

FROM FALAISE TO NIJMEGEN WITH BRITISH SECOND ARMY

CHASING THE CHIMERA: PRECONCEPTION AND SELF-DECEPTION IN WAR

by T. L. Cubbage II, Major, MI, USAR (Ret.)

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Chimera: 1a. a she-monster of Greek mythology; 1b. a similar imaginary monster; 1c. a horrible or frightening manifestation; 1d. an often fantastic combination of incongruous parts, esp. a fabrication; 2. an illusion or fabrication of the mind or fancy....¹

Non semper ea sunt quae videntur (Things are not always what they appear to be). ²

¹ Phillip B. Gove (ed.), *Websters Third International Dictionary of the English Language Unabridged* (Springfield, MA: Merriam-Webster, Inc. 1986), p. 389.

² Phaedrus of Macedon, circa. 1st cent. A.D.

Preconception: a conception or opinion previously formed.³

The capacity to imagine the truth, to visualize the unknown, to tell a story, is indispensable for exploring the unknown.⁴

If there were dreams to sell, what would you buy?⁵

It's a capital mistake to theorize before you have all the evidence. It biases the judgment.⁶

An intelligence hypothesis may become your hobby horse on which you will ride into a self-made trap.⁷

³ Gove, *Websters Third International Dictionary*, p. 1783.

⁴ Eric Hoffer, *Truth Imagined* (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1983), p. 19.

⁵ Thomas Lowell Beddoes (1803–1849), “Dreams-Pedlary.”

⁶ Sherlock Holmes to Dr. Watson. Arthur Conan Doyle, “A Study in Scarlet: The Lauriston Garden Mystery,” in *The Complete Sherlock Holmes* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1930), p. 26.

⁷ Joseph Stalin’s advice to his intelligence chiefs, *quoted* in Angelo Cordevilla, “Comparative Historical Experience of Doctrine and Organization,” in *Intelligence Requirements for the 1980’s: Analysis and Estimates*, by Roy Godson, ed. (Washington: National Strategic Information Center (distributed by Transaction Books), 1980), p. 17.

Self-deception: the act of deceiving oneself or the state of being deceived by oneself.⁸

Generally speaking, perceptual errors are the result of either projecting one's own culture, ideological beliefs, military doctrine, and expectations of the adversary (*i.e.*, seeing him as a mirror image of oneself) or of wishful thinking, that is, molding the facts to conform to one's hopes.⁹

This was the grand delusion that brought other delusions after it.¹⁰

Trying to be objective does not guarantee accurate perception.¹¹

The imagined truth of these storytellers is more alive, more true, than truth.¹²

⁸ Gove, *Websters Third International Dictionary*, p. 1783. According to Barton Whaley's typology of perception, self-deception is a self-induced form of misperception, while deception is an other-induced form of misperception. Barton Whaley, "Toward a General Theory of Deception," in *Military Deception and Strategic Surprise*, John Gooch and Amos Permuter (eds.) (London: Frank Cass & Co. Ltd., 1982), p. 181.

⁹ Michael I. Handel, "Strategic Surprise: The Politics of Intelligence and the Management of Uncertainty (First Draft)," (U.S. Army War College, Photocopy, 1985), p. 30.

¹⁰ Ronald Lewin, *Ultra Goes to War* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1978), p. 361.

¹¹ *Id.*, p. 35.

¹² Hoffer, *Truth Imagined*, p. 16.

THE *WEHRMACHT* AS THE *CHIMERA*

The German Army (the *Wehrmacht*), a military force which to some appeared more evil by reason of its augmentation with units of the Nazi party's *Waffen-SS*, certainly was seen by the British as a *loathsome force*. The *Wehrmacht* was perceived as the dread beast that the forces of St. George were called upon to slay, and not a moment too soon. By late summer of 1944, Victory seemed to be at hand for the British and their Allies.

Of course, things are not always as they seem. The German military force that was being pursued pell-mell across France and Belgium by the British in late August and early September 1944 was not, in fact, the same military force that was in hasty flight. As shall be seen, preconception and self-deception on the part of the British, and others, had turned the *Wehrmacht* into a ***Chimera***.¹³ The estimates of the Allied forces concerning its foe did not reflect the real capabilities and intentions of the Germans; instead, they were mere illusions—fabrications of the mind.

In an earlier article, this author stated that there are ten *fog factors* which alone, and in combination, form significant blocks to the ability of commanders and intelligence analysts to perceive correctly the capabilities and intentions of an adversary.¹⁴ On 6 June 1944 the Germans were surprised by the Allied landings in Normandy. The German estimative failure regarding the time and place of the D-Day invasion came as a result of the ten *fog factors*, not the least of which was the masterful deception effort mounted by the Allies.¹⁵ In turn, in mid-September

¹³ Here the term Chimera is used to describe an illusion, or a fabrication of the mind or the Allied political and military leaders.

¹⁴ T. L. Cubbage, "German Misapprehensions Regarding Overlord: Understanding Failure in the Estimative Process," *Intelligence and National Security* 2 (July 1987): pp. 114, 118–62, reprinted in Michael I. Handel, *Strategic and Operational Deception in the Second World War* (London: Frank Cass & Co. Ltd., 1987), pp. 114, 118–62.

¹⁵ See T. L. Cubbage, "The Success of Operation Fortitude: Hesketh's History of Strategic Deception," *Intelligence and National Security* 2 (July 1987): pp. 328–46, reprinted in Michael

of 1944 the Allied forces in Northwest Europe were surprised in Holland. It would not be correct to say that the forces under Field-Marshal Bernard L. Montgomery's British 21st Army Group—particularly British Second Army and the Allied First Airborne Army—were intentionally surprised by the Germans. The Germans did not try to deceive the Allies regarding the capability of the *Wehrmacht* to send reinforcements to Holland, or to rally an army then in full retreat, or to form a defense in depth. Moreover, the Germans certainly did not deceive the Allies about the presence of two *SS Panzerdivisionen* in the Arnhem area. Instead, the British (and the intelligence officers at SHAEF, as well) were the victims of their own self-deception—a self-deception that mirrored certain false preconceptions about the war-making capabilities of both Germany and the German armed forces.

This paper illustrates a vicious cycle in which the command thinking influenced intelligence estimating, while the latter reinforced and influenced the former. The author's intuitive idea for this thesis was focused by "Formula for Fiasco," a chapter in Daniel Goleman's book, *Vital Lies, Simple Truths: The Psychology of Self-Deception*, about which more will be said later in the article.¹⁶

To illustrate the *preconception* behind, and the *self-deception* reflected in, the Allied intelligence reports concerning action in Northwestern Europe in the late summer and early fall of 1944, we will deal primarily with the Daily Intelligence Estimates of the British Second Army during the time period from 15 August 1944 to 30 September 1944. Since British Second Army was the ground force that rolled across Northeastern France and across Belgium, only to be stopped in

I. Handel, *Strategic and Operational Deception in the Second World War* (London: Frank Cass & Co. Ltd., 1987), pp. 328–46. Cf. Klaus Jürgen Müller, "A German Perspective on Allied Deception Operations in the Second World War," *Intelligence and National Security* 2 (July 1987): pp. 301–26, reprinted in Michael I. Handel, *Strategic and Operational Deception in the Second World War* (London: Frank Cass & Co. Ltd., 1987), pp. 301–26. Müller suggests that German self-deception had as much or more to do with the actual course of events than did the Allied efforts—with the FORTITUDE deception being the exception. Letter to author, 12 December 1986.

¹⁶ New York: Touchstone Books, 1985.

Holland when it mounted Operation GARDEN, the daily intelligence summaries it produced will form the core of the information about how one key preconception led to the widespread self-deception in the Allied higher commands. In addition, the Weekly Intelligence Summaries of SHAEF and those of certain other higher headquarters—particularly those associated with the airborne invasion of Holland (Operation MARKET)—and the Orders of 21st Army Group will be referenced to fill out the story. These other reports also illustrate that this self-deception was not merely an isolated phenomenon associated only with the G-2 staff of the British Second Army.

Two maps illustrate the situation along the Western Front on 14 September 1944 (MAP I at Page 155) and the plan of attack for Operation Market/Garden, the land and air invasion of Holland on 17 September 1944 (MAP II at Page 156). A third map shows how certain of the German forces escaped capture in western Holland and survived to block utilization of the port city of Antwerp (Map III at Page 157).

THE FALSE PRECONCEPTION: THE WAR IS ALMOST OVER

No sooner was the First Allied Airborne Army (FAAA) command activated, in August 1944, than there came upon the Allies the belief that war in Europe might end suddenly in 1944. Beginning in mid-August 1944, after two months of hard fighting following the Normandy D-Day landings, a great feeling of euphoria swept over the Allied commanders. Though he expressed caution, Prime Minister Winston Churchill initially was no less influenced by the feeling that the end of war in Europe might be very close. Thus, even the Allied Control Commission was alerted to be ready to set up an operational headquarters in the German capital of Berlin by 1 November 1944.¹⁷

¹⁷ Nigel Hamilton, *MONTY: Final Years of the Field-Marshal, 1944–76* (London: Hamish Hamilton Ltd., 1986; New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1986), p. 3.

Reflecting the general feeling of the Allied commanders, the SHAEF G-2 summary for 23 August said this:

*The August battles have done it and the enemy in the West has had it. Two and a half months of bitter fighting have brought the end of the war in Europe within sight, almost within reach.*¹⁸

In London, the Combined Intelligence Committee was convinced that the German strategic situation had deteriorated to the point where “no recovery is now possible.”¹⁹ The problem for the most senior Allied ground force commanders—Generals Dwight Eisenhower (SHAEF), Bernard Montgomery (21st Army Group) and Omar Bradley (12th Army Group)—was how to turn that belief, which lasted almost a month, into a reality.²⁰

Early, in September 1944—after three weeks of chasing a German army in full flight—the commanders’ perception of the situation began to change. The most dramatic turn of events took place in British Second Army’s area along the frontiers of southeastern Holland. There, to the great surprise of the Allies, the fleeing Germans halted, turned about, and with fresh combat-ready troops, dug in and reinforced a new defensive line. Effectively employing armoured fighting

¹⁸ Stephen E. Ambrose, *Eisenhower*, Vol. 1, *Soldier, General of the Army, President-Elect, 1890-1952* (New York: Simon & Schuster, Inc., 1983; reprint, New York: A Touchstone Book, 1985), p. 336.

¹⁹ Ambrose, *Eisenhower*, pp. 336–37.

²⁰ On 1 September 1944 General Eisenhower assumed the duties of the Commander-in-Chief Allied Ground Forces. Eisenhower decided to exercise the field command of the two Allied Army Groups from the Villa Montgomery, his headquarters—code named SHELLBURST—at Granville, located on the shores of the Golfe de St. Malo on the western side of the Contentin Peninsula. Hamilton, *MONTY: Final Years*, pp. 10, 12, 25, 46. On that same day Montgomery was made a Field-Marshal, and Monty moved his 21st Army Group Tactical (Tac) Headquarters east of the River Seine, establishing himself at Conty in the Château de Dangu (20 km southwest of Amiens). *Id.*, pp. 8, 34. Bradley’s 12th Army Group headquarters then was at Chartres, 80 km southwest of Paris. *Id.*, p. 14. This dispersal of headquarters made command coordination difficult in the days that followed.

vehicles and 88mm anti-tank guns, the *Wehrmacht* stopped the rapid cross-county advance of British Second Army.

On 7 September, XXXth Corps of the British Second Army began a two-pronged attack from its positions along the Albert Canal: The plan called for the Guards Armoured Division to assault along the Eindhoven–St. Odenrode–Grave–Nijmegen–Arnhem road toward the city of Apeldoorn (a distance of about 150 km). Simultaneously, the 11th Armoured Division—on XXXth Corps’ left flank—was to advance on the Turnhour–Tilburg–’s-Hertogenbosch–Zaltbommel–Tiel–Renkum road toward Ede (a distance of about 120 km). Unexpectedly strong enemy defenses in depth prevented the crossing of the Albert Canal by the 11th Armoured Division, and the 50th Division was committed in the area between the 11th and the Guards Armoured divisions. The latter also encountered strong resistance at the canal but made some progress.²¹

By the evening of 7 September Montgomery knew, or should have known, that the headlong Allied rush eastward had lost all of its momentum—or rather, that the Germans, having found favorable ground, had halted their retreat and were making a stand. This latter fact, at least, was clear to Montgomery who noted in his nightly cable to the Commander of the Imperial General Staff (CIGS):

*On the Second Army Front the enemy is offering very determined resistance in the northern outskirts of Antwerp and along the general line of the Albert Canal from Antwerp to Maastricht.*²²

That appreciation was confirmed by the course of action along the XXXth Corps sector of the British Second Army’s front over the next week.

²¹ Lewis Golden, *Echoes from Arnhem* (London: William Kimber and Co. Limited, 1984), p. 115.

²² Hamilton, *MONTY: Final Years*, p. 37.

On 8 September the Guards Armoured Division finally crossed the Albert Canal at Beringen and the 50th Division crossed at Geel. It took the Guards Armoured Division until 10 September to move some 25 km and cross the Meuse-Escaut Canal at Neerpelt. In the face of fierce German resistance the 15th Division replaced the 50th, but by 13 September the left wing of the XXXth Corps' attack had moved only 5 km and crossed the Aart Canal. The terrain favored the defenders and generally was most unsuited for an armoured advance—tank and wheeled units were forced to stay on the roads and cross-country movement was possible only for dismounted infantry units.²³

It was obvious that all of the worst fears of Montgomery's senior staff—especially those of General Francis de Guingand and of Brigadier Charles Richardson—about a lowland thrust were proving to be well founded. On 3 September Montgomery had signaled de Guingand at the 21st Army Group Main Headquarters in England:

*Consider we may want considerable airborne drop to make certain of getting over the Meuse and Rhine. Order Browning to come see me tomorrow and you come too.*²⁴

It was clear to de Guingand—Monty's Chief of Staff—that the progress through the Wesel-Arnhem gap was going to be difficult, but the use of the Airborne Army might just make the difference.

However, even with airborne support, neither de Guingand nor Richardson, the Chief of Plans for 21st Army Group, were in favor of a lowland entry into

²³ Golden, *Echoes from Arnhem*, p. 115.

²⁴ Message M.149, 032000 Sep 44, C-in-C to Cos (EXFOR MAIN), PP/MCR/C 30, Reel 10, BLM 109/22, Imperial War Museum, London; Hamilton, *MONTY: Final Years*, p. 22. This, and other materials quoted from the Bernard L. Montgomery Collection, appear with the permission of the Montgomery Collection Committee of the Trustees of the Imperial War Museum. This author gratefully acknowledges the assistance given by Miss Ann Commander of the IWM staff when he reviewed materials in the collection soon after it was opened to the public.

Germany in the autumn months; instead both favored an all-out thrust further south through the Aachen Gap. For them the lowland route through Holland north of Wesel—the northern extent of the *Siegfried* Line—was one so dissected by numerous rivers and beset with a maze of easy to inundate areas, all made worse by the deteriorating weather, that it was not a fit route to the Ruhr and to Berlin. In the autumn of 1944 almost every inch of Holland favored the defender. If the terrain and the weather were not bad enough, there also was the problem of the some 150,000 Germans of *General der Infanterie* Gustav von Zangen's *Armeeoberkommando 15 (A.O.K. 15)* in the Channel coast sector and north of the line from Breck-Plage on the Pas-de-Calais coast through Hesdin–Bethune–Lille to Antwerp in the Netherlands. To both de Guingand and Richardson, the task of bottling up, then capturing von Zangen's forces, and the clearing out the Schedt Estuary—necessary of itself to open the access to the inland port of Antwerp—made more sense than a bold unilateral British effort to breakthrough into Germany over the lowland route at that time. However, the latter was exactly what Montgomery had in mind.²⁵

By 8 September Prime Minister Churchill was becoming pessimistic about the prospect of an early end to war in Europe and noted that “it is at least as likely that Hitler will be fighting on 1 January as that he will collapse before then.”²⁶ Meanwhile, at Second Army, General Miles Dempsey also could read the signs of a new German resolve and told Lieutenant-General Brian Horrocks (XXX Corps) and Lieutenant-General “Boy” Browning (FAAA) that COMET, the airborne phase of the ongoing attack was to be postponed until the night of 9/10 September at the earliest. In a meeting with Horrocks at Diest on 9 September, Dempsey put COMET on a further hold until the night of 11/12 September. By the early evening of 9 September Dempsey, had concluded that the enemy understood the importance of the Arnhem-Nijmegen area, and that the Germans were going to

²⁵ Hamilton, *MONTY: Final Years*, pp. 22–24.

²⁶ Ralph Bennett, *Ultra in the West: The Normandy Campaign of 1944–45* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1980), p. 150.

do all that they could to hold it. Dempsey concluded that a rapid advance along the Eindhoven–Apeldoorn and Turnhout–Ede axes of advance was out of the question.²⁷

In his diary that night General Dempsey noted well the most important question of the moment:

Owing to our maintenance situation, we will not be in a position to fight a real battle for perhaps ten days to a fortnight. Are we right to direct Second Army to Arnhem, or would it be better to hold a left flank along the Albert Canal, and strike due east, toward Köln [south of the Ruhr] in conjunction with [Hodges' U.S.] First Army?²⁸

In retrospect we know that the second option probably would have been the better choice.

So there one has on one hand the false preconception and on the other the reality of the situation. The false vision was that the war was all but over, that the Germans were thoroughly beaten, and that the critical task was getting on to Berlin to wrap the whole thing up. Although that preconception was false, there certainly were indications suggesting otherwise—not the least of which was the desperate plight of the Germans—which must be explored to understand the magnitude of the Allied error.

THE GERMAN SITUATION IN PERSPECTIVE

While it is important to understand how the preoccupation with victory and the end of the war affected the thinking of both the commanders and the intelligence officers at SHAEF, 21st Army Group, Second Army, and FAAA, it also is equally important to realize what was happening on the other side of the hill—in the

²⁷ Hamilton, *MONTY: Final Years*, p. 50.

²⁸ *Id.*, pp. 50–51.

German camp—during the same time period. A brief synopsis of the German military situation will illustrate the grave problems that confronted Hitler and the *Oberkommando der Wehrmacht (OKW)*—the German High Command.

On 2 August *General der Flieger* Karl Kitzinger, then the *Militärbefehlshaber Frankreich* (Military Governor of France), flew to the “*Wolfsschanze*” *Führerhauptquartier (FHQu)* near Rastenburg in East Prussia to brief Adolf Hitler on the desperate military situation in France, and on the possibility of establishing new defensive lines both on and east of the River Seine. Kitzinger told Hitler that, while the Seine River was a natural defensive line, there was no natural feature behind it which could be used to prevent the Anglo-Americans from getting into the Pas-de-Calais region where the V-1 (buzz-bomb) launching sites were located. Mindful of the need to protect the launching areas, the *Führer* decided to establish another fortified belt on the Somme–Marne–Saône–Jura line. He gave *General* Kitzinger the task of coordinating the construction of the new defensive line.²⁹

On 5 August the *OKW* issued to *General* Kitzinger the necessary orders providing for the “immediate development of a rearward position” from Reims to Chalons and the Marne–Saône Canal. The order stated that *General* Kitzinger and his special staff were generally empowered to use “the severest measures” to conscript French civilian laborers between the ages of sixteen and sixty years and to commandeer all necessary entrenching tools and excavating equipment.³⁰ To ensure the successful withdrawal to the Seine, and from there to the new fall-

²⁹ MS # ETHINT-1, *General der Artillerie* Walter Warlimont, “From Invasion to the Siegfried Line,” 19–20 July 1948, 41, EUCOM: HD:OHGB, Records of the United States Army Commands, Record Group 338, Modern Military Records Branch, National Archives Records Administration (NARA), Washington, D.C.; Martin Blumenson, *United States Army in World War II: European Theater of Operations – Breakout and Pursuit* (Washington: Office of the Chief of Military History, United States Army, 1961), p. 592.

³⁰ Bennett, *Ultra in the West*, p. 116, citing Msgs. XL 5501 and XL 5533. These, and the other ULTRA messages cited by Bennett are in the DEFE 3 File at the Public Records Office, Kew, England.

back line, Hitler also ordered that a special command be set up in Paris under the German Commander-in-Chief for Northwestern Europe—the *Ober-befehlshaber West* (*Ob. West*)—to coordinate all of the military’s retrograde operations.³¹

On 6 August *General* Kitzinger met with the representatives of *Organization Todt* (*O. T.*) and the military engineers to discuss the task of establishing the Somme–Marne–Saône–Jura Line. It was soon clear that it was much too late to begin such an undertaking, but on the order of Hitler that such a line was to be built, the work was commenced anyway. Kitzinger met the same day with *General der Artillerie* Walter Warlimont from the *OKW/Wehrmachtführungsstab* (*OKW/WFSt.*)—the *OKW* Operations Staff—who was in Paris on a fact-finding mission. Kitzinger passed on to Warlimont the assessment that there were neither sufficient men nor building materials to build the new line in the time remaining.³²

On 7 August Hitler appointed *Generalleutnant* Dietrich von Choltitz to be Commandant of Paris. Kitzinger’s duties as the Military Governor of France had been administrative. In the appointment of Choltitz, Hitler intended to make Paris and its environs more defensible against attack.³³

On 13 August Kitzinger was given additional powers to speed work on the development of the Somme–Marne–Saône–Jura Line. He again was told to use “all possible means” to get the line built in time. In addition, *Ob. West* was ordered to allocate weapons to the Somme–Marne section and to assign *Armeekorps LXVII* to defend the sector.³⁴

³¹ Blumenson, *Breakout and Pursuit*, p. 592.

³² ETHINT-1 (Warlimont), p. 41.

³³ *Id.*

³⁴ Bennett, *Ultra in the West*, p. 135.

By 16 August Hitler felt compelled to order a withdrawal in the West.³⁵ The day before American and French forces had landed on the south coast of France. When *OKW* learned that the enemy airborne assault in the south of France was a success, they judged that they had no alternative but to defend the coast with the fortress troops and save what they could of the units still mobile enough to conduct a retrograde operation; Hitler agreed.³⁶ It also was time to save the battered remnants of the *Wehrmacht* in Normandy. Accordingly, the German headquarters and staffs that had been in Paris and its environs since the occupation began in June 1940 were given permission to evacuate the French capital.³⁷ At the same time the *Feldheer* formations fighting in Normandy were given orders to begin retrograde movements. *Armeeoberkommando 7* (A.O.K. 7) and *Gruppe Eberbach* were ordered to fight their way out of the Falaise pocket; then, with the balance of the *Heeresgruppe B* (*H.Gr. B*) forces, to move back to and defend a line on the lower Seine.³⁸

By mid-August, *H.Gr. B*—which had been in continuous action since D-Day—was made up of only fourteen battered infantry divisions, nine fresh but incompletely trained divisions in reserve along the Channel coast, the remnants of some fourteen divisions released from the Normandy front for rehabilitation, and nine badly mauled *Panzer* divisions. The *Panzer* formations were all engaged

³⁵ ETHINT-1 (Warlimont), p. 41.

³⁶ *Id.*, pp. 45–46.

³⁷ *Id.*, p. 43.

³⁸ *Id.*, p. 44; Blumenson, *Breakout and Pursuit*, pp. 661–2. As early as 14 August the Allied commanders believed that the bulk of the Germans had escaped from the Falaise pocket. They discovered otherwise on 15 August. Even then, the Allied intelligence over-estimated the strength of the units still in the pocket. After his experiences in the battle of the Falaise Gap, General Omar Bradley says he learned a hard lesson for the second time: “never to over rely, tactically, on ULTRA.” Omar N. Bradley and Clay Blair, *A General's Life: An Autobiography by General of the Army* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1983), pp. 303–304.

and provided a mobile screen for the withdrawal of the rest of the army to the lower Seine River Line.³⁹

The German middle Seine sector was to be defended by two divisions of *Armeekorps LXIV* (A.K. LXIV) that were being withdrawn, under the command of *General der Infanterie* Kurt von Chevallerie, from the Bay of Biscay area of *Armeeoberkommando 1* (A.O.K. 1).⁴⁰ The two divisions, encumbered by many noncombatants, retired in an orderly fashion from southwest France through a hostile country filled with numerous guerrilla bands of the French Forces of the Interior (FFI).⁴¹ The defense of the undefended upper Seine sector was to be the responsibility of *Generalmajor* Ernst Gunther Baade's *Panzergrenadierdivision 15* (Pz.D. 15) which was ordered north from Italy.⁴²

The first objective of the German withdrawal was to form a temporary line on the Seine to allow time for all the units to regroup. Then, at the proper time, the units on the Seine Line would fall back to new positions being built by Kitzinger on the Somme–Marne –Saône–Jura Line.

On 17 August Hitler consented to the withdrawal of the bulk of the units of *Generaloberst* Johannes Blaskowitz's *Heeresgruppe G* (H.Gr. G) from the south of France.⁴³ Four mobile divisions from *Armeeoberkommando 19* and one from A.K. LXIV were ordered to move north, regroup in the Plateau de Langres area, and then move to positions along the line Seine–Yonne–Canal de Bourgogne. The five divisions of H.Gr. G moved northward up the Rhône River valley in a rapid and orderly movement. On 20 August Hitler sent a new message to Blaskowitz extending his defensive sector south on the line Dijon–Dole–Swiss

³⁹ *Id.*, p. 44.

⁴⁰ ETHINT-1 (Warlimont), pp. 44–45.

⁴¹ Blumenson, *Breakout and Pursuit*, pp. 661–2.

⁴² ETHINT-1 (Warlimont), pp. 44–45.

⁴³ ETHINT-1 (Warlimont), p. 46.

border (near Lake Geneva). With Baade's *Pz.D. 15*, Blaskowitz's *H.Gr. G* was to defend the left flank of the Somme–Marne–Saône–Jura Line.⁴⁴

By 19 August, a weak link was established at Chambois between Canadian forces coming from the north and American coming from the south: twelve German divisions were encircled.⁴⁵ After the closing of the Falaise Gap, the fresh units of *A.O.K. 15* from the Pas-de-Calais, which were en route to the battle area, were held on the east bank of the Seine River to form a rally line for the troops retreating eastward from the Normandy sector.⁴⁶

On 20 August Hitler issued a new directive for the conduct of the withdrawal to the Seine and for the defense of Paris. Hitler ordered *A.O.K. 7* and *Panzerarmee 5 (Pz.A. 5)* to fight in Paris and its suburbs without regard to the destruction of the city.⁴⁷ On that same day the Germans trapped in the Falaise Gap area began a breakout effort. By 21 August some 40,000 Germans—about half of which were *Panzer* forces—escaped the Allied trap.⁴⁸

On 21 August *H.Gr. B* noted the following in the Situation Report for the period 14–20 August:

The enemy thus exhibits the clear intention of first dealing with our forces in the Normandy area, and then proceeding east.

At the same time, two [enemy] Corps are operating between Chartres and the Loire [River] in order to secure possession of the Loire and

⁴⁴ *Id.*, p. 46; Bennett, *Ultra in the West*, p. 135, citing Msgs. XL 6753, XL 7753, and XL 7793; Blumenson, *Breakout and Pursuit*, p. 661.

⁴⁵ Bradley and Blair, *A General's Life*, p. 304.

⁴⁶ ETHINT-1 (Warlimont), p. 44. When the Germans established the Seine River rally line (the *Aufnahmelinie*), they positioned troops on the west or south bank of the river at those nodal points where the loops in the river made large peninsulas; as, for example, north of Elbeuf. *Id.*

⁴⁷ Bennett, *Ultra in the West*, p. 135, citing Msgs. XL 7753 and XL 7793.

Seine crossing by a thrust eastward south of Paris. From [our] previous experience, a swing toward Paris from the southeast must be reckoned with in that case....

In connection with these operational intentions, the likelihood of a large-scale landing from the air by the airborne troops at readiness in Great Britain must be reckoned with, as only weak airborne forces have been deployed in southern France.⁴⁹

The Germans were anticipating Operation TRANSFIGURE—an airborne operation which was canceled at the last minute when American ground forces overran the proposed landing zones.⁵⁰

On 24 August *Feldmarschall* Walter Model (commanding both *Ob. West* and *H.Gr. B*) sent the following—his own appreciation of the situation—to *General* Jodl at *OKW/WFSt.* and requested that it be submitted to the *Führer*:

I. The enemy in northwest France at the present time has 53 divisions, [a force] which he can increase by 2 to 4 divisions by 1 September. In

⁴⁸ Bradley and Blair, *A General's Life*, p. 304.

⁴⁹ *Wochenmeldung 14.VIII. - 20.VIII.44, H.Gr. B, 21.VIII. 44, Ia Nr. 6375/44 g.Kdos.*, BLM 150/20, IWM.

⁵⁰ Operation TRANSFIGURE was an First Allied Airborne Army plan designed to establish a blocking force east of Chartres in the Paris–Orléans gap. The airborne forces in England were put on alert on 13 August and the plan was canceled on 20 August when the rapid advance of the U.S. Third Army mooted the need for the air-assault. Meeting Notes, 4 Jul 44, Hq AIRTRPS, File: 21 AGp/20721/1/G (Plans), subject: “Employment of Airborne Forces ‘LUCKY STRIKE,’” WO 205/669, PRO; Memo-randum, Hq 21 AGp, File: 21 AGp/7815/G(Air), subject: “TRANSFIGURE,” WO 205/428, PRO; Hq FAAA Plans - Signals Part, 15 August 44 Outline Plan, File: 21 AGp/20752/G(Plans), subject: Opn TRANSFIGURE, August 1944, WO 205/691, PRO; Mtg Notes, 4 Jul 44, Hq AIRTRPS (original concept), File AGp/20721/1/G (Plans), subject: “Employment of Airborne Forces ‘LUCKY STRIKE,’” WO 205/669, PRO; Msg to 1AB/101AB/1POL, 131715 Aug 44 (alert canceled); Msg AIRTRPS to EXFOR, 171820 Aug 44 (standdown), File: 21 AGp/7815/G(Air), subject: “TRANSFIGURE,” WO 205/428, PRO; Hq AIRTRPS Msg. 0735, 202330 Aug 44 (operation canceled), File: 21 AGp/20752/G(Plans), subject: “Operation TRANSFIGURE, August 1944” WO 205/691, PRO.

southern France the enemy has been operating with [a force of] about 8 divisions....

The following options are available to the enemy:

(a) After winning the Seine bank crossing, thrust between Rouen and Mantes northward past Paris to the Somme (Objective: bases of the V-1's and the vital Belgian industrial basin). He can put 30–35 divisions [into action] for this thrust;

(b) Thrust via Paris [in the] direction [of] Riems to the old invasion route (Einfalltor) to Germany. For this purpose he can put in[to action] 35 divisions;

(c) Thrust south of Paris via the line Troyes–Auxerre [in the] direction [of] Dijon (in order to cut off H.Gr.B) and then a movement forward through the Trouée de Belfort toward Alsace. He can put in[to action some] 25 divisions for this purpose.

For all three options the enemy can put in the airborne army (5-6 divisions) for the opening of the break-through (Seine–Somme crossings).

The enemy can simultaneously conduct operations (a) and (b) with 15 and 25 divisions respectively.

II. Our own troops are, as reported on 18 August, played out. No significant reinforcements are expected before 1 September....

In view of the keen enemy conduct of operations and [his numerous] reinforcements, the possibility will have to be reckoned with that the

*Seine–Dijon line cannot long be held and that we [soon] shall have to fall back on the Somme–Marne line.*⁵¹

It had been ten weeks since the Allied airborne troops were used in Normandy and predictions of their further use had become a routine part of most German intelligence estimates.

On 24 August the *Führer* ordered the four *Gauleiters* in the West to call-up the civilian population to work on the “defensive positions in the West.”⁵² Five days later Hitler issued the *Führerbefehl* entitled “Order for Completion of Defenses in the German Bight.” He ordered that the defenses in the German Bight were to be strengthened by “the fortification of the entire coast from the Danish to the Dutch frontier, as well as those of the North and East Frisian Islands,” and for the island areas already fortified to be brought up to a full state of anti-invasion defense readiness.⁵³ The order went on to provide that reports on progress were to be made on the 1st and 15th of each month. Inasmuch as the German Bight sector covered by this *Führerbefehl* had a seafront of over 250 km, it seems clear that Hitler was reacting to an immediate and deeply-felt concern. Evidently the *Führer*

⁵¹ *Lagebeurteilung der Feldmarschall Model, H.Gr. B, 24.VIII. 44, Ia Nr. 6660/44, g.Kdos., BLM 150/11, IWM.*

⁵² *Führerbefehl 24.VIII.44* (Order for the Construction of German Defensive Position in the West). See H. R. Trevor-Roper, ed., *Hitler's War Directives 1939-1945* (1964; reprint, London: Pan Books Ltd., 1983), pp. 268–72.

⁵³ *Führerbefehl, 29.VIII.44* (Order for Completion of Defenses in the German Bight). See Trevor-Roper, *Hitler's War Directives*, pp. 265–68. The order also called for preparations for the quick construction of a *second position* from the Dutch to Danish border, at a depth of about 10 km from the coast; a *cross-line* somewhere along the German–Danish border, *further cross-lines* in Schleswig-Holstein to the north of the Kaiser Wilhelm Canal. In addition, *Militärbefehlshaber Dänemark* was ordered to plan and construct further east-west cross-lines along the north of the German-Danish border. Hitler's order directed that the North and East Frisian Islands, the coastal sector opposite Sylt (Hindenburg-damm); the Eiderstedt peninsula, the river defense of the Elbe-Weser estuary, the coast from Brunsbüttel–Cuxhaven–Wesermünde to Wilhelmshaven inclusive, and the Ems estuary with Delfzijl were to be fortified as a *first priority*. *Id.*

had seen and had believed the intelligence reports of an Allied sea and airborne threat to the German Bight sector.⁵⁴

On 29 August Hitler ordered *Generalfeldmarschall* Walter Model at *Ob. West* to commence the withdrawal of his forces of *H.Gr. B* from the Seine to the Somme River and to hold the unused *FHQ* fortress north of Soissons. In doing so Model was directed to leave elements of *A.O.K. 15* in all of the fortress ports of the Channel coast and to position the bulk of *H.Gr. B* along the Somme. Thus *A.O.K. 15* was to defend the coastal right flank and, to the left, the forces of *A.O.K. 7* were to establish a defensive line extending southward. The extreme left flank was to be held by the forces of *H.Gr. G* which was being reinforced by new units from Germany. All of the units which were unable to continue to fight because of losses in men and matériel were to be moved back to the *Westwall* to rest and refit (*erfrischen*).⁵⁵

The same day Model signaled to *OKW* that he thought that he would be able to defend an initial line to the west of the Somme–Marne line along a line that ran Dieppe– Senlis–Soissons–Marne–Marne Canal.⁵⁶ One day later Kitzinger reported to the *OKW* that the Somme–Marne–Saône–Jura Line would not be ready in time. Parts of it were ready, but much work still had to be done.⁵⁷

On 31 August the term *Westwall* was used by the Germans for the first time in the context of establishing a new defensive line. By then it was clear that the Somme–Marne–Saône–Jura Line could not be held and that the old defenses along the Franco–German border would have to be prepared for use. Up to that time neither Hitler nor the *OKW* had ordered that any preparations be made for the use of the old border bunkers in the pre-war line. In fact, the *OKW* staff had to

⁵⁴ Trevor-Roper, *Hitler's War Directives*, 265-68.

⁵⁵ ETHINT-1 (Warlimont), pp. 46-47.

⁵⁶ Bennett, *Ultra in the West*, p. 135, citing Msgs. XL 8647, and XL 8654.

⁵⁷ *Id.*, citing Msgs. XL 6450, XL 6721, XL 6881, XL 7104, XL 8253 and XL 8528.

call *General d. Pion. Jacob*, the *Inspekteur d. Festungen*, to ask him about the condition of the border defenses. It was *General d. Art. Jodl* that was able to convince Hitler to upgrade the old defenses and thus the term *Westwall* came into use again in the West.⁵⁸

During August the main concern of the *OKW* was not about the 21st Army Group area in the north, but about the situation east and south of Paris. They could not understand why the Americans were not more aggressive in that sector. They were worried that General Patton's forces would either attack Blaskowitz's *H.Gr. G* as it retreated north-ward or strike swiftly on to the east, across the Moselle River and into the Metz Gap before a defensive line could be established. When neither alternative came to pass they tried reassessing the Anglo-American strategy. A straight line from Normandy to Berlin goes via Aachen and the Ruhr. The course of events showed that the enemy forces were moving on that line of advance. Thus, by the beginning of September *Ob. West* and the *OKW* believed that the next object of the enemy was to capture Aachen and cross the Rhine beyond.⁵⁹ Their main concern was whether a defensive line could be established and stabilized in time to prevent the Anglo-American forces from crossing into Germany.

The fear of the German staff officers was justified. During late August and the first few days of September there had been no coherent German defense anywhere in the West. There was panic in the rear areas. German supply installations were being destroyed without proper orders; fuel depots and ammunition dumps were being demolished or abandoned; ration and supply installations were looted by both troops and civilians; and reliable reports on the

⁵⁸ ETHINT-1 (Warlimont), p. 47. Warlimont says that prior to the decision by Jodl to convince Hitler of the need to upgrade the state of the *Westwall* defenses, no one at *OKW* had dared to mention the need for such action. "This may be explained," says *General Warlimont*, "by Hitler's attitude: never let anyone look behind him, but always ahead. To have mentioned the *Westwall* before this time probably would have cost you your head." *Id.*

status of supplies were nonexistent. Few of the *Panzer* divisions had more than five to ten tanks in working order, and there were too few armoured cars and trucks. The morale of the *Wehrmacht* troops was shaken and depressed by Allied control of the air and by the apparent abundance of Allied matériel.⁶⁰ It was a time of great crisis and some Germans believed that the collapse of the *Wehrmacht* in the West was imminent. However, Hitler certainly did not believe that the end was at hand, and neither did the majority of his senior military leaders in the West.

Hitler was not thinking only of defensive lines in the West. Model also was ordered to assemble, in the Chaumont–Troyes sector between the Seine and the Marne rivers, all of the *Panzer* units he could spare. At the right moment the *Panzer* forces were to counter-attack northwestward and into the rear of the advancing Anglo-American forces.⁶¹ In a staff conference on 1 September the *Führer* elaborated on his plan for an armoured force counter-attack in the West. Hitler stated that his intention was to halt the advancing enemy at the *Westwall*, and on the Moselle River, and in the Vosges mountains, then wait for winter to come. He told his staff that the “fog, night and snow” would provide him with a “great opportunity” to deal his enemies in the West a fatal blow before turning east to deal with the Russians.⁶²

The rapid pace of the German retreat had created a situation in which *Feldmarschall* Model had ceased to function as the head of *Ob. West*. In fact, Model and his staff at *H.Gr. B* had found it necessary to move their headquarters east almost daily to avoid being overrun. Since 1 September Model had been out of

⁵⁹ Seymour Freidin and William Richardson (eds.), Constantine Fitzgibbon (trans.), *The Fatal Decisions* (New York: William Sloan Associates, 1956), p. 238.

⁶⁰ Blumenson, *Breakout and Pursuit*, pp. 697-98, citing MS# B-596 (Gerber).

⁶¹ ETHINT-1 (Warlimont), pp. 46-47.

⁶² Chester Wilmot, *Struggle for Europe* (1952; reprint, New York: Carroll & Graf Publishers, Inc., 1986), p. 478.

touch with Blaskowitz at *H.Gr. G* at Dijon. It now was imperative that the unity of the front—especially as regards the lines of command and communication—be re-established. Finally, in late August *Generalleutnant* Gunther Blumentritt, *Generalstabchef* at *Ob. West*, suggested that *Generalfeldmarschall* Gerd von Rundstedt be recalled from retirement to once again command *Ob. West*. It was an idea that Model seconded. The worsening situation in the West would soon force the *Führer* to act on the proposal to recall von Rundstedt.⁶³

On 1 September, Hitler issued a new *Führerbefehl*, this one entitled “Order Placing the West Wall in a State of Defense.” It provided for the immediate strengthening and extension of the *Westwall* by a call-up of civilians all along the western border of Germany and in Holland.⁶⁴ It was at this point when Hitler issued an order that all the new output of 88mm anti-tank guns, *Tiger II* tanks, and *Jadgpanther* anti-tank vehicles was to go to the Western Front and the units being formed for deployment in that area.⁶⁵

By 2 September work had begun in earnest on the rehabilitation of the *Westwall*. It had not been used for anything but storage since 1940 and most of the original guns had been removed for use elsewhere.⁶⁶ On the same day *SS Panzerdivision 9* and *SS Panzerdivision 10*, along with several other *Panzer* formations, were ordered to rest and refit in the area west of Liège.⁶⁷

On 3 September the *Führer* issued a *Führerweisungen* addressed to *Feldmarschall* Model at *Ob. West*; it was a directive for the conduct of further

⁶³ Freidin and Richardson, *The Fatal Decisions*, pp. 233–34.

⁶⁴ *Führerbefehl 1.IX.44* (Order Placing the West Wall in a State of Defense), See Trevor-Roper, *Hitler's War Directives*, pp. 268–72.

⁶⁵ Wilmot, *Struggle in Europe*, p. 481.

⁶⁶ Bennett, *Ultra in the West*, p. 136, citing Msgs. XL 9090 and XL 9100.

⁶⁷ *Id.*, p. 153, citing Msg. XL 8994.

operations in the West.⁶⁸ With unusual candor Hitler summarized the serious situation that existed in the West and issued orders for a fighting withdrawal:

Our own heavily tried troops, and the impossibility of bringing up adequate reinforcements quickly, do not allow us at the present moment to determine a line which must be held, and which certainly can be held.

Therefore it is important to gain as much time as possible for raising and bringing up new formations, and for the development of the defenses in the West, and to destroy the enemy by local attacks.

*I therefore issue the following orders for the conduct of operations: **The right flank and centre of the Army in the West** ... will dispute every inch of ground with the enemy by stubborn delaying action. The likelihood of local penetrations must be accepted, but these must not lead to the encirclement of large German formations.⁶⁹*

At that moment Hitler was in desperate need of a reserve to send to Holland to fill the gap between A.O.K. 15 and A.O.K. 7.

Help for the northern flank came from an unexpected quarter. *Reichsmarschall* Göring revealed—to the dismay of the *OKW* which was desperately short of men—that the *Luftwaffe* had six *Fallschirmregimenten* in training and refitting, and two more could be raised in short order by combing-out the parachute troops in the convalescent depots. This force amounted to a combat-ready reserve of some 20,000 men. Göring also told the *Führer* that an additional force of some 10,000 men could be raised from the regular *Luftwaffe* personnel

⁶⁸ *Führerweisungen 3.IX.44* (Directive for Further Operations by *Ob. West*), See Trevor-Roper, *Hitler's War Directives*, pp. 268–72.

⁶⁹ (emphasis in original) *Id.*, p. 272.

whose current training and operational activities had been curtailed by petrol shortages.⁷⁰

Hitler wasted no time in acting on Göring's information. On 3 September Hitler created the *Fallschirmarmee 1*, under the able command of *Generaloberst* Kurt Student, and ordered the transfer of the reinforced "Parachute Army" to the Albert Canal area.⁷¹ The new army was to be deployed, Hitler told Student, "with all speed along the Albert Canal in order that Holland at least, which for economic reasons was vital to the German war effort, should not fall into enemy hands."⁷²

At the same time Hitler told *Feldmarschall* Model at *H.Gr. B* that he attached "decisive importance" to the conduct of future operations designed to hold the English Channel ports of Boulogne, Dunkirk and Calais, and in addition, "Walcheren Island with Flushing harbour, a bridgehead round Antwerp, and the Albert Canal as far as Maastricht."⁷³

On 4 September *Feldmarschall* Model sent another personal appreciation of the situation to Jodl at the *OKW/WFSt*; Model also requested that Jodl submit it to the *Führer*.

1. Enemy Situation: The British [21st] Army Group is making its main thrust northeast toward the mouth of the Scheldt (Antwerp), in order to gain the double objective of taking the V-1 bases and bottling-up A.O.K.15. The formations conducting this operation on a broad front even now are closing up.

⁷⁰ Wilmot, *Struggle for Europe*, pp. 479–80.

⁷¹ Bennett, *Ultra in the West*, p. 140.

⁷² Freidin and Richardson, *The Fatal Decisions*, p. 234.

⁷³ Bennett, *Ultra in the West*, p. 147, citing Msgs. XL 9219 and XL 9248.

An American Army [—the First—] of the 12th Army Group with some six to eight divisions has attached itself to this forward thrust [by the British] and may bring up still further forces....

The mass of the American Third Army has for the past three days been closing up in the region of Verdun. It can at any time launch a new and strong offensive against the Luxemburg–Metz line....

The anticipated large-scale air-landing appears most likely in the Westwall region.⁷⁴

Model stated that, in order to prop up the entire Western Front before it gave way completely, he needed a minimum of twenty-five fresh infantry divisions and at least five or six new *Panzer* divisions.⁷⁵ Thus, as September began, *Feldmarschall* Model was expecting a large-scale airborne attack on the American 12th Army Group front in conjunction with large-scale ground attacks. However, at that time he was not forecasting an airborne landing on the British sector to the north.

On 4 September elements of British Second Army swept into Antwerp and captured the port city. It was accomplished with such speed that the German garrison was not able to implement the plans for the destruction of the harbour facilities. The *OKW* did not expect the breakthrough to Antwerp and the capture of the city on 4 September took them off guard.⁷⁶ Although the British troops entered the city of Antwerp, they did not push on north of the city to establish a secure bridgehead north of the Albert Canal and cut off the isthmus that connected Zuid Beveland Island with the mainland. Thus, the divisions of *A. O. K.*

⁷⁴ *Lagebeurteilung der Feldmarschall Model, H.Gr. B, 4.IX.44, Ia Nr. 6940/44, g.Kdos., BLM 150/14, IWM.*

⁷⁵ Blumenson, *Breakout and Pursuit*, p. 698, citing *H.Gr. B, Lagebeurteilung, Ia*; MS # B-730 (Brandenberger); MS# B-623 (Keppler); and MS# C-048 (Krämer).

15, which had intended to move into central Holland by way of Lier (Lierre), had an avenue of escape—albeit a most dangerous one. All would depend upon whether the divisions could be ferried across the 4 km wide Westerschelde from Breskens on the mainland to Vlissingen (Flushing) on Walcheren Island.⁷⁷

On 4 September *H.Gr. B* sent a message to *A.O.K. 15* telling it that all units which could not fight their way back to Holland by the direct route via Louvain–Hasselt should proceed via Flushing and Breda.⁷⁸ In a series of orders sent out on 4 and 5 September *H.Gr. B* set in motion a ferry operation designed to move the men, and equipment of *A.O.K. 15* across the mouth of the Scheldt.⁷⁹

On 4 September *H.Gr. B* sent a signal to *SS Pz.K. II*, and to the subordinate *SS Pz.D. 9* and *SS Pz.D. 10*, which ordered that these units were to remain on the defensive in the Liège area, but that as elements of the divisions could be freed from the line they were to proceed to Holland for rest and refitting in the Veillon–Arnhem–s’-Hertogenbosch sector.⁸⁰

The rapid fall of Antwerp surprised and stunned Hitler. But it also moved the *Führer* to new action. Since being removed from the post of *Ob. West* in July 1944, *Generalfeldmarschall* Gerd von Rundstedt had presided over the Court of Honour. There he was tasked with the responsibility of expelling from the *Wehrmacht* the officers found to be implicated in the Plot of 20 July. Hitler now had even more important work for the *Feldmarschall*.⁸¹

⁷⁶ ETHINT-1 (Warlimont), p. 48. (“You had barely crossed the Somme when suddenly one or two of your armoured divisions were at the gates of Antwerp.”).

⁷⁷ Freidin and Richardson, *The Fatal Decisions*, p. 234.

⁷⁸ Bennett, *Ultra in the West*, p. 156, citing Msg. XL 9192.

⁷⁹ *Id.*, p. 148, citing Msgs. XL 9162, XL 9165, XL 9192, XL 9260 and XL 9381.

⁸⁰ *Id.*, p. 153, citing Msg. XL 9188.

⁸¹ Wilmot, *Struggle for Europe*, p. 477; Freidin and Richardson, *The Fatal Decisions*, p. 234.

On 5 September the *Führer* contacted *Generalfeldmarschall* von Rundstedt and asked him to proceed immediately to the headquarters of *Ob. West* to consult with Model with the immediate object of again assuming command of all of the *Wehrmacht* forces in the West.⁸² Later that same day the *Feldmarschall* arrived at the headquarters of *Ob. West* at Aremberg on the east bank of the Rhine River opposite Koblenz. He was accompanied by his new chief of staff, *Generalleutnant* Siegfried Westphal. The actual change of command did not occur until the following day, but the two men immediately began to study the situation maps and reports.⁸³ The immediate concern of von Rundstedt was that the Allies would concentrate a strong mobile force in the Aachen area and use it to breakthrough into the Ruhr sector.⁸⁴

On 5 September *Ob. West* ordered *Obergruppenführer* Wilhelm Bittrich, *Kommand.Gen.*, *SS Panzerkorps II*, to move his staff headquarters from Liège to Eindhoven in the Netherlands. From there he was to direct the refitting of four *Panzer* divisions: *Pz.D. 2*, *Pz.D. 116*, *SS Pz.D. 9*, and *SS Pz.D. 10*.⁸⁵

On 6 September the *Ic*—the Intelligence Staff Officer—at *H.Gr. B* became concerned about the possibility that the Anglo-American commanders might utilize their available airborne forces to disrupt the process of consolidating the battle line on the western borders of Germany. He predicted that the enemy might utilize airborne formations in the area of Aachen and further south in the Saar region.⁸⁶

⁸² *Id.*

⁸³ Freidin and Richardson, *The Fatal Decisions*, p. 234; Wilmot, *Struggle in Europe*, p. 480.

⁸⁴ Hamilton, *MONTY: Final Years*, p. 3.

⁸⁵ Bennett, *Ultra in the West*, p. 153, citing Msgs. XL 9245 and XL 9857.

⁸⁶ MacDonald, *The Siegfried Line Campaign*, 135 fn. 49, citing *Lagebeurteilung, Ic/AO, KTB, H.Gr. B, 6.IX.44*

So effective on 6 September, the recalled *Feldmarschall* von Rundstedt was again in the position of *Oberbefehlshaber West*; Model was now to command only *H.Gr. B.*⁸⁷ Once again Hitler was focusing his attention on the West and on another defensive wall.

On 7 September *Feldmarschall* von Rundstedt, at *Ob. West*, sent his first personal appreciation of the situation to *General* Jodl at the *OKW/WFSt.* and he requested that Jodl submit the report to the *Führer*:

I. Estimate of the Enemy: The Anglo-Americans in Belgium and Northern France now have some 54 [infantry and armoured] ... divisions.... In England, inclusive of the airborne divisions, at least 30 more [enemy] divisions are ready for active service on the Continent....

Of its 25 to 27 divisions, the British 21st Army Group has put 8 to 10 divisions, with approximately 600 tanks, [into the sector] between Boulogne and Antwerp for a comprehensive and in part concentrated offensive against the formations of A.O.K. 15. A second group of 5 to 6 divisions, with some 400 tanks, is standing by between Antwerp and Diest. It will have the task of forcing the crossing over the Albert Canal in order to push forward with Rotterdam-Amsterdam as its point of main effort (Schwerpunkt)....

The American 12th Army Group stands ready with 15 to 18 divisions, and about 1000 tanks, between Hasselt and Toul on a wide front in

⁸⁷ *Führerbefehl 7.IX.44* (Military Powers of *Ob. West*). See Trevor-Roper, *Hitler's War Directives*, pp. 268–72. Since 17 July, first von Kluge and then Model had held the dual command of both *Ob. West* and of *Ob. H.Gr. B.* Blumenson, *Breakout and Pursuit*, p. 169. *Generalfeldmarschall* von Rundstedt had been dismissed from his position at *Ob. West* on 2 July after he had endorsed the idea of *Feld-marschall* Rommel's to move the main Normandy defense line well back from the coast and out of range of the Allied naval artillery. Gordon A. Harrison, *United States Army in World War II: The European Theater of Operations – Cross-Channel Attack* (Washington: Office of the Chief of Military History, United States Army, 1961), p. 446.

[readiness for] an offensive towards the east with the object of pushing forward to the Rhine....

II. Against this it must be stated: Our own forces are all tied up in battle, and in part have been severely mauled.... With H.Gr. B at this time there are some 100 tanks available for action. The enemy airforce dominates the battle area.... The current enemy pressure in the direction of Liège (Meuse–Tal) with a clearly defined thrust in the direction of Aix-la-Chapelle (Aachen) to the Rhine–Westphalian industrial region has developed into a serious danger. All [our] available forces ... are on the march from Ob. West to the Aachen region.

In agreement with Feldmarschall Model, I perceive [that] here [in the Aachen sector there is] the acute danger threatening not only the rear, but also the Westwall linking up with it to the south. Strategic enemy air-landings have not yet taken place. They may be timed according to further developments of the situation to materialize in the rearward area of the Westwall and also for the formation of a bridgehead on the east bank place where the enemy thrust in the Rhine direction has proved successful.⁸⁸

Feldmarschall von Rundstedt, like Model, reckoned that the main enemy threat was on a line from Aachen south in the American front sector. He expected that the drive being mounted by Montgomery would go north from Antwerp to Rotterdam, Amsterdam and the Hague—capturing along the way the V-2 rocket missile launching areas. Three days later, to von Rundstedt's surprise, the British XXXth Corps launched a ground attack aimed in a more northeasterly direction—toward Eindhoven and the Ruhr.

⁸⁸ *Lagebeurteilung der Feldmarschall von Rundstedt, Ob. West, 7.IX. 44, Ia Nr. 805/44, g.Kdos., BLM 150/10, IWM.*

On the morning of 7 September a *Führerbefehl* (*Führer Order*) went out from the “*Wolfsschanze*” *FHQ*. to the headquarters of *A.O.K. 15*. In it Hitler acknowledged that there were insufficient forces in the area and that *General d. Inf. von Zangen* could not reasonably expect to recapture Antwerp. Thus, said Hitler, “it must be insured that the enemy cannot use the harbour for a long time.” Accordingly, the mouth of the Scheldt Estuary was to be blocked by the occupation and the obstinate defense of Walcheren Island and the area around Breskens on the south shore of the Scheldt.⁸⁹ Von Zangen was ordered to defend Walchern and Zuid (South) Beveland Island on the north side of the Westerschelde channel and Breskens “island” on the south.⁹⁰ At the same time, the German army and naval forces were cooperating in the movement of troops from Breskens to Flushing on Walcheren Island. The *Kriegsmarine* had three ferryboats in operation and the army moved *Infanteriedivision 331*, commanded by *Generalmajor* Karl Rheim, into the Breskens sector to protect the ferry landings.⁹¹

The German situation continued to worsen, as is reflected in Model’s 8 September noon report to von Rundstedt:

The situation of A.O.K. 7 has during the last two days further developed in a particularly threatening manner. The reserves still at the disposal of that Armee-korps will be able for a time to offer resistance on the Meuse sector between Maastricht and Liège. South of Liège, as far as the newly ordered H.Gr. boundary, one can speak only of a thin wholly inadequate defense line. Here the enemy now already

⁸⁹ Bennett, *Ultra in the West*, p. 148, citing Msg. XL 9409.

⁹⁰ *Id.*, p. 148, citing Msgs. XL 9441, XL 9814, HP 24, HP 38, HP 120 and HP 261. The Breskens headland is on the north side of the Leopold Canal and the Isabella Canal which form defensive water barriers separating the headlands and forming an artificial island.

⁹¹ *Id.*, p. 156, citing Msgs. XL 9370, XL 9376 and XL 9397.

practically enjoys freedom of movement up to the Westwall, which is held at present by only 7–8 battalions to the rear of A.O.K. 7....

Of the hitherto announced reinforcements, the Kampfgruppe of Panzerdivision 9 [promised] ... by Ob. West ... has not yet arrived, and the first arrivals of the most advanced division, SS Panzerdivision 12 is not expected before 12 September. Both formations [will] in no way suffice to render possible the execution of the battle order as it stands up to now (i.e., combat forward of the Westwall and holding the Westwall thereafter).⁹²

Pointing out the dire consequences that would follow if the enemy breached the line between the Meuse and Moselle River, Model asked that the Aachen area be reinforced immediately, and that his views of the situation be passed on to Hitler.⁹³

On 9 September Model, at *H.Gr. B*, sent an urgent message to the *Luftwaffe* requesting that an aerial reconnaissance missions be flown to determine whether there was any enemy buildup behind the lines opposite Aachen. Model was trying to determine whether the main objective of the enemy's attacks which began on 7 September was the Eindhoven–Arnhem axis or whether the British attacks were a diversion to mask an even larger attack toward Aachen by the Americans.⁹⁴

Beginning on 9 September and continuing through 14 September, the *Ic* at *H.Gr. B* issued daily warnings of an imminent Allied offensive. He speculated that the objective of the attacks would be the Ruhr and that the *Schwehrpunkt*, or

⁹² *Lagebeurteilung der Feldmarschall Model, H.Gr. B, 8.IX.44, Ia Nr. 6993/44, g.Kdos, PP/MCR/C 30, Reel 14, BLM 150/19, IWM.*

⁹³ *Id.*

⁹⁴ Bennett, *Ultra in the West*, p. 153, citing Msg. HP 9.

main thrust, would be made in the Wesel–Arnhem sector of the front.⁹⁵ In view of the attacks launched by British 30th Corps along the Albert Canal starting on 7 September, the warnings from the *Ic* appear to have been appropriate.

By 10 September the Germans had achieved the juncture of both *H.Gr'n B* and *G* and a continuous—if not altogether solid—line was established from the North Sea to the Swiss border.⁹⁶ In the north, *H.Gr. B*, despite the Mons pocket losses, managed to get most of its units out of Normandy and either into the Netherlands or east of the *Westwall*, and in the south, *H.Gr. G* escaped from southern and southwestern France with seven of its divisions. Considering the shortages of men, arms, equipment, and supplies, the condition of the *Westwall*, and the immensity of the defeat suffered in the West, the German recuperation would later appear incredible.⁹⁷ “[V]ague symptoms appeared that the Germans might achieve what they would later call the Miracle of the West.”⁹⁸

On 11 September *Feldmarschall* Model received a report which stated that the enemy was assembling landing craft in British ports. Model reasoned that the movement of ships signaled an indication to make a seaborne attack on the Dutch coast, with the possible objective of opening the Scheldt estuary. He alerted *General der Flieger* Friedrich Christianson, *Wehrm.Befh. i. d. Niederlanden*, and ordered him to defend the Dutch coast with all the forces at his disposal. *Feldmarschall* Model also alerted *SS-Obergruppenführer* Bittrich at *SS-Panzerkorps II* to the possibility that he might have to detach a mobile element of *Pz.D. 9* and move it to the coastal area to counterattack any landing site. Model also detached *Infanteriedivision 59* (*Generalleutnant* Poppe) from *A.O.K. 15* and

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 134, citing the *Ic-Tagesmeldung, Kriegstagebuch, H.Gr. B, 9.IX.-14.IX.44*.

⁹⁶ Blumenson, *Breakout and Pursuit*, p. 697, citing James F. Scroggins, Jr., ed., *OB WEST, A Study in Command* (Washington: Department of the Army, Historical Division, n.d.), p. 166, containing MMS# B-308, B-344, B-672, and B-633.

⁹⁷ *Id.*, pp. 697–98, citing Scroggins, *Id.*

⁹⁸ *Id.*, p. 697.

ordered it to move to the Eindhoven area to rest and refit as a *H.Gr. B* reserve formation. As things turned out, *Inf.Div. 59* was in transit near Tilburg, about 28 km north-west of Eindhoven, when Operation MARKET began.⁹⁹

By 14 September Model had established the headquarters of *H.Gr. B* at Oosterbeek on the eastern outskirts of Arnhem.¹⁰⁰ On that day, and again on the following day, *H.Gr. B* received a signal from *Ob. West* ordering it to be on the guard against a large-scale airborne assault expected in Holland and a ground thrust on both sides of Eindhoven as far north as Arnhem.¹⁰¹ The *Ic* at *Ob West* had appreciated what was to come.

In his daily report for 14 September, the *Ic* at *H.Gr. B* elaborated on the rationale behind the warnings of an imminent British offensive—warnings that he too had issued daily since 9 September. He stated that he believed that the enemy generals probably were thinking along the following lines:

The British Second Army will assemble its units at the Maas–Schedt [Meuse–Escaut] and Albert Canals. On its right wing it will concentrate an attack formation mainly composed of armoured units, and after forcing a crossing of the Maas [which will be effected by the U.S. First Army] ... will launch operations to break-through to the Rhenish–Westphalian Industrial area [the Ruhr] with the main effort via Roermond. To cover the northern flank, the left wing of the [British Second] Army will close to the Waal at Nijmegen, and thus create the basic conditions necessary to cut off the German forces [—the troops

⁹⁹ MacDonald, *The Siegfried Line Campaign*, p. 135–36, citing the *H.Gr. B Befehl fuer Wehrm.Befh. i. d. Niederlanden, 11.IX.44*.

¹⁰⁰ Bennett, *Ultra in the West*, p. 153, citing Msg. HP 220.

¹⁰¹ *Id.*, p. 154, citing Msgs. HP 175 and HP 242.

*of A.O.K. 15 and others formations—] committed in the Dutch coastal areas.*¹⁰²

Having thus outlined the supposed scheme of maneuver of the Anglo-American ground forces, the *Ic* continued with his grim predictions concerning the use of numerous airborne formations:

*In conjunction with the [British Second Army attack] a large-scale airborne landing by the First Allied Airborne north of the Lippe River in the area south of Münster is planned for a yet indefinite date....*¹⁰³

On 14 September and again on the following day, *Ob. West* advised its subordinate commands and the *OKW* that a large-scale airborne assault was to be expected in Holland in conjunction with a ground thrust on both sides of Eindhoven extending probably as far north as Arnhem.¹⁰⁴ This warning—which, interestingly, did not call for any special precautions —probably was based on a routine concern about an airborne attack in conjunction with any major ground operation, and simply echoes the daily warning from *H.Gr. B*. Both headquarters had been following the actions of British XXXth Corps in the area southwest of Eindhoven since 7 September and no doubt rightly expected the British to resume their efforts to get the ground offensive moving again in the near future.

On 16 September, *Generaloberst* Kurt Student, commanding the *Fallschirmarmee 1* along the line of the Meuse-Escaut Canal, noted, in his daily situation report to *Feld-marschall* Model at *H.Gr. B*, that “increased motor transport activity and confirmed armoured preparations strengthen the appreciation ... that a heavy attack must be expected very shortly.” He expressed

¹⁰² MacDonald, *The Siegfried Line Campaign*, p. 134, citing *Ic-Tagesmeldungen, Kriegstagebuch, Ic/AO, H.Gr. B, 14.IX.44*.

¹⁰³ *Id.*

¹⁰⁴ Bennett, *Ultra in the West*, 154, citing Msgs. HP 175 and HP 242. See also, MacDonald, *The Siegfried Line Campaign*, 134, citing *KTB, Ob. West, 15.IX.44*.

no concern about the threat of an airborne attack.¹⁰⁵ In fact, while he expected an attack by the armoured divisions of the British XXXth Corps, Student was not overly concerned about it. As he viewed the situation, “the enemy was now approaching the maze of the Dutch system of canals which was most favorable for defense and which did not lend itself to the employment of [the enemy’s] ... far superior tank forces for [a] wide-aiming thrust as [had been done by the British ten days earlier] on the ideal area of the Beverloo army exercise ground.”¹⁰⁶

On Saturday, 16 September Hitler and the senior officers at the “*Wolfschanze*” *FHQ* were not anticipating an Allied airborne invasion in the Netherlands. In fact, on that day the *Führer* was planning an attack of his own aimed at Antwerp. It was on that Saturday that the *Führer* outlined his plan for a massive counter-offensive in West. *General* Jodl was giving his briefing at the mid-day war conference: he had just told Hitler, Keitel, Guderian and several others that there were 55 German divisions in the West and they were faced by 96 enemy divisions. In addition, said Jodl, the Anglo-Americans commanders had 10 more divisions en route from Britain where the strategic reserve—the First Allied Airborne Army—was poised for action. At that moment Hitler interrupted Jodl saying: “*I have just made a momentous decision. I shall go over to the counterattack, that is to say, here (pointing to a map)—out of the Ardennes, with the objective of Antwerp.*” Hitler told them that he considered that the German defensive positions were strong enough to outweigh the enemy’s clear numerical advantage. “*The present front can easily be held!*” said Hitler. “*Our own attacking force will consist of some 30 new Volksgrenadierdivisionen, and [many] new Panzerdivisionen, plus Panzerdivisionen from the Eastern Front. Split the British and American armies at their seam,*” he continued, “*then [we will have] a new Dunkirk!*” Well, not quite another Dunkirk he told them—with Antwerp again in

¹⁰⁵ Wilmot, *The Struggle for Europe*, 502, citing Liddel Hart’s notes of the interviews of Student.

¹⁰⁶ Kurt Student, “The Allied Airborne Operation Against Arnhem–Nijmegen–Veghel, ‘From the Other Side,’” to Bill Williams, thence to Field-Marshal Montgomery, May 1949, 2–3, PP/MCR/C 30, Reel 12, BLM 130/5, Imperial War Museum, London.

German hands the encircled British army would have no port from which to escape and they would be totally destroyed.¹⁰⁷

Guderian immediately noted that the situation on the Eastern Front would make it impossible to withdraw combat-worthy *Panzer* formations. Jodl voiced concern about the enemy's air superiority, and their capability to make further airborne landings in Holland, Denmark and also in northern Germany. The *Führer* noted their objections but was not dissuaded:

Acid comments. That is why our offensive will begin in a bad-weather period, when the enemy air forces is grounded.... Von Rundstedt will take command. All [of these offensive] preparations [will be finished] by 1 November."¹⁰⁸

So we see that on the day before Operation MARKET began Hitler did not have the slightest inkling that a large-scale enemy airborne attack was near at hand.

By way of confirming the intelligence collection and estimate picture with regards to the Germans in the hours just prior to the start of Operation MARKET, it is helpful to note where the key German commanders were located and determine what they were doing. The best way to understand what a person *really believed* on a given day is to see what he was *actually doing*, for man's actions reflect his beliefs. For all practical purposes it is fair to say that all was relatively quiet on the Western Front. *SS-Obergruppenführer Bittrich*, commanding *SS Panzerkorps II*, was at his headquarters at Doetinchem (26 km east of Arnhem). The commander of *Fallschirmarmee 1*, *Generaloberst Student*, was at his headquarters at Vught (27 km northwest of Eindhoven). Nearby, the *H. Gr. B* commander, *Feldmarschall Model* was at his tactical headquarters in the

¹⁰⁷ David Irving, *Hitler's War: 1942–1945* (1977; reprint, London: Papermac, 1983), p. 705. See also, MacDonald, *The Siegfried Line Campaign*, 135, citing MS # P-069, *General der Flieger* Werner Kreipe, "Kreipe Diary (22 July – 2 November 1944)," Record Group 338 (Foreign Military Studies), MRB, NARA.

Tafelberg Hotel at Oosterbeek in the western suburbs of Arnhem (4 km west of the main Arnhem bridge). Some 200 km to the south, *Generalfeldmarschall* von Rundstedt was at his *Ob. West* headquarters in Aremberg near Koblenz. None of these four senior commanders or their headquarters were operating under a *heightened* state of combat-readiness alert.¹⁰⁹

As it turned out, while von Rundstedt was not “on alert” to the danger of an immediate airborne attack, he was concerned. On the morning of 17 September he discussed the subject of an enemy air-landing with the *Ob. West Ia*—the operations chief—who noted in his log that “the general situation and [a] notable increase on enemy reconnaissance activities ... has caused [von Rundstedt] ... to again examine the possibilities of an amphibious assault and air-landing operations.¹¹⁰ After their conference, the *Feldmarschall* asked his operations officer to prepare a message to Model asking *H.Gr. B* to investigate the possibility that preparations were underway for an enemy landing on the coast of Holland with airborne troops in support. The message arrived at Model headquarters and was being deciphered at about 1300 hours that day—about the same time the Allied air-assault armada of OPERATION MARKET crossed the Dutch coastline enroute to the drop zones.¹¹¹

The great game was afoot and the victim was none the wiser. But then, neither was the would-be attacker. Big surprises lay ahead for both.

¹⁰⁸ *Id.*

¹⁰⁹ Wilmot, *The Struggle for Europe*, 502.

¹¹⁰ MacDonald, *The Siegfried Line Campaign*, 135, citing *KTB, Ob. West, 17.IX.44*.

¹¹¹ *Id.*; Cornelius Ryan, *A Bridge Too Far* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1974), pp. 200–202.

THE WEHRMACHT AS SEEN THROUGH SECOND ARMY'S EYES

Now begins an examination of the situation or “plight” of the German Army as interpreted in the daily intelligence summaries of British Second Army. Reference also will be made to other Allied intelligence reports, and in particular those of SHAEF and the First Allied Airborne Army (FAAA) planners. Large sections of the various reports are reproduced below to give the reader a first hand feeling of the attitudes and concerns of the Allied intelligence officers and the various operational planners. This is a case where it is at least as important to know how something is written, as to know what is said.

What follows is not a complete analysis of every aspect of the SHAEF and British Second Army intelligence reports. Instead, the focus is on the question of whether the Allied commanders and intelligence officers appreciated that the Germans were going to be able to mount an effective defense to the Allied drive to the east towards the Rhine and Berlin. The reader should be alert to the presence—or absence—of several key indicators in the Allied intelligence reports. One is evidence of the stiffening German resistance, and another is the presence *vel non* of German reinforcements coming into the line. Since the period being observed ends with the Allied invasion of Holland—Operation MARKET/GARDEN—the presence of German tanks in the Eindhoven–Nijmegen–Arnhem area is another important indicator.

The SHAEF Weekly Intelligence Summary for the week ending on 12 August 1944 sets the tone for what was to come.¹¹² In a week when the Germans were

¹¹² Weekly Intelligence Summary (WISUM) No. 21 (12 August 1944), SHAEF, Office ACS G-2, RG 331, Records of the Allied Operational & Occupation Headquarters, WW II, Entry 13, Box 45, Modern Military Records Branch, National Archives Records Administration (NARA), Washington, D.C.

still trying to press their attack, launched on 7 August at Mortain,¹¹³ the *Wehrmacht's* overall capabilities—the extent to which it could attack, defend, counterattack, or withdraw —were assessed as follows:

Throughout the war German propaganda at home and abroad, has reflected the nation's hopes and fears, using and abusing truth in ways that have been as contradicting as they have been inspired, dressing the facts in turn with coats of optimism, pessimism, pompous bombast and good plain lies. During the past few weeks, however, there has appeared a new note—Truth again, but stripped this time of the last of her tattered garments, stark naked in a howling draught. Typifying the new diet for home consumption was the announcement from Berlin:

Round the Reich the earth is heaving under a torrent of shells and bombs. On three fronts—in Italy, in the West, and at the Eastern gates of our country—a host of men is assaulting us. The storm is on. It drives towards Berlin.

That this “new” method of presenting the facts should have started in earnest with the short-lived Putsch of 20 July is hardly surprising....

*For whatever its origins, the implications of the new propaganda are only too clear—to present Germany to the Germans as a nation with its back to the wall, its shoulder to the wheel, tightening its belt, pulling up its socks, and using every other cliché that goes with being in a tough spot. **Having lost the war, and with no hope of winning the peace, the Nazis have no alternative but to continue the war.** To this end a superhuman effort is being demanded, backed up by a few half truths.*

It seems unlikely that the civilian population, which has already taken a beating second to none, will be able to formulate any effective protest

¹¹³ *Id.*, p. 1.

*or make any significant response, to this latest appeal. Cowed by what has gone before, and scared of what is yet to come, they can, however, be relied on to do what they are told. So, too, can the armed forces, who are as yet neither cowed nor scared enough to lay down their arms in sufficient numbers to make it worth while [for us]. They know—none better—that the storm is on, and that its is driving toward Germany. They know too, that the storm so far from abating, shows every sign of increasing in fury until it must, eventually, engulf them. **It is, however, a storm that they know, a storm that is not so vastly different from those that they have weathered in the past, a storm that, if the miracle should happen, they may yet seek in riding out. The snag is that the miracle is already overdue.***¹¹⁴

The tone of intelligence reporting was set: the German's had lost the war, but they would continue the struggle in the West while hoping for a miracle. The miracle was overdue, to be sure, but as shall be seen, eventually it almost came to pass. This report reflects, as do others that follow, an ambivalence about how to deal with facts that apparently contradict the basic conclusion. Here the conflict clearly is between the conclusion that the Germans have lost the war—at least as the Allies see it—and the fact that Hitler and the *Wehrmacht* is continuing to fight.

The Second Army Intelligence Summary for the period ending 15 August announced the commencement of Operation DRAGOON (ANVIL), and summarized the order of battle for the *Panzer* formations in the West:

While Southern France was being set alight [by another D-Day], the struggle for the [Falaise gap] corridor has been carried a stage further. The enemy is pulling out as fast as he can: of that there is no possible doubt. Moreover, identifications from many sources suggest that the only Panzer formation [still] definitely committed to the rearguard

¹¹⁴ (emphasis in original) *Id.*, p. 6. This, and the other summaries that follow, are quoted at

[action] is SS Panzerdivision 9. If a prisoner is to be believed, its losses around Chenedolle were even higher than was thought. According to him, there were on 6 August only seven Panthers fit for action, with another five in the workshops, and since that date six are known to have been knocked out....

*In the retreat from Mortain the enemy already has lost a lot of equipment, and he is likely to lose much more. In addition there are still many thousands of men west of Argentan, whose chances of escaping death or imprisonment are problematical. But **he does seem to have rescued the bulk of his armour**, except for the losses sustained during the journey, and if he were to be **given time and opportunity these bruised formations could be re-fashioned to fight again**. Without a pause to recover himself, his chances of obtaining sufficient reinforcements to do battle west of the Seine are small, and he may prefer to keep it away until he can use it as a striking force. On the other hand, the sands are running out and infantry formations are growing less in number and in strength. The pace and vigour of our advance may force a choice upon him ... to say nothing of a flank which still has nothing [in the way of a natural barrier] on which to rest....*

Most of the [German] armour is collecting in the Argentan area.... The situation appears to be as follows: SS Pz.D. 9 and SS Pz.D. 10 on their way back from the western end of the pocket toward Argentan. Pz.D. 116 in and around Argentan with SS Pz.D. 2 to the northwest and west. Southwest of them is SS Pz.D. 1 while Pz.D. 9 and elements of Pz.D. 11 are somewhere east of Carrouges. Pz.D. 21 had elements other than recce or arty in the general area Briouze and to the east, while SS Pz.D. 12 may have been the [armoured] formation moving southeast

length so that the "tone," and overall "sense" of the document can be felt.

*from Falaise this morning. How all of these Panzer formations are grouped is not known.... SS Panzerkorps II is sure to bring SS Pz.D. 9 and SS Pz.D. 10 [under its wing]. Eberbach [at Panzergruppe West], too, is presumably interested in the battle around Argentan. The immediate task of these Panzer forces was to stop the American drive north, but this may now have changed with the necessity of reacting to the drive on Chartres and Orléans.... Meanwhile the line is giving all along from the Dives to Domfront and the Germans are being pushed east. The speed with which this can be continued will determine how soon **the withdrawal is turned into a rout.**¹¹⁵*

In this report SS Pz.D. 9 is virtually written off as an effective armoured formation—a decision which will continue to influence later assessments. At the same time the possibility that the *Panzer* formations may be reconstituted is considered—another example of the ambivalence in the Second Army reports. As shall be seen, the first idea—that the *Panzer* units can be written off—will continue to overshadow the second—that the *Panzer* units can be reconstituted.

¹¹⁵ (emphasis in original) Second Army Intelligence Summary (SAIS) No. 72 (Up to 2400 hrs 15 Aug 44), File Subject: “Second Army Intelligence Summaries, 24 May 1944 – 10 May 1945,” WO 285/3, Public Record Office, Kew, England (emphasis added). Crown copyright materials in the Public Records Office cited here appear by permission of the Controller, H.M. Stationary Office.

The SS *Panzerdivisionen* had both units names and numbers. Thus, in the West there was: Pz.D. 1, “*Leibstandarte Adolf Hitler*”; Pz.D. 2, “*Das Reich*”; Pz.D. 9, “*Hohenstaufen*”; Pz.D. 10, “*Fruntsberg*”; and Pz.D. 12, “*Hitler Jugend*.” Samuel W. Mitcham, Jr., *Hitler’s Legions: The German Army Order of Battle, World War II* (New York: Stein and Day Publishers, 1985), pp. 440–43, 450–52, 454–55.

Missing from this roll call of the *Panzerdivisionen* on the Western Front is *Panzerdivision Lehr* (Pz.D. 130), the so-called Training or Demonstration Division. On 1 June 1944 it was the strongest *Panzer* unit in the German army (109 tanks and 40 assault guns). By 25 June in the fighting around Caen it had lost all but 66 of its tanks. One month later in the St. Lô region it had only 50 tanks and assault guns. In the wake of the carpet bombing attack on 25 July *Generalleutnant* Fritz Bayerlein, reported that his unit was “finally annihilated.” In early August the remnants of Pz.D. *Lehr* were attached to SS Pz.D. 2. Mitcham, *Hitler’s Legions*, pp. 385–86.

Second Army's summary also recognized the possibility that the Germans might be able to regroup, but little more:

*That the enemy's ability for organized resistance is diminishing there is no doubt. His formations and HQ's are disorganized, his losses are terrific and his supply situation is chaotic. The will of the soldier to carry on is weakening but **the leaders will continue the fight so long as the are allowed**. By now, however, the magnitude of the disaster cannot be hidden and there cannot be many Germans who see any future in the battle of Normandy.¹¹⁶*

This shows the British assumption of a *Götterdämmerung* attitude on part of the German officers.

The Second Army Intelligence Summary for 16 August provided an insight to the method being used to locate the German units, including SS Pz.D. 9 and 10:

The enemy Phantom service has once again been helpful in enabling us to sort out the location and intentions of at least four of the Panzer divisions.

First, early today SS Pz.D 12 was engaged east and south of Thury-Harcourt....

Secondly, ... SS Pz.D. 1 and Pz.D. 2 are sharing a defensive line immediately north of Rânes.... Behind these two, SS Pz.D. 9, or part of it, was located between la Courbe and Montgaroult....

The rest of the enemy's armour must still be classed as unlocated although Pz.D. 116 and SS Pz.D. 10 are probably in action at either

¹¹⁶ (emphasis in original) *Id.*

*end of the southern flank. SS Pz.D. 2 and Pz.D. 21 are finding their way out, and Pz.D. 9 is probably east of Argentan.*¹¹⁷

“Phantom” was the cover designation for the Headquarters Liaison Regiment which assigned small signal units to the various Allied divisions.¹¹⁸ The reference here to “the enemy Phantom service” most probably is to the *Fliegerverbindungsoffiziere (FLiVO)*, i.e., the *Luftwaffe* air liaison officers attached to the *Wehrmacht* and SS divisions. The *FLiVO* transmissions were a source of much of the ULTRA information about German operations; however, in the locations of units context of this particular intelligence item, the source probably is a Y-Service (radio direction finding) report based on a field intercept.¹¹⁹

The Second Army Intelligence Summary for 17 August also has information on the *Panzer* formations:

A week ago there was a concentration of enemy armour north and south of Mortain, comprising at least six Panzer divisions. This evening the remains of that army is struggling to escape, part of it seeking desperately to hold open the exit, part of it fighting to disengage itself from too close contact with our Allies' forward troops, and the rest of it having no other object than to make good its escape. For the first time since this [80 km] ... retreat began, there are signs of disorder this evening and the task of sorting out the widely scattered fragments of these divisions may prove beyond the capability of the enemy. It is now certain that two armies are involved against us: Panzerarmee 5 and A.O.K. 7....

¹¹⁷ SAIS No. 73 (Up to 2400 hrs 16 Aug 44), WO 285/3, PRO.

¹¹⁸ Golden, *Echoes From Arnhem*, p. 140.

¹¹⁹ Bennett, *Ultra in the West*, p. 7. In addition, the British Y-Service monitored the *FLiVO* messages to fix the location of the associated divisions by radio direction finding.

In the immediate battle area the way out between Falaise and Argentan is almost closed. Pz.D. 21 was one of the formations which tried to battle its way through this evening and [its supply column] paid heavily in the process near Trun.... SS Pz.D. 9 and SS Pz.D. 10 are certainly west of the barrier, and SS Pz.D. 1 and Pz.D. 2 were fighting around Ecouché today....

Nevertheless, Germans with their equipment are escaping and if they are given time they can and will, even in their exhausted state, prepare fresh positions to delay us while they attempt to regroup and bring in such reserves as they still have.¹²⁰

This report shows both of the SS *Panzer* formations that would play a decisive part in the defense of Arnhem and its bridge as being caught *inside* the trap at Falaise.

The Second Army Intelligence Summary for 18 August contains information showing that SS *Pz.D'n* 9 and 10 had avoided being caught in the encirclement.

The climax of the Battle of Falaise has been reached and passed, and the closing stages today produced as was expected, a really determined effort by the enemy to clear a way for at least part of the Panzer formations to escape....

Some idea of the welter of confusion which must exist in the conglomeration of enemy forces around Falaise can be gained from the fact that no less than fourteen divisions have been identified on the Second Army front today. They include all the seven infantry divisions which have been against us for the past fortnight, one parachute division, and six Panzer divisions: SS Pz.D. 1; SS Pz.D. 9; SS Pz.D. 10; SS Pz.D. 12; Pz.D. 21 and Pz.D. 116....

¹²⁰ (emphasis in original) SAIS No. 74 (Up to 2400 hrs 17 Aug 44), WO 285/3, PRO.

The enemy is in a position to receive a blow which may well cripple him. He has a tremendous task ahead of him to sort out the wreckage, and he has little enough in hand to ward off further blows. But his genius for improvisation needs no reminder, and [if the enemy is] given half a chance, he will at least improvise delay....

The enemy's future intentions are difficult to gauge.... But with the evacuation of a substantial part of the forces now in Normandy the Germans have not sufficient [forces] to stem the tide slowly advancing on Germany. The Marne has been spoken of as the next main line and there are reports of wholesale labour being transferred there to build defenses. Of defenses on the Seine there is as yet no evidence. But the choice of any line must be difficult for the enemy when he does not yet know what troops are available to man it.¹²¹

While acknowledging that the Germans saved a considerable portion of their forces, this summary still concludes that the *Wehrmacht* cannot stop the eastwards movement of the Allied forces.

The SHAEF Weekly Intelligence Summary for the week ending 19 August notes that “[o]n 12 August the first signs of a general withdrawal were seen” and “[a]lready prisoners were talking of a ‘general withdrawal.’”¹²² The summary contains the following analysis of the German capabilities:

The enemy situation in France has changed vastly in the last three weeks. Then the Germans might have felt, taking all in all, remotely satisfied at the trend in events. Although A.O.K. 7 was bleeding profusely it had so far managed to contain our bridgehead within a reasonable area and von Kluge had several divisions up his sleeve. Now the bulk of A.O.K. 7 and Panzergruppe West is in the [Falaise

¹²¹ SAIS No. 75 (Up to 2400 hrs 18 Aug 44), WO 285/3, PRO (emphasis added).

*Gap] melting pot, fighting desperately hard with little chance of escape and faced either with running the gauntlet through a narrow, closing neck, annihilation or surrender. To be a member of the German forces in Normandy held little future for any soldier from the day the Allies assaulted, but **the end for most of them looks as though it is going to be more sudden than we ourselves had dared to hope. The major portion of the enemy forces in Northern France is completely disorganized, and stands a very good chance of being eliminated** for the enemy will find it extremely difficult to get his forces that do escape from the cauldron [to safety] across the Seine....*

*The enemy can now only hope to gather the remnants of his Normandy forces and with the few indifferent divisions as yet uncommitted in France and those that may appear from Germany as a result of the most recent of Hitler's "total mobiliza-tion," withdraw slowly toward the fatherland ... in the hope that something may turn up. The River Seine can only be a temporary halting place. Beyond that von Kluge is believed to be busily building a line along the Marne.... But if all goes well in the present battle he will be unable to find sufficient forces to defend it. It is a poor future for Germany in France.... Pressed on all sides on the sea on land and in the air, and with Hitler's master hand directing the battles and throwing away his Armies one by one ... **it is difficult to see how the Germans can stand it much longer.** Two things are certain. The enemy has lost the war and the defeat of A.O.K. 7 and Panzergruppe West will hasten the end....¹²³*

SHAEF obviously drew tremendous comfort from the obvious results of the battle of encirclement. The conclusion—the overriding preconception—that the end of the war is very near clearly is evident in this summary.

¹²² Wisum No. 22 (19 August 1944), p. 1, RG 331, NARA.

¹²³ (emphasis in original) *Id.*, pp. 4–5.

On 20 August Montgomery issued a operational directive for the 21st Army Group. In it he assesses the enemy situation and laid out his intentions. He viewed the enemy's capabilities as follows, and exhorted his commanders accordingly:

*1. ... The enemy decided to stand [and] to fight it out between the Seine and the Loire; the natural outcome of that decision has followed, and **his Divisions have ceased to exist as effective fighting formations.***

We will now complete the destruction of such of his forces as are still available to be destroyed, and we will then proceed to other matters.

2. I must impress on all commanders the need for speed in getting on with the business.

The Allied victory in N.W. Europe will have immense repercussions; it will lead to the end of the German military domination of France; it is the beginning of the end of the war.

But if these great events are to be brought about, we must hurl ourselves on the enemy while he is still reeling from the blow; we must deal him more blows and ever more blows; he must be allowed no time to recover.

This is no time to relax, or to sit back and congratulate ourselves. I call on all commanders for a great effort. Let us finish off the business in record time.¹²⁴

For its part, British Second Army was given the task of destroying the remaining enemy in Normandy and advancing with all speed to the Seine. Having crossed it,

¹²⁴ General Operational Situation and Directive (M 519), 21 AGp, 20 August 1944, pp. 1–4, PP/MCR/C 30, Reel No. 10, BLM 107/17, Imperial War Museum, London (emphasis added).

the Army was move on to the Somme and cross it between Amiens and the sea. That accomplished the Army was to be prepared to advance northwards into the Pas-de-Calais, and to destroy all enemy forces in that area. The final objective was to be combined with suitable airborne operations; air landings being made ahead of the advancing Army.¹²⁵ General—soon to be Field-Marshal—Montgomery clearly believed that the just concluded battle marked, at the very least, the beginning of the end of the war in Europe.

The Second Army Intelligence Summary for 21 August sees the Chimera—the cornered beast—as still being full of fight:

*West of the Seine the enemy's dilemma increases every day. If he is to make good the escape of the armour, he needs freedom from pursuit, and freedom from pursuit is only to be secured by using such armour as he has. The vicious circle is complete, and if to these difficulties are added the problems of supply and the dangers of air attack, the prospect is dark indeed. But to make his defeat [into a] disaster, strong pressure will still be needed: **a cornered beast fights hard**....*

*Less than a week ago the enemy was planning to hold blocking lines between Paris–Chartres–Orléans. A great gash has been torn in these places, and our Allies ... have thrust as far as Sens, southeast of Paris. The enemy's intentions as regards the defense of Paris are not yet clear, but one thing seem reasonably certain, namely that any hope of rescue from the west or [from the] southwest is extremely small.... **Even now it is too late for the troops from the south to link up***

¹²⁵ *Id.* At that time Montgomery was at his Tactical (TAC) Headquarters located 5 km northeast of Condé-sur-Noireau. Bradley, meanwhile, with both the TAC and MAIN HQs of 12th Army Group was at Laval. *Id.*, pp. 4-5.

*with the western armies, and the enemy is facing the prospect of their both being defeated alone.*¹²⁶

Even as the fighting spirit of the *Wehrmacht* was acknowledged, the G-2 at Second Army discounted the possibility of the retreating Germans being able to establish a continuous line from the Swiss frontier to the North Sea. The ambivalent attitude of Second Army about the situation at hand is once more made clear. From the vantage point of Second Army, the reasoning is that since the Germans cannot win the war, they ought to surrender immediately. From the German perspective there are two issues to be resolved: the battle at hand and the war's outcome. It does not logically follow that an inability to win the war would mean that a defense line could not be established in the West, although the lack of such a line certainly would hasten the end of the war.

The Second Army Intelligence Summary for 22 August offers the following information and analysis of their enemy's intentions—noting, *inter alia*, the presence of *SS Pz.D'n 9* and *10*:

The enemy's plan is becoming plainer and today's withdrawal has done much to simplify it. The line of the Touques River [in front of Lisieux] is but a stage in a larger operation, and while the enemy cannot afford to make any determined effort to hold us there long, the delay imposed by an obstacle of this type is enough to enable him to continue his evacuation programme across the Seine [River]. There can scarcely be any doubt now that west of the Seine is for the enemy merely barren ground, and that his chief concern is not whether to evacuate, but how and where and when to do so. The choice of crossings is already

¹²⁶ (emphasis in original) SAIS No. 78 (Up to 2400 hrs 21 Aug 44), WO 285/3, PRO. *Infanteriedivision 338*, under *Generalleutnant Foltman*, using requisitioned French vehicles to move from the south of France, did not arrive in time to screen Paris. The division suffered considerable casualties as it retreated on to the German border. Mitcham, *Hitler's Legions*, p. 232.

limited and likely to be restricted further every day, and if he dallies too long in considering priorities of escape, the opportunity will go....

*There was evidence today that SS Pz.D. 2 was moving in a northeasterly direction and Pz.D. 21 was known to be in the line between Lisieux and Livarot. SS Pz.D. 9 is reported to have elements east and northeast of Vimoutiers, and if SS Pz.D. 10 has contrived to extricate itself in any recognizable form, it will probably turn up not far from its former associates: SS Pz.D. 9 and Pz.D. 21. **Bearing in mind the reduced state of these divisions**, four Panzer formations should not be more than a corps can reasonably control, and it is considered likely that the command of this armoured group will be found with SS Panzerkorps II.*

*There is still no concrete evidence as to the whereabouts of [Panzerdivision] "Leibstandarte Adolf Hitler" [(SS Pz.D. 1)], but it is certain to be seen again, and as recently as yesterday SS Pz.D. 12 was still on the scene of action. The German armed forces will have to sink to much lower straits than their present level before either of these divisions is acknowledged as destroyed, and while they may not be capable of offensive action at the moment, **they may be capable of impeding our own or ours Allies' advance**. The latter seems the likelier rôle, for except for the remnants of Pz.D. 2 and Pz.D. 116 (which are known to be only shadows of their former selves) and Panzerbattillon 205 (which is still something of an unknown quantity) there is nothing available in the way of armour to stop the southern drives.*

It is a pleasant task to be able to refer to the enemy's positions as a bridgehead west of the Seine, and moreover a bridgehead which has noticeably shrunk today. But one critical issue remains. The elimination of the bridgehead is certain, but will it come as the result of our

*encirclement or through the enemy's withdrawal? The consequences which depend upon the answer to this question are enormous and for that reason success will only be achieved after over coming opposition almost as severe as any we have met so far.*¹²⁷

In this summary, although the *Panzer* are viewed as being at no more than half-strength, if that, the ability of the Germans to prevent a head-on breakthrough by the British is implicitly recognized. The elimination of the German bridgeheads on the west or south bank of the Seine is acknowledged to depend on whether the Germans decide to withdraw or are encircled by American forces on Second Army's right flank.

The Second Army Intelligence Summary for 23 August records the following:

The situation in western Normandy develops almost hourly to the Allies' advantage as the closing stages are reached of the battle of the Seine, with the enemy concentrating on making good the escape of all the troops he can....

*Germany's A.O.K. 15 across the Seine awaits its trial. Its assets are much reduced and instead of the array of divisions which garrisoned the Channel Coast in June, there is now only a modest collection, many of which have already been rigorously pruned. **For the moment however they constitute an army, and it would be foolish to dismiss them out of hand....***¹²⁸

Optimistically the advantage in the situation is reckoned to be with the Allied forces, but the prowess of the enemy still bears mentioning.

¹²⁷ (emphasis in original) SAIS No. 79 (Up to 2400 hrs 22 Aug 44), WO 285/3, PRO.

¹²⁸ (emphasis in original) SAIS No. 80 (Up to 2400 hrs 23 Aug 44), WO 285/3, PRO.

The Second Army Intelligence Summary for 25 August gives the German's credit for the skill of their retrograde operation:

As the bridgehead west of the Seine shrinks and the enemy is pressed back into its northeastern corner, certain conclusions suggest themselves regarding the enemy's retreat. The setting is now familiar. The first phase of the retreat from Mortain ended with the disastrous effort to force the bottle neck at Falaise, and the infantry who continued to get through were in no condition to turn and meet the pursuers. With the armour, the case was different: such was the enemy's shortage, that he could not afford to take the battered Panzers away and in consequence some of them were forced to stay and fight.

*The second phase opened with the enemy facing dangerous encircling moves at either end of the bridgehead, and needing above everything else sufficient time to plan an orderly evacuation. If either flank had given way, there would have been a repetition of the Falaise disaster on an even larger scale. **Taking the picture as a whole, it must be acknowledged that the enemy has so far conducted his operation in this second phase with more than the usual skill.** The loss of ground was never in question: the issue was how much else would be lost too.*

*This does not mean that when the west bank of the lower Seine is finally cleared, the enemy will have succeeded in evacuating the bulk of his troops across the river. It means that **up till now he has staved off disaster**, and has prevented us from overrunning his Panzerarmee 5 in quick succession to A.O.K. 7. In other words, **the withdrawal to the Seine has never got out of hand** and the confusion that contributed to the catastrophe at Trun has not been present during the second phase.*

Across the river are undoubtedly enemy forces awaiting us.... But the Seine as a defense line is already breached and if the enemy tries to restore it, he may be in danger of wasting more of his substance on a cause already lost. For while he is parrying our advances across the river, the troops to the south of Paris are waiting anxiously for something to fill the yawning gap which still exists between them and the south. Unless he can [pull] ... out in time in front of the Allied advance up the Rhône, that gap will become too wide for him to [bridge] ... and three of the four remaining armies in the west—Panzerarmee 5, A.O.K. 1 and A.O.K. 19—will find themselves faced with independent battles on their own.¹²⁹

Second Army continues to discount the possibility that the Germans will be able to fill the enormous gap in the line between their forces in the north—Panzerarmee 5, A.O.K. 7 and A.O.K. 15—and their two armies in the south—A.O.K. 1 and A.O.K. 19.

The Second Army Intelligence Summary for 26 August notes the lack of German counterattacks, a recognized part of the German's tactical doctrine.

*Yesterday evening troops of Second Army crossed the Seine, and established a bridgehead at Vernon [between Rouen and Paris]. **[The] enemy resistance was not by any means negligible but at the same time it appeared to be lacking in initiative, and there was no immediate counter-attack.** The same comment may be made as regards the enemy's behavior [in other actions] today....*

Scarcely [50 km] ... away the Seine was also being crossed in very different circumstances. The enemy's "Schwerpunkt" for his cross-river traffic seem to have been at Rouen, and the concentration of transport observed yesterday was seen again this morning, hastening away to

¹²⁹ (emphasis in original) SAIS No. 82 (Up to 2400 hrs 25 Aug 44), WO 285/3, PRO.

the east and northeast. More than ever, the battle west of the river has resolved itself into an attempt by strong enemy rearguards to keep us at bay while [the] evacuation goes on. Apart from Armee-korps LXXXVI, which is still covering the retreat along the northern flank, the enemy's troops include contingents from all of the divisions which have been seen in the last few days. SS Pz.D. 2 and SS Pz.D. 9 have been responsible for part of the bridgehead defense, but there is evidence that a considerable part of the former, and probably part of the latter, is already across the river....

*With the occupation of Paris and [the] arrival at the Seine the end is reached of what may be called Part 1 of OVERLORD. It has resulted in the virtual destruction of A.O.K. 7, and the reduction of enemy strength, in armour and infantry alike, to say nothing of equipment and supplies, to a condition of extreme shortage. In the case of the present battle of France there is no pause, and Part 2 has already opened well. **The writing on the wall is plain for all except the enemy to see: and as he refuses to see, or seeing, refuses to read, he must be expected to fight on until necessity itself forces him to stop.***¹³⁰

Again the summary contrasts the fact that while the Germans have lost the war, they will continue to fight, albeit with little success.

The SHAEF Weekly Intelligence Summary for the week ending 26 August notes that “[t]his week has seen the closing and finally the elimination of the

¹³⁰ (emphasis in original) SAIS No. 83 (Up to 2400 hrs 26 Aug 44), WO 285/3, PRO. This is D-Day plus 81 days. The 21st Army Group's February 1944 forecast of operations for the development of the lodgement had the Allied forces reaching the outskirts of Paris and the West Bank of the Seine on D+90 days, where they were to pause, regroup and re-arm before pursuing on to the east. *Harrison, Cross-Channel Attack*, Map IV.

Argentan-Falaise pocket in which the enemy suffered very severe losses....¹³¹

The summary also contains the following analysis of the German capabilities:

The August battles have done it: the German Army in the West has had it. Crippled in the northwest by appalling losses, in the southwest by sheer futility, and in the south by totally inadequate reserves, the armies of von Rundstedt, of von Kluge, and now ... of Model, are committed willy-nilly to what must shortly be the total surrender of more than two-thirds of France. It is an achievement of which the Allied Armies may well feel enormously proud, and of which the enemy is frankly envious. Two and a half months of bitter fighting, culminating for the Germans in a bloodbath big enough for even their extravagant tastes, **have brought the end of the war in Europe within sight, almost within reach.** The strength of the German Army in the West has been shattered, Paris belongs to France again, and the Allied Armies are streaming towards the frontiers of the Reich.

Faced with these uncomfortable facts, it is hardly surprising that official German spokesmen should be making no bones about the situation. A sense of urgency is abroad, born of the imminence of disaster and reflected already in yet louder exhortations and more stringent regulations by the indefatigable [Propaganda Minister] Goebbels....

Ultimately, the enemy now has but one preoccupation, to bar the frontiers of Germany against invasion. To this end every conceivable expedient will be used, every available division concentrated.... And by no means least is the urgent need to keep the Allies in the West away from the [V-1] flying bomb sites. For as the value of the German Army in the field diminishes, so the values of the V [-weapon]'s must increase, in Allied as in German eyes....

¹³¹ WISUM No. 23 (26 August 1944), SHAEF, p. 1, RG 331, NARA.

In the West, therefore, the enemy's problem is twofold; he must not only fight tenaciously in defense of the coastal belt north of the Seine, but must keep somehow intact an Army for the defense of the Fatherland. Without reinforcements he cannot hope to do the first; having done the first he cannot hope to be in shape for the second. Yet he must make the attempt, and **it is clear that reinforcements will be found. Norway and Italy are likeliest and nearest sources**, and there are troop movements north of the Appenines, while a steady trickle of troops is reported arriving in Eastern France from Germany. The ability of these formations to make an effective stand on the Somme–Marne line is questionable, depending largely on the continued pressure of the Allied advance. Looking back, however, on the events that have overtaken his predecessors and their Armies in Normandy during the past 90 days, the new Commander in Chief can derive little hope for the future from his romantic nickname of “Jules Verne.”¹³²

SHAEF is convinced that the end of the war for the Germans is very near. At the same time SHAEF acknowledges that the *Wehrmacht* has the capability to reinforce a line on the German frontier with troops from the north and south, but does not acknowledge such a capability exists with regard to forces in Germany itself.

On 26 August, anticipating that Eisenhower soon would take operational command of all of the Allied ground forces, Montgomery issued a new operational directive which contains the following assessment of the enemy's situation:

*1. The enemy has now been driven north of the Seine except in a few places, and our troops have entered Paris. **The enemy forces are very stretched and disorganized; they are in no fit condition to stand and fight us***

¹³² (emphasis in original) *Id.*, pp. 4–5.

24. The enemy has not the troops to hold any strong positions.

The proper tactics now are for strong armoured and mobile columns to by-pass enemy centres of resistance and to push boldly ahead, creating alarm and despondency in [the] enemy rear areas....

25. I rely on commanders of every rank and grade to “drive” ahead with the utmost energy; any tendency to be [either] “sticky” or cautious must be stamped on ruthlessly.¹³³

The directive continued by saying that “[t]his, then, is our opportunity to achieve our further object[ive]s quickly, and to deal the enemy further blows which will cripple his power to continue in the war.”¹³⁴ Montgomery is convinced that the German line is, at best, thin and that spectacular breakthroughs are still possible. *As it turned out, this directive was a warrant for a military misadventure.* The caution against “caution” was a planted seed that would flourish to produce bitter fruit.

Montgomery directed that 21 Army Group would operate northwards and to destroy the enemy forces in Northeastern France and Belgium, to secure the Pas-de-Calais area and the airfields in Belgium, and to secure Antwerp as a base. The Army Group was informed that when its initial mission was completed, the Army Group would thereafter advance eastwards on the Ruhr. He exhorted his officers with this message:

5. Speed of action and movement is now vital. I cannot emphasize this too strongly; that what we have to do must be done quickly. Every officer and man must understand that by a stupendous effort now we

¹³³ (emphasis in original) General Operational Situation and Directive (M 520), 21 AGp, 26 Aug 44, pp. 1–3, PP/MCR/C 30, Reel 10, BLM 107/20, IWM.

¹³⁴ *Id.*

*shall not only hasten the end of the war; we shall also bring quick relief to our families and friends in England by over-running the [V-1] flying bomb launching sites in the Pas- de-Calais.*¹³⁵

In particular Second Army was ordered to cross the Seine with all speed, advance rapidly northwards, and establish itself in the Arras–Amiens–St. Pol area as fast as possible, quite irrespective of the progress of armies on its flanks. The Army was told to move with its armoured strength deployed well ahead so that its passage northwards must be swift and relentless. The short-term objective was to cut across the lines of communications of the enemy forces to facilitate the operations of the Canadian Army on its left flank.¹³⁶

The Second Army Intelligence Summary for 27 August again finds the absence of German counterattacks to be noteworthy:

While the enemy cannot exactly be said to have done nothing to interrupt the expansion and strengthening of our bridgehead across the Seine, he has certainly refrained from any kind of [a] determined counter-attack.... The impression that the troops immediately opposed to us are holding a longish stretch of river without any defense in depth has not been altered in the least by anything that has happened today. Moreover, having regard to the considerable number of enemy troops which are known to have made the crossing, two further impressions are taking definite shape. First, that the untidy remnants of A.O.K. 7 are being hurried away [to the rear], doubtless for the purpose of re-equipping for further action: whether they will reappear again with the same divisional numbers as those they have borne through the retreat is a question which only future events will answer. Some of the broken divisions are hardly likely to reappear, but in those cases the title

¹³⁵ *Id.*

¹³⁶ *Id.*

*acquired a tradition and the Germans have a rooted objection to writing anything off. The second impression is that Panzerarmee 5 is engaged on the three-fold task of fighting a rearguard action, of shepherding 7th Army to safety, and of re-organizing a second line of defense on the eastern banks of the Seine. The difficulty in present conditions of carrying out this task may perhaps account for the absence of any concerted effort to drive us back.*¹³⁷

The fact that Pz.A. 5 is constantly engaged in protecting the German retreat—and is constantly pushed back—reinforces the British belief that the *Panzer* formations in the West are not capable of holding a line, much less of mounting a counterattack.

The Second Army Intelligence Summary for 28 August reads as follows:

All four Allied Armies had a thoroughly successful day, and ... progress in every sector has been substantial.

First, on Second Army front, the Vernon bridgehead has again grown The presence of elements from two different SS Panzerdivisionen ... in such a narrow sector is of itself some indication of the straits in which the enemy now finds himself, and neither SS Pz.D. 10 nor SS Pz.D. 12 is likely to be capable of acting independently for some time to come....

*Whatever difficulty Hitler may be having in making up his mind on the placing of his reinforcements ... he cannot, except in his madness, ignore the American drive on the southern flank of H.Gr. B.... Only a madman will ignore this threat and although the [units of the] **Americans cannot be stopped** we must expect that the enemy will try to send whatever troops he can find to meet this emergency.*

¹³⁷ SAIS No. 84 (Up to 2400 hrs 27 Aug 44), WO 285/3, PRO.

Meanwhile the retreat continues, losses pile up as more troops and equipment are cut off. Replacements “pour” in to the tune of an odd Marschbataillon and [an] occasional Bodenständigdivision.... Existing rear guards will have to carry on at least till the Somme is reached and depleted as they are they cannot do more than delay us. Confusion will soon reign again—if its doesn’t already—while the Germans retreat to their frontiers and conscripted foreigners give themselves up [in great numbers].¹³⁸

By this time British Second Army was beginning to realize that the newly encountered forces of A.O.K. 15 were not going to present a serious obstacle to the advance of 21st Army Group. At the same time it is clear that the American forces are seen as being able to push forward directly into Germany.

The following estimate of the enemy forces is found in the Outline Plan of 29 August 1944 for Operation LINNET, the airborne assault planned to land [25 km east of Lille] at Tournai in Belgium in early September:

Enemy Forces. a. The enemy has the equivalent strength of 30 Divisions, 5 Panzer Divisions and 25 Infantry Divisions.... These forces are disposed as follows:

- (1) 3 Panzer Divisions and 17 Infantry Divisions in the main battle area;
- (2) 1 Panzer and 3 Infantry Divisions in the battle for Southern France;
- (3) 2 Infantry Divisions in Holland;
- (4) 2 Infantry Divisions [in France] opposing the Marquis;

¹³⁸ (emphasis in original) SAIS No. 85 (Up to 2400 hrs 28 Aug 44), WO 285/3, PRO.

(5) 1 Panzer Division reforming (unlocated); and, (6) 1 Infantry Division reforming (unlocated).

b. Reinforcements. Enemy reinforcements into the whole Western Theatre will be equivalent to 1 Division per week for six weeks plus ad hoc formations made up of combouts from Germany.

c. Defensive Positions. The enemy may withdraw to a line Somme–Marne–Saône Rivers, but in doing so will fight strong rearguard actions.¹³⁹

This planning estimate was made in conjunction with the 21st Army Group's plan to put Allied airborne troops down behind the enemy's river lines to open the way for a swift advance—one matching the speed of the Americans—of the British Armoured forces in the XXXth Corps of British Second Army.

The Second Army Intelligence Summary for 29 August contains the following assessment of what was being perceived as a total collapse of the German front:

*Two quotations from Alice in Wonderland are as apt a commentary on the day's events as any original description: "Faster, faster, said the Red Queen" is one, and "Whom did you see on the road? asked the King. Nobody, said Alice" is the other. In the light of what has happened since Mortain (still less than 3 weeks ago), it ought not perhaps to be so surprising as it seems, but the fact remains that **progress on the scale achieved in the past two days comes as rather a pleasant shock. Similarly, the failure of the enemy to offer any real resistance to the Allied advances makes a striking contrast to the conditions prevailing, for example, south of Caen and east of Vire. The reason for this is plain: after squandering much of his armour in stop gap tactics over a period of two months, the enemy collected all***

that he could in a wild effort to break in two the Allied movement then gathering momentum for its drive east. Having collected it, his courage failed him and the long trek home began. Now comes the aftermath, and in a crisis that calls for almost more than he had available on D-Day, he finds himself with practically nothing at hand....

The speed of the American advance shows no sign of slackening and in spite of the identification of three divisions from Italy ... they have occupied Rheims [(Reims)] and crossed the Aisne at Juvincourt....

*The German plight in France is a sorry one. A.O.K. 19 is lost—the **continuous line to the Swiss border is not possible to form**—the Seine as a defense line no longer exists—Rouen is about to fall or must be surrounded and cut off—the Aisne has been crossed and the Allies continue to advance at ever increasing speed and in overwhelming numbers. Retreat to the frontiers of the Reich is the only hope for the Germans and even that must be short lived as Hitler's territorial losses increase. Confidence in the Führer as a leader must be rapidly declining and cannot survive long. The time has come when German propaganda can no longer hide the true facts, and as they sink in, disaffection will grow till, encouraged by the arrival of Allied troops in strength in Germany, and the fear and even experiences of the horrors left in the wake of an for peace whatever the leaders may say.*

Meanwhile the Germans withdraw. SS troops keep the soldiers fighting at the point of a pistol but even that requires some organization, and organized formations are not the order of the day among the German forces in France at the moment.

¹³⁹ FAAA, Outline Plan for Allied Airborne Operation "LINNET," dtd. 29 Aug 44, File: 21 AGp/00/432/Ops, subject: "Airborne Operations, July – August 1944," WO 205/197, PRO.

*Resistance will continue and may increase at [the] centres of communication and in the Somme [area] where the remnants of A.O.K. 7 are believed to be collecting. **But it can only be short lived** and, as we move on, more prisoners will swell our cages—[V-1] flying bombs will cease to bother London and the **end of the war against Germany draws near. Just when it will come cannot be said,** so much depends on the temper of the people and on the German leaders who gain only the gallows or death by their own hands.*¹⁴⁰

This summary marks the day Second Army realized that the days of fighting a slow withdrawal had ended. A rout, which not even the SS troops could stop, had begun. Mention is again made of the fact that the Germans were not going to be able to establish a continuous north to south defensive line. An envy of the success of the Americans on the ground is obvious. The time for Second Army to get rolling had surely come—they were in step with the preconception that the end of the war was near.

The Second Army Intelligence Summary for 30 August says the following:

*By this evening we were more than half way to the Somme in our advance from the Seine, and **the enemy was still withdrawing before us, leaving behind no more than a thin rearguard, which showed itself very disinclined to fight....** Opposition on the whole of Second Army front has included no armour, and generally speaking has been negligible....*

Panzerdivision 21 ... has reappeared and the familiar name of [Oberst] Luck as well....

[S]omewhere between Paris and Amiens may be found the armour which has succeeded in escaping from the Seine. SS Pz.K. I is the

¹⁴⁰ (emphasis in original) SAIS No. 86 (Up to 2400 hrs 29 Aug 44), WO 285/3, PRO.

most likely to reappear, with SS Panzerdivisionen 1 and 12, and SS Pz.D. 2 a possible extra. SS Pz.K. II is further to the east if the inference that Pz.D. 21 still belongs to it is right, and still further away at Clermont is Pz.D. 2, at Estrées is Pz.D. 116, and at Crépy[-en-Valois] is Pz.D. 9. Panzerdivision "Lehr," SS Pz.D. 17 and the other SS formations are to the east [in front of the] First Army area....¹⁴¹

This summary reflects two basis themes: the *Wehrmacht* units to the front of Second Army are not up to a serious fight, and there are no *Panzer* formations in the area at all. The stage seemed to be set, in a sense, for a "bump and go" breakthrough across both Belgium and Holland into Germany.

The Second Army Intelligence Summary for 31 August gives information of the whereabouts of the unlocated SS *Pz.D. 1*:

Prisoners have given some news of SS Pz.D. 1, which does some way to explain their absence from recent fighting. Apparently they were ordered to hand over their remaining tanks, which cannot have numbered many after the Mortain retreat, to SS Pz.D. 2 and what ever their present location, they must be more or less grounded now.¹⁴²

Everything said here about the status of the German *Panzer* forces reinforced the earlier notion that they have been severely mauled and have had virtually no time to withdraw from the line to rest and refit.

On 1 September an estimate of the enemy situation was added to the Outline Plan for Operation LINNET. It read as follows:

¹⁴¹ (emphasis in original) SAIS No. 87 (Up to 2400 hrs 30 Aug 44), WO 285/3, PRO. The 11th Armoured Division had run into *Oberst* Hans von Luck first on 18 July near Cagny where he directed the fire of four 88mm guns of *Luftfelddivision 16* and destroyed sixteen of the tanks of 11th Armoured. Max Hastings, *Overlord: D-Day & The Battle of Normandy* (1984; reprint, New York: A Touchstone Book, 1985), p. 234.

¹⁴² SAIS No. 88 (Up to 2400 hrs 31 Aug 44), WO 285/3, PRO.

Enemy Situation. 1. *The breaching of the enemy's line south of St. Lô began what has since been a non-stop retreat....*

Reports from the sea to the Belgian border indicate that all is confusion and that the Germans are in full retreat. The whereabouts of formations and units is unknown to the German Command, as is also the Allied situation....

2. ... **[The German] plans are meaningless. Divisions are shadows of their war establishment**—equipment is short, tanks very few—great administrative difficulties exist—HQs are overrun and reinforcements are non-existent unless they come from Norway, the Balkans and Italy.

It is in these circumstances that the German High Command is required to make future plans.

3. *Immediate retreat to the German frontier is the only sensible thing to do and the only hope of saving, temporarily, at least some of the four [German] armies....*

4. *In spite of the impossibility of so doing, the Germans will probably continue to attempt protection for the [V-1] flying bomb and [V-2] rocket sites [in the Pas-de-Calais and Holland] and will attempt to keep the war away from German soil as long as possible.*

5. *Immediate opposition to LINNET ... is likely to come from Infanteriedivisionen 712 and 226 plus elements of shattered forward divisions as can reach the area. Armoured opposition is likely to be negligible or even NIL.... Defenses in the area are negligible.*

6. *Operation LINNET will add to the confusion already existing among the German Armies and should be successful in every way. The airborne forces should be capable of inflicting a heavy defeat on the*

*enemy now in the Tournai area and should have no difficulty in keeping off such German reinforcements which can get there, [all] without any assistance from the Second Army advancing from Arras. In point of fact, the speed of the British advance is likely to be such as to make it unlikely that the airborne forces will have to operate on their own for more than a few hours.*¹⁴³

Implicit in this planning document is the notion that no matter what operation the Allies undertake, the Germans are powerless to stop their enemy before the operational objective is attained.

The Second Army Intelligence Summary for 1 September 1944 notes the futility of the German's defensive efforts:

Today yet another pair of defense lines has been breached or by-passed by Second Army, and the rivers Authie and Canche which flow parallel to the Somme and north of it, have both been left behind.

A captured order ... shows clearly what the enemy proposed to do along the line of the Somme. Five of the divisions which had suffered so severely in the past month were to be sent home. Such, however, is the enemy equipment situation at the present time that they were to hand theirs over [to others] before leaving....

The other feature of the order is the absence of any reference to a Panzerdivision being under the control of A.O.K. 7. More than one man captured yesterday included as part of the enemy's intentions a concentration area for SS Panzer-divisionen 9 and 10 just east of Amiens, but there has been no report of them in this area, which is now overrun....

¹⁴³ (emphasis in original) FAAA, Outline Plan for Allied Airborne Operation "LINNET," dtd. 29 Aug 44 (with Enemy Situation Annex, dtd. 1 Sep 44), File: 21 AGp/00/432/Ops(A), subject: "Airborne Operations, July – August 1944," WO 205/197, PRO.

Of enemy intentions there is nothing new to say. The utter failure of the A.O.K. 7 plan for the Somme line is only one instance of the miscarriage of enemy plans which must be happening on a large scale everywhere....

Little new can be said of the future. There can be none this side of the German frontier at least and not much beyond....¹⁴⁴

If the Germans are going to be able to establish any sort of a defensive line at all, Second Army does not believe it will be able to do so west of the German frontier.

General der Panzertruppen Heinrich Eberbach, the commander of both Panzergruppe West and A.O.K. 7, was captured on 31 August. The Second Army Intelligence Summary for 1 September has details of the initial interrogation of the General:

Preliminary interrogation showed that the General had temporarily taken over command of A.O.K. 7 when Hausser was wounded. To a large extent he had been out of touch with his formations, and had only heard of the fall of Paris from civilian sources.

At the time of his capture he was in a Volkswagen, carrying out a personal reconnaissance in an effort to find out the situation....

He regarded the present situation with dismay. The OKW had appreciated originally that Second Army would be directed on Dieppe and Abbeville and only realized the threat to Amiens too late....

He implied that he was not expecting any complete formations as reinforcements from Germany but he felt sure that every thing would be done to defend Germany itself....

¹⁴⁴ (emphasis in original) SAIS No. 89 (Up to 2400 hrs 1 Sep 44), WO 285/3, PRO.

*The commonly expressed view amongst German generals was “Oh to be Montgomery, even if only for a day.” **When told of the C-in-C’s statement that the war in the West would be over on two or three weeks, he said “At your present rate of progress, I agree.”***¹⁴⁵

Here one sees the G-2 of Second Army providing confirmation of the preconception that the end of the war was very near, and of the belief that the *Wehrmacht* command and control structure has all but ceased to exist.

The Second Army Intelligence Summary for 2 September notes the following:

Except that the amount of ground lost by the enemy today is smaller than has been the case recently, there is nothing from the enemy point of view to lighten a gloomy situation. Only in the center of his long so-called line which stretches from the Channel toward the Swiss border, has the enemy shown any sign of strong resistance, and even there the result may only be to leave his rearguards in traps of his own making.

The only news of tanks comes from a civilian who stated that SS Pz.D. 9 left Amiens on 30 August for St. Quentin with 40 tanks. The figure is exaggerated but the tank remnants of [the several Panzerdivisionen of] SS Pz.K. II may have gone there....

*There is no sign yet of any order creeping into the enemy camp.*¹⁴⁶

It is interesting to note how quickly the civilian’s count of tanks with SS Pz.D. 9 is discounted.

The SHAEF Weekly Intelligence Summary for the week ending 2 September notes that “[t]his week has seen the expulsion of the enemy from the line of the Seine and the shattering of any ideas he may have had about holding a Somme—

¹⁴⁵ (emphasis in original) *Id.*

¹⁴⁶ SAIS No. 90 (Up to 2400 hrs 2 Sep 44), WO 285/3, PRO.

Marne Line....”¹⁴⁷ The SHAEF G-2 also comments that “[t]he capture of Amiens and the subsequent exploitation to the north presages the loss of the Pas-de-Calais and the V-2 sites with all that implies to Germans at home.”¹⁴⁸ The summary contains the following analysis of the German capabilities:

The past week has shown a considerable deterioration of the enemy situation in the West. Recent captured orders have shown the futility of the tasks which Model (whom it is now confirmed succeeded the dismissed von Kluge on 20 August) imposes on his forces. It is obvious that now-a-days even before the orders are issued they are out of date. The enemy is told to occupy lines on the map when Allied forces are well beyond them, and it would appear that, to say the least of it, the staff officers of Ob. West are somewhat confused.

The German Army in the West is no longer a cohesive force but a number of fugitive battle groups, disorganized and even demoralized, short of equipment and arms. To back them up Hitler still moves into the rapidly diminishing area of Model’s command the scrapping of the Wehrmacht pot in Germany and a couple of good (or they were when they arrived) divisions from Italy. The enemy, in fact, has been out-generalized and out-fought and **is no longer in a position to offer serious resistance on any line short of the Westwall. The rate of his withdrawal is not dependent on how long he is told to stay in position but rather on our ability to keep our petrol tanks full. Against our mobility the foot-weary infantry divisions of the enemy with their 1914 horse transport are left well behind our thrusts, to ponder whether it is all worth while....**

¹⁴⁷ WISUM No. 24 (2 September 1944), SHAEF, p. 1, RG 331, NARA.

¹⁴⁸ *Id.*

The enemy has no prospect of a rectification of this dismal state of affairs....

*And so, Germany is inevitably faced with continued withdrawal in the West and on all her fronts she does not now dispose sufficient forces, particularly armour, to compete with the Allied armies....*¹⁴⁹

The message in the SHAEF summary is clear: the Allies cannot be stopped east of the *Westwall* if they keep the pressure on the retreating Germans.

The Second Army Intelligence Summary for 3 September contains details on the retreating *Panzer* formations:

The whereabouts of enemy armour is still somewhat of a mystery, and it has not put in an appearance on the Second Army front today. It is probably moving back to Germany on our right flank, and there is some evidence that [the Recce Unit of] ... SS Panzerdivision 9 was interested yesterday in [the area around the town of] Valenciennes....

There is little news from the southern flank, and armoured remnants seem to be split in the Metz–Verdun area were the non-SS Panzer troops seem to be and the area east of Arras where there is evidence of at least SS Pz.D. 9 and SS Pz.D. 10. Evidence of movement on [the] Second Army front appears to be to the east and north-east and at least one captured map is reputed to show a line of withdrawal to Germany via Antwerp....

*There is no sign of any German stand in a big way but we must presume all possible will be done to defend the frontiers of the Reich.*¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁹ (emphasis in original) *Id.*, pp. 4–5.

¹⁵⁰ SAIS No. 91 (Up to 2400 hrs 3 Sep 44), WO 285/3, PRO.

Although the presence of elements of two Panzerdivisionen is duly noted by Second Army, they are not deemed to be a threat. Since the objective of the Panzer formations appears to be that of a withdrawal to Germany the only real danger they pose is that one of the rapidly moving British units may bump into them and provoke a sharp fight.

On the same day the G-2 at AFHQ in Italy noted “that the situation [in France and Belgium] can be fairly described as a rout and there is no evidence that the Germans are capable of holding our forces away from the frontiers of the Reich.”¹⁵¹ As regards the German morale he stated:

*[Enemy] morale has undergone a very definite decline during the last month, chiefly in infantry units, who have a feeling of bewildered helplessness in the face of Allied might and mobility. Rank and file taken mostly realize the inevitability of defeat, but many junior officers still believe in the possibility of a German victory. German discipline, however, maintains some fighting spirit and it is [too] early to speak of a complete collapse of morale [in northwest Europe].*¹⁵²

It is obvious that the optimism in the SHAEF messages has spread across the Alps.

On 3 September, after meeting with Bradley, Montgomery issued a new operational directive which noted that the Second Army was advancing to secure the Brussels–Ghent–Antwerp area, while First Canadian Army was moving forward across the Somme at Abbeville, with the task of clearing the coastal belt. Montgomery stated that he intended to have 21st Army Group advance

¹⁵¹ Allied Force Headquarters in the Field (AFHQ) G-2 Report No. 667 (030001-2400 Sep 44), File subject: “Daily Intelligence Reports 601-800, 30 Jun 44 – 15 Jan 45,” WO 204/981, PRO.

¹⁵² *Id.*

eastwards and destroy all enemy encountered while he occupied the Ruhr.¹⁵³ In particular Montgomery gave Second Army this operational order:

6. On 6 September, the Second Army will advance eastwards with its main bodies from the general line Brussels–Antwerp. Before that date light forces will operate far afield, as desired.

7. The western face of the Ruhr between Dusseldorf and Duisberg will be threatened frontally.

8. The main weight of the Army will be directed on the Rhine between Wesel and Arnhem.

The Ruhr will be by-passed round its northern face, and cut off by a southward thrust through Hamm.

9. One division, or if necessary a corps, will be turned northwards Rotterdam and Amsterdam.

10. Having crossed the Rhine, the Army will deal with the Ruhr and will be directed on the general area Osnabruck–Hamm–Munster–Rhine.¹⁵⁴

Almost as an afterthought, the directive noted that the Allied Armies would soon be entering Germany—an enemy country—and must expect that the inhabitants will be hostile and possibly treacherous. It cautioned that additional precautions will be necessary, and that “all officers and men will be warned to guard against spies, *Gestapo* agents, and treachery.”¹⁵⁵

¹⁵³ General Operational Situation and Directive (M 523), 21 AGp, 3 Sep 44, pp. 1–2, PP/MCR/C 30, Reel 10, BLM 107/22, IWM.

¹⁵⁴ *Id.*

¹⁵⁵ *Id.*

At 1600 hours on 3 September, Montgomery sent a message to Major-General Francis de Guingand, his Chief of Staff at EXFOR MAIN, 21st Army Groups' main staff headquarters, advising him of the details of the meeting with Bradley:

Have consulted Bradley and he does not require [an] airborne drop on Liège line Second Army will advance from line Brussels—Antwerp on 6 Sep[tember] directed on Wesel and Arnhem and passing round north side of Ruhr. Require airborne operation of one British Division and Poles on evening of 6 Sep[tember] or morning of 7 Sep[tember] to secure bridges over Rhine *between* Wesel and Arnhem¹⁵⁶

This message concerns plans for Operation COMET—a division plus *coup de main* attack on the bridges on the Second Army's line of advance by British and Polish airborne troops. It marks the genesis of the idea that evolved over the next two weeks into the larger attack on bridges of the Eindhoven–Nijmegen–Arnhem road—Operation MARKET. The line of advance that Montgomery had in mind that afternoon was on the axis Eindhoven–Goch–Bocholt–Osnabrück. That would have meant crossing the Rhine River between Wesel and Emmerich (upstream of Arnhem). Thereafter Dempsey's Second Army could wheel right and encircle the Ruhr, or move east to Hannover and Berlin.

The Second Army Intelligence Summary for 4 September notes the following surprising information:

Yesterday British troops crossed the Belgian border: this evening the are reported in Antwerp, and the Dutch frontier is less than ... [16 km] beyond [our front lines].... Thus in two days, an advance of more than ... [160 km] has been made and the coastal defenses of

¹⁵⁶ Msg. M.148, 031600 Sep 44, C-in-C to COS, PP/MCR/C 30, Reel 10, BLM 109/21, IWM (emphasis added); Hamilton, *MONTY: Final Years*, p. 22. At the time, Montgomery, at his TAC HQ on the Continent, was separated from his main staff in England.

Belgium and the remainder of northeast France has been cut off. This magnificent achievement represents the final blow to the Westwall of Europe and leaves the enemy forces who are still sheltering behind it with little to do except demolish their handiwork and wait their captivity or, if they prefer to fight, their death....

If the enemy broadcasts for home consumption are any guide to his intentions, he will not delay long his move back to German soil. The advantage of a shortened line and the dubious value of occupied territory are now being presented to the German public as an explanation of what can no longer be concealed and the arrival of Allied forces on the German doorstep is the signal for a renewed urge to keep the German war machine in motion. So far as the Western Army is concerned, there is as yet no sign that it will be better able to cope with Allied pressure on its own ground than it has been elsewhere, and the control of so rapid a withdrawal over so great a distance must be taxing the power and resources of the OKW beyond their most elastic limits. Of armoured reinforcements we have no knowledge, but we must expect armoured formations to be re-equipped with tanks and guns in top priority within the resources available.¹⁵⁷

What was most surprising about the capture of Antwerp, was that the Germans had not demolished the facilities of one of the best port cities on the coast. Antwerp, in the hands of the Allies, could shorten drastically the distance supplies had to be moved overland from France to the advancing Allied forces.

On 4 September Eisenhower sent the following messages to all of the SHAEF commands:

1. *Enemy resistance on the entire front shows sign of collapse. The bulk of the remaining enemy forces estimated at the equivalent of two*

weak *Panzer* and nine infantry divisions are north west of the Ardennes but *they are disorganized, in full retreat, and unlikely to offer any appreciable resistance if given no respite*. South of the Ardennes the enemy forces are estimated as the equivalent of two *Panzer* and four poor infantry divisions. Heterogeneous force withdrawing from south west France estimated number some one hundred thousand men but its fighting value is estimated as the equivalent of about one division. The equivalent of one half *Panzer* and two infantry divisions are being driven north up the Rhône Valley.

2. The only way the enemy can prevent our advance into Germany will be by reinforcing his retreating forces by divisions from Germany and other fronts and manning the more important sectors of the *Siegfried* Line with these forces. It is doubtful whether he can do this in time and in sufficient strength but, were he to succeed, he will be likely to concentrate on blocking the two main approaches to Germany, by way of the Ruhr and the Saar. Of these he will probably regard the approach to the Ruhr as the most important.

3. Our best opportunity of [delivering a final blow to] ... the enemy in the west lies in striking at the Ruhr and at the Saar, confident that he will concentrate the remainder of his available forces on the defense of these essential areas....

6. The mission of Northern Group of Armies and of that part of the Central Group of Armies operating northwest of the Ardennes is to secure Antwerp, reach the sector of the *Siegfried* Line covering the Ruhr, and then seize the Ruhr....

10. The First Allied Airborne Army will operate in support of Northern Group of Armies up to and including the crossing of the Rhine [River]

¹⁵⁷ (emphasis in original) SAIS No. 92 (Up to 2400 hrs 4 Sep 44), WO 285/3, PRO.

and then be prepared to operate in large scale operations in the advance into Germany.¹⁵⁸

The message was not received by Montgomery until 0730 hours on 6 September.¹⁵⁹ Eisenhower's directive was a blueprint for the capture of the Ruhr and the advance into Germany which had as the cornerstone the *opening* of the port of Antwerp. To accomplish that objective—securing Antwerp—Montgomery needed first to clear the remnants of *A.O.K. 15* from the Breskens and from both Walchern and South Breveland islands on the north and south shores of the Scheldt Estuary. Montgomery largely ignored the efforts of First Canadian Army to secure Antwerp. Instead, Monty focused on what was to be the follow-up to the establishment of a firm supply base at Antwerp and made his plans to send British Second Army into Germany. In the end the opening of Antwerp to supply ships was delayed while his effort to breakthrough into Germany was stopped by the Germans.

It must be noted, in fairness to Montgomery, that his view of the chances of getting quickly to Berlin was not the vision of an isolated dreamer. In a Joint Intelligence Committee appreciation of 5 September it is suggested that all German resistance might end by 1 December 1944, if not sooner.¹⁶⁰ But there were other, contrary signs to be read as well.

An ULTRA message from Bletchley Park sent out at 1152 hours on 5 September, advised that on the previous evening, *H.Gr. B* had sent a signal to

¹⁵⁸ Msg. FWD-1376, SHAEF to ANCXF, C-in-C EXFOR, C-in-C Twelfth Army Group, Air Officer C-in-C AEAFF, Commanding General First Allied Airborne Army, Commanding General USSTAF, Officer C-in-C Bomber Command, PP/MCR/C 30, Reel 10, BLM 108/21, IWM (emphasis added).

¹⁵⁹ Wilmot, *Struggle in Europe*, pp. 484, 487 fn. 3.

¹⁶⁰ Bennett, *Ultra in the West*, p. 150, citing L. F. Ellis, *Victory in the West*, Vol. II, *The Defeat of Germany* (London: HMSO, 1968), p. 142 and John Ehrman, *History of the Second World War*, Vol. V, *Grand Strategy (August 1943 to September 1944)* (London: HMSO, 1956), pp. 395–99.

SS Pz.K. II, and to SS Pz.D. 9 and SS Pz.D. 10, which ordered that these units were to remain on the defensive in the Liège area, but that as elements of the divisions could be freed from the line they were to proceed to Holland for rest and refitting in the Velno–Arnhem–’s-Hertogenbosch sector.¹⁶¹ Here one sees the two *Panzer* units that will play a critical role at Arnhem being located, albeit by a message expressing an intent to act, and **it was information available only in ULTRA.**

Another ULTRA message sent out at 1835 hours on that same day, advised that in messages sent on 3 September Hitler had told *H.Gr. B* that in view of the enemy threat to the port of Antwerp, he attached “decisive importance” to the conduct of the future defensive operations being conducted to hold the fortress ports of Boulogne, Dunkirk and Calais, and in addition, “Walcheren Island with Flushing Harbour, a bridgehead around Antwerp and the Albert Canal as far as Maastricht.”¹⁶²

The Second Army Intelligence Summary for 5 September notes the following:

News received today from Antwerp is indeed satisfactory, since it appears that owing to the speed of our advance and possibly owing to the incompleteness of the enemy preparations, the extent of enemy demolitions has been much less than was anticipated.... [G]enerally speaking the dock area is undamaged....

Now that the way of escape from the coastal corridor is firmly barred, the process of cleaning up is going on.... [T]he coastal ports—Boulogne, Calais, Dunkirk and Ostend—may need the application of something more than an ultimatum to surrender, [but] their capture cannot be long delayed....

¹⁶¹ Bennett, *Ultra in the West*, p. 153, citing Msg. XL 9188.

¹⁶² *Id.*, p. 147, citing Msgs. XL 9219 and XL 9248.

There is not yet sufficient information to form any useful conclusion about the strength of the Siegfried line or the troops available to man it. One thing however is tolerably certain, and that is that the enemy has not kept at home a reserve which is either well enough trained or well enough equipped to hold an invading force at bay for long, particularly if the latter included armour against which the enemy is becoming increasingly short of anti-tank weapons.... But the invasion of Germany is different to invasion of France. The population will not be friendly and there will be no FFI to clear up the pockets, escort [German] prisoners or guard bridges....

And so the advances of the future into Germany present many problems not so far encountered by the Allies Armies in France and Belgium and thereby may be of a slower pace whatever the opposition from fighting formations.¹⁶³

Here we see Second Army coming to the mistaken conclusion that the route of escape of A.O.K. 15 had been cut in two. In the days ahead Second Army would have to deal with elements of A.O.K. 15 which the Second Army had not reckoned on having to deal with.

On the evening of 5 September Montgomery dispatched his nightly signal to the CIGS:

The advance of the Second Army northeastward toward the Rhine will begin on 7 September from Louvain and Antwerp in cooperation with airborne forces which will be dropped that evening to secure the Rhine bridges. A very limiting factor in the progress of this thrust is going to be maintenance and transport. I have as yet no reply from Eisenhower

¹⁶³ (emphasis in original) SAIS No. 93 (Up to 2400 hrs 5 Sep 44), WO 285/3, PRO. See Map I.

*to my telegram regarding allotting all available resources to one selected thrust.*¹⁶⁴

Montgomery also wrote to Major-General Frank “Simbo” Simpson, the Director of Military Operations at the War Office, and expressed his concern about the reply he expected from Eisenhower:

The historic march of events continues [in the West], and we are now in Brussels and Antwerp....

*We have reached a vital moment in the war, and **if we now take the right decision we could be in Berlin in three weeks and the German war would be over....***

*I fear very much we shall have a compromise, and so prolong the war.*¹⁶⁵

This message marks the height of Montgomery’s self-deception. For him the end of the war was not merely a function of the capability of the German Army to mount a defense of the *Vaterland*, but was hinged instead on what Montgomery saw as an essentially Allied political decision.

An ULTRA message from Bletchley Park sent out at 0103 hours on 6 September, advised that at 1730 hours on 5 September, *H.Gr. B* had ordered the staff of *SS Panzerkorps II* to move to the city of Eindhoven and from there direct the refitting of three *Panzer* divisions: *Pz.D. 2*, *Pz.D. 116* and *SS Pz.D. 9*.¹⁶⁶ The

¹⁶⁴ Hamilton, *MONTY: Final Years*, pp. 29-31, citing M.167 in the Montgomery Papers, IWM.

¹⁶⁵ (emphasis in original) Ltr. 5 Sep 44, PP/MCR/C 30, Reel 8, BLM 94/9, IWM; Hamilton, *MONTY: Final Years*, p. 30.

¹⁶⁶ Bennett, *Ultra in the West*, p. 153, citing Msg. XL 9245. At that time *SS Pz.D 10* was identified as being at Maastricht. *Id.*, citing Msg. XL 9857. On 6 September land line communication between *H.Gr. B* and *SS Pz II* was established and the opportunity for further high level *Wehrmacht* intercepts was lost for a time. *Id.*

possibility of SS Pz.K. II being in southern Holland was not mentioned in the regular SHAEF Intelligence Summary until 16 September.¹⁶⁷

In the Airborne Troops Operations Instruction No. 1 issued on 6 September by HQ. AIRTRPS, the enemy situation was given as follows:

(a) The enemy is under the impression that the main Allied effort is directed across the Meuse at Strausbourg. His troops from the general area of Brussels and Lille are withdrawing on the general line Aachen-the Ruhr-to beginning of the Siegfried Line.

(b) There are probably very few enemy troops in the general area excluding Antwerp–Nijmegen.

(c) The low category coastal division which has been holding the coastal defenses around the Hague–Amsterdam is believed to be withdrawing to the area northeast of Arnhem.

*(d) ... heavy FLAK, except that XXX Corps will have been cleared FLAK south of the Rhine to Tilburg before the airborne operation commences.*¹⁶⁸

The plotting of the *Wehrmacht* units that had been followed since the breakout in Normandy produced a map on which the Southern Holland area looked essentially barren. The British would soon encounter units in that sector that had not previously been seen in action in the West, or which were presumed to be elsewhere.

The Second Army Intelligence Summary for 6 September noted the encouraging success of the Americans at Mons:

¹⁶⁷ Bennett, *Ultra in the West*, p. 151.

¹⁶⁸ Hq. AIRTRPS/2559/G, 6 Sep 44, WO 205/692, Operation LINNET, 21 AGp/20760/G/Plans, PRO (emphasis added). Tilburg is 30 km west northwest of the city of Eindhoven.

While Second Army was cutting through the ill-organized enemy defenses in the centre of Belgium, an outstanding success was being gained on the right front in what has come to be known as the Mons pocket.... [A]t least one enemy Corps was pursuing its disconsolate way homewards when it was hit extremely hard by U.S. armour. There was no set-piece battle, and the enemy was too surprised to offer much resistance. In three days (3-5 Sep) 25,000 prisoners are believed to have been captured ... [and] the grand total of enemy casualties must be well over 30,000....

[P]assing through [the] Second Army cage [on yesterday was] ... Generalmajor Graf zu Stolberg-Stolberg, Kommandeur, Infanteriedivision z.b.V. 136. He attributed his failure to prevent the fall of Antwerp to which prevented his defensive plan from ever taking form; and secondly the lack of time, during which he could have made very hurried preparations....

It is probable that the enemy realizes only too well that the climax of five years of war is near. *Last minute preparations are being made for an event that all the offensive ridicule of former years has not been able to prevent, and as the invasion of Germany appears over the horizon, there will be many regret for [the many Germans] divisions squandered in France and other battlefields....*

Events near Second Army front tend to show how hopeless is the situation West of the Antwerp-Brussels line. Reports are in today that all the bridges on the Albert Canal and Hasselt are gone, demonstrating that the enemy has given up trying to extract forces that way. East of Hasselt he may yet try to evacuate Panzerarmee 5 in the direction of the Ruhr. Prisoners speak of Panzer formations resting and refitting. This is wishful thinking. There can either be rest and refit or defense of the Westwall and Holland. There cannot be both....

The Albert Canal and A.O.K. 15 are our immediate concern. We may expect [that] A.O.K. 15 having failed to break out east [through Antwerp] to turn back and attempt the crossing [of the mouth of the Scheldt] to Flushing Peninsula....

German plans still do not keep pace with [the speed of our] operations—and if the enemy is to have any sustained success in the future his plans must first catch up.¹⁶⁹

Second Army anticipates that its upcoming attack will produce results similar to the American successes at Mons. The estimate also assumes that resting and defending against an attack are mutually exclusive capabilities. Events would soon prove that assumption to be false.

On 7 September the 1st Airborne Division Planning Intelligence Summary No. 2 contained the following assessment of the total enemy *Panzer* forces in the West and the strength of the *Panzer* units in the Arnhem–Eindhoven sector as of 1 September:

The present [total enemy] tank strength is about 250 tanks. The maximum that can be expected in the way of reinforcements is 350, with a possible 15,000 troops making the total strength in Panzer troops of 600 tanks, and 60,000 men.¹⁷⁰

Furthermore, regarding the Arnhem area it stated that:

¹⁶⁹ (emphasis in original) SAIS No. 94 (Up to 2400 hrs 6 Sep 44), WO 285/3, PRO.

¹⁷⁰ Golden, *Echoes from Arnhem*, pp. 107-108, citing *The War Diary of the 1st Airborne Division*, 7th September 1944.

[I]t is reported that one of the broken Panzer divisions has been sent back to the area north of Arnhem to rest and refit; this might produce some 50 tanks.¹⁷¹

Continuing, with regard to ground forces, the report states:

We may therefore reckon that the forces from Rotterdam to the German frontier might comprise a regt. from Inf.Div 719, a regiment from Inf.Div. 347, remnants of static troops and one Panzer division much the worse for wear. Today's photographs, together with ground reports from Dutch sources, indicate that the main direction of German movement is NW to SE; not only has Inf.Div. 347 come down, but many of the SS training units which were near Amsterdam are now quartered in the excellent barracks at Nijmegen. There seems little doubt that our operational area will contain a fair quota of Germans, and the previous estimate of one division may prove to be not far from the mark; moreover, it would not be surprising to find that the high ground south of Nijmegen—P[oin]t 83 is the highest point in Holland—protected as it is by the Maas-Waal Canal to the west, the Maas to the south, and the Waal to the [Rhine] ... to the north, and guarding as vulnerable outpost of the Fatherland frontier, has been made into a hedge-hog defensive position....¹⁷²

Such was the view of the enemy on the eve of Operation COMET. The Allied airborne forces were expecting to make contact with the equivalent of only one division with some very weak tank support.

Major Brian Urquhart, the G-2 at 1st Airborne Corps, knew that the headquarters of Second Army also had reports of German *Panzer* formations

¹⁷¹ Geoffrey Powell, *The Devil's Birthday: The Bridges to Arnhem, 1944* (London: Papermac, 1985), p. 40.

¹⁷² *Id.*, pp. 40–41.

being reformed and refitted in the northern Market area.¹⁷³ Major Urquhart knew that if these reports of *Panzer* troops were true, the danger to the airborne troops would be “frightful.”¹⁷⁴

A *Führerbefehl* (*Führer Order*) from the “*Wolfsschanze*” *FHQ* was the subject of an ULTRA message from Bletchley Park at 1646 hours on 7 September. The BP signal advised that Hitler had sent a message to *A.O.K. 15* in which he acknowledged that there were insufficient forces in the area to recapture Antwerp. Thus, said Hitler, “it must be insured that the enemy cannot use the harbour for a long time.” Accordingly the mouth of the Scheldt Estuary was to be blocked by the occupation and the obstinate defense of Walcheren Island and the area around Breskens on the south shore of the Scheldt.¹⁷⁵ Hitler’s acknowledgment of the weakness of *A.O.K. 15* reinforced the optimistic spirit of those privy to ULTRA.

The Second Army Intelligence Summary of 7 September noted the following:

Another general has been captured by Second Army with his Chief of Staff. He was the commander of Inf.Div. 348 (Bodenständige), Generalleutnant Seyffardt by name, and in a brief interrogation made no attempt to disguise his opinion that Germany has lost the war, and volunteered the remark that we would be in the heart of Germany in less than two months.... He also said that he was completely out of touch with the general position prior to his capture, and indicated that the B.B.C. [broadcast from London] was one of his best sources of information....

¹⁷³ Golden, *Echoes from Arnhem*, p. 109.

¹⁷⁴ *Id.*

¹⁷⁵ Bennett, *Ultra in the West*, p. 148, citing Msg. XL 9409.

*The other point which the enemy may now be grasping somewhat late is the peril in which his defenses of Germany will be placed, if our bridgehead across the Albert canal becomes a springboard for another thrust. **The troops holding the canal are hardly competent to hold their position for long, and the enemy is likely to pledge some of his few remaining assets in a desperate effort to maintain this line.** A prisoner taken today, for example, said that he belonged to Infanteriedivision 176 which is not recognized as a division in the current Order of Battle lists, but which may be yet another of the training or garrison divisions which have either been created ad hoc or have escaped notice heretofore. We shall run into more of these newly-fledged formations, but none of them is of vintage quality and their title to divisional status is by courtesy of the OKW and not by their own deserts....*

A week ago the enemy was not, if his dispositions and actions are any guide, unduly concerned by a move north to the Albert Canal. But now with three divisions identified in the Canal [area], blown bridges and counter-attacks at Antwerp it seems that the enemy is aware of the danger and is doing something about it. But in doing so he cannot ignore the threat from Verdun and although forces will be found to combat our advance into Holland, A.O.K. 1 in the south is likely to retain priority [for reinforcements].¹⁷⁶

Up to this point in time the British forces had not appreciated the arrival of *Fallschirmarmee 1* in the Southern Holland sector.

¹⁷⁶ (emphasis in original) SAIS No. 95 (Up to 2400 hrs 7 Sep 44), WO 285/3, PRO. *Inf.Div. 176* had been formed as a replacement division staff in 1939 and was in the Danzig area until 1943 when it returned to Germany. It was sent to Holland in early September and went into the line as part of *Fallschirmarmee 1* in the Maastricht area. Mitcham, *Hitler's Legions*, p. 146.

On 7 September, in his nightly telex to the CIGS, Montgomery pointed out that “on the Second Army Front the enemy is offering very determined resistance in the northern outskirts of Antwerp and along the general line of the Albert Canal from Antwerp to Maastricht.”¹⁷⁷ This is the *first hint* in his message traffic to England that Montgomery knows that something out of the ordinary is happening on the front line.

The Second Army Intelligence Summary for 8 September notes the following startling news:

On our right it is now evident that the enemy has reacted to the threat to his Albert Canal positions. Four divisions had already been identified in this area: Inf.Div. 136 at Antwerp; Inf.Div. 719 along the canal nearly as far as Hasselt; Inf.Div. 347 on its left; and an Inf.Div. as a late arrival from Germany at Beeringen. Today has brought a bolt from the blue in the shape of paratroopers, and two co[mpan]ys of Fallschirmregiment 2 have been identified near Beverloo. This regiment ought by rights to form part of Fallschirmdivision 2, but so mixed have enemy formations become of late that its would be no surprise to find these companies used as reinforcements for one of the other and more familiar divisions—3, 5 or 6. Fallschirmdivision 2 was for long expected as a reinforcement out of Brittany, if it was over there as a full division, into Normandy but its journey never took that direction. The division was eventually put into Brest and as far as is known it is still there. Other oddments which have been identified in the past 24 hours include Panzerkompanie 224 (which may be the owner of the seven Mark IV's seen near Antwerp), and Panzerbataillon 559 and Panzerjägerabteilung 344 (Anti-tank battalion). There is also a report of Grenadierregiment 289 in this area....

¹⁷⁷ Msg. M.174, EXFOR TAC, 072310 Sep 44, PP/MCR/C 30, Reel 10, BLM 110/66. IWM.

The inevitable conclusion is that there are more enemy troops between the Albert Canal and the lower Rhine than there were three days ago. In this connection it is worth pointing out that enemy rail communications in Western Germany have not yet been pulverized to the same extent as they were in Northern France, and although paratroops in the West have normally be concentrated in Eastern France, there is nothing remarkable in their being transferred even now to meet an imminent threat in Holland. On the other hand, except for Fallschirm-division 2, all these divisions have had appalling losses, and none of them are fit to take on new tasks without reinforcements. The parachute training establishments have probably been bled white already, and the only likely alternative sources is the kindred group of Luftwaffe field training schools, formerly used to supply the Luftfelddivisionen. But even if there are more troops on the ground, they are not likely to be fully equipped....

On our left ... [f]erries across the Scheldt are doing a roaring trade, and all of A.O.K. 15 that can getaway is making north across the river. The enemy's intention is reasonably plain: enough must be left to keep us out of the major port ... and to hold a perimeter south of the Scheldt....

Of the enemy's intentions there is no more to be said. To save his armies and prevent our entry into Germany is the task, by delaying actions and denial of ports. Unfortunately for him the troops needed for the Westwall must also do rearguard and port garrison duty, and as they get destroyed in the effort little that is formidable will be left for the frontiers.¹⁷⁸

¹⁷⁸ (emphasis in original) SAIS No. 96 (Up to 2400 hrs 8 Sep 44), WO 285/3, PRO.

This summary acknowledges that there are more enemy divisions in the Albert Canal area than been anticipated. It also noted the presence of the enemy's parachute troops —and at the same time discounts their strength.

In his diary that night, Major-General J. N. Kennedy, the Assistant Chief of the Imperial General Staff at the War Office in London noted that *he* expected the Allied forces to be in Berlin by the end of the month. Colleagues of Kennedy describe him as being usually cautious and not given to reckless opinions.¹⁷⁹ It would be several days before the optimistic mood in Britain took a turn for the worse.

On 9 September Dempsey was advised by his intelligence staff that there was “considerable railway activity at Arnhem and Nijmegen, and [both] heavy and light *FLAK* in both places is increasing very considerably....” He also was told that “Dutch resistance sources report that battered *Panzer* formations have been sent to Holland to refit, and [the Dutch] mention Eindhoven and Nijmegen as the reception areas.”¹⁸⁰ The Second Army Intelligence Summary for the day reports more details on the new enemy units identified on the line:

East of Antwerp the task of enlarging the bridgeheads over the Albert Canal has been impeded and to a large extent prevented by the enemy's determined opposition. Fresh new units keep appearing on the scene, one of them divisional size but all of them adding weight to the infantry defenses in the area. Thus, two regiments of Luftwaffe troops have been identified: 51 and 53, and the identification of Fallschirmregiment 6 (following that of Fallschirmregiment 2 yesterday) indicates that a proportion of reserves due for Fallschirmdivision 2 have been diverted to Second Army area. Reinforced by these various units, the enemy has put in several counter-attacks, and at Hechtel he

¹⁷⁹ Powell, *The Devil's Birthday*, p. 16.

¹⁸⁰ Wilmot, *The Struggle for Europe*, p. 488.

succeeded temporarily in forcing us back, but the situation was fully restored later. The enemy certainly has some anti-tank vehicles north of the Canal, but identifications confirms that most of them are provided by Panzerjägerabteilung 559 which includes a number of Jagdpanther [anti-tank vehicles] been reported....

The latest reinforcements we have news of are from Denmark. It seems that Henner and Kolding dispatched between them 33 trains southwards on 8 September. The probable candidate for this movement is Inf.Div. 160. It is needed in south Holland and may turn up there. It may equally well stop on the Rhine at Nijmegen to prepare a reception for us.

Reinforcements trickle in either as fresh low grade formations or as independent units—not battle worn and of fair fighting value when behind a river line. It is the old story of time. Time needed by us for our maintenance gives the enemy time to scratch up his last available reserves of manpower. This [fact] temporarily causes a set back and slows down the arrival of the day of final defeat, but it makes no difference in the end to the final end of the war with Germany.¹⁸¹

It is important to note that the Second Army blames a lack of supplies for the slowness of their own northeastwards attack, and for the conclusion that it is the slowness of their operation which allowed the Germans to send in new defensive units made up of what are characterized as the last available reserves of manpower in Germany. The real truth had not yet dawned on the Allied analysts and commanders.

The SHAEF Weekly Intelligence Summary for the week ending 9 September notes that “[t]he past week of war has seen developments on every front which closely threaten Germany herself, and it is quite clear now that the encirclement

battle for the *Reich* is beginning as collapses are reported from very part of the fighting front.”¹⁸² Meanwhile, the SHAEF G-2 also was proud to announce that “the Allies freed half of Belgium including Brussels, Antwerp and Liège.”¹⁸³ The summary contains the following analysis of the German capabilities:

The German, not many months ago, could console himself for many defeats and disappointments, by thinking that the war was still far from the Reich frontiers. Now, not only is the war right up to those frontiers in many places, but the German garrisons far from the Reich have ceased to be protectors: they are themselves an added anxiety.... Good German bodies and souls are dropping in thousands by the wayside [in France, Italy and Russia], and [now] will be missing in their hour of the defense of the Fatherland. Even those that get back, will get back too late....

In short, Ob. West, may expect not more that a dozen divisions within the next two months to come from outside to the rescue.

Ob. West himself salvaged rather over 200,000 fighting troops from the second battle of France. Since then he has had a further 70,000 trapped in Belgium, of which many no doubt will escape, but he has gained some 50,000 additional troops from Germany and perhaps 30,000 replacements may be acquired by degrees (a generous estimate). If 50,000 fighting troops escape from the South of France, the total troops available for manning the Westwall should eventually be around 300,000, or the equivalent of about fifteen divisions, to which the speculative dozen from the other quarters have to be added. It is

¹⁸¹ SAIS No. 97 (Up to 2400 hrs 9 Sep 44), WO 285/3, PRO.

¹⁸² WISUM No. 24 (9 September 1944), SHAEF, p. 1, RG 331, NARA.

¹⁸³ *Id.*

most unlikely that more than the true equivalent of four Panzer/Panzer Grenadier divisions, with 600 tanks, will be found.

To sum up, Ob. West will soon have available the true equivalent of about fifteen divisions, including four Panzer [divisions], for the defense of the West Wall. A further five or six [divisions] may struggle up in the course of the month, making a total of about twenty.

The West Wall cannot be held with this amount, even when supplemented by many oddments and large amounts of FLAK [artillery].¹⁸⁴

The analysts at SHAEF have not yet acknowledged the change in the situation that was developing in the riverine terrain of Holland.

The Second Army Intelligence Summary for 10 September focuses on the successes of the Americans on the Second Army right flank, and all but ignores the changing situation on the Second Army front:

As the Allies close in on Germany from various directions, it is not altogether surprising that some parts of the approaches to the Westwall turn out to be only moderately protected. What is surprising is that the very way by which the German Army burst into France four years ago should have been left with inadequate defenses, but ... such appear to be the case [in the area east of Liège]....

It is not a simple task to give a convincing reason for this crack in the fringes of the Westwall, but the origin is likely to be found in the short but extremely costly encounter which occurred at Mons. The enemy no doubt planned to use the forces of A.O.K. 7 which were liquidated then,

¹⁸⁴ *Id.*, pp. 5-6. (Text repeated in Second Army Intelligence Summary No. 100 (up to 2400 hrs 12 Sep 44), WO 285/3, PRO).

to fill the gap between his two major area of reinforcement, Holland on his right and Luxembourg to Nancy on his left.

[T]he enemy had nothing to spare for the gap, which only awaited the exploitation that is now taking place. It is still too early to speak of a breach of the Siegfried Line itself.... The enemy is not yet at the end of his tether, and something will be forthcoming: possibly one of the Panzer formations, denied once more the chance to reform and re-equip itself, or maybe yet another of the new class infantry divisions.... If it is uncertain what formation will be put in, it is clear beyond all doubt that unless something is put in, the consequences to the enemy may be disastrous....

The process that began on D-Day of throwing units and formations in piecemeal and never being able to form a central reserve has continued non-stop. There was never any alternative as long as greed dictated the necessity to hold on to ill-gotten gains. Had the Germans withdrawn to the Seine close to D-Day they might still have been holding it with reserves in hand. But it is now too late and though they can and still do plug holes if only inadequately, the time is shortly coming when they will not even be able to do that.¹⁸⁵

Despite the presence of new German parachute and infantry units in the line, the Second Army's report implies that the enemy's line to its front will break.

The AFHQ G-2 Report for 10 September marked the fact that the forces of General Patton's Third Army had met with French troops under General Patch's Seventh Army that had come up the valley of the Rhône from the south of France. The link-up was made at Sombornon, some 22 km west of Dijon.

¹⁸⁵ SAIS No. 98 (Up to 2400 hrs 10 Sep 44), WO 285/3, PRO.

Unfortunately for the Allies the meeting of forces came too late to cut off the retreat of the bulk of the fighting formations of A.O.K. 19.¹⁸⁶

The Second Army Intelligence Summary for 11 September says that the German line on the Albert Canal has been broken:

Three days ago the Albert Canal faced us as an awkward obstacle, backed at the time by somewhat thinly spaced units from Inf.Div. 719, for which reinforcements were being rushed up as fast as horses could bring them. Tonight the Albert Canal has been breached over so wide an area that we have been able to dispose of some of the strongly held enemy strongpoints barring the way to the Escaut Canal....

The enemy continue to push in a variety of units, and amongst the new one identified today is SS "Langemark" [which began] ... as the motor cycle battalion of SS Pz.D. 2 "Das Reich" [and] ... is now considered to be an independent brigade.... [I]t has been identified near Hasselt....¹⁸⁷

The breach of the German line in the face of stiff opposition buoyed the spirits of the British officers.

Major Brian Urquhart, although G-2 at 1st Airborne Corps, was not one of those cleared to see ULTRA classified materials. However, he was concerned about the reports from other sources of tanks received from the Dutch Resistance and by the reports of armoured units which were contained both in the Second Army and First Allied Airborne Army's intelligence summaries.¹⁸⁸ On 12 September Major Urquhart requested that the R.A.F. conduct a low level photo

¹⁸⁶ AFHQ G-2 Report No. 673 (100001–2400 Sep 44), WO 204/981, PRO.

¹⁸⁷ SAIS No. 99 (Up to 2400 hrs 11 Sep 44), WO 285/3, PRO.

reconnaissance sweep over the Arnhem area to see if corroborating evidence could be obtained.¹⁸⁹

The Second Army Intelligence Summary for 12 September, the day the Outline Plan for Operation MARKET was finalized, repeats the estimate of the capabilities of the Germans on the Western Front which was contained in SHAEF Weekly Intelligence Summary No. 25 issued on 9 September.¹⁹⁰ The Second Army summary notes the following concerning the enemy situation:

Judging by the standard of activity and success which has been set in recent weeks, today ranks as a quiet day. The enemy has refrained from any attempt to drive us back over the Escaut Canal, and our patrol have been as far as Valkenswaard without meeting anything much in the way of opposition.... Further to the west, in the Geel area, the enemy has shown more liveliness....

Our bridgehead in this sector has met with much more stubborn opposition since its establishment than did the Beeringen crossing.... Nearly all reports received so far emphasize two features of the enemy's resistance, namely its fanatical spirit and its comparative incompetence having regard to the scale of the effort employed....

[T]he general impression is that we are up against a different type of opponent from that which was driven back, almost without a pause from the Seine to Antwerp. The present opponent fights hard because he wants to: he does not fight well because he does not know how. The defeated fragments of A.O.K. 15 had at the end of the journey [eastwards] little or no desire to fight, and though most of them

¹⁸⁸ Powell, *The Devil's Birthday*, p. 44. Major Urquhart's first hint of the presence of SS Pz.K. II in the Arnhem area came from the 21st Army Groups Summary for 10 September. Brian Urquhart, *A Life in Peace and War* (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1987), p.72.

¹⁸⁹ Golden, *Echoes from Arnhem*, p. 109.

¹⁹⁰ SAIS No. 100 (Up to 2400 hrs 12 Sep 44), WO 285/3, PRO.

knew how, they lacked the means and the control to enable them to do so....

[I]t is not without interest to find that four days ago German home [radio] listeners were told that the Allied assault was slowly coming up against a coherent front line again, and that owing to supply difficulties the Allies were being compelled against their will to give the German forces a further respite for regrouping. At the same time they were warned that the line was “admittedly not a line in the old sense,” and that the line was also said not to present as yet “one uninterrupted front.”....

One form of reinforcement which deserves mention is the Panzerbrigaden of which two—105 and 106—have already been identified. They are meant to include 44 AFV’s, of which 33 are Panthers and 11 are Jagdpanthers, but in the case of Pz.Bde. 106 the number of Panthers was only 27 and 11 of them are no more. They also contain Panzergrenadierbataillon.... [I]t may be that the enemy will prefer to set up more of these reconstruct the battered divisions. Certainly the process is quicker and speed is a big factor these days.¹⁹¹

This report is the first to acknowledge that the German line—as weak as it is—is being manned by a tougher and better motivated German soldier. This fact is acknowledged, but its implications are not fully appreciated in the summary.

On 13 September Bletchley Park signaled that the Germans were concerned about Allied intentions in the Aachen and Arnhem sectors as was evidenced by an urgent message of 9 September to the area *Luftwaffe* reconnaissance unit.

¹⁹¹ (emphasis in original) SAIS No. 100 (Up to 2400 hrs 12 Sep 44), WO 285/3, PRO (emphasis added).

The staff at *Ob. West* requested that aerial reconnaissance sweeps be flown to determine whether the enemy's main objective was Aachen or Arnhem.¹⁹²

On 13 September General Browning issued Operation "MARKET" Operation Instruction No. 1 to the airborne division commanders preparing for MARKET. It contained the following information concerning the enemy in the southern Holland battle area:

*1. Enemy. The enemy is fighting determinedly along the general line of [the] Albert and Escaut Canals from inclusive Antwerp to inclusive Maastricht. His line is held by the remnant of some good divisions, including Parachute Divisions, and by new arrivals from Holland. They are fighting well but have very few reserves. The total armoured strength is probably not more than 50–100 tanks, mostly Mark IV's. There is every sign of the enemy strengthening the defenses of the river and canal lines through Arnhem and Nijmegen, especially with FLAK, but the troops manning them are not numerous and many are of [a] low category. The FLAK is sited for [a] dual purpose rôle—both AA and ground [defense].*¹⁹³

Browning noted all of the key indicators—new units, a defense in depth, and *Panzer* formations—but he discounts their ability to thwart the Allied plan. According to Major Brian Urquhart, Browning and the other British airborne commanders assumed *"that the war was nearly over and that one last dashing stroke—Operation MARKET— would finish it."*¹⁹⁴

¹⁹² Bennett, *Ultra in the West*, p. 153, citing Msg. HP 009.

¹⁹³ Opns Plan, 13 Sep 44, HQ AIRTRPS/TS/2564/G, Subject: Operation "MARKET" Operation Instruction No. 1, in File 21 AGp/00/432/Ops(A), subject: Opn MARKET, WO 205/192, PRO (emphasis added).

¹⁹⁴ Urquhart, *A Life in Peace and War*, p. 71.

The Second Army Intelligence Summary for 13 September noted the following:

*There has been no material change in the enemy Order of Battle on Second Army Front, but the identification elsewhere of some of the missing enemy Panzer formations is helpful and reduces the prospects of their being switched to the North. Panzerdivision 116 has been in action constantly during the retreat from the Seine and SS Panzerdivision 2 has also been met in action in the past week. Panzerdivisionen 2 and 9 are both reported in the US Army area.... Elements of SS Panzerdivisionen 1, 9, 10 and 12 have all been seen in small pockets, but **there is no reason to suppose that any of these formations is operating, or indeed in a condition to operate as a division at the present time.** Panzerdivision Lehr, probably brought back to life with the help of some Danish SS personnel, is once more in action and has been identified in the Luxembourg area. The missing link is Panzer Division 21 and for the time being its exact location is not known though it is certainly well to the south....*

There are as yet no signs that the enemy knows where our next thrust will be. We are well placed to go either North or East. To go east is to reinforce success, a likely enough thing to do, in the German way of thinking.

*A successful drive to the north would cut off Holland with A.O.K. 15, A.K. LXXXVIII and the coastal and fortress garrisons. The eastward drive brings us onto German soil quicker, but not much; that to the enemy ensures further forced reduction on a large scale in German manpower. **Whatever reinforcements are available will be sent to***

stop the drive the Germans are likely to dislike most. They will probably therefore not come into Holland.¹⁹⁵

SS *Panzerdivisionen* 9 and 10 were the only *Panzer* formations that the Allies believed were anywhere near the Arnhem area. In this summary the ability of either to fight effectively is discounted. The threat of other *Panzer* formations is seen as minimal because all of the other known units were believed to be operating elsewhere. Believing that the Germans were reacting to meet the grave threat of the Americans in the Aachen area, Second Army discounts the likelihood of the Germans sending any reinforcements into the Southern Holland sector, believing instead that the *Wehrmacht* will be content to fight a delaying battle with the troops already in place.

The Second Army Intelligence Summary for 14 September noted the following:

There are only two important incidents to record on Second Army front for the last 24 hours. One is the establishment of another bridgehead over the Escaut Canal immediately north of Geel.... The other important incident was two sharp counterattacks on the eastern bridgehead over the same canal, put in by two battalions of infantry and six tanks....

*For the moment the enemy is doing all he can to delay the arrival of those other invaders, of whom Second Army is but one. The defense of water obstacles, and the counterattacks to restore the positions, when breached, are familiar tactics and the enemy has no others to employ.*¹⁹⁶

¹⁹⁵ (emphasis in original) SAIS No. 101 (Up to 2400 hrs 13 Sep 44), File Subject: "Second Army Intelligence Summaries, 24 May 1944 – 10 May 1945," WO 285/4, Public Record Office, Kew.

¹⁹⁶ SAIS No. 102 (Up to 2400 hrs 14 Sep 44), WO 285/4, PRO.

While the ability of the Germans to be a serious problem in the local tactical sense is noted, they are not acknowledged as having the means to be a threat in any large sense.

At 0752 hours on 15 September Bletchley Park had signaled the German message of 0700 hours on 14 September in which *H.Gr. B* had reported that it had established its headquarters in the village of Oosterbeek on the western outskirts of Arnhem.¹⁹⁷ By mid-day BP had provided two more intercepts (one signaled on 14 September and the other a day later) which revealed that the Germans were expecting a large-scale airborne assault in Holland and a ground thrust on both sides of Eindhoven as far north as Arnhem.¹⁹⁸ *The MARKET/GARDEN planners privy to ULTRA were so confident of the ultimate success of their upcoming operation that they were not in the least concerned by the fact that the Germans had guessed correctly at the British intentions.*

On 15 September Major Brian Urquhart received the pictorial results of the low level sweep photos of the Arnhem area from the R.A.F. The oblique angle pictures showed the presence of well-camouflaged tanks and armoured cars in the Arnhem area. Some of the German AFV's were located quite close to both the designated parachute drop and glider landing zones of 1st Airborne Division. Urquhart showed the photos to Major-General Browning. Several days earlier Urquhart had tried to convince Boy Browning of the serious threat posed by the reported presence of *Panzer* units in the area. At that time Browning showed little concern for Major Urquhart's information, and when Urquhart pressed the point the general became annoyed.¹⁹⁹ When Urquhart confronted Browning with photographs of the AFV's, Browning treated him with contempt. According to Urquhart, he was "*treated once again as a nervous child suffering from a*

¹⁹⁷ Bennett, *Ultra in the West*, p. 153, citing Msg. HP 220.

¹⁹⁸ Bennett, *Ultra in the West*, p. 154, citing Msgs. HP 175 and HP 242.

¹⁹⁹ Urquhart, *A Life in Peace and War*, p. 72.

*nightmare.*²⁰⁰ Tanks or no tanks, Browning believed that the Germans on the line in Holland were “in no fit state to resist another determined advance” and that “once the crust of resistance in the front line had been broken, the German Army would be unable to concentrate any other troops in sufficient strength to stop the break-through” so *a few tanks certainly would not matter.*²⁰¹

On 15 September General Bedell Smith met with Montgomery to talk about the German tanks believed to be in the MARKET area. Smith had seen the ULTRA reports concerning the possible presence of two *SS Panzerdivisionen* in the area, and reports that they were being refitted with new tanks from a *Panzer* depot located at Kleve to the east of Nijmegen. He discussed his concerns with General Eisenhower who told Bedell to go up and visit with Montgomery about the problem. Bedell had in mind that the threat of armour at Arnhem could be dealt with either by dropping another division—the U.S. 17th Airborne Division was available—in the Arnhem area, or by moving the drop zones of the 82d Airborne Division closer to Arnhem. Montgomery dismissed the suggestion for change—it would delay the D-Day of the operation, he said, and there were insufficient transport aircraft as it was—and waved aside Bedell’s objections to the plan as they were then finalized.²⁰²

On 15 September the Dutch resistance sent a signal to London advising that the *SS Div. “Hohenstruff”* (sic. the “*Hohenstaufen*”) [is located] along IJssel [River]; sub-units observed between Arnhem and Zutphen [(28 km northeast of

²⁰⁰ *Id.*, p.73; Golden, *Echoes from Arnhem*, p. 109; Powell, *The Devil’s Birthday*, p. 44. Thereafter Browning arranged for Major Brian Urquhart to be put on sick leave on the grounds of nervous exhaustion. Urquhart, *Id.*; Powell, *Id.*

²⁰¹ Powell, *The Devil’s Birthday*, p. 45.

²⁰² *Id.*, p. 43.

Arnhem)] and along [the] Zutphen-Apeldoorn road....”²⁰³ This message was not passed on to the airborne planners prior to the assault.²⁰⁴

The Second Army Intelligence Summary for 15 September also shows a concern with tanks:

On our eastern flank Panzer Recce 116 provided its usual contribution to the day's battle by giving the location of the Panzerdivisionen which was apparently holding positions west of the line Mausbach–Fleuth–R. Vicht....

*Enemy dispositions are unaltered, though some doubt as to the whereabouts of SS Panzerdivision 1 “Adolf Hitler” exists. Its engineer battalion was identified two days ago in the Mol area and today there is some evidence of SS Panzergrenadierregiment 2 being there about. This is not unlikely though it is thought that at most no more than a regimental group will be there.*²⁰⁵

In this particular instance the *Panzer* units that are mentioned are not those that would be involved in the MARKET/GARDEN battle.

The Second Army Intelligence Summary for 16 September—the day before the start of MARKET/GARDEN—notes the following about the enemy situation and the determination of the German troops in the line opposite Second Army:

The enemy has given ample proof of his determination to keep open the way of escape for the evacuees from the southern side of the Scheldt estuary, and the appearance of a new threat to this escape route, which arose with our bridgehead north of Geel, produced prompt

²⁰³ Wilmot, *The Struggle for Europe*, p. 501 n.1.

²⁰⁴ *Id.*

²⁰⁵ SAIS No. 103 (Up to 2400 hrs 15 Sep 44), WO 285/4, PRO.

and aggressive response. In the course of the past 36 hours our troops on the northern bank of the Escaut Canal have been subjected to heavy artillery fire, and to a number of counterattacks. None of these has succeeded in driving us back across the canal, but our efforts to improve the bridge[head] situation have been seriously hampered by persistent shelling. It appears that the enemy has more artillery available at this end of the canal sector than he had further east, where it was almost conspicuously absent....

The area in which the enemy order of battle situation is most obscure is the sector on our right flank. One major problem is the boundary between A.O.K.7 and the Armeeoberkommando facing us: the latter may now be assumed to be Fallschirmarmee 1, in view of the presence of General Student in Tilburg, reported yesterday.²⁰⁶

The G-2 of Second Army was correct in identifying the major force headquarters as being *Fallschirmarmee 1*. What the summary does not do is give a clear picture of what sort of fighting force the commander of *F.A. 1* has at his disposal. Another problem with the summary is that it assumes what is known in ULTRA not to be the case. Hitler's orders to *A.O.K. 15* were to hold the Scheldt area. The summary wrongly states that the German's in the *F.A. 1* sector had the mission of keeping an escape route open for *A.O.K. 15*. In fact, the *Fallschirmtruppen* in front of Dempsey's Second Army were reacting to *Ob. West's* warnings that the British ground forces were about to attack on the Eindhoven-Nijmegen–Arnhem axis. In view of the British armoured attacks which began on 7 September, the Germans would have had to be blind to have failed to see what Second Army was trying to do. What is curious is why the Allies were oblivious to the fact that the Germans knew or that such a knowledge might influence the course of the battle. Perhaps the simple answer is that as of that moment the preconception

²⁰⁶ SAIS No. 104 (Up to 2400 hrs 16 Sep 44), WO 285/4, PRO.

that the war was nearly over, and that the Allies could not be stopped was still shaping the way the plans were being made.

Consider, however, the precarious situation of the commander of the British force scheduled to capture the city of Arnhem and the bridge over the Neder Rijn. According to Major-General R. E. Urquhart, the Commanding General of the 1st Airborne Division, he was not warned by Browning to anticipate finding more than a few tanks in his division's operational area. He did not know the *panzer* forces were present until having to engage the quite considerable number of tanks and other AFV's of two large SS *Panzer* units. In fact no one told him about the real threat facing him. Urquhart says he did not know about the *Panzer* divisions at Arnhem prior to the assault:

I did not know about those armoured divisions at Arnhem, when I took off, I also thank God I didn't!

My briefing with General Browning was that opposition might be a weak brigade group with some tanks—those were his very words, “a few tanks.” There was no mention of any armour [divisions] refitting in that area.

And if I had known? I don't know—at that late stage.... Everything was in train. The operations had been planned in a hectic way over six days. The machine was moving and unless you called the whole bloody thing off, you couldn't alter details at that stage. You either went in or you didn't.... Don't forget that our gliders with our guns and things like that were loaded four days, three or four days before we took off—rather like sending your luggage ahead!

There were no more anti-tank guns—we used every one there was—all we could have done was warn our people of this possibility [of enemy armour] so that they were forewarned. There was certainly no bad feeling about not knowing. To start with, everyone was keen to go,

irrespective of the consequences, because they were so bored with popping in and out of aircraft and transit camps. They'd reached the state of mind—"we must go"—and they wouldn't have been put off easily.

And secondly in [the] airborne forces you expect the unexpected the whole time—that's part of our make-up, I think.²⁰⁷

Had General Urquhart known about the presence of *Panzerdivisionen* units to the north and east of Arnhem he *might* have planned his attack a little differently. We can never know whether any plan of attack would have worked at Arnhem. However, the original attack scenario called for a *coup de main* attack on the bridge itself, and while it called for risking more aircraft to *Flak*, that plan might have worked better after all. The decision to land the men of the 1st Airborne Division west of town allowed for larger landing zones, and kept the aircraft and gliders out of the way of the heaviest *Flak*, but the trade-off was the greater distance to the key objective—the bridge. *The assumption that the resistance in Arnhem would be light and that the distance could be covered in good time was simply wrong.*

In the course of the briefings given prior to the operation at least one of the officers of the 1st Airborne Division was more than a little uneasy about the information on the enemy situation. In the opinion of Brigadier J. W. "Shan" Hackett, Commander, 4th Parachute Brigade, the FAAA planners were treating Operation MARKET like some sort of an "airborne picnic" to which the enemy was but part of the scenery.²⁰⁸ Hackett called it "cooking up the airborne battle, then

²⁰⁷ Hamilton, *MONTY: The Final Years*, pp. 95-96, *quoting* from an interview with Major-General R. E. Urquhart on 13 October 1983.

²⁰⁸ After the war, Hackett continued his military career and, as General Sir John Hackett, was the Commander-in-Chief of the British Army of the Rhine, and Commander of the Northern Army Group in NATO. In 1978, Hackett and others published *The Third World War: August 1985* (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., Inc., 1978).

adding the enemy in as pepper and salt to taste.”²⁰⁹ What Hackett did not realize was that the airborne planners were victim of a self-deception about the number, type, and fitness of the German that was accepted at all of the major Allied headquarters.

General Browning—the principal officer at FAAA in charge of the planning and execution of Operation MARKET—*did not have access to ULTRA*. As the Commander of 1st Airborne Corps, the risk of Browning’s capture made it impossible to put him in the ULTRA picture. The security of this critical source of intelligence was felt to outweighed any advantage that would have been gained by giving him access to the information. The rule in this regard is summed up in the line attributed to General Wavell in 1941: “Better [to] lose Crete than lose ULTRA.” Had Browning been in the know with regard to the ULTRA intelligence, he too might have planned the airborne assault differently. As it turned out for Browning, who landed in Holland with his Corps headquarters, his FAAA corps command was too ill-equipped to be of any real use in directing the battle.²¹⁰

On the eve of the airborne assault—the one many thought would be the last opportunity to use the “sky-soldiers” in Europe—a few enemy tanks in the suburbs of Arnhem were the least of Boy Browning’s worries. Uppermost in his mind were two questions: would the weather hold on D+2 and D+3 so he could get the balance of his airborne forces and their supplies into battle; and would the men and tanks of Horrocks XXXth Corps be able to break the front line defensive crust and race up the Eindhoven–Nijmegen–Arnhem road faster than the Germans could react to the air-assault and the breakthrough.²¹¹

²⁰⁹ Powell, *The Devil’s Birthday*, pp. 45–46. Major Urquhart had similar concerns. Urquhart, *A Life in Peace and War*, p. 71.

²¹⁰ Powell, *The Devil’s Birthday*, p. 47. According to the G-2 at 21st Army Group, Bill Williams, the intelligence staff at Monty’s headquarters were not well acquainted with the key planners of the FAAA headquarters; accordingly, they did not try to pass on any of the ULTRA information by paraphrasing it. *Id.*

²¹¹ Wilmot, *Struggle for Europe*, p. 501.

General Brereton, the commander of First Allied Airborne Army *did have access to ULTRA*—albeit the amount of intercepts sent to FAAA was limited. However, Brereton was not deeply involved in the planning of Operation MARKET. There is no real evidence that Brereton tried to make Browning more conscious of the threat of tanks in the MARKET area. Either he did not have the full ULTRA picture, or he was of the view that Browning's general precautions about a weak enemy tank force in the battle area were sufficient. Both possibilities may have been true in this regard.²¹²

One of the British officers at FAAA involved to a degree in the planning of Operation MARKET was the Air Intelligence Officer at Brereton's headquarters, Wing Commander Asher Lee. He had been using ULTRA since the Battle of Britain days when he was in the AI3b section of the Air Staff. When he arrived at FAAA he found that the airborne headquarters was getting very little in the way of useful ULTRA information. To keep himself in the picture, Lee made it a practice to rise early each morning and visit another nearby headquarters where he had worked and where, unofficially, he still had access to ULTRA. There he read the daily messages. On one such visit, Lee discovered that Bletchley Park was reporting enemy *Panzer* formations in the COMET/MARKET area. Certain that no one at FAAA was aware of the seriousness of the threat Lee briefed his commander. General Brereton did not view the information with the same concern as did Lee. However, the general did send Lee to Belgium to talk to the 21st Army Group staff about the problem. Lee said his warning words fell on deaf ears at EXFOR MAIN.²¹³

In the SHAEF Weekly Intelligence Summary for the week ending 16 September the SHAEF G-2 reported on the reorganization of *Ob. West*—including the deployment of *Fallschirmarmee 1*, with two or three *Fallschirmdivisionen*—in the

²¹² Powell, *The Devil's Birthday*, p. 47.

²¹³ Ronald Lewin, *Ultra Goes to War* (1978; reprint, New York: Pocket Books, 1980), p. 423, detailing a conversation between Asher Lee and Lewin.

Antwerp–Hasselt sector of Holland.²¹⁴ The SHAEF G-2 says this of the Arnhem sector:

SS Panzerdivision 9, and with it presumably [SS Panzerdivision] 10, has been reported as withdrawing altogether to the Arnhem area of Holland: there they probably will collect some new tanks from the depot reported in the area of Kleve [(Cleves), east-southeast of Nijmegen].²¹⁵

While the SHAEF G-2—presumably under Bedell Smith’s prodding—noted the presence of one and possibly two *Panzerdivisionen* in the Arnhem area, the SHAEF intelligence summary had no effect on the plan of attack.

The same SHAEF summary contains the following analysis of the German capabilities on the eve of Operation MARKET/GARDEN:

2. The enemy has by now suffered, in the West alone, losses in men and equipment which can never be repaired during this war. It is estimated ... that the enemy, on reaching his position on the western frontier of the Reich, will have lost at least 900,000 men on all the fronts in the West....

No one or two, or even five or six divisions from Scandinavia and the Balkans can possibly compensate for these losses, nor can what boys and old men and training units remain in Germany (it must be remembered that a very large proportion of the training army was quartered in the West or the Balkans, and has already been committed, used up and overrun). Only a major reversal of strategy can really help, and on this Ob. West still cannot count, though the situation is so serious that, at least in Italy, a change may be made....

²¹⁴ WISUM No. 26 (16 September 1944), SHAEF, p. 1, RG 331, NARA.

²¹⁵ *Id.*, p. 7.

To offset the lack of men and equipment, the Führer can only rely on his people fighting with more tenacity on their own soil. This they will probably do....

No force can, then, be built up in the West sufficient for a counter-offensive or even a successful defensive. But defense must be attempted. Essentially the Westwall is the chosen line, but in the south the natural gift of the Vosges will not be surrendered without a stiff delaying action, and in the north the West Wall will have to be rounded off by some natural obstacle, eventually the Waal, to bring it up to the sea. The other method of defense is to deny to the Allies as many of the major ports as possible, and above all Antwerp as being the biggest and nearest to Germany: for this reason Walcheren Island and the Zeeuwach Vlaanderen at the mouth of the Scheldt will probable be held in strength by a generous part of A.O.K. 15, even at the risk of leaving the line between Antwerp and Hasselt weaker than it would otherwise be.

In the meantime the problem of holding the line in detail is proving very intractable. Reserves are so small that they are having to be committed piecemeal into the sector which was last hit hardest, and with a considerable delayed action effect. Hence, the result that all the reinforcements available, ordered at first to the Trier–Nancy sector to meet the threat of the leading American thrust, were still continuing to go there throughout the course of the thrust through Flanders, leaving the Ardennes and the Liège–Aachen sector critically weak. In the Ardennes the only solution found has been to give ground but reinforcements both there and especially in the Aachen sector are now an obvious first priority, and it may be assumed that Panzerdivision 9 will be followed by others.

It is not surprising that the enemy momentarily is fighting better on his own soil. New numbered divisions are in action without the dreary record of having been destroyed and reformed and destroyed again in

many cases. The Westwall, Hitler's guarantee to the German people of the inviolability of his Western frontier is being manned in defense for the first time and Germany is really being invaded. How long this rejuvenation of the enemy forces in the West is likely to last it is difficult to say. Probably only for a short time; as long in fact, as the Siegfried line remains alive, but once breached in force our mobility will once again show the German soldier the futility of fighting. We may then see the disintegration setting in. No doubt the fanatical Nazi youths will continue to fight and one must expect a guerrilla type of warfare as we march on into Germany. One thing is certain, that even if the war ended tomorrow, the Wehrmacht will never be able to say, as in the last war, it was not defeated on the field of battle. It has suffered the greatest military defeat in history already and inevitably is in for another hiding of the first magnitude. It might as well give up now.²¹⁶

The German's renewed defensive capabilities are clearly reflected on the eve of Market/Garden in this Shaef summary, but the new vigor is considered to have but a short-term life. What the G-2 at Shaef was saying was that the enemy in the West will collapse when the Westwall is breached—and we are on the verge of doing just that. The beginning of the end of the war is almost over, and the end of the end is about to come—it was a lovely but a dangerously deadly preconception that had shaped the previous thirty day of the war in the West.

THE ALLIES COME TO GRIPS WITH REALITY IN THE WEST

The H-hour for Operation MARKET/GARDEN was 1300 hours local on Sunday, 17 September 1944. The intelligence reports that follow illustrate how difficult it was for the Allies to come to grips with the reality of the changed German situation. It was ever so hard to shake the false notion that the once feared, now

²¹⁶ *Id.*, pp. 8–9 (emphasis added).

weakened *Wehrmacht* was about to collapse. Even as the Allied forces were locked in mortal combat with the Chimera they had great difficulty understanding the form the battle was taking.

The Second Army Intelligence Summary for 17 September noted the following:

The present campaign has already produced so much that is the parallel—in reverse—of the German successes of 1940 that an aerial liberation of Holland seems to follow in natural sequence, and at 1300 hours today a large airborne force descended in three main areas: north of Eindhoven, between Grave and Nijmegen, and near Arnhem. Detailed reports from our own forces are still awaited, but such information as has already come in makes it reasonably certain that the operation was launched with success....

*Soon after the airborne landings began, Second Army also began the invasion of Holland, starting from the bridgehead across the Escaut Canal northwest of Neerpelt. Progress was barred by new arrivals in the canal area, namely elements of SS Panzerdivisionen 9 and 10. There may not be many among them who took part in the battles round Evercy and Chenedolle, but the nature of their opposition was every bit as tough. They are reported to be two battle groups, each of roughly battalion strength, under command of another battle group carrying the title of SS Panzerdivision 10 "Fruntsberg." **They are unlikely to have any tanks with them, certainly of no appreciable number.**²¹⁷*

The report of SS *Pz.D'ns* 9 and 10 being in the line on the canal opposite XXXth Corps ground advance is puzzling. The German records do not show that any elements of these two division were engaged on 17th September in any locales other than at Arnhem and between the Arnhem bridge and Nijmegen.

The Second Army's Summary for the first day of the MARKET/GARDEN battle continues:

Information was only received today that at the moment when the enemy divisions were in full retreat through northeast France and Belgium, a radical change was made in the enemy High Command. Feldmarschall von Rundstedt, who relinquished his command in the West for "medical reasons" not long after the attempt on Hitler's Life, has been recalled....

The return of the Old Guard is on any footing an event of great significance. Whether its repercussions are to extend beyond purely military matters, cannot yet be answered, but the fact that command has again been entrusted to a man who cannot be—and would not wish to be—regarded as anything but a soldier speaks for itself....

Enemy reinforcement of his Western frontiers during the past fortnight seems to have been based on an appreciation that invasion was coming, first, through Metz and Nancy, and more recently through Aachen and Liège. All the early arrivals of any quality went to meet the Third U.S. Army: the more recent newcomers have been committed against the First, and today another division [—Infanteriedivision 12, recently resting in Austria after a battering on the Russian Front—] is reported near Aachen....

*What the enemy will or can do to parry our invasion of Holland depends on his willingness to take further risks elsewhere, where there is nothing to spare, and his ability to move reinforcements and supplies to the area in time. **In any case it is considered unlikely that any large-scale reinforcements can be made available, and the battle now joined will be fought out by the troops already on the***

²¹⁷ (emphasis in original) SAIS No. 105 (Up to 2400 hrs 17 Sep 44), WO 285/4, PRO.

*ground, with the uncertain addition of some of the forces still stranded south of the River Scheldt. They will not amount to much.*²¹⁸

The fact that the Second Army G-2 speaks in one paragraph of the arrival of reinforcements from Austria in the Aachen area, and in the next paragraph says that there will be no large-scale enemy reinforcements in Holland is a reflection of the optimism prevailing when the attack began. When he says there will be no reinforcement, what he means is that the British will be across the Neder Rijn before the Germans can react. As shall be seen, during the next two weeks of battle in Holland, the Germans introduced five new division-sized formations into the line.²¹⁹ To make matters even worse for the British, they did not even have a clear picture of the actual strength of the forces opposing them on the day the battle began.

The Second Army Intelligence Summary for 18 September noted the following:

Last night in the Escaut Canal area there was a considerable amount of activity, all of which involved hard fighting resulting eventually in definite set-backs for the enemy. North of Neerpelt the enemy made a definite effort to cut off the base of the bridgehead from which we were advancing to meet the airborne troops north of Eindhoven....

The most important news this morning regarding the airborne invasion was the successful link between the troops advancing north from the Escaut Canal and airborne forces which had moved south from their dropping zone near Son. As a result of these operations the town of

²¹⁸ (emphasis in original) *Id.*

²¹⁹ The new divisions, in the order of their recognition by the British were: *Inf.Div. 406* "Scherbening" (21 Sep); *Inf.Div. 361* "Wuppertal" (22 Sep); *Inf.Div. 180* and *Inf.Div. 190* (23 Sep); and *Inf.Div. "Tettau"* (28 Sep).

Eindhoven has been cleared of the enemy and the first stage of the advance across Holland completed.

Son itself was captured yesterday, but Best remained in enemy hands. The enemy's hold on the village [of Best] was far from secure and it is known that at 1250 hrs the Commander of Fallschirmarmee 1, Generaloberst Student, himself gave orders for the bridges to be blown: at 1310 hrs this order was reported carried out. The destruction of the bridges at Best and Son has necessarily meant some delay but with both sides of the canal in our possession, a bridge was expected to be completed without much loss of time.

The Nijmegen landing is reported to be going well, in spite of enemy efforts to nip it in the bud. At one moment there seemed a chance that the report (received a week ago) of a very large number of tanks in the Forest Reichswald was going to prove true, but later reports put the number at three and the number of infantry at 300. Between Nijmegen and Eindhoven the bridges the bridges at Grave and Cechel are both in our possession and are intact: the bridge at Nijmegen is also reported intact but is not yet in our hands. If these reports are right, there is little to bar our progress between Eindhoven and Grave and no large body of enemy is thought to be in the area between....

From Arnhem there is no definite news, and until communications are fully established, it is impossible to say what enemy reaction has been. But further north, digging is reported on the banks of the rivers Waal and Ijssel, in the latter case at Olst and Wijhe. Civilian sources report that SS Panzerdivision 9 is located along the Ijssel river, but it cannot be the whole division, for part of it is known to be in the Escaut Canal area northeast of Neerpelt. A reasonable guess to account for its identification in both places is that the elements on the Ijssel River were sent there to recover from the effects of the long retreat, leaving behind

them such troops as were still capable of continuing the struggle without a refresher....

Thirty-six hours have now passed since the invasion of Holland began. Quick results have indeed been achieved already, but the full results of the operation will not be seen just yet. It is enough for the moment to know that the enemy has not disclosed any unexpected reserves, and that the composition met so far has been unable to impose any substantial check upon our progress. There is still no reason to suppose that he has anything worse in store for us than we have met so far, and nothing of divisional size is likely to appear just yet.²²⁰

This reports reflects the confusion about where SS Pz.D. 9 is located. As was indicated earlier, there were no units of this division south of the Waal during the battle. Not knowing the true situation in Arnhem, Second Army continues to be optimistic about the progress of the invasion force.

The Second Army Intelligence Summary for 19 September noted the following:

Right, left and centre the enemy has had the worst of the day, and on all sectors of Second Army front there are successes to report.

The most spectacular of these has been the lightning drive across Holland which has carried our armoured forces from the Eindhoven area right up to Nijmegen, where the bridge is still reported intact though not yet captured. The way was prepared for them by the airborne troops who held all the main bridges on the road north, including the vital one over the Maas at Grave....

Having reached the wooded country south of [the city of] Nijmegen, our troops linked up with the centre group of the forces that were landed by

air two days ago. They had met a certain amount of opposition of indifferent quality.... Most of [the opposition] ... in the Nijmegen are [came from] ... Inf.Div. 84, and this division is quite probably reforming in this area. It was last met in action north of the Somme, and there is some evidence to show that it had amalgamated with Infanteriedivision 85, but it is evidently on its own again now, although the latter division is not far away....

There is still very little up to date news from Arnhem. At one time the main road bridge was in our hands but it could not be held against determined enemy pressure, which included some Mark IV tanks.

Early this morning another bridgehead was forced over the Escaut Canal north of St. Huibrechts–Lille. As in other cases where we have had to establish crossings over this canal, the enemy has made every effort to prevent us and in this instance heavy mortar fire and small arms fire from strongly fortified houses made matters difficult for a time. In the course of the encounter another identification of a regiment last seen in the Normandy days was made, this time Fallschirmregiment 5 of Fallschirmdivision 3. It only adds to the confusion from the Order of Battle point of view, and it is reasonably clear now that, in this area at any rate, conclusions as to the presence of divisions cannot safely be drawn merely from identifications [of subordinate elements]....

With the Scheldt bridgehead not yet evacuated, and many thousands of troops still being sorted west and north of Antwerp, the enemy's position in Holland is unenviable....

²²⁰ SAIS No. 106 (Up to 2400 hrs 18 Sep 44), WO 285/4, PRO (emphasis added).

*From the North Sea to the Swiss frontier the Allied Advance is making headway and the coming days are full of possibilities, of which a Dutch disaster for the enemy is not in the least remote.*²²¹

The reporting of the developing battle continues to be optimistic in tone, but some discordant notes are present. While *Inf.Div. 84* and *Fallschirmregiment 5* cannot be classified as reinforcements in the battle area, the unexpected discovery of these units along the line of march illustrates how little was known about the enemy order of battle in Southern Holland.

The Second Army Intelligence Summary for 20 September speaks in terms of relief concerning both: first, the absence of a large enemy force in the *Reichswald* Forest area to the southeast of Nijmegen; and second, the failure of the Germans to make a serious attempt to cut the line of advance and encircle the advancing Allied force:

After ... bitter fighting, the bridge at Nijmegen is now in our possession and the way opened for the last stage of the process of linking up the airborne groups with the main body of the [ground] advance....

The anticipated source of danger to us in the Nijmegen area was the Forest Reichswald, but the latest estimate of enemy troops in the area puts them at not more than three companies in strength, supported by a few tanks. [This force] ... did not prove more than a nuisance, centered chiefly round Mook....

The battle of Arnhem has been an even harder struggle and the strength of the opposition has prevented us from establishing a foothold on the bridge. Except that the enemy troops included SS personnel, and also some tanks, there is still insufficient information to

²²¹ SAIS No. 107 (Up to 2400 hrs 19 Sep 44), WO 285/4, PRO.

form any firm idea as to the formations in charge. A reasonable guess would be SS Panzerdivision 9 and an odd Dutch SS battalion.

Meanwhile there are still enemy on either side of the corridor, but the most offensive party (at Best) has been liquidated. On the eastern side of the road, between Eindhoven and Helmond, there are reported to be about 400 enemy with some tanks.... Another day has gone without any serious attempt by the enemy either to sever the shaft of the spear which has been driven north by us, or to find some way through for the troops that are facing encirclement to the west. The presence of the enemy on each side of the road is a menace for solitary travelers, but until they form some plan of offensive action, they can be left to be mopped up by the rest of Second Army as it moves forward....

Enemy intentions have not been made any clearer by the events of the day and it may be that he is too busily occupied dealing with ours to have much time for any of his own.... Such signs as can be detected in a confusing picture point to the enemy's choice being in favor of withdrawal, and the speed of our advance may make his mind up for him. How soon positive signs will appear from the front line will depend on how soon we get to Arnhem, for headlong flight by front line troops, at the moment of writing, will turn what is more than an awkward situation into a major disaster.²²²

In this intelligence report Second Army begins to show concern for the situation of the 1st Airborne Division at Arnhem, but no doubt is expressed about the ability of XXXth Corps to effect a timely relief of the division. The presence of tanks in several areas is noted in three areas—at Arnhem, in the *Reichwald*, and on the right flank of the line of advance at Helmond. However, as with the presence of

²²² SAIS No. 108 (Up to 2400 hrs 20 Sep 44), WO 285/4, PRO (emphasis added).

enemy forces on either side of the corridor road, the tanks are considered to be few in number and not to pose any significant threat to the operational plan.

The Second Army Intelligence Summary for 21 September details the seriousness of the British situation at Arnhem:

The situation at Arnhem can now be reported [with some accuracy].... The enemy has undoubtedly put up [a] most determined opposition to all our efforts to secure the bridge, but in spite of it the northern end is still in our possession. The southern end is in enemy hands and the question whether he is in a position to destroy the bridge must remain unanswered. Further to the west our airborne forces are concentrated in a comparatively small area and have had to put up with persistent enemy artillery and mortar fire. Such efforts as the enemy has made to reduce this area below the tenable limits have been defeated, and the net result of four days constant fighting has been to leave us at least with a strong contingent on the north side of the Neder Rijn. This afternoon reinforcements by air descended on the southern side [of the river] and with [the Polish Airborne Brigade now on the ground] ... the whole Arnhem position, which had begun to be uncomfortable, may soon be improved.

Meanwhile we are 3 km north of Nijmegen, meeting the familiar type of opposition based on 88mm anti-tank guns, and consequently finding progress difficult. The corridor is not yet continuous between Nijmegen and Arnhem but the gap outstanding is of very small proportions.

Opposition is very mixed, as regards the enemy troops involved....

The three main enemy formations involved in this northern battle are a combined SS Pz.D. 9/10 formation (supported by SS Lehrbataillon 365), Fallschirmdiv. 6, and a division known as "Scherbening." The first of these has only added to the muddle, by producing a duplicate battalion

of SS Panzerregiment 21: the other was identified three days ago close to the Escaut Canal, north of Neerpelt. The second was reported to have but two regiments, each only one battalion strong, but it is also said to be in command of the divers Luftwaffe field units which are in abundance in the area. The third still remains something of a mystery, but it seems to be the product of Wehrkreis VI and may be taken to consist of reinforcement personnel, probably only partly trained....

On either side of the corridor the enemy is fairly active without showing any real sign of malicious intent. "Willing to wound but yet afraid to strike" is a fair summary of his behavior.... On the other side of the corridor Panzerbrigade 107 [now] has been identified [as the armoured unit] near Nuenen, and its presence here serves to explain the repeated reports of tanks, varying in number from 3 to 50, which have been received in the past few days [in the area northeast of Eindhoven]. The brigade is obviously one of the group of which four others have already been met by our Allies and its establishment provides for approximately 40 AFV's. In the present case both Panther and Tiger tanks are reported, and according to another prisoner 35 tanks have recently been received at a Panzertruppen workshop in Nuenen....

[The] ... [f]irst major reaction to our drive for Arnhem is the sending in of Panzerbrigade 107. Up to now [our] forces have met troops already in the area and Flak [guns] or low grade SS and infantry reinforcements. Pz.Bde. 107 is probably a warning of what is to come, and of a change in policy, as the enemy can no longer ignore the threat. Whereas hereto Aachen and Trier have had priority these sectors must now share with Holland. What remains to come cannot accurately be assessed but further Panzerbrigaden will be among the troops found to attempt to stop our northward drive. The initiative is still very much with us and, just up to now, the enemy has failed to do more than delay the Allied advance since we left western Normandy, so now, with less and less to

*throw in and more and more sectors needing it, the result is unlikely to be any different. A further factor determining the reinforcement programme is the preoccupation of finding men and weapons to strengthen the Westwall, in case it is needed....*²²³

In this report the identification of a new *Panzerbrigade*, with an assumed full establishment of modern tanks, prompts a half-hearted acknowledgment that Hitler may try to reinforce the battle area in Southern Holland. Second Army obviously is not impressed with the threat of reinforcements, probably because of their belief that the *Westwall* has an absolute reinforcement priority. In fact Second Army does not seem to be overly concerned about the possibility that *Inf.Div. "Scherbening"* also being the vanguard of a multi-division reinforcement effort. Finally, because both *SS Pz.D. 9* and *SS Pz.D. 10* were fighting in close proximity to each other in the Arnhem area and south of the Neder Rijn bridge, the Second Army did not discover that the two divisions were operating independently. Thus, overall, this summary still reflects the view that the Germans will not be able to stop the advance of the forces of XXXth Corps.

The Second Army Intelligence Summary for 22 September noted the following:

The Battle of Holland has continued today without the smallest indication that the enemy is prepared to give up ground of any military value before he [is forced to do so] The other indication of the enemy's fighting spirit was a determined effort by [German] infantry and armour to cut the line of our communications north of Eindhoven. In this

²²³ SAIS No. 109 (Up to 2400 hrs 21 Sep 44), WO 285/4, PRO (emphasis added). *Infanteriedivision "Scherbening,"* was in reality elements of Replacement Division Staff Nr. 406, an administrative divisional staff directing *Wehrkreis VI* head-quarters and local defense troops in the area round Geldern. Mitcham, *Hitler's Legions*, pp. 264–65. Some of its units must have rushed forward and been captured, leading to the identification of this formation. The training forces were not officially designated as a fighting formation—*Infanteriedivision 406*—until September 1944. In October 1944 the division was sent to the Arnhem area where it held a sector of the *Westwall*. *Id.*

he succeeded and **the sector between Uden and Veghel is out of our control....**

*It was only to be expected that the enemy would put up a strenuous effort to prevent the last link being forged in the Arnhem-Eindhoven chain. SS troops have provided the backbone of the opposition, with tanks and 88mm guns, and they have been reinforced with the latest arrivals from the Reich: the size of this new formation is not yet known, but it comes from Wehrkreis VI and is said to carry the title "Wuppertal" and to be part of Infanteriedivision 361. Although it is probably only partly trained, it can help to hold ground especially with SS personnel around. The result has been that a proper link-up with our airborne forces in the Arnhem area has not yet been possible.... **One of the main obstacles to the progress of our armour further north is that the road out of Nijmegen is a causeway making deployment difficult.***

Today's attack [by the enemy] on the Nijmegen road is likely to be the first of the enemy's assaults on what is obviously a tempting target. The units taking part in the attack [on the corridor road] were Pz.Bde. 107 and a strong contingent from SS Panzergrenadier- regiment 21.... In addition a small Kampfgruppe called "Richter" and another numbered 1099 were involved, [along] with Flakbataillon 52. It was therefore not by any means a negligible collection [of enemy forces]....

As was suggested yesterday Holland is now receiving some attention from the powers that be who provide reinforcements and now that the flow has begun we must expect more....²²⁴

²²⁴ (emphasis in original) SAIS No. 110 (Up to 2400 hrs 22 Sep 44), WO 285/4, PRO. *Infanteriedivision 361* was encircled at Brody on the Russian front in the summer of 1944. After the remnants of the division retreated into Poland, it was sent to Germany to reorganize and to refit, where its incorporated units of the newly formed *Grenadierdivision 569*. In

In contrast to the summary of 21st September, Second Army's G-2 is acknowledging the ability of the Germans to reinforce the battle area with division-sized units. The sharp counterattack by the forces in the Helmond area is reported to have resulting in the cutting of the corridor supply road. *It is of some interest to note that the Second Army finds it necessary to state that the reverine terrain and causeway roads is making the progress of the XXXth Corps forces difficult.* The sense of optimism contained in the earlier reports is absent in this summary—the Allies are just beginning to see that their enemy has greater capabilities than they had recognized.

The Second Army Intelligence Summary for 23 September noted the following:

The enemy's re-occupation of part of the Nijmegen road was not allowed to continue for more than 24 hours and by this evening communication with the northern group was restored....

Both from our troops on the ground and from prisoners captured in the Veghel area there is fairly strong evidence to show that the quality of the newcomers from the east differs widely from that of the retreating pilgrims of the west. The latter are frankly a sorry collection, inspired above all else with a determination to get home. The others are ready and willing to fight, and the morale of prisoners taken from Pz.Bde. 107 is stated to be "good to excellent." (The brigade was formed in Poland some months ago and had not been in action before.)

Across the Waal ... resistance was as stubborn as ever, and any hope [on our part] of an easy passage along the direct road to Arnhem has been sharply corrected.... The airborne troop in the Arnhem area are still hard pressed but they reported this morning a slight lessening in

September 1944, elements of the division—now *Volksgranadierdivision 361*—were rushed to Holland and it fought in the Battle of Arnhem. Mitcham, *Hitler's Legions*, pp. 244–45, 295–96.

the scale of enemy attacks, and a supply column supported by infantry gained touch on the southern bank of the [Neder Rijn] River.

Two [new infantry] formations now engaged on our eastern front include at least one and probably two new divisions. The first of these, Infanteriedivision 180 [under Generalleutnant Lemcke, is at Deurne (east of Helmond)]....

The other division is Infanteriedivision 190 [under a Generalleutnant Ernst Hammer]....

But one thing emerges plainly: the enemy is reinforcing with anything he can lay his hands on. A division of this type [i.e., Inf.Div. 180 or Inf.Div. 190,] may not be worth much and is probably ill-trained, but it is a case of desperate measures for desperate needs, and there is nothing else to spare. The object is primarily to keep the Westwall—or rather its northern appendix—intact as long as possible, and the committal of these divisions west of the Maas serves to accentuate the fact ... that the main defensive positions are forwards of the Rhine.

Thus the enemy policy begins to take shape. While he bars the way into Germany with all available means, he hopes to extract and re-form the surplus remains of A.O.K. 15. To fulfill this policy his method must be one of aggressive defense.... By cutting the road between Uden and Veghel the enemy hoped to wipe out our forces in Nijmegen and further north....

The reinforcement situation is difficult to assess. There are many divisional staff of the calibre of 180 and 190 for whom scratch regiments and supporting arms can be found, and though the quality of the man- power will not be high the recent comb-out in Germany will produce some of the requisite numbers.... But the position remains unaltered and all he can hope to do is to continue to check us for short

*periods with no hope of replacing the 900,000 men he has lost so far in the battle in the west.*²²⁵

When the Second Army had identified two more new division—which raised the total of reinforcement divisions to four—the intent of the Germans to do something contrary to what was expected had to be acknowledged. Second Army had not anticipated that the main defensive line in Holland would be maintained west of the Rhine. *It is hard to see how the Allies could have accepted the notion that the Germans would fail to make use of the numerous rivers and canals in Holland which were forward of the Rhine to establish a defense in depth.* Perhaps the answer lies simply in the false belief that the only purpose of the *Wehrmacht* in Holland was to keep the escape road open for A.O.K. 15. This summary also shows that the fighting spirit of the German troops already in place in Holland was a matter of note and concern for Second Army.

The SHAEF Weekly Intelligence Summary for the week ending on 23 September opens with the notation that “[i]n the West *the past week came nearer to seeing a stable line than any week since the Normandy break-through.*”²²⁶ The summary continues to reflect the sense of optimism still prevalent at SHAEF, but it does give an assessment of the capability of the Germans to send new units to the West:

In the sphere of major strategy, none of Germany’s problems are any nearer to solution....

²²⁵ SAIS No. 111 (Up to 2400 hrs 23 Sep 44), WO 285/4, PRO (emphasis added). *Infanteriedivision 180* was formed as a replacement training division in *Wehrkreis X* and conducted training operations in the north-central area of Germany until September 1944 when it was sent to Holland. Mitcham, *Hitler’s Legions*, p. 149. *Inf.Div. 190* was organized in 1939 as a training division in the Schleswig-Holstein area of *Wehrkreis X*. In September 1944 the division was upgraded and sent to Holland where it went into the line in the *Reichswald* area southwest of Groesbeek. Mitcham, *Hitler’s Legions*, pp. 153–54.

²²⁶ WISUM No. 27 (23 September 1944), SHAEF, p. 1, RG 331, NARA.

As before ... the rallying of the Western Front depends for the moment almost entirely on the manpower in Germany. In addition to the four divisions so far formed from training units and comb-outs by the four western Wehrkreisen, up to a further six from the same stable may be expected. These for preference will be used in manning the Westwall, not in open fighting. The rest of Germany might form a further ten such divisions ... [but they] would not necessarily be available for employment in the West.

Of Panzerbrigaden, a total of about 15 may be formed ... as a means of bringing [regular Panzerdivisionen] ... up to strength again....

Otherwise there may be in Germany some eight or ten divisions either in the "500" [Grenadierdivision] class or the bogus SS type, and three or four frontier divisions: more may yet be formed in due course. It is doubtful how many of these will be available for employment in the West, but four or five would be a reasonable share....

In detail, the enemy on the Western Front can only cut his coat according to the cloth. Unless his desperate counter-attack into the long Allied flank north of Eindhoven is successful, and unless he holds Arnhem, Holland is gone, and it will remain only for him to evacuate, as much as possible (very little) by sea. [All the] ports no doubt will be destroyed and fouled thoroughly²²⁷

Here some recognition of reality begins to evidence itself in the SHAEF summaries as the capabilities of the *Wehrmacht* to reinforce the line in Holland with infantry and *Panzer* forces is explained. However, SHAEF does not consider that the Germans will be able to do any more than slow down the invasion of Holland.

²²⁷ *Id.*, pp. 5–6.

The Second Army Intelligence Summary for 24 September noted the following:

But between [Uden] ... and Veghel it was evident that the enemy was not far away.... [A]nd from reports [this afternoon] ... it is clear that the enemy has once again reached the road, this time from the west. The troops involved are said to come from Fallschirmregiment 6 and to be supported by tanks. The latter are difficult to explain unless they are part of Pz.Bde. 107 which took part in the previous raid and perhaps crossed to the west when we regained control. On the other hand there have been one or two unconfirmed reports of tanks in the western and northern part of Holland, and civilians have referred more than once to SS Division "Mannheim" and SS Division "Viking," either of which might control a small number of tanks or assault guns. This further attack illustrates, if evidence were needed, how ready [and tempting] a target the road is, and there is ample opportunity here for a determined enemy....

The possibility of a general withdrawal on the western mainland of Holland is not by any means out of the question, and it would not be surprising to find the enemy leaving fortress garrisons on the western islands, to deny us access to Antwerp, and withdraw the remainder of his troops to positions north of the Waal. He has little to gain if he holds on to the mainland, but he will not hurry as he goes....

The enemy's policy doesn't alter. He hopes to cut off our supply line and in this he succeeds temporarily but he will need more troops if any lasting effect is to be achieved. Meantime, those employed are at times more than a nuisance but at each attempt he gets a bloody nose and nowhere handy has he the forces to make a lasting success of it. Nevertheless it all causes delay in the process of securing the L[ine] of C[ommunication] and gives him much needed time to bring in more

troops of the calibre of Inf.Div. 180, with which to hold us at bay, and render more difficult the task of consolidating the bridgehead at Nijmegen.

*The enemy has reacted strongly to the thrust in Holland and though hard pressed on all fronts to find troops and aeroplanes **he probably now considers the stopping of Second Army [as] priority one, in view of the fact that his reinforcements elsewhere on the German frontier has caused a temporary halt.***²²⁸

Second Army has recognized that Holland has the first call on the available German reinforcements. There is a certain pessimism in this summary which is caused in part, no doubt, by the palpable capability of the Germans to introduce new—albeit weak—units into the battle area. That pessimism also must be prompted by the recognition that great difficulty was being experienced by the men of XXXth Corps in consolidating the bridgehead north of Nijmegen. There is no sign in this summary that an early relief of Arnhem is anticipated. Clearly the British are still hoping that an enemy withdrawal will occur to allow the forces of Second Army to once again move forward.

The Second Army Intelligence Summary for 25 September noted the fact that the Germans have made a limited withdrawal in the area around Elst north of Nijmegen—where the British had least expected it—and the G-2 of Second Army acknowledges that he is unable to reconcile all that has happened:

²²⁸ (emphasis in original) SAIS No. 112 (Up to 2400 hrs 24 Sep 44), WO 285/4, PRO. The SS *Panzerdivision 5 "Viking,"* had Dutch volunteers in two of its three regiments, but it saw action only on the Russian Front and was engaged in fighting in the Warsaw area in the Autumn of 1944. It was not involved in the Battle of Holland. Mitcham, *Hitler's Legions*, pp. 446–47. This author finds no reference to an SS formation "*Mannheim.*" If the name is associated with either SS *Panzerbataillon "Hermann von Salza,"* of SS *Panzer Grenadierdivision 11,* or SS *Panzerbrigade 4 "Niederlande,"* the former was in the Riga area in September 1944 while the latter was fighting in the Courland pocket area. Again, neither was in Holland in September 1944. *Id.*, 453–54, 469–70.

The struggle for the road has been going on all day and when darkness fell this evening the enemy had been driven off it, but was still too near to make the highway completely free from risk. In so far as he has interrupted our chain of communication and supply, the enemy has gained something, but he has not been able to summon enough strength at the critical centre of activity to make the interruption anything more than temporary.... This does not mean that he will not try again: far from it. Vicious jabs of this type are all part of the policy with which Second Army has good reason to be familiar, namely that of holding open a means of escape for the withdrawal of formations now sadly the worse for wear. It was illustrated at Falaise, again west of the Seine, again (for a brief moment) on the Somme and once again in Belgium....

North of the Waal the enemy was reported during the afternoon to be withdrawing and the village of Elst was captured after being the scene of heavy fighting earlier in the operation. To what extent he is going back and with what object is not yet clear, but the ground between the rivers [north of Nijmegen] is ceasing to have any particular value to him, and its denial to us might involve him in a heavier commitment than he can afford. And yet there are signs of a reinforcement in an area somewhere north of Nijmegen.... It is not beyond the bounds of possibility that [the new unit] ... is Panzerbrigade 109, come in to reinforce the Arnhem area....

Enemy intentions are not by any means clear. Reinforcement of the Reichswald Forest, withdrawal from Elst after a bitter struggle, and the fact that our patrols are reported to have reached 's-Hertogenbosch do not all fit the plan. The attack on the road was probably designed with the dual purpose of preventing us from using it and to gain time while 's-Hertogenbosch is fortified, yet there do not appear to be any troops in the area. Reinforcement to the Reichswald probably had the dual

purpose of containing our troops between the rivers and of providing a force for a westward drive to prevent our early advance to the Maas. Yet our troops have reached the [Maas] River at Gennep against only minor opposition. It was necessary to hold Elst to deny us easy access to Arnhem, yet the enemy has been forced to go. Intentions must now be withdrawal to the Waal on the west while holding 's-Hertogenbosch, when he can withdraw the troops in the Schijndel area and south to hold it with. [The city of] 's-Hertogenbosch must be held as a pivot if the withdrawal over the [Maas and] Waal is to have any success.... The immediate policy is to gain time while a more secure line is chosen.²²⁹

Even with the capture of Elst there is no optimism in this summary of the enemy situation. There is obvious concern shown about the status of the corridor road, and the presence of yet another new *Panzerbrigade* is unsettling news.

The Second Army Intelligence Summary for 26 September noted the following:

The way to Nijmegen still required some clearing this morning, and the enemy had spent part of his period of occupation in laying mines and creating improvised road blocks from the vehicles which fell into his possession. By mid-day however the road could be used again, subject to the [continuing] risk of shell fire from the western side....

In view of the pressure we exerted in the area between the Nijmegen road and the Meuse, there was little hope of any enemy lingering there except at great peril to himself, and the general tendency on that side of the road has been to retire to greater security behind the Meuse. Panzerbrigade 107 is still in the area, but has lost much of its armour and ... had not more than 10 tanks left today. Infanteriedivision 180 has also been severely handled....

²²⁹ SAIS No. 113 (Up to 2400 hrs 25 Sep 44), WO 285/4, PRO.

*On our left flank the continued task of evacuating A.O.K. 15 remnants and fighting a delaying action through Holland is occupying all the enemy's resources. Further information about the capacity of ferries across the Scheldt makes it possible to form some estimate of the number of men and the amount of equipment transported. In round figures it is considered that 80,000 men, 500 guns and over 4,500 vehicles and horses escaped. A considerable part of this total is required to garrison the coastal "fortresses," and some of the troops are again in action, notably Infanteriedivisionen 59 and 245. **The remainder are presumably on their way to Germany where they will be re-formed for immediate reinforcement of the west....***

The enemy is still on the defensive, and so he will remain. The events of the past week have given him ample opportunity to take offensive action if he was in a position to do so, and the fact that he has done no more than nibble at our Lines of Communication, except at Arnhem, is a fair indication of his plan.

*The British [First] Airborne Division has now been withdrawn from north of the Neder Rhein under cover of rear guards sent up from Nijmegen and of an artillery programme. After many days of very gallant fighting, in which they suffered many casualties, their task has been completed. Although as a result we failed to secure the Arnhem Bridge large enemy forces that could have come to Nijmegen were diverted, so making our task of securing a bridgehead over the Waal the easier. **It is fair to say, in fact, that it is doubtful if we could have consolidated the Nijmegen bridgehead if troops had not been dropped at Arnhem to divert the enemy.***

Offensive action by the enemy in any strength, unless he brings in new troops, is most unlikely perhaps north and east of Nijmegen where a handsome prize is to be won if he can regain that bridge. Elsewhere he

*must defend the Maas and Waal and hold 's-Hertogenbosch and Tilburg while A.O.K. 15 withdraws behind the river taking its time unless it is pushed.*²³⁰

This summary is interesting in several respects. First, note is made of the fact that the attack of XXXth Corps has not prevented units from A.O.K. 15 from returning to Germany. And, two of the divisions from that *Korps—Inf.Div'n 59 and 245* have crossed the Scheldt Estuary and gone into the line on the left flank of Second Army. Second, *describing the British air-landing at Arnhem as a "diversion" to allow for the passage of ground forces to Nijmegen is a classic post hoc rationalization of the original intent of Montgomery.* Redefining objectives is a polite, albeit dishonest, way of having to acknowledge that one has been defeated by a foe whose capabilities were misjudged.

The Second Army Intelligence Summary for 27 September noted the following:

After ten days of intense activity during which we have advanced approximately 80 km and established a firm hold over the eastern half of Holland south of the Neder Rhein, and Second Army has had a day of comparative quiet on most of the front....

*There is nothing new to be said about [the] enemy [current] intentions. They remain as before to prevent our expansion into Holland. [Meanwhile] Arnhem is now lost to us and everything possible will be done by the enemy to prevent us gaining a fresh footing over the Neder Rhein....*²³¹

²³⁰ (emphasis in original) SAIS No. 114 (Up to 2400 hrs 26 Sep 44), WO 285/4, PRO.

²³¹ SAIS No. 115 (Up to 2400 hrs 27 Sep 44), WO 285/4, PRO.

Here one sees the Second Army as putting the best face on what was truly a most disappointing situation. Gone is the preconception that the war's end was in sight.

The Second Army Intelligence Summary for 28 September reveals that the Germans have satisfied themselves with the stability of their defensive line in Holland and are withdrawing *Panzer* units from the front line:

In spite of a lack of reports [during the day,] last light information indicates that the enemy has been active today both on the ground and in the air.... [In the air] his main effort was again designed to destroy the Nijmegen bridges. In this he failed, but he managed to stop traffic over the railway bridge for a short time and to interrupt the flow over the road bridge. Repairs have now been completed....

North of the Waal enemy troops that crossed the Neder Rijn the night before last have been eliminated. They appear to be from Kampfgruppen "Tettau," [—which is estimated to be of divisional strength—] which is responsible for defense of [the Neder Rijn] River astride Wageningen.

South of the Waal in the Reichswald area the enemy has probably been more active than anywhere else. Three attacks [—all supported by tanks—] began between 0500 and 0600 hrs this morning. [All of the attacks were repelled]....

All evidence goes to show that SS Panzerkorps II is trying to re-form in the general area northeast of Arnhem.

SS Panzerdivision 9 is reported to be located astride the Arnhem-Zutphen road. SS Panzerregiment 10 is at Vorden [east of Zutphen] with a divisional HQ at Ruurlo [to the east].... The enemy has appreciated the threat from Nijmegen and it seems that very shortly, if

they are not now indeed ready, he will have available to meet us in this sector SS Panzerdivision 9, Panzerbrigade "Frundsberg" [from SS Panzerbrigade 10] and a Jagdpantherbataillon with perhaps Panzerbrigade 109 as well.

In the next few days we must expect further reinforcements and the most likely area is between the Maas and the Rhine southeast of Nijmegen. It is difficult to see what will come but armour is of first importance. Apart from Panzerbrigaden, of which we have no fresh evidence, it would not be surprising if SS Panzer- division 12 ["Hitler Jugend"] were to appear. There is absolutely no evidence to show any leaning towards Second Army but it is some time since it was identified by the Allied Armies.

If Holland has high priority for reinforcements, the "Hitler Jugend" division is an obvious candidate. Ersatz infantry and fortress troops are probably in fairly good supply to man the east bank of the Maas but armour is at present lacking. We must expect this situation to be remedied soon.²³²

Several days earlier Second Army had denied that there was any threat of tanks in the Holland and denied that the enemy had the ability or intent to send reinforcements to Holland. Now the two things that weigh heaviest on the mind of G-2 Second Army is the clearly demonstrated ability of the Germans to reinforce this area and to upgrade the status of the *Panzer* forces to a sector reserve presumably capable of mounting a strong counterattack against any further efforts of Second Army to cross the Neder Rhein.

The Second Army Intelligence Summary for 29 September noted the following:

²³² SAIS No. 116 (Up to 2400 hrs 28 Sep 44), WO 285/4, PRO.

In the early hours of this morning, [some] 12 divers attacked the bridges at Nijmegen ... and succeeded in planting 4 mines on the road bridge and 2 on the railway bridge.... A gap of 80 feet was made in the road bridge, and one span of the railway bridge was destroyed.... The efforts are likely to be repeated....

In the northern sector the position is anything but simple. Infanterie-division "Tettau" has been re-ported north of the Neder Rhein round Wageningen, and there is apparently a very mixed force at Arnhem.... The most significant feature of this information is that it leaves out SS Pz.D. 9, and if as is reported, this formation has now been recovered sufficiently to be functioning as a division, it is available as a reserve in the area northeast of Arnhem.

South of Arnhem there is still an untidy situation. Infanteriedivisionen 406, "Räsler," 190, 180, and 176, and Fallschirmjägerdivision 7 ("Erdmann"), form the framework between the Neder Rhein and the Maas (Meuse) at Wesseem. Within this framework there are several groups below divisional size, and of these the most important are Kampfgruppen "Hartmut," and "Walther," and Pz.Bde. 107....

Meantime, trains continue to arrive in Eastern Holland. Some are coming to Second Army sector but not all and the enemy appears to show more than little concern for the line on the River Ijssel; north from Zutphen. In posing of available reserves therefore we should view the problem in the light as the enemy sees it. In Holland his problems are three: to prevent a drive east to the south of Nijmegen; to prevent a drive east between Nijmegen and Arnhem; and finally to prevent us

*from crossing the Neder Rhein and then driving east over the Ijssel....*²³³

This summary acknowledges the presence of a large number of enemy units—not all of which had arrived in the battle area from elsewhere as reinforcements—which were not carried on the G-2's order of battle charts a fortnight earlier.

The Second Army Intelligence Summary for 30 September noted the following:

This day is one of somewhat disconnected fragments, so far as news of the enemy is concerned. They vary greatly in importance, and with the best will in the world it is difficult to see that they affect the general picture to any material extent. Shuffle his hand as he may, the enemy's cards remain much the same.

One clue to his intentions has been given by further evidence linking Panzerdivision 116 with the area around Kleve. The information is still somewhat thin, but there is some reason to believe that the Panzerdivision has shifted north[wards] from the Aachen area....

Our hold on Nijmegen and its bridges has already survived more than one counterattack, but it is still not merely a tempting target if the enemy were minded to strike, but a very obvious target, if he wishes to deprive us of a valuable base for further operations. There is no doubt that the enemy strength in the area has increased considerably during the past few days. Rail movements, road movements, air activity and so on may have been the preliminaries to a counterthrust which is

²³³ SAIS No. 117 (Up to 2400 hrs 29 Sep 44), WO 285/4, PRO. *Fallschirmjägerdivision 7* was formed in September 1944 and was under the command of *Generalleutnant* Wolfgang Erdmann, who had been the Chief of Staff of *Fallschirmarmee 1*. Mitcham, *Hitler's Legions*, pp. 423–24; Arnold von Roon, *Die Bildchronik der Fallschirmtruppe 1935-1945: Von den Männern, der Ausbildung, dem Kampf* (Freiburg: Podzum-Pallas-Verlag GmbH, 1985), p. 214.

inviting enough on paper but which may involve a greater risk than the enemy can afford. For the present there are no more than signs, persuasive but not convincing....

Elsewhere on the front the enemy continues preparations for the battle of Germany. Extensive diggings are reported all along the east bank of the Maas and [the river's] nodals too have their trench system and anti-tank ditches. As yet the system is but a single line of deep linked-up fire trenches with listening posts forward. In time depth will be added till the whole system provides a formidable barrier.

The enemy's policy just now is to delay us so as to gain time to refit his formations and to dig his trenches. The tactics are mainly of a defensive nature so far as the areas of 's-Hertogenbosch–Nijmegen–Overloon. But pure defense will gain nothing and some form of offensive action is to be anticipated if only to cause yet more delay. The most likely area for this is Nijmegen, where the large dividend of the Waal bridges awaits the successful outcome of offensive action in that area.²³⁴

This summary, without saying so, all but acknowledges that Second Army's efforts to complete Operation GARDEN as planned have ended. The enemy on the line is seen as being well dug-in and sufficient in number, with an adequate armoured reserve. The Chimera is seen as every bit as tough and ready for hard action as it was in the area around Caen.

The SHAEF Weekly Intelligence Summary for the week ending 1 October 1944 begins by noting that “[t]he shape of the line in the West has changed little in the past week....”²³⁵ SHAEF goes on to state:

²³⁴ SAIS No. 118 (Up to 2400 hrs 30 Sep 44), WO 285/4, PRO.

²³⁵ WISUM No. 28 (1 October 1944), SHAEF, p. 1, RG 331, NARA.

The great operation of the week was, of course, the successful holding [by the Germans] of the Neder Rijn. Though the Allies did manage to secure the bridges at Nijmegen over the Waal, they were not able to keep their hold on the Neder Rijn and the Germans were eventually able to blow even the Nijmegen bridges, keeping an improvised line along the Lower Rhine–Westwall–Vosges virtually intact, with the exception of the Allied penetration at Aachen [by First Army].²³⁶

The summary also contains this analysis of German capabilities:

Enemy Capabilities.... On the home manpower front, which still remains decisive, there is little to add beyond a few fragmentary items. One tendency to be watched is the creation of new “parachute” divisions. Luftwaffe personnel in training units and ground organizations are being flung wholesale into infantry uniform and, to judge by the statements of captured officers and by extemporizations in Holland, these are likely to be formed into new so-called “Fallschirmdivisionen.” Needless to say, no parachutes will be required, but the name is glorious....

On the Western Front itself the enemy has fared better than might have been expected. He has so far recovered from the initial shock of the Allied advance into Holland with credit. At least he has still kept open some alley ways out of a not impossible situation, and he may well cherish hopes of a more considerable success. Armeekorps 15 is fighting well, very much favored by the watery terrain, and shows every intention of continuing to hold its angular line south of the Waal. None of its formations is yet entirely cutoff. The whole position will, however, become untenable unless the Allies are driven back across the Waal, and even then A.O.K. 15 still possesses no armour and is

²³⁶ *Id.*

liable to defeat in detail. Moreover, the extemporized forces pushed in along the east side of the salient have not shown up well, so that some further stiffening will be needed if the Westwall is to be solidly buttressed on the Meuse [(the Maas)]....

Behind all this lies the clear and steady intention of forming two large armoured formations to be used as mobile reserves, one for each Army Group, while the line is stabilized with infantry alone. This is a consummation, first adumbrated in Panzergruppe West, at which the enemy has been steadily aiming since D-Day. If the line were really stable and if the armoured groups were really large, he might be said to have got once more some way toward its realization.²³⁷

This summary shows that SHAEF too has come to its senses. The belief in an early end of the war in Europe has ended—almost with as much abruptness as it began. To the credit of General Strong, the SHAEF summary acknowledges that the Allies have underestimated the capabilities of the *Wehrmacht*.

This is a good place to stop the story in so far as it details the state of the Germans army and its intentions as seen from the viewpoint of Allied intelligence. *Indeed, in time it marks the beginning of two more dangerous assumptions that were made on the part of the Allies—the assumption that the German were forming an armoured reserve solely for defensive purposes, and that the weakened German line in the Ardennes presented no threat to the Allies.*²³⁸

SUMMING UP

Charles MacDonald, in *The Siegfried Line Campaign*, states that the resurgence of the German Army on the Western Front in the fall of 1944—hailed

²³⁷ *Id.*, pp. 7–8 (emphasis added).

by the Germans as the “Miracle in the West” (akin to the “Miracle of the Marne” in World War I)—was possible, in part, due to the able leadership of *Feldmarschal* Walter Model during the retreat from France. This conclusion is certainly debatable—Model was scarcely in control of the rout. But, of more importance, according to MacDonald, was the “one simple truth: contrary to [an] almost universal belief, Germany had not reached the peak of war production until the fall of 1944 and still contained a considerable pool of manpower.”²³⁹ Neither of these facts were taken into account in the intelligence summaries of Second Army, FAAA, 21st Army Group, or SHAEF during the period studied in this paper.

The Allied commanders—feeling enormous relief at the success of the risky D-Day landing and the much delayed Normandy breakout—simply became *overconfident*. That affected both their analysis and their planning. In the instance detailed above, they failed to achieve the main objective of MARKET/GARDEN—they failed to cross the Neder Rhein to establish the bridgehead for the final drive to Berlin. Heavy casualties and the loss of much equipment and stores were the results of the error in their thinking and attitude.

Eisenhower and his staff never considered the success of OVERLORD as a sure thing. They planned against known odds and gave themselves a considerable edge with the FORTITUDE deception. But once they were ashore, and after the Allied Army made its breakout, their view of the German Army was changed. Believing that a collapse of the *Wehrmacht* in the West was a near-term probability, they began to believe that the war itself was nearly over and that the Germans could not effectively deal with anything they did in Northwestern Europe. *The belief—the fatal preconception—that they war was all but over led to a universal self-deception about their strengths and the weaknesses of the Germans. Overconfidence to the point of hubris was the result.*

²³⁸ On 16 December 1944 *Panzerarmee 5* and *Panzerarmee 6* launched Germany's counterattack in the Ardennes—it all came as a big surprise to the Allied forces. MacDonald, *The Siegfried Line Campaign*, pp. 392–96.

*Overconfidence probably is the single most frequent cause of surprise.*²⁴⁰ Military analysts and operational planner ought to begin every day with that maxim on their mind.

*Overconfidence certainly breeds vulnerability.*²⁴¹ “Swaggering tends to produce self-intoxication, and along with it an inflation of one’s strength across-the-board,” and such an enhancement of self-esteem tends to lead to even greater self-confidence, and produce even more aggressive attitudes toward an adversary.²⁴² *Hubris is the zenith state of overconfidence.*

Understanding this truth—that overconfidence breeds vulnerability—brings with it the realization that when men like Montgomery are being swept along in a hubristic state of mind, *the Chimera—my symbol for self-deception (any illusion or fabrication of the mind)—can become the reality that shapes action.* In regard to the invasion of Holland, Montgomery and the other Allied commanders simply lost sight of the real strength of the *Wehrmacht*. *The Germans certainly were surprised by the airborne invasion in a tactical sense, but surprise did not bring victory.* On the other hand, the Allies certainly were the victims of strategic surprise in Holland—the invasion of Holland failed when the Allied self-deception came face to face with reality of a German army that was not as they imagined it to be.

After the Allies had concluded that the *Wehrmacht* was beaten they began to plan for the end of the war. It was at that point in time that ***the current***

²³⁹ *Id.*, p. 392.

²⁴⁰ Roy Godson, “General Discussion: Avoiding Political and Technological Surprise in the 1980’s,” in *Intelligence Requirements for the 1980’s: Analysis and Estimates*, ed. Roy Godson (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Books, 1980), 118.

²⁴¹ Klaus Knorr, “Lessons in Statecraft,” in *Strategic Military Surprise: Incentives and Opportunities*, eds. Klaus Knorr and Patrick Morgan (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Books, 1983), p. 249.

²⁴² Michael J. Brenner, “The Iraq-Iran War: Speculations About a Nuclear Re-Run,” *Journal of Strategic Studies* 8 (March 1985), p. 32.

expectations factor began to interfere with the British perception capability. Because Montgomery and the many of the officers at SHAEF, at Second Army, and in the First Allied Airborne Army had concluded that the enemy was beaten there was a natural tendency on their part either to ignore or to misinterpret the key indicators relating to any real German capabilities other than withdrawal. All the indicators pointing to defensive and counterattack capabilities simply were ignored by them. All the indicators that signaled the presence of tanks or of the intent to reinforce the line in Holland also were ignored. Because the current Allied expectation seemed so logically sound, the preconceptions naturally also carried with its own self-proving persuasiveness.

Time and again well-publicized experiments have demonstrated the extent to which the information accepted and acted on by those in charge—including military commanders—depends on the person’s own expectations, assumptions and preconceptions.²⁴³ The cognitive phenomenon which this author calls the *current expectations factor* “is one of the most fundamental principles concerning perception: we tend to perceive what we expect to perceive,” and “a corollary of this principle is that it takes more information, and more unambiguous information, to recognize an unexpected phenomenon than an expected one.”²⁴⁴ Michael Handel summarized the phenomenon thusly:

²⁴³ Richard J. Heuer, “Cognitive Factors in Deception and Counterdeception,” in Donald C. Daniel and Katherine L. Herbig (eds.), *Strategic Military Deception* (Elmsford, NY: Pergamon Press, 1981), p. 34.

The **availability bias** also suggests that employees of watch offices will tend to over-estimate the [actual] probability of whatever it is they are watching for. Having been briefed and trained to recognize certain indicators, and having imagined and rehearsed scenarios that include the watched-for developments, it is not surprising that these developments are at the forefront of their minds as they try to forecast the future course of events. *To the extent that the watched-for developments is judged more probable, the perceptual bias of seeing what one expects to see also plays a greater rôle.*

Id., pp. 48–49.

²⁴⁴ Heuer, “Cognitive Factors,” p. 34.

I'll believe it when I see it.

I'll see it when I believe it.²⁴⁵

*If a military commander is not expecting immediate trouble, or trouble of a particular kind, or trouble in a particular place, then his negative expectations determine how he will read an intelligence report.*²⁴⁶

Richard Heuer tells how preconception influences the way all people perceive information, and how the thought process also is effected:

Patterns of expectation, rooted in past experience and training, tell us subconsciously, what to look for, what is important, and how to interpret what we see. These patterns form a “mind-set” that predisposes us to think in certain ways. “A mind-set is akin to a screen or lens through which we perceive the world.”²⁴⁷

The application of this concept to the military situation is vital to an understanding of the combat decision-making process. *Even as military commanders and intelligence officers sort the reports before them, they always will tend to select*

²⁴⁵ Handel, “Strategic Surprise (First Draft),” p. 28, paraphrasing Charles Perrow, “Normal Accident at Three Mile Island,” *Transaction (Social Sciences and Modern Society)* 18 (July/August 1981), p. 21.

²⁴⁶ See Roberta Wohlstetter, *Pearl Harbor: Warning and Decision* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1962), p. 390. “As William James put it, ‘My experience is what I agree to attend to. Only those items I notice shape my mind.’ But he adds, ‘Without selective interest, experience is utter chaos.’” Goleman, *Vital Lies, Simple Truths*, p. 21.

²⁴⁷ Heuer, “Cognitive Factors,” pp. 35–6. According to Heuer:

[M]ind-sets are neither good nor bad: they are unavoidable. There is no conceivable way of coping with the volume of stimuli that impinge upon our senses, or with the volume and complexity of the information that we have to analyze without [a] ... simplifying preconception about what to expect, what is important, and what is related to what.”

Id., p. 36.

*what is in accord with their expectations.*²⁴⁸ However, “objective analysis is not achieved by attempting to avoid preconceptions” (and it would be self-deluding even to try), but by always attempting to recognize the very *tentative nature* of all knowledge and by devising means to test every perception and assumption against some objective reality.²⁴⁹

Against the backdrop of current expectation problems, Richard Heuer observes and advises:

As a general rule, we are more often on the side of being too wedded to our established views and thus too quick to reject information that does not fit these views, than on the side of being too quick to reverse our beliefs. Thus, most of us would do well to be more open to evidence and ideas that are at variance with our preconceptions.²⁵⁰

The problem with this advice, as noted by Michael Handel, is that, at times, “open-ended ideas do not provide enough basis for action or longer planning, as continuous change [and conflicting information] can bring about confusion and paralysis.”²⁵¹

²⁴⁸ Wohlstetter, *Pearl Harbor*, p. 393.

²⁴⁹ Heuer, “Cognitive Factors,” p. 36. He also notes that “when evidence is ambiguous, as is commonly the case in intelligence analysis, this predisposition increases the likelihood the indicators [of potential conflict] will be perceived accurately when they in fact exist ... but it also increases the chances they will be perceived erroneously when they are not really there. *Id.*, p. 35. The author served as the Army’s Middle East current intelligence analyst at ISD in the Pentagon in the 1969–71 period. Over his desk his colleagues hung this sign:

He was on the alert constantly for every signal, shrewdly sensitive to relationships and situations that did not exist.

It was a constant reminder to beware of preconceptions.

²⁵⁰ Richard J. Heuer, Jr., “Strategic Deception: A Psychological Perspective,” a paper presented at the 21st Annual Convention of the International Studies Association, Los Angeles, California, March 1980, p. 45.

²⁵¹ Handel, “Strategic Surprise (First Draft),” p. 30.

*When the adversary's actions do not correspond with the analysts current expectations, behavioral surprise results.*²⁵² Thus, according to Klaus Knorr, when an analyst forms expectations about the enemy he must be sure that *his* current expectations correspond with the adversary's *attitudes* or *predispositions*, for both affect the enemy's behavior:²⁵³

The crucial point to note is that attitudes, though they are powerful in shaping behavior, do not by themselves determine it ... [i.e.,] behavior depends upon the information on which the [adversary] ... acts and the value it places on the outcome of alternative courses of action.²⁵⁴

Knorr also points out that intelligence estimates and decisions by commanders often are wrong, not because the analyst or the decisionmaker does not know the information or basic values on which the enemy acts, but because he assumes the adversary will act on the basis of the very same information or values that the commander and the intelligence officer possess."²⁵⁵

Three psychological factors are known to play an important part in turning innocent preconceptions into serious self-deceptions. They are **unconscious suppression, stubborn attachment, and psychological investment**—each of which is easily explained.

²⁵² It is well to distinguish here two categories of strategic surprise noted by Klaus Knorr. "Technical" surprise is compatible with the prevalent set of expectations and occurs when the enemy is successful in concealing a particular capability or in keeping a particular course of action secret; in contrast, "behavioral" surprise results when the enemy's behavior is incompatible, or seems incompatible, with the analyst's set of expectations. Klaus Knorr, "Failure in National Intelligence Estimates: The Case of the Cuban Missile Crisis," *World Politics* 16 (April 1964): p. 462. In other words, Technical surprise makes one say: "I didn't *know* they would do that." Behavioral surprise makes one say: "I didn't *believe* they would do that."

²⁵³ *Id.*, p. 464.

²⁵⁴ *Id.*

²⁵⁵ *Id.*

When a military commander, or an analyst, or anyone having decision-making responsibility, is processing new intelligence information they necessarily will approach it with a fixed set of assumptions and expectations about the motivation of the enemy and the process of the adversary's decisionmaking. All observed events consistent with such current expectations are perceived and processed easily. Those that contradict the preconception tend to be ignored or to be distorted in a subconscious—or preconscious—process of perception.²⁵⁶ This means that decisionmakers tend not to be aware of this mental process—hence the ***unconscious suppression***. Accordingly, from time to time, all old information should be thoroughly and objectively re-examined—for a decisionmaker's current expectations may change—to see if any vital signal was overlooked unknowingly during an earlier analysis.

Sometimes the decisionmaker's problem is not one of mental suppression; instead, it is one of not being able to mentally let go of an expectation. "Human beings have a ***stubborn attachment*** to old beliefs."²⁵⁷ Sometimes "the pattern of expectation becomes so deeply imbedded that they continue to influence preconceptions even when we are alerted to and try [hard] to take account of the existence of data that does not fit our preconception."²⁵⁸

At some point every decisionmaker move from having a tentative hypothesis to the point of having a reasoned opinion. It is at that point that they subconsciously will make a ***psychological investment*** in their work product. The

²⁵⁶ Heuer, "Cognitive Factors," p. 35. Roberta Wohlstetter observed that "much of the appearance of wanton neglect that emerged from the various investigations [of Pearl Harbor] ... resulted from the unconscious suppression of vast congeries [—i.e., aggregations of information—] of signs pointing in every direction except Pearl Harbor. It was difficult to recall these signs later since they had led nowhere." Wohlstetter, *Pearl Harbor*, p. 387.

²⁵⁷ Wohlstetter, *Pearl Harbor*, p. 393 (emphasis added).

²⁵⁸ Heuer, "Cognitive Factors," pp. 34–35, citing Jerome S. Bruner and Leo Postman, "On the Perception of Incongruity: A Paradigm," in *Perception and Personality: A Symposium*, ed. Jerome S. Bruner and David Krech (New York: Greenwood Press, 1968). This problem is

harder anyone has had to work to get to that decision point, the bigger will be the psychological investment. As the factual analysis continues, the decisionmaker will find that the information—or the preconception—*first* used to reach a decision will be more and more supportive of the *initial* theory. They also will begin to find more facts to support their view. Once the decisionmaker's orders or estimates become the basis for action—their psychological investment in the product (and it may all be unconscious)—will make a change of mind virtually impossible.²⁵⁹

This heuristic factor works equally well when applied to the intelligence product of a group or an organization, or to the decisions made by anyone in authority. In fact, when senior military commanders become convinced of the correctness of *their* decisions, then their psychological investment usually manifests itself in the form of what can only be described as “sturdy optimism.” The operational orders that were issued by Field-Marshal Montgomery in August and September 1944 reflected his optimism in the ability of the British Second Army to simply do whatever he ordered.

All things now considered, there really was nothing so very extraordinary about the failure of the intelligence officers of British Second Army to predict what would happen after the Germans were routed in France. There is no credible evidence which would support the proposition that the failure of the British staffs to anticipate the *Wehrmacht's* “Miracle in the West” in Holland was the result of any instance of negligence or stupidity, or lack of intelligence acumen. Rather, the root of the problem lies in the circumstances which naturally tend to affect even the most “honest, dedicated and intelligent” of men.²⁶⁰ The self-deception of

also is referred to as *mental anchoring*. Theodore R. Sarbin, “Prolegomenon to a Theory of Counterdeception,” in *Strategic Military Deception, op. cit.*, p. 153.

²⁵⁹ See I. Nelson Rose, “Litigator’s Fallacy,” *Litigation: The Journal of the Section of Litigation, American Bar Association* 3 (Spring 1985): p. 61. Rose discusses this problem in relation to trial attorneys and states the problem in an insightful way. “It is a normal human reaction to look for factual capital to support one’s psychological investment.” *Id.*

²⁶⁰ Roberta Wohlstetter noted in regard to the intelligence failure at Pearl Harbor, “we have found the roots of this surprise in circumstances that affected honest, dedicated, and intelligent men.” Wohlstetter, *Pearl Harbor*, p. 397.

Montgomery and others came to pass quite naturally because of the preconception that the war had been “lost” by the Germans and that the *Wehrmacht* had ceased to be a military force to be feared. Truly the “war” had been “lost,” but that did not mean that either the will or the capacity of the German military to wage war or to wage successful battles had been destroyed.

Despite the fact that the end of the war was near—this we know with the hindsight of history, there was still a good deal of fight left in the Germans. To borrow and adapt an old idea from Ronald Lewin: as one thinks of the armoured strength of British Second Army thrusting against their adversary, the image comes to mind of a proud gladiator in the arena of a Roman circus, vainly seeking to destroy his opponent, the *retiarius*, who in the end foils and finally entraps the gladiator with the toss of the net before finishing him off with the three pronged spear.²⁶¹ Such was the unfortunate fate of Montgomery’s daring plan to lay down a carpet of airborne forces and make an armoured dash across Holland and into Germany. *The plan was splendid, albeit unsuited to the circumstances, and no amount of bravery or daring could bring about the desired result.*

The German military force that 21st Army Group believed it had routed, and was pursuing pell-mell across France and Belgium was not, in fact, the same military force that was in hasty flight. The British understanding of the German’s capabilities was wrong. The dread forces of the *Wehrmacht* had become, in the mind of Montgomery, the Chimera. Unfortunately for British Second Army and the Allied airborne forces, that Chimera was only an illusion—a passing fancy or fabrication—in Montgomery’s mind, and for that reason he was totally unprepared to deal with the reality of the solidification of the German line in Holland. Montgomery was the victim of strategic surprise.

It is clear that neither Montgomery nor the intelligence officers at SHAEF, British Second Army, or at First Allied Airborne Army were surprised by any

²⁶¹ Ronald Lewin, *The Life and Death of the Afrika Korps* (New York: Quandrangle, 1977), p. 34. In Lewin’s usage the *Afrika Korps* was defeated by the British.

deliberate *German* deception. Instead, all were victims of a collective self-deception that was rooted in one hopeful, albeit false, preconception—a belief that because the Germans had lost the war, the Germans would end the war and end it quickly. Intent on capitalizing on the belief that he had but to order Second Army and FAAA to breach the Neder Rijn barrier and it would be a *fait accompli*, Montgomery was hoisted with his own petard.

As noted earlier, the intuitive idea for this article was put into focus by Daniel Goleman who wrote, in *Vital Lies, Simple Truths: The Psychology of Self-Deception*, that “[w]e live at a particularly perilous moment, one in which self-deception is a subject of increasing urgency,”²⁶² for “[i]n the face of our individual powerlessness, we find it somehow reassuring to cling to the illusion that there is something—some new weapon, a defensive shield in space, a new missile [or something]—that can protect us against nuclear death [or the particular high anxiety of the moment].”²⁶³ Goleman characterizes self-deception as a natural psychological device to relieve anxiety on a personal level, with serious social-group implications. Taking Goleman’s views into the arena of military decisionmaking, I suggest that some form of “anxiety” has and will continue to skew intelligence analysis and military command decisionmaking in the years ahead. Aside from concerns about the extreme of “nuclear death,” a more subtle form of “anxiety” may be a nagging belief on the part of decisionmakers—military commanders and intelligence analysts—that their essential preconception is false.

If anxiety operates on such a threshold level, then it has enormous implications. According to Goleman:

²⁶² Daniel Goleman, *Vital Lies, Simple Truths: The Psychology of Self-Deception* (New York: A Touchstone Book, 1985), pp. 11.

²⁶³ *Id.*, p. 12. At the heart of this doublethink is the classic self-deception. Indeed it was noted thousands of years ago in the ancient Indian epic, the *Mahabharatta*, in which the sage poses the riddle, “What is the greatest wonder of the world?” The answer: “That no one, though he seen others dying all around, believes he himself will die.” *Id.*, p. 11.

Perception is selection. Filtering out information is, in the main, for the good. But the very capacity for the brain to do so makes it vulnerable to skewing what is admitted to awareness, what is rejected.²⁶⁴

Coleman notes the following paradox:

Attention is the gathering of information crucial to existence. Anxiety is the response when that information registers as a threat. The intriguing part of this relationship is straightforward: we can use our attention to deny threat, and so cushion ourselves from anxiety."²⁶⁵

The inaction of attention and anxiety, of perception and self-deception, says, Coleman demand further study:

Anxiety ... may intrude in many forms apart from the obvious. Whatever its guise, when anxiety swamps attention, all performance suffers. The antidote at hand, as we shall see, is attention itself—more precisely, *dis*attention, or denial. To see how denial can erase anxiety, we need first to understand the key role of cognition in the stress response, particularly the cognition of threat.²⁶⁶

The theme here is that perception and anxiety are linked in the mind. The anxiety which results from having to deal with facts which are contrary the decisionmaker's essential preconception will influence that person's perception. Self-deception is merely the natural psychological way in which the discomfort of that anxiety is resolved.

Space does not permit an elaboration of Goleman's overall concept, however, suffice to say, his thesis is built on three premises:

²⁶⁴ *Id.*, p. 21.

²⁶⁵ *Id.*, p. 19.

²⁶⁶ *Id.*, p. 46.

- The mind can protect itself against anxiety by dimming awareness;
- The dimmed awareness mechanism creates a blind spot: a zone of blocked attention and self-deception; and
- Such blind spots—the zones of blocked attention and self-deception— occur at each major level of behavior from the psychological to the social.²⁶⁷

The fact that self-deception can operate in the collective awareness of the group is what is important, and what has been illustrated by this article in a military context. According to Goleman:

To belong to a group of any sort, the tacit price of membership is to agree not to notice one's own feelings of uneasiness and misgiving, and certainly not to question anything that challenges the group's way of doing things.²⁶⁸

“Cooperate and graduate” is the popular contemporaneous expression of this idea.

In the historical example of Operation MARKET/GARDEN used here to illustrate how a vital or essential preconception may lead to a dangerous self-deception, only Major Brian Urquhart—the Intelligence Chief at FAAA—had the good sense and the courage to challenge a major tenant in the dangerous self-deception. He proved the presence of the German tanks that were instrumental in breaking the hold of 1st Airborne Division on the Arnhem bridge. His only reward for being right in advance of the destruction of the British airborne division, was expulsion from

²⁶⁷ *Id.*, p. 22. “The [term] blind spot is an apt psychological metaphor for our failure to see things as they are in actuality. [It is] ... a piece missing from awareness. A hole in [one's] attention. A lacuna.” *Id.*, p. 15.

²⁶⁸ *Id.*, p. 13. “How does self-deception enter in? People who are not privy to the ‘secret’ seem to want to go along with it, to be deceived.” *Id.*, p. 12. “Ibsen called this sort of secret a ‘vital lie,’ the family myth that stands in the place of a less comfortable truth.” *Id.*, p. 16.

the group.²⁶⁹ Urquhart's expulsion was not caused by reason of the fact that he told the truth and exposed the self-deception—it came because he broke the fundamental rule of any social group that is self-deceiving itself: *i.e., one never openly acknowledges that any self-deception is going on.*²⁷⁰ As the daily intelligence summaries of Second Army attest, all the key indicators of the capabilities of the German Army were duly reported, but all were dealt with in such a way that they lost their true significance. As a result, in August and September 1944, in the minds of those in command at Second Army (and elsewhere), the fundamental nature of the German Army became as imaginary as the Chimera.



²⁶⁹ Urquhart, *A Life in Peace and War*, p. 73. According to Brian Urquhart, Colonel Eggar, the FAAA's chief medical officer, came to see him on 15th September. It was the day after Urquhart had shown Browning the aerial photographs of the AFV's in the Arnhem area. Eggar informed Urquhart that it was the opinion of Browning and the doctor that the Major "was suffering from acute nervous strain" and Urquhart was ordered "to go on sick leave." When Urquhart asked what would happen if he did not, Eggar said to him straight out that he "would be arrested and court-martialed for dis-obeying orders." *Id.* Thus, two days before MARKET/GARDEN was launched, Urquhart left Moor Park, the FAAA headquarters at Ascot—a thorn had been removed from the British lion's paw.

²⁷⁰ Goleman illustrates this fundamental axiom—the axiom with two rules—by telling how the son of an alcoholic family described his situation:

In our family [where both parents are alcoholics] there were two very clear rules: the first was that there is nothing wrong here, and the second was, don't tell anyone.

"The denial evident in this [boy's] reminiscence is the hallmark of the vital lie. If the force of facts is too brutal to ignore, then their meaning can be altered." Goleman, *Vital Lies, Simple Truths*, p. 17

Special Note:

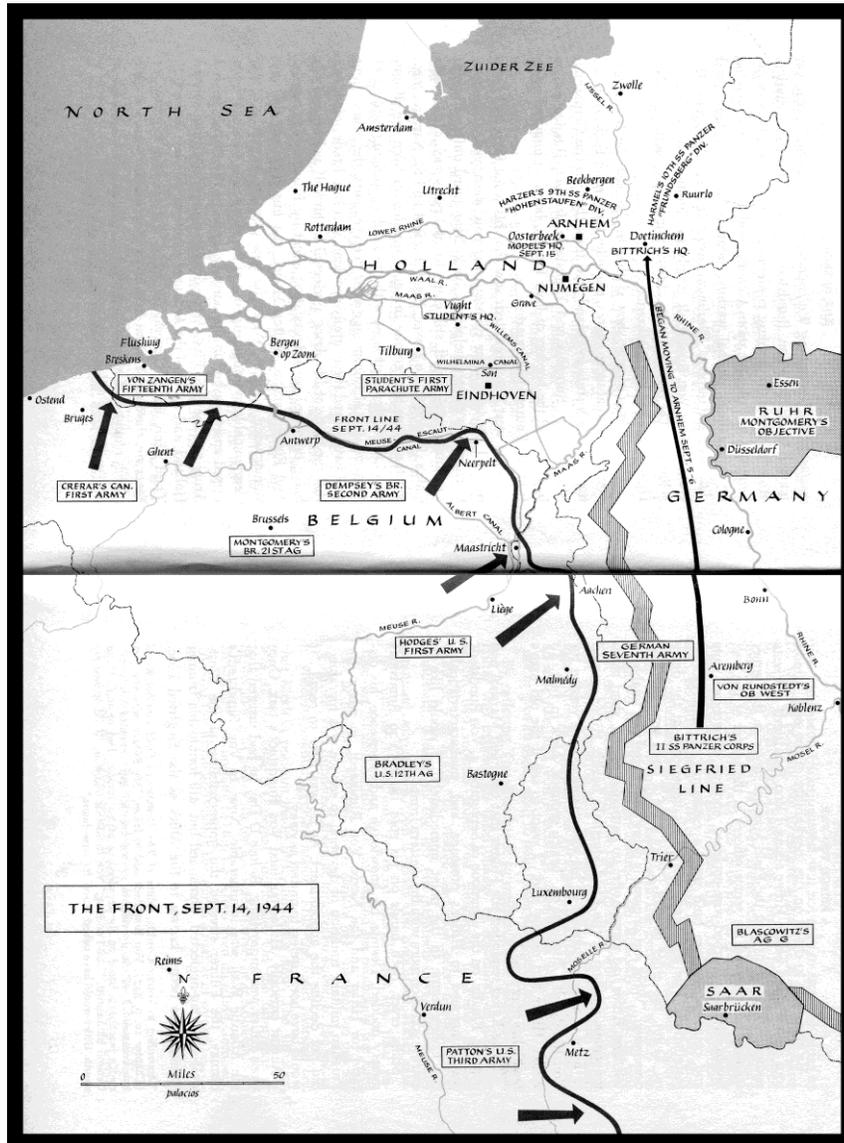
The author acknowledges with special thanks, the editorial review done on this article by his son, T. L. Cabbage III, while the latter—now an attorney at Covington and Burling in Washington, DC—was then a senior and student of history and English at Southern Methodist University.

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MAP I

THE WESTERN FRONT – 14 September 1944

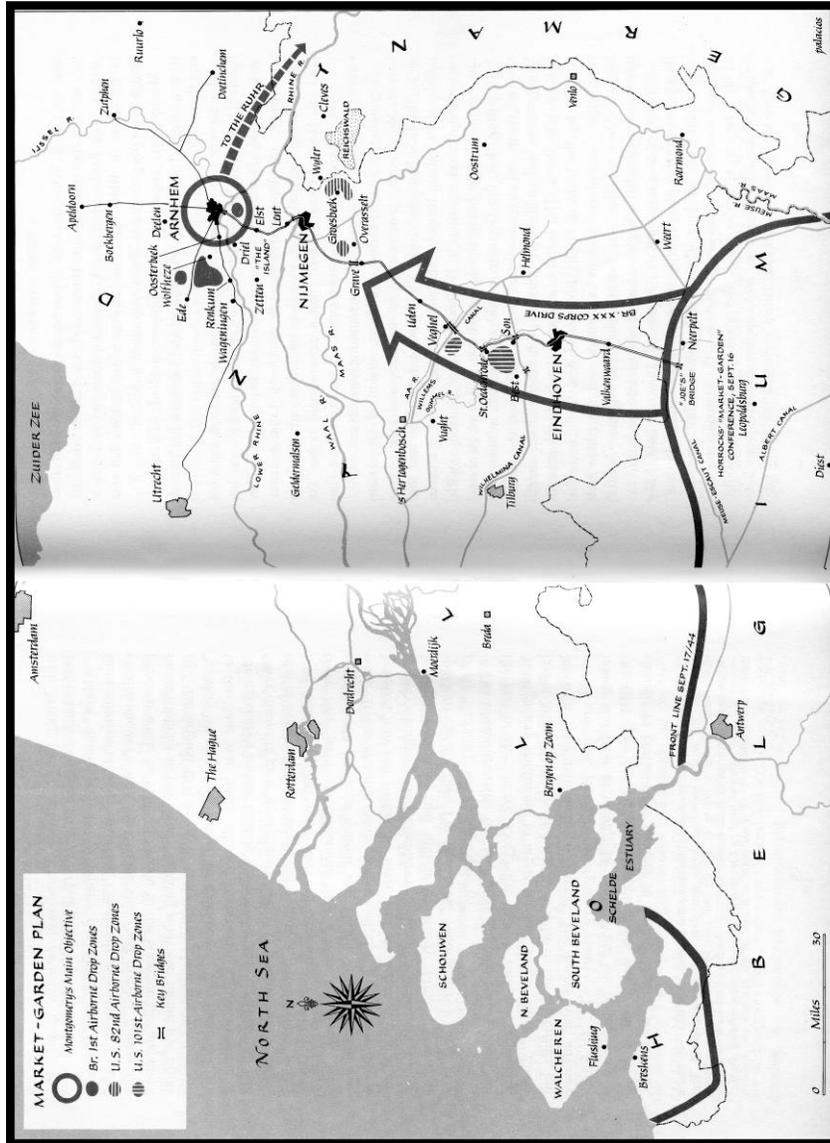
(Map from Cornelius Ryan's A Bridge Too Far, with permission of Simon & Schuster)



MAP II

OPERATION MARKET/GARDEN – 17 September 1944

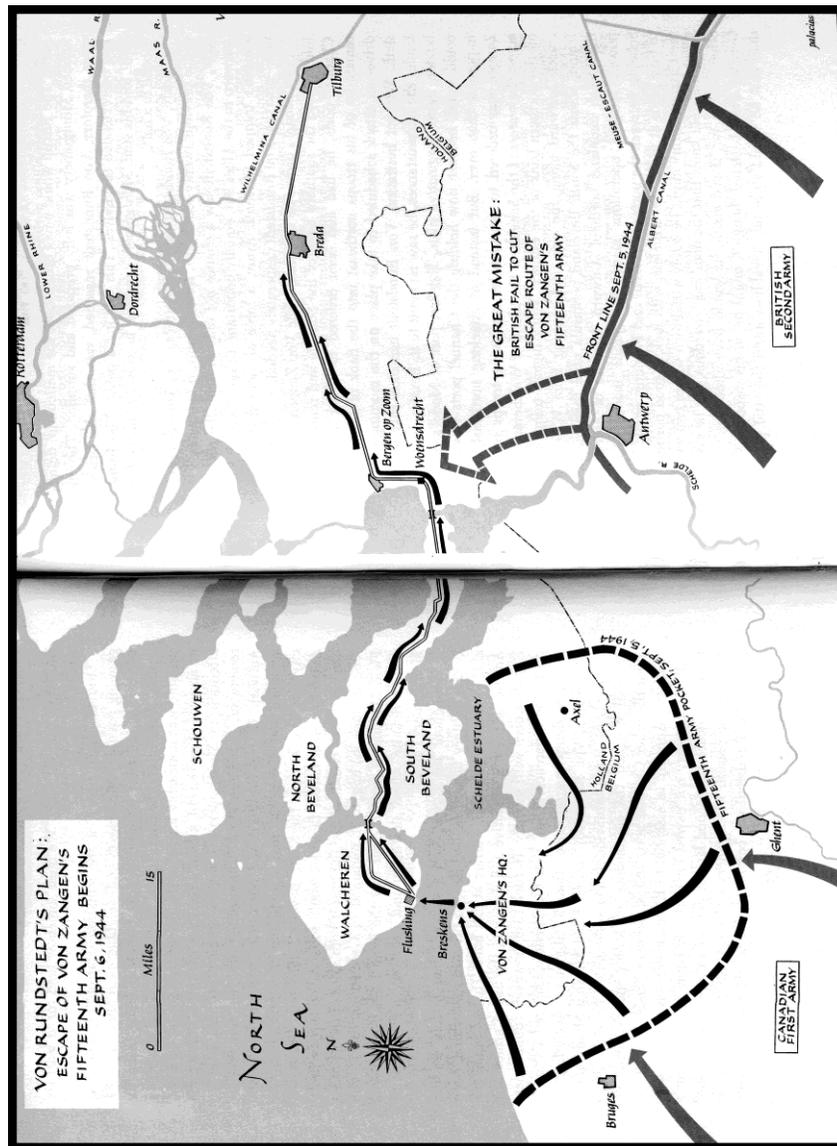
(Map from Cornelius Ryan's *A Bridge Too Far*, with permission of Simon & Schuster)



MAP III

A.O.K. 15's ESCAPE – 6 September 1944

(Map from Cornelius Ryan's A Bridge Too Far, with permission of Simon & Schuster)



Readers Notes: