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MS # B-247 Koenigstein, 11 November 1950

Gustav Hoehne
General der Infanterie

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Supplement to my report of 9 May 1946 (MS # B-075).

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Gustav Hoehne
General der Infanterie
former Commanding General of the
LXXXIX Army Corps

Steinlager Allendorf, 5. 11. 1946

Supplement to my report of 9 May 1946

(MS # B-075)

Translated by: W. Loeffel

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re: Supplement to my report of 9 May 1946 (MS # B-075)

When I took my leave from the Commander in Chief of the First Army at about 0000 hours, there was no doubt about the difficulties of the situation. During my call, the Commander in Chief said to me: "I hope you will still get into Zabern." I had been accustomed to take over a command in difficult situation, and raised, therefore, no objections against accepting the order under these circumstances. My further decisions, naturally, depended on the further development of the situation.

After my arrival in Zabern and after being informed of the situation by the LXXXIX Army Corps, I realized that a far reaching thrust by the enemy would very soon be followed by the capture of Zabern from the North and the South. It was essential, however, to cut down losses of the troops employed in front to a minimum. Advantage was to be taken of the mountainous terrain. A withdrawal of the forces engaged in the battle was now out of the question. Moreover, they would certainly have been destroyed in the open country to the East of Zabern within a short time. The Corps Headquarters Staff had to remain as long as possible at its command post, if it were only for the reason to be in a position to report as long as possible on the further development of the situation. Then an attempt had to be made to establish with the troops in front, so as to be able to lead them there. That was successful. My views on the situation and the orders given by me were approved of by the Army subsequently when I reported to it on 24 November 1944.

On 22 November 1944 at 0800 hours the following was known in Zabern about the breakthrough of the Vosges.

a). The armored thrust of the enemy from Mettingen - Hangweiler had been extended as far as Dessenheim.

b). The armored penetration to the South of Zabern had reached Wasselheim (Wasselone) by way of Dagsburg - Birkenwald.

According to a report at about 0900 hours one armored group each was wheeled from North to South, the southern group being the stronger one. Owing to this fact the hopelessness of the situation in Zabern became obvious. With the exception of a few anti-aircraft guns to the east of Zabern there were no reserves available to the Corps Headquarters. I had already mentioned in my report of 9 May that, with the exception of the most essential motor vehicles for the officers of the battalions operations (Ia), intelligence (Ic), and engineers (Stopi) and with the exception of the portions of the signal battalion, the whole staff under the command of the adjutant was ordered by me to march to the northeast.

I had the rest of the staff of the Corps Headquarters of the LXXXIX Army Corps remaining at Zabern moved into position after we succeeded in breaking out of there, at noon, to the north of the multiple road junction four kilometers east of Pfalzburg. Driving up to Luetzelburg by way of Pfalzburg was not possible from here, because the road to Pfalzburg could be overlooked by the enemy and was being heavily shelled by the latter. For this reason I drove myself, with the chief of the Corps Headquarters and with an administrative officer, alone to the front, with the intention of bringing up the remaining portions of this command group at nightfall.

According to reports to me, made on 24 November 1944, the Staff left behind at the road junction, was attacked at about 1700 hours from the East by the infantry of the enemy and was soon shattered. The intelligence and the engineer

staff officer with his adjutant did not succeed in passing through to the North, whereas the remaining portions, with the loss of the motor vehicles, arrived at Bitsch on 24 November. The intelligence and the field officer of the engineers, together with his adjutant were taken prisoners. In addition to this, on 23 November, the Chief of the General Staff of the LXXXIX Army Corps, who had driven off from Wimmenau for the purpose of taking up again connections with the Army, was taken prisoner. We did not succeed in disrupting the connection in Zabern in time. The soldiers of the signal battalion who were attending to this exchange, were taken prisoners in Zabern. I took advantage of the availabilty of telephone until enemy tanks appeared in front of the garden of the Corps command post. The cases of breakdowns of motor vehicles and the failures of signal equipment were considerable. In spite of this, by the 25 November we succeeded in forming an organization able to work, from the main body of the staff, sent away in time from Zabern and brought up to Bitsch.

Development of the Situation in the Sector of the 553rd Volksgrenadier Division on 22 November 1944.

In order to give an estimate, it will be necessary to mention the state of the Division: The Infantry Regiments 1120 and 1121 existed no longer. From the Infantry Regiment 1119 a weak battalion was formed, combat strength of each company not even being ten men. One battalion of the 361st Volksgrenadier Division was subordinated to the Division and in addition to this, there was the staff of one noncommissioned officers' school which held Pfalzburg until the evening of 22 November. At other parts of the front of the 553rd Volksgrenadier Division there was the following situation: Bucehelberg - north of Pfalzburg - was captured by the enemy in the afternoon of 22 November. The enemy broke through the thin line of security of the Division to the East of St. Louis, too.

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If the armored thrust by the enemy had been made from the direction of Zabern into the rear of the Division as far as Pfalzburg, the Division would have been annihilated completely by the evening of 22 November. Except the anti-tank obstacle four kilometers to the East of Pfalzburg there was no protection in the rear on this road but only two guns.

Neither a departure by night by way of Pfalzburg to the Northeast would have been possible, if, after the capture of Buchelberg, the road had been blocked by the enemy. This road was used for the start to the North, unimpeded by the enemy.

(signed) HOEHNE