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THE BATTLE OF METZ

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During the period September-December 1944 the US XX Corps encircled and reduced Metz as a preliminary move to enhance the continued attack eastward of the US Third Army. Recognizing the strategic and political importance of the city, seizure by US forces was strongly contested by elements of the German First Army. The Battle is an excellent example of a Corps sized operation against a well fortified and defended strongpoint, as well as combat in urban terrain.

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COMMON REFERENCE: Reduction of Metz.

TYPE OPERATION: Offensive, Deliberate Attack, MOUT.

OPPOSING FORCES:

US:	3d Army	377th Inf
	XX Corps	378th Inf
	5th Inf Div	379th Inf
	90th Inf Div	320th Eng Cbt Bn
	95th Inf Div	10th Inf
	10th Armored Div	11th Inf
	XIX TAC	2d Inf
German:	LXXXII Corps	
	19th Volks Grenadier Div	17th SS Pz Gren Div
	416th Div	
	462d Volks Grenadier Div	
	25th Panzer Grenadier Div	
	106th Panzer Bde	

SYNOPSIS: US XX Corps encircled and reduced Metz as a preliminary for continued attack east by 3d US Army.

Excellent example of a Corps sized deliberate attack against a well fortified and defended strongpoint. Good deception operation, detailed planning, surprise, a river crossing, and urban combat.

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THE BATTLE OF METZ

A Battlebook presented to the Staff and
Faculty of the United States Army
Command and General Staff
College in fullfillment
of the requirements for
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by

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1984

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	PAGE
INTRODUCTION	1
BIBLIOGRAPHY	3
REVIEW OF THE STRATEGIC SETTING	5
REVIEW OF THE TACTICAL SITUATION	12
THE BATTLE	38
ANALYSIS OF THE BATTLE	65
END NOTES	69
MAPS	73

I. INTRODUCTION

The Battle of Metz is but one episode in what is commonly referred to as the Northwest Europe Campaign during the final year of World War II. The campaign really began on 25 July 1944 when the Allied armies broke out from the confines of the Normandy Peninsula and ended in May of the following year when the German Army surrendered unconditionally. To reduce the scale somewhat further, the operations that made up the Battle of Metz and which lasted from September through December 1944, were part of the Lorraine campaign, waged during the same period by the Third U.S. Army.

The Battle of Metz took place at the city of Metz, between the Ardennes hills and the Vosges in France. The principal allied forces involved in the battle were the XX (US) Corps of the Third U.S. Army consisting of the 5th Infantry Division, 90th Infantry Division and the 7th Armored Division. German forces consisted of German Army Group G with the primary units coming from the German First Army.

The types of sources required for a thorough, balanced account of this battle include first hand accounts of the battle from the German and the American armies, newspaper and magazine articles, and operational histories.

The comprehensive bibliographies are contained in the principal book on the subject: The Unknown Battle, by Anthony Kemp.

The Unknown Battle provides an excellent account of the battle. The book goes into great detail about the background leading up to the fight, particularily emphasising the part Metz played in the war both strategically and politically. The book also details the background on the principal commanders, perhaps keying on Patton and his attitudes towards this type of warfare. Additionally, the book outlines the logistic problems facing the

Americans and the personnel and material shortages facing the German forces. The book is also very valuable in providing the reader with illustrations of the Metz Fortress and a detailed account of the notes and sources used in writing the book.

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II. REVIEW OF THE STRATEGIC SETTING

The operations which made up the Battle of Metz lasted from September through December 1944 and were part of the Lorraine campaign, waged during the same period by the Third U.S. Army.[1]

The Allied Situation

Actual detailed planning for the invasion of Europe went only as far as the Liberation of France up to the line of the river Seine, which, it was calculated, would be reached by D+90. In fact this line was reached on 15 August (D+74), and, on the following day, units of the Third Army had a bridgehead at Mantes.[2]

The city of Metz was first mentioned in Allied planning during the considerations for how to reach the Ruhr area, the heart of German industrial production. It was determined by SHAEF (Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Forces) planners that the main emphasis would be placed on the northern thrust along the traditional invasion route into northern Germany via Manbenge and Liege. Once across the Rhine and with the Ruhr neutralized, the way to Berlin would be open across the North German Plain. This maneuver would be supported by a subsidiary thrust on the Verdun-Metz line.[3]

The success of the breakout was so overwhelming that the Allied leadership found itself on the horns of a dilemma. By mid-August the whole command system was being called into question, and lack of firm direction was to lead to fatal delays. General Eisenhower, as Supreme Allied Commander, delegated the responsibility of ground commander to General Montgomery with Bradley in charge of an Army Group equal to Montgomery's, but subject to overall tactical supervision by the latter. General Montgomery was directed to advance into Belgium with the immediate aim of taking Antwerp and neutralizing the V-weapon

bases in the Pas de Calais. Patton was to continue his eastward move, at least as far as Rheims, and to link up with the Anvil/Dragoon forces advancing up the Rhone valley toward the Vosges. The bulk of Bradley's fuel tonnage was allocated to the First Army, so that Patton was given enough fuel to join the battle but not to win it.[4]

The advance agreed on by General Eisenhower finally got underway on 29 August — by which date Patton's spearheads were already approaching Rheims, having managed to storm across the Marne. Three days later his mobile columns would be across the Meuse, but stalled for lack of fuel. Only thirty miles ahead of them lay the Moselle, just one more river on the way to the Rhine.[5]

The German Situation

After the defeat in Normandy, and as a result of the terrible losses suffered during the Russian summer offensive, under a normal political system, Germany should have sued for peace. Nothing, however, was further from the mind of the Fuehrer, who in mid-August was already considering a counteroffensive that was to emerge as the Ardennes attack in December.[6]

At the beginning of September, shortly before he was relieved of command, Model received a set of instructions that were indicative of German strategy. These emphasized Hitler's "stand or hold" doctrine, which had led to the loss of so many troops in isolated pockets and had not succeeded in halting Allied advances. The enemy was to be held in a general defensive battle in front of the Westwall to gain time so that it could be made ready. According to Hitler, success here would mean that the Netherlands could be retained and German territory would not be occupied. Allied aircraft would be left as far away as possible, and even if Antwerp were to be lost, German possession of the north bank of the Scheldt would render the approaches useless. Finally, the vital Ruhr and Saar industrial and mining areas would be retained.[7]

Third Army and XX Corps

The Battle of Metz was fought by the XX Corps which was part of the Third Army commanded by General George S. Patton. At the end of August, the Third Army consisted of 314,814 officers and men divided into nine divisions, two of which were armored. By this time, the Third Army was a close-knit fighting organization flushed with victory and eager for the kill. The XX Corps was commanded by General Walton H. Walker and consisted of three divisions, the 5th and 90th Infantry, and the 7th Armored. None of the three divisions had suffered excessive casualties during the pursuit of Germany across France.[8]

On 1 September 1944, the Third Army suffered the humiliation of running out of fuel. However, by 5 September, the situation had improved somewhat and General Bradley again assigned the Rhine at Frankfurt as the Third Army objective as soon as the Westwall could be breached. Immediately as the conference was over, Patton issued his orders. General Walker with XX Corps was to attack eastward in two phases--first, to establish a bridgehead over the Moselle, and second, to cross the Rhine.[9] At no time was any mention made of expected German opposition. It was assumed that the Germans would make some sort of stand at the Westwall, which General Patton thought would be breached easily by armor.[10]

Armed with his orders, General Walker rushed back to his headquarters and issued verbal messages that were followed the next morning by Field Order No. 10, upon which the first stage of the Metz battle was based. It stated, "Third U. S. Army attacks to seize crossings over the Rhine River between Mannheim and Coblenz." The mission of XX Corps was first to seize a crossing over the Moselle and then to capture Metz and Thionville. Second, they were to cross the Rhine in the vicinity of Mainz and prepare to advance to Frankfurt. The individual units were assigned missions as follows: The 3rd Cavalry Group was

ordered to reconnoiter to the Rhine without delay and the 7th Armored Division was to advance east in multiple columns; seize crossings over the Rhine. The 5th Infantry Division was to capture Metz and then continue to advance to the Rhine, while Thionville was assigned to the 90th Infantry.[11]

At this state of the campaign, the XX Corps and the American Army had run out of detailed maps and were using mostly 1:100,000 Michelin road maps. The fortifications around Metz and Thionville were marked on some of the maps used by XX Corps, but nobody had any idea of the type, design, or actual sites of the forts. Some apprehension was felt, but the general tendency was to hope for the best and to dismiss the forts as probably obsolete and incapable of offering determined resistance. The events of the next ten days virtually altered this view.[12]

The German Situation at the beginning of the Metz Campaign

Directly opposing General Patton's forces was the German First Army. On 6 September the commander, General von der Chevallerie was retired on grounds of "illhealth" and replaced by General Otto von Knobelsdorf. The latter had had considerable experience as a corps commander in Russia and was known to be both a tough fighter and an optimist. His Army, together with the Nineteenth Army immediately to the south, was placed under the command of Army Group G and General Blaskowitz.[13]

During the last days of August, the German First Army had pulled back behind the Meuse with its forces totally shattered and on the run. From the retreat, only nine battalions of infantry, two batteries of field artillery, ten tanks, and a number of antiaircraft and antitank guns had been retrieved. Reinforcements in the shape of elements of the 3rd and 5th Panzer Grenadier Divisions had arrived from Italy in time to see action in the Verdun-Commercy Area, and the remaining troops of these units were in position along the

Moselle by 2 September. In addition there was the exhausted 17th SS Panzer Grenadier Division, which was in the First Army area for refitting. Parts of this unit were thrown in to form an outpost line to the west of Metz, astride the main road from Verdun.[14]

Directly facing General Walker's XX Corps, on the Moselle between Metz and Thionville, was the German LXXXII Corps, commanded by the artillery general, Johann Sinnhuber. American intelligence had estimated that the enemy would not make a stand on the Moselle, but would retire to the prepared positions of the Westwall along the German frontier. This proved to be a false estimate, for as early as 24 August, Hitler had issued orders for the preparation of defenses in advance of the Westwall. In the Moselle sector, Gauleiter Burckel was empowered to call up the civilian population for the construction of defense works, and orders were also given for the reconditioning of the old fortifications of Metz and Thionville.[15]

Sometime toward the end of July 1944, Lieutenant General Walther Krause was appointed to command Division No. 462 in Metz. At the time, this unit was nothing more than a headquarters with a nominal staff, responsible for the various military schools and training and replacement units in the Metz area. They were engaged in such matters as the reorientation of convalescents and the care of wounded prior to discharge. The officers and NCO's of the division were either unfit or overage, and none of the units were in any way ready for combat.[16]

On 2 September, Krause was appointed fortress commander by General Sinnhuber (LXXXII Corps). However, on 7 September the higher command echelon changed to the XIII SS Panzer Corps and assumed responsibility for the sector from Thionville to south of Metz. This was SS Corps only in name as the bulk of the troops were normal army units.[17]

General Krause took control of the roadblocks and set to work to assemble a fighting force capable of defending the city. His division had two infantry training battalions immediately available plus miscellaneous specialists, but by the beginning of September he managed to form a three-regiment division, which consisted of the Officer Candidate Regiment, the 1010th Security Regiment, and the NCO School of Military District XII.[18]

The Officer Candidate Regiment was commanded by Colonel von Siegroth, and the unit was mainly composed of the cadets of an officer training school. They numbered some 1,800, most of whom had been commissioned as lieutenants on passing their examinations at the beginning of September. The regiment was filled out with some 1,500 sundry troops who had been gathered in from the retreating columns to give a total combat strength of 3,300 experienced men.[19]

The 1010th Security Regiment, commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Richter, had retreated from France and consisted of two under-strength battalions. The personnel were mostly overage and their combat efficiency was low.[20]

The NCO School of Military District XII, commanded by Colonel Wagner, was formed into a regiment of some 1,500 men who had been attending various courses. Krause rated their efficiency as high, although they had never before fought together as a combat unit.[21]

In addition to the above three regiments, the two replacement battalions belonging to the division were stationed on the east bank of the Moselle to the south of the city. There they were joined by a battalion formed from the personnel of the SS Signal School — known as "Battalion Berg," after its commander. Initially, artillery was almost nonexistent, consisting of two battalions of a replacement unit armed with Russian 7.5cm cannon, and with no transport of its own. The only reinforcement received was a battery of four

10.5cm guns.[22]

General Krause deployed the bulk of his forces around the western fortified salient. On the right, the 1010th Security Regiment held the line facing north between the Feves Ridge and the Moselle. In the center, the NCO School was spread between St. Privat and Verneville. The area from Verneville to the river at Ars-sur-Moselle was held by the Officer Candidate Regiment to whom the bulk of the artillery was assigned.[23]

On 5 September, OB West estimated that there was the equivalent of four and a half divisions available for the Metz-Thionville sector. They were positioned on the eastern bank, except for the fortified salient to the west of Metz. The divisions were a mixture of odd battalions and "burnt-out" regiments, largely without vehicles, heavy weapons, and armor. Their state of training and efficiency varied considerably, from excellent to terrible. However, there was a front of units, as General Walker's men were to discover when they resumed their advance.[24]

III. REVIEW OF THE TACTICAL SITUATION

A. The Area of Operations

(1) Climate and Weather

The plan to reduce the fortresses of Metz was destined to be greatly altered. Even before it was initiated the weather had changed the plan materially. Steady autumn rains blanked out the medium and heavy air bombardment that was scheduled to soften up the Metz defenses. Serving to exacerbate the already unfavorable situation, the Moselle River began to rise over its banks and fill adjacent flood plains. A feint had to be established at a secondary crossing site at Ackange because of the risk of crossing the swollen Moselle at Koenigsmacher as originally planned. Due to the extreme flooding along the Moselle, it was feared that the element of surprise associated with the deception plan was lost because of the necessity to conduct a safe river crossing operation.

(2) Terrain (OCOKA)

Complete surprise was impossible to achieve due to the excellently positioned observation posts and fields of fire from the outer ring of forts. Additionally, German infantry soldiers were deployed as far out as possible from the forts themselves.[25]

As regards cover and concealment: Across from the 90th Infantry Division's crossing area, Fort Koenigsmacher and the ridge line of Maginot forts commanded the entire crossing area and provided the enemy with excellent observation. The tactical effect of the area of operations clearly favored the enemy. The terrain virtually dictated the effective placement of observation posts and influenced the ability of the Germans to exercise surveillance of critical areas of the battlefield. Typically, the Forest of Cattenom provided an assembly area for the initial river crossing operation to be

executed by the 90th Infantry Division. The area was located on the forward slopes of the valley hills. Between the forest and Moselle River, the ground was devoid of cover and completely under direct observation from the enemy held high ground east of the river. This observation vulnerability prompted the planning of the movement into the forest and the subsequent assault from the woods to occur under the cover of darkness. The natural defenses of the city were formidable. The city is located in a looping bend of the Moselle that provides a water barrier to the north and west, and a tributary, the Seille, flows in from the South. Steep hills on three sides of the city form a shallow bowl further enhancing the defense of the fortress. Narrow and twisting valleys disect this bowl into four distinct defensive areas.

The Fort System

The first complete circle of forts and fortified groups that afforded the outer defense of Metz consisted of 15 positions. On occupation of the forts in 1940 by the Germans, the outer ring fortifications were improved. A military signal center was installed at Fort St. Quentin connecting the fortified groups. Actual repair lagged as a result of German victories. The forts of Girordin and Sion were linked by tunnels and supported by bunkers, pillboxes, armored observation posts, heavily reinforced casemates, minefields and a trench system that extended completely around the crest of some of the major hills of the city. Two 210mm guns were installed on the west bank of the Moselle at Fort St. Quentin along with a protective, modern, revolving, armored observation post. Several 105mm self-propelled guns and anti-tank guns were also installed in the area. Concrete-reinforced caves dug into the side of the hill were to protect the roving self-propelled guns when the guns were not in use. Extensive, deliberate field fortification work was also done on the remainder of the 12 forts.[26]

The second complete outer belt of 28 forts and fortified groups, located on the rim of a wheel of hills approximately six miles out from the hub of the city of Metz, was composed of permanent fortifications. The forts of this group were essentially fortified artillery positions, as distinguished from the inner belt, whose forts were primarily used as infantry strongpoints. There were no planned fields of fire from the forts proper for direct fire of automatic weapons. Instead, an inter-defensive system of fire was devised whereby the deep moats that surrounded each fort or fortified group were covered by interlocking fields of automatic fire which effectively barred any infantry crossing. The German infantry positions protecting these highly fortified artillery positions were set up quite a distance out from the forts themselves in an all-around security design.

To prevent high velocity direct fire weapons from destroying the gun emplacements, the Metz forts were generally underground with their large caliber guns firing from round, revolving, steel turrets that protruded above ground level. Underground passages linked the various forts so that counter-battery artillery fire was ineffective and only a direct hit on a turret by an aerial bomb of 1,000 pounds, or more, would silence the position. Attacking infantry on one fort proved ineffective. The German defender merely went underground while the attacking infantry received heavy artillery bombardment from the supporting German forts and artillery positions.[27]

Each fortress accommodated 2,000 to 3,000 men along with a crew of 150 to 200 men for each battery. The communications system was excellent and was designed to provide the defenders of one fort with direct communications with other forts as well as indirect communications with each fort via a central telephone exchange in Metz.

The terrain of the Moselle River region forms one of the finest natural

barriers. The river's swift waters cut a natural breastwork of abrupt slopes on western banks. To the east of the Moselle the banks are dominated by hills that have been cut out of the land by tributary streams, chiefly the Seille and Nied Rivers. Throughout the entire area, the hills and ridges formed by these rivers are steep and heavily wooded. These facts proved that Metz was the perfect site for fortifications on dominating terrain formed by the convergence of these rivers.

The imposing double belt of forts and fortified groups that ringed the naturally fortified city of Metz were carefully and cleverly emplaced so that full defensive advantage of the dominating terrain could be utilized. In all, there were 43 fortified areas or forts, with 128 artillery pieces of large caliber emplaced around Metz. These were exclusive of the Maginot Line fortifications, the forts around Thionville and the Siegfried Line.[28]

Fort Guentrange was northwest of Thionville and was occupied by the 90th Infantry Division in its September sweep east to the Moselle River. After the attack, it was vacated and left in good condition by the Germans retiring east of the Moselle. Its eight 100mm French guns, now manned by the cannoneers from XX Corps Artillery, later played an important part in the assault against the Metz fortified region.[29]

The terrain along with the German held forts on high ridge lines and hill tops forced the infantry and armor of the XX Corps to canalize their attacks between ridge lines of hilly and heavily wooded terrain.

B. COMPARISON OF OPPOSING FORCES

Strength and Composition

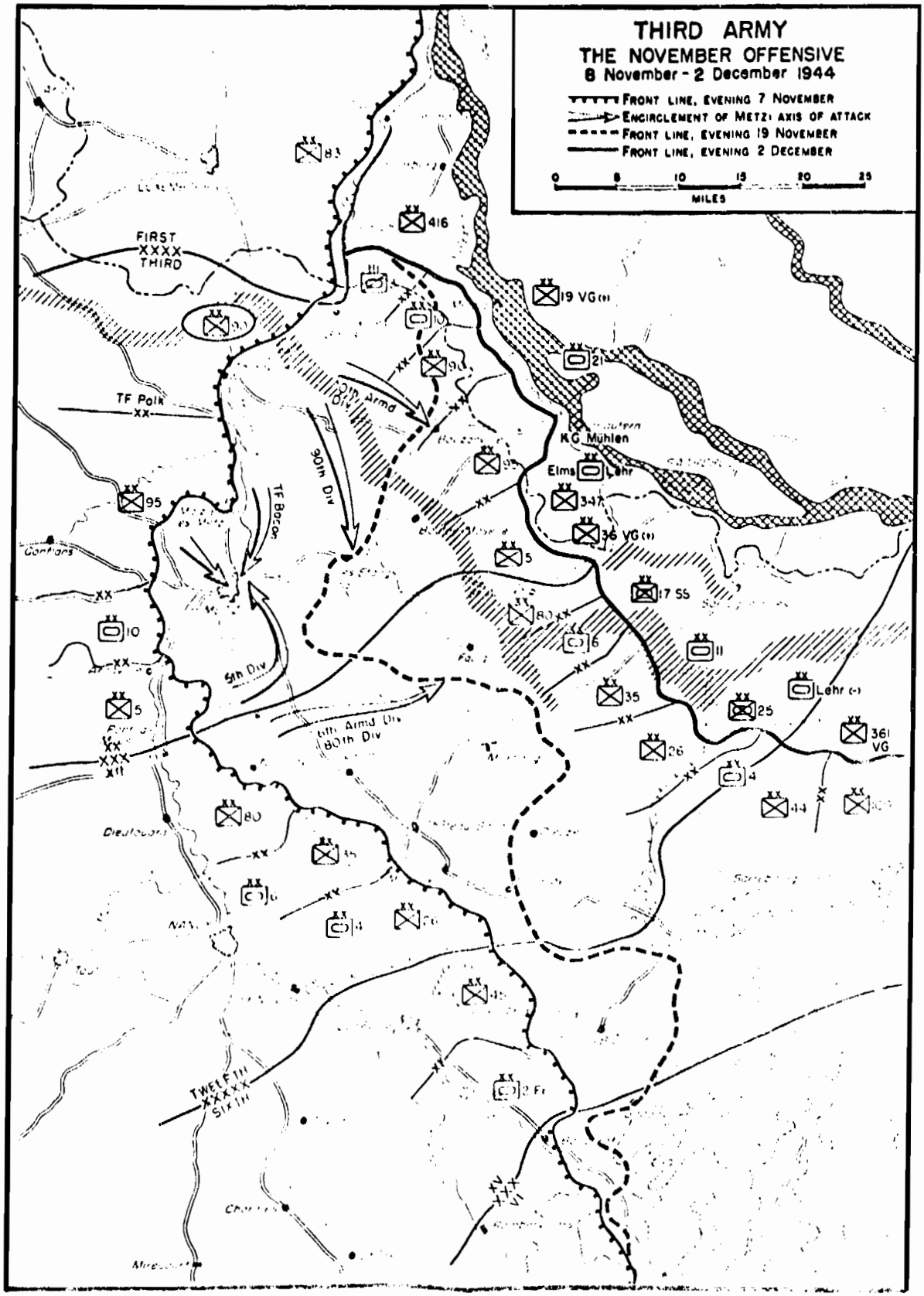
U.S. Forces consisted of elements of the Third U.S. Army, commanded by LTC George S. Patton, Jr., and supported by elements of the XIX Tactical Air Command. The battle on the ground was fought by men of two of the Third

Army's corps. (Map A, Third U.S. Army Situation).

The XX Corps, in the north, commanded by MG Walker, contributed the units who did the bulk of the fighting for the final reduction of Metz. In the far north, TF Polk and the 83d Infantry Division held defensive positions. The 90th Infantry Division, commanded by MG James A. VanFleet, was assembled west of the Moselle River for an intended encirclement from the north. The 10th Armor Division was positioned to breakout to the rear of Metz. The 95th Division, commanded by MG H. L. Twaddle, directly opposed the city of Metz. The 5th Infantry Division, commanded by MG W. H. H. Morris was positioned south of Metz to encircle from that flank. Additionally, TF Bacon, commanded by COL R. L. Bacon and comprised of 95th Division units, was formed after the initial river crossings in the north. The 3d Cavalry Regiment also played a major role in combat and in the Corps' deception schemes prior to the battle.

The XII Corps, in the south, was commanded by MG Manton S. Eddy. Eddy's forces had fought well to gain their initial positions along the Moselle River, but their participation in the actual reduction of Metz was limited. They were poised to breakout to objectives along the Saar River and further east on the Maginot Line and the WestWall. Major corps units were the 4th and 6th Armor Divisions and the 26th, 35th and 80th Infantry Divisions.

Opposing forces for the Metz battle consisted of elements of the LXXXII Corps of the First (German) Army. The 462d Volksgrenadier (VG) Division occupied the city itself, while the 416 VG Division, 19th VG Division, and the 1010th Security Regiment held the lines to the north. In the south 22d Fortress Regiment and the 462d Fusilier Battalion held the lines with the 17th SS Ranger Grenadier Division to the rear in the south. While the Allies possessed air superiority during the battle, limited Luftwaffe support in the way of reconnaissance was received.



MAP NO. 45

MAP A

US Forces:
Order of Battle, Composition:

THIRD U.S. ARMY

* * * * * *

XX Corps

5th Inf Div
- 2d Inf Regt
- 10th Inf Regt
- 11th Inf Regt

90th Inf Div
- 357 Inf Regt
- 358 Inf Regt
- 359 Inf Regt

95th Inf Div
- 377 Inf Regt
- 378 Inf Regt
- 379 Inf Regt
- TF Bacon

7th Armor Div
- CCA
- CCB
- CCR

10th Armor Div
- CCA
- CCB
- CCR

3d Cav Gp
6th Cav Gp
1103d Cbt Engr Gp
1139th Cbt Engr Gp
5th Ranger Bn

XIX Corps

26th Inf Div
- 101st Inf Regt
- 104th Inf Regt
- 328th Inf Regt

35th Inf Div
- 134th Inf Regt
- 137th Inf Regt
- 320th Inf Regt

80th Inf Div
- 317th Inf Regt
- 318th Inf Regt
- 319th Inf Regt

4th Armor Div
- CCA
- CCB
- CCR

6th Armor Div
- CCA
- CCB
- CCR

2d Cav Gp
106th Cav Gp
1117th Cbt Engr Gp
1135th Cbt Engr Gp

* * * * * *

GERMAN ORDER OF BATTLE

COMPOSITION

LXXXII CORPS

19TH VOLKS GRENADIER DIV.

416TH DIV.

462 VOLKS GRENADIER DIV.

25TH PANZER GRENADIER DIV.

106TH PANZER BDE

17TH SS PANZER GRENADIER DIV.

Technology

Technology of the opposing forces was fairly evenly matched. Large weapons systems did not play a major role, for the battle was fought mostly by infantry units or on a small unit basis.

U.S. Forces had been unpleasantly surprised by the Metz area fortress defenses during the September battles. They had strived for an improvement in their river crossing methods and fortress reduction techniques in the interim period. Plans and blueprints of the forts were finally supplied to U.S. forces and assisted in an understanding of the construction and connectivity of the strongpoints.

During the October lull, German Forces had made some improvements to the fortifications. They had stopped well short of real improvement and many forts were unmanned or undermanned and several important gun positions were inoperative. The eastern sector was especially deficient in repair.

Nevertheless, U.S. Forces in the Third Army were faced with a formidable obstacle which would have to be cleared fort by fort, building by building. A large civilian population in Metz precluded on both a political and morale basis the use of heavy bombing, although this type of bombing had proved unsuccessful against the Metz fortifications. The large civilian population also provided FFI forces to the Allies and sympathizers and fifth columnists to the Germans.

Logistical and Administrative System

"All through August General Patton's determination to override every obstacle and continue to advance had so inspired his army that it had violated with impunity many an accepted tactical or logistical dictum and had surpassed the most sanguine expectations of success. The total impact of these successes could not but disrupt a system of supply based on the expectation of a

more gradual and evenly paced advance across France."[30]

Logistical Requirements

U.S. — The U.S. forces needed fuel and artillery: 2,000 tons of ammunition per day; 20,000 shells per day; rifles; antitank guns; rifles; tires; maintenance parts; bridge crossing equipment; explosives; fortification mounting equipment; river crossing equipment; and as winter set in, blankets, warm clothing and shoes. Vital spare parts were missing and maps were sorely needed.[31]

Germans — The Germans mainly needed antitank weapons, artillery, gasoline, tanks, ammunition, rations and potable water, and concrete and steel to reinforce their fortifications.[32]

Availability of Classes of Supply

U.S. — At the outset no supplies were readily available. The demand for fuel had ground the Third Army to a complete halt. The Fifth Infantry Division had only 2,000 gallons of fuel of which half was needed just for cooking.[33]

Maps were not available since the planners had not anticipated the need so quickly. Therefore, there was no idea of the type, design or actual sites of the forts, let alone the inside fortifications.[34]

By 20 September there was a chronic shortage of artillery ammunition: 7 rounds per gun for 155's and about the same for 105's. Water was getting short and ammunition began to run out. No vehicles had been able to cross the river even up to 12 November; therefore, no bangalore torpedoes and engineer equipment normally needed for tackling forts were available. The desired artillery expenditure of 60 rounds per weapon per day had been reduced to .4 rounds per day — a grand total of 553 rounds for the entire Third Army.[35] It was mainly due to the lack of ammunition that the initial assault on Metz

had to be called off.

Gasoline was 368,000 gallons short on 30 August 1944 and had there not been a lull in fighting during the month of October to build up supplies, the November offensive could not have begun.

By November the critical needs were explosives and fuels. The weather made it impossible to bridge the river and any supplies brought up to the fort had to be hand carrier across by engineers and infantry already heavy laden with their normal battle equipment, personal weapons and ammunition.

After the second full day of fighting in November, still no tanks or tank destroyers had made it to the east bank, so the only support was from artillery working in mud up to their knees and firing around the clock.

Germans — Most of the forts lacked usable guns, ammunition and fire control apparatus. Only Fort Driant had its fixed batteries functioning by 6 September. They also found problems with a lack of barbed wire and mines. Apart from personal weapons and a few mortars, firepower at Fort St. Quentin consisted only of two heavy infantry howitzers. The two 80mm mortars were out of ammunition.[36]

Due to the need of building up for the later Ardennes's offensive, the forces at Metz had a low fill priority and were very low in assault guns and tank destroyers. During the October lull, only one and one half rounds per gun per day were made available.

Artillery regiments were in fairly good shape, although the number of field pieces was generally well below the complement of the American division artillery. The 17th SS Division was lacking most of its tanks and assault guns.

By 21 November, food was in short supply as was water. Finally, a combination of the lack of both items forced them to give in. As Colonel Vogel had

said, he refused to surrender until forced to do so or by having his food or ammunition run out.[37]

PROCUREMENT AND DISTRIBUTION

At the initial phase in September the greatest difficulties were with the Third Army. Having outrun the lines of communication which extended all the way back to Normandy. Since no closer ports had been opened, and receiving third priority, since the main effort was going to Montgomery in the north and stockpiling to support Market-Garden, the Third Army was in dire straits. With no knowledge of the fortifications and inadequate artillery available, coupled with the adverse weather which prevented adequate air support and made the river impassable as well as causing any logistical support to be swallowed in a quagmire, the likelihood of success in September was poor to none. On the other hand, the Germans in the fortifications faced a much better position. Despite their shortages the presence of elite troops, moral and physical strength derived from steel and concrete, even in outdated fortifications and the possession of ground that favored the defender were factors which greatly swung to the side of the German forces at the outset of conflicts in September.

Additionally, trains still ran in to Metz until 17 November. Despite the slow resupply to them due to the priority fill going to the anticipated Ardennes offensive, the lines of communication favored the Germans.

Bridging equipment and heavy engineer stores for the Third Army were scattered in trucks that had run dry along the line of advance. Bridging trains were not moved up until 6 September.[38] Due to the lack of fuel, ammunition could not be moved up and the appalling weather only compounded the problem while the opponents were generally warm and snug in their permanent emplacements.

The Germans were given little aid since men and material were being

shunted to the north for the great counteroffensive. As a matter of fact, Balck commented, "I have never commanded such jumbled up and badly equipped troops."[39] Of course this comment came just prior to the U.S. major thrust in November after Metz had been forced to relinquish the "elite" troops and was being refilled with troops having as little as one week's training and receiving a low fill priority for arms and ammunition. Hundreds of train loads were diverted to support the buildup for the Ardennes offensive. During the October lull, proper steps had not been taken to ensure an adequate supply for Metz. Consequently, as the November attack began, they only had enough food available for 2 days. Ground resupply had met the interdicting power of our air force, and by 17 November the trains were cut off. The attempts to resupply by air failed to connect when the very item needed for identification (flares) was part of the critical shortage.[40]

The American plan had been to build small reserves by the first of November. Market Garden denied logistical support for the Third Army and the basic method of delivery for all supplies and equipment was using the Red Ball express in which it took three trucks for every single trip to the front.[41] Patton's main means of obtaining supplies and equipment was by using the "Rock Soup" method; asking for bits and pieces and using it up so he would force the hand of his superiors in providing him more. They were able to confiscate a large store of Argentine beef and fuel. Though low grade, it was enough to push ahead for a few days.[42]

With no rail available, ports hundreds of miles away, no forward logistical support points, confiscation, austerity and use of the resupply trucks were the primary means for U.S. procurement. In November, air resupply delivered 1800 K-rations, 46,000 rounds of .50 calibre ammunition and medical supplies. Air resupply continued to be a major resource throughout the

conflict. It was not until 18 November that the first supplies were brought in by road and landing strips were cleared and able to evacuate the more seriously wounded. Large stocks of engineer equipment and special supplies for dealing with fortifications were built up during the October lull.[43]

TRANSPORTATION

Since both the Third U.S. Army and the First German Army were given a rather low priority, transportation was inadequate to support either. The Red Ball express transported fuel and supplies from supply dumps near the invasion beaches and ports. However, their increasingly longer trips decreased the amount of fuel that could be brought to the combat units. Rail lines were not opened to Metz until December.[44]

Weather had a significant impact on both forces, slowing the transport for the U.S. and causing sickness for the horses which were used to draw much of the forward field artillery to be used by the Germans.

At close range during the final reduction of Metz in November, U.S. efforts to construct rafts to cross the river were frustrated and overturned, dumping contents into the river. The first bridge was not completed until 12 November, thus enabling the headquarters and medical facilities to move into Fort Yutz. Two platoons of tank destroyers and a number of anti-tank guns crossed to the east bank, and carrying parties brought over the much needed explosives and demolition equipment. Up until this time, however, transportation was totally inadequate.[45]

Trainloads of assorted guns, mainly Italian "booty," were brought in to the Germans on 15 November. Ammunition, however, was scarce. Motor tractors were virtually nonexistent and there was a grave shortage of horses. Due to the lack of transportation the Germans lacked artillery, antitank weapons, water and were down to only 18 days of rations by mid November. Bread,

potatoes, salt and coffee were scarce.[46]

SUPPLY INSTALLATIONS AND TERMINALS

The theater was virtually devoid of airfields. Close port facilities were not available and supplies had to be shipped over land from the initial beaches at ports at Normandy. Allied strategy called for a halt on the Seine to build up stocks, followed by a systematic advance. The spectacular success of the Third Army could not be kept up with, and success of allied tactical bombers had smashed the railway network.

The rapid advance of armored columns meant that the burden thrown on airfield construction agencies was much greater than the capacities of the organizations which had been set up. Opening a port at Antwerp was the main order of the day and considered to be the only way to support the drive toward the Rhine. Only the port at Cherbourg was functioning. Brest, Calais and Dunkirk were still in German hands. Despite the opening of Antwerp, it could not help the eastward move of the Third Army through the Lorraine.[47]

By 5 November supplies of gasoline and rations were in sound condition due primarily to the opening of new railheads directly behind the front line, but tires and diesel fuel were still in short supply. The petroleum pipeline opened to Alemon was some help, but it could handle only relatively small amounts.

EVACUATION AND SALVAGE SYSTEM

Once again due to the combination of low priority for combat service support, rapid movement of the combat forces, inability to provide fuel, direction of effort toward the north, and finally the destruction of rail lines and the worrisome weather complete with its knee-deep mud and flooding rivers, there was no way the battlefield evacuation and salvage system could work. Virtually no vehicles were returned for salvage and only patients

desperately in need of hospitalization were able to be evacuated until late in November during the final reduction of Metz. Until then there were a number of reports of the dead and wounded being piled up.[48]

MAINTENANCE

With the poor state of even the most basic logistical support, maintenance support was virtually nonexistent. Any vehicle that broke down was ruthlessly bulldozed off the road. Vehicles were in urgent need of repair, casualties had to be replaced, and equipment overhauled long before such services were available.[49]

IMPACT OF SHORTAGES

By 1 September, the main force of the Third U.S. Army's XX Corps had run out of gasoline at Verdun. If they had had fuel, the XX Corps would have pushed on to Metz, and, probably would have sealed it off with a regimental size force and continued to push on to the Rhine. As it was the delay in receiving fuel allowed the Germans to reinforce Metz and thereby repulse the first attempt to attack in early September. Inexperience in attacking fortified positions and lack of adequate air support were probably the primary reasons for the initial lack of success of the American forces. However, the caliber and training of the young officers-in-training at Metz were a formidable obstacle.

With the supply priorities geared to a broad front and first priority going to Montgomery and the First Army, along with instructions that no more aggressive action be permitted beyond what the maintenance situation would support after the full requirements of the main effort had been met, the Third Army drive forward had little chance for success.[50]

The shortage of fuel stopped the advance. The shortage of artillery and air support blunted the success of the attack as did the absence of maps and

special materials needed to overcome fortifications. Lack of heavy bridging equipment and ability to cross the swollen river made it virtually impossible to accomplish the initial assault on Metz. The October lull provided an opportunity to make up for these and other shortcomings, thereby making it possible to successfully defeat the Germans at Metz in November.

On the other hand, had the Germans had the proper priority in personnel and logistical support as well as improved the fortification assets, they could very likely have repulsed the Third Army advance. As it was, they did not have the priority or the logistical support and finally, due to a lack of artillery and anti-armor capability, coupled with the sealing off of their lines of communication, they were forced to surrender.

COMMAND, CONTROL, AND COMMUNICATIONS SYSTEM

U.S. Forces were well organized for the Metz battle. The commanders and staffs had been preparing for the final reduction since the September battles. A realignment of forces had positioned the Infantry divisions against Metz while the Armor units were poised to exploit to both the north and the south. Additional engineer support had been positioned for the river crossings and engineers and infantry were trained and organized to reduce the fortifications with explosives.

Communications were generally satisfactory, although deficiencies existed on both sides. U.S. wire communications were frequently interrupted by enemy shelling and the destruction of one bridge severed commercial circuits across the Moselle. A lack of communications for command prompted the formation of TF Bacon on the east side of the Moselle early in the battle.

The Germans relied primarily on wire within the protection of the fortress system. Destruction of this system was accomplished only by eliminating the communications centers scattered through the fortresses. Many enemy units

fought on without communications.

Command of the German Forces was fair, but was hampered by a lack of planning and uncertainty of the fortress' mission. Additionally, many experienced officers and NCO's from the units within Metz had been reassigned during the October lull. Not until one day before the U.S. offensive was it decided by the German high command to hold the city. Nevertheless, General Balck, commanding the German Corps, had foreseen the sacrifice of Metz. He had therefore not committed his precious tanks or assault guns to the city. When the decision to hold the city was finally made, there was not time to reinforce with men and equipment and the commanders were left to fight with what they had on hand. To add to the confusion, General Luebbe, commanding the Metz Fortress, suffered a stroke. He was replaced on 14 November by General Kittel, who had formerly commanded the 49th VG Division.

DOCTRINE AND TRAINING

The losses suffered by Third Army units during the September battles had caused a rethinking in tactics and training during the October lull in the battle. This break in the fighting allowed U.S. units to efficiently train units which had to undergo major replacement and reconstitution operations.

Superior U.S. personnel strength allowed units to be rotated to the rear for rest and training. XX Corps conducted courses on Floating Bailey bridges, river crossing, explosives, fortress reduction, and house-to-house fighting immediately preceding the November offensive. Rotating units to the front again allowed green troops to experience combat before the actual jumpoff.

German Forces were not as lucky. Although they outnumbered U.S. Forces in number of units, their strength and training were well down. Opposing U.S. Forces kept up patrolling and artillery, thus preventing major rest or rotation operations. Good training was hampered by a lack of skilled leaders and

supplies. While U.S. Forces had introduced two new divisions into the Metz area during October, the Germans had actually allowed their defensive condition to gravely deteriorate.

Like U.S. Forces, the Germans had suffered tremendous casualties during the September fighting. They, however, were hampered in reconstitution by a severe lack of manpower. Overall in Metz, German Forces were down to 14,000, while the 462d VG Division was down to less than 7,000. Recent replacements were overage and poorly trained, and the lack of good leaders further hindered additional training. The 416 VG Division and the 19th VG Division were both under strength and undertrained with many new replacements. Only the 17th SS Panzer Division and the 25th Panzer Grenadier Division were good fighting units, and both were pushed east as Metz was squeezed off.

Deception played a major role immediately prior to the offensive. XX Corps' relocation of the 90th Division to an assembly area in the northern sector prior to the battle was a successful large-scale deception operation. Dummy guns and rubber dummies were left on the line along with limited real weapons and men. Sound-deception units provided realism, and false radio traffic was provided. From their assembly areas, 90th Division units conducted recons of their river crossing sites with false vehicle bumper markings and borrowed shoulder insignia. This complicated scheme, which relocated an entire division just a few miles from the Germans, was effective and achieved surprise during the subsequent attack.[51]

INTELLIGENCE

The U.S. Army's 3d Cavalry Squadron conducted the initial ground reconnaissance to the east and northeast in the direction of Metz and Thionville. Observation posts were established overlooking the Moselle River eight miles from Metz. These reconnaissance elements obtained information that the

Germans were hastily organizing to defend Metz and the Moselle River Line. The fortress system around Metz was to be used as the basis for this defense, and the loss of Metz to the advancing American Force was to be prevented. To the north of Metz German Forces were observed setting up a defensive screen west of the Moselle in the Thionville area.

Numerous disorganized German units, after falling back in confusion from the XX Corps offensive, were observed withdrawing towards Metz as a rallying point.

There was a permanent German garrison, the 462d Mobilization Division. It consisted of an officer candidate school, Regiment VI, a number of battalions of the Stellung type incorporated into a regimental organization, and the 1010th Security Regiment, remnants of which had fallen back on the city after their previous stand on the Seine River. This unit was manning static defenses in Metz. The 17th SS Panzer Grenadier Division, which had fallen back from positions in the vicinity of ETAIN, was assigned the defense of the zone southwest of Metz. In the Thionville sector, on the north, the 559th Infantry Division was mobilized to defend the Moselle line and to delay west of Thionville as long as possible. The object of the delay in force at Metz was to establish a hinge on which to organize the center of the western front.

The XX Corps had little information regarding the military strength of Metz. Their rapidity of advancement had allowed no time to gather and disseminate information on the fortress system or the availability of troops to defend it. Maps available to U.S. forces showed neither the fortifications nor the details of the terrain.[52]

From the German perspective, the defense of Metz could best be accomplished by concentrating forces east of the Moselle River line, and the forts west of the river were used chiefly for delaying purposes only. Metz itself

would be used as an administrative center to direct and repulse the advancing Americans. Later, Metz would be used as a concentration point for ammunition and weapons to arm the counteroffensive which was to be organized behind the Moselle River line. However, Hitler directed that all forts, including those west of the Moselle, be manned, improved where possible and held at all costs. Work was begun on these positions and as many artillery pieces as possible were emplaced.

The Attack on Fort Driant

XX Corps and Third U.S. Army endorsed a plan developed by the commanders of the 11th Infantry Regiment and the 5th Infantry Division for the attack on Fort Driant. The plan was designed to indoctrinate newly arrived replacements and reinforcements and to bolster the morale of the 11th Infantry Regiment. However the Corps and Third Army commanders saw Fort Driant as vital to the assault on Metz since the Fort was considered a keystone in the reduction of the approaches to Metz. The reduction of Fort Driant would open the way for a tank assault north through the Moselle Valley to Metz. The planning of the initial attack on 27 September was based on ground reconnaissance as well as extensive aerial reconnaissance photo information regarding the actual disposition of the enemy in Fort Driant. This attack did not take place however until October to allow for additional engineer preparations. The assault after eleven days of effort was repulsed.

Based on the ordeal at Fort Driant, the Commanding General, XX Corps, initiated intensive planning for the subsequent reinforced attack on the entire fortified region of Metz. This plan consisted of two distinct operations to be accomplished concurrently: The first would be an attack to encircle and destroy the fortress and garrison of Metz, the second would be the seizure of a bridgehead over the Saar River in the vicinity of Saarburg as a

base to resume the attack to the northeast. It was reasoned that after the Metz operation had commenced and the enemy strength had been siphoned into the threatened area, an infantry division, crossing north of Thionville, could proceed rapidly over the base of the Saar-Moselle triangle and seize a bridgehead on the Saar River at Saarburg.

PERSONNEL REPLACEMENTS

The personnel replacement system for both sides was similar in one aspect, they were inadequate to sustain prolonged operations. We see that Patton's drive across France produced 24,820 casualties with 19,506 replacements through 28 August 1944, while German losses totaled 154,000. While the Americans were depending almost totally upon individual replacements, the Germans used almost extensively the unit replacement system. Their concept was to form units and insert them into the defense as such. If a unit had been disabled, they were collected, consolidated and reformed into another unit.[53]

By September 17, the beginning of the short lull or stalemate, 3d Army casualties totaled 26,402, an increase of 2,000, while enemy casualties numbered an estimated 186,000, an increase of 30,000 since 28 August 1944. There was a delay in reporting the casualties up the ranks as the initial attacks to seize bridgeheads produced more than 2,000 casualties. This is further justified by the casualty figures of 3d Army as reported on 24 September. Total casualties were reported at 45,130, an increase of 7,272 during a period of lessening activity, while the enemy casualties were estimated at 216,109, an increase of 30,100 in one week. The cumulative replacements for 3d Army numbered 43,566, less than 2,000 short of casualties sustained.[54]

The individual replacement concept was employed after all units were deployed in the theater, and provided the new green troops a sense of identity

and afforded them some measure of security. They knew if they survived initial battles they had a chance of surviving the war. On the other hand the German unit replacement system employed by the Germans seemed to suit their purposes and was their best course of action. Although there were cohesion problems, the Germans at that time were continually involved in reconstituting units from whatever assets they could manage.

Both sides' replacement stream was inadequate to keep up with casualties. In the 3d Army, non battle casualties were 2.5 for each KIA. The German replacement stream was inadequate because Hitler felt the war with Russia had greater significance. This major influx of people into the West would occur during the forming of units for the battle of the Bulge.

The U.S. replacements were green. Although Patton tried to give them training prior to throwing them into battle, it was not always possible to do so. The German replacements were no better. The 462 Div. defending Metz, ended up using an OCS Regiment, a Security Regiment, the NCO School Regiment and a composite regiment with 2 replacement battalions and a signal battalion.

The OCS regiment was composed of young men as well as veterans of the Eastern Front who had distinguished themselves. The NCO School regiment was rated high in technical ability, but had never worked together. The other regiments were not line soldiers and ill-trained for the mission.[55]

Although Patton was short of replacements, this was not the cause of his delays. The logistical problems caused the initial stopping of his momentum, allowing the Germans more time to prepare Metz fortifications. On the German side, their shortages were directly responsible for this inability to hold the terrain. But one must look at Hitler's position to understand why he did not send replacements to the West. He knew the Allies' lines were short and until Antwerp was open, he could devote all his attention to the Eastern Front.

MORALE

The morale of Patton's 3d Army was high before the initial stopping West of the Moselle. They had devastated the Germans and bragged that they were with Patton. Their loss in momentum for 30 days or so caused a slight decrease in morale due to inactivity. They were overjoyed when given the order to attack onward "toward the Rhine". During this loss in momentum the Germans had set strong defenses and were nearly prepared for the full scale American attack. They inflicted heavy casualties on the U.S. forces and experienced a lift in their morale by stopping Patton.[56]

During the first phase, the U.S. forces were tired, hungry and took 50 percent casualties. The morale of men in the companies had gone down as they saw their leaders die. Some units even retreated uncontrolled from the battle.[57]

The weather served to further demoralize them as the rain, cold and mud slowed them, thereby exposing them longer to the enemy's fire. The terrain and weather did not favor use of tanks which caused the soldiers to fight a different type of battle than they had been previously fighting. Gone was the flank security achieved by speed. Gone was the maneuver they enjoyed with their tanks. In its place was an assault upon fortified positions without the assistance, initially, of air cover.

The leaders did all they could to increase morale. Patton gave many of his famous "pep talks". Many subordinate leaders showed their concern for their soldiers by insuring they had proper clothing and adequate food. The soldiers believed in their leaders and in their cause. They knew Hitler must be defeated.

LEADERSHIP

The German Leadership was convinced the war was over in the Western Front

but were nearly fanatical about protection of the homeland. In this battle the most fierce opposition was from the OCS regiment and the NCO academy. Although some of the leaders were technically competent the majority of the smaller level leaders were inexperienced.

Patton's personality permeated the battle. He was everywhere! He forced, pushed and, at times, directed forward operations. He proved, however, not to be very flexible about this plan. The smaller unit leaders ended up using initiative to overcome the obstacles and eventually took Metz. The American Army had the leadership advantage throughout the battle, although the Germans fought bravely.

C. Immediate Military Objectives

XX Corps' mission was simple: "to encircle and destroy the enemy in the Metz garrison and capture a bridgehead over the Saar (River)." The order specifically called for the "destruction or capture of the Metz garrison without the investiture or seizure of the Metz Forts."[58] The Corps was anxious not to repeat the fiasco at Fort Driant which had cost so many lives and LTG Patton was anxious to resume his rapid advance to the Rhine River.

General Kittel's orders were clear: His oath was "to defend the city to the last man and cartridge." Hitler had now taken a special interest in the Metz garrison and in the second week of November ordered the garrison to "hold" and to be reinforced, provisioned for a long siege, and equipped with additional rocket launchers. He saw the opportunity to put a large salient in the advancing Allied lines and to slow or stop Patton. His orders came too late for the Metz garrison.

D. Feasible Courses of Action

U.S. Forces had the following courses of action:

1. Encircle and reduce the garrison.

2. Encircle, then bypass the city.

3. Encircle the garrison, then conduct siege warfare.

German forces had the following courses of action:

1. Hold the garrison.

2. Conduct delay operations with the city as a pivot.

3. Withdraw the garrison with delaying general forces.

The Third Army had learned its lesson in siege operations during the September fighting. While XX Corps encircled the city, XII Corps and other XX Corp elements were to push ahead to the Saar River. XX Corps was to reduce the city without engaging in a costly, long term siege.

The German decision to hold the city was a waste of precious men and equipment. Although a more adequately equipped force could have been a thorn to the U.S. Forces for an extended period, the days of siege warfare had literally been bypassed by armor and air power. This German course of action could not be supported tactically or logistically.

IV. THE BATTLE

The XX Corps Plan[59]

On 3 November XX Corps issued Field Order No. 12 which outlined its concept for the reduction of the Metz fortified area and the resumption of offensive operations to secure the Rhine. This plan called for an encirclement of Metz, a follow on reconnaissance to the Sarre River, the seizure of a bridgehead in the vicinity of Saarburg, and on order, the continuation of the attack to the northeast. In specific regard to Metz, the order stated that the intent of the commander was to destroy or capture the Metz garrison, without the investiture or siege of the Metz Forts.

To implement the plan, the 90th Infantry Division was tasked with the initial envelopment of the city from the north. The 5th Infantry Division attack was to encircle Metz from the south. The 95th Infantry Division was initially to contain the German salient west of the Moselle. When the concentric attacks of the 90th and the 5th divisions closed, the 95th was to drive into the salient, cross the Moselle, and secure the city. The 10th Armored Division was to follow the 90th division. After crossing the Moselle, it was to attack to the left and parallel to the 90th to close the encirclement east of Metz. Simultaneously, the 10th was to push armored reconnaissance units east towards the Sarre River with the intention of seizing a preliminary bridgehead near Merzig. Finally, the 3rd Cavalry Group was to follow the 10th Armored across the Moselle River. Upon crossing, it would swing northeast to probe enemy resistance in the vicinity of Saarburg and to screen the flanks and rear of the corps units encircling Metz.

The plan was basically to be executed in two phases: 1) The elimination of German forces in the Metz area. 2) The resumption of the attack to the northeast. Its success depended upon the rapid culmination of the encirclement

and the point at which the German Army commander decided to withdraw from the encircled area.

The 95th Division's Bridgehead at Uckange[60]

On 7 November, only hours before the attack was to jump off, the 95th division was given a change of mission. In addition to containing the salient around Metz, the division was to force a crossing of the Moselle at Uckange and to reduce a pocket of German resistance in the vicinity of Maizieres-les-Metz. The purpose of this effort was to create a disturbance which would draw the German's attention away from the 90th division attack further north. The 95th division was to employ only the minimum of forces in the crossing but would also coordinate its attacks on both sides of the river to give the impression that it was the corps main effort. The attack was to be executed on 8 November which was one day before the other XX Corps units were to begin operations.

The new mission was assigned to the 377th Infantry Regiment. The remaining units, the 378th and 379th Infantry regiments were to contain the Metz salient. In the 377th, the 1st Battalion was designated to make the river crossing. Their mission was to force a crossing, occupy the town of Immeldange and block the north-south road between Metz and Thionville. Once these objectives were secured, the battalion was to dig in and wait relief by troops moving down from the main crossing in the north. The 2nd and 3rd Battalions of the 377th were to reduce the German pocket at Maizieres-les-Metz.

At dusk, on the night of 8 November, a detachment of the 320th engineers crossed the river in assault boats and blew a gap in the German wire and minefield. At 2100, C company 1st Bn 377th Infantry crossed the river with no opposition. The company advanced approximately 400 meters from the river and then dug in to await the arrival of the rest of the battalion.

In conjunction with the crossing, the 2nd and 3rd battalions initiated their night attack against Maizieres-les-Metz. The operation was almost immediately halted by the extensive minefields in the area. Once tripped, the Germans were alerted to the attack and caught the American troops in the open with artillery fire. Despite heavy casualties, the attack continued throughout the night and on into the next day. On the afternoon of 9 November, the battalions were reinforced with tanks and by nightfall had secured the entire area except for a small enemy enclave in the town of Hauconcourt. On the following day, the Moselle River began to flood and the rising water isolated this village. Thereafter, no further attempt was made to clear it.

On daybreak of 9 November the 1st Battalion had succeeded in crossing its A company and a heavy weapons platoon across the river. By this time, however, German artillery had zeroed in on the crossing site and prevented the bridge building operations of the engineers. Additionally, the rising flood of the Moselle, combined with the increasing accuracy of German fire made continued boat crossings impossible. The two companies of the battalion were cut off.

The 19th Volks Grenadier division, which opposed the crossing, made no major attempt to eliminate the bridgehead. Its actions were confined to patrolling and indirect fire. It is apparent that the division recognized the action as a fient. The companies on the east bank were supported for three days by air drops from light spotter aircraft. Finally, on the night of the 11/12 November the flood waters began to recede and the remainder of the battalion was able to cross.

The 90th Division Crossing[61]

To execute its northern envelopment of Metz the 90th division selected two crossing sites on the Moselle River: Cattenom and Malling. It was the

commanders intent to put a strong force across the river before daylight on 9 November in order to quickly overrun the forts of Koenigsmacker and Metrich while securing the dominant terrain to the southeast. The remaining regiments would cross in follow-on attacks on 9 November.

The 358th Infantry Regiment was to be on the division's right and was to cross at Cattenom. It was to seize Ft. Koenigsmacker and the village of Basse-Ham with one battalion. The remaining two battalions were to by pass the fort and secure the ridgeline southeast of Koenigsmacker. The 359th Infantry Regiment on the left was to cross at the Malling site and secure the high ground between Mount Altenberg and the village of Oudrenne. The 357th Infantry Regiment was to cross at either site and attack between the other two regiments to secure the town of Koenigsmacker. From these positions, the Division was to continue its attack to dominate the high ground northwest of Boulay-Moselle which controls the roads leading out of Metz and would close the northern portion of the XX Corps encirclement.

Two days before the attack the division moved its regiments and support troops into the cover of the Forest of Cattenom which was directly to the rear of the crossing area. The 3rd Cavalry patrolled extensively to conceal this movement and keep German patrols away. Before midnight on 9 November, the assault battalions of the 358th and 359th began to carry their boats towards the river. The Moselle was beginning to flood and hampered the approaches to the river. The flood, however, also covered the German minefields on the east bank and forced their outposts away from the river. By 0500, the 358th had one battalion ashore without incident and was shortly followed by the arrival of the two other battalions. The 359th was also able to cross all three battalions with no casualties.

In the 358th sector the 1st battalion launched its attack at 0715 against

Ft Koenigsmacker while the 3rd battalion bypassed the attack and advanced toward the village of Inglange. The 1st battalion quickly penetrated the wire and mine fields surrounding the fort. The battalion had detailed maps of the fortification and had trained previously in the special techniques required to clear its bunkers. The operation proceeded systematically but was hindered by the shortage of explosives. Supplies had to be hand carried from the river and the flow was insufficient to support the attack. Spotter aircraft were then employed to airdrop explosives. By 10 November, A and B companies of the 1st battalion had captured roughly half the fort.

On the afternoon of 9 November, two battalions of the 357th crossed the river and secured the town of Koenigsmacker. However, the flooding river had prevented the crossing of any tanks or other heavy weapons and the eight battalions were virtually cut-off. Despite this situation the regiment launched a battalion attack on 10 November to secure the Metrich fortifications. The fort was surrounded and the ridgeline secured by nightfall.

In the 358th and 359th sectors, the enemy was slowly beginning to react to the bridgehead. On 10 November, the 359th was hit by a German counter-attack which caused the regiment to lose control of the town of Kerling. This village controlled the road network needed by the 10th Armored to conduct its attack. In the 358th area, a counter-attack was repulsed at Basse-Ham. Company C of the 1st battalion was brought up to reinforce A and B companies in Ft Koenigsmacker. The failure to secure this fortification allowed its German occupants to interdict the advance of the 2nd battalion and forced it to stop short of its objective.

On the 11th of November, the three regiments were still cut-off. Only a few anti-tank guns had made it across the river. The soldiers had been fighting hard for two days with little sleep and were soaked from the continuing

rain and flood. None the less, all three regiments moved on the offensive. The 357th secured the high ground west of Breistroff-la-Petite. The 359th repulsed several strong counter-attacks, retook Kerling, and secured the dominant terrain from the vaillage of Rettel along the river to the village of Oudrenne. The 358th completed the reduction of Ft Koenigsmacker, captured or killed several German units attempting to reinforce the fort and secured hill 254.

The most important event of the day, however, did not occur on the battlefield. The flood waters were receding. Thus far, the Germans had not put together a strong counter-attack force. Time was running out for the division because its activities of the past three days had clearly marked it as the major attack in the area. If the 90th did not cross its tanks, tank destroyers and other heavy weapons soon, the infantry regiments could be pushed into the river by strong armored forces.

The German Army Group had been initially forced to deal the bridgehead with piecemeal attacks scraped together from its two divisions in the area: The 416th division and the 19th Volks Grenadier division. These attacks, although executed with great spirit, lacked the firepower, depth and mobility needed to achieve decisive results. However, on the night of 11 November a combat group of the 25th Panzer Grenadier Division was committed to attack the bridgehead. Meanwhile, the 90th Division was working to push supplies and heavy weapons by ferry across the river. By early morning of 12 November, a bridge finally spanned the Moselle and two tank destroyers crossed the river. At this point in the battle, both sides were locked in a deadly race to build up enough combat power to decide the battle.

At 0300 12 November, the combat group of the 25th Panzer Grenadier reinforced by ten tanks and assault guns struck the 359th. This initial

attack drove the 3rd battalion out of Kerling. The German main effort was centered along the Kerling-Petite-Hettange axis and was obviously focused on the destruction of the Malling crossing site. In their advance, the Germans broke through two company size units attempting to block them. A composite force of cooks, staff and support personnel formed by the 2nd battalion commander checked the Germans at Petite-Hettange. At that time, twenty artillery battalions opened up on the German combat group. Additionally, the two tank destroyers that had crossed earlier that morning moved up and took the combat group under fire. The counter-attack completely broke under such intense pressure and the German force retreated back through Kerling. By the afternoon of 12 November, the 359th had regrouped and then moved over to the attack to retake lost ground.

The 357th had managed to cross its reserve battalion. After heavy fighting, the regiment pushed the bridgehead line to the end of the Koenigsmacker ridge and overlooked the village of Inglange. The 358th also continued the attack seizing the villages of Valmestroff and Elzange. This effort was stopped outside the villages by plastic mines which current U.S. mine detectors could not locate. At the crossing sites, strong efforts were again underway to repair the bridges damaged during the counter-attack. Supplies were still not crossing the river in sufficient quantities. The bridgehead had been expanded but the troops were cold, wet and tired.

On 13 November all three regiments again attacked. The 357th cleared out pockets of enemy resistance in its rear. The 359th attacked with great losses through a minefield to link up with the 357th at Oudrenne. It also completed its reoccupation of Kerling. The 358th also had to deal with minefields, but managed to seize the high ground overlooking Inglange and tied in with the 357th. A bridge was completed at Cattenom and the 90th Division

poured the rest of its units into the bridgehead. Transport, artillery, anti-tank, and supply units crossed in a continuous stream at Cattenom. The 90th Reconnaissance troop pushed south along the river to link up with the 95th division elements at Uckange. By the 14th of November, the troops in the regiments had overcoats, blankets and dry socks and the 90th division was now in position to support the advance south.

95th Bridgehead Expanded[62]

On or about 10 November, XX Corps headquarters became very concerned about the progress that was being made in securing a suitable crossing to commit the 10th Armored Division. Operations in the 90th bridgehead did not, at that time, look hopeful. Therefore, the 95th division was ordered to expand its foothold on the east bank of the moselle by conducting a reconnaissance in force to test the possibility of securing a crossing in the town of Thionville.

The 2nd Battalion 378th Infantry was tasked with the mission. By mid-day on 11 November the battalion had crossed the Moselle and secured a small section of the east side of Thionville. The most serious resistance encountered was from an old fortification in the town called Ft Yutz. This was overrun by the battalion on 13 November. Operations were immediately initiated to expand the bridgehead. By the 14th of November, the villages of Basse-Yutz and Haute-Yutz were seized expanding its area to the north and east. In the southern sector a German company size element of the 74th Regiment held a small cluster of more modern fortifications near the town of Illange. It took the battalion two days of hard fighting to eliminate this threat. During the fight, the reconnaissance troop from the 90th division linked up with the battalion and established a secure lane on the east bank of the Moselle for the commitment of the 10th Armored Division.

On 13 November, the 1st Battalion 377th Infantry which held the initial crossing at Uckange was ordered to attack north to make contact with the 2nd Bn, 378th Infantry. The battalion immediately secured the villages of Bertange and Imeldange. However, before its defenses could be fully emplaced, the unit was counter-attacked by a task force from the 73rd Regiment of the 19th Volks Grenadier Division. This strong force was reinforced by a unit from the 485th Anti-tank Battalion. In two days of hard fighting the battalion took heavy casualties but continued to hold the village. Finally, the 2nd Bn, 378th Infantry with a platoon of tank destroyers attacked south from Illange and relieved the battalion.

To coordinate the advance towards Metz, the 95th reorganized to consolidate its units on the east bank. On 15 November, COL Robert L. Bacon was given command of all units east of the Moselle. Task Force Bacon was then reinforced with some cavalry, artillery, tank and tank destroyer units. Upon the relief of the 1st Bn 377th Infantry, the task force was assigned the mission of attacking south towards Metz to clear the enemy from the east bank of the Moselle.

Commitment of the 10th Armored Division[63]

The 10th Armored was moved into secure assembly areas just west of the Moselle on 9 November. As soon as a suitable crossing site was established, it was to cross the river and conduct a two pronged operation to seize a bridgehead across the Sarre and to attack alongside the 90th division. On 12 November, following the attack of the 95th division across Thionville, work was begun in that area on a Bailey Bridge. Despite intensive enemy fire, the bridge was completed on 14 November. Combat Command B (CCB) of the 10th Armored crossed the bridge in the afternoon and closed on an assembly area near Kerling before daylight on 15 November. Earlier that evening, CCA

crossed the repaired bridge at Malling and assembled south of CCB. The 3rd Cavalry Group also crossed at Malling. It relieved the northern flank of the 359th and prepared for its future screening and reconnaissance missions.

In the early morning of 15 November, CCB began its drive east along the Kerling-Waldwisse road. CCA began its attack south later that afternoon. In order to effectively utilize the few available roads, each Combat Command broke down into smaller task forces. The German forces opposing the division lacked cohesion but were able to mount several strong blocking actions along the narrow roads. The clearing of the weather allowed both units to employ the full support of the XIX Tactical Air Command.

CCA advanced steadily for three days and by 19 November had forced crossings of the Nied river in the vicinity of Freistroff and Bouzonville. This effectively completed 10th Armored's mission in the Metz encirclement. The infantry divisions to its left had at this time closed the inner circle on the city. Meanwhile CCB was meeting stiff opposition in its advance to the Sarre. CCA, therefore, was ordered to destroy its Nied crossings and attack north to join the rest of the division in the drive east.

Closing Attack of the 90th Division[64]

On 15 November, at the time of the 10th Armored attack, the 90th division had expanded the bridgehead to a width of eleven miles and a depth of seven miles. The division was now preparing to continue its attack to close the encirclement of Metz. The resistance of the German 416th and 19th Volks Grenadier divisions was crumbling. Indications were that the German commanders at Army and Army Group level were trying to cut their losses and prevent a gap from being ripped out of their line by the encirclement. None the less, the German First Army commander reinforced the 25th Panzer Grenadier combat group with a battalion of the 74th Regiment and launched a counter attack against

the 90th division's southern flank.

At first light of November 15th, the combat group struck the town of Distroff. This area was held by the 2nd Battalion 358th Infantry. The battalion had recently been reinforced with one platoon of tanks and one platoon of tank destroyers. Initially, direct fire from the village was able to force the German tanks back and separate them from their supporting infantry. After two attempts the German troops forced their way into the village. At the same time another German unit encircled the village and cut the Americans off. In four hours of hard fighting, the German attack was broken and the combat group withdrew.

The 357th attacked on 15 November, but was stopped by German held fortifications at Hackenberg. After a full day and night artillery duel with the fort's field guns, the area was neutralized on 16 November and the attack continued. By the 17th of November the division had advanced beyond the village of Klang and had destroyed or captured several German units.

Upon restoring its situation at Distroff, the 358th Regiment moved to the attack on 16 November. The 3rd Battalion cleared Inglange. The 1st and 2nd Battalions attacked and seized Metzervisse. The 2nd Battalion continued the attack to secure Metzeresche on 17 November.

At this point the 90th division stopped assigned intermediate objectives and launched the division into a pursuit to close the gap around Metz. The 359th relieved the 358th. Rapidly moving on trucks, the regiment overran German demolition teams and caught road blocks before they were emplaced. By 19 November the regiment had cut escape routes out of Metz at Conde-Northen and Les Efanges. Later that day the 90th Reconnaissance troop linked up with elements of the 735th tank battalion supporting the 5th Division. The encirclement was complete. At that time, the 90th division was ordered to

regroup to continue the drive to the Sarre.

"CLOSING JAWS" SEGMENT

The friendly forces participating in the "Closing Jaws" segment of the battle include the 95th Infantry Division, 5th Division and Task Force Bacon which although technically a part of the 95th Division was deployed as an independent force. The 95th Division, for the most part, had been responsible for guarding the western fortifications and was finally given an active role in the battle on 14 November. They had deployed the 379th Infantry Regiment in the vicinity of Driant; the 378th in the vicinity of the Canrobert fortification; and the 377th near Maizieres-les-Metz. Meanwhile, the 5th Division which was located to the south had expanded the bridgehead and was waiting to aid the 95th in the encirclement and the capture of Metz.

The enemy forces deployed in position to oppose the 95th consisted of the 1217th VG Regiment, 1010th Security Regiment, 1215th VG Regiment and the 1216th VG Regiment which faced TF Bacon. Further to the South the 17th SS Panzer Grenadiers faced the 5th Division.

The 95th Division

"The mission assigned to the 379th Infantry was to penetrate on both sides of the Jeanne d'Arc group. On the left, the 378th Regiment was to attempt to wheel around to the North of the Feves ridge and roll up the defenses from the rear. The 377th Infantry and TF Bacon were to advance into the city astride the Moselle".[65] The overall U.S. plan included avoiding frontal assaults on the forts, isolating them and to move forces into the city itself.

The main attack was scheduled for 15 November while the supporting attack, to be conducted by the 379th, was slated for 14 November. A heavy artillery preparation preceded the 0600 14 November supporting attack. Never-

theless, there was minimal damage done to the forts or their occupants. The 379th attack advanced to their first objective which was 500 yards to the rear of Fort Jeanne d'Arc. Although the objective was reached, the fort was not secured. This permitted a large number of German troops to hide in the trenches and bunkers. After the 2d Battalion of the 379th moved through the fort, the enemy forces regrouped and were able to cut off the 2d Battalion from the Regiment. The 1st Battalion was similarly cut off after they captured Fort Jussy, and Fort Bois la Dame which they lost again shortly afterward. "The encircled units were supplied during the early part of the evening by artillery spotter aircraft running the gauntlet of enemy fire".[66]

The defending enemy forces weren't strong enough to prevent a penetration but they were quick to regroup where possible and continue to place harassing fire on the U.S. forces. "The 462d Fusilier was committed in the Jeanne d'Arc sector. Elements of the 1010th Security Regiment cut off the American 2d Battalion. It is probably that the 1217th Regiment opposed the 1st Battalion".[67] General Kittel had successfully engaged the 95th Division threat by moving his small reserve throughout the battlefield and concentrating them against the 379th attack.

The night of the 14th was spent drafting contingency plans to effect link up with the two U.S. elements that were encircled. The next day, the 3d Battalion was committed along the road between Ferd de Guise and Jeanne de Arc. Pressure was being applied by the 378th to enhance the effectiveness of the operations of the 3d Battalion.

Enemy resistance was lowered significantly, and "the German officer in charge of the strongpoint then surrendered with 46 men and it later transpired that he had (wrongly) assumed that he was surrounded by a considerable force of Americans".[68]

The 377th and 378th began their coordinated attack on the 15th of November. The Bois de Feves ridge was attacked in the northern sector by the 1st Battalion of the 378th. "Company A, leading the assault, secured the main ridge line south of Fremecourt Farm and around to the rear of Fort le Feves. By 1100 this key work, commanding the approaches to Metz from the North and Northwest, was in American hands".[69] This fort had provided the enemy with excellent observation, fire direction and communications resources. Most of their war effort in this sector had been directed from Fort de Feves. "The capture of the relatively weak position may not sound like all that much, but in many ways, it was decisive. It means that a small force was in behind the fortifications and that they had hit the boundary between the 1010th Security Regiment and the 1215 VG Regiment".[70]

The 377th was able to clear the 1215th Regiment from the vicinity of Maizieres-les-Metz and proceed as far as the town of Woippy which was about three miles from the center of Metz. "The American success of 15 November not only turned the North flank of the German bridgehead West of the Moselle but also threatened to cleave a corridor straight to the Metz bridges".[71] German equipment, which included artillery and trucks that were still half loaded, was found abandoned along many of the roads used by the 377th to chase the retreating enemy.

Task Force Bacon

Task Force Bacon, which consisted primarily of the 1st Battalion from the 379th Regiment and the 2d Battalion from the 378th Regiment, started its assault on the city of Metz from positions on the east side of the Moselle river. After spending most of the 15th putting together a formidable fighting force, TF Bacon was ready to get into the battle. The commander of TF Bacon decided to use very simple tactics in making the attack. "The advance was made in two columns, moving along parallel roads on a narrow front, with

tank destroyers and tanks — later reinforced by two self-propelled 155MM guns — at the head of each column, and with infantry following in trucks and on foot".[72] This tactic allowed them to use one column as a base of fire and maneuver the other column into a position to hit the flanks and rear of enemy units located in strongpoints along the axis of advance. The Task Force moved approximately 4½ miles before it stopped for the night and attempted to make contact with elements of the 90th Division on its right flank. The advance south continued the following day and by nightfall the TF was at Fort St. Julien, which was within 3000 meters of the center of Metz.

The 5th Division

The 5th Division, with the 2d Infantry, 10th Infantry and 11th Infantry had been out of action since early November and had now received badly needed resupply and replacements. The 9th of November was the start of the 5th Division advance toward the city of Metz. The Seille River, which was normally less than 20 meters wide, was now almost 200 meters wide as a result of the tremendous rainfall. Crossing the river presented a significant obstacle but "throughout the night of 8/9 November, the engineers labored to complete bridges across the river and to mark the approaches for the Infantry".[73] There was little enemy resistance encountered and secure bridgeheads were established throughout the Division sector by the end of the first day. On the second day elements of the 2d Infantry captured over 400 prisoners as the towns of Pagny-les Goin and Silly-en Saulnois were over-run. On 12 November the attack was deliberately slowed down to allow the lines of communications between the 2d Infantry and the Division main body to be restored. Later that day, the Nied river was reached by the 1st and 2d Battalions, 2d Infantry. During the night, the 1st Battalion crossed the river and occupied the town of Ancerville.

Enemy forces made numerous unsuccessful attempts to destroy the bridgehead that had been established.

The 10th and 11th Infantry fought their way north and "by the evening of 14 November, six days after the commencement of the offensive, the pincers were gradually closing around Metz".[74] The 10th Infantry had moved as far North as Marly and the 5th Division, although overextended, started to get ready for the attack on the city of Metz. Prior to moving out the 5th Division completed plans for establishing contact with the 90th Division and made final preparations on the 15th of November. The following day elements of the 11th Infantry were pinned down in fighting near the airfield at Frescaty. Two additional Battalions had to be committed to extricate the 11th from the enemy which was held up in the hangars and bomb shelters at the airfield.

The enemy forces continued to fight a determined battle in spite of high casualties. Forces pitted against the 5th Division continued to be elements of the 17th SS PG Division which had lost communications with the Metz garrison. The Verdun forts were not finally encircled by the Americans until the night of 16 November. The German forces at the Frescaty airfield were finally driven off by two Infantry Battalions and the 735th Tank Battalion by dusk on the 17th.

The city of Metz was finally encircled by the U.S. forces on 18 November when elements of the 5th Division linked up with elements of the 90th Division at Point Marais. Some elements of the 5th Division entered into the city of Metz and started to "mop up the southern suburbs block by block, fighting their way through the maze of railway yards at Sablon".[75] The American forces were now in position to enter Metz and over-run the enemy.

Battle For the City of Metz

By nightfall on 17 November, the Americans surrounded the city and were

preparing to enter.

TF Bacon, consisting of the 2nd Battalion, 378th Infantry, the 1st Battalion, 377th Infantry, and the 95th Reconnaissance Troop were located approximately 2½ miles north of Metz in the vicinity of the German-held Fort St. Julian. The bulk of the 377th(-) and 378th Infantry Regiments had drawn up to the Hofen Canal, parallel to the Moselle River, just northwest of the city. West of the city the previously encircled 379th Infantry Regiment had fought its way to within about a mile from the Moselle. South of Metz, elements of the 5th Division's 10th and 11th Infantry regiments were occupying the city's southern suburbs.[76] All U.S. forces were reduced in strength because of casualties and because of forces which had to be left behind to hold several German occupied strongpoint forts which surrounded the city.

In addition to the previously mentioned U.S. forces surrounding the city, there were some 400 combatant FFI people still in the city itself.

The main German strongpoint forts surrounding the city which were still offering strong resistance during the night of 17 November were Forts St. Julian, about 3 miles north of the city in TF Bacon's sector; Forts Plappeville and St. Quentin approximately 3 miles west of Metz in the 379th Infantry Regiment's area; Forts Jeanne d'Arc, Driant, and a couple of the Seven Dwarfs further south and west of the city; Fort Verdun about 4 miles south and Fort St. Privat on the city's southernmost edge, both in the 11th Infantry Regiment's area; and Fort Queuleu about a mile southeast of Metz in the 10th Infantry Regiment sector.

German forces contained within these forts by U.S. troops reduced the number of forces available to the German commander responsible for holding the city of Metz.

Because of the large number of French civilians still in the city the

Americans' use of bombing and artillery was greatly restricted.

General Kittel had the following forces, aside from those previously mentioned, available to hold Metz. The 1215th VG Regiment was in the general vicinity of Fort St. Quentin to the west of the city and was ordered to hold out in the fort itself if necessary. Regiment Anton (1010th Security Regiment) was in the vicinity of Fort Plappeville, also to the west. The 1217th VG Regiment staff was located inside Fort Driant and the regiment was in the fort's general area west of the Moselle and south of the city. The 462 Fusilier Battalion was located to the south and west of Metz around the Seven Dwarfs. Combat Group von Matzdorf allowed itself to be surrounded in Fort St. Privat just south of the city.

The German forces under General Kittel were prepared to pose the Americans as many problems as possible and, although they were aware their situation was grave, they were only to give it up block by block.

Fighting on 18 November

American efforts to enter the city of Metz keyed upon securing any remaining bridges over the Moselle River and upon the assistance of FFI forces still within Metz. Their situation was severely hampered by General Kittel's almost wholesale demolition of the bridges in the area prior to their arrival.

The attack on 18 November began with the 95th Division's 379th Infantry Regiment from the west. Leaving two companies to contain German resistance at the Seven Dwarfs, the 1st Battalion managed to cut off Fort Jeanne d'Arc from its rear end. By evening it was at the Moselle at Moulins-les-Metz only to find the bridge there had been demolished. The isolation of Fort Jeanne d'Arc was supported by the 3d Battalion's clearance of the suburbs to the west of the fort. Since the bridge had been blown and a boat crossing of the river at that point was not considered feasible, the 379th(-) Infantry

Regiment was ordered to keep Forts Jeanne d'Arc and Driant contained and to mop up any remaining German resistance in the area.

The 378th(-) Infantry Regiment in the Division's sector was in dire straits. Its 1st Battalion was fully occupied keeping Fort Plappeville contained. The situation there was aggravated by the German forces in Forts St. Quentin and Plappeville being able to exchange supplies with one another. The German forces in the two forts numbered about 650. Ammunition and food within the forts was being expended rapidly. The Germans were willing to pay high costs to hold the forts since they overlooked the Moselle and the Hofen Canal where the Americans would have to cross and the city could be fired upon from forts. Had the Germans prestocked these positions better with food and ammunition they could have greatly delayed the Americans' eventual capture of the city.

The Regiment's other battalion, the 3d, attempted to seize one of the few bridges left intact by General Kittel, the bridge from Longville across the Ile St. Symphorian just to the west of Metz. Unfortunately, however, the Germans who had been securing the bridge blew it just as lead American elements began to cross. With the bridge out it was decided that an attempt to cross the river would be carried out on the next day, 19 November.

Most of the 377th(-) Infantry Regiment's two battalions were located in the northern Metz suburbs of Sansonnet and Metz Nord. While the 2d Battalion was attempting to seize a bridge over the Hofen Canal to the north of the suburbs, they were slowed considerably by "88" machine guns and 20-mm anti-aircraft gunfire from an island in the river. The resistance was neutralized by American tanks. When the battalion reached the bridge, however, they found that it too had been demolished but that foot soldiers could still cross over the remains. G Company of the 2d Battalion crossed and mopped

up the remaining enemy on the island while engineers made the bridge suitable for jeeps to cross. The 3d Battalion arrived shortly thereafter on the island and assisted in securing 200 captured German prisoners. The 377th(-) was then ordered to force their way across the Moselle, even though no boats were available, if they could do so without taking too many casualties. As they were preparing to cross they began taking increasing fire from the Isle Chambiere which stood between the island the 377th(-) had taken and the opposite shore they were ordered to reach. Unbeknown to them General Kittel's command post was located on the Isle Chambiere and he was organizing his troops there for a last stand.

TF Bacon was busy north of Metz in the vicinity of Fort St. Julian. Its plan for 18 November had its 2d Battalion of the 378th Infantry Regiment attacking the fort from the rear at 0700. At the same time its other battalion, the 1st Battalion of the 377th Infantry Regiment was to bypass the fort and clear the suburb of St. Julian of any resistance. From the suburb they were to go on toward Fort Bellecroix and attempt to cross the Seille River where it forms the northeast border of the city, just south of where it joins the Moselle. While the 2/378 approached the rear of the fort they were greatly slowed by German troops from the garrison who had been deployed among the fortifications. By early afternoon, however, they managed to reach the dry ditch which ran around the fort. The fort's only entrance was through a very heavy metal door at the end of a causeway which spanned the ditch. After confirming that there were no other entrances a tank destroyer was placed on the causeway about fifty yards from the door. While infantry and two tanks fired at the multitude of gun ports in the walls of the fort from which German soldiers of the 1215 and VG Regiments were defending, the tank destroyer fired ammo piercing and high explosive rounds at the door—to no

avail. The TF Bacon commander then ordered a 155mm self propelled gun to be brought up to fire on the door. After firing ten rounds at point blank range the door to Fort St. Julian still stood. When the target was finally changed to the stonework surrounding the door, twenty more rounds finally caused the giant door to fall into the fort. It was indeed fortunate for TF Bacon that the Germans defending Fort St. Julian had no antitank guns. Since it was dark by the time the door was destroyed, 2/378 elected to wait until the following day to enter and clear the fortress.

Meanwhile 1/377 was experiencing heavy mortar fire while attempting to enter the suburb of St. Julian. That fire was likely to have been fire from an antiaircraft battery put into position north of Fort Bellecroix by General Kittel. General Kittel claimed to have known of the plan for the 1/377 to bypass Fort St. Julian and had consequently positioned the antiaircraft battery to fire on tanks approaching the city from the direction of Forts St. Julian and Bellecroix. The resistance offered by the antiaircraft battery and the few German soldiers in the suburb did not stop the 1/377th, and led by tank destroyers, they entered St. Julian by early afternoon. They pressed on to Fort Bellecroix, a huge storage facility constructed in the 18th century.

While Company A 1/377th moved to the rear of the fort and took a large number of German prisoners, Company C lost 8 killed and 48 wounded as the result of a huge explosion from within the fort's northern edge near where they were located. The exact cause of the explosion has never been established but speculation has it that an ammunition storage magazine exploded. As a result of the explosion, however, the 1/377th had to withdraw for the night to care for their wounded soldiers.

The 95th Reconnaissance Troop under TF Bacon was moving to the west

during the battles for Forts St. Julian and Bellecroix in an attempt to establish contact with the 5th Division's 10th Infantry Regiment. The 10th was operating in the southern suburbs of Metz east of the Seille River.

The 10th and the 11th Infantry Regiments had been contending with resistance in their sectors from Forts Queuleu and St. Privat respectively. Fort Queuleu had approximately 500 German troops and the 10th's efforts to storm the fort were unsuccessful because of the limited number of forces available to the Americans.

Forts St. Privat and Verdun provided the 11th Infantry Regiment problems in their area of operation south of Metz between the Moselle and Seille Rivers. The Americans continually fired on the forts with tanks, and each time the Germans refused opportunities to surrender, attempts were made to burn them out with white phosphorous rounds. The 11th's strength was diminished by having to leave elements behind to contain these strongpoints.

By nightfall on 18 November General Kittel concentrated his efforts on the immediate defense of the area around his command post on the Isle Chambiere.

Fighting on 19 November

At dawn a company sized element of the 2d Battalion, 378th Infantry Regiment of TF Bacon prepared to enter Fort St. Julian. As they entered the blown door to the fort they overpowered a German NCO who was posting a squad to defend the entrance and led him at bayonet point to the fort commander who was persuaded to surrender Fort St. Julian.

At about the same time the other battalion of TF Bacon, the 1st Battalion, 377th Infantry Regiment, was moving back into the area of Fort Bellecroix. As they moved around the rear of the fort they were very surprised to find a bridge over the Seille still intact. After defeating a small German

force defending the bridge, it was easily captured. At about noon a first rifle company supported by a tank platoon crossed the bridge into Metz but was greatly hampered by extensive sniper fire. The German force of nearly 700 men was not well organized however, and their commander received permission from General Kittel to attempt a breakout. The unit's commander, a Colonel Meier, was subsequently captured and by that afternoon TF Bacon had control of a large part of the city. That evening FFI men led units to a building housing a Gestapo headquarters where a few infantry supported by two tank destroyers neutralized the headquarters.

The 95th Reconnaissance Troop finally managed to establish contact with the 10th Infantry Regiment of the 5th Division east of the city near Vallieres. Shortly before this the enemy's other escape route was closed by the 2d Infantry Regiment of the 5th Division and the 90th Division's Reconnaissance Troop south of the city.

The 377th(-) Infantry Regiment, which had taken up positions on the island between the Hofen Canal and the Moselle, were ordered to take the Isle Chambiere, General Kittel's headquarters and the last strong defensive position in the city. Due to confusion as to where the actual crossing was to take place support bombardment for the crossing fell in the wrong place. Boats were made available and although initial American losses were heavy, by noon a 200 yard foothold was gained on the Isle Chambiere and 300 German prisoners had been taken. By evening the entire 2d battalion and one company of the 3d battalion had crossed and had entered two of the large barracks complexes on the island.

The 3d Battalion, 378th Infantry formed the center of the attack and were to cross the Isle St. Symphorian. Under the support of very effective artillery and tank fire they easily overcame enemy positions. To their dismay they soon learned that the bridges connecting the island to the city were

destroyed and that they would have to make another crossing by assault boats. This crossing, which was eventually successful, could not be accomplished until nearly 1700 hours, however, because a boundary change with the 5th Division had to be coordinated first.

The 379th Infantry Regiment was left without a suitable crossing site. Having been ordered to keep Forts Jeanne d'Arc and Driant contained and to mop up any remaining German resistance in the area on the previous day, they were given responsibility for the Forts St. Quentin-Plappeville complex on 19 November. This was as a result of the 378th(-) Infantry Regiment's request for a boundary change to facilitate its crossing of the Moselle.

5th Division units were busily engaged south of the city. The 11th Infantry Regiment had all of its forces committed to containing Forts St. Privat and Verdun and in isolated combat at Trescoty Airfield south of the city. This left only the 3d Battalion to take on the German forces in the area of the railway yards south of the city.

The 10th Infantry Regiment had units still committed around Ft. Queuleu but the majority of the unit was into the east and southeastern suburbs of the city.

Since all major enemy escape routes had been cut off and the divisions surrounding Metz were now in contact, final capture of the city was only a matter of time.

German accounts of the battle indicate that attempts were made to air drop supplies to the encircled Forts St. Quentin and Plappeville (which because of their strategic locations could have still greatly complicated the American occupation of the city) during the night of 19 November. Because the German soldiers were out of flares to mark their location, the airplanes were unable to drop the supplies to them.[77]

Fighting on 20 and 21 November

The main combat within the city during this period consisted mainly of confused street fighting.

West of the Moselle, however, matters were more complicated for the 379th Infantry. They had been ordered responsible for the take over for all the forts still holding out on the west bank of the Moselle. By 0730 hours on 21 November they were to attack to contain or capture the Forts Plappeville and St. Quentin complex, Jeanne d'Arc, the Seven Dwarfs, and Fort Driant. They were promised as much supporting fire as possible but were not to conduct any attacks which may result in casualties! In essence, the Regiment was all that the Americans were willing to expend and any remaining forces in the forts would be contained until ready to surrender.

In addition to artillery support being utilized in support of the 379th's efforts, an air strike which never materialized was planned against Fort Plappeville on 21 November. Psychological warfare units were also employed in trying to convince the Germans in the forts to surrender. Their efforts were perhaps counteracted by the German radio broadcasts, praising the German soldiers still defending the forts. On 23 November the 379th Infantry Regiment was relieved by the 2d Infantry Regiment of the 5th Division as the 95th Division prepared to move out to participate in the Saar campaign.

Inside the city on the morning of 20 November the 378th(-) Infantry Regiment seized their objective, the main railway station, while TF Bacon reported that resistance had ceased in their sector of the city. On 21 November TF Bacon was dissolved.

By 1200 hours on 21 November the 5th Division reported that it had cleared its southern section of the city and that Fort Queuleu had at last surrendered. That left the Verdun group and Fort St. Privat as a concern.

Although the commander of Fort St. Privat repeatedly refused to surrender, a large number of his men allegedly deserted during the night of 22 November greatly reducing this threat. On 22 November the 11th Infantry Regiment was able to set up its forward command post inside the city.

As 20 November dawned on the 377th(-) Infantry Regiment, they were still occupying their narrow foothold on the Isle Chambiere confronted by General Kittel and the last of his defenders inside the Mundra Caserne. The Regiment's 2d Battalion cleared the northern part of Isle Chambiere by nightfall of the 20th only after very bitter fighting. Their fight for the southern end on 21 November, however, was much harder but after block to block fighting, they closed in on Mundra Caserne by evening. Early in the morning one company of the Battalion managed to get into the ground floor of the barracks housing General Kittel's command post. Since the two floors above them still contained enemy, it was not until later that a tank was able to cross the Moselle via a bridge constructed by the engineers and shoot the top floors to pieces thereby forcing the surrender of the remaining defenders.

During the morning of 21 November General Kittel began participating in the battle as an infantryman and was subsequently wounded about 1100 hours.[78] Colonel Von Stossel still holding out in Fort St. Quentin assumed command at this point. Shortly afterward General Kittel was taken prisoner while being treated for his wound. Since General Kittel had relinquished command and since some of the outlying forts still had not surrendered, Kittel refused to surrender the garrison. This refusal denied the XX Corps the surrender ceremony they deserved.

Fighting continued on the Isle Chambiere on 22 November while American troops flushed German soldiers from the tunnel complex of the fortress. By

1435 hours, 22 November the 377th Infantry Regiment Commander reported that all resistance in the city had ceased. Although the battle for Metz was officially over, the fight for the remaining outlying forts would continue for three more weeks before the area was turned over to the French.

V. ANALYSIS OF THE BATTLE

General

The "Battle for Metz" developed in an outstanding example of a deliberate attack to reduce a fortified position. The operation was marked by detailed and skillful planning on the part of the Third Army and its associated corps staffs. This planning was clearly the result of lessons learned from the poorly coordinated and costly operations conducted in September and October. The operation was conducted without air cover in the worst of weather conditions.[79] Its successful execution, therefore, depended in most part on the effective leadership of regimental and battalion commanders who kept their men moving and managed limited combat support resources efficiently. Most important, however, to final victory was the determination, endurance, and aggressiveness of the individual soldier who daily continued the attack despite supply shortages, bad weather, personal misery, and fierce enemy resistance. Their performance at Metz put away forever the myth of the "American ice cream soldier" that relied more on material than courage to win battles.

To the Third Army, the battle was an essential 1st step to continue its offensive, establish a bridgehead across the Saar River, and to finally breech the famed German "Western Wall". Metz was not simply a pocket of resistance that could be simply by passed. The road net in the areas adjacent to the city was poorly developed and probably could not support the traffic associated with an army or corps line of communication. Additionally the bridges setup by the divisions involved in the battle could not sustain long term heavy logistics traffic. The bridge and road network that ran through Metz had to be secured if the Third was to continue its drive west.[80]

The perspective of the German's Army Group G was similar. Metz was an

important center from which to support its forward positions along the Moselle. The retention of Metz and its associated riverline defense bought time for the Army Group to improve its "Western Wall" fortifications and to further delay the U.S. Third Army's entry in Germany itself.[81]

Significance of the Battle

The Americans

General Patton's success in breaking through to the Saar which was made possible by the reduction of Metz, gave credibility to the U.S. position of a broad front strategy. In the north, General Hodge's First Army had met only limited progress in its attack and was held east of the Ruhr River. If Third Army's attack had also failed, the British could have easily held 21st Army Group's operations as poor diversions to the theater's main effort. This could have eliminated for General Eisenhower any support for his broad front strategy.[82]

The enemy forces caught by Third Army's attack were decisively defeated. The envelopment and follow on pursuit destroyed large enemy units beyond the point of reconstitution. As a result, when Third Army established its new line along the Saar, it opposed an extremely weakened enemy with almost no offensive capability. This situation greatly facilitated Third Army's later disengagement to launch its December counter attack in the Ardennes.[83]

The Germans

Despite the decisive defeat of their forces in the area, Army Group G was able to achieve some strategic gains. The September and October engagements which preceded the final battle of Metz showed the value of the area's fortification network. The Germans were then able to withdraw their more experienced combat troops for employment elsewhere while utilizing lower quality units around Metz. The poorer fighting capabilities of these troops

were partly compensated for by the Metz fortifications. This allowed the Germans to release good formations for the winter offensive in the Ardennes, allowed them to gain time for the offensive, and strengthen western defenses beyond the Saar at the cost of only their most expendable formations.[84]

In addition, the Germans could use the area to force the Americans into difficult and lengthy urban battles. This type of combat is extremely destructive to the villages and farms. However, since it was unlikely that this territory would ever be returned to German control, they could use it to achieve the maximum delay of U.S. forces.[85]

Army Group G, although it incurred great losses, was able to delay the Third Army, position its more effective units to defend the Saar, and gain time and forces for the Ardennes Offensive. It was able to maintain the cohesion of its First Army throughout the battle and establish a continuous 2nd defensive line.[86]

Battlefield Lessons

The "Battle of Metz" offers several important lessons that are highly relevant to the Army's present day application of its Airland Battle doctrine. Some of the most significant are as follows:

Bad Weather Operations: An extremely notable characteristic of Airland Battle tactics is the employment of attack helicopters and other air support to destroy counter attack forces, and to generally isolate the battlefield so that the offensive power of ground maneuver forces can be concentrated. These operations are successful, however, only if the weather permits the employment of aircraft. XX Corps found themselves in a situation where their available airpower could not be used. This was compensated for by the effective employment of both division and corps artillery assets. On more than one occasion, enemy counterattacks were disrupted and the offensive

momentum maintained by large concentrations of artillery fire. Until such time when the air assets available to support corps operations are truly "all-weather", it would seem that the employment of artillery should be more carefully considered in wargaming offensive courses of action. In light of the Army's experience at Metz, wargaming under conditions of unfavorable weather should be the rule rather than the exception in staff operations.

Commander's intent: The "Battle of Metz" reaffirmed the importance of a subordinate's understanding of his commander's intent in an operation. Corps, division and regimental commanders were able to effectively reconfigure their forces, change their main effort, and redirect their combat support to meet changing situations without diverting their attention from what was to be accomplished. The early crossing of the 95th Infantry Division, the redirection of the 10th Armored Division, and the formation of Task Force Bacon were all diversions from the original plan that commanders were able to improvise because they knew what end result was expected.

Training during Combat: One important aspect that is often neglected in the study of tactics is the conduct of unit training during a war. A key element in the success of the U.S. Army in the "Battle of Metz" was the special training in fortification fighting conducted before the November assault. The 90th and 95th division units had practiced the techniques necessary to storm and defeat the Metz fortifications. Without this training, they would have been subjected to high casualties. The Army needs to insure that its corps are organized and oriented to conduct such training in future conflicts. Without this capability, U.S. units may find it difficult to deal with new threat battlefield tactics or to employ new weapons and tactics introduced during the conflict.

END NOTES

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[4]Ibid., pp. 4-6.

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[9]Third Army After Action Report (AAR, 5 September 1944).

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[15]Ibid., p. 32.

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[27]Ibid., pp. 8-9.

[28]Ibid., p. 7.

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[46]Cole, op. cit., p. 388.

[47]Ibid., p. 211.

[48]Ibid., pp. 145, 146.

[49]Ruppenthal, op. cit., pp. 144-146.

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[56]Patton, op. cit., p. 164.

[57]Ibid.

[58]Kemp, op. cit., p. 146.

[59]Cole, op. cit., pp. 373-374.

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Reduction of Metz, op. cit., Appendix 3.

[60]Cole, op. cit., pp. 376-380.

Kemp, op. cit., pp. 154-157.

[61]Cole, op. cit., pp. 381-403.

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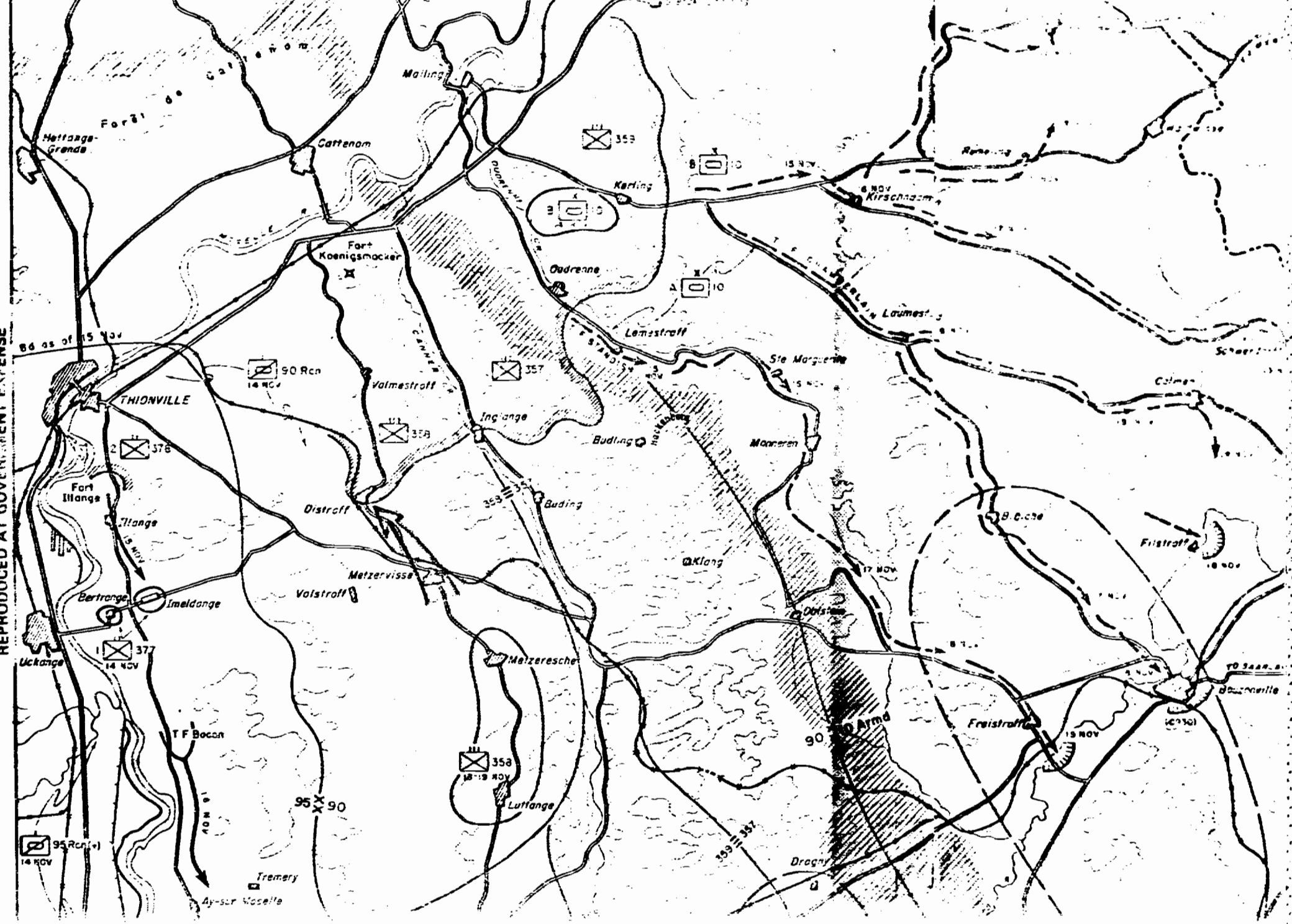
[82]Bradley, op. cit., p. 444.

[83]Cole, op. cit., p. 607.

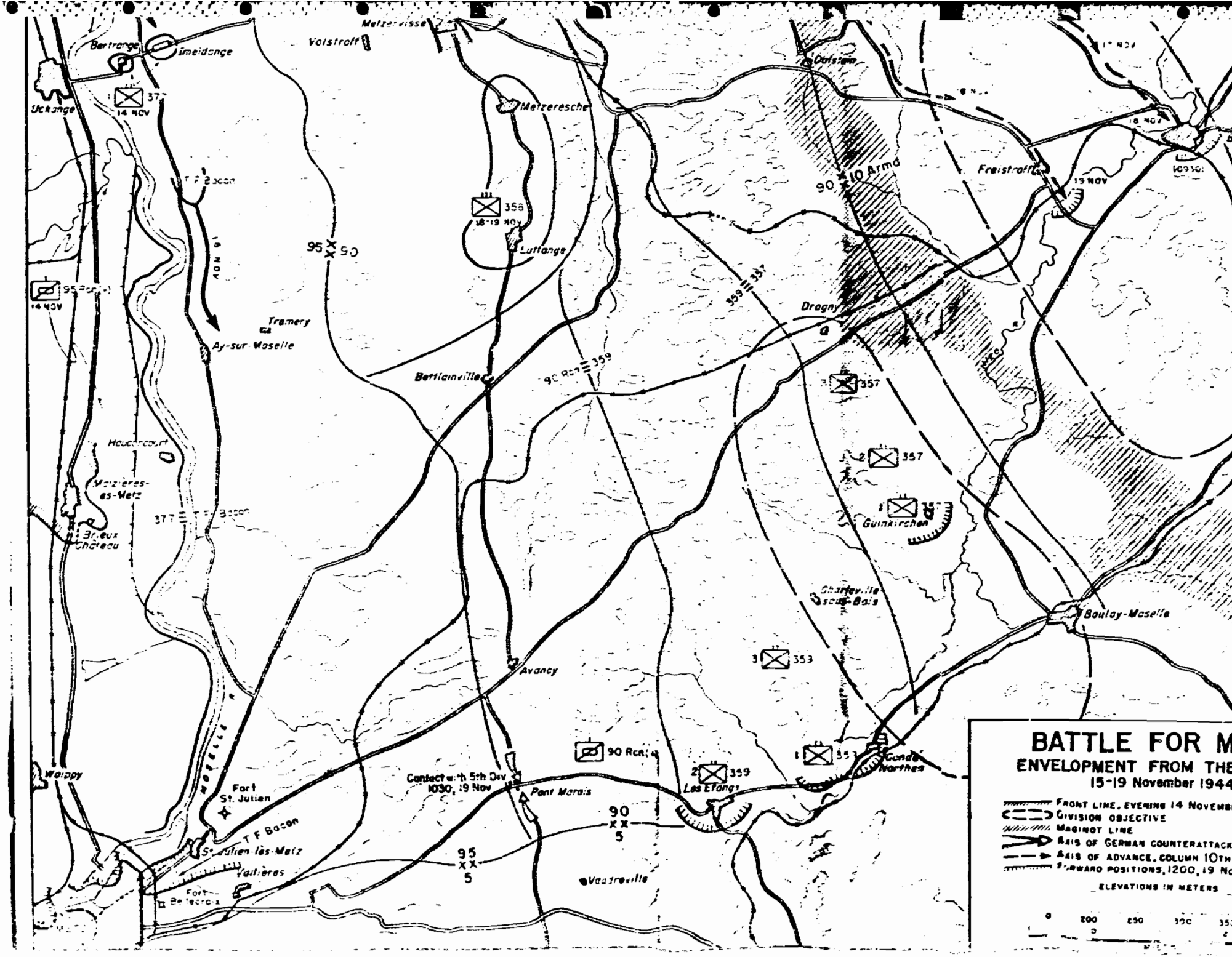
[84]Mellenthin, op. cit., pp. 393-394.

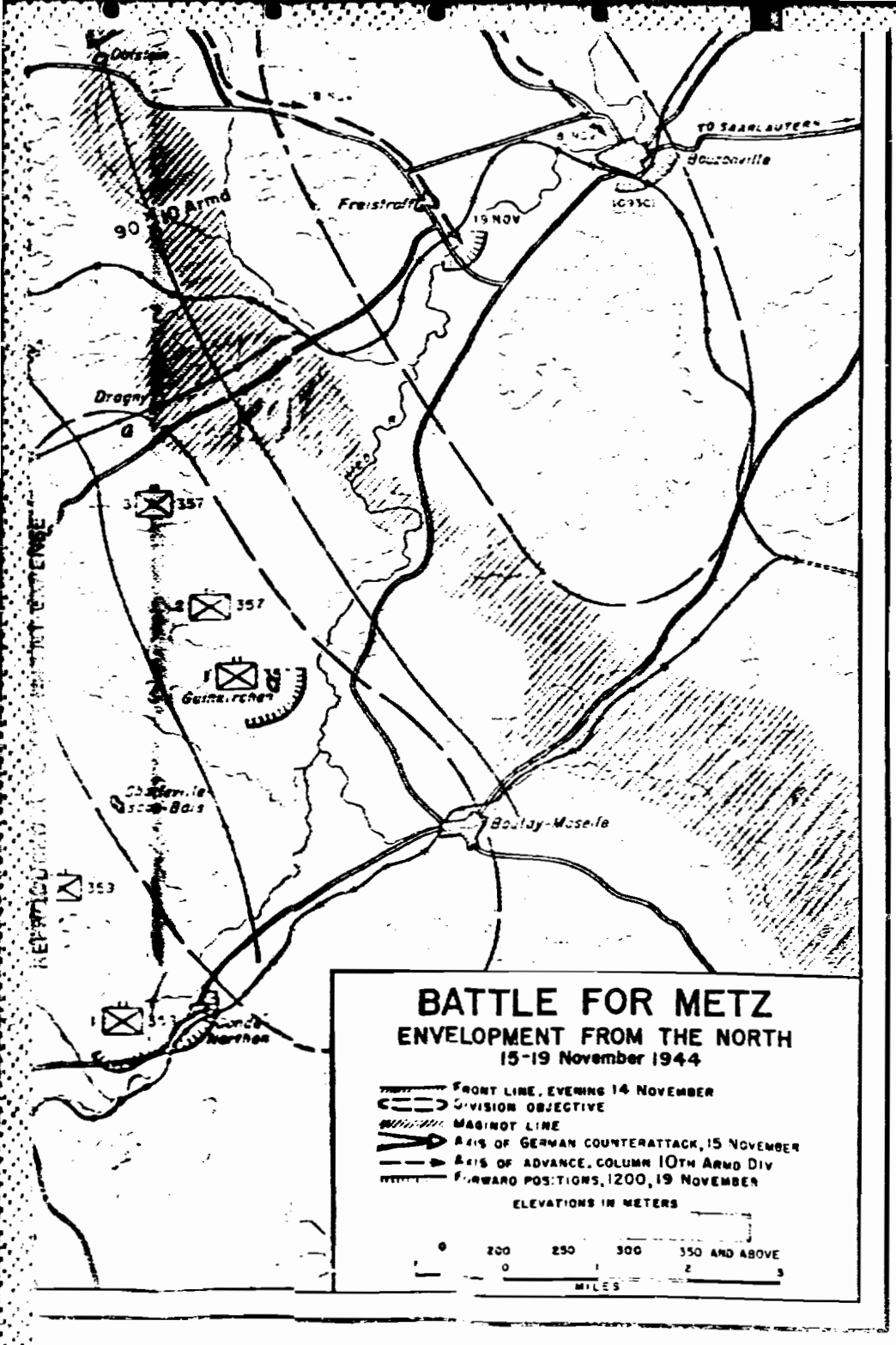
[85]Bradley, op. cit., p. 441.

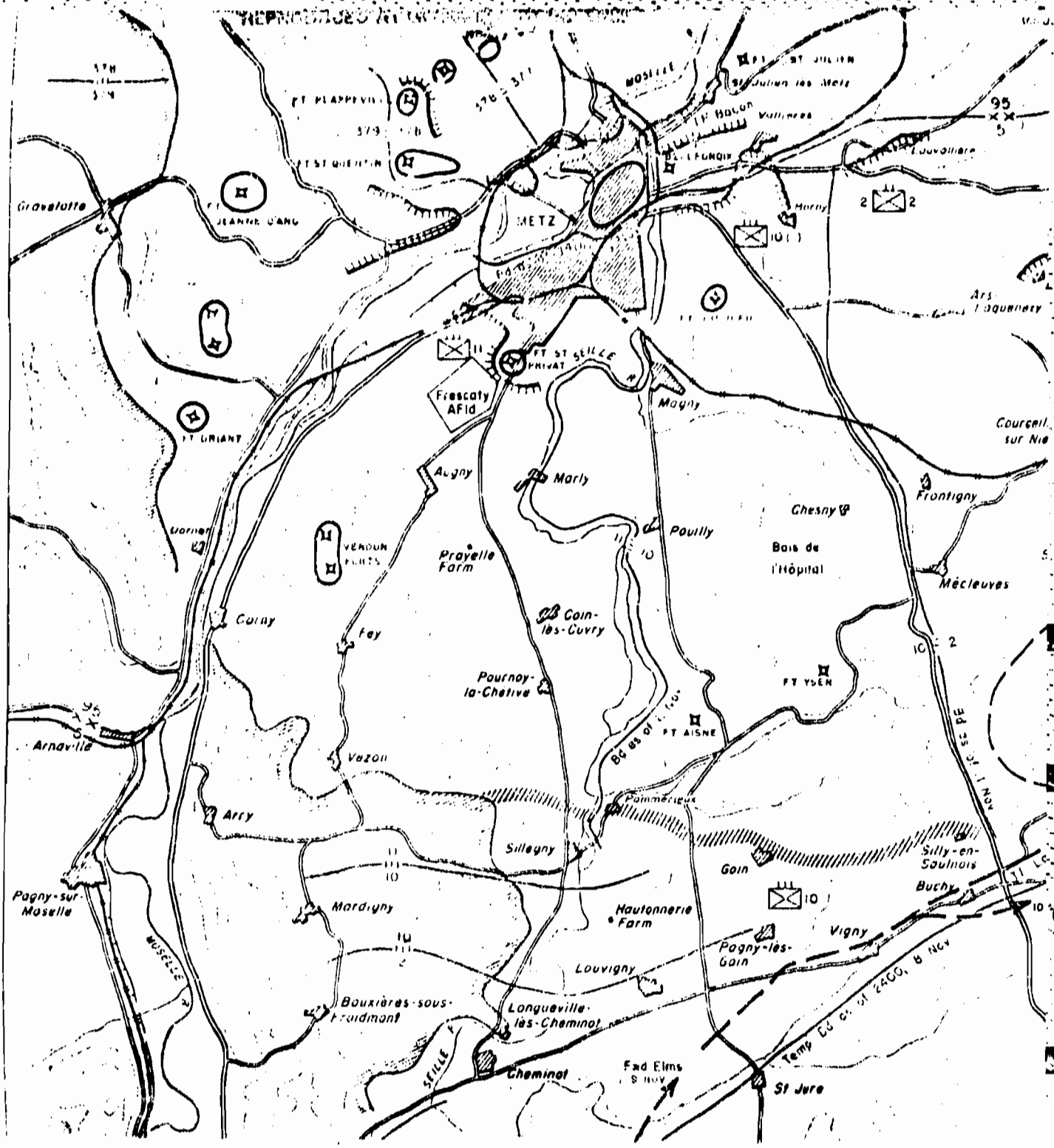
[86]Mellenthin, op. cit., p. 395.


Metlingen
Hettange-Grande
Cattenom
Kerling
Kirschnaum
Fort Koenigsmacker
Oudrenne
Lemestroff
Ste Marguerite
THIONVILLE
90 Recn
14 NOV
Volmestroff
357
Inglange
358
Budling
Manrern
Fort Illange
Illange
Distroff
Buding
Metzervisse
Volstroff
Klang
Bertrange
Imeldange
Uckange
377
14 NOV
Melzeresche
T F Bacon
358
18-19 NOV
Luttange
95 Recn(+)
14 NOV
Tremery
Ay-sur-Moselle
Armd
90
Freistroff
19 NOV
Boulonville
359
382
Dragny
15 NOV
17 NOV
18 NOV
REPRODUCED AT GOVERNMENT EXPENSE

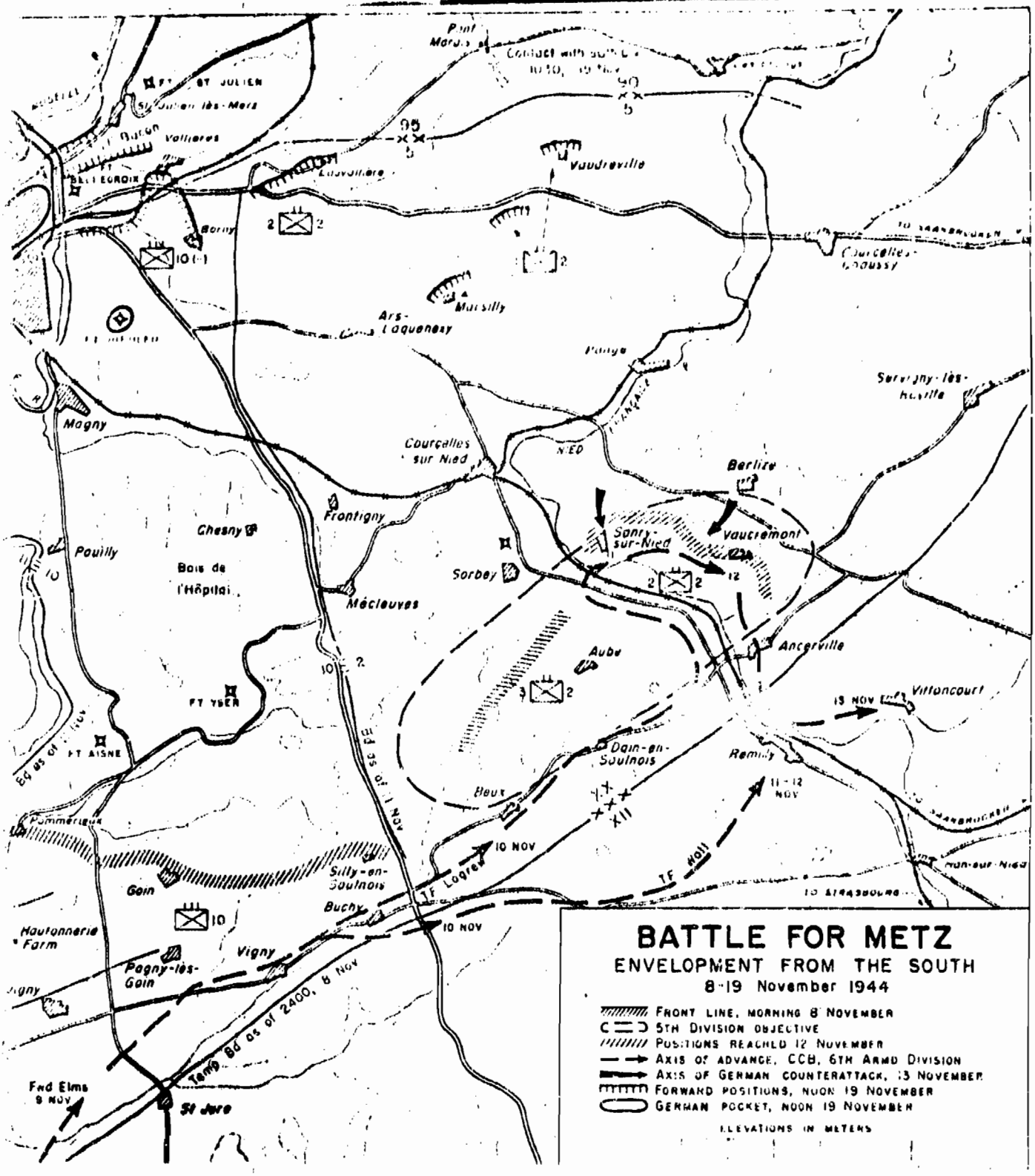
Freistroff
Boulay
Dragey
357
359
357


Metzervisse
Bertrange
Imeldange
Volstroff
Ottstein
Uckange
Metzeresche
Freistroff
10 Armd
Lutlange
Tremery
Ay-sur-Moselle
Dragny
Bettainville
Houdrcourt
Malzieres-les-Metz
Briey
Chateau
Guinkirchen
Charleville sous-Bois
Boulay-Moselle
Avancy
Woippy
Fort St. Julien
Contact with 5th Div 1030, 19 Nov
Pont Morais
Les Etangs
Gondreville
St. Julien-les-Metz
Vallieres
Fort Belecroix
Vaudreville
BATTLE FOR M
ENVELOPMENT FROM THE
15-19 November 1944
FRONT LINE, EVENING 14 NOVEMB
DIVISION OBJECTIVE
MAGINOT LINE
AXIS OF GERMAN COUNTERATTACK
AXIS OF ADVANCE, COLUMN 10TH
FORWARD POSITIONS, 1200, 19 NO
ELEVATIONS IN METERS
0
200
350


TO SAARLAUTERN
Bourbonville
Freistroff
19 NOV
90
10 Armd
Dragny
357
357
353
Boulay-Moselle
Metz
BATTLE FOR METZ
ENVELOPMENT FROM THE NORTH
15-19 November 1944
FRONT LINE, EVENING 14 NOVEMBER
DIVISION OBJECTIVE
MAGINOT LINE
AXIS OF GERMAN COUNTERATTACK, 15 NOVEMBER
AXIS OF ADVANCE, COLUMN 10TH ARMD DIV
FORWARD POSITIONS, 1200, 19 NOVEMBER
ELEVATIONS IN METERS
0
200
250
300
350 AND ABOVE
0
1
2
3
MILES


METZ
Gravelotte
Frescaty AFld
Magny
Marly
Ars
Courcell sur Nie
Frontigny
Chesny
Poully
Bois de l'Hôpital
Mécleuves
Prayelle Farm
Coin-les-Cuvry
Pournoy-la-Chetive
Fey
Corny
Arnaville
Vezon
Arry
Sillegny
Pommerieux
Goin
Silly-en-Soulnois
Buchy
Vigny
Pagny-sur-Moselle
Mardigny
Hautonnerie Farm
Pagny-les-Goin
Louvigny
Bouxières-sous-Froidmont
Longueville-lès-Cheminot
Cheminot
St Jure
Fad Elms
MOSELLE R
SEILLE R

REPRODUCED AT GOVERNMENT EXPENSE



2