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Note to: ETHINT 15

By: Kenneth W. Hechler  
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This was a two-days' series of oral interviews conducted by Lt. Robert E Merriam. I was present at the first of these interviews, and know that there is no record in German which was made at the time of the oral interview. I believe that Lt. Merriam has made a very accurate appraisal of General Dietrich, and reference to the parenthetical notes of Lt Merriam will give a very clear picture of the circumstances of the oral interview and the lack of grasp which General Dietrich showed of the movements of 6th Panzer Army Troops.

Lt. Merriam took notes in English as the interpreter translated General Dietrich's remarks, and after the oral interview he prepared this interrogation report. Therefore, this does not purport to be a stenographic account of the oral interview, but is a fairly complete summary of the substance of General Dietrich's remarks.



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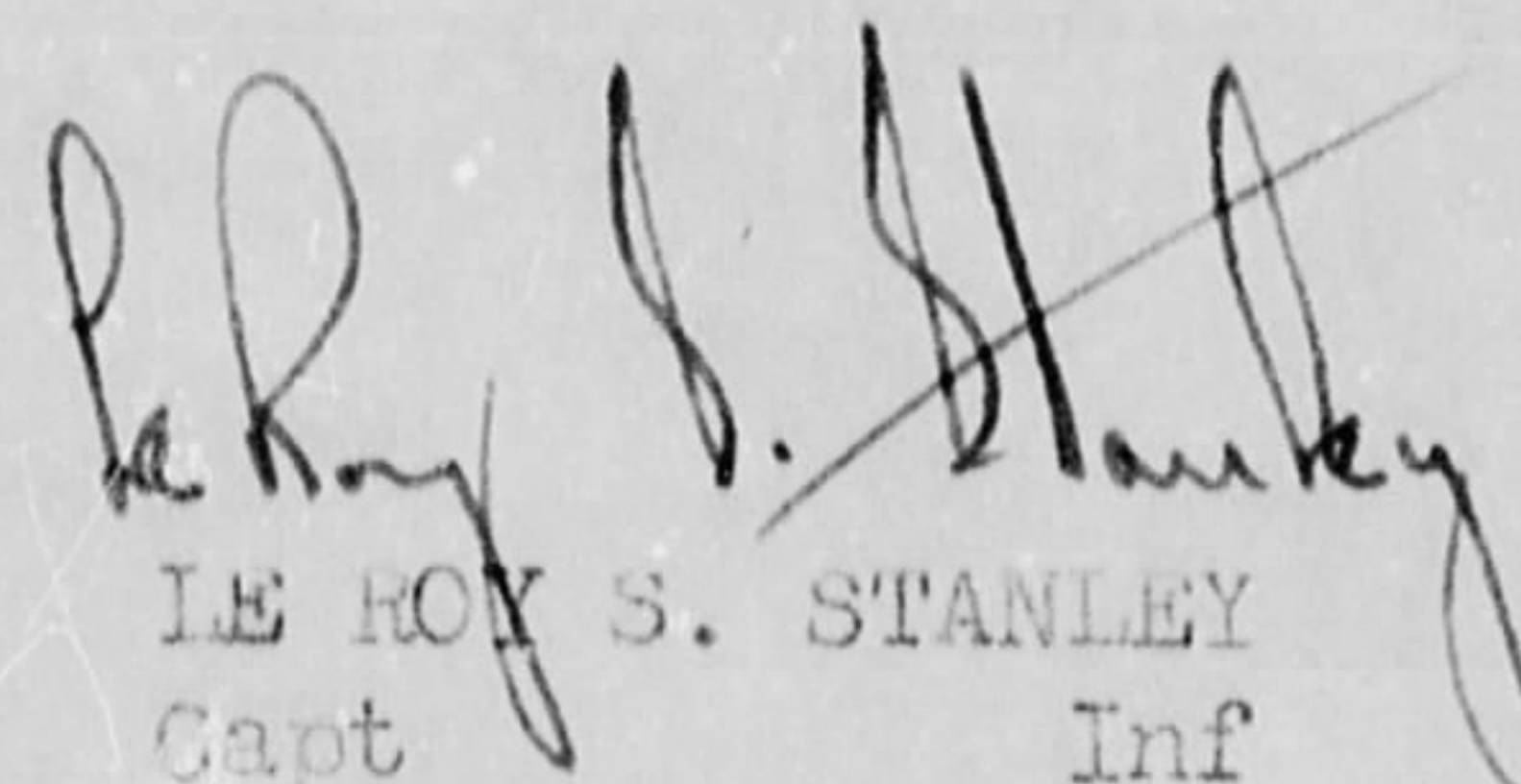
Title : Sixth Pz Army In The Ardennes Offensive  
Source : Obstgrf Dietrich, Josef ("Sepp")  
Position : Cmdr, Sixth Pz Army  
Date : 8 - 9 Aug 45  
Place : USFET Interrogation Center, Oberursel, Germany  
Interviewer : 1st Lt Robert E. Merriam  
Interpreter : M/Sgt Edward L. Kropf  
Circumstances : Gen Dietrich is regarded with low esteem by his fellow officers. He did not seem to have a grasp of the operations of his Army in the Ardennes and was unable to present a comprehensive picture of the happenings, even in the most general terms. Much of the material in the following pages must be regarded in the light of this situation; furthermore, there are a number of obvious errors in the answers provided by this former chauffeur. (REL)



Foreword

This interview is one of a series conducted by the Historical Section, TSFET (Rear). Unfortunately, only a typed record in English is available for editing. It is not known whether a record in German was made at the time of the interview nor, if one was made, can the accuracy of the translation be determined. Therefore, no absolute guarantee can be given as to the authenticity and completeness of this version of this interview. Only obvious errors in spelling, punctuation, and grammatical construction have been corrected. All parenthetical statements, except those of the interviewer and the editor, which are identified as such, are as they appear in the available record.

A carbon copy of the available record is attached as an enclosure to Copy 1 of this interview.

  
LE ROY S. STANLEY  
Capt                      Inf  
Historical Editor

FEB 25 1948



SIXTH PZ ARMY IN THE  
ARDENNES OFFENSIVE

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## I. Organization and Training

1. Q: When was Sixth Pz Army formed?

A: The Army was formed in Sep and Oct 44 in Westphalia with 1, 2, 9, and 12 SS Pz Divs. Later, 12 Volks Gren Div, 3 FS Div, and another infantry division were added.

At the time of the Ardennes, Sixth Army was not an SS Army, but was a regular army unit. Headquarters in Berlin would not allow my Army to become an SS Army until Apr 45, when we were in Hungary, because I had both SS and Wehrmacht troops under my command. In Hungary, there was another Sixth Army and, to distinguish between the two, my Army was designated Sixth SS Pz Army. At that time, I had only SS troops with me.

All of these panzer divisions in the Army had taken a bad beating on the Western Front, and it was very difficult to get replacements for them.

2. Q: Did the High Command always have in mind the use of your Army in a counterattacking role?

A: At first, the Army was just a reserve force; later, however, with all of its panzer divisions, it was an attack unit.

3. Q: Did you have much difficulty in getting tank replacements for your battered units?

A: The entire Army received about 250 tanks for the period Oct - Dec 44. Very few new vehicles were received; primarily, old vehicles were kept in good running condition.



4. Q: Did your troops have any special training in Westphalia? What was the status of their training?

A: Status of their training was medium, as 60% of the combat elements had less than six to eight weeks of training. An armored division has 17-18,000 men, of which 9-10,000 are service elements. Replacements, for the most part, were from the air force, navy, and other army units. Most of them were young men from 18 to 25 years of age. As unit training was carried up through battalion, but no higher, they were given only general training. The main trouble was a lack of gasoline.

5. Q: It was noted that numerous times your units attacked in the dark in the Ardennes. Did your Army have any special night training during its training period?

A: Very little night training was given because of the lack of gasoline; however, most of the tank drivers were experienced hands. The Army allotted sufficient gas for five hours' driving for each driver.

6. Q: Were your divisions up to strength at the start of the Ardennes Offensive?

A: One can say that, in general, they were up to strength. Each of the panzer divisions had about 17,000 men, of which 9-10,000 were rear echelon or service troops and the rest actual combat men.

7. Q: What extra tank units were with your Army?



A: One "section\*" of 45 Mk VI tanks was with 1 SS Pz

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\*Ed: Probably a battalion. The German word "Abteilung" may mean either "battalion" or "section", among other things. It seems probable, therefore, that the word "section" resulted from an inaccurate translation of "Abteilung".  
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Div. In addition, we had two mixed sections (Ed: battalions) of Mk V and Mk IV tanks, totalling 40 tanks, alternating between I and II SS Pz Corps and LXVII Inf Corps. Some 500 tanks in all were available to the Army, of which 100 were not in use at the start of the attack. These 100 tanks had been deadlined because of minor mechanical difficulties incurred during the three-day march. (Interviewer's Note: When I expressed surprise at the fact that 20% of the tanks would be deadlined in a three-day trip, Gen Dietrich expressed surprise at my surprise and said that this was normal for such a trip. He added that they were mostly minor deficiencies which were repairable in two to three days at the most, and sometimes within two to three hours.)

8. Q: Did your Army use searchlights in this attack?

A: No. Their use had been demonstrated to all commanders and we had one company experiment with them. However, we did not use them because of the lack of time for training with them. I also thought that the weather would not favor their use. Two main ideas with the searchlights are to provide markers for giving direction of attack, and to blind the enemy.



II. Movement To The West

9. Q: When did your Army move to the West?

A: About 15 Nov 44, the I SS Pz Corps began its move to the area north of Cologne, where it was sent because of the American-English attack aimed at Duesseldorf. The mission of the Corps was to guard against a breakthrough into the Ruhr. About ten days later, II SS Pz Corps began its move into the area southwest of Cologne to protect that city.

10. Q: Did you think the American forces could move across the Roer River toward Cologne?

A: You came very close to breaking through our line. My Army saved the situation as the other units were in very bad shape. During Nov 44, your threat was great, but the bad weather kept you from getting through.

11. Q: Were your units committed as an Army?

A: Three of the divisions--12 Volks Gren Div, 3 FS Div, and 162 Inf Div--were committed into the line, but as reinforcements rather than with an Army front.

12. Q: Just where were your Corps before 12 Dec 44?

A: One Corps was in the Bonn area and the other was in the general Cologne area. They had moved to these areas at the end of Nov 44 after the Ninth US Army attack had been stopped. Their mission was to be a reserve. They were moved south because the area to the north was too crowded with troops.



13. Q: Did you have a mission, a potential employment with plans for certain possible actions?

A: The only mission in the first part of Dec 44 was training. Since armored units are for the attack, we were training for an attack but with no specific mission in mind. Panzer corps usually are employed only as attack forces, unless they are 60-70% destroyed, at which time they may be used in the defense.

### III. Planning The Offensive

14. Q: When was the first time you heard of the plans for an offensive in the Ardennes?

A: On 12 Dec 44, the Fuehrer addressed us at a meeting and said that a winter offensive would be launched. He gave a long speech, and said that they had to do something. At that time, however, Hitler did not give the time of the attack. He just said that they would have enough planes and tanks. I told Hitler that I wasn't ready to attack with my Army and that we didn't have the ammunition or fuel to carry it through successfully. The generals were all in a line waiting to speak to Hitler and I had only a minute to tell him this before the line moved on. He said that I would have all I needed.

15. Q: Weren't you able to talk to him longer, in view of your long acquaintance with him?

A: During the last eight years, I had gotten further



and further away from him and hadn't seen much of him because I was constantly in the field with my army work.

16. Q: Weren't you at a meeting on 23 Nov 44, when plans were discussed for the Ardennes Offensive?

A: Yes, I now remember a meeting on that date; however, we only discussed the possibility of committing Sixth Pz Army and whether it would be ready for commitment if needed. Model (Ed: Cmdr, A Cp B) said it would be, but I said it would not be ready in Dec 44. We talked only in terms of a general winter offensive and did not specify date or time or place. (Interviewer's Note: When questioned again on this, Dietrich reaffirmed his statement on this meeting. He said he wasn't there the entire time, and that it is possible that details were discussed while he was gone. He remembers that Model, Jodl (Ed: Chief, Wehrmachtfuehrungsstab), Hitler, and Keitel (Ed: Chief, OKW) were there.) About 4 or 6 Dec 44, Model told me something was coming, but he was very secretive and said Hitler had not yet decided the time or place.

17. Q: Then you made no plans for the attack prior to 12 Dec 44?

A: Plans for the attack were made by Model at Army Group. About 13 or 14 Dec 44, I made corps assignments and decided on I SS Pz Corps to lead the attack.

18. Q: Is it possible that Gen von Manteuffel (Fifth Pz Army) knew of the attack before you?

A: It is possible because he might have heard through friends or unofficially. Manteuffel had a lot of good connections.



19. Q: When did you know the date was definitely 16 Dec 44?

A: On 13 or 14 Dec 44, I was told the attack would be 15 Dec 44. I said I couldn't get my troops there in two days, so the attack was postponed one day. At that, my units had to start the attack right from a march.

20. Q: Could you give us any ideas as to why you were not consulted prior to the 12 Dec 44 meeting?

A: Army commanders are not consulted very much. All of the higher leaders in the Army knew that I needed more time to get my Army in shape for an attack. The method in the German Army is for plans to come from above, based on reports from below. I knew about the attack too late and couldn't give my best advice to my division commanders. After we knew of the attack, no one dared talk about it for fear of reprisal.

#### IV. Army Attack Plan

21. Q: Would you state your general plan of attack in the Ardennes?

A: The general order of attack was for I SS Pz Corps to be the attacking Corps and move toward Stavelot--Stoumont in the general direction of Liege--Huy. I instructed the commanders to secure a bridgehead any place between those two points along the Meuse. They were then to move in the direction St Trond--Hasselt--Antwerp. It was wishful thinking to hope that we could cut the British Armies off from



the south. Our boundary was south of Liege because roads and terrain were such that our units could not move to the north.

22. Q: We have a captured map of the Liege area showing two pincer movements around the city. To what were these referring if you had no intentions of moving around Liege?

A: This could have been a Fifteenth Army map made in anticipation of their later move forward on our northern flank. I wasn't interested the least in Liege because I didn't have enough troops to take it, or even surround it. The town is on low ground and it is hard to get into it. I didn't care about taking Huy either.

23. Q: What was your plan for the attack of I SS Pz Corps?

A: I SS Pz Corps was to be the attack Corps with 12 SS Pz Div on the right in the area Krinkelt--Rocherath--Wirtzfeld, 1 SS Pz Div in the center, and 12 Volks Gren Div on the left. The attack of 12 Volks Gren Div remained in the vicinity of Holzheim--Honsfeld--Heppenbach--Medendorf.

24. Q: Was the infantry to make the first attack?

A: Yes, but not to a great extent. The divisions that were in position in the line before the attack should have helped with the attack, but they didn't because these Fifteenth Army units had been in the line for a long time. They were supposed to go to the Elsenborn Ridge, but they didn't get there. On 15 Dec 44, the Fifteenth Army's southern Corps (LXVII Inf Corps) was given to me.

25. Q: What plans had you made for the use of II SS Pz Corps?



A: This Corps was to be kept in reserve in case Ninth US Army should counterattack from the north, in which case they would be committed to protect the flank and push them back. They were to have been able to do this at any time until I reached the Meuse River. An alternative use for this Corps was to carry the attack should I SS Pz Corps fail. They were then to move on a line St Vith--Vielsalm and continue on to the objective, the Meuse. This Corps remained in the same assembly area, which was only 40 - 50 km from the starting point (Ed: line of departure?), until it was finally committed.

26. Q: What were the plans for the use of von der Heydte's paratroops?

A: They were under the command of Model. They originally were to have been used on 16 Dec 44, but, because of the weather (or perhaps the lack of fuel), they were not used at that time. I believe Model wanted to show that the Luftwaffe had something to do with the attack. I wanted them to jump in the vicinity of Elsenborn, but I was not consulted on their use. I didn't know exactly what their mission was, and, as an army commander, I had nothing to say about what they were to do. Their liaison officer was with Model, not at my headquarters.

27. Q: When von der Heydte was captured, he was very angry because the panzer units had not contacted him as promised. Were there plans for 12 SS Pz Div to move north to contact these units?

A: As far as I know, the attacking corps had no order to contact the paratroopers. I thought they might be able to do it, but



they couldn't succeed in widening the salient. They would have succeeded had they captured the Elsenborn Ridge, which was vital territory.

28. Q: What was the planned use of LXVII Inf Corps?

A: The Fifteenth Army Corps (LXVII) was to move from Monschau down toward Malmedy to cut off the Elsenborn Ridge and make a junction with 12 SS Pz Div on the south. They did not have communication with the paratroops and, because of that, could not tell them where they were. Because they lacked good communications, they thought that the paratroops had all been captured.

29. Q: When did you hope to reach the Meuse River?

A: According to the original plan, I was to reach the Meuse on the second or third day. (Interviewer's Note: When told that Gen Jodl had said it was expected that reconnaissance troops would reach the river the first day, Dietrich said Jodl had waged war only on maps and that he had never had a field command. He added that Model also was always over-optimistic.)

30. Q: What were the plans for using Operation "Greif"?

A: I had nothing to do with the planning of this operation and can't tell you much about it. I could not give them any orders. Skorzeny, who was running this operation, had special orders. He was supposed to get to the rear areas by Huy and Liege and cause trouble in general. The units were put in with I SS Pz Corps, but I didn't get any orders (Ed: sic) from the Corps. Part of the operation was to destroy radio and telephone communications in the rear areas, give false orders, find fuel dumps, and capture bridges intact.



31. Q: What about the special tank units equipped in part with American tanks and equipment?

A: These units may have used the same roads as mine, but they were not under my control and were not used in the initial attack. On the morning of 16 Dec 44, they had not arrived, but it is possible that they had arrived by noon of that day. The I SS Pz Corps did not get any special communication from the Operation "Greif" people. On 20 Dec 44, the Corps Commander asked me to take the "Greif" people out of his Corps because they were making false statements and hindering the operation of the Corps by driving between vehicles and doing exactly as they pleased. It was interfering with the control of the Corps.

32. Q: Do you know of any successes these special groups had?

A: No, I don't know of any. I heard that in one case a regiment was directed in the wrong way. Is this true? (Interviewer's Note: Gen Dietrich laughed when I told him it was probable that one of these men had posed as an MP and misdirected part of 84 Inf Div (US) as it moved south into the Ardennes area.)

33. Q: Did you hear anything about a plot to take high personages?

A: No, but it is possible that they may have been after some of the division or corps commanders. I have never captured one in the ten years I have been fighting.

34. Q: The personage referred to was Gen Eisenhower. Do you know anything about that?



A: Always plans, plans, plans. It would be very difficult to locate a personage that high.

35. Q: Would you go into more detail regarding your plan of attack?

A: As 1 SS and 12 SS Pz Divs moved out, the flank was to be covered by 12 Volks Gren and 3 FS Divs. The 12 Volks Gren Div had been with I SS Pz Corps at the start of the attack, and 3 FS Div was given to the Corps on 18 Dec 44.

36. Q: Just what was Fifteenth Army expected to do?

A: When I had reached the Meuse, Fifteenth Army was to start an attack of its own from the east, moving north of Aachen. This attack was not to be directed at Aachen, as Fifteenth Army had been too weakened by the Nov 44 battles and did not have enough troops to take the city. Nor was the attack to come south from the Geilenkirchen area. Fifteenth Army, however, was absolutely worthless as an attack army.

37. Q: Are the routes as shown on captured maps--the five routes of 1 and 12 SS Pz Divs--accurate? (Interviewer's Note: This map showed five routes which, from north to south, were: (a) from Hollerath to Rocherath, west to Camp d'Elsenborn, and then to Follieur; (b) to Rocherath, Wirtzfeld, then west to Sart; (c) Losheim, Malmedy, to Spa; (d) south of Losheim to Stavelot; (e) Krewinkel west to Trois Ponts.)

A: Yes. These were the original routes that we planned to use and whichever division got there first, could have taken Malmedy. On 15 Dec 44, it was planned that the attack would move toward Liege, but on 16 Dec 44, this was changed to move the attack farther south as



it already was apparent that the northern half of the attack was not progressing. If the original plan had not bogged down, we would have gone north and south of Liege. I gave the corps commanders freedom to decide whether to go north or south of the city; in fact, wherever they could go in that general area to get across the river. Later, however, after the attack had started, I changed this and ordered that they should cross only between Liege and Huy, both exclusive. At no time did we contemplate taking Liege. It was always planned to bypass the city and cut it off. These five routes were in the initial plans.

(Interviewer's Note: Gen Dietrich was not exactly certain which divisions were to use which routes, but thought that 12 Volks Gren Div was to use the southern one. It was apparent that he could not remember accurately enough to vouch for the statement, so the subject was dropped. He was sure that 1 SS Pz Div was on the southern routes and 12 SS Pz Div on the northern routes.)

38. Q: How did you plan to use 3 FS Div and 3 Pz Gren Div?

A: I do not remember 3 Pz Gren Div being in this area at all. The 3 FS Div was to move to the flank of the Army as one of the screening divisions.

39. Q: Were your troops told to rely on our gas to complete your attack?

A: Why, sure, if they could find the dumps; however, they didn't know the exact locations of them. We didn't get one liter of your gasoline. (Interviewer's Note: When told that one of his reconnaissance units had been 300 yards from the largest gas dump on the



Continent--2,200,00 gallons--Gen Dietrich made a wry face, and then said that he had had no idea of that, but that our troops probably would have burned the gas before he could have gotten to it.)

40. Q: How much did you know of our dispositions at the time of the attack?

A: We knew you were weak in the area we were attacking and we knew also that you had some green units there. I don't remember the numbers of the units.

41. Q: What did you know of the American corps attack toward the Roer dams?

A: I had not heard of your corps attack, but our attacks must have met head-on. The terrain held by your 99 Inf Div was very poor for tanks.

42. Q: How did you expect to cover your flanks all the way to the Meuse, according to your original plan of attack?

A: The flanks were weak, but, in addition to being covered by the infantry and paratroop divisions and one of the divisions from LXVII Inf Corps, the two panzer divisions of II SS Pz Corps were to move to the flank. The latter two divisions would be relieved of this mission when we got to the Meuse as the Fifteenth Army attack would then start and the pressure would be eased.



V. The Attack

43. Q: Would you go into detail about the start of your attack?

A: The infantry started the attack after a considerable artillery preparation and the tanks started moving about 1000 or 1100 hours. They didn't meet very strong opposition except at Losheim, where there were many tank traps. Also, the Krinkelt--Wirtzfeld--Bullingen triangle was heavily defended for three days. The 12 SS Pz Div bogged down right away.

44. Q: To what do you attribute the failure of the Elsenborn Ridge attack?

A: The attacking forces were to move from the north and south and, because they couldn't break out of the triangle they were in, they could not get to Malmedy.

The 12 SS Pz Div was attacking in swampy land, and it only had one part (100 liters) per tank. We thought this would be good for 50 - 60 km, but, in the swampy terrain, low gear had to be used quite a bit, and the gas didn't last. The division remained clogged up in this area for three days and couldn't get started. Also, your troops had many tank defenses in the area, including tank traps, etc.

45. Q: Was 1 SS Pz Div told to stay out of Malmedy?

A: No, they had a flexible route. (Interviewer's Note: Gen Dietrich then was told of the day 1 SS Pz Div approached Malmedy and turned south without even sending reconnaissance toward the town. He



was told that the town, at that time, was held only by a company of engineers. He threw up his hands in disgust, and said that the fault was in the reconnaissance units and that had he had good reconnaissance, it would never have happened. He went on to explain that all of his good officers and men had been lost in the Normandy fighting and that they were very hard to replace. He emphasized again that they were not inflexible in their routes. When he was told this incident occurred 17 Dec 44, Gen Dietrich then remarked that another reason for the apparent oversight was that on 17 Dec 44, 1 SS Pz Div did not yet know that 12 SS Pz Div was bogged down. He concluded however, that a good reconnaissance unit still would have found out that Malmedy was held so lightly.)

46. Q: Why do you think 1 SS Pz Div got trapped in the Stoumont--La Gleize area?

A: The Division didn't have the gas it needed. It waited for fuel from 17 Dec to 19 Dec, but it didn't get any. By that time, the forces had been cut off.

47. Q: Do you know why the forces which captured Stavelot moved on and left it held so very lightly?

A: I do not know. It was probably because they didn't have much to leave, probably no more than a battalion.

48. Q: What did you have in the vicinity of Stoumont?

A: We had a panzer regiment, a panzer grenadier regiment, and five artillery batteries.

49. Q: How much did you know of our troop movements into the Ardennes area?



A: I remember when word came that the 7 Armd Div (US) was moving into the Ardennes. Other than that, I don't remember specifically the numbers of the divisions. I do remember, though, that the pressure from the flank began to get heavier and heavier.

50. Q: When did you decide to use II SS Pz Corps?

A: I decided to use II SS Pz Corps when it became apparent that 12 SS Pz Div was stopped and 1 SS Pz Div was bottled up. This was about 21 Dec 44. The 9 SS Pz Div was to move to the Recht--Poteau--Petit Thier--Grand Halleux area, and 2 SS Pz Div was to move to the Schonberg--St Vith--Beho area. The II SS Pz Corps was then to continue the attack according to plan.

51. Q: Why was 9 SS Pz Div sent into the area designated above?

A: The Fuehrer Begleit Brig (about 11,000 men) was having trouble, and 9 SS Pz Div was sent over to help them. They met around Vielsalm. At this time, Fifth Pz and Sixth Pz Armies began to get all mixed up. This, of course, was not according to plan, but the roads didn't permit the troops to follow the routes planned for them and they had to search for roads on which they could get through. Thus, not only the divisions, but also the army boundaries, got all mixed up.

52. Q: You mentioned once that 2 SS Pz Div was taken away from you for a short time. Would you relate this incident?

A: The 2 SS Pz Div was with Fifth Pz Army from about 18 Dec to 21 Dec. On 22 Dec 44, it came back to me. I don't know exactly what it did during that time. It was given to Fifth Pz Army because the



Fuehrer Begleit Brig was too weak and didn't get ahead. (Interviewer's Note: Gen Dietrich then remarked that he was sorry he could not give more specific information, but he was no longer a field soldier and that, as an army commander, he was a watch dog and could not follow the individual movements as much.)

53. Q: Would you go into more detail on the employment of II SS Pz Corps?

A: The plan was to keep on going with this Corps after the other corps had bogged down. (Interviewer's Note: Gen Dietrich did not seem to be able to give a good explanation of the use of II SS Pz Corps.)

54. Q: Was 9 SS Pz Div under II SS Pz Corps at Poteau on 21 Dec 44 when 2 SS Pz Div was under Fifth Pz Army?

A: Yes.

55. Q: What was your evaluation of our withdrawal in the area Trois Ponts--Manhay on the night of 24/25 Dec 44?

A: I thought your withdrawal just meant you were pulling back to prevent being cut off by an attack by me from the Trois Ponts area across the base of your salient. Although I had thought about it, I couldn't make such an attack because your pressure in the Stavelot--Malmedy--Wainmes area was getting stronger every day. I had my hands full trying to put reserves on the flank so that I myself wouldn't be cut off.

56. Q: On 25 Dec 44, when II SS Pz Corps launched an attack on Manhay--Grandmenil, did you think you had a good chance of breaking



through toward the Meuse River?

A: Originally, when the attack started, I thought we had a good chance. I wanted Erezee and the roads north to Durbuy and just east of there as these were the best routes to the Meuse. We didn't get as far as Erezee, however, and after that I didn't think it was possible to get through. As far as I was concerned, the offensive then was completely stalled. Erezee was a key position.

57. Q: At the time of your breakthrough to Manhay, our forces were temporarily quite disorganized and we often wondered why you did not attempt to break north toward Werbomont and Liege?

A: The attack was never directed toward Liege. After the failure of the original plan, the direction of the attack was always northwest. (Interviewer's Note: Gen Dietrich then modified this statement to say that they had very heavy casualties in the Manhay fighting and that, if they hadn't had such heavy casualties, they would have gone north.)

58. Q: Were you afraid of an attack in the Malmedy--St Vith area to cut off your spearhead?

A: Yes. I thought and believed that this would happen. You were building up strong artillery on that flank and I thought you were bringing in new troops on the flank, possibly for just such an attack.

59. Q: Did you do anything about this threat?

A: On 26 - 27 Dec 44, I wanted to attack again in the Elsenborn area with an infantry corps, but I dropped this plan because



the Corps (LXVII) had such high casualties in the earlier fighting that they wouldn't have been able to carry out an attack at that time.

60. Q: Did you know the disposition of the British units around Liege?

A: We heard that there were two British divisions near Liege.

61. Q: Could you recall anything of 3 Pz Gren Div in your sector?

A: The 3 Pz Gren Div was brought in to reinforce LXVII Inf Corps in the Monschau area. I was afraid of a possible breakthrough by your troops at that point.

62. Q: When did you move 12 SS Pz Div to the west?

A: On 28 Dec 44.

63. Q: Did you have any plans for a new general attack?

A: No. The attack on Sadzot must have been ordered by the Corps Commander. My orders after 25 Dec 44 were to continue to hold in place. We no longer were in position to attack because of the lack of ammunition.

#### VI. Defense and Withdrawal

64. Q: When did your divisions move toward Bastogne?

A: The 1 SS Pz Div moved south on 28 Dec 44, with 12 and 9 SS Pz Divs following shortly thereafter. With them went I SS Pz Corps. The 1 SS Pz Div moved in east of Bastogne and made some progress.



The 12 SS Pz Div moved in west of the town. Model ordered Fifth Pz Army to take Bastogne, and, because of that, I had to give my divisions to the attacking Fifth Pz Army.

65. Q: Why do you think so much importance was attached to Bastogne so late in the fight?

A: Model wanted to get it at all cost. I'm not sure exactly why. He was to order a coordinated, all-out attack, but it never came. On 3 Jan 45, he changed his mind.

66. Q: What troops did you have under your command late in Dec 44?

A: I still had my II SS Pz Corps, and, in addition, had been given IXVI Inf Corps with 16 and 62 Volks Gren Divs. These divisions took the place of those I sent to Bastogne. The Fifteenth Army Corps was lost to me from about 25 Dec 44 until 10 Jan 45, when it again came under my command.

67. Q: What did you know of our attack plans in Jan 45?

A: All I knew was that your pressure kept mounting daily and that finally you launched a triple attack from the areas Trois Ponts--Manhay, Hotton--Erezee, and on the west end of the Bulge.

68. Q: What did your Army do in the defensive?

A: We first held the Trois Ponts--Vielsalm line, and then the line to the west of St Vith. The I SS Pz Corps came back to us about 10 Jan 45, and it was used on the flanks and wherever additional strength was needed. By this time casualties had been very high and the division sectors were very narrow.



69. Q: When did you receive orders to move to the East?

A: These orders came through about the end of Jan 45.

We marched back over the Rhine on foot in 12 days. Because we were waiting for more gas, the tanks moved very slowly to conserve fuel and many vehicles were towed by tractors. We went to an area south of Budapest; on the way, I left over a thousand vehicles for repairs. I received some new vehicles and about 22,000 new men, most of them replacements. We left the Rhineland area by train between 5 Feb and 17 Feb, and the main body arrived in Hungary on 1 - 2 Mar 45. One corps attacked on 4 Mar 45, and by 6 Mar 45, we launched an Army attack on Lake Balaton. We were known as an engineer army so we would not be identified by the Russians.

#### VII. Review Of The Offensive

70. Q: When did you think the attack was lost?

A: On the third or fourth day.

71. Q: What would you list as the most important reasons for the failure of the Ardennes Offensive?

A: I would say it was mainly bad preparation. Also important were lack of fuel, lack of supplies, lack of training, and the time of the year, in that order. In addition, an important factor was the fast regrouping of the American forces. I had believed you could do it, however, because of all your vehicles. In 14 days, your regrouping was an accomplished fact.



72. Q: Do you know what your casualties were for the entire operation?

A: For the entire operation, I lost 37,000 men killed, wounded, and frozen, and from 350 - 400 tanks. (Interviewer's Note: This does not include LXVII Inf Corps, which had about 20% casualties.)

73. Q: Did you get any replacements of men or tanks while you were in the Ardennes?

A: None at all, and very little gas. The whole attack was a big mistake. To use those two armies at that time of the year was the biggest mistake they made in the War. In May 45, the attack might have gone better, but I agree the air might have raised the devil with us. Normandy, in Jul and Aug 44, was the worst time I have spent in my fighting years. I had five complete corps shot out from under me. It used to take me six hours to move the ten km from my headquarters to the front. And the worst is that those planes don't distinguish between generals and anyone else. It was terrible. I told Goering his Luftwaffe wasn't worth a pfennig. (Interviewer's Note: Gen Dietrich then made some remarks about the general situation in the Ardennes to the effect that they had very poor weather, the roads were bad, it was a poor time of the year for tank movement, and they had a very short day in which to conduct operations. He went on to remark that he had two Volks artillery corps, but that they had only enough ammunition for two sections (Ed: battalions?), and that many of the guns stayed back in the reserve areas because they didn't have enough gas to bring them into the Bulge.)



74. Q: How much communication did you have with von Manteuffel during the attack?

A: I had very little communication with him because I was out in the field much of the time, as he was. Our staffs, however, were in constant communication.

75. Q: How can you explain that von Manteuffel was consulted so much on the plans for the Offensive?

A: Manteuffel had better liaison with Hitler because he had been in command of the Grossdeutschland Div (Ed: a panzer division) and knew many of the men around the Fuehrer's headquarters. I should have been given four weeks of planning instead of four days. I knew that the Offensive would start, but not where. I was not in the area even once before the attack, and I couldn't look at the terrain. I didn't have time to prepare my thoughts and ideas in the way they really should have been prepared. Because of that, it is hard to give a detailed description. I am one of the oldest tank men in the Army, having been in tanks in 1916-17. If I had been asked, I would have been against that terrain with swampy territory and few roads. I would have gone by Aachen or Metz. The Ardennes was the worst terrain imaginable for a thousand tanks. Only four to five of them could fight at one time because there was no place to deploy. A big tank attack in this terrain is impossible. West of Aachen, one can see from five to ten km in places and we could have gone to town. In the Ardennes, we could develop nothing.

76. Q: But at Aachen or Metz, you would have bumped into



our strongest forces. Wouldn't this have been a deciding factor in locating the attack?

A: The initial fight would have been harder, but we could have broken through.

77. Q: What happened to 10 SS Pz Div?

A: It should have come to us, but I don't know what happened to it. I think it was sent to Strassburg, although I received word I was to get it. As far as I know, it didn't come into the sector at all.

78. Q: Did our air power do much damage to you in the Ardennes?

A: Yes. Many ammunition and gas-carrying vehicles were destroyed. I lost about 25-30% of all such vehicles I had. The worst attacks were on 23 Dec 44, when the weather first became good. During good weather after that, we could move only at night.

79. Q: Did the raids on St Vith slow traffic through the town?

A: The raids completely destroyed the town and made us route transportation another way. This town was in my Army zone after it was taken. I was there during the big raid of 26 Dec 44. It was terrible.

80. Q: Did the attack on your spearheads on 18 Dec 44 in the Stoumont area do much damage?

A: These attacks weren't so bad.