

DOD DIR. 5200.9, Sept. 27, 1963

NE by BSR Date 10/5/70

SHAEF MAIN - 21 January. During the past week the enemy, aided by the weather, was methodically completing his withdrawal from the ARDENNES, and deliberately building up a force and a plan for a second offensive in ALSACE. However the Russian offensive in POLAND, so long expected, ripped the whole Eastern front wide open.

On the Western front the withdrawal in the ARDENNES, a major operation conducted with skill and dogged fighting, continued to absorb much of the enemy's energy. At no point was a breakthrough achieved against him nor was any major formation cut off. Facts for which he has perhaps the weather to thank, for his general position had grown most precarious. Meantime, his attacking forces in ALSACE were concentrated in the Northeast corner, where, when battering against the Maginot Line proved fruitless, he transferred his force to exploit the gradually growing success of the GAMBSHEIM bridgehead. This was linked up with the forces to the North, Allied counter-attacks were repelled, and a more serious threat Westwards was begun.

At the same time, the Allies launched two attacks, one in the far South at MULHOUSE, and one in the North near SITTARD, to which the enemy has as yet made no very positive reaction.

After the outburst of activity in the COLMAR bridgehead during the second week of January, the past week, in contrast, was very quiet. The area North of COLMAR, always an active neighborhood, was the scene of a small attack launched on the afternoon of January 16th. Except for one or two minor patrol crossings of the RHINE and some artillery fire there was little other German activity in this sector.

North of STRASSBOURG the bridgehead at GAMBSHEIM which at the beginning of the week was suffering some reverses and appeared to be shrinking, was reinforced on January 16th. After some very bitter fighting, the bridgehead was thrust Northwards and on the following day made a tenuous connection with the First Army's (German) left wing when STATTMATTEN, DAHLHUDE, and DENGOLSHEIM were captured. 10th SS Panzer Division was committed at HERRLISHEIM

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in the bridgehead of January 19th, by which time the furthest penetration West of the RHINE amounted to about six miles. By January 19th, six pontoon bridges had been erected across the RHINE in this general area.

North of the forest of HAGENAU bitter fighting took place all during the week in the HATTEN-RITTERSHOFEN area, bolstered by elements of 7th Parachute Division in the attempt to drive Westward. 21st Panzer and 25th Panzer Grenadier Divisions fought throughout the week in the streets of both towns, but at the end of the period no sizeable gain of ground had been made. The SAAR PALATINATE front was in general quiet: the main German thrust down through the HARDT, already halted, turned onto the defensive and the enemy made some small withdrawals.

On the Southern flank of the ARDENNES salient the Allies made some advances over the River SAUER both to the East and West of DIEKIRCH on January 18th. Southwest of WILTZ, NOCHER fell on the same day to our troops in their drive towards the WILTZ river. 5th and 6th Panzer Armies with the help of the extreme winter weather, were able to pull back in rather good order. For the first few days the divisions right out to the West of the salient withdrew considerable distances daily, but by January 16th when HOUFFALIZE was given up, the tempo of the retreat slowed considerably and in some sectors stopped. Ground on the flanks of the main withdrawal was released more reluctantly throughout the week. To the South for instance, OBERWAMPACH, a town six miles East of BASTOGNE, was counter-attacked five times after its eventual capture by the Allies on January 17th, after a lot of heavy fighting mainly by the 5th Parachute Division. To the North the main points of resistance, CHERAIN and STERPIGNY, were given up on January 14th after heavy resistance and were continually counter-attacked after their fall. BOVIGNY fell on January 15th but our troops were unable to progress beyond the strong defensive positions East of the town. VIELSHALM was very strongly held and was only given up on January 17th after being out flanked by an Allied bridgehead over the river at SALMCHATEAU. After offering only hasty resistance in their withdrawal on January 13th and 14th, Southeast from STAVELOT, the Germans attempted to form

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a line of defense from GRAND HALLEUX to LIGNEUVILLE on January 15th which held for one day. However, Allied armor forced some breaches, and PETIT THIER fell on January 17th and RECHT on January 19th. LIGNEUVILLE was bitterly defended but finally gave up the ghost on January 15th and to the East heavy counter-attacks were launched towards THIRIMONT until January 18th. SCHOPPEN was lost on January 19th.

The DUREN-LINNICH sector was quiet except for patrolling.

In HOLLAND the Allies launched an attack between SITTARD and MAESEYCK on January 17th. After initial bridging difficulties considerable inroads were made into the German positions. Resistance was moderate and SUSTEREN and OPHOVEN were captured on the first day. Later resistance stiffened up a little and the thaw bogged down Allied armor. However, by the end of the week 176th Division had withdrawn up to five miles and must now have some help if it is to continue the stubborn defense. Probably 183rd Division will be drawn in.

A German attack was launched South of HEMMEN in the NIJMEGEN sector. It was driven in and the position remains the same.

The total strength of the German army engaged in the defense of the Western Front cannot be put at less than 1,500,000 men, one quarter of the six million or more men in the German army, the proportion demanded by its quota of divisions -- and may be even higher. The number of bodies per "division", including all overheads, is therefore about 20,000. In the days of the 16,000-man division, the total for a division with overheads was always quoted as 27,000: a total of 20,000 would correspond to a division of over 12,000 if the ratio remained constant. The number of enemy tanks in the West is estimated at about 600, with over 300 runners.

The vastness of the Russian offensive in the East and the speed with which it has progressed has materially altered the overall situation. It is as yet not clear to what extent the Germans were surprised and overrun. But one thing is certain. It is not only the German

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outposts which the Russians have by-passed. The depth of the advance is such that, without doubt, a number of German divisions have been cut off and face annihilation or surrender. And, at the moment, there is no sign that the advance is being halted or even contained in any one sector by the enemy. The Russian penetration into SILESIA is itself a sufficient token that the enemy is bewildered. It is, however, too early to predict the total effect which our Allies' offensive will have in the West. The one division which went to HUNGARY may be only the forerunner of other infantry divisions and, perhaps, armor which may have to go to POLAND. It will mean also that less replacements of men and materiel will come to RUNDSTEDT. On the other hand, there are no signs that the enemy intends to abandon his offensive in the West, and he is endeavoring by every means to retain the initiative. He is keeping his offensive going in the HAGENAU area with the evident intent of getting back ALSACE and the political prize of STRASBOURG. Divisions from the North in the form of 10th SS Panzer Division and 7th Parachute Division have appeared. The Southern pincer of the ALSACE offensive, however, has not been progressing so well and the COLMAR "pocket" offensive needs more infantry for it to get going. Rail movement South suggests this may be forthcoming shortly. To keep us from concentrating, 11th Panzer Division with 416th Infantry Division on its left has attacked using the MOSELLE as its right flank. Without reinforcement this can only be designed as a diversionary attack with the bonus, if successful, of strengthening the right flank of Army Group G. But the real factor is the future employment of 6th SS Panzer Army. Three of its divisions are definitely out of contact and a fourth partly so. 12th SS Division has had time to rest and refit, though not so completely as in November, while 2nd SS and perhaps 9th SS are in the process of refitting. There is, however, no present indication as to the likely role of the Army. RUSSIA might claim it. But to remove the four best divisions from the West to the East would leave RUNDSTEDT weak in armor in comparison with the Allies and would mean resignation eventually to a defensive strategy. But events in RUSSIA may dictate otherwise. Until they do, we must assume that the main offensive Army in the West, however hard it may have been hit, will NOT remain idle for long. And Hitler must be able to tell a success story on some part of his now almost continuous front.

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The Me.262, a jet aircraft with two propellant units, is the most promising single aircraft in the GERMAN plans for challenging Allied air superiority. Most of the operational specimens of this type now seem to be active on the SAAR front, where Me.262 activity has been continuous since 10 January on days when flying was possible. They are based both around FRANKFURT and to the east and have operated both as fighters and fighter-bombers.



Following is a resume of outstanding incidents from 10-18 January inclusive:

On 10 January about a dozen bombed and strafed in the area of GERMAN ground force attacks in the HAGENAU area. In no case did ground units report that substantial damage was inflicted. Again on 14 January, more than a score of bombing-strafting attacks were reported in the same area, white smoke being used to mark targets, but again with no considerable damage being reported.

Fighter activity was likewise inconclusive with the exception of one P.47 being shot down by an Me.262 near LAUTERBOURG at 9,000 feet. Other reports, specifically on 13, 14 and 16 January, list passes at bomber and fighter formations, at altitudes of from B.17 height to the deck. In most cases Allied fighters tried to chase the M.262's but there are no claims or damage as a result. On 14 January a formation of six M.262's appeared to be furnishing top cover at 25,000 feet for 50 Me.109's. On one occasion jets seemed to be trying to lead P.47's over flak area by turning power alternately on and off. In general Me.262's were too fast for P.47's but latter were able to turn inside easily.

In addition to the activity listed above, it is known that Me.262's are engaging in reconnaissance activity. For the moment bombing and strafing seems to be the major commitment, but a considerable amount of exploratory and experimental fighter activity is going on. The GERMANS appear to be in some doubt as to the effort employed of this potentially versatile aircraft. It is to be expected that when tactics have been somewhat further developed attacks will be pressed home with more determination and accuracy.