gave orders for the withdrawal of an additional Corps Headquarters and two divisions from this front; one division to be transferred to Army Group G with the greatest possible speed. (Ibid, 20 Nov)

21 Nov

127. Headquarters 2 SS Pz Corps, slated for a role in the Abwehrschlacht (paras 121 and 126 above), was now being relieved in the area east of Arnhem-Nijmegen by H.Q. 88 Corps, hitherto at the Maas-north front. The SS Corps H.Q. was to be available in the area of Army Group B, complete with Corps troops by 25 Nov at the latest. With regard to current operations the day was characterized by various local engagements in the Aachen region. North of Eschweiler the opponent gained further ground, and O.B. West granted Army Group B's request for permission to shorten the front and give up Eschweiler to save the garrison. (Ibid, 21 Nov)

128. In the area of Army Group G, however, the situation in southeastern Lorraine was worsening. There had been a serious break-in astride the Rhino-Marne Canal. A blocking line in process of being established 10 km N Saarburg, had already been pierced. Efforts were made to form a blocking line west of Saverne. In view of this, OKW now gave permission for the temporary employment of Pz Lehr Div. O.B. West placed the Division under Army Group G and gave orders for its immediate departure in the direction Homburg-Saarunion, to be committed to an attack from the North against the deep flank of the enemy in the Saarburg area. Immediately upon arrival of the first infantry division from Army Group H, Pz Lehr Div would have to revert to OKW reserve. - In the Belfort area 198 Inf Div seemed to be gaining some measure of defensive success. (Ibid)

22 Nov

129. On its extreme left wing, Army Group H was expecting an attack on the Roermond bridgehead. As a precautionary measure 85 Inf Div and an assault gun brigade were being moved to the area as an Army Group reserve. In addition, 6 Para Regt was being shifted from the Venlo bridgehead to the area between Venlo and Roermond. But it was too late to save the bridgehead, and at 1700 hrs it was reported lost. - In the meantime 3 Para Div (on route from Army Group H to Seventh Army) was directed to Düren as a

potential backstop east of Aachen. Permission for this had been granted by OKW on the request of O.B. West despite the fact that the formation was slated for employment in the forthcoming offensive. (Ibid, 22 Nov)

130. In the area of Army Group G the opponent was making further gains, and operations that had previously served the purpose of trading space for time were now turning into a desperate last minute effort to keep the enemy from engulfing Alsace and Lorraine. East of Metz the opponent was advancing in the St. Avold area, a mere 30 km from the western borders of the Palatinate. Further south the enemy had entered Alsace from southeastern Lorraine and was reported to have entered Saverne. The German troops in the area seemed to have disintegrated. As no reports were being received from H.Q. 88 Corps at Saverne, this staff was presumed incapacitated, and the "Higher Command Vosges" charged with the task of collecting the various shattered groups and creating some sort of defence line. Pz Lehr Div had not yet appeared and O.B. West employed every means to hasten its journey. Due to the swiftly changing situation the projected flank attack now would have to be delivered against the American Corps in the Saverne area. (Ibid)

23 Nov

131. Army Group H reported merely renewed attacks against the already shrunken Venlo bridgehead. But the enemy was known to be holding close to the front of the Army Group two armoured and five infantry divisions. A similar situation prevailed at Army Group B, where the Allies had not made any further gains but controlled uncommitted reserves amounting to four armoured and ten infantry divisions. (Ibid, 25 Nov)

132. In the area of Army Group G, however, a critical situation had deteriorated to the point where the loss of Alsace and Lorraine appeared inevitable. Before any German headquarters had even heard of the approach of enemy tanks and vehicles, the opponent appeared at the gates of Strasburg, and shortly afterwards entered the city and demanded its surrender. While Alsace Lorraine was being sliced-up by the many-pronged advances of the enemy, Rundstedt recalled with some bitterness the incident in September (para 65 above) when despite his repeated objections the top officers of Army Group G had been relieved abruptly by OKW and replaced by officers whose lack of comprehension had greatly contributed to the present debacle in the South. In a telephone conversation with Jodl, C. of S. O.B. West brought up this matter again and criticized the performance of the Chiefs of Staff of A Gp G and First Army. (Ibid)

133. As the day went on it became clear that the attack of Pz Lehr Div would come too late to be effective and the divisions from Army Group H would come too late to save the situation. With this in mind, O.B. West asked for the immediate despatch of two battleworthy panzer divisions and

one additional infantry division. In his reply over the telephone, Jodl acknowledged the validity of Rundstedt's request, but said that in view of the forthcoming Abwehrschlacht it had to be turned down. (Ibid)

24 Nov

134. Developments at Army Groups H and B were not causing immediate concern, but Army Group G was in grave difficulties and in particular the situation of Nineteenth Army was steadily worsening. Close to the Swiss border the opponent's armoured convoys were continuing to pass through the German blocking line; 5000 German soldiers were pinned down and encircled in the fortifications of Strasbourg. The big gap which had sprung up in this area between First Army and Nineteenth Army, as well as the deep penetrations at the western front of Nineteenth Army could not be eliminated with the forces on hand. Most important in the circumstances was the creation of a new cohesive line of defence at the northern and western sectors and the maintenance of a firm line to the Swiss border in order to preclude a double envelopment of Nineteenth Army. O.B. West therefore gave orders to withdraw to new lines in the northern and western sectors and to make an attempt to stand fast in the South. To prevent a rapid influx of enemy forces into the Strasbourg area (between First and Nineteenth Army) Pz Lehr Div was directed to advance towards the Rhine-Marne Canal and to block the low ground at Saverne. As the sudden deterioration in the situation of Army Group G was at least partly due to command mistakes, the Führer demanded investigation by a court of inquiry. O.B. West requested that his own conduct in the matter be examined at the same time. (Ibid, 24 Nov)

25 Nov

135. Army Groups H and B reported their situation unchanged. In the area of Army Group G the attack of Pz Lehr Div had been halted by a barrage of anti-tank fire. As the attack in question was no longer offering any promise and Pz Lehr Div would be needed to carry out its assigned task in the Abwehrschlacht, Hitler demanded its withdrawal. - Army Group G had suggested a withdrawal on its left wing but as this would have meant a withdrawal from the area at the Swiss border, O.B. West objected strongly and demanded to the contrary that the forces in question be bolstered and the border area be defended by all means. - Fighting in the city of Metz had come to an end. (Ibid, 25 Nov)

26 Nov

136. In the areas of Army Groups H and B there were no significant developments. Army Group G reported local engagements at the front of First Army and continuing pressure on the western front of Nineteenth Army, where the opponent had followed the withdrawal movements and at several points overtaken the rear elements of the withdrawing forces. The German regiment nearest to the Swiss border had ceased to report and immediate investigation showed that it had been destroyed and that heavy Allied traffic was now moving unmolested along the highway the regiment was supposed to be blocking. Faced by the facts that the German western front was no longer anchored to the Swiss border and that the situation was beyond remedy, O.B. West asked OKW for permission to shorten the lines by withdrawals in that area. On receiving OKW's concurrence, O.B. West gave orders to withdraw the southern wing of the Army to the line Maasmünster-Sonthem-Mulhouse-Rhine near Hombourg (Ibid, 26 Nov). On the same day the Führer issued an order placing all armed forces participating in the defence of the Upper Rhine from the Bien-Wald (excl) to the Swiss border under the command of the Reichsführer SS, Heinrich Himmler (Der Westen, 234).* Hitler must have been seething with suspicions to charge a policeman with a difficult military task.

27 Nov

137. Mainly due to inclement weather the day was fairly quiet in all sectors. In the Vosges Mountains and further east Pz Lehr Div was serving as a screen behind which a new make-shift line was being established. On the western front of Nineteenth Army the opponent achieved some deep penetrations. (W.D. O.B. West, 27 Nov)

28 - 30 Nov

138. During the last three days of the month, French and American forces continued to nibble away at Alsace and Lorraine, and there was some pressure against the German Maas-bridgeheads and an increase in the pressure on the German lines east of Aachen. Considering the magnitude of the issue, however, and the size of the forces and command facilities in the theatre, it was clear - or should have been - that each side was engrossed in preparations for undertakings of vastly greater importance.

*Himmler assumed command on 30 Nov (Der Westen, 235)

139. While the German concentrations in the rear areas of Army Group B were getting ready for offensive action, the formations in the line managed to gain important time at the cost of comparatively unimportant ground. Army Group G, apart from receiving some small infusions of armour left to its own devices, was in more serious straits; at Merzig and Saarlautern in the North the opponent achieved deep penetrations, further south Nineteenth Army was forced to fall back in the northern and western sectors and faced the prospect of being cut off from its vital bridges and then surrounded and destroyed. (Ibid, 28-30 Nov)

1 Dec

140. In the greater Aachen area Allied forces striving to break through in northerly direction almost succeeded in doing so. In addition to the Allied forces actually committed in this area, there was now a clearly recognizable British concentration somewhat further to the North. And a German counter-attack north of Aachen had bogged down. All this gave the situation an ominous character, with Rundstedt noting in the war diary: "All the more important therefore is the continuation of the preparations for the Abwehrschlacht."* (C.R.S. - 75144/29, W.D. O.B. West, (A Gp D), Dec 44, 1 Dec) (981CW(D62))

2 Dec

141. The general quiet in the area of Army Group H was disturbed to some extent at 1700 hrs when WSW Arnhem the Needer-Rijn Dam (Pannordensche Kanal) was blasted in order to induce the Allied opponent to withdraw from his

*With the launching date for the Abwehrschlacht drawing closer, most decisions were taken in the light of the forthcoming operation. Information on the preparations for that operation will appear in a forthcoming summary of German information on the Ardennes offensive as a whole.

forward positions.* At the northern wing of Army Group B the British continued trying for a breakthrough on both sides of Limrich, while further south the right wing of Seventh Army succeeded in holding on to the exits of the Eifel area. At the same time the lightly held left wing of Seventh Army (66 Corps), where complete quiet had prevailed, came suddenly under heavy artillery fire. O.B. West was anxious to learn whether this was a mere holding manoeuvre or a sign of changing enemy dispositions and intentions. (Ibid, 2 Dec)

3 Dec

142. At the Waal front of Army Group H the inundations made the desired progress, but in the Maas sector the Germans were ejected from the Wanssum area and compelled to

* O.B. West's Intelligence Section had been puzzled by the apparently deceptive behavior of the Polish and Canadian formations, which were advertising their continued presence in the former locations but seemed to have moved to the area of the Nijmegen bridgehead. It was thought possible that the expected large attack of Second British Army might be preceded by a thrust from the Nijmegen bridgehead towards the North or from the area between Waal and Maas towards the East.

... For such a purpose these would possibly be available in the Nijmegen bridgehead: 1 Pol Armd Div, 33 Brit Armd Bde, as well as 50 and 51 Brit Inf Divs, whereas the attack from the area south of Nijmegen might be carried out by 1 Pol Armd Div, 4 Cdn Armd Div, 2 Cdn Armd Bde plus 2 and 3 Cdn Inf Divs. In this connection it was to be taken into account, however, that the commitment of Canadian forces to an operation involving high casualties was likely to be avoided at this time for political reason.

(O.B. West, Daily Intreps, op cit, Int No. 7875/44, 2 Dec 44) (981CW(D34c))

Next day 88 Corps reported gratefully:

... Due to the flooding of the area SW Arnhem between Needer-Rijn and Waal, a big enemy attack from the Nijmegen bridgehead is not to be expected in the near future.

(C.R.S. - 63289/4, W.D. 88 Corps, Vol "B" of Apps, Appx B 597, 88 Corps Ops No. 1158/44, Sitrep for 3 Dec 44, 2140 hrs 3 Dec 44)

evacuate the Venlo bridgehead during the night 3/4 Dec. In the greater Aachen area Army Group B was under pressure in the Wiern and Jülich areas, whilst southeast of Aachen American forces made a deep penetration at Vossenack. At the front of Army Group G First Army lost Saarlautern, where the bridges had been taken intact by the opponent, and recaptured Saarunion (11 Pz Div and Pz Lehr Div), while Nineteenth Army lost Schlettstadt and Rappoltswiler and was now reduced to a small bridgehead west of the Rhine and isolated from the forces of O.B. West. (Ibid, 3 Dec)

4 Dec

143. Army Groups H and B passed a quiet day while Army Group G suffered further reverses. First Army once again lost Saarunion, belated efforts to destroy the bridge at Saarlautern were of no avail, and the enemy made deep penetrations in the area south and southwest of Saarbrücken. In the wake of O.B. West's repeated criticisms on First Army's command performance, the Army commander was replaced by Gen Inf Hans von Obstfelder, previously in command of 86 Corps (since August 1943). In connection with the forthcoming offensive, 67 Corps Staff and 402 Volks Arty Corps, as well as 15 and 16 Volks Werfer Brigades were ordered transferred from A Gp H to A Gp B, while A Gp G was instructed to despatch 401 and 404 Volks Arty Corps to A Gp B, and reminded of the overdue transfer of 11 Pa Div and Pz Lehr Div to A Gp B. (Ibid, 4 Dec)

5 Dec

144. In the areas of A Gps H and B the situation remained unchanged on the whole. A Gp H received orders to despatch 244 and 902 Asslt Gun Bdes to A Gp B' (Ibid, 5 Dec). The appearance of 52 Brit Inf Div north of 's-Hertogenbosch and the presumed transfer of 4 Cdn Armd Div to 2 Cdn Corps south of Nijmegen was interpreted as a significant strengthening of "Army Group Montgomery's" eastern front (O.B. West, Daily Intreps, op cit, Int No. 7925/44, 5 Dec 44). At the front of A Gp G there was increasing danger of an American breakthrough from the Saarlautern and Saarbrücken areas towards the Weissenburg gap. In consequence O.B. West supported A Gp G's request for permission to retain 11 Pz Div and 404 Volks Arty Corps. OKW consented with the proviso that the formations would have to be handled in a manner assuring the possibility of their quick transfer in the event of orders to that effect. Pz Lehr Div (absorbing 559 Pz Jg Abt as an organic part) was reaching the entraining points for its movement to A Gp B. (W.D. O.B. West, 5 Dec)

6 Dec

145. At Army Groups H and B the day was uneventful. In connection with the preparations for the Abwehrrschlacht orders were issued for the transfer of 85 Inf Div from A Gp H to A Gp B. In the area of Army Group G the opponent crossed the river Saar at several places. O.B. West noted the heavy concentration of enemy forces in the area SW and S of Saarbrücken. Some formations previously committed against Nineteenth Army seemed now to be at the front of First Army. Relatively speaking the operations of Nineteenth Army were now of limited importance. (Ibid, 6 Dec)

7 Dec

146. In the Nijmegen-Roermond sector Second British Army and First Canadian Army were ready and waiting. The focal points of Allied operations were still in the general areas of Aachen and Saarbrücken. Between these areas the Allied front was lightly held and quiet. Most critical was the situation at the Saar bridgeheads. O.B. West estimated the total combat value of First Army as $3\frac{1}{2}$ inf divs and $1\frac{1}{2}$ armd divs at best. They were opposed by eleven infantry divisions and four armoured divisions with approximately 1000 - 1100 tanks. The most urgent task was the defence of the Weissenburg gap. In view of O.B. West's poor opinion of First Army's command performance, 89 Corps (Gen Inf Gustaf Hühne), with 361, 245 and 256 Inf Divs was designated as Group Hühne, placed directly under A Gp G and charged with the defence of the Weissenburg area. First Army retained command over 82 Corps, 13 SS Corps and 90 Corps. (Ibid, 7 Dec)

8 Dec

147. A Gp H reported no events of consequence. A Gp B reported the resumption of enemy attacks at the front of Fifteenth Army and the right wing of Seventh Army; the bridgehead at Jülich had to be vacated. A Gp G reported localized fighting at the Saar bridgeheads. In connection with the preparations for the Abwehrrschlacht 79 VGD was moving from the interior of Germany to the area of A Gp B. 6 Para Div was directed to code some of its vehicles and weapons to 5 Para Div. (Ibid, 8 Dec)

9 Dec

148. At the centre of First Parachute Army's front, Corps Command Feldt (Gen Cav Kurt Feldt) was inserted as an additional command staff. Army Groups H and B reported no fighting of consequence. Concern was caused by the fact that

troop movements and other traffic in connection with the Abwehrschlacht were greatly impeded by the icy condition of the roads in the Eifel area. A Gp G reported that enemy formations previously at the northern front of Nineteenth Army had been relieved and were now poised to participate in the thrust to the Palatinate. All told the opponent now disposed of 14 inf divs and 5 armd divs for that purpose. The situation of Group Höhne was becoming critical, and there were no formations that could be made available in support of the Group. An even more acute situation existed in the Hagenau area, where American forces outnumbered German forces by ten to one. (Ibid, 9 Dec)

10 Dec

149. Following several days of preparatory action, in the area of A Gp B the enemy resumed his large-scale attacks in the greater Aachen area and obtained a penetration at Langerwehe. Continuation of the powerful attacks west of Düren and presumably also on both sides of Jülich was to be expected. The renewal of serious fighting in the Aachen area and the commencement of enemy attacks in the direction of the Westwall through the Weissenburg gap were making it imperative to accelerate preparations for the Abwehrschlacht lest enemy thrusts to the Cologne area or the Palatinate deprive it of its logical foundation. Attempts to speed-up preparations were greatly hampered, however, by systematic Allied air attacks on traffic installations. The movements of at least ten formations were being delayed by the troops having to detrain farther east than planned, which lengthened their approach marches by 80-100 km. In the area of A Gp G, Group Höhne was under growing pressure. At the extreme southern end of the Army Group front, Hagenau was lost. (Ibid, 10 Dec)

11 Dec

150. Army Group B was under considerable pressure in the Düren area; Army Group G was expecting the early beginning of large-scale attacks. There were new penetrations and the enemy was getting closer to the Westwall. In the war diary of O.B. West the following was entered:

The danger of an operative break-through into the Palatinate is therefore moving ever more into the realm of the possible. This makes it all the more important to complete the preparations for the Abwehrschlacht with the utmost dispatch. ...The preparations must be completed before the enemy gains further decisive successes at the two focal points. ...Concerning all these problems [there is an] active exchange of ideas with OKW and the Führer in person. ...

All higher commanders (div and up) participating in the forthcoming operation have been ordered to report to the Führer (first half on 11 Dec, second half on 12 Dec).
(Ibid, 11 Dec)

12 Dec

151. Army Group B reported continuing heavy fighting at the Düren bridgehead. Fighting was spreading to the right wing of Seventh Army. A Gp G reported further transfers of enemy forces from the northern front of Nineteenth Army to the Hagenau area. General uneasiness was caused by Allied air attacks that were crippling German telephone and teleprint communications. During the afternoon O.B. West was out of touch with every one of his Army Groups. In the war diary the following was recorded:

The danger of an enemy breakthrough in the greater Aachen area, as well as through the Weissenburg Gap to the Palatinate is growing by the hour.... The situation reports are stressing the possibility of an attack against the right wing of the Parachute Army, the certainty of continuing attacks at the Rur and, above all, the very tense situation in the Weissenburg area, where the threat to the Palatinate has been increased by strong attacks from the Saarlautern area. No doubt the situation has become even more acute.
(Ibid, 12 Dec)

13 Dec

152. Due to widespread fogs, Allied air activity was quite limited. There were no major developments at the fronts; southeast of Weissenburg the German forces were forced to fall back further towards Weissenburg. (Ibid, 13 Dec)

SITUATION ON THE EVE OF THE ARDENNES OFFENSIVE

(14-16 Dec)

14 Dec

153. Seen from the German side the race for time was now in its most critical stage. In the area of A Gp B all signs were pointing to an imminent major attack, in the area of A Gp G heavy attacks on Weissenburg and Lauterburg were to be expected

for 15 Dec or 16 Dec at the latest. In the meantime the preparations for the offensive had been progressing well; the panzer divisions were almost complete in their assembly areas; it would be possible to launch the operation on 16 Dec. Time was of the essence; a prior Allied thrust into the Palatinate would place the entire operation in question; O.B. West advised strongly against any possible postponement of the launching. (Ibid, 14 Dec)

15 Dec

154. Preparations for the attack were making further progress. During the night 14/15 Dec the planned reliefs and movements had been carried out. The fuel situation was meeting expectations, the indispensable requirements for the attack had been met. A Gp B asked for a further postponement, but O.B. West objected strongly on the grounds that the situation on the left wing of A Gp G demanded the earliest possible beginning of the attack. Moreover, with the bulk of the attack formations in the assembly areas, the secrecy of the operation was no longer vouchsafed, particularly so as the enemy was reconnoitring the Eifel area with photo-flashbombs. The commitment of strong enemy forces east of Aachen was of advantage to the Germans, but the renewed enemy gains on the left wing of A Gp G were a source of danger. C. of S. O B. West was present at the Führer's situation conference and reported in that sense. At 1530 hrs word was received over the telephone from the Führer's Headquarters: "No change, D Day 16 Dec 44" O.B. West noted: "Therewith all is decided, a further change is no longer possible." (Ibid, 15 Dec)

16 Dec

155. At 0535 hrs, after ten minutes of artillery preparation, Sixth Panzer Army, Fifth Panzer Army and the participating elements of Seventh Army launched the big attack. (Ibid, 16 Dec) This operation has become known as the Battle of the Ardennes. It was undertaken against forbidding odds at a time when the outcome of the war was a foregone conclusion. Whatever discomfort it caused on the Allied side was the price that had to be paid for the Allied decisions in September to refrain from cutting off Fifteenth Army in the North, Nineteenth Army in the South and delivering a swift powerful single blow against the industrial heart of Germany.

156. Due to the extremely severe security regulations surrounding everything even remotely connected with the planning and preparations for the Ardennes Offensive, the source materials used for the present report carry very little information on that subject. In the more recent past, however, a comprehensive first hand story of Hitler's plans and preparations has come to hand in the form of: O.C.M.H., F.S.B., MS # A-862, Schramm, The Preparations for the German Offensive in the Ardennes, Sep - 16 Dec 44, German and English texts, (98oSOM(D273)). A synopsis of this detailed presentation is being prepared by Historical Section (G.S.).

157. The present report has been prepared by
Capt A.G. Steiger, Historical Section (G.S.)

A. G. Steiger, Capt.

for (C. P. Stacey) Colonel
Director
Historical Section (G.S.)

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BUSCH, Ernst, Field Marshal

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CHOLTITZ, Dietrich von, Gen Inf, Armed Forces Cmdr Paris

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CHRISTIANSEN, Karl Friedrich, General German Air Force,
Armed Forces Cmdr Netherlands

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DIETRICH, Sepp, SS Col Gen,
Cmdr Fifth Panzer Army (9 Aug - 10 Sep 44)
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KEITEL, Wilhelm, Field Marshal, Chief OKW

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KESSELRING, Albert, Field Marshal, O.B. Southwest

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KLUGE, Günther von, Field Marshal, O.B. West
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Appendix "A"
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Principal Appointments in the West

(Autumn 1944)

Ref: para 7

Appendix "B"
to H.S. Report No. 77

O.B. West

Order of Battle

15 Aug 44

981.045(D1)

Ref: para 10

Appendix "C"
to H.S. Report No. 77

Führer Order
to hold or destroy Paris

23 Aug 44

981AGpB(D2)

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Appendix "D"
to H.S. Report No. 77

Führer Order

of

25 Sep 44

981AGpB(D2)

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Appendix "F"
to H/S Report No. 77

OKW/WFSt

Directive to O.B. West

29 Oct 44

981HCN(D16)

Ref: para 102

PRINCIPAL APPOINTMENTS IN THE WEST

(for period under review)

O.B. WEST (until 8 Nov 44 also known as A Gp D)

3 Jul 44 - 17 Aug 44 GFM Guenther von Kluge
17 Aug 44 - 4 Sep 44 GFM Walter Model
4 Sep 44 - 10 Mar 45 GFM Gerd von Rundstedt

ARMY GROUPS

Army Group B

31 Dec 43* - 17 Aug 44 GFM Erwin Rommel
17 Aug 44 - 17 Apr 45 GFM Walter Model

Army Group G

10 May 44 - 21 Sep 44 Col Gen Johannes Blaskowitz
21 Sep 44 - 23 Dec 44 Gen Pz Tps Hermann Balok

Army Group Studen (prov)

31 Oct 44 - 10 Nov 44 Col Gen Kurt Student

Army Group H

10 Nov 44 - 28 Jan 45 Col Gen Kurt Student

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First Army

2 Jun 44 - 6 Sep 44 Gen Inf Kurt von der Chevallerie
6 Sep 44 - 29 Oct 44 Gen Pz Tps Otto von Knobelsdorff
29 Oct 44 - 1 Dec 44 Gen Inf Kurt von Tippelskirch
1 Dec 44 - 22 Mar 45 Gen Inf Hans von Obstfelder

* Date on which upgraded from a working staff to command (under O.B. West): 88 Corps (Netherlands), Fifteenth Army and Seventh Army.

Seventh Army

29 Jun 44 - 23 Aug 44 SS Gen Paul Hausser
24 Aug 44 - 31 Aug 44 Gen Pz Tps Heinrich Eberbach
31 Aug 44 - 19 Feb 45 Gen Pz Tps Erich Brandenberger

Fifteenth Army

15 Aug 43 - 23 Aug 44 Col Gen Hans von Salmuth
23 Aug 44 - 17 Apr 45 Gen Inf Gustav von Zangen

Nineteenth Army

29 Jun 44 - 15 Dec 44 Gen Inf Friedrich Wiese

Fifth Panzer Army

9 Aug 44 - 10 Sep 44 SS Col Gen Sepp Dietrich
10 Sep 44 - Early 1945 Gen Pz Tps Hasso-Eccard von Manteuffel

Sixth Panzer Army

13 Sep 44 - May 1945 SS Col Gen Sepp Dietrich

First Parachute Army

4 Sep 44 - 31 Oct 44 Col Gen Kurt Student
31 Oct 44 - 28 Mar 45 Gen Para Tps Alfred Schlemm

Armed Forces Commander Netherlands

1 Sep 44 - 26 Jan 45 Gen G.A.F. Karl Friedrich
Christiansen

ARMED FORCES HIGH COMMAND

U K W

PERIODICAL SCHEMATIC
ORDERS OF BATTLE
GERMAN ARMY

O B WEST SECTION of CHART for

15 AUG 44

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LEGEND :

- * Lw Pd
- ** in Aufst
- *** s. b. V.
- **** Ma
- x in Umgl
- xx in Antrsp
- xxx in Abtrsp
- xxxx in Auffr
- + Freiwilligen Stamm
Division

- : German Air Force Field
- : in process of formation
- : for Special Employment
- : main body
- : in process of reorganisation
- : on way (coming)
- : on way (going)
- : in process of rehabilitation
- : Volunteer Parent Div (East Legion)

O B WEST SECTION of CHART
as on 14 Aug 44

Ta

Geheime Kommandosache

**Geheime
Nur Offiziere!**

HR Elite

Stab. d. H. d. B., Ia

AKK 1,

Zs. AKK 2,

AKK 3

Zusatz 1) O.B. West, Ia Nr. 100/44 g. H. d. B. v. H. d. B.

2) O.B. West/Op (II) Nr. 11000/44 g. H. d. B. v. H. d. B.

Genld Bezug 2) hat der Führer befohlen:

Die Verteidigung des Festungsbunkers Paris ist von entscheidender militärischer und politischer Bedeutung. Sein Verlust weist die gesamte Westfront gefährd. der Seine auf und räumt uns die Basis für den Vormarsch gegen England.

In der Geschichte bedeutet der Verlust von Paris aber auch bisher immer den Fall von ganz Frankreich.

Der Führer wiederholt daher seinen Befehl, daß Paris im Sprungfeld verbleibe der Stadt verteidigt werden muß und verweist dazu auf die für O.B. West angeforderten Verordnungen.

Innerhalb der Stadt sind gegen erste Anzeichen von Angriffen mit schärfsten Mitteln eingeschritten worden, z.B. Sprengung von Mauerblöcken, öffentliche Exekutionen der Missetäter, Evakuierung des betroffenen Stadtteils, da hierdurch eine weitere Ausbreitung zu vermeiden verhängt wird.

Die Seine-Brücken sind zur Sprengung vorbereitet. Paris darf nicht eher zur als Ertränkung in die Hand des Feindes fallen!

O.B. West
Ia Nr. 100/44 g. H. d. B. v. H. d. B.

Ia Nr. 100/44 g. H. d. B. v. H. d. B.

Führer Order of 25 Sep 44

(Translation)

The enemy has transferred the main weight of his attacks to the Dutch area and the forefield of the Northern Vosges. In the South the available forces have been committed on the whole, but in England he has still large formations - including airborne divisions - to exploit and expand success in Southern Holland by further landings from the air and from the sea in western and northern Holland, or possibly even in Germany between Wilhelmshaven and Emden.

The centre of gravity of our counter-measures must therefore be transferred to the northern area of the western front, to hold the Netherlands and make possible the completion of the West Wall extension, thereby protecting the Ruhr area.

My orders are:

1. The enemy in the Arnhem - Nijmegen area is to be destroyed by concentric attack. The focal point of this attack must be between Waal and Maas in order to take the Nijmegen-Grave road, thereby preventing a further reinforcing of the enemy north of the Maas.
2. The southern front of Fifteenth Army and the western front of First Parachute Army must be held at present lines. The enemy bridgehead across the canal south of Helmond is to be eliminated or securely sealed-off at least.
3. The gap at the inner wings of Fifteenth Army and First Parachute Army at Veghel is to be closed by means of a concentric attack in order to meet the preliminary requirement for the destruction of the enemy north of the Maas.
4. Army Group G will stand fast forward of the Vosges position thereby winning by fighting the time required for the completion of that position as well as of the Vosges Battle-position. The long and unprepared triangle of the Western position from south of Metz via Falkenberg, Püttlingen to Blamont is completely unsuitable for defence. In order to be able to conduct mobile operations in the area Duss - Nomeny - Luneville all panzer and panzer grenadier divisions as well as the panzer brigades presently under the Army Group are to remain with it. The assembly of a mobile reserve also behind the Nineteenth Army is necessary (sic).
5. For the attack of First Parachute Army between Waal and Maas, 108 Pz Bde, 741 Hy A Tk Bn and 506 Tiger Bn are to be moved-in, furthermore also 116 and 9 Pz Divs, the latter two to be relieved by Fortress Bns and, if necessary, by moving-in 246 Inf Div.

6. The Chief of Army Equipment and Commander of the Replacement Training Army has been instructed to move strong forces into the area Wilhelmshaven - Leeuwarden - Apeldoorn - Rheine. Orders concerning this and further work on the western Position and the West Wall will follow.
7. Operational Intentions and Dispositions are to be reported.

Adolf Hitler

Abschrift.

HNK Tüpfel

HR-Blitz Fernschreiben vom 25.9. 05.00 Uhr

Bezug Adolf Hitler, Chef/Oy. Nr. 773518 g.Kdes. Chef. v. 25.9.

Mit Bezug hat der Führer befohlen:

Der Feind hat den Schwerpunkt seiner Angriffe in den holländischen Raum und in das Vorfeld der Hart-Vogesen verlegt. Während er in Süden die vorhandenen Kräfte in wesentlichen in den Kampf geworfen hat, stehen ihm in England noch starke Verbände nach Luftlande-Divisionen zur Verfügung. Um einen Erfolg der Kämpfe in Südholland durch weitere Landungen aus der Luft und zur See in west- oder nordholländischen Raum, vielleicht sogar auf deutsches Gebiet zwischen Wilhelmshaven und Brest, auszunutzen und auszuweiten.

Der Schwerpunkt unserer Gegenmaßnahmen muß daher in den Nordraum der Westfront verlegt werden, um Holland zu behaupten, den Ansehen des Westwallen Westwallen zu ermöglichen und dadurch das Ruhrgebiet zu sichern.

Dazu befehle ich:

- 1.) Der Feind in dem Raum Arnheim - Nijmegen ist durch konzentrischen Angriff zu verdrängen. Der Schwerpunkt dieses Angriffs ist in den Raum zwischen Saal und Maas zu legen, um die Straße Nijmegen - Grave zu gewinnen und dadurch eine weitere Verstärkung des Feindes nach Nordl. ins Maas zu unterbinden.
- 2.) Die Westfront der 15. Armee und die Westfront der 1. Fallsch. Armee sollen in der jetzigen Linie zu halten. Der feindliche Brückenkopf über den Kanal südlich Holland muß beseitigt, zumindest sicher abgeriegelt werden.
- 3.) Die Lücke an den inneren Flügeln der 1. Armee und der 1. Fallsch. Armee bei Veghel ist durch konzentrischen Angriff wieder zu schließen und damit die Voraussetzung für die Vernichtung des Feindes nördlich der Maas zu schaffen.
- 4.) Die Heeresgruppe G hat sich vorwärts der Vogesen-Stellung zu konzentrieren und dadurch den Zeitgewinn für den Ausbau dieser Stellung und der Vogesen-Kampfstellung zu erkämpfen. Das lange und nicht ausgebaute Dreieck der Weststellung von südlich Metz über Falkenberg, Füllingen nach Metz ist für die Verteidigung völlig ungeeignet. Um den Kampf im Raum Duno - Bony - Lamville beweglich führen zu können, sind der Heeresgruppe alle ihr n. St. unterstellten Panzer- und Gren. Divn., sowie die Pz. Brigaden zu belassen. Die Bereitstellung einer beweglichen Eingreifreserve auch hinter der 19. Armee ist nötig.
- 5.) In Verbänden ist zu dem Angriff der 1. Fallsch. Armee zwischen Saal und Maas die Pz. Orig. 108, die schw. Pz. Jg. Abt. 741 und die Tiger-Abt. 506, ferner die 116. und 9. Pz. Div. heranzuziehen, letztere beide unter Ablösung der Festungs- Stle. und wenn nötig, auch noch durch Zuführung der 246. I. D..
- 6.) Chef H Rüst u. BdB hat Auftrag, in den Raum Wilhelmshaven - Leeuwarden - Apeldoorn - Rheine möglichst starke Kräfte zu verlegen. Befehle darüber und über den weiteren Ausbau der Weststellungen und des Westwalls folgen.
- 7.) Operationsabsichten und Kräfteverteilung sind zu melden.

Adolf Hitler."

ARMED FORCES HIGH COMMAND

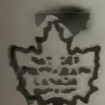
PERIODICAL SCHEMATIC ORDERS OF BATTLE OF GERMAN ARMIES.

O. B. WEST-(A GP D)
SECTION OF CHART.

DIVISIONS	CORPS	ARMIES	ARMY GROUPS
64 [†] , 70 [†] , 85 [†] , Battle Gp 346 [†] , 711 [†] , 719 [†]	67	15	B 319 [†] -----
245 [†] ; 59 [†] ,	88		
Battle Group 712 [†] H.Q. 344	89		
363 V.Gr.	12 SS	I PARA Div. No. 526	3 Para 5 " 5 " undergoing rehabilitation
9 Pz, Battle Group 9 SS Pz, Battle Group 10 SS Pz	2 SS PZ		
Div. No. 406 ^{XX} , Battle Group 84, Div No.100 ^{XX}	2 PARA		
Battle Group Walter (107 Pz Bde), Div.No. 180, Div. No. 176 ^{XX}	86		
183 V.Gr, Remts 49 [†] , 116 Pz, 108 Pz Bde	1 SS PZ	7 3 Pz Gren (coming)	256 V.Gr. 361 V.Gr.
246 V.Gr, 12 V.Gr.	81		
275 [†] , 89, Battle Group 347 [†]	74		
Remts 1 SS Pz, Remts 12 SS Pz, Div.No.172 ^{XX} , Battle Group 2 SS Pz, Battle Group 2 Pz	66	I 5 PZ	D simultaneously OB WEST
Remts 353, 36 V.Gr [†]	80		
Remts 265 [†]	75		
416 [†] , 19 V.Gr, 462	82	19	G 30 SS Gren Div (Russian No. 1)
17 SS Pz Gr, Remts 553 V.Gr, 559 V.Gr, 48	15 SS		
11 Pz, 15 Pz Gr	58 PZ		
21 Pz, 16 V.Gr [†]	47 PZ	85 for special employment.	O K W
716 [†] , 198 [†]	64		
338 [†]	4 LW FD#		
159, 189, 106 Pz Bde			

† static, † without Asslt Gun Bn / L^v Fd - German Air Force Field V.Gr. - Volks Grenadier Remts - Remnants

XX Divisions with the prefix "No." were "Heimatdivisionen" (i.e. home divisions, not yet fully manned, trained or equipped)



OKW/WFSt Directive to O.B. West

(29 Oct 44)

1. The Führer expects Fifteenth Army to stand fast with all its power in the present main line of resistance along the line Bergen op Zoom - Breda - 's-Hertogenbosch - south of the Maas.
2. Should new and deep penetrations resulting from further enemy attacks place elements of the forces in danger of being destroyed, the Fifteenth Army would then have to hold on at least in large bridgeheads south of the Maas. In that case the right wing of the Army would have to wheel around towards the West to block the crossings to the Scheldt islands and thus prevent a breaking-up of the Scheldt defences from the East.
3. The defence of the Scheldt Estuary depends on the heavy batteries on the island of Walcheren. Therefore this island is to be defended fanatically. Should in the long run 70 Inf Div no longer be able to hold on to South Beveland, the forces committed there must be withdrawn to North Beveland and Walcheren. After the last heavy batteries of the Breskens bridgehead had been lost, that bridgehead was of little further value for the blocking of the Scheldt Estuary. It is to be reported whether at this time there are still well founded prospects of transferring substantial elements of 64 Inf Div to Walcheren. If not, 64 Inf Div in the bridgehead will also have to stand fast to the last.
4. The conduct of the operations of Fifteenth and First Parachute Armies is to be coordinated forthwith under Col Gen Student. The arrival of the Army Group headquarters staff is not to be waited for. For the time being the most necessary elements of the command apparatus are to be placed at the disposal of Col Gen Student by the Armed Forces Commander Netherlands, Fifteenth Army and First Parachute Army.
5. In order to make possible the speedy replacement of the casualties suffered by Fifteenth Army in its hard struggle, the activation of the 8th, 9th and 10th Parachute Divisions is to be renounced for the present. The units and transfer battalions (including those still in the Home Defence Area) which have been organized for these divisions, are to be despatched to the Fifteenth Army by the Inspector General of the Parachute Army as required by Col Gen Student. Numerical strength and location of the units are to be reported forthwith to Col Gen Student, O.B. West and OKW.

3rd, 5th, 6th and 7th Parachute Divisions, including the replacements earmarked for them, will not be drawn upon.

6. To strengthen Fifteenth Army with regard to materiel, beginning on 30 Oct seventeen assault howitzers will be despatched to the Army. Additional heavy materiel and weapons for Fifteenth Army are to be drawn from Army Group B's own stocks. Gaps thereby created in the materiel of other formations will be filled by means of higher allocations in November. The numbers of weapons transferred are to be reported.

OKW/WFSt/Ops No. 773955/44, Top Secret

(Note: The foregoing is a translation of the text of OKW signal OKW/WFSt/Ops No. 773955/44, as passed on by the Operations Section of the Naval Operations Staff to the other section of that staff in the form of a certified copy bearing the number 1.Sk1.B. No. 3416/44, Top Secret, 29 Oct 44.)

Geheime Kommandoabsicht!

Abschrift.

Cheffache!
Nur durch Offizier!

1. Skl. B. Nr. 3416/44 gldos. Chefs.
vom 29.10.44

Fernschreiben: mit L.H.

1. Skl. B. Nr. 3416/44 gldos. Chefs.
vom 29.10.44
Ob. West
Off. / Lt. Hist.
Inspekteur d. Fallsch. Armees
Off. / 1. Skl.
Genst. d. H. / Cp
Genst. d. H. / Org

gldos. Chefs. - Nur durch Offizier!

- 1.) Führer erwartet, daß 15. Armee sich mit allen Kräften in derzeitiger ML in Linie Bergen Op Zoom - Breda - S'Hertogenbosch - südlich der Maas hält.
- 2.) Sollten im Verlauf der weiteren feindlichen Angriffe erneute und tiefe Einbrüche entstehen, so daß die Gefahr einer Vernichtung von Teilkraften eintritt, so hat die 15. Armee wenigstens große Brückenköpfe südlich der Maas zu halten. Der rechte Flügel der Armee muß dann nach Westen einschwenkend die Übergänge zu den Scheldeinseln sperren, um ein Auftreten der Schelde-Verteidigung von Osten her zu verhindern.
- 3.) Die Verteidigung der Schelde-Mündung beruht auf den schweren Batterien der Insel Walcheren. Diese Insel ist daher mit allen Kräften fanatisch zu verteidigen. Sollte es der 70. Inf. Div. auf die Dauer nicht mehr gelingen, sich auf Südbeveland zu behaupten, so müssen die dort eingesetzten Kräfte auf Nord-Beveland und Walcheren zurückgenommen werden. Nachdem die letzten schweren Batterien des Brückenkopfes erschossen verloren gingen, hat der Brückenkopf für die Sperrung der Schelde-Mündung nurmehr geringen Wert. Es ist zu melden, ob die begründete Aussicht besteht, namhafte Teile der 64. Inf. Div. jetzt noch nach Walcheren zu überführen. Wenn nicht, hat sich auch die 64. Inf. Div. bis zur letzten in ihrem Brückenkopf zu behaupten.
- 4.) Die Führung des Kampfes der 15. und 1. Fallsch. Armeen ist bereits jetzt einheitlich unter Generaloberst Student zusammenzufassen. Eintreffen des Stabes Heeresgruppe E ist nicht abzuwarten. Die notwendigsten Führungsorgane sind Gen. Ob. Student aus der 4. B. Niederlande, 10K 15 und Fallsch. 10K 18 zunächst zur Verfügung zu stellen.
- 5.) Um rasch die Verluste der schwer ziehenden 15. Armee aufzufüllen zu können, wird zunächst auf die Aufstellung der 8., 9., u. 10. Fallsch. Jg. Div. verzichtet. Die für sie jetzt schon bereitgestellten Truppenteile, Marschbattalione (einschließlich der im Heimatkriegsgebiet beforderten usw.) sind durch Insp. d. Fallsch. Armee der 15. Armee nach näherer Anforderung des Gen. Ob. Student auszuführen. Zahl der verfügbaren Kräfte und Bereitstellungsorte sind sofort an Gen. Ob. Student Ob. West und Off. zu melden.
3., 5., 6. und 7. Fallsch. Jg. Div. einschließlich der für sie vorgesehenen Ersatzes dürfen nicht angegriffen werden.
- 6.) Zur materiellen Unterstützung werden 10K 15 ab 30.10. 17 Sturm-Maubitsen angeführt. Weiteres schweres Material und Waffen für die 15. Armee sind den eigenen Beständen der H. Gr. B. zu entnehmen. Dadurch bei anderen Verbänden der H. Gr. entstehende Lücken werden durch erhöhte Zuweisung im November wieder aufzufüllt. Zahl der abgegebenen Waffen ist zu melden.

Off. / West / Op Nr. 77 3955/44 gldos. Chefs.

Verteiler:

- Prif 1:.....Ib
- 2:.....If
- 3:.....Adm. z. b. Y.
- 4:.....I op

Für die Richtigkeit:

[Handwritten Signature]

(Verfügung bei I West)

Oberleutnant AMD.