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THE COURSE OF EVENTS OF THE GERMAN
OFFENSIVE IN THE ARDENNES

16 Dec 44 to 14 Jan 45

Considered from the German viewpoint, prepared from the WFSt records by Major PERCY ERNST SCHRAMM, Professor, the then conductor of the War Diary of the WFSt.

Prefatory note: Available to the author for this sketch besides unmarked maps are only the extracts from the documents made by him from the War Diary. This composition suffers therefore from a lack of further aids (Armed Forces and Situation Estimates, Organization Time Charts, Situation Maps, Surveys of Troop Organization).

An exact presentation of the preparations (September to 15 December 1944), in bulk about 40 typed pages is to be found in the records of the War Diary, which was handed over to the CIC in early May. Therefore, the time before the offensive is not discussed in the following.

P. E. S.

Written in Brussels end of 1945
without sufficient material and
maps so that this study can
be taken only as an attempt
to reconstruct the course of the
events.
P. E. Schramm
Sept. 25. I. 1947

Early on 16 Dec began the offensive in the Ardennes prepared since October. This offensive had received the code name "Watch on Rhine" to create the impression among those not fully initiated that it was only a matter of a large scale defensive measure against the threatening penetration to the Rhine.

The orders to be sent out from the Supreme Command had already been issued in time; everything was prepared down to the last detail: by numerous conversations and discussions, supplemented by continual oral and telephonic connection between the Fuehrer's Headquarters, C in C West (Field Marshall von Rundstedt), and Army Group B (Field Marshall Model) it was provided that all command echelons should work in exactly the same direction. Only the long since prepared "Special Directives for the treatment of the civilian population, civil administration, and prisoners of war" remained to be issued. The fundamental principle should be that the German behavior would follow that of the native populace, and that "rear echelon conditions" with relation to the civilians should be avoided. It was provided that the former offices would take over the administration of Holland, Belgium, and Luxembourg, insofar as they were cleared of the enemy, that is, Reichs Commissioner Dr Seyss-Inquart, Grohe, and Gauleiter Simon. No new military government would be erected (a leaflet for the soldiers followed on 26 Dec).

In the first two days of the offensive, because of thoroughness of preparation, there was no need for the Supreme Command to intervene. It was established that the enemy had no continuous MLR, but conducted his defense from strong defensive positions in a depth of 4 to 5 kilometers. His security

troops had been ordered to retreat according to plan, though in many cases they were not successful in doing this. Extensive use was made of wire obstacles and mines. In the immediate vicinity of the defensive strongpoints small groups of 4 to 5 tanks were ready as counter thrust reserves, and further back fully motorized reserves were held in readiness. Consequently, we were successful in attaining considerable gains in territory, but the hope that our mobile units would break through on the first day and obtain one or the other crossing of the Meuse did not materialize. Yet the tip of the attack arrow did force its way through to open territory, where the chances were as good or better, because here in a mobile conduct of operations the Germans could attempt to avoid those sectors in which the enemy was presenting strong resistance, and then attack on the flanks or into the rear. Most unsatisfactory was the situation on the right wing, where not only did 6 Panzer Army threaten to bog down, but also the enemy made counter thrusts against the flanks.

On 18 Dec for the first time occurred the moment when the Supreme Command gave C in C West a new directive.

C in C West had proposed on 16 Dec to support the main attack by a subsidiary one, which 15 Army would conduct, to tie up enemy forces. He now received the Fuehrer's order that this attack was to be disregarded. In Hitler's opinion no success could be expected: if the enemy were to concentrate his forces at the secondary point of attack, he still had on other fronts because of the massing of forces which had occurred in the present offensive so many other troops that we could not expect to break through with later thrusts

at other places. To relieve the north flank of 6 Panzer Army, 9 Pz Div and 15 Pz Gr Div were ordered to the Blankenheim-Statdkyll-Ahrdorf area, though OKW reserved for itself the control of these divisions. A further weakening of 15 Army was to be provided by a withdrawal of army troops; in any case measures for this should be made ready. The risk involved here could be chanced, because presumably the enemy would not undertake anything on his former offensive front at this moment.

In the corresponding order with C in C West released on the same day (18 Dec), he ordered 7 Army to create full freedom of maneuver for 5 Panzer Army by following both panzer armies (5 and 6) as quickly as possible, winning as much terrain as possible, and then swinging to the south and southwest. The assignment seemed feasible. The enemy at the moment was weakest against 7 Army and in any case he needed more time to fill out his line, which had been torn into loose defensive points, by drawing up his newly arrived reserves, and to close it together. The strength of 7 Army was increased on 19 Dec by the release to C in C West of the particularly well equipped Fuehrer Grenadier Brigade (later the Fuehrer Grenadier Division) which was distinguished for its first class manpower material.

The situation on 6 Panzer Army's right flank was quite different from that on the left.

In the course of 18 Dec the arriving messages made it clear that the situation here was working out to the disadvantage of our units. Consequently, it was necessary to make new decisions for the right wing. The measures suggested by C in C West on 16 Dec were now approved. C in C West received on 18

Dec the order to conduct these measures so that Army Group H on 22 Dec would be ready within 24 hours to launch an attack over the lower Meuse. To ensure a full surprise, day movements and any early giving away of the attack were forbidden; movement toward the east should be simulated. In case of a success, all available forces of 25 Army were to be prepared to follow. Only security troops should remain on the Meuse and on the Waal, but the coastal protection forces should not be weakened.

To break the resistance in front of the particularly hard hit 277 Inf Div on 19 Dec the Fuehrer considered bringing up the 3 Pz Gr Div, which had lately come out of Italy, over Eilenborn and then turning it off to Monschau. However, the further development of the situation was awaited. Because the counter pressure exerted by the enemy on the right flank still continued, and threatened to grow sharper, C in C West on 21 Dec ordered Army Group B to clean up the situation as quickly as possible. The intentions on 3 Pz Gr Div were changed in that it and 12 SS Pz Div were incorporated into the thrust movement of the other units. As the objective to be attained, C in C West was given the capture of ST Vith on the right wing and the extension of the ground gained then to the west, as well as the quickest possible formation of bridgeheads over the Meuse between Huy-Givet, that is, on both sides of Namur. For C in C West it was a matter of so building the northern front of the attack arrow that it would run 15 to 20 kilometers north of the roads used by the motorized units and thus would make possible their use unhampered by artillery. On the left flank he wanted the screening to be pushed so far that it would make contact with the block at Orscholz (in the Metz-Dieuze line).

An entirely new phase in planning entered when C in C West decided to exploit immediately the already noticeable lightening of the front left of the attack area. To release units for the broken southern front of the attack wedge, the enemy had seen himself forced to give up uncontested the bridgehead over the Saar which he had won in the course of long and hard battles, to provide a line that would save him troops. It could be considered certain that the enemy intended to withdraw further troops from this sector, which would complicate developments on the still fluid southern front. C in C West ordered therefore on the evening of 21 Dec Army Group G to exploit the new situation by local night attacks, and the preparation of a surprise attack for the rewinning of the Zabern Rise. Particular secrecy was ordered; preparations should be established with an ensuing removal of the Army Group.

The Fuehrer, who on 22 Dec was informed of this order, saw on the contrary better possibilities in an attack further east, since the necessary forces would first have to be supplied for a thrust out from the northwest Vosges Massive still in our hands. He ordered therefore an examination of the possibility of an attack from Bitsch and northwest of it to the south, for which two armored divisions and three infantry divisions would be provided, as the object should be kept in mind to attack the American forces in the Weissenburg area in the rear. In general the Fuehrer demanded that the entire West Front be as active as possible to deceive the enemy and to tie up his forces.

C in C West, to whom this mission was imparted on the same day, changed on the next day his order of 21 Dec correspondingly. In addition he ordered

a trial to see if the front could be shifted forward of the ORSCHOLZ block with the troops on hand, in the event the left flank of the Third American Army should come up. As the troops for the thrust against the Zabern Rise four infantry and three armored units were provided; the date of the attack would be the first week in January. C in C Upper Rhine was informed of this on 23 Dec and asked to support the planned attack by assault troop operations and the building of bridgeheads north and south of Strassbourg.

On 24 Dec a discussion with Army Group G took place. The account of the discussion issued on 25 Dec established the code name of "North Wind" for the new operation. In its announcement of intentions, Army Group G designated as the object of the operation the winning of the Zabern Rise in the Pforzberg-Zabern sector in order to destroy the enemy in North Alsace and to make contact with the 19 Army.

The continuation of this parallel operation belongs to the further presentation of this account only as it stands in immediate relationship with the main offensive in the Ardennes. We turn again to the main offensive.

To support the efforts of C in C West, the Supreme Command on 23 Dec released the 9 Panzer Div and the newly arrived from Italy 15 Pz Gr Div from its reserve which had been held back as much as possible. In addition, it was ordered to move the 9 and 167 Volksgrenadier Divisions forward; for this purpose, 10 and 11 Pz Divs were to be assembled and refitted (both Volksgrenadier divisions were released for employment on 26 Dec).

By the observations made in the meantime, and the continued reports on newly contacted or regrouped enemy units, it could be seen how the enemy reacted to the surprise, what counter measures were introduced by him, and what probabilities in the future must be taken into account.

The "big picture" made on 26 Dec, in judgment of which the Fuehrer, Col Gen Jodl of the WFST, and C in C West agreed, looked like this: from the south the enemy was conducting a unified counter attack with four to five divisions, which threatened the attack wedge at its base; on the north front between Dinant and east of Marche the enemy likewise was conducting a unified attack, although here it was already established that his counter attack between Stavelot and Monschau had already stuck fast. As for us, it was to be noted as an advantage that the left wing of 5 Panzer Army was now more fluid. 5 Panzer Army had advanced far to the west in the direction of the Meuse. The protection of its flanks, north as well as south, was still unsatisfactory; 7 Army was suffering a crisis because of the counter attack, but this at the moment could be considered only local.

Was it possible under these circumstances to thrust forward over the Meuse as planned? This is, was it possible to attain that objective, which in the event of an ideal course of events should have been reached within the first two days, and then the further objective of Antwerp, and thus the rolling up of the entire enemy front from Trier to the ocean? The final objective could play no part in the analysis, as long as the intermediate objectives had not been attained. This was even more the case when the projected secondary attack of Army Group H was again given up. After weighing all

circumstances the Supreme Command established that the planned thrust from the Ardennes over the Meuse could still be regarded as practical; however - this was established on 26 Dec - the attainment of the intermediate objectives depended on two circumstances: (1) In the south on the regaining of the equilibrium on the Sauer (Sure); (2) In the north on the destruction of enemy forces standing on the right flank of 15 (sic) Panzer Army between Ourthe and Meuse north of the line Marche-Dinant.

On the same day (26 Dec) C in C West released to Army Group B a corresponding order. Accordingly, the formation of a bridgehead at Duren planned by him for 29 Dec should not be attempted, as in C in C West's opinion, it would involve too great losses. Instead he ordered that all forces which could be made available should be brought up to the line. In this connection the 340 VG Div was shifted to Manderfeld, that is, in the Elsenborn area; in addition two further divisions were released. 7 Army received both VG divisions which OKW had released from its reserve on 23 Dec. In addition, C in C West agreed to ^{turn} LXVII Corps over to 15 Army from 6 Panzer Army. Operationally, C in C West approved 5 Panzer Army's intention to turn off to the northeast, so that it could attack from the rear the enemy troops east of the Meuse.

Parallel with these efforts of C in C West to increase the attack capacity of the spearhead, OKW for its part placed all emphasis on keeping the offensive troops intact. Replacements to the number of 24,000, of which 6,000 were panzer grenadier, were announced to C in C West for January; in addition, the 10% decrease in strength of all theaters of war, which was

supposed to bring about a decrease in staffs and supply units, was suspended for Army Group B until 1 February 1945. Requests of C in C Upper Rhine for reinforcements were declined. Orders for the refitting of exhausted divisions and others similar were issued.

In spite of all these efforts no decisive change in the entire situation was to be brought about, since the enemy front had grown steadily fixed in the meantime and there was no place suitable for a penetration. The year's last days brought only local territorial gains and the repelling of new enemy attacks against the flanks.

Bastogne had been revealed as the point of main difficulty, though our troops had been able to surround it. However, the town itself, with its immediate vicinity and the cross roads, which were unconditionally necessary for the rear area lines of communications and supply, remained in the hands of the enemy, who defended here with dogged toughness. He was supported by attacks to the south from the vicinity northeast of Neufchateau, so that he could hope for a relief. Obviously the enemy command also recognized that Bastogne had a decisive meaning for the success or failure of the offensive. By continually renewed attacks against the southern front he succeeded in opening the pocket and in holding open an at first narrow pipe line to the outside. Reinforcements and everything else necessary could thus be brought in to the encircled troops, so that the hope of clearing up this pocket of resistance further diminished.

At the beginning of the New Year a trial balance was again drawn by the Supreme Command. Was the offensive, as it had taken place, to be

considered a failure or a success? The intermediate objective of crossing the Meuse had not been attained and neither had the long range objective, the conquest of Antwerp. But both these goals had originated in the intention of restoring to our command the initiative that had been lost since 6 June 1944; and thereby preventing the penetration to the Rhine threatening from the Aachen area and from the Upper Rhine. Not to weaken prematurely the reserves for the projected offensive, all requests made by Army Group G for new divisions had been refused or complied with only in the smallest degree. Consequently, Army Group G was not able to contain the enemy in Alsace or to prevent his advance to the Upper Rhine. Only by this great natural obstacle was the enemy held up, and then he turned to the Saarpfalz, whose loss threatened the greatest military as well as economic disadvantages. Consequently, at the offensive's beginning the danger had existed that the enemy first would thrust over Duren to Cologne, secondly, that he would cross the Rhine in the sector of C in C Upper Rhine and force our troops back to the Schwarzwald, and thirdly, that he would penetrate to the Saarpfalz and then threaten the Rhine Pfalz. If the offensive is considered from this point of view, then it was not only a success, but a telling success at the time. Previous enemy intentions had come to naught, the danger threatening at Duren, on the Saar, and on the Upper Rhine, had been eliminated. From the information on hand, it could be seen that the enemy had employed practically all his troops available to him in the west, and that several could be regarded as unfit for battle for a long time. Particularly revelatory of his situation was his employment of airborne

troops in ground conflict, for the irregular use of such highly valuable divisions was viewed as a sign that this happened only because of a lack of other troops. In addition, it was a matter of satisfaction that thereby the danger of airborne operations, which the Arnheim battle had so emphatically indicated, was excluded for the near future.

In so far as it had been a matter of getting the initiative in our hands, the goal of Ardennes offensive should be considered as attained. If nothing more could be had in the breakthrough area itself, we could go over to the defensive and thereby tie up the enemy's forces again, while in the meantime withdrawing some divisions and employing them on other frontal sectors weakly held by the enemy, and there produce such a superiority that smaller offensives would be promising. If we succeeded thereby in crushing other enemy units, it must be more difficult for him to launch such a large scale offensive as the one at Aachen. By quick shifting of main efforts it seemed possible to conduct a series of such blows one after another, and thus ensure in the long run that the initiative further remained in our hands.

The first undertaking of this sort was the "North Wind" operation which had been worked on in plan since 24 Dec. Its objective as has already been mentioned - should be to free Alsace, where only sharply decreased numbers of American and French troops were presumed to be. The attack was originally planned for 2300 hours on 31 Dec, but later postponed. On 2 Jan a new alert was released, on which on 5/6 Jan the attack began. In the meantime on 3 Jan a plan for another operation with the object of crushing the four to five American divisions between Forbach and Pfalzburg was

prepared.

It must be sketchely indicated here how, in relation with the other theaters of war, the shifting of the situation on the west front should be regarded.

A view of the other fronts found at the moment nothing disturbing. In Italy, the enemy had obtained no further decisive gains, and it could be hoped that the southwest front could be further held. In the southeast, Army Group E had been successfully withdrawn from the Balkans and had built up a new front around Croatia. Hungary was in large part lost, Budapest was encircled on all sides, but here also a new MLR had been built along the East Front. The Russians attacked into Courland, where the Army Group employed there successfully warded off the attacks of a numerically far superior enemy and ironed out small salients into our front. It was certain that new offensives on the Vistula as well as in East Prussia were imminent, but every day that the Russians waited, and they waited longer than the Germans had thought probable, gave us the opportunity of stabilizing the front and the containing lines prepared behind it, of resting our units, and perfecting training for the imminent defense. Numerically the relationship in men and material along the entire front and also in the recognized attack areas was as unfavorable as before, but such an enemy superiority had had to be reckoned upon since the beginning of the Russian campaign. Not only the optimists believed that it would be possible to bring this new Russian assault, even if with terrain losses, to a halt.

On the other fronts the Germans had lost the initiative, but defense

did not need to be regarded as unpromising.

Not to speak of affairs of state, the continual danger was the increasingly depressed condition of war industries caused by shortages of material, the air war, and many other factors. Further there was the progressive difficulty of supply because of the traffic bottlenecks on the railroads and highways, as well as the exhaustion of our units. Most dangerous was the shortness in gasoline supply, increasing in intensity from week to week in spite of all counter measures; it had now gone so far that in any operation, even those local in nature, it first had to be inquired if adequate supplies of gas and Diesel oil were available, and whether they could be procured at the right time. For this reason it was imperatively necessary to hold the district southwest of the Platten See and the city of Komorn north of the Danube in our hands in Hungary where our last petroleum district as well as the few still operating refineries were located.

That the weather, which at the operations beginning had prevented the enemy's air force from reaching full extent, again grew better, meant for C in C West an essential handicap, and for the troops a renewal of that tension that had already had so much influence in forcing them to give the field up to the enemy from Normandy on.

To strike the enemy's air force where, because of German air inferiority he least expected it, all available fighter craft were employed in one blow against enemy air strips in Belgium and North France (operation "Bodenplatte"). Success was great: the account rendered on 2 Jan reported that 467 planes were destroyed, 66 were shot down in aerial combat, and the others

were destroyed on the ground (278 of these reported on aerial photographs, and 123 were observed falling). To be sure our own losses were so high that a continuation of such attacks had to be given up. A very short relief of our own troops was felt. This was the collective situation.

The judgment passed in writing by the Supreme Command on 4 Jan (in the beginning of the Fuehrer's directive released on that day) was that our offensive had compelled the enemy to stop his attempts to break through at Aachen and against the Saarpfalz, and that the enemy had so regrouped his forces that half of them were tied up by the still attacking Army Group B.

The reverse side of the picture was - as it was described here also - that the enemy not only had been able to build up a continuous front around the attack arrow, but the intention was clearly recognizable of crushing Army Group B by disrupting its supply lines and by concentric attacks into the flanks. No prospect of success could be ascribed to a continuation of the operation as originally planned (C in C West spoke thus to Army Group B on 3 Jan on the basis of a Fuehrer directive.)

The first goal must be to clear up the situation at Bastogne. On 2 Jan C in C West ordered Army Group B to so continue the attack that the encirclement would be restored if possible; Army Group therefore should attack either from the West to the southeast or from the southeast toward the northwest. To this the latter replied that the enemy in the meantime had attained new penetrations and attempted to cut off the jumping off ground southeast of Bastogne. The area had grown so narrow that no additional motorized unit could be brought into it. General Field Marshal

Model who was actually there on the spot answered that the plan requested by the Supreme Command was not feasible, because of the enemy's strength southeast of Bastogne and a terrain unsuitable for tanks. However more suitable terrain which also provided a prospect of surprising the enemy was available north and northeast of Bastogne. Model wanted therefore to attack with the 9 SS Pz Div from the north, the 12 SS Pz Div from the northeast, and the Fuehrer Grenadier Brigade from the east. The Fuehrer agreed to this proposal.

C in C West supplemented his orders on 3 Jan by a further one which prescribed for the Army Group its future procedure: it should in the future tie up and crush as strong enemy forces as possible, in support of the other operations which were planned for the West Front. Consequently, it was the Army Group's new assignment to retain the newly won territory in all essentials. The assignment to clear up the Bastogne situation under any circumstances remained unchanged. Since the enemy would shortly attack 6 Panzer Army, the latter's front must be reinforced. The long defensive flanks needed particular attention, to prevent concentric enemy working in, and the defense capacity of the West Wall must be improved.

The orders in effect were compressed and rounded off in a Fuehrer directive. C in C West's general mission was so expressed: he should by quickly repeated blows, whose location the Fuehrer reserved for himself, destroy the Anglo-American armies one after another, and so retain the initiative at all costs. Army Group Upper Rhine should join the attack operation at the appointed time not only north of Strasbourg but also from

19 Army territory in a northern and northwestern direction.

The following special missions were given both Army Groups and C in C Upper Rhine:

Army Group B had first the mission of containing the forces concentrated on its front, and to fortify its position should crush the enemy at Bastogne where a strong southern front would be built. Army Group G should so conduct the operation "North Wind" that enemy forces between the lower Vosges and the Rhine were destroyed, and the western exists of the Vosges were taken for a continuation of the offensive.

It was reminded that the thrust to Zabern and the blocking of the Zabern-Saarburg road formed an essential prerequisite for the launching of future operations or for a turning off of the original direction of attack to the southwest, in case the enemy were to evacuate the Lauterburg-Bitsch-Hagenau area.

Army Group Upper Rhine received the order to build a bridgehead north of Strasbourg and to bring about a connection between 1 Army and 19 Army in a northwesterly direction or where possible to win the western exists of the Vosges, if enemy withdrawals made that possible.

The formations which would be supplied Army Group G were assembled by it north and east of Saarbruecken for the preparation of the partial offensive planned between Forbach-Pfalzburg.

The next few days brought with them a further worsening of conditions in the breakthrough area. The counterattack made against Bastogne led to no success of great proportion; on the contrary the enemy succeeded in so broaden-

ing the original pipe like entrance to the road crossing that our chances of once again closing it off finally disappeared. The front thus originating in the south and southwest of Bastogne was exposed to strong attacks, and had to be withdrawn more and more. Consequently, the situation on the south front was not only unsatisfactory but gave rise now to serious concern. At the same time the enemy attacked from the north and the northwest; he attained slow but steady successes against 6 Panzer Army, so that the situation at the point of the attack wedge was untenable in the long run. From this a new Fuehrer directive released on 8 Jan, drew the conclusions: it approved the withdrawal of the front to the line Douchamps (northwest of La Roche) - Longchamps (northwest of Bastogne). That thereby a measure decisive for future operations had been resorted to was clear to all those informed. For it meant not only that a renunciation of the intentions originally planned had been finally made visible, but also that now the enemy had the opportunity of wresting for himself the hard fought for initiative. To prevent this, the same directive ordered further: as soon as the enemy reorganized this withdrawal movement, his previous attack objectives would no longer seem attractive. It was to be presumed that he would transfer the point of his main attack further to the east, or - what must be presumed more probable - that he would withdraw 10 to 12 divisions for employment against thinly held fronts. To meet this danger, strong forces of Army Group B must immediately be made free in order not to lose freedom of action. Therefore, the Fuehrer ordered the withdrawal of 2 Panzer Corps, four armored units, and two Werfer Brigades (all in all, the 6 Panzer Army) with the employment

of extensive deception. For the time being these units were transferred in the area northeast of St Vith and east of Wiltz, since there enemy counterattacks seemed certain. Army Group B's mission remained for the rest unchanged.

On 9 Jan the Fuehrer ordered once again emphatically that I and II SS Panzer Corps with the 1, 2, 9, and 12 SS Panzer Divisions, were to be immediately relieved from the front and assembled for a short term rest and refitting behind Army Group G. C in C West received the task of ensuring through stringent orders that these units were not thrown piece-meal into the battle and thus delayed in their assembly (this order was supplemented on 15 Jan by another that I and II SS Panzer Corps should have a short term refitting period in C in C West's territory).

Since the enemy continued his attack, the first withdrawal movement was shown to be not adequate. Therefore C in C West received on 14 Jan the Fuehrer's approval for a withdrawal of the front on the line Cherain - hard east of Houffalize which should remain under our own artillery fire - Bourzy - the former MLR, south of Longvilly. This movement should be so opportunely timed that no further losses for Army Group B should occur. Thereby the initiative in the former attack area passed to the enemy. It was still the question if the actions introduced in the meantime could be brought to success. We break off our presentation here, and must direct the attention to another further factor, which influenced the view of the overall situation.

On 13 Jan the long awaited Russian offensive had begun. In spite of

all defensive preparations it attained such deep breakthroughs on the first few days that all expectations were exceeded. Therefore it was ordered at the same time to transfer the 712 Div from the west to Tschenschau (west of Krakau) as quickly as possible. In exchange for the 269 Inf Div, which had been destined for the Upper Rhine, C in C Upper Rhine received the 2 Mtn Div from Norway, and since this division had already been promised to C in C West, he in turn was compensated by a promise of the 169 Inf Div to be drawn from Norway. The 712 Inf Div would be replaced by another Norwegian division, the 163 Inf Div. So one hole was patched with much labor and another torn. That a reservoir of troops should be present in Norway because of the withdrawal from Finland was efficacious in a positive sense in the west as well as on the eastern front, but the bringing up of these troops made foot marches, railroad journey, sea transport and again railroad travel and more foot marches necessary, and experienced many interruptions from the mines in the Cattegat and was far longer protracted than was first estimated. Consequently, the effect of these reinforcements entering in part in regimental size was of limited meaning in the overall picture.

On 14 Jan occurred the order for the transfer of two volks artillery corps from the west to the east, on 15 Jan an army engineer brigade destined for the west was detoured to the east. Further orders of this sort followed in the next few days. The Eastern Front showed itself again to be a suction pump which weakened all other fronts. Consequently, events on the Western Front were influenced by those on the Eastern Front, which had not been the

case during the Ardennes offensive, and more so from week to week.

Finally it became necessary to throw into the East the 6 Panzer Army, the last hope of any activity on the Western Front. That the 6 Panzer Army was not used for the immediate protection of Germany, but instead had to be employed for the defense of the last petroleum supply, illuminated lightning like the entire situation: operative intentions had finally given way to the necessities of a war economy.

NOTE: There are the following indications or estimates of our own and enemy losses and casualties:

1. From 16 to 31 Dec Army Group B lost -

- 102 assault guns
- 77 Mark IV
- 132 Mark V
- 13 Mark VI

324 - total assault guns and tanks

2. Losses in enemy aircraft in the "Bodenplatte" operation of 1 Jan 45 are presented in the text above, also

3. Enemy losses, as well as our own, in the period from 16 Dec 44 to 25 Jan 45:

<u>Enemy</u>	<u>Our own</u>
dead and wounded (estimated	Dead: 12,652
about 100,000	Wounded: 38,600
pris-	Missing: <u>30,582</u>
oners <u>26,430</u>	
126,430	81,834
	(according to another
	account: 98,024)

4. Enemy casualties in tanks, etc:

	<u>LOOT</u>	<u>DESTROYED</u>
Tanks and assault guns	91	1,242
Armored Recon cars	65	220
Guns, AT, AA	193	225
Airplanes and gliders	22	125

The enemy's losses meant a loss in combat effectiveness of at least 10 divisions, reinforced by army troops.