

on the left wing of the Army Group, Nineteenth Army was forced to yield ground to 2 French Armd Div in the North and 5 French Armd Div in the South. But the most significant development of the day was the resumption of large-scale Allied operations in the Aachen area. Massive air attacks on lines of defence and supply routes preceded attacks on a wide front. At 1710 hrs O.B. West learnt from his Chief Intelligence Officer that the northern wing of Army Group B faced an enemy concentration of five armoured and seven infantry divisions - some British, some American. Concluding that the centre of gravity of the Allied efforts was now at the northern wing of Army Group B, O.B. West immediately authorized Army Group B to commit 47 Pz Corps. In addition to this 10 SS Pz Div was to move from the area east of Arnhem to the area east of Venlo, and Army Group H would despatch 85,245 and 363 VGD's to the area behind the Maas-east front. The consequent temporary weakening of Army Group H was a tolerable risk and had to be accepted. (Ibid, 16 Nov)

17 Nov

123. Due to limited visibility Allied air activity at the front of Army Group B was somewhat smaller than on the preceding day, and by committing virtually all free reserves the Army Group was able to hold the Allied forces in the greater Aachen area in check. Developments in the area of Army Group G were decidedly unfavourable; in order to maintain a coherent front First Army had to fall back to rear positions and leave the garrison of Metz to its fate. Allied forces had already entered the southern suburbs of Metz. At the southern wing of Nineteenth Army the opponent reached the area 10 km SW Belfort. Obviously the Allied operations against Nineteenth Army were more than mere holding attacks. Rundstedt believed that he could not cope with the situation without making use of the OKW reserves, but his request in that sense was turned down flatly:

Despite all stop gap measures, representing the utmost O.B. West could do on his own, a defensive success against the enemy's large-scale attacks cannot be guaranteed. In a telephone conversation with the Chief of the Armed Forces Operations Staff, C. of S. O.B. West points to the newly arrived SS formations and the desirability of committing them before the enemy achieves a strategical breakthrough. Chief WFSt declined [to consider] the possibility of such a commitment and announced that in the case of such a development the OKW Reserves concerned would have to be removed from the area.

(Ibid, 17 Nov)

18 Nov

124. While Army Groups H and B were under moderate pressure only, developments in the area of Army Group G were causing mounting concern at the headquarters of O.B. West. The loss of Alsace and Lorraine had become a distinct possibility. The further Allied advances in the area of First Army had not come as a surprise, but a breakthrough at the extreme left wing of Nineteenth Army north of the Swiss border via Delle to Courcelles and Grandvillers raised the spectre of serious operational repercussions. O.B. West expressed astonishment at the unexpected developments in the Belfort area and demanded energetic counter-measures. (Ibid, 18 Nov)

19 Nov

125. Army Group H was forced to yield some ground at the Venlo bridgehead, Army Group B lost Geilonkirchen but on balance obtained a defensive success by foiling the opponent's determined attempt to collapse the salient north of Aachen. In the area of Army Group G, however, the situation showed further deterioration. At the southern wing of Nineteenth Army the breakthrough at Delle had been widened, and enemy forces had reached points 20 km NE and 12 km E Delle. Moreover, the opponent was approaching Belfort. When it became known that enemy forces had pushed eastwards to the Rhine at Hünningen, and to nearby Rosenau and Sirentz, the defence of Mulhouse became a matter of immediate urgency and O B. West instructed Military District No. 5 (Alsace, Württemberg and Baden) to despatch all available forces under its command to the area south and southwest of Mulhouse. (Ibid, 19 Nov)

20 Nov

126. At the front of Army Group B, Allied forces made only some moderate gains of ground north of Aachen, but the situation at Army Group G was continuing to cause concern. In the centre, American forces were approaching Saarburg (a mere 50 km WNW Strassburg), further south, French forces were getting still closer to Belfort. German counter-attacks in both areas had been of no avail. In a telephone conversation at 1445 hrs between C. of S. O.B. West and Deputy Chief WFSt, O.B. West asked for permission to use Pz Lehr Div at the Belfort gap and 12 VGD in the Aachen area. His contention was that these forces would go far to restore the situation and could be withdrawn in good time to be available for the Abwehrschlacht. Both requests were turned down. This left only the forces in the Netherlands as a possible source of formations for the focal points of the front. South of the

Maas (resp. Waal) there were now only one British division (on Walcheren), one Polish division, one Canadian armoured division, one armoured brigade and some Dutch volunteers, while the German forces, after all pending withdrawals would still consist of two Corps with a total of five divisions. O.B. West therefore gave orders for the withdrawal of an additional Corps Headquarters and two divisions from this front; one division to be transferred to Army Group G with the greatest possible speed. (Ibid, 20 Nov)

21 Nov

127. Headquarters 2 SS Pz Corps, slated for a role in the Abwehrschlacht (paras 121 and 126 above), was now being relieved in the area east of Arnhem-Nijmegen by H.Q. 88 Corps, hitherto at the Maas-north front. The SS Corps H.Q. was to be available in the area of Army Group B, complete with Corps troops by 25 Nov at the latest. With regard to current operations the day was characterized by various local engagements in the Aachen region. North of Eschweiler the opponent gained further ground, and O.B. West granted Army Group B's request for permission to shorten the front and give up Eschweiler to save the garrison. (Ibid, 21 Nov)

128. In the area of Army Group G, however, the situation in southeastern Lorraine was worsening. There had been a serious break-in astride the Rhino-Marne Canal. A blocking line in process of being established 10 km N Saarburg, had already been pierced. Efforts were made to form a blocking line west of Saverne. In view of this, OKW now gave permission for the temporary employment of Pz Lehr Div. O.B. West placed the Division under Army Group G and gave orders for its immediate departure in the direction Homburg-Saarunion, to be committed to an attack from the North against the deep flank of the enemy in the Saarburg area. Immediately upon arrival of the first infantry division from Army Group H, Pz Lehr Div would have to revert to OKW reserve. - In the Belfort area 198 Inf Div seemed to be gaining some measure of defensive success. (Ibid)

22 Nov

129. On its extreme left wing, Army Group H was expecting an attack on the Roermond bridgehead. As a precautionary measure 85 Inf Div and an assault gun brigade were being moved to the area as an Army Group reserve. In addition, 6 Para Regt was being shifted from the Venlo bridgehead to the area between Venlo and Roermond. But it was too late to save the bridgehead, and at 1700 hrs it was reported lost. - In the meantime 3 Para Div (on route from Army Group H to Seventh Army) was directed to Düren as a

potential backstop east of Aachen. Permission for this had been granted by OKW on the request of O.B. West despite the fact that the formation was slated for employment in the forthcoming offensive. (Ibid, 22 Nov)

130. In the area of Army Group G the opponent was making further gains, and operations that had previously served the purpose of trading space for time were now turning into a desperate last minute effort to keep the enemy from engulfing Alsace and Lorraine. East of Metz the opponent was advancing in the St. Avold area, a mere 30 km from the western borders of the Palatinate. Further south the enemy had entered Alsace from southeastern Lorraine and was reported to have entered Saverne. The German troops in the area seemed to have disintegrated. As no reports were being received from H.Q. 88 Corps at Saverne, this staff was presumed incapacitated, and the "Higher Command Vosges" charged with the task of collecting the various shattered groups and creating some sort of defence line. Pz Lehr Div had not yet appeared and O.B. West employed every means to hasten its journey. Due to the swiftly changing situation the projected flank attack now would have to be delivered against the American Corps in the Saverne area. (Ibid)

23 Nov

131. Army Group H reported merely renewed attacks against the already shrunken Venlo bridgehead. But the enemy was known to be holding close to the front of the Army Group two armoured and five infantry divisions. A similar situation prevailed at Army Group B, where the Allies had not made any further gains but controlled uncommitted reserves amounting to four armoured and ten infantry divisions. (Ibid, 25 Nov)

132. In the area of Army Group G, however, a critical situation had deteriorated to the point where the loss of Alsace and Lorraine appeared inevitable. Before any German headquarters had even heard of the approach of enemy tanks and vehicles, the opponent appeared at the gates of Strasburg, and shortly afterwards entered the city and demanded its surrender. While Alsace Lorraine was being sliced-up by the many-pronged advances of the enemy, Rundstedt recalled with some bitterness the incident in September (para 65 above) when despite his repeated objections the top officers of Army Group G had been relieved abruptly by OKW and replaced by officers whose lack of comprehension had greatly contributed to the present debacle in the South. In a telephone conversation with Jodl, C. of S. O.B. West brought up this matter again and criticized the performance of the Chiefs of Staff of A Gp G and First Army. (Ibid)

133. As the day went on it became clear that the attack of Pz Lehr Div would come too late to be effective and the divisions from Army Group H would come too late to save the situation. With this in mind, O.B. West asked for the immediate despatch of two battleworthy panzer divisions and

one additional infantry division. In his reply over the telephone, Jodl acknowledged the validity of Rundstedt's request, but said that in view of the forthcoming Abwehrschlacht it had to be turned down. (Ibid)

24 Nov

134. Developments at Army Groups H and B were not causing immediate concern, but Army Group G was in grave difficulties and in particular the situation of Nineteenth Army was steadily worsening. Close to the Swiss border the opponent's armoured convoys were continuing to pass through the German blocking line; 5000 German soldiers were pinned down and encircled in the fortifications of Strasbourg. The big gap which had sprung up in this area between First Army and Nineteenth Army, as well as the deep penetrations at the western front of Nineteenth Army could not be eliminated with the forces on hand. Most important in the circumstances was the creation of a new cohesive line of defence at the northern and western sectors and the maintenance of a firm line to the Swiss border in order to preclude a double envelopment of Nineteenth Army. O.B. West therefore gave orders to withdraw to new lines in the northern and western sectors and to make an attempt to stand fast in the South. To prevent a rapid influx of enemy forces into the Strasbourg area (between First and Nineteenth Army) Pz Lehr Div was directed to advance towards the Rhino-Marne Canal and to block the low ground at Saverne. As the sudden deterioration in the situation of Army Group G was at least partly due to command mistakes, the Führer demanded investigation by a court of inquiry. O.B. West requested that his own conduct in the matter be examined at the same time. (Ibid, 24 Nov)

25 Nov

135. Army Groups H and B reported their situation unchanged. In the area of Army Group G the attack of Pz Lehr Div had been halted by a barrage of anti-tank fire. As the attack in question was no longer offering any promise and Pz Lehr Div would be needed to carry out its assigned task in the Abwehrschlacht, Hitler demanded its withdrawal. - Army Group G had suggested a withdrawal on its left wing but as this would have meant a withdrawal from the area at the Swiss border, O.B. West objected strongly and demanded to the contrary that the forces in question be bolstered and the border area be defended by all means. - Fighting in the city of Metz had come to an end. (Ibid, 25 Nov)

26 Nov

136. In the areas of Army Groups H and B there were no significant developments. Army Group G reported local engagements at the front of First Army and continuing pressure on the western front of Nineteenth Army, where the opponent had followed the withdrawal movements and at several points overtaken the rear elements of the withdrawing forces. The German regiment nearest to the Swiss border had ceased to report and immediate investigation showed that it had been destroyed and that heavy Allied traffic was now moving unmolested along the highway the regiment was supposed to be blocking. Faced by the facts that the German western front was no longer anchored to the Swiss border and that the situation was beyond remedy, O.B. West asked OKW for permission to shorten the lines by withdrawals in that area. On receiving OKW's concurrence, O.B. West gave orders to withdraw the southern wing of the Army to the line Maasmünster-Sonthem-Mulhouse-Rhine near Hombourg (Ibid, 26 Nov). On the same day the Führer issued an order placing all armed forces participating in the defence of the Upper Rhine from the Bien-Wald (excl) to the Swiss border under the command of the Reichsführer SS, Heinrich Himmler (Der Westen, 234).* Hitler must have been seething with suspicions to charge a policeman with a difficult military task.

27 Nov

137. Mainly due to inclement weather the day was fairly quiet in all sectors. In the Vosges Mountains and further east Pz Lohr Div was serving as a screen behind which a new make-shift line was being established. On the western front of Nineteenth Army the opponent achieved some deep penetrations. (W.D. O.B. West, 27 Nov)

28 - 30 Nov

138. During the last three days of the month, French and American forces continued to nibble away at Alsace and Lorraine, and there was some pressure against the German Maas-bridgeheads and an increase in the pressure on the German lines east of Aachen. Considering the magnitude of the issue, however, and the size of the forces and command facilities in the theatre, it was clear - or should have been - that each side was engrossed in preparations for undertakings of vastly greater importance.

*Himmler assumed command on 30 Nov (Der Westen, 235)

139. While the German concentrations in the rear areas of Army Group B were getting ready for offensive action, the formations in the line managed to gain important time at the cost of comparatively unimportant ground. Army Group G, apart from receiving some small infusions of armour left to its own devices, was in more serious straits; at Merzig and Saarlautern in the North the opponent achieved deep penetrations, further south Nineteenth Army was forced to fall back in the northern and western sectors and faced the prospect of being cut off from its vital bridges and then surrounded and destroyed. (Ibid, 28-30 Nov)

1 Dec

140. In the greater Aachen area Allied forces striving to break through in northerly direction almost succeeded in doing so. In addition to the Allied forces actually committed in this area, there was now a clearly recognizable British concentration somewhat further to the North. And a German counter-attack north of Aachen had bogged down. All this gave the situation an ominous character, with Rundstedt noting in the war diary: "All the more important therefore is the continuation of the preparations for the Abwehrschlacht."* (C.R.S. - 75144/29, W.D. O.B. West, (A Gp D), Dec 44, 1 Dec) (981CW(D62))

2 Dec

141. The general quiet in the area of Army Group H was disturbed to some extent at 1700 hrs when WSW Arnhem the Needer-Rijn Dam (Pannordensche Kanal) was blasted in order to induce the Allied opponent to withdraw from his

*With the launching date for the Abwehrschlacht drawing closer, most decisions were taken in the light of the forthcoming operation. Information on the preparations for that operation will appear in a forthcoming summary of German information on the Ardennes offensive as a whole.

forward positions.* At the northern wing of Army Group B the British continued trying for a breakthrough on both sides of Limrich, while further south the right wing of Seventh Army succeeded in holding on to the exits of the Eifel area. At the same time the lightly held left wing of Seventh Army (66 Corps), where complete quiet had prevailed, came suddenly under heavy artillery fire. O.B. West was anxious to learn whether this was a mere holding manoeuvre or a sign of changing enemy dispositions and intentions. (Ibid, 2 Dec)

3 Dec

142. At the Waal front of Army Group H the inundations made the desired progress, but in the Maas sector the Germans were ejected from the Wanssum area and compelled to

* O.B. West's Intelligence Section had been puzzled by the apparently deceptive behavior of the Polish and Canadian formations, which were advertising their continued presence in the former locations but seemed to have moved to the area of the Nijmegen bridgehead. It was thought possible that the expected large attack of Second British Army might be preceded by a thrust from the Nijmegen bridgehead towards the North or from the area between Waal and Maas towards the East.

... For such a purpose these would possibly be available in the Nijmegen bridgehead: 1 Pol Armd Div, 33 Brit Armd Bde, as well as 50 and 51 Brit Inf Divs, whereas the attack from the area south of Nijmegen might be carried out by 1 Pol Armd Div, 4 Cdn Armd Div, 2 Cdn Armd Bde plus 2 and 3 Cdn Inf Divs. In this connection it was to be taken into account, however, that the commitment of Canadian forces to an operation involving high casualties was likely to be avoided at this time for political reason.

(O.B. West, Daily Intreps, op cit, Int No. 7875/44, 2 Dec 44) (981CW(D34c))

Next day 88 Corps reported gratefully:

... Due to the flooding of the area SW Arnhem between Needer-Rijn and Waal, a big enemy attack from the Nijmegen bridgehead is not to be expected in the near future.

(C.R.S. - 63289/4, W.D. 88 Corps, Vol "B" of Apps, Appx B 597, 88 Corps Ops No. 1158/44, Sitrep for 3 Dec 44, 2140 hrs 3 Dec 44)

evacuate the Venlo bridgehead during the night 3/4 Dec. In the greater Aachen area Army Group B was under pressure in the Wiern and Jülich areas, whilst southeast of Aachen American forces made a deep penetration at Vossenack. At the front of Army Group G First Army lost Saarlautern, where the bridges had been taken intact by the opponent, and recaptured Saarunion (11 Pz Div and Pz Lehr Div), while Nineteenth Army lost Schlettstadt and Rappoltswiller and was now reduced to a small bridgehead west of the Rhine and isolated from the forces of O.B. West. (Ibid, 3 Dec)

4 Dec

143. Army Groups H and B passed a quiet day while Army Group G suffered further reverses. First Army once again lost Saarunion, belated efforts to destroy the bridge at Saarlautern were of no avail, and the enemy made deep penetrations in the area south and southwest of Saarbrücken. In the wake of O.B. West's repeated criticisms on First Army's command performance, the Army commander was replaced by Gen Inf Hans von Obstfelder, previously in command of 86 Corps (since August 1943). In connection with the forthcoming offensive, 67 Corps Staff and 402 Volks Arty Corps, as well as 15 and 16 Volks Werfer Brigades were ordered transferred from A Gp H to A Gp B, while A Gp G was instructed to despatch 401 and 404 Volks Arty Corps to A Gp B, and reminded of the overdue transfer of 11 Pa Div and Pz Lehr Div to A Gp B. (Ibid, 4 Dec)

5 Dec

144. In the areas of A Gps H and B the situation remained unchanged on the whole. A Gp H received orders to despatch 244 and 902 Asslt Gun Bdes to A Gp B' (Ibid, 5 Dec). The appearance of 52 Brit Inf Div north of 's-Hertogenbosch and the presumed transfer of 4 Cdn Armd Div to 2 Cdn Corps south of Nijmegen was interpreted as a significant strengthening of "Army Group Montgomery's" eastern front (O.B. West, Daily Intreps, op cit, Int No. 7925/44, 5 Dec 44). At the front of A Gp G there was increasing danger of an American breakthrough from the Saarlautern and Saarbrücken areas towards the Weissenburg gap. In consequence O.B. West supported A Gp G's request for permission to retain 11 Pz Div and 404 Volks Arty Corps. OKW consented with the proviso that the formations would have to be handled in a manner assuring the possibility of their quick transfer in the event of orders to that effect. Pz Lehr Div (absorbing 559 Pz Jg Abt as an organic part) was reaching the entraining points for its movement to A Gp B. (W.D. O.B. West, 5 Dec)

6 Dec

145. At Army Groups H and B the day was uneventful. In connection with the preparations for the Abwehrrschlacht orders were issued for the transfer of 85 Inf Div from A Gp H to A Gp B. In the area of Army Group G the opponent crossed the river Saar at several places. O.B. West noted the heavy concentration of enemy forces in the area SW and S of Saarbrücken. Some formations previously committed against Nineteenth Army seemed now to be at the front of First Army. Relatively speaking the operations of Nineteenth Army were now of limited importance. (Ibid, 6 Dec)

7 Dec

146. In the Nijmegen-Roermond sector Second British Army and First Canadian Army were ready and waiting. The focal points of Allied operations were still in the general areas of Aachen and Saarbrücken. Between these areas the Allied front was lightly held and quiet. Most critical was the situation at the Saar bridgeheads. O.B. West estimated the total combat value of First Army as $3\frac{1}{2}$ inf divs and $1\frac{1}{2}$ armd divs at best. They were opposed by eleven infantry divisions and four armoured divisions with approximately 1000 - 1100 tanks. The most urgent task was the defence of the Weissenburg gap. In view of O.B. West's poor opinion of First Army's command performance, 89 Corps (Gen Inf Gustaf Hühne), with 361, 245 and 256 Inf Divs was designated as Group Hühne, placed directly under A Gp G and charged with the defence of the Weissenburg area. First Army retained command over 82 Corps, 13 SS Corps and 90 Corps. (Ibid, 7 Dec)

8 Dec

147. A Gp H reported no events of consequence. A Gp B reported the resumption of enemy attacks at the front of Fifteenth Army and the right wing of Seventh Army; the bridgehead at Jülich had to be vacated. A Gp G reported localized fighting at the Saar bridgeheads. In connection with the preparations for the Abwehrrschlacht 79 VGD was moving from the interior of Germany to the area of A Gp B. 6 Para Div was directed to code some of its vehicles and weapons to 5 Para Div. (Ibid, 8 Dec)

9 Dec

148. At the centre of First Parachute Army's front, Corps Command Feldt (Gen Cav Kurt Feldt) was inserted as an additional command staff. Army Groups H and B reported no fighting of consequence. Concern was caused by the fact that

troop movements and other traffic in connection with the Abwehrschlacht were greatly impeded by the icy condition of the roads in the Eifel area. A Gp G reported that enemy formations previously at the northern front of Nineteenth Army had been relieved and were now poised to participate in the thrust to the Palatinate. All told the opponent now disposed of 14 inf divs and 5 armd divs for that purpose. The situation of Group Höhne was becoming critical, and there were no formations that could be made available in support of the Group. An even more acute situation existed in the Hagenau area, where American forces outnumbered German forces by ten to one. (Ibid, 9 Dec)

10 Dec

149. Following several days of preparatory action, in the area of A Gp B the enemy resumed his large-scale attacks in the greater Aachen area and obtained a penetration at Langerwehe. Continuation of the powerful attacks west of Düren and presumably also on both sides of Jülich was to be expected. The renewal of serious fighting in the Aachen area and the commencement of enemy attacks in the direction of the Westwall through the Weissenburg gap were making it imperative to accelerate preparations for the Abwehrschlacht lest enemy thrusts to the Cologne area or the Palatinate deprive it of its logical foundation. Attempts to speed-up preparations were greatly hampered, however, by systematic Allied air attacks on traffic installations. The movements of at least ten formations were being delayed by the troops having to detrain farther east than planned, which lengthened their approach marches by 80-100 km. In the area of A Gp G, Group Höhne was under growing pressure. At the extreme southern end of the Army Group front, Hagenau was lost. (Ibid, 10 Dec)

11 Dec

150. Army Group B was under considerable pressure in the Düren area; Army Group G was expecting the early beginning of large-scale attacks. There were new penetrations and the enemy was getting closer to the Westwall. In the war diary of O.B. West the following was entered:

The danger of an operative break-through into the Palatinate is therefore moving ever more into the realm of the possible. This makes it all the more important to complete the preparations for the Abwehrschlacht with the utmost dispatch. ...The preparations must be completed before the enemy gains further decisive successes at the two focal points. ...Concerning all these problems [there is an] active exchange of ideas with OKW and the Führer in person. ...

All higher commanders (div and up) participating in the forthcoming operation have been ordered to report to the Führer (first half on 11 Dec, second half on 12 Dec).
(Ibid, 11 Dec)

12 Dec

151. Army Group B reported continuing heavy fighting at the Düren bridgehead. Fighting was spreading to the right wing of Seventh Army. A Gp G reported further transfers of enemy forces from the northern front of Nineteenth Army to the Hagenau area. General uneasiness was caused by Allied air attacks that were crippling German telephone and teleprint communications. During the afternoon O.B. West was out of touch with every one of his Army Groups. In the war diary the following was recorded:

The danger of an enemy breakthrough in the greater Aachen area, as well as through the Weissenburg Gap to the Palatinate is growing by the hour.... The situation reports are stressing the possibility of an attack against the right wing of the Parachute Army, the certainty of continuing attacks at the Rur and, above all, the very tense situation in the Weissenburg area, where the threat to the Palatinate has been increased by strong attacks from the Saarlautern area. No doubt the situation has become even more acute.
(Ibid, 12 Dec)

13 Dec

152. Due to widespread fogs, Allied air activity was quite limited. There were no major developments at the fronts; southeast of Weissenburg the German forces were forced to fall back further towards Weissenburg. (Ibid, 13 Dec)

SITUATION ON THE EVE OF THE ARDENNES OFFENSIVE

(14-16 Dec)

14 Dec

153. Seen from the German side the race for time was now in its most critical stage. In the area of A Gp B all signs were pointing to an imminent major attack, in the area of A Gp G heavy attacks on Weissenburg and Lauterburg were to be expected

for 15 Dec or 16 Dec at the latest. In the meantime the preparations for the offensive had been progressing well; the panzer divisions were almost complete in their assembly areas; it would be possible to launch the operation on 16 Dec. Time was of the essence; a prior Allied thrust into the Palatinate would place the entire operation in question; O.B. West advised strongly against any possible postponement of the launching. (Ibid, 14 Dec)

15 Dec

154. Preparations for the attack were making further progress. During the night 14/15 Dec the planned reliefs and movements had been carried out. The fuel situation was meeting expectations, the indispensable requirements for the attack had been met. A Gp B asked for a further postponement, but O.B. West objected strongly on the grounds that the situation on the left wing of A Gp G demanded the earliest possible beginning of the attack. Moreover, with the bulk of the attack formations in the assembly areas, the secrecy of the operation was no longer vouchsafed, particularly so as the enemy was reconnoitring the Eifel area with photo-flashbombs. The commitment of strong enemy forces east of Aachen was of advantage to the Germans, but the renewed enemy gains on the left wing of A Gp G were a source of danger. C. of S. O B. West was present at the Führer's situation conference and reported in that sense. At 1530 hrs word was received over the telephone from the Führer's Headquarters: "No change, D Day 16 Dec 44" O.B. West noted: "Therewith all is decided, a further change is no longer possible." (Ibid, 15 Dec)

16 Dec

155. At 0535 hrs, after ten minutes of artillery preparation, Sixth Panzer Army, Fifth Panzer Army and the participating elements of Seventh Army launched the big attack. (Ibid, 16 Dec) This operation has become known as the Battle of the Ardennes. It was undertaken against forbidding odds at a time when the outcome of the war was a foregone conclusion. Whatever discomfort it caused on the Allied side was the price that had to be paid for the Allied decisions in September to refrain from cutting off Fifteenth Army in the North, Nineteenth Army in the South and delivering a swift powerful single blow against the industrial heart of Germany.

156. Due to the extremely severe security regulations surrounding everything even remotely connected with the planning and preparations for the Ardennes Offensive, the source materials used for the present report carry very little information on that subject. In the more recent past, however, a comprehensive first hand story of Hitler's plans and preparations has come to hand in the form of: O.C.M.H., F.S.B., MS # A-862, Schramm, The Preparations for the German Offensive in the Ardennes, Sep - 16 Dec 44, German and English texts, (98oSOM(D273)). A synopsis of this detailed presentation is being prepared by Historical Section (G.S.).

157. The present report has been prepared by Capt A.G. Steiger, Historical Section (G.S.)

A. G. Steiger, Capt.

for (C. P. Stacey) Colonel
Director
Historical Section (G.S.)

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GERMAN PERSONAL NAMES

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BLASKOWITZ, Johannes, Col Gen, Cmdr A Gp G
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