THE 49TH INFANTRY DIVISION

By

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Historical Division
HEADQUARTERS
UNITED STATES ARMY, EUROPE
1953
The first part of the report on the 49th Infantry Division, covering the period from 2 September to 18 September 1944, supplements certain details in the report of the Seventh Army for approximately the same period (SE # 1-730). The tasks of the 49th Infantry Division, in the framework of the LXXXI Corps and the Seventh Army, were thoroughly delineated in that report.

The second part of the report, covering the period from 19 September to 10 October 1944, describes the fighting of the division in the west wall.

In September 1944 Seventh Army headquarters had been surprised to see the enemy advancing between the Meuse and Waaler Rivers from south to north, i.e., parallel to the West Wall, for it had expected him to turn east against the West Wall. After the end of the first battle for Antwerp, Seventh Army headquarters expected that the enemy might now try to take Antwerp from two sides at once. Since the Antwerp front required the commitment of all available forces, Seventh Army headquarters had been able to reinforce its northern wing only to a limited extent. It
Had also tried to strengthen the 19th Infantry Division by giving up
the bridgehead of Kerkrade, which was tactically useless, but the Army
Group did not approve. The loss of Kerkrade on 30 September was a gain
for the Seventh Army.

With the penetration at Veghel - Ralenburg the second battle for
Aachen began. In the beginning Seventh Army headquarters had considered
the penetration merely a local undertaking. From 5 October on the danger
arising in that direction became more evident. In spite of the arrival
of reinforcements it was not possible to prevent the enemy penetration
from being constantly extended, the two adjacent sectors -- the 183d
Volksgrenadier Division on the right, the 266th Volksgrenadier Division
on the left -- also being affected. So Seventh Army headquarters was
compelled to pull out the corps headquarters of 1 SS Corps on the left
side of the army and to transfer the command of the northern sector to
it. Although the 116th Panzer Division and the 74th Panzergrenadier
Division were moved up, the gradual encirclement of Aachen could not be
prevented.

Generalmajor Nichols concludes his report as of 10 October 1944.

The further course of the fighting is shown by the report of the LXXI
Corps, to which the 49th Infantry Division was subordinated.

Neustadt, 7 April 1945
I. INTRODUCTION

On 21 August 1944 the 49th Infantry Division had been ordered to
defend the Seine River in the sector of Les Andelys - Vernon - La Roche
d'ouzon. During the bitter nights of 22 - 23 August 1944, the enemy had
broken through, overran and destroyed the greatest part of the division.1

II. ASSEMBLY AND REORGANIZATION

During the retreat the division had issued the following order on
the evening of 29 August: "Assembly point: Hasselt. To be announced
to all headquarters by 26th Military Police Detachment."

On the evening of 1 September when the division commander and the
operations echelon arrived at Hasselt (Belgium), they found the supply
and administration officers of the division and its supply group of
division headquarters eagerly trying to organize the remnants of the
division according to units. A beginning had already been made in
registering the officers by name and the enlisted personnel numerically,
and in ascertaining the number of weapons and equipment.

1See NS 98-749, "The 49th Infantry Division in Northern France," by S. Mackel. (Editor.)
On the arrival of the division commander the supply and administrative officers reported that headquarters, Seventh Army had called by telephone on 1 September, demanding that the units assembled be committed in the area south of Brussels. He had succeeded, he said, in getting the order canceled by pointing out that these units were completely disorganized, and that most of them lacked weapons and equipment.

The situation was as follows:

So far, about 1,500 men had arrived at the assembly point.

Division headquarters was almost complete.

The headquarters of the engineer battalion and two weakened companies had fought their way through. The improvised partial reorganization had proved good. The elements which had been marching on foot with the infantry regiments were still missing.

Except for the radio and telephone sections operating with the regiments the signal battalion was present and ready for work.

The supply troops and administrative units were also more or less complete.

Only remnants of the infantry regiments, the fusilier battalion, and the artillery regiment were left.

Some members of the headquarters of the 148th Infantry Regiment had arrived, as well as the commander of the fusilier battalion, Captain Schrader. Only a few officers of the other infantry regiments had arrived, together with some NCOs and enlisted men. Part of the trains, burning at night, had succeeded in avoiding capture. Almost the entire
train of the 16th Infantry Regiment under the command of Captain Thommsee had arrived. Except for small arms practically nothing had been brought ready to heavy MG, no AA guns. Only one platoon of the AA company, which had been employed for the protection of division headquarters during the last days of August, had been able to fight its way through.

The artillery offered to same sad picture. The commander of the regiment and almost its entire headquarters had been taken prisoner. The commanders of the 1st and 3d Battalions had reported. Gradually a certain number of younger officers, and NCO's and enlisted personnel, turned up. Only one gun — a 120-mm. howitzer — had escaped destruction.

The following orders were immediately issued:

1. One regiment with two battalions was to be formed of the available infantry. Lieutenant Colonel Kloese was ordered to organize and command it. It was given the designation "16th Infantry Regiment." The former organization of the units was to be given consideration. Deviating from former custom, only one horse-drawn echelon was to be activated for this regiment. Surplus trains and elements of trains were to be evacuated to the 31.

2. The senior artillery officer, Major Vossberg, was ordered to organize replacement companies out of the available and arriving officers and men of the artillery units so that they could be incorporated in the infantry regiment at once, if necessary. In case guns should be assigned to the division, activation of an artillery battalion was to be prepared.
The division knew that the time to fulfill this task would be short. It was plain that the only way to stop the enemy was to organize defenses at the Meuse River. Since it was important for the division to have a period of quiet to reorganize its forces, it requested permission to move to the area southeast of Roermond, i.e. behind the Meuse.

However, in the night of 2 September another army order came to commit the units available. The operations officer was at once sent to army to make a report. By describing the situation he succeeded in having the order canceled. Moreover, he received permission to move the remaining elements of the division behind the Meuse. In addition, the division was ordered to prepare the bridges in the Meuse sector of Roermond and Maastricht for demolition.

- The division was moved to the new area.

- The reorganization of the division began.

- The supply and administration officer faced a particularly difficult task. By telephoning Military Area VI at Maastricht, which was competent for the division, he succeeded in procuring explosives. On the other hand, although he discussed matters personally in Maastricht, he failed to obtain any weapons, ammunition, and equipment. The former supply lines were destroyed, the new ones were not in operation. The fuel supply proceeded monthly because the stocks available at the mines could be used in addition to the fuel allocated.

- September 1944

- The engineer battalion prepared the Meuse bridges for demolition.
September

The following order from XXXI Corps Headquarters, to which the division was again subordinated, arrived: "The division will defend the Meuse in the sector of Visé (excl.) - Jupille northeast of Liège (inclus.). To the right contact is to be made with the 275th division, to the left communication is to be established with the commander of the fortress of Liège."

Since the division had no news about the situation in the area of Liège, an officer was at once sent out to obtain information.

At dusk the regiment was loaded on trucks and moved up to its new area of operations. All other elements of the division were ordered to begin moving to the area around Galpen in the night. By order of corps headquarters all artillery officers were to be attached to the garrison headquarters of Roosendaal for an unspecified period of time to special missions.

The division moved its command post to Aubel.

III. THE FIGHTING FROM 6 - 28 SEPTEMBER 1944

On the afternoon of the 6th the regiment took over the security of the Meuse River line in the sector ordered.

From the reports of the regiment and of the liaison officer detached to Liège the division received the following picture of the situation:

In front of the entire sector of the division, the leading elements of the enemy had reached the Meuse. Enemy movements on the eastern bank of the river could be clearly seen.
The fortress of Liege had not been prepared for defense; its commander had only a weak unit of military police under him. The bulk of this unit was grouped around the citadel. It confined itself to securing the Meuse bridges, some of which were prepared for demolition.

During the morning enemy tanks of the American 3d Armored Division entered the western section of Liege.

The battalion operating on the left wing did not incorporate the city of Jupille in the security line, as ordered, because the population of this crowded town showed a hostile attitude toward the German troops. Nor was it possible to establish communication with the garrison of Liege.

In the evening a message arrived saying that Liege had been taken by the enemy.

On the evening of 8 August a security regiment, which had reachederve on its way back from Liege, was subordinated to the division. At the same time the division was informed that elements of the 116th Panzer Division were at Flersdon (about 6 kilometers east of Liege), while the bulk of the division was situated east of that village. Contact with this division was immediately made in order to obtain information on the enemy situation. It appeared that the division expected an attack by enemy armored forces on 9 September and that it planned to fight a delaying action to serve as a base south of this town.

Because of this information the division decided that it was impossible to retain the open flank of the 126th Infantry Regiment at Jupille on the Meuse. Corps headquarters approved. It was now important to find a new
more or less continuous security line where the enemy attack expected for the following day could be beaten off.

The course of the line was determined by the fact that the new security regiment was already at Herbe, and by the probable focal point of the fighting to come. It was also influenced by the fact that this regiment lacked the experience to make a move at night and by the planned contact of battle of the 116th Ranger Division.

Orders were therefore issued on 9 September to defend the line Mars - Fort de Marchon - Holland - Herbe. This was approved by corps headquarters. The 116th Infantry Regiment had to head back its left wing.

The division commander himself established communication with the security regiment and gave the necessary orders on the spot.

The leader of the security regiment was Lieutenant Colonel Glasser (Knight’s Cross), a battle-proved officer. There were two battalions, made up from various units. Their leaders were old officers, who had served in World War I; in World War II they had not yet faced the enemy. The enlisted personnel — mostly men of the older generation — had never used live ammunition. Throughout the war they had guarded vital installations such as railroads, bridges, ammunition depots. They were by no means equal to the requirements and hardships of the fighting lying ahead of them, especially that against tanks.

Thus the situation of the personnel was serious, but that of the equipment and weapons was even worse. The troops had practically small arms only. There were one or two light machine guns per company, no medium guns, no AT guns. None of the men had been trained to use a panzerfaust,
Thus, the division faced the fighting that was expected with great concern. It was to be expected that the men, who were not accustomed to combat and fire, could not withstand the first bomber or tank attack.

The division repeatedly submitted its evaluation of the regiment to superior headquarters. It stated that it was inexcusable to sacrifice an untrained, poorly-equipped unit. But all its objections were disregarded because of the emergency.

September

As expected the enemy attacked the 116th Panzer Division at Piermont with superior forces during the morning. The division withdrew systematically to the northeast and occupied a position there. The enemy pressed in pursuit. In the new position the 116th Panzer Division repulsed the enemy.

The latter merely made weak attempts to feel his way forward against the detachments of the security regiment along the Aachen - Liege road.

It was clear from the development of the situation that the next day the enemy would continue the attack on both sides of the big road leading through Erez to the northeast. It was certain that the security regiment at Erez would be overrun.

Therefore, the division ordered both regiments to withdraw during the night to a line of resistance approximately following the Berdine brook. The right wing was to be situated at Neuchoateau where contact was to be established with the 275th Infantry Division. The left wing was to be situated at the bridge across the Berdine brook south of Label, where contact was to be established with the 116th Panzer Division. Strong security detachments were to be moved into the hills south of the Berdine.
The 116th Panzer Division took over the security of Herve. It planned to withdraw to Henri-Chapelle only under strong enemy pressure and to make contact with the division south of Aubel. It committed itself to securing the road Aubel – Battice, because it possessed armor-piercing weapons and artillery, which the division did not have.

Late in the afternoon of 10 September strong, enemy tank forces attacked the 116th Panzer Division at Herve, the point of main effort being south of the main road. After hard fighting the division withdrew as planned. Its right wing made contact with the security regiment at the road south of Aubel.

Many tanks fell their way forward to the right wing of the division and the left wing of the 275th Infantry Division. When MG fire was opened they wheeled off at once. In the afternoon strong tank forces succeeded in entering Aubel, but they were thrown back. An attack against Henri-Chapelle was also repelled.

In the evening the lively activity of aircraft and the appearance of artillery opposite the right wing of the division showed that an attack was imminent. The 275th Infantry Division confirmed this view with regard to its left wing. A continuation of the attack against the adjacent unit on the left and its expansion toward the area south of Aubel was also to be expected.

The security regiment was likely to face the first hard fight. Although it had not yet been attacked, there had been disturbing symptoms during the withdrawal in the night of 9 September, although it was carried out...
without interference by the enemy. One battalion had withdrawn 50
kilometers too far — allegedly because an order had been misunderstood —
although the men could hardly march that distance; it had to be brought
back again.

In the morning strong enemy forces, supported by artillery, even
from the western bank of the Meuse, launched an attack against the left
wing of the 379th Infantry Division and penetrated into its position.
Enemy tanks also advanced against the right wing of the 49th Infantry
Division and entered Neufchateau. In spite of the lack of heavy weapons
a further advance was stopped in the bitter, fluctuating fighting which
lasted until the evening.

Apart from the lively activity of the enemy air force, the other
sectors of the division front were quiet. Late in the afternoon, enemy
tanks advancing on the road Rethice - Anvel succeeded in breaking through
the defense of the 116th Panzer Division and advancing through Anvel up
to the crossroad (1 kilometer north of Anvel). Here the enemy forces,
consisting in the main of tanks, halted in the evening and withdrew to
the area south of Anvel.

Because both its flanks were open, the division was ordered to
withdraw during the night to the line of Fournon St. Martin (inclusive) -
Habsbourg (exclusive).

Threatened by a tank attack, division headquarters moved to open
area in the evening.
In spite of the lack of heavy, armor-piercing weapons and artillery support, the 149th Infantry Regiment, which had been formed out of the remnants of the former 49th Infantry Division, had given a good account of itself during the last days. It had not been able to prevent a penetration, but, on the other hand, the enemy failed to achieve a breakthrough in spite of his supremacy in the air and the considerable support given him by his artillery and tanks.

Although not under attack itself, the security regiment had been given a taste of modern warfare for the first time.

On 12 September the enemy did not continue his attack against the division. The 275th Division was again attacked and another breakthrough achieved. The division withdrew to the north.

The 116th Panzer Division was also attacked, and lost Herbrug.

Till dusk the 49th Infantry Division remained in its security line. At night it withdrew to the line Margaten - Empu (two villages not included). Leaving small security detachments in this line, the bulk of the regiment withdrew behind the De Ceul and Selzer brooks and there reorganized for defense.

The enemy did not launch an attack against the front of the division. An attack was again made against the 275th Infantry Division, which withdrew to the De Ceul sector.

In the evening the division security detachments were retaken back, because contact on the left with the 116th Panzer Division had been lost.

The division moved its command post to Elzeleheven.
14-15 September - The front was almost quiet. Some movements of the enemy could be recognized south of Tilburg. The enemy air activity had ceased. The enemy (U.S. 30th Division) tried to feel its way toward Valkenburg (275th Infantry Division).

Since the division could not carry out the order to make contact on the right with 275th Division and to the left with the West Wall near Oirschot, because the sector was too wide and the strength of the division was too low, it was ordered to expand at least as far as the area of Wijhe, keeping close to the West Wall. Thence a dangerous gap arose between the inner wings of the 49th and the 275th Division.

The division could not obtain a clear picture of the existing situation. It could not understand why the enemy did not make use of its success of 11 September by pushing on. The enemy might have advanced as far as the area of Aachen without encountering any strong resistance and, moving further to the northeast, might have gained even more territory in the following days. It was to be assumed that in the area between the Meuse and Aachen the enemy was deploying his units.

There were no signs that the enemy was preparing a strong attack against the left wing of the division. On the other hand the division was greatly worried by the situation on the right wing, especially with regard to the gap between the 49th and the 275th Divisions. A threat through this gap could hit the division at a very vulnerable spot and result in the entire sector being pulled up.
16 September 1944

The dreaded events came to pass. The enemy — the U.S. 30th Division — had apparently identified the gap in the defense. Moving past the left wing of the 27th Division the enemy attacked the 148th Infantry Regiment through Mijre. Heavy, frustrating fighting began. Toward evening the regiment was pressed back to the line Ubagsberg - Simpelveld. The security regiment, operating to the left, had to join in this maneuver, although it had not been attacked strongly. With its right wing it clung to Simpelveld; its left wing held Boschoterbeize.

In view of the superiority of the enemy, who must have recognized the weaknesses of the defense, the situation looked very serious in the evening. It was to be expected that on the following day the enemy would pierce the thin German front and reach the West Wall in one bound, ahead of the German troops fighting in front of him. But in the evening an assault-gun battalion under SS Lieutenant Colonel Roestel was assigned to the division. This battalion was moved up during the night and ordered to cooperate with the 148th Infantry Regiment.

17 September 1944

In the morning of 17 September the enemy continued to attack the new defense sector of the division. In heavy fighting, during which the assault-gun battalion came into operation successfully, the enemy took Ubagsberg, Simpelveld and Boschoterbeize. But he was prevented from advancing beyond the line Heerlen - Heerbach. During the afternoon the enemy succeeded in penetrating into the southern part of Heerlen, occupied by a small security detachment of the 148th Infantry Regiment.
Late in the afternoon, the 275th Division withdrew to the line Schermer — Wijchen under the pressure of superior forces; during the night it moved to the line Nuth — Heerlen. The enemy did not follow.

During the night the division was ordered to recapture Heerlen by attack and to hold it so as to prevent the enemy from breaking through between the 49th and 275th Divisions. For this purpose the regional defense battalion operating in the West Wall sector of Venlo — Horst-Wageningen was subordinated to the division. The battalion was hurriedly taken out, loaded on trucks and moved to the area west of Egelshoven by day.

At dawn the battalion, subordinated to the 128th Infantry Regiment, launched its attack on both sides of the road Egelshoven — Heerlen. Without fighting it gained the western edge of the town and prepared for defense there. During the morning it was attacked by strong tank forces and completely scattered after short fighting.

The regiments of the division were also attacked; during a bitter fight they had to withdraw to the line Tommerselen — Speikolzerberg to the West Wall. Surprisingly enough the enemy did not pursue them. To stop in front of the West Wall, which was not occupied after the departure of the regional defense battalion, and did not exploit his success. With his point of main effort to the right of the right wing of the division, the enemy advanced past this using in a northeasterly direction through Schaesberg toward Heerlen and there coalesced elements of the 275th Division.
In the meantime — perhaps even on 17 September — the following
order was received: "The division will defend the West Wall sector
of Muensterberg (excl.) — Hermsdorf (inclus.). To the right contact
with the 354th Volksgrenadier Division, to the left with the 245th Volksgrenadier
Division. By order of the Army Group the Dutch town of Nederwld, situated
west of the West Wall must be held as a bridgehead and included in the
Wall. The units operating in the West Wall are subordinated to the Division."

In the evening the elements of the division still fighting in front
of the West Wall were taken back to the edge of Nederwld without interference by
the Army.

In the morning of 18 September the command post of the division was
Nederwld.

The situation on 18 September evening, was as follows:

Except for the bridgehead of Nederwld, which was to be held, the
fighting in front of the West Wall had come to an end. The positive
result reached was that, without support by medium guns, artillery and
aircraft, a weak, partly untrained unit, kept together only by its ener-
ggetic officers and NCO's, had succeeded in retarding a far superior enemy.

From the direction of the enemy thrust on 18 September it could be
inferred that the enemy did not plan to continue his attack against the
division sector, especially against the extreme right wing, the unoccupied
West Wall sector from Rintgen to the area north of Nederwld. For operations
in this sector the division had been promised the 47th MP Battalion, which
was at full combat strength and well-equipped. But would the battalion
have the time to prepare and get acquainted with the position? In the
West Wall sector north of the division the 133rd Volksgrenadier Division was practicing its position. This division, too, was greatly concerned by the question whether the enemy would not start operations before the most urgent preparations for defense had been made.

In spite of repeated detailed requests, submitted to my Headquarters, the proposal of the division to hold the bridgehead of Kerkrade, lying in the center of the defense sector, merely as an "advance position" was always refused with reference to the order of the army group. So the intention of the division to charge the compact, though weak, unit under one responsible leader with the securing of the bridgehead, to have the bulk of the regiments pass behind the West Wall under the protection of this security, and to form two new regiment sectors so as to safeguard the unity of command and obtain a reserve in each regimental sector, could not be realized.

The division was compelled to leave both regiments in the bridgehead: to the right the 13th Infantry Regiment with its right wing on the West Wall — Kerkrade (inclus.) ; to the left the security regiment up to the West Wall. Based in the houses of the city, without any tank obstacles in front, without heavy weapons, the troops had to build a new position, although they knew that it was useless, that judging from previous experience this position could not be held against a major attack and that perhaps both regiments would be destroyed in front of the West Wall and would then be lost for any operations in the West Wall.
On the left wing of the division a battalion, composed of the remnants of the 793rd Division under Lieutenant Stotz, had been operating in the West Wall on both sides of Roerbach. There was contact with the left adjacent unit, the 265th Volksgrenadier Division.

IV. THE FIGHTING FOR THE WEST WALL (19 September - 30 October 1944)

There is no need to speak of the condition of the West Wall. Reference is made to the reports of General der Panzertruppe Brandoberger and of General Baron von Grodoff, mentioned in the list of sources. However, a brief description of the division's sector of the West Wall must be made, with respect to its usability for defense.

The sector was 15 kilometers wide. On the right wing as far as the area close to Hermannshof the positions were immediately east of the Merw, which was a good tank obstacle because of the water dammed up and the sandy river banks. There were only two crossings and these could easily be bridged. The river was passable everywhere by infantry. The fact that the banks as well as the positions themselves were covered with bushes and trees was a drawback, because this impeded the field of fire. In this part of the sector the defense had to be adjusted to a surprise attack.

In the center of the sector the system of West Wall positions stretched around the eastern side of the city of Hermannshof. The approaches leading to the city from the west could be blocked effectively. But since the roadblocks were not under direct fire, they could be removed easily.
Once the city was taken, it would constitute a great danger, because the enemy could assemble under the protection of its houses. South of Horrighem the position was again based on the Würm.

The southern section of the West Wall, from the area northwest of Barbranes to Horbach (inclus.), was built so as to fit the terrain. Strong tank obstacles secured the position to a certain extent. The division assumed that in an attack the enemy would leave this part of the position unshelled.

Until 24 September the front was almost completely quiet. But strong enemy movements were recognized in front of the extreme right wing and in front of the right adjacent unit. The 27th DP Battalion, committed in the northern sector from 19 September on was able to prepare its position during the full. Unfortunately the assault gun battalion had to be handed over to the right adjacent unit on 20 September. So the division again lost its only unit of heavy weapons and at the same time, its reserve.

On 19 September and the following days organizational measures were ordered as follows:

1. The division sector was divided into two subsectors. On the right was the 12th Infantry Regiment, on the left the security regiment. The responsibility for the bridgehead of Kerkrade had to be transferred to both regimental commanders, which was regrettable.

2. Since the division had succeeded in procuring guns, the activation of a battalion was ordered. The personnel was available.
About 25 September the battalion was ready for operation. It took up its position in the area of Alsdorf and north of it. Thus there existed some artillery protection for the center of the division sector although it was moderate. In order to increase the artillery fire power on the wings and at the boundaries, the two adjacent divisions were requested to move their artillery in such a way that it could cover the area in front of the division sector as well. During the last days of September, when air activity was increasing, two AA battalions came into operation in the division sector. They remained subordinate to the higher AA commander. In addition to their main task of controlling the air they took over the tasks of the division artillery.

3. The tasks of the engineers were fixed according to their priority. Most important of all was the strengthening of the position. Trenches had to be dug to enable the elements operating in the bridgehead to withdraw to the West Wall. About 25 September the engineer battalion was ordered to control the construction of the Roer position which up to then had been built unsystematically by civilian agencies.

4. The signal battalion had to install the telephone net of the division and establish communications.

5. A replacement training battalion was activated. It was important to form and equip new units out of stragglers and fresh personnel in a short time.
In spite of these efforts the division knew that it faced an unequal fight. The bulk of the troops was inexperienced. They lacked stamina.
A certain order had been brought in the units, but the fact that the bridgehead had to be held made it impossible to undertake decisive measures. The greatest worry was still the lack of heavy weapons. The artillery battalions made matters a little better. Support by tanks and by aircraft could not be expected, and that was the decisive thing.

The troops began to realize that after all the bitter fighting and conditions of the long years of war the city itself was now under threat of war and all its horrors. The soldiers were deeply impressed by the spectacle of the combat zone and the miserable masses of refugees.

On 25 or 26 September the 57th MG battalion, which was at full combat strength and well-equipped, was deployed and subordinated to the division. It was committed in the east wall sector on both sides of Horazennath.

When this MG battalion had arrived the division resolved to begin an immediate reorganization of its units, especially of the infantry. Incorporation of the MG battalion, which was the necessary condition for the reorganization, was applied for and approved. From now on the security regiment was designated as the 149th Infantry Division. The 6th Company of the battalion and the heavy weapons companies of the regiments were to be forced out of the MG battalion, which were to be disbanded as such. However, the reorganization could not be carried out fully because of the events.
For a short time the plan of the division seemed to be favored by what was happening in the bridgehead.

When Eindhoven had been occupied by the Germans, this Dutch city had been cut off from its natural supply area. Thus, the food situation of the civilian population, amounting to 25,000 inhabitants, had become difficult after the first days. The city depended on the stores existing, because in spite of all endeavors of the division, superior headquarters did not approve supply of the population out of German stores. On 26 September the mayor of Eindhoven announced that there was sufficient food only for one more day. Therefore, the army ordered the population to be evacuated to Dutch territory under the consent of the enemy. On 27 September the population left the city without incident. The next day the head waiter followed with the sick of the hospital, who had originally intended to stay.

The departure of the civilian population relieved the division of a great burden, but the Germans were sure that the enemy now knew about the weakness of the occupying forces and the situation of the positions. An attack was to be expected very soon. The artillery activity beginning again on 28 September made it probable.

As expected, the enemy entered the town with his tanks from the north late in the afternoon of 30 September. He could not be thrown back, although the attack was recognized to be merely a stress thrust for reconnaissance purposes. At night the garrison of the bridgehead was, therefore, taken back behind the West Wall.
Toward the evening of 1 October the battalions were situated behind the sectors of their regiments, where they began to reorganize immediately.

The air activity of the enemy, which had been more lively during the last days of September, increased considerably on 1 and 2 October. In the area of the 148th Infantry Regiment and of the right adjacent unit the movements of its troops by day were practically paralyzed.

The activity of the enemy artillery also revived. The division sector north of Palenberg as far as the area of Marienborn was covered by heavy enemy fire at times.

The movements of the enemy in the area west of Marienborn were particularly noteworthy. They were successfully combated by the fire of our artillery (AAA).

All signs indicated that an attack of the enemy was impending.

The division was therefore not unprepared when late in the evening a message arrived that the enemy had launched an attack against the right adjacent unit (183d Volksgrenadier Division) and had penetrated into the positions on a narrow front near Palenberg. The division regarded the situation as serious and considered the attack the beginning of major operations. This view was not shared by the 183d Volksgrenadier Division. It considered the attack a local reconnaissance thrust. It believed that it could clear up the penetration with the reserves kept ready for this purpose.

In spite of this optimistic estimate of the situation the 148th Infantry Regiment was given a preparatory order to organize reserves.
behind its right wing in such a manner that they could be used to strengthen the defense of the front as well as to launch an attack in the sector of the adjacent unit.

During the morning the 183rd Volksgrenadier Division reported that up to then it had not been able to regain the part of the West Wall which had been lost and that, on the contrary, the enemy had considerably expanded his penetration during the night. Fresh enemy forces, consisting mainly of armor, were pouring in.

The seriousness of the situation was emphasized by a message which arrived at noon and which stated that the company of the 183rd Volksgrenadier Division, operating at the point of penetration, had given up its sector without fighting and had deserted to the enemy.

In the afternoon the division was informed that the 183rd Volksgrenadier Division had been ordered to throw the enemy back across the Wester sector in a counterattack to take place in the morning of 4 October. For this purpose corps headquarters issued orders to attach to the 183rd Division the two battalions of the 128th Infantry Regiment which had not been fully reorganized. Apart from lively air activity and some weak attempts by the enemy to enlarge the penetration to the south, the division sector was quiet till the evening. The enemy managed to push back the 183rd Volksgrenadier Division and to enter the eastern quarter of Wachenheim.

Toward evening the command post of the division was moved to Ungershain (1 kilometer north of Durbach).
October

3 October

Except for one territory gained the counterattack carried out in
the early morning under the command of the 183d Volksgrenadier Division
did not result in any decisive success. The U.S. 30th Division and the
U.S. 2d Armored Division had moved up strong forces into the penetration
achieved in the west bank and had improved the positions gained for
defense. Despite the failure was, as usual, the superiority in
aircraft and the air supremacy of the enemy.

The two battalions of the 149th Infantry Regiment succeeded in advancing
from their jump-off positions south of Usch and in entering the locality
after heavy fighting. Prisneurs were made. In the evening, however, they
had to return to their jump-off positions. The losses were considerable.

By the attack on 2 October the enemy succeeded in breaching the West
bank north of Aachen, although only in a narrow sector at first. The
enemy had also repulsed the counterattack carried out on 4 October, mainly
because of his technical superiority. A comparison of the forces operating
on both sides showed the inferiority of the German troops with frightening
clarity.

On the enemy side there were two divisions concentrated for attack —
the U.S. 30th and 2d Divisions, which were fully fit for combat. The
2d Armored Division had more than 200 tanks, both divisions had artillery
and, according to the order of battle, immense quantities of ammunition.
The enemy had complete superiority in the air.

On the German side there was the 183d Volksgrenadier Division, just
activated and operating on a wide front and the 49th Infantry Division,
also operating on a wide front. The infantry of this division was just being reorganized, and it was still exhausted by the fighting in Northern France and Belgium. It had practically no artillery and no heavy weapons. The reserves available to the divisions were battle-worn after the counter-attack of 4 October.

Once the enemy had succeeded in making a penetration in the West Wall, the weak 138th and 49th Divisions were forced to fight in open terrain, where they had to meet the attack of superior tank forces without heavy weapons.

From the entries on a map, captured in the counter-attack on 4 October, it was evident that the enemy, after having succeeded in breaking through the West Wall, intended to continue the attack toward Aisne with the aim of encircling Aachen from the north and east, while covering his left flank toward the west. This meant that the division’s front would be rolled up from the north. The division was unable to withstand this attack effectively with the weak forces at its disposal. It was, therefore, greatly concerned by the future. Since new forces could not be placed at its disposal, the division ordered that the 128th Infantry Division build up a new defense line on the right side in the general line Uebach – northern edge of Horbeck – West Wall, making contact to the right with the 188th Division, and that the 149th Infantry Division detach all available reserves toward the area of Aisne and west of it.

At dawn the hostile air force attacked in large numbers. Fighter pilots attacked artillery and antiaircraft. All movements in the division sector were greatly handicapped.
midday, the enemy launched another attack. The units of the 126th Infantry Regiment on the new line of resistance and those clinging to the positions in the depths of the last line succeeded in preventing the enemy from moving north. But the enemy was able to gain territory from the right adjacent unit. Infantry and tanks, attacking toward the east, took Unckl and advanced to the northeast beyond the Gellenkirchen - Büradorf road.

Apart from enemy air and artillery activity, the night and the morning were fairly quiet.

At noon the enemy started an attack against the northern wing of the division. Heavy, fluctuating combat developed. About 150 Americans were taken prisoner. By evening the enemy had penetrated into the positions of the 148th Infantry Regiment and had taken Unckl and Büradorf.

In the sector of the 133rd Division hostile tanks advanced northeast and east and took Baggendorf and Hirschau. This attack tore a gap that was extremely dangerous between the two inner wings of the divisions.

During the night a NI battalion assigned to the division was committed in this gap and subordinated to the 148th Infantry Regiment. The units of the 126th Infantry Regiment reorganized for defense.

The enemy did not continue his attacks against the 133rd Division, but his infantry and tanks again launched an attack at noon with the point of main effort directed at Beemswiler. In spite of the fact that up to 50 tanks were employed the enemy failed to take the town. Thereafter the hostile forces feebly tried to push south through Unckl and Büradorf.
During the night a battalion of the 246th Division, which had been brought forward, was committed in the direction of Reesweiler and along the road Reesweiler — Alsdorf, between the III Battalion and the remnants of the 120th Infantry Regiment.

Strong enemy infantry and tank forces continued to attack southeast and north. Particularly bitter fighting developed in the area of Reesweiler and Alsdorf. Reesweiler was lost. In spite of the many tanks committed by the enemy he was prevented from crossing the big road. But he was able to pierce the thin defense front of the 128th Infantry Regiment, which had been greatly exhausted by the preceding fights, and roll up this front, consisting of pillboxes of the West Wall. By evening he had managed to gain the line Alsdorf — Herrgenrath.

During the afternoon hard fighting again developed for the road Reesweiler — Alsdorf. Again the enemy failed to advance. Toward the north he managed to push as far as the brook east of Herrgenrath and at some places even beyond the brook.

In this situation corps headquarters ordered a rearrangement of the sectors: the former boundary between the 128th Infantry Regiment and the 149th Infantry Regiment became the boundary between the 49th and the 246th Divisions. The 120th Infantry Regiment and the artillery battalion were subordinated to the 246th Division.

At the same time the commander of the 246th Infantry Division was ordered to move his command post to Eischen and to allow himself to be encircled, if the city were cut off.
From noon on enemy tanks and infantry, supported by artillery and aircraft, continued their attempts to take possession of the road Hoefu-
celler - Alsdorf. By evening the enemy, owing to his enormous superiority
of material, finally succeeded in taking Gutweiler and Schautenberg.

Toward the south the enemy also gained terrain near Hardenberg.

In the evening the division commander, seriously taken ill, handed
the command of the division over to Colonel Keesta.

In the sector of the division it had been possible to halt the enemy
attacks, but toward the south, in the direction of Aschau, the enemy had
gained terrain.

A counterattack was planned for 11 October, to be carried out by a
new regiment (motile Regiment von Frischer) from the line Hoequen-
Marbachdorf toward Alsdorf.

In summing up I can only repeat that during the contests of 3–30
October all elements of the division fought well against an enemy superior
in strength in every respect. Every inch of ground was defended heroically.