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ARMOR UNDER ADVERSE CONDITIONS

(2nd AND 3rd ARMORED DIVISIONS IN THE ARDENNES CAMPAIGN)

16 December 1944 to 16 January 1945

A RESEARCH REPORT PREPARED

BY

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THE ARMORED SCHOOL

1948 - 1949

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JUNE 1949

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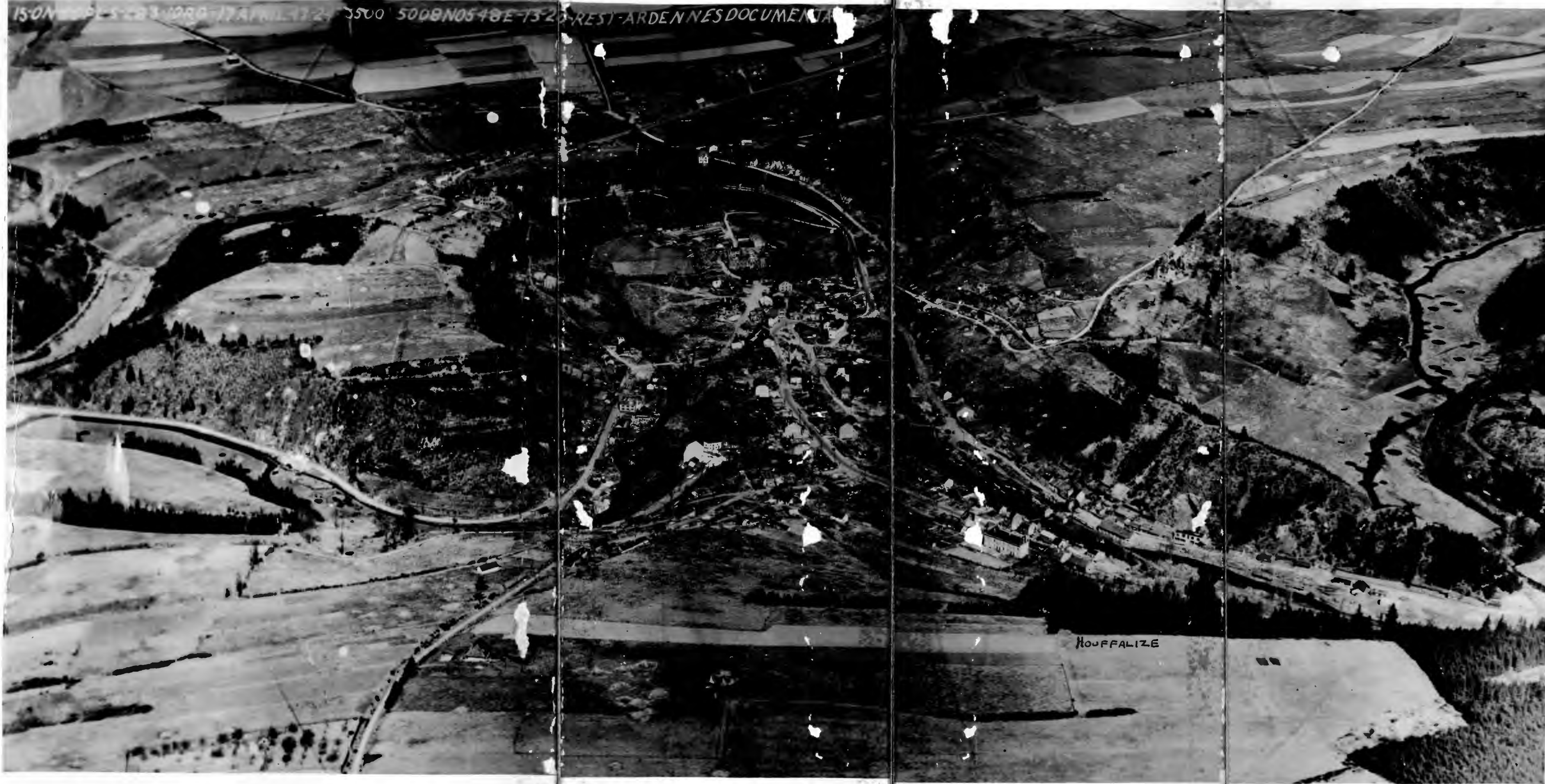


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HOUFFALIZE



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PREFACE

In the study of facts surrounding the employment of two of the United States Armored Divisions which fought in the ARDENNES Campaign, two circumstances stand out clearly. These are the severity of weather conditions and the intensity of confusion which existed throughout the campaign.

The confusion which existed stemmed from the complete surprise of the German attack. It grew with the advance of the enemy forces and with the panic that this advance initially instilled in our own troops. It shook the self-confidence of commanders and, even after front lines were stabilized and the offensive resumed, made their actions cautious.

The "worst winter in years" placed a tremendous hardship on men and machines and took heavy toll in casualties. The weather itself required a fight for survival on the part of each soldier. The grim aspect of this fight for survival must be considered in evaluating the leadership required to move these troops against the enemy.

Full credit is due to each unit that participated in this bitter campaign and, the pages that follow, though dealing entirely with armored divisions, are not intended to slight in any way the part played by the many other divisions and separate units.

This study deals with the activities of two armored divisions. Because of this scope, it is impractical to relate the important and often heroic actions of many individuals and small units. Rather,

these chapters must deal with units of battalion and larger size. There exists no minimization of the efforts of individuals and small unit activities, for these indeed were the basis of the brief minute of history to be discussed.

The entire committee takes this opportunity to express its deep appreciation to Mrs. Harold S. Walker, Jr. Much valuable assistance was given, by Mrs. Walker, in the preparation of the sketches which accompany this report.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Early in the month of December 1944 two of the greatest armies the world has ever seen were facing each other in northern Europe. One army, the German, was tired, beaten back, but as yet undefeated. The other, the American First Army, had enjoyed great success on the continent and was somewhat overconfident. The result of this situation was the greatest single battle fought by American troops in World War II, the Ardennes Campaign. During this battle three German Armies, two of which were Panzer, penetrated the sector of the First U S Army in the region of Luxembourg and Belgium, and only after over a month of the bitterest fighting were thrown back to a line approximating that from which they had started.

A total of 56 divisions, 29 United States and 27 German, participated in this battle. Among these 29 American divisions were 10 Armored divisions, as well as numerous separate tank battalions. As a mute testimony of the savage fighting, 85,000 casualties were suffered on each side before the battle ended.

This study deals with four major features of armored division employment during the Ardennes Campaign. These features are; first, piecemeal versus coordinated employment of the armored division; second deficiencies of organization and equipment; third, the effect of the type of mission assigned by higher headquarters on the employment of the armored division; and fourth, operations during an unusually obscure combat situation.

Of the 29 U S divisions engaged in this action, only two will be covered in detail in this study. These are the 2nd and 3rd Armored

Divisions. The tactical employment of these units will be developed to portray the use of armor on the division level during operations under extremely obscure circumstances, over the difficult, rugged terrain of the northern Ardennes sector, and in severe winter weather.

The German Ardennes offensive began early on the morning of 16 December 1944, splitting the American line on a 50 mile front. This gap in the line was finally closed one month later on 16 January, 1945, at the little Belgian town of HOUFFALIZE. During this period the action of the 2nd and 3rd Armored Divisions took place in three phases. The first phase was the action of the 3rd Armored Division during 18-31 December 1944; the second was the employment of the 2nd Armored Division during 21-31 December 1944, and the third phase was the action of 1-16 January 1945 in which both divisions, under the U S VII Corps, attacked abreast to make a juncture with troops of the U S Third Army advancing from the south.

The extreme winter weather was superimposed upon the entire action with increasing severity as the battle progressed. These winter conditions seriously affected the efforts of both Allied and German forces - sometimes favorably and sometimes adversely. To the individual soldier, however, the weather always was a miserable handicap that gradually sapped his endurance and efficiency.

A better understanding of the events that took place in the Ardennes on the northern flank of the German Counteroffensive may be gained from a knowledge of how the Ardennes sector was related to the overall situation along the front of western Europe.

On 15 December 1944 the Allied forces were disposed generally north and south along the western border of Germany. These troops

had landed in Normandy, France the previous June, had driven eastward to the German border by early September, had stopped until mid-November for a build-up of supplies, and had then attacked into Germany with the mission of reaching the RHINE River along the entire front. General Dwight D. Eisenhower's forces met heavy resistance, made slow progress, and were just launching a renewed drive when the German Ardennes counterattack began. At this time the Allied forces were disposed in three army groups, the 21st Army Group on the north, the 12th Army Group in the center, and the 6th Army Group on the southern flank of the line.

In the center of this effort, as the interior army of General Omar Bradley's 12th Army Group, the First U S Army was disposed generally along the Siegfried Line (see Fig. 1). At the moment, the major strength of the army was heavily engaged to the north in the HURTGEN Forest in an attempt to seize the vital ROER River dams. Such was the character of the terrain and opposition that these troops were concentrated on a comparatively narrow front in the sector of the U S V Corps, then charged with the immediate mission of securing the dams.

South of V Corps, and occupying over half of the 125-mile First Army front, was the VIII Corps, commanded by Major General Troy H. Middleton. This Corps, disposed thinly along an 80-mile front that wound through the forested hills of Belgium and Luxembourg, enjoyed comparative inactivity. As a result, this portion of the front was used as an area for resting battle-weary divisions, and for indoctrinating unseasoned units to foxhole life in front of the Siegfried Line.

It was into this broad sector, lightly held by three infantry divisions, that the three German Armies launched their winter offensive before daylight on 16 December 1944. This German effort, which

fortunately for the Allied cause was never to accomplish its capabilities, had been conceived many months earlier by Adolph Hitler. During July and August 1944, while bedridden with injuries received in an attempted assassination, he planned a counterblow at the Allied forces threatening Germany. This was to be his means of keeping the support of the German people and of regaining the initiative lost to the Allies by their successful landings in Normandy.

The plan, erroneously referred to as the "Rundstedt Offensive"², and refined by the German high command, was:

To consist of an armored dash through the difficult country of the Ardennes with the object of capturing the bridges on the MEUSE River between NAMUR and LIEGE. Once this spurt of over 50 miles had been completed, and bridgeheads on the west bank of the MEUSE secured, the panzer divisions would continue their advance in a north-westerly direction and seize the cities of BRUSSELS and ANTWERP. By this bold maneuver it was hoped to deprive the Allies of their chief supply base at ANTWERP, and at the same time, trap the entire British and Canadian forces of Field Marshal Montgomery's 21st Army Group, then lining the banks of the MEUSE³.

General Field Marshal Gerd von Rundstedt, Commander in Chief, German Forces in the West, thought so little of the plan's chance of success that he refused to participate. Thus Field Marshal Walter Model actually implemented the plan, and under his command three German armies trained and assembled for the attack. The effectiveness of Model's divisions varied greatly due to the personnel. Some units were composed of highly trained officer and enlisted cadres of fanatical young SS troopers. Others contained converted navy and air force personnel, and some were made up of boys and old men brought into service by the "final" draft of the dregs of German manpower. Divisions were reorganized or reconstituted at about 85% of war tables of organization, and equipment was issued on a similar basis, actual vehicle strength being approximately 60% of wartime authorization.

strength being approximately 60% of wartime authorization.

With rigid secrecy, supplies were assembled under the code name "Watch on the Rhine", designed in the event of information leaks to mislead the Allies as to German intentions, making it appear that these resources were being marshalled for a defensive effort. So successful was this plan that not only were Allied intelligence officers deluded, but an uninitiated German logistical commander stored the larger portion of German gasoline reserves east of the RHINE River. As a later result, these reserves never reached the attacking troops, who were then forced to plan on capturing American supply dumps to keep their motorized elements moving.

These three German armies were assembled west of the RHINE in the U S V and VIII Corps sectors. At 0530 on 16 December 1944, 17 divisions of the 27 that were to see action in this battle crossed the line of departure. They included approximately 180,000 men and 400 tanks. The magnitude of the H-hour force is important because of its tremendous contribution to the overwhelming obscurity of the action during the next ten days. These preparations had been kept secret so well that the initial reports of the attack were considered, in U S military channels, as a rather small-scale German effort. Had we ather prevented aerial reconnaissance, which should have located German columns and indicated the size of the attack. It was not until the fourth day of the attack (19 December) that General Eisenhower realized the full seriousness of the situation.

The Theater Commander had no troops in theater reserve, therefore units had to be shifted from other areas of the front to engage this German threat. The 2nd and 3rd Armored Divisions were thus moved to the Ardennes area where they helped form the northern line al-

long the penetration. Here they helped bring the German effort to a stop, and moved into a coordinated offensive to close the gap of the enemy penetration.

This study, in the next three chapters, takes up in detail the part which the 2nd and 3rd Armored Divisions played in closing the gap.

The 3rd Armored Division was the first of these units to go into action. Thus, it will be treated first. It will be shown that this division was committed in a piecemeal fashion under extremely obscure circumstances, and that a lack of organic infantry, now corrected, in the T/O & E of the U S Armored Division, was a definite handicap, particularly in the rugged terrain of the Ardennes.

The action of the 2nd Armored Division in December 1944 will be studied next. Emphasis will be placed upon the obscure situation, poor weather, and again, a lack of organic infantry to work with the tank units.

Finally, the action of the 2nd and 3rd Armored Divisions in a coordinated attack will be studied. This study will emphasize the employment of armored divisions in a tactical situation which was more suited to infantry, the extremely severe weather, stubborn enemy resistance, and the accomplishment of its mission by armor, under perhaps the most adverse conditions that armor could face.

NOTES FOR CHAPTER I

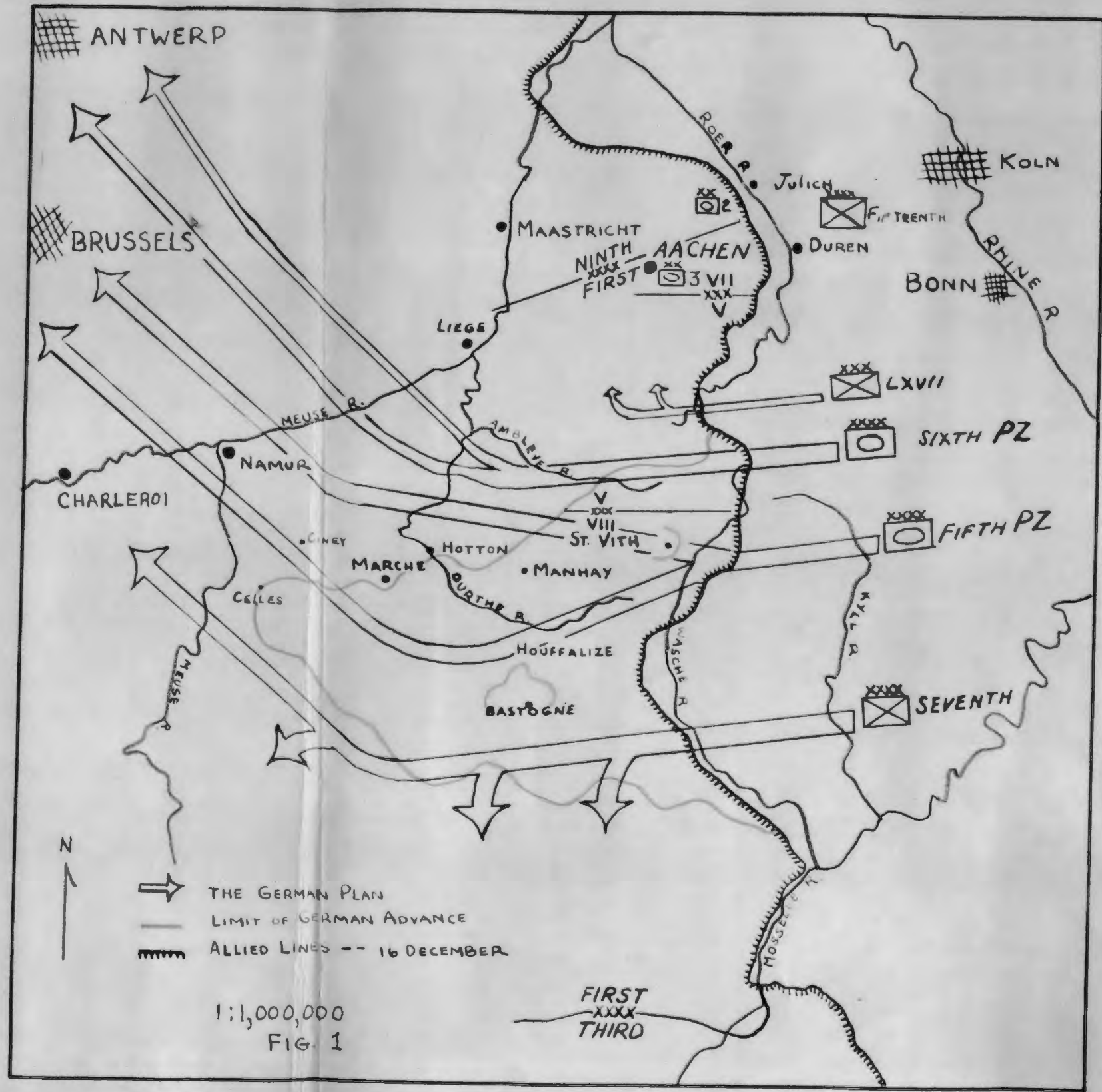
¹ Robert E. Merriam, Dark December, (Chicago: Ziff-Davis, 1947) Chap. 1, "An Idea is Born", p. 1.

² Milton Schulman, Defeat in the West, (New York: E. P. Dutton and Co, 1948), Chap. XXVI, "Offensive in the Ardennes", p. 228.

³ Ibid., p. 224.

Statement of Prisoner of War Gen. d. Kav. Westphal, Chief of Staff to Commander in Chief, West, von Rundstedt. (Salvaged Third Army Files)

THE 'BULGE'



CHAPTER II

PIECEMEAL EMPLOYMENT OF THE THIRD ARMORED DIVISION

16-31 December 1944

At the time that the German counteroffensive in the Ardennes began on 16 December 1944, the 3rd Armored Division was in an assembly area in the vicinity of STOLBERG, Germany. While acting as reserve for VII Corps the division was undergoing a period of maintenance and rest after participating in the battles which had ended only a few days before.

The 3rd Armored Division was commanded by Major General Maurice E. Rose. CCA was led by Brigadier General Doyle O. Hickey, CCB by Brigadier General Truman E. Boudinot, and CCR by Colonel Robert L. Howze.

On 14 December 1944 the division was placed on a four-hour alert. There were strong rumors that enemy paratroopers were being dropped near the division area. As a result of these rumors the security measures in force around the assemble area were greatly strengthened, but no other action took place until 18 December 1944, when the division began to roll out of its assembly area to take part in the greatest battle of World War II on the Western Front.

To follow the 3rd Armored Division during the early days of the German offensive it will be necessary to trace three separate and distinct actions, as the division was widely scattered in its employment. We shall follow these three separate actions to the time that they converged into a unified division action, and then follow the division

through to the close of the first phase of the Ardennes counteroffensive in the last days of December.

The first unit to leave the division assembly area was CCA, which was attached to V Corps on 18 December and ordered to EUPEN, Belgium, where it was employed in anti-airborne operations until 21 December when it reverted to the control of the 3rd Armored Division.

The day after CCA departed from the vicinity of STOLBERG, CCB was attached to V Corps and ordered to the vicinity of SPA, Belgium. Upon arrival near SPA CCB was transferred to control of XVIII Corps and attached to the 30th Infantry Division. The command was employed in the LA GLEIZE-STAVELOT area until 25 December when it reverted to control of the 3rd Armored Division.

With the departure of both of the major fighting units of the division the remainder of the division was attached to XVIII Corps on 19 December, and on the night of 19-20 December it moved to HOTTEN, Belgium. Upon arrival the division was ordered to attack southeast from HOTTEN to secure the MANHAY-HOUFFALIZE road. This attack was made by the 83rd Armored Reconnaissance Battalion, reinforced.

On 21 December the division, still minus CCA and CCB, was attached to VII Corps, and on 24 December the Commanding General, VII Corps, ordered the division to establish a defense line from GRANDMENIL to MELROUX, and to tie in with the 7th Armored Division on the left and with the 84th Infantry Division on the right.

As the action progressed and the situation became clearer the division gradually regained control of its organic units and received

strong attachments. CCA came back under control of the division on 21 December, and CCB on 25 December. Also about 25 December the small but heroic task forces of the 83rd Armored Reconnaissance Battalion were withdrawn through the division lines after stubbornly resisting repeated attacks from a greatly superior enemy force.

In the closing days of December, 1944, the 3rd Armored Division succeeded in stabilizing a line which ran generally from HOTTEN to GRANDMENIL, Belgium, and just south of the road which connects the two towns. At this time the division was reinforced by the attachment of the 289th Regimental Combat Team, the 290th Regimental Combat Team, the 2nd Battalion, 112th Infantry Regiment, and the 509th and 517th Parachute Infantry Battalions. ² Tying in with the 7th Armored Division in the east and the 84th Infantry Division on the west, this line enabled the Allied forces to prepare and launch the attack of 3 January 1945, which resulted in reduction of the German salient.

We shall now take up a detailed account of the employment of CCA, followed in turn by CCB, and concluding with the division less CCA and CCB.

Combat Command A

As noted previously, CCA was the first element of the 3rd Armored Division to move from the division assembly area for participation in the Ardennes counteroffensive. On 18 December, the command, composed of:

Hq Det, CCA
32nd Armored Regiment (less 1st Bn)

3rd Battalion, 36th Armored Infantry Regiment
67th Armored Field Artillery Battalion
Co A, 23rd Armored Engineer Battalion
Co A, 45th Armored Medical Battalion
Det, Co A, Maintenance Battalion
1st Plat, Co A, 738th Tank Bn (SP) ME

was attached to V Corps and ordered to the vicinity of EUPEN, Belgium. Clearing the division assembly area by 1200 on the 18th, the command arrived in the zone of V Corps and relieved the 18th Infantry of the 1st Infantry Division at EUPEN on 19 December.

While in this vicinity the infantry of the command was employed in mopping up German paratroopers in the woods south of the town. Armored elements of the command established road blocks on the main roads leading to the town and were to be employed as a mobile reserve by V Corps in event of enemy attacks. However, the expected enemy attacks failed to develop, and, on 21 December, the command was relieved from attachment to V Corps and reverted to control of the 3rd Armored Division.

CCA departed from EUPEN on 21 December and closed into an assembly area near WERBOMONT, Belgium, on 22 December.

Immediately upon arrival at WERBOMONT the command was split into two task forces.

Task Force Doan, Colonel Leander L. Doan commanding, consisting of:

32nd Armored Regiment (less 1st and 3rd Bns)
3rd Battalion, 36th Armored Infantry Regiment (less Co I)
1st Plat; Co A, 23rd Armored Engineer Bn
1st Plat, Ren Co, 32nd Armored Regiment
67th Armored Field Artillery Battalion

was ordered to move to the main highway junction seven kilometers

north of MARCHE in order to cut the MARCHE-BASTOGNE road at that point.⁴ (See Fig. 2) Arriving in the vicinity of HARGIMONT at 1615 on 22 December, Task Force Doan established the road blocks and tied in their defense with elements of the 84th Infantry Division, which was operating in the area. During the night of 22-23 December and on 23 December Colonel Doan's road blocks received heavy pressure from enemy armor and infantry, but held fast. On 24 December Task Force Doan was attached to the 84th Infantry Division.

Meanwhile, the other task force of CCA, Task Force Richardson, Lieutenant Colonel Walter B. Richardson commanding, was placed under division control and ordered to go to the aid of elements of the 106th Infantry Division defending a road block at crossroads 576853, which is about $2\frac{1}{2}$ miles southeast of ODEIGNE.⁵ (See Fig. 2).

Task Force Richardson, composed of:

3rd Battalion, 32nd Armored Regiment
Co I, 36th Armored Infantry Regiment

moved on 23 December toward the crossroads.

The defense of crossroads 576853 was very important because it gave the division time to organize its position. Without the action at the crossroads the division most likely would have been overrun.⁶

The crossroads was under attack, and Richardson's force, under command of Major Olin F. Brewster, had to fight in order to reach it. Upon reaching the crossroads Major Brewster returned to the Task Force Command Post to bring up reinforcements. While he was gone the road block was overrun by the enemy. Major Brewster returned with an additional platoon of tanks and a platoon of infantry and managed to set

up another road block farther to the north in the vicinity of BELLE HAIE. However, on 24 December this block was also overrun by a numerically superior enemy, who was advancing on MANHAY (See Fig. 2). Lt. Col. Richardson and his headquarters withdrew to GRANDMENIL, and Major Brewster was ordered to withdraw his force by way of MALEMPRE. Proceeding north, Brewster ran into strong enemy fire which was coming from MALEMPRE, and was forced to halt. Hopelessly cut off from friendly lines Major Brewster ordered the destruction of the few remaining vehicles, and with the remnants of the Task Force withdrew on foot cross country. On 25 December this force passed through the lines of the 3rd Battalion, 289th RCT, just west of GRANDMENIL. (See Fig. 2).

Keeping in mind the fact that Task Force Richardson was operating under division control, the loss of Task Force Doan to the 84th Infantry Division on 24 December stripped CCA of all its combat units with the exception of a small reconnaissance outfit. On 24 December the headquarters of CCA moved to HEYD, Belgium, where it took over the defensive sector from AMONINES TO MANHAY. The 3rd Armored Division was at this time attempting to stabilize the lines in that area. The principal unit coming under control of CCA was the 289th Regimental Combat Team, which held a line running just south of the EREZEE-MANHAY road. Its 3rd Battalion was blocking to the north and east, as the enemy at this time held the town of GRANDMENIL.

On 25 December the 289th RCT attempted to advance to the line AMONINES-AISNE-RAU SOUS L'EAU-LE CHAT-GRANDMENIL, but the 3rd Battal-

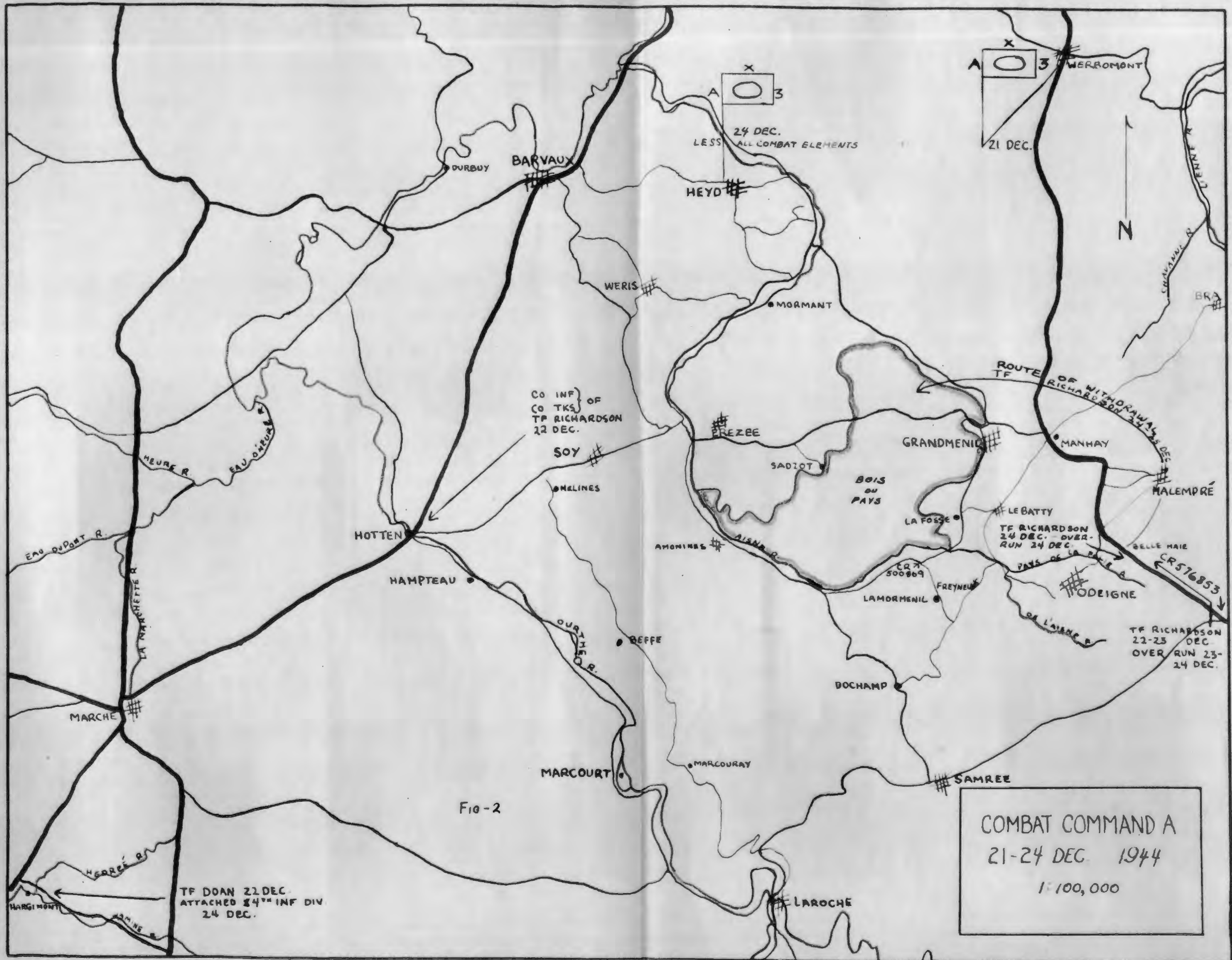
ion was unable to seize GRANDMENIL, which was strongly held by the enemy. The other two battalions of the regiment endeavored to cover the entire line, but in doing so left a gap of about one thousand yards in the line just south of the town of SADZOT (See Fig. 2).

Task Force Mc George from CCB was ^{attached} to CCA and on 26 December drove enemy tank and infantry forces from GRANDMENIL, securing the crossroads in the center of the town. The task force also established contact with CCB of the 7th Armored Division. ⁹ Up to this time several attempts to close the gap in the lines of the 289th RCT had been unsuccessful. On the night of 27 December elements of the 12th SS Panzer Division and other troops infiltrated through the gap and launched a determined attack on SADZOT. This enemy attack was counter-

attacked by the 509th Parachute Battalion, now attached to CCA. ¹⁰

The counterattack was successful, and the paratroopers continued their attack southeast through the forests to LA FOSSE (See Fig. 2). While the paratroopers were driving to the southeast, the 1st Battalion, 112th Infantry Regiment, now also attached to CCA, moved forward and closed the gap in the line. ¹¹ With these operations the last thrusts of the enemy into the lines of the 3rd Armored Division was repelled. Official control of the sector passed to the 75th Infantry Division at 1600 on 28 December, and elements of the 3rd Armored Division left the area on 29 December for a short period of rest and reorganization.

In evaluating the employment of CCA we see considerable piecemeal use of its forces. In the initial action at EUPEN the tank and infantry units were separated. Upon return to control of the division



COMBAT COMMAND A
 21-24 DEC. 1944
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Fig-2

the command was split into two forces, Task Force Doan passing to control of the 84th Infantry Division, and Task Force Richardson to direct division control. CCA then took control of a defensive sector held by infantry troops, finally succeeding in stabilizing the lines.

Now let us consider CCB's actions during the same period.

Combat Command B

On 19 December, the day following the departure of CCA for EUPEN, CCB, under the command of Brigadier General Truman E. Boudinot, was attached to V Corps and ordered to SPA and LA REID, Belgium. The command moved in two columns, Task Force Lovelady, Lieutenant Colonel William B. Lovelady commanding, consisting of:

- 2nd Bn, 33rd Armored Regiment
- Co B, 36th Armored Infantry Regiment
- Plat, Rcn Co, 33rd Armored Regiment
- Plat, Co B, 23rd Armored Engineer Battalion

went to SPA, while Task Force McGeorge, Major Kenneth T. McGeorge commanding, with:

- Co I, 33rd Armored Regiment
- Co F, 36th Armored Infantry Regiment
- Plat, Co D, 36th Armored Infantry Regiment
- 2 Plats of Assault Guns
- Mortar Plat, 36th Armored Infantry Regiment
- 2 Plats of Light Tanks
- Engineer Squad

12

went to LA REID, Belgium. Upon arrival in their new areas, the units of CCB were attached to XVIII Corps. On 20 December the command was attached to the 30th Infantry Division and committed to action in the LA GLEIZE-STAVELOT sector (See Fig. 3). The command was ordered to attack from their present positions toward the L'AMBLEVE River with

the mission of blocking and eliminating an enemy force which was headed for SPA from the direction of STAVELOT. This enemy force was a combat team of the 1st SS Panzer Division, I SS Panzer Corps, led by Lieutenant Colonel Joachim Peiper, perpetrator of the infamous "Malmedy Massacre".

Task Force Lovelady was ordered to move south from PONT DU LORRAIN, establish a road block on the LA GLEIZE-STAVELOT highway east of LA GLEIZE, and then drive to the east to assist the 30th Infantry Division, which was fighting in the vicinity of STAVELOT. Task Force McGeorge was ordered to organize into two forces for the execution of its mission. General Boudinot personally gave the attack order to Major McGeorge, who commanded one column, and to Captain John W. Jordan, who commanded the second column. ¹³ Capt. Jordan was to advance to the south, seize STOU MONT, turn east and seize LA GLEIZE in conjunction with Major McGeorge's column, ~~whereupon they were to take~~

south toward LA GLEIZE on an axis parallel to and east of Jordan's route.

Task Force Lovelady moved from its area near SPA and proceeded on its mission. The road block east of LA GLEIZE was established, as ordered, after a sharp fight. The column continued to the south, minus the personnel necessary to man the road block, and in the vicinity of TROUS PONT again struck enemy resistance, consisting of tank-infantry teams. Despite this resistance another road block was set up and Lovelady continued to move to the south. A third road block was established just north of GRAND COO, and Lovelady turned to the

east on the road to STAVELOT. The road blocks that he had left behind him in order to protect his rear and keep the road open had employed all of the infantry of his command with the exception of an attached company from the 120th Infantry Regiment.

Moving to the east, Lovelady reached PARFONDRI but was unable to advance farther. On 22 December he held his position, but enemy forces which had by-passed him cut him off from his road blocks, overran his aid station, and captured several vehicles. The enemy forces which accomplished this were dressed in American uniforms and used American vehicles.

This turn of events forced the task force to turn away from PARFONDRI and move to the west to the aid of the road blocks. On 23 December Lovelady succeeded in reaching GRAND COO, and went into position to attack south, where his road block under Major Stallings was surrounded. The attack began on 23 December but progressed only to PETIT COO that day before being halted. However, during the night Lovelady received a company of infantry from the 30th Infantry Division, and on 24 December the Task Force reached the cut-off road block and took up a defensive position near PETIT COO. At 2300 on the 24th the Task Force was relieved by elements of the 30th Infantry Division. The Task Force then moved to an assembly area near LES FORGES.

Farther to the north Major McGeorge and Captain Jordan had succeeded in accomplishing their mission after several small but very severe engagements. On 20 December Jordan reached the outskirts of

STOUMONT but was stopped by heavy anti-tank fire and halted for the night. On the same day Major McGeorge had reached BOURGEMONT. His advance had been slow because of the very poor roads, numerous detours from the planned route of advance, and stubborn enemy resistance. On the next day Jordan's force was attached to the 119th Infantry Regiment and attacked STOUMONT. The little town was strongly defended, and the attack met with no success. During the night additional artillery was given the Task Force, and on 22 December Jordan's force entered STOUMONT. Major McGeorge was at this time on the north edge of LA GLEIZE, but had been unable to penetrate the defenses of the town.

The next day, 24 December, Jordan advanced to the east and attacked LA GLEIZE in conjunction with Major McGeorge's attack from the north. The town was heavily defended by anti-tank guns, tanks, and well hidden mine fields. The lack of infantry combined with poor terrain which kept the tanks on the roads was a severe handicap in this attack, but on 24 December the two columns finally succeeded in occupying the town. At 1530 they were ordered to an assembly area near STINVAL. Elements of the 30th Infantry Division relieved the task forces in LA GLEIZE.

With this action the deepest westward penetration of the entire 6th Panzer Army was stopped, and this major German force was put upon the defensive.

CCB reverted to division control on 25 December. At 0930 that date the Commanding General, 3rd Armored Division, ordered the command

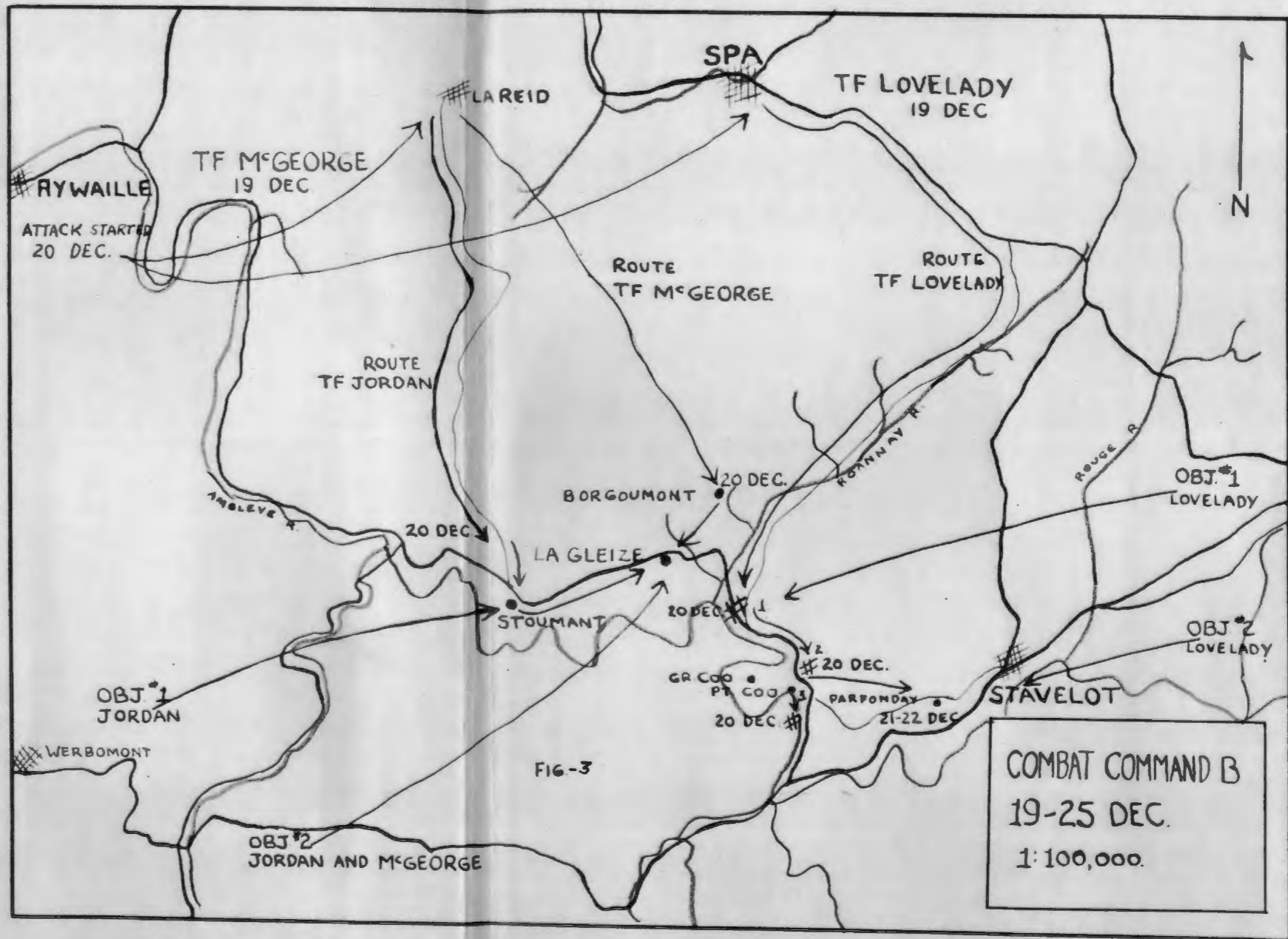
to send a force to the aid of CCA in the vicinity of GRANDMENIL. Task Force McGeorge was ordered on this mission and was attached to CCA. In the narrative dealing with CCA we have already seen how this Task Force seized GRANDMENIL after attacking with the 3rd Battalion, 289th RCT.

CCB, less Task Force McGeorge, moved to the vicinity of HOTTEN. On 26 December the command took over a defensive sector from CCR. This sector ran from NY to MELROUX, where the defense was tied in with the 84th infantry Division. This sector was held by the 290th RCT. 27 December found the units of Task Force McGeorge in SOY, having been relieved in GRANDMENIL by the 289th RCT. The rest of CCB was improving the defensive positions held by the 290th RCT.

On 30 December the command was relieved from responsibility for the sector and moved to assembly areas near MODAVE and prepared to join the remainder of the division.

In summing up the actions of CCB during this period it is apparent that it contributed greatly to stopping the German drive in the LA GLEIZE-STAVELOT area. It furnished the 30th Infantry Division with much-needed armored support and provided the armored punch which took LA GLEIZE and STOU MONT. Later, Task Force McGeorge seized GRANDMENIL while attached to CCA, after several infantry attacks to take the town had failed. It is hoped that the inclusion of organic tanks in the Infantry Division will provide the Infantry with needed armored support so that it will not in the future be necessary to employ Armored Divisions in piecemeal fashion in order to provide tank battalions.

Having seen the separate employment of CCA and CCB, let us again



retrace this same period of time and consider the employment of the remainder of the division.

The Third Armored Division (less CCA and CCB)

On 18 December XVIII Corps was given a sector of the American Ardennes front. One of the divisions assigned to this corps was the 3rd Armored Division, then in an assembly area in the vicinity of STOLBERG, Germany. As we have seen, the division was sent into action quickly after the German offensive became obvious, but was committed in a piecemeal fashion by losing its two combat commands, which were sent on widely separated missions under two different corps.

After having been assigned to XVIII Corps, the division was ordered to HOTTEN, Belgium, where it was to be prepared to attack either east, southeast, or south. This directive in itself tells much of the uncertainty and confusion that was rampant at the time.

The division, minus CCA and CCB, closed into an assembly area in the vicinity of HOTTEN on the night of 19-20 December, and immediately received an attack order.

The mission received by General Rose from the CG, 1st Army and the CG XVIII Corps was, "To initiate intensive reconnaissance in the HOTTEN-GRANDMENIL sector, to locate the enemy, and to secure a line running east from LA ROCHE to CR 576 853, and to tie in with the 82nd Airborne Division on the left and the 84th Infantry Division on the right." 17

It is obvious that this mission was an impossible one in view of the enemy strength and the lack of strength of the division at

that time. However, on 20 December no one knew anything of the enemy situation, nor did he know much about the Allied situation. As General Rose stated later in an interview, information of the enemy was practically non-existent.

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The operation was a bluff, because on occasions the enemy had enough strength to overrun the division. During the ten days of the first phase of the Ardennes the division succeeded in its mission because it attacked instead of passively defending.

On 20 December at about 1200, under immediate command of the Commanding Officer, 83rd Armored Reconnaissance Battalion, Lieutenant Colonel Prentice E. Yeomans, and under general control of the Commanding Officer, CCR, three task forces rode south across the HOTTEN-MANHAY road to carry out the mission of the division (See Fig. 4). These three forces and their missions were:

Task Force Hogan (Lt Col Samuel Hogan)

Hq, 3rd Bn, 33rd Armored Regiment
Co A, 33rd Armored Regiment
Co A, 83rd Armored Reconnaissance Battalion
Plat, Co C, 83rd Armored Reconnaissance Battalion
Btry, 54th Armored Field Artillery Battalion
AA Sect, 486th AAA Battalion

to parallel the L'OURTHE River, pass through LA ROCHE, turn east and cut the MANHAY-HOUFFALIZE road at DINEZ;

Task Force Orr (Lt Col William R. Orr)

Co B, 83rd Armored Reconnaissance Battalion
Plat, Co C, 83rd Armored Reconnaissance Battalion
Co, M-4 Tanks
Btry B, 54th Armored Field Artillery Battalion
AA Sect, 486th AAA Battalion

to advance with its axis on the EREZEE-DOCHAMPS-SAMREE road, turn east and occupy the MANHAY-HOUFFALIZE road at crossroads 576853;

Task Force Kane (Lt Col Matthew W. Kane)

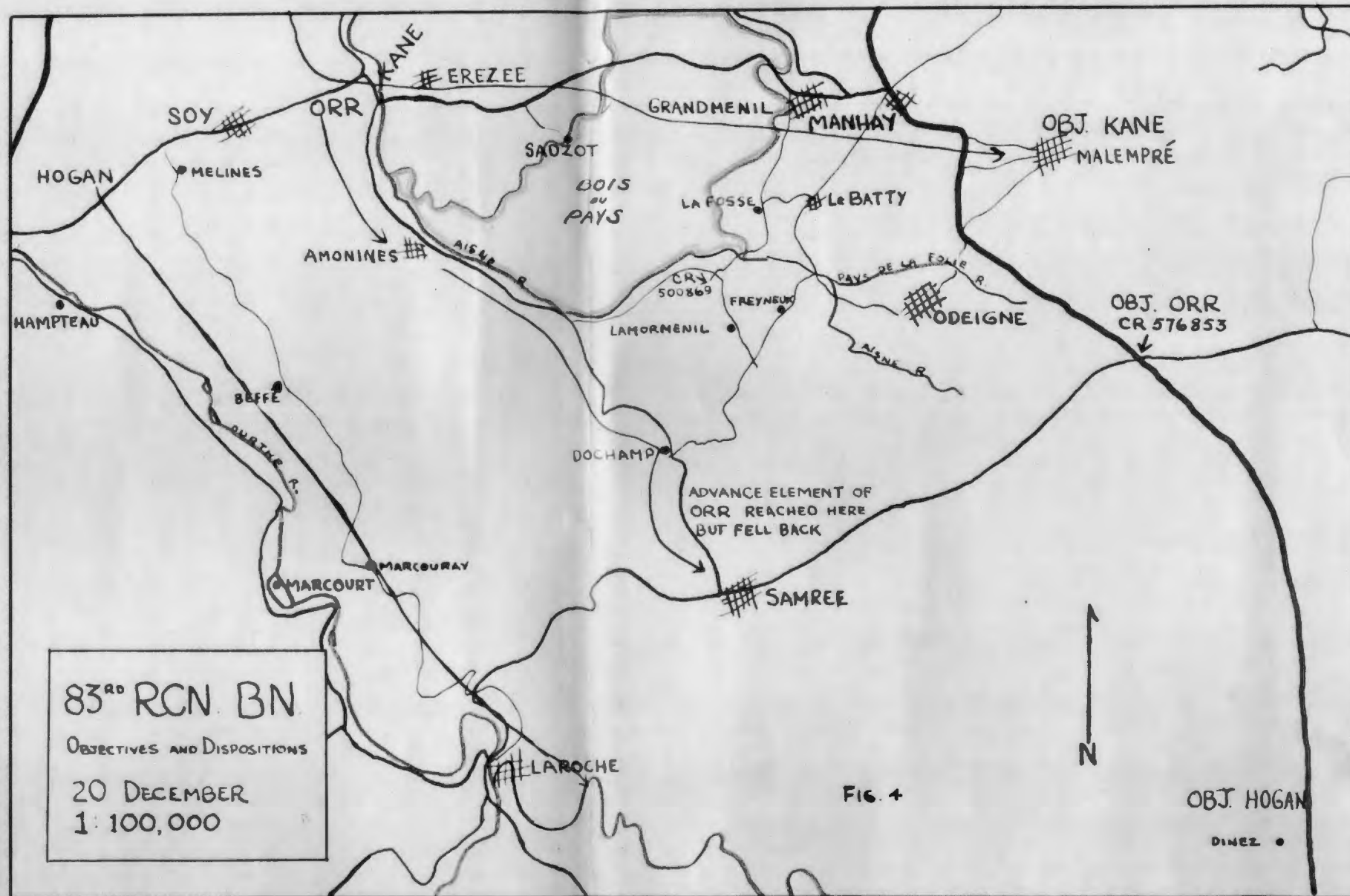
Hq, 1st Bn, 32nd Armored Regiment
Co, M-4 Tanks
Co D, 83rd Armored Reconnaissance Battalion
Btry A, 54th Armored Field Artillery Battalion
AA Sect, 486th AAA Battalion
Plat, Co C, 83rd Armored Reconnaissance Battalion
Squad Engineers

to advance on the highway from MORNONT through GRANDMENIL to MANHAY, thence east to MALEMPRE.

As stated previously, the attack began at about 1200 on 20 December. In an interview later, Lt Col Hogan stated that his attack was delayed because he waited for the trains to bring up gasoline. When he finally started, the sorely needed gas had not arrived, and his vehicular tanks were only half full. It may be presumed that the same situation existed in the other Task Forces.

On the first day of the operation, Task Force Hogan proceeded south through BEFFE, MARCOURAY, CIELLE, and LA ROCHE until it was halted by a strong enemy road block south of LA ROCHE. Restricted to the roads by the nature of the terrain, the force stopped for the night and set up its command post in LA ROCHE.

Meanwhile, to the northeast, Task Force Orr moved first to ERE-ZEE, where the main body halted. A reconnaissance company and a company of tanks were sent south on the road to DOCHAMPS. This force found DOCHAMPS strongly defended by the enemy, so it by-passed the town to the west and continued on toward SAMREE. Just south of DOCHAMPS a superior enemy force was encountered, and the two companies were forced to withdraw. Unable to leave the road, under heavy fire, the tanks were abandoned, and the force retired to AMONINES, where it



met the rest of Task Force Orr moving to the south. The force halted for the night in AMONINES, outposting the town. The 1st Battalion, 36th Armored Infantry Regiment, was dispatched from CCR to reinforce Orr and joined him in AMONINES that evening.

On the same day the column to the east, Task Force Kane, succeeded in reaching MALEMPRE without encountering resistance. Road blocks were set up on all roads leading into the town. The command post was established in MANHAY.

Thus, on the first day of the attack, one of the forces had reached its objective, but the other two were forced to halt shortly after crossing the line of departure.

On the second day of the operation, 21 December, (See Fig. 5) Task Force Hogan attempted to continue its move to the south, but it was again stopped by enemy road blocks. Colonel Howze, CCR Commander, ²¹ ordered the force to return to HOTTEN at this point. The force moved back to the north and at dusk reached BEFFE, where it came under heavy fire from the enemy, who had apparently passed Hogan to the east and was moving north. Hogan turned to the south again, moved about two miles, and halted for the night.

The center force, Orr's, moved out of AMONINES in another effort to seize DOCHAMPS and continue to the south. The attack was beaten off by the strongly entrenched enemy, and Orr withdrew into AMONINES again.

In the east, Task Force Kane pushed elements of his force to crossroads 576853, then held by scattered elements of the 106th Infan-

try Division. Kane then received orders to move to the west and attack DOCHAMPS in conjunction with Orr. The force moved west through FREYNEUX and LAMORMENIL and was stopped by enemy fire about one thousand yards to the east of DOCHAMPS, where it halted for the night.

By the night of 21 December it had become apparent that the bat-
22
talion had met a strong enemy drive head-on.

On 22 December all of the task forces received heavy tank-infantry attacks. In the west, Task Force Hogan met resistance at BEFFE and could not advance to the north. He turned south again and proceeded to MARCOURAY where he occupied the town and set up a perimeter defense. It was apparent that Hogan was surrounded and cut off from his own lines and his supplies. By this time Hogan's vehicles were almost out of gasoline.

In the center, Task Force Orr again tried to move south against DOCHAMPS, was beaten back again, and withdrew into AMONINES where a defense was established to meet the enemy, who was moving to the north out of DOCHAMPS.

In order to man the defenses around AMONINES adequately, Lt Col Orr had to use tankers of the 33rd Armored Regiment dismounted as infantry. His road blocks were manned by cooks and drivers of the infantry half-tracks.²³

Task Force Kane was stopped to the east of DOCHAMPS, and repeated attacks against the town failed, as the terrain strongly favored the defenders. Some seventy paratroopers, unit unknown, joined the Task Force and tried two night attacks against the town, but even they were unable to advance over the rugged terrain against heavy en-

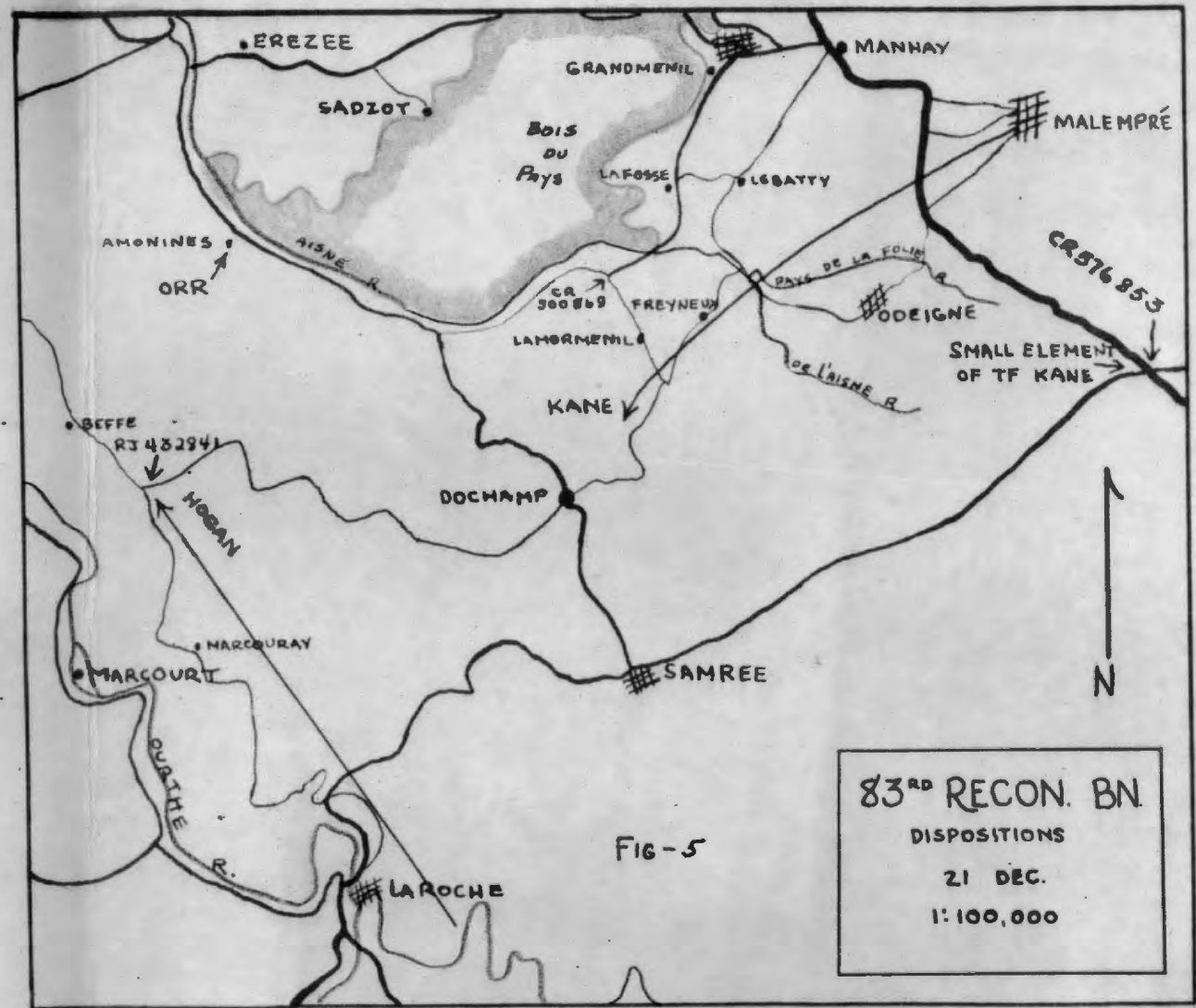


FIG-5

83RD RECON. BN.
 DISPOSITIONS
 21 DEC.
 1:100,000

emy fire.

Task Force Hogan continued to defend MARCOURAY on 23 December. Two attempts to supply him by air were made by C-47 aircraft, but the drops failed, and the supplies fell into the hands of the enemy. ²⁴

Task Force Orr continued to defend AMONVINES and remained in that town until 27 December when it was relieved by elements of the 75th Infantry Division. ²⁵

Task Force Kane continued to press its attack on DOCHAMPS but was forced to fall back toward FREYNEUX and LAMORMENIL. A road block on the MANHAY-HOUFFALIZE road just south of MANHAY which had been established by Lt Col Kane was overrun as the enemy moved in toward MANHAY and GRANDMENIL.

Continued attempts to supply Hogan by air failed again on 24 December. General Rose sent a message to Lt Col Hogan, stating that another attempt to supply him by air would be made on 25 December and that if it failed Hogan was to destroy his vehicles and withdraw on foot. Lt Col Hogan radioed a recommendation that no further attempts be made to supply him, and that the force withdraw. This was approved by General Rose. ²⁶

By 24 December Task Force Kane was also in a precarious situation. Defending in FREYNEUX and LAMORMENIL, it was cut off from friendly lines and all supplies, but in defending as it did, it prevented enemy reinforcements from moving to the north (See Fig. 6).

Christmas Day was spent by Task Force Hogan in preparing for its withdrawal. Vehicles were disabled by removing vital parts, as burn-

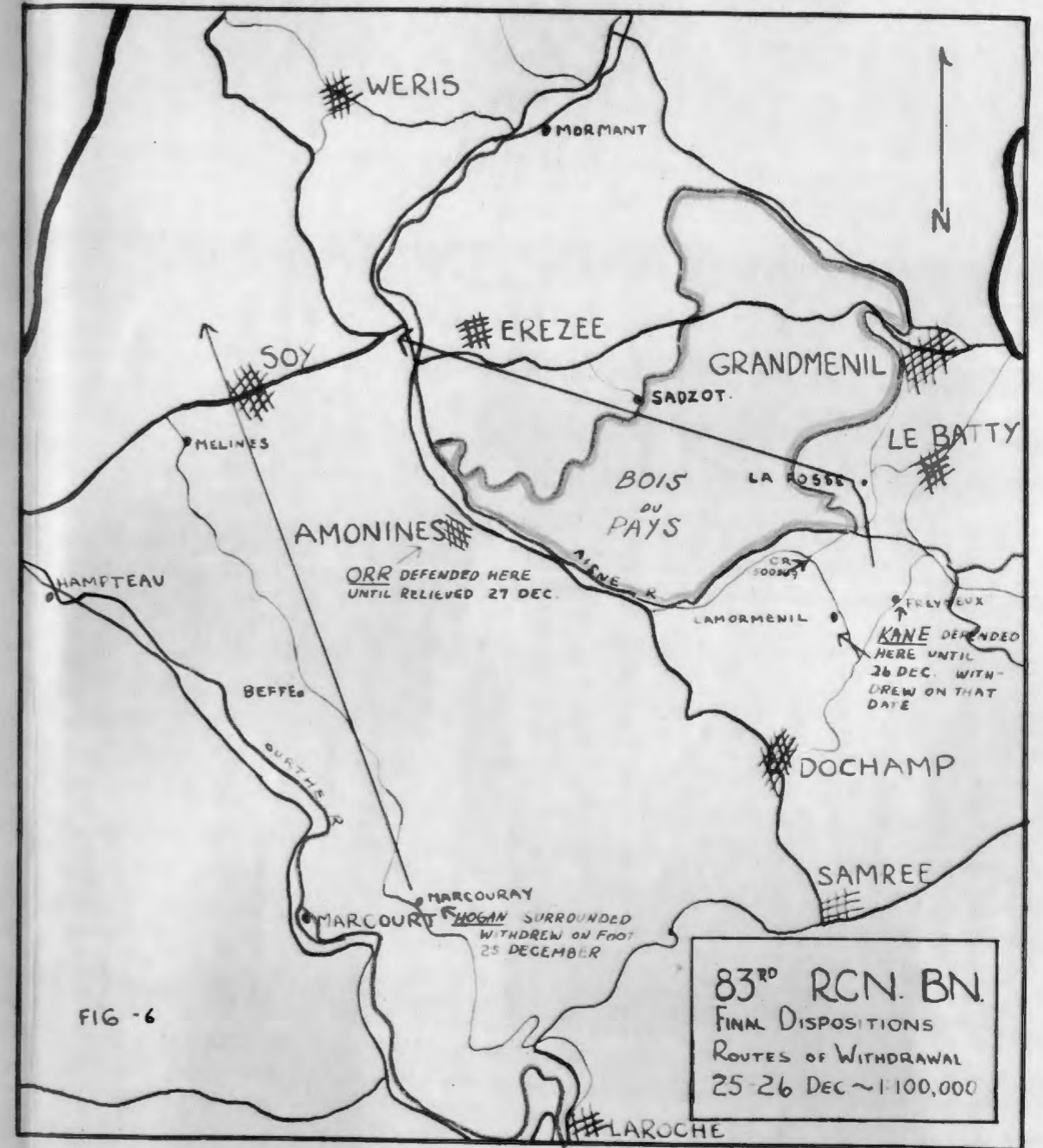
ing them would have disclosed the intent to the enemy. Also during the day, a reconnaissance was made of the proposed route of withdrawal. At 1600 that day Lt Col Hogan and four hundred men moved out of MARCOURAY and struck north through the woods. Although several times during the night the men came so close to the enemy that they could hear commands being given to German artillery batteries, no men were lost, and the force reached friendly lines early in the morning of 26 December.

Task Force Kane also spent Christmas Day in planning a withdrawal while fighting off several attacks at FREYNEUX and LAMORMENIL. On 26 December at 1900 Kane and his men moved out under cover of smoke and fog. They passed through LA FOSSE, SADZOT, and EREZEE, where they were again within friendly lines.

From the beginning of this action around the HOTTEN-GRANDMENIL sector this battalion was in constant contact with Hitler's best. They fought well against great odds, and gave a good account of themselves. This action was probably the toughest assignment that men of this battalion have been given yet.²⁷

"Hitler's best" have been identified as the 116th Panzer Division and the 560th Volksgrenadier Division.

With the withdrawal of Task Force Hogan and Task Force Kane on 26 December and the relief of Task Force Orr on 27 December, the operations of the 83rd Armored Reconnaissance Battalion in this sector ended. During this period they had carried the brunt of the action for the 3rd Armored Division. The defense of MARCOURAY by Hogan, the attacks on DOCHAMPS and the defense of AMONINES by Orr, and the occupation of MALEMPRE, the defense of crossroads 57685Z, the attacks on



DOCHAMPS, and the defense of FREYNEUX and LAMORMENIL by Kane all served greatly to slow and stop the German advance, and at the same time gave the infantry units under CCA and CCB the vital time necessary to establish and strengthen the lines farther to the north.

Summary of Action

This has been the story of how one American Armored Division was employed in the first phase of the Ardennes counteroffensive. Not an ideal employment, to be sure, but neither were the conditions under which it was employed. Today it is an accepted fact that all levels of command were taken by surprise on 16 December, surprised not only by the fact that the Germans were capable of making an attack, but also by the strength and fury with which it was undertaken. With confusion rampant, lines of communication cut, and commanders frequently cut off from higher headquarters and certainly from any reliable information, the employment of all units had to be based on what little was known of the situation.

The somewhat piecemeal employment of the 3rd Armored Division was probably a direct result of the obscure situation and resultant panic. There could be unlimited speculation as to the results which might have been obtained had the division been employed as a unit, but that speculation does not fall within the scope of this work. The employment of CCA at EUPEN apparently was not necessary, as units other than armor were available for the mission. The employment of CCB in the LA GLEIZE-STAVELOT sector did reinforce the 30th Infantry

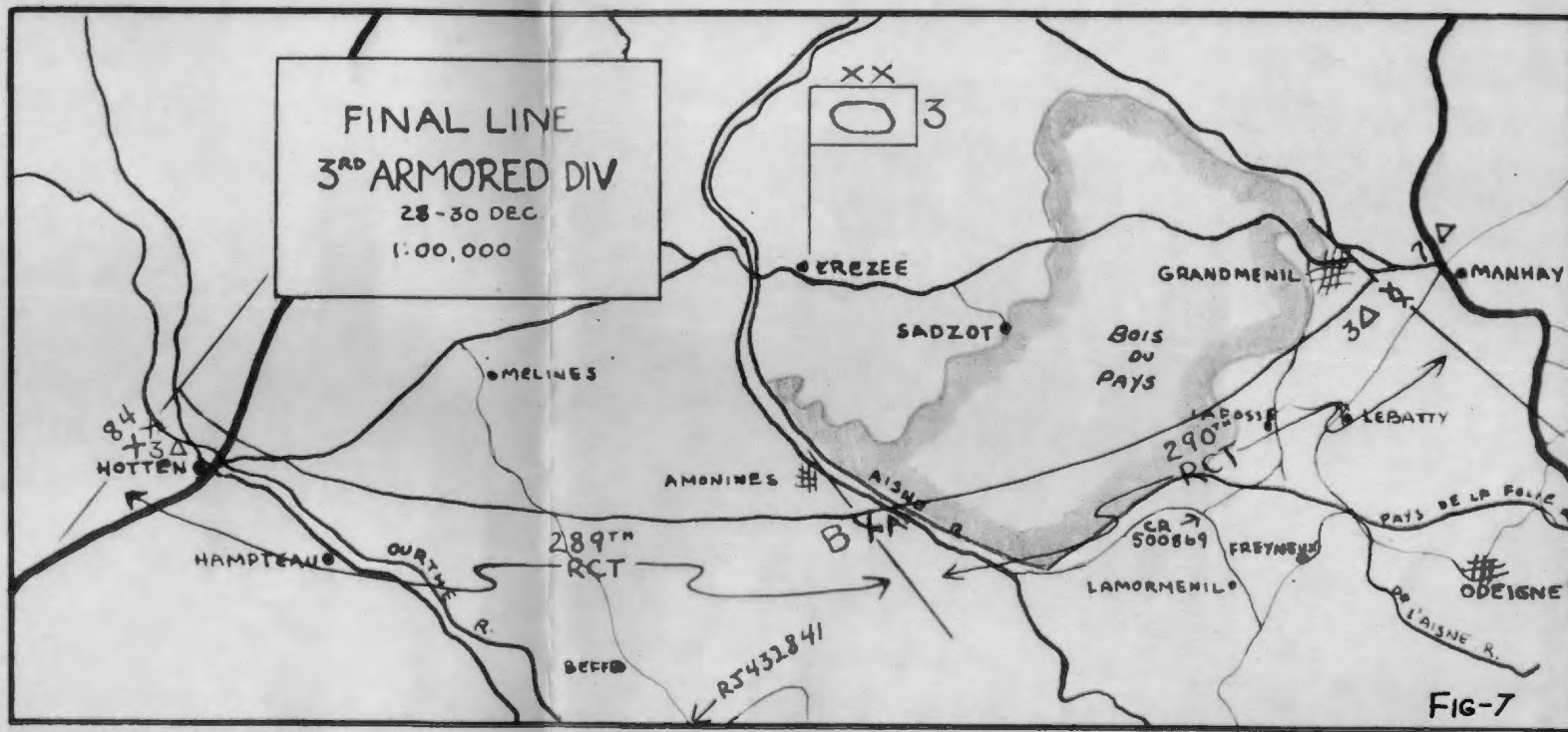
Division with much needed armor, and succeeded in eliminating a grave threat in that sector.

While the mission given to the division at HOTTEN was certainly beyond its capabilities, much was accomplished. The defense made by the task forces of the 83rd Armored Reconnaissance Battalion in the HOTTEN-GRANDMENIL sector served to slow down the enemy, forced him to use his dwindling supplies in efforts to break through, and gained the time necessary for moving in infantry reinforcements to stabilize a defensive line, from which was later launched the attack of 3 January 1945.

The terrain and weather in the HOTTEN-GRANDMENIL sector worked to the disadvantage of armor. In most of the sector armor was forced to remain on the roads, which are narrow and winding. Heavy forests and steep hills prevented it from leaving the roads. Since both forces were heavy in armor and light in infantry, the advantage lay with the defenders. It is worthy of note that the line finally stabilized by the 3rd Armored Division (See Fig. 7) was largely held by infantry units, although they were given the time to deploy and take up this line by armored action to their front.

The attack to the southeast by the Spearhead's relatively light forces may be called, with some reason, a bold bluff. How well this move succeeded in screening the assembly and deployment of VII Corps may be gauged by the story of the actions that followed.²⁸

The mobility, flexibility, and firepower of armor were proven in this battle. Mobility allowed rapid movement, movement over difficult terrain, and employment over wide areas. Flexibility allowed the div



ision to accomplish widely separated missions with varied forces, and firepower allowed small units to hold against a numerically superior and fanatic enemy.

While the 3rd Armored Division was engaged in this action, the 2nd Armored Division had also been committed to battle in a nearby sector. We turn now to an account of the action of the 2nd Armored Division during this same December period of the Ardennes counteroffensive.

NOTES FOR CHAPTER II

- 1 After Action Report, 3rd Armored Division, December 1944
- 2 Ibid.
- 3 Report of Operations, 1st U S Army, 1 Aug 44-22 Feb 45, p. 111.
- 4 Op. Cit., 3rd Armored Division
- 5 Interview with Lt Col Walter B. Richardson by 2nd Information and Historical Service, VII Corps, Sart, Belgium, 11 Jan 45.
- 6 Interview with Major General Maurice Rose by 2nd Information and Historical Service, VII Corps, Petite Somme, Belgium, 26 Jan 45.
- 7 Op. Cit., Interview with Lt Col Richardson.
- 8 After Action Report, CCA, 3rd Armored Division, December 44.
- 9 Op. Cit., 1st U S Army, p. 121.
- 10 Op. Cit., CCA.
- 11 Ibid.
- 12 After Action Report, 33rd Armored Regiment, December 1944.
- 13 Interview with Captain John W. Jordan by 2nd Information and Historical Service, VII Corps, Ottre, Belgium (no date).

- 14 Op. Cit., 33rd Armored Regiment.
- 15 Ibid.
- 16 Op. Cit., 1st U S Army, p. 111.
- 17 Op. Cit., Interview with General Rose.
- 18 Ibid.
- 19 Ibid.
- 20 Interview with Lt Col Samuel Hogan by 2nd Information and Historical Service, VII Corps, Modave, Belgium, 1 Jan 45.
- 21 Ibid.
- 22 After Action Report, 83rd Armored Reconnaissance Battalion, December 1944.
- 23 Interview with Lt Col William R. Orr by 2nd Information and Historical Service, VII Corps, Havelange, Belgium, 31 Dec 44.
- 24 Op. Cit., Interview with Lt Col Hogan.
- 25 Op. Cit., Interview with Lt Col Orr.
- 26 Op. Cit., Interview with Lt Col Hogan.
- 27 Op. Cit., 83rd Armored Reconnaissance Battalion
- 28 Spearhead in the West, 3rd Armored Division History, p. 222.

CHAPTER III

COORDINATED EMPLOYMENT OF THE SECOND ARMORED DIVISION

16-31 December 1944

When the German offensive struck the Ardennes on 16 December 1944, the 2nd Armored Division was 70 miles away to the north near BAESWEILER, Germany in the Ninth U S Army. It had engaged in several weeks of heavy offensive fighting to reach the ROER River. Then, during the four weeks prior to 16 December, the division had a dual mission. It held a defensive sector of the XIX Corps sector with a small force, while the remainder of the command was held in Corps reserve.

During this month of reserve status, 17 replacement officers and 464 enlisted men were integrated into the fighting teams. All units had conducted maintenance and training along with rest and rehabilitation.

Current thought among commanders had resulted in the reorganization of one regiment (36th Armored) on 5 December 1944. This regiment kept the three-battalion organization but made one into a reconnaissance and security battalion composed of a reconnaissance company and a light tank company. The two assault battalions each contained one light tank company and three medium tank companies. The organization of the 67th Armored Regiment remained unchanged with its light tank battalion and two medium tank battalions.

Thus the status of the division is viewed as the German attack began. Major General Ernest N. Harmon had rested his men for four

weeks and had integrated the necessary replacements after the previous fighting. He had instituted the new organization of one armored regiment, and maintenance was caught up. This refreshed armored division now stood unknowingly at the beginning of two weeks of previously un-parallelled operations.

16-23 December 1944

This period opened with intense obscurity which prevailed amid a hail of orders and changes of orders. It included a 70-mile road march in cold rain with the weather becoming worse. Wet roads became icy and severely hindered the tanks with their steel treads. The division entered bitter, decisive battle against German armor at the deepest point of the penetration. The period closed in late December with the LA LESSE River line being established and the division being relieved for another mission. Insufficient infantry personnel handicapped the division during its action.

The obscure situation began 17 December when the division was alerted for defense against an airborne attack. Brigadier General J. H. Collier's Combat Command A received orders at 0800 to prepare for movement to the zone of the XIII Corps. This order was rescinded and the entire division was placed on "double alert". By 20 December General Harmon's responsibility for the defensive sector along the ROER River had been taken over by the 28th Infantry Division, and the troops thus relieved joined the division in the assembly area. Division Artillery remained in firing positions.

General Harmon received an emergency call at 1600 on 21 December telling him he was to make a march. He had the division ready to move by 1700, but he could not find out until 2200 what route to take. Then he had no time for reconnaissance prior to the 70-mile march to join VII Corps south of HUY, Belgium. It is a tribute to the 2nd Armored Division that all combat elements completed this move in 22 hours and were closed into assembly areas by 2150 on 22 December. The Reconnaissance Battalion had led the division by placing two companies on each of the two routes used and by dropping off route markers at each road intersection. The weather was near freezing and raining, and the slippery roads were very hazardous. All night movement was in blackout. Only thirty vehicular mishaps were reported, and all these vehicles were recovered and returned to duty.

Following the combat elements, the Division Trains later closed into an area in the vicinity of MODAVE, Belgium, and an interesting logistical situation developed. The division drew ammunition directly from Communications Zone dumps and even had occasion to establish temporarily a "static" gasoline dump of its own. There was a great deal of confusion and obscurity because no one knew where the Panzer columns were moving and because Allied units were being hastily shifted to locate and contain the German drive. The 2nd Armored Division had moved so suddenly that no advance liaison could be established with the G-4 of VII Corps. Consequently, when the division became engaged suddenly on 23 December, there had been no opportunity to locate the supply dumps nor to become integrated into the new Corps' SOP for

logistical support. Therefore, the quite unusual situation developed in which ammunition was drawn from a nearby Class V Depot of Advance Section, Communications Zone. Gasoline had become critical, since the long, difficult march had consumed more than the division's mobile Class III Supply Point could replace. Therefore, a "static" division dump was hastily set up, to which combat elements could go for their gasoline. Meanwhile, trucks of the mobile supply point shuttled back and forth constantly to the Army Class III Supply Point until the normal level was reestablished. Then the division mobile Class III supply system returned to normal operation of delivery to the combat units. It is also of interest that all supply directives were obtained orally and usually by the Division G-4's personally visiting the Corps G-4.

Employment against the Panzers

Upon assembly in Belgium, control of the 2nd Armored Division passed to Lieutenant General J. Lawton Collin's VII Corps. His plan was to keep the division in reserve for use in a counterattack once the German penetration had been contained. The division was actually committed without orders when a reconnaissance patrol from the 82nd Reconnaissance Battalion was fired on by two enemy tanks near HAID, Belgium on the 23rd of December. General Harmon realized that the enemy knew that the division was identified as being in the area because the armored car had been knocked out. He dispatched Combat Command A, consisting of:

Task Force A

2nd Bn, 66th Armored Regiment
2nd Bn, 41st Armored Infantry Regiment
Plat, Co A, 17th Armored Engineer Battalion
Plat, Co A, 702nd Tank Destroyer Battalion

Task Force B

3rd Bn, 66th Armored Regiment
Co E, 41st Armored Infantry Regiment

Task Force C

1st Bn, 66th Armored Regiment
Rcn Co, 66th Armored Regiment

CCA Control

Co B, 82nd Armored Reconnaissance Battalion
Co C, 82nd Armored Reconnaissance Battalion
Co A, 17th Armored Engineer Battalion (-)

Direct Support

92nd Armored Field Artillery Battalion

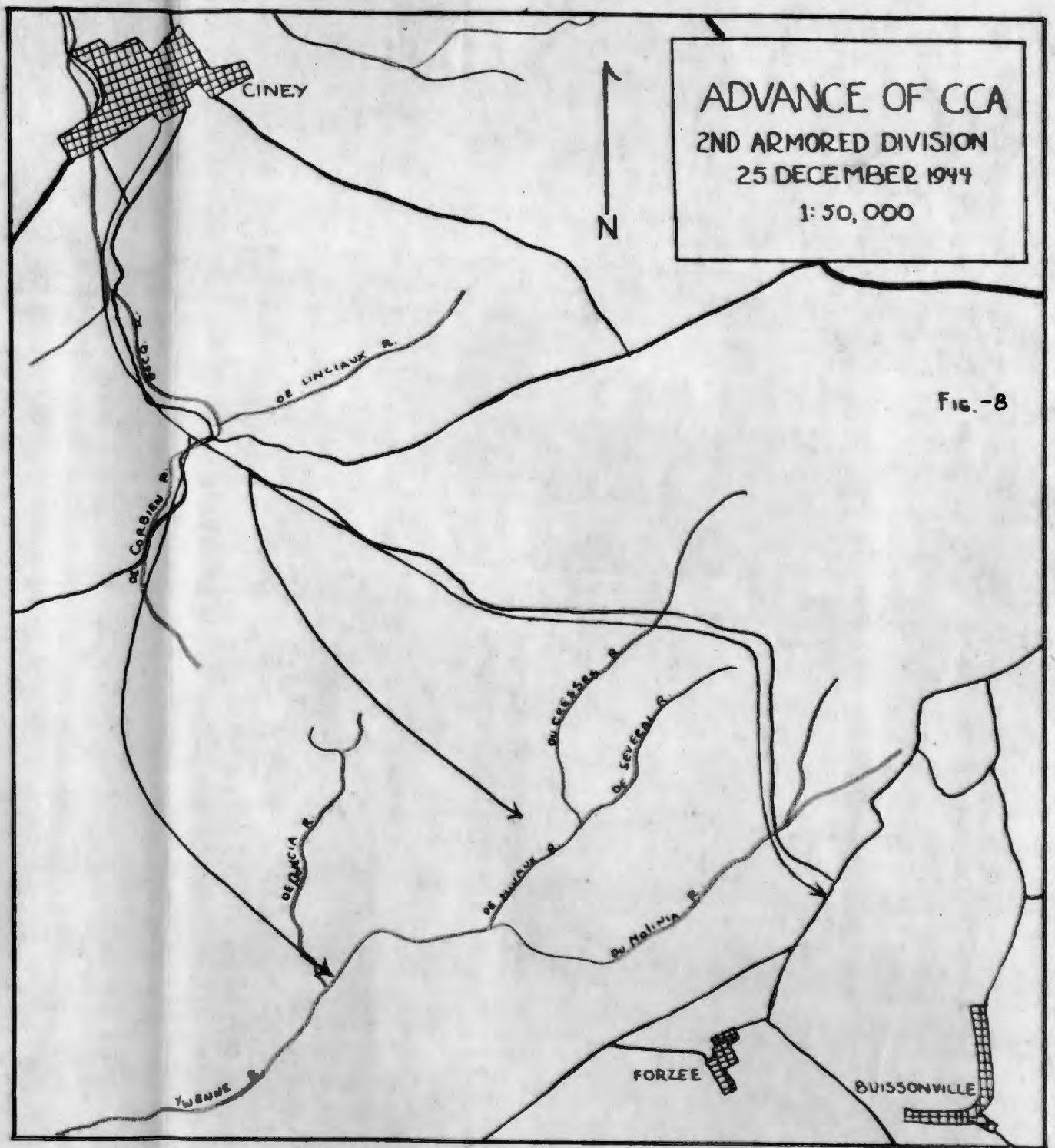
to CINEY with instructions to secure the town and to be prepared to continue the attack south toward BUISSONVILLE. The tanks moved out immediately and were able to occupy CINEY without opposition. CCA sent out patrols and established contact with British armored units that were in that vicinity, to the west. General Collier then swung his command towards BUISSONVILLE and continued without meeting resistance until they encountered automatic weapons and anti-tank gun fire at 2100 coming from the direction of LEIGNON. By 2345 they had reduced this resistance and were able to proceed, moving out in column with one Task Force astride the CINEY-ROCHEFORT road.

One of the most decisive ambushes of World War II was accomplished by CCA almost by accident. As the column was advancing to the

south a German armored column was moving north along the same road. Fortunately CCA became aware of the enemy column to their front at a time when they could deploy on either side of the road, and they prepared to receive the enemy column with a welcome from all weapons. The surprise was complete and the snow-covered hills of Belgium were soon bathed in the flickering light of burning German vehicles. Enemy losses were extremely heavy while CCA's were relatively light. Shortly after this action the combat command coiled for the night.

The weather cleared on 24 December for the first time since the beginning of the Battle of the Bulge. At 0630 CCA moved out in the attack with two task forces abreast. Task Force A was in column astride the main road to ROCHEFORT. Task Force B was in two columns to the right of the road (see Fig. 8). After Action Reports characterize the resistance as sporadic, but to the men in the leading elements it was just like any other attack when they had to fight their way forward. One of the highlights of the day was a tank action near FORZEE when three enemy tanks fired on Task Force B. Two of these tanks managed to escape. The two columns of Task Force B were in the BOIS DE HAUTMONT by 1500 after having pulled into a single column at FEM DE STE. PHILLIPE earlier in the afternoon. While this was going on Task Force A rolled on into BUISSONVILLE at 1430. Patrols were sent out to HAVRENNE and SORINCHAMPS, and contact was established X with the 4th Cavalry Group that had been attached to the division by X Corps.

General Collins made a decision to allow General Harmon to com-



mit CCB in an attack on a concentration of enemy armor that had been reported by aerial observers. This decision, made in the face of a 21st Army Group directive to defend and be prepared to fall back to a new line through HOTTON, was one of the audacious moves that have many times brought success to American arms in the face of seemingly hopeless circumstances.

CCB celebrated Christmas Day by attacking the enemy concentration near CELLES. Task Force A, consisting of:

- Hq, 67th Armored Regiment
- 3rd Bn, 67th Armored Regiment
- 3rd Bn, 41st Armored Infantry Regiment (- H Co)
- Plat, Co C, 702nd Tank Destroyer Battalion
- Plat, Co B, 17th Armored Engineer Battalion
- 78th Armored Field Artillery Battalion (plus Btry A, 195th AAA (AW) Battalion (- 1 Plat)) (Direct Support)

moved west through ACHENNE and south through BOISELLES and by 1700 occupied the high ground overlooking CELLES from the southwest.

Task Force B, composed of:

- 1st Bn, 67th Armored Regiment
- 1st Bn, 41st Armored Infantry Regiment
- Plat, Co B, 17th Armored Engineer Battalion
- Plat, Co C, 702nd Tank Destroyer Battalion
- 87th Armored Field Artillery Battalion (plus section, Btry A, 195th AAA (AW) Battalion) (Direct Support)

moved directly south clearing enemy elements from CONJOUX and SOINNE and moved into CELLES from the southeast (See Fig. 9). The occupation of the town was completed by 1745 in a coordinated attack by both task forces. The enemy units were trapped north of the town in the BOIS COREUX and BOIS DES PRIÈSSES by this encirclement. The rest of the forces in the Combat Command at this time were:

Mobile Reserve

Co I, 67th Armored Regiment (- 1 Plat)
Co H, 41st Armored Infantry Regiment

CCB Control

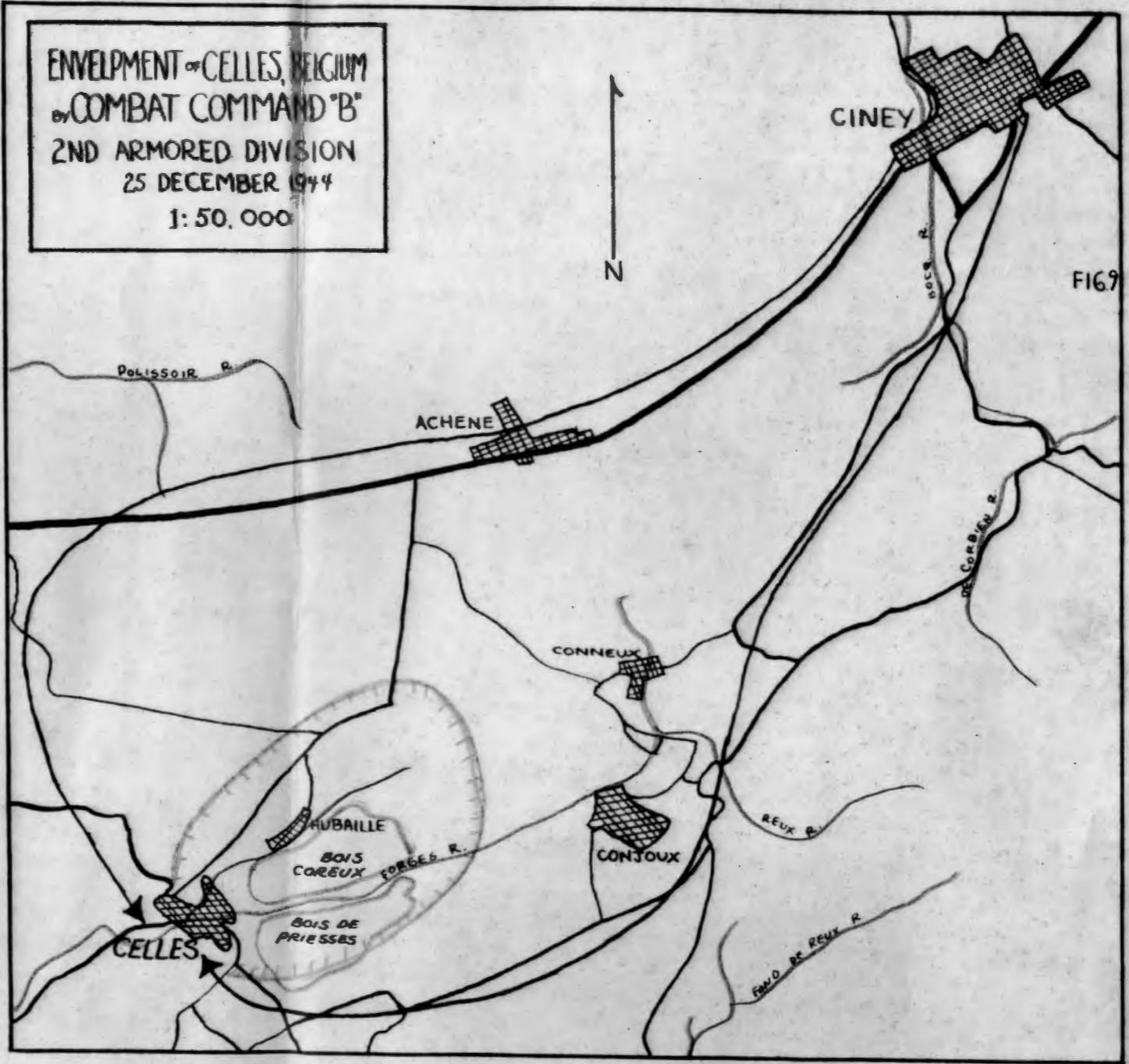
Co B, 17th Armored Engineer Battalion (- 3 Plats)
Rcn Co, 67th Armored Regiment (plus Plat, Co B, 17th Eng
Bn)
Co C, 702nd Tank Destroyer Battalion (- 2 Plats)
82nd Armored Reconnaissance Battalion (- Co C, B, 1 Plat,
Co D)
Co D, 67th Armored Regiment

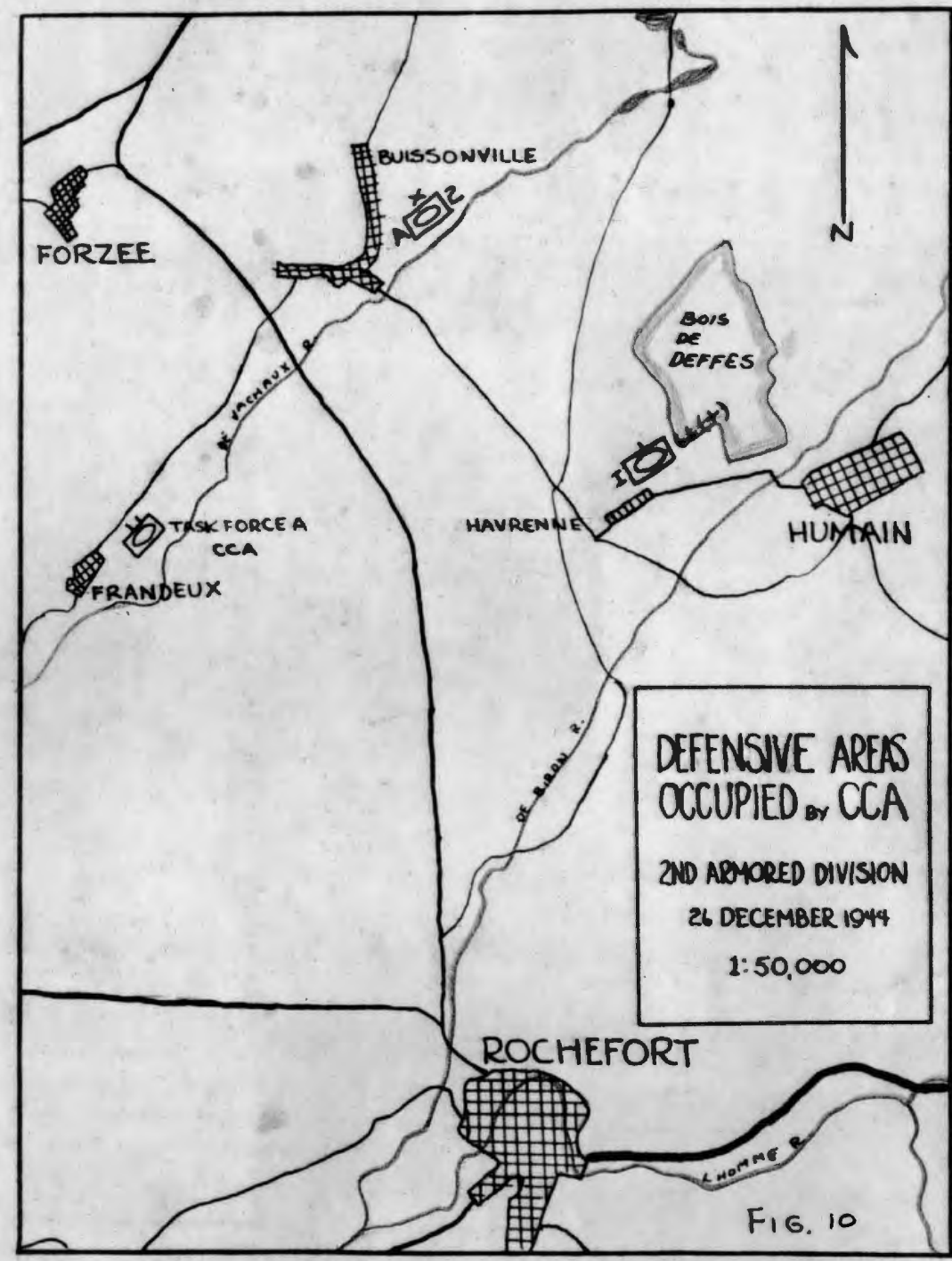
While this attack was going on the 82nd Armored Reconnaissance Battalion cleared SORINNE and FOY NOTRE DAME and succeeded in destroying or capturing nineteen vehicles (seven of them American, captured by the Germans) and one SP gun.

This action at CELLES was a classic example of the double envelopment. Two Task Forces, each following an independent axis, each consisting of a reinforced battalion, secured the high ground overlooking the town. Then, in a coordinated attack, the combat command entered and cleared the village. When interviewed after the war the German general who commanded the elements of the 2nd Panzer Division that were trapped in the woods, stated that his vehicles were practically immobilized due to the shortage of gasoline. In spite of this situation, several attempts to break out were made. The task of clearing the woods and actually mopping up the area still had to be faced by this armored force which had no attached infantry.

While this action was going on CCA had assumed defensive positions in the vicinity of HAVRENNE, BUESSENVILLE and FRANDEUX (See Fig. 10). The enemy lost heavily in both vehicles and personnel in

ENVELPMENT OF CELLES, BELGIUM
BY COMBAT COMMAND "B"
2ND ARMORED DIVISION
25 DECEMBER 1944
1:50,000





making three counterattacks against these positions. Company I, 66th Armored Regiment (reinforced) bore the brunt of two of these attacks at HAVRENNE. The first counterattack at 0750, by fifteen tanks and approximately a battalion of infantry was repulsed with a loss of one Mark IV and seven Mark V tanks, two half tracks, and one SP gun. Company I lost two medium tanks in this engagement. At 0830 another enemy attack was launched against the same position and again it was stopped, this time by tank and anti-tank fire which knocked out the three leading half tracks. This seemed to be enough for the Germans, and they withdrew. The third Task Force of the combat command patrolled the VERRE-FORZEE road. By 2400 CCA held a line through VERRE-LALOUX-HAVRENNE-HAIES DU GRAND PRE.

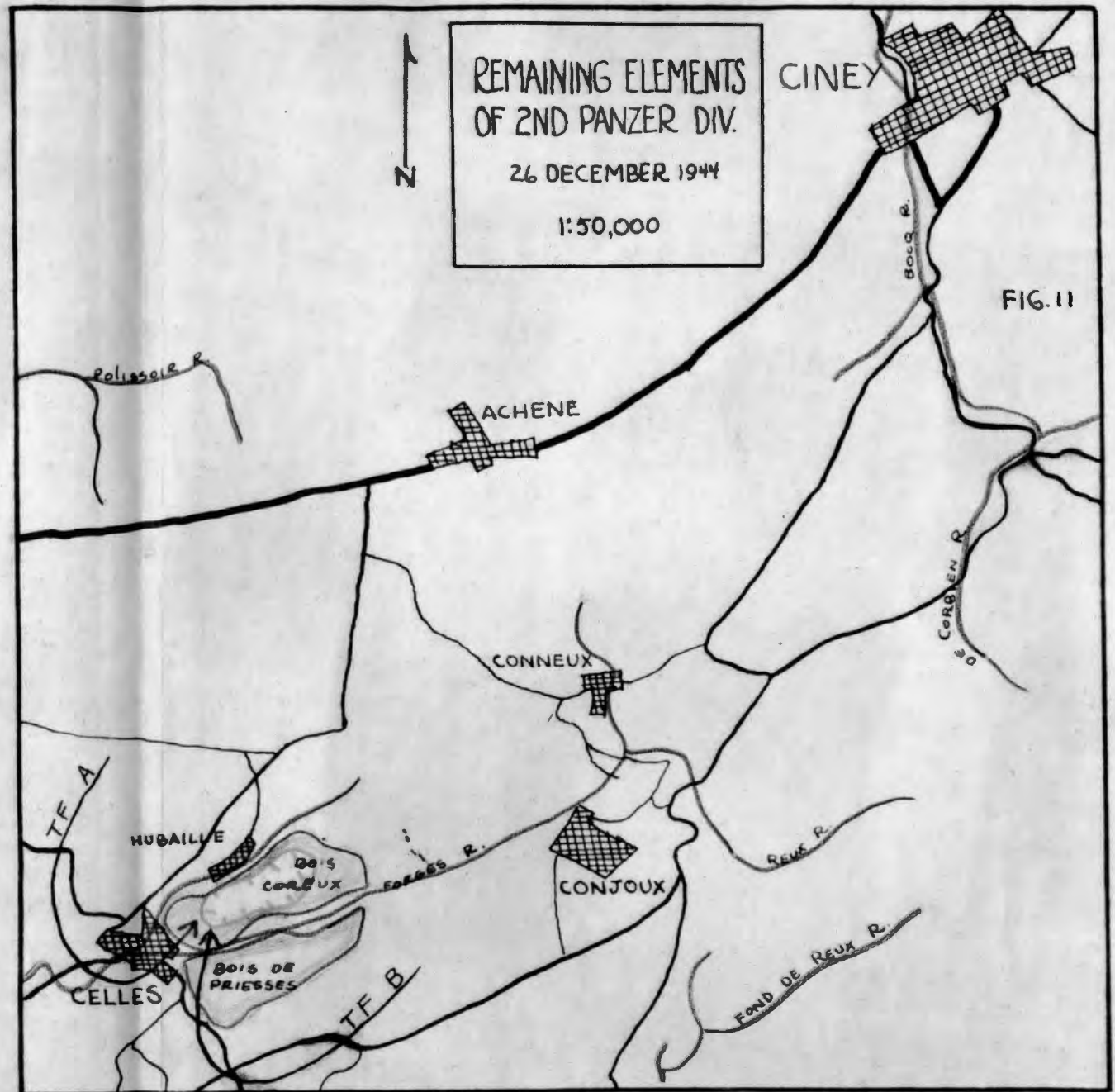
CCB continued mopping up the "Celles Pocket". By the end of the day there remained only one small group of the enemy in the BOIS COR-EUX near HUBAILLE (See Fig. 11). This was an infantry mission; consequently, the attack was actually made by two companies from the 41st Armored Infantry Regiment supported by armor from the 1st Battalion of the 67th Armored Regiment. Two enemy counterattacks with tank-infantry teams seemed to belie the statement that the enemy vehicles were immobilized. By 1500 the BOIS DES PRIESSES was clear. During the day's fighting the highlight was a combined air-artillery action in beating off the second of the two counterattacks previously mentioned.

Meanwhile, Colonel John C. MacDonald's 4th Cavalry Group had the mission of maintaining contact between CCA and CCB, and securing the

left (east) flank of the division. He used elements of the 4th Cavalry Squadron to maintain contact and the 24th Cavalry Squadron (reinforced) to block the roads in the sector north of HUMAIN. The 24th Cavalry Squadron thwarted enemy attempts to reinforce the garrison at HUMAIN. CCR had been alerted to support either CCA or the 4th Cavalry Group in the event of a breakthrough in either sector. It was also preparing for an operation against HUMAIN. ^X Enemy air was active over the division area throughout the day of 26 December.

In the twenty-four hour period of 27 December 1944 the 2nd Armored Division claims to have inflicted the heaviest enemy losses of the eastern Belgium operation. To substantiate this claim they cite at least 142 vehicles of all types destroyed or captured and 448 prisoners taken; in 88 fire missions Division Artillery fired a total of 5598 rounds.

In this action CCR was attached to CCA and became Task Force R. CCA was ordered to take HUMAIN. A one hour artillery preparation began at 0700, then Company I, 66th Armored Regiment attacked to gain a position overlooking the town from the west (See Fig. 12). This effort succeeded and placed the company in position to support by fire the assault of Task Force R on HUMAIN. This was another double envelopment, again using two reinforced battalions over separate routes. The southern force consisted of the 2nd Battalion, 67th Armored Infantry Regiment reinforced by Company E, 41st Armored Infantry Regiment and Company B, 702nd Tank Destroyer Battalion. The northern force was made up of the 2nd Battalion of the 41st Armored Infantry



Regiment less Company E. The attack was made at 1230 by both forces. The 24th Cavalry Squadron, elements of which had fought gallantly in the two previous attacks on HUMAIN, blocked the roads to the east and northeast. Fighting continued until 2330 when the last enemy strongpoint fell. An estimated battalion of enemy infantry had been barricaded in the houses and reinforced by anti-tank fire from the BOIS DE DEFFES northwest of town.

After consolidating positions near HAVRENNE the other Task Forces of CCA attacked at 1600 in three columns to cut the east-west road out of ROCHEFORT and reach the LA LESSE and L'HOMME Rivers. In two hours the right and center columns reached their objectives, but the left column was halted by nebelwerfer fire from ROCHEFORT (See Fig. 13). The other forces, by vigorous patrolling, established control within the CCA zone and tied in with CCB on the right. The LA LESSE River line was secure.

CCB did not rest on its well-earned laurels but continued to mop up throughout its zone, on the right flank of CCA. By 1900 CCB had extended the LA LESSE River line from CCA's zone west to the British position at HOUYE.

VII Corps directed that the 83rd Infantry Division assume responsibility for this zone on 28 December. By 31 December the entire division had been relieved and was assembled in the area HAVELANGE-MOHIVILLE-MIECRET. Preparations were begun for the coming offensive to the south.

ATTACK ON HUMAIN
BY TASK FORCE R
(CCR) CCA 2ND ARMORED DIV
27 DECEMBER 1944
1:50,000

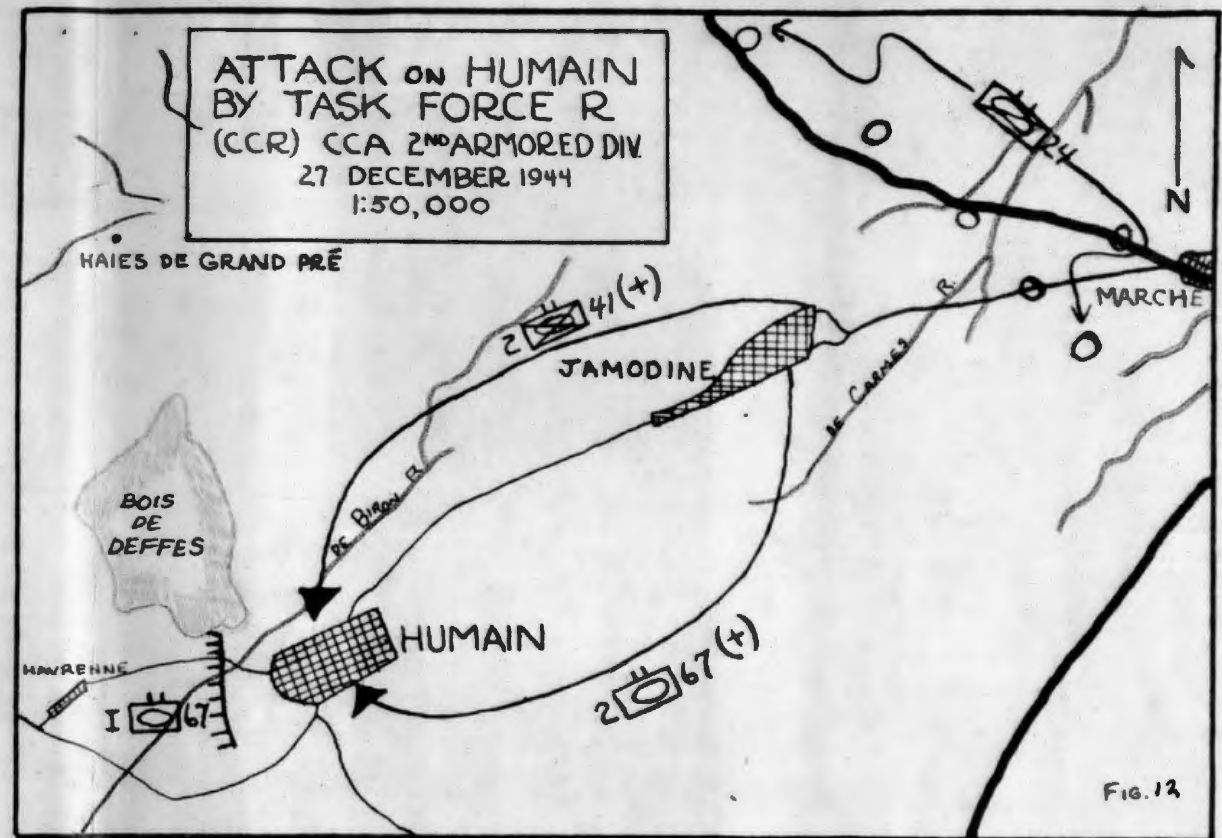
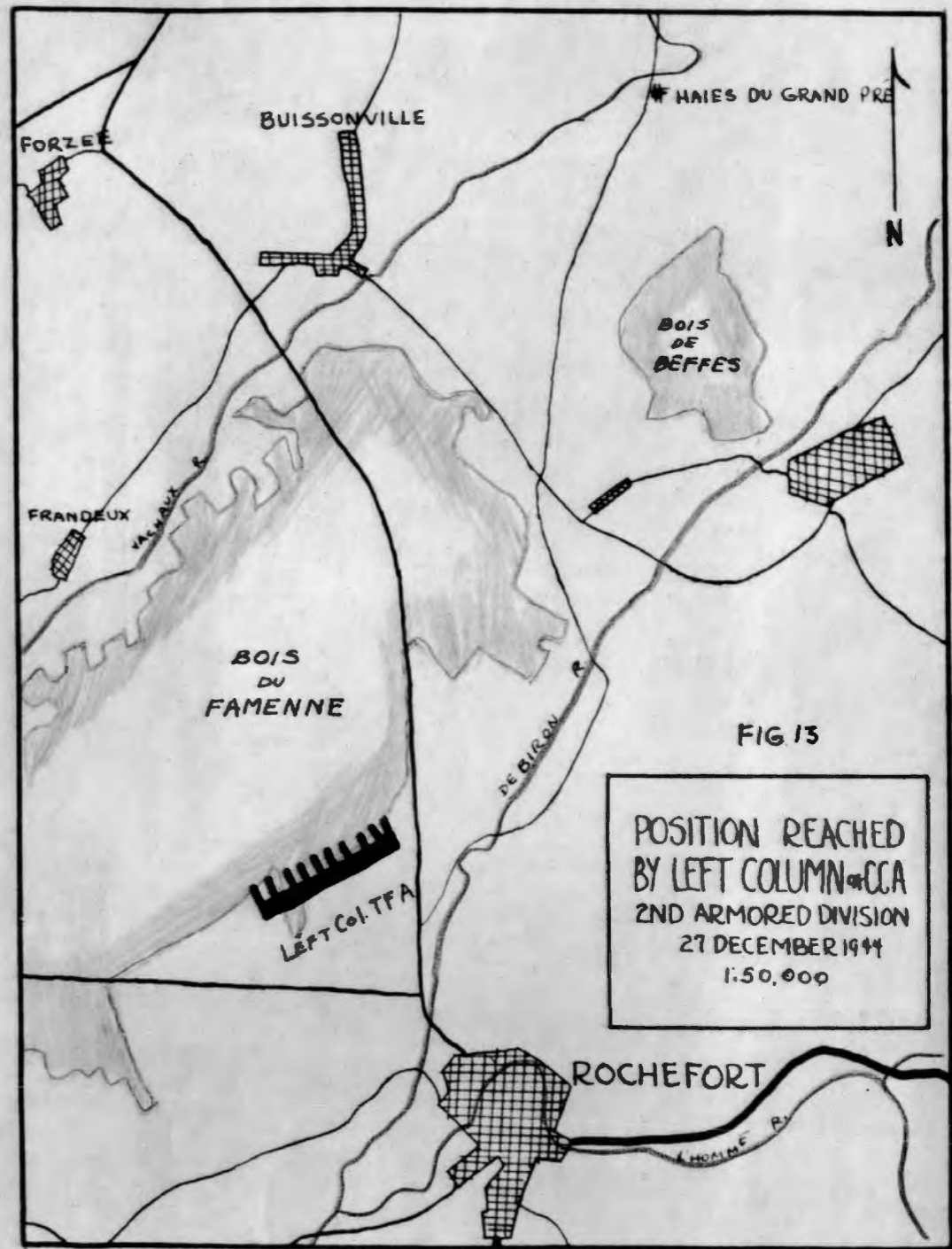


FIG. 12



Summary of Action

Thus we end an action which assisted in halting the German drive to the MEUSE, stopping it only four miles short of that key terrain feature. This battle had been described as a fitting comparison of Allied and German armored might in which the superiority of the 2nd Armored Division was tellingly displayed.

Casualties suffered by the division in this campaign indicate that the weather took almost as heavy a toll as enemy action. Losses were 151 from sickness against 185 wounded. Cold and snow, combined with the inevitable fatigue caused by continuous action night and day thus took its deadly toll of the fighting men.

Supply during this phase of the operations constituted no real problem, as the Corps supply points were within a few miles of the division supply points at MODAVE. Ammunition was available at HERVE, 47 miles away, if the Corps Class V truckhead at NANDRIN was empty, as it often was during this period. Efficient and prompt replacement of all ordnance equipment was available from the Army Ordnance Depot and the supporting Tank Maintenance Company.

Actually, the division can be considered as being in an enviable supply position, as all shortages had been filled prior to entering the campaign. Losses of vehicles, especially tanks, were amazingly light. Special items of equipment such as shoe spacs and white camouflage suits for the infantry were not available in sufficient quantities. The only problem was that the available supply rate of 76mm HVAP tank ammunition was so low that a definite problem existed for

which there was no solution.

This action was a coordinated attack by an armored division depending heavily on its armor. Organic infantry, being limited to one regiment, was insufficient to balance favorably with two tank regiments. The losses were relatively light compared to enemy vehicles destroyed and personnel captured.

In the actual reduction of the "Celles Pocket" it was apparent that additional infantry would have speeded the mopping-up phase. Also, in looking at the action of CCA near ROCHEFORT, a column was stopped as it debouched from the woods. Here the infantry had to be brought forward before the tanks could move again.

To recapitulate, the 2nd Armored Division marched from an assembly area in Germany to Belgium where it fought a coordinated division action utilizing two combat commands to stop the western drive of the German Army. The reserve command was committed toward the end of the action to reduce the last remaining enemy strongpoint. The attached cavalry group performed excellently as both a security and economy force.

Thus, we can see that the U S forces had a logistical advantage over the German forces, especially in regard to gasoline. The U S forces were fresh while the Germans were tired from several days of fighting. The German commanders were tied to a preconceived plan of maneuver and did not have adequate communications facilities while the American commanders operated under mission type orders and had excellent communications.

With the assembling of the division and preparation for the at-

tack we are now ready to turn to a consideration of the Corps attack to HOUFFALIZE to pinch off the German armies in the Ardennes.

NOTES FOR CHAPTER III

- 1 After Action Report, 2nd Armored Division, December 1944, p. 4.
- 2 Ibid., p. 3.
- 3 Historical Report, CCA, 2nd Armored Division, December 1944, p. 2.
- 4 Op. Cit., After Action Report, p. 4.
- 5 Ibid., p. 6.
- 6 Interview with Lt Col Muller, Acting G-4, 2nd Armored Division, 16-31 December 1944, in November 1948.
- 7 Op. Cit., After Action Report, p. 6.

CHAPTER VI

CLOSING THE GAP

Second and Third Armored Divisions

1-16 January 1945

By 31 December the German offensive had been halted short of the MEUSE. The Allied forces seized the initiative, and, in a well-executed, coordinated attack drove the badly mauled Nazi columns back to their SEIGFRIED fortifications. The 2nd and 3rd Armored Divisions fighting in a Corps team played an effective role in the resumption of the offense.

First U S Army assigned VII Corps the mission of attacking southeast and seizing HOUFFALIZE to make juncture with General George S. Patton Jr.'s Third U S Army. The drive on HOUFFALIZE was bounded on the southwest by the L'OURTHE River and on the east by a line SALM-CHATEAU-GRAND SART-HIERLOT. The principal streams of the area run along the line of the attack, a factor which was of advantage to our forces. As indicated in Appendix IV, the terrain is wooded, contains dense underbrush and is hilly and rough, vehicular movement being thereby confined to the inadequate road net. The area cannot be described as good tank country. In describing it, General White has said:

I would like to accentuate what is probably well known of the extreme difficulty of the operations due to weather and terrain. While the fighting around Celles was in fairly good tank country, the fighting from MANHAY to HOUFFALIZE was through densely wooded terrain in which the enemy utilized every conceivable device to slow our advance.¹

General Collins planned for the VII Corps to seize HOUFFALIZE with an armored spearhead consisting of the 2nd and 3rd Armored Divisions. In implementation of this plan, these two divisions moved from the vicinities of HAVELANGE and OFFUT, respectively, to new assembly areas along the line SOY-BRA. For the attack 2nd Armored Division would be disposed on the right, 3rd Armored Division on the left. These divisions were to be followed by the 84th and 83rd Infantry Divisions respectively.

Study of the drive on HOUFFALIZE has revealed four factors of distinct importance and definite effect on the results which the action achieved. These factors are:

1. The physical condition of the men and the weariness that the preceding two weeks of battle had brought about.
2. Lack of mission type orders to commanders of the armored divisions and the restrictions thereby placed upon them.
3. Insufficiency of the infantry that was allowed the armored divisions by existent Tables of Organization and Equipment.
4. The miserable weather, particularly the snow which commenced on 1 January and continued through 9 January.

Although the two armored divisions advanced abreast and against similar resistance, it seems advisable to discuss the action of each separately in order to achieve continuity of thought.

Action of the 2nd Armored Division

In considering the 2nd Armored Division's part in the offensive

it is well to remember that General Harmon's troops had indulged in heavy fighting up to 28 December and that his division's losses during that month had been 1,021.² As the attack took place on 3 January, it is evident that there had been little opportunity to reequip, absorb replacements or regroup forces and that hardships of December action had an adverse effect on morale and physical ability. Weather was adverse throughout the operation. Turrets were frozen in the morning, and mobility was greatly reduced. To quote General White again:

Lack of suitable winter clothing was a tremendous handicap and contributed to the suffering and discomfort. We made a form of footgear by cutting up blankets and making a sort of inner boot and then galoshes or overshoes were worn. This item was particularly useful to tankers, but was not so good for the people who had to walk.³

The 2nd Armored Division was assigned the mission of clearing enemy from the area between the line of departure and HOUFFALIZE within its zone. The VIELSALM-LAROCHE highway and the town of HOUFFALIZE were prescribed as objectives by Corps. On 2 January the division moved to new assembly areas in the vicinity of SOY and GRAND-MENIL. The attack was planned for 0830 on 3 January through lines held by the 75th Infantry Division. The formation of combat commands abreast was chosen, CCA attacking on the right with three task forces abreast, CCB attacking on the left with two task forces abreast.

The formation adopted by General Harmon appears reasonable in view of two factors:

1. The mission of the division was to clear enemy from its

4
zone.

2. Terrain and weather made maximum use of available road net desirable.

On 1 January General Collins attached the 335th Infantry Regiment
5
84th Division to the 2nd Armored Division. General Harmon further at-
tached this regiment to CCA. General Collier subdivided CCA into
6
four reinforced battalion task forces as follows:

Task Force A

3rd Bn, 66th Armored Regiment (less Co I)
1st Bn, 335th Infantry Regiment
1 Plat, Co A, 702nd Tank Destroyer Battalion
1 Plat, Co A, 17th Armored Engineer Battalion

Task Force B

66th Armored Regiment (less 1st Bn, Co F, Rcn Co, Maint Co)
3rd Bn, 335th Infantry Regiment
1 Plat, Co A, 702nd Tank Destroyer Battalion
1 Plat, Co A, 17th Armored Engineer Battalion

Task Force C

335th Infantry Regiment (less 1st and 3rd Bns)
1st Bn, 66th Armored Regiment (less Rcn Co)
Co's F and I, 66th Armored Regiment attached
1 Plat, Co A, 702nd Tank Destroyer Battalion

Task Force D

82nd Armored Reconnaissance Battalion (less Co B, 1 Plat,
Co A, and 1 Plat, Co D)
Co A, 17th Armored Engineer Battalion (less 2 Plats)

CCB was subdivided into two task forces and a reserve as fol-
7
lows:

Task Force X

Hq, 67th Armored Regiment
1st Bn, 67th Armored Regiment
1st Bn, 41st Armored Infantry Regiment

1 Plat, Co C, 702nd Tank Destroyer Battalion
1 Plat, Co B, 17th Armored Engineer Battalion
78th Armored Field Artillery Battalion (plus Btry A, 195th
AAA Battalion) (Direct Support)

Task Force Y

3rd Bn, 67th Armored Regiment
3rd Bn, 41st Armored Infantry Regiment
1 Plat, Co C, 702nd Tank Destroyer Battalion
1 Plat, Co B, 17th Armored Engineer Battalion

CCB Control

Rcn Co, 67th Armored Regiment
Co B, 17th Armored Engineer Battalion (less 2 Plats)
Co C, 702nd Tank Destroyer Battalion (less 2 Plats)
Co B, 82nd Armored Reconnaissance Battalion

The attack of 3 January began at 0830 with the handicaps of snow, fog, impaired visibility and ice-covered roads. Tanks and trucks floundered on ice and snow, and vehicles equipped with steel tracks found the going particularly difficult. Elements of the 2nd Panzer Division and the 560 Volksgrenadier Division opposed the attack from positions that were well prepared, well situated and stubbornly defended. Against this resistance, the division's advance of 3 January was limited to 2,000 yards.

The attack continued through four days of bitter fighting against a stubborn enemy. On the fourth day, 7 January, elements of CCB had cut the important VIELSALM-LAROCHE road, one of the division's objectives (See Fig. 14). Seizure of this road denied enemy forces an important route of retreat.

Upon seizure of a portion of the VIELSALM-LAROCHE road in its zone, CCB moved Task Force R, which had been attached to it on 4 January, in an attack west along the road toward SAMREE. This attack

continued against much opposition until 9 January and was necessary in view of a part of the division's mission, "To clear all enemy from the forest strongpoints and villages between the line of departure and HOUFFALIZE." SAMREE fell to CCA on 10 January after being bitterly defended by tank and infantry elements. It is noteworthy that the raking of this town delayed the advance of the division for a three-day period.

On 7 January the eastern boundary of the German 116th Panzer Division was shifted to the east to include SAMREE, placing parts of this division in opposition to CCA at SAMREE, and to the part of CCB that moved west along the VIELSALM-LAROCHE road. Of the action that occurred between 7 and 10 January around SAMREE, the commander of the 116th Panzer Division has said:

Had these superior forces with a quick and vigorous thrust, forced their way forward and succeeded in breaking through, the results for the Germans who were still holding out on all fronts would have been immense.¹⁰

Following the seizure and organization of SAMREE on 10 January, major units of the 2nd Armored Division were assembled, and 11 January was spent in maintenance and repair of equipment and in preparation for continuing the attack.

The attack was resumed on 12 January, CCA attacking at 0800 and CCB at 0900. Task Forces were again employed abreast, and this formation was principally used throughout this second phase of the attack. Weather continued to be bitter, but terrain south of the VIELSALM-LAROCHE road was slightly improved, and hostile resistance between the road and HOUFFALIZE appears to have diminished somewhat.

Resistance from 12 to 16 January has been characterized as a "ten-
11
acious rear guard action."

An interesting note of the cooperation which existed between the 2nd and 3rd Armored Divisions has been made by General White.

A spirit of cooperation existed to a marked degree, and one time we were able to envelop an enemy force holding up our advance through the cooperation of the 3rd Armored permitting us to use roads in their zone to effect the envelopment. On the infrequent occasions when we had column cover, we passed available planes back and forth to work on targets in each division zone.¹²

By daily continuation of the attack, 2nd Armored advanced south and southeast until contact with Third Army patrols was accomplished in the vicinity of HOUFFALIZE on 16 January. The town itself was occupied that day. The air line distance covered by the 2nd Armored Division in this drive had been 16 miles, the elapsed time - 14 days.

To complete the picture of the VII Corps use of armor in the January push we shall have to look back to the beginning of the offensive and follow the actions of the 3rd Armored Division.

Action of the 3rd Armored Division

The action of General Rose's 3rd Armored Division during this period parallels quite closely that of the 2nd Armored Division. The division's mission was to seize CHERAIN and BOUVIGNY, and the zone of its advance on these objectives was bounded on the west by the MANHAY-HOUFFALIZE highway, inclusive, and on the east by the line SALM-CHATEAU-HIERLOT. The western boundary was later changed to exclude the MANHAY-HOUFFALIZE highway.

VII Corps had attached the 330th Infantry Regiment, 83rd Division, to 3rd Armored Division and General Rose had attached one battalion of this regiment to CCA, the remaining two battalions to CCB. CCA was organized into two task forces, Task Force Doan and Task Force Richardson. CCB was similarly organized into Task Forces McGeorge and Lovelady.

The 3rd Armored Division attacked on 3 January with combat commands abreast, each combat command with task forces abreast in order to take advantage of the existing road net. Initial resistance was heavy and consisted of infantry, tanks, and defended mine fields and road blocks. Despite this fact, 3rd Armored made somewhat better progress during the initial days of the attack than was enjoyed by 2nd Armored on its right flank. It is interesting to note, however, that throughout the operation the progress made by the two divisions was essentially the same.

The attack continued through 9 January, which date found elements of the division disposed along the line PROVEDOUX-OTTRE-REGNE (See Fig. 14). On that date the 83rd Infantry Division passed through 3rd Armored with a mission of seizing the line BOUVIGNY-BACLAIN-MONT LE BAN.

A new attack order (F O 23) directed continuation of the attack on 13 January. In the continuation of this attack, CCB was directed to seize high ground northwest of BACLAIN and proceed rapidly to secure CHERAIN while CCR was to follow and be prepared to move on the objective if the attack of CCB was slowed. CCA was to protect the

the left flank of the division.

Circumstances necessitated changing the plan of attack, and the plan that was put into effect involved the attack of CCR and CCB abreast. CCB was ordered to seize CHERAIN and CCR to take VAUX and SOMMERAINE.
14

This phase of the attack began on 13 January and continued against the resistance of infantry, tank, and artillery elements through the 16th. 17 January found the 3rd Armored Division in possession of the line SOMMERAINE-STERPIGNY as is indicated on Fig. 14.

Summary of Action

In drawing conclusions from the operations of the 2nd and 3rd Armored Divisions, the effect of weather is most difficult to assess. Additionally, the weariness of the divisions, even at the outset of the offensive, is a factor deserving careful consideration. Certainly the weather was as bitter as any encountered by US forces in Europe during World War II, and its effect on air operations and on the observation of artillery fire was tremendous. Tank elements were roadbound and the mobility of these elements was reduced to a small fraction of the normal figure.

The VII Corps attack was characterized by the advance of two Armored divisions abreast on a fourteen-mile front. Shortage of organic infantry in these armored divisions was overcome by the attachment of an infantry regiment to each division. VII Corps did not give mission type orders to the armored divisions, but rather required them to



LEGEND

- AREA CLEARED - 3-4 JAN.
- AREA CLEARED - 4-6 JAN.
- AREA CLEARED - 6-9 JAN.
- AREA CLEARED - 9-15 JAN.

FIG. 14

CLOSING THE GAP
 2-3 ARMORED DIVISIONS
 2-16 JANUARY 1945
 1:100,000

advance within zones. The restrictive orders given to the divisions imposed the requirement of liaison and contact with adjacent units, and it precluded attack in column, factors which may have slowed the advance materially.

NOTES FOR CHAPTER IV

- 1 Statement of Major General I. D. White, former commander of CCB, 2nd Armored Division, from a letter dated 13 December, 1948.
- 2 After Action Report, 2nd Armored Division, December 1944, p. 21.
- 3 Op. Cit., General White.
- 4 After Action Report, 2nd Armored Division, January 1945, p. 2.
- 5 Ibid., p. 2.
- 6 Ibid., Annex I
- 7 Ibid., Annex I
- 8 Ibid., p. 5.
- 9 Ibid., p. 2.
- 10 Commitment of the 116th Panzer Division in the Ardennes, 1944-1945, a report prepared by Brigadenfuehrer Seigfried von Waldenburg, Commanding 116th Panzer Division in the Ardennes, D/A MS A-873, Part III, p.11.
- 11 Op. Cit., After Action Report, January, p. 12.
- 12 Op. Cit., General White.
- 13 Spearhead in the West, 3rd Armored Division History, p. 228.
- 14 Ibid., p. 232.

CHAPTER V
CONCLUSIONS

Two veteran United States Armored Divisions have been followed throughout their employment in the Northern Sector of the Ardennes Campaign from 16 December 1944 until 16 January 1945. In this month of fighting, everything was bitter - the German offensive, the American resistance, then the American offensive, the German resistance, and above all the weather.

Many lessons in armor may be gained from this action. Here are nine outstanding points:

1. Importance of training for marching.
2. Importance of logistical support.
3. Desirability of maintaining tactical integrity of the armored division.
4. Desirability of mission type orders over zone type orders for an armored division.
5. Need for adequate infantry in the World War II armored division.
6. Need for tanks in the World War II infantry division.
7. Terrific effect of lack of enemy information.
8. Proof of armor's characteristics of mobility, firepower, shock action, and flexibility.
9. Outstanding value of the aggressive spirit inherent in the armored division.

These lessons certainly are not new at this date in 1949. How-

ever, a measure of satisfaction may be gleaned from seeing them incorporated in present Armored School doctrine and in present Tables of Organization.

During the December action several of these lessons were learned from the 3rd Armored Division. On the third day of the German offensive, CCA was taken from the division and attached to V Corps. It moved to the vicinity of EUPEN, Belgium where it remained four days and successfully completed its mission of rounding up the German paratroopers in the area. The 300 enemy paratroopers hardly merited the attention of CCA's two tank battalions, one armored infantry battalion, and supporting troops. However, more than twice that number of parachutists had been estimated and the command also constituted a corps reserve against an expected ground attack which failed to develop. CCA then returned to division control on 21 December.

Meanwhile, the division had moved to HOTTON, Belgium. Here it was attached to XVIII Corps but had temporarily lost CCB which had been attached to the 30th Infantry Division. Lacking both CCA and CCB the division received a mission it could not possibly accomplish - to secure the MANHAY-HOUFFALIZE road. CCB was helping the 30th Infantry Division unknowingly halt the Sixth Panzer Army by defeating Task Force Peiper, its leading element. CCB was organized into two task forces for this action and was further split into smaller elements, some of which were further attached to regiments. The overall effort was successful, but, on several occasions, the tank elements were initially unable to accomplish assigned missions due to

lack of infantry support. After six days, CCB was returned to division control on 24 December, but General Rose still did not have control of his entire division. Task Force Doan, of CCA, was attached to the 84th Division that same day, because of heavy enemy pressure. This incident occurred at a most inopportune time, as CCA's other task force was hopelessly cut off and had to destroy its remaining vehicles, thus stripping CCA of all combat elements.

Two days later, Task Force McGeorge from CCB, was attached to CCA. This force was able to drive the Germans from GRANDMENIL, a town which CCA had occupied before Task Force Doan was attached to the 84th Division. Prior to this date, three reinforced task forces of the 83rd Reconnaissance Battalion, fought a valiant five-day battle against overwhelming odds, plus being short of gasoline resupply. Although eventually cut off and having to abandon most remaining vehicles, they did delay part of the Fifth Panzer Army long enough for a line to be stabilized. In stabilizing this line, the 3rd Armored Division eventually had two regimental combat teams and two parachute battalions attached.

Thus the 3rd Armored Division's employment, in twelve days of continuous action, points up the lessons enumerated while playing a decisive role in the American effort to contain the German penetration.

During this same period, the 2nd Armored Division operated in the same decisive role somewhat to the west. However, its employment presented the sharp contrast of coordinated versus piecemeal employment. The entire division remained under General Harmon's control

during all this December action.

The division completed a spectacular march of 70 miles in 22 hours against great odds, weather, blackout, lack of maps, and lack of time for prior reconnaissance. All units closed into assembly areas just before midnight on 22 December and sent out reconnaissance parties. By early afternoon on the next day, General Harmon had committed CCA after one of his armored cars had been knocked out. CCA continued south and during the night ambushed a strong German tank column which it almost completely destroyed. The command's task forces fanned out abreast the next day and continued on to BUISSONVILLE and the surrounding area where it set up defensive positions. Against these positions the Germans launched repeated heavy counter-attacks only to be consistently repulsed with heavy losses. CCR was then attached to CCA and took HUMAIN against stubborn resistance. CCA pushed on to the LA LESSE River and established a line there which tied in with the 84th Division on the east and CCB on the west. CCB, meanwhile, was withheld from action for two days after CCA struck south. Then it was committed to the right of CCA and for three days engaged in wiping out the CELLES pocket. This action stopped the Germans at the deepest point of their penetration. Afterward, CCB continued south, clearing the area to the LA LESSE River line and tying in with British units to the west near the MEUSE River.

General Harmon had been concerned about the area between CCA and CCB during the heavy fighting. However, the attached 4th Cavalry Group was screening this area and elements of either CCA or CCB could be shifted there if necessary. This entire action occurred without

the help of attached infantry and many times the pinch of insufficient infantry was apparent. The 2nd Armored Division had halted the German Panzers just four miles short of the MEUSE River. General Collins had not expected to commit the division before early January, but, by that time, it had executed a most decisive effort, by thorough coordination and aggressive action, and with very light losses. In this employment, again appear armor's characteristic mobility, firepower, shock action and flexibility along with outstanding aggressiveness.

By 3 January, the 2nd and 3rd Armored Divisions were disposed side by side on VII Corps' front, ready for the offensive. These two divisions led the Corps attack against bitter resistance of tanks and infantry. The outstanding feature of this offensive was that the armored divisions were each given the mission of clearing their zones of advance, even though they were both followed immediately by infantry divisions. It is also of interest to note that 14 days were required to cover the 16-mile distance to HOUFFALIZE, where junction was made with Third Army. Other factors also contributed to slow this advance. The troops had become weary from the previous two weeks of continuous operations. In addition, the early half of this offensive moved toward higher ground which favored the German defenders. There was also the great mechanical difficulty of vehicles slipping on ice-covered roads. To try to improve traction, the 2nd Armored Division changed to rubber tank treads, during the battle.

There was very close coordination and cooperation between the two divisions. Their front advanced as a unit and, on occasion, one division readily permitted maneuver by the other in its zone. Again, additional infantry was attached throughout the operation

The one big question, which remains unanswered, is: Why was not one armored division given the mission, on 3 January, of moving to HOUFFALIZE as quickly as possible? This question rises primarily due to the combination of terrain and enemy dispositions. Until about 9 January, elements of four Panzer Divisions were west of HOUFFALIZE and their routes of withdrawal to the east converged through this little town. A German officer has been quoted as saying that these American forces could have pushed through their delaying positions and closed this trap. However, the armor that could have made this accomplishment was clearing all enemy in its zone. We can only say here that General Collins must have had positive reasons for giving these zone missions to his armored divisions.

In conclusion, the highlight of this study is the adversity of conditions in which armor was employed in the Ardennes Campaign. Weather, terrain, and the obscure enemy situation were extremely unfavorable to armor. In the light of the action herein discussed, along with many other examples from World War II, we therefore conclude that regardless of adverse circumstances, United States armor will fight wherever United States troops may fight in the future. It was done in the Ardennes, it can be done anywhere.

NOTES FOR CHAPTER V

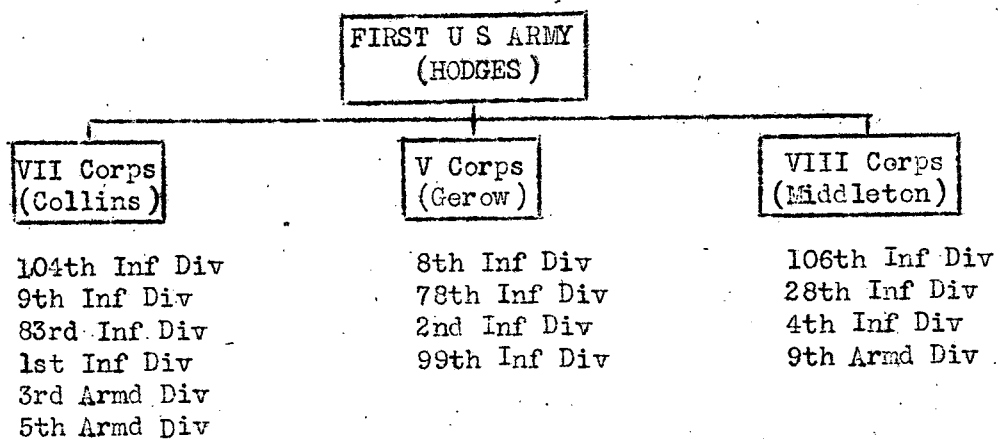
1

Other studies have revealed the employment of armor on mission type orders by General Collins in the previous assault across France.

APPENDIX I

AMERICAN ORDER OF BATTLE

16 December 1944



AMERICAN ORDER OF BATTLE

3 January 1945

VII Corps
(Collins)

2nd Armd Div¹
84th Inf Div
3rd Armd Div
83rd Inf Div

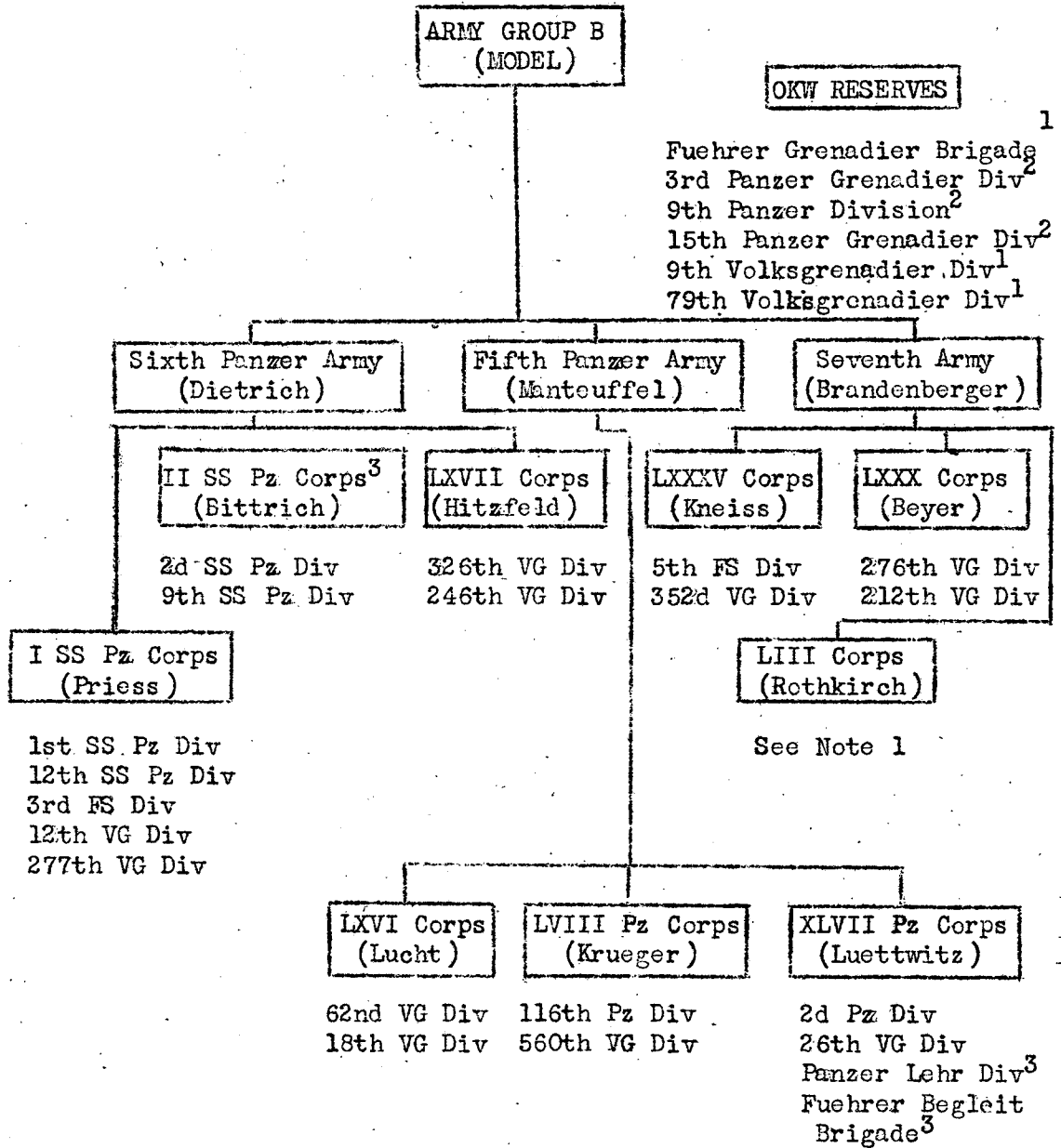
NOTE:

1

2nd Armored came from Ninth Army for this operation.

APPENDIX II

GERMAN ORDER OF BATTLE
16 December 1944



NOTES:

1

After beginning of offensive assigned to LIIII Corps (Seventh Army).

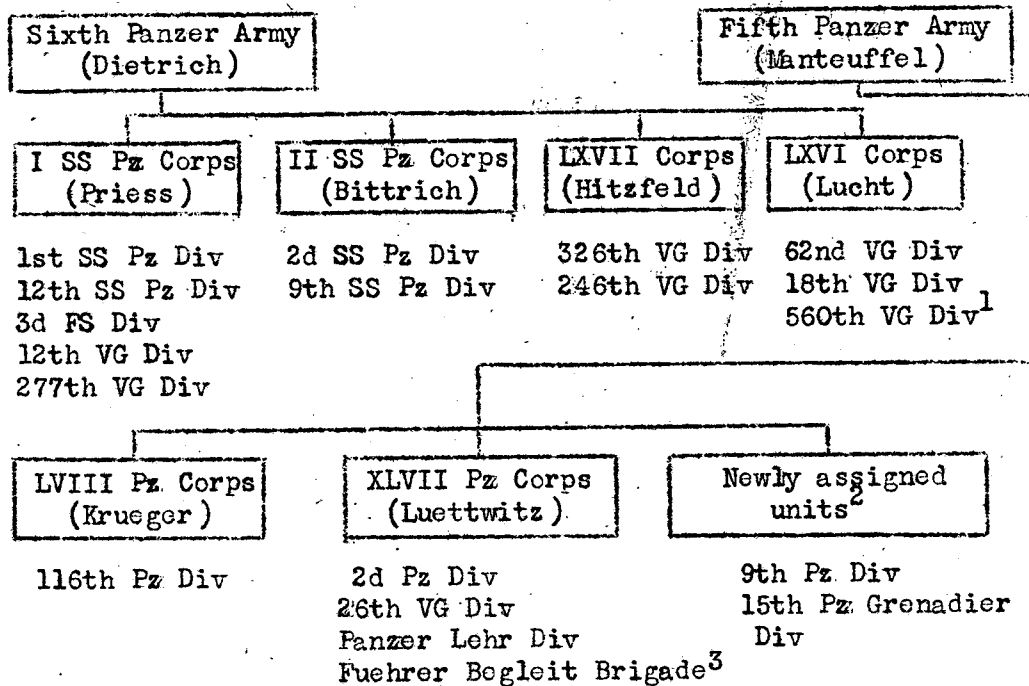
2

After 23 Dec 1944 assigned to XLVII Pz Corps.

3

Being designated respective Army reserves these units did not participate in the initial attack.

GERMAN ORDER OF BATTLE
22 December 1944



NOTES:

1

Transferred to control of Sixth Panzer Army along with LXVI Corps although not a part of this Corps.

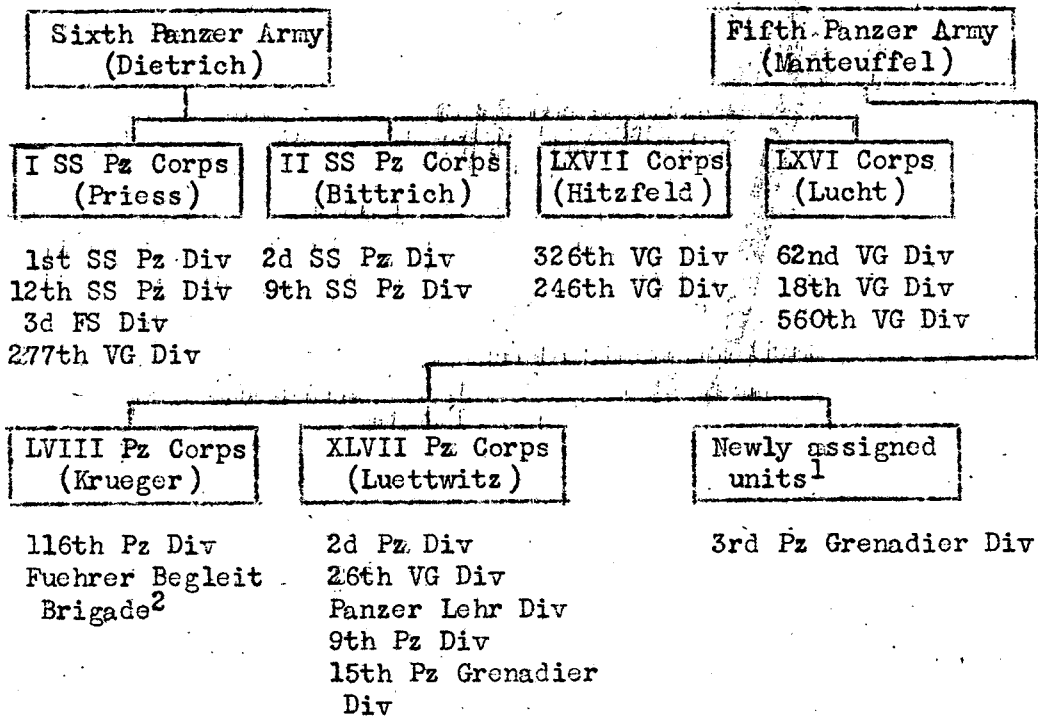
2

Assigned from OKW Reserves although not physically present in Fifth Panzer Army area.

3

Still in Fifth Panzer Army reserve.

GERMAN ORDER OF BATTLE
24 December 1944



NOTES:

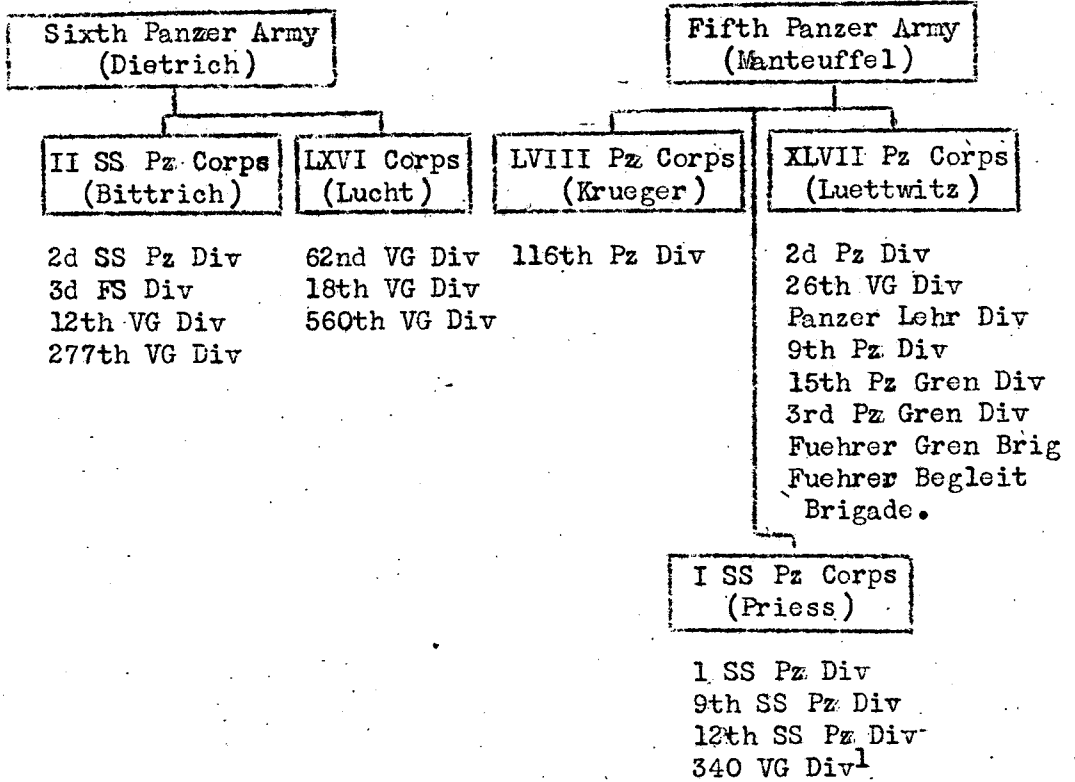
1

Assigned to Fifth Panzer Army from OKW Reserve.

2

Transferred to XLVII Pz Corps on 25 December 1944.

GERMAN ORDER OF BATTLE
27 December 1944



NOTES:

1

This division actually joined Fifth Panzer Army on 6 January 1945.

APPENDIX III

BACKGROUND AND ACTIONS OF GERMAN UNITS
IN THE ARDENNES COUNTEROFFENSIVE (NORTHERN SECTOR)

16 December 1944 - 16 January 1945

During July and August 1944, Hitler, while bedridden, concentrated on higher strategy for his military forces. He had to regain the initiative lost since the Anglo-American landings in Normandy to keep the support of the German People. His answer to this problem was the Ardennes Counteroffensive, erroneously referred to as the "Rundstedt Offensive".

The German people, still unconvinced that they had been defeated, were ready to rally to the last great stand. The plan, as refined by the German high command was:

To consist of an armored dash through the difficult country of the ARDENNES with the object of capturing the bridges on the MEUSE River between NAMUR and LIEGE. Once this spurt of over fifty miles had been completed, and bridgeheads on the west bank of the MEUSE secured, the panzer divisions would continue their advance in a northwesterly direction and seize the cities of BRUSSELS and ANTWERP. By this bold maneuver it was hoped to deprive the Allies of their chief supply base at ANTWERP, and at the same time, trap the entire British and Canadian forces of Field Marshal Montgomery's 21st Army Group, then lining the banks of the MEUSE.

General Field Marshal Gerd von Rundstedt, Commander-in-Chief, German Forces in the West, although titular commander of the plan, thought so little of its likelihood of success he refused to take part in the final arrangements. Field Marshal Walter Model, Commander of Army Group B, actually implemented the plan of the OKW (German High

Command), directed the training of the assembled forces and commanded the attack.

Three German armies, made up of highly-trained officer and enlisted cadres, young, fanatical SS troopers, the dregs of the "final" draft of German manpower, consisting of youngsters and old men, converted navy and air force personnel, were massed. Divisions had about 85% of their war tables of organization. Equipment was issued on an emergency table of equipment, the actual vehicle strength being approximately 60% of war tables of equipment. Due to an unforeseen and highly unfavorable consequence of the rigid secrecy imposed upon the Army by Hitler, gasoline became a critical item of supply. A high-ranking supply officer, taking as the true picture the term "Watch on the Rhine" the High Command used to disguise the actual planned operation, stored the larger portion of gasoline east of the RHINE. As it later developed, this reserve supply never reached the attacking armies. As a result, Army Group B had only one-fourth the amount needed to move the motorized elements to ANTWERP and had to plan on capturing American supply dumps to accomplish its mission.

The mission and success or failure of each of the three German armies are clearly reflected in their commanders. The Sixth Panzer Army, assigned the northern sector and the main effort, was commanded by Oberstgruppenfuehrer Joseph "Sepp" Dietrich, a former SS captain. His army was predominantly made up of SS troops, as Hitler wanted his "own" troops to gain the glory of victory. The burden laid by Hitler on this army caused it to bog down from the very start. The Fifth Panzer Army, led by General der Panzer Truppen von Manteuffel, was to

make the secondary effort in the center. Its brilliant commander soon proved the fallacy of Hitler's judgment by making the secondary effort perform the deepest penetration. The Seventh Army, led by General der Artillerie Erich Brandenberger, was to screen the south flank and keep the American Third Army from joining with the American First Army. This commander, capable and steady, did well with the forces provided him.

It was the fortune of the American 2nd and 3rd Armored Divisions to be employed in the path of the two northern German armies. The four German divisions which these two American divisions fought the most during the counteroffensive; the 116th Panzer, 2nd Panzer, Panzer Lehr, and 2nd SS Panzer Divisions, were well-trained, efficient units, led by four of the most capable division commanders in the German Army.

Although a total of 27 German divisions were to see action in the counteroffensive, 17 divisions, a total of approximately 180,000 men and 400 tanks, crossed the line of departure at 0530, 16 December 1944. Two SS panzer divisions of the II SS Panzer Corps, consisting of approximately 34,000 men and 200 tanks were in the Sixth Panzer Army reserve, while one panzer division and one panzer brigade, approximately 16,000 men and 100 tanks, were in the Fifth Panzer Army reserve.⁸ Because the scope of this study is limited to the northern sector of this counteroffensive, the German Seventh Army, which operated in the southern sector will not be discussed further. Figure 1 does show, however, the attacking sectors and the final objectives of

all three armies.

In the Sixth Panzer Army sector the infantry divisions led the attack, followed by panzer units to exploit any penetrations. The two Volksgrenadier divisions of the LXVII Corps, attached to this Army from the Fifteenth Army on the north, were to break through on both sides of MONSCHAU, crossing the road MUETZENICH-ELSENBORN, and then screen to the north and west. I SS Panzer Corps had the mission of attacking the area MONSCHAU-UBENBERTH and LOSHEIM, push across the MUESE into the sector LUETTICH-HUY. The Army reserve, the II SS Panzer Corps followed directly behind the I SS Panzer Corps to reinforce this main effort.

Due to the immediate reaction of the Allies, the LXVII Corps was never able to get farther than the line BUTGENBACH-ELSENBORN-MONSCHAU (See Fig. 15), thereby leaving the northern flank of the Sixth Panzer Army exposed. The Army's attacking infantry met stubborn resistance from the outset and failed to make the planned penetration for the armor to exploit. Consequently, the panzer units had to make their own holes in the Allied defense. This difficulty, combined with the canalization of the tanks because of poor roads, caused the Army to fall behind schedule from the very beginning.

The deepest penetration made by the Sixth Panzer Army was that of a combat team of the 1st SS Panzer Division, I SS Panzer Corps, led by Lt Col Joachim Peiper. On 20 December this team pushed to the sector west of STAVELOT on the AMBLEVE River, being stopped there by CCB, 3rd Armored Division and elements of the 30th Infantry Division. (See

Fig. 15). It was cut off from the 1st SS Panzer Division and had to fight to rejoin the division east of STAVELOT.

This action ended the major offensive effort of the entire army in its original sector with the units being forced to the defensive. On 22 December the southern boundary of the Sixth Panzer Army was shifted to take in the northernmost corps plus one division of the adjoining corps of Fifth Panzer Army (LXVI Corps and 560th VG Division) (See Fig. 15). The Sixth Panzer Army was unable to move forward in this new area to any extent. The II SS Panzer Corps pushed through the LXVI Corps west of ST. VITH, was able to get its 2nd SS Panzer Division to MANHAY north of the 560th VG Division. Here this Corps came to a halt. The fact was that this major unit, Hitler's pride, was entirely stopped and was destined only to retreat for the rest of the campaign. Hitler's knowledge of tactics and his "intuitive" judgment were again proved faulty.

The Fifth Panzer Army, breaking through the OLSHEIM-GEMEUND sector, planned to cross the MEUSE on either side of NAMUR and continue on to BRUSSELS. The LXVI Corps, consisting of the 18th and 62nd VG Divisions, had the mission of capturing ST. VITH after surrounding the Allies in the SCHNEE EIFEL and pushing forward, echeloned in depth, to and over the MEUSE. The LVIII Panzer Corps, made up of the 116th Panzer Division, 560th Volksgrenadier Division, was assigned the OUR River sector on either side of OUREN, and instructed to continue through HOUFFALIZE, gaining bridgeheads over the MEUSE. The XLVII Panzer Corps, consisting of the 2nd Panzer Division and the

26th VG Division, was assigned the DASBURG-GEMEUND sector, crossing the OUR River, by-passing the CLERF sector, with the intermediate objective of BASTOGNE, thence across the MEUSE, near and south of NAMUR. The Panzer Lehr Division and Fuehrer Begleit Brigade made up the Army reserve.

Without any artillery preparation to give away surprise, the Fifth Panzer Army attacked at 0530, 16 December. The flank corps advanced rapidly, but the center, LVIII Panzer Corps made little headway because of stubborn American resistance. To further the success of the south flank the Panzer Lehr Division was committed in this sector the first day. Figure 15 indicates the line gained on the 16th. On 17 December the Fuehrer Begleit Brigade was committed in the LXVI Corps zone in the advance toward ST. VITH. To bolster the lagging LVIII Panzer Corps the 116th Panzer Division was withdrawn from the south flank and sent forward through DASBURG toward HEINERSCHIED. Even though the Fifth Panzer Army was behind its schedule it was ahead of the Sixth Panzer Army, and thus its north flank was exposed. On 17 December the LXVI Corps began to bog down in front of what was to be a big thorn in the side of the army, ST. VITH. The next day, 18 December, saw the center Corps, LVIII Panzer, starting to roll. The 560th VG Division gained full control of the eastern bank of the OUR River near HEINERSCHIED and the 116th Panzer Division spearheaded west from here. The XLVII Panzer Corps continued to the OURTHE River, but the north flank remained east of ST. VITH.

On 19 December the LXVI Corps was still stalled, but LVIII Pan-

zer Corps, joining its 116th Division, crossed the road HOUFFALIZE-BASTOGNE. The XLVII Panzer Corps was tied down in front of BASTOGNE, although the 2nd Panzer Division crossed the OURTHE River at ORTHERVILLE. The Fifth Panzer Army was ordered to capture BASTOGNE instead of by-passing it as had been originally planned, but decided to accomplish this in conjunction with pushing to the MEUSE with its LVIII Panzer Corps. This corps reached CHERAIN (Northeast of HOUFFALIZE) on 20 December. The 116th Panzer Division, reaching SAMREE, captured a dump of gasoline there.

The 116th Panzer Division pushed up the eastern bank of the OURTHE River to the area east of HOTTEN on 21 December. The 560th VG Division was echeloned to the right rear to the area BEHAIN-LES TAILLES.

The LXVI Corps finally captured ST. VITH on 22 December. This unit and the 560th VG Division were transferred to the Sixth Panzer Army on this date (See Fig. 15). The LVIII Panzer Corps moved forward to the line ODEIGNE-south of SOY-HOTTON with the 116th Panzer Division moving to the western bank of the OURTHE River to protect the road junction at MARCHE. On this same day, 22 December, the 2nd Panzer Division, XLVII Panzer Corps, meeting resistance southeast of MARCHE, swung west to HARGIMONT, with the most advanced battalion getting to within eight kilometers of DINANT. This proved to be the deepest penetration toward the MEUSE made by the Fifth Panzer Army (See Fig. 15). This penetration created the "Celles Pocket", which was reduced by CCB, 2nd Armored Division. This action is fully described in the

narrative section of this study.

The Panzer Lehr Division, moving from the southeast through ST. HUBERT, reached ROCHEFORT on 23 December in an effort to clear the rear areas of the 2nd Panzer Division. This same day found the LVIII Panzer Corps stalled on the HOTTON-MARCHE road with the 116th Panzer Division unable to move against elements of the American 84th Infantry Division. The 560th VG Division, now under Sixth Army control, was vainly fighting for GRANDMENIL on the east bank of the OURTHE River.

On 24 December December the XLVII Panzer Corps was hit by attacks from south and north of MARCHE, the American 2nd Armored Division striking from the north. Panzer Lehr Division swung north from ROCHEFORT to relieve the pressure on the 2nd Panzer Division, but this latter unit had to withdraw to ROCHEFORT. So the entire Fifth Panzer Army was stopped - it had lost the initiative, never to regain it, notwithstanding the minor successes of the Fuehrer Begleit Brigade south of HOTTON.

On 25 December the 9th Panzer Division, assigned to the Fifth Panzer Army from OKW reserve, reached the XLVII Panzer Corps sector and was immediately thrown in to secure the rear and flanks of the 2nd Panzer division from attacks from MARCHE. The Fuehrer Begleit Brigade was withdrawn from the HOTTON sector and assigned to XLVII Panzer Corps for use in the BASTOGNE area.

The story of the Sixth Panzer and Fifth Panzer Army units opposing the American 2nd and 3rd Armored Divisions from 26 December to 16 January (the closing date of this study) is that of these German units

being on the defensive, striving to keep the escape route through HOUFFALIZE open. Elements of the Fifth Panzer Army's 2nd Panzer Division, Panzer Lehr Division, 9th Panzer Division and 116th Panzer Division tried to stop the American 2nd Armored Division. The Sixth Panzer Army's 560th Volksgrenadier Division and 2nd SS Panzer Division vainly attempted to halt the American 3rd Armored Division. This defensive action was bitter, not because the German commanders hoped to regain the offensive, but because they realized if HOUFFALIZE was not kept open all German units would be trapped. When the Panzer Lehr Division succeeded in retreating through HOUFFALIZE on 15 January 1945 the division commander reported the carnage of German personnel and materiel there was terrible. He felt indeed fortunate to have been able to escape.

NOTES FOR APPENDIX III

¹
Commitment of Sixth Panzer Army, a report prepared by Brigadefuehrer der Waffen SS Fritz Kraemer, Chief of Staff, Sixth Panzer Army, D/A MS A 924.

The Fifth Panzer Army during the Offensive in the Ardennes, 16 December 1944-25 January 1945, a report prepared by General der Panzer Truppen von Lanteuffel, Commanding Fifth Panzer Army, D/A MS B 151a.

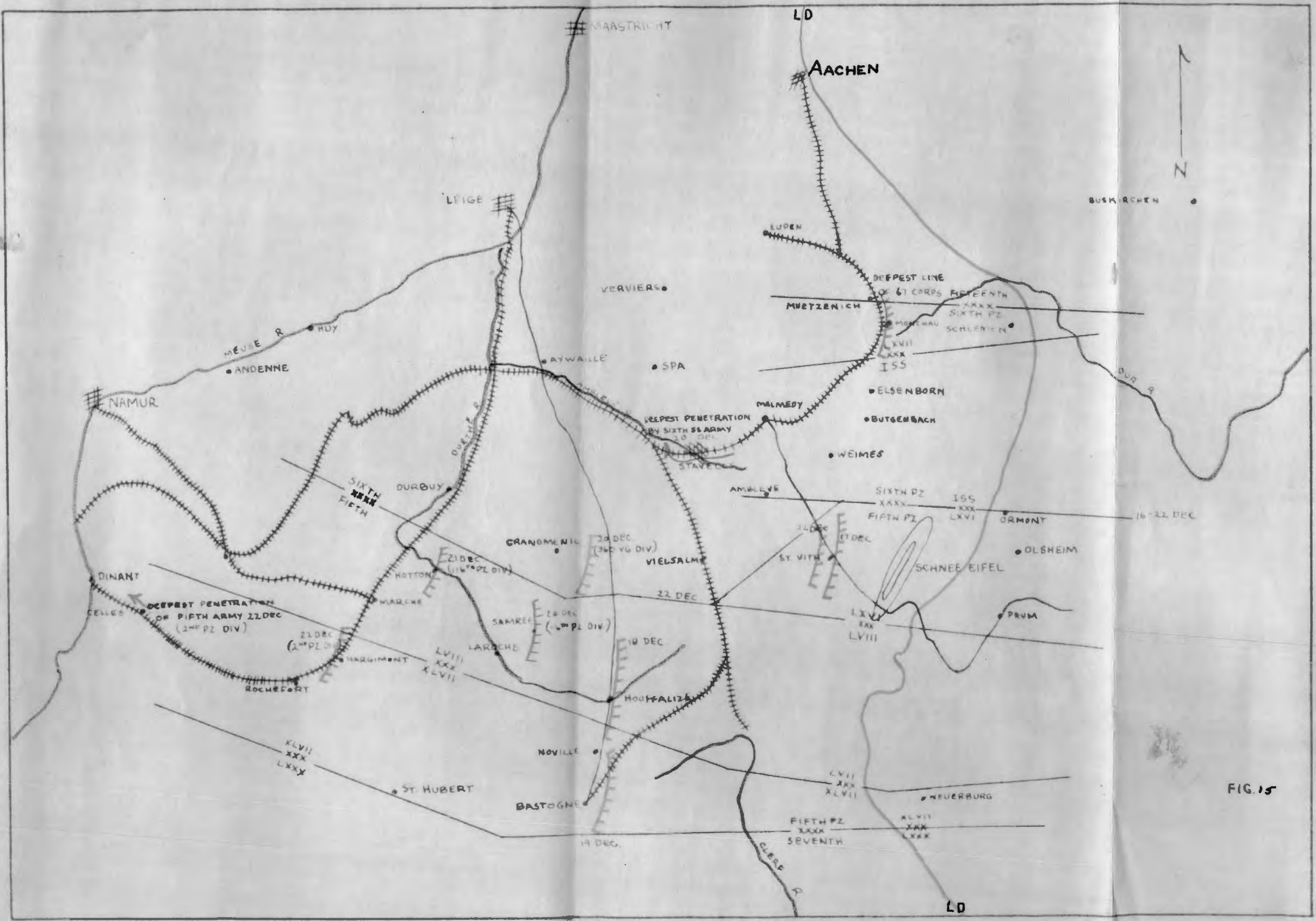
Commitment of the 5th Panzer Army in the Ardennes Winter Offensive, 1944-45, a report prepared by Generalmajor Carl Wagener, Chief of Staff, Fifth Panzer Army, D/A MS B 235.

²
Robert E. Merriam, Dark December, (Chicago: Ziff-Davis, 1947), Ch. I, p. 3,

³
Milton Schulman, Defeat in the West, (New York: E. P. Dutton & Co., 1948), Ch. XXVI, p. 228.

⁴
Op. Cit., Merriam, Ch. I, p. 6.

⁵
Op. Cit., Schulman, Ch. XXVI, p. 224.



GERMAN OPERATIONS
 16-22 DECEMBER - 1944
 1:500,000

SHOWING:

1. DEEPEST PENETRATION
 A. 6TH PZ ARMY-STAVELOT
 B. LXVII CORPS-MONCHAU
 C. 5TH PZ ARMY-VIC CELLES

2. BOUNDARY CHANGE BETWEEN 5TH 6 PZ ARMIES ON 22 DECEMBER
 A. 16-22 DEC-NORTHERN
 B. 22 DEC-SOUTHERN

FIG 15

6
The Preparation for the German Offensive in the Ardennes (September - December 1944), a compilation of records and statements of Percy Ernst Schramm, Ph D, officer in charge of keeping the war diary of the Wehrmacht Operations Staff, D/A MS A 862, p. 199.

7
Ibid., pp. 198, 199.

8
Ibid., pp. 198, 199

9
Enemy Intelligence Summaries, an interrogation report of Generalaleutnant Fritz Bayerlein, Commanding Panzer Lehr Division, prepared by Headquarters Air PW Interrogation Detachment, A. P. W. I. U., 9th Air Force (Adv), 63/1945, File 378.2, 29 May 1945.

APPENDIX IV

TERRAIN STUDY - NORTHERN ARDENNES

General Description

That area of Belgium and Luxemburg that will be referred to in this study as the Northern Ardennes Sector is generally bounded on the west and north by the MEUSE River, which makes a 90-degree turn to the east at the city of NAMUR. After flowing east along the northern boundary, the MEUSE turns to the north at LIEGE and leaves this area, flowing eventually into the RHINE. To the east and slightly to the south of LIEGE, the remainder of this sector's northern boundary is roughly delineated by the swamps of HOHEN VENN that, at this point, occupy the terrain between the MEUSE and the ROER Rivers.

To the east, the Northern Ardennes Sector may be said to end at the geographical border of Germany. This line roughly parallels the ROER and OUR Rivers which, each originating in the same locality, flow north and south respectively. The southern boundary of the sector is generally outlined by the northern edges of the extensive ARDENNES Forest, from which the whole area derives its name.

The ARDENNES Forest covers the top of a large, flat ridge running from the German border west through Luxemburg and Belgium to France. It is the Northern Ardennes Sector, outlined above, that forms the northern slope of this ridge that slopes into the valley of the MEUSE.

Flowing generally north or northwest down this ridge to the MEUSE

are three major streams: the LESSE, the OURTHE, and the SALM-AMBLEVE, named here in the order from west to east that they appear on the maps of the area. These streams are in turn fed by many tributaries that wind through the area forming a veritable maze of hills and steep-banked valleys. Like their tributaries, the major streams themselves flow through comparatively deep valleys which, from the military point of view, form substantial obstacles to any sizeable force advancing from east to west through the area.

Thus it is that the principal roads through the area have been caused by nature to follow generally the major stream valleys or the tops of the ridges that lie between the streams. Generally, those roads along the high ground were from six to eight meters wide, while those along the valleys were somewhat narrower. Most east-west connecting roads can be called "secondary" by comparison.

Here and there throughout the area, the road net converges upon a few communities, thereby forming, for military purposes, communications centers of importance beyond their geographical size. The chief of these are ST. VITH, overlooking the OUR River; HOUFFALIZE, LAROCHE, and HOTTON, situated at intervals down the OURTHE River valley at principal crossings; and MARCHE and CINEY on the ridge between the OURTHE and LESSE Rivers (See Fig. 16). Although it does not enter into this study, the key to the whole ARDENNES area is the town of BASTOGNE, a hub of communications situated on top of the ARDENNES ridge at the hypothetical border between the northern and southern ARDENNES sectors.

The Northern ARDENNES Sector, with its few roads, steep, winding stream beds, and its ruggedly forested landscape, was not designed by nature to be the ideal battlefield or open route for moving large masses of troops in an offensive operation. However, once the area has been traversed, and the MEUSE river crossed, the terrain of Belgium and France almost immediately offers an invader from the east more open and "normal" terrain for military maneuver. It was this terrain, north and west of the MEUSE, that was the unachieved goal of the German panzer formations.

For the period covered in this study, most of the action of the 2nd and 3rd Armored Divisions took place within that central portion of the Northern ARDENNES Sector outlined in Figure 16. An analysis in detail of that terrain will serve to point up the difficulties encountered by both sides in this operation.

Detailed Description

The armored divisions we have studied operated in a comparatively narrow strip of the terrain we have briefly described above. Let us then consider only a sixteen-mile-wide strip of the terrain of the sector that lies within the MEUSE River on the west and the SALM River on the east (See Fig. 16).

Climatic and General Weather Conditions:

During the period 16-25 December 1944 the temperature in the northern ARDENNES may be described generally as slightly above freezing with variations below 32° F., usually in the early morning hours. Visibility throughout the period was poor, because of almost inter-

mittent fog, rain, sleet, and some snow. After 24 December, the temperature dropped below the freezing mark and continued steadily colder. Conditions of poor visibility cleared, but occasional snowfall became heavier, reaching an average depth throughout the area of about two feet early in January 1945. This, with some continued sleet, caused ice to form on the roads in the sector.

Topography:

Relief and Drainage Systems:

The area of the Northern ARDENNES under consideration in this study lies on the northern slope of a major ridge encompassed on the north and west by the MEUSE River, and on the south by the headwaters of the MEUSE, and by the MOSELLE. Thus, this area consists of a series of streams and spur ridges leading from the top of the MEUSE-MOSELLE ridge on the south to the valley of the MEUSE north of the area, where that river, after flowing north along the western edge of the sector, turns sharply to the east.

Considering the terrain from east to west, there are four major streams which, with their tributaries, affect the configuration of the land; the SALM, the OURTHE and its tributary the AISNE, the LESSE and a portion of the MEUSE. All of these rivers flow generally north or northwest through the area, although they wind considerably. Thus they, and their even more winding tributaries, lend a rolling, more often rugged, character to the hilly country between them. All of these rivers and streams, in time, have cut deep into the earth, and they now flow through steep-banked valleys.

Between each of these major streams lies a comparatively flat ridge, all of which actually are spurs of the larger MEUSE-MOSELLE ridge. These spur ridges, although lying generally north and northwest, are themselves cut by numerous tributary streams. Thus each spur ridge in itself offers a series of local ridges and hills that give the terrain an intermittent rugged or rolling character not conducive to the rapid movement of large bodies of troops.

Vegetation:

This area is best described as intermittently wooded, with the eastern half of the area more heavily covered than the terrain farther west. Most trees are evergreens. Undergrowth in the wooded areas is common, although some "cultivated" woods are found free of brush. For the most part, wooded areas are traversed by firebreaks which permit the passage of armored vehicles through areas that ordinarily would be impassable to them. Most wooded land is passable to foot troops. The more open localities fall into three general classifications: pasture, cultivated land, and brushwood.

Cultural Features:

The principal roads generally run north and south through the zone. Such roads are from six to eight meters in width. Interconnecting these major east-west highways is a sparse network of smaller roads from three to six meters wide. East of the OURTHE River, in the eastern half of the area, these lesser highways are comparatively few in number, affording at intervals from one to three such routes across the major ridge between the SALM and OURTHE Rivers. West of the OURTHE

this type of road becomes more common, offering five or six interconnecting routes westward toward the MEUSE. Roads of this three to six-meter type also can be found following the valleys of most of the principal streams in the region. Superimposed upon the whole area is a network of even more secondary, rural roads that offer communication of a simpler nature between most localities. Most roads of all types throughout the area are hard-surfaced.

When traversing the area from east to west, the first road of the six to eight-meter type is encountered running north and south through the center of the eastern half of the area. By following along the rideline between the SALM and OURTHE Rivers, it connects HOUFFALIZE on the southern edge of the area with MANHAY, 12 miles to the north, before leaving the area in the direction of LIEGE on the comparatively distant MEUSE.

In the geographical center of the area, eight miles west of the OURTHE, is the village of MARCHE, the principal communications center in the sector. From MARCHE, five main highways of the six to eight-meter variety depart in a star-shaped pattern to the north, northeast, southeast, southwest and northwest.

The northbound road follows a small tributary valley leading out of MARCHE, and leaves the area enroute to LIEGE.

The northeast road parallels a double-tracked railroad out of MARCHE and then goes along a rideline for five miles where it drops suddenly into the OURTHE River valley at the village of HOTTON. From HOTTON this road takes a more northerly course to BARVAUX village on

the northern edge of the sector.

The southeast road leaves MARCHÉ, skirts a hill, and then turns south for about three miles until it reaches the valley of the WAMINE River. Here the road turns up the valley to the southeast and into the BOIS DE BANDE, a northern projection of the ARDENNES Forest proper.

The southwest road out of MARCHÉ follows a railroad over a small ridge into the WAMINE River valley, thence down the valley to the village of ROCHEFORT, a total distance of approximately seven miles. Here the road turns to the south, crosses a ridge, and leaves the area.

The northwest road leaves MARCHÉ along the major ridgeline between the OURTHE and the LESSE-MEUSE Rivers. Twelve miles from MARCHÉ this highway passes to the north of CINEY, intersects another highway (see below), and departs the area for NAMUR on the MEUSE

The remaining major road in the area connects DINANT on the MEUSE with CINEY, eight miles to the northeast along a spur ridge. Two miles northeast of CINEY, on the route to LIEGE, this road intersects the MARCHÉ-NAMUR highway. A similar road leads south from DINANT, but does not enter into this study.

All through the area are numerous rural communities. None of these can be classed as larger than a village, with the possible exceptions of GIVET and DINANT in the MEUSE valley on the western edge of the zone. The principal villages are located either at main stream crossings in the larger valleys, or at major road junctions. The vil

lages of most importance within the sector are VIELSALM, HOUFFALIZE, BARVAUX, SAMREE, EREZEE, MANHAY, MALEMPRE, GRANDMENIL, MARCHE, ROCHEFORT, HOTTON, CINEY, BUISSONVILLE, DINANT, and GIVET. Generally, dwellings and other buildings, both in the villages and on the farms, are constructed of stone.

Almost without exception the major stream crossings are located within riverside villages. The principal bridges are at: SALM River bridges, VIELSALM and SALSCHATEAU; OURTHE River bridges, BARVAUX, DURBUY, PETIT HAN, NOISEUX, HOTTON, LAROCHE, and HOUFFALIZE; LESSE River bridges, vicinity of GENDRON, HOUYE, and vicinity of CIERGNON; MEUSE River bridges, DINANT and GIVET. Most of these bridges, during the period of the ARDENNES battle, were of stone construction.

Military Aspects of the Area

Critical Terrain Features:

Any study of terrain in this area readily indicates that, from a military standpoint, the most critical features are the bridges over the SALM, OURTHE, and MEUSE Rivers and the high ground dominating these crossings. Of importance for the same reason, control of the major road net, are some villages other than those located at the major stream crossings. Chief of these are MANHAY, SAMREE, BARVAUX, MARCHE, ROCHEFORT, CINEY and the surrounding, commanding terrain. A country crossroads (CR 576853) on the HOUFFALIZE-MANHAY highway is likewise important. From an overall point of view, possession of the entire Northern Ardennes Sector is vital to any attacker from the

east. Once this rugged sector has been secured, along with its MEUSE River crossings, the comparatively open and flat terrain of France and Belgium is available to the invader.

Observation and Fields of Fire:

Observation and fields of fire vary throughout the area, depending primarily upon the location of wooded areas. Observation and fire within the woods themselves is limited, except for trails and firebreaks. However, the intermittent pastures and cultivated lands offer the fields of fire normally encountered in any rolling terrain. The western half of the area, being less wooded, offers opportunity for more open combat. However, during the period of 16-25 December, 1944, visibility in all types of terrain was limited by the almost constant fog, rain, or snow.

Obstacles:

The obstacles in this area which face an invader from the east are sufficient to discourage all but the boldest commanders. Chief of these obstacles are the SALLM, OURTHE, LESSE and MEUSE Rivers and their tributary streams, particularly the AISNE River, a tributary of the OURTHE. All of these streams for centuries have wound their way through the terrain, cutting deeper and deeper into the landscape. Today their narrow valleys rise steeply from the stream bed, in many places forming miles of bluffs and cliffs traversable to vehicles only by means of existing roads or much engineer support.

Wherever encountered, the frequent woods and small forests again are a bar to vehicular traffic. Although tanks and trucks can negoti

ate the small roads, trails, and firebreaks, the wooded areas are suitable only for infantry action.

From an overall consideration, the whole of the Northern ARDENNES Sector is a gigantic terrain obstacle interposed between Germany and France.

Concealment and Cover:

The wooded areas of the region, particularly in the eastern half of the zone, offer ample concealment and cover to military units. The terrain, because of its rolling or rugged construction, offers local defilade.

Avenues of Approach:

From the east into the area under consideration there are only three avenues of approach suitable from a military standpoint. Two of these are secondary highways from ST. VITH which lies to the east of the area and does not enter into this study. The northernmost of these roads follows a relatively open valley in the village of VIELSALM. The southern route from ST. VITH, after crossing a considerable expanse of open terrain southwest of that village, enters the area under study through a small, winding, wooded valley leading to BOVIGNY. At VIELSALM and BOVIGNY, these routes reach the SALM River, a definite obstacle. From these villages, they follow the river between its steep banks, and run south and north respectively to join at the village of SALMCHATEAU. In this locality, the only route out of the SALM valley is the secondary highway from SALMCHATEAU west up the tributary D'ASSET GOLMAN River. This highway, after

reaching CR 576853, offers a variety of smaller roads through wooded terrain toward the OURTHE valley via either SAMREE to LAROCHE, or MANHAY-GRANDLENIL to HOTTON. This latter choice offers the disadvantage of a necessary crossing of the tributary AISNE River.

In the southeastern corner of the area, two roads lead to the key community of HOUFFALIZE; one of these, from BOVIGNY through CHERAIN, the other, and tactically most important, a major highway from BASTOGNE in the south. The only acceptable route from HOUFFALIZE is the main highway north to MANHAY, which intersects the northern routes at CR 576853.

For military purposes, there are two major routes leading west from the OURTHE River. The northern route, from HOTTON crosses a relatively bare ridge into MARCHE, a hub of highways and by far the most important communications center in the area. A southern, more secondary route, leads diagonally northwest from LAROCHE across the major ridgeline of the locality and into MARCHE.

Of military importance is a major highway that enters the area from BASTOGNE at a point southeast of MARCHE. It, too, leads to MARCHE.

From MARCHE, the network of roads to the west becomes more profuse, and the terrain becomes more rolling and less spotted with woodland. Thus, an invader, after reaching MARCHE, encounters less difficulty in finding acceptable routes west to the MEUSE and France.

Tactical Effect of the Area

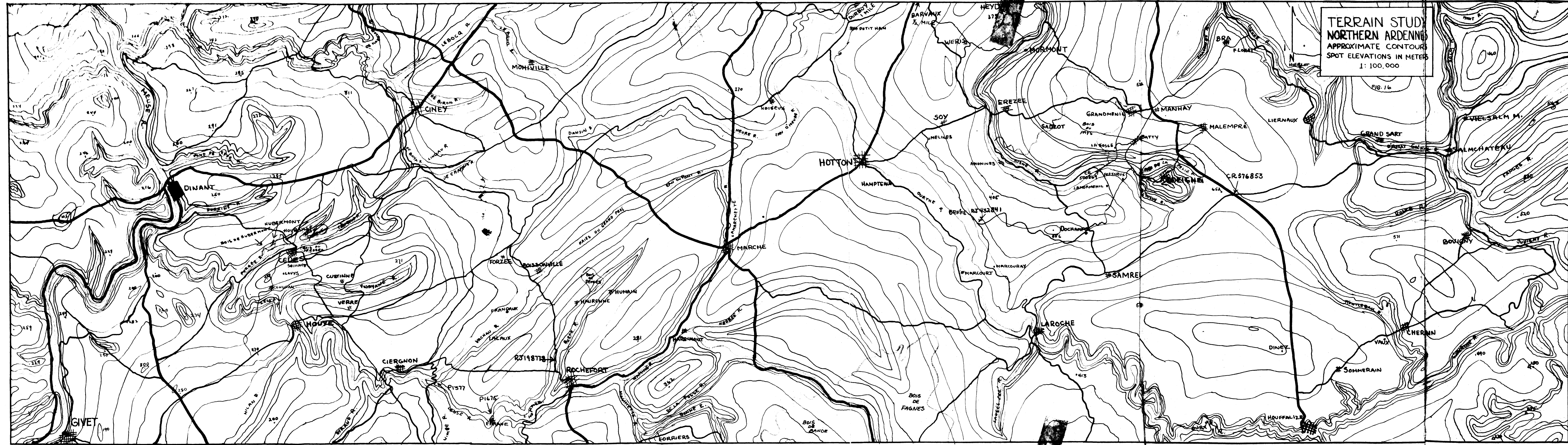
For centuries the ARDENNES region of Belgium and Luxemburg has stood as a natural barrier between Germany and France. The comparatively few acceptable roads and the numerous stretches of forest and woodland, restrict movement from east to west through the area. The deep-banked streams and rivers flowing laterally across the area, provide a defender natural delaying or defensive positions, and, since stream crossings are few, present a definite obstacle to an invader.

During the period of the great ARDENNES battle of 1944-45, weather conditions of fog, rain, sleet, snow and ice, when superimposed upon the existing difficulties of terrain, added much to the confusion and hardship of tactical operations in the area.

All in all, the Northern ARDENNES Sector, would be selected as a battleground by only the most foolish or the most brilliant of commanders.

NOTES FOR APPENDIX IV

1
Map, Belgium, 1 : 100,000



TERRAIN STUDY
NORTHERN ARDENNES
APPROXIMATE CONTOURS
SPOT ELEVATIONS IN METERS
1: 100,000

FIG. 16