

about 450 casualties, a large number for armored troops and not commensurate with the gains.<sup>39</sup> Feeling that the armored division could be employed better elsewhere, General Corlett instructed General Brooks to move the 2d Armored Division off the roads in order to let the 28th and 29th Divisions pass through. The armored division—with the exception of CCA on Hill 219, designated now as the XIX Corps reserve—assembled and prepared to move into the VII Corps zone. Meanwhile, the 28th Division made ready to continue southeastward to Gathemo and beyond, and the 29th Division completed preliminary consolidation for the assault on Vire.

Just before dark on 6 August, the 116th Infantry descended the steep east slope of Hill 219. The men moved in single file through dense underbrush and over thick outcroppings into a narrow ravine at the bottom of the hill. They were more interested in speed than in concealment, for the Germans did not wait long before beginning to shell the route of advance. Protected to a degree by the sharp angle of declivity and the narrowness of the gully, the assault troops crossed a shallow stream at the bottom of the hill and climbed the opposite wall of the ravine. Rushing in small groups across a shell-pocked secondary road, the troops ran up a gently sloping hill and into the town of Vire.

Buildings set ablaze by artillery threw a pall of smoke over the town, and piles of rubble blocked the streets. The exercise of command even at company level was difficult during the street fighting, but men of the 116th Infantry dis-

played individual initiative and judgment and worked efficiently in small groups to clear the town. Prisoners constituted a problem in the darkness, and many escaped after capture. By dawn of 7 August the regiment had secured Vire and had set up blocking positions on five roads leading east and south from the town. The 29th Division officially reported the capture of Vire, as the Germans systematically began to shell the town.

The 29th Division sustained nearly a thousand casualties while advancing the ten miles from Tessy through Vire, in the process achieving its third major victory in less than a month: St. Lô, Tessy, and Vire.<sup>40</sup> Yet the gain of twenty miles from St. Lô to Vire must have seemed to the troops hardly fair compensation for so much weariness and pain.

The First Army achievements during the first six days of August were somewhat inconclusive even though the objectives deemed essential for continued operations—Mortain and Vire—were in American possession and even though undiminished pressure had forced a withdrawal that the enemy, by his determined resistance, had demonstrated he was unwilling to make. By capturing the Forêt de St. Sever the Americans denied the Germans excellent observation and cover and came into control of an extensive road net.<sup>41</sup>

Despite these accomplishments, the First Army was still short of its objectives in the Sourdeval area, and a twenty-mile gap lay open in the right portion of

<sup>39</sup> FUSA Daily G-1 Rpts, Aug.

<sup>40</sup> See V Corps G-2 Tactical Study of the Terrain, 30 Jul, V Corps G-3 Jnl and File.

<sup>41</sup> FUSA Daily G-1 Rpts, Aug.



CLEARING OPERATIONS IN VIRE

the army front between the 1st Division at Ambrières-le-Grand and the 30th Division at Mortain. Stubborn resistance in the Sourdeval-Gathemo salient despite a developing American threat of encirclement perplexed American commanders. General Hodges on 4 August thought there might be some German strength coming west toward the salient and in order "to stop them as short as possible" he had approved a suggestion made by General Collins. In view of the slow XIX Corps advance south from Tessy, Collins proposed to push the VII Corps almost due east to Gathemo and thus intrude on the XIX Corps zone. However, the VII Corps continued to

have difficulties in its own zone, the XIX Corps rate of advance improved, and the original boundaries remained in effect.

Determined enemy resistance in the center, evidence of increasing strength among German forces, and the gap in the VII Corps zone promoted caution on the part of the First Army. It was this that had kept the First Army from exploiting the fluid situation on the German left "with impunity" as had the Third.<sup>42</sup>

The failure to eliminate the opposi-

<sup>42</sup> FUSA Rpt of Opns, p. 4; Sylvan Diary, 4 Aug.

tion that had crystallized around Sourdeval was like an ominous cloud marring an otherwise clear summer sky. Optimism obscured some of the cloud's meaning. The cloud actually foreshadowed a storm.

#### *Montgomery's Intentions*

British troops had also threatened the town of Vire during the first week in August as the 8 Corps of the Second British Army right flank continued the drive south begun from Caumont on 30 July. Although patrols of the 11th Armoured Division had reached a point a little more than a mile north of Vire on 2 August, antitank fire by the 3d Parachute Division forced a withdrawal. On the following day paratroopers, aided by parts of the 9th and 10th SS Panzer Divisions under II SS Panzer Corps control, counterattacked exposed British flanks and encircled a small armored force, causing the armor to halt temporarily.<sup>43</sup> The 11th Armoured then resumed the attack toward the southeast and advanced through le Bény-Bocage, across the Vire-Condé-sur-Noireau road, and into position to threaten Tinchebray and Flers by 6 August. (*See Map IX.*)

The 30 British Corps, in the center of General Dempsey's army, had struck southeast on 30 July from the vicinity of Villers-Bocage toward Thury-Harcourt and the Orne River. Stubborn resistance and rugged terrain centering on the thousand-foot height of Mt. Pinçon denied rapid advance, but the Brit-

ish nevertheless secured a foothold on the slopes of the high ground. On 5 August Dempsey broadened his attack, and two days later the 12 Corps crossed the Orne River between Mt. Pinçon and Caen, securing a shallow bridgehead.

Meanwhile, the 2d Canadian Corps of the First Canadian Army had mounted several holding attacks in the Caen sector to prevent the Germans from shifting reinforcements to other sectors under Allied attack. Even as General Crerar thus sought to divert the Germans, his main concern was to prepare a major effort to be launched south of Caen toward Falaise.<sup>44</sup>

Plans for a major attack from Caen toward Falaise revealed the development of General Montgomery's intentions. The strategic decision reached by the Allies early in August involved a drive to the Seine, but the first step toward the Seine was the clearance of the area west of the Orne. General Eisenhower had pointed this out as early as 31 July when he wrote: "With the Canadian Army fighting intensively to prevent enemy movement away from the Caen area, Dempsey's attack coupled with Bradley's will clean up the area west of the Orne once and for all."<sup>45</sup>

Several days later, General Montgomery was thinking beyond the Orne. By 4 August he felt that the enemy front was "in such a state that it could be made to disintegrate completely." He had concluded that "the only hope" the Germans had of saving their armies was a "staged withdrawal to the Seine." By swinging the Allied right flank "round

<sup>43</sup> MS # B-346 (Blauensteiner); MS # B-840 (Eberbach); Answers by the CG, 11th Armd Div, to Questions by Hist Sec USFET, 6 Nov 45, ML-2251.

"<sup>44</sup> Montgomery, *Normandy to the Baltic*, pp. 140-50; Stacey, *Canadian Army*, p. 195.

<sup>45</sup> Ltr, Eisenhower to Montgomery, FWD-12505, 31 Jul, SGS SHAEF File 381, OVERLORD, I (a).

towards Paris," Montgomery could hasten and disrupt the withdrawal and force the Germans back against the Seine and its destroyed bridges.

If the Germans withdrew to the Seine, as Montgomery thought they must, their immediate move logically would be to positions east of the Orne River, generally along a line between Caen and Flers. If Montgomery could act quickly enough, a drive to the south from Caen to Falaise would place troops behind the preliminary German withdrawal to the Orne. If Crerar's troops secured Falaise, if Dempsey's troops reached Condé-sur-Noireau, and if enemy forces remained in between, the Germans would be "in a very awkward situation."

Thus, although the broader Allied strategy was an intent to pin the Germans back against the Seine, the immediate opportunity was present to "cut off the enemy now facing Second Army and render their withdrawing east difficult—if not impossible." Destroying enemy personnel and equipment would be but the beginning of a "wide exploitation of success," presumably meaning exploitation on a wide front toward the Seine. The main instrument of destruction was to be the First Canadian Army making ready to attack toward Falaise "*as early as possible* and in any case not later than 8 August."<sup>46</sup>

Two days after stating these plans, General Montgomery explained his intentions more specifically. As Montgomery saw the situation on 6 August, the Germans faced dismal alternatives in making the withdrawal that seemed

to Montgomery the only course open to them. If they tried to utilize a series of delaying positions between the Caen—Vire line and the Seine, they would be unable to hold any long front in strength. With relatively few troops available, it would be impossible for the Germans to retain a pivot point at Caen for the withdrawal and simultaneously to restore the crumbled left flank. In the absence of established alternate lines in the rear, the Germans could not let go both ends of the line. If the Germans persisted in holding Caen, they offered the Allies the opportunity of swinging completely around their left and cutting off their escape. If they endeavored to buttress their encircled left flank and thereby weakened their pivot point, they gave the Allies access to the shortest route to the Seine. In either case, the Germans invited destruction of their forces west of the Seine River.

General Montgomery accepted the invitation with alacrity, announcing his intention to destroy the enemy forces within the boundaries of the OVERLORD lodgment area. He planned to pivot the Allied armies on the left, swing hard with the right toward Paris, drive the Germans against the Seine, and crush them before they could repair the destroyed bridges to evacuate their retreating forces.

Judging that the Germans would try to escape the COBRA consequences by accepting the lesser evil and pivoting on the Caen area as they fell back, Montgomery planned to unhinge the Germans' withdrawal by robbing them of their pivot point, Caen. General Crerar was to accomplish this by driving to Falaise, then attacking to the Seine along the Lisieux—Rouen axis. As a com-

<sup>46</sup> 21 AGp Gen Operational Situation and Dir, M-516, 4 Aug; Montgomery, *Normandy to the Baltic*, pp. 150–51.

plementary maneuver, General Dempsey was to push out in an arc, swinging southeast and then east, putting the main weight on the right flank. After moving through Argentan and Laigle, the British were to drive through the Dreux-Evreux area and prepare to cross the Seine between Mantes-Gassicourt and les Andelys. On the right, General Bradley's 12th Army Group was to make the main effort on the right flank, thrusting rapidly east and northeast toward Paris.

Speed, General Montgomery indicated, was the overwhelming requisite for success. Commanders were therefore to press forward boldly and take great risks. Destroying the enemy forces west of the Seine might be so damaging a blow, he thought, as to hasten the end of the war.<sup>47</sup>

In brief, General Montgomery's intentions were postulated on the belief that the Germans had no alternative but to withdraw to and across the Seine. On this premise he sought to disorganize, harass, and pursue them, transform their retreat into a rout, and destroy their forces in detail. The maneuver he ordered would swing three Allied armies into the German forces while the fourth Allied army would catapult forward to outrun them.<sup>48</sup>

General Bradley was not entirely convinced of the irresistible logic of Montgomery's interpretation. He ordered Patton to move toward le Mans and eventually toward the Paris-Orléans gap, and he ordered Hodges to seize the Domfront-Ambrières-le-Grand area as a

<sup>47</sup> 21 AGp Gen Operational Situation and Dir, M-517, 6 Aug.

<sup>48</sup> See Eisenhower to Marshall, FWD-12674, 7 Aug, Pogue Files.

preliminary for a drive toward Alençon. But he was concerned by the fact that the Germans might turn and leap. They were capable, Bradley judged, of assembling strong armored forces in the vicinity of Domfront, and from there they might attack westward toward Avranches.<sup>49</sup>

Like Bradley, Hodges felt that because the German left flank was still "floating," it was reasonable to expect a German counterattack aimed at arresting American momentum.<sup>50</sup> Similarly, but more specifically, Haislip had pointed out that a German counterattack toward Avranches with the purpose of separating American forces north and south of the Sée and Sélune Rivers was "a distinct capability."<sup>51</sup>

Despite these warnings, commanders were in no mood to listen to what seemed to be prophets of gloom. Without worrying about what the Germans might do, the Allies pursued their own offensive plans. While Crerar prepared to jump off toward Falaise, while Dempsey made ready to push southeast toward Argentan, while Hodges displaced part of his forces southward to take up the pursuit toward Alençon, and while Patton was sending the XV Corps eastward toward le Mans, the Germans disregarded Montgomery's logic. In their first large-scale counterattack since the invasion two months earlier, the Germans turned and sprang westward toward Avranches.

<sup>49</sup> 12th AGp Ltr of Instrs 3, 6 Aug. Bradley later made no claim to anticipating a German counterattack. Bradley, *Soldier's Story*, p. 371.

<sup>50</sup> FUSA FO 4, 4 Aug.

<sup>51</sup> XV Corps Plan for XV Corps Defense Between Fougères and La Sée River, 4 Aug, XV Corps G-3 Jnl and File.

## CHAPTER XXIV

# The Mortain Counterattack

### *German Intentions*

The attack launched toward Avranches during the early hours of 7 August was the product of a curious lack of empathy between Hitler and Kluge. Hitler had issued the attack order on 2 August, and Kluge had carried out the planning, but by 6 August Hitler had developed his original concept into a grandiose scheme that Kluge had not even imagined.

The original goal of the counterattack was to regain Avranches and thereby re-establish a continuous defensive line in Normandy and restore the conditions that had made possible the static warfare of June and July. According to General der Panzertruppen Adolf Kuntzen, commander of the *LXXXI Corps* who was briefed by Kluge on 3 August, Kluge from the beginning felt that the counterattack could not fundamentally change the situation. The sole advantage, from Kluge's point of view, an advantage he was sure Hitler appreciated, was that the counterattack might facilitate a general withdrawal from Normandy to a new line of defense.<sup>1</sup> Denied by Hitler the freedom to look backward, Kluge could only hope that OKW was in the process of organizing defenses in the rear.

As late as 6 August, the day before the attack, Kluge's misgivings were reflected in his attempts to make last-minute changes in the plan. He was dissatisfied with the strength of the attacking force as constituted under the *XLVII Panzer Corps*, and he tried vainly to find additional units for reinforcement. The *LXXXI Corps*, in the vicinity of Alençon, was the only nearby force, and Kluge wanted it to commit the *9th Panzer Division* in a thrust to St. Hilaire-du-Harcouët once the division arrived in the area. In contrast, Hausser desired the *LXXXI Corps* to send the armored division in an attack toward Mayenne. The controversy soon entered the realm of academic discussion, for it quickly became evident that the divisions slated for the *LXXXI Corps*—the *9th Panzer* and the *708th Infantry*—would arrive from southern France too late to affect significantly the operations around either Avranches or Mayenne.

Unable to increase the striking power of the attack force either by additional units or by commitment of the *LXXXI Corps*, Kluge began to think that the *XLVII Panzer Corps* ought not to make the main effort north of Mortain as planned—between that town and the Sée River—but instead southwest through Mortain. *Seventh Army* staff planners, who had formulated the attack plan, had early pointed out that an axis of attack

<sup>1</sup> MS # B-807 (Kuntzen); AGp B KTB, 3 Aug.

south of Mortain—between the town and St. Hilaire—would not only broaden the front and tend to dissipate the limited forces available but would also commit the armored assault force to a poor road net. The best route to Avranches, they argued, was the most direct route, since it had the added advantage of keeping the attackers on the dominating terrain north of Mortain. Despite the completion of the attack preparations, it took the persuasion of Hausser's chief of staff, Gersdorff, to reassure Kluge that the plans about to be executed were probably the better, particularly since a thrust toward St. Hilaire would more than likely result in road congestion.<sup>2</sup>

It was a late hour to be thinking of altering plans, for the preattack situation was becoming increasingly dangerous, and an immediate effort was necessary to bolster the left flank before the lines there disintegrated completely. Even though the front had been contracted to the Chérencé-le-Roussel-Champ-du-Boult-Vire line, there was no telling how much longer the *LXXXIV Corps* could successfully hold on to the designated assembly areas and the high ground around Mortain. American occupation of Mortain was a serious setback that threatened to nullify these important attack prerequisites, and the American capture of Laval on 6 August endangered the supply bases near Alençon and le Mans.

Despite the disadvantages and diffi-

culties, some commanders felt that the tactical situation between 4 and 6 August had actually developed more favorably than might have been expected. The *II SS Panzer Corps* and the *II Parachute Corps* had eased, at least temporarily, the crisis along the army boundary near Vire. Although Hausser had to keep the *116th Panzer Division* committed defensively, he had pulled the *2d SS* and *2d Panzer Divisions* out of the line without breaking the connected front between the Sée River and Vire. The German field commanders nevertheless agreed that the attack had to be launched as soon as possible in order to regain operational initiative before new developments further complicated the situation.

Accepting the tactical necessity of executing the plans at once as scheduled, Kluge was rather disconcerted by several calls from Hitler on 6 August. Since 2 August, when Hitler had issued the original order, there had been neither instruction nor interference from higher headquarters. Kluge had interpreted his conversation with Jodl on 3 August as authority to command all the German forces in the west (including the Navy and the Air Force) and as clearance for attacking as he wished. Accepting the responsibility along with the freedom granted to deal with the American breakout and enjoying the implicit confidence thus accorded him, Kluge had arranged to have an advance command post set up west of Alençon so that he could personally supervise the attack. Suddenly however, on 6 August just a few hours before the attack was to begin, when Kluge was already committed to launching the effort that night, Hitler

<sup>2</sup> Telecon, Gersdorff and Kuntzen, 1115, 6 Aug, *LXXXI Corps KTB*; Telecons, Gersdorff and Kluge, 1025 and 1045, 6 Aug, *AGp B KTB*; MS # B-179 (Hausser); MS # B-725 (Gersdorff). The two latter documents and Hodgson, R-58, are basic sources for this chapter.

called *OB WEST* for a report on the progress of the planning.<sup>3</sup>

Not only did Hitler want a report on Kluge's intentions and plans by that evening, he also placed additional strength at Kluge's disposal. He made available sixty Panther tanks still held in reserve east of Paris and released to Kluge eighty Mark IV tanks and all the armored cars of the 11th Panzer Division, which was moving northward from southern France toward Normandy. These troops were to reinforce the counterattack.<sup>4</sup> It was rather late to be getting additional forces, but they were a positive contribution. Later that afternoon, after Hitler received preliminary reports on the counterattack during his customary daily briefing at the Wolf's Lair headquarters, Jodl called *OB WEST* to inform Kluge that Hitler wanted some changes made. The most important was that Hitler did not wish Funck, the XLVII Panzer Corps commander, to lead the attack; instead, he wanted Eberbach, commander of the Fifth Panzer Army.<sup>5</sup>

This telephone conversation revealed clearly that Hitler and Kluge were not tuned to the same wave length; they were not thinking of the same kind of operation. Kluge was ready to attack, whereas OKW was apparently only in the preliminary stages of planning. Kluge intended only to regain Avranches and restore the defensive line, while Hitler evidently thought in terms



ARTILLERY OBSERVATION POST near Barenton.

of a big offensive to be launched by several corps under Eberbach.

To accede to Hitler's wishes meant postponing the attack at least twenty-four hours to await the concentration of stronger forces and also disregarding the developments around le Mans. In view of the precarious tactical situation, any delay seemed unreasonable. The northern front at the Sée River might disintegrate, and the deep south flank of Army Group B might be so enveloped that contact between the combat troops and the supply complex based on Alençon would be impossible. Already that evening Barenton (seven miles southeast of Mortain) was being threatened, and the weakness of the 275th Division's defenses at the village made obvious the distinct menace to the southern flank. Furthermore, Radio Calais, a German

<sup>3</sup> Telecons, 1445 and 1500, 6 Aug, *OB WEST KTB*; Telecon, Kluge and Jodl, 1210, 3 Aug, *AGp B KTB*; MS # B-723 (Gersdorff).

<sup>4</sup> Telecon, 1510, 6 Aug, *OB WEST KTB*; Telecon, 1516, 6 Aug, *AGp B KTB*.

<sup>5</sup> Telecon, Jodl and Blumentritt, 1525, 6 Aug, *OB WEST KTB*.

intelligence agency, informed Kluge that the Allies had recognized the shift of his troops for what it was. Uncertain of the ability of the German defenses to hold much longer and fearing that the Allies would bomb his assemblies out of existence, Kluge persuaded Hitler to let the attack go as planned even though it meant that he could not use the additional armor Hitler had made available.<sup>6</sup>

Only with great reluctance did Hitler permit the attack to be launched. Desiring the most massive blow that could be assembled, he was not convinced that the counterattacking force was as strong as it could have been. He accepted Kluge's recommendation nevertheless, and issued specific instructions for the conduct of operations once Avranches was captured. He directed that Eberbach take command from Hausser at Avranches and swing from there to the northeast into the First U.S. Army flank, thereby disrupting and nullifying the American breakout. To insure compliance, Hitler dispatched the chief of the OKW Army staff, General der Infanterie Walter Buhle, to the west by plane.<sup>7</sup>

Hitler's intention, which had crystallized too late to affect the initial attack, was clear in the order he issued on the following day, 7 August, after the attack was under way. "The decision in the Battle of France," he wrote, "depends on the success of the [Avranches] attack. . . . The C-in-C West has a unique opportunity, which will never

<sup>6</sup> Telecons, Kluge and Blumentritt, 1600, 6 Aug, Kluge and Buttlar-Brandenfels, 1650, 6 Aug, and Zimmerman and Templehoff, 1905, 6 Aug, AGp B KTB; Telecon Jodl and Zimmerman, 1900, 6 Aug, OB WEST KTB.

<sup>7</sup> *Der Westen* (Schramm), p. 83.

return, to drive into an extremely exposed enemy area and thereby to change the situation completely."<sup>8</sup> The Avranches counterattack, as the Germans called it, was to be the decisive blow sought since the invasion, the master stroke of strategic significance that was to destroy Operation OVERLORD. The first step in that direction was to divide the First and Third U.S. Armies at Avranches. Once this was accomplished, further measures were to roll up the Allied front. Choltitz, the former *LXXXIV Corps* commander who was being briefed by Hitler for a new assignment, recalled later that Hitler expected the offensive to throw the Allies back "into the sea."<sup>9</sup>

The field commanders did not share Hitler's conviction. Kluge had not suspected that Hitler anticipated such exalted results. Hausser, who considered the task of regaining Avranches relatively easy, felt that holding Avranches after taking it would be the difficult part of the assignment, to say nothing of launching a further attack to the northeast. The result of the conflicting intentions was what became known to the Americans as the Mortain counterattack, a drive launched in some uncertainty but with Avranches clearly defined as the objective. (*Map X*)

#### *The Attack*

The first echelon of the attacking force was to be composed of three armored divisions moving westward abreast toward an initial objective along

<sup>8</sup> Quoted in *Msg, AGp B to Fifth Pz A*, 7 Aug, *Fifth Pz A KTB, Anlage 275*; *OB WEST KTB*, 7 Aug, and *Anlage 1176*.

<sup>9</sup> Choltitz, *Soldat unter Soldaten*, pp. 222-23.

the Brécey-St. Hilaire road. The *116th Panzer Division* on the right was to attack without prior assembly and strike along the north bank of the Sée River toward Chérencé; it was to be echeloned to the right rear to protect the north flank. Making the main effort in the center, the *2d Panzer Division* (reinforced by a panzer battalion each from the *1st SS* and the *116th Panzer Divisions*) was to thrust along the south bank of the Sée, using the St. Barthélémy-Reffuveille road as its principal axis of advance. The *2d SS Panzer Division* (reinforced by the *17th SS Panzer Grenadiers*, a division reduced by combat to regimental strength) was to attack on both sides of Mortain; it was to be echeloned to the left to cover the open south flank. Following the first echelon closely, the *1st SS Panzer Division* (less an armored infantry regiment and a tank battalion, which remained with the *Fifth Panzer Army*) was to exploit initial success and capture Avranches. The reconnaissance battalion of *Panzer Lehr* was to patrol the deep south flank. The *LXXXI Corps* was to block a possible American thrust toward Alençon.

The situation on the evening of 6 August was judged favorable. With regard to weather, a vital factor, forecasters had predicted fog for the following morning, a desirable condition for the attack. If the fog cleared later in the day, the Luftwaffe was prepared to furnish aerial support in strength. The commander of the fighter plane contingent in the west had visited the *Seventh Army* command post on 6 August to inform the ground troops that three hundred operational planes in France had been gathered to provide cover for the counterattack the next day. Ground opposition seemed

weak, for only elements of two U.S. divisions, the *3d Armored* and the *30th Infantry*, had been identified in the attack zone, as was the actual case. Against them were concentrated between 120 and 190 German tanks poised for the surprise attack. Once Avranches was captured, a newly arriving infantry division, the *331st* (scheduled to be at Tinchebray by 9 August), would be committed between the *XLVII Panzer Corps* and the *LXXXIV Corps* in order to regain Brécey.<sup>10</sup>

On the debit side of the ledger, the assembly of the counterattack forces had been made in great haste, at night, and with great difficulty. Units had assembled while in almost constant contact with Allied forces. In some instances, they had been compelled to fight their way to assembly points while in danger of being encircled. There was no distinct boundary between moving into position and jumping off in attack. Many units had already taken heavy losses before the attack started. In contrast with the usual daily personnel losses that averaged about 3 percent of those units in contact, German casualty reports for 6 August inexplicably attained heights of 30 and 40 percent. The meaning of the casualty figures was obscure to the Germans, for although it indicated the urgent necessity of getting the counterattack under way before attrition sapped the strength of their forces in Normandy, the fact that the *353d Division* (kampfgruppe size) and *363d Division* had together knocked out 28 American tanks on 6 August indicated that the German units, though

<sup>10</sup> See MS # C-017 (Speidel).