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TRIEPEL,
Major-General

B-426

PART: III.-1 Aug - 6 Sept 1944

by: Artillery Commander: LVIII.A. C.

MS B-426
John J. Colombel, Translator

(1) Part: III. 1 June to 6 Sept 1944

by: Artillery Commander - LVIII. A. C.

On 1 August 1944 I was appointed Arty Cmdr 85 and with my Staff placed in subordination to the LVIII Pz Corps. After a short engagement south of Caen my Staff was committed for action in the sector of Mortain.

During this short period commitment south of Caen I can distinctly recollect how the enemy air force was checked for the first time since 6 June by our Flak (Fl. Sturm-Regt. (1) and (2), so one was able to move more freely about without interference.

At Mortain, the artillery of 2SS Pz Div and of 10-SS-Panzer Div. was subordinated, since a regular planned resistance to the enemy's artillery fire could not be accomplished because reconnaissance detachments were lacking. The artillery of both of these two divisions fired mostly on special requests send in from their infantry units, respectively.

(2) During the first days, on or about 9 or 10 August 1944, one artillery regiment reported that an enemy's battery was successfully fought and wiped out on report obtained only by observation.

At first, the enemy's artillery fire was moderate and only increased later in intensity. Concentrations of artillery fire on a large scale did not occur. The command-post of the artillery commander was situated near Bauchene, close-by of that of the Corps.

Direct communications with the artillery regiments did not exist. I could contact the divisions only by way of the Corps Command and therefore a single fire control was not possible. Because of this, I made dayly trips to the artillery regiments to discuss pending matters there and then. Most disturbing during these trips were attacks made by fighter bombers. The enemy's artillery fire seemed to be somewhat widely scattered. Only on rare occassions could I observe fire concentrations.

A village, named Gar was kept under fire frequently. The batteries of both of the two artillery regiments suffered only small losses through

enemy artillery fire.

Movement of ammunition supplies was had and fire concentrations could be made with only a small supply of ammunition available. Enemy counter activity was weak, but our own artillery activity during nights was also moderate. On or about 12 August 1944, the enemy attacked from the direction of Barenton whereby the intensity fire increased some, it being directed frequently against villages (places) and roads in our rear.

During our frontline withdrawal in the night of 12 August 1944, enemy artillery fire was only light, whereas during day time fighter-bomber attacks developed more lively.

On or about 15 August I could observe very strong concentrations of enemy artillery fire southwest of Briouze, whereby a considerable amount of ammunition was expended. Later on, frequent artillery surprise attacks were directed against the highway from Bellou-on-Houlme to Briouze. At that time, having not subordinate artillery, I ordered a heavy armored gun which I had discovered near Briouze, to take position at the south-entrance of Briouze and shell for a while the roads running from the Southwest to Briouze. I was under order from LVIII.Panz.-Corps to hold out in Brouze until the enemy with all troops available to boster-up an undisturbed withdrawal of our forces from Flere. Remnants of the reconnaissance detachment of the IX.Panz. Div were mainly instrumental to accomplish the task.

On 17 August, the LVIII.Panz.-Corps got orders to regulate the withdrawal of troops while retreating across the Orne river. An emergency bridge had been built southeast of Putange; within the place itself a shore bridge and near St. Croiz an old bridge were available for the task.

Artillery shells fell near Putange and southeast and northwest to St. Croix as early as 17 August; artillery fire increased considerably during that night taking especial disagreeable effect on the bridge in Putange.

On 18 August early about 8 a. m. all troops had crossed the Orne and were now crowding the roads on their way toward the East. Now the enemy air-arm could have caused considerable losses, but enemy planes appeared in larger

numbers only around noontime, and considerable losses on motor-vehicles were caused during these attacks.

Until 17 August in the evening, I stayed with my Staff of the A. C. north of Chambois. I was accompanied only by the officer for special service and my car-driver. The other part of the Staff had disappeared.

In the night of 19 August we drove on over a much overcrowded highway to Candebec on Semi, northwest of Rouen by way of Barnay - Bourtheroulde-Mallerai - sur - Sime experiencing continued traffic jams during the trip.

We crossed the Seine river on a steam driven ferry which then was subject to continued attacks by fighter bombers. The Staff suffered losses during the river-crossing.

The Staff had received orders to proceed to Chantilly, situated east of Paris in order to supervise the replacing of several tank divisions.

On 21 August I arrived there. (Chantilly) On 23 August, I got orders to dirve back again to the Seine-crossing at Caudebec, in order to fetch the remnants of the Corps-Staff to Chantilley. On that trip I found that fighter-bomber activity was exceedingly heavy; every vehicle on the road was attacked by them.

On 26 August the General-High-Command was reinserted in the area south-east of Paris.

I moved with my staff, which for the biggest part had found its way back again, early on 27 August from Chantilly to Meaux. On the way there, part of the Staff fell into the hands of heavy armed guerrillas. (terrorists?) After my arrival at Gen.-High-Command, I received order to establish connection with two divisions which were subordinate to the Corps. I drove to Coulommiers by way of la Ferté-sous-Jouarre where I met unexpectedly a few German armored tanks, stopping near the bridges. American tanks had arrived already on the other bank of the river.

In a village, situated northeast of Coullommiers I located one of the missing divisional staffs and drove back to G.H.Q. at Coulombes by way of la Ferté-sous Jouarre - Meaux, a distance of about 12 km northeast of Meaux.

On 28 August the Gen-High-Command was moved in a nothern direction to Villers-Helon. The Staff of the artillery commander arrived there in the early afternoon. Because of American tanks approaching from the West, we had to move-on further in north westerly direction in order to evade them. Billets for the night were assigned in Montingny-Le-Grain, 12 km west of Soissons.

On 29 August the command post was transferred to Jonquieres about 4 km southwest of Compiegne. No more artillery was anywhere on hand. Enemy action only by airforce was conspicously offensive creating trying situations on 30 and 31 August when passing through Compiegne and also at Mayon and Channy. Very aggravating were the vexations caused by the inhabitants; spreading-out of bent nails painting over or reversing direction signs and the shoving at night from ambush by the guerrillas.

On 31 August, we were billeted in Remigny northwest of La Fere, on 1 Sept in Neuville to the east of St. Quentin, and on 2 Sept in Hecqu, about 6 km south of La Quesnoy.

In the evening of 2 Sept the Staff of the artillyer Commander traveled to the highway Valenciennes-Mons by way of Quesnoy, there encountering attacks of guerrillas (terrorists), and proceeded northward by way of Jenlein and Quievrain.

Since then American tanks had meanwhile thrust forward and penetrated into Mons. Therefore, my Staff and myself turned 6 km west of Mons in a northern direction and proceeded to Peronnes, 3 km northeast of Binches by way of St. Chislain - Baundour - Maisieres and Obourg, where, as was said, the dommand post of the AC was supposed to be. Since no-one from the Gen- High-Command was found there, the Staff traveled by way of Nivelles to the area of Tilly, 15 km east of Nivelles where our Gen-High-Command arrived during that afternoon, it too reporting to have suffered losses and the march during last nights trip.

On 4 Sept the Gen-High-Command with our Staff proceeded to Orbais by way of Cembloux, about 9 km northeast of the latter place. From there we

headed into the area north of Liégè. Here, on 6 Sept we got marching orders to proceed to the Elsace, southwest of Strassbourg. Fighter-bomber activity during the march was again very considerable.

(signed:) Triepel,
Major-General