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LANGHAEUSER, RUDOLF

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GENERALMAJOR

COMMITMENT OF, AND ENGAGEMENTS FOUGHT BY

6 FS DIV FROM 19 NOV 1944 TO CAPITULATION (10 MAY 1945)

Translator: M. Otto

COMMITMENT OF AND ENGAGEMENTS FOUGHT BY THE
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I. Background

The 6th F.S. Div engaged in Normandy at the beginning of the invasion, had been completely annihilated by the end of August 1944 during the heavy fighting which took place in the area roughly between the Seine and Amiens. No remnants of any consequence were left of these fighting units which could, later on, have been used as seasoned cadre for a subsequent reorganization. The new organization was effected in October 1944 in Holland, in the area ASSEN--MEPEL--COEVORDEN, approximately on the lines set forth in (Annex 1)

The men of the outfit, all of them of the younger and youngest age groups, and full of the highest initiative but without any experience in ground warfare, were furnished from units of the air force-ground crews, signal units, anti aircraft artillery and pilot cadets. They had received no more than the private's basic infantry training but had never before taken part in any, not even the smallest-scale exercises with combat teams. On the whole: an excellent replacement, which however, first required a thorough infantry training to bring out their true value.

The N.C.O's, who came from the same replacement sources,

had a poor infantry training and were much harder to remodel on account of their long employment in specialized services and by reason of having already gained certain military grades. Their value in battle only rose later, after they had gained more experience and when more rehabilitated elements of the battle-tried 1., 4. and 5 F.S. Div were incorporated in their ranks.

The Junior Officers Corps, which in its bulk originated from the anti-aircraft and signal communication troops, consisted of young, active men, ready for action, but weak in ground tactics. About 25% of the commanders of battalions and regiments could be considered as very good, 50% as good and 25% as weak in their ground warfare training.

At the time of the newly formed division's first action, its commander, GENERALLEUTNANT PLOCHER, reported its aggregate battle value to the Superior Command as being "conditionally suited for defensive action."

The following combat reports are incomplete since all written records of value for the compilation of this document are missing, and much has been forgotten in the course of the long time elapsed since the engagements. Some of the less precise passages could be clarified in discussions with adjacent commanders now available, and all too great discrepancies thus avoided in the final composition.

First Commitmentfrom 19 Nov 44 to App 10 Dec 44

On 19 Nov 44 the 6 F S Div, incorporated in the units of the LXXXVIII Inf Corps, took over the combat sector of the II SS Pz Corps (363 Volks Gren Div and 10 SS Pz Division) on both sides of ARNHEIM from (right hand boundary) GREBBEDANN inclusive (east of RHENEN) to (left hand boundary) the bend of the river WAAL near NIJMEGEN. A survey of the approximate commitment is given in (Annex 2)

Division command post: VELPE (east of ARNHEIM).

The division was reinforced by the M. G. Battalion 30 (4 companies) and, for a short period, by a further M. G. battalion, (46 or 49?) as well as by 3 garrison battalions. The fighting qualities of the M. G. battalions were good, those of the garrison battalions, weak. They consisted of old age classes without any combat experience, and lacked initiative. The artillery available consisted of the divisional artillery, and, besides this, of a heavy battalion (1 battery 17 mm. guns, 1 battery 15 mm. howitzers and several individual guns of medium caliber.)

As few forces as possible were employed at the actual front in order to

1. Gain depth in the defense line and
2. To continue with the necessary training.

The division, at the time, had at its disposal for training and as divisional reserve, the following forces, which were not in use: 1 F. S. Reg, 1 F. S. tank company and 1 F. S. mortar company. In numerous minor engagements the forces employed in the front line had also to gain experience in battle conditions and improve their training.

At the time of taking over the position, its field construction was but weak and needed considerable reinforcement work, which was taken in hand immediately. Lack of building material, however, made any real improvement impossible; also, the mining of the outpost area could not be carried out to the desired extent for lack of mines. A rearward position (See Annex 2) was under construction by O. T. forces. There also, building materials and means were in short supply.

Units of the 49 and 50 British Infantry Divisions were observed opposite the F. S. Division.

On various occasions preparations for attack (such as artillery reinforcements) were observed in the enemy lines; no attack, however, developed during this commitment of the division.

The strategic importance of the 6th F. S. Div's combat sector on both sides of ARNHEIM, however, made it seem likely that the enemy might seek a decision at any moment by launching an attack here.

A break-through at ARNHEIM could have folded up the whole lower Dutch defense and severed the communications as well as destroying the lower RHINE defenses and opening up the way in the

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direction of BREMEN-HAMBURG.

Second Commitmentfrom App. 11 Dec 44 to App. 6 Feb 45

About the 10 Dec 44 the 6 F. S. Div was relieved by the newly reconstituted 2 F. S. Div. and withdrawn from its first position. In the following night it took over the sector until then held by the 711 InfDiv. extending from the recent western divisional boundary to the WAAL bend at HEESBELT.

Subsequently, the division had also to take over in quick succession the sectors of the 712 and 719 Inf. Div. so that by 20 Dec 44, it was responsible for the defense of about 80 km of front, extending from the beginning of the HOLLANDSCH. DIEP (right hand boundary: SCHEDRECHT inclusive, -HOOG ZWALUWE exclusive) to the area east of RHIENEN (left hand boundary: GREEBE-DAMM inclusive BERGHAVEN inclusive)

For details as to formation see

(Annex 3)

Divisional command posts at this time were: GAMEREN,
from 11 Dec 44 to App. 6 Jan 45

BRAKEL, from 7 Jan 45 to App. 16 Jan 45

GELDERSHALSEN, From 17 Jan 45 to App. 6 Feb 45.

The command posts were changed from time to time, mainly on account of too intensive enemy fire and too frequent air attacks; tactical considerations were, on the whole, not decisive in these changes. What led to these excessive demands being made on the division by the tremendous

frontage, was the relief of the 711, 712, and 719 Inf. Div. These divisions, together with other forces detached from various points, were to be used in a coordinated attack in the Ardennes offensive, and to thrust forward in the general direction of BREDA--ANTWERPEN. It was not yet certain whether this assault was to be staged simultaneously with, or at a later stage in connection with, the Ardennes offensive. The 6 F. S. Div was also to be detached, its task being to join in the attack on the left wing, and in the further course of action to take over protection of the east flank. It might be observed however that this plan of attack was rejected as hopeless by the intermediate commands, - divisional and general commands--as the available forces seemed too weak for the success of an intended attack with such far-reaching aims. This plan of attack was later abandoned and the 711, 712, and 715 Divisions held in reserve for the Ardennes offensive.

In accordance with these intents the reinforcements left with, or drafted to, the division, were trifling. Those at disposal were:

M. G. Battalion 30

Russian " 800

Combat team (Regt) OBERST FUCHS (1 battalion air forces
1 battalion army).

Apart from these, the division had, from its own forces, formed a heavy artillery battalion, the IV F.S. Arty Reg 6, consisting of 3 batteries, each of 4 12.2 cm Russian medium field howitzers, These howitzers were very good guns of great firing accuracy and small

dispersion, very mobile, and sufficient ammunition was available. In spite of its tremendous frontage and its relative weakness, the division still aimed to employ as few forces as possible in the front line and to keep strong and mobile reserves in readiness. It was the task of these reserves to simultaneously improve the fighting qualities of the unit by planned training.

Apart from a short spell, during which the F. S. Regt 18 was drafted out for construction of field fortifications in the Reichswald-Southwest of CLEVE - (sheet F 1 and Qu 1)(during the Christmas season of 1944), the division had, besides the local regimental reserves, at its constant disposal:

F. S. Regt. 16 minus 1 battl.

1 battalion F. S. Regt 17

1 motorized reserve group (1 F. S. Comp.

1 F. S. mortar platoon

1 antitank company, 1 Engineer
company

Appropriate steps had been taken by the division to render these reserves fully mobile; they were partly at the disposal of the division and in a lesser degree at that of corps headquarters.

The Division's fighting capacity in this second commitment was reported by the divisional commander to higher quarters as being:

"fit for defensive action" and

"conditionally fit for attack"

Opposite the division, from east to west, were:

	Mixed	{	(The Dutch Brigade Crene
			(The 4 Canadian Armored Division
			(The 1 Polish Armored Division and
	In the rear	{	(Appr. 2 Battalions Royal Marines Cdo
			(1 regiment parachutists (Scottish?))?

The 4 Canadian Armored Division and the Polish Armored Division were often mixed, from which fact it could be gathered that the Canadians did not rate the fighting qualities of the Poles very highly.

Thus, the enemy had to be considered highly superior.

These engagements were characterized by embittered guerilla warfare in the most difficult, widely flooded marsh and canal terrain, in extremely cold weather.

Bigger scale and more protracted fighting arose for possession of the small bridgehead at CAPELLSCHE VAER. After very heavy losses on both sides in battles for this bridgehead (strength: 1 F. S. Company only, reinforced by 1/2 a F. S. machine gun company and 1 F. I. Grenade Platoon), it was voluntarily abandoned by the Germans on higher order in mid January, since the casualties were no more in proportion to its value.

During this whole period numerous reconnaissance patrols were operating against the enemy and penetrated as far as 50 km behind his front line, furnishing excellent reconnaissance results. On one occasion the F. S. Rgt 16 was transferred to the area of the 2 F. S. Div, but withdrawn again immediately. The Division was never

informed whether this movement was effected with the intention of withdrawing the 2 F. S. Div, or as a diverting movement.

The F.S. Reg 16 (minus 1 battalion), but reinforced by one antitank company and one mortar company, had to be drafted out to the Reichswald at the beginning of February. There, the regiment was wiped out in the course of a few days' heavy defensive combat.

the
About 10 Feb 45/division headquarters echelon was withdrawn and transferred to the combat sector east of the Reichswald (south of Emmerich). There, it relieved the staff of the 84 (?) Division (GENERALLEUTNANT FIEBIG) and as Combat Command GLOCHER - took over the command of several smaller composite combat teams which had, up to then, been under the command of the 84th Division. The troops of the 6 F. S. Div were gradually relieved from their recent positions along the MAAS and followed in individual transports.

Third Commitmentfrom app. 10 Feb to 10 Mar 45

In the new sector the Division was at first under the command of corps headquarters XXXXVII Tank Army Com; and later that of the II F. S. Army Com; both within the unit of the first F. S. Army. A survey on the approximate course of battle during this time and the approximate formation is given in

(Annex 4)

(After withdrawal from the Reichswald the front ran app. along the blue line. The enemy continued his attacks with point of main effort south of the road CLEVE--CALCAR--XANTEN, forcing back the 116 Armored Division adjacent to the 84 Division on the left. The blue line shows the course of the front as it was at the time of the 6 F. S. Div's assuming command. The first units of the 346 Inf. Div--which was in process of moving in--and one police regiment, were at this period on the right hand side, on the northern bank of the RHINE; they were not attacked.

The mixed combat teams taken over by the 84 Division, were composed appr. as follows:

In the right sector (Rhine bank to appr. the KALFLACH-stream) were placed only weak posts consisting of remnants of two battalions of the 19 F. S. Regt. They held the western defense of the roads leading into the villages. The entire terrain in this area was thoroughly flooded and could in that condition be considered impassable.

Remnants of two battalions (1 battalion army infantry, 1 battalion parachutists) under the command of the regt staff Gren. Reg. 835, closed up in the center, from KAFLACH brook to App. 1½ km southwest of MOYLAND.

To the left, the defense-fronting south-southwest-- was in the hands of remnants of 2 parachutist battalions, Regiment 21, remnants of the F. S. Regt. 16, detached from the Reichswald.

The artillery available consisted of only a few light battalions. Of these, one platoon after another was withdrawn for other use, as the artillery of the 6 F. S. Div. (without the IV F. S. Art. Rgt. 16) was gradually brought in and inserted in the sector.

Simultaneously, to start with, the F. S. Regt. 17, and then the F. S. Regt. 18, followed.

They were brought forward by rail to MARIENBAUM (8 - 10 km. behind the front line!) Even continuous enemy air attacks on the railroad failed to disturb this movement.

After its arrival, the F. S. Regt. 17 assumed command in the left sector in place of the utterly battleworn F. S. Rgt. 21. The remnants of the F. S. Rgt. 16, which were thus relieved, were transferred to the quiet sector north of the road CLEVE--CALCAR where their reconditioning was taken in hand. With the help of newly brought in replacements it was possible fairly soon to re-form 2 weak battalions fit for commitment; the reorganization of the regimental staff 16, however, proved impossible for the time being.

As long as the flooding in the northern sector continued, the enemy made no attacks there. Later on, as the roads slowly dried off, he undertook frequent thrusts with tanks towards the villages of CRIMP and WISSEL, and repeatedly succeeded in entering, but was unable to hold, them. These villages were eventually abandoned and finally left to the enemy. It was only during the withdrawal of the entire front, necessitated by the deep penetration south of the left divisional sector, where the utterly battle-worn 116 Armored Division was stationed, that these villages were abandoned and finally left to the enemy.

After its arrival, Parachute Regt. 18 relieved the center combat group (Cren. Regt. 835). The scanty remnants of that regiment (app. 300 men) were withdrawn behind the RHINE.

On the enemy side, the excellent 2 and 3 Canadian Infantry Divisions, supported by armored units, were in position opposite the division. These divisions relieved each other in their assaults and were thus able to return to the attack fresh and rested, whilst facing the heavily battered but firmly resisting troops of the Division. The fighting, often in close combat, was hard and bitter on both sides.

The enemy attacks were especially fierce after the first withdrawal of the front to CALCAR (to the brown line, Annex 4).

The enemy conduct of battle was highly schematic. Every assault could be reorganized in good time by its long term moving into position and the careful adjustment fire of the artillery. From these it was also possible--in most cases--to deduct the direction

of the assault and point of main effort beforehand. Any infantry assault would be preceded by a heavy barrage, lasting up to eight hours. Thus, it was often possible to withdraw our infantry from the danger zone at the beginning of the preparation fire, returning it to the front before the enemy attack set in.

Casualties at that time were bearable and, on the whole, we succeeded either in repelling the assaults in spite of crushing enemy superiority, or in clearing up penetrations by immediate counter-attacks. After an attack had been repelled a pause of three days usually followed, used by the enemy for the relief of the attack troops and for the new organization of his next assault. In the further course of action the Division used these pauses for planned retirement and preparation of the new main line of resistance. The disengagement was always voluntary and only executed on higher orders; also, great care was taken to maintain integral contact within the division, the strength of which was steadily diminishing as a result of the severe fighting.

The individual main lines of defense are marked with various colors in Annex 4.

During the night of the 9 to 10 March 1945 the Division was retired to the right RHINE bank west of WESHL, according to plan, and inserted in the sector: Right hand boundary HAFEN--MARIENBAUM,
left hand boundary: HANWINKELN--BIRTEN

(blue line again, Annex 4)

The enemy did not follow up at first and later cautiously felt his way to the weak rear-guard troops which remained on the left RHINE bank app. 24 hours. Their retirement across the RHINE was also effected without disturbance.

Responsible for the objective authenticity of this statement:

Signed: FLOCHER, GENERALLEUTNANT

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Maps: Americ. 1:100 000, Sheet 2, Sheet 5, Sheet P 1.
Sheet 4, Sheet 91.

Annexes:

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6. F. S. Div.

Annex 1.

19-11-44 - 10 May 45

as 16

Div. Bombardment School

Notes: *) - assault-company

***) - commanded sold. (?)
(commandierbe sold.)

each F. S. Rgt. 1 batt.
on bicycles.

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c

Annex 2

First Commitment of 6th F. S. Div.

19 Nov - App. 10 Dec 44

Maps 1:100 000 Am. Sh 2 5 pl

----- rear position

NIMWEGEN

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d

LXXXVIII. A. K.

Second Commitment of the 6 F. S. Div.

from app. 11 Dec 44 - App. 6 Feb 45

Maps: Am. 1:100 000 Sh 2, 4, 5

Main forces of F. S. Rgt. 16

(fr. 17 Jan 45)

Annex 3

Canadians

Poles

Royal Marines Command

Parachute Rgt (Scottish?)

Observed evacuation 4th Can. Tank Div?

Reichswald?

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e

Annex 4

EMMERICH

3rd Commitment of the 6 F. S. Div.

from Apr. 10 Feb - 10 Mar 45

Maps: Am. maps 1:100,000 Sh (121) ?

CLEVE

Assembling
point

XANTEN

WESEL

Remnants
of various regiments.

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f.

GEYER, Oberst.

Seen! ?

Remark to pages 3/4. The Army Group "H" did not expect a
decisive attack by the Anglo-Americans aiming at
severing the Netherlands. See composition "RHINELAND"

OBERST GEYER.

Checked by the Central Europe

Campaign review board

Imp important.

17 Feb 1947

GEYER,

OBERST

17

1. Fj. Rgt. Res

Anlage 2 B. 368

1. Einsatz d. 6. Fj. Div
19.11 - etwa 10.12.44.
Karten 1:100 000 am. sh 2,5 Pa

— rückwärtige Stellung

711. V.G.D.

Niederrhein

ARNHEM

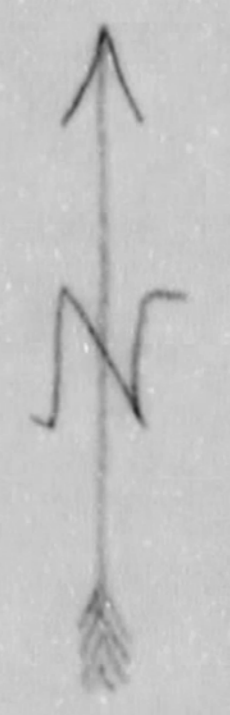
6. Fj. Div.

Velpt

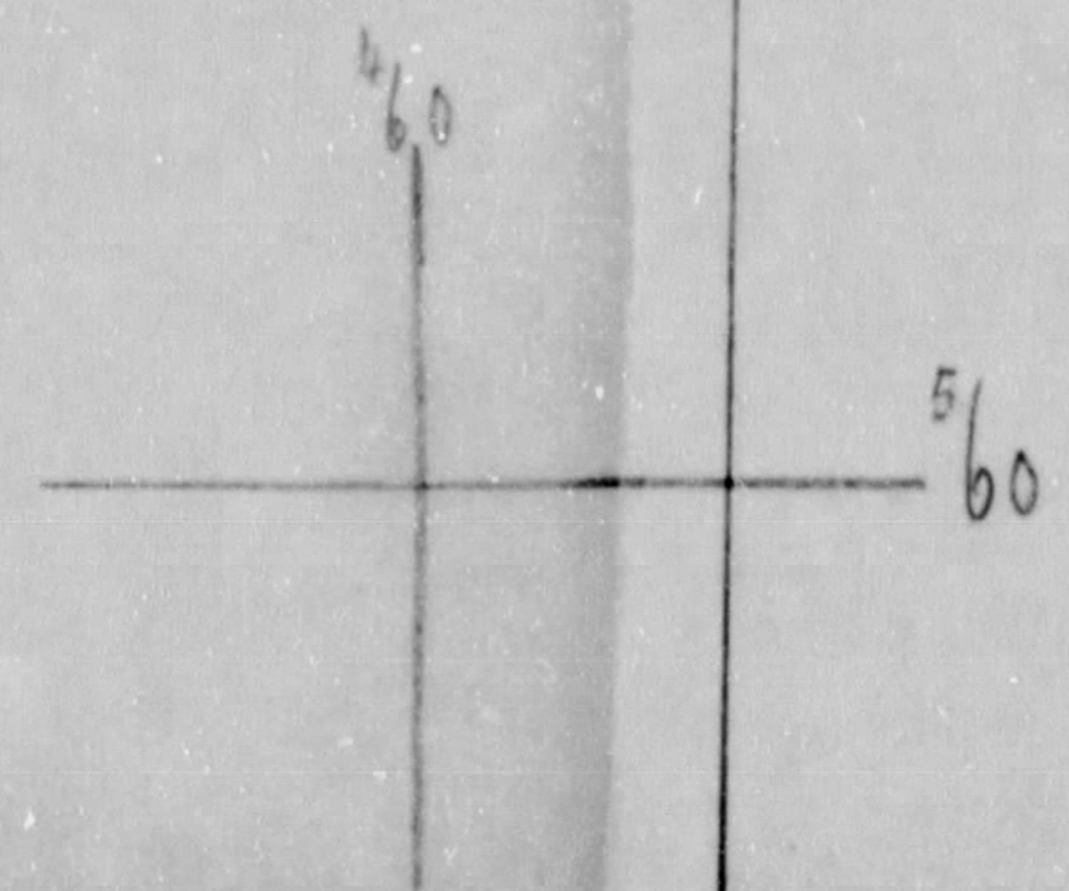
I/6

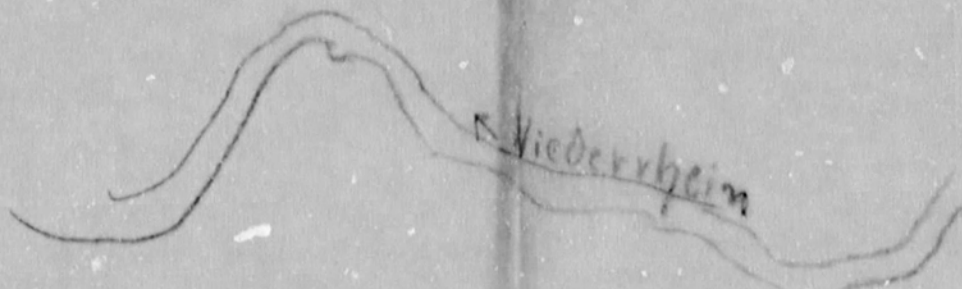
WaaP

NIMEGEM



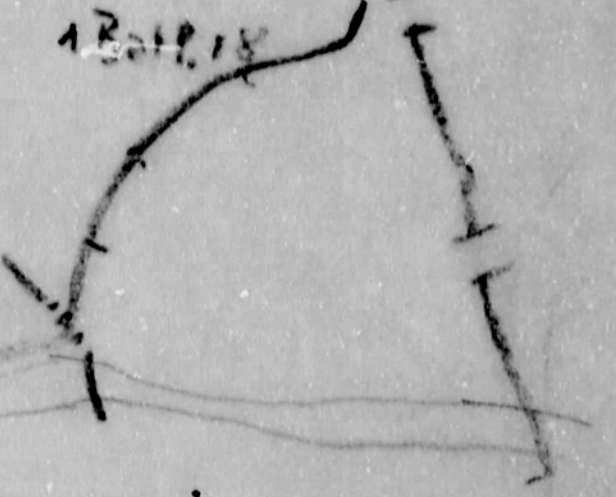
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2 Einsatz der 6. Fj. Div.
von etwa 11.12.44 bis etwa 6.2.45
Karten: am. 1:100000 sh 2, 4, 5

Profant II.16



(2617145)

2 Bat. 18

Hollände Brigade

Anlage 3

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Res. Bat. 17

Russenbat. 800

I.16



1 Bat. Rgt 16

(-6145)

IV.16

Lw. Bat.

M. G. Bat. 30

2 Batte. Fj. Rgt 17

Masse

H-Bat.

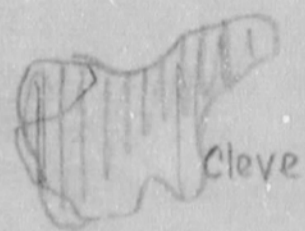
beobachteter Abtransport 4 Kanad. Pz Div? Reichswald?

- { Kanadier
- { Polen
- { Royal Man. Kdo
- { Fajersch. Jäg. Rgt. (Schotten?)

3. Einsatz der 6. Fg. Div.
von etwa 10.2. bis 10.3.45

Karten am. Karten 1:100000 sh (P1Q1)

Phylogeny



546. Inf. Div.

Emmerich



Calcar

REES

Rhein

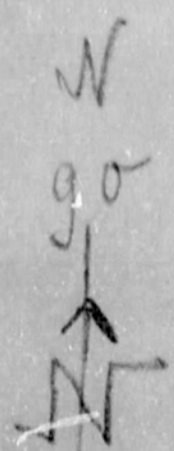
2 Rgt. v.

Sammel-Raum

Xanten

Wesel

Reste versch. Rgt. v.



40

