

GERMAN OCS VI¹
Defense of Metz
2-24 Sept 1944

Chronological narrative by an enemy historical officer chronologically describes the officer-candidate "battle-group" that defended Metz.

Some combat detail at platoon and squad level. Improvising during the defense of obsolete fortifications.

¹ Transcribed by Wesley Johnston (wwjohnston@aol.com). The original from which this transcription was made is at National Archives II in Record Group 407, Box 24082 (Combat Interviews), Folder 246. Spellings are left as in the original. Posted as <http://www.7tharmdiv.org/docrep/N-German-Metz-CI.pdf>

Translated German documents and reports dealing with the

METZ OPERATION

Upon the reduction of Metz, various documents and reports were found by the CIC in the Gestapo Headquarters in Metz, which also served as the CP of the 462d Infantry Division of the German First Army. The following is a translation prepared by 1st Lt Walter Haag and M/Sgt J. Haftbillig of the German Order of Battle Detachment attached to XX Corps.

Interviewers: Capt H. A. Morris and Lt M. F. Ludden, 3d I & H Sv, atchd XX Corps.

HISTORY OF OCS VI - (Metz Officer Candidate School).

It is only a short period of time that has passed from the foundation of the school up to the present day, but in this time events of unique historical importance have occurred.

The events extend from the entry of the United States into the war; over Stalingrad; the landings of the Anglo-Americans in North Africa; the betrayal of Badoglio; the Territorial Tasks in the east; the invasion up to the time of 20 July 1944; events which made the German soldier, but particularly the Officer Candidate, harder and more determined.

During this period, the school has given more than 7,000 young National Socialist peoples officers to the German Army. Many Knights Crosses, many statements of front line commanders, report of behavior and their fighting ability, but especially in unique form the historic fight of 1,800 lieutenants and Officer Candidates of the

16 Officers Class on the heights of **St Privat and Gravelotte** gave proof of their heroism.

It is the highest and proudest acknowledgement for the instructor, whose service is often very difficult and full of privations, to know that his Officer Candidates guided by him have proved to be excellent German officers who protected the **gates of their Fatherland.**

The magnificent bearing of these, our Comrades, may be a proud legacy to all the officers and Officer Candidates who have gone through the ranks of that school.

I. "Formation in BEVERLOO"

Period of Instruction and Training

On the 1st of October 1942, the class for officers candidates in Beverloo was reorganized into a school VI for Officer Candidates. Lt Col Abe, assigned as Adjutant of the Training Class, was transferred to supreme command of West. The majority of the NCOs and EM was transferred to their replacement units in France. Military District VI supplied the necessary replacements. Beginning of March 1943, the school was transferred to Metz.

The appeal of the Fuhrer in Sport Palace in Berlin formed the enthusiastic climax and finale of the 12th Class of the Officer Candidate School. At the same time it was the last course in the school of Beverloo.

II. "Transfer to Metz"

Period of Development and Training

Fourteen days before the 12th OCS Class forward echelon of the school moved to Metz in order to find proper details of establishing new training and billeting areas. By the **cooperation of local authorities** and the party, the school found excellent billets in Schlesier Barracks. **Twenty-five years had passed since the old OCS Metz had been closed and the commander of the new school became Colonel Sievers, who himself had attended an Officer candidate course in Metz in the old Kriegsschule.** In April 1944, when the school was already one year in its new location, it was ordered to increase the school by one class. Thus the school had 1,900 students by May 1, 1944.

Lt Col Tolsdorff who had been commander of the new class for only a few weeks was suddenly transferred to the east as a regimental commander, and a few days later he relieved the garrison of the city of Wilna. Col Kokott, who had become the successor of Col Sievers in August 1943, was called to take over the command of an Infantry Brigade and later of the 26th Volksgran² Division right in the middle of the 16th OCS Class. Colonel Siegroth succeeded Colonel Kokott as 4th Commander of the school. He had only four weeks time to complete the training of the class. Then the school was

² Should be "Volksgren", short for "Volksgrenadier".

committed against the XX American Armored Corps as a finale of their class.

COMMITMENT AS A BATTLE GROUP

"The reorganization to a battle group on 17 August 1944"

The school set up several stragglers collecting points on the main roads leading from the west across the Moselle bridges in order to bring under control all of the individual motor vehicles, or special columns of soldiers, arriving there from the retreat in the West. The High Command of the Armored Forces agreed to this reorganization and officers, NCOs, and enlisted men were transferred to the various forwarding stations in the city of Metz.

Until the 2d of September 1944, about 4,000 soldiers and 400 motor vehicles had been directed to the collecting points of the local garrison. On the 2d of September 1944, the Commanding General of Wehrkries³ XII, General of the Infantry Schroth, authorized the school to keep all retreating soldiers, including their weapons and vehicles, for the impending commitment against the advancing Americans.

Already on 27 August 1944 the school had been organized to a battle group. After concluding school work, with three reinforced battalions and a 13th company (in addition, Signal and Assault Platoons), after a conference with General Krause of the Division #462, AT detachments and field guards were put up as security in order to repulse the advancing American reconnaissance forces.

³ Should be "Wehrkreis"

In order to guarantee complete construction of fortifications, on the 28th of August 1944, in each battalion sector one company was assigned in turn in the respective part of the MLR. On account of the incoming enemy reports the entire Group 1 and 2 were employed for constructing positions on the next day. As proposed by the school commander and after agreement with the Division Commander #462, the MLR was put up in a general line - Amanvillers (incl) - Gravelotte (excl) - Ars sur Moselle (incl) in a total length of more than 20 kilometers. The main line of the MLR ran over the historic battle fields of St Privat and Gravelotte on which line training grounds of the school were located.

Combat outposts were moved forward as far as St Privat, Verny, West of Gravelotte, Gorze, and Nouveant. The territory on both sides of the MLR was evacuated by the civilian population in a perimeter of five kilometers. Both committed OCS groups as well as Group 3, which still remained in the reserve, were reinforced by many of the retreating soldiers collected by the military garrison of Metz, so that battle group Von Siegroth had a total strength of 4,000 men.

"The patrol of the Combat Outposts at St Privat - Verny - Gravelot - Gorze and Nouveant"

1, St Privat: At dawn of August 27, 1944, one platoon of 3d Company commanded by Lt Hintze moved to the town of

St Privat and both sides of it as a combat outpost, Due to the rocky terrain, the construction of the positions was very difficult and **in the next few days** these constructions were improved, road obstacles were put up, roads prepared for destruction, and St Privat made a small fortress.

On 4 September 1944 the rear guards of the 17th SS Pz Division were withdrawn. **On the 5th of September the first contact with the enemy was made.** American dive bombers attacked our vehicles on the road St Privat - Marieneichen.⁴ On the 6th of September, at 1530, our observation post reports fifteen enemy tanks advancing. After the first shots, they turned around in direction of Batilly.

One of the marines is observed caressing his AT grenade on which he had been trained three days ago. At 1630, eight enemy tanks and six armored cars and halftracks attacked St Privat, advancing up to 100 yards of our positions and suddenly attacking the edge of the town with machine gun fire.⁵ The enemy infantrymen jumping off their vehicles were forced to cover due to our heavy machine gun fire. The AT close weapons cannot be used yet because the enemy tanks do not approach near enough. Our combat outposts could not receive any AT guns because the few available ones had to be dug-in in the MLR. Our own light infantry howitzer started firing on the enemy tanks.

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⁴ Marieneichen is probably the German name for Ste. Marie-aux-Chênes.

⁵ See Combat Command "A" (7th Armored Division) After Action Report for September 1944.

Our own artillery and heavy mortars attacked the Americans who, after a short while, suddenly jumped on their halftracks and together with their tanks retreated towards Marieneichen. Strong enemy artillery fire of all calibers covered the retreat of the enemy.

At 1830, tanks attacked again. Thirty enemy tanks are rolling forward on a wide front firing from all guns. The wire connections are cut. Under heavy artillery fire the enemy slowly advanced. 100 yards before our positions the tanks are splitting up in order to push ahead partly south, partly north of St Privat. Company Commander, 1st Lt Langenohl, orders the machine gunners and snipers to attack the half-tracks which follow the tanks. On the northern edge of the town, two Lieutenants are using their AT rocket launchers. They do not destroy the Sherman Tanks but only damage them. The tanks are rolling forward. The enemy was greatly impressed. He keeps away from our own positions and pours artillery fire on us. After dusk, strong infantry forces are approaching from the direction Mine Ronhofen, digging in on both sides of St Privat.

Forty tanks and a battalion of infantry have the village surrounded. There is no connection to our companies and battalion. Our reports do not get through. On the left flank, the enemy has broken into the positions of one of our squads. An enemy patrol, having entered

the southwest part of the village, was wiped out. After darkness Lt Klutsch arrives with the patrol and a Signal Squad from the Battalion CP; shortly afterwards, the assault platoon of the battalion, under command of 1st Lt Korell. At 0200 the order is given to withdraw the combat outposts to the MLR. In the village of St Privat we laid mines, The Americans do not notice the withdrawal of our combat outposts. Only on the next day they occupy the deserted village.

2. WERNHEIM (VERNEVILLE):

On 31 August 1944 Lt Schaefer takes over the combat outposts in Wernheim. Day and night one works feverishly in order to finish the construction of the positions. Mines are laid, the road beds torn up, road obstacles established. Sniper positions, hidden MG stands and patrol paths are laid out.

The civilian population had to leave the town on 2 September. On 3 September one of our patrols contacts Americans and terrorists in Conflans. In the night to 5 September tank noise is heard. At dawn we recognize 70 tanks and 80 armored troop-carrying vehicles which had pulled up in the park of the chateau in a depression SW of the castle. We also observe SP artillery. To judge from the careless behaviour of the Americans, they don't seem to have recognized yet our combat outpost.⁶

⁶ This may have been CCA of 7AD. The infantry were probably from 2nd Infantry Regiment of 5th Infantry Division.

In the afternoon four tanks started moving in order to reconnoiter in the Genivaux forest behind Wernheim. At the same time five tanks approaching from the north with infantrymen, move towards the north exit of the town. The squad leader, Lt Leuther, gives the signal to start firing. The enemy infantrymen jump off the tanks and take cover. The tanks stop and form the protection for their infantrymen who are withdrawing under heavy losses. A second similar attack of the enemy in the evening hours is repulsed. During the night we evacuate Ferme Neuf S of Wernheim according to order.

On 6 September the Americans are carefully, but continuously, reconnoitering the positions around Wernheim in order to destroy them with their superior artillery, their tanks and planes. But nothing betrays our positions. Around noon there was another infantry attack of the enemy in company strength with strong support of few tanks. This time the enemy is advancing towards the castle and the park of Wernheim, in which Lt Schaefer has his CP. The enemy succeeds in penetrating on the west side of the park, thus heavily pressing the squad of Lt Reinthaler. Also this attack is beaten off and the enemy has heavy losses.

On the same evening the Americans are attacking again in strength of sixty men, this time from Ferme Neuf, approaching the park. Also this attack collapses due to the fire of

our squads. Fire of our own mortars, directed by our company commander, Captain Nicklaus, causes heavy casualties in the ranks of the enemy. After darkness two American tanks appear under which protection the remnants of the enemy are evacuating the Ferme Neuf. In the evening hours the enemy attacks again the village and the castle of Wernheim with heavy artillery and mortar fire, Major V. Winkler orders Lt Schaefer by radio to withdraw to the MLR during the night. Lt Schaefer is determined though to hold Wernheim. In the early hours of 7 September the enemy attacks again the positions in Wernheim with heavy artillery and mortar fire. The enemy succeeds in penetrating into our positions between the park and village, Lt Schaefer starts a counterattack with eight of his men. Heavy fire fight, Lt Schaefer is standing in a destroyed house and is shooting with a sub-machine gun out of a window. Suddenly he hears the cry: "Cease firing!" He steps into the street, where he sees a few tanks and armored cars and a group of American infantrymen under command of an American captain, who is holding a white flag in his hands and demands Lt Schaefer's surrender. Lt Schaefer acts as if he did not understand anything and he becomes a prisoner for a while. In a favorable moment he escapes and returns to his men, counterattacks the astonished Americans and answers the offer of surrender with violent fire. Lots of

Americans are getting killed, the rest escapes fleeing. Four confused Americans are taken prisoner. In this attack especially Lt Reinthaler distinguished himself. Later, eight more American prisoners are taken. On the next day heavy fire is lying on village and castle all day long.

In the afternoon tanks are attacking again and try to penetrate into the eastern part of Wernheim. Suddenly a dull intonation is heard. Lt Kober destroys the first tank with his Panzerfaust. A few minutes later he finishes the second. An armored reconnaissance car is blown up by a road mine. Several American tanks are damaged by Panzerfaust, the rest of the tanks withdraw in a hurry. But the heavy artillery fire does not seem to end. With the beginning of darkness it is getting quiet and we can take care of our wounded and of the prisoners.

On 8 September the day begins with heavy fire on village and castle. In the early hours the enemy attacks with an infantry battalion, also tanks take part in the battle. Tanks and infantry penetrate the village, Lt Steinmetz and Lt Stroehlein are killed, but the resistance in castle and park is unbroken. Here Lt Schaefer is the soul of a fanatic fight and resistance. In the evening hours heavy artillery fire is starting again and very late it ceases. After darkness Lt Schaefer orders the withdrawal. The 1st squad starts marching,

feeling their way through enemy lines, behind them the rest of the platoon and safely they reach their own MLR. Lt Schaefer then addresses his platoon, describes the heroic fight for Wernheim. Then it goes to new fighting in the Genivaux forest.

3. GRAVELOTTE:

On 5 September 1944, the first advance of American tank spearheads from Rezonville to Gravelotte in strength of two Armored Reconnaissance cars, four jeeps, and three Sherman tanks.⁷

The first two armored cars are allowed to pass, as ordered in our plans, then the road is blown up and we opened fire. The crew of the jeeps are jumping off the vehicles, under protection of the three tanks, and go into position on both sides of the road.

Two squads of 1st Lt Henneberg attack the Americans and take nine prisoners, among them one colonel.

Two tanks are destroyed by the officer candidates Norkus and Lorenz with Panzerfaust. The colonel, the commanding officer of the 3d American Cavalry Regiment, being visibly impressed and despondent, stated, when later interrogated: "I never saw anything like that from German soldiers, who attacked us from all sides."⁸

6 September, from 0800 continuous reconnaissance by tanks⁹ from sector Rezonville and Malmaison. The enemy tries the sector W of Gravelotte with the fire of the tank

⁷ This was 3rd Cavalry Group.

⁸ Col. Frederick W. Drury, CO 3rd Cavalry Group

⁹ This would have been the attack column that included Company "C" of 38th Armored Infantry Battalion.

guns. At 1600 three tanks advance towards Ferme Mogador, coming from the S edge of Malmaison. The 75mm AT gun in the Ferme Mogador opens fire but misses its target and reveals its position. After five direct hits with a tank gun we lose four men, two of them killed, two badly wounded.

At 1630 the tank attack starts on a wide front from the direction of Rezonville and Malmaison. About thirty tanks and motorized infantry¹⁰ attack the platoon Henneberg frontally, but the attack is contained by our platoon. The tanks try then to attack our positions with gun and MG fire; nevertheless our platoon inflicts heavy casualties on the enemy and beats off every further attack. Finally the tank attack from Malmaison breaks E and W of Ferme Mogador into our positions which were thinly held there. Twelve tanks and infantry turn W and try to attack the platoon Henneberg from the rear, together with the tanks attacking from the front. In this battle two tanks are destroyed by Panzerfaust, one armored Rcn car and one tank are badly damaged by mines. *The enemy infantry suffered heavy losses during this attack which lasted for several hours. Also the casualties of the platoon Henneberg are high, considering the bitter battle,* 1st Lt Henneberg and some of his men are taken prisoners after heavy fighting.

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¹⁰ C/38

Fifteen tanks then attacked the south part of Gravelotte and met there the defense of platoon Huber. Our small arms fire hit several tank commanders, who were looking out from their turrets. One tank is destroyed by Panzerfaust. The tanks are turning S.

Thirty-two tanks with three motorized infantry companies penetrate vicinity Ferme Mogador on a wide front into the positions of the platoon Schiefner. In the defense of the burning farm Captain Schiffner gets killed.

At 1730 enemy infantry protected by the tanks in Ferme Mogador start an attack from the north on the east part of Gravelotte, but this attack is stopped by our men from the Co Hq and the enemy suffers heavy casualties.

Then tanks are approaching up to 150 meters. The infantry attacks again but they are stopped by our troops.

At 1815 eleven tanks and several armored personnel carriers attack the E part of Gravelotte, approaching the road St Hubert - Gravelotte and holding the road under fire, thus encircling the village of Gravelotte.

At 1900 three tanks and armored cars attack in direction of St Hubert. The men from our Company Hq receive orders to withdraw to the ravine. One Sherman tank is destroyed by Panzerfaust, and several more tank commanders are hit by our fire. Also the motorized infantry of the enemy has suffered such heavy casualties on their armored cars that they turn around and withdraw.

At 2045 an OCS candidate of platoon Henneberg arrived, reporting that part of this platoon were still in their positions, having numerous wounded men. This OCS man fought his way through several enemy tanks and through the lines of the Americans.

The company is sending out an assault party with the order to rescue the wounded men and both medium mortars which cannot be manned due to the loss of the mortar crew.

Let¹¹ by sergeant Simons this assault party is accomplishing its mission magnificently, succeeding to get through the enemy lines to their own positions. The difficulty of transporting the wounded is solved by Sergeant Kendler in a particularly clever way. He sneaks up to two manned jeeps, captures the crew of five men, and forces them to drive the first part of the wounded men to the first aid station. Then he drives with them through the tanks still parking there and gets the rest of the wounded.

This undertaking is rendered difficult by a long convoy of tanks and trucks, moving from Malmaison to Ars, whose road has to be crossed.

At 2200 our position is only weakly manned as we had considerable losses. All three AT guns of the company were lost. In the gaps of our positions are enemy tanks, protected by their infantry.

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¹¹ Should be "Led"

The combat outposts under the command of the badly injured Major Sickert accomplished their missions magnificently. At 2300 they receive the order to **withdraw to the MLR.**

4. GORZE:

On **31 August 1944**, the 5th Company, under command of Captain Schorr, received the order to move into position in and around Gorze as a combat outpost in order to repulse enemy advances from the direction Chambley - Rezonville. Attached to 5th Company are a 75mm AT gun, a 50mm AT gun, a heavy MG squad, and a heavy mortar squad as well as two squads of infantry engineers.

The 2d Platoon put up its position on the W edge of Gorze with the order to close the narrow gap between Ferme Theobald and the cemetery.

The 3d Platoon was placed 500 meters N of Gorze, in order to defend against enemy advances from the direction of Rezonville.

The 1st Platoon's mission: To set up a defensive position on the SE edge of Gorze, so that enemy troops, especially tanks that penetrate into our lines, could be destroyed by close combat weapons. Moreover each platoon has the order to assist the other platoons in emergency.

In the course of the next days, the positions are completed and the terrain improved by mines, tree blocks, and barricades.

On 4 September 1944, the last remnants of the 17th SS Pz Gren Div, which had been fighting in this sector, is withdrawing according to plans.

Already on the same evening mixed enemy tank columns¹² are identified by our patrols in the sector NW of Chambley. An armored scout car, advancing as far as Les Baraques, is destroyed by an AT grenade. A following column¹³ of armor, consisting of about thirty-five armored vehicles with infantrymen, turns N and moves N of the road Chambley - Gorze as far as the Petry woods, 2 km NW of Gorze. By our direct fire of the heavy mortars the column is first routed. While we repel an attack of two companies, assisted by tanks, the enemy succeeds in cutting the road Gorze - Rezonville and to penetrate into the Chevaux Woods. Thus the connection to the battalion and to the combat trains is cut.

On 7 September more enemy tanks appear on the road Gorze - Noveant, and the 1st Plat, committed on the SE edge of Gorze, turns around in order to repulse enemy attacks from the rear, while the men from Company Hq defend the E edge of Gorze on both sides of the road to Ancy sur Moselle.

Our repeated attempts to repair the connections to the combat trains and thus to the Battalion CP failed, because there were 19 enemy tanks and a battalion of infantry on the heights between Gorze and Ancy.

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¹² Almost certainly elements of 3rd Cavalry Group

¹³ Note the jump from 4 September in the prior paragraph to 7 September in the next. The tank columns referred to in this paragraph on the evening of 4 September are followed by a "following column" which probably was the attack column (one of four) on 6 September.

During the day (7 September) the enemy tries to narrow the encirclement supported by strong artillery fire. At 1430 Captain Wirth succeeds to penetrate the ring with his company, bringing the order for the combat outpost to withdraw and to cross the Moselle River at Noveant, together with Combat Group Schmidt. After successful accomplishment of his mission, Captain Wirth was killed when fighting his way back through the Chenaux woods.

At 1900 the withdrawal of the combat outpost begins, and with small losses the troops reach Noveant.

The crossing of the Moselle on a ferry and some deserted boats was successful. Also all the heavy weapons are brought across the river. On the far bank of the river the company assembles, awaiting new orders for commitment on another sector.

5. NOVEANT:

In the sector of Noveant the Combat Group Schmidt formed the left flank of the combat outpost, consisting of two rifle companies, reinforced rifle companies of 208 Tng and Repl Bn.

On 6 September for the first time much noise of motors was heard from the direction of Gorze-Bayonville. On 7 September there was the first contact with the enemy. Enemy infantry under support of tanks had approached up to 50 meters to the edge of the town Noveant, in strength of three companies.

Soon after the first fire fight the enemy withdraws impressed by our strong concentrated mortar fire. Especially the heavy MG squad, committed on the flank, was very successful.

After about one hour there is again quiet and peace in the valley. At 1130 we hear heavy noise of motors. Suddenly we hear the shot of a heavy gun and a long echo is resounding. Four Sherman tanks and another tank of unknown type are rolling toward Noveant.

Our own 88mm AT gun opens fire and stops the enemy's tank attack. Our mortar and heavy MG fire forces the enemy troops to dig in. Meanwhile the Sherman tanks have discovered our 88mm AT gun. They fire numerous shots, but they don't succeed in knocking out our gun.

Suddenly the 1st Sergeant of 1 Company¹⁴ jumps into the fox hole of Captain Schmidt and reports that the train of the combat outpost was attacked at Dornot between 0400 and 0500 and that the Americans had occupied the town.

Immediately the reserve platoon is alerted and committed in a switch line on the north edge of Noveant. Our patrol W of Dornot is attacked in the woods. Thus combat group Schmidt is cut off.

Meanwhile enemy tanks, under the impression of the artillery fire of our batteries which suddenly started firing from across the Moselle River, withdrew.

At 1130 we receive orders from Kg v. Siegroth to withdraw across the Moselle at dusk, together with our right neighbor, the company Schorr which is engaged in bitter fighting in Gorze.

¹⁴ The lower-case letter L and the number 1 (one) are identical in the typed script so that it is not clear if this is 1 (one) Company or L Company.

The afternoon is quiet except some artillery harassing fire. At 1900 Co Schorr disengages itself from the enemy and slowly withdraws through the positions of Kg Schmidt to Noveant, where they start crossing the Moselle River.

The crossing on the badly damaged bridge causes many difficulties and the 88mm AT Gun fell into the river, shortly before we had reached the opposite bank.

Thus also the combat outposts of Noveant and Gorze accomplished their mission ideally and gained precious time for our command.

The battles on the right flank of the combat group.

12 September 1944. 1130 a few dozen fighter planes are circling over the sector Amanviller - Fort Lorraine - Saulny, drop their bombs on the firing positions of our heavy weapons, and attack with MG our observation posts and positions of company Langenohl. But they have soon to turn away, due to our heavy AA fire. Shortly afterwards tank alarm is sounded. 25 enemy tanks S of Roncourt approach our MLR in three waves of seven tanks, the fourth with four tanks. The 8.8 cm and 7.5 cm AT guns under command of Lt Enders open fire. Two shots and two tanks are burning, another shot and another tank is unable to move. The tank crew jumps out and seek cover. Now also shells of Battery Seidel and of the heavy mortar platoon under Lt Clauss are firing. Meanwhile a battle between the tanks and our AT section has developed.

Numerically an unequal fight, 20:2, but our guns destroy two more tanks, and that breaks the fighting spirit of the enemy which leave the battlefield badly beaten.

A short distance before Roncourt, Lt Enders succeeds in knocking out another tank with the 8.8 cm AT gun from a distance of 2500 meters.

Next day from early in the morning until 1230 heavy fire is falling on our lines. At 1230 we hear loud combat noise between Ferme Marengo¹⁵ and Brunvale on. At 1600 suddenly heavy infantry fire and hand grenade detonations in the depth of the positions of the right sector of company Langenohl. Now also American HMGs interfere. The connection with the platoons of Lt Hausherr and 1 Lt Tschoep is cut off. 1 Lt Langenohl orders the reserve platoon to start counter-attacking. The squad of Lt Friedrich attacks the enemy who had penetrated into our positions. Together with that platoon 1 Lt Langenohl pushes through the retreating enemy until the connection with the platoons Hausherr and the parts of the platoon Tschoep is secured.

Lt Hausherr reported later that the enemy had penetrated on the right flank between Brunvale and Ferme Marengo presumably with two rifle companies, at 1230. One messenger, whom Lt Hausherr sent to the Co CP at 1230 was later found wounded in the woods. A messenger of 1 Lt Tschoep was killed on his way to the Co CP. While the counterattack of Lt Hintze

¹⁵ C/38 was in this bitter combat at Marengo.

forced the enemy to retreat, 1 Lt Tschoep pursued the other part of the attackers across the road to Brunvale and he succeeded in capturing 25 Americans, among them one 1st Lt and three NCOs, although he had only four men with him. Moreover 1 HMG, 3 LMGs, several Sub MGs, and rifles were captured.

At 2000 the MLR is again firmly in our hands, and a considerable danger diverted from the combat groups Wagner and v. Siegroth.

The defense of Amanvillers and of Ferme Montigny

6 September 1944. Continuous noise of driving tanks during the night leads to the conclusion of a larger number of tanks and an expecting tank attack in the morning hours.

Our combat outposts on height 303, about 3 km in front of our MLR, are in a state of highest alertness. At 1000, the expected American tanks appear, about 20 to 30 can be observed. They are rolling toward the Ferme Anoux la Grange and stop shortly before that farm. Others continue driving and disappear between the buildings of the Ferme. They seem to have been instructed by French civilians who had been hiding out, because a little later after the tanks have all turned back, the positions of our combat outposts are suddenly heavily attacked by enemy artillery and tanks.

During the fire fight, the leader of the combat outpost, Lt Schlosser, is seriously wounded in his belly, but nevertheless he remains conscious and gives the orders to the individual

groups to withdraw to the MLR. He forbids every effort to save him and the accomplishment of his mission even in the face of death is his natural duty. He dismisses Lt Kossek and NCO Tannhaeuser who want to rescue him with the words: "Give my regards to my wife and tell her that I did as a German officer." Shortly afterwards Lt Schloesser is dead.

Later in the afternoon the Americans try again in vain to take Amanvillers, One of their 1st Lts and five American EM are taken prisoners.

In the afternoon of 7 September the Americans try again by a surprise attack to capture the town of Amanvillers, but we are able to destroy four of their armored half-tracks. The infantry is wiped out in close combat.

In order to reconnoiter the American positions in the night of 8 September a patrol is sent out led by Lt Hoelzinger with 6 EM. At about 0400 they surprise an American position by a very swift action, 64 captured American prisoners, among them one officer, are the result of this courageous and clever action.

The 9 of September brings an extraordinary increase of fighting around Amanvillers. The Americans seem determined to take the town at any price. Tanks and infantry are attacking seven times during the day, but under the prudent leadership of 1 Lt Stragholz all attacks are repulsed. In the

seventh attack three Sherman-tanks are destroyed by AT guns and panzerfaust. At 2130 the old MLR is secured and firmly in our hands.

On 10 September the enemy increases his efforts to take Amanvillers. For the first time during the forenoon a heavy force of dive-bombers. At 1400 an attack takes place, supported by American tanks, but it is repulsed. In a second attempt the enemy changes his tactics. Out of 8 attacking tanks five are staying behind and give fire protection to the three advancing tanks. They succeed to penetrate into the Ferme de Mondelinge. Under guidance of Capt Lumpp immediately two counterattacks are started in the course of which the 30 infantrymen that had penetrated into the Ferme are wiped out to the last man. Then also the three tanks turn around. At 1700 the Americans try again to reach their goal but also this attack is beaten off.

In the following days the offensive actions of the Americans decreases, apparently due to their heavy losses and the stubborn resistance of our men. An infantry attack against the ferme of Mondelinge on the afternoon of 13 September can easily be beaten off. Amanvillers, one of the pillars of the defensive front of Metz, firmly remains in German hands.

The defensive battles in the woods of Genivaux and Chamoix

After four days of hard work, the positions in this difficult terrain of dense French woods are completed. Firing paths and sniper's nests are set up, and mines are laid on particularly endangered sectors.

On 4 September the first enemy tanks and armored cars¹⁶ show up, which fire wild into the edge of the forest in order to attract our fire and thus find out our positions. But nothing moves in the woods. There is no attack on 5 or 6 September. Only the heavy weapons of the Americans increase their fire. On 7 September an American bn, supported by 20 tanks, attacks the positions of the platoon Rieger on the road Verneville-Gravelotte, but twice the enemy could be beaten back. In a counterattack Lt Rieger who leads his men is seriously wounded and is taken prisoner. All attempts of his men to free him are in vain and the positions of his platoon are taken back a few hundred yards to the railroad embankment.

On 8 September about 200 Americans, protected by the fire of several tanks, are storming the squad of Lt Billen. Every second American carries a sub-MG, but their fire is not precise as they have not recognized our positions. In a distance of only 50 meters, Lt Billen orders "Start firing!" A lieutenant fires in a short time 50 rifle grenades and proves the excellent qualities of this weapon. A few minutes after the opening of the fire, about 50-60 Americans are falling

¹⁶ Probably 3rd Cavalry Group

in front of our positions. Cries and loud orders oversound each other. The rest of the attackers jump back and seek cover. The enemy tanks discontinue their fire. Our squad ran out of ammunition. Suddenly American soldiers with large white cloths appear and request a pause in order to recover their wounded and their dead ones. After removing the casualties, the tanks turn around too. The attack is beaten off.

On 9 September on the left flank of Co Nicklaus, the squad of Lt Duenner is engaged in heavy fighting with superior enemy forces. The connection with the neighbor is cut off. Lt Duenner is finally taken prisoner by the Americans. They take him to the rear and remove his boots in order to make an escape impossible. Meanwhile his comrades have noticed the disappearance of Lt Duenner. They start numerous advances and feint attacks into the woods occupied by the enemy. The Americans are getting nervous and withdraw partly. Lt Duenner takes advantage of this confusion and in a favorable moment he escapes. After hours of erring around he finally reaches the company CP with bloody feet. "Lt Duenner returned from his captivity," is the short report to the CO.

On 10 September the Americans attack on a wide front near the positions of Lt Roettger's platoon and the railroad embankment in the woods. There are bitter battles everywhere

The positions change hands quite often. But our men are all instilled with the thought: The forest must be held. Everybody knows that this Genivaux-forest is of particular importance. Everywhere they are running short of ammunition. Again the brave men of the Co Hq are those always bring forward the ammunition to the hard fighting squads.

Near the platoon Roettger the enemy has penetrated our lines. Lt Roettger himself is badly wounded. Lt Kleinpeter makes a counterattack in the woods, in order to help the hard pressed platoon. Badly wounded, heavily bleeding, he is carried to the CP. Also Lt Schaefer, the defender of Verneville, is called to assist with the special order to regain the connection with the neighboring company of Major Sickert. Also he is wounded after short, successful fight and is carried to the Co CP.

Also the enemy suffered heavy losses. Finally Capt Nicklaus succeeds in getting the company again firmly under his command and put up a new defense line near the railroad embankment. Due to the heavy attacks, this MLR can only be held with great losses on men. Capt Nicklaus therefore decides, after consulting Bn CO Major Winkler, to reconnoiter another position in the woods.

Already early in the morning of 11 September the Co CP is under heavy arty fire. During the night the Americans occupies the Frosch Ferme, which is right in front of the Chamoix forest, and his tank-guns and MGs fire into our

positions. Therefore the CO of the company decides to withdraw to the rear edge of the Chamoix forest.

In the afternoon there was an unsuccessful attack of American infantry squads reinforced by tanks, on the positions of the squad under Lt Steinemann, also dive-bombers are committed. The squad has considerable losses, only Lt Steinemann and three EM are not wounded. Late in the afternoon the enemy attacks again along a hedge which runs from Genivaux forest to the Chamoix woods, which attack is first repulsed but the Americans storm these positions again and again. At the same time the enemy attacks in co strength the squad of Lt Steinemann and that of Lt Mahr. The four men of Lt Steinemann are exhausted and Lt Steinemann seriously injured and dies the same evening. Lt Edwards receives the order to start a counter-attack along the edge of the woods in direction of the squads Steinemann-Mahr. The counter-attack succeeds. The enemy is pushed back. Lt Mahr and three of his men are found dead in their positions. They have not gone back a yard, but kept on fighting courageously until their death. The Chamoix woods are firmly in our hands, except the height where Lt Steinemann's position was located.

Meanwhile the Bn CO, Major v. Winkler and Major Voss have sent two platoons of an SS Signal school bn and an assault platoon under command of 1 Lt Korell to that sector.

A violent nightly counterattack finds the sleeping Americans completely surprised, and throws them back. The enemy suffers heavy losses. Lt Korell is lost in this action. One only knows that he was wounded, since then there is no trace about his whereabouts.

On 12 September the enemy attacks again from direction Frosch Ferme with heavy forces. It comes to bitter close combat, which surpasses all imaginations. For the Germans, there is only one slogan: To fight to the last man.

Late in the evening the company Nicklaus is relieved by the 6th Co, Capt Hasenbein. The men who are exhausted enjoy one day of undisturbed sleep.

After 2 days of rest and regrouping the company is attached to the newly formed Battalion von Donat, to be committed on the left flank.

The bitter battles in the Genivaux and Chamoix woods against a far superior enemy has given all men the feeling, to be superior to the Americans also in forest fighting. If the Americans, after days of hard fighting, succeeded to push us back to the MLR, his losses and the fanatical resistance of our troops have blocked his entrance to the fortress of Metz.

The defence of the ravine of Mance

The ravine of Mance runs about 800 meters E of Gravelotte as far as Ars sur Moselle. With its steep, densely wooded slopes, it forms a natural protection against tanks. From Gravelotte a road is leading to Moulins les Metz and Metz itself. The terrain is especially hidden from view and offers good chances of approach to the enemy.

Since the attack of the Americans on Gravelotte, the enemy made several attacks until 15 September 1944 but all of them were repulsed. In the northern part of the ravine heavy arty fire began in the morning of 15 September. Arty liaison planes steadily circle over the sector. They are flying too high in order to be fired at with our rifles and other infantry weapons. At 1700 we hear the noise of tanks and of infantry on both sides of the ravine. The wires of the 7 Co to the bn are cut. Here the platoon under command of Lt Mangoldt succeeds in repulsing several attacks. Lt Mangoldt is wounded and replaced by Lt Seidel. The enemy penetrates into the NE sector of the ravine. In order to eliminate the enemy's penetration, two squads under command of Lt Haindl are withdrawn from the MLR on the W edge of the Mance ravine and ordered to counterattack.

Along the ravine the counterattacking men advance to the point of the breakthrough but they meet very strong resistance. Suddenly the enemy appears in the flank at

least in company strength, the squad of Lt Hendrix stopping him in bitter fighting. The enemy is partly destroyed, partly thrown back. Leading his men, Lt Amend is killed in battle. Lt Neven fighting with the right squad falls a few minutes later.

An American, probably an officer waves a white cloth and calls for the men to surrender. But this is the signal for leader and officer candidates to continue the attack, in the course of which Lt Haindl is wounded. Lt Hendrix replaces him and holds the line as long as the penetration is sealed off.

This counterattack impressed an American bn by its determination and courage of the soldiers so much that it discontinued the attack on the road Gravelotte-Metz. The daring, ideal and relentless action of these few men has eliminated an extraordinary danger for this **cornerstone of the defense of Metz**. Under the impression of the stubborn defense and the continuous counterattacks, the enemy renews a heavy artillery bombardment. After several hours of fighting two strong companies succeed to advance as far as the road-bridge across the Mance ravine.

In spite of the detachment of bn van Donat, and the lack of sufficient reserves, two platoons are formed on 20 September with the mission to restore the old MLR.

After thorough instruction of the platoon leaders, the attack is supposed to start at 1430. Covered by the steep, wooded slopes of the Mance ravine, both platoons advance at 1430 toward the startoff position, while the enemy fire is steadily increasing. Fire of our own arty is supposed to begin at 1430.

The construction and improvement of the Mosel
Battery and of Fort Driant.

In front of the positions of the 3d Bn near Ars sur Moselle, located on a steep mountain, is the demolished Fort Driant with its casemates, forts and batteries. A reinforced infantry platoon guarding as an outpost is securing the old fort against its occupation by the enemy.

The enemy advancing through the Bois des Ognons to the Moselle river to the south tries to force the crossing of the Moselle near Ancy and Dornot, in order to encircle Metz from the south. An enemy attack against the line of the combat outposts north of Anch¹⁷ is repulsed under heavy losses for the enemy. When reconnoitering the firing positions in the combat outposts, the Co CO of the heavy company of the 3d Bn, Capt Hinkmann, finds out the barrels of one of the outer batteries were not completed. Grenades, cartridges and shells are found plentiful in the ammunitions bunkers. Should it be

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¹⁷ Should be Ancy

possible to fire with this battery which was-built 10 years before the World War? It was apparently forgotten and not yet destroyed. What opportunities are offering to one's mind! The enemy, 2 kilometers in front of our lines in heavy battle for a bridgehead formed on the east bank of the Moselle and here a cannon battery with tank cupolas of 30cm thickness and Krupp guns from the year 1904, which from its high mountain position could directly fire into the bridgehead. **The soldier's luck is once more favorable for us.** There is nothing missing except the fuze for the French grenades piled up in long rows. Also that fuze must be found. They are not in the casemates of the fort. But special squads are looking in other forts and ammunition depots in the vicinity. On the afternoon of the next day the suitable fuzes are available.

The enemy has a good sight into the steep slopes of the terrain on top of which the gun battery is located. Only during the night one can start the first trial firing. To the young lieutenants which have been trained in new infantry weapons, these armored, rotating, 40 years old turret-guns are something entirely new.

With particular enthusiasm they approach their task. Shortly after midnight the guns are ready to fire. Now they fire and listen whether the impact of the projectiles can be heard in enemy terrain on the other bank of the Moselle.¹⁸

¹⁸ Referring to the Dornot bridgehead of 23rd Armored Infantry Battalion and later (since this text refers to 9 September) elements of 5th Infantry Division

They wait in vain. Should it be possible that the shells do not explode any more? The second gun is firing. Again long seconds of waiting. Then! Quite distinctly the explosion of a shell is heard. The work of the last 36 hours was worth while. Still during the same night the crew of the Mosel-battery is formed from newly commissioned lieutenants, marines and several volunteers. During the few night hours they have to work hard. The field of fire is cleared, the ammunition elevators are put into operation, the ammunition squads are instructed, and the gun-crews trained. Everything has to be well working when the enemy will be attacked with destroying fire.

10 September. The lieutenants are waiting impatiently. Capt Hickmann, the company commander, stands on the armored observation post. Down there, to both sides of the village (Ancy) on the slopes and on the Moselle, 2 km in front of them, the Americans, careless and unsuspecting are moving around. Trucks and armored cars are moving to and fro. To the left of the village rubber boats and engineer tools are carried to the crossing point.

"Right gun, range 2300, deflection 2600, ready to fire!" Quietly the orders are sounded through the megaphones. "Right gun ready for firing!" it comes back. "Right gun fire!" The discharge is short and hard. For the first time

since the mounting of the guns, they are firing on the enemy. This battery which is dominating the entire Moselle valley far to the south, is going to worry the enemy. The impact of the projectile is too far. A concentration of vehicles in a small wood is the first target. "Right gun deflection 2400 - 40 over! Ready, fire!" The projectile drops almost at the target. Another correction and direct hit! The first trucks are burning.

The first concentration of fire of both guns has directly hit the target. More trucks are burning. The enemy runs, fleeing into the woods, leaving everything in great panic. The enemy is quickly leaving the village. The next target is the bridge crossing. The ponton boats can be observed distinctly. In a short time the equipment is destroyed and the enemy is fleeing to the rear. The fire fight lasting for two hours has prevented the attempts of the enemy on this forenoon for further crossings of the river.

At noon the enemy is firing into the battery positions with assistance of air-observation planes. In the afternoon the battery is under heavy fire of light and medium artillery. Two observation posts of the enemy are destroyed by two direct hits. The Ancy bridgehead is destroyed on this day, with the essential support of the Moselle battery.

On 11 September heavy arty fire attacks the Moselle battery. 21cm shells hit nearby and tear up big craters.

The enemy wants to eliminate the threat to his flanks by all means. In the evening hours the Americans, after crossing the Moselle near Noveant and S of it, attack our high position E of the Moselle. Immediately our batteries open fire and destroy the concentrations of the enemy. In this fire fight the left armored cupola receives a direct hit. Three men of the gun crew become casualties. Half an hour later the gun is operating again, commanded by the old gun commander, Lt Conen, and three replacements from the gun-crew.

On the third day of the battle of the Moselle battery the driving band of the projectile in the left gun bursts, which puts the gun out of action. Immediately measures are taken in order to get a spare barrel. The entire Fort Driant with its numerous corridors and chambers is searched, the spare barrel is found and mounted.

In hard work one is doing everything to complete the armament of the Fort Driant. All difficulties of ammunition and supplies are overcome. After 6 days all turret-guns of the fort are ready for action and take part in the defensive fight for the bridgehead Metz and the **enemy bridgehead near Arnaville.**

In order to protect this turret battery, the MLR is moved forward and Fort Driant becomes also part of the MLR.

On 24 September, after taking out the OCS school and the majority of the lieutenants in the sector Ars sur Moselle the fort can be handed over, ready for action. This excellent accomplishment could only be made possible by the art of improvising and assisting, done by the young lieutenants and by their determined and unbreakable spirit.

If the OKW¹⁹ report of 7 October mentions that the garrison of Fort Driant repulsed strong enemy attacks, then this success is to be put to the credit of the young lieutenants of OCS VI.

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¹⁹ Oberkommando West