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MILITARY MONOGRAPH

TITLE: 7th Armored Division in Defense of a Canal Line.

SCOPE: This article covers the defense of a canal line in the Roermond-Venlo area of Holland during October 1944.

During this period the 7th Armored was able to successfully defend on a twenty-five mile front against an attack by two German Divisions.

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41-112

## 7th ARMORED DIVISION IN DEFENSE OF A CANAL LINE

During the past war in many cases necessity demanded that armor be called upon to perform missions for which it was unsuited, and to operate over terrain which was next to impossible. It seems however that in spite of these difficulties it was nearly always able to accomplish its mission.

In the month of October, 1944, the British forces had captured Antwerp and were engaged in clearing the enemy from the approaches to the harbor.

The Germans had been able to maintain a bridgehead over the Maas River in the VENRAY-VENLO- ROERMOND area. This bridgehead provided a constant threat to the supply lines and to the Port of Antwerp which the allies were making every effort to put into operation.

It was during this clearing out of the Scheldt Estuary that the 7th Armored division, working with the British VIII Corps, was given the mission of protecting the right flank of the British Second Army in the Roermond-Venlo area.

In order to carry out this mission the Commanding General 7th Armored Division ordered the division to establish a counter-reconnaissance screen in its sector and maintain contact with the Belgian Brigade on the right or south flank and be prepared at all times to commit the bulk of the division against any serious thrust which the enemy might make in that sector. The total division front was approximately

twenty-five miles.

During the period immediately prior to 27 October, troops in the line engaged in extensive patrolling, established a bridgehead just south of the Deurne-America road and made reconnaissance in force in the area south of the bridgehead. Troops not in the line engaged in training, maintenance and rehabilitation.

On the morning of 27 October 1944, the 7th Armored Division was disposed as follows:

CCB, consisting of the 23rd Armored Infantry Battalion, 31st Tank Battalion, 434th Armored Field Artillery Battalion and supporting tank destroyers and engineers, was on the north flank with a bridgehead over the Deurne Canal just south of the Deurne-America Road and had made on 26 October, a reconnaissance in force of the woods to the south of Grientdsveen. The 23rd Armored Infantry Battalion was in the line supported by the 434th Armored Field Artillery Battalion, one company of tanks and the assault guns of the 31st Tank Battalion occupying indirect fire positions north of Zijlberg. The British 11th Armored Division was on the left flank of CCB.

Since 20 October, the 87th Reconnaissance Squadron had been maintaining a counter-reconnaissance screen along

the fifteen mile Liesel-Meijel-Neederweert line.

The 87th Reconnaissance Squadron was supported by the 440th Armored Field Artillery Battalion and also by the 774th Field Artillery (4.5" Gun) which was in general support of the sector.

The 87th Reconnaissance Squadron was disposed as follows:

Troop D in the north part of the sector patrolling from Liesel to Heittrak.

Troop C in the center of the sector including the town of Meijel.

Troop A in the south of the sector from a point opposite Stokers Horst, southwest to the town of Nederweert.

Company F was charged with the security of squadron headquarters and the 440th Armored Field Artillery.

Troop B was in reserve in the vicinity of Asten.

Troop E (Assault Guns) was under squadron control.

The squadron command post was located three kilometers southeast of Asten on the Asten-Meijel road.

CCA, consisting of the 38th Armored Infantry Battalion the 40th Tank Battalion, the 489th Armored Field Artillery Battalion, Company A, 33rd Armored Engineer Battalion, and the Reconnaissance company of the 814th Tank Destroyer Battalion, occupied the southern sector of the division zone

from Nederweert, southeast along the Wessem Canal to approximately the 90th east west coordinate.

The sector was outposted and patrolled by the 38th Armored Infantry Battalion and the 40th Tank Battalion. The outposts consisted of tanks and infantry and were supported by the 489th Armored Field Artillery and one platoon of Company A, 33rd Armored Engineers was attached.

Combat Command A, although tied in with the 87th Reconnaissance Squadron on the front, was somewhat isolated, due to the fact that the main north-south road along the Bois Le Duc Canal was under direct enemy fire at several points. Due to this fact, traffic from Asten to the South was forced to travel by rear routes and approach Weert from the west.

Combat Command R, consisting of the 17th Tank Battalion and 48th Armored Infantry Battalion, was in division reserve in the vicinity of Asten.

Since the terrain in the division sector was flat and for the most part swampy with small wooded sections scattered throughout, observation was limited to OP's in high buildings and to the artillery cubs when weather permitted.

Four main canals passed through the sector. The Deurne Canal running north and south from Grientsveen to a junction with the Noorder Canal about 1000 yards SE of Meijel;

the Bois Le Duc Canal farther west running through Helmond almost due south to a junction with the Noorder Canal at Nederweert; the Noorder Canal running SW-NE through Weert to vicinity of Venlo; and the Wessem Canal running from a junction with the Noorder Canal at Nederweert south east to the Maas River SW of Roermond.

The road net consisted of three main north-south roads, the Deurne-Asten-Weert highway which ran along the Bois Le Duc and Noorder Canal; the Deurne-Meijel-Roermond highway which ran generally 2000 - 3000 yards west of the Deurne Canal; and farther to the west the Helmond-Heeze-Weert highway.

The east-west net consisted of the Deurne-America-Venlo highway and railroad in the northern part of the sector; the Roermond-Weert-Eindhoven highway in the southern sector and two other minor roads running into Meijel and the Helenaveen-Liesel road.

The weather in the sector, at that time of year, was rather cool and each night brought a mist which seldom lifted before 1000 hours. This curtailed observation considerably as the planes were grounded until late morning and the ground OP's rendered useless.

So much for the overall situation. Now let us turn to the sector of the 87th Reconnaissance Squadron, (Liesel, Meijel, and Nederweert).

Meijel is a rather small, unimportant town surrounded by swamps, peat bogs and small wooded areas; however it is important from a military point of view since it is a hub where four roads come together. Due to the terrain around it, it becomes necessary for all east-west traffic in a radius of about eight miles to pass through the town.

The east bank of the Deurne and Noorder Canals was occupied by elements of the Hermann Parachute Regiment and some other miscellaneous German troops dug in. The enemy controlled, by fire during the day and aggressive patrolling at night, a sizeable area on the west bank of the Deurne Canal east of Meijel. The town of Meijel was held by the headquarters platoon of C Troop 87th Reconnaissance Squadron plus one platoon of assault guns of E Troop. Each troop established OP's by day and listening posts at night while the supporting artillery had OP's in Liesel, Heitrak, Neerkant, Meijel and Nederweert. Division artillery had flash OP's in Liesel and Meijel and the British artillery had sound and flash OP's in the zone. In addition, when weather permitted, an air patrol was maintained by the liaison planes covering the entire front.

During the three or four days prior to 27 October, enemy activities along the front increased considerably. The frequency and aggressiveness of the patrols increased, the cubs began to draw fire from the area east of Meijel and

along the canal from Meijel to Nederweert. Civilian reports of large enemy concentrations to the east began to come in, and on the 25th of October several of the natives began to pull out of Meijel on advice of the Burgomaster. The German artillery began increasing its fire and the listening posts reported sounds of moving vehicles across the canal but up to this time no confirmation of German troop movements into the area could be obtained.

On the 26th of October, between 1600 and 1800 over 100 rounds of enemy artillery fell in D Troop sector mainly along the Liesel-Meijel road. About the same time A Troop adjusted our artillery fire on an enemy column estimated to be 150 men moving west from Stokers Horst. During the night listening posts reported sounds of enemy motors and horse drawn vehicles across the canal in the vicinity of Stokers Horst.

About 0610 on the morning of 27 October, intensive artillery fire was received by our troops along the entire division front and in the sector held by the Belgian Brigade to the south. This barrage lasted for approximately an hour, then came a lull in the firing. Immediately following the ceasing of fire an attack was launched against C Troop in the area just east of Meijel and at the same time, attacks were launched against D Troop on the north at Neerkant and Heitrak and against A Troop on the south with the main effort



of the attack against A Troop being directed toward troop headquarters which was located in Nieuw En Winnerstradt, which is located about two thousand yards west of Ospel.

In the Belgian Brigade sector the town of Thorn was entered by the enemy but the Belgians succeeded in kicking the enemy out and back across the canal with approximately 50 losses to the enemy.

Of the concurrent attacks made by the enemy that morning, the strongest and most serious was directed against C Troop in the Meijel sector.

The attack against A Troop came in the form of two strong patrols on each side with the main attack directed at troop headquarters. One of these patrols was led by a civilian while other enemy passed through our outpost lines wearing American and British uniforms. Several losses were incurred by A Troop but they successfully withdrew a short distance, consolidated their positions and held.

The attack on C Troop at Meijel was more successful for the enemy. Having successfully by-passed the farther outposts during the artillery barrage, which was not too difficult a task, because some of the outposts were five to eight hundred yards apart. Immediately following the artillery barrage an attack was made on the defenses of Meijel by an estimated enemy company. The defenders held their fire until the enemy was less than fifty yards away; then opened up with everything they had, almost completely destroying the first and second waves. However the 3rd wave assisted by survivors from

/ the first and second waves who had filtered around the flanks, was successful in overrunning the positions and gained the shelter of some houses in the edge of Meijel. At this point the troop commander ordered the withdrawal from the town in an attempt to save the troop vehicles. It should be remembered that this was the troops headquarters platoon plus one platoon of assault guns defending the town, the other platoons being engaged in patrolling and outpostng the remainder of the 8000 yard front assigned this troop.

In the D Troop sector the first assault against Neerkant was stopped by small arms and artillery fire. When stopped in Neerkant, the attackers moved on to the north to join the other force in the attack on Heitrak, which was temporarily stopped by small arms, artillery and the assault guns from E Troop.

By about 0830, it was clearly evident that the main attack had been launched against Meijel and with this in mind the squadron commander made plans accordingly.

As C Troop withdrew from Meijel it was met about one quarter of a mile west of the town by the squadron executive, who was followed closely by B Troop (the reserve troop). This troops formed a defensive line at this point and allowed C Troop to withdraw through it, then both B and C Troops organized for a counterattack. At 1010 hours the attack pushed off with the two troops abreast, C north of the road and B south of the road with the four assault guns in support. The artillery had two forward observers immediately available

and the Forward Observer from the 440th Armored Field Artillery furnished close support for the attack with the 4.5" battalion firing on the town of Meijel.

The attack met with some success until B Troop on the south reached the edge of a woods just west of Meijel and was forced to cross an open field of about five hundred yards. At this point they came under fire from enemy small arms, automatic weapons, artillery and mortars and were brought to a standstill. B Troop held at the edge of the woods and C Troop pushed on a short distance further but met with heavy resistance from superior forces and was forced back on a line with B Troop. At this time the light tank troop arrived on the scene and with C Troop was quickly organized to attack on the same two-hundred yard front. The 1st platoon of tanks swung wide to the left to protect that flank, the second platoon went down the road working to the north, as terrain permitted, in direct support. The third platoon followed down the road in local reserve. One after another, three of the 1st platoon tanks were knocked out, leaving only the platoon leader and one other tank. These two kept pushing on but never came back. Meanwhile two tanks of the second platoon had been knocked out by anti-tank fire and one by bazooka fire and the attack fell back to the line from which it started.

While the squadron commander and the F and C Troop commanders were planning another attack, an HE shell burst near them. The F Troop commander was wounded and the C Troop

commander suffered from concussion so that he had to be evacuated. The new C Troop commander organized five ten-man bazooka teams to make a coordinated attack with the remaining tanks on their objective, a hedgerow north of the road and just west of the town. The attack pushed off and reached their objective without serious difficulty but before they could organize their position, two of the tanks were knocked out by anti-tank fire, two others took cover behind a house just south of the road and the other returned to the shelter of the woods. This action by the tanks left the dismounted men without tank support and under artillery, mortar and automatic weapons fire. To add more to their difficulties, during the action their lieutenant had been killed, so with their position threatened on all sides the men fell back in more or less disorder. This ended the first attempt to retake Meijel.

During a talk with the squadron commander prior to the failure of the counterattack by the 87th, the division commander expressed the opinion that the town could be retaken with the troops then committed and had directed that if it were not retaken by 1300 hours CCR would be committed.

CCR had been alerted since 0730 and at 0812 Companies A and B of the 48th Armored Infantry Battalion had been ordered to an assembly area to await instructions. At 0930 Company C 48th AIB had been ordered to outpost an area east of Neerkant and protect the northern approaches to the Meijel-Asten

road. By noon C Company was in position covering this road.

At the same time a force consisting of B and D Companies and the assault gun platoon of the 17th Rank Battalion had been ordered to positions about half way between Liesel and Heitrak to counter any northward attack against Liesel. At noon C Company, 814th Tank Destroyer Battalion was attached to this force. About 0930 a threat to this northern sector was reported and the force commander reorganized to meet it by placing D Company (light tanks) in position to protect the 440th Armored Field Artillery, which was firing from positions only a few thousand yards west of Neerkant. One platoon of medium tanks was placed with a platoon of D Troop 87th Recon near Neerkant, and a second platoon was placed with E Troop 87th at Heitrak and the third platoon north of Heitrak.

During the period 0600-1100 the enemy had succeeded in getting some armor across the Deurne Canal and the first enemy armor was sighted by D Troop about 2000 yards to the east of the Liesel Heitrak road. They were engaged by our artillery and assault guns with undetermined results. However about 1200 on the same road and farther west an M8 Armored Car of D Troop 87th, which was on outpost was confronted by three enemy tanks. The car commander allowed one to pass and fired 6 rounds of 37mm shell in its rear at a range of approximately 15 yards. This caused the tank crew to ditch the tank. The M8 escaped up the road before the other two enemy tanks could bring it under fire.

By 1630 the enemy had succeeded in building up his strength west of the canal, enabling him to resume the attack.

According to the previous plan CCR was committed at 1300 and given the mission of attacking and siezing Meijel, as the 87th had been unable to retake the town by that hour. The plan called for the use of A and B Companies of the 48th Armored Infantry supported by A Company 17th Tank Battalion to make the attack. Company C 48th Armored Infantry was held in reserve. Company A was to flank Meijel from the wouth while B Company 48th, supported by A Company 17th Tanks was to attack astride the main road. The 87th Reconnaissance Squadron was to provide flank security. In this section the terrain was swampy on either side of the road and the attacking troops were forced to wade through water up to their knees in some places. The tanks were, in nearly all cases, road bound.

The 48th Armored Infantry moved out in their attack and the B Company Commander contacted the squadron commander of the 87th Reconnaissance, who informed him that he had see ~~no~~ no enemy between that point and a church in the western outskirts of Meijel. The 87th began withdrawing to carry ~~out~~ their mission of securing the flanks of CCR. Just before entering the outskirts of Meijel, B Company ran into concentrated automatic weapons fire and was stopped. This

turned out to be an attack by the enemy. B Company was forced back about 1000 yards to positions where the reserve platoon had dug in and there held.

To the south A Company reached a woods just south of Meijel and was met by fire from enemy tanks and automatic weapons. The company was forced back to a new position and during the night this position was flanked by the enemy and the company withdrew through the swamp to B Company positions and there the forces were consolidated.

At the same time of the attack west from Meijel the enemy launched an attack north from Meijel toward Neerkant. The attack consisted of about 20 tanks supported by infantry. This advance of the enemy cut off one platoon of D Troop 87th and one platoon of C Company 48th, which were able to escape under cover of darkness across the swamps. While the outposts had engaged the enemy troops making the northern advance, the 87th had established a new line to the north of Heitrak. The enemy advanced to within 200 yards of his line but by concentrated fire from our tanks, tank destroyers and artillery the attack was stopped with heavy losses to the enemy.

By the end of the day the situation was as shown in figure 3. The enemy had succeeded in getting a strong force across the canal and now held positions from which he could launch a new attack. On the other hand our troops had succeeded in delaying the enemy and allowing time for rein-

forcements to be brought up. On the whole the enemy had paid well for his advances. It had also cost our troops to hold him.

During the day positive identification was made of one company of the 9th Panzer Division and the paratroops and other elements formerly identified were still active.

It was decided by the Corps Commander during the night, to attack at 0700 28 October using the 7th Armored Division to drive the enemy from the zone.

The right flank of the British 11th Armored Division was extended south to include the sector held by CCB thus freeing CCB to make the main effort down the Liesel-Meijel road. CCR was to attack down the Asten-Meijel road and CCA with the exception of one force consisting of approximately one company of tanks and a platoon of infantry, was to hold. The force from CCA was to attack and secure the Deurne Canal in its zone; CCR was to seize and secure the southern part of Jeijel and secure the Deurne Canal in its zone; CCB was to attack south along the Liesel-Meijel road, seize the northern portion of Jeijel and secure the Deurne Canal in its zone. ( See Figure 4).

By 2045 on the night of the 27th the relief of CCB by the British 11th Armored was complete and CCB moved into an assembly area just west of Liesel and prepared for the



attack at 0700 next day. Our own artillery had been reinforced by the British artillery so that a mass of artillery was available to support the attack.

The scheme of maneuver to be carried out by CCB was for A and C Companies of the 23rd AIB to proceed south astride the Deurne-Meijel road toward Meijel with A Company 31st Tank Battalion in immediate support; while B Company 23rd AIB, C Company 31st Tanks, the assault gun and mortar platoons of the 31st Tanks, one platoon of the 814th Tank Destroyers and one platoon of engineers branched off the road, about 2000 yards south of Liesel, east toward Hoogebrug to destroy a bridge which the enemy had built across the canal. D Company 31st Tanks was to remain in reserve in the assembly area. B Company 31st Tanks was already in Division reserve.

A force of the 17th Tank Battalion consisting of one company of medium tanks, D Troop 87th Reconnaissance and a platoon of tank destroyers located about 2000 yards south of Liesel was to come under control of CCB when passed through by CCB. After coming under control of CCB this force was to protect the rear of CCB against attack from the north and from the Hoogebrug road to the east.

The attacking force of CCB moved out at 0700 28 October with A Company 23rd AIB on the left of the road and C Company 23rd AIB on the right, both companies dismounted, with A Company 31st Tank Battalion following down the road. The attack progressed about 1000 yards during the first hour,

encountering light artillery, some mortar and a little machine gun fire. At this point A Company 23rd AIB on the east side of the road was subjected to considerable small arms and automatic weapons fire in addition to increased enemy artillery fire on both companies A and C. The fire became so intense that A Company was forced to stop and with difficulty disengaged from the enemy and crossed to the west side of the road and proceeded on behind C Company. After passing the junction of the road leading east to Hoogebrug A Company moved back to its assigned zone and continued the attack southward. By 1400 C Company had reach the northern outskirts of Heittrak and dug in to await the arrival of A Company. Resistance in A Company's zone had slowed them down considerably. At this point all movement was halted as a wedge, held by the enemy, was between the route tanked by B Company and the route taken by A and C Companies. A and C were drawn upon a line and dug in, and B Company dug in about 1200 yards east of the road junction. The gap being covered by the heavy machine gun platoon and reconnaissance platoons from Headquarters Company.

The force of CCB with was attacking eastward toward the canal immediately ran into heavy enemy artillery and mortar fire and as the force progressed, the intensity of the automatic weapons, small arms, artillery and mortar fire increased. The tanks slightly ahead of the infantry came

under anti-tank fire and five of them were knocked out in a short time. This force had advanced a total of about 1200 yards, the last 600 of which they proceeded about 100 yards behind a rolling barrage laid down by our artillery. However the enemy fire became so intense that B Company was forced to dig in. The enemy was using this road as an attack route to the flank of CCB and this force met with B Company 23rd AIB as they advanced. The enemy, driven back by our force, attempted to circle to the north to cut the route into Liesel. The tank destroyers engaged the enemy tanks and knocked out two of them with a loss of two of their own tank destroyers. The assault gun platoon of the 31st Tank Battalion, which was protecting the left flank of B Company 23rd, spotted a column of German tanks and knocked out 5 of them with the loss of one assault gun.

Late in the evening B Company 23rd was ordered to withdraw about 500 yards in order to shorten the line between A and B Companies. Shortening of the lines still left the defensive positions rather thin and dismounted troops from the 814th TD's were used to fill some of the gaps. D Troop 87th was brought around from Liesel to fill the gap between C Company 23rd, the right company of CCB, and B Company 48th AIB, the left company of CCR. The lines were somewhat consolidated now, but the enemy wedge between B and A Companies of the 23rd still remained a dangerous threat if the enemy chose to exploit it.

The attack by CCR along the Asten-Meijel road was never launched due to the strong enemy pressure on their front. The positions were deepened and improved where possible.

The force from CCA started its attack and was successful to the extent of establishing positions along the Horik-Meijel road.

During the day the 48th AIB (CCR) had been able to maintain its positions about 2000 yards west of Meijel under strong pressure from the enemy. An air mission was called for by CCR on the enemy tanks to its front and which was flown by British typhoons. The typhoons knocked out four of the enemy tanks. At one point enemy armor penetrated the 48th AIB positions but was engaged and halted by CCR armor and massed artillery fire before it could exploit the breakthrough.

During the night of the 28th, the enemy was quite active. About 1830 the air strip of the 440th Armored Field Artillery, near Asten, was bombed destroying both liaison planes on the ground, killing one pilot and wounding the other pilot, his observer and three other men of the air section. The area of the 31st Tank Battalion was shelled, bombed and strafed but without serious damage. Considerable patrolling and infiltration was attempted by the enemy in both CCR and CCB sectors. All of our artillery fired continuously throughout the night.

By the end of the second day the 9th Panzer Division and the 15th Panzer Grenadier Division were identified on our front and prisoners stated that there were some 76 enemy tanks with the attacking forces, twenty to thirty of which were across the bridgehead. In addition to the two enemy divisions on our front, intelligence sources reported that the XLVII Panzer Corps had recently established headquarters in Venlo which is about thirteen miles due east of Meijel and that the 116th Panzer Division had been identified in Steinstrass which is about thirty-five miles distant.

After conferences between commanders during the night, it was ordered that, in view of the heavy losses suffered and new intelligence information, all forces would consolidate and hold their present positions.

Our positions at the end of the second day were approximately the same as at the end of the 1st day, after regaining some of the ground which was lost during the first night and second day of fighting.

On the morning of 29 October, enemy patrols were particularly aggressive during the early hours and intermittent artillery fire was received. About 0410 track vehicles were heard moving west toward Liesel and were assumed to be friendly vehicles. However at 0715 D Company 17th Tanks which was screening directly to the east of Liesel reported

one hundred fifty to two hundred enemy troops accompanied by four enemy tanks approaching from the east along the Hoogebrug road. The attacking force turned off the road and headed directly toward Liesel. This enemy force was taken under fire by machine guns and artillery which were successful in splitting the force. The light tanks also engaged the enemy but three of them were immediately knocked out and the rest of them were forced to withdraw to the north. The CP and motor pool of CCB were withdrawn to the west leaving the town of Liesel to the enemy, who reached the outskirts of the town by 0840. By 0900 the 23rd Armored Infantry was cut off from the rear.

In the CCR sector an attack was launched at dawn by the enemy against the left flank of CCR which was made up of two platoons of C Company 48th AIB immediately north of the Meijel-Asten road and C Troop 87th Reconnaissance which was tied in to D Troop 87th Reconnaissance on the right of CCB's forces. The attack completely overran C Company 48th positions. A tank destroyer attempted to stop their armor but was quickly eliminated. With the collapse of the left flank the platoon of C Company 48th which was immediately right of the road and A Company 48th also on the right, started withdrawing to the rear. B Company 48th, the reserve company dug in to the rear of A and C Companies' positions, then became the front line company. With the aid of our own artillery and a British 25 pounder regiment, B Company was able to hold the attack while the S-3 of the 48th Armored

Infantry gathered up a force consisting of about three tank destroyers, five tanks and about eighty infantrymen, including the remainder of A Company and set up a perimeter defense around a road junction about 3000 yards southeast of Heusden. Company B then withdrew to this position.

The Germans continued the attack with both tanks and infantry with a loss of seven tanks and three armored vehicles knocked out by the defenders. Our artillery had much success in the attack, when a battalion of Germans had just completed marching into a wooded area and had not had time to dig in, the forward observers placed all available fire on them and according to a PW report the battalion was almost completely wiped out. This position as organized was able to repulse all other attacks.

In the CCB sector the main forces held their positions despite the loss of Liesel. The tanks of B Company 17th were withdrawn during the morning but about 1130 four of them were returned to the infantry and A and C Companies of the 23rd AIB moved north a few hundred yards to more favorable positions. Pressure on A and C Companies of the 23rd had been fairly light during the day although PW's had reported tank concentrations in Heittrak. In the late afternoon German tanks supported by infantry moved north against A and C Companies. A Company reported eleven enemy tanks in its zone while others were seen in front of C Company. The

force was engaged by our armor and artillery but results were inconclusive.

At dusk B Company 23rd AIB, which was on the Hoogebrug road, received its heaviest attack of the day, by an estimated enemy company. Our tanks had just withdrawn to covered positions when the attack was launched so the defenders were forced to repulse the attack with machine gun, rifle and artillery fire. Heavy losses were inflicted on the enemy before they decided to withdraw.

Immediately after the loss of Liesel a force consisting of one company of medium tanks from the 31st Tank Battalion, a platoon of tank destroyers and one company of the 33rd Armored Engineers were sent to reinforce our lines west and north of the town. At 1330 this force was ordered to attack Liesel and clear the enemy from the town. The attack jumped off from the north with B Company 33rd Engineers making the attack and supported by the tank destroyers and assault gun platoon of the 31st Tank Battalion. When they were about halfway through the town orders were received to halt.

After conferences between the commanding general of the British VIII Corps and commanding general 7th Armored, it was decided to strengthen the sector by further shortening the lines of the 7th Armored. The 15th Scottish Division was to take over from CCB and CCR who would move south to the sector now held by CCA. It was after the commanding general of CCB had learned of the decision by the



commander of the relieving forces to set up new defensive lines to the west of Liesel, that he ordered the attack on Liesel discontinued. The CCB force was withdrawn and an air mission flown on the town.

The British forces established defensive positions commencing at dark, one about 1000 yards west of the final positions of CCR on the Asten-Meijel road, the other about 2000 yards to the rear of CCB's positions on the Liesel-Asten road. Relief was effective upon word from the relieving forces that they were in position.

With some difficulty our forces withdrew under cover of artillery. A and C Companies of the 23rd AIB were faced with the danger of withdrawing across the front of the enemy, however the maneuver was successfully carried out. The artillery barrage in the CCB sector was so effective that the British force did not make contact with the enemy until next morning.

All units with the exception of the artillery were closed in the new area by morning of 30 October. The artillery having remained in positions to support the relief of CCR and CCB and continued to fire for the relieving forces until the following morning.

After moving to the CCA sector in the vicinity of Weert, plans were made by the Corps Commander for a coordinated attack by the 15th Scottish Division and the US 7th Armored to restore the line formerly held along the Deurne and Noorder canals. The plan was for the 15th Scottish to retake

Meijel and the 7th Armored to attack south and clear the enemy from the Noorder Canal.

#### SUMMARY

During the period 27-29 October, CCB and CCR had held off an attack by the 9th Panzer and 15th Panzer Grenadier Divisions until reinforcements could be Brought in from other sectors.

The support rendered by the British air and artillery plus our own artillery had been a deciding factor in stopping the advance of the Germans.

Reported vehicle losses for the action are as follows:

<u>ENEMY</u>	<u>OUR LOSSES</u>
5 - anti-tank guns (Asstd sizes)	32 - Medium tanks
6 - 88 mm Guns	13 - Light Tanks
11 - Mark V Tanks	5 - Assault Guns (105)
20 - Mark VI Tanks	14 - Half tracks (Personnel)
	2 - M8 Armored cars
	2 - M8 Assault Guns (75mm)
	7 - Tank destroyers
	3 - Half-track (Mortars)
	45 - Peeps.

The artillery expenditures by the 434th and 440th Armored Field Artillery Battalions had been something like 8000 rounds each for the 3 days. Records of the 774th and the British 25 pounders are not available but it is reasonable to assume that their expenditures were greater due to a more adequate supply of that caliber. It has been stated by several of the front line commanders, that had it not been for the excellent work done by the artillery, the enemy would have come on through in at least two instances.

Although this is not considered a good situation for the employment of armor, it should help prove the fact, as did many other armored units, that armor may be successfully employed in many like situations. The tools provided an armored division commander, properly employed, make possible the accomplishment of any reasonable mission assigned it.

Note: The material covered in this article is taken from the after action reports of units of the 7th Armored Division.

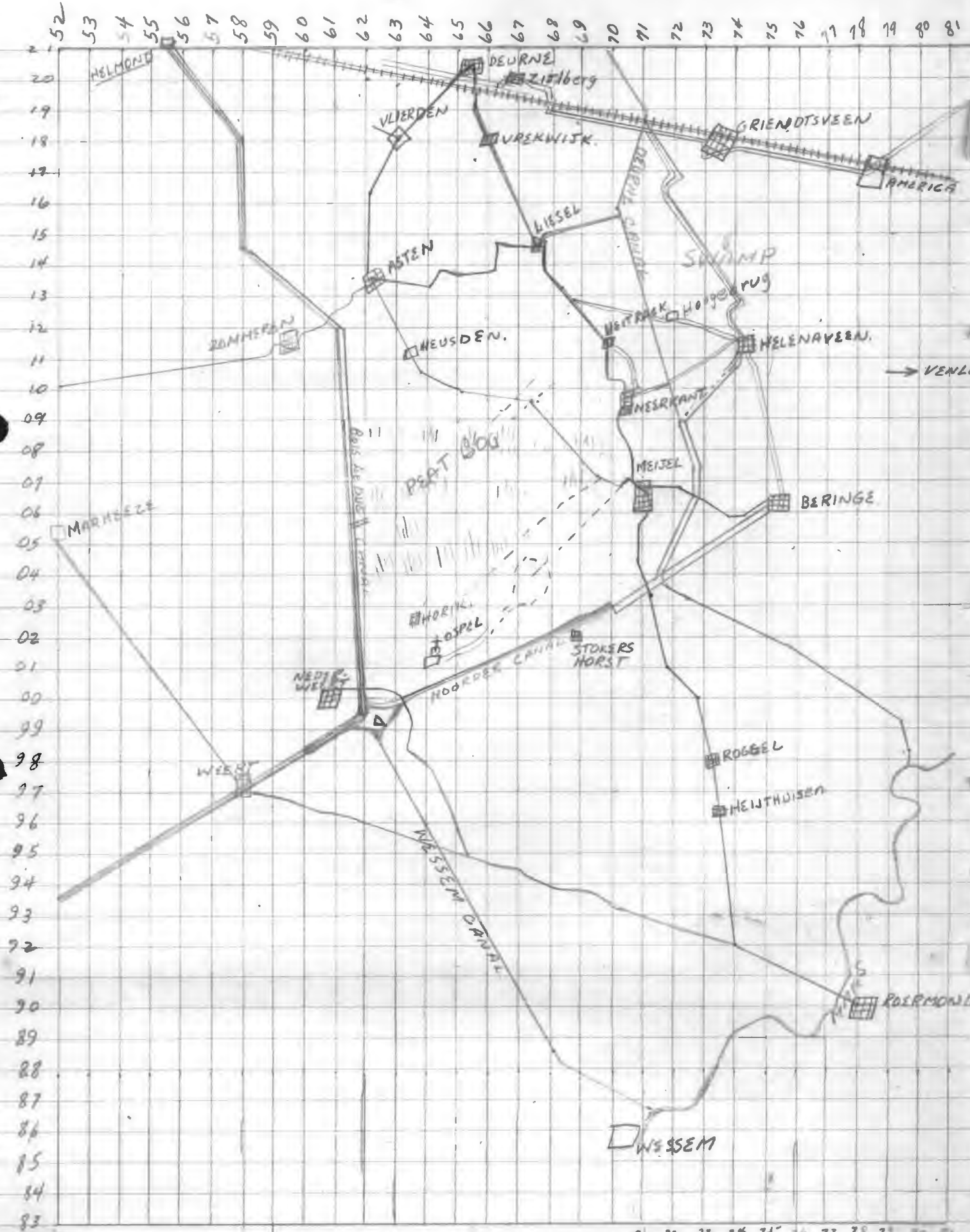
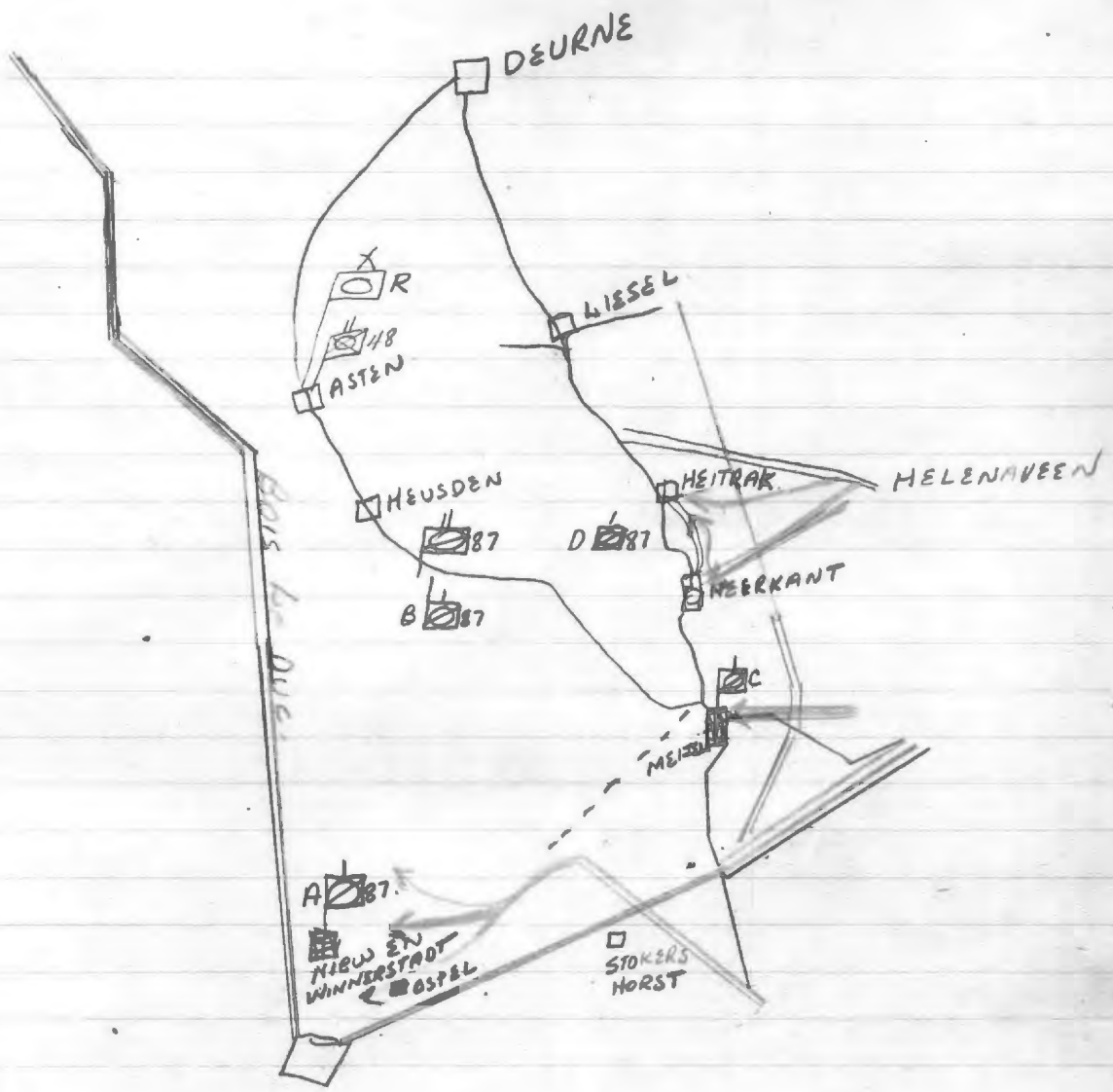
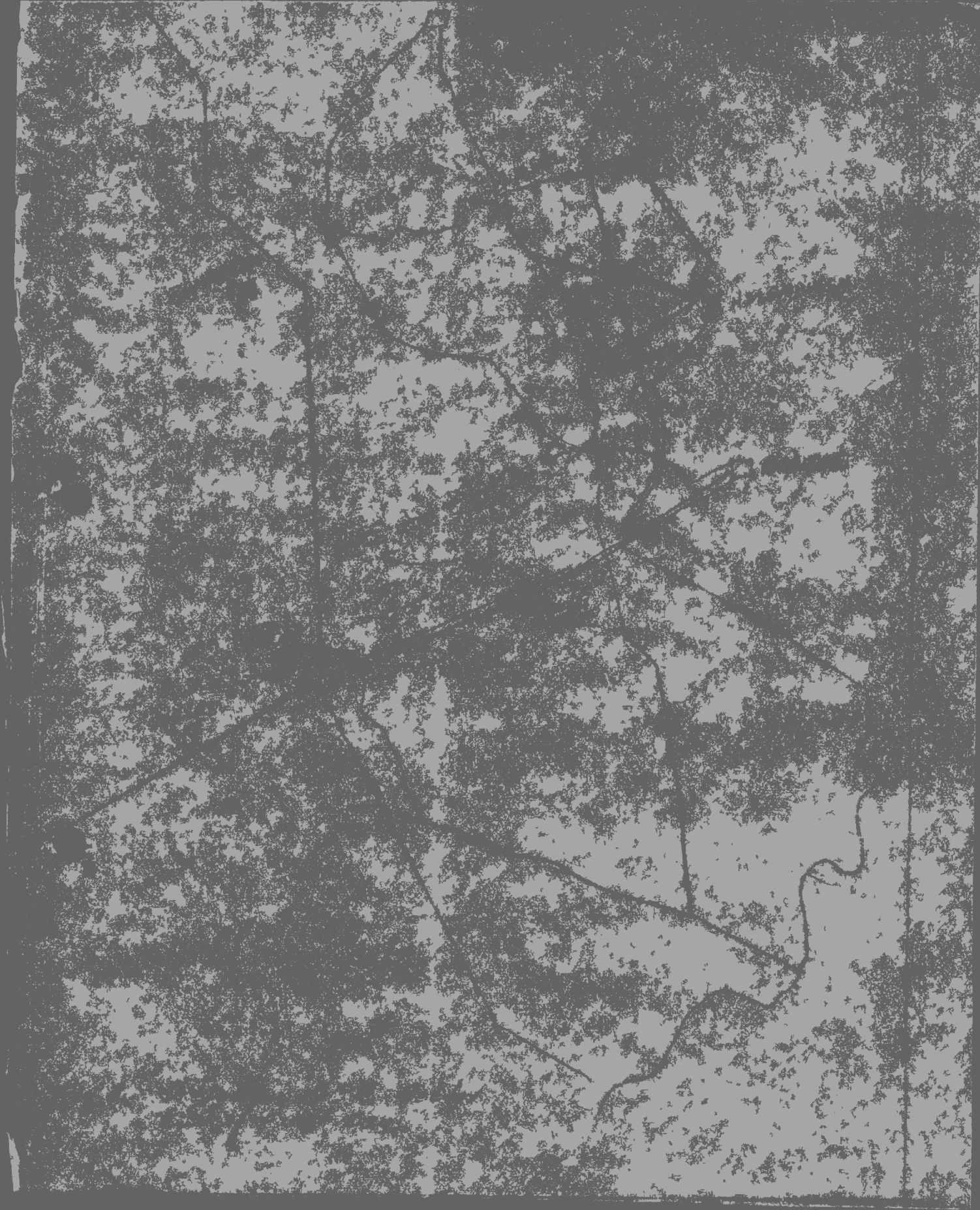


FIG 2

71 72 73 74 75 76 77 78 79 80 81







Force CCA	CCB	CCB
2/100 TK	480 AIBn	230 AIBn
1/A/814 TD	1R4-1700 TK	318 TK
1/A/23 AIBn	B+C-8TK	430 AFM
480 AAA	1R4 Eng	CCB assumed
	1R4 TD	South of the 3rd Pz
	4400 Pz	N of 6430 TK
	774 Pz (4.5)	

Plan of attack 20 DAY. FIG 4