

The German Viewpoint of the Battle

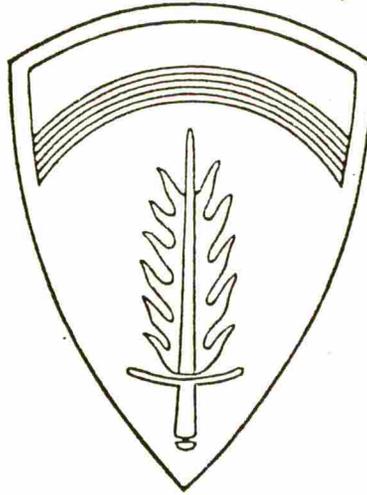
The following are reports written by German commanders who participated in the action against the 28th Infantry Division near Schmidt.

Some highlighting was in the documents when scanned, and the condition of the originals were not always ideal. Moreover, there are some notes within the margins, but these may not necessarily involve staff ride discussion questions.

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Battle of Hürtgen Forest
Nov- Early Dec. 1944

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THE BATTLE OF THE HURTTGEN FOREST
Nov - Early Dec 1944

by

Gen Maj V. Gersdorff, C of S, Seventh German Army. (Translated from the German text by Gen Gersdorff in the presence of Capt. N. B. Sigband and F. C. Mahin, USFET Historical Officers. Minor paraphrasing and additions were made by the historical officers, all of which were approved by Gen Gersdorff at a final reading, 12 Dec 45).

INTRODUCTION

On 22 Oct 44, the Fifth PZ Army (CG, Gen Manteuffel) was placed in a position on the right flank of Army Group B (CG Gen Modl). (1) This was at approximately the time

(1) See next page for reasons influencing commitment of the Fifth PZ Army.

when the second battle for Aachen had ended: At this time only the command staff of the Fifth PZ Army was present.

In broad outline it was believed that the American

advance could be halted. However, it was felt that it would not be successful to eliminate the penetrations that had been made on both sides of Aachen nor would it be possible to push the enemy forces west to the boundary of Germany. The city of Aachen was finally lost to the American forces 20 Oct 44.

The intelligence reports of the German Army made clear the fact that in the Aachen - Liege sector the purpose of the American drive was the Ruhr industrial area with the cities of Cologne and Dusseldorf as the primary objectives. On the north we felt that the British in a coordinate action would also drive for the Ruhr, sweeping down from the north. The results of consideration on the above point revealed to us that the right flank of the American attack (north) would be just north of Monschau. We felt that the main effort would be directed at the Hürtgen - Monschau - Düren road

for the purpose of (1) capturing Duren and (2) seizing the Roer Dams.

The following were the reasons that influenced us in the decision of committing the Fifth PZ Army: (1) The length of the front of the Seventh Army (from Geilenkirchen to Trier) was too broad to effectively handle the disposition of the tasks at Army level. (2) During the battles east of Aachen more and more mobile troops were brought into the area (PZ Gren units). Also other forces of a highly mobile type were brought forward. This made it necessary to place such forces under an Army that was qualified to direct them. That was the Fifth PZ Army. (3) The Ardennes offensive which had been planned at this time also influenced placing of the Fifth PZ Army in the line of defense. It was believed that this would hide the preparations that were being made for the Dec attack.

The boundary between the Fifth PZ Army and the Seventh

Army was the same as the one between the LXXXI Corps and the LXXIV Corps and ran on a line Vicht - Schevenhutte - to just north of Duren - Bruehl. The Fifth Pz Army, at the same time this line became effective, took control of the LXXXI Corps. (This was on 22 Oct 44.)

This line was not satisfactory to the Seventh Army because it ran on an angle to the northeast. It was assumed that when the American attack drove to the east the forces north of the line would withdraw in that direction and those south would withdraw to the east. That would leave an open corner in the direction Duren - Cologne through which the American forces could penetrate. An attempt by the Seventh Army to have the boundary between the two Armies changed to a more satisfactory position was not given favorable consideration by the AGP. In the beginning of November, therefore, the right wing of the Seventh Army was in the Hurtgen

forest engaged in what the Germans termed the third phase of the battle for Aachen. The order of battle of the right flank of the **LXXIV Corps** (CG, Gen Straube) is as given along the blue lines as indicated on sketch 1. The infantry divisions of the Corps (275 and 89) possessed the faults of being **organized hurriedly while holding a front in the Siegfried Line.** Many improvisations were necessary and there existed **insufficient quantity of materiel for future action.** (See interview by Siegfried Line Sub-section with Gen Gersdorff, 28 Nov 44, question 1). CMS# A-892

The strength of the infantry divisions was complete but the distribution of materiel among the sub-units was **unsatisfactory.** The personnel of the units were not soldiers. They were secondary troops and formerly assigned within the nation and had **no field experience.**

The officers and non-commissioned officers were not satisfactory and left much to be desired. The weapons

were unsatisfactory and not uniform. The artillery regiments were composed of guns of German, Russian, Italian, and French origin. For some of these foreign guns there was an insufficient supply of ammunition, i.e., the 12.2 Russina howitzer. There were also very few AT weapons, but a sufficient supply of bazookas and panzerfausts. Especially distressing was the personal clothing of the soldiers. This was especially felt when the weather became cold and wet and we incurred a large number of non-battle casualties.

RESERVES

In the reserve battalions of the Army the self-propelled guns numbered approximately 12-15. (Normal strength about 30.) These were not in satisfactory condition. Later the Army gave to the Corps grenade battalions which performed very satisfactorily southwest of Hurtgen. In the rear, organization was begun

of an AT zone between the Roer and Erft Rivers.

Community digging groups worked between the Roer and Erft Rivers.

The right flank of the Army ran through heavy woods and joined the second portion of the Siegfried Line at Druikaisereichen just west of Germeter. The Siegfried Line here consisted of a single line of pillboxes, widely spaced, that commanded the primary and secondary roads and also the firebreaks. In the east of the Hurtgen forest there were the large open areas of Hurtgen - Vossenack - Bergstein and Schmidt which were of importance by reason of their elevation. (between 380 and 500 meters). That sector played an important role in the defense of the Roer area south of Duren. In the wooded area the terrain was especially bad and the mud became worse with the frequent snows and rains. The entire wooded area contained so many differences in

elevation plus the condition of the soil that it was extremely difficult to commit tanks.

Northwest of Gemund there were two giant dams (Schwarzenau and Urfttalsperre) which were important industrially and economically for the generation of electricity west of the Rhine and for the military importance of controlling the level of the Roer River. The small dam near Untermaubach had no importance.

Special orders were issued for the protection of these dams. There were small AA batteries emplaced and also security troops to protect the dams. (Barrage balloons had been employed in the dam area, but by this period they were no longer in a usable condition. The dams and generating machinery were prepared for demolition.

The Army had an opportunity in October to draw on former experiences in the Hurtgen Forest. That was the battle of the 9th American Division when the Todtenbruch

9

was lost (southwest of Germeter). (Regiment Wegelein while proceeding to another point had been stopped and directed into this battle and after some initial successes was halted.) The fighting in the Hurtgen was as costly to the defending troops as it was to those engaged in the offensive. In addition to the natural difficulties of fighting in a forest there were the added complications of poor communication, poor observation, danger from flank attacks, etc. The differences in elevation and the condition of the ground due to the inclement weather added further to the difficulties present. The Seventh Army directed that the front should be held in the woods, as far west as possible in spite of disadvantages for the following reasons: (1) The joining of the easternmost portion of the Siegfried Line west of Germeter by the troops in defense should be retained. The defense was to be complete and strong so that from neither the

north or the south could penetrations of the Siegfried Line be possible. (2) The line of defense in the woods should hold back the enemy from the dominating elevated positions of Hurtgen, Grosshau, Vossenack, Schmidt and Bergstein. (3) The front was further to prevent the enemy from gaining the dams which we have mentioned above that were of military and economic importance. (4) Because of the plans already made for the Ardennes offensive it was extremely important that absolutely no change take place in the front line then existent in the Hurtgen Forest. (5) We realized that here in the Hurtgen forest the superiority the Americans possessed in the air, in tanks, and in artillery could not be employed as effectively against the German forces as would be possible in open terrain. (6) Duren, because of its position as a road net center and communications zone, must be

retained and protected. In the defense of Duren it was important to retain the road Duren - Gey - Hurtgen because of its normal function and also because most of our supplies utilized it.

THE BATTLE OF THE HURTGEN FOREST

From the beginning of November and the operations which developed until the Ardennes offensive it is necessary to consider the reasons given above to fully appreciate the difficulties of the fighting. The men and officers were fully cognizant of the importance of this zone of operation and did their very best in its defense. Therefore, there existed the bitter fighting for every foot of ground and resulted in the counterattacks which at times were successful as well as unsuccessful. It is a fact that as the strength and bitterness of the fighting increased coupled with the conditions of the ground and the weather and the effects on all arms there was a

similarity that was noticeable between this fighting and that of the last years of the first World War. (1) For

(1) At this point, Gen Gersdorff further expanded verbally, "I have engaged in the long campaigns in Russia as well as other fronts, in addition to the time I spent on the Western front and I believe the fighting west of the Roer, and especially in the Hurtgen, was the heaviest I have ever witnessed." (Capt N.B. Sigband)

the Seventh Army the Hurtgen area was, always an "open wound", and was a very disturbing factor in the planning for the Ardennes offensive. Because of the continued fighting, Seventh Army was always forced to attempt to bring forward reserve troops for the battle in the Hurtgen. Those VG divisions that were in the area, we were forbidden to utilize because they had been earmarked for the Ardennes. (Pz and SS units were already under control of the Armies that were going to fight in the Ardennes). These divisions had to finish their organization and instructions behind the front, or in the inactive sectors, the only zones we were permitted to commit them.

As an example of this, the 47 VG Div might be cited.

(47 VG Div was almost completely destroyed in about three days just north of Schevenhutte in about mid-November when it was committed in a critical sector with incomplete preparation). Further it might be said that the Siegfried Line Divisions which possessed secondary troops and poor weapons were likewise ill-qualified for commitment in the difficult fighting of the Hurtgen.

~~One of the big problems was the consistent lack~~
~~of ammunition of artillery caliber.~~ Because of that we were restricted to firing only about one fourth to one fifth the amount of ammunition that the Americans fired. In spite of that we successfully maintained offensive and defensive action west of the Ruhr so that the initial phase of the Ardennes offensive was insured. (Gen G pointed out that had the Roer River been crossed by the American forces the Ardennes offensive would not have been possible

to execute in its original plan).

HURTGEN FORIST
2-15 Nov

The fact of the American attack was no surprise - only its timing. Observed movement of American troops in the rear of Rotgen, obviously (by pattern of air bursts) preplanned artillery fires, agent reports, and other signs led us to believe that an attack was imminent. The anticipated direction of the attack was towards Germeter and Lammersdorf. The deep penetration in the direction of Hurtgen and Vossenack assured us that the attack was headed for the roads to Duren, the Roer and the dams. Since the Army ~~XXXXXX~~ reserves were too weak we initiated a request to Army Group for troops with which to counter-attack and reduce the penetration. By unusual chance both the Army Commander and his Chief of Staff were in conference with the Army Group Commander, Field Marshall Modl at Castle Schlenderhan. [See interview with Chief of

Staff, Seventh German Army, 28 Nov 48, Question 27. Army Group initially gave one battle group and later in the day released the entire 116 Pz Div whose commander Gen von aldenburg, was present at the conference. The decisions, orders, and execution were accelerated by this chance gathering of the commanders.

The Army decided to move the bulk of the 116 Pz Div over the shortest route from Duren to Hurtgen. The counterattack itself was to be organized in the woods south of Hurtgen. Army ordered that the shoulders of the penetration - northwest of and south of Germeter - be held strongly. With the rapid advance of the Americans to the east and southeast of Vossenack parts of the 116 Pz Div were positioned around the perimeter ready to launch a concentric counterattack. Since the deep valley between Vossenack and the Brandenburg - Bergstein ridge offered us considerable protection, our greatest

fears were for the axis Vossenack - Kommerscheidt - Schmidt. We expected a rapid advance in that direction to the dams. Near the Mestriinger Muehle were only weak elements of the 89 Inf Div. The reconnaissance battalion of the 116 Pz Div was ordered to this point. Because the woods north and east of Vossenack prevented armored employment the tank regiment of the 116 Pz Div was sent to the vicinity of Schmidt, attached to the 89 Div. Both these forces, however, were so restricted by the air situation and by the condition of the road that they arrived too late to perform their initial tasks. The Reconnaissance Battalion, however, was successful, in coordination with the 89 Inf Div, in retaking the Mestriinger Muehle and thereby severing the connection between your leading elements and those in Vossenack. At this time Army ordered LXXIV Corps to launch two attacks. The first attack, employing the 89 Inf Div,

reinforced with the tank regiment of the 116 Pz Div, and assault gun brigade (15 guns) was to retake Schmidt and Kommerscheidt. The second attack, employing the remainder of the 116 Pz Div, was to be a concentric squeeze on Vossenack. All possible support - artillery, assault guns and heavy weapons - were given to these attacks. The divisional artillery of the 272 VG Div, less one battalion, was displaced to the north and added its fires. This artillery disposition was ordered by the Corps artillery commander.

The first part of the mission given to LXXIV Corps can be considered successful. By 7 Nov the Corps had destroyed the American forces which had gotten to the vicinity of Schmidt. After heavy fighting in both **Schmidt** and Kommerscheidt the American tanks had been destroyed and the infantry could only pass individually back through the woods to Vossenack. **The three most**

important reasons for our success in this engagement were; the steepness of your supply route from Vossenack to Kommerscheidt, the availability to us of roads capable of supporting an armored attack, and the effective massing of our artillery fire.

The second ~~part~~ part of the mission was not so successful. The 116 Pz Div was able to reach the church in Vossenack but they could neither capitalize on nor retain this advantage. Without armored support, operating on open ground which left us at the mercy of aircraft and artillery, lacking reserves, and facing an excellent, spirited defense, our attack could go no further. In spite of heavy artillery support repeated assaults made no success. When we saw that our attack to cut off the penetration had no chance of completion we ordered that the troops establish a defense along the edge of the woods. In this process the 116 Pz Div was replaced by parts of

of the 89 Inf Div and the 275 VG Div. The Fz Div then assembled near Hurtgen in preparation for a new attack, designed to go along the Hurtgen - Germeter road to the edge of the woods south of Germeter. Such an attack would cut off the Vossenack bulge. The tank regiment was to remain east of the Kall while the two Pz Gren Regts and the assault gun brigade were moved to Hurtgen. The artillery displaced to support the new attack. All elements of the 275 VG Div which were in the zone of attack became attached to the 116 Pz Div. The American renewal of the attack on 7 Nov had been stopped by the effective use of extensive minefields, by the artillery, and by the employment of a mortar battalion. When the 116 Pz Div launched its attack southwest of Hurtgen on 10 Nov it met a new American Division, the 4th, which was also attacking. The arrival of this unit was a surprise to us. The Fz Div was successful in stopping the attack of the new American

forces but could not effect a breakthrough. The attack of the 116 Pz Div in the woods succeeded in pinching off the salient of the American troops but we were unable to prevent your withdrawal to the south. The American troops could pass through the thick woods undetected. The special character of forest fighting was illustrated in another episode east of the Germeter - Hurtgen road. Here an American attack was launched along a division boundary into the woods south of Hurtgen. There the enemy established a defensive position which after repeated attempts we could not reduce. The 89 Inf Div considered the ejection of this force to be a point of honor, but they were never able to dispose of them. This typically confused example of forest fighting may be likened to a contest of "cat and mouse".

III

SECOND PHASE
16-30 Nov

The Army now realized that the possibility for regaining the lost ground was now dim. Orders were therefore issued changing the mission from offensive to defensive. In this connection we consistently tried to keep control of the dominating terrain and to establish the front lines in the woods. On 16 Nov the expected large scale American offensive began striking the Army's northern flank with the American right wing. At this time the strong American attacks by the 4th Div were launched first in the woods against Roten Wehbach and later Weissen Wehbach. The defending elements of the 275 Inf Div could not prevent the advance of the 4th Div towards Grosshau. At this time, against our strongest wishes, we were again forced to commit the 116 Pz Div to prevent American troops from spilling out of the woods onto the open ground. The Division should 2/

have been withdrawn from the line and rehabilitated for the Ardennes offensive. The ever-pressing problem confronting us at Army was the reinforcement of the heavily engaged right flank of the LXXIV Corps. Since reserves were not available we adopted an expedient solution. The 272 and 277 VG Divs were periodically required to leap-frog their right flank battalion during the night to occupy the positions of their neighbor to the north. In this way we were able, bit by bit, to shift the weight north. The right boundary of the 272 VG Div, for example, initially was north of Monschau and ultimately was edged up to Zweifallshammer.

Besides this method the Army consistently tried to milk reserves from the LXVI and LXXX Corps. At first we were able to free only single battalions, separate field artillery battalions, etc. Now began a series of moves in which newly arrived VG Divisions on the

Biffel front relieved the panzer divisions located there. (See attached sketch). The 18 and 26 VG Divs had in early Nov relieved the 2 SS PZ Div and 2 Pz Div, respectively. The two Pz Divs were not available for our use since they had to be readied for the Ardennes offensive. The 18 and 26 Divs in mid-November each extended its interior flank, thereby pinching out the 344 Div which was in the center of LXVI Corps. The 344 Div thus became available for employment in the north. A few days later the 352 VG Div replaced the 353 Div in the LXXX Corps zone. The 353 Div then moved north and was committed on 20 Nov to further bolster the right flank of LXXIV Corps. Not an integral part of this shift to the north but indicative of the readjustment of units at this time was the insertion of the 312 VG Div above Trier. This division relieved the

36 VG Div which in turn was dispatched to the Saar front. Thus two divisions, the 353 and 344 divs, were committed in mid-Nov in the Hurtgen Forest.

The 344 Div was originally known as the 91 Air Landing Div, which had been reportedly destroyed. A new designation was therefore applied. It was clear to Army that units like the 344 and 353 Inf Divs had little combat value in the unusually bitter fighting of the Hurtgen Forest. Since no other troops were available we had to content ourselves with what we had. With the arrival of these two divisions we were enabled, however, to withdraw the 116 Pz Div in preparation for its role in the coming Ardennes offensive. The Pz Div artillery remained several extra days in position, partially because there were no replacements and partially because we did not want to inform you of their withdrawal. Later, however, the Division

once again had to detach a combat group to the south flank of the Fifteenth Army. The arrival of the two divisions also enabled us to withdraw the staff, key commanders, non-coms, and the supply echelons of the 275 Inf Div. The remnants of the infantry troops were absorbed by the 353, 344, and 89 Divs, as was the artillery. All these complicated changes and reinforcements were accomplished during the relentless, bitter fighting of the Hurtgen Forest. In a steady, slow, meter-by-meter advance the numerically superior enemy forces were able to shove the front line back through the woods and into the cleared space of Hurtgen and Kleinheu.

THIRD PHASE
1 Dec - 10 Dec

The defense now gripped onto the battered towns of Hurtgen, Kleinheu, Grossheu to protect the critical

hills east of those towns. When the 89 Inf Div was broken through north of Vossenack and the town of Hurtgen threatened from several sides, the defense was unhinged. The attack of an American armored group in the direction of Brandenburg in early December was of critical importance. This thrust threatened a deep penetration with a consequent extension of our thinly spread forces. Every effort was, therefore, made to repel this lunge by counterattacks. Having no other reserves available, Seventh Army, with concurrence of Army Group, decided to commit the 272 VG Div assisted by assault gun units. It was an unwelcome decision for both Army and Army Group. The Division was scheduled to participate in the Ardennes offensive and it was recognized that heavy casualties in this engagement would seriously hamper its effectiveness. The projection, however, of the American attack on through Bergstein to

the Roer River would jeopardize the execution of the Ardennes offensive. For this reason Army Group released the 47 VG Div for the specified purpose of defending east of the Roer River. This Division was in the process of absorbing replacements after its heavy engagement farther north. By these measures a new American breakthrough was prevented but repeated counterattacks against Brandenburg, Bergstein, and Hill 400 enjoyed no success.

Meantime in the north the right flank of the Army had been slowly retiring before the repeated assaults that also drove back the southern flank of Fifteenth Army. But at Gey-considered the focal point of the defense since it controlled the debouchment of American forces from the woods-we made special efforts to hold the ground. Army Group considered the threat of a breakthrough, Gey to Duren, so important that they

assigned to Seventh Army a task force of the 3 Para Div - again with specific limitations. The task force was to form a second line of defense running generally north-south through Birgel. On 10 Dec, Seventh Army was relieved in the Duren - Bergstein area by the Fifteenth Army and on its southern front by the Fifth PZ Army. Seventh Army then took over its sector Vianden - Trier.

Although we left a dangerously weak front manned by exhausted troops we felt that we had prevented a strategic penetration in the Hurtgen area. The fighting in Hurtgen had cost us dearly in casualties yet we were certain that we had inflicted commensurate losses on the enemy in men and materiel. In what was probably the heaviest fighting in the war, soldiers of both sides performed, under unbelievable hardships, acts of great gallantry and perseverance.

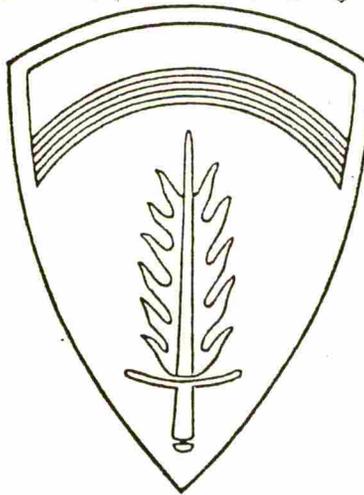
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Units Opposing the U.S.
28th Division in the
Hürtgen Forest

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Units opposing the US 28th Division in the Huertgen Forest

Translated by Janet E. Dewey, December 1989
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Units opposing the US 28th Division in the Huertgen
Forest

To the person responsible for compiling the questions:

The author of the work concerning fighting in the Huertgen Forest and his editor are aware that some of the questions on this fighting are already dealt with in other manuscripts. However, in a comparison with official records and documents available to us, it became clear that there were discrepancies which had to be cleared up.

We understand that answering some of these questions requires a great deal of memory searching and also that some of the questions only pertain to a certain circle of participants.

We hope that the enclosed map will help to bring to light certain specifics of the fighting.

QUESTIONS.

1. On 3 November Grenadier-Regiment 1055 was stopped on its way from Strauch to the area of Nideggen and ordered to seal off and clear out American penetration in Schmidt. Sections of the regiment had already marched through Schmidt and were on the approach route to Nideggen while other sections were only approaching Schmidt on the Strauch-Schmidt road.

a. Which sections (battalions) of Grenadier-Regiment 1055 were committed to the road Harscheidt-Schmidt?

b. Which sections were committed on the road Strauch-Schmidt?

c. If there were regimental sections on the road Hasenfeld-Schmidt, which units were they?

d. Were sections of Grenadier-Regiment 1056 involved in the first counterthrust against Schmidt? If yes, from what point of departure were they committed?

e. Did sections from the 347th Infantry Division take part in this operation? If yes, what sections were involved and what was their point of departure?

2. Which battalions from Grenadier-Regiment 1056 were the first to make contact with sections of the reconnaissance battalion from the 116th Panzer Division in the vicinity of the Mestrenger mill?

3. When the 7th Army was informed of American penetration at Huertgen and Vossenack, they sent in considerable reinforcements to the threatened area of Huertgen-Brandenberg-Schmidt. Among these reinforcements was division artillery (possible exception

of one battalion) from the LXXXI Army Corps. The artillery did not directly participate in the fighting around Schmidt, Vossenack and Huertgen.

a. Which division of the LXXXI Army Corps sent in their artillery as reinforcement to this threatened area?

b. Did the 12th VGD* (*not translated) send their artillery to this area?

c. Where was the division artillery deployed?

d. Were the following units sent in. If yes, where were they deployed?

- Army Artillery-Battalion 992.

- Fortress Artillery-Battalion 1308.

- Fortress Artillery-Battalion with 12.2cm guns. (The number of the battalion is not known. Please indicate it, if you can remember.)

- Assault Gun-Battalion (Brigade) 341, 394, 519.

- Army Mortar-Battalion 628.

e. Were there any other units sent in that are not mentioned above?

f. How many assault guns were in the 228th Antitank-Battalion of the 116th Panzer Division at this time?

g. Were the assault guns of this battalion deployed with Fighting Group Bayer in Schmidt or in the area of Huertgen-Vossenack?

4. American sources repeatedly indicate that "Tigers" took part

in the fighting around Schmidt and Vossenack. A situation report on the tank strength of the 116th Panzer Division which was given to the Inspector General of the Armored troops shortly after the fighting around Schmidt does not mention Tigers. Because of sources and the general knowledge that there were Tigers in Army units, the question is raised if:

a. Tigers from the 116th Panzer Division were divided up or brought in from disbanded or wiped out units. American sources mention the name Panzer-Regiment Grossdeutschland or if,

b. the mention of Tigers was based on a mistake?

5. Did any sections of Panzer Grenadier-Regiment 60 take part in the first counterthrust against Schmidt? Did any other sections of the 116th Panzer Division apart from Fighting Group Bayer take part in this counterthrust?

6. What part of the total strength in tanks and enlisted men from Panzer-Regiment 16 was made available to build Fighting Group Bayer?

7. On 5 November German forces again launched a counterthrust in the area of Huertgen. Did sections (battalions) from Panzer-Grenadier 60 take part? If yes, which sections? What other units participated?

8. On 5 November sections of the 89th Infantry Division made contact with Reconnaissance-Battalion 116. The contact was made in the Kall sector in the area of the Mestrenger Mill.

a. Which of the above-mentioned units reached the Mestrenger Mill first?

b. Which unit (battalion, regiment) of the 89th Infantry Division pushed ahead in the Kall sector from the direction Simonskall in order to establish contact with Reconnaissance-Battalion 116?

9. American forces in Schmidt and Kommerscheidt were cut off by the thrust of the above-mentioned units in the Kall sector and their making contact with one another. In addition to these two assaults in the Kall sector, was there another thrust conducted to reach the Mestrenger Mill? If yes, which unit was involved and what was its point of departure?

10. Were one or two battalions from Panzer Grenadier-Regiment 60 detached to the area of Huertgen in order to support Panzer Grenadier-Regiment 156 in a counterattack on Vossenack? If yes, which battalion(s) and when did the detachment take place?

11. On 6 November, Panzer Grenadier-Regiment 156 and 60 attacked Vossenack in order to recapture the town. A German source says that the attack was planned for 0400 hours. By noon, German troops occupied the eastern section of the town to the church.

a. Did the attack begin at 0400 hours? If yes, why was there so much time between the beginning of the attack and occupation of the eastern part of Vossenack?

b. Was the attack delayed? If yes, why was the attack put off? When did the two regiments actually begin the attack? Please provide an approximate time table for both regiments.

c. How strong were the German attack forces which attacked against the American defenders prior to 1200 hours?

d. Which German unit occupied and held the church in Vossenack? It if was sections of Panzer Grenadier-Regiment 60, where was Panzer Grenadier-Regiment 156 at this time?

KG Bayer 116 PzD

COL Johannes Bayer

5 June 1951

ANSWERS.

I would like to state that all questions are answered from my memory and I do not have any written documents at this time. The answers to questions 3b, d, g, and 4, 4a were verified by my former regimental adjutants from their memory.

3b. Artillery from the VGD was there but I cannot remember if it was the 12th VGD or not.

3c. The artillery stood in the area north of Huertgen-Brandenberg where there was also artillery from the 116th Panzer Division. In the first phase of my attack on Kommerscheidt, they supported us.

3d. Assault Gun-Battalion 519 had some sections in the area. A 1LT and Company Commander were on their way to the front and one evening they showed up at my rear-lying command post. They had 4-5 wagons and received an orientation from the regimental adjutant. I think they went to the VGD which I was subordinated to for the attack on Kommerscheidt. I no longer remember the number of the VGD. It was commanded by a general by the name of Engelbrecht or Engelhardt. The command outpost of this division was in Hasenfeld.

3f. As far as I remember, no more than 5-7. (228th Pz Tgr Bn)

3g. Antitank 228 was not in my fighting group but deployed with Panzer Grenadier-Regiment 156.

4a. There were no Tigers in my fighting group. Earlier there had been Tigers in this area. At one of the turns in the road

directly northwest of Hasenfeld, there was a burnt out Tiger (shot by aircraft?). My fighting group was attached to a heavy Panther battalion which had approximately 5-9 tanks. Only 3-5 tanks took part in the attack on Kommerscheidt. There were no sections from Panzer-Regiment Grossdeutschland in my fighting group or with the 116th Panzer Division.

4b. The mention of Tigers must be based on an inaccuracy. Maybe it was because there was a burnt out Tiger along the road northwest of Hasenfeld.

5. No sections of Panzer Grenadier-Regiment 60 or other section of the 116th Panzer Division took part in the first counterthrust against Schmidt. My regiment was made up of the II/Panzer-Grenadier ~~16~~⁽¹¹⁶⁾ and the I/Panzer-Regiment 24 which had been subordinated to my regiment for a long time because my I/Battalion was on rest and recuperation in Germany. When they were brought back, they were first sent outside of our area (far to the south) and were deployed with another command agency.

6. All deployable tanks of my regiment (I/24 - II/116), with a strength of approximately 30 tanks, were in my fighting group.

7. Some sections of Panzer Grenadier-Regiment 60 took part. Which battalion, I no longer remember. I don't know of any other units taking part in this counterthrust.

8. Even my fighting group, which took Kommerscheidt with sections of VGD (number ?) to which I was subordinate, established contact with sections of the 116th Panzer Division at the Mestrenger Mill. I cannot recall the date or the time. As far as I can remember, sections of Panzer Grenadier-Regiment 156

were the first to reach the mill.

9. Yes, from Fighting Group Bayer. See number 8.

11. That, around late morning, Panzer Grenadier from the 116th Panzer Division reached the church at Vossenack. I can confirm this because I observed the action from the battlefield of Kommerscheidt. From the area of Kommerscheidt, we aimed our tank fire on targets south of Vossenack.

11d. As far as I can remember, sections of Panzer Grenadier-Regiment 156, which, during the combat, had combined with sections of Panzer Grenadier 60, held the church at Vossenack. There was an argument between the two regiments on who had actually reached the church first.

by Bayer

89th Inf. Div

MG Walter Bruns

12 February 1951

Meldorf/Holstein

Oesterblick 4

ANSWERS.

1a. The following units were deployed on the Harscheidt-Schmidt road: RIGHT. III/1055. LEFT. I/1055. Regiment 1055 was supposed to have a "short rest behind the front after being relieved by the 272nd VGD". The first battalion to be relieved was I/1055. On 3 November 1944 at around 1100 hours, they arrived at Kilometer Marker 18 on the Nideggen-Schmidt road and assembled there. By Corps order they were loaded onto trucks and driven to the right neighboring units at Birgel. II/1055, the second battalion to be relieved, was also given the order to assemble at Kilometer Marker 18 and await further orders. As the enemy broke through at Germeter and advanced over the Mestrenger Mill, approaching Kommerscheidt, the I/Battalion was moving toward Birgel and the III Battalion had not yet reached Kilometer Marker 18. The Division Commander had moved to Kilometer Marker 18 in order to supervise the movement of I/1055. At this time, he was not aware of the events at Germeter and so he continued the movement of I/1055 to Schmidt. Here he found two companies of Russian Volunteer-Regiment 4 at weapons muster. The Division Commander received a report that heavy enemy forces with tanks were advancing on Kommerscheidt over the Mestrenger Mill. He gave the Battalion Commander of the Russian companies the order to stop further enemy penetration on Schmidt. Because of their

unreliability, the Russian companies were usually used only for entrenchment work by the division. This was the first resistance encountered by the enemy south of the Kall sector. While the Russian companies were attacking, the mass of III/1055 arrived at Marker 18. The Division Commander now drove to the next telephone location at the local command Niedeggen. He briefed the Corps on the situation and ordered the local commander to scrounge up some units and take over protection of the bridge at Niedeggen. The Corps ordered the III/1055 called back and they were subordinated to the 89th Division. The Corps further ordered that a grenadier regiment was to be deployed around Schmidt in order to seal it off. There was an unpleasant breakdown in the call back of III/1055. The Battalion Commander had not reported his arrival in Birgel and it took a long time before the battalion could be located. They returned to Marker 18 very late in the night. They were deployed on both sides of the road Nideggen-Schmidt.

*Russian
companies
engaged
first*

1b. The II/1055 was deployed west of Schmidt on the Schmidt-Strauch road. Two companies from this battalion were later, on 6 November 1944, made subordinate to Grenadier-Regiment 1056.

1c. The III/860 (Cdr, CPT Schindler), which was led in from the left neighboring division, was deployed south of Schmidt on the Hasenfeld-Schmidt road. The strength of this battalion was five officers, 260 non-commissioned officers, and enlisted.

1d. Sections of Grenadier Regiment 1056 did not take part in the first counterthrust against Schmidt. It is necessary to closer inspect the situation of the 89th Infantry Division, which did

not take part in the fighting around Schmidt. Only then will the danger presented by the fully unsuspected enemy infiltration from Vossenack to the south on Kommerscheidt-Schmidt be clear.

Not only was Grenadier-Regiment 1055 supposed to be relieved for a short rest behind the front but Grenadier-Regiment 1056 was also to receive a break. Even though this regiment was not as well put together or suffered as great a loss in withdrawal combat from the west wall, it had still earned and deserved a rest from the fighting. Since its deployment in Avranches it had been constantly in the center of heavy fighting. Even a very short rest would greatly help the regiment. The weapons also needed to be cleaned. As the enemy broke through at Gremeter, Grenadier-Regiment 1056 stood in its former sector on the left flank of the division in close contact with the enemy. After Grenadier-Regiment 1055 was relieved, it was supposed to be replaced by sections of the 272nd VGD.

As a result of the enemy's penetration at the right neighboring division and its shift to the south, the entire Kall sector from the Kall bridge to the east was open. Instead of being relieved at the front, the 1056 had to be deployed here. Relief of the 1056 was speeded up by the Corps and ordered for the night 4-5 November. Grenadier-Regiment 1056 was given the difficult task of moving closely behind the front through wooded terrain to the area Gerstenhof, north of the Schmidt-Strauch road. This movement was very tricky. One look at the map shows that all roads go from west to east but none run north to south.

There were also barricades which had to be overcome in the valley. There was no time to take a detour. Under the brilliant command of COL Roessler, Grenadier-Regiment 1056 accomplished their mission.

1e. Units from the 347th Infantry Division did not take part in this operation. The infantry strength of the counterattack by the 89th Division on Schmidt-Kommerscheidt was 606 men.

2. The first contact by the III/1055 with Panzer Reconnaissance-Battalion 116 occurred on 5 November 1944, at 1455 hours. In my diary it states: 5 November 1944, 1455 hours: III/1055 (Cdr, CPT Wolf) reports contact established with Panzer Reconnaissance-Battalion 116 at Zweifallshammer. Grenadier-Regiment 1056 was relieved in the night of 4-5 November and by 6 November stood ready in the Kall sector. According to my diary, they were given the following order: Grenadier-Regiment 1056 was to remain ready for a new mission. (At 0600 hours they were in the woods north of Gerstenhof on the road Schmidt-Strauch.) After the relief by the 272nd VGD, the battalion was to report in every hour on their progress. On 6 November the regiment was to occupy the Mestrenger Mill in order to occupy the only crossing over the Kall stream. They were to establish contact with Panzer Reconnaissance-Battalion 116 on the western outskirts of Kardenberges and occupy the Kall stream sector from the Mestrenger Mill to the Kall bridge. Grenadier-Regiment 983 would be adjacent. Grenadier-Regiment 983 belonged to the 347th Division, to the right. After the break-through by the enemy at

Link up
in the
Kall Gorge
planned

Germeter, they had been bent back to the south and now occupied bunkers south of Kall bridge. Grenadier-Regiment 983 had a strength of approximately 420 men and was commanded by COL Schmitz. Their left flank was adjacent to the right flank of the 272nd VGD.

Contact between Panzer Reconnaissance-Battalion 116 and Grenadier-Regiment 1056 never took place in the area of the Mestrenger. Grenadier-Regiment 1056 never tried to establish contact because the III/1055 had maintained contact with this battalion at Zweifallshammer.

2a. One battery to four guns from the 272nd Infantry Division (left) was made subordinate to the 89th Infantry Division.

2b. I do not know.

2c. This battery went into position northwest of Abenden.

2d. Army Artillery-Battalion 292 was subordinated to the 89th Infantry Division and deployed west of the Kall stream, south of the bridge at Hetzingen. The strength was six light field howitzers and three self-propelled field howitzers 15.2 (Russian).

Fortress Artillery-Battalion 1308 had three batteries with four field guns each and was also subordinate to the 89th Infantry Division. They were positioned on both sides of the Schmidt-Hasenfeld road in the woods east of Neuenhof.

The division did not have a fortress-artillery battalion with 12.2cm guns. Assault-Gun Battalion (Brigade) 341 was subordinate to the 89th Infantry Division. The Army Battalion 628 was also not with the 89th Infantry Division.

StuGs?
about 20
(no more
than 20)

Sturmz 217: several confirmations that it had Brummbären (Grizzly Bears w 150mm Spt How) and not Hummeln

actually 519
Pz Jnr 518
cdr. Maj. Hoppe

were - these actually Brummbären?
see Chamboquin P 101

2e. The division was further subordinated: **Army Panzer-Battalion 518 (Cdr, MAJ Hoppe) and Assault Gun-Battalion 217 with 20 "Bumblebees" (self-propelled medium field howitzers).**

Sturmpzr Abt. 217
created 7 Apr 44
See Jents II p

3f and g. I don't know.

4a. **Panzer Division 116 did not have any Tigers. Army Armored-Battalion 518 had "Jagdpanthers" (panthers with self-propelled guns), which the enemy referred to as Tigers.** These were not brought in from other units and they had nothing to do with Panzer-Regiment Grossdeutschland.

Jagdpanthers possibly mistaken for Tigers

4b. The mention of Tigers was not by mistake.

5. Units from the panzer grenadier-regiment did not participate in the first counterthrust against Schmidt. There were no sections from the 116th Panzer Division, except for Fighting Group Bayer.

6 and 7. I don't know.

8a. **On 6 November the Mestrenger Mill was taken by the III Battalion 1056 after heavy fighting in which it changed hands several times.** It was held until the end of the combat operation. Units of the 116th Panzer Division never advanced as far as the mill. This was no longer required after the III/1055, deployed at the right flank of the 89th Infantry Division, established contact with this battalion and were thereby adjacent to the 116th Panzer Division.

8b. Penetration by units from the 89th Infantry Division in the Kall sector from the direction Simonskall in order to establish contact with Reconnaissance-Battalion 116 was neither ordered or conducted.

9. The course of fighting was as follows: By the afternoon of 4 November, the enemy, which had penetrated as far as Schmidt, was encircled in the area Kommerscheidt-Schmidt-Mestrenger Mill. The only way out for the attackers led over the Mestrenger Mill. This route was taken by the III/1056th and after tank destruction troops from this regiment succeeded (1325 hours, 7 November) in destroying two tanks. With this the encirclement of the enemy in the area Schmidt-Kommerscheidt was complete. Resistance by the enemy was only a matter of time and their destruction was only a question of artillery.

10 and 11. I don't know.

In the night of 8-9 November the 116th Panzer Division was pulled out, except for their artillery. They remained in position and were made subordinate to the 89th Infantry Division.

After the end of fighting around Schmidt-Kommerscheidt, Grenadier-Regiment 1055 (minus the III/860th and two companies from the 1056th) was deployed to the right of 1056th as follows: right flank at Point 370,0 (adjacent to the right neighboring 347th Infantry Division), north of Vossenack, east of Bosselbach, at the edge of the woods north of Vossenack in an eastward direction up to Kreuzheck; from there, further along the edge of the forest bending to the southeast to Giesenheck, here bending to the southwest, south of the Kall stream to the Mestrenger Mill adjacent to Grenadier-Regiment 1056. They were south of the Kall stream to the bunkers south of the Kall bridge, where they were adjacent to Grenadier-Regiment 983.

Losses suffered by Grenadier-Regiment 1055 from 4-8 November were 66 dead, 222 wounded, and 199 missing. A number of the missing came back to the division after the fighting was over.

by Bruns

estimate of losses

1055 Rgt.

est 800 men in Rgt.

Dead - 8%

WIA - 28%

MIA - 25% (most stand)

*[Thus lost over 60% of
strength]*

7th Army CoS

Baron von Gersdorff

6 February 1951

Cologne

ANSWERS.

As the former Chief of Staff of the 7th Army, I can only answer the questions from the view of Army command. Due to the lack of documents and notes, I am unfortunately not in the position to answer the specifics concerning deployment of different units. Only the local commanders would be able to supply the information.

At the end of October, the 7th Army gave up its former right flank in the sector from Geilenkirchen to Dueren to the newly deployed 5th Panzer Army (Commanding General, LTG von Manteuffel). The dividing line between the two armies ran approximately Zweifall-Wenau-south of Dueren. On the right flank of the 7th Army was the LXXIV Army Corps (Commanding General, LTG Straube; Chief of Staff, COL Zoeller (?). On its right flank was the 352nd Infantry Division (LTG Mahlmann). In addition the 89th Infantry and the 247th Infantry Division were deployed at the front. All of these divisions were so-called west wall divisions which had been rebuilt after the withdrawal from Belgium. They were made up of pieces of units after the invasion fighting. In September 1944, these units had been filled up with personnel transfer replacement battalions, fortress and air land battalions. The fighting strength of these units was very low. There were not enough personnel from the old divisions to fill in the positions. The training and condition of these replacements

was so bad that they could be used only for defense. There was a lack of weapons and uniformity. Most of the artillery guns had been captured and were different types and sizes so that there was also a limited amount of ammunition available. The division sector was much too wide for any distribution in depth. The units were barely mobile and the artillery had only minimal means of moving their weapons.

The Army had no success in protesting the selection of the dividing line between the two armies. It was not well chosen and was wooded terrain with limited visibility. There were increasing reconnaissance reports stating that American attacks were to be expected out of the Roettgen area. The Army did not believe the enemy would launch an attack on the point of main effort. They thought the attack would be for protection of the southern flank of the American point of main effort in the area of Aachen with the limited objective of capturing the large dam. Since the Army did not have any operational reserves available, a mobile reserve from the Army Group was requested to be held ready at the boundary.

On 2 November the Army Group ordered the Commander of the 5th Panzer Army to conduct a map exercise in which defense against a major attack on both sides of the boundary would be discussed. As I was going to the exercise location at Ichendorf, with the Commander of the 7th Army, LTG Brandenburger, in the quadrant of Castle Schlenderhan, I was called by the Chief of the LXXIV Army Corps and told that heavy artillery activity was observed since morning on the right corps flank. I ordered him to remain at

The
Map
Exercise

the HQs and to tell the local commanders of the flank units not to come to the map exercise. LTG Straube was present at Schlenderhan. The map exercise had just begun (approximately 0900 hours) when the Chief telephoned me that it appeared a major American attack had started in the area Huertgen-Germe.

I reported this to Field Marshal Model. He ordered that the map exercise continue and that reports from the front be used as input for the exercise. This resulted in the course of battle being charted directly on the map. **Because of the insufficient strength, there was considerable penetration by American attack troops.** Without some reinforcement it appeared that sealing off the sections would not be possible. **Army command assessed the situation as critical and requested that the Army Group reserve (116th Panzer Division) from the area Juelich-Dueren be led in and made subordinate.** This request was received by the Commanding General of the Army Group, Field Marshal Model, about one hour after the American attack began. **LTG von Waldenburg, who was in the room, received the order directly** along with the deployment order for the 7th Army. LTG von Waldenburg, who had his Operations Officer, MAJ Prinz zu Holstein, as well as all the commanders of his units present, could hand out the orders within minutes of receiving them. The alerted division could begin deployment in a relatively short period of time. Chance had made this probably the fastest deployment of a division.

The Army had ordered the 116th Panzer Division to move over

Dueren and go to the area Brandenburg-Bergstein. From there they were to attack in the direction Vossenack-Geremeter and recapture the main line of resistance. Reconnaissance results established that the track laying vehicles would not be able to cross the deep, sheer gorges between Brandenburg and Vossenack. The Commander of the 116th Panzer Division decided, with Army and Corps approval, to advance over Nideggen to Schmidt and from there they would attack in the direction of Vossenack. For this reason the Fighting Group Bayer moved toward Schmidt.

German
recon
established
tracked veh.
could not
handle
Kall Trail

1. Deployment of Grenadier Regiment 1055 was a local countermeasure taken by the LXXIV Army Corps to thwart the penetrating enemy tanks in the area of Schmidt. I don't remember the details of this counterattack. It is entirely possible that units from the 347th Infantry Division took part in this operation because at that time the Corps brought in all available reserves for deployment in order to stabilize the situation.

2. By good fortune the attack by the infantry fighting group coincided with the tank attack of the 116th Panzer Division. If my memory serves, there was at first fighting in Schmidt and then a tank battle in the area of Kommerscheidt. The American armored point, which had broken through, suffered heavy casualties and was finally thrown back to the sector at the Mestrenger Mill.

3. The Army did not have any Army artillery. Measures taken to reinforce the artillery were done by the LXXIV Army Corps. I do not believe that any artillery from the VGD took part because this division was subordinate to the LXXIV Army Corps, which was the left flank Corps of the 5th Panzer Army.

I no longer remember the details concerning artillery deployment, the strength, or distribution of artillery and assault gun units.

4. The Army did not have any Tiger battalions subordinate to it. All of these were deployed in the area of Aachen and were handed over to the 5th Panzer Army. To my knowledge the 116th Panzer Division only had Panzer V's (Panthers).

5. To my knowledge, no. Most of the 116th Panzer Division was moving for the attack on Vossenack so that they would be ready. The reconnaissance battalion advanced on the Mestrenger Mill in order to prevent the retreating American forces from crossing this sector.

I cannot provide details for the rest of the questions because I simply cannot remember the specifics.

The counterattack by the 116th Panzer Division was at first unsuccessful. After regrouping, it was repeated several times and, on 6 November, against heavy resistance, the church was reached in the middle of the town of Vossenack. Combat was very hard and losses were heavy. The demands placed on the troops by this difficult terrain with its poor visibility were very great. Only through the rapid deployment of the 116th Panzer Division was it possible to seal off the dangerous and deep penetration and secure the damn, which was so important to the defense of this sector.

by Baron von Gersdorff

LTC Heinrich Grollman,
former Commander,
Panzer Grenadier-Regiment 156

16 August 1951
Bigge, Ruhr
am Hammergraben.

ANSWERS.

Map: 1:25,000

Attachment: 1 order of battle for Panzer Grenadier-Regiment 156.
1 photocopy of map 1:25,000.

At the time of the counterattacks against American forces which had infiltrated Vossenack, I commanded Panzer Grenadier-Regiment 156. They were deployed as follows:

I. Battalion. Right border to (right neighbor can no longer be remembered). Western edge of Heurtgen, exclusive of Bosselbach, intersection in Vossenack, 200 meters. West of the church Vossenack. Dividing line to the II/156th Raffels-B northwest Brandenburg exclusive, Kreuzheck to I/156th, Church Vossenack to II/156th.

II Battalion. Left border to Panzer Grenadier-Regiment 60 "d" from Brandenburg, Breuers-B, including path to Lukas mill, Vossenack included. The regiment's order of battle is shown on the attached photocopy.

1. I don't know.

2. I don't know.

3f. Antitank battalion 228 had approximately 12-14 assault guns ready to be deployed. I base this on my memory and that of my company commander from Antitank Company/156th.

3g. Assault guns from Antitank Battalion 228 were not deployed with Fighting Group Bayer at the beginning of the deployment in the area Huertgen-Vossenack. Antitank Battalion 228 supported Panzer Grenadier-Regiment 156 and was deployed in the area Huertgen. The division's early intention was to use the assault guns to support the attack by the I/156th on Vossenack. For this reason, Antitank Battalion 228 was deployed to the area of the southwestern part of Huertgen. They had the defensive mission against possible enemy attacks from the area of the "wild pig", directly southwest of the Huertgen River or from out of the forest area to the west. An attack by the I/156th deploying tanks or assault guns was not possible because of the thick forest area between Huertgen and Vossenack, which was also barricaded and had minefields.

Heavy assault guns of an Army Assault Gun Battalion, as I remember, were deployed for artillery support in the area Raffels-B, northwest of Brandenburg. (Assault guns with high caliber mortars?) *150 mm Spt How*

*This Stammzettel
217*

4a. To my knowledge there were no Tigers in the 116th Panzer Division and none were brought in.

4b. The mention of Tigers is inaccurate. It must have been a mix-up between Panzer 5 and 6 (Panther-Tiger). Considering the conditions, this was an easy mistake.

5. Sections of Grenadier-Regiment 60 did not participate in the first counterthrust on Schmidt. I can't say anything on any other participating division sections as units of Fighting Group

Bayer. In my opinion, one or possibly two (engineer company, Panzer Engineer-Battalion 675) belonged to Fighting Group Bayer.

6. Fighting Group Bayer had all of the tanks ready for deployment. I don't remember the figure. I can't remember if enlisted infantry were deployed but it is probable because the fighting was bitter. Neither the I or the II Panzer-Regiment 16 with Panzer 4 and 5's were filled up.

7. There were no units from Panzer Grenadier-Regiment 60 deployed in the area of Huertgen on 5 November. The local counterthrust was from sections of the I/156th and was led against enemy security north of the minefield "wild pig". The Huertgen River was occupied as a support point. After that, our own security was on the northern edge of the "wild pig" on the road Huertgen, Germeter. Assault guns from Antitank Battalion 228 supported this operation.

If this was not enough, there could be local counterthrusts conducted out of the woods at V. from Vossenack in order to get control of Bosselbach.

This operation failed because of concentrated enemy fire out of the Germeter area. As I remember, no other local units took part.

8. No comments.

9. No comments.

10. At the time of the attack on Vossenack there were no units of Panzer Grenadier-Regiment 156 subordinate to Panzer Grenadier-60. Subordination followed a few days later when Panzer Grenadier-Regiment 156 was deployed north of Napoleonseiche,

approximately one kilometer west of Huertgen for an attack to clean up the forest northwest of the "wild pig".

11. According to my memory and statements by the former Battalion Commander I/60th, CPT Nagel, and the Company Commander of the Attack Company of the II/156th (5th and 6th Company), the attack was scheduled for 0400 hours.

11a. The attack did not take place at 0400 hours.

11b. Because of the necessary regrouping in difficult terrain at night and further complications of rain, the 5th and 6th/156th only arrived at dawn for the attack on Vossenack. Units from the I/60th arrived later. According to CPT Nagel, I/60th, they only arrived at 1500 hours (I thought it was earlier).

11c. According to the two company commanders, only the 5th and 6th/156th arrived before 1200 hours for the attack. The I/156th was weak because of heavy casualties and was to move in only after the attack by the II/156th was underway from the east. They were to engage from the north with assault troops. They were not to attempt an attack by themselves. In addition, they were to first defend their position because a simultaneous enemy operation from the north could be figured on.

11d. After the attack by the 5th and 6th/156th from the east, these two companies met a company from I/160th (I/60th) at Point 390.1. This company had taken a field position southeast of Point 390.1.

After heavy, sudden concentrations from our artillery (early for the actual start of the attack) on Vossenack, which did not hit the enemy field positions directly east and northeast, the

companies intentionally attacked without any renewed preparatory fire. They could have taken the field positions and the town section around 390.1.

After regrouping (6/156th north, 5/156th south of the road through Vossenack along with sections of the I/60th), the attack was continued in the afternoon. An enemy counterthrust was repelled after destroying three enemy tanks in close combat (MSG Neckermann, Gunner Chimanzek from 6th Company).

11d. The church in Vossenack was captured by the 5/156th, sections of the 6/156th, and sections of I/60th around 2300 hours and held until dawn.

Company Commander of the 6/156th, 2LT Noltensmeyer was wounded at the road junction at east Point 418.2. The company commander, 5/156th, 1LT Junge took the sections of the 6th Company and subordinated them to MSG Neckermann. Then, with sections of Company I/60, they captured the church in close combat. The brunt of the attack was carried by the 5th and 6th/156th and the I/60th. As the battle progressed, the southern way out of Vossenack, was taken by the 3/60th. The assault companies suffered heavy losses in door-to-door combat. By morning, the weak units could not withstand an enemy counterthrust with tanks and Vossenack had to be given up again.

The I/156th, which had reached the road Vossenack-Bosselbach with its left flank, had to fall back to its departure position on the edge of the forest north of Vossenack under heavy enemy pressure and heavy flanking fire from Germeter.

Around noon of the day after the attack, sections of the II/156th as well as I/60th had been forced back to the departure positions.

SOURCES.

1. Personal talks with:

a. CPT Helmuth Nagel, Commander, I/60th, Dortmund-Schueren, Meinbergstrasse 43.

b. MSG Paul Baetzel, Battalion SGT, I/60th, Plettenberg1 Westfalen, Schuhhaus Geck.

c. 1LT Oskar Junge, Commander, 5/156th, Langenberg, Krs. Wiedenbrueck.Westf. in the firm Bartels, Langenberg.

2. Written statements from:

a. CPT Willi Lehmkaemper, Chief 9, Light Infantry/156th, Ruenthe ueber Kamen/Westf. Schulstrasse 34.

b. 1LT Karl Noltensmeyer, Commander 6/156th, Bonn, Lennestr. 52 (detailed answer).

3. My own memory, in conjunction with the map 1:25,000, and the questions.

by Grollman

ORDER OF BATTLE FOR PANZER GRENADIER-REGIMENT 156 (MOTORIZED)
OF THE 116TH PANZER DIVISION

(At the time of fighting around Huertgen-Vossenack in November 1944 -- from memory.)

Regimental Staff

Staff Company	Reconnaissance platoon, signal platoon, supply platoon with ordnance shop.
9th Light Infantry Company	2 platoons of light infantry with each 2-7.5cm. 2 platoons of light infantry with each 2-15cm.
10th Engineer Company	2 panzer grenadier engineer platoons with flame throwers.

I. Battalion Staff

Supply Company	Signal platoon, supply platoon, J-staff.
1st Panzer Grenadier Company	2 rifle platoons.
2nd Panzer Grenadier Company	same as 1st Company.
3rd Panzer Grenadier Company	same as 1st Company.
4th Heavy Company	1 motorized mortar platoon, 6 or 8m mortars. 1 anti-aircraft platoon, 6 12mm twin

machine guns with SPW.

1 antitank platoon, 3 small antitank
7.62cm, motorized.

II. Battalion Staff.

Supply Company Same as in I. Battalion.

5th Panzer Grenadier " "
Company

6th Panzer Grenadier " "
Company

7th Panzer Grenadier " "
Company

8th Heavy Company 3 groups, 6 heavy mortars, 12 cm,
motorized.

2 groups, 4 mortars, 8 cm.

1 anti-aircraft platoon, 4 anti-aircraft
2 cm.

SITUATION REPORT:

Combat Strength: Rifle and regiment engineer company had
approximately 80-90 men. Heavy Company had available weapons of
approximately 80%. Signal platoon had personnel and material
approximately 90-100% filled.

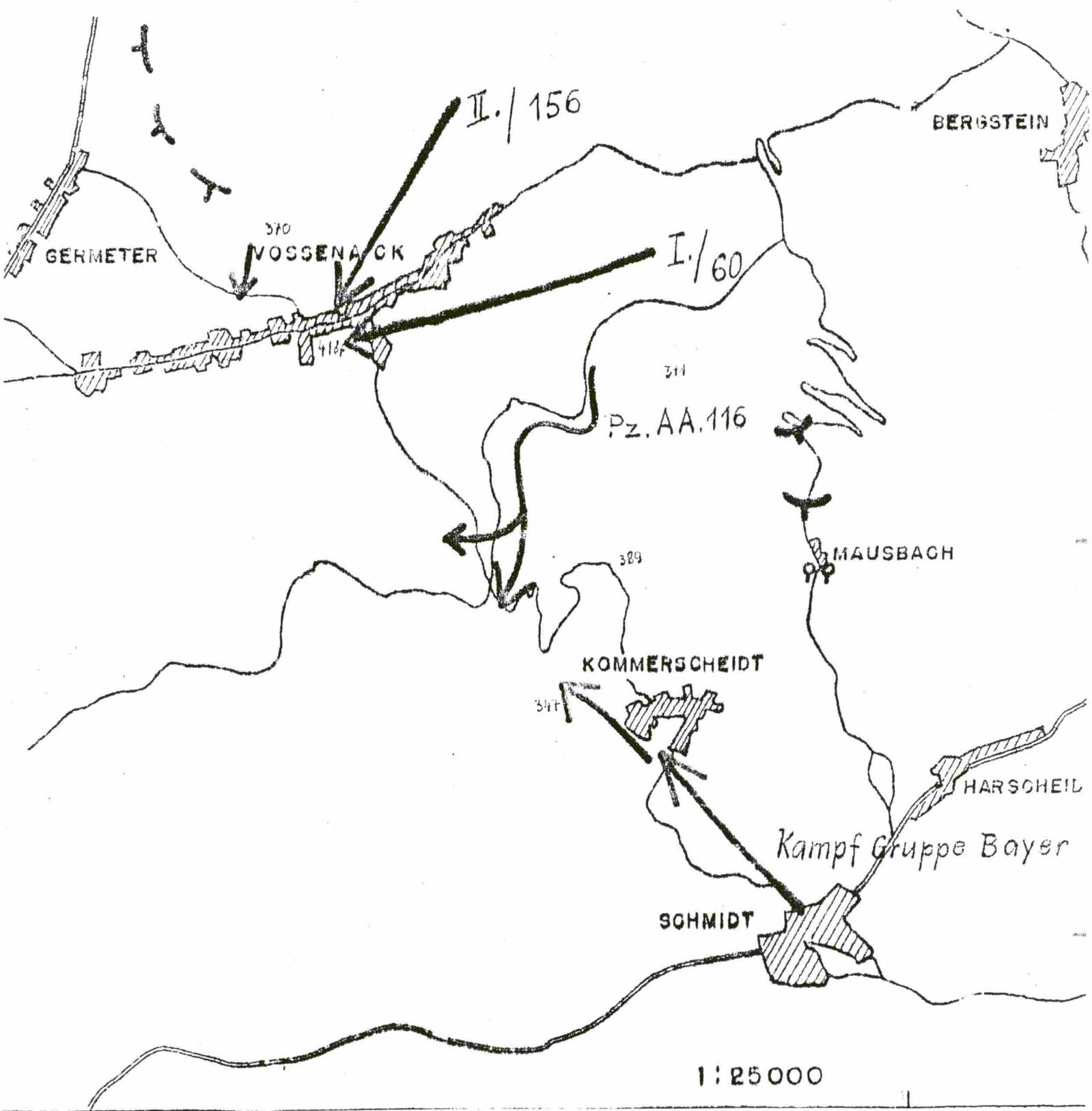
Motorization: From bicycles to transports for heavy weapons,
radios, medical, and the anti-aircraft 12 mm. In consideration
of the strength, it was fully mobile.

Condition of the troops: After heavy fighting and heavy losses in Aachen, Arnheim, Aachen-Wuerselen, and after a short rest in the area Ndr. Kruechten, west of M.Gladbach, they were ready for deployment. Unfortunately the balance in personnel was poor, especially in the panzer grenadier company. The backbone in all units was the small number of returning, healthy "old" soldiers.

Grollman

MS # C-089

LAGE AM 5. BZW. 6. NOVEMBER



LTG Straube

1 April 1951

Osterode/Harz

Doergestr. 10

ANSWERS.

I answered the questions as well as I could. My personal impressions of the heavy combat in the Huertgen forest are still clear but the actual sequence of fighting is only roughly remembered. After studying the maps and reading the questions, I remember more of the events and even some of the dates; however, the details on deployment of smaller units can only be accurately reconstructed by those who were very near the fighting, visiting troop units.

1a-c. I cannot answer.

1d. As far as I can remember, sections from Grenadier-Regiment 1056 took part. I do not know the point of departure.

1e. Sections of the 347th Infantry Division did not take part in the first counterthrust.

2. **III/156th succeeded in establishing contact with the reconnaissance battalion of the 116th Panzer Division.**

3a. 347th Infantry Division; I don't remember any others.

3b. 12th VGD did not give up artillery.

3c. I cannot accurately give the area where the artillery was deployed. Artillery groups were formed.

3d. Yes, Army Mortar-Battalion 628 was employed in the area of Huertgen.

3e. I don't remember.

228 Pz Jumbn
About 5
Stukas
von Waldenburg
states
@ 14x

3f. 288th Antitank-Battalion had only one company with assault guns. I do not remember the number.

3g. All armored vehicles from the Antitank Battalion and Panzer-Regiment 16 were deployed with Fighting Group Bayer in the area of Schmidt.

4a. The 116th Panzer Division did not have Tigers and was not given any.

4b. I think that the mention of Tigers is based on a mistake.

5 and 6. Units from Panzer Grenadier-Regiment 60 participated (two companies?). In addition, one battalion of artillery, anti-aircraft, and four barreled anti-aircraft guns took part. Panzer-Regiment 16 had only battalion strength.

7. I cannot answer with certainty.

8a. Panzer Army 116.

8b. I can't remember.

9. There were units in the forest west of Schmidt which advanced to the north on the Mestrenger Mill. I can't remember the specific units.

10. Panzer Grenadier-Regiment 156 (two battalions) and Panzer Grenadier-Battalion 60 (one battalion) were made ready for the attack on Vossenack. Which battalions, I no longer remember.

11a, b. The attack was scheduled for 0400 hours and preparatory artillery fire began accordingly. Getting the troops to the readiness area in the forest north of Vossenack ran into major problems so that readiness was not completed on time. The attack

began with daylight 0700-0800 hours. The readiness area and attack came under heavy enemy artillery fire. Our own

support by artillery was no longer possible because of the amount of ammunition.

11c. I can't remember the strength.

11d. Panzer Grenadier-Regiment 60 and Panzer Grenadier-Regiment 156 lay north of the town and were delayed in crossing the open ground by enemy artillery fire and their air force. Casualties were heavy.

by Straube

COL Helmut Zander

5 April 1951

Wuerzburg

ANSWERS.

3g. The attack on Vossenack was conducted without tanks and assault guns. There were no units from Fighting Group Bayer or Tigers deployed.

4. No Tigers were deployed. This fact would have been known to me because the Commander of Fighting Group Bayer had spent some time at my HQs in Brandenburg.

5. No units from Panzer Grenadier-Regiment 60 took part in the counterthrust on Schmidt. As far as I remember, sections of Panzer Army 116 were committed over Kommerscheidt to Schmidt.

7. No units from Panzer Grenadier-Regiment 60 took part in the counterthrust on 5 November. Perhaps it was Panzer Grenadier-Regiment 156?

8. Panzer Army 116 was the first to reach the Mestrenger Mill. Reconnaissance units of American forces were already advancing from the Mestrenger Mill on the road along the Kall to the north. I no longer recall the day in which contact was established between Panzer Army 116 and the 89th Infantry Division at the Mestrenger Mill.

9. Sections of the I/60th established contact with Panzer Army 116 along the road Vossenack-408.6 at the Mestrenger Mill.

10. Sections of Panzer Grenadier-Regiment 60 were not stopped in order to support Panzer Grenadier 156 in the attack on Vossenack.

11. In this connection, it must be said that Panzer Grenadier-

Regiment 60, which was night marching to the area southwest of Dueren (date no longer known), received the attack order on Vossenack in such a short time that they could not arrive at 0400 hours.

The assembly area southwest of Brandenburg was only reached in the late morning. The attack on Vossenack was ordered for the following night around 0300 hours(?).

Only reconnaissance units had arrived prior to 1200 hours, in the area of Brandenburg and to the south. The attack began as ordered. The eastern part of Vossenack including the church was captured by two companies from the I/60th and held. II/60th followed to the right rear at the boundary to Panzer Grenadier-Regiment 60. Through reaching the church, contact was made between Panzer Grenadier-Regiment 106 and the I/60th. As part of the phase of battle, Panzer Grenadier-Regiment 60 was replaced by Grenadier-Regiment 1055 and then deployed for the first time to the area southwest of Huertgen (I/60th).

Subordination of sections of Panzer Grenadier-Regiment 60 (II/60) to Panzer Grenadier 156 occurred 9-10 November in the sector north of the forester's house-Huertgen.

by Zander

BG Siegfried von Waldenburg
former Cdr, 116th Panzer Division

15 March 1952
Joellenbeck

ANSWERS.

2. The reinforced reconnaissance battalion, which had been positioned at the Mestrenger Mill by the 116th Panzer Division, established contact with the independent Fighting Group Bayer from the area Schmidt. As to the individual units, I no longer remember. The reconnaissance battalion of the division had the mission:

a. First, through penetration in the direction of the Mestrenger Mill in the rear of the enemy in the area Kommerscheidt-Schmidt to support Fighting Group Bayer and to secure the left flank of the division, so that

b. through deeper infiltration in the direction of the western road out of Vossenack-Richelskaul, capture this town so as to make it easier for the division and hinder the enemy from escaping into the woods of Vossenack.

3f. The Antitank-Battalion 228 of the 116th Panzer Division had around 14 deployable assault guns at this time.

Batt. 228
= 14 vehicles

3g. Originally it was the division's intention to deploy the antitank battalion with Panzer Grenadier-Regiment 156 at the fighting around Vossenack. The unnaturally, difficult terrain (woods and number of mines) made it impossible, for example, to deploy engineers in order to stop forest aisles through the woods. The battalion remained available to the division in

the area of Kleinhau-Huertgen in order to impede an expected enemy break-through attempt in this open terrain. For a time, the battalion was deployed solely for artillery support in the fighting around Vossenack in the area north of Brandenburg.

Later it was also used in the combat around the Huertgen River.

4. The 116th Panzer Division did not have any Tiger tanks during any of the fighting. The same was true of Fighting Group Bayer.

4a. No.

4b. Yes.

5. Panzer Grenadier 60 did not take part in the counterthrust against Schmidt. As far as I can remember, Fighting Group Bayer was only given a company of the division. Engineer Battalion 675 and one anti-aircraft unit were subordinated. As mentioned in number 2, the advance over Schmidt was mostly supported by the penetration by Army artillery on the Mestrenger Mill. In addition, the road Zweifallshammer-Schmidt was heavily barricaded and it ran through the division area from north to south.

Fighting in the area of Schmidt was supported by artillery as much as possible. Continual radio communications were kept with Group Bayer.

6. Panzer-Regiment 16 was deployed in closed formation. There was direct infantry and artillery support with the deployed division in the area of Schmidt with further reinforcements sent in by the Corps.

7. In the counterthrust on 6 November in the area of Huertgen, only sections from Panzer Grenadier-Regiment 156, reinforced by assault guns, participated. It was the division's objective to

throw the enemy out of the wooded area into a large minefield south of the Huertgen River. The forester's house was retaken.

8a. In my opinion, the reconnaissance battalion of the division was the first to reach the Mestrenger Mill. In any case, they had to fight at the crossing there. The mixing with other sections, probably Fighting Group Bayer, must have followed shortly thereafter.

9. In my opinion, no.

10. No, only several days later in cleaning up a section of the forest west of the Huertgen River.

11a. As far as I remember, the attack was to be launched in the darkness around 0400 hours. The troops (Panzer Grenadier-Regiments 156 and 60) had a number of difficulties to overcome: regrouping, darkness, difficult terrain, bad weather, etc., and the attack could not be carried out as planned. As a result, our own heavy artillery fire was not used to our advantage. It was later determined that the brave enemy had his positions outside of town. These positions were hardly hit or not hit at all by our preparatory fire.

11b. See above. As far as I remember, the thrusts by both regiments were scattered and went on from dawn to around noon.

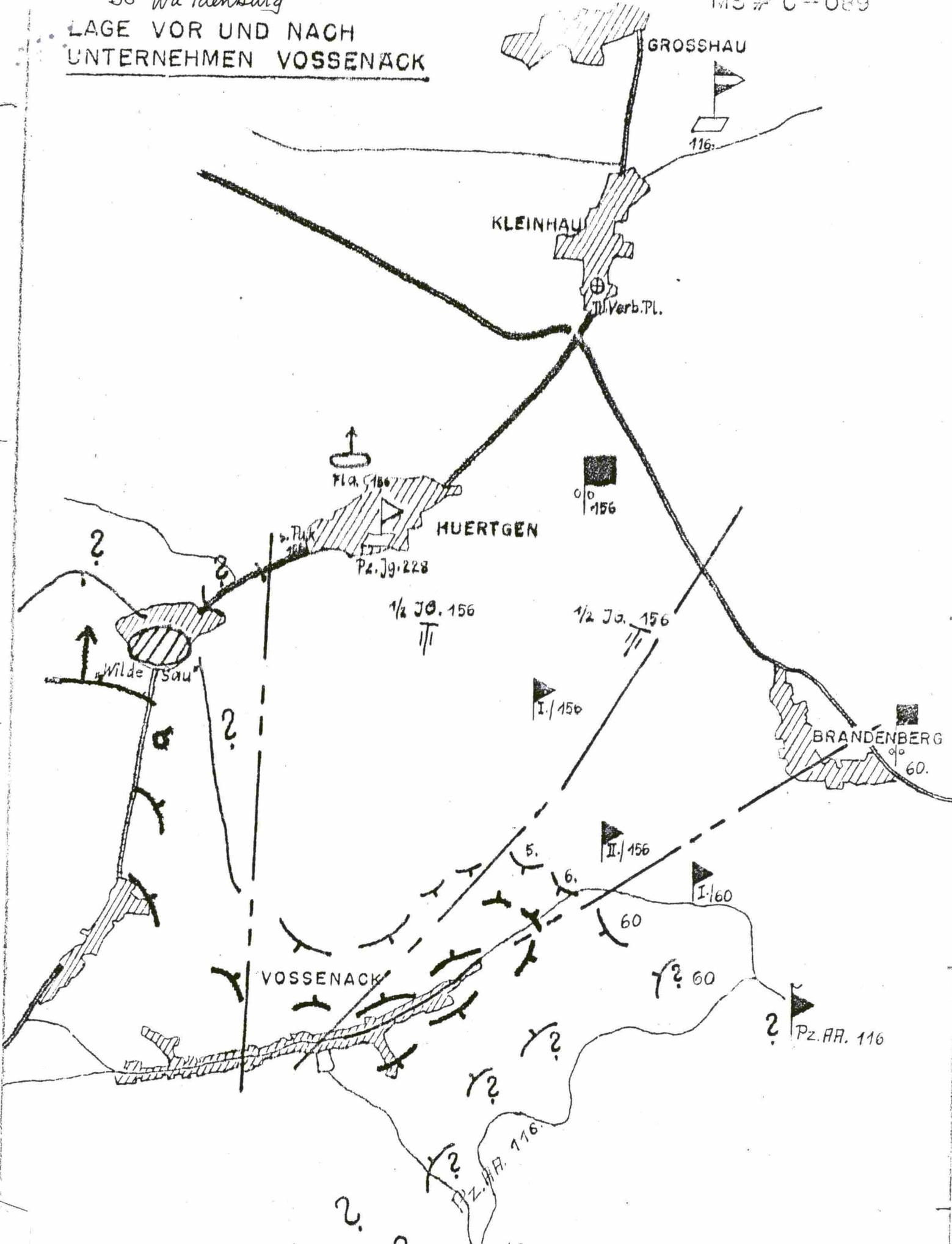
11c. Most of the attack troops were from the II/156th and the I/60th.

11d. In the combat around Vossenack which lasted the entire day, there is no doubt that both regiments mixed troops. The church was reached by sections of the 156th and 60th at the same time.

After defending against counterthrusts and after shooting up numerous enemy tanks, it was taken in the late evening.

By von Waldenburg

LAGE VOR UND NACH
UNTERNEHMEN VOSSENACK



MS A-905

Answers to questions concerning the 116th Pz. Div. (Fighting at [of?] Vossenack and Schmidt).

(1) The 116th Pz. Div. was moved from the area Muenchen-Gladbach to the area of Kreuzen, Kufferath, Untermanbach, Winden at the beginning of November, in order to prevent the threatening American penetration via Huertgen, and in so doing recapture the dominating Vossenack, to the extent to which this was possible. At the same time the division was to assist in cleaning up the situation at Kommerscheidt and Schmidt by detachments [of troops]. For this purpose my division was attached to the LXXXVI. A. K. (General Straube), which desired a speedy and early intervention.

The division decided to attack with the two Pz. Grenadier Regiments the village of Vossenack from the north and east, via the general line of Huertgen - Brandenburg. At the same time the reconnaissance Bn. of the division was ordered to move from Brueck-Hetzlingen via Zweifallshammer, along the Kall Sector, to attack the mill west of Kommerscheid, to open Vossenack from the south and cut off the American forces that had effected a penetration of the area of Schmidt.

of the 116th Pz. Div.,
 an armored group with about 20 to 30 panzers, under the command of the regimental commander of my Pz. Rgt., was directly attached to the LXXXVI. A. K., that is to say to the 89th Div., to clean up the situation at Schmidt. This armored group was reinforced by other elements of the corps.

(2) The American artillery did not forestall the attack preparations of my division; only in the course of the fighting it became more powerful and more and more harassing.

As far as I can recall, the attack on Vossenack and the mill west of

Kommerscheidt had been ordered for 6 November. The attack was to be launched in the early morning but was postponed for a few hours, as our artillery was not ready in time.

The 156th Pz. Grenadier Rgt. moved to the attack on Vossenack from the wooded terrain south of Huertgen, and the 60th Pz. Grenadier Rgt. from the bottom land of the creek southwest and south of Brandenburg, while the reconnaissance Bn. reinforced by engineers and some panzers pushed forward along the Kall River. In very stiff and heavy combats, with the troops on both sides fighting very courageously and stubbornly, my division succeeded in taking half of Vossenack and weakening the American forces in the area of Schmidt and Kommerscheidt by an attack of the reconnaissance Bn.

(3) As stated under (1), the reconnaissance Bn. of the 116th Pz. Div. had been ordered to attack the mill west of Kommerscheidt. It was able to reach its objective, advancing in the Kall Valley, fighting heavily, whereby several mines were laid on the path to Kommerscheidt in the vicinity of the mill on both sides of the river.

(4) I am unable at present to make accurate statements in this connection. However, no vehicles etc. had been borrowed from the SS. The Kampfgruppe at Schmidt was directly attached to the 89th Div. that is to say [bzw. - beziehungsweise] the Corps for the time being. Our own losses in panzers were very small at Schmidt; some were demolished or damaged by the Am. Air Force, 2 or 3 by Am. panzers. The Am. Air Force, which became more and more powerful from day to day, was the principal enemy of our panzers. Panzer-defensive [antitank] rockets were not used. In this connection I must say that I have made above statements without any documents, and merely from memory, to the best of my knowledge!

The hard prison fate with months of hunger, very poor quarters, disgraceful treatment, and the worry about the fate of the family, with

Too much
credit to
US Air

MS A-905

-3-

whom there is no contact by mail whatever, have weakened and exhausted me physically and morally to such an extent that I am unable at present to deal with such tasks, particularly concerning the course of the Ardennes Offensive, completely and with historical exactness.

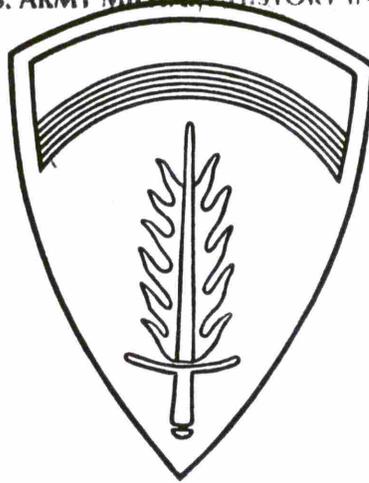
I ask that the preliminary requirements and opportunities be provided for me which are necessary to do justice to the questions asked, as recommended by me previously in a special request.

[SIGNED] von WALDENBURG

General-Major [Brig. Gen.]

and last Commander of the 116th Pz. Div.

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English Copy

275TH INFANTRY DIVISION

(2 - 11 Nov 1944)

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TO BE RETIRED WHEN NO LONGER NEEDED

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HISTORICAL DIVISION
HEADQUARTERS, UNITED STATES ARMY EUROPE
FOREIGN MILITARY STUDIES BRANCH

Originator: Lt. Mahin, Siegfried Line Section

For Genlt. Hans Schmidt, CG, 275 Inf. Division.

(Listed by PWIB as at Camp No. 19, Foucarville).

In some of the regimental attacks of the American 28th Division in its efforts to seize Schmidt during the period 2 - 11 November, no artillery preparation was employed. These limited attacks around Simonskall were consistently successful while other attacks which followed a heavy artillery preparation met with very stiff resistance. Do you believe the surprise gained by attacking without artillery was responsible for the variance in success?

Schmidt, Hans
CG, 275th Inf Div

The 275th Inf Div was made up from extremely heterogenous troops of all parts of the Army, Navy and Air Force. The command of such troops was a matter of command personalities. In the event of sudden attacks without artillery preparation, it was not possible for single commanders to organize the defense, and a unified command was impossible. The troops were left to themselves, and the defensive potential sunk correspondingly. In addition, the fighting worth of single parts of the division was then so small they, when suddenly attacked, did not know the proper things to do.

On the other hand, from your artillery preparations, an immediately following attack could be deduced. Consequently, individual commanders were enabled to make preparations by the force of their personalities and to move themselves to the main effort of the attack. In addition, the division command was enabled to use the time remaining until the beginning of the attack to bring up reserves to the threatened points, which in view of the small fighting strength of the troops was very important. In addition, it was possible to use our own relatively strong artillery in defense. Our artillery was well registered in, and contributed a great deal to our successful defense. Since our communications were deficient, the artillery could not be brought up quickly enough, unless we were warned by the American artillery preparation.

From my own experiences in the West and in the East, I believe that our attacks without artillery preparation were more successful, since the enemy is alerted by preparatory artillery fire, and artillery fire had usually less effect than expected. **Surprise is more important than artillery preparation.**

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Pt. 2

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U. S. Army Military History Institute

116 PzD. in Hürtgenwald

**WORLD WAR II
GERMAN MILITARY
STUDIES**

Volume 3

Part II. The ETHINT Series continued

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NEW YORK & LONDON, 1979

15 Dec 45

An INTERVIEW With
Genmaj Rudolf von GERSDORFF
Genmaj Siegfried von WALDENBURG



116 PZ DIV
IN THE
HUERTGEN FOREST

OFFICE OF THE CHIEF OF MILITARY HISTORY
DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
WASHINGTON 25, D. C.

ETHINT 56 - ()

Title : 116 Pz Div In The Huertgen Forest
Sources : Genmaj von Gersdorff, Rudolf - C of S, Seventh Army
Genmaj von Waldenburg, Siegfried - Cdr, 116 Pz Div
Date : 15 Dec 45
Place : Unknown (probably St Germain, France)
Interviewer : Capt Frank G. Mahlin

Foreword

This interview is one of a series conducted by the Historical Section, ETOUSA, and its successors. Unfortunately, except for Genmaj Waldenburg's answer to Question 12, which is inclosed with Copy 1 of ETHINT 56, only a typed record in English is available for editing. It is not known whether a record in German was made at the time of the interview, nor, if one was made, can the accuracy of the translation be determined. In addition, references are made to ML-1039 and an account by Gersdorff of a "Kriegsspiel of Model." Neither of these documents can be identified in this office. For these reasons, no absolute guarantee can be given as to the authenticity and completeness of this version of the interview. Only obvious errors in spelling, punctuation, and grammatical construction have been corrected. All parenthetical statements of the interviewer and editor are identified as such.

[Handwritten signature]

LE ROY S. STANLEY
Capt Inf
Historical Editor

MAY 31 1948

*Main attack
NE (to Hürtgen)*

*Atk on Schmidt
for the dams*

1. Q: What was the mission of 116 Pz Div when it was committed in the Vossenack-Schmidt area?

A: (Waldenburg) The immediate task was to halt your attack and then counterattack with the mission of clearing the American penetration.

(Gersdorff) At Army level, we felt that the effort should divide itself in two phases. First, we wanted to cut off and destroy your troops southeast of the Kall, using principally 89 Inf Div and the tank regiment of 116 Pz Div. Secondly, by using the remainder of 116 Pz Div, we hoped to drive you off the heights at Vossenack and eventually reestablish the front in the woods west of Gernster. For us, it was advantageous to fix the battle line in the forest as it limited the use of your air power and your tanks.

2. Q: Was our attack a surprise in timing and/or direction?

A: (G) We knew, generally, that an attack was forming.

Our agents in Roetgen reported the presence of numerous reserves and artillery observation planes, but we did not know the specific date. We believed the main thrust would be headed northeast through Huertgen on to Dueren. At the same time, we believed you would send a force through Schmidt and go for the Dams. The tremendous artillery preparation, of course, showed your hand and we knew the attack was on. (Interviewer's Note: See Gersdorff's account of "Kriegsspiel of Model.")

3. Q: (Interviewer's Note: The account of 116 Pz Div's action is contained in ML-1039.) When your reconnaissance battalion drove for Mestringer Muehle, did 89 Inf Div launch an attack from the south to

Waldenburg: tried to build a road thru woods b/w Hürtgen - Vossenack - but tanks stuck in the mud

Giersdorf - Germans couldn't move tanks up to Vossenack (Kall gorge trail)

ETHINT 56

-2-

join them?

A: (W) I believe so. Our elements did make contact, but 89 Inf Div was very weak at the time and no strong link was formed. A patrol from my reconnaissance battalion, consisting of an officer and four or five men with a radio, made its way to this point of woods south of Vossenack (Ed: coordinates) 0232). From here, they could easily observe movement from Germeter to Vossenack and adjust artillery fire.

4. Q: Our troops in Vossenack, having been shelled almost continually for four days, were unnerved by the quiet on the morning of 6 Nov 44. Was the absence of an artillery preparation a planned tactic?

A: (W) Yes. We hoped to gain surprise.

5. Q: Did your troops find stiff resistance from our forces in Vossenack?

A: (W) Yes. There was hand-to-hand combat. We did get many prisoners, but the farther we went, the more resistance stiffened. During the attack, we smoked the Germeter area. Finally, when your armor and reinforcements arrived, we could not get beyond the church.

6. Q: Did you plan to renew the attack on 7 Nov 44?

A: (W) Yes. As a matter of fact, I believe the artillery preparation for our attack caught your troops as they were getting ready to attack us. Your troops (Interviewer's Note: 146 Engr C Bn) that retook Vossenack with those tanks did an excellent job.

7. Q: After we had repulsed your second effort to take Vossenack on 7 Nov 44, we brought up an infantry battalion to replace

ETHINT 56

-3-

the engineers. The relief was made hurriedly and the infantry, on 8 Nov 44, was not ready for action. Did you plan another attack for that day?

A: (W) Unfortunately, you didn't notify me of this situation. No, our troops were very tired and had suffered heavy casualties.

(G) You must remember this Vossenack fight was considered the second phase of our action, so most of our concern was across the Kall; then too, we could not move tanks up to Vossenack.

(W) I tried to build a road from Huertgen through the woods toward Vossenack, but it was not suitable. A couple of assault-guns got through, but the heavier, bigger tanks became stuck in the mud. [map note: this cut across several gorges]

8. Q: At this time, we committed a new regiment (Interviewer's Note: 12 Inf Regt of 4 Inf Div (US)) in the woods above Germeter. They were to attack toward Huertgen. Was this area under your control?

A: (W) Initially, my zone was south and east of there, but on 6 or 7 Nov 44, this area also became my responsibility. On 10 Nov 44, while you were attacking west to slip off the Weisser Weh salient, I launched an attack. Following a heavy artillery preparation, elements of both 156 and 60 Pz Gren Regts, followed by some engineers, were committed and cut off your troops. They passed through the engineer battalions who were holding the line.

9. Q: On 13 Nov 44, after two unsuccessful efforts to improve the situation of the isolated force, we made a withdrawal. Not a

Waldenburg: requested removal of 116 PzD
from Hürtgen area (not suitable
for PzDiv)

ETHINT 56

-4-

shot was fired. Were you aware of this?

A: (W) Yes. We got a report on what you were doing, but the local commanders said the woods were so thick and the debris so prohibitive that they could not stop you.

10. Q: Having failed to cut off the Wessler Weh salient at its base, we finally began on 14 Nov 44 to attack directly up it. How strongly was it defended at that time?

A: (W) We merely maintained patrols behind the wire obstacles and mine fields. All this time I was making daily requests to be relieved from this sector. It was not suitable for the employment of a panzer division.

(G) We also wanted to withdraw the unit so that it could be refitted for the Ardennes Offensive, but we had no one to fill the hole. Finally, we managed to relieve a battalion at a time. The Division Artillery stayed on an extra three or four days so that you would not notice a slackening in the fire and realize what we had done.

11. Q: On what date did your troops leave the Vossenack area?

A: (Ed: probably answered by Waldenburg.) Approximately 13 Nov 44.

12. Q: What do you estimate as your casualties in the battle for Schmidt and Vossenack and in the fighting between Germeter and Huertgen and between Huertgen and Kleinbau?

A: (W) Without data of any kind, it is, unfortunately, impossible for me to give a detailed description of the losses suffered

ETHINT 56

-5-

by the Division in the fighting in the Huertgen Forest and at Schmidt. The casualties in personnel, especially of officers and noncommissioned officers, were heavy. The two panzer grenadier regiments were particularly hard hit and the reconnaissance battalion to a lesser degree. The panzer regiment, as far as I remember, suffered only small losses in the Schmidt area, with only three or four tanks being put out of action. The artillery had hardly any casualties or any losses in materiel. The antiaircraft battalion lost two guns through air attacks.

Even though the losses in personnel of the Division could be made up on the whole by fresh replacements before the Ardennes Offensive, the casualties in officers and noncommissioned officers and enlisted men with battle experience could no longer be replaced. This lack of experienced personnel made itself felt considerably in the Ardennes campaign. Weapons lost or put out of action generally could be completely replaced. The motor vehicle situation, however, had further deteriorated and the Division moved into the Ardennes Offensive with only about 60% of the vehicles it should have had.

13. Q: How seriously did your engagement in the Huertgen Forest affect your efficiency and strength for the Ardennes Offensive?

A: The loss of experienced leaders and battle-hardened veterans was certainly felt. Our losses in materiel were replenished, except in trucks. In that category, we went into the Ardennes at only 60% of our T/O strength.

116 Pz
pulled
out
13 Nov

116 Pz
60%
motor
vehicle
(trucks)

ETHINT 57 - ()

An INTERVIEW With
Genmaj Rudolf Frhr von GERSDORFF

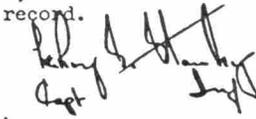
Title : Reaction Of Seventh Army To The November 44 Offensive
Source : Genmaj von Gersdorff, Rudolf, Frhr
Position : C of S, Seventh Army
Date : 10 Dec 45
Place : Unknown (probably St Germain, near Paris)
Interviewer : Capt Norman B. Sigband



REACTION OF SEVENTH ARMY
TO THE
NOVEMBER 44 OFFENSIVE

Foreword

This interview is one of a series conducted by the Historical Section, ETOUSA, and its successors. Unfortunately, only a typed record in English is available for editing. It is not known whether a record in German was made at the time of the interview nor, if one was made, can the accuracy of the translation be determined. Therefore, no absolute guarantee can be given as to the authenticity and completeness of this version of the interview. Only obvious errors in spelling, punctuation, and grammatical construction have been corrected. All parenthetical statements, except those of the editor, which are identified as such, are as they appear in the available record.


for: KARL W. LILLGE
1st Lt Inf
Historical Editor
MAY 31 1948

1. Q: What were the immediate steps ordered on 17 Nov 44?

A: When the American attack began on 16 Nov 44, it was unnecessary to issue immediate instructions because the subordinate units already had been directed to maintain their front line as far west as possible. Our first problem was to reinforce the existing line, and, also, to replace the casualties resulting from the day's fighting. Every effort was made to draw reserves, unassigned men, or any other available troops from the rear. However, we were not permitted to call upon those troops which were to be utilized in the Ardennes Offensive.

2. Q: What was the plan and mission of your Army after the realization that the Nov 44 offensive was a major effort?

A: The plan and mission of the Army during the initial days of the offensive was to hold the line, prevent a breakthrough, and maintain the Dueren--Huertgen road.

3. Q: What was the condition of your reserve troops at the time of the attack, and in what proportion, if any, were they brought forward to counter the attack?

A: We had an insufficient number of men to execute a large-scale counterattack; only local counterthrusts were employed.

4. Q: How did the attack affect supplies and replacements?

A: During the initial days of the offensive, our supply status became critical, not so much because of the enemy ground attack, but more because the American air offensive cut the supply lines to the front. Especially felt was the lack of artillery ammunition.

5. Q: How did the weather conditions affect your planning

and action?

German Heavy tanks -2-
bogged in mud

A: Concerning the weather, there were advantages and disadvantages. Because there was so much rain, the ground had become soggy, and almost prohibited the operation of our heavy tanks (Tiger tanks). To some extent, the weather prohibited the maximum effective employment of the American Air Force over the Huertgen Forest.

6. Q: Were your casualties heavy or light? If possible, estimate the number during a specific period.

A: It is impossible for me to estimate the number of casualties; however, they were very heavy. Casualties were due to: (1) artillery, (2) mortar fire, (3) non-battle casualties, and (4) men missing in action due to the disorganization of command, which was natural since the fighting occurred in a heavily wooded area. By and large, considering the conditions under which the German troops were required to fight in the Huertgen Forest (lack of clothes, ammunition, disorganization, etc), they made an admirable showing.

7. Q: Can you recall the length of your front, the number of corps and divisions you controlled, and the number of men and tanks which were involved?

A: During the November offensive, the Seventh Army front extended from Dueren, on the northern flank, to Grevenmacher (on the Moselle River), in the south. In the northern sector, LXXIV Inf Corps comprised (from north to south) 275 Volks Gren Div, 89 Inf Div, and 272 and 277 Volks Gren Divs. From 3 Nov 44 to approximately 21 Nov 44, 116 Pz Div also was attached to this Corps in the Huertgen Forest

7th Army
deployment

Causes of
Casualties

sector. To the south, LXVI Inf Corps extended from Stadtkyll to Vianden. It was composed of 18 and 26 Volks Gren Divs and 344 Inf Div. About mid-Nov 44, 344 Inf Div was transferred to LXXIV Inf Corps to reinforce 275 Volks Gren Div. In the extreme south, the Seventh Army line was held by LXXX Inf Corps, from Vianden to Grevenmacher. It was composed of (from north to south) 353 Inf Div and 212 Volks Gren Div. On 20 Nov 44, the 353 Inf Div was attached to LXXIV Inf Corps, in the northern sector of the Army line; it was replaced by 352 Volks Gren Div. This was in accordance with the policy of keeping the volks grenadier divisions in quiet sectors.

The strength of the Army at this time was approximately 100,000 men. The divisions were up to strength; volks grenadier divisions had 13,000 men, and infantry divisions had about 10,000 men. This included the necessary supporting troops. There were approximately 65 to 75 serviceable tanks in the Army.

Strength
of
7th
Army

8. Q: What effect did the November offensive have on the Ardennes planning?

A: Seventh Army staff felt that its mission, during Nov 44 and the first part of Dec 44, had been accomplished because it was possible for the German Army to launch the Ardennes Offensive. Had the Americans advanced east of the Roer during Nov 44, such an operation on the part of the Wehrmacht would have been impossible. We knew that on the southern flank of First US Army (VIII Corps (US)) there were weak divisions which had suffered heavily in the Huertgen Forest sector. It was felt that if the Ardennes Offensive pushed west sufficiently, the

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-4-

American troops in the north and south would be withdrawn to the area of penetration, and, then, Seventh Army could easily advance westward within its zone of attack. Three days after the Offensive began, it was quite apparent that such would be impossible; however, it was 10 Jan 45 before the German order was issued to withdraw from the Bulge to the protection of the Siegfried Line. A study of our order of battle will indicate that, throughout the November offensive, we were constantly reinforcing the northern sector of our line, which was in the Huertgen Forest, with anything that was available. This resulted in weakening our line in the south, but strengthening the line where that was necessary, in the north.

ETHINT 58 - ()

16 Dec 45

A n I N T E R V I E W W i t h
G e n m a j R u d o l f F r h r v o n G E R S D O R F F



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4 Mar 46

A n I N T E R V I E W W i t h
G e n A r z t S C H E P U K A T



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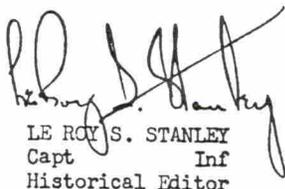
ETHINT 60 - ()

Title : German Casualties in the Huertgen Forest
Source : Gen Arzt Schepukat
Position : Surgeon General, Seventh Army
Date : 4 Mar 46
Place : Disarmed Enemy Forces Camp No 429, Camp Langlau,
Germany
Interviewer : Capt Frank C. Mahin

Foreword

This interview, one of a series conducted by the Historical Section, ETOUSA, and its successors, consists of four questions which were forwarded to the source while he was interned in Disarmed Enemy Forces Camp No 429. Unfortunately, the letter of transmittal which returned the answers to the Theater Historian failed to indicate whether the source wrote his answers in English, or German, or whether an interpreter was employed and the answers recorded in English at that time. As only a record of the answers in English is available for editing, no absolute guarantee can be given as to the authenticity and completeness of detail of this version of the interview. Only obvious errors in spelling, punctuation, and grammatical construction have been corrected.

A copy of the available record of the interview is contained in each copy of ETHINT 60.


LE ROY S. STANLEY
Capt Inf
Historical Editor

MAY 31 1948

1. Q: What were the casualties sustained in the battle for the Huertgen Forest (including the continuous wooded area north and west of the Roer River) from 20 Sep 44 to 10 Dec 44?

A: After one and one-half years, it is impossible for me to give the losses sustained during the battle of the Huertgen Forest between 20 Sep 44 and 10 Dec 44. As far as I can remember, the German losses at times were very heavy.

2. Q: What percentage of these were non-battle casualties, such as frost bite, trench foot, combat exhaustion, etc?

A: Casualties due to cold were 2 percent of all troops employed during this battle; I cannot say what percent this would be of the total casualties. There were few cases of combat exhaustion; however, since these men were not relieved, I could not say what percent this would be of total casualties.

3. Q: Were any special medical efforts made to reduce the non-battle casualties? If so, how successful were they?

A: Although battalion medical personnel were instructed to relieve men suffering from exhaustion, it was impossible because of the shortage of replacements. Winter clothing with a thick layer of wool or cotton was issued to all troops, as were felt shoes and wool stockings. Each platoon leader was responsible that his men followed instructions on changing socks, etc; he was also responsible that his men were allowed to be out of the cold as much as possible.

4. What percentage of Americans captured during this time were

wounded or suffering from the effects of weather?

A: I personally did not see or receive any reports of American wounded who were suffering from the effects of the cold. I did, however, hear some unofficial reports of trench foot and frost bite among the Americans captured, but I personally did not see any of these cases.

A n I N T E R V I E W W i t h
G e n P z H o r s t S T U M P F F



T A N K M A I N T E N A N C E
I N T H E
A R D E N N E S O F F E N S I V E

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for the information of the troops

This document must not fall into enemy hands

DIVISION REVIEW

No 2

of the 29th Division

The Battles of SCHMIDT and KOMMERSCHIEDT

This second Division Review has the purpose of illustrating to the members of the division the hard and bitter fighting in the KOMMERSCHIEDT and VOSSENACK sector, as a result of which a strong enemy force was surrounded and annihilated on 7 November 1944.

On 2 November 1944, the enemy started renewed and intensified attacks in the area of GERMETER-VOSSENACK, which brought VOSSENACK into enemy hands.

On 3 November 1944, before noon, the enemy jumps off in a surprise attack from VOSSENACK in a southern direction. He succeeds in breaking through the unit on our right and reaches the rear area of our division sector. After the breakthrough east of SIMONSKALL the enemy appears to have opened a way over VOSSENACK and SCHMIDT towards the south and southeast. General BRUNS, who happens to be in this sector at this time, orders Captain OLBRIGHT, with two Russian companies, to contact the enemy. They meet the first enemy position for the enemy and prevent his supposed advance. The 1055 Regiment marching in direction HARSCHIEDT-NIDEGGEN, is contacted and stopped. The men, who since the beginning of the battle for the sector have repulsed the enemy with heavy losses and had prevented all reconnaissance and patrol activity, are now again in contact with the enemy. This situation, from necessity requires the new commitment. The thrust of the enemy continues, taking the KRADENBERG, the MES-TRERGER MUEHLE and KOMMERSCHIEDT. A further advance of the enemy must be prevented under all circumstances, or all battles, all hardships, all sacrifices of the last weeks and months will have been in vain. The 1055 Regiment receives the following mission. In fact, improvised actions the enemy is first halted. Tank-destroyer troops advance, and our new reserves are moving up. The pressure of the enemy is always increasing, his artillery fire intensifies. At 1415 the following message comes through: "SCHMIDT taken by enemy". At 1600 Pz WOLF is assembled and in readiness. Roadblocks on the roads are being prepared for demolition. Fuempchen are going into position. Patrols are being sent out in all directions and are coming back with important reports. Confident and determined, Col HESSE gives orders to build new positions, the coming attack is being prepared for. Assault guns and tanks are moving up. Our soldiers are overjoyed. It's a long time since they have seen these "big brothers". Now they know, whenever there is a real danger at any one point, then the necessary weapons are on hand. Our artillery gets the range of the new targets. All day long fighters are roaring over our positions, but our own fighter planes are reported also, over our right neighbouring unit in the GERMETER sector. They are attacking the enemy with bombs and MGs.

4 November 1944: In the early morning the enemy opens a strong attack against SIMONSKALL. We are going over to the attack in the area around KOMMERSCHIEDT. Captain WOLF, Captain WILSCHEWSKY and Captain SCHINDLER attack from HARSCHIEDT in a

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westerly direction. Captain GUNN thrusts from west of KOMMERSCHIEDT in a northerly direction. The first results are observed. Captain WOLF with one platoon and his communication section breaks into SCHMIDT. Assault-guns along with men under WOLF's command, move through SCHMIDT and force the enemy out of the town. Slowly the enemy gives ground in the north. The message comes in that the enemy has entered SIMONSKALL. The whole sector is seeing activity. Foot by foot the battalions fight their way forward. The 1056 Regiment also receives the order to participate in this battle. A pitch-dark night envelopes the mountains of the Eifel. Rain drenches the men as they move up into the new battle area. Many a curse relieves the mind. If one cannot go into a rest area one could at least have stayed in the old positions where, under dangerous labor, positions had been erected and everyone is familiar with every inch of the ground. But the situation demands this commitment. If the enemy succeeds in pushing further to the south, he will be able to roll up our positions from the rear.

5 November 1944. An ONAGER attacks again. Reports of the first reinforcements and combat patrols are coming in from the 1056 Regiment also. The MESTRENGEN MEURIE has been retaken. From the north the 116th Panzer Division thrusts through VOSSENAOK towards the south. The enemy line is being slowly closed. The enemy tries with all his force to break out in several places. He is being repulsed everywhere. Elements of the Battalions WOLF and WILSCHEWSKY, with their commanders at the head of their troops over power a bitter and stubborn resistance and break into the eastern part of KOMMERSCHIEDT. The battle proceeds with almost unbelievable intensity. House after house must be stormed and again and again an enemy soldier will shoot from a cellar, or an attic window. In the afternoon an American Battalion is thrown into KOMMERSCHIEDT. Again enemy tanks are pushing forward, but they cannot break

KOMMERSCHIEDT P/W's are being brought in. The number is slowly growing. First 7, then 9, then 12. A few comrades, who had fallen into enemy hands, are being freed. Then the results of a hard day's battle are made known: 41 P/W's, two Sherman tanks knocked out, one damaged, one plane shot down. During the night patrols are sent out against the enemy from all directions. He cannot be permitted to rest. Our artillery also provides continuous and successful harassing fires.

6 November 1944. The weather has cleared up. Fighter planes are trying all day long to relieve their comrades in the encircled area. Slowly the men of the Bo SOPYNDLES fight their way forward and make contact with GUNN and WILSCHEWSKY. At 1430 the enemy attacks KOMMERSCHIEDT from the north. Previously as in the days before, the enemy places heavy fire on SCHMIDT and other of our positions. However our artillery is doing a thorough job also. Again and again heavy stuff goes over our heads, falling into the encircled area. Sometimes our shells hit only 100 or 200 meters in front of our advancing men in the north and west part of KOMMERSCHIEDT. Every cellar, every barn must be cleaned up. Thus the enemy attack is broken up under the fire of our artillery and the unbreakable fighting spirit of our grenadiers. Two enemy tanks have been shot up, three more damaged. Some of our own tanks had to fall out also in this hard battle. In the evening the General, who is also known as "PAPA DRUMS" by his men, calls his commanders together. The trapped force must be annihilated under all circumstances before the enemy has a chance to rally new strength and attempts to break into the pocket from any direction thus to free the

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trapped unit. The 1055 Regiment receives the mission, in cooperation with the armored task force BAYER, to resume the attack on 7 November 1944 to annihilate the trapped enemy. The 1056 Regiment must make contact with the Reconnaissance Bn of the 116th Panzer Division and thus prevent the enemy north of VÖSSENACK from making contact with the enemy encircled at KOMMERSCHIEDT.

7 November 1944: At the precise minute, and according to plan, the attack starts off in the morning hours of the 7 November 1944. From the east the Bn's WOLF, WILSCHEWSKY and SCHINDLER, from the south assault guns, tanks and tank destroyers, with the 5 Co GAF Bn, and from the west the Bn ONNEN move forward. 3000 projectiles, coming from all directions, fall into the encircled area. The enemy has orders to hold at all costs, until reserves come up, but under the concentrated fire of all our weapons and the fanatical will of our grenadiers and tank men the enemy resistance is weakening. To relieve the pressure on his forces, the enemy again attempts to attack near SIMONSKILL. The attack is unsuccessful. Near MESS TRÄNTER MUEHLE a few courageous men engage three enemy tanks with close combat anti-tank weapons. One tank is destroyed and the other two, undamaged, are the booty of Sgt SIEDHAUBEN and his Tank Destroyer section. The crews surrender with their tanks. Two other tanks are completely destroyed by direct artillery hits while trying to cross the heights. The second highest decoration for bravery is the immediate reward for this courageous action and a well deserved "Tank Cracker" furlough follows. Meanwhile mortars go into position further to the rear, and just in time to break open the communications of the enemy. The enemy attempts to break through the perimeter in order to relieve his encircled forces, but it is too late. At 1500 the following message comes through: "The battle of KOMMERSCHIEDT has ended successfully". On this last day alone 260 P/W's are brought in and so far 100 dead have been counted. Only small groups continue to resist. The cleaning up operation against these scattered groups continues. Sgt BAYER with his tanks and our grenadiers, who for days and nights had hardly an hour's sleep and who had been fighting continuously, are pursuing the enemy to destroy the last remnant and to establish the defensive line once more.

8 November 1944: While the cleaning up operations proceed in our sector a new battle develops in the sector of the 1056 Regiment. It grows with intensity near HEDRENGER MUEHLE. Four times the enemy tries to storm our defenses. Our men who have had no food for several days and just a few hours sleep, repulse the enemy four times, in superb cooperation with the I Bn 189 Arty Regt, and with the support of mortars, and at closer range, with handgrenades and machine pistols. 80 dead and 27 P/W's and wounded are the price the enemy paid for this unsuccessful engagement.

Against a larger group of scattered Americans in the area southwest of SCHMIDT, there for days before our GAF men had already taken a number of prisoners, another attack is launched with the support of two assault guns. 135 American prisoners are the proud result of the strenuous mopping-up operation in the wooded area southwest of SCHMIDT. With this operation, the last remaining remnants of the encircled enemy are annihilated or captured. The results of this stubborn and bitter fighting justifies the losses which we too had to suffer. The enemy lost twice as many men, prisoners and dead, as we had committed since the beginning of the operation to wipe out the trap.

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Accounted for in this battle were 555 H/V's, 250 counted enemy dead, 25 enemy tanks destroyed, two tanks captured, as well as four half-tracks, four jeeps, one half-tracked ambulance, one antitank gun, a great number of automatic weapons, and many other items.

More important still is the operational success. The contemplated penetration of the enemy through the ELFEL into the open plains was prevented. When the penetration in the area KOMMERSCHIEDT and SCHMIDT was cut off, the enemy who succeeded in breaking through was surrounded and after several days of stubborn fighting the encircled enemy was annihilated.

Through this action the division has won renewed and everlasting glory. All this was only possible through the close cooperation of all the units attached and assigned to the division. Within the division the spirit of the veteran of Falaise has united with the young men of the Luftwaffe dashing and full of fighting initiative, and the Paratroopers, which have recently joined in in the Westwall.

Hardened thru the battle of KOMMERSCHIEDT, united in dire emergency and danger, blood and sacrifice, our 89th Infantry Division will also in the future repel the attacks of the enemy, and will not rest until victory is achieved.

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