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ARMY HEADQUARTERS

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THE CAMPAIGN IN NORTH-WEST EUROPE  
INFORMATION FROM GERMAN SOURCES

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

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NOTES

1. How to locate complete references:

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

2. Use of single dash:

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

3. Use of term "Sitwest":

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

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

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ABBREVIATIONSAmerican

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

German

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

Others

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

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REPORT NO. 77  
HISTORICAL SECTION (G.S.)  
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THE CAMPAIGN IN NORTH-WEST EUROPE  
INFORMATION FROM GERMAN SOURCES

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

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

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

and a companion report to:

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

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

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

### SOURCES OF INFORMATION

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

### SITUATION ON 20 AUG 44

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

THE DAYS OF THE GREAT VOID

(20 Aug - 16 Sep)

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

to hold the bridgehead west of Paris;

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

(footnotes continued on next page)

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

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(footnotes continued from page 6)

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

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

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

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

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

(Ibid, fol 183)

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The Führer has ordered:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

objective: V-1 sites and Belgian industrial basin;

b) via Paris to Rheims,

objective: the traditional invasion route to Germany;

c) to Dijon,

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Concurrence was requested.

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

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

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

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

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

(signed) Jodl

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



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

(Narrator's Condensation)

#### Allied Forces

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

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

#### German Forces

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

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

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

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

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

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

### Operations

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

In the way of expedients one could:

on the right flank - withdraw to the Somme,

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

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

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

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

Hence I order:

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

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

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

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

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

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

\*\*Hereafter cited: Der Westen

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

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

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

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

4 Sep

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

5 Sep

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

6 Sep

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

6 Sep

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

(Der Westen, p. 132)

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

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

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

559 A-Tk Bn and 18 Flak Bde.

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

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

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

At this time I was assigned the following units:

[H.Q.] 88 Corps

719 Inf Div

176 Trg & Repl Div

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

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

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

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

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

(c) five newly formed parachute regiments,

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

(e) about 5000 parachute supply troops.



...The para units had no artillery whatever.

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

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

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

(a) Tilburg:

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

(b) Eindhoven - Helmond - Wer:

7 Para Div and one other new para regt;

(c) 's-Hertogenbosch:

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

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

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

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

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

7 Sep

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

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

(Ibid, Appx 26a)

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

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

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

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

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

Indicated focal points for attacks were still:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

8 Sep

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

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

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

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

9 Sep

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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