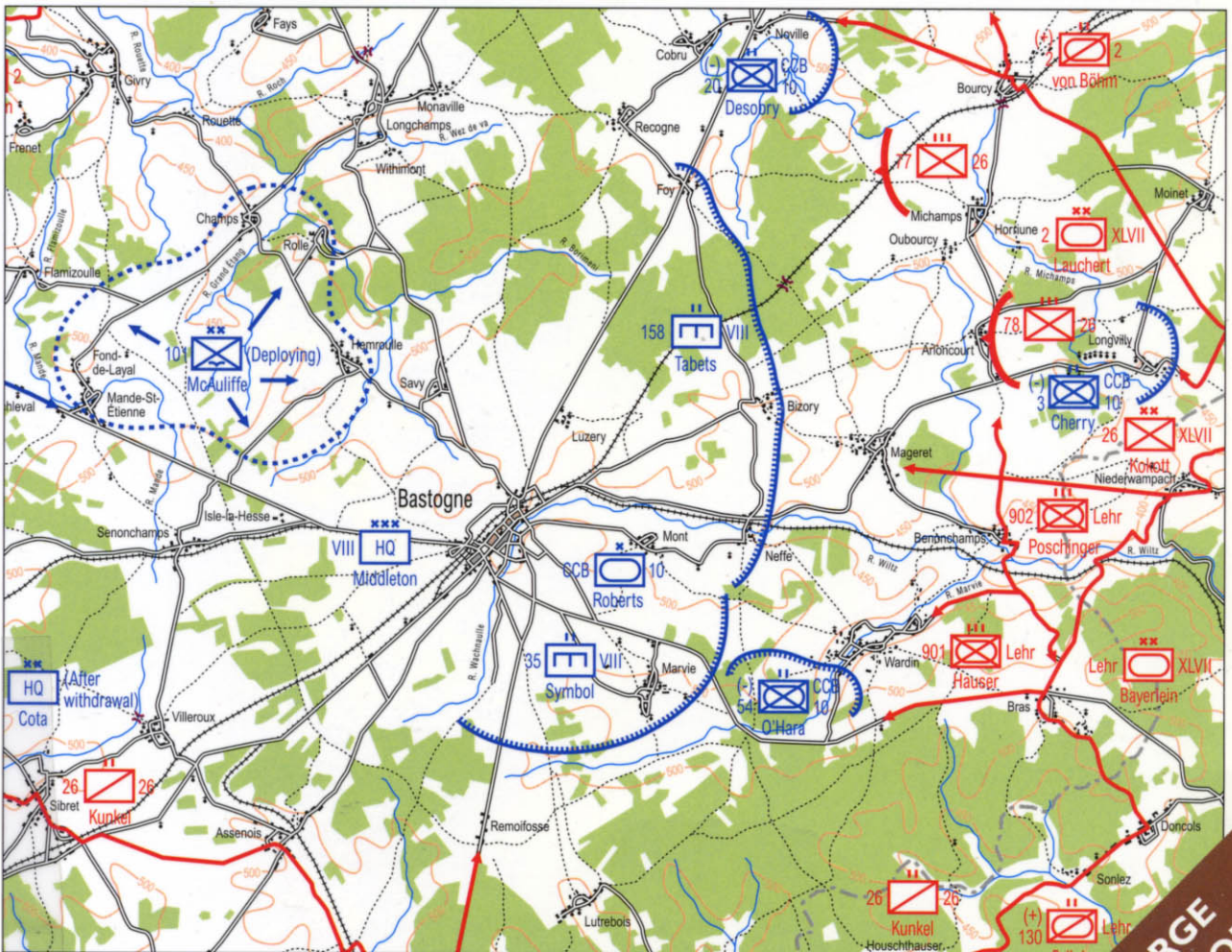


# THE ARDENNES OFFENSIVE

## V PANZER ARMEE



## CENTRAL SECTOR

Bruce Quarrie

INCLUDES LARGE  
FOLD-OUT MAP OF  
BATTLEFIELD



With a father and grandfather who served with distinction in two world wars, **BRUCE QUARRIE** grew up with a fascination for military history. Born in 1947, he graduated with honours from Cambridge University in 1968 and started work as a journalist with the *Financial Times*. He is now established as a full-time writer and until recently was also editor of the monthly magazine *Military Illustrated*. Bruce's principal interest is in World War 2 and his definitive *Encyclopaedia of the German Army* was even translated and published in German!

SERIES EDITOR: JOHN MOORE

ORDER OF BATTLE 8

# THE ARDENNES OFFENSIVE

V PANZER ARMEE

CENTRAL SECTOR

BRUCE QUARRIE

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### Key to Military Series symbols

|                 |                     |                         |                 |                  |                    |
|-----------------|---------------------|-------------------------|-----------------|------------------|--------------------|
|                 |                     |                         |                 |                  |                    |
| Army            | Corps               | Division                | Brigade         |                  |                    |
|                 |                     |                         |                 |                  |                    |
| Regiment        | Battalion           | Company                 | Platoon         |                  |                    |
|                 |                     |                         |                 |                  |                    |
| Armour          | Cavalry             | Infantry                | Airborne        |                  |                    |
|                 |                     |                         |                 |                  |                    |
| Artillery       | Anti-Tank Artillery | Anti-Aircraft Artillery | Mortar          | Rocket Artillery | Fortress Artillery |
|                 |                     |                         |                 |                  |                    |
| Engineers       | Armoured Engineers  | Bridging Engineers      | Bridging Column |                  |                    |
|                 |                     |                         |                 |                  |                    |
| Signals         | Supply              | Ordnance                | Medical         | Quartermaster    |                    |
|                 |                     |                         |                 |                  |                    |
| Unit Identifier | Parent Unit         | Commander               |                 |                  |                    |

## Series style

The style of presentation adopted in the Order of Battle series is designed to provide quickly the maximum information for the reader.

Order of Battle Unit Diagrams – All 'active' units in the ORBAT, that is those present and engaged on the battlefield, are shown in black. Unengaged and detached units, as well as those covered in subsequent volumes, are 'shadowed'.

Unit Data Panels – These provide a ready reference for all regiments, battalions, companies and troops forming part of each division or battlegroup and present during the battle, together with dates of attachment where relevant.

Battlefield Maps – In this volume, German units engaged are shown in red and Allied units in blue.

## Order of Battle Timelines

Battle Page Timelines – Each volume concerns the Order of Battle for the armies involved. Rarely are the forces available to a commander committed into action as per his ORBAT. To help the reader follow the sequence of events, a Timeline is provided at the bottom of each 'battle' page. This Timeline gives the following information:

The top line bar defines the actual time of the actions being described in that battle section.

The middle line shows the time period covered by the whole action.

The bottom line indicates the page numbers of the other, often interlinked, actions covered in this book.

|          |               |       |      |      |
|----------|---------------|-------|------|------|
|          |               |       |      |      |
| 0800 hrs | 0900          | 1000  | 1100 | 1200 |
| pp45-47  | 48-49 & 52-55 | 50-51 |      |      |

## Author's acknowledgements

For the very detailed information on the composition and strength of the Panzer and Panzergrenadier divisions, correcting many errors in previous publications and obtained through exhaustive research in the Freiburg archives, I am particularly indebted to Jeff Dugdale.

## Editor's note

All individual battle maps are based on Government Survey 1:50,000 G.S. 4040 series dated 1938 and 1939, revised from aerial reconnaissance 1943, by permission of The British Library.

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# STRATEGY IN THE WEST

## Towards a new Blitzkrieg

**N**o one outside Germany – or very few people – had ever heard the word ‘Blitzkrieg’, or ‘Lightning War’, until 1939-40. Then, when the Panzer divisions swept through Poland, Holland, Belgium and France, everyone suddenly knew what the word meant. Or thought they did, because, as General Sir John Hackett has pointed out, the word ‘lightning’ implies something unexpected, violent and almost instantaneous, whereas a Blitzkrieg campaign actually demands a sustained effort over a period of days or weeks.

In May 1940 the Wehrmacht's Panzer divisions were fresh, highly trained, well led and motivated, and had the full backing of a buoyant economy. They swept through the Ardennes to outflank the Allies' anticipated move north to the Dyle Line, reached the Channel coast, kicked the British Expeditionary Force off the beaches at Dunkerque and simply rolled up the

demoralised French army.

In December 1944 the conditions for the sort of sustained effort required for a successful Blitzkrieg through the Ardennes or anywhere else no longer existed, except in Hitler's imagination.

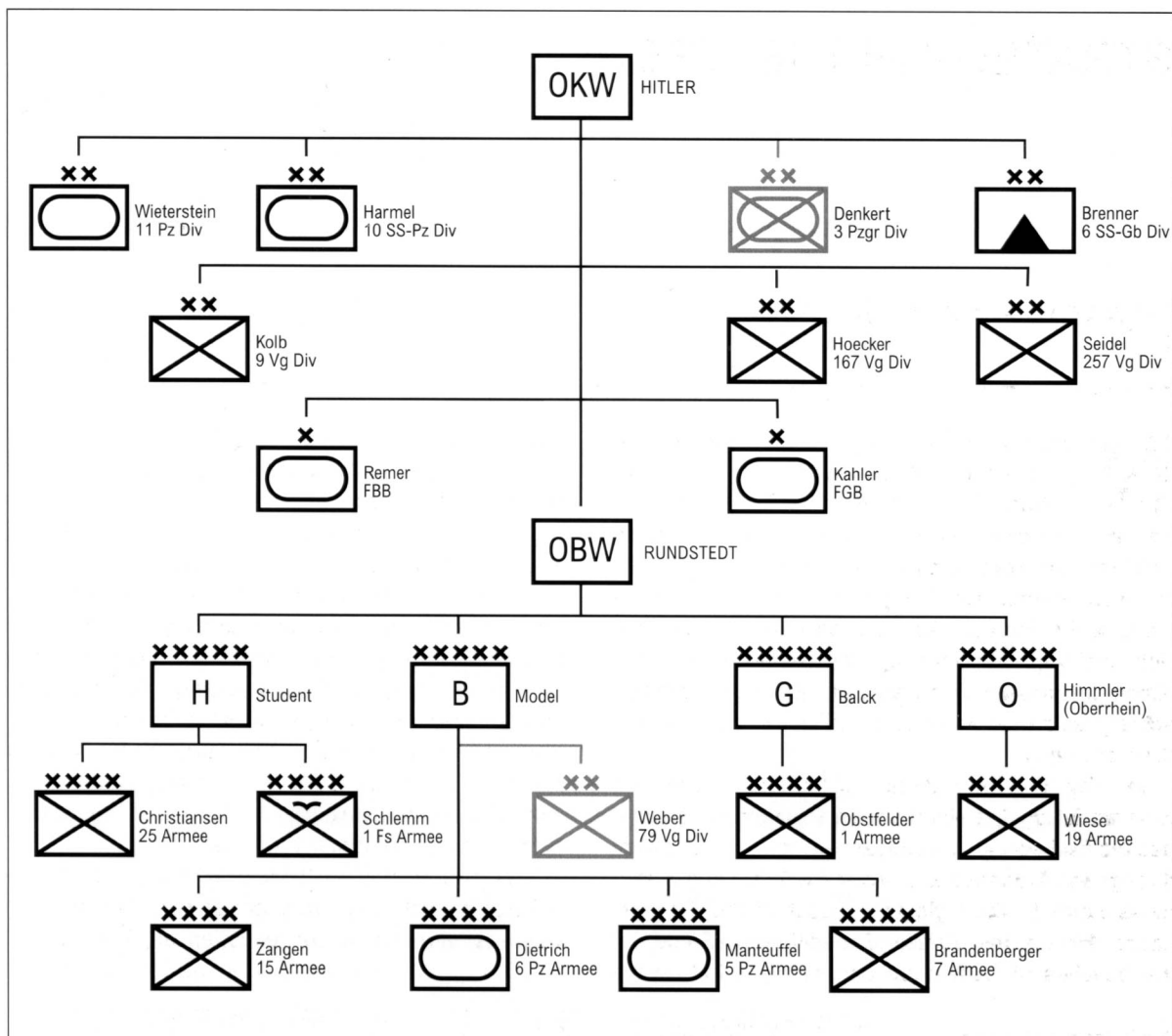
Oil, in particular, was in short supply, as were many other strategic materials such as tungsten. Munitions factories, although they continued to function, had been badly hit by the Allied bombing offensive which had laid waste Germany's industrial heartland. Road and rail networks had also been struck hard, making transportation to the front a laborious exercise. Any form of travel in daylight was also made perilous by roving long-range fighter-bombers.

The quality of the German front-line troops had suffered as well after five years of war. The surviving veterans were tough and experienced, but after all they had gone through, either on the Russian front or

**A still from a German newsreel, showing Heeresgruppe B commander Walter Model and his chief of staff, Hans Krebs, in animated conversation with Fifth Armee CO Hasso von Manteuffel during the planning stages of the last Blitzkrieg.**

(U.S. National Archives)





in Normandy, were tired and disillusioned, while their ranks were swollen by the young, the elderly and the reluctant. In the PzKpfw V Panther, the German armoured corps had arguably the best tank in the world, certainly on the western front, but there were never enough Panthers to go around and the mainstay of the Panzer divisions remained the old PzKpfw IV, which had first gone to war in 1939-40.

The Wehrmacht's opponents in December 1944 were also different to those they had faced in 1940. They, too, had gained experience, although some of the divisions which had only recently landed in Europe were as 'green' as many of the Wehrmacht's own formations. Their equipment, while inferior in some respects to German equivalents, was far more numerous, and in the United States, Canada, Australia and South Africa, the wealth of manpower and natural resources was almost inexhaustible. The Allies had none of the shortages of fuel or ammunition which

would ultimately defeat the last Blitzkrieg, because the momentum of the initial German surprise attack could simply not be sustained.

Yet – other than surrender, as Feldmarschall Gerd von Rundstedt had suggested six months earlier – what else could Hitler attempt? He had to buy time in the west and retrieve at least part of the initiative in order to stand any hope at all of stabilising the situation in the east. Operation 'Herbstnebel', then, was the drowning man's last grasp at a straw. Despite the care with which it was planned, despite the Herculean effort involved in assembling the assault forces – in absolute secrecy, to boot – and all their equipment, there was in truth not a hope of success. Hitler's generals from von Rundstedt down knew that the venture was doomed, but their oaths compelled them to obey orders and to try.

The armoured forces scraped together for the assault were, on paper, sufficient: four Panzer Korps

**HEER PANZER DIVISION**

(14,373 men at full 1944 establishment)

Stabs Kompanie (2 x MG 42), Kapelle (Band), Landkarte Zug (map copying platoon), Feldgendarmarie Zug (field police platoon), Flak Zug (4 x 2cm Flak), Krafftahrrad Zug (motorcycle platoon, 21 cycles with MG 42), Granatwerfer Truppe (2 x 8cm GrW 34 mortars), Maschinengewehr Zug (4 x sMG 42 & 6 leMG 42 on sustained fire and bipod mountings respectively)  
(400 officers and men)

**PANZER REGIMENT**

(2,416 officers and men at full 1944 establishment)  
Stabs Kompanie including Nachrichten Zug (signals platoon), up to 5 x PzKpfw IV or V, up to 8 x 'Wirbelwind' or 'Ostwind'

**I Abteilung**

Stabs Kompanie including 2-5 x PzKpfw V, 3 x 2cm SdKfz 7/I Flak, 12 x MG 42

1, 2, 3 & 4 Kompanien (each 17 PzKpfw V and/or PzKpfw IV at full strength; normally only 14, sometimes as few as 10)  
Versorgungs Truppe (supply troops) (5 x leMG 42)

**II Abteilung**

Stabs Kompanie as above but PzKpfw IV  
5 & 6 Kompanien (each 14 PzKpfw IV)  
7 & 8 Kompanien (each 10-14 PzKpfw IV or StuG)  
Versorgungs Truppe (5 x leMG 42)  
Werkstatt Kompanie (workshop company)

**(1st) PANZERGRENADIER REGIMENT**

(3,095 officers and men at full 1944 establishment)  
Stabs Kompanie (SdKfz 251 half-tracks) including Nachrichten Zug and Kraffrad Zug (6 x MG 42)

**I Bataillon (nominally, all SdKfz 251)**

Stabs Kompanie including Versorgungs Zug (4 x MG 42)  
1, 2 & 3 Kompanien (each 2 x 7.5cm KwK L/24, 7 x 2cm Flak 38, 2 x 8cm GrW 34, 4 x sMG 42 & 29 x leMG 42)  
4 Kompanie (6 x 7.5cm KwK L/24, 4 x 12cm sGrW 42, 2 x sMG 42 & 4 x leMG 42)  
Versorgungs Truppe (5 x leMG 42)

**II Bataillon (all truck-mounted)**

Stabs Kompanie (as above)  
5, 6 & 7 Kompanien (each 2 x 8cm GrW 34, 4 x sMG 42 & 18 x leMG 42)  
8 Kompanie (6 x 2cm Flak 38, 4 x 12cm sGrW 42 & 2 x sMG 42)  
9 Kompanie (6 x sIG 33 or 'Bison')  
10 (Pionier) Kompanie (24 x Flammenwerfer [flamethrower], 1 x 2cm Flak 38, 2 x 8cm GrW 34, 2 x sMG 42 & 27 x leMG 42)  
Versorgungs Truppe (5 x leMG 42)

**(2nd) PANZERGRENADIER REGIMENT**

As above except both battalions as II/1 and Pionier Kompanie only 16 x Flammenwerfer & 12 x leMG 42

**PANZER ARTILLERIE REGIMENT**

(2,102 men at full 1944 establishment)  
Stabs Kompanie (2 x leMG 42)

**I Abteilung**

Stabs Kompanie (1 x PzKpfw III), 3 x 2cm Flak 38 & 2 x leMG 42)  
1 & 2 Batterien (each 6 x Wespe)  
3 Batterie (6 x Hummel)

**II Abteilung**

Stabs Kompanie (as above)  
4 & 5 Batterien (each 6 x towed 10.5cm leFH 18 light field howitzers)

**III Abteilung**

Stabs Kompanie (as above)  
6 & 7 Batterien (each 4 x towed sFH 18 heavy field howitzers)  
3 Batterie (4 x towed 17cm K18 guns)

**PANZER AUFKLÄRUNGS (reconnaissance) ABTEILUNG**

(1,153 officers and men at full 1944 establishment)  
Stabs Kompanie including Nachrichten Zug  
1 Spähwagen (armoured car) Kompanie (26 x SdKfz 221 & 16 x SdKfz 231/232/233/234)  
2 (leichte) Kompanie (SdKfz 251s) (2 x 7.5cm PaK 40, 2 x 3cm GrW 34 & 44 x leMG 42)  
3 Kompanie (2 x 7.5cm PaK 40, 7 x 2cm Flak 38, 2 x 8cm GrW 34, 4 x sNG 42 & 29 x leMG 42)  
4 Kompanie (6 x 7.5cm FaK 40, 6 x 8cm GrW 34, 5 x leNG 42 & Pionier Zug 13 x leNG 42)  
Versorgungs Kompanie (5 x leMG 42)

**PANZERJÄGER ABTEILUNG**

(552 officers and men at full 1944 establishment)  
Stabs Kompanie (3 x 7.5cm Jagdpanzer IV/70 or StuG)  
1 & 2 Kompanien (each 10-14 x Jagdpanzer IV/70 at full establishment)  
3 Kompanie (12 x towed 7.5cm PaK 40)  
Versorgungs Kompanie (3 x leMG 42)

**FLAK ABTEILUNG**

(c. 750 officers and men)  
Stabs Kompanie (2 x leMG 42)  
1 & 2 Kompanien (each 6 x towed 8.8cm Flak 18 or 36 & 3 x 2cm Flak 38)  
3 Kompanie (9 x 3.7cm Flak 36 or 37)  
4 Kompanie (up to 12 x 2cm Flakvierling on half-tracks)

**PANZER PIONIER BATAILLON**

(979 officers and men at full 1944 establishment)  
Stabs Kompanie (4 x Flammenwerfer & 4 x leMG 42)  
1 Kompanie (mot) (4 x 8cm GrW 34, 4 x sMG 42 & 36 x leMG 42)  
2 Kompanie (mot) (2 x 8cm GrW 34, 6-8 Flammenwerfer, 2 x sMG 42 & 43 x leMG 42)  
3 Kompanie (SdKfz 251)  
Brückenkolonnen (K)

## HEER PANZER DIVISION (continued)

### PANZER NACHRICHTEN ABTEILUNG

(420 officers and men at full 1944 establishment)  
Stabs Kompanie  
Fernsprech (telephone) Kompanie  
Funk (radio) Kompanie  
Versorgungs Kompanie (2 x leMG 42)

### NACHSCHUB & WERKSTATT (commisariat & workshop)

**ABTEILUNG (mot)**  
(Total services personnel 2,157 officers and men at full 1944 establishment)  
Stabs Zug  
Versorgungs Kompanie (mot)  
Fleischerei (butcher's) Kompanie (mot)

Bäckerei (baker's) Kompany (mot)  
Feldpost (field post) Zug (mot)  
1, 2 & 3 Werkstatt Kompanien (mot)  
Ersatz (replacement) Bataillon (mot)

### SANITÄTS (medical) ABTEILUNG (mot)

1 & 2 Sanitäts Kompanien  
1, 2 & 3 Krankenwagen (ambulance) Kolonnen

### VERSORGUNGS (supply transport) ABTEILUNG (mot)

Stabs Kompanie  
1, 2, 3, 4 & S Transport Kolonnen  
Westatt Kompanie

totalling seven Panzer divisions plus one in reserve; and two Panzer brigades plus two Panzergrenadier divisions, again initially in reserve. Although the exact composition of the American forces opposing them was unknown, they were believed to be weak and thinly stretched, since the main Allied efforts were

to point out); because there was insufficient backup, particularly from the Luftwaffe; because of the nature of the terrain and the weather in the depths of winter compared with the summer; and because neither the men nor their leaders had the energy any longer to sustain it.

## HEER INFANTERIE (VOLKSGRENADIER) KOMPANIE

(144 men)

Stabs Zug (Hauptmann or Oberleutnant & Feldwebel & 7 men including radio operator)

1 Zug (Leutnant & Unterfeldwebel)  
1/1 Trupp (Unteroffizier & 9 men; 1 x leMG 42, 1 x MP 40 & 8 x Kar 98 or StG 44)  
2/1 Trupp (as 1/1)  
3/1 Trupp (as 1/1)  
4/1 Trupp (Unteroffizier & 12 men)  
1 x leMG 42 (3 men)  
1 x 8cm GrW 34 (5 men)  
3 x Panzerfaust/Panzerschreck (1 or 2 men each)

2 Zug (Leutnant & Unterfeldwebel)  
1/2 Trupp (Unteroffizier & 9 men; 1 x leMG 42, 1 x MP 40 & 8 x Kar 98 or StG 44)  
2/2 Trupp (as 1/2)  
3/2 Trupp (as 1/2)  
4/2 Trupp (as 4/1)

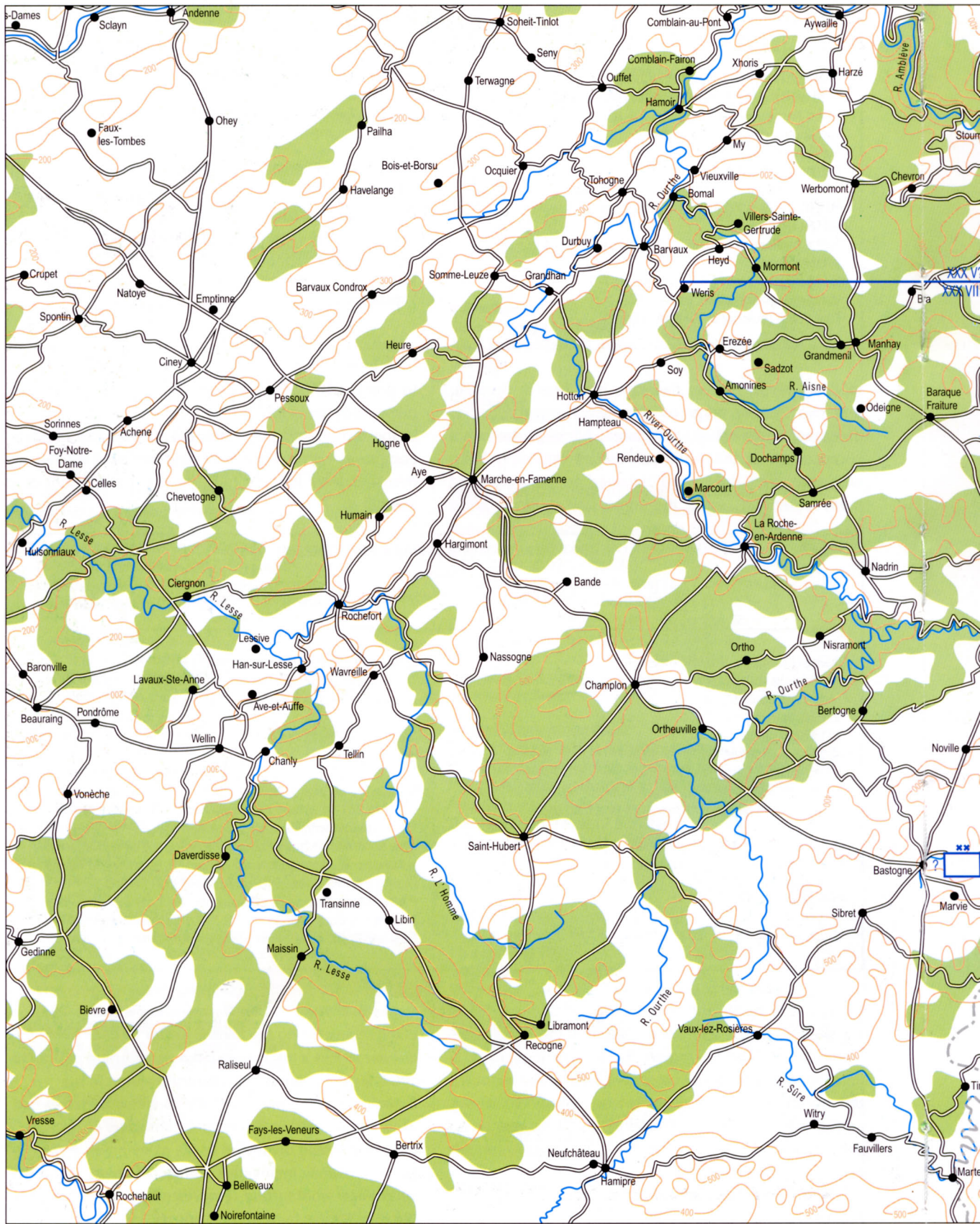
3 Zug (Leutnant & Unterfeldwebel)  
1/3 Trupp (Unteroffizier & 9 men; 1 x leMG 42, 1 x MP 40 & 8 x Kar 98 or StG 44)  
2/3 Trupp (as 1/3)  
3/3 Trupp (as 1/3)  
4/3 Trupp (as 4/1)

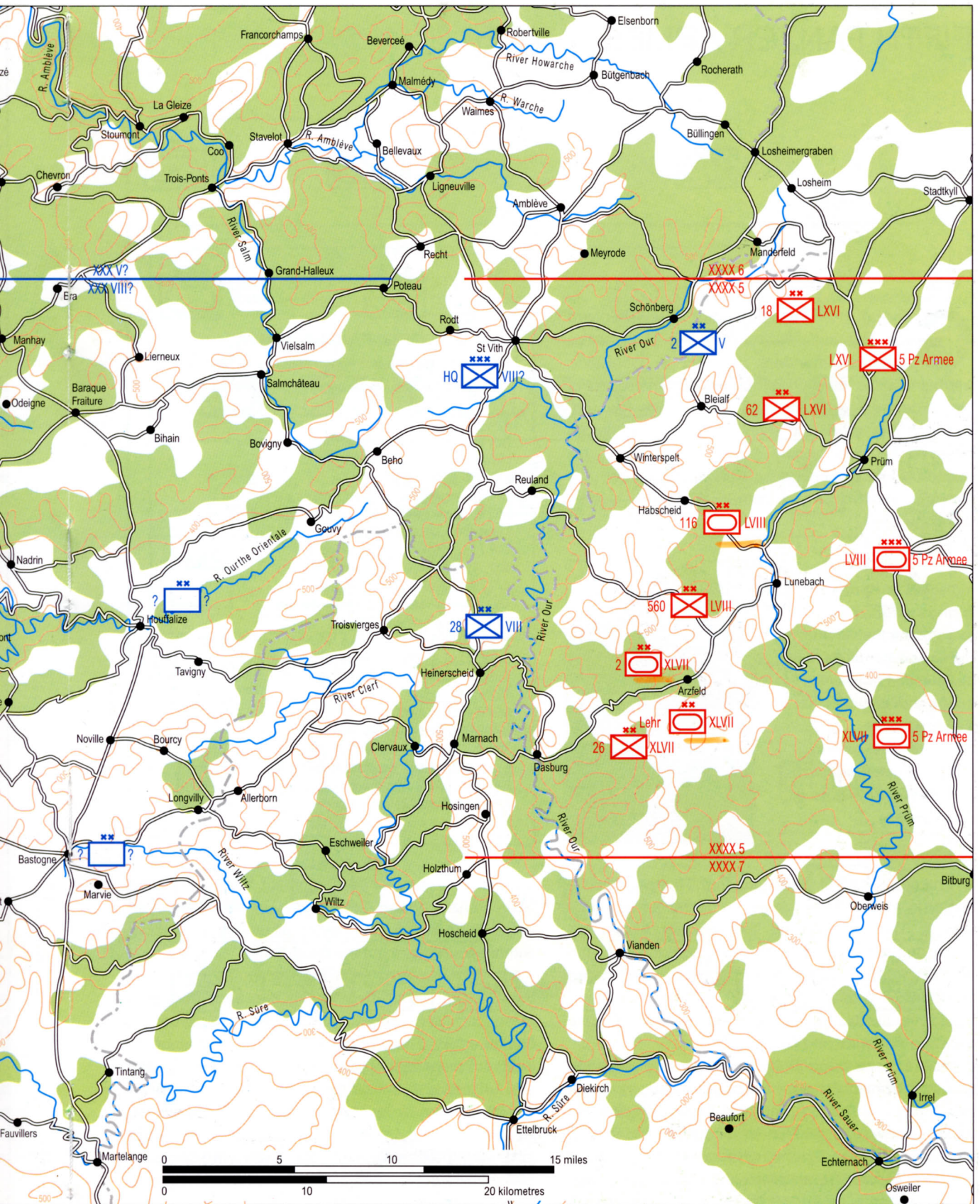
By late 1944 a high proportion of the infantry were equipped with the StG 44 assault rifle instead of the conventional Kar 98. This, together with the high proportion of light machine-guns, gave a German infantry company a much higher allocation of automatic weapons compared with a U.S. infantry company. During the Ardennes, also, many more men carried Panzer-fausts than were officially allocated. By this stage of the war the 8cm GrW 34 mortar had completely replaced the 5cm leGrW 36 except in airborne and mountain divisions

being made north and south of the Ardennes. Hitler believed, correctly as it happened, that the Allies were using the Ardennes region as a combination of a kindergarten and a convalescent home, but what he did not reckon on was American resilience or the speed with which reinforcements could be rushed to the threatened sector, given the fact that all American units were fully motorised.

Hitler's last Blitzkrieg failed, at the end of the day, because it was far too ambitious (as his generals tried

**Pages 8–9: What did the Germans know about Allied dispositions facing the central sector of their front? The answer is 'not a lot' because the substitution of the raw 106th for the veteran 2nd Infantry Division in the Schnee Eifel had been carefully concealed. Patrols had ascertained that the line further south was only thinly defended. Allied command of the skies made aerial reconnaissance impossible and therefore no one at OKW knew what further reserves might lie just east of the river Meuse for a prompt riposte.**





# FIFTH PANZER ARMEE

**G**eneral der Panzertruppen Hasso-Eccard von Manteuffel is the only one of the three army commanders involved in Operation 'Herbstnebel' to have left us with a coherent account of the Ardennes' campaign as seen from the top. Although it is short, and slightly inaccurate in places because he was largely relying on memory, his memoir is important because it helps explain from the German viewpoint *why* rather than *how* events developed.

**A disciple of Guderian during the formative years of the Panzer arm, Hasso von Manteuffel had commanded front-line troops with distinction at a regimental and divisional level before being entrusted with Fifth Panzer Armee.**  
(Bundesarchiv)



The orders to von Manteuffel from Heeresgruppe B supremo Walter Model were, in broad terms, quite explicit. They stated that: 'Fifth Panzer Armee will break through the enemy front on both sides of the northern frontier of Luxembourg and will push forward (especially by using the roads Marche–Namur and Bastogne–Dinant) in a drive across the Meuse between Andenne and Givet.

'Should the opportunity occur or the situation require it, parts of the army will push on through Dinant and [over] the Sambre, into the Bruxelles area and west of Antwerp. It will then be the task of the army to prevent any action by enemy reserves in the rear of the Sixth Panzer Armee along the line Dinant–Givet. To that end, it is necessary for the spearhead units of

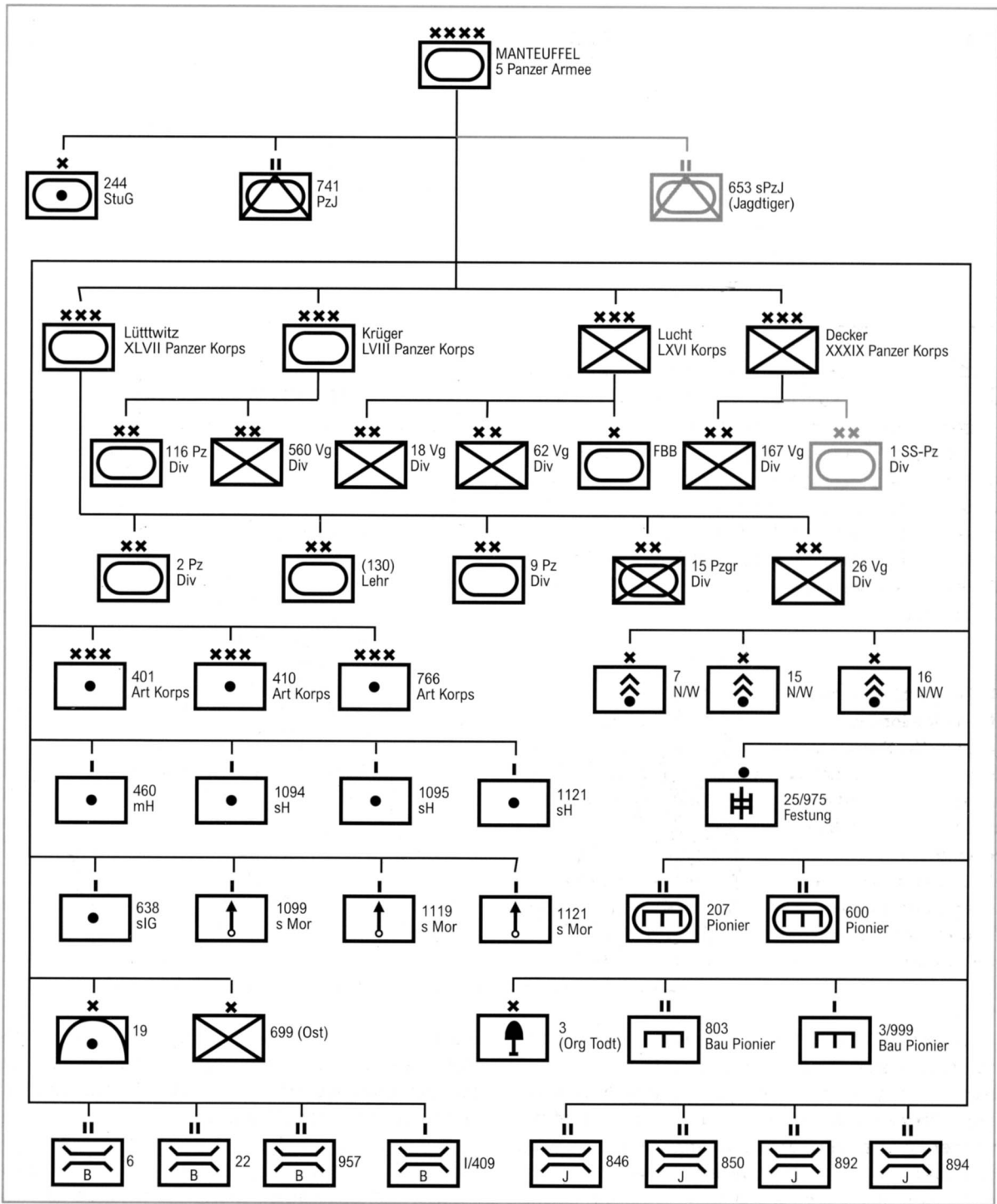
## FIFTH PANZER ARMEE

*General der Panzertruppen Hasso von Manteuffel*  
Stabschef: *Generalmajor Carl Wagener*

XLVII Panzer Korps (von Lüttwitz)  
LVIII Panzer Korps (Krüger)  
LXVI Korps (Lucht)  
244 Sturmgeschutz Brigade (Decker)  
653 schwere Panzerjäger Abteilung (Jagdtiger)  
(assigned but not deployed)  
741 Panzerjäger Abteilung (Hetzer)  
401, 410 & 766 Volks-Artillerie Korps  
7, 15 & 16 Volks-Werfer Brigaden  
460 mittlerer Haubitze-Artillerie Batterie  
638 schwere Artillerie Batterie  
1094, 1095 & 1121 schwere Haubitze-Artillerie Batterien  
1099, 1119 & 1121 schwere Mörser Batterien  
25/975 Festungs-Artillerie Batterie  
19 Flak Brigade  
669 (Ost) Bataillon  
207 & 600 Pionier Bataillonen  
803 & III/999 Bau-pionier Bataillonen  
6, 22, I/409 & 957 Brückenkolonnen (B)  
846, 850, 892 & 894 Brückenkolonnen (J)  
3 Brigade, Organisation Todt

the army to stay at least abreast of those of the Sixth Panzer Armee, and to gain control of the area between Bruxelles and Antwerp as quickly as possible without worrying about the deep flanks.'

On 16 December Fifth Panzer Armee comprised three corps, two of them designated armoured, plus three artillery corps and three brigades of Nebelwerfers. The army's strength in heavy weapons, until reinforced by the later arrival of reserve divisions and brigades, was less than two-thirds that of Sixth Panzer Armee to its north: around 197 *operational* PzKpfw IVs and Vs, 104 Jagdpanzer IV/70s, 38(t)s and Jagdpanthers, and 59 StuG III/IVs, plus 596 artillery pieces and 367 rocket projectors. It also had a much broader front to assault than did Sixth

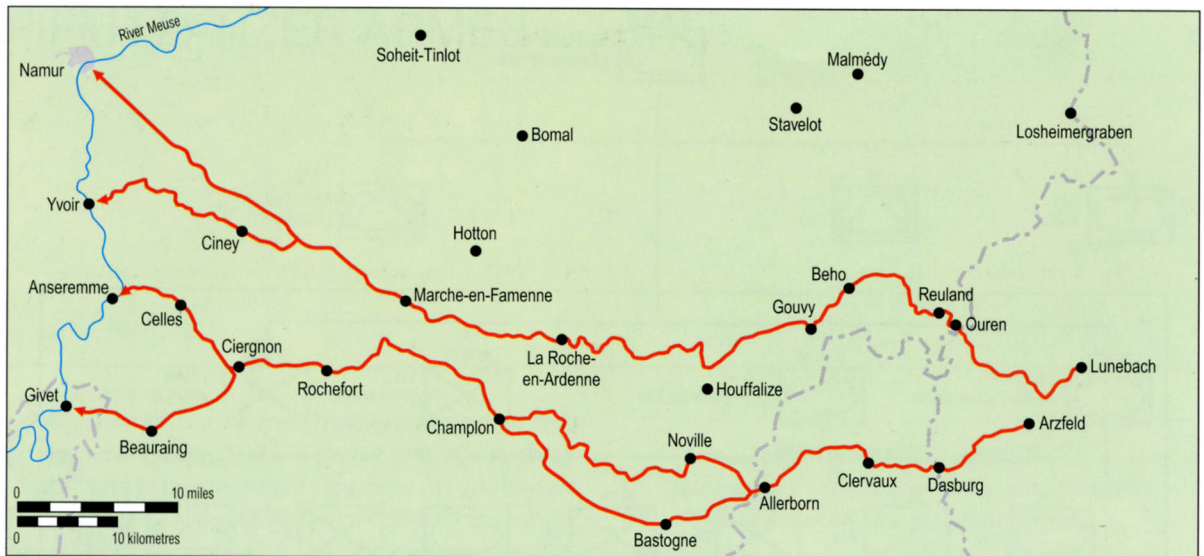


Panzer Arme, so von Manteuffel deployed his three Panzer divisions (2, 116 and Lehr) in line abreast.

'The Fifth Panzer Arme,' von Manteuffel wrote, 'attacked on a wide front with three corps and six divisions committed in the assault wave. These units formed assault companies which were specially trained and equipped. They were to approach the

enemy positions as closely as possible during the night, when the terrain was illuminated only by searchlights.'

In fact, it had been von Manteuffel who had first proposed that the attack begin in the pre-dawn darkness rather than after daylight, and to preserve the element of surprise he limited his corps' artillery to



While Sixth Panzer Armee had five designated Rollbahns for its four Panzer divisions, Fifth Panzer Armee only had two for its three, and the southernmost fork of those encroached on Seventh Armee territory at Bastogne.

no more than a twenty-minute barrage against selected targets, rather than the much more sustained and indiscriminate bombardment in the Sixth Panzer Armee sector.

'Then,' continued von Manteuffel, the assault companies 'were to overrun these [enemy] positions. The Sixth Panzer Armee attacked only with some spearheads which, according to statements of the division commanders, were not strong enough. Some of the tanks of my Panzer divisions were subordinated to the infantry for the breakthrough, while Sixth Panzer Armee kept its tanks together and brought its four Panzer divisions up on two roads, one division behind the other.'

Hasso von Manteuffel was unquestionably the most eloquent and intelligent of the three German army commanders, the most farsighted and the most flexible in his responses to a rapidly changing situation. Prussian-born, prewar he had served on Guderian's staff in the Inspectorate of Armoured Troops. After the fall of France he was promoted to Oberst and commanded 3 Panzergrenadier Regiment, 3 Panzer Division, in Russia in 1941. With further promotion to

Fifth Panzer Armee troops had to fight their way back through sections of the West Wall, in front of the Schnee Eifel and at Sevenig, which had been captured by the GIs earlier in the year. (U.S. Army)

Generalmajor, he assumed command of 7 Panzer Division in 1943 and then, as Generalleutnant, of the élite 'Großdeutschland' Division in 1944.

Bypassing the corps level of command entirely, and promoted again to General der Panzertruppen, he was given command of Fifth Panzer Armee on 12 September 1944, leading it in its battles in Lorraine and around Aachen before the Ardennes campaign. Manteuffel was still only 48 years old when he took over the doomed Third Panzer Armee in East Prussia in the spring of 1945 but had won the Knights Cross with Oakleaves, Swords and Diamonds.

Blitzkrieg, as von Manteuffel well understood, depends not so much on the sudden bolt of lightning, but on the ability of the attackers to maintain the initiative and keep moving until the battle is won. 'The target,' he said, meaning Antwerp, 'was too remote and the strength of the attacking force quite disproportionate to this distant aim. Our forces lacked the necessary "depth" in men and material alike to exploit rapidly and powerfully the breakthrough, once that had been achieved. At the same time,' he added 'there were not sufficient troops available to secure the



## V PANZER ARMEE RESERVE

### 244 Sturmgeschütz Brigade

(Just one kompanie, 14 x StuG III)

### 741 Panzerjäger Abteilung

(Two kompanien, each 10 x Hetzer)

### 401, 410 & 766 Volks-Artillerie Korps

(Each) Stabs Kompanie & Beobachtungs (observation) Kompanie)

I Bataillon

1-3 Batterien (each 6 x 7.5cm PaK 40)

II Bataillon

4-6 Batterien (each 6 x 8.8cm PaK 43)

III Bataillon

7-9 Batterien (each 6 x 10.5cm leFH 18)

IV Bataillon

10-11 Batterien (each 6 x 15cm sFH 18)

V Bataillon

12-13 Batterien (each 6 x 12.2cm sFH(r))

VI Bataillon

14-15 Batterien (each 3 x 21cm Mrs 18)

16 Batterie (3 x 17cm K18)

### 7, 15 & 16 Volks-Werfer Brigaden

(Each) Stabs Kompanie, Nachrichten Kompanie & Park Kompanie

1 Regiment

Stabs Kompanie

I Bataillon

1-3 Batterien (each 6 x 15cm WGr 41)

II Bataillon

4-6 Batterien (each 6 x 15cm WGr 41)

III Bataillon

7-9 Batterien (each 6 x 21cm WGr 42)

2 Regiment

Stabs Kompanie

I & II Bataillonen (as I & II/1)

III Bataillon

7-9 Batterien (each 6 x 30cm WkrS 42)

### 460 mittlerer Haubitze-Artillerie Batterie

(6 x 10.5cm leFH 18)

### 638 schwere Artillerie Batterie

(6 x 15cm sIG 33)

### 1094, 1095 & 1121 schwere Haubitze-Artillerie Batterien

(Each 6 x 15cm sFH 18)

### 25/975 Festungs-Artillerie Batterie

(3 x 17cm K18)

### 1099, 1119 & 1121 schwere Mörser Batterien

(Each 6 x 21cm Mörser 18 or 38)

### 19 Flak Brigade

(14 x schwere Flak Batterien, each 4 x 8.8cm Flak 18/36 and 14 x leichte/mittlerer Flak Batterien, each 8 x 2cm Flak 30/38 of 3.7cm Flak 18/36)

### 207 & 600 Pionier Bataillonen

(Each) Stabs Kompanie (5 x I3MG 42)

1, 2 & 3 Kompanien (each 2 x 8cm GrW 34,

6 x Flammenwerfer, 2 x sMG 42 & 18 x leMG 42)

### 803 & III/999 Bau-pionier Bataillonen

(Each) Stabs Zug (1 x leMG 42)

1, 2 & 3 Kompanien (each 6 x leMG 42)

4 Kompanie (2 x leMG 42)

### 6, 22, I/409 & 957 Brückenkolonnen (B)

(Each except I/409, 2 x abteilungen; each abteilung 4 x kompanien, 4 x pontoon bridge)

### 846, 850, 892 & 894 Brückenkolonnen (J)

(Each 2 x abteilungen, each abteilung 4 x kompanien, 4 x girder bridge)

flanks of the attacking column without drawing on the forces which were intended to thrust for the Meuse.

'The general lack of strength had as a result another and greater failure. No definite point of main effort was established.' Here, von Manteuffel is being less than honest. The schwerpunkt was supposed to have been Sixth Panzer Armees largely Waffen-SS assault in the northern sector of the battlefield. It was only after this failed that the emphasis was switched to the Fifth Panzer Armees sector; and after that failed in turn, to the 'consolation prize' of Bastogne, which by that time was unattainable. But there was initially a 'point of main effort'.

Von Manteuffel offers no clue as to why Hitler, having been forced to abandon his original objectives, should have become so obsessed with Bastogne.

Perhaps the sheer stubbornness of the defenders offended him, as has been suggested more than once? What von Manteuffel does say is that, 'The defence of Bastogne, undertaken in apparently hopeless circumstances, was decisive in foiling our offensive plans.'

But, while von Manteuffel is full of praise for the speed of the Allied response to the German offensive – which saved Bastogne – he also criticises the counter-attack in January as being premature (which was Montgomery's opinion) and not sufficiently ambitious (Patton's opinion!). 'Germany,' he concludes, was at least 'given a breathing space ... But the cost was so great that the offensive failed to show a profit. Time gained was illusory.'

# FIFTH PANZER ARMEE

## XLVII PANZER KORPS

**G**eneral Heinrich von Lüttwitz's XLVII Korps was the strongest of the three in Fifth Panzer Armee at the beginning of Operation 'Herbstnebel' and before the end of the year, when General Karl Decker's XXXIX Korps was subordinated to it for 'Kampfraum Bastogne', it officially became 'Armeegruppe von Lüttwitz'. By this time, of course, XLVII Panzer Korps had already absorbed 9 Panzer and 15 Panzergrenadier Divisions, which were originally intended for Decker's embryo XXXIX Korps. However, von Lüttwitz then lost 2 and 9 Panzer Divisions to LVIII Korps!

XLVII Korps formed the left flank of Fifth Panzer Armee and assembled behind the West Wall with its two Panzer divisions, 2 'Wien' and (130) 'Lehr', and their bridging trains, poised to strike through Dasburg and Gemünd respectively. General der Panzertruppen Hasso von Manteuffel's instructions to von Lüttwitz were explicit: to get across the rivers Our and Clerf as quickly as possible so as to 'create the conditions for a westward advance'. This included capturing Bastogne before advancing in a broad column, with 2 Panzer Division in the van and Lehr slightly behind and to the south, in order to seize the river Meuse crossings at Dinant, Anseremme and Givet.

Like everybody else in Fifth Panzer Armee, von Lüttwitz expected the first phase of the operation to go smoothly. Once past the steep banks of the two rivers his forces had good roads to follow ('good', that is, in comparison to those assigned to Sixth Panzer Armee's armoured spearheads, 1 and 12 SS-Panzer Divisions). However, von Lüttwitz, who had been briefed on the operation at the Führerhauptquartier, Adlerhorst, on 11 December, realised that speed was of the essence to keep the enemy off balance and allow his Panzer divisions time to get across the Meuse before Allied armoured reserves could be brought into play.

Like all the other commanders in Heeresgruppe B, he had two main worries: the parlous fuel situation, and how long the poor weather would hold before

### XLVII PANZER KORPS

General der Panzertruppen Graf Heinrich von Lüttwitz  
Stabs Kompanie

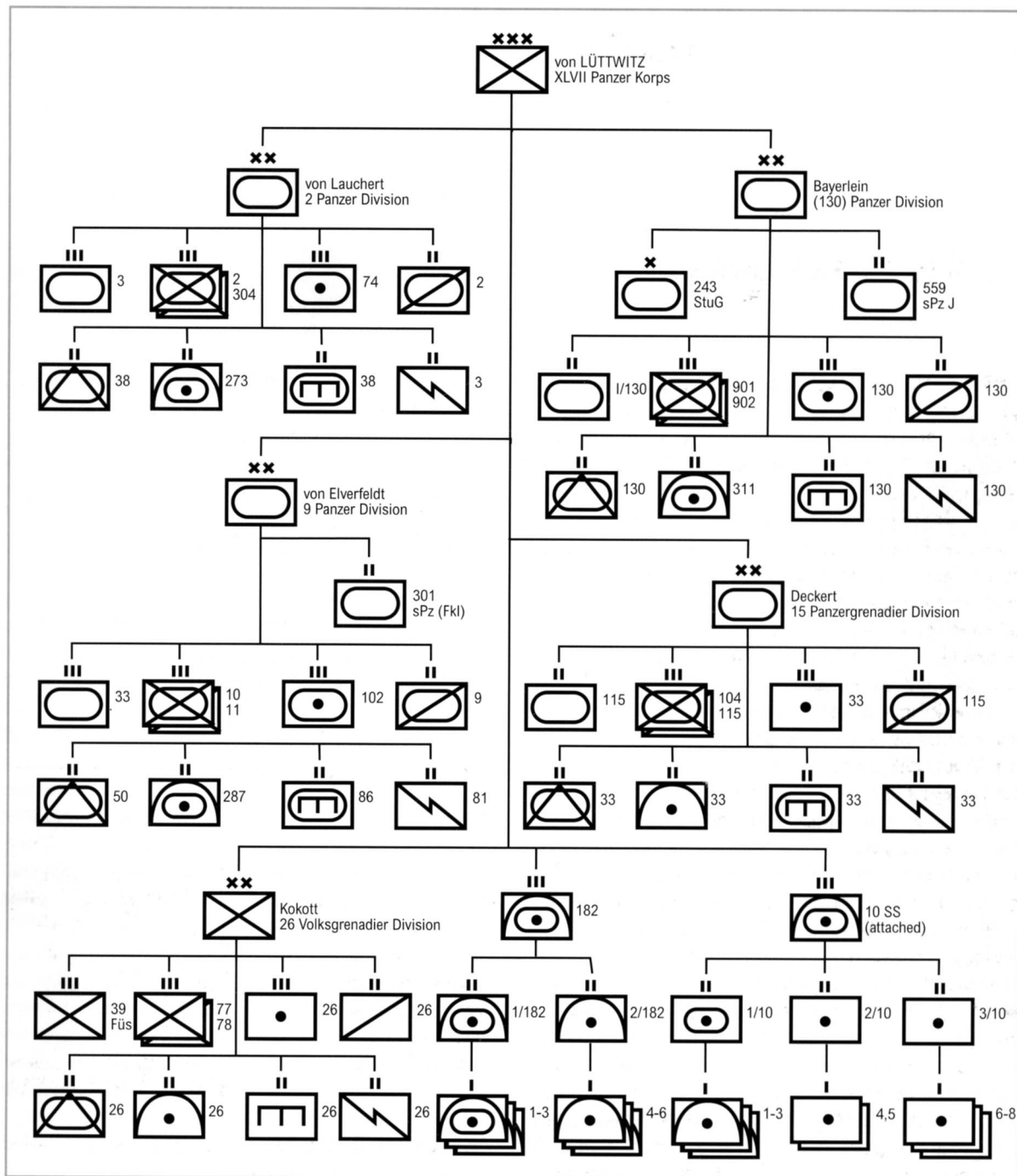
2 Panzer Division (von Lauchert)  
(to LVIII Panzer Korps 29 December)  
(130) Panzer 'Lehr' Division (Bayerlein)  
26 Volksgrenadier Division (Kokott)  
9 Panzer Division (Elverfeldt)  
(from Fifteenth Army 20 December; to LVIII Panzer Korps  
29 December)  
15 Panzergrenadier Division (Deckert)  
(from Fifteenth Army 20 December)  
182 Flak-Sturm Regiment  
10 SS-Panzer Artillerie Regiment (attached)

**General der Panzertruppen Graf Heinrich von Lüttwitz had worked with Manteuffel before. Both men shared similar experiences as Panzer commanders in Russia and understood each other well.**  
(U.S. Signal Corps)



the skies cleared enough to allow swarms of Allied fighter-bombers – the dreaded 'Jabos' – to begin pummeling his tanks. Whether he mentioned these concerns when he briefed his three divisional commanders at his forward headquarters in Ringhuscheid on the 15th is not a matter of published record, but Fritz Bayerlein at least must have experienced the same doubts. This in itself might account for some of the Panzer Lehr CO's hesitation during the following few days.

Graf Heinrich von Lüttwitz himself was a highly experienced officer who had commanded 20 Panzer

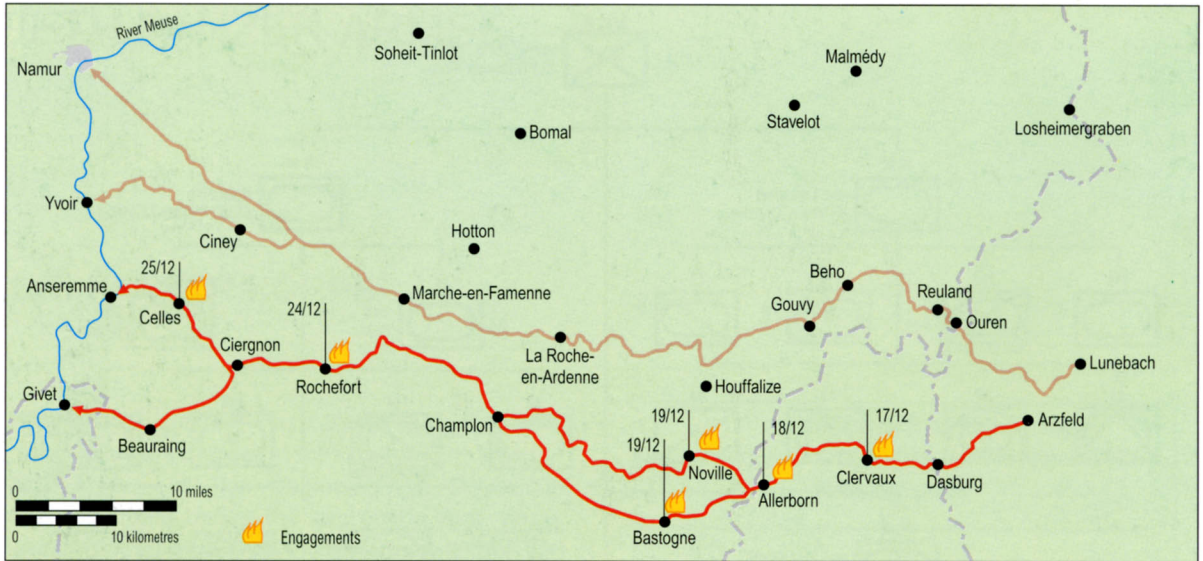


**XLVII PANZER KORPS RESERVE**

(From Fifth Panzer Armee Reserve)

- 766 Volks-Artillerie Korps
- 15 Volks-Werfer Brigade
- 1121 schwere Haubitze-Artillerie Batterie
- 1119 schwere Mörser Batterie
- 600 Pionier Bataillon

Division at Kursk and 2 Panzer Division from September 1943 until the same month in 1944, when he assumed command of XLVII Korps. The Korps itself had been created in Danzig in 1940 and operated on the eastern front from 1941 until it was brought west in April 1944, by then designated a Panzer korps instead of motorised infantry. Its CO at the time of D-Day was Generalmajor Graf Hans von Funck, who was killed during the ill-advised



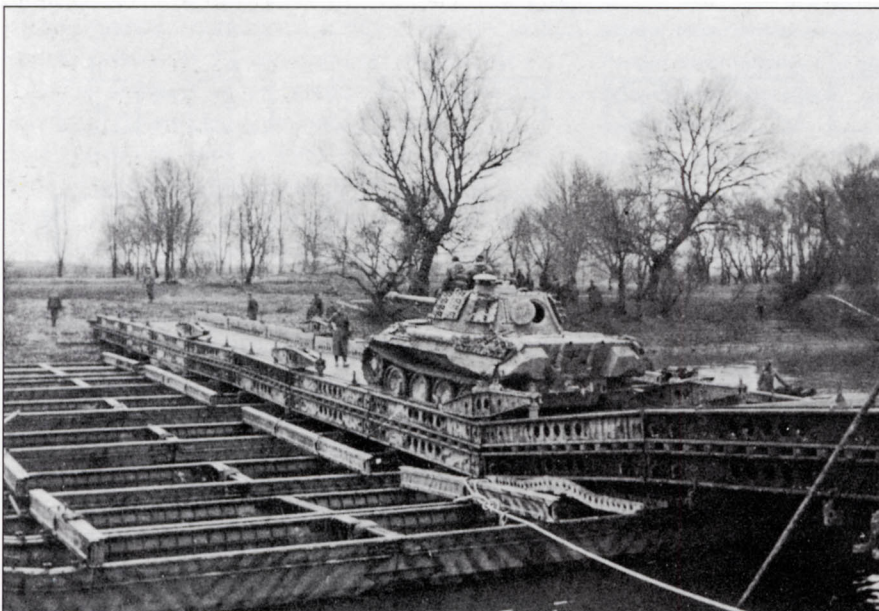
counter-attack at Mortain in August, after which von Lüttwitz took over for the remainder of the war.

The Korps staff assembled at Kyllburg on 6 December after handing over their Geilenkirchen sector to XII SS-Korps. No one had any idea of what lay in front of them. That something 'big' was obviously afoot did not worry von Lüttwitz, who was a determined and resourceful leader. Colleagues thought of him as a man who did not suffer fools gladly, but who would always lend a hand if a neighbour was in trouble. During Operation 'Herbstnebel' he did both, on the one hand sacking one of 2 Panzer Division's regimental commanders on the spot for not pursuing the objective aggressively

**XLVII Korps was only assigned a single Rollbahn for its two Panzer divisions although this split into two around Bastogne and then again west of Ciergnon, debouching on the Meuse at Dinant and Givet. Capturing Bastogne itself was initially the responsibility of 26 Volksgrenadier Division alone.**

enough, and on the other reinforcing the overstretched 26 Volksgrenadier Division twice in its desperate struggle to break through the Bastogne perimeter, even before Hitler specifically ordered the town's capture on 27 December.

There were essentially four phases to XLVII Panzer Korps' offensive operations. The first was the initial



**Getting the 60-ton capacity Brückengerät J pontoon bridges built at Dasburg and Gemünd for 2 and (130) Panzer Divisions was a time-consuming process which put XLVII Korps 24 hours behind schedule right at the start of the offensive. (U.S. Signal Corps)**

Only a few Jagdpanthers were deployed in the Ardennes, one battalion with Sixth Panzer Armee and one with Fifth. 559 schwere Panzerjäger Abteilung with 12 Jagdpanthers, 17 Jagdpanzer IV/70s and 12 StuGs, was used as a substitute for Panzer Lehr's missing I/130 Panzer Regiment. In the constricted terrain of the Ardennes, the powerful Jagdpanthers proved rather less than effective. (U.S. Signal Corps)



breakthrough on 'Skyline Drive' – the north–south ridge bisecting the rivers Our and Clerf, defended by the battle-weary 110th Regiment of the U.S. 28th Infantry Division. The second was the series of battles that 2 and (130) Panzer Divisions had to get through the American roadblocks in villages east, north and south of Bastogne. The third and fourth phases coexist in time but not space: the Panzer divisions' drive toward the Meuse; and the assaults against Bastogne prior to the arrival, specifically, of Patton's 4th Armored and 35th Infantry Divisions. After this, the battle for Bastogne took on a totally different shape.

The first phase of the offensive went off relatively smoothly, although determined resistance by small pockets, particularly at Clervaux and Consthum, caused approximately a 24-hour delay. Then the unexpected opposition at Longvilly, Noville and Marvie caused further disruption to von Lüttwitz's schedule. However, by 22 December he could look at his Korps' progress with some satisfaction: his Panzer spearheads were west of the river Ourthe and the defenders in Bastogne were completely surrounded. However, getting fuel to the Panzer divisions was a nightmare; there was a disturbing build-up of American strength behind the Hotton–Marche–Ciney line which threatened the Korps' right flank because of the slow progress of 116 Panzer Division from LVIII Korps; and Seventh Armee reported that strong Allied forces were striking north towards Bastogne.

Everything went wrong over Christmas. Having got within spitting distance of the Meuse, 2 Panzer Division was effectively reduced to half strength after battling with

2nd Armored Division at Celles; all attempts to capture Bastogne had failed; and on Boxing Day leading elements of Patton's 4th Armored Division arrived to break the blockade. By this time the remnants of 2 Panzer Division had fallen back to a rough line Rochefort–St-Hubert, with Panzer Lehr continuing the line south to west of Bastogne. At this point 2 Panzer Division was transferred to LVIII Korps in exchange for the Führer Begleit Brigade, to leave von Lüttwitz free to concentrate on Bastogne, which Hitler on 27 December had ordered must be taken 'at all costs'.

The town now became a 'black hole', sucking in disparate elements from Sixth Panzer and Seventh Armee until in the end there were components of no fewer than nine divisions operating under the umbrella of Armeegruppe 'von Lüttwitz'. These included 1 SS-Panzer Division which, alongside 167 Volksgrenadier Division, constituted XXXIX Korps; and 3 Panzergrenadier Division, moved south from the Monschau front. A Kampfgruppe from Panzer Lehr was already involved in the struggle, as was 15 Panzergrenadier Division, in addition to the tenacious but tattered 26 Volksgrenadier Division. Finally, in the New Year, 340 Volksgrenadier Division began moving south from Fifteenth Armee, and both 9 and 12 SS-Panzer Divisions were assigned to 'Kampfraum Bastogne'.

By this time, however, the Allies had launched their own counter-offensive with First and Third Armies converging to cut off all German forces west of Houffalize, and all von Lüttwitz's efforts at Bastogne were ultimately futile.

## 2 Panzer Division 'Wien'



**O**berst Meinrad von Lauchert's 'Wien' (Vienna) division was in comparatively good shape at the start of Operation 'Herbstnebel', considering the terrible mauling it had taken earlier in the year. After withdrawing from the fighting in France and refitting at Wittlich under a 'caretaker' commander, Generalmajor Schönfeld, it assembled

**Oberst Meinrad von Lauchert had only just taken over command of 2 Panzer Division on the eve of the offensive and had no time to get to know any of his officers.**  
(Bundesarchiv)



### 2 PANZER DIVISION 'WIEN'

*Oberst Meinrad von Lauchert*  
Stabs Kompanie

3 Panzer Regiment  
2 Panzergrenadier Regiment (Gutmann)  
304 Panzergrenadier Regiment (von Cochenhausen)  
74 Panzer Artillerie Regiment  
2 Panzer Aufklärungs Abteilung (von Böhm)  
38 Panzerjäger Abteilung (StuG III) (Holtmeyer)  
273 Flak Abteilung  
38 Panzer Pionier Bataillon  
38 Panzer Nachrichten Abteilung  
82 Panzer Nachschub Truppe  
82 Panzer Werkstatt Truppe  
82 Verwaltungs Truppe (mot)  
82 Sanitäts Truppe (mot)  
82 Panzer Feld-Ersatz Bataillon

near Neuerberg and was estimated to be at 80 per cent strength on 10 December. Its new CO, von Lauchert, did not arrive to relieve Schönfeld until the 15th and barely had time to meet his staff and regimental commanders before his division was thrown into battle. For all that, it did extraordinarily well considering the weather, the state of the roads and the constant fuel shortages, and penetrated further west towards the river Meuse than any other German division, Heer or Waffen-SS.

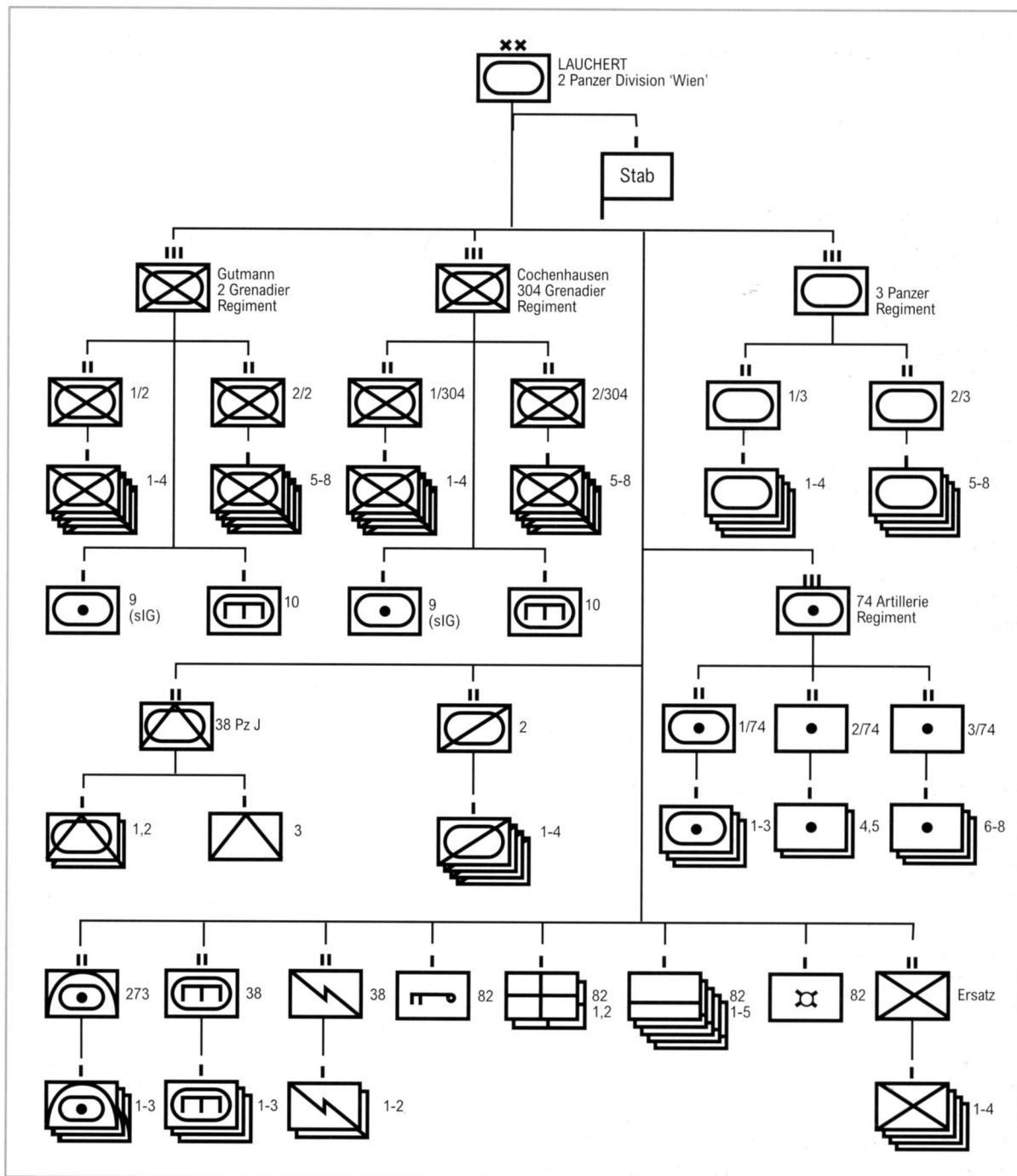
The 2nd was one of the three original Panzer divisions formed in 1935 at Würzburg. Its first commander, until 1938, was none other than Generalmajor Heinz Guderian, 'founding father' of the Panzer Korps. However, following the Anschluss, its home station was moved to Vienna and most of its later personnel, after reorganisation following the French campaign in 1940, were Austrian. Its commander during the Polish, French and Greek campaigns and Operation 'Barbarossa' was Generalleutnant Rudolf Veiel.

The early table of organisation of a Panzer division included two tank regiments and one of motorised infantry, but experience in Poland and France showed that this was top heavy and each of the first three Panzer divisions now lost a tank regiment (which

would form the nucleus of a new Panzer division) and gained a second infantry regiment (now designated Panzergrenadier). In the case of the 'Wien' division, its 4 Panzer Regiment went to 13 Panzer Division, while it gained 304 Panzergrenadier Regiment in replacement.

In September 1939 the division attacked from Slovakia as part of Fourteenth Armee and suffered heavy losses fighting in central Poland during the drive towards Lublin. However, the new Panzer divisions had all withstood their first campaign under fire and vindicated Guderian's concept of fast-moving, motorised divisions with a mixed balance of tanks, infantry and artillery supported by Stuka dive-bombers. The word 'Blitzkrieg' was here to stay.

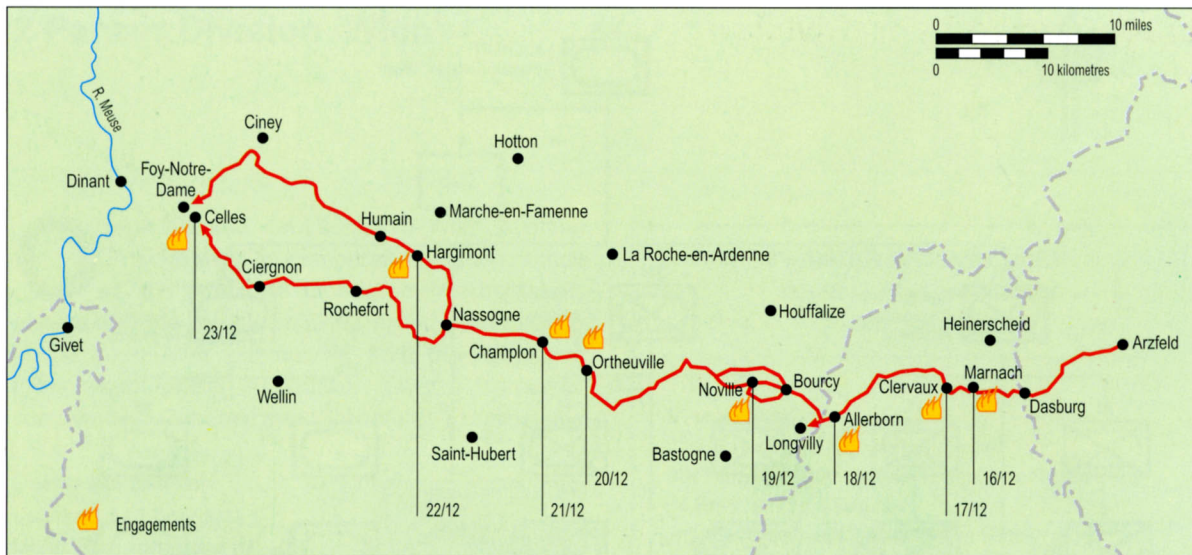
On 10 May 1940 Hitler struck in the west, breaking the spell of the 'phony war'. Guderian's XIX Panzer Korps, including Veiel's 2 Panzer Division, attacked where least expected – through the Ardennes – and, outflanking the vaunted Maginot Line, headed straight to the coast. Reaching Abbeville on the river Somme 10 days later after a 240-mile (380-km) drive, 2 Panzer Division turned north to help complete sealing the Dunkerque pocket, and thereby also sealing the fate of France itself.



After reorganisation in the autumn, the division next took part in the invasion of Greece in April 1941 and, alongside 6 Gebirgs Division, captured Athens. Assigned to XLI Panzer Korps of General der Panzertruppen Hermann Hoth's 3 Panzergruppe on the north of Armeegruppe Mitte, for the invasion of Russia in June, the division drove through Smolensk and reached Khimki just five miles (8 km) outside Moscow before the Soviet winter counter-offensive

brought the attack to a halt.

During 1942, now commanded by Generalleutnant Freiherr Hans-Karl von Eisebeck, 2 Panzer Division remained in the central sector of the front, mainly fighting defensive battles while Armeegruppe Nord maintained the siege of Leningrad and Armeegruppe Süd advanced to disaster at Stalingrad. After taking part in the general withdrawal from Rzhev and helping contain the second Soviet winter counter-offensive,



2 Panzer Division was heavily involved in the battle of Kursk during July 1943. Now commanded by Generalleutnant Vollrath Lübke, it formed part of XLVII Panzer Korps, alongside the 9th and 20th Panzer Divisions, in Generaloberst Walter Model's Ninth Armee, which struck against the northern flank of the Russian salient. Unable to advance more than a few miles, the division was outflanked during the Soviet Orel counter-offensive and suffered further heavy casualties defending the river Dniepr line during the winter of 1943-44.

Generalleutnant Freiherr Heinrich von Lüttwitz

**Bearing the trident device of 3 Panzer Regiment, PzKpfw IVs of the 2nd Abteilung prior to the ill-fated counter-attack at Mortain in August 1944.**

(Bundesarchiv)



**The routes taken by 2 Panzer Division diverted in a couple of places from its Rollbahn, skirting Bastogne for the following Volksgrenadiers to cope with, then splitting west of Champlon with Kampfgruppen 'von Böhm' and 'von Cochenhausen' taking different roads towards the Meuse at Dinant.**

assumed command of the division during this period, after which it was withdrawn to France to rest and refit. Thrown into the Normandy front in June, 2 Panzer Division was severely mauled in the fighting around Villers-Bocage and Caumont, southwest of Caen, before its remnants were sent into the counter-attack designed to split the U.S. First and Third Armies at Mortain. Trapped in the Falaise pocket, the division was reduced to a mere 25 tanks and was withdrawn behind the West Wall to begin re-equipping again, this time for Operation 'Herbstnebel'.

General von Lüttwitz was promoted to lead a re-formed XLVII Panzer Korps, and in December he was replaced by von Lauchert, former CO of 15 Panzer Regiment, 11 Panzer Division. So, 2 Panzer Division now had its former CO as Korps commander and a complete unknown as its own 'chef'. The fact that surviving veterans from 1940 reminisced about their drive through the Ardennes to the Channel coast in 1940 may have bolstered the morale of younger newcomers to the division and contributed to its near success in the Ardennes. However, 'near' and 'success' are the operative words and 2 Panzer Division was again severely mauled by 2nd Armored Division, at Foy-Notre-Dame and Celles. By the end of January 1945 the once proud division was reduced in strength to a mere 200 men with four tanks.

## (130) Panzer 'Lehr' Division



In December 1944 the once proud Panzer 'Lehr' Division was a mere shadow of its former self. At the time of the Allied invasion of Normandy it could field 193 tanks and 41 assault guns; for the beginning of 'Herbstnebel' it could only muster 57 tanks (30 Panthers and 27 PzKpfw IVs) and just 20 Jagdpanzer IV/70s. I Abteilung of Oberst Gerhardt's 130 Panzer Regiment was missing entirely and in its

As early as May 1944

Fritz Bayerlein's operations officer, Oberstleutnant Kurt Kauffmann, said he was 'worn out', 'nervous' and 'weak'. After Normandy, it is unsurprising that his leadership lacked fire in the Ardennes.

(U.S. Signal Corps)



place Generalleutnant Fritz Bayerlein had 559 schwere Panzerjäger Abteilung with 12 Jagdpanthers and 29 Jagdpanzer IV/70s and StuGs. The latter was held in reserve to begin with but later assigned to Oberstleutnant Joachim von Poschinger's Kampfgruppe.

The division's two Panzergrenadier regiments, 901 and 902, were reportedly at about 80 per cent strength. However, whereas in June the men had been a handpicked, élite force, they were now a mixed bag of replacements, mostly of indifferent quality, although their officer and NCO cadre was good.

Panzer Lehr assembled at Kyllburg at the beginning of December fresh from battling as part of First Armee on the Saar river line against Patton's Third Army. It formed the left flank of XLVII Korps with 2 Panzer Division on its right and 26 Volksgrenadier Division preceding it across the river Our. However, like almost all the Panzer divisions deployed in Fifth and Sixth Panzer Armees, Panzer Lehr's initial advance was stalled by the monumental traffic jam ahead of it. Writing afterwards, General der Panzertruppen Hasso von Manteuffel said: 'I regarded the hold-up of this division as a very grave disappointment, for I

### (130) PANZER 'LEHR' DIVISION

*Generalleutnant Fritz Bayerlein*

Stabs Kompanie

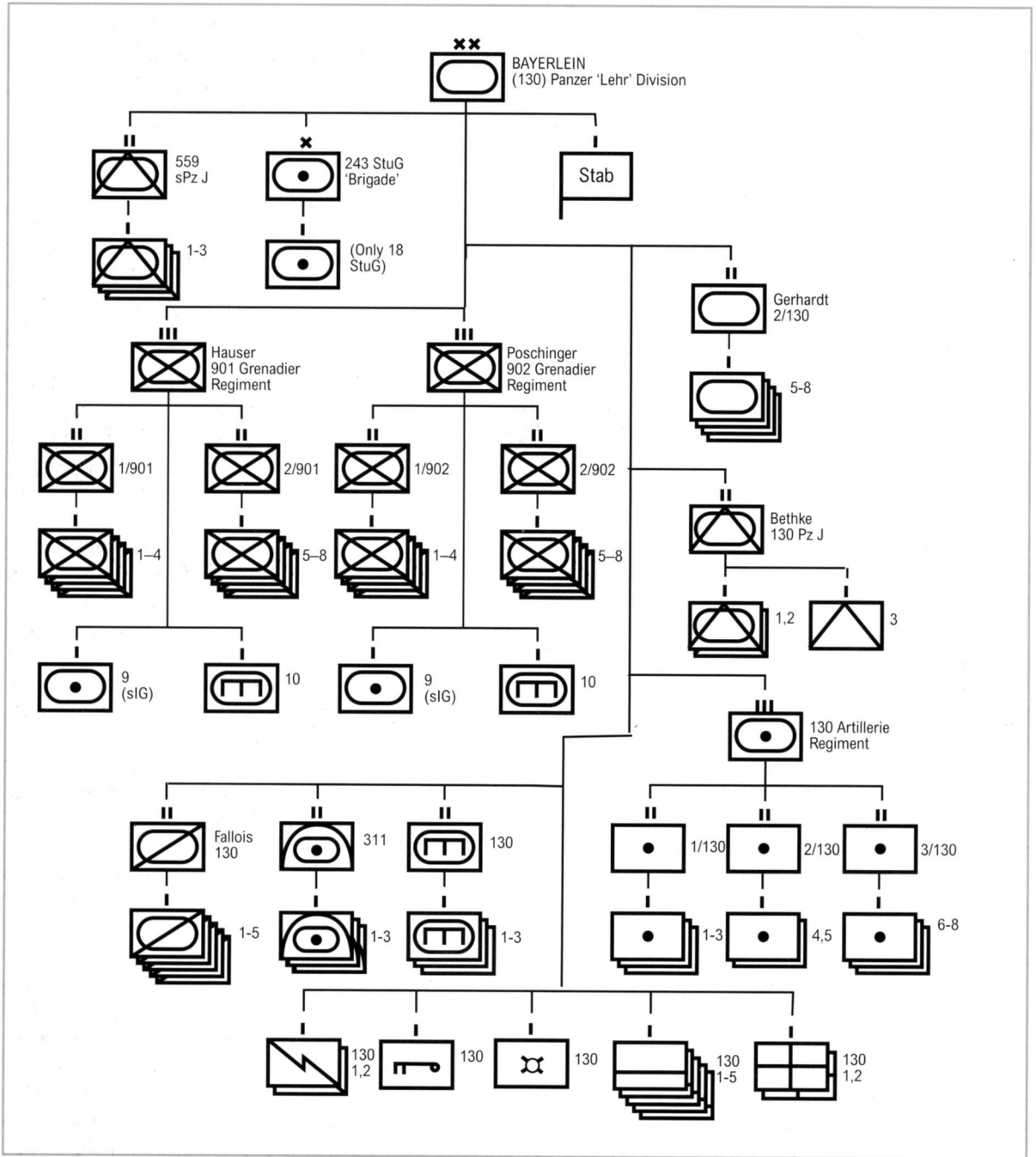
II/130 Panzer Regiment (Gerhardt)  
901 Panzergrenadier Regiment (von Hauser)  
902 Panzergrenadier Regiment (von Poschinger)  
130 Panzer Artillerie Regiment (Zeisler)  
130 Panzer Aufklärungs Abteilung (von Fallois)  
130 Panzerjäger Abteilung (Jagdpz IV/70) (Bethke)  
311 Flak Abteilung (Teichert)  
130 Panzer Pionier Bataillon (Kunze)  
130 Panzer Nachrichten Abteilung  
130 Panzer Nachschub Truppe  
130 Panzer Werkstatt Truppe  
130 Verwaltungs Truppe (mot)  
130 Sanitäts Truppe (mot)  
559 schwere Panzerjäger Abteilung (Jagdpanther)  
(attached from Armee Reserve)  
243 Sturmgeschütz Brigade (attached)

expected great results from its commitment. My fears were to be fully justified in the days to come.'

In fact, throughout 'Herbstnebel', Generalleutnant Fritz Bayerlein acted with unusual caution and without the former decisiveness which had led to his appointment as its commander in the first place. Bayerlein was an experienced veteran of many campaigns, having fought his first battles as an enlisted man during World War 1. After joining the ranks of the unemployed in 1918, he was fortunate to secure a commission in the small 100,000-strong army permitted under the terms of the Treaty of Versailles.

After serving with the General Staff, Bayerlein became Heinz Guderian's operations officer in 2 Panzergruppe during the invasion of Russia. In late 1941 he became chief of staff to Rommel's Afrika Korps, then Panzerarmee Afrika, then the First German-Italian Army in Tunisia. Wounded in the final battles, he was evacuated and later in 1943 commanded 3 Panzer Division in Russia before being appointed to lead the new Panzer 'Lehr' Division.

The division officially came into being on 10 January 1944. It was created around the staff and



instructors of the Panzer training school at Kramprnitz and incorporated other personnel from Lehr ('Demonstration') units at Potsdam and Bergen. This made it, as intended, an élite unit from the beginning and it was earmarked as the principal mobile reserve behind the Atlantic Wall.

Before the Allies invaded in June, however, Panzer Lehr was assigned a completely unscheduled task. The Hungarian government headed by Admiral Miklos Horthy had been getting cold feet about its

involvement in the war even before the Italian surrender in September 1943, and Hitler needed to stiffen its resolve. After summoning Horthy to a meeting at Berchtesgaden on 17 March 1944, he sent German troops into Budapest while the Hungarian Regent's back was turned. Panzer Lehr took part in the fait accompli (Operation 'Margarethe') before returning to Orleans, France, in May. While in Hungary, however, it had absorbed 901 Infanterie 'Lehr' Regiment into its establishment.

This pristine PzKpfw V Ausf G photographed earlier in the spring of 1944 carries an infra-red searchlight and night sight on the cupola. Bayerlein later claimed that some of Panzer Lehr's Panthers were fitted with this new device. If so, it did not do them much good. (U.S. Signal Corps)



Immediately following D-Day, Panzer Lehr was rushed to Normandy where, in Bayerlein's own words, it was 'annihilated'. The division arrived in the line alongside 12 SS-Panzer Division in the Caen sector facing elements of First Canadian and Second British Armies early in the evening of 9 June. Here, it fought hard at Tilly and Villers-Bocage but within a fortnight was down to almost half strength with only 66 tanks left.

Then, in July, it was moved against the Americans in the St Lô sector as they prepared for Operation 'Cobra'. By this time it was reduced to a total of 50 tanks and assault guns. Hit hard by the massive bombing raid which preceded the successful Allied breakout from Normandy, the division was virtually wiped out and its remnants absorbed by 2 SS-Panzer Division. Only a few survivors escaped from the Falaise pocket.

In September a reborn Panzer Lehr emerged and was assigned to First Armee, but it was a division in name only. It only had five tanks and six 10.5cm howitzers to a single understrength battalion of Panzergrenadiers with a company of engineers and a reconnaissance platoon – but on the distorted maps of Hitler's imagination it was still the vaunted 'Demonstration' Division. Some degree of sanity must have prevailed because, before Panzer Lehr was assigned its role in Operation 'Herbstnebel', it was withdrawn from its place in LXXXI Korps' front line and entrained to Paderborn to refit 'properly'.

By this time, though, the German manpower pool was dwindling rapidly, and the couple of hundred surviving veterans of the original division must have

looked askance at the replacements they received from other shattered divisions. But they did have 72 new tanks, about one and a half battalions.

Then, even before the division had completed refitting, in November it was thrown back into the Saar region to bolster First Armee again, because Armeegruppe G was on the point of collapse under Patton's sustained onslaught.

How much effect the hurriedly thrown-together division can have had is impossible to ascertain, but that it did its share of the fighting is shown in the fact that when it was once more withdrawn from the line at the beginning of December, its tank strength was again down to a single battalion. Small wonder that neither the division nor its commander lived up to von Manteuffel's expectations.

After failing to break the Bastogne cordon and being rebuffed at Rochefort, Panzer Lehr was again pulled out of the line and sent first to Holland, where it failed to prevent British and Canadian troops establishing a firm bridgehead east of the river Maas. Despite this succession of failures, the division was next thrown against the bridgehead the Allies had established over the Rhein at Remagen in March after the fortuitous capture of the intact Ludendorff rail bridge.

As the Americans strengthened their hold east of Remagen and launched their main assault across the Rhein further north towards the end of the month, Panzer Lehr retreated into the Ruhr pocket with its remaining 15 tanks and 300 men. The last few survivors finally surrendered in April to the U.S. 99th Infantry Division, although few can have appreciated the irony of the situation.

## 26 Volksgrenadier Division



**O**berst Heinz Kokott's Volksgrenadiers had one of the toughest tasks assigned on 16 December 1944. They had to get across the river Our in the pre-dawn darkness and fight their way up the steep slopes of the western bank, hampered by the fact that German troops retreating through the region earlier in the year had left hundreds of felled trees, festoons of barbed wire and unknown quantities of unexploded mines in their wake. Many of the infantry felt that all their effort was just to give the 'black knights' of the following 2 and (130) Panzer Divisions their share of the glory in the new offensive—after engineers had built bridges for them at Dasburg and Gemünd, of course.

Even though Kokott was later given promotion to Generalmajor and command of 2 Panzer Division, he must have compared the value of these rewards against his men's struggle to break through the

**Oberst Heinz Kokott was an experienced commander who had won the Ritterkreuz earlier leading 337 Grenadier Regiment, 208 Infanterie Division, at Kursk and during the retreat through the northern Ukraine.**  
(Bundesarchiv)



American lines on 'Skyline Drive', and their fruitless and costly efforts to take Bastogne – especially after they had been rebuffed by a single word. The studious Kokott might himself have done better with Milton's immortal line, 'They also serve who only stand and wait', which is what so much of the Ardennes campaign was about.

Kokott's 26 Volksgrenadier Division had spent most of the war on the same front as the men's new commander – the east. Originally raised in 1936, predominantly from Westfalian Rheinlanders, its home base was Köln and its otherwise ambiguous emblem was based upon the twin spires of the cathedral. As 26 Infanterie Division, commanded by Generalleutnant Sigmund von Förster, it saw no action in Poland and

### 26 VOLKSGRENADIER DIVISION

*Oberst Heinz Kokott*

Stabs Kompanie

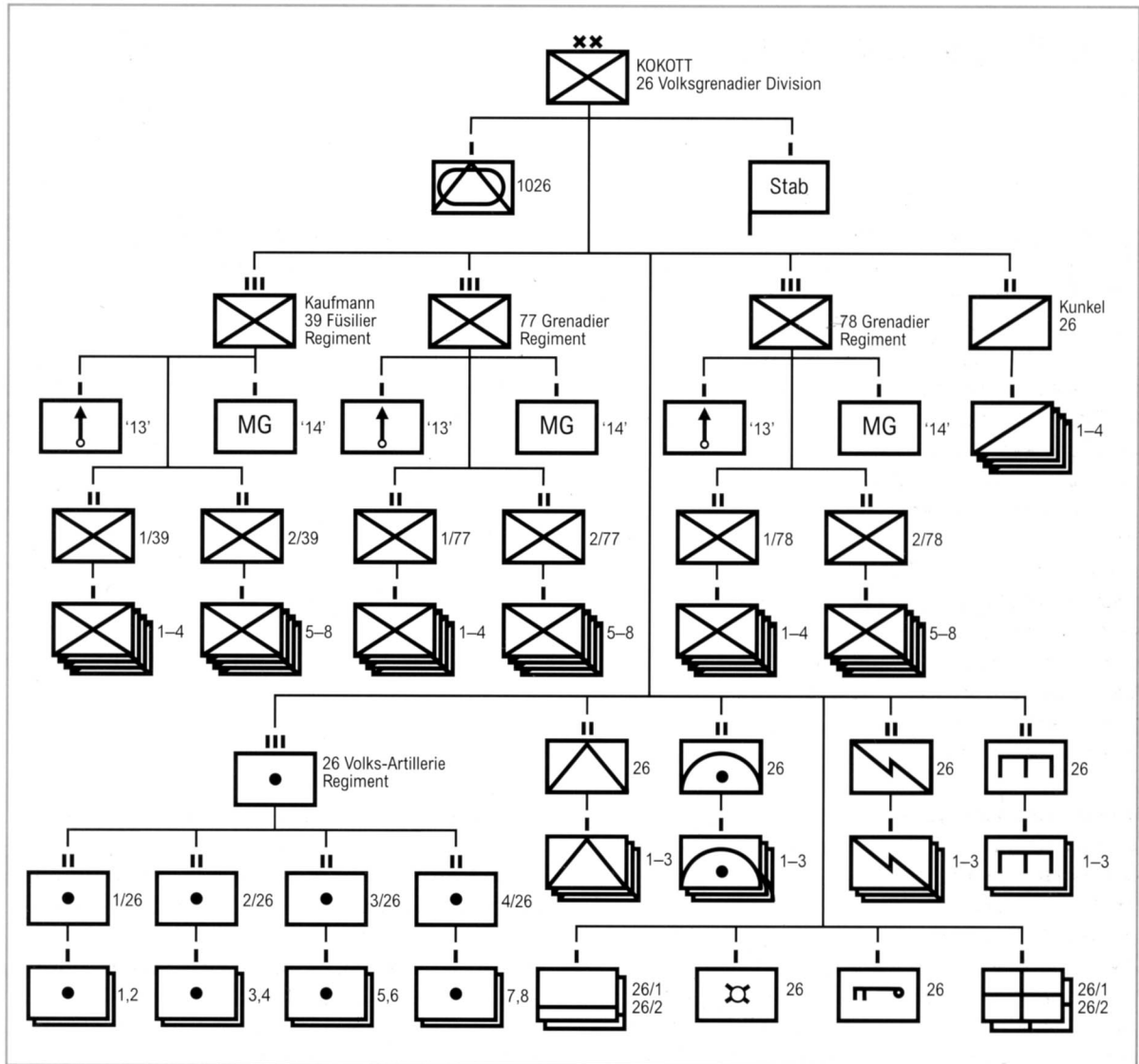
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39 Füsilier Grenadier Regiment (Kaufmann)  
 77 Volksgrenadier Regiment  
 78 Volksgrenadier Regiment  
 26 Volks-Artillerie Regiment  
 26 Aufklärungs Abteilung (Kunkel)  
 26 Panzerjäger Abteilung (PaK 40 & Hetzer) (Junker)  
 26 Flak Abteilung  
 26 Pionier Abteilung  
 26 Nachrichten Abteilung  
 26 Nachschub Truppe  
 26 Werkstatt Truppe  
 26 Verwaltungs Truppe  
 26 Sanitäts Truppe

only played a minor part in the invasion of the west in 1940. The following year, now commanded by Generalmajor Walter Weiss, the division took part in Operation 'Barbarossa' on the northern flank of Armeegruppe Mitte and, alongside 206 Infanterie Division, crossed the river Volga between Moscow and Leningrad to capture Rzhev in October.

The division escaped quite lightly from the Soviet winter counter-offensive which recaptured Rzhev, and remained predominantly on the defensive during 1942, still on the central front but now commanded by Generalleutnant Friedrich Wiese. In the summer of 1943 the 26th was heavily engaged during the battle of Kursk and suffered a large number of casualties. With Wiese's promotion to lead XXXV Korps in October, Generalleutnant John de Boer took over the division until he was killed in action early in 1944. His successor, Generalleutnant Friedrich Höchbaum, conducted a brilliant defence of Kovel in July. Despite being greatly outnumbered as the triumphant Red Army drove relentlessly towards the borders of the Third Reich, the division retreated in good order until it was finally overrun in East Prussia in September.

The survivors were sent back to Warthelager, near Poznan in Poland, and formed the nucleus of a rebuilt 26 Volksgrenadier Division, absorbing the Westfalian troops previously assigned to 582 Volksgrenadier



Division, which, like so many others at this stage of the war, never got beyond the planning stage. Further personnel from the Luftwaffe and Kriegsmarine brought the division back up to strength. Meanwhile, Höchstbaum had been given command of XVIII Gebirgs Korps in Norway and Oberst Heinz Kokott took over for the remainder of the war.

The division assembled east of Dasburg in November prior to 'Herbstnebel' and on 16 December attacked the U.S. 110th Regiment, 28th Infantry Division, behind the river Our on 'Skyline Drive', the ridge running north-south from St Vith to Diekirch. Pushing through Marnach, Hosingen and Holzthum, the division reached the eastern perimeter of the Bastogne defences at Neffe and Bizory on the 19th. Surprisingly, von Lüttwitz made no immediate attempt to take Bastogne by storm and 2 and (130) Panzer

Divisions continued heading west, bypassing the town to north and south with a few brushes against American task forces in the surrounding villages.

On 22 December Lüttwitz sent an emissary with a surrender demand to Brigadier-General Anthony McAuliffe, who responded with the historic retort, 'Nuts!' Now the siege began in earnest and 26 Volksgrenadier Division was heavily engaged until February, fighting first to get into Bastogne and then falling back steadily in the face of the Allied counter-offensive. The division's lines were finally broken when Patton's Third Army forced a crossing of the river Pruem. By this time the division was reduced to a mere 1,782 men but they fought on gamely until the few hundred survivors, with their escape route blocked by fast-moving American armoured columns, finally surrendered west of the Rhein in March.

## 9 Panzer Division



On 18 December 1944 Generalmajor Harald von Elverfeldt's 9 Panzer Division was transferred from Fifteenth Armee to OKW Reserve. Prior to this, alongside 15 Panzergrenadier Division, it had been part of General der Infanterie Gustav von Zangen's own reserve for the planned attack in the Venlo region. Moved south to the Eifel once it became clear that the Ardennes offensive was not going entirely according to plan, 9 Panzer Division was assigned to von Lüttwitz's XLVII Panzer Korps two days later to follow up and support 2 Panzer Division's lunge towards the Meuse. That in fact it failed to achieve its objective was mainly due to the usual problems of unsuitable and congested roads, lack of fuel and attacks by Allied fighter-bombers – plus interference from Hitler, who refused to allow a tactical retreat in time to save the division heavy losses.

By 1944, 9 Panzer Division had already had a long and, at least partially, successful war. It was originally formed in Vienna under Generalleutnant Dr Alfred Ritter von Hubicki in 1938, after the Anschluss, as 4 Leichte Division; its principal components being 33 Panzer Abteilung and 10 and 11 Kavallerie Regimenten (mot). As such, it only had a minor role in the invasion of Poland the following year before being reorganised as an armoured division during the winter of 1939-40. The new 9 Panzer Division played a significant part in the 1940 campaign as one of the three armoured divisions in von Bock's Armeegruppe B. Linking up with Fallschirmjäger at Moerdijk on 12 May, 9 Panzer advanced towards Rotterdam and, after the Dutch surrender on the 15th, headed south into Belgium. Following the evacuation of the Dunkerque salient, the division was reassigned to Guderian's XIX Panzer Korps and enjoyed a major success in the pursuit of the retreating French until hostilities ceased on 25 June following the armistice on the 21st. In fact, the division travelled further than any other unit during the campaign. In April 1941, 9 Panzer repeated the formula in Yugoslavia and Greece before being allocated to Armeegruppe Süd for Operation 'Barbarossa'.

Advancing rapidly into the Ukraine, 9 Panzer Division took part in the massive encirclement battles in the Dniepr bend around Kiev which netted 660,000 prisoners and convinced Hitler and OKW that the Red Army

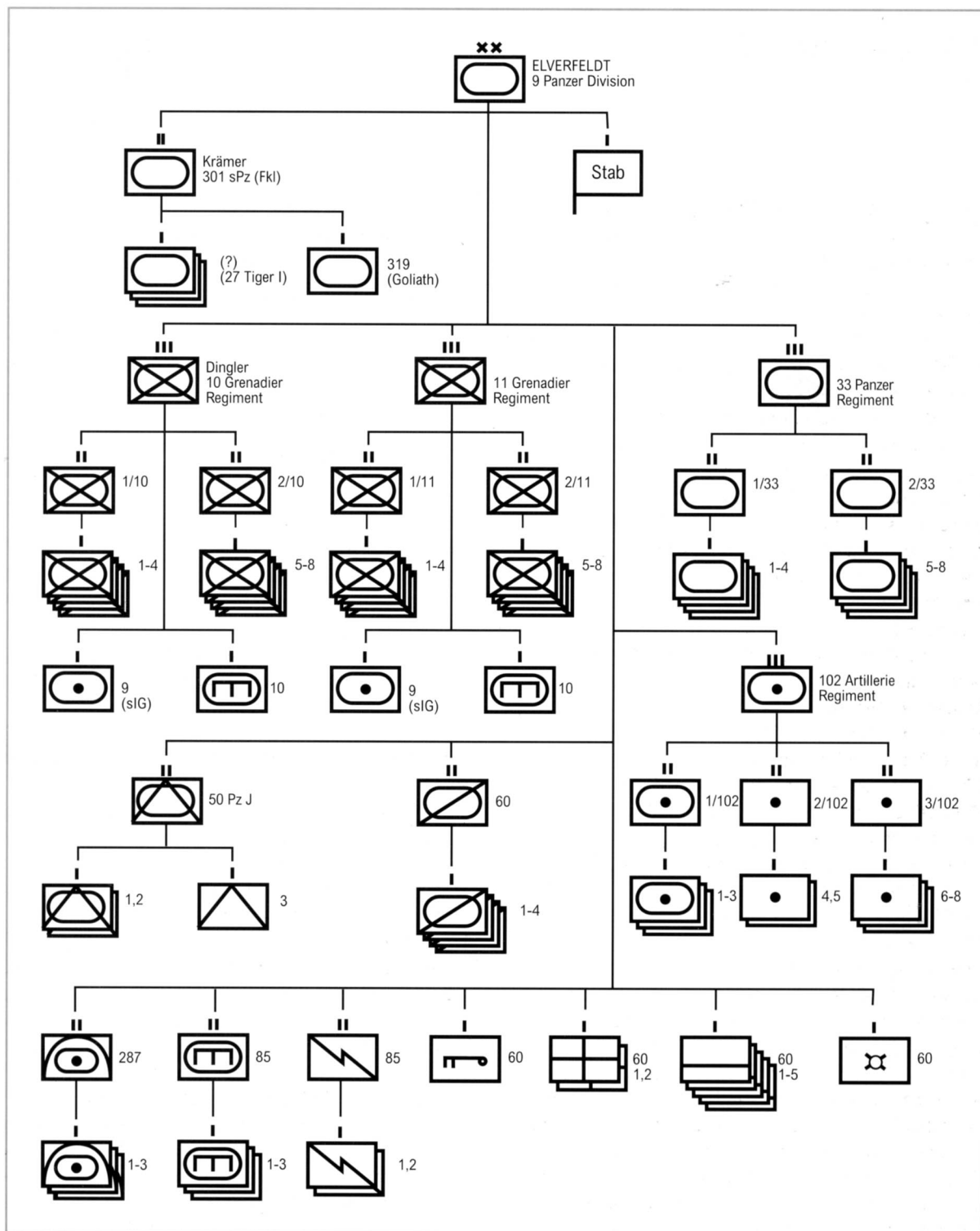
### 9 PANZER DIVISION

*Generalmajor Freiherr Harald von Elverfeldt*  
Stabs Kompanie

33 Panzer Regiment  
10 Panzergrenadier Regiment (Dingler)  
11 Panzergrenadier Regiment  
102 Panzer Artillerie Regiment  
60 Panzer Aufklärungs Abteilung  
50 Panzerjäger Abteilung (Jagd pz IV/70)  
287 Flak Abteilung (mot)  
86 Panzer Pionier Bataillon  
85 Panzer Nachrichten Abteilung  
60 Panzer Nachschub Truppe  
60 Panzer Werkstatt Truppe  
60 Verwaltungs Truppe (mot)  
60 Sanitäts Truppe (mot)  
301 schwere Panzer Abteilung (Fkl) (Krämer)  
(attached from Sixth Panzer Armee Reserve)

was finished. The failure to capture Moscow followed by the Soviet winter counter-offensive brought disillusionment and realisation that this was going to be a long campaign. Nevertheless, even though Moscow had not fallen, Armeegruppe Süd's drive to capture the important Caucasus oilfields during the summer of 1942 revived German hopes, until they were shattered at Stalingrad. Now commanded by Generalleutnant Bruno von Frankewitz, 9 Panzer Division escaped the fate of so many others and was transferred to Armeegruppe Mitte for the battle of Kursk in 1943. Here, it fought alongside 2 and 20 Panzer Divisions as part of XLVII Panzer Korps in Model's Ninth Armee on the northern flank of the Russian salient. Even though the Korps had some of the new Ferdinand tank destroyers, these lumbering anachronisms fell easy prey to Soviet infantry and the furthest Model managed to advance was 10 miles before the Russians struck back at Orel.

After Kursk, the tide had definitely turned in the Russians' favour and the renewed Soviet assault north and south of the salient meant that 9 Panzer Division was largely on the defensive, only able to make limited counter-attacks. Returned to Armeegruppe Süd, now under Generalmajor Erwin Jolasse, it was heavily involved in the battles on the Dniepr during the winter



and by January 1944 its strength was reduced to 13 tanks, with commensurate losses amongst its infantry and other units.

Withdrawn from the line, and posted to Nîmes in southern France in May, 9 Panzer absorbed the

reserve 155 (Ersatz) Panzer Division, which was also predominantly Austrian, its home station being Ulm. Unfortunately, many of its 60 tanks were only PzKpfw IIIs, which were, by this stage of the war, virtually obsolete. Nevertheless, the reconstituted 9 Panzer

Division's personnel strength was back up to 12,768 by the time of D-Day. Moving from its training area north of Marseilles through Avignon, the division was a latecomer to the Normandy battlefield and only sent to help the crumbling Seventh Armee at the beginning of August – just in time to get trapped in the Falaise pocket. This time its losses were even more ruinous and by the end of the month its operational strength was down to the equivalent of one infantry and one artillery battalion, with perhaps a dozen tanks. Its commander had also been wounded and was replaced by Generalleutnant Walter Scheller.

Nevertheless, the 'division' was kept in the line and fought in front of Aachen in September before the few hundred survivors were taken into Armeegruppe B reserve for rehabilitation. Another 11,000 men were found from somewhere to swell its ranks and its 33 Panzer Regiment was brought back up to almost full strength. In addition, it was assigned 301 schwere Panzer Abteilung with PzKpfw VI Ausf E Tiger 1s and little Borgward BIV 'Goliath' Sprengstoffträger, or demolition charge laying tanks. By the middle of October the division was back in the front line, fighting

**Although Allied combat reports frequently mention 'Tigers', in fact there were only two understrength battalions deployed in the Ardennes – 301 schwere Panzer Abteilung with 9 Panzer Division and 501 schwere SS-Panzer Abteilung with Sixth Panzer Armee. (U.S. Signal Corps)**

U.S. First Army forces at Aachen, Geilenkirchen and in the Peel Marshes near Venlo, Holland, in November as part of Fifteenth Armee.

Taken into OKW Reserve in December and re-allocated to XLVII Panzer Korps, with von Elverfeldt as its latest CO, the division had 28 PzKpfw IVs in I/33 Panzer Regiment and 57 Panthers, unusually, in its second Abteilung. About 27 Tigers survived in 301 schwere Panzer Abteilung and 24 Jagdpanzer IV/70s were operational with 50 Panzerjäger Abteilung. After being delayed for over a day by lack of fuel, leading elements of 9 Panzer Division finally established contact with the main force of 2 Panzer Division near Rochefort on Christmas Day. Helping to secure the northern flank, they took Humain on the 26th but were forced out by CCA of 2nd Armored Division two days later.

Now reassigned to LVIII Panzer Korps, 9 Panzer Division remained in the line until 14 January 1945, distinguishing itself in the Eifel battles. Withdrawn behind the river Erft with just 29 surviving tanks, and then to the east of the Rhein, the division gamely but unsuccessfully counter-attacked the Allied Remagen bridgehead in February. By now it only had 15 tanks and about 600 men left, and could not withstand a renewed Allied assault on 5 March. Freiherr von Elverfeldt was killed and Oberst Dingler, CO of 10 Panzergrenadier Regiment, assumed command of the survivors. Like so many others, they were finally forced to surrender in the Ruhr pocket in April.



# 15 Panzergrenadier Division



**O**n 27 December 1944 an order reached Fifth Panzer Armee from von Rundstedt's Oberbefehlshaber West stating explicitly 'The Führer has ordered that Bastogne be taken at all costs'. Why Hitler picked this moment to issue such an instruction is unclear, because earlier he had been almost disinterested in the capture of the town. Perhaps, as has been suggested before, it was just pique at the stubbornness of the American resistance. Whatever the reason, the order made no difference to Oberst Hans-Joachim Deckert's 15 Panzergrenadier



**The insignia of 15 Panzergrenadier Division was a prominent white five-pointed star, which must have caused some momentary battlefield confusion.**  
(U.S. Army)

Division, which was already heavily involved in the battle.

The exact strength of the division when it was transferred south from Fifteenth Armee over 18-20 December is unknown. At the beginning of November it was at virtually full strength with some 13,000 men, but since then it had been involved in heavy fighting around Aachen, Geilenkirchen and Venlo, alongside 9 Panzer Division. At the same time in November its 115 Panzer Abteilung had been reduced from 30 to seven tanks, but this had been doubled for 'Herbstnebel', and the battalion also had 30 StuGs. The division's 33 Panzerjäger Abteilung mustered a further eight StuGs and 20 Jagdpanzer IV/70s.

The division began life as 33 Infanterie Division, which was formed at Kaiserlauten during 1935-36 and originally had three infantry regiments, 104, 110 and 115. After taking part in the battle for France, the division was reorganised and renamed 15 Panzer Division, losing 110 Infanterie Regiment (and all of its horses!) but gaining 8 Panzer Regiment in their place. In the spring of 1941 the re-formed division shipped to Libya to join Rommel's fledgling Afrika Korps in the wake of his capture of Benghazi.

## 15 PANZERGRENADIER DIVISION

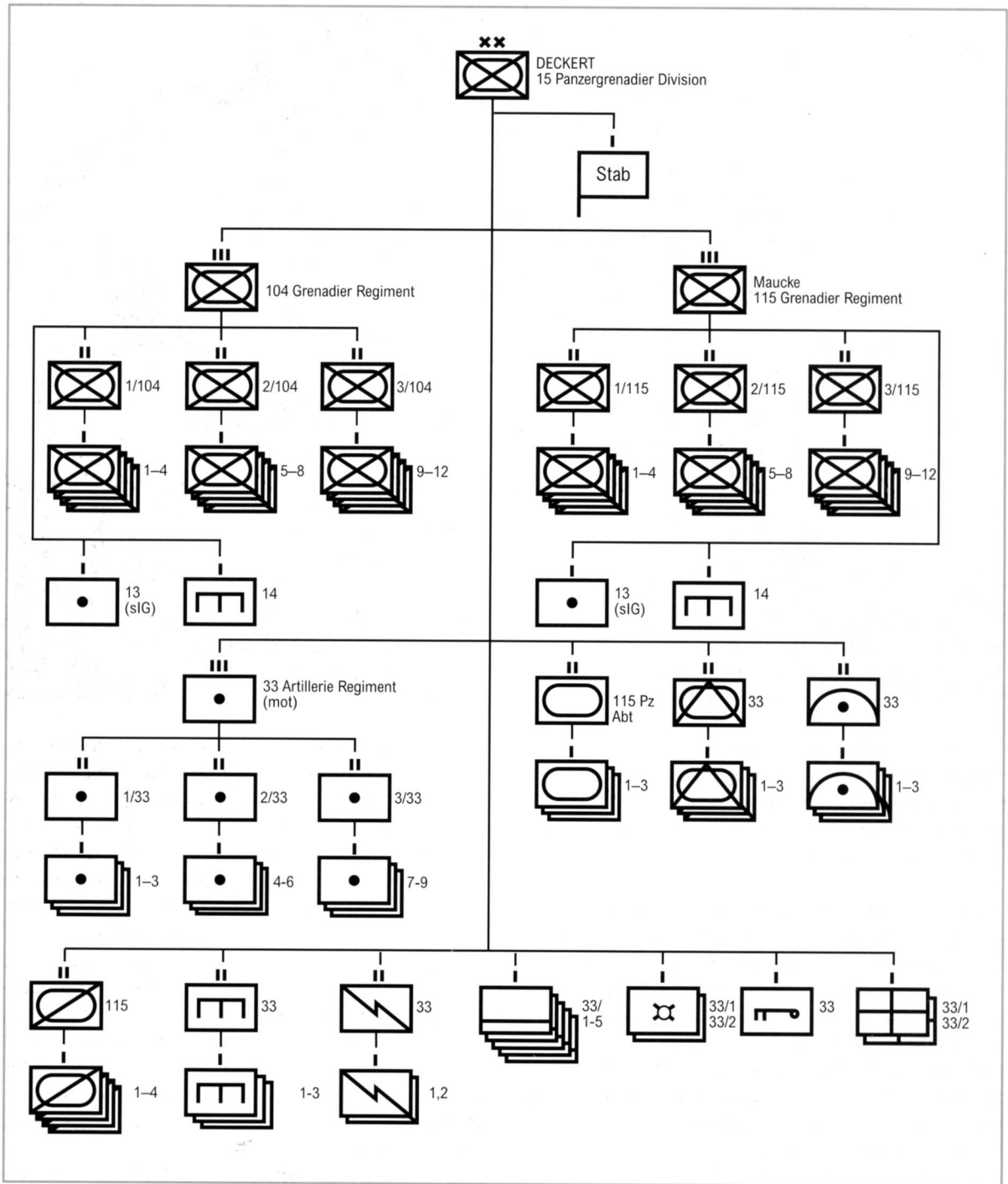
*Oberst Hans-Joachim Deckert*

Stabs Kompanie

115 Panzer Abteilung  
104 Panzergrenadier Regiment  
115 Panzergrenadier Regiment (Maucke)  
33 Artillerie Regiment (Simon)  
115 Panzer Aufklärungs Abteilung  
33 Panzerjäger Abteilung (Jagd pz IV/70 & StuG III)  
315 Flak Abteilung (mot)  
33 Pionier Abteilung (mot)  
33 Nachrichten Abteilung (mot)  
33 Panzer Nachschub Truppe  
33 Panzer Werkstatt Truppe  
9 Verwaltungs Truppe (mot)  
33 Sanitäts Truppe (mot)

A month later the division's first commander, Generalmajor von Prittwitz, was killed by a shell outside Tobruk. His successor, Generalmajor Hans-Karl von Esebeck, was luckier and escaped with a wound; he later commanded 2 Panzer Division in Russia. The division's third CO, Generalmajor Walter Neumann-Silkow, was also killed, on 7 December, the date of the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor. Then Generalmajor Gustav von Vaerst was wounded in May 1942 and did not return until August, his place temporarily being assumed by the commander of 33 Panzer Artillerie Regiment, Oberst Eduard Crasemann. As a sad conclusion to this succession of misfortunes, the division's last commander, Generalleutnant Willibald Borowietz, committed suicide after surrendering in Tunisia in May 1943.

The full story of 15 Panzer Division belongs elsewhere, but it took part in all the significant battles of the Western Desert campaign from the siege of Tobruk to Alam Halfa and El Alamein and played a major role in the attack through Kasserine Pass in February 1943. Some elements of the division escaped the final destruction of the Afrika Korps in May and reassembled on Sicily as the 'Sizilien' Division. These included most of 115 Panzergrenadier Regiment and parts of the artillery, Panzerjäger,



engineer and signals battalions. 104 Panzergrenadier Regiment, which had gone to 21 Panzer Division earlier in the North African campaign, also rejoined, and the division absorbed the survivors from 129 Panzergrenadier Regiment, whose parent division, 22 Panzer, had been destroyed in Russia.

Now commanded by Generalleutnant Eberhard Rodt, the 'rump' division helped stem the Allied

invasion of Sicily in July before being shipped to Italy where, finally re-designated 15 Panzergrenadier Division, it played another major role in resisting the Allied landings at Salerno. (By coincidence, from this point onwards, 15 Panzergrenadier shared all its battles with 3 Panzergrenadier Division, which had a similarly mixed origin.)

Despite all it had been through, the 15th's fighting



**A PzKpfw IV of Oberst Wolfgang Maucke's 115 Regiment, 15 Panzergrenadier Division, knocked out during the attack against the 502nd Parachute Infantry Regiment at Champs, northwest of Bastogne, on Christmas Day. (U.S. Army)**

spirit was undiminished and it won what the U.S. Army would have called a 'unit citation' from the CO of XIV Panzer Korps, General Fridolin von Senger und Etterlin. After the Allies broke out of the beachhead and advanced on Naples and Rome, 15 Panzergrenadier Division also helped significantly in the defence of Cassino. Once that position had been outflanked by the further landings at Anzio, the division retreated from Rome to the 'Gothic Line'.

In September it was sent to southern France to help repel the latest Allied invasion in the Mediterranean, that of Lieutenant-General Alexander Patch's Seventh Army between Hyères and Cannes. Alongside French troops, this was heading northward to link up with Patton's Third Army heading southeast from Normandy. Split into 'penny packets', 15 Panzergrenadier Division was unable to do anything to prevent the two American forces uniting at Dijon on 11 September, and was taken out of the line for a well deserved rest and refit.

After rehabilitation, and temporarily commanded by the CO of 33 Artillerie Regiment, Oberst Karl-Theodor Simon, the division fought during November as part of Fifteenth Armee around Aachen, Geilenkirchen and in the Peel Marshes in Holland, before being reassigned to XLVII Panzer Korps for the siege of Bastogne. Its commander now was Oberst Hans-Joachim Deckert (whose background has unfortunately eluded research) until the division was reassigned to LIII Korps of Seventh Armee after the failure to capture Bastogne. By this time, however, Deckert had been replaced by Oberst Wolfgang Maucke, up to that point CO of 115 Panzergrenadier Regiment and the leader of the Kampfgruppe that had inflicted more damage than the remainder of the division, despite its own heavy casualties.

After slowly retreating east of the river Our, the division was pulled back through Kleve and fought alongside 116 Panzer Division on the line of the Waal against Montgomery's British and Canadian forces advancing towards the 'hook' of the Rhein. Although powerless to stop the relentless Allied onslaught, the 15th managed to escape the fate of so many other divisions in the Ruhr pocket once the Allies were across the Rhein, and was still conducting a fighting withdrawal when the surrender was announced.

# XLVII PANZER KORPS' BATTLES

## II/3 Panzer and II/304 Panzergrenadier Regiments

### Clervaux – December 16–18

**B**ecause he was such a 'new boy', Oberst Meinrad von Lauchert had no real responsibility for the first phase of 2 Panzer Division's operations, which had been dictated prior to his arrival by von Lüttwitz, the division's former CO who obviously knew the officers and the men's capabilities well. The division was placed on the right of XLVII Panzer Korps' front, making its initial assault through the West Wall and over the river Our at Dasburg. Its first priority was to capture the bridge over the river Clerf at Clervaux before advancing on Bastogne.

Because the division's tanks and other AFVs could not cross the Our until a bridge had been built for them, the division's attack was spearheaded by the 80-strong assault companies of 38 Panzer Pionier Bataillon and II/304 Panzergrenadier Regiment. Crossing the river in rubber assault boats before the

Korps' artillery started its bombardment at 0530 hrs, the men threaded their way through the minefield on the west bank and by 0800 hrs had reached Marnach. The village was defended by Company B of Lieutenant-Colonel Donald Paul's 1st Battalion, 110th Infantry Regiment, and a platoon of M36s from the 630th Tank Destroyer Battalion (part of VIII Corps' reserve). They were flanked on the left by Company A at Heinerscheid and Company K of the 3rd Battalion on their right at Hosingen, while Colonel Hurley Fuller had the 110th's regimental command post behind them in Clervaux itself. Companies C and D of I/110th were in reserve at Munshausen.

Company B was well dug in at Marnach and von Lauchert's assault companies were unable to pierce their perimeter, but they infiltrated the woods north and south, heading for their primary objective, Clervaux. Behind them, engineers laboured to complete bridges over the Our for 2 and (130) Panzer Divisions. In the middle of the morning Colonel Paul ordered Company C to counter-attack at Marnach, but the grenadiers fiercely resisted this threat to their flank and forced the GIs to go to ground in the woods. A small patrol despatched by Company A from Heinerscheid also ran into trouble and was unable to make contact with Company B.

While von Lüttwitz was exhorting his Korps' engineers on to even greater efforts, the commander of the U.S. 28th Infantry Division, Major-General Norman Cota, had analysed the situation in the light of the confused reports which reached his headquarters

**After the battle for Clervaux, a couple of grenadiers examine the hole made in the side of a 707th Tank Battalion Sherman by one of 3 Panzer Regiment's PzKpfw IVs. (U.S. Army)**



**Because of his inexperience in top command, von Lauchert relied heavily on his regimental commanders to use their own initiative. By a mixture of sidestepping and fiercely resisting American counter-attacks, they won the vital bridge at Clervaux.**

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| pages 35-38,66-67,84-85 | 86-89 | 39-40 | 41-42 | 68-69 | 70-71 | 43-44 | 51-52 | 47-50,72-73 | 45-46,53-54 |       |       | 55-56,94-95 |



Clip from a captured German newsreel showing some of the damage in Clervaux the day after the battle. Barely distinguishable in the drifting smoke, a Sherman from the 28th Infantry Division's attached 707th Tank Battalion has been flipped completely on its back, probably by German pioneers clearing the road for 2 Panzer Division's advance. (U.S. National Archives)



in Wiltz, and realised that the main threat lay in the 110th Regiment sector. However, his only reserves were II/110th at Donnange, halfway back to Bastogne, and the 707th Tank Battalion. Despite Fuller's pleas, Cota refused to release II/110th, but did send Company A of the 707th to Clervaux. One platoon went to Clervaux itself, one rolled into Marnach to bolster Company B's defence and the third picked up Company C and returned with it to Munshausen. As elsewhere in the early stages of the battle, the American reluctance to use armour in sufficient strength to be effective worked to the German advantage, and by early evening von Lauchert's grenadiers had finally overrun the Marnach garrison.

At about the same time, engineers completed the bridge at Dasburg and the PzKpfw IVs of II/3 Panzer Regiment led the way through Marnach toward Clervaux. They were in the nick of time to forestall a counter-attack which General Cota had ordered for dawn on 17 December, believing there was still some hope for Company B in Marnach. He brought the light M5s of Company D, 707th Tank Battalion, down from Weiswampach to attack south through Heinerscheid; he ordered the platoon of M4s still in Munshausen to attack north; and at last he released II/110th from reserve, sending Companies E and F to attack east through Clervaux but retaining Company G to

reinforce the defence of Wiltz.

Von Lauchert's grenadiers and the newly arrived PzKpfw IVs and StuGs made short work of the counter-attack. The light tanks, forced by the terrain to advance in column down the Heinerscheid road, were shot to pieces, losing eleven of their number in as many minutes. The survivors fell back on Urspelt and Heinerscheid, losing two more M5s later in the day. The two 2nd Battalion infantry companies advancing up the steep slopes east of Clervaux made no impression and had to fall back to Reuler after advancing a mere 1,000 yards. The platoon of M4s from Munshausen did reach Marnach only to find the village totally deserted, and returned the way they had come. However, Cota had one last shot in his locker – VIII Corps' commander Troy Middleton sent Company B of the 9th Armored Division's 2nd Tank Battalion to reinforce the 110th, but again the M4s' effectiveness was dissipated by sending one platoon to Heinerscheid. By this time von Lauchert's grenadiers were into the southern edge of Clervaux and his tanks were streaming down the winding road into the town. The last American counter-attack failed with heavy losses and the survivors of I/110th fell back behind the river Clerf, leaving just a tiny rearguard in the château in Clervaux itself who held out until noon on 18 December when they ran out of ammunition.

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| pages 35-38,66-67,84-85 | 86-89 | 39-40 | 41-42 | 68-69 | 70-71 | 43-44 | 51-52 | 47-50,72-73 | 45-46,53-54 |       |       | 55-56,94-95 |

# XLVII PANZER KORPS' BATTLES

## II/77 and I/78 Volksgrenadier Regiments

### Hosingen – December 16–18

**W**hile 2 Panzer Division was fighting its way west from Dasburg through I/110th Infantry Regiment, it was the task of Oberst Heinz Kokott's 26 Volksgrenadier Division to clear the roads west of Gemünd for the tanks of Generalleutnant Fritz Bayerlein's Panzer Lehr. This brought it up against Major Harold Milton's 3rd Battalion of the 110th Infantry Regiment whose Company K, together with Company B from the 28th Infantry Division's 103rd Engineer Combat Battalion, was in Hosingen. This little village was Kokott's principal first objective because it gave access to a relatively good road west toward Bastogne, over the river Clerf at Drauffelt, whereas the second road in his sector, through Wahlhausen, Holzthum and Eschweiler, was more tortuous and less suited to armour. The latter also, although Kokott was unaware of the fact, impinged on General Norman Cota's 28th Infantry Division

headquarters in Wiltz.

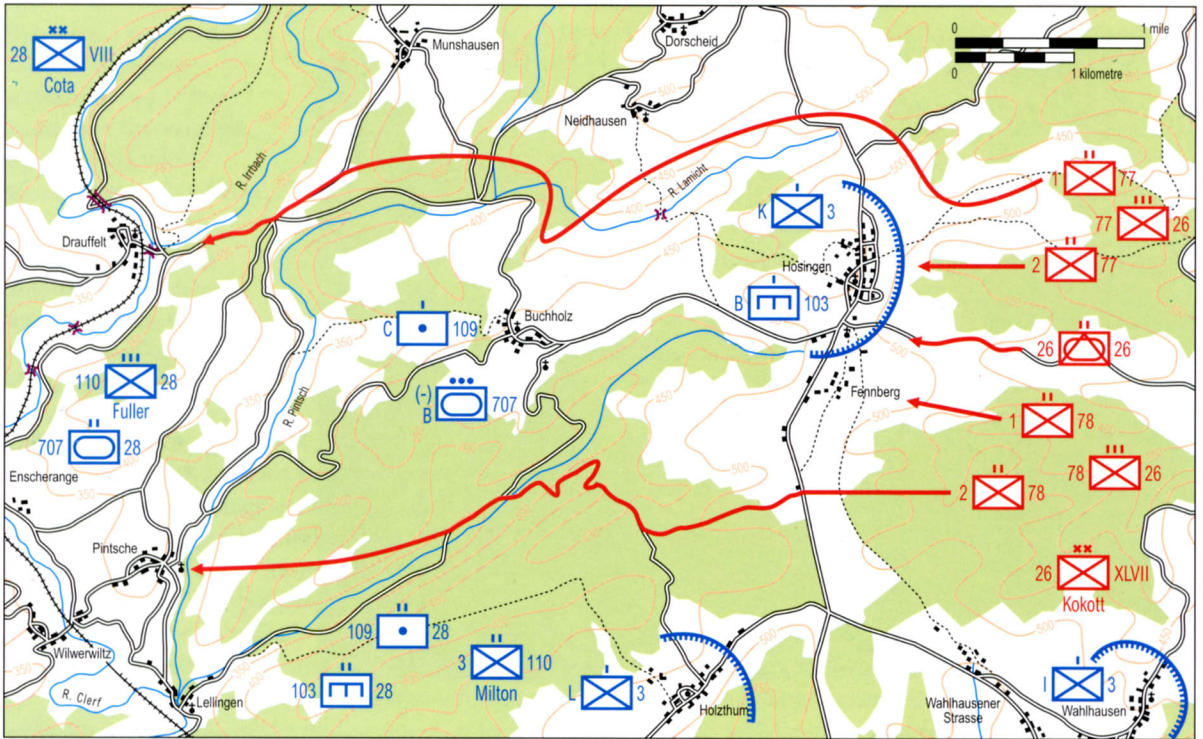
Kokott's 78 Grenadier Regiment screened the front of his line along the east bank of the river Our and remained in situ during the night of 15/16 December while the assault companies of 77 Grenadier Regiment filtered through its ranks at 0300 hrs with their inflatable boats. They led the attack along the Hosingen route while 39 Füsilier Grenadier Regiment advanced along the more southerly road. The 78th now, therefore, formed the division's reserve.

General von Lüttwitz's orders required 26 Volksgrenadier Division to establish bridgeheads across the river Clerf by nightfall on the 16th, so any enemy resistance had either to be subdued quickly, or bypassed. As it turned out, the biggest stumbling block turned out to be the two companies of infantry and engineers in Hosingen. Further south, the villages of Holzthum and Consthum were defended against

**Volksgrenadier with a Panzerfaust. Developed in 1942 in response to a demand from front-line troops for a more effective weapon than the anti-tank rifles then in use, the weapon had a range of less than 50 yards but its hollow charge warhead could penetrate sloped armour over five inches thick – more than enough to write 'finis' to any Allied tank. (U.S. Army)**



| 16/12/1944                    | 17/12 | 18/12 | 19/12 | 20/12 | 21/12 | 22/12 | 23/12 | 24/12       | 25/12       | 26/12 | 28/12 | 30/12       |
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**The unexpected resistance by a mere two companies of American infantry at Hosingen was only finally overcome after a 48-hour battle, and Kokott later acknowledged the determination of the defenders.**

39 Füsilier Grenadier Regiment by III/110th's Companies L and M, while Weiler and Hoscheid, defended respectively by Company I and the American regiment's 14th (anti-tank) Company, were objectives for 5 Fallschirm Division from General Baptist Kniess' LXXXV Korps of Seventh Arme.

At Hosingen, commanding a crossroads on top of 'Skyline Drive', 77 Grenadier Regiment came under heavy fire and the leading 1st Battalion veered north to bypass the village and continue on toward Drauffelt as per orders. The 2nd Battalion, however, launched a determined assault which broke into the eastern edge of the houses, but there the attack stalled. The defenders were simply too well dug in to be shifted easily, and the close-range battle, with dozens of individual hand-to-hand encounters, swayed backwards and forwards all day. In the evening, four Shermans arrived from the 707th Tank Battalion, but failed to bring any rifle ammunition with them.

I/77, meanwhile, had come under heavy fire from

105mm guns of the 109th Field Artillery Battalion and a platoon of tanks at Buchholz and again had to move cross-country toward Drauffelt, where grenadiers finally captured the bridge over the Clerf early on the 17th. The constant delays imposed by the defenders in the handful of villages along Skyline Drive forced Kokott to unleash his reserve 78 Grenadier Regiment, whose 2nd Battalion advanced cross-country in between Hosingen and Holzthum to seize a second river crossing at Wilwerwiltz. The 1st Battalion was thrown into the struggle for Hosingen, supported by a few Jagdpanzer 38(t)s from the Panzerjäger Abteilung. The Hetzers were held at bay by the platoon of Shermans, but I/78 Grenadier Regiment now brought flamethrowers into play, and the village was soon in flames.

Despite the far superior numerical strength of the attackers, Company K continued to hold on throughout the 17th, but ammunition was now running very low indeed and the end of the unequal struggle was in sight. Reduced to a few hand grenades and the bayonets on their rifles, the survivors finally surrendered early on the morning of the 18th. It was, however, a Pyrrhic victory, for even now 10th Armored Division tanks were rolling into Bastogne.

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# XLVII PANZER KORPS' BATTLES

## 39 Füsilier Grenadier Regiment

### Holzthum/Consthum – December 16–18

Even though the American defence of the villages on 'Skyline Drive' in between the rivers Our and Clerf ultimately put Oberst Heinz Kokott's westward advance a day behind schedule, it would probably have been delayed even further if he had not sent his assault companies forward well before XLVII Korps' artillery barrage commenced at 0530 hrs. As it was, in the southern sector of his attack, Oberstleutnant Kaufmann's 39 Füsilier Grenadier Regiment reached Holzthum before anyone in the U.S. 28th Infantry Division sector was even aware an attack was in progress. At that, it was not until about 0615 hrs that Colonel Hurley Fuller, CO of the 110th Regiment, received a report from Company L of his 3rd Battalion in Holzthum – five miles (8 km) west of the Our – that German infantry were on top of them, and it was not for nearly another three hours that the divisional commander, Norman Cota, got the same news.

During the course of the morning of 16 December

Kaufmann's Füsiliers made five separate attacks against Company L at Holzthum and Company M at Consthum. The latter village also housed Major Harold Milton's III/110th battalion command post, and when Kaufmann's men finally seized it at about midday, he used his headquarters company to counter-attack and throw them out again. Shortly afterwards, a platoon of M4s from the 707th Tank Battalion arrived although, in the confusion, one of the tanks shot at and destroyed a battalion anti-tank gun outside Holzthum.

Meanwhile, Kaufmann's Füsiliers were suffering badly from artillery fire directed by an observation post on the ridge west of Wahlhausen and, against orders, some of them joined 5 Fallschirm Division troops in their attack against Wahlhausen and Weiler, which

**The Hetzer equipped one company of the Panzerjäger Abteilungen in most Volksgrenadier divisions. Although small, it was a very effective tank destroyer, but not invulnerable to Allied air strikes. (U.S. Signal Corps)**



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# XLVII PANZER KORPS' BATTLES

## Kampfgruppe 'von Böhm'

### Bastogne Roadblocks – December 18–20

**W**hile Panzer Lehr was still struggling toward the Clerf on 18 December, 2 Panzer Division was rolling west across the river through Clervaux, past the smoke-blackened shell of the château, which had housed the last pocket of I/110th Infantry Regiment's resistance. In the van was the reinforced Aufklärungs Abteilung commanded by Hauptmann von Böhm. Taking the road which skirts to the north of Donnange and Lullange, the Kampfgruppe ran into the first of the Bastogne roadblocks at the Antoniushof farm road junction – a task force from CCR of 9th Armored Division commanded by Captain Lawrence Rose. Advancing under cover of a smoke screen, von Böhm's company of PzKpfw IVs knocked out seven M4s and forced the accompanying American infantry to retire. The next opposition lay at Baraque d'Allerborn, where a second task force – also

**Kampfgruppe 'von Böhm' advances north of Bastogne. Visible are a Puma, SdKfz 233 and one of the battlegroup's attached Panthers. (U.S. Signal Corps)**



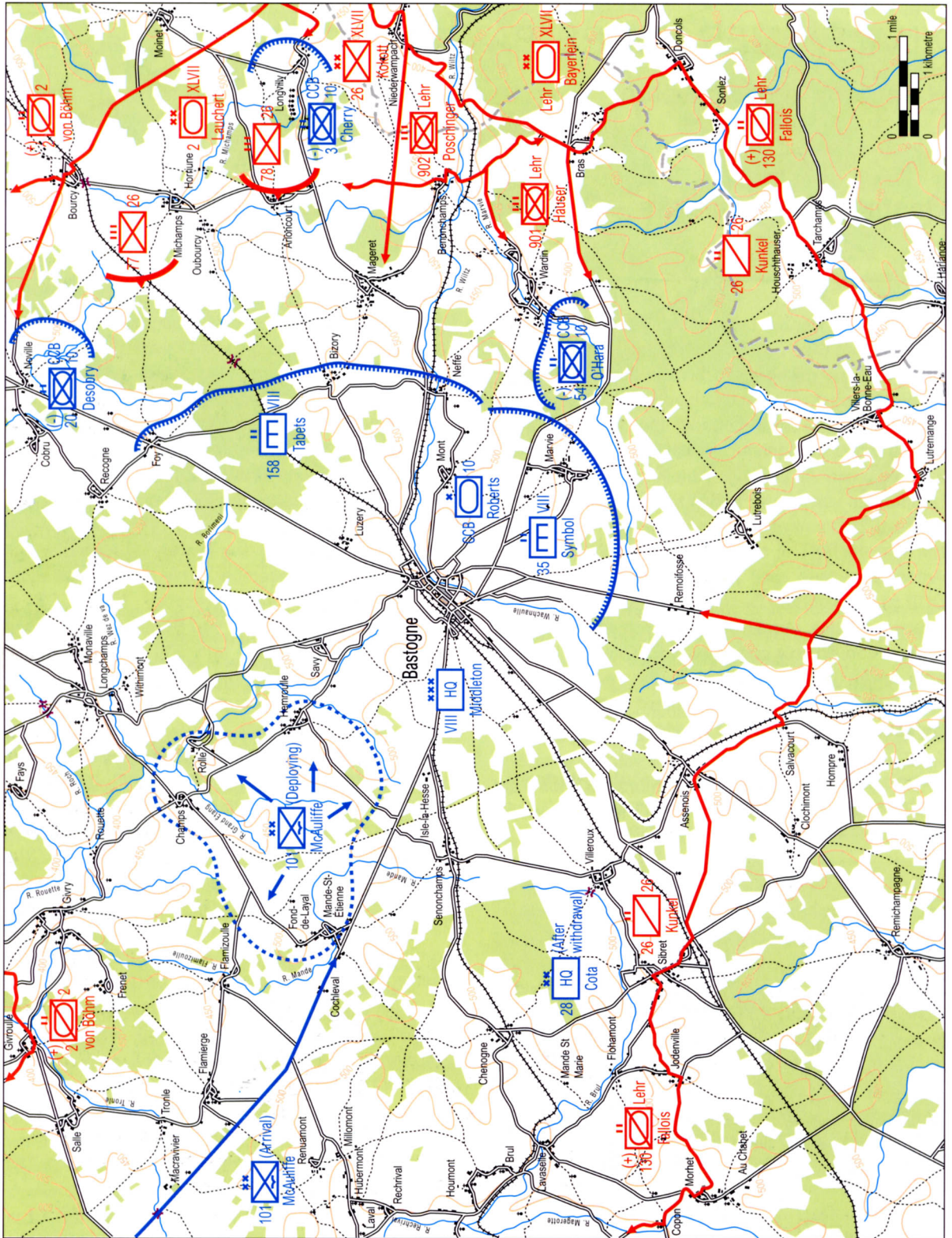
from CCR/9th – was waiting. Kampfgruppe 'von Böhm' attacked here at dusk, and within 15 minutes destroyed 24 Shermans and killed the task force commander, Lieutenant-Colonel Ralph Harper.

From here, von Böhm headed northwest toward Bourcy, cutting behind the third CCR/9th task force led by Lieutenant-Colonel Robert Booth, which was forced north toward Houffalize and was later ambushed and almost wiped out near Hardigny. The Kampfgruppe passed through Bourcy and reached Noville at about 0400 hrs on 19 December. This was rather more strongly held by Team 'Desobry' from CCB of 10th Armored Division and von Böhm wisely decided to leave it for 3 Panzer and 304 Panzergrenadier Regiments, which were only a few hours behind: his task was to scout and secure a crossing over the river Ourthe further to the west.

After passing Bertogne, and now heading slightly south of west, Kampfgruppe 'von Böhm' had its last encounter with a Bastogne roadblock at Herbaimont on 20 December, which was manned by an outpost of the 327th Glider Infantry Regiment, 101st Airborne Division. The outnumbered paras fell back east toward Flamierge and von Böhm pressed on to Ortheuville. Here, miraculously, he found a Bailey bridge over the river Ourthe still intact, but his leading Panzer was disabled by a shot from a tank destroyer, blocking it. However, von Böhm had accomplished his mission and when the following Kampfgruppe 'von Cochenhausen' arrived at about 2200 hrs, the defenders pulled back to St Hubert.

**Page 40: While the 101st Airborne Division was still beginning to deploy on 19 December, Bastogne lay wide open apart from a thin line of engineers and the roadblocks established by teams 'Desobry', 'Cherry' and 'O'Hara'.**

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# XLVII PANZER KORPS' BATTLES

## Kampfgruppen 'von Fallois' and '901'

### Wardin/Marvie – December 19–23

**A**fter helping Kokott's Volksgrenadiers in their final assault against Holzthum, Oberst Paul von Hauser's 'Kampfgruppe 901' followed the rest of Panzer Lehr, which had already crossed the Clerf at Drauffelt. The division's reinforced Aufklärungs Abteilung, Kampfgruppe 'von Fallois', and the following 'Kampfgruppe 902', had had a brief skirmish at Eschweiler, just to the north of Wiltz, but Bayerlein left the subjugation of this thorn in the division's flank to the following Volksgrenadiers and Fallschirmjäger.

From Eschweiler, Major Gerd von Fallois' Kampfgruppe – which principally comprised his own 130 Panzer Aufklärungs Abteilung plus the PzKpfw IVs of 8 Kompanie, II/130 Panzer Regiment – headed west to Oberwampach and Niederwampach, closely followed by Oberstleutnant Joachim von Poschinger's 'Kampfgruppe 902'. This consisted of 902 Panzergrenadier Regiment plus the Panthers of 5 and 7 Kompanien, II/130 Panzer Regiment, and the towed guns of I/130 Panzer Artillerie Regiment. As they reached the villages the men could see the flashes and hear the sound of gunfire to their north, where Kampfgruppe 'von Böhm' was dealing with Task Force 'Harper' at Baraque d'Allerborn.

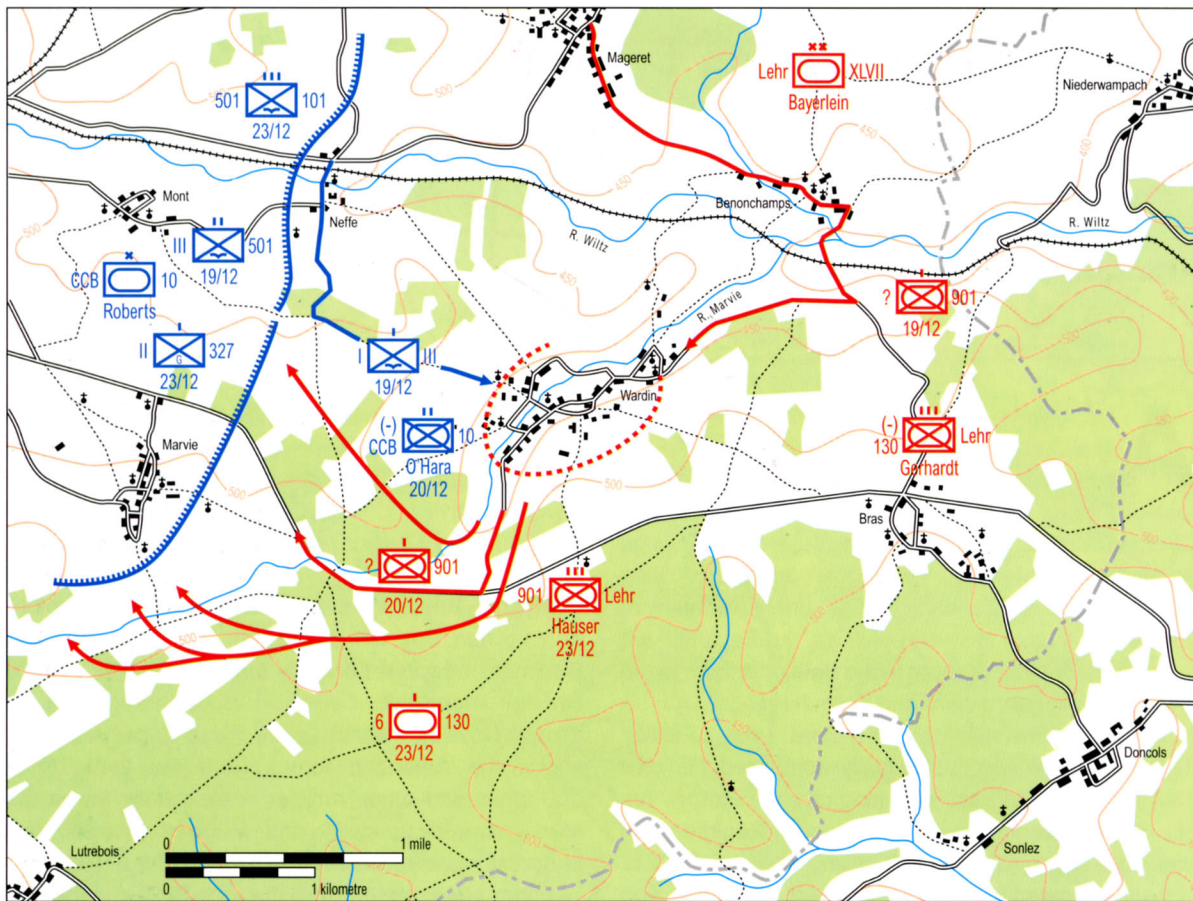
Reaching Mageret during the night of 18/19 December, Bayerlein learnt that a strong American tank detachment had just passed through toward Longvilly. This was Team 'Cherry' from CCB of 10th Armored Division, which had been sent to help those elements of CCR/9th still to the east of Bastogne. Bayerlein could not leave enemy armour behind him so, while Kokott's 77 Volksgrenadier Regiment attacked Longvilly from the east (2 Panzer Division meanwhile being en route through Bourcy toward Noville), Panzer Lehr's Panzerjäger Abteilung struck the American forces from the flank. Over 200 tanks and other vehicles were destroyed on the road between Longvilly and Mageret and the few survivors rejoined the Bastogne perimeter at Bizory.

Other elements of 'Kampfgruppe 902', meanwhile, had attacked Lieutenant-Colonel Henry Cherry's command post at Neffe, driving his remaining men back to Mont. However, the Bastogne defences, which a day earlier had lain wide open, were now being rapidly reinforced as the 101st Airborne Division deployed. Deciding against a frontal assault, Bayerlein sent Kampfgruppe 'von Fallois' southwest; one company drove a company of American paratroops out



**Just outside Wardin, an M4 from Team 'O'Hara' of 10th Armored Division's CCB lies abandoned two years after its battle with Panzer Lehr. Many derelict tanks still form centrepieces for tourists in Ardennes villages. (U.S. Signal Corps)**

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After a probing attack by a single Kompanie drove a company of the 501st Parachute Infantry Regiment out of Wardin on 19 December, but was then repulsed outside Marvie, Hauser threw the whole regiment in on the 23rd.

of Wardin while the main force, followed by 'Kampfgruppe 902', detoured through Bras and Doncols then west through Lutremange, Assenois and Sibret toward the river Ourthe.

Oberst Paul von Hauser's 'Kampfgruppe 901', comprising his own 901 Panzergrenadier Regiment, the PzKpfw IVs of 6 Kompanie, II/130 Panzer Regiment, and 5 Batterie of II/130 Panzer Artillerie Regiment, was now thrown against the defenders in Marvie. These comprised some of Templeton's M18s and the 30 M4s of CCB/10th's Team 'O'Hara', now reinforced by II/327th Glider Infantry Regiment. Hauser's first probe against Marvie was a disaster: a single grenadier company got half a dozen half-tracks

into the village before they were ejected, and the four PzKpfw IVs and Jagdpanzer IV in support were shot to pieces, only one tank surviving.

Hauser's next attack did not take place until 23 December, by which time the Kampfgruppe had been subordinated to Kokott's 26 Volksgrenadier Division. After shelling Marvie at 1725 hrs, 901 Panzer-grenadier Regiment launched a three-pronged assault directly at the village and either side of it. The flanking attacks were both rebuffed and 6 Kompanie's PzKpfw IVs suffered at the hands of O'Hara's M4s and Templeton's M18s. In the centre, though, the grenadiers overran one platoon of paras and got into the eastern edge of Marvie but, when dawn came on Christmas Eve, that was the whole extent of their victory. Although fighting continued until Patton's tanks broke through to Bastogne on Boxing Day, Hauser's Kampfgruppe had only managed to dent, not pierce, the American perimeter. The result was the same in the simultaneous attack on Senochamps.

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# XLVII PANZER KORPS' BATTLES

## 39 Füsilier Grenadier Regiment and Kampfgruppe 'Kunkel'

### Flamierge/Mande-St-Étienne – December 22–23

**A**s all attempts to penetrate the eastern defences of Bastogne had failed, and the surrender demand on 22 December was so tersely rejected, Fifth Panzer Armee commander Hasso von Manteuffel decided that XLVII Panzer Korps' best chance of breaking through the stubborn defences was from the west. Thus, even while 'Kampfgruppe 901' was preparing for its second assault on Marvie, he and von Lüttwitz were also studying their maps of the Champs–Senochamps–Flamierge triangle, planning a concentric assault.

By this time Heinz Kokott's 26 Volksgrenadier Division had Bastogne fairly tightly surrounded, with 39 Füsilier Grenadier Regiment and Kampfgruppe 'Kunkel' – the reinforced Aufklärungs Abteilung – controlling the southwest sector, 77 Grenadier Regiment the northwest, 78 Grenadier Regiment the northeast and 'Kampfgruppe 901' the southeast. Opposing them, respectively, were 327 Glider and 502, 506 and 501 Parachute Infantry Regiments, together with those elements of 10th Armored Division's Combat Command B and 9th Armored's CCR, which had survived the earlier battles, plus three engineer combat battalions and the remnants of 28th Infantry Division's 110th Regiment, which had managed to make it back from 'Skyline Drive'. Huddled within the western sector of the American perimeter was also a large part of VIII Corps' artillery reserve.

This makes the situation easy to visualise, but actually the battle lines were far from so clearly delineated and there were gaps in both the American and German dispositions. In fact, the U.S. official

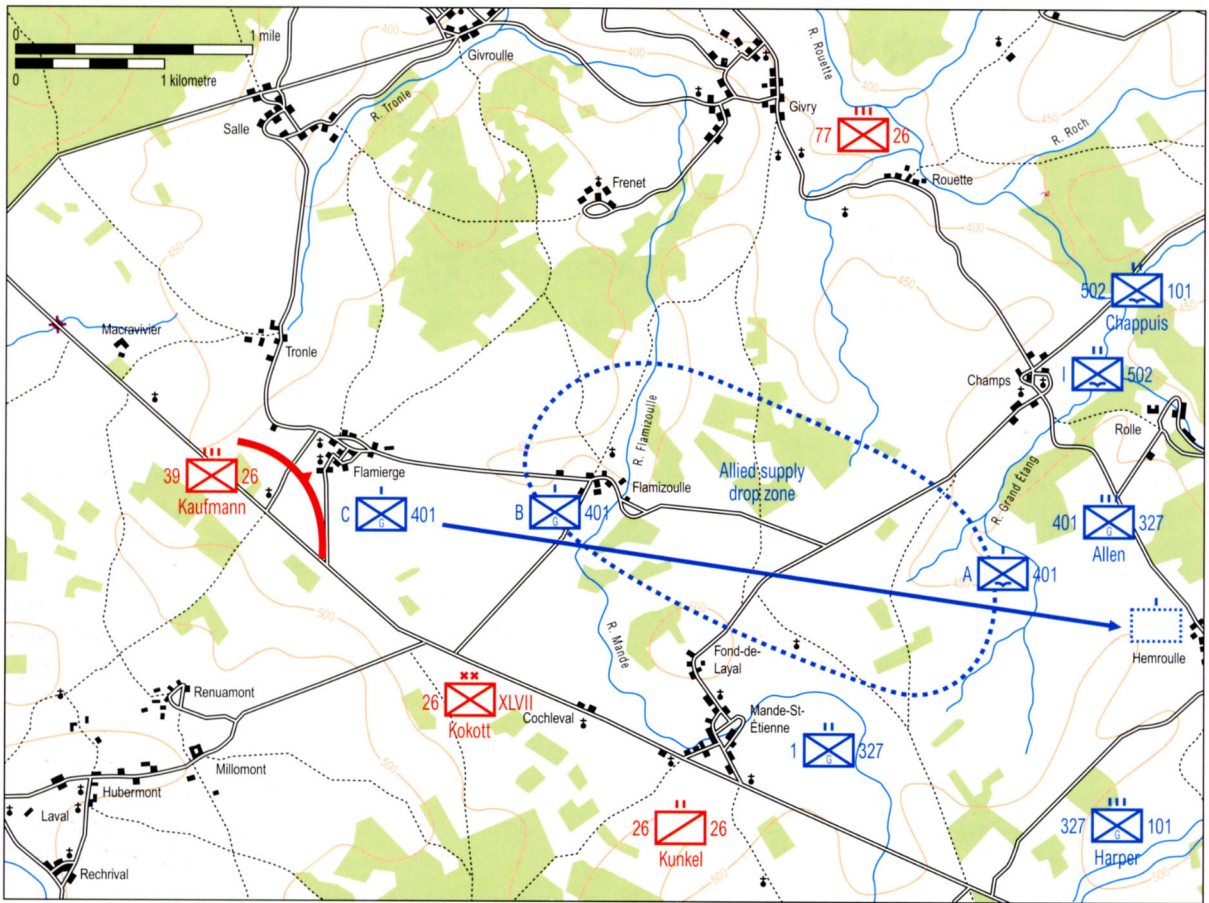
**After the initial attacks from the east had failed, General Hasso von Manteuffel decided that the best way into Bastogne was from the west, and here indeed were the greatest incursions made. (Bundesarchiv)**

history says that 'the two antagonists were mixed higgledy-piggledy and for much of the time with no certain knowledge of who was in what village or at what crossroads'. It was at least partly with this in mind that von Manteuffel decided to 'tidy up' the western sector of the battlefield over 22-23 December preparatory to a main thrust at Christmas, by which time 15 Panzergrenadier Division, newly released from Fifteenth Armee reserve, would have arrived to reinforce Kokott.

The operation began with an attack by the reinforced reconnaissance battalion commanded by Major Rolf Kunkel against the 4,000-yard line around Senochamps defended by Lieutenant-Colonel Barry Browne's 460th Armored Field Artillery Battalion from CCB/10th. His M7s were protected by 17 of the combat command's M4s but only had a scratch force of 30 infantrymen for close-in defence. However, when Kunkel launched first one and then a further three attacks during the afternoon of 22 December, his grenadiers were cut to pieces by the Shermans' high



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**Before 39 Füsilier Grenadier Regiment's successful attack at Flamierge on the evening of 23 December, the Germans were forced to watch tons of supplies being parachuted in to the Bastogne defenders.**

explosive shells and machine-guns. Then Browne was reinforced by Company C from I/327 Glider Infantry Regiment, and Kokott contented himself with using some of the Korps' artillery to bombard the static positions throughout the night.

The commander of 26 Volksgrenadier Division was in a difficult position because he was under orders to maintain the pressure, but still had to husband his already sadly depleted resources. However, he achieved limited success on the 23rd. Oberstleutnant Kaufmann's 39 Füsilier Grenadier Regiment, assembled to the west and northwest of Kampfgruppe 'Kunkel', now moved in on Flamierge, defended by Company C of I/401st Glider Infantry Regiment. (This was actually the third battalion of the 327th, but its men

preserved their earlier identity.)

Kaufmann's Füsiliers drove the paras out of the village, but were then themselves ejected by a totally unexpected counter-attack. The small American victory was only shortlived, because the battalion commander, Lieutenant-Colonel Ray Allen, had already planned that, if he was attacked in force, Company C would retire through Company B at Flamizoulle, and those of Company A west of Hemroulle, to form a new battalion reserve. Company B itself would then withdraw to align with Company A, flanked on the left by I/327th near Mande-St-Étienne and I/502nd at Champs. This manoeuvre was carried out smoothly, and 39 Füsilier Grenadier Regiment moved cautiously in pursuit. Neither Kokott nor Kaufmann were in any hurry to waste their men's lives, because they knew that tanks and armoured infantry from 15 Panzergrenadier Division were on their way. Meanwhile, Kunkel, having captured Mande-St-Étienne, was keeping up the pressure on the 420th Armored Field Artillery at Senochamps.

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# XLVII PANZER KORPS' BATTLES

## Kampfgruppe 'Maucke' and 77 Volksgrenadier Regiment

### Hemroulle/Champs – December 25

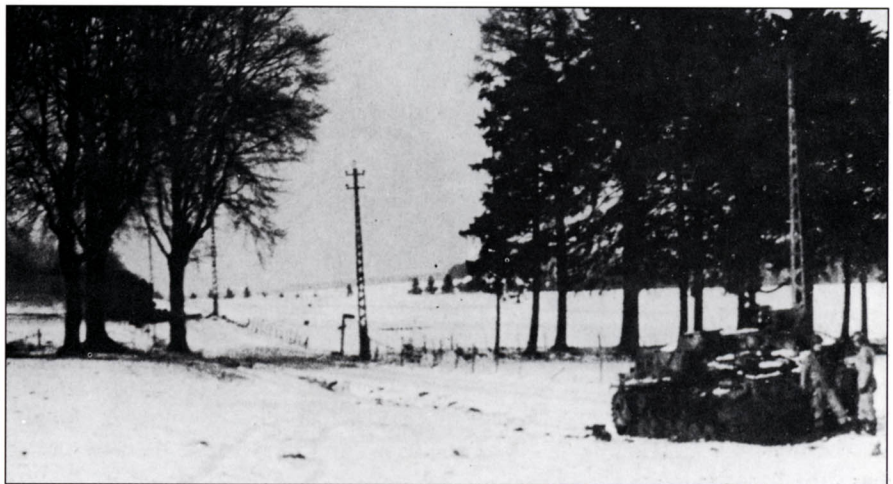
On Christmas Eve Heinz Kokott moved his forward command post to Givry in order to be better able to coordinate the three-pronged attack planned for the morrow. 15 Panzergrenadier Division had finally arrived to reinforce XLVII Panzer Korps, but only part of it had been loaned to him for the assault. Nevertheless, the Kampfgruppe assigned to him was a powerful force – Oberst Wolfgang Maucke's 115 Panzergrenadier Regiment reinforced by a company of 17 PzKpfw IVs from 115 Panzer Abteilung and a company of StuGs. Moreover, its men were all fresh, unlike those in Kokott's own 26 Volksgrenadier Division who had been marching and fighting non-stop for eight days now.

The plan for the attack was straightforward but depended on speed for success, because the terrain west of Bastogne is rolling, offering little cover if Maucke's tanks were out in the open when daylight brought the 'Jabos'. (The weather on the 23rd and 24th was clear, bringing with it waves of C-47s parachuting supplies into the Bastogne garrison, as

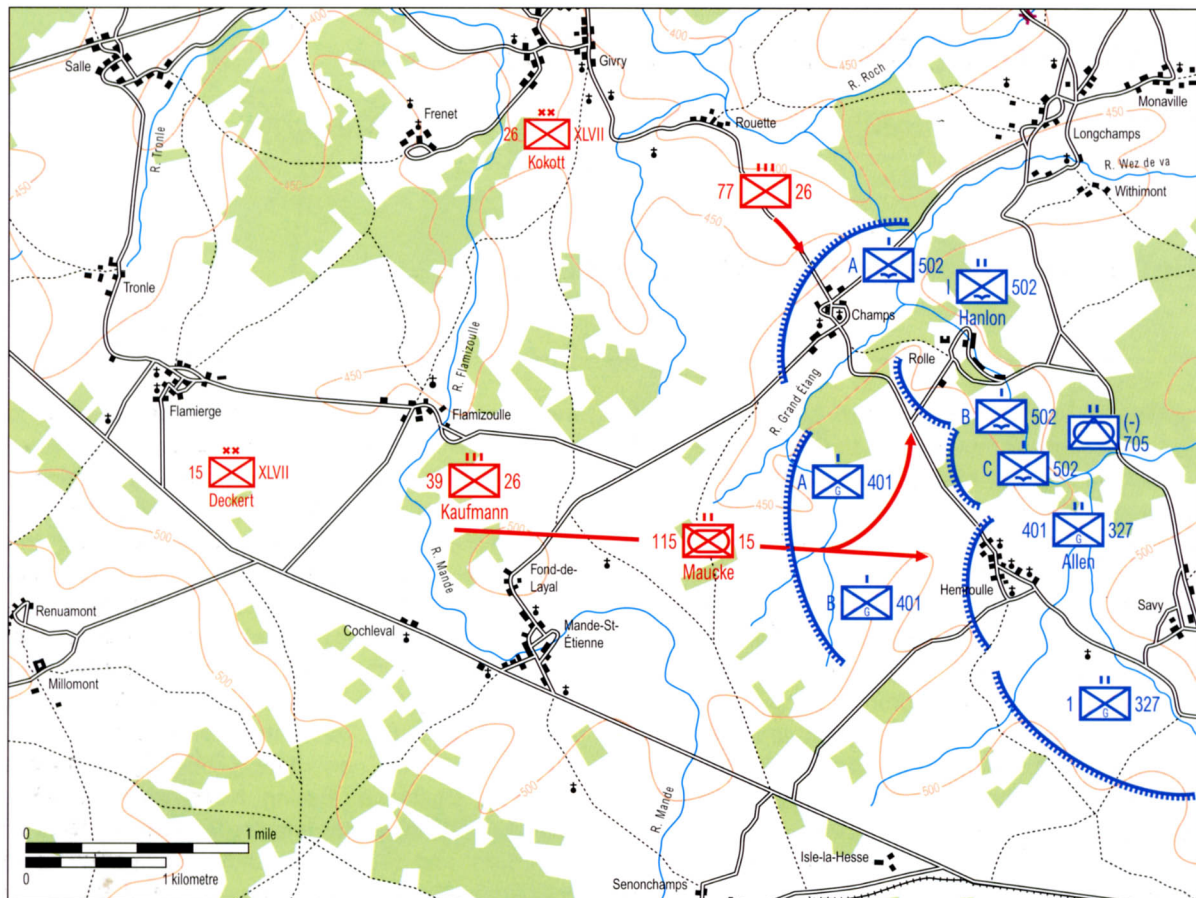
well as swarms of P-47s.) Kokott therefore planned to begin his assault at 0300 hrs on Christmas morning, aiming to have Maucke's Kampfgruppe into Bastogne by 0900. The 15 Panzergrenadier Division battlegroup had the key role and formed the centre of the assault force, striking between Flamizoulle and Mande-St-Étienne toward Hemroulle. On its left, 77 Volksgrenadier Regiment was to attack from Givry through Champs, while on its right Kampfgruppe 'Kunkel' would attack between Mande-St-Étienne and Senochamps – the obstinate 420th Armored Field Artillery Battalion now having been pulled back closer to Bastogne. Facing Kokott's forces were I/401st (III/327th) Glider Infantry Regiment in front of Hemroulle, and I/502nd Parachute Infantry Regiment at Champs and Rolle.

The attack toward Champs in the north was spearheaded by I/77 Volksgrenadier Regiment, with the second battalion echeloned behind on its left ready to exploit the anticipated breakthrough. Maucke also kept his third battalion in reserve. At 0245 hrs mortar and

**This StuG III supporting 115 Panzergrenadier Regiment's assault was destroyed only 100 yards or so from Rolle Château, which is hidden from sight behind the trees on the right. This is believed to be the deepest penetration into the Bastogne perimeter. (U.S. Signal Corps)**



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artillery fire began to rain down on Champs and Hemroulle and the grenadiers advanced in long lines under the waning moon across the snow-covered landscape.

The leading assault group of I/77 Regiment, some 50 strong, dashed into Champs at 0400 hrs and began infiltrating the woods south of Longchamps. Company A of I/502nd, fully alerted by the earlier bombardment, fought hard and the battalion commander, Major John Hanlon, brought Company B up behind them, but withheld them from the mêlée until daylight allowed them to distinguish friend from foe. Company C, with some of Templeton's tank destroyers, was in the woods between Rolle and Hemroulle.

Maucke's Kampfgruppe enjoyed momentary triumph as it broke through between Companies A and B of I/401st, many of the grenadiers in their white snow suits riding on the backs of the tanks and assault guns. They soon regretted it because a hail of smallarms fire from all directions swept them away. Maucke's tanks now split

**Although Kampfgruppe 'Maucke' broke through the 401st Glider Infantry Regiment's lines, and 77 Grenadier Regiment through the 502nd Parachute Regiment's positions at Champs, there the attack ended.**

into two groups, one heading for Hemroulle and the other for Champs. On the outskirts of Champs they destroyed two of Templeton's M18s, but two other tank destroyers hidden in the woods south of Rolle knocked out three PzKpfw IVs while bazookas accounted for two more vehicles. The last PzKpfw IV broke into Champs, but Company A had driven the grenadiers of I/77 out, and this too succumbed to bazookas. The second group of 12 PzKpfw IVs and StuGs fared no better, running into another four M18s and a wall of bazooka fire which destroyed them all. The following lines of Panzergrenadiers were dispersed by artillery fire and failed to break through I/401st's line. The attack, in short, had been a disaster which resulted in the virtual destruction of Maucke's Kampfgruppe.

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# XLVII PANZER KORPS' BATTLES

## Kampfgruppen 'von Böhm' and 'von Cochenhausen'

### Foy-Notre-Dame/Celles – December 24–26

The attack from the West Wall across the rivers Our and Clerf through the lines of the U.S. 28th Infantry Division over 16-18 December went, overall, so well that 2 Panzer Division deserved in military terms to get across the Meuse at Dinant. Its leading elements could, quite easily, have reached Bruxelles by Christmas, as Montgomery feared, and ruined at least one ball, if not the Duchess of Richmond's. But, as elsewhere throughout Operation 'Herbstnebel', just when things looked as though they were going right for the aggressors, they went wrong – in this case, horribly wrong.

The assault companies of 26 Volksgrenadier Division preceded the Panzers, as scheduled, and infiltrated the American lines west of the river Our in the pre-dawn darkness of 16 December. They were closely followed

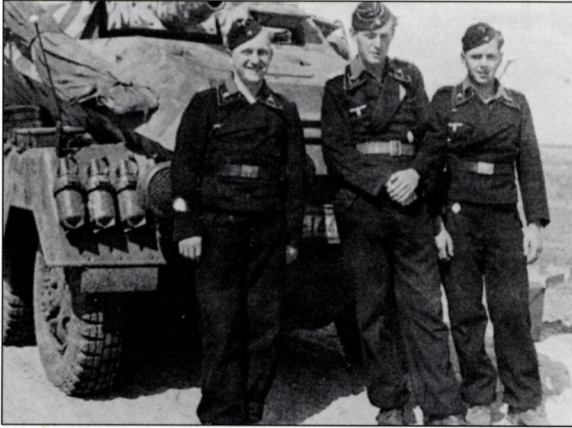
by the Pionieren of the Brückenkolonnen, who had to erect the heavy metal girders and pontoons of the Brückengerät J bridges capable of carrying 60-ton loads for Oberst Meinrad von Lauchert's tanks. The new CO of 2 Panzer Division was dissatisfied with progress and took a timesaving initiative, sending his own 38 Pionier Bataillon and a battalion of 304 Panzergrenadier Regiment across the cold water in rubber assault boats. Although hampered by minefields on the far bank, they were attacking Marnach by 0800 hrs, leaving the bridging engineers to labour in relative peace.

The bridge at Dasburg was actually completed shortly after dark on the 16th and before midnight tanks were clattering through Marnach towards Clervaux. With the odds at this time significantly in their favour, they broke through on 17 December and

PzKpfw IV of II/3 Panzer Regiment advances towards the Meuse. The crew have obliged the Kriegsberichter by putting their teddy bear mascot astride the gun barrel. (U.S. National Archives)



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**Oberleutnant Rudolf Siebert of Hauptmann von Böhm's 2 Panzer Aufklärungs Abteilung with two of the crew of his SdKfz 233 (7.5cm StuK L/24). (U.S. Signal Corps)**

followed their designated Rollbahn west towards Allerborn, skirting Bastogne to the north. Here they bumped into two of the American perimeter task forces at Antonionshof and Baraque d'Allerborn and shouldered their way through, but then turned northwest towards Bourcy. They had, inadvertently, missed a golden opportunity of overrunning the slim cordon at Longvilly and capturing Bastogne with hardly a fight, because the town's first reinforcements would not arrive until the 18th and the 101st Airborne Division not until the following day. (This parallels Peiper's lost chance to outflank Elsenborn Ridge on the northern flank of the offensive.)

Moving cross-country, the division reached Bourcy in the early hours of the morning of 19 December, brushing against another American outpost at Noville which delayed the division's main column for a day. Meanwhile, however, Hauptmann von Böhm's reinforced 2 Panzer Aufklärungs Abteilung had been sent slightly northwards to skirt Noville and scout a fast route west. The rest of the division followed as quickly as possible because von Böhm had discovered a Bailey bridge intact at Ortheuville.

When the American demolition charges failed to go off, von Böhm's tanks charged forward (he had been 'loaned' a company of Panthers), but a shot from a tank destroyer knocked out the leading vehicle and temporarily blocked the bridge. The battlegroup commander therefore pulled back to wait for reinforcements, which arrived during the night of

20/21 December. Panzergrenadiers forded the icy river and forced the defenders back towards St Hubert, but as they headed towards Tenneville on the 21st, von Lauchert's Panzers ran into the same problem which was to cripple the whole German offensive – lack of fuel. A whole day was wasted while trucks struggled to reach them.

On the 22nd, von Lauchert expanded the Ortheuville bridgehead beyond Tenneville, and Kampfgruppe 'von Böhm' reached Hargimont. By this time, however, Montgomery was rapidly redeploying Lawton Collins' VII Corps, and the 84th Infantry Division was moving into position northwest of Marche. Following standard Panzer doctrine, von Lauchert ignored the potential threat to his flank for the time being and sent Kampfgruppe 'von Böhm' on ahead again, directly west. By midday on the 23rd it had reached Buissonville and by nightfall was just outside Achêne, only half a dozen miles from the Meuse at Dinant. Even Feldmarschall von Rundstedt sent a message of congratulations, for nowhere else had the offensive achieved this much. Midnight saw von Böhm's men at the hamlet of Foy-Notre-Dame with only a tantalising four miles (6-7 km) to their goal.

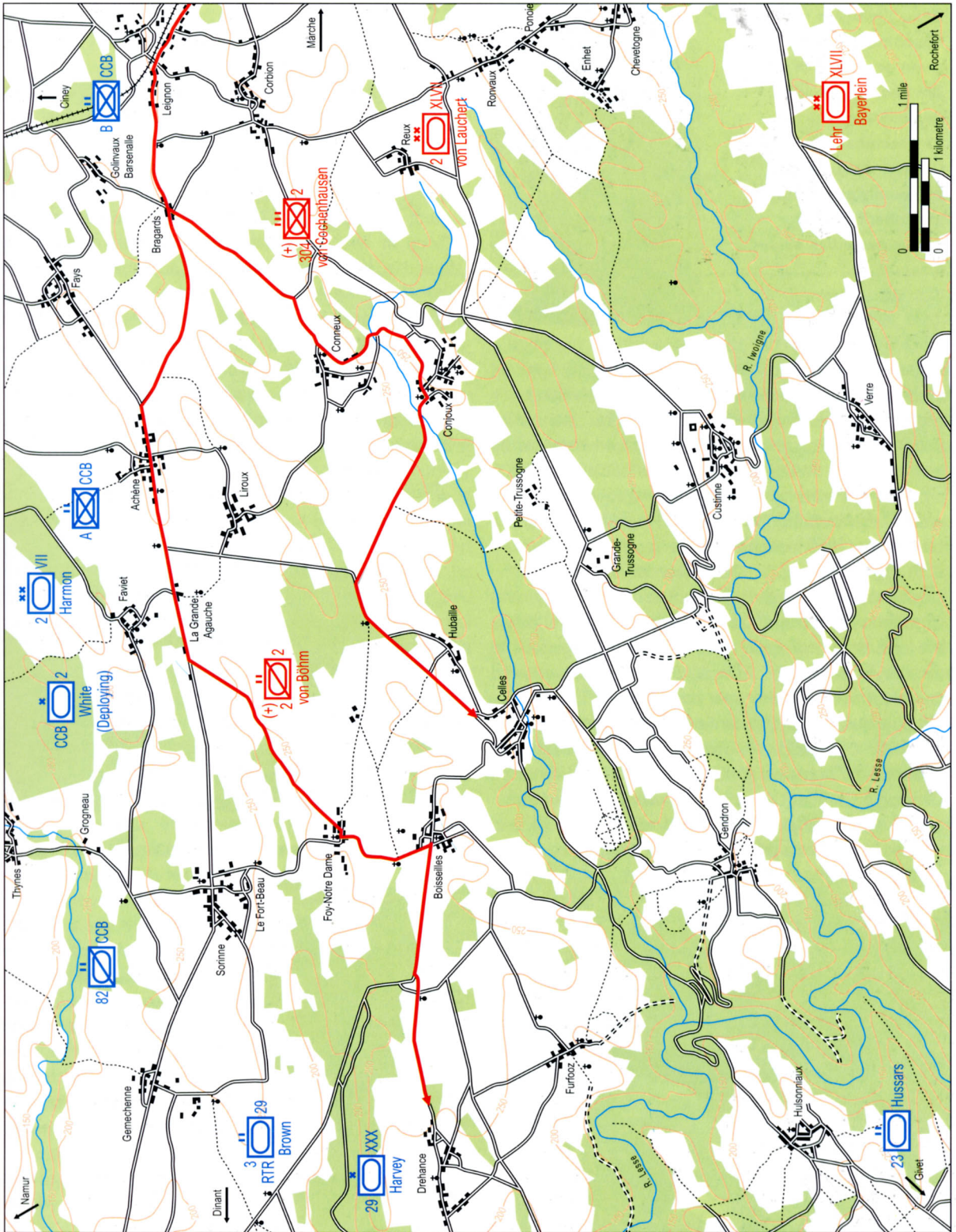
Meanwhile, during the afternoon of the 23rd von Lauchert had received a visitor in the form of his Korps commander, General von Lüttwitz. The former CO of 2 Panzer Division was not impressed by the performance of 304 Panzergrenadier Regiment and sent its Colonel packing to await court martial. A battalion commander, Major Ernst von Cochenhausen, was appointed in his place and Lüttwitz and Lauchert quickly formed a new battle-group under his leadership to reinforce von Böhm. (It may be significant that Ernst's father was Generalleutnant Friedrich von Cochenhausen, former CO of 10 Infanterie Division and now commander of Wehrkreis XIII, Nürnberg!)

The flexibility of the German Kampfgruppe system is exemplified in the speed with which this transformation was carried out. Before the afternoon was over, von Cochenhausen was on his way, following a slightly

**Foy-Notre-Dame, where Kampfgruppe 'von Böhm' was halted by tanks from the British 29th Armoured Brigade, lies only four miles east of the bridge at Dinant.**

**Kampfgruppe 'von Cochenhausen' was destroyed around Celles by a combination of the attacks by CCB of 2nd Armored Division and Allied fighter-bombers.**

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**Major Ernst von Cochenhausen was given command of 304 Panzer-grenadier Regiment on 23 December after General von Lüttwitz personally sacked the incumbent Colonel, whose name has eluded research.**  
(U.S. Signal Corps)



different route to von Böhm and having to fight off probing attacks from the U.S. 84th Infantry Division to his north. His battlegroup consisted of his own newly acquired 304 Panzergrenadier Regiment reinforced by tanks from I/3 Panzer Regiment, two battalions of self-propelled guns from 74 Panzer Artillerie Regiment, some mobile anti-aircraft guns from 273 Flak Abteilung and a company of engineers from 38 Panzer Pionier Bataillon.

By midnight on 23 December Kampfgruppe 'von Cochenhausen' was deployed around Celles and Conneux, just behind Kampfgruppe 'von Böhm', while the rest of the division halted west of Hargimont to await the arrival of 9 Panzer Division, then reported just a few miles to the east near Bande. This pause, although justified by the threat from the north posed by the U.S. 84th Infantry Division (and, although von Lauchert did not know it, the approach of 2nd Armored Division's Combat Command A), was to prove fatal.

Montgomery, given command of all Allied ground forces in the northern sector of 'the bulge', had begun deploying British forces to support the American defences, and the understrength 3rd Royal Tank Regiment was now at Dinant. During the night of 23/24 December, patrols scouted out the positions of Kampfgruppe 'von Böhm' and shellfire began to rain down around Foy-Notre-Dame. Sherman Fireflies with high-velocity 17pdr guns took a toll of the Panthers on Christmas Eve, blocking von Böhm's planned attack towards Anseremme, just to the south of Dinant. Meanwhile, Combat Command B of the U.S. 2nd Armored Division, although confused by the lack of 'hard' intelligence, was preparing to attack von Cochenhausen's battlegroup at Celles. CCA, at the same time, had sliced through Buissonville to Humain, cutting the two forward battlegroups off from the rest of

2 Panzer Division further to the east – and there was still no sign of the promised arrival of 9 Panzer Division.

From this point on things turned from bad to worse. The leading battlegroups were both low on fuel and ammunition, and with CCA behind them, no realistic hope of resupply. Then the Allies struck. Even lacking positive information about the German strength or exact positions, 2nd Armored's CCB attacked from Ciney in two prongs through Achêne and Conjoux towards Kampfgruppe 'von Cochenhausen' while 3rd Royal Tank Regiment and the 82nd Armored Reconnaissance Battalion (from 2nd Armored Division) hammered at 'von Böhm'. Overhead, fighter-bombers of the U.S. 370th and British 83rd Groups strafed, bombed and fired rockets at anything they saw. And there was still no sign of 9 Panzer Division.



**PzKpfw Vs of I/3 Panzer Regiment disabled by P-38 Lightnings outside a farm east of Foy-Notre-Dame.**  
(Imperial War Museum)

Kampfgruppe 'von Böhm' was overwhelmed on the afternoon of Christmas Day and a mere 148 survivors, including their commander, were taken prisoner. Kampfgruppe 'von Cochenhausen' was in little better state, with 2nd Armored Division tanks prowling the woods around Celles and Conjoux in search of sitting ducks. A last desperate attempt by Kampfgruppe 'Holtmeyer' to relieve the battlegroup on Boxing Day came to naught and, abandoning their vehicles and heavy equipment, some 800 men (including their commander) escaped east over the river Lommel during the night.

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# XLVII PANZER KORPS' BATTLES

## Kampfgruppe 'von Poschinger'

### Rochefort – December 23–24

**A**fter skirting round the south of Bastogne through Sibret on 22 December, Kampfgruppen 'von Fallois' and 'von Cochenhausen', leading Panzer Lehr's westward advance while 901 Panzergrenadier Regiment remained behind at Marvie, headed for the bridge over the river Ourthe at Moiricy. En route, von Fallois ran into a convoy heading east toward Bastogne and captured 68 Jeeps and trucks! After a skirmish at the bridge, the column took a side road cross-country toward St Hubert because American engineers had done their best to ruin the main highway. St Hubert fell to Kampfgruppe 'von Poschinger' that night, and von Manteuffel himself joined Panzer Lehr for the advance on the crucial road junction at Rochefort on the 23rd.

The little town's importance lies in the fact that, once across the bridge over the river L'Homme (a tributary of the Lesse), two roads lead directly to Givet and Dinant, on the Meuse. 2 Panzer Division was already approaching the river along its slightly more northerly route, and it was vital to von Manteuffel's plans that Panzer Lehr maintained close contact on

the left flank. Not unnaturally, this fact was clearly apparent to the commander of the U.S. VII Corps, Major-General Lawton Collins. Fortunately for him, Brigadier-General Alexander Bolling's 84th Infantry Division had deployed to the west of Hotton, and on the 22nd he had sent Company I of Major Gordon Bahe's III/335th Infantry Regiment into Rochefort, reinforcing it that night with Companies K and M.

Panzer Lehr's artillery had bombarded the town during the afternoon, and after dark scouts from Kampfgruppe 'von Fallois' reported no sign of the enemy. It is more likely that they never actually ventured into Rochefort itself, for the town and the hills either side of the approach road from St Hubert were now almost swarming with Americans. Apart from III/335th, the defenders now included two platoons of the regimental anti-tank company, and one platoon each from the 638th Tank Destroyer Battalion, 309th Engineer Combat Battalion and 29th (Separate) Infantry Regiment.

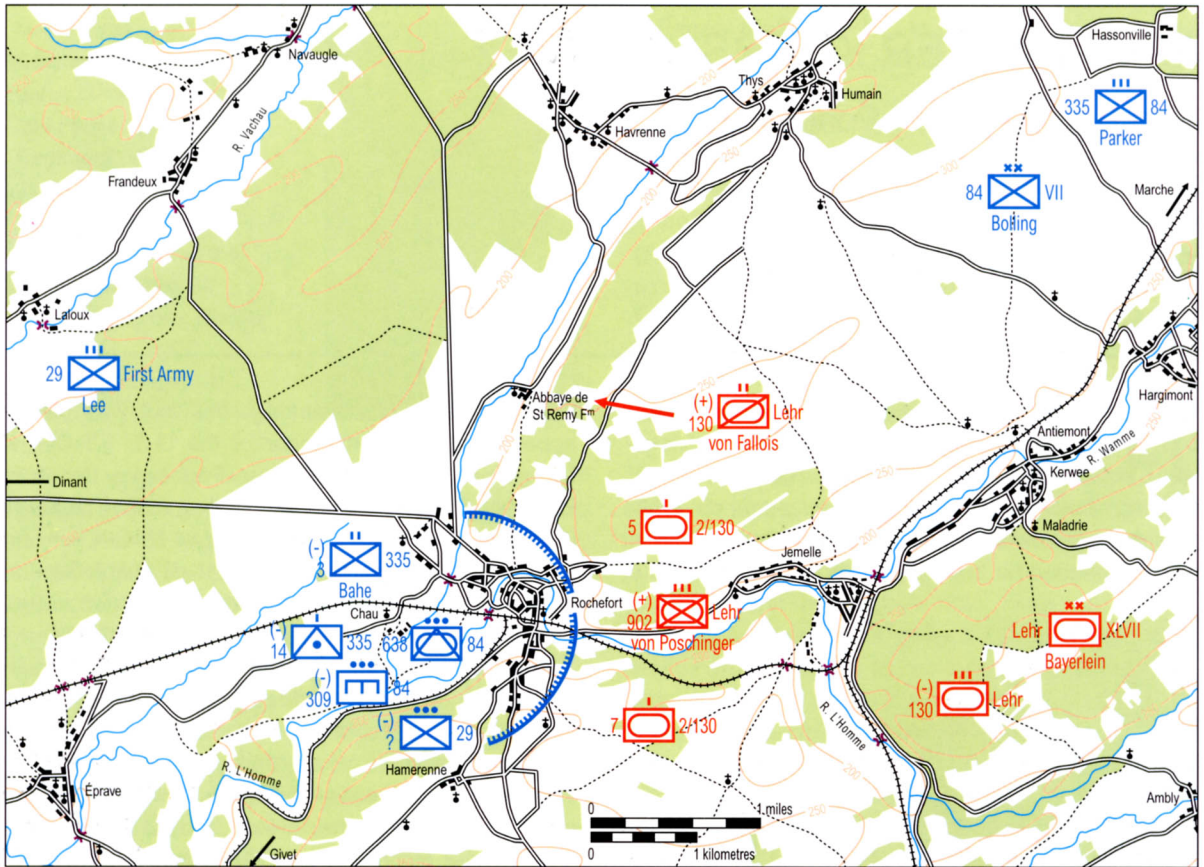
Perhaps Bayerlein's sixth sense alerted him, because when he ordered von Poschinger's

**A PzKpfw V Panther, of either 5 or 7 Kompanie, II/130 Panzer Regiment from Kampfgruppe 'von Poschinger' of the Panzer 'Lehr' Division, rattles through the centre of Rochefort on Christmas Eve. Hatches are shut, so the enemy is still around ...**

(U.S. Signal Corps)



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**If 2 Panzer Division had not been stalled at Celles, Panzer Lehr's capture of Rochefort could have got both divisions across the Meuse.**

Kampfgruppe into the attack later that night, he shouted 'Augen zu!' ('Shut your eyes'). The battlegroup's leading battalion ran straight into intense crossfire from the hills and fell back in disorder, so Bayerlein planned a more systematic assault for Christmas Eve. Sending Kampfgruppe 'von Fallois' looping north round the town to see whether they could find another bridge over the L'Homme, he brought the rest of the divisional artillery up to bombard the defences. Von Manteuffel himself, more worried about 2 Panzer Division because of the growing threat to its northern flank because 116 Panzer Division from LVIII Korps was lagging behind, left Bayerlein to capture Rochefort and headed off toward Hotton to inject some urgency into von Waldenburg since there was no sign of the promised arrival of 9 Panzer Division.

Oberstleutnant Joachim von Poschinger launched 902 Panzergrenadier Regiment and the Panthers

of 5 and 7 Kompanien, II/130 Panzer Regiment, into the attack at 0200 hrs on 24 December. Although outnumbered, Gordon Bahe was ready for him. Companies I and K were concentrated around his command post in the Hôtel du Centre with two 57mm anti-tank guns and a section of .50 machine-guns. The rest of his men sheltered behind stone walls and the tank destroyers guarded the approaches.

The battle quickly became a close-quarter affair, house to house and garden to garden, while the Panthers tackled the M18s. It was still raging after daybreak at 0900 when Bahe suddenly lost radio contact with the division headquarters in Marche. When he did manage to contact Bolling at 1300 hrs, he was told to withdraw, which his men gratefully did under cover of darkness at 1800 hrs, firing wildly in all directions as they went. Kampfgruppe 'von Poschinger' had won the day, but it was a shortlived victory for only five days later Rochefort was recaptured by the fresh 83rd Infantry Division.

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# XLVII PANZER KORPS' BATTLES

## Kampfgruppe 'Holtmeyer'

### Custinne – December 25

**D**uring Christmas Day the pleas for help from Kampfgruppe 'von Böhm', trapped in the pocket at Foy-Notre-Dame, became increasingly desperate. Oberstleutnant Rüdiger Weitz, von Lauchert's operations officer, recalled that, 'On the evening of the 24th the commander of 9 Panzer Division [Generalmajor Harald von Elverfeldt] arrived at the divisional command post. His division had been held up for 24 hours owing to lack of fuel. The arrival of the first elements of this division could not therefore be expected that evening [so] the almost insoluble question arose of how to bring help to the elements fighting in the front line.'

Oberst Meinrad von Lauchert wanted to withdraw all 2 Panzer Division's remaining forces from their commitment near Marche now that 116 Panzer Division at least had finally arrived in the vicinity, and Panzer Lehr had captured Rochefort. There was still hope for von Böhm, and Kampfgruppe 'von Cochenhausen' at Celles, if a relief attempt could be mounted quickly enough. Von Lauchert therefore planned to pull a battalion of 2 Panzergrenadier

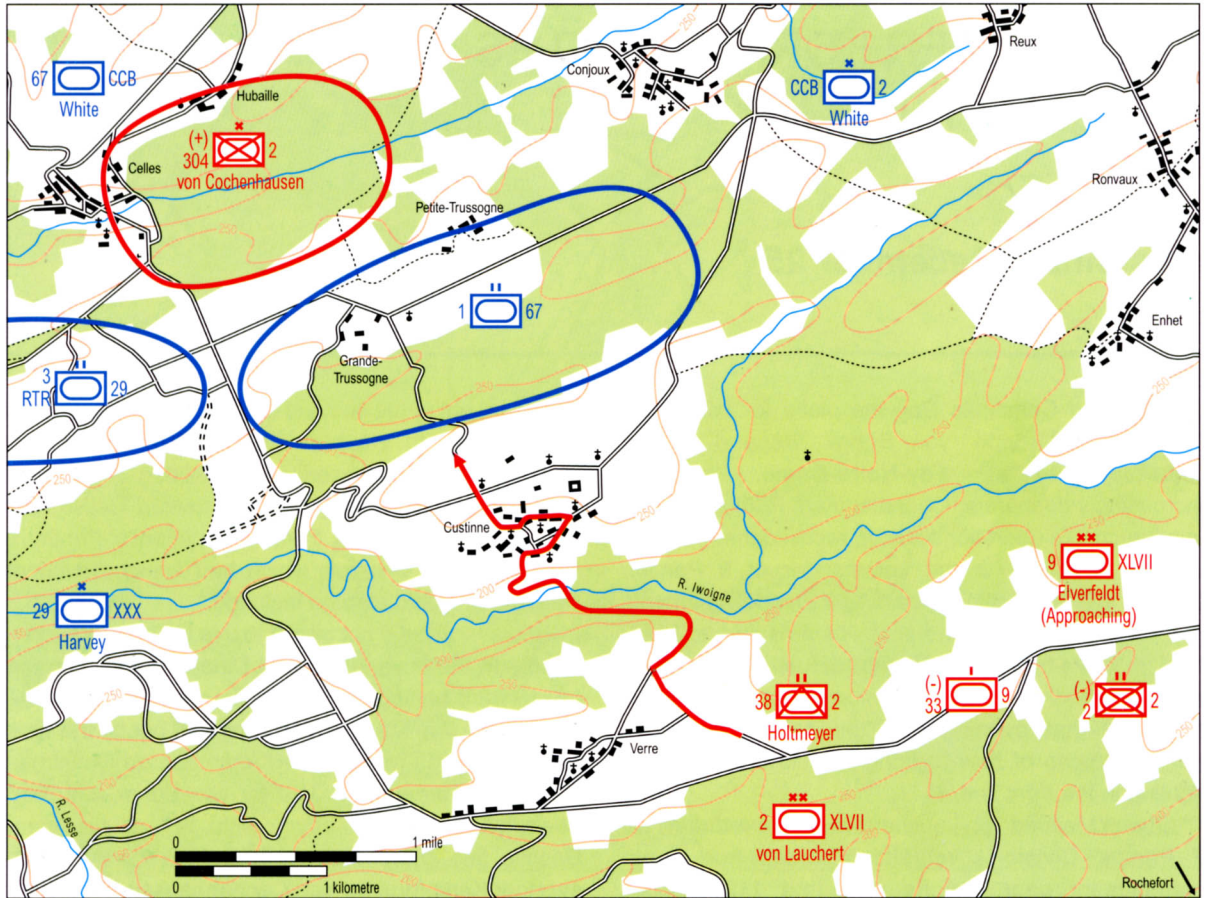
Regiment out of the line and route it through Rochefort to link up with Hauptmann Friedrich Holtmeyer's uncommitted 38 Panzerjäger Abteilung as a new Kampfgruppe to strike northwest toward Celles and Conneux. Some of 33 Panzer Regiment's Panthers from 9 Panzer Division, which had finally arrived at Hargimont, would also be included.

However, he did not intend to use Holtmeyer's force to pursue the advance toward Dinant, but to help the two forward battlegroups retire. In order to do this, he had to gain von Manteuffel's approval, but by the time permission was received mid-afternoon on Christmas Day, it was already too late for von Böhm, who had been taken prisoner along with 147 of his men. Despite this, there was still a chance for the much stronger Kampfgruppe 'von Cochenhausen'. However, Weitz continues, 'It proved difficult to pull out elements from the front and assemble them on narrow roads and in pitch darkness.' In fact, because of the presence of American forces between Hargimont and Rochefort, it took all night, and it was not until after dawn on Boxing Day that the Kampfgruppe could

**In the aftermath of battle curious American infantrymen hunt for souvenirs (?) in a Panther from Hauptmann Friedrich Holtmeyer's Kampfgruppe, which attempted to come to the relief of 2 Panzer Division's vanguard at Celles on Christmas Day. (Imperial War Museum)**



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begin advancing from Rochefort through Ciergnon toward Custinne. Just beyond this lay the densely wooded area where von Cochenhausen's tanks had been hiding all day from swarms of Allied fighter-bombers.

Von Lauchert must have known that Holtmeyer's Kampfgruppe faced an almost impossible task, advancing in daylight under the menace from the air, but the trapped men around Celles were part of his command and he was honour bound to try to save them. However, at Custinne the Kampfgruppe came up against I/67th Armored Regiment of the U.S. 2nd Armored Division. The leading Panther was disabled and Holtmeyer himself was killed. Rüdiger Weitz takes up the story again.

'In spite of strong enemy artillery fire, and even stronger armoured superiority, we came up to within 800m [880 yards] of the pocket by the afternoon. By then, however, the relief force's strength was exhausted ... Elements inside the pocket were also

**Advancing from Rochefort in daylight across relatively open ground offering little cover from Allied fighter-bombers, Holtmeyer's relief column in truth stood little chance of success.**

unable to support their comrades' attack, as they had run out of ammunition and the tanks were immobilised for lack of fuel. Stragglers from the reconnaissance battalion [Kampfgruppe 'von Böhm'] confirmed that the Foy pocket had been overpowered.'

'Air activity ... continued at a high level. Its intervention in the ground battle aggravated the division's position still further. Since the bringing forward of the division's adjacent units and the introduction of 9 Panzer Division failed to achieve what the Korps had hoped for, at about 1600 hrs the division was ordered to disengage and to withdraw to Rochefort.' In fact, the reason for this was that the relief force and, indeed, the rest of 2 Panzer Division, were themselves now in danger of being surrounded.

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# XLVII PANZER KORPS' BATTLES

## Führer Begleit Brigade and 3 Panzergrenadier Division

### Sibret – December 30

**T**he battle for Sibret, southwest of Bastogne, falls into three phases, of which the last just before the New Year was most conclusive and – to the German cause – most destructive. In fact, it marked the end of Operation 'Herbstnebel'. Except that the village fell astride Panzer Lehr's route west towards the Meuse, it had no real strategic importance at the beginning of the offensive. So, it was pure coincidence that, with his 28th Infantry Division in tatters on 'Skyline Drive', Major-General Norman Cota decided to withdraw his forward headquarters from Wiltz to Sibret.

That occurred on 18 December, but Cota's tenure of Sibret did not last long, either. Having established his new HQ there late on 19 December, he quickly found himself forced to move again. Remnants of his division assembled in the village and were organised into a scratch defence force to try to hold open the road to Neufchâteau – the new VIII Corps headquarters. This force consisted of about 200 infantry with a few M36s of the 630th Tank Destroyer Battalion and a battery of the 771st Field Artillery Battalion's howitzers.

The first attack against Sibret came at about

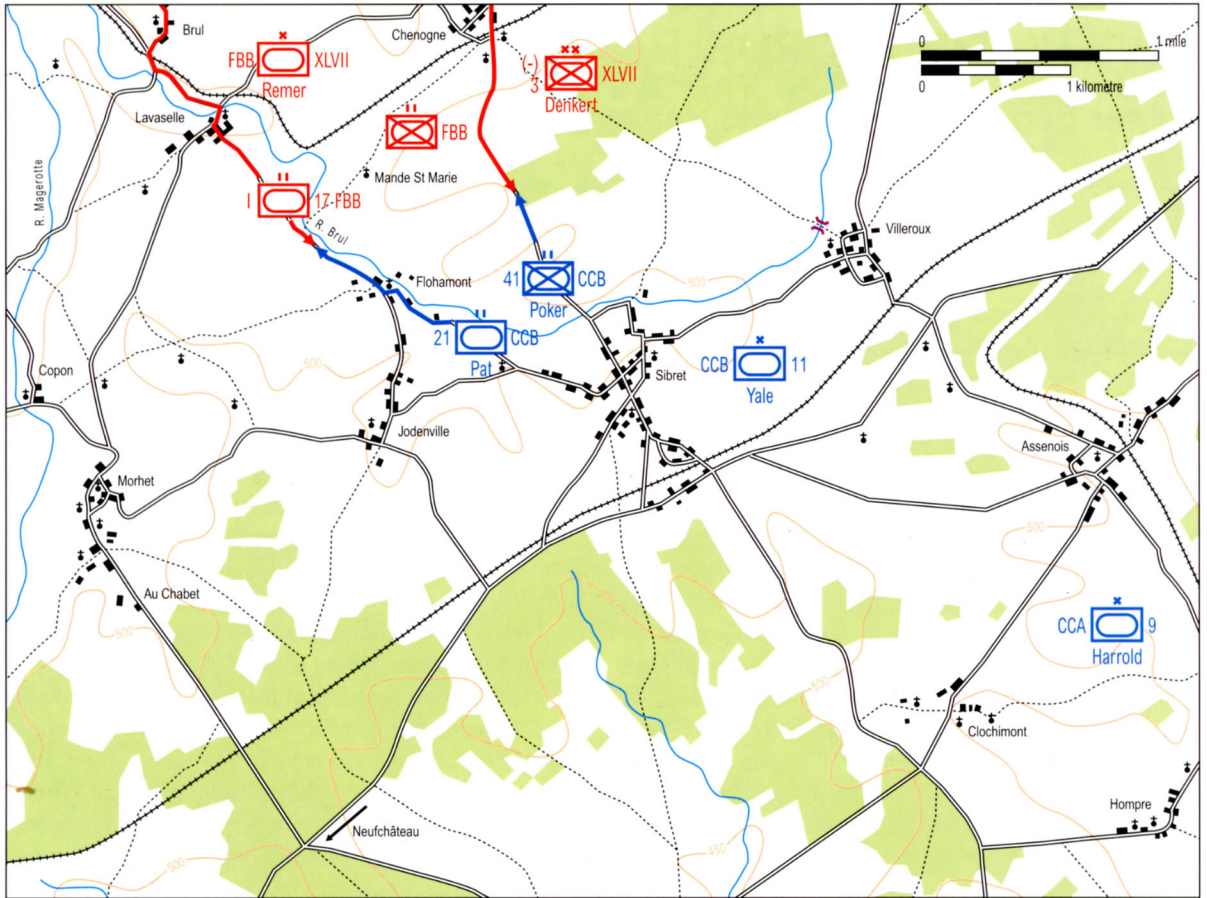
0300 hrs on 21 December. The Aufklärungs Abteilung of 26 Volksgrenadier Division commanded by Major Rolf Kunkel, accompanied by a rifle company from 5 Fallschirm Division picked up en route, overran Cota's tiny force and advanced on Senochamps. This closed the last road into or out of Bastogne, completing the blockade, and opened the route west for Panzer Lehr's reinforced 130 Panzer Aufklärungs Abteilung commanded by Major Gerd von Fallois.

German tenure of Sibret lasted less than a week. On 26 December leading elements of 4th Armored Division's Combat Command R forced their way through part of Oberstleutnant Kaufmann's 39 Füsiliere Grenadier Regiment at Assenois to the east, and made contact with paras of the 326th Engineer Combat Battalion on the outskirts of Bastogne, breaking the siege. Next day a task force from CCA of 9th Armored Division forced its way into Sibret against determined resistance by a company of the 104th Panzergrenadier Regiment from Hans-Joachim Deckert's 15 Panzergrenadier Division. The battle for the village raged all night but on the 28th Sibret was in

**After the struggle at Sibret, an M18 tank destroyer from Patton's 4th Armoured Division lies wrecked beside the road with an M3 half-track in the background. The original caption says 'destroyed by artillery fire' and American open-topped tank destroyers were, indeed, vulnerable even to mortars. (U.S. Army)**



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The engagement at Sibret on 30 December was a classic ‘encounter’ battle with both sides advancing towards each other along the same roads at the same time.

American hands. Heinz Kokott, CO of 26 Volksgrenadier Division, counter-attacked on the 29th with a company of pioniers, but they were beaten off with about 50 casualties.

The main attempt to recapture Sibret and Assenois took place the very next day. Model had decided that the only chance of retrieving anything from the worsening situation was to attempt a variation of the original ‘small solution’ which Hitler had rejected. That was to capture Bastogne as a first priority, then throw a left hook to take out those Allied forces east of the Meuse. Von Manteuffel planned a two-pronged attack to cut the American corridor into Bastogne before an all-out assault on the stubborn town. To this end he committed Oberst Otto Remer’s Führer Begleit Brigade, transferred from brief attachment to

LVIII Korps to von Lüttwitz’s XLVII Panzer Korps; and Generalmajor Walter Denkert’s 3 Panzergrenadier Division, transferred south from Sixth Panzer Armee. These forces were to attack the corridor from the northwest while Generalleutnant Karl Decker’s newly committed XXXIX Panzer Korps drove in a pincer movement from the southeast.

Unfortunately for Remer’s brigade, it ran headfirst into Colonel Wesley Yale’s CCB of 11th Armored Division which was advancing at the same time – 0730 hrs – up the two roads from Sibret towards Lavaselle and Chenogne. A dense mist obscured the battlefield and, although his tanks caught a company of Shermans in flank on the Chenogne road, destroying seven of them, while 3 Panzergrenadier Division troops occupied Chenogne, Remer’s depleted brigade simply lacked the strength to go any further. Next day, 11th Armored’s CCA and CCB combined to counter-attack, with the 87th Infantry Division as backup, ending all German chances of even partial success.

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# FIFTH PANZER ARMEE

## LVIII PANZER KORPS

**W**hile von Lüttwitz's XLVII Panzer Korps had one hand metaphorically tied behind its back by the need to split its efforts between driving to the Meuse and capturing Bastogne, there was no such impediment to General Walter Krüger's LVIII Panzer Korps in the centre of the Fifth Panzer Armee sector. General Hasso von Manteuffel's orders for the Korps were quite explicit: '116 Panzer Division was to be committed south of the Ourthe,' his memoirs state, '560 Volksgrenadier north of that river, since its right-hand neighbour [62 Volksgrenadier Division, LXVI Korps] was still fighting on the Our. The 116 Panzer Division was to advance from Houffalize to La Roche and thence as far west as it could go.'



**Promoted General der Panzertruppen shortly after he was given command of LVIII Panzer Korps, Walter Krüger lacked the same combat experience as von Lüttwitz, and was not as aggressive.**  
(U.S. Signal Korps)

As events transpired, 116 Panzer Division in fact had the best opportunity to reach and even get across the Meuse before Allied reserves could be brought into play, but was frustrated by the amount of counter-marching it was forced to do under orders from LVIII Panzer Korps' commander Walter Krüger. In fairness, though, it was not all Krüger's fault.

On 16 December the Korps was deployed behind the West Wall between Leidenborn and Dahnen, a roughly five-mile (8 km) front, with Generalmajor Siegfried von Waldenburg's 116 Panzer Division on the right and Generalmajor Rudolf Bader's

### LVIII PANZER KORPS

General der Panzertruppen Eugen Walter Krüger  
Stabs Kompanie

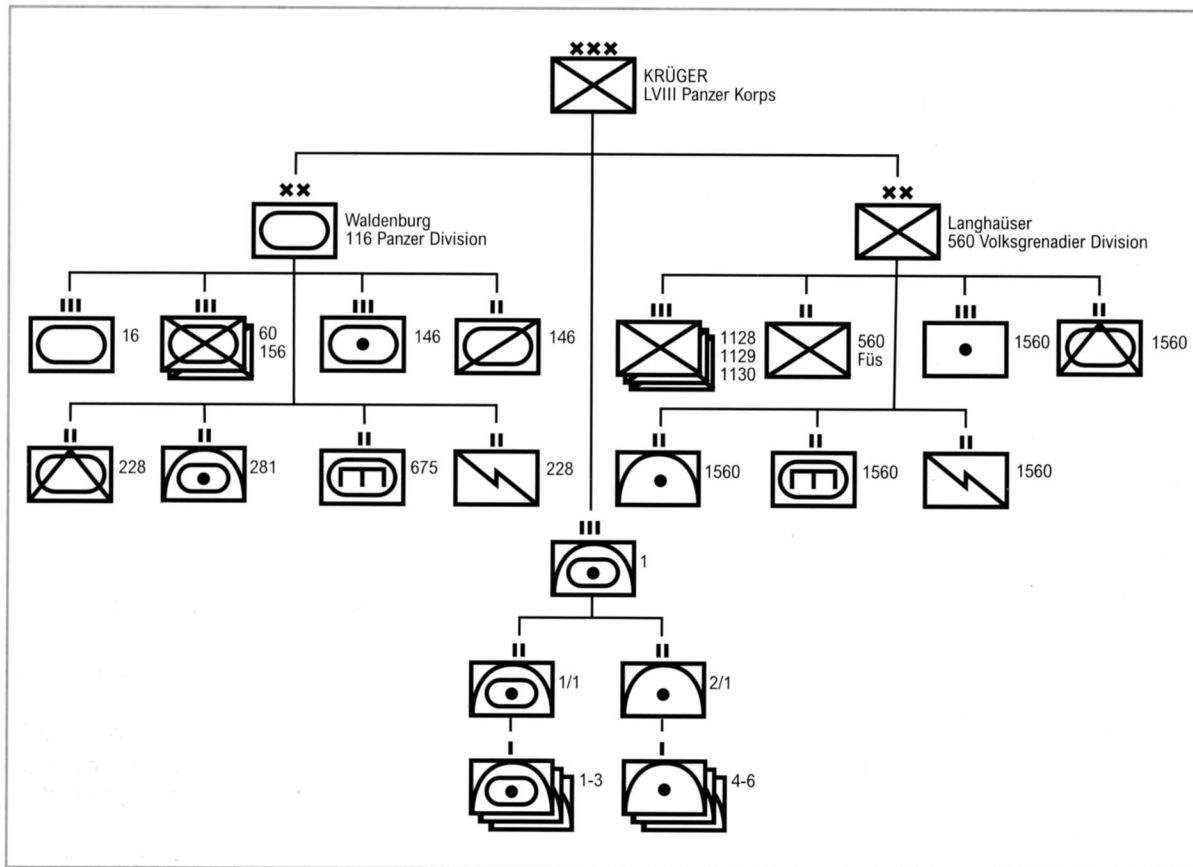
116 Panzer Division (Waldenburg)  
560 Volksgrenadier Division (Langhäuser)  
Führer Begleit Brigade (Remer)  
(from LXVI Korps 24 December)  
2 Panzer Division (von Lauchert)  
(from XLVII Panzer Korps 29 December)  
9 Panzer Division (von Elverfeldt)  
(from XLVII Panzer Korps 29 December)  
1 Flak-Sturm Regiment

560 Volksgrenadier Division to its south. Having pushed through the lines of the 112th Regiment, U.S. 28th Infantry Division, and reached Ouren on 17 December, 116 Panzer Division found that the bridge there would not bear the weight of its tanks. This was an elementary failure on the part of German intelligence: since German forces had retreated through the area earlier in the year, *someone* should have notified von Manteuffel that the bridge was unsuitable for armour. However, Krüger himself had reasoned that if the bridge would carry the weight of American traffic, it would accommodate his own. When he was proven wrong, the result was that von Waldenburg's division lost a full day while it was ordered to retrace its path and try again further south,

### LVIII PANZER KORPS RESERVE

(From Fifth Panzer Armee Reserve)

401 Volks-Artillerie Korps  
7 Volks-Werfer Brigade  
1095 & 1121 schwere Mörser Batterie  
25/975 Festungs-Artillerie Batterie  
207 Pionier Bataillon



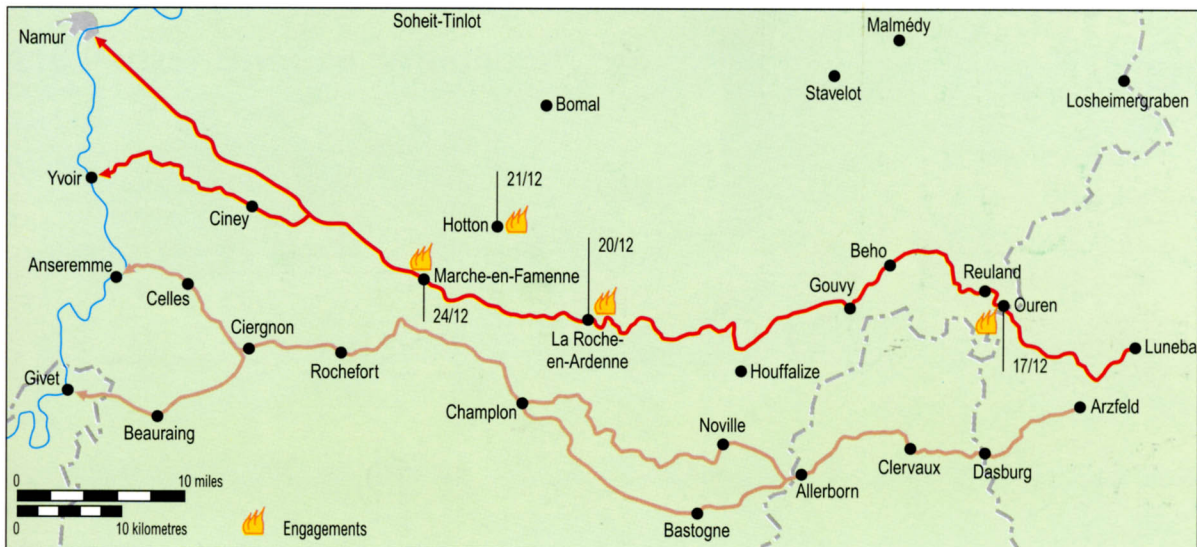
where 560 Volksgrenadier Division had broken through the U.S. 110th Infantry Regiment's line at Heinerscheid after establishing a bridgehead over the Our at Kalborn.

Then, heading southwest from Houffalize after crossing the Our and Clerf, 116 Panzer Division was

ordered to retrace its path again and head northwest from Houffalize towards Samrée instead. Once more it was the fault of poor intelligence, because Krüger had been told that the bridge at Ortheuville had been blown. (In fact, it had not, and 2 Panzer Division exploited this stroke of luck – but 116 Panzer Division

**LVIII Korps' commander, Walter Krüger, seen shortly after his appointment in February 1944, probably during Operation 'Margarethe', with Panzer Lehr's CO, Fritz Bayerlein, and Oberst Gerhardt of 130 Panzer Regiment. (U.S. Signal Corps)**





The Rollbahn assigned to LVIII Panzer Korps was based on the ability of 116 Panzer Division to use the bridge at Ouren, and did not approach Samrée or Hotton. If the bridge had been usable, the division could easily have been through Marche before the U.S. VII Corps even began deploying.

could have been across it a day earlier, because 2 Panzer Division had lost 48 hours battling its way past the Bastogne roadblocks at Longvilly and Noville.)

The final blow to LVIII Panzer Korps' hopes of a speedy advance came when 116 Panzer Division

encountered surprisingly tough opposition at Hotton. Believing the forces opposing him were far stronger than they really were, Krüger ordered 116 Panzer Division to disengage (replacing it with 560 Volksgrenadier Division) and try again through Marche. Von Manteuffel wrote, 'On the success or failure of this attack – or so I thought at the time – must

**Before the battle. The crew of a 116 Panzer Division Panther hail the occupants of a Kubelwagen. The landscape is quite flat, suggesting a location west of the river Ourthe. (Bundesarchiv)**





**After the battle. Panther and PzKpfw IV of the 'Windhund' division, knocked out during the intense close-quarters battle at Hotton, being inspected by GIs of the 3rd Armored Division. (U.S. Signal Corps)**

depend the decision: if the Meuse could be reached, then the two Panzer Korps might yet turn north along its eastern bank in accordance with the old plan for the "Small Solution", thus relieving LXVI Armeekorps on the right wing of Fifth Panzer Armee and enabling Sixth Panzer Armee to achieve some success after all.' By this time, however, unknown to von Manteuffel or Krüger, Collins' U.S. VII Corps was coming into play west of the Ourthe, and the decisive breakthrough which LVIII Korps might have achieved earlier was no longer possible.

Von Manteuffel writes the final footnote to this sorry tale. 'The Führer Begleit Brigade, which had been placed under command of [LVIII] Korps, was brought forward. It was to help 116 Panzer Division, now engaged in bitter fighting about Verdenne, by capturing the high ground near Hotton [which 560 Volksgrenadier Division had been driven from]. However,' von Manteuffel concludes ruefully, 'the brigade was halted, turned about and ordered to proceed with all speed to Bastogne.' This ended all LVIII Panzer Korps' chances of success, and from this point onward it was on the defensive, even though reinforced by 2 and 9 Panzer Divisions transferred from von Lüttwitz's to Krüger's command. (In fact, LVIII Korps itself had been scheduled to have four divisions, two of them Panzer, during the early

planning for 'Herbstnebel', but Heeresgruppe B commander Feldmarschall Walter Model opted to keep 9 Panzer and 15 Panzergrenadier Divisions in reserve, intending that they would exploit the situation once XLVII and LVIII Korps had got across the Meuse.)

The whole situation by 24 December was anathema to Krüger, a resourceful though unimaginative leader who had earlier commanded 1 Panzer Division in Russia and during its recuperation in France 1942-43, then LXVIII Korps in Greece, before taking over LVIII Korps in February 1944. He was promoted to General der Panzertruppen in May, probably for political reasons rather than on merit. His new Korps itself was a late war formation, having been created in France on 28 July 1943 as a reserve Korps command staff. In March 1944, just after Krüger assumed command, LVIII Korps (including Panzer Lehr) was the main instrument in Operation 'Margarethe', the occupation of Hungary after Hitler discovered that Admiral Miklos Horthy was putting out feelers to Stalin for a separate cessation of hostilities. In the summer the Korps was heavily engaged first in Normandy and then Lorraine before being earmarked for 'Herbstnebel'.

Once it was apparent that the Ardennes offensive had failed, 560 Volksgrenadier Division went first to II SS-Panzer Korps and then, after Hitler pulled the SS divisions out of the line prior to sending them to Hungary, to LXVI Korps. 116 Panzer Division, after giving stubborn resistance to the U.S. First Army's counter-offensive towards Houffalize, was taken out of the line and sent to Holland.

# 116 Panzer Division 'Windhund'



Full of confidence after the first 24-hour battle against the U.S. 112th Regiment, 28th Infantry Division, Generalmajor Siegfried von Waldenburg wrote: 'Besides the number of knocked out tanks, the division captured 200 men, ammunition, some fuel and a number of vehicles. One had the impression that the enemy front was broken through and that a further rapid advance would be possible. Our casualties were very small and losses of matériel not worth mentioning.' Two days later, however, on 19 December, the picture was rather different. He now wrote: 'The situation in which the division found itself during that night was anything but pleasant.'

The reason for the rapid change was the order issued by General der Panzertruppen Walter Krüger earlier on the 19th, re-routing his whole Korps because, with the bridge over the Ourthe east of Bertogne blown, he assumed the Americans would also destroy the one at Ortheville as well. But turning



**Oberst Siegfried von Waldenburg had served as Military Attaché in Rome prior to the Italian surrender and then on the staff of LXXX Korps before being promoted Generalmajor and given command of 116 Panzer Division on 1 November.**  
(Bundesarchiv)

a whole armoured division around on the narrow roads of the Ardennes to retrace their path towards Houffalize before turning northwest towards Hotton and Marche instead of southwest towards Champlon and Rochefort was no easy task, especially in the dark! However, Krüger wanted to exploit the wide gap in the American line caused by the collapse of the 110th Infantry Regiment in XLVII Korps' sector. It was to prove a mistake because, after capturing Samrée, the division's leading Kampfgruppe 'Bayer' was stalled at Hotton and Marche.

Part of the reason for 116 Panzer Division's early success was that its tanks did not have to push their

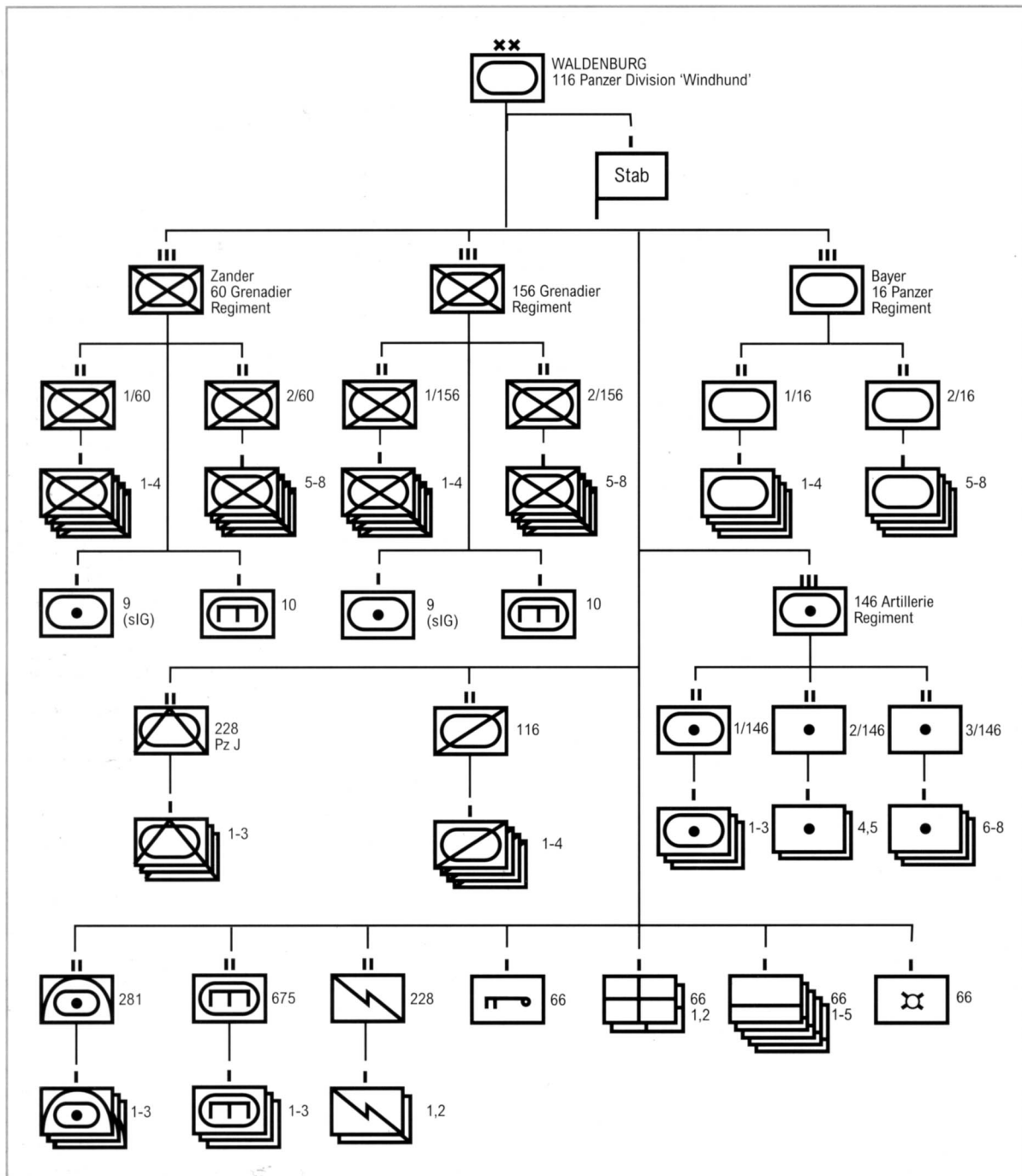
## 116 PANZER DIVISION 'WINDHUND' Generalmajor Siegfried von Waldenburg Stabs Kompanie

16 Panzer Regiment (Bayer)  
60 Panzergrenadier Regiment (Zander)  
156 Panzergrenadier Regiment (Voigtsberger)  
146 Panzer Artillerie Regiment  
116 Panzer Aufklärungs Abteilung (Stephan)  
228 Panzerjäger Abteilung (Jagd pz IV/70)  
281 Flak Abteilung  
675 Panzer Pionier Bataillon  
228 Panzer Nachrichten Abteilung  
66 Panzer Nachschub Truppe  
66 Panzer Werkstatt Truppe  
66 Verwaltungs Truppe (mot)  
66 Sanitäts Truppe (mot)

way through a Volksgrenadier division to get on to their Rollbahn. 560 Volksgrenadier Division, the other component of LVIII Korps, was tasked with attacking west-southwest towards Heinerscheid at the junction of the U.S. 28th Infantry Division's 110th and 112th Infantry Regiments, while the 116th's two Panzergrenadier Regiments themselves forced crossings west-northwest towards Ouren and Oberhausen at the junction of the 112th and the U.S. 106th Infantry Division's 424th Regiment.

Prior to 1944 the 'Windhund' (Greyhound) division had spent most of its war on the southern sector of the Russian front as 16 (not 116) Motorised (later Panzergrenadier) Division. The original 16 Infanterie Division had been formed at Rheine, near Münster, in 1935-36, mainly from Westfalian personnel with some East Prussians. During the Polish campaign, and later in France when it fought at Sedan, the division was led by Generalleutnant Siegfried Heinrici, who in 1945 would command Armeegruppe Vistula during the final defence of Berlin.

In the autumn of 1940 the division was split, two of its regiments forming the nucleus of 16 Panzer Division and 60 Infanterie Regiment going to the new 16 Motorised Division with Heinrici still in command until in 1942 he was promoted to lead XLIII Korps. The



Afrika Korps' veteran and one-time CO of the élite 'Grossdeutschland' Regiment, Generalleutnant Graf Gerhard von Schwerin, then took over until he was dismissed by Hitler (prompted by Himmler) for ordering an unauthorised retreat during the early stages of the battle for Aachen in September. A 'caretaker' commander, Oberst Heinrich Voigtsberger, assumed temporary responsibility until Waldenburg's appointment was confirmed in November, a post he

held until the bitter end.

In 1941 the new 16 Motorised Division fought first in the Balkans before being assigned to Armeegruppe Süd for Operation 'Barbarossa'. It fought its way through the 'Stalin Line' into the Ukraine and, although forced on to the defensive during the winter counter-attack, rebounded during 1942, reaching the Caucasus Mountains in the summer. In fact, 341 Aufklärungs Abteilung (later renumbered 116)

Panthers of the 'Windhund' division advance towards Hotton. If General Walter Krüger had not ordered the division to backtrack on 19 December, it might have reached the Meuse a full day ahead of 2 Panzer Division on its left flank. Note that, in compliance with the orders issued before 'Herbstnebel', the 116th's usual greyhound insignia has been painted out. (U.S. Signal Corps)



almost reached Astrakhan, marking the easternmost landmark of the German offensive. It was this success which gave the division its nickname and unmistakable insignia.

During the subsequent terrible winter the division helped cover the gap that had appeared between First and Fourth Panzer Armees southwest of Stalingrad. It was then reassigned to the reconstituted Sixth Armee and, now designated 'Panzergranadier', suffered heavy casualties in the fighting around Zaporozhe during the retreat to the river Mius in the aftermath of the battle of Kursk. Worse was to follow during the Soviet winter 1943-44 offensive, when the division was practically decimated on the southern banks of the river Dniepr near Uman, and it was finally withdrawn to the west for rehabilitation.

In May 1944, rechristened 116 Panzer, the division was merged with 179 (Ersatz) Panzer Division near Laval in western France. This reserve and replacement 'division' only at the time comprised a single tank company, one infantry battalion and a coastal defence artillery battalion, which was wisely left in place. At the time of the Allied landings in Normandy, the division was north of the river Seine not far from Paris but was still re-equipping and acquiring more manpower, so was equally wisely not thrown into the battle until July.

Its mixture of veterans and novices fought hard at Mortain but were then caught in the Falaise pocket. By 21 August it was reduced to about 600 men and a dozen tanks, but still remained a 'division' in Hitler's

distorted world, and was thrown into the defence of Aachen. When von Schwerin tried to withdraw, the local Gauleiter accused him of 'disloyalty', prompting his dismissal. But 116 Panzer was finally withdrawn from the line for a full refit, temporarily commanded by the CO of 156 Panzergranadier Regiment.

Outside Düsseldorf, the division was brought up to approximate strength in manpower (circa 11,500) during October and November and, when it was moved to the vicinity of Köln and earmarked for Operation 'Herbstnebel', had 43 Panthers and 22 PzKpfw IVs respectively in Oberst Johannes Bayer's I/ and II/16 Panzer Regiment. In addition, 228 Panzerjäger Abteilung reported 18 Jagdpanzer IV/70s serviceable.

After being stalled at Hotton, by the middle of January 1945 the division was tasked with covering the withdrawal of what remained of Fifth Panzer Armee northeast of Houffalize. Amazingly, the division still had 44 assorted tanks operational despite the earlier battles. Now, however, it only narrowly escaped annihilation as the steel jaws of the American 2nd and 11th Armored Divisions closed. Subordinated briefly to Lucht's LXVI Korps it was, according to its commander, 'tired out and used up to the utmost'. The survivors were then moved north to Holland, where they tried in vain to halt the Anglo-Canadian advance towards the Rhein during February and March. The division's value, said von Waldenburg, 'was gone forever', and alongside so many others, it met its end in the Ruhr pocket.

## 560 Volksgrenadier Division

**A**lthough it was by far the weakest formation in Fifth Panzer Arme, and completely combat inexperienced, 560 Volksgrenadier Division managed to achieve a surprising amount. It broke through the lines of the U.S. 28th Division's 110th and 112th Regiments before driving as far west as Amonines and Soy on the flank of 116 Panzer Division. The 560th had only begun forming as part of Himmler's 'Replacement Army' in August 1944, coming 'on line' on 10 October. It was stationed near Moss, in northern Norway, and its personnel came from miscellaneous units, Heer and Luftwaffe, in Denmark and Norway.

Originally destined for the eastern front, it was diverted by Hitler himself to LVIII Korps for 'Herbstnebel', but on 16 December was seriously understrength because many of its personnel were still en route from Norway. Its three infantry regiments were barely battalions and were designated as Kampfgruppen under the names of their commanders, Schmidt, Happich and Schumann. Moreover, the division had no assault guns, although 10 Hetzers did arrive from Milowitz a few days after the beginning of the attack. To top everything else, the 560th's regular CO, Generalmajor Rudolf Bader, was in hospital, and for the first 10 days of the battle command was entrusted to the 1128th Regiment's Oberst Rudolf Langhäuser.

**Although 560 Volksgrenadier Division reached Dochamps, on the right flank of 116 Panzer Division, during LVIII Korps' attack towards Hotton, the village was soon recaptured by men of the U.S. 3rd Armored Division's Task Force 'Orr', seen here with a 'peashooter' 57mm anti-tank gun which was standard issue to American infantry battalions. (U.S. Army)**

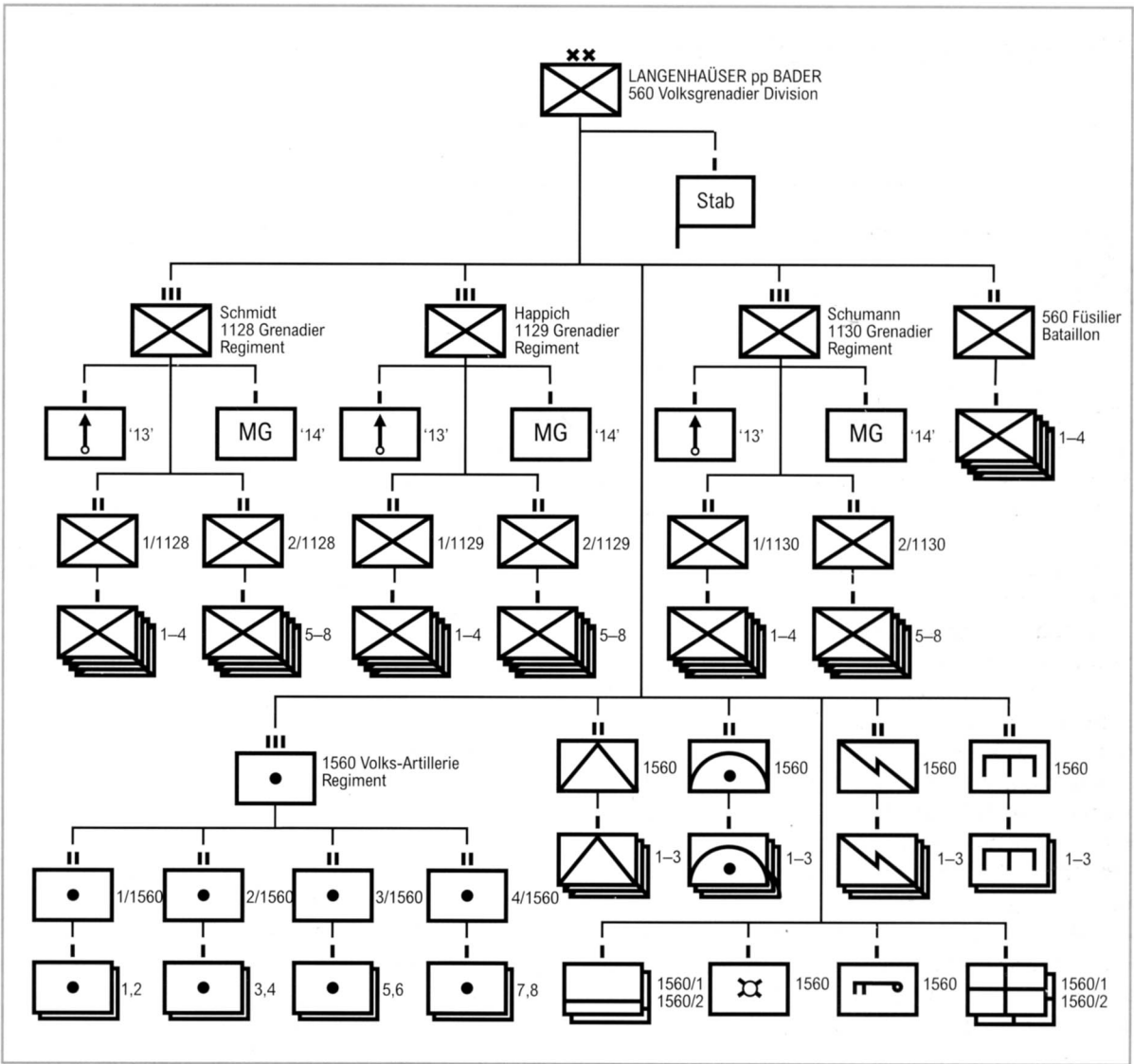


### 560 VOLKSGRENADIER DIVISION

*Oberst Rudolf Langhäuser*  
*pp Generalmajor Rudolf Bader*  
 Stabs Kompanie

1128 Volksgrenadier Regiment (Schmidt pp Langhäuser)  
 1129 Volksgrenadier Regiment (Happich)  
 1130 Volksgrenadier Regiment (Schumann)  
 1560 Volks-Artillerie Regiment  
 560 Füsilier Grenadier Bataillon  
 1560 Panzerjäger Abteilung (PaK 40)  
 1560 Flak Abteilung  
 1560 Pionier Bataillon  
 1560 Nachrichten Abteilung  
 1560 Nachschub Truppe  
 1560 Werkstatt Truppe  
 1560 Verwaltungs Truppe  
 1560 Sanitäts Truppe

By the time Bader returned, on 26 December, his whole division had shrunk to little more than a battalion in strength: Kampfgruppe 'Schmidt' had a mere 300 men and 'Happich' and 'Schumann' 250 each. Langhäuser himself was then given command of 12 Volksgrenadier Division, whose own



CO, Gerhard Engel, had been badly wounded in the fighting south of Elsenborn ridge.

In Bader's absence, Langhäuser had led 560 Volksgrenadier Division with both determination and skill. In conjunction with the attacks against the U.S. 110th Infantry Regiment by 2 Panzer and 26 Volksgrenadier Divisions (XLVII Korps) on their left flank, his men had broken through at Sevenig and Heinerscheid and reached Houffalize, on the river Ourthe, when the Korps' attack was realigned, encroaching on LXVI Korps' territory west of St Vith.

Now, however, they encountered stiffening resistance, running into elements of both XVIII (Airborne) and VII Corps (7th and 3rd Armored Divisions respectively). Although they almost reached Hotton – and some of the grenadiers may have done just that, hitching rides on 116 Panzer Division tanks –

they were too weak to push any further, and had to fall back towards Houffalize.

When the Allied First and Third Armies began their major counter-offensive on 3 January 1945, the division was reassigned temporarily to II SS-Panzer Korps and continued fighting in the St Vith sector. Although the battalions which had been missing at the start of 'Herbstnebel' had now joined up, the division was badly depleted when it was finally committed to the battle of Echternach in February.

Patton's Third Army was really on the warpath by now and the battered remnants of 560 Volksgrenadier Division fell back over the river Pruem. Langhäuser, who had rejoined his 1128 Regiment when the CO of 12 Volksgrenadier recovered from his wounds, led the last survivors into captivity in the Ruhr pocket in April.

# LVIII PANZER KORPS' BATTLES

## Kampfgruppen 'Schumann' and 'Bayer'

### Ouren – December 16–18

**K**nowing that only weak forces lay immediately in front of him, but not knowing what American reserves might lie further to the west, LVIII Panzer Korps' commander, Walter Krüger, pinned his main hope on forcing a quick crossing of the river Our and being able to drive west before those same reserves could be brought into play. To further this end, he based his plan of attack on speed and surprise, concurring with von Manteuffel's own admonition to all three of his korps' commanders not to waste ammunition on a softening-up artillery barrage. Krüger also split his forces into four assault battlegroups, Panzergrenadiers alongside Volksgrenadiers, rather than having the latter lead the way with the armour in their wake as was the case in Sixth Panzer Armee. Had he known that the bridge at Ouren was so weak, however, Krüger would certainly have allocated his forces differently.

As it was, LVIII Korps' attack led off, from north to south, with 60 and 156 Panzergrenadier Regiments

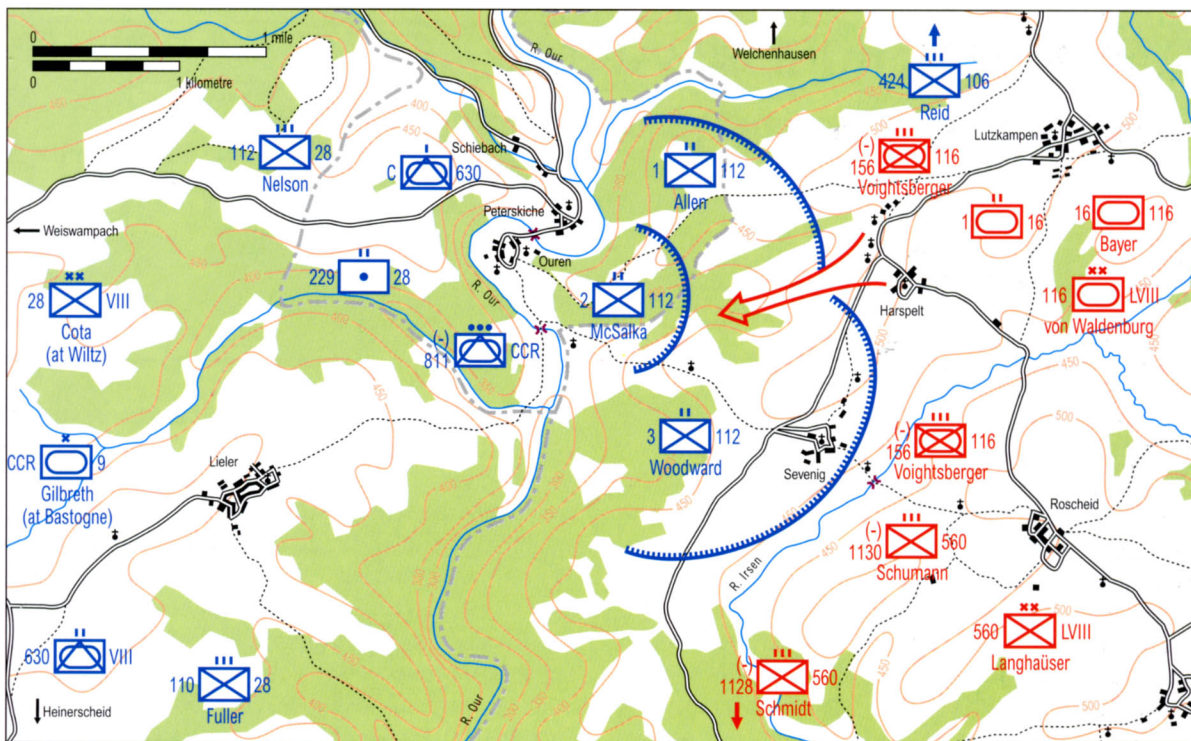
advancing through the West Wall either side of Leidenborn, then the understrength 1130 Volksgrenadier Regiment – Kampfgruppe 'Schumann' – towards Ouren, and 1128 Volksgrenadier Regiment – Kampfgruppe 'Schmidt' – toward Kalborn and Heinerscheid. Immediately to their front was the 112th Regiment of the 28th Infantry Division, but 60 Panzergrenadier Regiment ran into such heavy flanking fire from the 112th's neighbouring II/424th of the 106th Infantry Division that it had to abort its assault and try again further south.

Meanwhile, Kampfgruppe 'Schumann' began its attack by infiltrating the lines of Major Walden Woodward's III/112th, which occupied an exposed forward position around Sevenig, actually lying within

**After having found the bridge at Ouren unsuitable for tanks, thanks to faulty intelligence, 116 Panzer Division was re-routed further south, causing at least a 24-hour delay in LVIII Korps' schedule. (U.S. Army)**



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| pages 32-38,84-85 | 86-89 | 39-40 | 41-42 | 68-69 | 70-71 | 43-44 | 51-52 | 47-50,72-73 | 45-46,53-54 |       |       | 55-56,94-95 |



**If Walter Krüger had deployed 560 Volksgrenadier Division to take Ouren and 116 Panzer to their south, the tanks could have been on the banks of the Meuse while 2 Panzer Division was still struggling at Bastogne.**

the West Wall. Then, at 0620 hrs, the Korps artillery finally opened up, not indiscriminately but at clearly defined targets; searchlights stabbed the clouds and the assault began in earnest. The first results were inauspicious: one American platoon was caught eating breakfast and two company kitchens were captured! Elsewhere, Woodward's men rallied quickly while their commander called down fire from the supporting 229th Field Artillery Battalion. Then, at 0930 hrs, two companies from the 112th's reserve 2nd Battalion counter-attacked and recaptured the lost ground.

Elsewhere, the results of the first day's operations were, if not spectacular, promising. 156 Panzer-grenadier Regiment had captured Lützkampen and Kampfgruppe 'Schmidt' had established a small bridge-head across the Our at Heinerscheid (at the junction of the 28th Infantry Division's 112th and 110th Regiments). During the night of the 16th/17th, Oberst Johannes Bayer's I/16 Panzer Regiment assembled at Lützkampen ready to lend its

weight to Schumann's grenadier companies, and during the day advanced toward Ouren, disrupted only by an Allied air strike at 0935 hrs. The Panthers overran two companies of I/112th and reached the high ground overlooking Ouren, where Colonel Gustin Nelson had his regimental command post.

Bayer's tanks suffered casualties from the handful of M18s and towed anti-tank guns on the far bank of the Our, but their manoeuvre also put some of them in a position to fire from a ridge overlooking III/112th's positions in the West Wall. Woodward's men had continued to defy Kampfgruppe 'Schumann' during the day but, now outflanked, had no option other than to retire to Weiswampach on the other side of the Our during the night of the 17th/18th. Schumann's Volksgrenadiers followed them eagerly through the pillboxes and dragon's teeth and poured down the hillside into Ouren, capturing a number of men from the 112th's headquarters, medical and cannon companies. Total victory eluded the two Kampfgruppen, though, because it was now they discovered that the bridge over the Our would not bear the weight of Bayer's tanks. Constructing a new one would have caused at least a 15-hour delay, so instead the Panzers were redirected south to exploit the bridgehead at Heinerscheid.

|                   |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |             |             |       |       |             |
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| pages 32-38,84-85 | 86-89 | 39-40 | 41-42 | 68-69 | 70-71 | 43-44 | 51-52 | 47-50,72-73 | 45-46,53-54 |       |       | 55-56,94-95 |

# LVIII PANZER KORPS' BATTLES

## 60 Panzergrenadier Regiment and Kampfgruppe 'Happich'

### Samrée – December 20

**W**hile Kampfgruppe 'Bayer' and the remainder of 16 Panzer Regiment were retracing their footsteps from Ouren to exploit the bridgehead at Heinerscheid created by Kampfgruppe 'Schmidt', the CO of 116 Panzer Division, Generalmajor Siegfried von Waldenburg, had already sent Hauptmann Eberhard Stephan's 146 Panzer Aufklärungs Abteilung west toward Houffalize, exploiting the gap that had opened up between the U.S. 110th and 112th Infantry Regiments. By the time the rest of the division had reassembled around Heinerscheid it was the evening of 18 December. Next day, however, while Stephan's armoured cars reached Bertogne, the bulk of the Panzer and Panzergrenadier regiments were detouring southwest round Houffalize in their wake. 560 Volksgrenadier Division, which had now taken over the right flank of the Korps' attack, had forced the 112th Infantry Regiment out of Weiswampach and back northwest towards St Vith, and was advancing steadily through Trois Vierges toward Gouvy.

Now, though, Krüger's LVIII Korps encountered

another difficulty. When the Aufklärungs Abteilung found that the bridge over the river Ourthe west of Bertogne had been blown, it was assumed that the one further south at Ortheuville would be as well, if any attempt was made to seize it. (In fact, through a stroke of luck it was not, and was later captured intact by 2 Panzer Division.) Krüger therefore ordered 116 Panzer Division to retrace its footsteps and head northwest through Houffalize toward La Roche and Samrée instead. This put Oberstleutnant Helmuth Zander's 60 Panzergrenadier Regiment, which had been at the tail of the column, in the lead, with 1129 Volksgrenadier Regiment – Kampfgruppe 'Happich' – on its right flank.

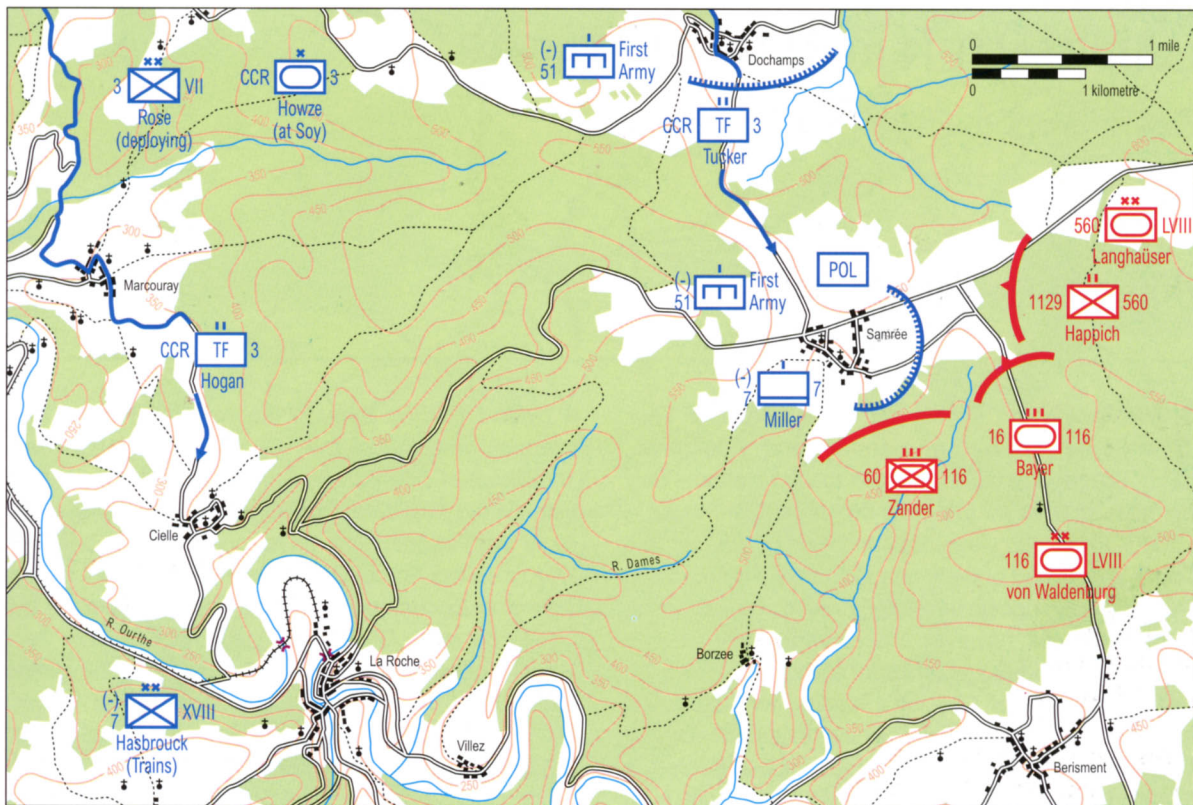
Houffalize fell to Zander's men without a fight, but now, because the terrain around La Roche was totally unsuitable for tanks, von Waldenburg decided to put

**Barely distinguishable under their covering of snow, a pair of 116 Panzer Division's Jagdpanzer IV/70s lie in ambush somewhere between Samrée and Hotton.**

(U.S. Army)



|                         |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |             |             |       |       |             |  |
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| pages 32-38,66-67,84-85 | 86-89 | 39-40 | 41-42 |       | 70-71 | 43-44 | 51-52 | 47-50,72-73 | 45-46,53-54 |       |       | 55-56,94-95 |  |



**116 Panzer Division's swift victories at Samrée and Dochamps were overshadowed by its further need for redeployment after being baulked next day east of Hotton.**

his main effort in against Samrée, beyond which lay Dochamps and Hotton. Combat Command R of 3rd Armored Division was just beginning to deploy in the Hotton area, but the only other defenders around Samrée and Dochamps at this time were two companies of the 51st Engineer Combat Battalion. 7th Armored Division's trains were at La Roche, but their main supply depot had been moved to just outside Samrée.

Early in the afternoon of 20 December, 60 Panzergrenadier Regiment began assembling in the woods south of Samrée while 16 Panzer Regiment prepared to attack straight down the road, with Kampfgruppe 'Happich' on its right. The 7th Armored Division's quartermaster, Lieutenant-Colonel A.A. Miller, delayed destroying the supply dump because he had been told a task force from CCR/3rd Armored was on its way to Samrée.

In fact, Colonel Robert Howze's combat command was pitifully weak but, under orders to reconnoitre the area west of the Ourthe while the rest of VII Corps was beginning to deploy behind him, he split his units into three task forces; that commanded by Major John Tucker was given Samrée as its immediate objective. It comprised only one company of M4s, a troop of M8s, a platoon of M5s and a battery of M7s. By the time it reached Dochamps, it was too late for the troops in Samrée. The small force was simply overwhelmed by Zander's and Happich's grenadiers, and 16 Panzer Regiment began to head on through. The big bonus to LVIII Korps was the capture of the dump of 30,000 gallons of fuel.

Major Tucker's small force moved into Samrée from the north. Within 20 minutes his leading six Shermans had been destroyed single-handedly by Gefreiter Sielemann of 1129 Volksgrenadier Regiment. Surviving crew members were picked up by fast-moving armoured cars and the task force retreated to Dochamps, where another seven Shermans were swiftly despatched by Bayer's tanks before they headed on toward Hotton.

| 16/12/1944              | 17/12 | 18/12 | 19/12 | 20/12 | 21/12 | 22/12 | 23/12 | 24/12       | 25/12       | 26/12 | 28/12 | 30/12       |
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| pages 32-38,66-67,84-85 | 86-89 | 39-40 | 41-42 |       | 70-71 | 43-44 | 51-52 | 47-50,72-73 | 45-46,53-54 |       |       | 55-56,94-95 |

# LVIII PANZER KORPS' BATTLES

## Kampfgruppe 'Bayer'

### Hotton – December 21

**F**ollowing the almost literal demolition of Task Force 'Tucker' at Samrée and Dochamps, Krüger urged his forces on toward Hotton – only 20 miles (32km) as the crow flies from the Meuse – with all speed. He was very conscious of the fact that valuable time had already been lost in two detours and that an Allied riposte in strength must be becoming imminent. It was, however, a big consolation to be able to drive on with full fuel tanks for a change.

The 116 Panzer Division's leading formation was now Kampfgruppe 'Bayer', which included not just 16 Panzer Regiment's two battalions but also a battalion from 60 Panzergrenadier Regiment, one from 146 Panzer Artillerie Regiment, and a company of combat engineers from 675 Panzer Pionier Bataillon. It was in effect a simulacrum of the battlegroups that had spearheaded Sixth Panzer Armee's offensive, and was almost replicated in 2 Panzer Division's Kampfgruppe 'von Cochenhausen'.

The CO of 116 Panzer Division, von Waldenburg, sent Kampfgruppe 'Bayer' northwest from Samrée up

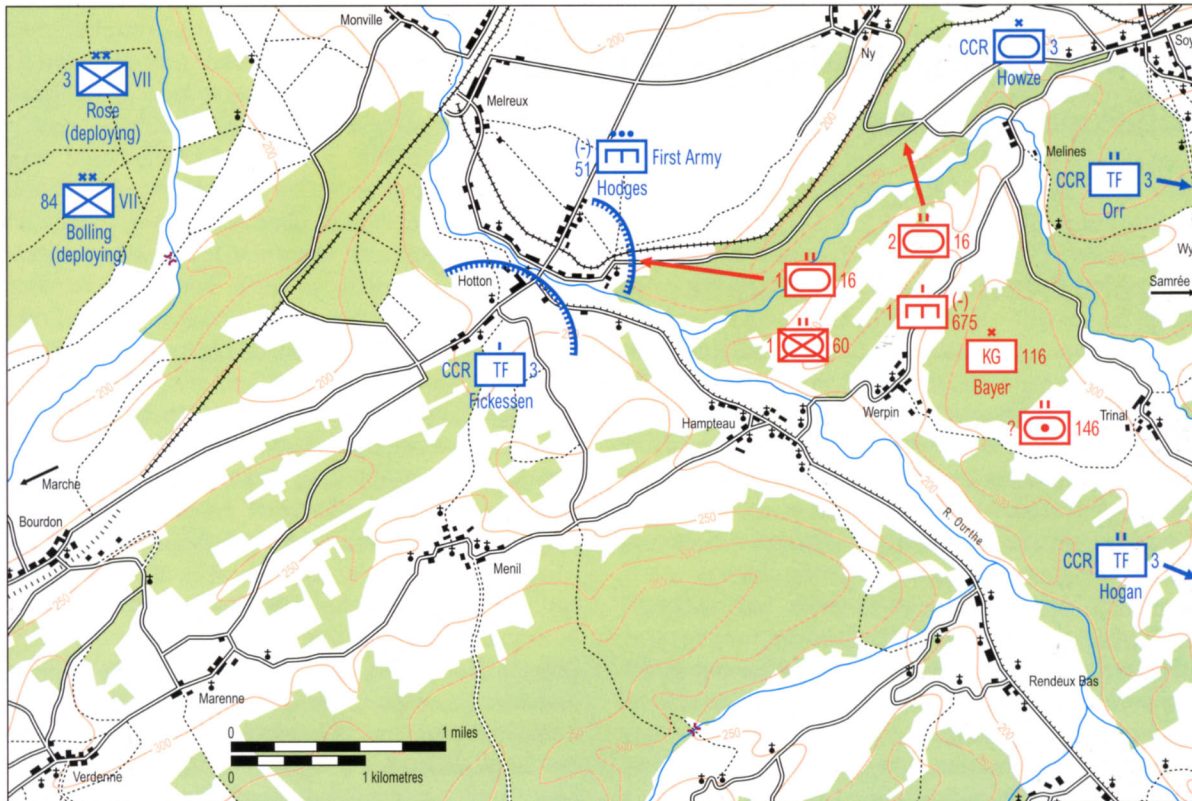
a byroad leading through the hamlet of Neffe. His intention was to cut the main Erezée–Hotton road southwest of Soy (where Colonel Robert Howze had established CCR/3rd Armored's headquarters). This route inadvertently took Bayer undetected in between Howze's Task Force 'Orr', which had been sent to help Tucker at Dochamps; and Task Force 'Hogan' on the La Roche road. Outflanked, Lieutenant-Colonel Sam Hogan pulled his men back to the shelter of the woods east of Marcouray, while Lieutenant-Colonel William Orr's force ran straight into Kampfgruppe 'Schmidt' (1128 Grenadier Regiment) and pulled back to Amonines after losing three Shermans to Panzerfaust rounds.

The village of Hotton itself, with its wide and sturdy wooden bridge over the Ourthe, was at the time barely defended. Its entire garrison comprised a couple of hundred headquarters and service personnel, a platoon of combat engineers, two M4s, an M5 and an M36. The senior officer present was the exec of 23rd Armored Engineer Battalion, Major Jack

The bridge over the river Ourthe at Hotton, photographed earlier in the year with GIs manning a checkpoint. Kampfgruppe 'Bayer's failure to capture this forced 116 Panzer Division into yet another detour. (U.S. Army)



| 16/12/1944              | 17/12 | 18/12 | 19/12 | 20/12 | 21/12 | 22/12 | 23/12 | 24/12       | 25/12       | 26/12 | 28/12 | 30/12       |
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**The capture of Hotton would not just have given 116 Panzer Division quick access to Marche, but also forced U.S. forces to pull back from Manhay–Grandmenil–Erezée, opening the road for 2 SS-Panzer Division.**

Fickessen. No one had any idea that German troops were anywhere in the vicinity until mortar fire began raining down on the village at dawn on 21 December. Fickessen deployed Captain Preston Hodges' platoon of the 51st Engineer Combat Battalion on the east side of the town with one M4, a little 37mm anti-tank gun and two 40mm Bofors. Trucks were overturned to make impromptu roadblocks, machine-guns were set up behind the thick stone garden walls, and every bazooka round available was quickly handed out.

Bayer's attack was slow to gather momentum, although a Panther quickly knocked out Hodges' solitary Sherman. Then a 90mm round from the M36 returned the favour, another Panther was disabled by the 37mm gun and a third by a bazooka round. However, Bayer was now forced to pull most of his tanks back to meet the threat of a counter-attack, which Howze began mounting from Soy, encouraged

by the news that a battalion from the 517th Parachute Infantry Regiment was on its way to his aid and that the 84th Infantry Division was beginning to assemble around Marche to the west. On other sectors of the battlefield, Kampfgruppe 'Schmidt' was still hacking at Task Force 'Orr' at Amonines and Hauptmann Eberhard Stephan's 146 Aufklärungs Abteilung against Task Force 'Hogan' at Marcouray. Meanwhile, Oberst Heinrich Voigtsberger's 156 Panzergrenadier Regiment was assembling at Neffe.

The men of Bayer's 60 Panzergrenadier Regiment tried, and failed, to take Hotton. They were met, according to von Waldenburg, by such a 'hailstorm of fire' that they were unable to get across the bridge after overrunning Hodges' valiant engineer platoon. One determined effort could have done it, but fate intervened. LVIII Korps' commander, Walter Krüger, not realising that the force in Hotton was so small, but seeing American tanks on both flanks, decided to withdraw 116 Panzer Division and detour it – again! – through La Roche toward Marche instead, while 560 Volksgrenadier Division moved forward to occupy the ground Bayer had seized.

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# LVIII PANZER KORPS' BATTLES

## 156 Panzergrenadier Regiment

### Marche/Verdenne – December 24–26

**V**on Waldenburg, CO of 116 Panzer Division, later said that the failure to take Hotton by coup de main was the turning point in the campaign as far as his own men were concerned. 'Our own casualties were heavy,' he wrote. 'Several of our tanks were lost through enemy artillery, others were damaged. The troops were tired, having been continuously engaged in action and on the move in cold, wet winter weather since 16 December ... Gradually the troops came to realise that what was to have been the deciding blow must have failed or that victory could not be won; with that, morale, and then efficiency, began to suffer.'

Hasso von Manteuffel, at the time, was rather more optimistic. 'By exploiting 2 Panzer Division's advance further to the south,' he wrote, 'it did still seem possible to co-ordinate an advance by LVIII Panzer Korps along the south bank of the Ourthe. Therefore 116 Panzer Division was ordered to disengage and to advance ... in a northwesterly direction by way of La Roche.'

First, however, the bridge at La Roche which had been reconnoitred by Hauptmann Eberhard Stephan's 146 Aufklärungs Abteilung had to be repaired by the division's 675 Pionier Bataillon, so, after withdrawing from Hotton, it was not until 23 December that the westward advance was resumed. The intention was to cut the Hotton–Marche road, capture Marche and advance toward Ciney on the right flank of 2 Panzer Division. But, by this time, although Manteuffel, Krüger and von Waldenburg could not know it, LVIII Panzer Korps faced far tougher opposition than it had done on the 20th. CCA of 3rd Armored Division had arrived near Durbuy on the 22nd, and 2nd Armored Division was moving into position further to the west as part of VII Corps' preparations for a counter-attack in force. At the same time, Brigadier-General Alexander Bolling's

**The flotsam of war: SdKfz 251 half-tracks of 156 Panzergrenadier Regiment abandoned near Verdenne after the attempt to break through the 84th Infantry Division's lines. (U.S. Signal Corps)**



|                         |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |        |             |       |       |             |
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84th Infantry Division had deployed along a 12-mile (19-km) defensive front from Hotton to Jamodenne, west of Marche.

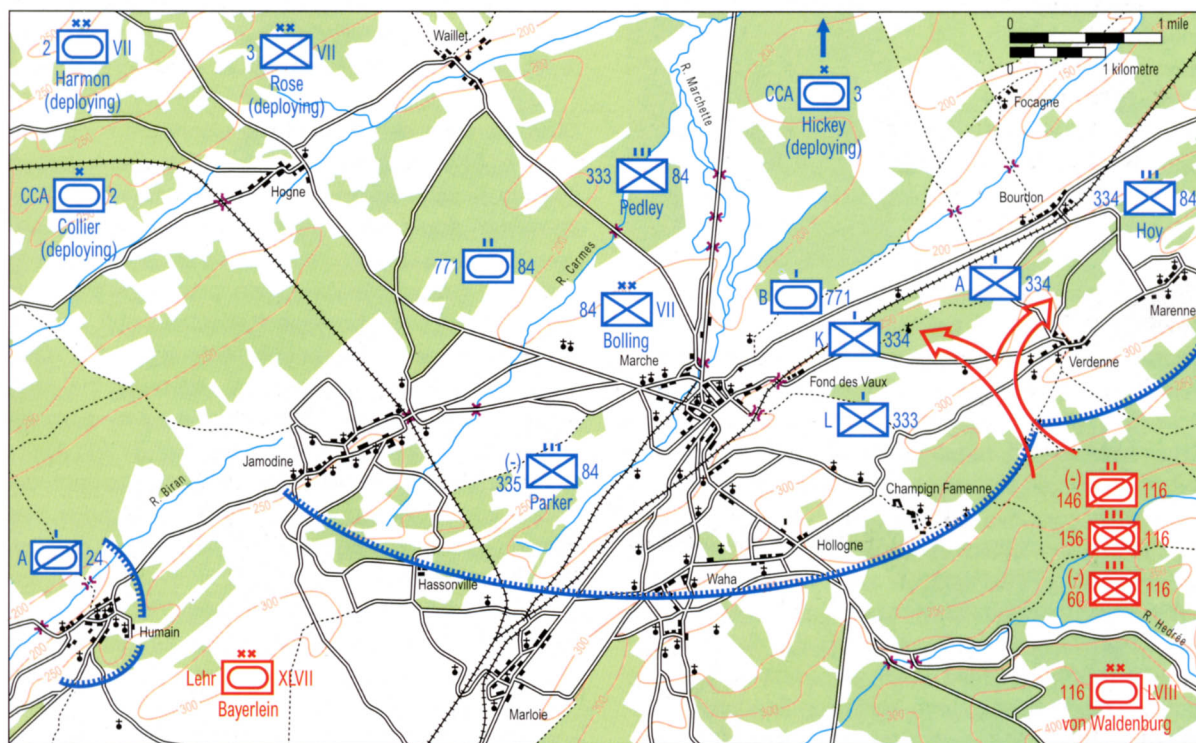
Von Waldenburg, after a 'pep talk' from von Manteuffel, began his attack toward the Hotton– Marche road by infiltrating two companies of Stephan's reconnaissance battalion through the woods southwest of Verdenne to a ridge just to the north of the village. This lay at the junction of the 84th Infantry Division's 334th and 335th Regiments – in effect, outflanking them both, but in insufficient strength to do any real harm. They were, however, detected, and an American attack at about noon on Christmas Eve threw them back — at just the same time that Oberst Heinrich Voigtsberger's 156 Panzergrenadier Regiment, supported by five Panthers from I/16 Panzer Regiment, was preparing to launch the main assault against Verdenne.

After a short but bitter house-to-house battle, by 1500 hrs Voigtsberger had driven Companies I and K

of III/334th out of the village and brought mobile artillery up in support. It was, however, a shortlived victory, even though one of three American companies (K/III/334th again), counter-attacking during Christmas night, ran headlong into some of Bayer's tanks and was decimated. Verdenne itself, by this time, was under heavy fire from the 155mm howitzers of the 327th Field Artillery Battalion, and the remaining two companies (A/I/334th and L/III/333rd) drove the Panzergrenadiers out of the village. This cut off those of Voigtsberger's and Bayer's men, plus some from 60 Panzergrenadier Regiment, still north of Verdenne overlooking the Hotton–Marche highway.

Von Waldenburg attempted to break through to relieve them at noon on Christmas Day, but all nine of Bayer's tanks supporting the attack were knocked out by M4s of the 771st Tank Battalion's Company B. Then, on Boxing Day, Bolling put Companies A and B/I/333rd into an assault against those troops of 116 Panzer Division still isolated in the woods. The Panzergrenadiers repulsed this attempt, and Bolling contented himself with shelling them for the rest of the day – but when his men attacked again on the 27th they found only empty woodland. The prey had escaped to fight again another day.

**U.S. VII Corps' deployment of the 84th Infantry Division west of Hotton while 116 Panzer Division was struggling to redeploy ended all von Waldenburg's hopes of reaching the Meuse.**



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# FIFTH PANZER ARMEE

## LXVI KORPS

Just as one of Hasso von Manteuffel's questions, when he was first briefed about 'Herbstnebel', concerned air support, so it was one of Walter Lucht's. Hitler gave his final briefing to his Panzer commanders at FHQu Adlerhorst on 11 December and to his infantry commanders the following day. But, when Lucht asked von Manteuffel about the role of the Luftwaffe, the Fifth Panzer Armees commander could

**LXVI Korps' victories in the Schnee Eifel and at St Vith after so many reverses in recent months brought deservedly broad smiles to the faces of Walter Lucht's Volksgrenadiers.**  
(U.S. Signal Corps)



only be evasive. Like everyone else, he had learnt to distrust Göring, and could only tell Lucht that OKW had promised 'adequate' air support. He did, however, add the pious hope that bad weather during December would reduce the effectiveness of the Allied tactical air forces, and with this Lucht had to be satisfied.

General der Artillerie Walter Lucht's LXVI Korps was the weakest in Fifth Panzer Armees, comprising just two understrength and inexperienced Volks-grenadier divisions, which were deployed facing the Schnee Eifel between Ormont in the north and Habscheid in the south. Oberst Günther von Hoffmann-Schönborn's 18 Volksgrenadier Division occupied the right of the line, flanked by Sixth Panzer Armees's 3 Fallschirm and 1 SS-Panzer Divisions. On its left, Generalmajor Friedrich Kittel's 62 Volksgrenadier Division was in turn flanked by LVIII Korps' 116 Panzer Division so, although Lucht's

### LXVI KORPS

General der Artillerie Walter Lucht  
Stabschef: Oberstleutnant i.G. Siebert

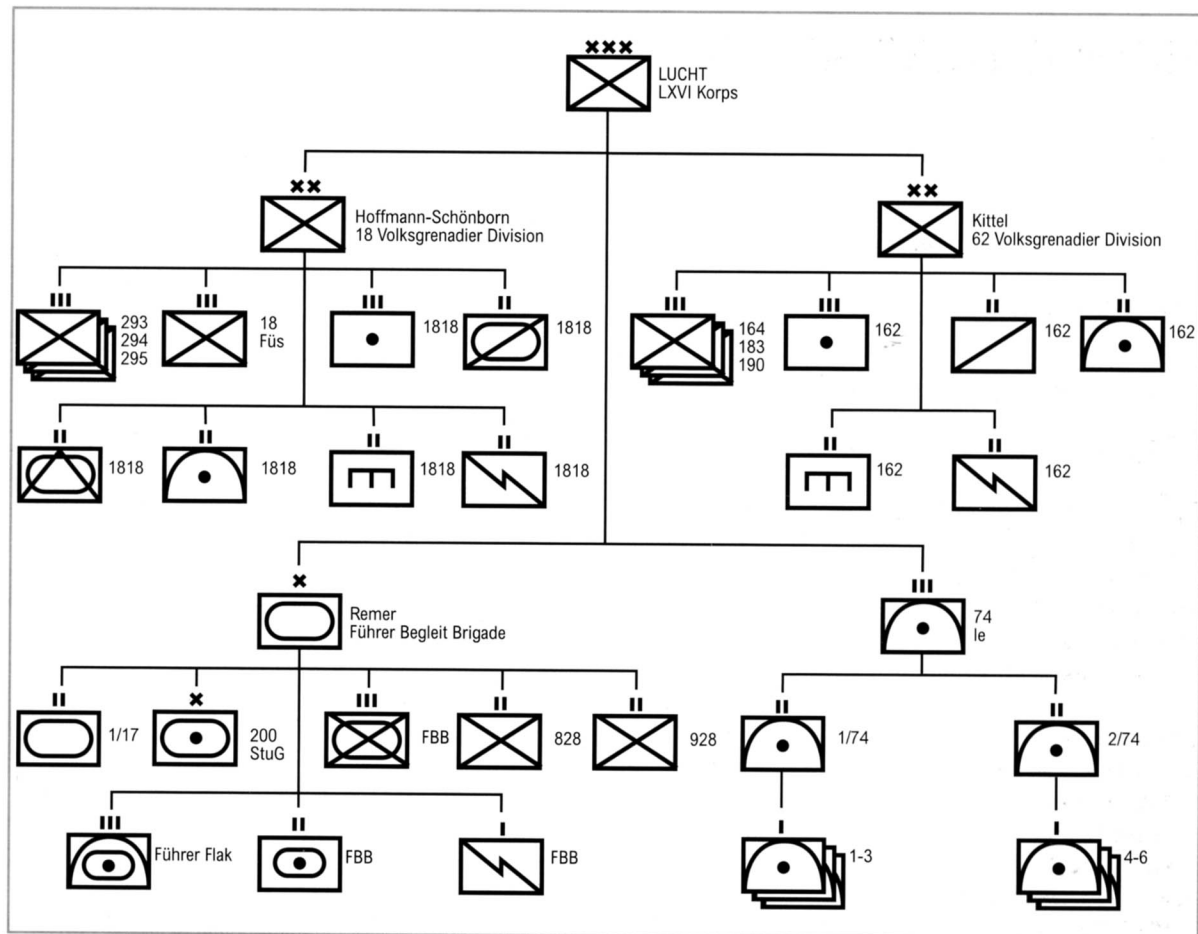
18 Volksgrenadier Division (Hoffmann-Schönborn)  
62 Volksgrenadier Division (Kittel)  
Führer Begleit Brigade (Remer)  
(from OKW Reserve 17 December; to LVIII Panzer Korps  
24 December)  
74 leichte Flak-Sturm Abteilung

Korps itself was severely lacking in armour, it did have reassuringly powerful Panzer forces on either side.

In the event, though, neither 116 nor 1 SS-Panzer Divisions were able to lend any significant support to Lucht's LXVI Korps, because both were forced through circumstances to adopt routes which took them far south and north of the Schnee Eifel (the central eastward spur of the Eifel plateau which protruded through the West Wall, pierced by the Allies earlier in the year between Kobscheid and Bleialf). All LXVI Korps' initial success belongs to the often much-maligned Volksgrenadiers, although the later arrival of the Führer Begleit Brigade was a major contributory factor in the final capture of St Vith itself.

Fortune, says an old Latin proverb, favours the brave, and an obscure 17th-century poet adds that 'there is no armour against fate'. Was it luck or destiny, then, that led to LXVI Korps' victory over not just the U.S. 106th Infantry Division, but also 7th Armored, a combat command from 9th Armored, a regiment from 28th Infantry, an assortment of combat engineers and the massed guns of eight battalions of VIII Korps' reserve artillery? The German victory was, according to the U.S. official history, both 'tragic' and 'controversial', which is hardly surprising.

LXVI Korps had been formed in France in September 1942 as a reserve Korps but was up-



graded in February 1943 and sent to the Russian front. Moved back to France, in August 1944 the Korps opposed the Allied landings on the Mediterranean coast and was at Clermont-Ferrand when it was withdrawn to Germany for Operation 'Herbstnebel'. Walter Lucht commanded the Korps from October 1943, when he was promoted from Generalleutnant to General der Artillerie, to the end of the war. Prior to this, in 1941 he had commanded two artillery regiments, then, from spring 1942 to autumn 1943, 336 Infanterie Division, leading it during the battle of Kharkov and the attempt to relieve Stalingrad.

With his training and background, it was natural that

Lucht should want to place a great deal of reliance on artillery, but he was only given one Nebelwerfer brigade and two batteries of heavy artillery so was forced to forgo this luxury. In any case, OKW's estimates of the ammunition stockpiles which could be assembled for the start of the offensive had proven greatly over-optimistic, and by Christmas many German gun batteries were restricted to firing only half a dozen rounds a day.

Lucht's plan of attack, based on a suggestion made by Hoffmann-Schönborn, relied for its success on two principal factors. First was the assumption that the Schnee Eifel would not be defended in strength; and second was the further assumption that Sixth Panzer Armee would be able to advance quickly into the Losheim Gap, leaving LXVI Korps' right flank un-opposed. Günther von Hoffmann-Schönborn's 18 Volksgrenadier Division would thus be able to sweep round the northern flank of the Schnee Eifel towards the bridge over the river Our at Schönberg, cutting the Americans' most direct line of communication to the west. And that, in effect, is exactly what happened – one of the very few instances

### LXVI KORPS RESERVE

(From Fifth Panzer Armee Reserve)

- 244 Sturmgeschütz Brigade
- 16 Volks-Werfer Brigade
- 460 mittlerer Haubitze-Artillerie Batterie
- 1099 schwere Mörser Batterie
- 803 Bau-Pionier Bataillon



in the whole battle of 'the Bulge' when everything went according to plan.

The assault in the north was spearheaded by Hoffmann-Schönborn's 294 Grenadier Regiment supported by 244 StuG Brigade, while 293 Grenadier Regiment attacked to the south at the junction of the U.S. 423rd and 424th Infantry Regiments. The latter would face the full brunt of Kittel's 62 Volksgrenadier Division. The rest, as they say, is history. 294 Grenadier Regiment, led personally by Hoffmann-Schönborn, surrounded the unfortunate American 422nd and 423rd Regiments, and three days later took their surrender. 18 Volksgrenadier Division then pushed west towards St Vith and, while the newly arrived Führer Begleit Brigade attacked from the northeast (drawing off most of 7th Armored Division's tanks which were not already engaged against 9 SS-Panzer Division 'Hohenstaufen' around Poteau), the grenadiers broke through the Prümerberg heights and captured St Vith on 21 December.

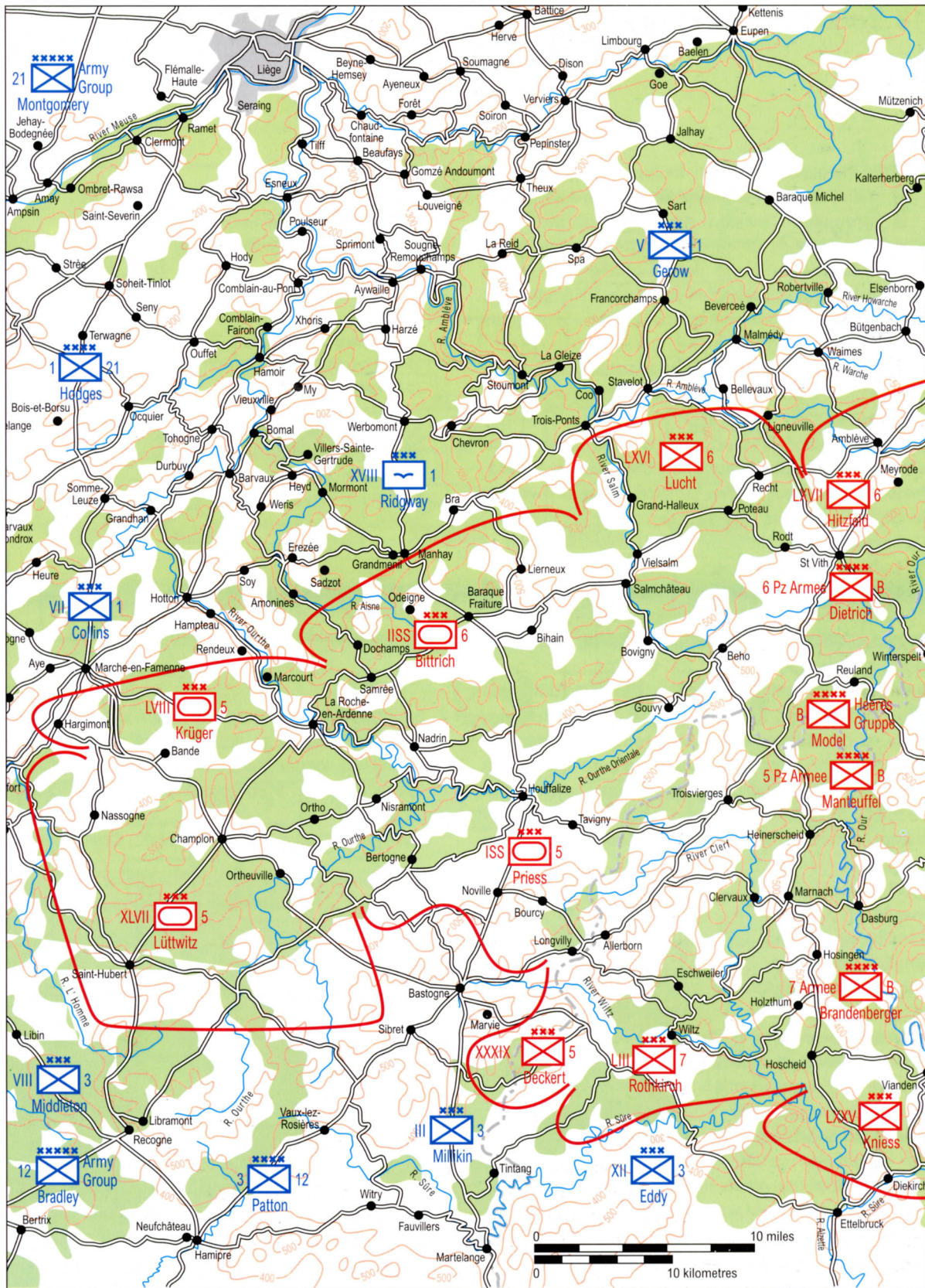
On the same day LXVI Korps was transferred to Sixth Panzer Armees command with the arrival of 2 SS-Panzer Division 'Das Reich', II SS-Panzer Korps, in its sector, but on the 24th it lost the Führer Begleit Brigade to LVIII Panzer Korps. While Lucht's Volksgrenadiers pursued the retreating Americans to Vielsalm and Salmchâteau and extended the Korps' line north as far as Trois Ponts, 2 SS-Panzer Division attempted to exploit the gap between the rivers Salm and Ourthe at the junction of the U.S. 3rd Armored and 82nd Airborne Divisions, but suffered heavily on the road to Erezée at Manhay and Grandmenil. A last

**Above:** After LXVI Korps' capture of St Vith, it became a prime target for both the USAAF and RAF, but despite the cratered landscape the raids caused very little disruption to German traffic. (U.S. Army Air Forces)

**Opposite:** The Fifth and Sixth Panzer Armees Korps were so redeployed once the Meuse was unattainable and Bastogne became the objective, that they bear little resemblance to those on 16 December.

attempt by 12 SS-Panzer Division 'Hitler Jugend', transferred from I to II SS-Panzer Korps, to break through in the same sector on 27 December marked the last offensive effort in LXVI Korps' sector as all attention now focused on Bastogne.

Sixth Panzer Armees now comprised just Wilhelm Bittrich's II SS-Panzer and Lucht's LXVI Korps, since Otto Hitzfeld's LXVII Korps had gone to Fifteenth Armees and now covered the front all the way from Monschau to St Vith. LXVI Korps' two Volksgrenadier divisions' lines themselves were thinly stretched in a semicircle from Salmchâteau via Trois Ponts and east along the Amblève valley south of Stavelot to link up with Hitzfeld's men at St Vith. II SS-Panzer Korps extended Sixth Panzer Armees' lines on the left of Lucht's grenadiers to La Roche, but Bittrich's 9 SS-Panzer Division then went to LVIII Korps for the onslaught at Bastogne. Sixth Panzer Armees' last component, 1 SS-Panzer Division Leibstandarte 'Adolf Hitler', was similarly transferred to XXXIX Korps in Armeegruppe 'von Lüttwitz'. All thought of getting across the Meuse had now been abandoned.



# 18 Volksgrenadier Division



**T**o the green and poorly trained infantry of Oberst Günther von Hoffmann-Schönborn's 18 Volksgrenadier Division went two of the most significant victories of the whole Ardennes campaign. They inflicted the worst defeat of the war on an American division serving in north-west Europe; and they captured St Vith, whose defence is almost as legendary as that of Bastogne.

Most Volksgrenadier divisions have a history dating back to an earlier Heer Infanterie division but not so the 18th, because 18 Infanterie (later Panzergrenadier) Division was an entirely separate entity which fought almost its entire war in Russia. Instead, 18 Volksgrenadier Division's ancestry was air force, not army, its 2,500-strong cadre coming from Generalleutnant Joachim von Treschow's former 18 Luftwaffen-Feld Division.

Treschow's command was a static formation during 1943-44, stationed near Dunkerque to help repel the expected Allied invasion in the Pas de Calais. In August 1944 it was rushed to Paris too late to be of any help and, after retreating into Belgium, was virtually destroyed in the Mons pocket. The survivors now found themselves integrated into Himmler's 'Replacement Army' and were sent to Esbjerg in Denmark. Here they joined the conscripts in the fledgling 571 Volksgrenadier Division, the amalgam being renamed 18 Volksgrenadier Division on

**StuG III with Saukopf mantlet of 244 Sturmgeschutz Brigade, which was detached from Korps reserve to assist 18 Volksgrenadier Division's 294 Regiment capture Schönberg and St Vith. The brigade only had 14 StuGs instead of a normal complement of 45, but until the arrival of the Führer Begleit Brigade, was LXVI Korps' main armoured strength.**  
(U.S. Signal Corps)



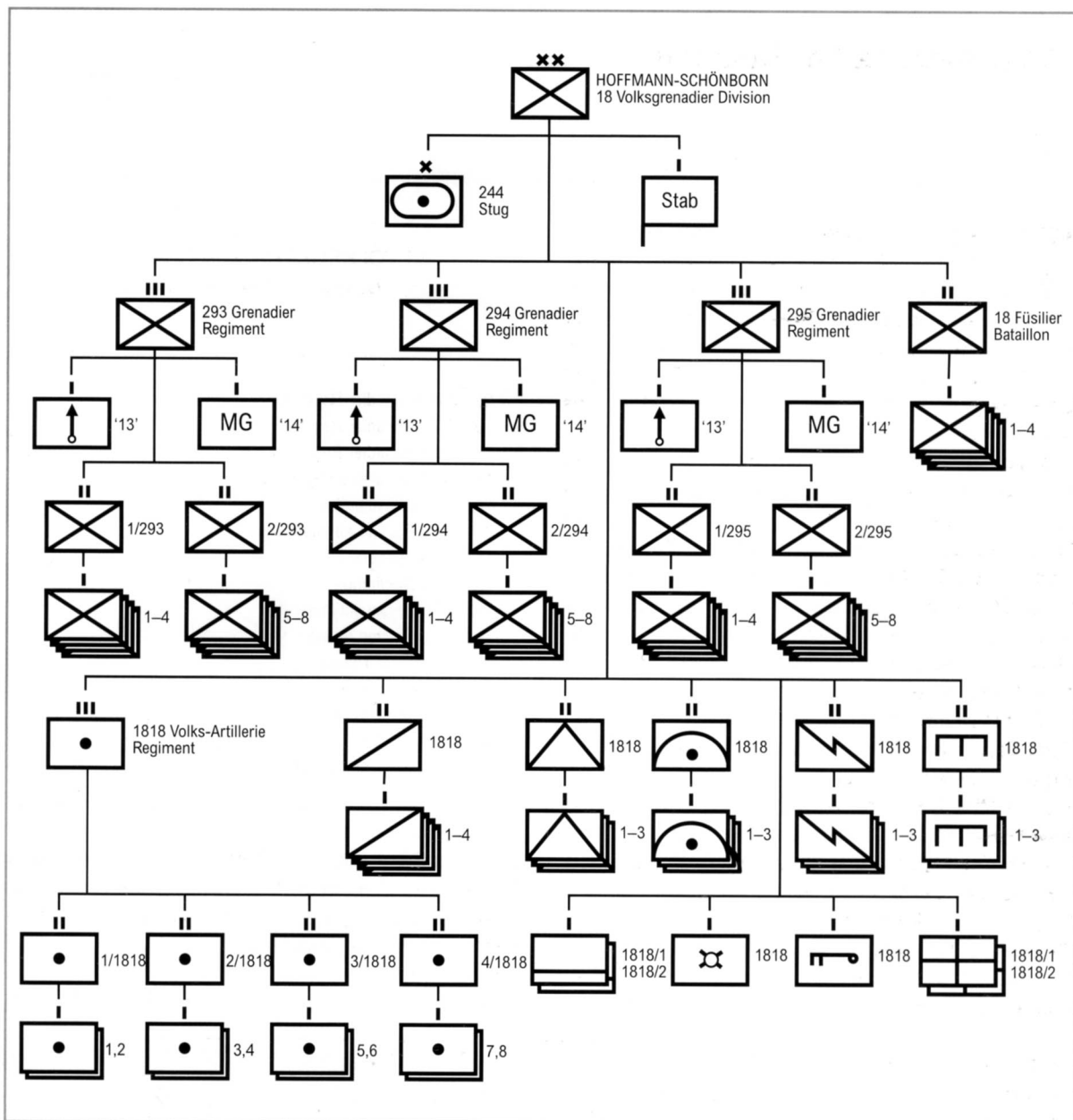
## 18 VOLKSGRENADIER DIVISION

*Oberst Günther von Hoffmann-Schönborn*  
Stabs Kompanie

293 Volksgrenadier Regiment  
294 Volksgrenadier Regiment  
295 Volksgrenadier Regiment  
1818 Volks-Artillerie Regiment  
18 Füsilier Bataillon  
1818 Aufklärungs Abteilung  
1818 Panzerjäger Abteilung (PaK 40 & Hetzer)  
1818 Flak Abteilung  
1818 Pionier Bataillon  
1818 Nachrichten Abteilung  
1818 Nachschub Truppe  
1818 Werkstatt Truppe  
1818 Verwaltungs Truppe  
1818 Sanitäts Trupp  
244 Sturmgeschutz Brigade (attached)

2 September. Their numbers were made up with former Kriegsmarine personnel out of a job now that Germany no longer had a navy to speak of, and middle-aged men from formerly 'reserved' civilian occupations.

The new division's chief of staff, Oberstleutnant



Dietrich Moll, commented that 'Germany was in her sixth year of war, yet few men ... had campaign ribbons or decorations'. That soon changed, and two junior officers won the Knight's Cross at St Vith. What is really remarkable is that the 18th's new commander, Oberst Günther von Hoffmann-Schönborn, managed to lick them into shape so quickly, and to lead them so effectively. It is all the more remarkable because he himself had no previous combat experience, coming from a post as an artillery instructor at a training school! Regardless, his leadership – usually from the front – was inspired, and his promotion to Generalmajor after the capture of St Vith was richly deserved.

Hoffmann-Schönborn's division was moved from Denmark to the section of West Wall facing the Schnee Eifel in October, which gave plenty of time for training, particularly in manoeuvre. It was this which in turn led to Hoffmann-Schönborn suggesting the plan of attack which General Walter Lucht adopted, thereby giving his other Volksgrenadier division, the 62nd, a more subordinate role. The 'bulge' was 18 Volksgrenadier Division's first and last campaign. When the Allies counter-attacked in January it was driven back across the river Pruem and the remnants were amalgamated with other units. Its CO was one of the survivors at the end of the war.

## 62 Volksgrenadier Division



On 15 December Generalmajor Friedrich Kittel's 62 Volksgrenadier Division was moved into the line behind the West Wall at Habscheid, taking over positions formerly occupied by 26 Volksgrenadier Division, which had now been transferred south for XLVII Panzer Korps' assault on the U.S. 28th Infantry Division. This placed the 62nd on the left of LXVI Korps' other component, 18 Volksgrenadier Division, with 560 Volksgrenadier and 116 Panzer Divisions (LVIII Panzer Korps) on its own left flank.

The Korps commander, General Walter Lucht, intended that the 62nd should attack through Winterspelt towards the river Our at Steinebrück. Twenty-four hours after the assault began, the division had driven the 424th Regiment, 106th Infantry Division, out of Winterspelt and reached the high ground overlooking the river, railway line and crossroads at Steinebrück. Here, however, they were counter-attacked by elements of 9th Armored Division's CCB. Although 116 Panzer Division had got as far as Ouren, just to the 62nd's south, the bridge there proved too weak to support the tanks so they were withdrawn to try again further south, leaving the 62nd without any armour support apart from the 14 Jagdpanzer 38(t)s in 1162 Sturmgeschütz Kompanie.

When CCB withdrew to begin forming the new St Vith perimeter, they demolished the Steinebrück bridge, which caused a 24-hour delay, but by

Remarkably cheerful Volksgrenadiers in a motley assortment of clothing grin for the cameraman, alongside the wreckage of one of the U.S. 106th Infantry Division's trucks, after their victory in the Schnee Eifel. The battles for St Vith and Salmchâteau would be nothing to laugh about. (Author's collection)



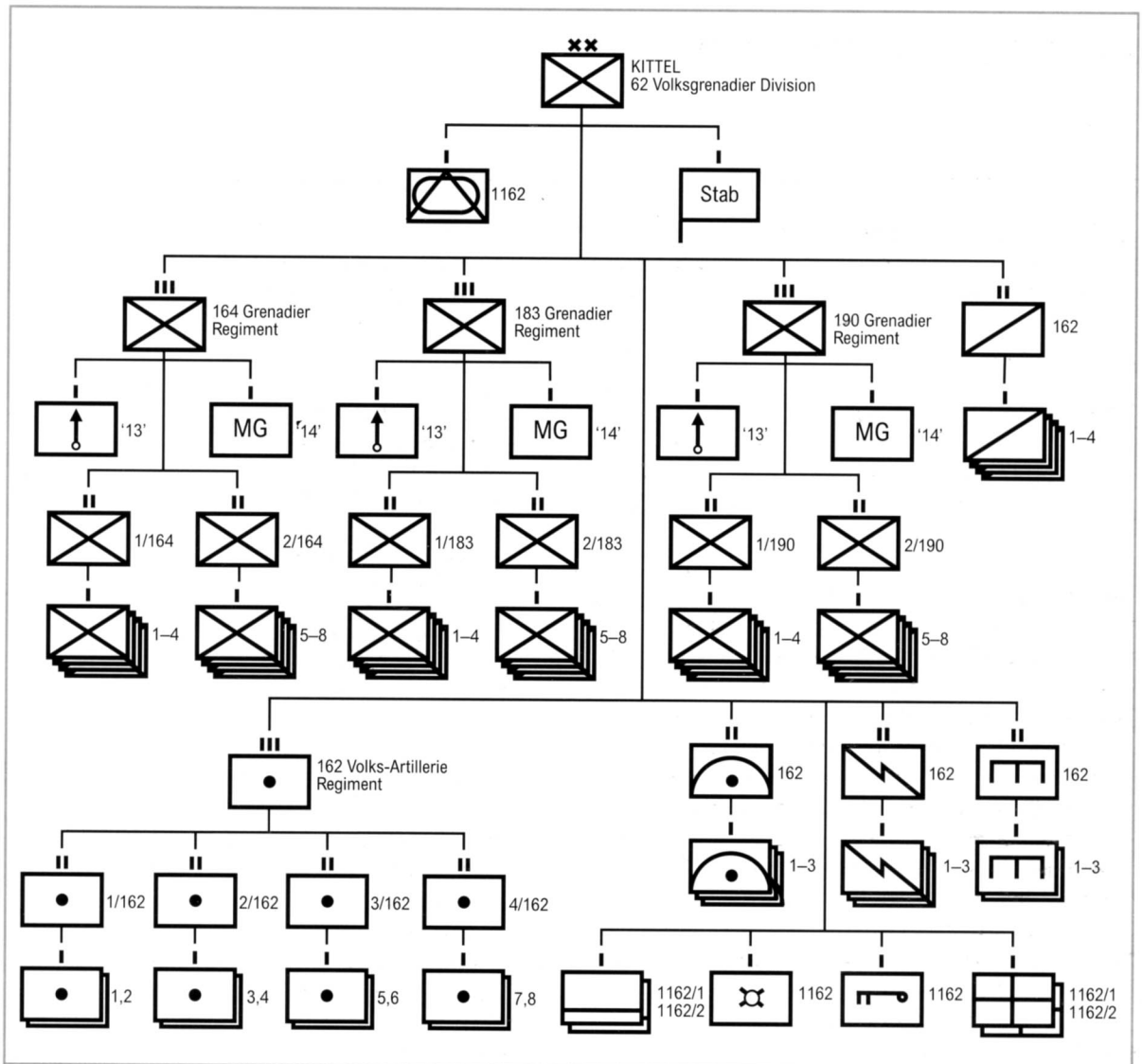
### 62 VOLKSGRENADIER DIVISION

*Generalmajor Friedrich Kittel*

Stabs Kompanie

164 Volksgrenadier Regiment  
 183 Volksgrenadier Regiment  
 190 Volksgrenadier Regiment  
 162 Volks-Artillerie Regiment  
 162 Aufklärungs Abteilung  
 1162 Sturmgeschütz Kompanie  
 162 Flak Abteilung  
 162 Pionier Bataillon  
 162 Nachrichten Abteilung  
 1162 Nachschub Truppe  
 1162 Werkstatt Truppe  
 1162 Verwaltungs Truppe  
 1162 Sanitäts Truppe

19 December the division had reached Lommersweiler and linked up with 18 Volksgrenadier Division at Setz for the assault against St Vith. Following the retreating 7th Armored Division on the 23rd, 62 Volksgrenadier Division got as far west as Salmchâteau. After heavy fighting in this sector over the next three weeks, the exhausted troops were relieved by 326 Volksgrenadier Division in the middle of January 1945.



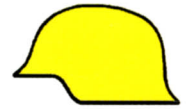
The original 62 Infanterie Division had been formed under Generalmajor Walter Keiner during the summer of 1939, mainly from Silesian reservists. They fought well in both Poland and France before being assigned to Armeegruppe Süd for Operation 'Barbarossa' in the summer of 1941. Although almost entirely lacking in motorised transport, the division made good progress but suffered inevitable heavy casualties in the course of the Soviet winter counter-offensive.

During 1942, now commanded by Generalleutnant Rudolf Friedrich, the 62nd was used to bolster the flagging Third Romanian Army northwest of Stalingrad but was then caught up in the general retreat after Paulus' Sixth Armee was encircled and finally forced to surrender. The division's further heavy losses in its second Russian winter were made up in the spring of 1943 without withdrawing it from the line, and it fought

well at Kursk in July under its third CO, Generalmajor Erich Gruner, who was killed at Sevastopol in spring 1944. The division itself suffered badly on the river Dneestr and at Jassy, so the remnants were finally returned to Germany in September after the capture of their fourth commander, Generalmajor Tronnier.

Recuperating from the long ordeal, the division absorbed the fledgling 583 Volksgrenadier Division at Neuhammer and in November was moved to Wittlich to begin preparing for Operation 'Herbstnebel'. Its latest, and last, CO was the younger brother of Generalmajor Heinrich Kittel, the defender of Metz. The unfortunate 62nd again incurred heavy losses in the Ardennes and, after it was pulled out of the line in mid-January, retreated into the Ruhr pocket, where it met its end in April.

## Führer Begleit Brigade



The Führer Begleit (Escort) Brigade was originally a personal bodyguard for Hitler, formed by the Army as a direct rival to the SS Leibstandarte 'Adolf Hitler'. The Army regarded itself as the sole arms-bearer of the Reich and was apprehensive about the growing strength of the SS after Hitler's accession to power in 1933. Although the Waffen-SS itself never exceeded 10 per cent of the Army's own strength, the rivalry persisted throughout the war, with both groups constantly trying to prove

**Oberst Otto-Ernst Remer was a dedicated Hitler supporter and his prompt action resulted in the arrest of most of the Bomb Plot conspirators in July 1944. In postwar Germany he was leader of the neo-Nazi Sozialistische Reichs-Partei. (Bundesarchiv)**



they were better soldiers. The way Hitler structured Heeresgruppe B for 'Herbstnebel' made the offensive something of a grudge match, with 'Sepp' Dietrich's Sixth Panzer Armee being predominantly Waffen-SS and given the prime role of driving to Antwerp. Fifth Panzer and Seventh Armees were, in effect, cast in supporting roles, but in the end it was the Army which achieved the most, even if its efforts were ultimately futile.

The Führer Begleit Brigade had its origins in the Wachtruppe Berlin, which was formed in 1934 and at one point was briefly commanded by Erwin Rommel. The Wachtruppe, expanded to a battalion in 1937, formed the nucleus of the famous 'Großdeutschland' Regiment, later enlarged to a division, but retained its own identity as the Führer Begleit Bataillon from 1939. In 1941 the battalion's duties were divided between Berlin and the Führerhauptquartier in the Wolfsschanze outside Rastenburg, East Prussia. At the Wolfsschanze the battalion had responsibility for guarding the inner perimeter, while its sister Führer Grenadier Bataillon (raised in 1943) guarded the

### FÜHRER BEGLEIT BRIGADE

*Oberst, later Generalmajor, Otto-Ernst Remer*

Stabs Kompanie

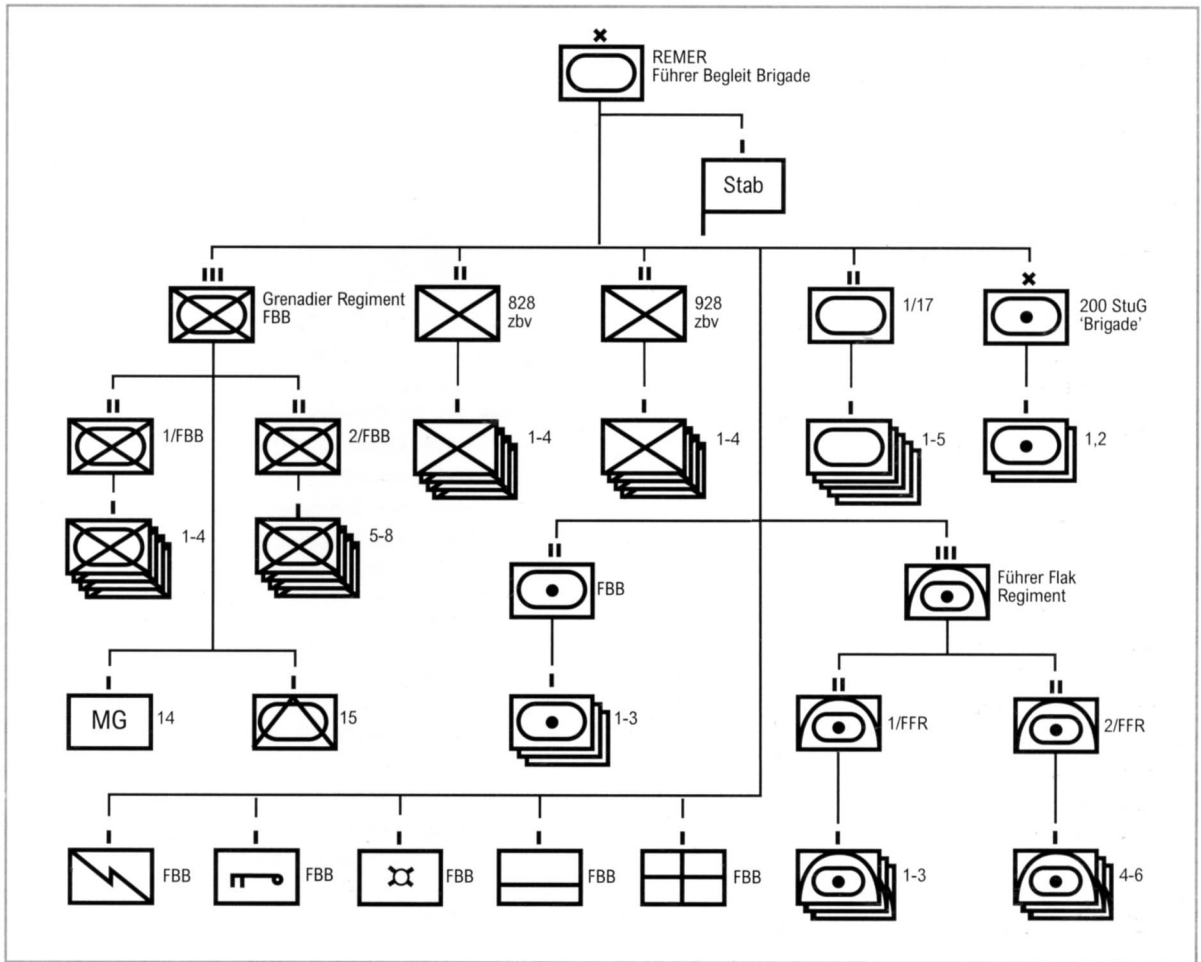
I/17 Panzer Regiment 'Großdeutschland'  
 200 Sturmgeschütz Brigade  
 Panzer Grenadier Regiment FBB  
 Führer Flak Regiment  
 828 Infanterie Bataillon zbv  
 928 Grenadier Bataillon zbv (Fahrrad)  
 Artillerie Abteilung FBB  
 Nachrichten Kompanie FBB  
 Nachschub Truppe FBB  
 Werkstatt Kompanie FBB  
 Verwaltungs Truppe FBB  
 Sanitäts Kompanie FFB

Note: Although 120 Aufklärungs, 120 Panzerjäger and 120 Pionier battalions appear in some secondary sources, they are not listed in the official German 'Führer-Begleit-Brigade Stand Dezember 1944'.

outer. Other components of 'FBB' fought with the 'Großdeutschland' division in Russia at Kharkov and Kursk in 1943. In May 1944 both battalions were expanded to regiments.

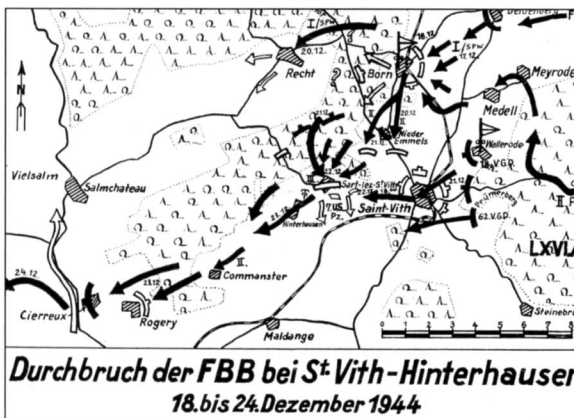
On 20 July 1944 the Berlin garrison was commanded by Major Otto-Ernst Remer. As news of the bomb attack on Hitler's life at Rastenburg swept through Berlin, Remer was summoned by Josef Goebbels, the only senior Nazi official then in Berlin. Goebbels connected Remer directly to Hitler on the telephone line. Hardly believing his luck, Remer found himself promoted on the spot to Oberst and given the task of arresting the conspirators, which he accomplished within hours. From this point on he became one of the few men whom Hitler really trusted, and on 1 August the Führer Begleit Regiment was further expanded into a brigade, with Remer in command, acquiring the second battalion of Panzer Regiment 'Großdeutschland' and 200 StuG Brigade.

In November the brigade's components then fighting in Russia were moved west for operation 'Herbstnebel' and on 10 December began assembling



near Daun as part of OKW Reserve. This caused a great deal of confusion to Allied intelligence when the presence of both the Führer Begleit and Grenadier Brigades was detected. Not only were they both

**Original German map showing the successive probes by the Führer Begleit Brigade at the defences of St Vith over 18/24 December. (Author's collection)**



known components of the 'Großdeutschland' Panzer Division, but the commander of Fifth Panzer Armee, Hasso von Manteuffel, had commanded that division since January. However, Soviet intelligence (correctly) put 'GD' on the eastern front!

Remer's brigade was below full strength when it was transferred from OKW Reserve to LXVI Korps to reinforce the assault on St Vith. However, it had 23 PzKpfw IVs and 20 Sturmgeschütze in the five companies of I/17 Panzer Regiment and a further 28 StuGs in 200 Sturmgeschütz Brigade.

Alongside 18 and 62 Volksgrenadier Divisions, Remer's brigade finally took St Vith on 21 December. Transferred to LVIII Korps and moved south next day, it captured Fraiture on the flank of 2 SS-Panzer Division, then was briefly involved in the fighting near Hotton before again being moved south towards Bastogne as part of XLVII Panzer Korps.

At the end of January 1945 the brigade was expanded (on paper) to a division with Remer still as CO but now a Generalmajor. Moved into Czechoslovakia, it met its end outside Prague in April 1945.

# LXVI KORPS' BATTLES

## 293 and 294 Volksgrenadier Regiments

### Schnee Eifel/Schönberg – December 16–19

When he began planning LXVI Korps' attack, under Manteuffel's directions but with useful suggestions from his subordinate, Oberst Günther von Hoffmann-Schönborn, Walter Lucht based everything on two factors. The first thing he relied on was the apparent weakness of American forces in the relatively lowland Amblève river valley between the Schnee Eifel and the Hohes Venn to the north – the so-called Losheim Gap. The second point Lucht depended on was the ability of Sixth Panzer Armee on his right flank to drive those same American forces back very quickly. This would enable him to fill the vacuum with Hoffmann-Schönborn's 18 Volksgrenadier Division in a right hook aimed at the bridge over the river Our at Schönberg. That in turn would give direct access west through the important road junction at St Vith towards Vielsalm and Bovigny.

For the attack on the Schnee Eifel, Lucht and Hoffmann-Schönborn put 294 and 295 Grenadier Regiments on the right, supported by the attached 244 Sturmgeschutz Brigade. The division's 18 Füsilier Bataillon was to pin down the centre of the American line, while 293 Grenadier Regiment on the left was to complete a pincer manoeuvre by driving on Schönberg through Bleialf. Finally, 1818 Panzerjäger Abteilung, with its sole company of 14 Hetzers, was to be held in reserve behind 294 Grenadier Regiment.

The assault companies of the three grenadier regiments began infiltrating the lines of the U.S. 14th Cavalry Group and 106th Infantry Division about an hour before the artillery barrage was due to start at

0530 hrs on 16 December. By the time it did, the villages of Weckerath and Roth were already in the hands of 294 Grenadier Regiment – which was being led personally by Hoffmann-Schönborn – while the StuG Brigade advanced towards Auw, and Bleialf was under attack by 293 Grenadier Regiment. Kobscheid fell soon afterwards, as the light tanks and armoured cars of the 14th Cavalry Group pulled back westward; Auw fell after a brief firefight later in the morning and by mid-afternoon the 106th Infantry Division's 422nd Regiment (Colonel George Deschenaux) had been completely outflanked and its supporting 589th and 592nd Field Artillery Battalions were under attack. To the south the 423rd Infantry Regiment (Colonel Charles Cavender), even though it had suffered worst from the German artillery barrage, retook Bleialf – but it was a shortlived reprieve.

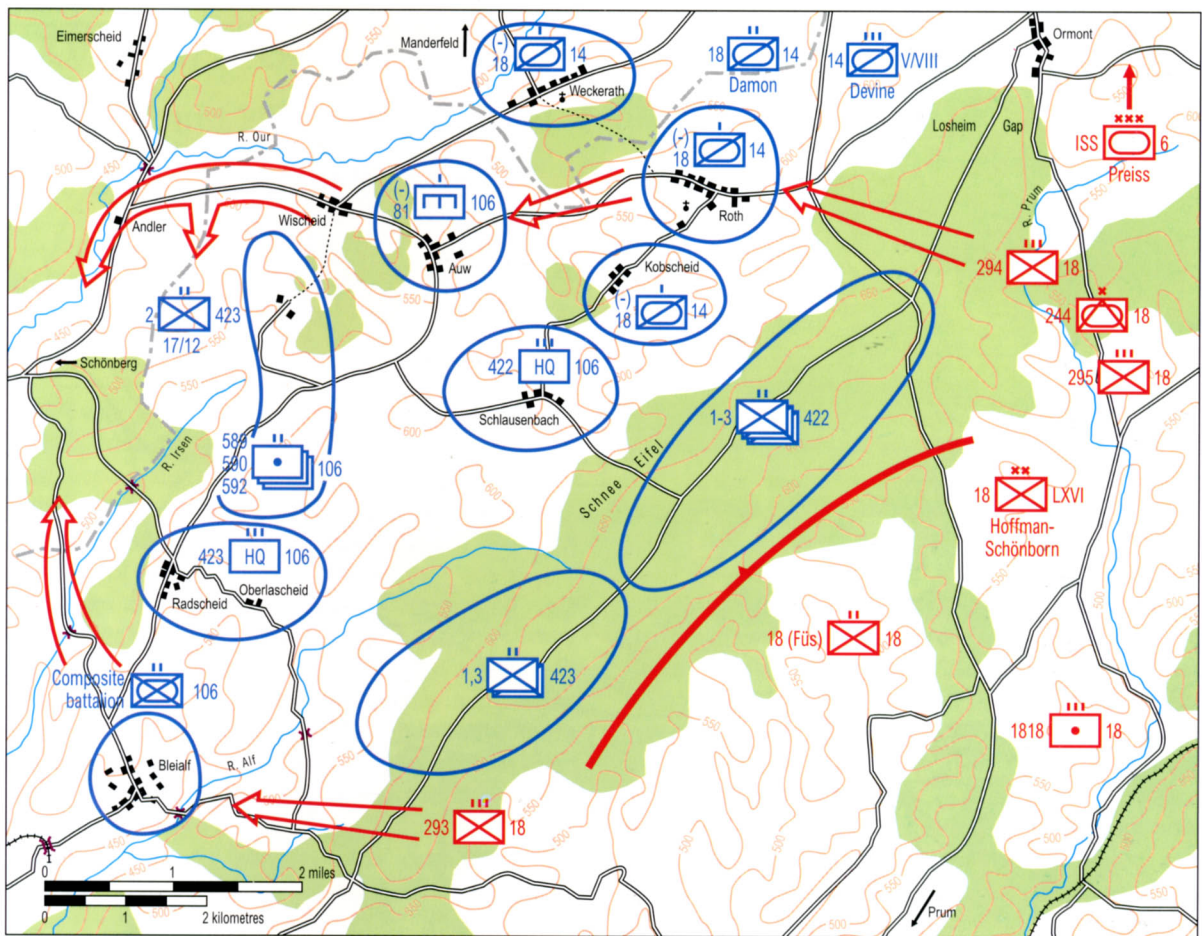
During the night of the 16th/17th, 294 Grenadier Regiment advanced on Schönberg, drove out a cavalry detachment and seized the bridge over the Our intact, while 293 Grenadier Regiment recaptured Bleialf just before dawn and also pressed on toward Schönberg. The two American infantry regiments had



**Disconsolate GIs of the 106th Infantry Division trudge into captivity after being surrounded on the Schnee Eifel. The men themselves wanted to fight on but suffered from inept leadership in this crisis.**

(U.S. Signal Corps)

| 16/12/1944        | 17/12 | 18/12 | 19/12 | 20/12 | 21/12 | 22/12 | 23/12 | 24/12       | 25/12       | 26/12 | 28/12 | 30/12       |
|-------------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------------|-------------|-------|-------|-------------|
| pages 32-38,66-67 | 86-89 | 39-40 | 41-42 | 68-69 | 70-71 | 43-44 | 51-52 | 47-50,72-73 | 45-46,53-54 |       |       | 55-56,94-95 |



so far been refused permission to withdraw and were now almost surrounded. For the rest of the day they did, in effect, nothing, waiting for the promised arrival of 7th Armored Division. The German grenadiers simply tightened the noose and pushed on toward Setz, only a couple of miles from St Vith. Hoffmann-Schönborn's chief of staff, Oberstleutnant Dietrich Moll, later called the inaction of the two trapped regiments 'unverständlich' ('incomprehensible').

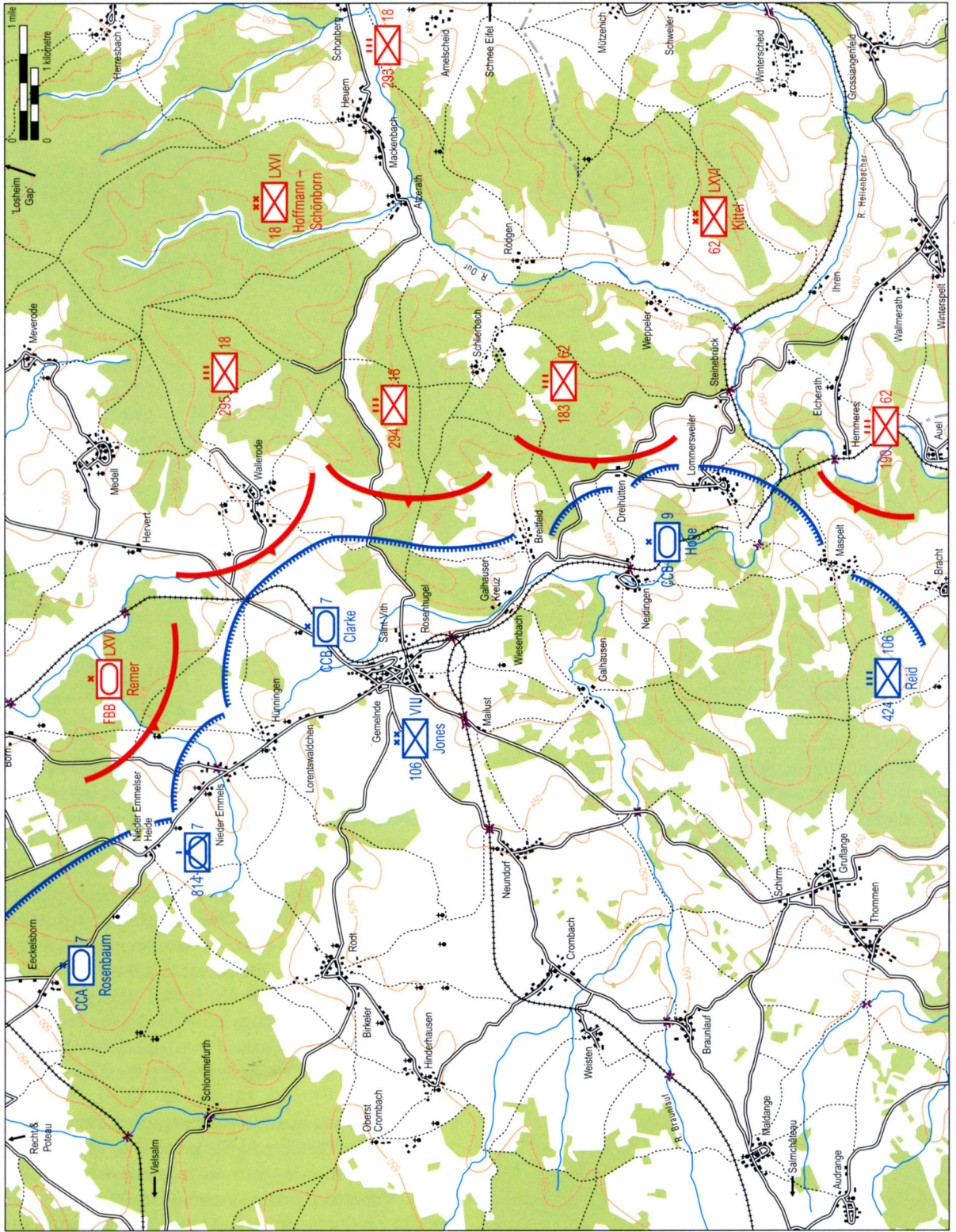
In the early hours of 18 December the two American regiments finally received permission to fight their way out southwest between Schönberg and Bleialf. By late morning they were slowly pushing back 293 Grenadier Regiment, and could probably have succeeded in escaping, when their divisional commander, Major-General Alan Jones, ordered them to retrace their footsteps, saying that 'it is imperative that Schönberg be retaken'. While redeploying after the short winter day ended, the two regiments

**Hoffman-Schönborn's outflanking pincer manoeuvre in the Schnee Eifel at the outset of the campaign gave German forces their greatest victory in the Ardennes – and it was accomplished with lowly Volksgrenadiers!**

accidentally got into a firefight with each other, then at daybreak suffered badly – out in the open – when Hoffmann-Schönborn directed his artillery on them.

Cavender's 423rd attempted to storm Schönberg late in the morning of 19 December, but by this time his men were very low on ammunition and the Volksgrenadiers repulsed them with relative ease. Mid-afternoon, Cavender surrendered. Deschenaux followed suit shortly afterwards. Apart from the two infantry regiments, Hoffmann-Schönborn also captured the 590th and most of the 589th Field Artillery Battalions as well as large elements of the 106th Infantry Division's anti-aircraft, engineer, medical, reconnaissance and tank destroyer units.

|                   |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |             |             |       |       |             |
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| 16/12/1944        | 17/12 | 18/12 | 19/12 | 20/12 | 21/12 | 22/12 | 23/12 | 24/12       | 25/12       | 26/12 | 28/12 | 30/12       |
| pages 32-38,66-67 | 86-89 | 39-40 | 41-42 | 68-69 | 70-71 | 43-44 | 51-52 | 47-50,72-73 | 45-46,53-54 |       |       | 55-56,94-95 |



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| 16/12/1944              | 17/12 | 18/12 | 19/12 | 20/12 | 21/12 | 22/12 | 23/12 | 24/12       | 25/12       | 26/12 | 28/12 | 30/12       |  |
| pages 32-38,66-67,84-85 |       | 39-40 | 41-42 | 68-69 | 70-71 | 43-44 | 51-52 | 47-50,72-73 | 45-46,53-54 |       |       | 55-56,94-95 |  |

# LXVI KORPS' BATTLES

183, 294 and 295 Volksgrenadier Regiments and

Führer Begleit Brigade

## St Vith – December 17–23

Even while the bulk of 18 Volksgrenadier Division's 294 Regiment was deploying to complete the encirclement of the U.S. 106th Infantry Division's 422nd and 423rd Regiments east of Schönberg on 17 December, at least one company of grenadiers, accompanied by three assault guns from 244 Sturmgeschutz Brigade, pushed west through Setz. Driving out a small American cavalry detachment in Heuem, they headed on towards St Vith, but came under artillery fire as they approached the Prümerberg heights straddling the road about a mile east of the town. Two of the StuGs were disabled and Hoffmann-Schönborn's grenadiers went to ground to await reinforcements.

At this point St Vith lay wide open. The only defenders on the ridge were about 300 combat engineers with a baker's dozen of howitzers and anti-tank guns. If the Führer Begleit Brigade had been assigned to Walter Lucht's LXVI Korps from the outset, the town would have fallen with hardly a shot being fired. As it was, by mid-afternoon the U.S. 7th Armored Division began arriving after its long journey from the other side of Aachen, and it was American not German reinforcements who reached Prümerberg first.

The commander of 7th Armored's Combat Command B, Brigadier-General Bruce Clarke, decisively took over the defence of St Vith from his ranking superior, Major-General Alan Jones of the 106th Infantry Division. He deployed 7th Armored's three combat commands in an arc from Prümerberg in the east via Rodt to Recht and Poteau to the north and west, where long columns of armour from 1 and

9 SS-Panzer Divisions were heading towards the Meuse along Rollbahn E. Defence of the southeast was then entrusted to Brigadier-General William Hoge's CCB of 9th Armored Division, which would soon be reinforced by Colonel Alex Reid's 424th Regiment of the 106th Infantry Division.

Reid's 424th had been the main adversary of Generalmajor Friedrich Kittel's 62 Volksgrenadier Division, on the left of LXVI Korps' offensive. Kittel advanced with his 183 and 190 Grenadier Regiments in line abreast through Heckhuscheid and Eigelscheid respectively, aiming for the river Our crossings at Hemmeres and Steinebrück.

On the 62nd's left, 183 Grenadier Regiment was initially repulsed by III/424th at Heckhuscheid, but 190 Grenadier Regiment succeeded in breaking through the American battalion's lines north of Eigelscheid, on the road toward Winterspelt and Steinebrück. Colonel Reid brought I/424th forward from its reserve position in Steinebrück to Winterspelt. During the night, however, elements of 190 Grenadier Regiment pushed into Winterspelt and by the morning of the 17th occupied the village. The regiment then moved on, leaving 164 Grenadier Regiment to occupy the saddle of high ground between the village and the bridge at Steinebrück. This threatened to envelop the 424th since it had already lost contact with the 423rd on its left flank due to the attack on Bleialf by Hoffmann-Schönborn's 293 Grenadier Regiment. If Kittel's 62 Volksgrenadier Division got across the bridge at Steinebrück, it could veer left down the west bank of the Our, trapping the 424th to its east.

U.S. VIII Corps commander, Troy Middleton, had not been idle during the 16th, and even before the arrival of 7th Armored Division he brought Brigadier-General William Hoge's CCB, 9th Armored Division, south from Faymonville where it had been assembled

**After 18 Volksgrenadier Division captured Schönberg, their elation at victory over the U.S. 106th Infantry Division was diminished by the unexpectedly fierce opposition just west of St Vith.**

| 16/12/1944              | 17/12 | 18/12 | 19/12 | 20/12 | 21/12 | 22/12 | 23/12 | 24/12       | 25/12       | 26/12 | 28/12 | 30/12       |
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| pages 32-38,66-67,84-85 |       | 39-40 | 41-42 | 68-69 | 70-71 | 43-44 | 51-52 | 47-50,72-73 | 45-46,53-54 |       |       | 55-56,94-95 |

to support the 2nd Infantry Division's attack through the West Wall at Wahlerscheid toward the Rur and Urft dams. As soon as it arrived before dawn on the 17th, Clarke ordered CCB/9th's 27th Armored Infantry and 14th Tank Battalions to Winterspelt, where they counter-attacked 164 Grenadier Regiment, throwing it into disorder. Digging in, the armoured infantry held off Kittel's grenadiers for the remainder of the day before covering the withdrawal of the 424th and then retiring west of the Our themselves during the night of the 17th/18th.

Kittel now brought up his horse-drawn artillery in preparation for an assault on Steinebrück, but American engineers blew the bridge, forcing his men to wade the icy river. They met little opposition because General Hoge knew his forces were already outflanked by elements of 18 Volksgrenadier Division in Setz, and withdrew them to the high ground between Lommersweiler and Burg Reuland. Kittel's engineers immediately started on building a pontoon bridge to get the division's artillery and company of Hetzers across the river, while elements of 190 Grenadier Regiment established contact with 18 Volksgrenadier Division troops at Setz.

The next 24 hours passed relatively quietly as 62 Volksgrenadier Division moved into its new positions west of the Our while 18 Volksgrenadier Division took the surrender of the two American regiments trapped in the Schnee Eifel. A battalion of Hoffmann-Schönborn's division did make a couple of rather half-hearted sorties against the defenders on

**Oberst Otto Remer with two of his officers from I/17 Panzer Regiment during the battle for St Vith.**  
(Bundesarchiv)



the Prümerberg heights, but these were repulsed by heavy and accurate artillery fire. Korps commander Walter Lucht wisely therefore decided to delay a full-scale assault on St Vith until reinforcements arrived, knowing the Führer Begleit Brigade had finally been released from OKW Reserve. Remer's brigade was delayed arriving by traffic congestion but began to assemble on the right flank of LXVI Korps near Wallerode, to the northeast of St Vith. However, the defenders also received reinforcements during 19 December with the arrival of the 112th Regiment from 28th Infantry Division, which had been driven back from Ouren through Weiswampach by 560 Volksgrenadier Division (LVIII Korps), and now took up station on the right of Reid's 424th.

By the 20th LXVI Korps was almost in a position to attack St Vith. Hoffmann-Schönborn's 295 Grenadier Regiment occupied the right of the line opposite Hünningen; 294th was on its left opposite Prümerberg, while Kittel's 190 and 164 Grenadier Regiments continued the line further south. 293 Grenadier Regiment was in reserve in Schönberg and 183 back at Winterspelt.

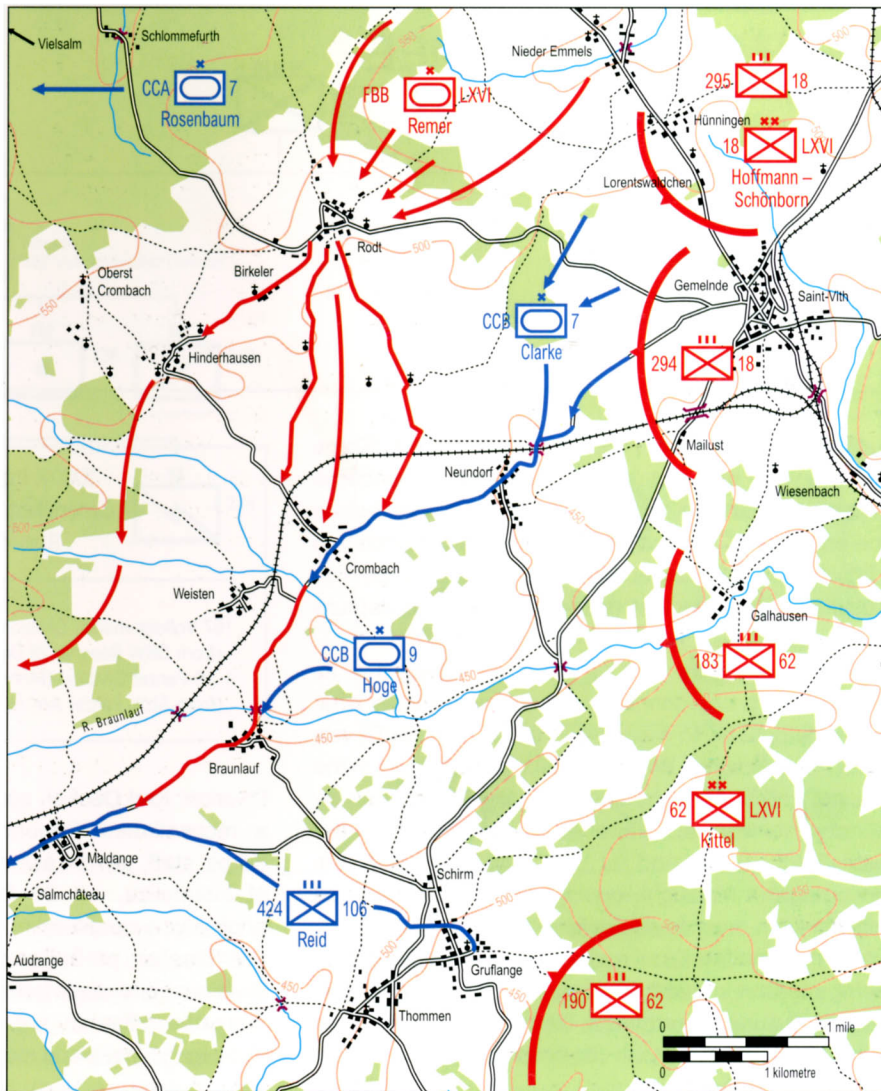
The Führer Begleit Brigade, meanwhile, although still lacking most of its tanks, tried one attack from the north to outflank Hünningen but was repulsed by a dug-in company of tank destroyers. Next day, the 21st, von Manteuffel ordered Lucht to assault St Vith in force whether Remer's brigade was ready or not.

All the Korps artillery had now been assembled near Schönberg and at 1600 hrs began an intense bombardment of the St Vith defences. After 15 minutes the gunners lifted their sights and the Volksgrenadiers began to advance, 295 Regiment from Wallerode (where Hoffmann-Schönborn had been wounded the previous day), 294 against Prümerberg and 183, brought up from reserve, against the junction of CCB 7th and CCB 9th Armored Divisions north of Lommersweiler. Kittel's 164 and 190 Grenadier Regiments, now on the south of LXVI Korps' line, were in the meanwhile making steady if slow progress against Reid's 424th near Grufflange, but played no part in the battle for St Vith.

Remer's Führer Begleit Brigade, deterred at Ober Emmeisser on the 20th by the tank destroyers of the 814th Battalion, now essayed an attack against Rodt, further west, but was baulked by CCA of 7th Armored. Similarly, the assault against Hünningen through the woods west of Wallerode by 295 Grenadier Regiment

| 16/12/1944              | 17/12 | 18/12 | 19/12 | 20/12 | 21/12 | 22/12 | 23/12 | 24/12       | 25/12       | 26/12 | 28/12 | 30/12       |
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The final capture of St Vith by 294 Volksgrenadier Regiment after fighting its way through well dug-in enemy forces on higher ground contradicts standard military theory, which only proves that the 'rule books' have to be thrown away sometimes! The subsequent exploitation by the Führer Begleit Brigade, although it succeeded in completing the annihilation of Task Force 'Jones' at Salmchâteau, failed to accomplish the destruction of the U.S. 7th Armored Division as hoped, with severe repercussions when First Army counter-attacked in January 1945.



was thrown into disarray by the intensity of the American artillery fire. Walter Lucht, who had moved his forward headquarters to Wallerode, ordered everything thrown into 294 Grenadier Regiment's assault on the Prümerberg heights. This time, the grenadiers carried the day, punched a hole through the dug-in infantry of CCB/7th, and began pouring down the road into St Vith, closely followed by 183 Grenadier Regiment.

The defenders – now under command of XVIII (Airborne) Corps after VIII Corps' transfer to Patton's Third Army – were ordered to begin a systematic withdrawal west of the river Salm. The 112th and 424th Infantry Regiments went first,

followed by CCB/9th, leaving just a small covering force (Task Force 'Jones') on the Salmchâteau road. CCB/7th, outflanked on both sides and pursued by the Führer Begleit Brigade, retired southwest through Crombach. Remer's tanks, and grenadiers armed with Panzerfausts, harassed every step of their way, but in the early hours of 23 December, helped by a sharp frost, the remnants of the combat command managed to break out west. The Führer Begleit Brigade's last achievement before being transferred to LVIII Korps on the 24th was to complete the annihilation of Task Force 'Jones', which had been bottled up by Kampfgruppe 'Krag' from 2 SS-Panzer Division at Salmchâteau.

| 16/12/1944              | 17/12 | 18/12 | 19/12 | 20/12 | 21/12 | 22/12 | 23/12 | 24/12       | 25/12       | 26/12 | 28/12 | 30/12       |
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# FIFTH PANZER ARMEE

## XXXIX PANZER KORPS

**G**eneralleutnant Karl Decker's XXXIX Korps was the last major formation to become operational with Fifth Panzer Armee before the end of 1944, and was subordinated to Heinrich von Lüttwitz's XLVII Panzer Korps in 'Armeegruppe von Lüttwitz' during the last desperate battles to capture Bastogne.

The whole story of XXXIX Panzer Korps and its deployment is an anomaly because it was neither what it was supposed to have been in the first place, nor what Feldmarschall Walter Model wanted it to be in the second place. Misbegotten, and largely forgotten by history, it was an unnecessary addition to the battlefield at the end of the day. Nor, with the advantage of hindsight, could it have been deployed effectively in the role originally envisaged.

The Korps itself, in name, had had a long war, being created in 1939, serving in France and then in Russia. It surrendered to the Red Army near Minsk in July 1944 but the then commander of 5 Panzer

### XXXIX PANZER KORPS

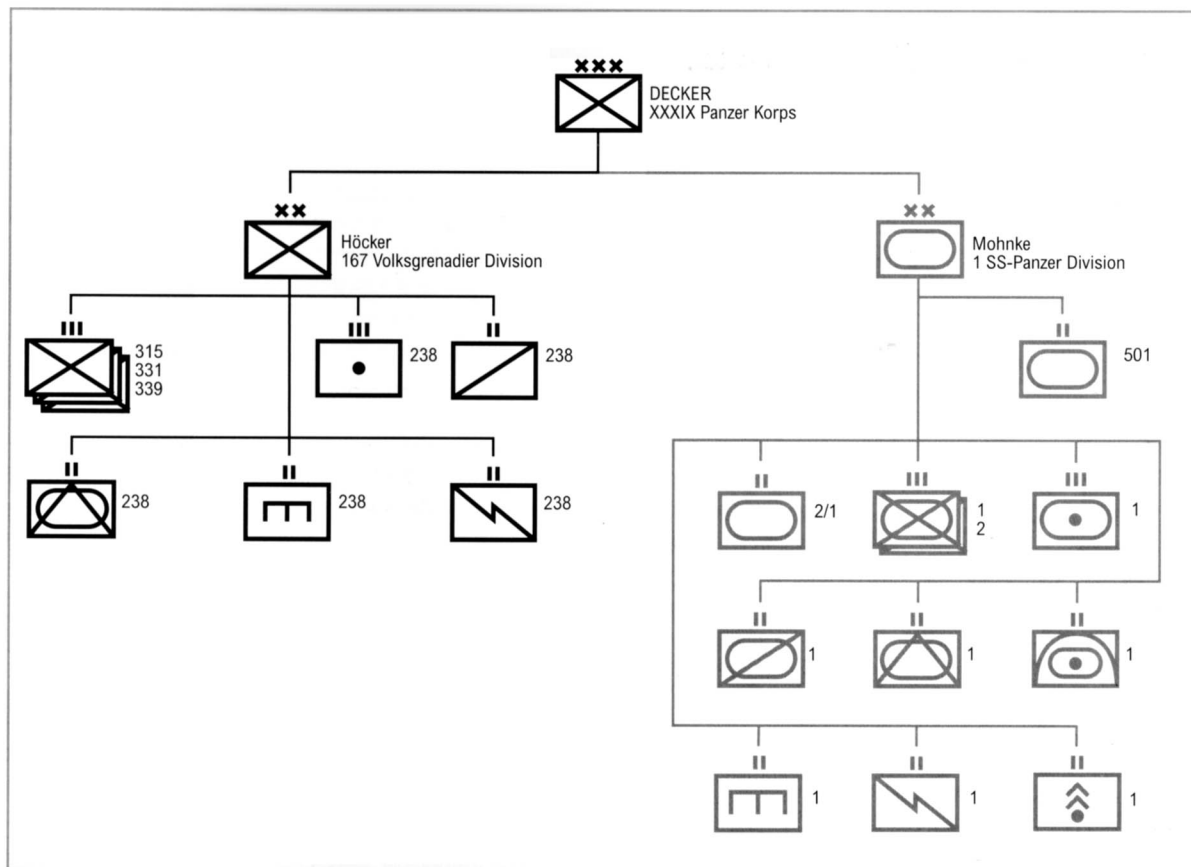
Generalleutnant Karl Decker  
Stabs Kompanie

167 Volksgrenadier Division (Höcker)  
(from OKW Reserve 28 December)  
1 SS-Panzer Division (Mohnke)  
(from Sixth Panzer Armee 28 December)

Division, Karl Decker, survived to be appointed CO of a reconstituted Generalkommando XXXIX Panzer Korps staff, which assembled at Tavigny, just east of Houffalize, on 26 December. The Korps was originally, a week earlier, intended to have taken over the direction of 9 Panzer and 15 Panzergrenadier Divisions, after their transfer from XII SS Korps of von Zangen's Fifteenth Armee. Had this actually been done in the first place, so that von Manteuffel did have



Bicycles were not a particularly useful mode of transport in the mud, slush and snow of the Ardennes, but they were used by many units, including the reconnaissance battalions of the Volksgrenadier divisions. Here, men of an unidentified unit trudge past a Panther and PzKpfw IV. (BFZ, Stuttgart)



a proper mobile reserve for Fifth Panzer Armee, it might have made a big difference to the course of the campaign, particularly at Bastogne, by freeing XLVII Panzer Korps to concentrate on the drive to the Meuse. Instead, 9 Panzer and 15 Panzergrenadier Divisions were first assigned (but too late) to von Lüttwitz's Korps, then the former was transferred to Krüger's LVIII Panzer Korps, halving the effectiveness they might have had, deployed earlier and in unison.

Model then proposed that Decker's XXXIX Panzer Korps staff take over 3 Panzergrenadier Division, which had been fighting with Sixth Panzer Armee on Elsenborn ridge; together with von Lüttwitz's 15 Panzergrenadier Division, which was already involved in the battle for Bastogne; plus 11 Panzer Division from Heeresgruppe G. However, 11 Panzer Division only had 3,500 effectives at this time, of whom a mere 800 were first echelon troops, so this suggestion was wisely abandoned.

What this left was 9 and 167 Volksgrenadier Divisions, but Erich Brandenberger's Seventh Armee was in a desperate situation too, so in the end only General Höcker's 167 Division went to XXXIX Korps, although the remnants of the once-proud 1 SS-Panzer Division Leibstandarte 'Adolf Hitler' were brought

south to assist in 'Kampfraum Bastogne'.

Karl Decker's Korps, subordinated to von Lüttwitz's overall command, formed up to attack Bastogne from the southeast in the left hook of a pincer movement with the remainder of XLVII Korps supplying the right hook from the northwest. It was, in fairness to both von Manteuffel and von Lüttwitz, about the only plan which could have been devised, given the disintegration of the offensives by both Sixth Panzer and Seventh Armee to their north and south. Besides, Hitler had ordered specifically on 27 December that Bastogne be taken 'at all costs'.

That Decker did the best possible with the meagre forces assigned to XXXIX Panzer Korps is undeniable. By the time the attack was launched, however, it was already too late because Bastogne had been significantly reinforced by the 4th Armored and 35th Infantry Divisions from Major-General John Millikin's III Corps of Patton's Third Army. Further Allied forces, including 6th Armored Division, were also on their way for the start of the Allied counter-offensive planned provisionally to begin on 3 January, and Decker's men found themselves banging their heads against a proverbial brick wall. By the middle of January the Korps had been reassigned to Heeresgruppe G in Alsace.

## 167 Volksgrenadier Division

**T**o the unfortunate 167 Volksgrenadier Division went the unlucky distinction of sharing almost the same fate as the U.S. 106th Infantry Division during the 'battle of the bulge'. The best part of two of its regiments, and their commanders, were taken prisoner during Third Army's counter-attack through the West Wall in February 1945.

The division was released from OKW Reserve on 22 December, alongside 9 Volksgrenadier Division, which was assigned to Seventh Armee. Because it was forced to detrain east of the Rhein due to the heavy Allied air strikes against rail lines and bridges since Operation 'Herbstnebel' began, it did not begin assembling southeast of Bastogne until the 28th, joining 1 SS-Panzer Division, which had had a slow journey south. (The Leibstandarte itself was in a sorry state by this time, one of its Kampfgruppen having been destroyed and two others badly mauled during the fighting in the Amblève valley before Christmas.) At Bastogne, 167 Volksgrenadier Division was principally opposed by Patton's 35th Infantry and also parts of 4th Armored Division and was only able to make minimal headway before being forced into a long retreat.

The 167 Infanterie Division had been formed in January 1940 with its home station in München. Only

IFH 18/40 10.5cm field guns abandoned by 167 Volksgrenadier Division near Lutrebois being examined by GIs of the U.S. 35th Infantry Division, III Corps. The muzzle brake, unusual on a field gun, was introduced in 1939 to allow a larger propellant charge to be used, increasing range from 11,700 to 13,500 yards. (U.S. Army)



### 167 VOLKSGRENADIER DIVISION

*Generalleutnant Hans-Kurt Höcker*  
Stabs Kompanie

315 Volksgrenadier Regiment  
331 Volksgrenadier Regiment  
339 Volksgrenadier Regiment  
238 Volks-Artillerie Regiment  
238 Aufklärungs Abteilung  
238 Panzerjäger Abteilung (PaK 40 & Hetzer)  
238 Pionier Bataillon  
238 Nachrichten Abteilung  
238 Nachschub Truppe  
238 Werkstatt Truppe  
238 Verwaltungs Truppe  
238 Sanitäts Truppe

partially trained, it played a subordinate role in the invasion of France but was in first-class condition for Operation 'Barbarossa' the following summer. Assigned to Guderian's 2 Panzergruppe, the division played a major part in the battle for Gomel during the massive encirclement battles around Kiev in August and, in September 1941, it was on the Moscow front

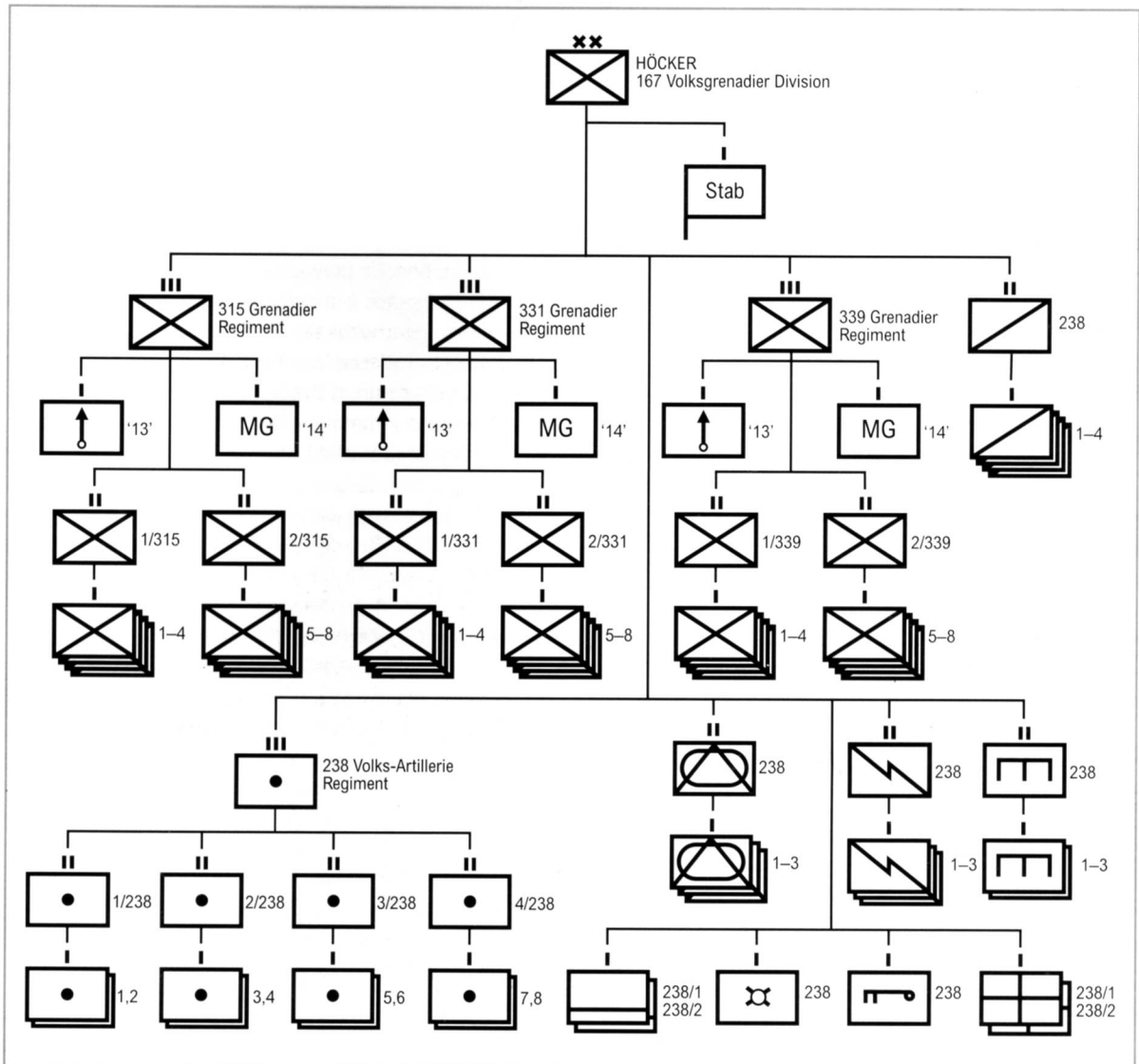
when Marshal Zhukov launched his first winter counter-offensive. The division was so badly mauled that it had to be taken out of the line, and was sent back to Holland for rehabilitation. It remained there on occupation duties until the summer of 1943, when it was reassigned to Fourth Panzer Armee reserve during Operation 'Zitadelle', the battle of Kursk.

The division, at this time commanded by Generalleutnant Wolf Trirenberg, was not directly involved in the attack phase of the operation but caught the full brunt of the Soviet Sixth Guards Army counter-attack northwest of Belgorod on 3 August. Within 24 hours the division had, to all intents and purposes, ceased to exist. The German situation in Russia was so critical, though, that the survivors remained in the line as Kampfgruppe 'Trirenberg' until they were surrounded in the Cherkassy pocket in

February 1944, alongside 1 SS-Panzer Division, with which they were to fight in the Ardennes.

A new 167 Volksgrenadier Division began forming at Dollersheim in August around the survivors from Generalleutnant Hans-Kurt Höcker's 17 Luftwaffen-Feld Division, which itself had been virtually destroyed by the U.S. First Army between Le Havre and Paris. To make up numbers, the division absorbed the partially formed 585 Volksgrenadier Division and, commanded by Höcker, moved west from Slovakia in December to its assembly area around Gerolstein.

Like most of the ill-equipped and partially trained Volksgrenadier divisions, the 167th fought harder and with greater skill than could have been expected, but after Patton's breakthrough in February 1945 the weary survivors were finally surrounded and forced to surrender in the Ruhr pocket.



# XXXIX PANZER KORPS' BATTLES

## 1 SS-Panzer Division and 167 Volksgrenadier Division

### Lutrebois – December 30

On 29 December, XXXIX Panzer Korps assembled east of Harlange for its part in von Manteuffel's planned pincer attack through Patton's Third Army to cut the Bastogne corridor, capture the town and then hook northwest to trap all the American forces east of the Meuse. Decker's Korps was to attack northwest through Lutrebois, forming the left hook of a manoeuvre designed to link up with XLVII Korps at Assenois after von Lüttwitz had recaptured Sibret.

The forces assembled for the combined assault were formidable on paper: for the Sibret attack, the Führer Begleit Brigade and 3 Panzergrenadier Division (which at one point had been intended to join XXXIX Korps); and for the Lutrebois part of the operation, 1 SS-Panzer Division and the fresh 167 Volksgrenadier Division,

accompanied by 901 Panzergrenadier Regiment from Panzer Lehr and 14 Fallschirm Regiment from 5 Fallschirmjäger Division. The reality, as von Manteuffel knew, was rather different. The Führer Begleit Brigade, even though victorious, had suffered at St Vith, as had 3 Panzergrenadier Division on Elsenborn Ridge. The Leibstandarte was, at best, at half strength after the loss of Kampfgruppe 'Peiper' at La Gleize. Only 7 Kompanie of 1 SS-Panzer Regiment still had a full complement of PzKpfw IVs, and 501 schwere SS-Panzer Abteilung's Tigers had also been reduced during the fighting in the Amblève valley. 1 SS-Panzerjäger Abteilung had similarly been seriously weakened at Krinkelt and Rocherath. How Hans-Kurt Höcker's newly formed 167 Volksgrenadier Division would perform was conjectural, even though a third of its men were veterans of other campaigns; while the other two regiments attached to XXXIX Korps had already lost heavily during the earlier battles south of Bastogne.

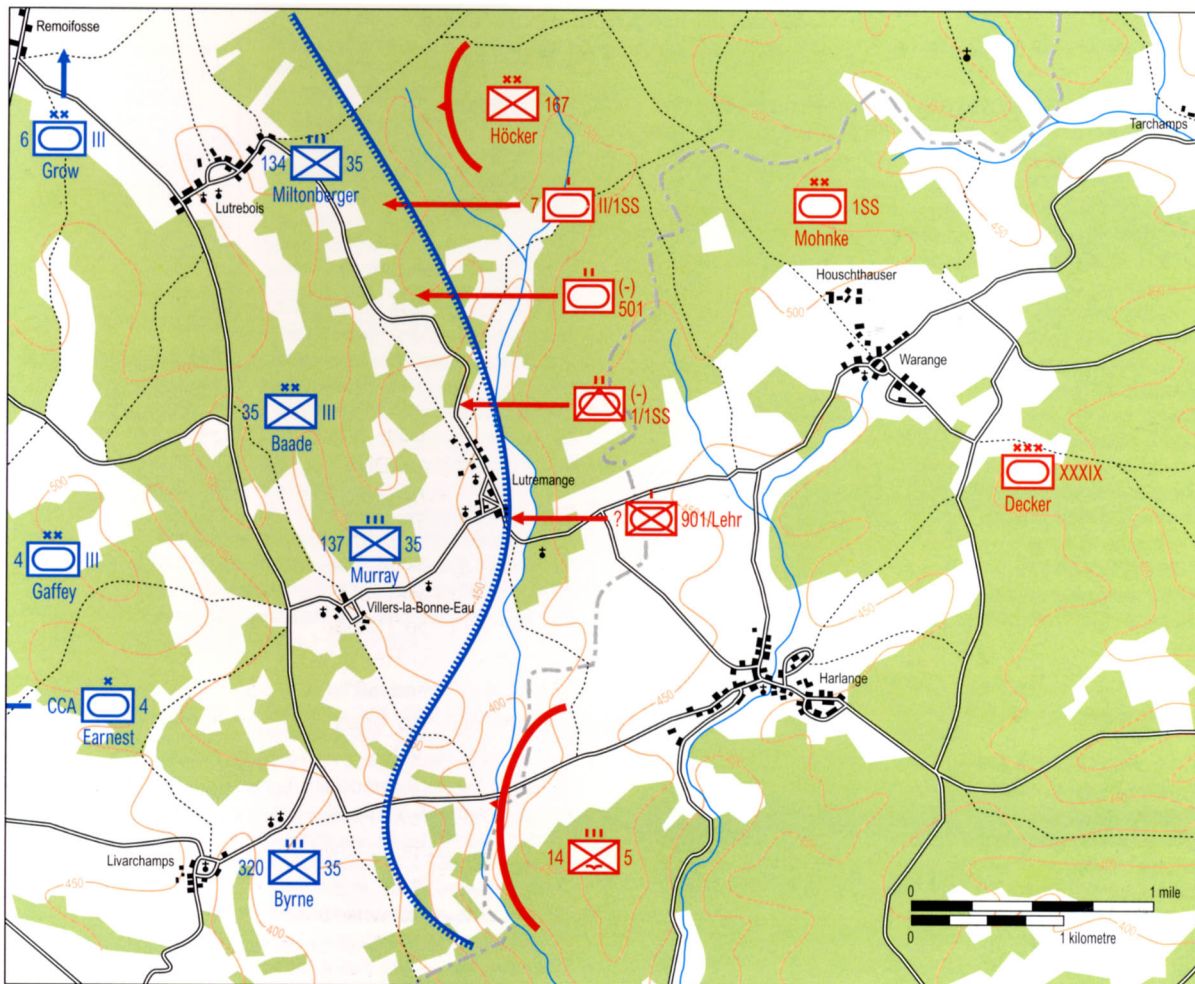
Immediately facing XXXIX Korps was Major-General Paul Baade's 35th Infantry Division, but behind that was Brigadier-General Herbert Earnest's CCA of Patton's 4th Armored Division, and just to the north lay Major-General Robert Grow's 6th Armored. Lutrebois, Decker's first objective, had only been occupied by the 3rd Battalion of the 35th's 134th Infantry Regiment the previous day! To its south, the 137th Regiment held the Villers-la-Bonne-Eau sector, while on its right flank the 320th Regiment occupied a salient towards Harlange.

Decker's attack began at about 0445 hrs on 30 December. The Leibstandarte was in the centre, with 167 Volksgrenadier Division on its right and the



**PzKpfw Vs of 1 SS-Panzer Division head south to join XXXIX Korps in the battle to break the Allied lines around Bastogne. (U.S. Signal Corps)**

| 16/12/1944              | 17/12 | 18/12 | 19/12 | 20/12 | 21/12 | 22/12 | 23/12 | 24/12       | 25/12       | 26/12 | 28/12 | 30/12 |
|-------------------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------------|-------------|-------|-------|-------|
| pages 32-38,66-67,84-85 | 86-89 | 39-40 | 41-42 | 68-69 | 70-71 | 43-44 | 51-52 | 47-50,72-73 | 45-46,53-54 |       |       | 55-56 |



**On the same day that XLVII Korps' assault towards Sibret from the northwest ran headlong into 11th Armored Division, XXXIX Korps was equally unable to break the Bastogne corridor from the southeast.**

Fallschirmjäger and Panzergrenadiers on its left. Höcker's Volksgrenadiers, advancing in column of battalions through the woods northeast of Lutrebois, were caught in an intense barrage from 4th Armored Division's artillery (using the POZIT proximity fuse) and, in their commander's own words, were 'zerstückeln' ('cut to pieces').

The Leibstandarte fared little better, although grenadiers accompanied by seven Panzers did take Villers-la-Bonne-Eau after surrounding and capturing two companies of III/137th. South of Lutrebois more grenadiers pierced the lines of II/134th Infantry

Regiment, only to be halted again by accurate artillery fire. Seven of 7/1 SS-Panzer Abteilung's tanks, which broke through north of the village, were put out of action by tank destroyers and, although III/134th had to fall back from Lutrebois, it was quickly reinforced by CCA/4th's 51st Armored Infantry Battalion. The Tigers of 501 schwere SS-Panzer Abteilung, advancing with the Jagdpanzer IV/70s of 1 SS-Panzerjäger Abteilung, fared little better because daybreak brought the 'Jabos' of Brigadier-General Otto Weyland's XIX Tactical Air Command. The first wave of fighters knocked out seven Panzers, the second a further six; six more succumbed to M4s of CCA/4th's 35th Tank Battalion, and three to M36s of the 654th Tank Destroyer Battalion. To all intents and purposes, XXXIX Korps ceased to exist in one day of battle.

| 16/12/1944               | 17/12 | 18/12 | 19/12 | 20/12 | 21/12 | 22/12 | 23/12 | 24/12       | 25/12       | 26/12 | 28/12 | 30/12 |
|--------------------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------------|-------------|-------|-------|-------|
| pages 32-38,66-67,84-85, | 86-89 | 39-40 | 41-42 | 68-69 | 70-71 | 43-44 | 51-52 | 47-50,72-73 | 45-46,53-54 |       |       | 55-56 |

## WARGAMING THE ARDENNES - AXIS CENTRAL SECTOR

The Ardennes Offensive of December '44 represents the last desperate gasp in the West by a defeated and crippled Germany. Recent anniversaries and commemorations, events in the cinema (as well as the reminiscences of relatives) have brought the war into sharper focus in the public mind with a consequent increase in interest. All these factors make World War II a must for many wargamers. Wargaming with model figures offers the budding general possibly the most visually satisfying medium for refighting World War II battles – particularly the Ardennes Campaign.

### Figures and models

Below is a list, by no means comprehensive, of the main figure manufacturers. Many can be obtained from good model shops or the addresses of the individual manufacturers can be found in most wargamers magazines.

#### 6-mm /1/300th Scale:

Heroics and Ross

#### 1/285th Scale:

GHQ via Chiltern miniatures

#### 10-mm/1/200th Scale:

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#### 25mm Scale:

1st Corps

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### Computer Games

Empire Interactive's 'Battleground Ardennes'

Microsoft's 'Close Combat - Normandy to the Ardennes'

Strategic Simulation Inc's 'Panzer General'

Strategic Studies Group's 'Ardennes Offensive'

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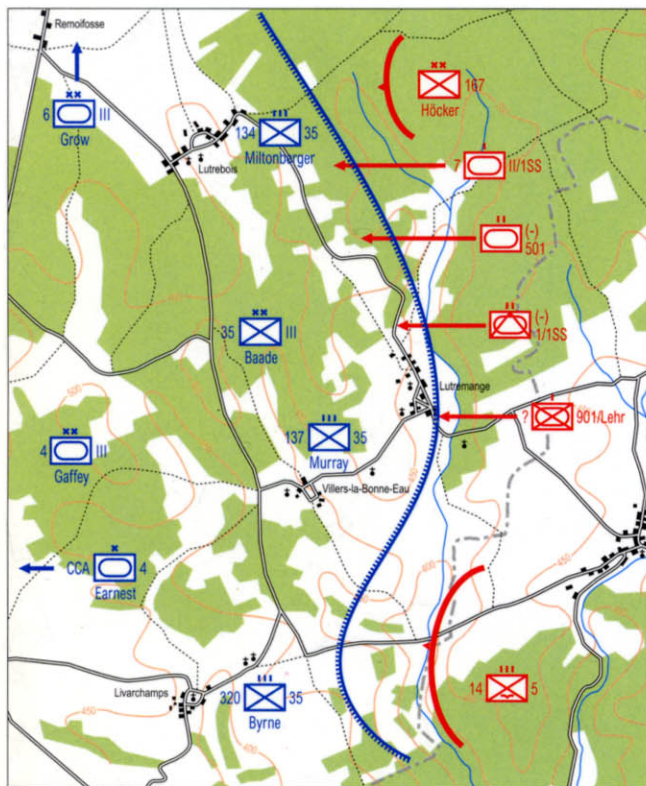
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