



MILITARY INTELLIGENCE DIVISION
WAR DEPARTMENT
Washington, March 20, 1941

SPECIAL BULLETIN
No. 32
G-2/2657-231

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ACCOUNT OF OPERATIONS BETWEEN MAY 10
AND THE ARMISTICE AT COMPIEGNE

SOURCE

In November, 1940, the chief of the French Second Bureau, who corresponds to the American G-2, rendered an account to the Vichy government on operations between May 10 and the armistice at Compiene. This report, translated and considerably reworked, is presented here with an introduction prepared in the Military Intelligence Division.

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24 NOV 1944

Chief of AC of S, G-2, WDGS
E. S. Johnston

E. S. JOHNSTON
Colonel, Infantry
CUSTODIAN

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Two maps are attached.



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ACCOUNT OF OPERATIONS BETWEEN MAY 10 AND THE
ARMISTICE AT COMPIEGNE

1. INTRODUCTION.

The French G-2's account of operations, presented herewith, brings out these salient points:

a. The Germans obtained strategical surprise through the factors of rapidity and power.

b. French GHQ knew before May 10 that the Allies were greatly inferior in combat strength to the Germans, but the full degree of inferiority was not recognized.

✓ c. Political as well as military factors were involved in the French decision to advance into Belgium.

✓ d. The Allied forces moved out from behind their prepared defenses without any intention of seeking a military decision, but with the sole purpose of extending their passive defense system over a part of Belgium.

✓ e. The general line which the Allies hoped to defend had not been fully organized in advance.

f. French distribution of forces was extremely defective.

✓ The account states that on May 10 the number of divisions available to the Allies on the Northeast Front was 104. There were 67 French infantry divisions, as well as 13 fortress divisions, three armored divisions, three light mechanized divisions, five light cavalry divisions, and three infantry divisions in GHQ reserve. In addition, the British had ten divisions available. The report adds, however, that initially only 46 divisions - two armored, three light mechanized, four light cavalry, 27 infantry, and ten British - met the enemy west of the Moselle. None of the totals includes the 22 Belgian and the nine Dutch divisions.

Examination of the map indicates that GHQ controlled some 21 divisions, although this fact is not clear from the report. In the Maginot Line there were about 25 divisions in addition to fortress troops whose strength was probably equal to that of about nine divisions.

✓ From the distribution of troops, it appears that the French High Command did not expect the Germans to make their main effort where they did, but the French seem to have determined correctly the direction of the German main effort by May 11. The initial distribution of forces and the rapidity of the German movement were such that

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little could be done in time.

✓ In particular, French armored and light mechanized units were widely dispersed over the front, and 75 per cent of the French tanks were not in armored formations. These tanks - 34 battalions - appear to have been largely frittered away; no very strong tank mass could be constituted for the decisive action, although French GHQ seems to have recognized the need for such an armored mass.

There is no indication that GHQ sought to facilitate rapid movement of its reserves to the decisive point. Orders for reinforcement of the hinge at Sedan stated that the four divisions of a first echelon were to arrive over a period of six days, while the six divisions of a second echelon were to arrive over a period of eight days.

The extreme weakness of French aviation, particularly as regards bombers, is made clear in the report, but there is no indication that GHQ fully recognized what repercussions this weakness would have upon the action of other arms or upon the operations as a whole.

Complete details of French strength and frontage near Sedan are not available, although the report shows that the Second Army had five infantry divisions and some fortress troops to hold 70 kilometers while the Ninth Army had seven infantry divisions, including one fortress division, to hold a front which was 75 kilometers in width but which would expand to 90 kilometers when the army's left wing had pivoted to Namur. The German main effort struck the left of the Second Army and the right of the Ninth, just short of the pivot of the French-British advance into Belgium. Thus, the main bodies of French troops had not left their prepared defenses in the area where the effort was made.

It appears that Gamelin insisted on the Breda maneuver - the movement into Holland - despite the objection of the commander of the Seventh Army. There is also an intimation that General Georges, Commander of the Northeast Front, opposed the movement, at least passively. The result of this plan was that the Seventh Army, originally intended as a reserve behind the Allied left, was committed initially. Incidents such as this lend weight to reports that complicated command organization resulted in considerable friction.

As a result of the nature of French dispositions, the Germans generally met the French in greatly superior force. They were able to strike locally with a powerful armored force at weak parts of the French position in terrain favorable for German tactics

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but unfavorable for the French. French GHQ lacked means for intervening rapidly and effectively although the direction of the main effort was known.

2. REPORT OF THE FRENCH G-2

a. General Foreword.

On May 10, 1940, France had been on a war footing for more than eight months. The sudden attack which had been feared at the beginning of operations had not taken place because of the campaign in Poland. Mobilization and concentration had been effected without difficulty and without intervention by enemy bombing aviation.

During the winter of 1939-1940, training for reservists, who constituted the major part of our effectives, was somewhat improved, and the program for equipping our units with armored, antitank, and anti-aircraft materiel was in progress. Because of the fact that construction of this type of materiel had just been started, the few units which had any of it at all had only small amounts.

During the same period, the Germans made considerable progress in training of effectives and in development of materiel. They increased their number of large units from about 140, which were probably set up upon mobilization to more than 190. They re-conditioned armored and motorized materiel which had been damaged in Poland, brought their large mechanized units up to strength, increased from six to ten the number of their armored divisions by providing tanks for the four light divisions already in existence.

The spring, therefore, found us making great improvements, but it would be several months before we could come up to the mark. The German Army was greatly superior in both men and materiel.

b. Opposing Forces.

(1) The Allied Armies.

(a) The High Command.

✓ From the beginning of the war until January, 1940, GHQ at La Ferte-Sous-Jouarre ensured execution of the orders of General Gamelin, Chief of Staff of National Defense and Commander-in-Chief of the Land Forces, and of General Georges, Assistant to the Commander-in-Chief and Commander of the Northeast Theater of Operations. The Chief of the General Staff was at La Ferte with General Georges.

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On January 18, this organization was changed, with the following results:

General Gamelin, Commander-in-Chief of the Land Forces, was stationed at Vincennes with his cabinet. He had GHQ at his disposal, but by order of the Chief of Staff, this headquarters was located in the region of Montry, 30 kilometers west of La Ferte.

General Georges, redesignated Commander-in-Chief of the North-east Front had a headquarters entirely distinct from GHQ, but the Fourth Bureau, equivalent of the American G-4, remained common to both headquarters in order that supply and transport might be unified.

(b) Inter-Allied Cooperation.

In principle, the British Expeditionary Force was immediately under the Commander-in-Chief of the Land Forces, but Gamelin tacitly authorized Georges to settle directly with Lord Gort on means of carrying out the Gamelin decisions. This double subordination did not result in major inconvenience because of the fine spirit of cooperation shown by Lord Gort. He recognized the authority of General Georges from the beginning of the war, and even passed into Belgium under the orders of the general commanding the First Group of Armies.

No agreement could be reached with the Belgian High Command, however, regarding organization of the command in case Franco-British forces should penetrate into Belgium at the request of the Belgian King.

General Gamelin intended to settle the important question of organization of the Inter-Allied Command when the time came.

(c) Ground Forces.

Large Units. On May 10 the French Army had, in principle, the following forces in the different theaters of operations:

- (67 infantry divisions plus staffs and corps
- (troops for 23 army corps;
- (13 fortress divisions plus staffs and corps
- (troops for 5 army corps;
- Northeast Front (3 armored divisions;
- (1 cavalry corps composed of 3 light
- (mechanized divisions;
- (5 light cavalry divisions and 4 cavalry
- (brigades.

- Southeast Front (2 army corps composed of 7 divisions,
(including 1 colonial division;

- GHQ Reserve (3 divisions stationed in rear of the
(Northeast Front, but destined eventually
(to reinforce the Southeast Front;

- North Africa. , 3 army corps composed of 8 divisions;

- Near East 1 army corps composed of 3 divisions;

- Norway 3 light divisions.

The 67 infantry divisions on the Northeast Front comprised 31 active divisions, of which seven were motorized; 20 divisions formed upon mobilization and constituting Series A, First Reserve; 16 divisions formed upon mobilization and constituting Series B, Second Reserve.

A much greater reorganization than had been effected was contemplated for fortress troops. The five army corps on the Northeast Front were not complete with respect to service troops; they included no organic corps elements, such as general reserve or corps artillery. Infantry fortress divisions, which had partially taken the place of fortified sectors, were also incomplete with respect to service troops. Thus, although there was a theoretical increase in the number of our large units as a result of these beginnings of reorganization, there was no increase in the actual power or value of our formations.

The situation was serious for the colonial divisions. Their number had just been increased from six to eight. In each of six of these divisions, two regiments of seasoned white troops had been replaced by two regiments of colored troops, some of whom had only recently been levied. On May 10, three of the seven colonial divisions on the Northeast Front had not even completed the amalgamation of their elements. Some of them, as one might have expected, gave a very poor account of themselves.

Our armored divisions had been created very recently. Each consisted of only two battalions of B tanks - 70 tanks - and two battalions of light tanks - 90 tanks. Two of the divisions had had but a few weeks of training, and the third was just being completed. At the beginning of the battle they suffered for lack of cohesion and combat practice.

In addition to French troops, the Allied forces under the

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Commander-in-Chief of the Northeast Front were three British army corps, consisting of ten infantry divisions, and a division from the Polish Army.

The power of the British divisions, five of which were regular and five territorial, was about equal to that of a similar number of French divisions. They were fully equipped with modern materiel, but the training of troops and cadres, especially in the territorial divisions, was far from good. A British armored division was to arrive late in May at Pacy-sur-Eure, where it would complete its training. Its materiel was neither very abundant nor more than lightly armored.

The Polish division was incomplete, and its training had not been finished.

Belgium set up 20 infantry divisions, of which six were active, and two cavalry divisions. Materiel was incomplete and not sufficiently modern, while the training, morale, and value of large units was not uniform.

Holland furnished eight infantry divisions and one light division, but these were not capable of offering long resistance to the German Army.

French General Reserve. In the French general reserve there were 34 tank battalions in addition to the twelve which were used in the armored divisions. Among the 34 battalions were six employing Model F. T. tanks and one employing Model F. C. tanks. Both of these types were obsolete.

Troops for Norway. There were three light divisions of a special type available for use in the Norwegian theater of operations on May 10. These had been rapidly organized while the reinforcement of armament equipment - unfortunately too slow - was in progress, and while the High Command was endeavoring to increase the number of our large units. Formation of these units not only deprived us of two normal divisions and four companies of tanks, but involved changes within about ten divisions.

Antitank Armament. When the invasion of the Low Countries began, each division was equipped with its battery of eight 47-mm. guns, but the far greater requirements for 25-mm. guns had by no means been met.

Antiaircraft Armament. In each of 22 divisions, specialized antiaircraft armament included three sections of 20-mm. Oerlikon

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machine guns, each section having 12 guns; in each of 13 divisions it included a battery of six 25-mm. anti-aircraft guns. Other divisions had no anti-aircraft armament on May 10, although ten additional batteries were emplaced on May 12.

In the army echelon, 39 general reserve batteries, each having six 25-mm. anti-aircraft guns, had been distributed among the armies. There were also 33 groups, or 99 batteries, of 75-mm. guns. Of this number, 19 groups, or 57 batteries, were equipped with World War motorized guns which possessed good ballistic qualities up to 5,000 meters, but whose transport materiel was worn out and sometimes incomplete.

Finally, 163 Territorial anti-aircraft defense batteries were emplaced in the zone of the armies on the Northeast Front. The majority of the guns in these batteries had old ballistic qualities, including a ceiling of 5,000 meters, and no transport materiel.

(d) Aviation.

On May 9, the forces available to air zones of operations, corresponding to army groups deployed on the front, were as follows:

NORTHERN ZONE (1st Group of Armies)

	Air Forces for Cooperation	Reserve Air Forces
Reconnaissance	4 Groups	1 Group
Observation	17 Groups	1 Group
Pursuit	4 Groups	7 Groups
Bombing		2 Day Bombing Groups 2 Night Bombing Groups 2 Assault Bombing Groups

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EASTERN ZONE (2nd Group of Armies)

	Air Forces for Cooperation	Reserve Air Forces
Reconnaissance	3 Groups	1 Group
Observation	15 Groups	
Pursuit	3 Groups	4 Groups
Bombing		4 Night Bombing Groups

SOUTHERN ZONE (3rd Group of Armies)

	Air Forces for Cooperation	Reserve Air Forces
Reconnaissance	1 Group	
Observation	4 Groups	
Pursuit	1 Group	1 Group
Bombing	1 Group	1 Group

The numbers of French planes available at the front on May 10 were as follows: 580 modern pursuit planes, 31 day bombing planes, 64 obsolete night bombing planes, and 300 modern reconnaissance planes.

British air forces based in France on the same day comprised ten bombing squadrons of 160 planes, of which eight squadrons were equipped with obsolete Battles and two squadrons were equipped with modern Blenheims; ten pursuit squadrons of 130 planes,

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and the observation aviation of the B.E.F. The 130 planes of the pursuit squadrons were reduced to 40 after May 20.

Stationed in Great Britain were the Bomber Command and the Fighter Command, which served to reinforce units based in France or to execute missions for the benefit of the land forces from bases in England.

(e) Defensive Organizations.

The Maginot Line. In the principal line of resistance and rear areas of the Maginot Line, the winter and spring program of improving permanent fortifications called for installation of armor plate and special armament. This work was considerably handicapped by lengthy delays in manufacture. The program also contemplated the construction of works such as defiladed entries and supplementary premises, but these had not been started on May 10.

Positions were reinforced by construction of concrete field works for the purpose of increasing the depth of the organizations and the density of arms under light concrete. Detailed programs for this work were made up by the armies upon a basis of technical recommendations made by the Inspector General of Engineers. There were plans for concrete blockhouses of all types, as well as for antitank obstacles, generally in the form of ditches. Troops in the intervals were to be protected by trenches, communication trenches, shelters, and other features of terrain organization, but since concrete work was given priority, none of these works had been completed by May 9.

On the Saar Front the weakness of peacetime organization was remedied by construction of important casemates and by reinforcement of inundation areas. Slow production of armor plate also hampered this work.

Outposts were discontinuous organizations consisting of wire entanglements in front of ground shelters along the line of contact and the line of resistance. Special efforts, including construction of concrete blocks and antitank obstacles, were made in connection with outposts near Longwy and Steinseltz, region of Seltz, and along the Rott Line.

The Meuse, the Ardennes, and the North Front. The program of the First Group of Armies was to reinforce light peacetime works by means of rather large blocks for protection against 210-mm. armament, while the program of the large units in line was to multiply the small works.

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Although the winter program was handicapped by bad weather, it was well on its way to completion.

The works of the Givet Salient had not been improved, since priority had been given to work on the main line of resistance. The spring program contemplated reinforcement of this part of the front by civilian labor, but very little progress had actually been made.

The Second Position. The second position was to include a continuous reserve line along the entire front. Work on this position, entrusted to the Fortified Zone Study Committee, had been started by civilian contractors in the following areas: Region of the Flanders Heights; La Capelle; the Signy-L'Abbaye-Omont-Stenay-Mangiennes-Spincourt Line, Zone of the Forest of Remilly, and the line running: Pond of Pischwald-Saar Union-Butten. On May 10 the work yards were in full swing, but few actual results had been seen.

Belgian Works. Peacetime works included fortifications at Liege, Namur, and Antwerp; organization for defense of the Albert Canal; establishment of a zone of massive demolitions in the Belgian Ardennes, and the starting of an antitank obstacle on the edge of Gembloux. This obstacle was moved to the region of Perwez by the Belgians shortly before May 10.

The Armies going into Belgium were to carry out a plan of demolitions to protect their defense on water lines - the Dyle, the Charleroi Canal, and the Meuse - and to hold up the enemy's advance in the passive zones, such as Semoy.

The Dutch Lines of Defense. These lines, based upon water lines and inundations, were as follows:

The covering line on the Yssel-Meuse cut, characterized by demolitions.

The first line of resistance, including the Grebbe Position and the Peel Position, situated on both sides of the rivers along the Eem-Amersfort-La Grebbe-Grave-Mill-Deurne-Weert Line. The defensive organizations of the Peel, consisting of light works above ground, were the subject of contradictory estimates. Their right flank did not have liaison with the Belgian defenses.

The "Holland" position, a redoubt encircled by the sea and the line of inundations extending Amsterdam-Utrecht-Gorinchem.

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Some works and inundations in Zeeland to support the defense of the islands.

Intermittent works between Peel and Zeeland, south of the rivers.

(2) The German Armies as Seen by the French High Command.

The total number of divisions set up by Germany upon mobilization was estimated at approximately 150, divided as follows:

56 active divisions, of which six were armored divisions, one was a light division, and one an SS division;

40 reserve divisions;

34 Landwehr divisions;

19 divisions made up of replacement units.

After the outbreak of hostilities, there were three new series of divisions, nine in September, 19 in the period from November to January, and 15 in the spring of 1940. In addition, four light divisions had been converted into armored divisions by addition of tank units.

Thus on May 10, 1940, the Germans had available ten armored divisions of approximately 300 tanks each, and about 180 infantry divisions, of which five were motorized. Undoubtedly these divisions differed somewhat as regards strength and equipment.

Of the total German strength, about 56 active divisions were shock units and about 50 other divisions seemed suitable for offensive operations. In short, German troops available for offensive battle in the spring of 1940 exceeded, according to the estimates of the French High Command, 100 divisions.

At the beginning of May, information collected by the French High Command indicated that the general distribution of German forces was as follows:

110 to 127 divisions on the Western Front;

27 to 36 divisions in Poland, Bohemia, and Austria;

15 to 23 divisions in Scandinavia and on the northern coast of Germany;

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12 to 22 divisions in the Reich.

On the active front from the Moselle to the Rhine, however, only 13 second rate divisions were identified, and only five to six divisions held the Rhine front itself.

All the German divisions suitable for offensive operations seemed to be available.

The success of armored divisions in Poland had confirmed the conviction of the German High Command that mechanized formations would be called upon to bring about a lightning decision in the war. For this reason the aims of the Germans, as far as armored forces were concerned, seemed to be rapid reconditioning of materiel damaged in Poland; use of the Czech plants, Skoda and C.K.D., for the production of improved medium tanks; perfection of the heavy materiel, armed with 75-mm. or 105-mm. guns, which had been tested before the war; energetic training of greatly increased personnel, and conversion of light divisions into armored divisions.

On May 1, the German Army probably had available 7,500 tanks of different models. These constituted ten armored divisions - about 40 battalions - and 25 to 30 general reserve battalions which could be used as replacements for losses suffered by armored divisions.

German combat aviation was estimated on May 10 at 1,500 pursuit planes and 3,500 bombing planes.

According to information gathered during the second fortnight of May, the German High Command used for the offensive west of the Moselle on May 10 an army of operations whose minimum strength was as follows:

34 army corps organic elements;

10 armored divisions;

107 infantry divisions, of which 43 were active and 64 were reserve; 45 of the latter had been initially in GHQ reserve.

At the beginning of May, certain of these large units had still been in training at camps in the interior of the country at such places as Arys, Frankfort-on-Oder, Kustrin, Grafenwoehr, Bruck Leitha, Neuhammer, and Ohrdruf.

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There were two German army groups, including a total of six armies and two groupments of armored and motorized forces.

To this army of operations, the French High Command originally opposed the following French forces:

2 armored divisions;
3 light mechanized divisions;
4 light cavalry divisions, and
37 infantry divisions, including the 10 British divisions,
as well as:

20 Belgian infantry divisions;
2 Belgian cavalry divisions, and
The Dutch Army.

c. Allied Plans of Operations.

(1) Intervention in Belgium and Holland.

(a) General.

Of all the hypotheses made by the French High Command with regard to a German attack in the northeast theater of operations, the one considered most likely, even in peacetime, was the hypothesis of an aggression against Belgium and Holland.

The plan in force upon mobilization contemplated that our left flank armies would defend the position of resistance organized in French territory and marked by the bridgehead of Montmedy-Mezieres-Revin-Rocroi-Maubeuge-Bavai-Conde sur Escaut-Lille-Les Monts-Dunkirk.

In case authority to penetrate into Belgium were given, the First Army was to straighten its left around the pivot of Conde and occupy the Middle Escaut in liaison with the Belgians defending the bridgehead of Ghent and the strong point of Antwerp. The High Command understood that this penetration into Belgium could be effected only upon the request of the Belgian government, either as a preventive measure or after the frontier had been violated.

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(b) Defense of the Frontiers.

From the beginning of our operations in the Saar, the Commander-in-Chief of the Land Forces foresaw the eventuality that the main body of the German forces would turn upon us. On September 26, 1939, the Commander of the Northeast Theater of Operations gave the following personal and secret instructions:

On October 1 the First Group of Armies, withdrawn from the Southeast Front, would take over the front from Rochonvillers to the North Sea.

On October 3 the British Expeditionary Force would go into line in the Lille Sector.

The Seventh Army, a reserve unit on the left of the formation, would be introduced if the threat became more clearly defined.

The defense of the frontier position of resistance was to be ensured in any case by the Second Army, the Ardennes Army Detachment, and the First Army of the B.E.F.

If authority to penetrate into Belgium were given, the B.E.F. and the Seventh Army were to move to the Middle Escaut and organize it defensively.

In case of particularly favorable circumstances, cooperation of the French and Belgian Armies was to be sought on the position of the Albert Canal and on the Meuse from Liege to Namur. On September 29 and 30, the Commander-in-Chief of the Land Forces emphasized the necessity of accepting combat only at fortified positions and the prohibition on penetrating deeply into Belgium unless the Belgians requested our help. These orders are explained by the fact that the Belgian Government wished to maintain strict neutrality. In fact, two Belgian divisions were placed in the Ardennes and two others between the Sambre and Escaut as covering forces to oppose France.

(c) The Escaut Hypothesis.

On October 24, 1939, the Commanding General of the Northeast Theater of Operations defined conditions for intervention of Franco-British forces in Belgium. Instructions called primarily for occupation of the Middle Escaut and contemplated a thrust on the Antwerp-Namur line. The latter could be effected only if it were possible for us to arrive in time on a prepared position, or on one

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which we should have time to organize.

Assistance from the B.E.F. to the extent of two army corps of two divisions each was assured for the purpose of establishing an organization in Belgium, for it was to the interest of both France and Great Britain to protect Flanders. The number of large units mobilized in the Belgian Army had been increased to 16 infantry divisions, and the army was clearly oriented to face north and east.

The French military attache in Belgium reported that a spirit of neutrality prevailed, but that close collaboration with the Belgian Staff did not seem indispensable for carrying out the maneuver successfully.

The alert of November 11, 1939, caused the entry into line of the French Seventh Army on the left of our formation.

(d) The Holland Hypothesis.

On November 8, 1939, the French High Command became concerned about the possibility of an invasion of Holland as a prelude to a direct attack against Great Britain. In such an event the plan was to move to the mouth of the Escaut, occupy the Island of Walcheren and the Woensdrecht Salient, and, in Belgium, to reach the line Antwerp-Louvain-Wavre-Namur for the purpose of ensuring greater liberty of action for our rear and our left. Our action was to be subordinated to the wishes of the Belgian government; and this maneuver was to be carried out according to the plan contemplated in previous instructions.

(e) The Dyle Hypothesis.

The intention to penetrate into Belgium beyond the Escaut took shape after the alert of November 11, which foreshadowed a German attack in the near future. Meanwhile, the attitude of the Belgians towards us had changed. We knew that the Belgian Army included 18 divisions and that it had the intention of establishing a continuous obstacle from Wavre to Namur and extending towards the south the position Antwerp-Louvain-Wavre (Dyle). This would bar entry at Gembloux.

On November 17 the Commander of the Northeast Theater of Operations defined the methods by which we were to occupy the position Antwerp-Namur. Pivoting around Revin, the left of the Franco-British formation would move toward the north. The Ninth Army, which had formerly constituted the army detachment of the Ardennes,

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would hold the Meuse above Namur; the First Army would bar entry to Gemblous; the B.E.F. would hold the line of the Dyle; the Belgian Army would connect the Dyle from Louvain with the fortified position of Antwerp, and the Seventh Army, placed in reserve, would be ready to support the extreme left of the formation. In order to save time, the movement would take place directly from our frontier position without a stop on the Escaut.

(f) The Albert Canal Hypothesis.

On January 10, 1940, after studies ordered by the Commander-in-Chief of the Land forces had been completed and after recommendations had been made by the First Group of Armies, the Commander-in-Chief of the Northeast Theater of Operations issued directives concerning eventual occupation of the Albert Canal. The idea was to reinforce progressively, prudently, and according to circumstances the occupation of the canal from the Dyle.

(g) The Breda Maneuver.

The Commander-in-Chief of the Land Forces insisted on March 12 that the Commander-in-Chief of the Northeast Front make a new study and reconsider the mission of the Seventh Army. This army was not only to occupy the Maritime Escaut, but it was also to debouch north of Antwerp for the purpose of securing the lower Escaut and ensuring liaison between the Belgians and the Dutch.

(h) The New Dyle Hypothesis.

In view of the Breda maneuver, a new draft of the Dyle hypothesis was made on March 20. The Dyle maneuver was considered most probable of realization, and the Breda maneuver would be carried out only if orders to penetrate into Holland were given.

The general formation along the Meuse from Namur to Antwerp was not modified. The Seventh Army, previously in reserve on our left, was charged with debouching northeast of Antwerp in the direction of Breda, at the same time making sure of the Maritime Escaut.

The cavalry, recently reorganized, was to protect the movement of the main bodies as follows:

The 1st Light Mechanized Division would ensure protection of the Seventh Army in the direction of Tilburg;

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The cavalry corps consisting of the 2nd and 3rd Mechanized Divisions would move in the general direction Bavai and St. Trond, north of the Sambre-Meuse Ridge;

The 1st and 4th Light Cavalry Divisions would move in the general direction of Dinant and Laroche, south of the Sambre-Meuse Ridge;

The 2nd and 5th Light Cavalry Divisions, would move in the general direction of Carignan and Bastogne. They were in liaison, by way of Arlon, with the 3rd Light Cavalry Division operating in the Grand Duchy.

In spite of the difficulties foreseen by the Commanding General of the Seventh Army in the execution of the Breda maneuver, the Commander-in-Chief persisted in his view that it was necessary to give a helping hand to the Dutch. This maneuver, defined in an instruction dated March 21, was to be used when the Germans attacked on May 10.

(i) The New Escaut Hypothesis.

Reconsideration of the Dyle hypothesis resulted in a revision of the Escaut hypothesis. The purpose of this was to cover the possibility that German forces would precede us in Belgium and that we would not be able to move our formation in due time to the Louvain-Namur position.

The problem involved new data. The B.E.F. had increased its strength from four to nine infantry divisions, and a new light mechanized division had been organized. A decision to occupy the mouth of the Escaut had been made.

The general formation was not modified except that the B.E.F. was to occupy the entire Middle Escaut from Maulde to the bridgehead of Ghent and that the Seventh Army was to occupy the Maritime Escaut. North of the Sambre-Meuse Ridge, the three light mechanized divisions would be moved to a line from the Willebroek Canal to the canal from Brussels to Charleroi. South of the Sambre-Meuse Ridge, the 1st, 2nd, 4th and 5th Light Cavalry Divisions would be moved to the Sambre below Charleroi, to the Meuse, to a point above Namur, and to the line of the Semoy.

(2) Intervention in Luxembourg.

Intervention in Luxembourg offered the advantage of ensuring

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better protection of the industrial region of Longwy, situated in front of our fortified position.

In case the enemy should penetrate into the Grand Duchy, the Third Army was to be entrusted with the following missions:

Its cavalry units - the 1st Light Cavalry, one brigade of Spahis, and one groupment of reserve cavalry - were to be pushed ahead as quickly as possible in the direction of Luxembourg for the purpose of gaining contact with the enemy. They were to effect certain vital demolitions in liaison with the cavalry elements of the Second Army.

Outposts close to the frontier were to be occupied for the purpose of gaining contact as far forward as possible.

Resistance was to be offered in advance positions, including Longwy, in order that possession of this region might be retained as long as possible.

These missions immobilized permanently large cavalry units and caused troops taken from three divisions to enter the line at the advanced post of Longwy. The divisions occupied the position of resistance, and troops taken from them had a total strength equal to that of one division.

(3) The Maginot Line.

The purpose of the Maginot Line, as viewed before the war, was to permit covering forces to hold their ground in case of a sudden attack. A short distance in front of the line of actual fortifications there were advance posts, more or less fortified, which barred the approaches.

After our offensive of September, 1939, the fortified position between the Rhine and Moselle afforded the advantage of a glacis as much as ten kilometers deep in certain places. The High Command decided to occupy the glacis, establish a system of outposts, and form a covering position for the purpose of permitting execution of works reinforcing the main position. These works were undertaken at first in intervals or in rear of works constructed in time of peace, but later the Commander-in-Chief of the Land Forces insisted upon increasing to the front the depth of the position. At certain selected places, strong points were organized. These constituted the real advance posts of the position of resistance.

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The defense of the Maginot Line between the Rhine and Moselle devolved upon the Second Group of Armies, which included the Third, Fourth and Fifth Armies. Aimed chiefly at the main lines of approach, the maneuver of this group tended to block any attack on the fortified position in national territory and to reestablish the integrity of this position wherever it might have been penetrated.

The battle was conducted according to the following directives:

In advance of the fortified position - that is, in front of its outer edge - outposts formed a covering position whose garrison was organized in two echelons, one for contact and one for support. The strength of these two echelons was not to exceed 1/3 of the infantry and 1/5 of the artillery of the divisions in line.

The contact echelon, made up of small posts along the general line of the frontier and slightly in rear thereof, had a mission of surveillance.

The support echelon, formed by centers of resistance, occupied an intermediate line marked by strong points of the terrain. Its normal role was to stop enemy incursions, and in case of attack, it was to have a temporary resistance mission. A withdrawal order could be given to it only by the army commander.

The fortified position included a main line of resistance made up of fortifications, a checking line, and an antitank barrage in rear of the position. The battle was to be fought on the line of the fortifications.

The fortified position was covered at certain points by outposts or strong points. When these could be closely connected with the position of resistance and given the benefit of its fire, their garrisons were assigned the mission of resisting without thought of retreat.

After the period of movement of September, 1939, frontages allotted to large units in the field corresponded to those that would be used in a static defensive combat situation. Approximately 16 infantry divisions were in line between Longuyon and the Rhine. It had been estimated that if there was to be defensive combat on the fortified position, it would be necessary to reinforce fortified sectors with an average of two infantry divisions each. There were nine fortified sectors from Longwy to the Rhine.

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Combat frontages were not only maintained once the October threat had disappeared; they were even increased progressively to facilitate service in outposts and to speed up passage of our large units into a "seasoning" sector. A plan of relief for our large units contemplated a sojourn of about one month in a sector for each of them.

Each frontage involved a strip of terrain more than ten kilometers deep and gave the formation the following aspect:

Infantry divisions superposing fortress troops - that is, about two divisions per fortified sector - each had their three regiments abreast. In each regiment, the battalions were successive - one in the outposts, one on the position of resistance, and one in reserve or engaged in fortification work. This schematic formation was in reality far more flexible than it would seem because of the use of reconnaissance groups, groups of volunteers, battalions of machine gunners, units of pioneers, and the like. First echelon battalions, nevertheless, had large fronts to watch and hold, and they alone bore the brunt of winter operations.

The High Command attached special importance to the maintenance of our outposts in the density existing at the end of December, 1939, and they maintained this density until April, 1940. At that time the withdrawal of several large units from the Lorraine front seemed advisable in view of the general situation.

The Commander-in-Chief on the Northeast Front informed the Second Group of Armies that it was desirable to give a certain stability to our first line formation and that, at the cost of strict economy, the armies supported by our fortified position would be deployed to ensure the freedom of action indispensable to our large maneuvering units.

Approving the first phase of the withdrawal plan submitted by the Second Group of Armies, the Commander-in-Chief on the Northeast Front prescribed the withdrawal of two divisions and contemplated placing a third division in reserve as soon as a British division had been engaged in the sector of the Third Army.

On April 15 the deployment of the large units in the zone of the Second Group of Armies, excluding fortress units, was as follows:

In line: 22 infantry divisions, 20 of which were between Longuyon and the Rhine

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In reserve: 6 infantry divisions

Total: 28 infantry divisions

On May 10 the withdrawals effected in execution of the orders of April 16, which corresponded to the first phase of the retreat plan of the Second Group of Armies, had modified this distribution as follows:

In line: 18 infantry divisions, 17 of which, including the British 51st Division, were between Longuyon and the Rhine

In reserve: 7 infantry divisions

Total: 25 infantry divisions

At the end of this first phase, the front was short three divisions, but the total number of large units available to the Commander-in-Chief had been increased by that number. The 7th and 14th Infantry Divisions had been placed in GHQ Reserve, zone of the Second Group of Armies, and the 36th Infantry Division had been practically replaced by the 51st British Infantry Division. In the same zone, the number of large units in GHQ Reserve ready to be moved to another destination had been increased from three to five.

In a second phase, which had not started on May 10, three new divisions were to be taken from the Second Group of Armies and were also to be placed in GHQ Reserve.

d. Estimate of the Maneuvering Possibilities of the Enemy.

The end of the campaign in Poland made available the greater part of the German forces. The question with the French was how and for what purpose they would be employed. The hypotheses to be considered were air offensive on the Northeast Front west of the Rhine; intervention in Southeastern Europe, or an attack through Switzerland, possibly in liaison with Italy.

Of these eventualities, the last two were never confirmed by what was known of the formation of the enemy forces, and the first remained most probable. As a matter of fact, the German forces necessary for a Holland-Belgium-Luxembourg operation had been in assembly west of the Rhine since mid-November.

During the winter, the main object of the French intelligence plan was to determine possible variations in the strength of

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these enemy forces, to keep an eye on their stations, and to watch especially for any closing of the formation toward the frontier which would increase the possibility of attack. Special attention was given to the situation of the armored divisions, basic elements of any offensive action.

From the very beginning of 1940, the German High Command had available on the Western Front a mass of from 106 to 120 divisions. All the large armored and motorized units seemed to be assembled there. Further, a certain number of large units were either stationed or training in the interior of the Reich. Operations in Norway did not alter this situation to any great extent.

The form of the German operation on the Northeast Front and the point where the main effort would be made had not been determined, but it was known that a direct attack on the Maginot Line would demand the emplacement of materiel and personnel. No serious indications of such emplacement were observed.

On the other hand, the following operations were always possible:

(1) An attack on Belgium and Holland for the purpose of outflanking the Maginot Line from the north and conquering bases from which Great Britain could be attacked.

(2) An operation in Holland alone, which might possibly furnish bases without Franco-British intervention.

Although definite information as to the enemy plan of operations had not been obtained, an examination of the known formation of German forces on the Dutch-Belgian frontiers showed important concentrations between the Moselle and the Rhine at Wesel. There were approximately 50 divisions in first echelon.

Serious alerts took place November 12 and January 15, but information regarding a German offensive on the Western Front became frequent and definite only after April 15. About May 3 the immediate threat to Belgium and Holland became more and more apparent, and on May 10 the German attack debouched from the North Sea to Luxembourg.

e. Operations.

From the French point of view, the battle which started May 10, when German forces invaded Holland, Belgium and Luxembourg

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and which ended with the Armistice of June 25, may be divided into three distinct phases.

The first, which lasted until the end of May, started with the forward movement of our formation on the Antwerp-Namur-Mezieres Front. This front was soon compromised by an enemy break-through in the direction of Mezieres and Calais which resulted in the separation and envelopment of our left wing. While most of the remainder of our forces in the north were, at the cost of their materiel, embarking at Dunkirk, we were able to constitute from Montmedy to the Channel a front resting on the cut of the Aisne prolonged by the Ailette and, insofar as possible, by the Somme from St. Simon to the sea.

The second phase lasted from June 5 to June 11. It corresponds to the Battle of the Somme and Champagne, and, because of lack of means, our dispositions were overextended. There was no spirit of retreat, in spite of the fragmentation certain to occur in our armies should the front be disrupted.

The third phase lasted up to the armistice and included the deep withdrawal maneuver imposed on our entire formation by German forces exploiting their successes.

(1) From the Meuse to Dunkirk.

(a) May 10.

During the second part of the night of May 10, many bombing attacks were launched against the north and northeast of France, as well as against Holland. Extensive landings were effected at Dutch airdromes, most of them preceded and accompanied by release of parachutists and supported by activities of the Fifth Column.

At dawn a large number of German troops crossed the German-Luxembourg frontier, and elements of apparently lesser strength penetrated into Belgium.

At 6:30 A. M. General Gamelin telephoned to General Georges that the Belgians had requested our help, and orders were given for action on the Belgium-Holland-Dyle maneuver hypothesis. As a result of the lessons of previous alerts, the First Group of Armies prescribed the application of measures codified in instructions issued to every echelon. Cavalry units penetrated immediately into Belgium to cover installation of main bodies on the selected position - Dyle-Namur, the Meuse at Dinant, and Mezieres.

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In principle, the main bodies were to effect their movements by night in order to escape the activity of enemy aviation. Emplacement of their essential elements was not to be completed before May 13, but it was hoped that the time necessary for completion of these movements north of the Meuse would be ensured by resistance along the Albert Canal. South of the Meuse, however, the necessity of checking the German advance as far forward as possible in the direction of the Meuse at Dinant, which the main bodies could occupy in force in 48 hours, was obvious from the first day. It was for this reason that the Commanding General of the Northeast Front intervened to push the cavalry of the Ninth Army forward beyond the Meuse.

(b) May 11-12

The unexpected collapse of resistance along the Albert Canal in the region of the Maastricht Canal on May 11 resulted in the High Command's prescribing that on May 12 the First Group of Armies order the cavalry corps to engage vigorously the enemy armored elements on the plateau of Tirlemont. With the same object in view the efforts of bombing aviation were directed against the German columns debouching south of Maastricht.

It became obvious as early as May 11 that the enemy was making a vigorous effort south of the Meuse. The cavalry of the Second Army was violently attacked by important armored elements and thrown back on the Semoy.

On the same day, after having sent to the rear of the First Group of Armies the units which were to constitute its reserves, the High Command decided to direct an armored division of the general reserve and three infantry divisions towards the hinge of Sedan-Mezieres and the second position of Thierache. These movements started May 12, and the arrivals were to be echeloned from May 14 to May 17. Larger forces - one armored division and five infantry divisions - were to be moved in the same direction on May 13 and to be on the ground May 21.

(c) May 13.

The Seventh Army, subjected to bombing and tank operations in Holland organized the line connecting WUEST WEZEL and the Turnhout Canal. The British Army had its three infantry divisions in first echelon on the Dyle in Belgium.

The cavalry corps, attacked in force, was obliged to withdraw at the end of the day in rear of the Perwez obstacle. The units

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of the First Army, meanwhile, continued their movement into position. Further south the Meuse was crossed rapidly at Dinant by the first enemy elements on the morning of May 13.

The Commander of the Ninth Army gave his attention to his left, where he was to attempt to reduce the bridgehead of Anhee - first with all the infantry and tank units he could muster, then with an armored division.

During the afternoon, an attempt at infiltration was made in the region of Montherme. This was easily contained. The enemy, however, crossed the Meuse in force at Sedan, debouched from Flize and Nouzonville in the direction of Liart, and attacked in the rear all organizations of the Ninth Army occupying the first position.

(d) May 14.

There were now two necessities - first, to hold firmly the pivot of Sedan and keep the enemy from widening the breach and out-flanking our fortified system between the Argonne and the Meuse; second, to fill the breach between the Oise and the Bar Rivers by occupying the second position.

The solidity of the pivot south of Sedan was maintained in spite of the fact that the left divisions of the Second Army gave way and the enemy continued his strenuous effort with varied intensity until the beginning of June.

It had been hoped that the front on the second position could be united between the organizations of Rocroi and the Heights of Sedan, but it soon became apparent that the contemplated concentration as planned would be outdistanced by the enemy. It was necessary, therefore, to gain time, to remain on the south flank of the enemy advance, and to assemble the necessary means of bringing together the two parts of our formation.

In the North the enemy gained contact on the entire front between Antwerp and Namur, and it became urgent to relieve the First Group of Armies of the mission of carrying out the maneuver on the Meuse and Aisne, as well as to place a new Army in the breach. For this purpose, the Second Army was placed under direct orders of the Commander-in-Chief of the Northeast Front as early as May 13, and on May 14 the army detachment commanded by General Touchon was given the mission of reestablishing the unity of the front between the First Group of Armies and the Second Army.

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(e) May 15-16.

To avoid the break-through which was looming, it was necessary to check the advance of armored units engaged in the region between the Hirson-Liart Railroad and the Aisne at Chateau-Porcien. This operation could be entrusted only to units of the same type. Efforts were made on the one hand to reassemble them on the left wing of the Ninth Army, consisting of the 1st and 2nd Armored Divisions, and on the other to form additional units of this type for the benefit of the Touchon army detachment. This detachment was de Gaulle groupment, which was to later become the 4th Armored Division.

This operation, contemplated for May 17, was to include a main operation in the direction of Marle and Signy l'Abbaye, and two secondary operations towards Nizy-le-Comte, Chaumont-Porcien, Vervins and Liart. It was aimed particularly at gaining control of road junctions of Hirson, Aubenton, Rumigny, Liart and Chateau-Porcien. Meanwhile, reserves were to continue to be brought up on the flanks of the breach.

The organic large units of the Seventh Army - brought back from Holland - with the exception of the 60th and 68th Infantry Divisions, were directed toward the right of the First Army Group, which was located in the region of Cambrai and Roye. Reserves were brought up by rail as far as possible, although some came by motor transport. It was thus possible to prolong the partitioning on the Aisne at Rethel, and at one time there was a plan to reach the right of the Ninth Army by way of the Marshes of Pierrepont.

(f) May 17.

In Holland, the situation of the Seventh Army's forces in the Islands of Beveland and Walcheren became critical as a result of the vigorous advance of the Germans in Beveland. This island finally had to be evacuated. Further, it was contemplated that Walcheren would be abandoned when a landing of enemy elements was reported.

The Belgian Army, which had retired to the entrenched position of Antwerp, was not attacked. During May 15 and 16 the First Army and the B.E.F. were withdrawing to the rear of the Charleroi Canal, very strongly pressed by the enemy. On several occasions the tanks of the cavalry corps were able to reestablish local situations.

At the end of the night it appeared that offensive operations contemplated between the Sambre and Aisne could not give the desired results anticipated because the Ninth Army did not have the necessary

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armored equipment. In fact, the 1st Armored Division had suffered considerably, and the 2nd Armored Division had the majority of its units placed on the bridges of the Oise and the Sambre Canal. During the day, while the Maubeuge Salient and the line of blocks still seemed to hold, the line of resistance was overrun farther to the south, and General Giraud was obliged to shift his defense to the Sambre and the Oise Canal between Berlaimont and Moy.

On the Aisne, on the other hand, the de Gaulle groupment started from the region of Liesse and attacked at dawn. It advanced satisfactorily; its tanks reached Montcornet at about 12 o'clock and held without any great reaction on the part of the enemy.

(g) May 18.

In Holland, the Island of Walcheren was evacuated.

In Belgium, the situation of the Belgians, the British, and the French First Army was fairly good, although the troops of the First Army were exhausted. The cavalry corps had helped considerably in breaking off the engagement and in the establishing of the First Group of Armies on the general line Alost-Ath-Mons-Maubeuge. It was to be regrouped on May 19 and moved to the right of the formation.

Farther south, the enemy endeavored throughout the day to undermine the defense of Maubeuge and to cross the Sambre Canal. At the end of the day he had penetrated into the forest of Raismes. In the region of Le Cateau, his attempts towards Cambrai failed in front of the 1st Light Mechanized Division.

On the Oise, taking advantage of the bridgehead secured towards Ribemont the previous evening and forcing the passages at Mont d'Origny, the enemy pushed forward in the direction of St. Quentin and Peronne, which he reached at the end of the day. He crossed the Somme at Peronne and at Pont-de-Brie, where passages guarded only by regional elements.

The delays necessary for permitting arrival of large units capable of uniting the Ninth Army with the line of the Somme - delays which were increased by the action of enemy aviation on communications - killed the hope that we could stop the onrush of the armored divisions along a united front. The idea now was to canalize, to slow down this onrush, and to take measures to cope with the worst - that is - the outflanking of the Somme and the advance on Paris.

Consequently the Sixth Army and the de Gualle groupment

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were ordered at 10 o'clock to action armored elements north of the Serre and to slow down their advance toward the Oise; the Seventh Army brought back from Belgium was ordered to join the right of the Ninth Army on the Oise from La Fere, and, if possible, from Ribemont; and the Second Army was ordered in the evening to prolong the obstructions and barrages of the Somme.

(h) May 19.

In Belgium the withdrawal operations of Allied forces left personnel exhausted. At the end of the day the Belgians were on the Canal from Terneuzen to Ghent and on the Escaut from Ghent to Audenarde; the B.E.F. was on the Escaut from Audenarde to Amulde; the French First Army held on its left the strong point, Conde-Valenciennes, and on its right, in the region of Maubeuge, it endeavored to force the passage and reach the Escaut. The cavalry corps was being regrouped in the region of Douai and Arras.

In the region of the Somme, the enemy reached Peronne and the southeast approaches to Doullens.

The Seventh Army received the mission of organizing without delay the defense of Paris through the gap of the Oise. It established itself on both sides of the valley, its right on the Ailette, its center on the Oise at Chauny and the Crozat Canal, and its left on the Somme at Ham and Peronne.

Farther to the East, the 4th Armored Division, formerly the de Gaulle groupment, attacked from Laon to the North in order to act against the flank of enemy columns. Having advanced successfully to the Serre, the division was stopped and subjected to heavy bombardment. By withdrawing on the heights of Laon, it was to protect the assembly on the Aisne at Berry-au-Bac and on the Ailette of arriving reinforcements.

A solution to the painful question of uniting the two ends of our formation became more and more necessary. The First Group of Armies was urged to group on its right wing a force built around large armored units capable of opening a way toward the South. Before the forces necessary for effecting a joining maneuver could be assembled, care had to be taken to avoid being outdistanced on the cut of the Somme, from which a mechanized maneuvering mass destined to envelop our formation could debouch.

Information indicated that the enemy had limited his action to deployment on the Aisne and the Somme in a curtain of decreasing

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density from east to west. This was destined to protect the operations of his armored forces in the direction of northern ports. A covering force on the Somme at Peronne, at Amiens and ultimately at Abbeville could be expected to gain the time necessary for a later debouching toward the North.

(i) May 20-22.

Efforts were made to assemble on the Somme all elements which could be taken from the Second Group of Armies or from the interior, and to constitute on the extreme left a covering groupment based upon cavalry - either mechanized or horse elements - reinforced by British units stationed in the West and the British division previously engaged in Lorraine.

At the same time, the Third Group of Armies, charged with coordinating operations on the Somme and Aisne, received the special mission of reducing bridgeheads which the enemy had conquered south of the Somme from Peronne to Abbeville. Unfortunately the means provided for this purpose permitted neither successful execution of this task nor capturing the necessary passages for an ultimate debouching in the direction of Bapaume and Albert.

On the other hand, the efforts of the First Army Group and the B.E.F. to conquer the necessary exits for their maneuver toward the South were fruitless, and we had to abandon the hope of unifying our formation before the arrival of the main bodies of German divisions in second echelon on the Valenciennes-St. Quentin front. The pressure of the enemy was increasing around the units of the First Group of Armies. On May 22 the First Army held the Escaut while the Canal of St. Omer, Bethune, and La Bassee were defended only by miscellaneous elements, frequently weak ones.

Farther to the West, enemy armored vehicles were at Noeux-les-Mines, south of Bethune. They were approaching St. Omer by the way of Montreuil and Lumbres and arriving south of Boulogne, where the 21st Infantry Division, having recently landed, was engaged at Neufchatel, Samer, and Desvres.

(j) May 23-June 4.

Up to May 25, the First Group of Armies still hoped that the operation contemplated towards the South and prescribed by General Weygand could be carried out. This operation was to be effected on May 26 by three infantry divisions attacking between the North Canal and Escaut in the direction of Marchiennes and Peronne and supported

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to the west by two infantry divisions in the direction of Bapaume. The cavalry corps was to connect the attack with troops forming a barrage at the Bassee Canal.

Late on the day of May 25, however, the serious situation of the Belgian Army, which had been violently attacked in the region of Courtrai, became apparent. Two of the divisions which were to attack had to be recalled to the North. Under these conditions, the Commander of the First Group of Armies decided that the attack would not take place and that it was advisable to organize the withdrawal of forces as a whole with a view to occupying a wide bridgehead covering Dunkirk by the Canal of the AA, the Lys, Ypres, Dixmude and Nieuport.

On May 28 the Belgian Army capitulated.

Pressed on their left as a result of this defection and deprived on their right of the assistance of the B.E.F., which was withdrawing and embarking at Dunkirk, our forces in the North remained alone to face the enemy in heroic combats. Only part of them were able to embark; the last moved out under fire during the night of June 3-4.

(2) The Somme and Champagne.

It was obvious as early as May 26 that the situation was critical. Fifteen French divisions, three light mechanized divisions, and nine British divisions were about to disappear in the North. On the Aisne and the Somme a line of about 20 divisions was stretched from the Argonne to the sea. Facing us, a victorious enemy had employed only part of his troops, and he would soon be able to turn his main forces against us.

(a) May 26-27.

It was to be expected that after a short delay the German High Command would direct its efforts to the south, but no definite information as to where the enemy would make his new attack was yet available. It might follow the shortest route to Paris - that is, through the Oise Valley - accompanied by an outflanking movement and followed by an exploitation south of the Somme, Amiens and Abbeville, as well as by a powerful action on the Laon-Soissons axis. Such operations however, would call for numerous preparations, and it did not seem possible that these could be made in the immediate future.

An offensive seemed more probable between the Argonne and

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Chiers and on the Aisne at Attigny, where enemy pressure was relentless.

Finally, the forcing of the Aisne between Berry-au-Bac and Attigny might occur shortly and open the way for deep exploitation by armored detachments across the plains of Champagne.

Maintaining liaison with the fortified system of Montmedy and Longuyon, and well protected on the Aisne at Rethel and Berry-au-Bac, the French High Command devoted its efforts to organization of a strong defense of the Oise valley and endeavored to assemble its maximum forces gradually from the extreme left to the sea. The Commander-in-Chief of the theaters of operations as a whole notified the armies that the battle on which the fate of the country depended was to be fought on the occupied positions without any thought of retreat.

It was obvious, however, that whatever respite might be given the High Command, there could not be an assembly of troops in sufficient numbers along the entire front. It was necessary therefore to make dispositions that would enable prolongment of struggle. With the idea of directing the efforts of all units towards the front, the Command took upon itself the organization of necessary security in rear areas.

For this purpose, natural strong points and defensive lines dividing the future battlefield throughout its depth were to be occupied and organized by the large units in reserve as they arrived. In the intervals, or near zones which were unoccupied because of a shortage of means, groupments were to be built around armored units and given the mission of attacking the flank of the enemy exploitation detachments.

The Forest of Compiegne was to be organized and prolonged beyond the Oise by the obstacles of the marshes of Clermont and the valley of the Therain in the region of Beauvais. At the extreme left, groupments based upon light mechanized divisions or armored divisions were to defend the cut of the Bethune River and both sides of Formerie Ridge. In rear, the obstacle of the Seine was to be organized from Meulan to the sea and prolonged by the valley of the Oise and the defensive position of Paris, while in the center, the Mountain of Rheims was protected to the east by the canal from the Aisne to the Marne.

The Argonne, to the right, was strongly held throughout its depth, and from it a groupment including one armored division and

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units of a light mechanized division would be ready to debouch from Grandpre towards the West. Between the Mountain of Rheims and the Argonne, the cuts of the Marne at Chalons and Vitry, the Ormain from Vitry to Revigny and the upper Aisne were to be organized to complete closing of the plain of Champagne.

On May 27 the enemy attacked without tanks our position between the Meuse and Chiers, particularly in the region of Inor. He was contained, but in the evening a straightening of the line enabled him to reach the northern edges of Inor and Olizy-sur-Chiers.

(b) May 28.

The staff of the Fourth Army was withdrawn from the Lorraine front and placed in reserve in the region of Troyes, while the Third Group of Armies was ordered to reduce enemy bridgeheads south of the Somme.

(c) May 29.

Although the battle was to be fought on the occupied positions and without thought of retreat, further instructions defined the maneuvers which the armies would have to effect in case the enemy should break through their formations. The purpose of the instructions was to facilitate the best use of strong elements which were being organized in the rear areas.

If the enemy directed his efforts toward Paris and extended them more or less to the sea, the Third Group of Armies was to concentrate its resistance on these lines of approach: Amiens-Paris, Laon-Paris, and Rethel-Chalons. It was to take advantage of natural defensive lines in its rear areas and hold on the line Aisne at Soissons-Oise at Compiègne-Creil-Clermont-Beauvais. This line could be extended if necessary to the Epte and the obstacle of the lower Seine.

If the enemy directed his efforts between Montmedy and the Aisne at Rethel, the Second Group of Armies, holding the positions of Montmedy-Longuyon on the one hand, and the heights north of the Argonne on the other, was to use the compartment of the Aisne at Vouziers and the heights of the Meuse at Dun to bar the direction Sedan-Clermont-en-Argonne.

If a deep break-through prevented execution of these measures, the Third Group of Armies, covering the capital, was to reestablish itself on the Paris position prolonged to the West by the Lower Seine

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and to the East by the Marne. The maneuver of its right was to be covered on the line of the Vesle and the Marne Canal to the Aisne. The Second Group of Armies, tying its right and center to the fortified position, was to fall back on its left to the line Longuyon-Verdun-Ste. Menehould-Chalons, or, at the worst, on the Orne, Verdun, Ste. Menehould and Chalons.

At the junction of the two army groups between the Argonne and the Mountain of Rheims, a groupment of forces was to be emplaced in such a manner as to form a barrage on the axis of the enemy's eventual effort. Laborers were sent to the rear areas of the armies with a view to preparing the maneuvering position which had been planned.

(d) June 1-4.

This period was marked by the preparation for the battle which was anticipated. Attempts were made to reduce the bridgeheads of the Somme, but the enemy, fully aware of their importance, had concentrated defense means and antitank weapons upon them, and our successes were limited.

In addition to preparing new obstacles, we set up new divisions with training battalions, effectives who had recuperated from the battle of May 10, and brigades which had been destined for Norway and repatriated from England. Materiel - particularly anti-tank weapons - was not available in sufficient quantity to equip these new units.

There was indication of an eventual threat on Paris by two wing operations, one along the coast and the other on the plains of Champagne against Rheims.

In order to avoid charging the same authority with defending in two directions, the Command was reorganized with a view to clearer definition of missions. The Third Group of Armies, comprising the Sixth, the Seventh, and the Tenth, was charged with defense of the front from the Mountain of Rheims to the sea and with barring the direction Amiens-Paris. The Fourth Group of Armies, entrusted to General Huntziger and comprising the Fourth and Second Armies, was to bar the direction Rethel, Chalons and Sedan, Bar-le-Duc. The Second Group of Armies continued to defend the fortified regions.

(e) June 5.

The enemy offensive was launched on June 5 from the Aisne

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at Bourg et Comin to the sea against an organized but very much extended formation, especially on the extreme left.

Stopped the first day at the debouches of Peronne, the enemy made an effort south of Amiens, where he succeeded in advancing. On the extreme left, British contingents organized their defense on the Bresle, abandoning the passages of the lower Somme.

East of the Oise, our line on the Ailette, which was too sparsely held, gave way and our defense had to be moved back on the Aisne, which was soon crossed. Under enemy pressure, the Sixth Army no longer could expect to reestablish the situation before reaching the line of the Marne at La Ferte.

(f) June 9-11.

The withdrawal in the direction of the Lower Seine was effected through successive use of delaying positions at the Bresle and Bethune Rivers, Clermont, and Beauvais, then through withdrawal on the position of Paris.

Throughout this battle the Command endeavored to carry out the maneuver as planned. It tried to occupy the rear barriers - lower Seine, Marne, Ormain - with units recently reconstituted and hastily brought up. Elements of these units came from the Alps Front or from North Africa.

A large part of the Tenth Army, driven back to the sea in the region of St. Valery-en-Caux, was lost insofar as any later maneuvering was concerned.

(3) The Withdrawal Maneuver.

(a) June 11-12.

The enemy succeeded in crossing the lower Seine on June 11, although the center of the Third Group of Armies - the Army of Paris and the Seventh Army - held its own on the position of Paris. The Tenth Army, which had lost the greater part of its forces in the rear of the Bethune River, risked being separated from the remainder of our forces. The center of the Sixth Army, on the Marne at Chateau Thierry, was broken, while the enemy, penetrating deeply into Champagne, broke up the Fourth Army and compromised the retreat of the right of the Sixth Army.

It then became obvious that the problem was no longer one

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of a military character. In spite of all, however, the struggle had to be continued. There were two alternatives - either to remain united on our fortified position insofar as possible and have our formation fall back on the pivot Longuyon-Argonne, or to abandon the fortified position and endeavor to retreat with our entire force, covering the heart of the country as long as possible.

The first alternative afforded us the advantage of retaining a formation supported by fortifications. It abandoned to the enemy, however, practically all our national territory and left to the army only the prospect of capitulation in the East or partial refuge in Swiss territory.

The second alternative, difficult to execute, could lead only to the division of our formation, but it permitted covering the heart of the country for a longer period. It gave hope of preventing capitulation of the main bodies of our remaining forces. This solution was adopted, and necessary instructions were given to the groups of armies on June 12. The Second Group of Armies had been notified on June 11.

The withdrawal was to end on the left at the Orne River and at the hills of Alencon and the Perche; in the center and to the right on the shortest and most economical front constituted by the Loire River from Tours to Briare, the Morvan Hills, the Cote d'Or and the Jura in the region of Champagnole and of the Rousses. An intermediary stage, however, was necessary. It consisted of a regrouping of the center and right on the Orleans Canal, the Loing, the Seine, the Aube, the Marne at Vitry, the Moselle at Toul, Epinal, and Belfort.

During this maneuver - executed for the most part by troops who were exhausted, who had suffered heavy losses in effectives and in material, and who were under the pressure of aggressive motorized units - it became imperative that we act quickly. That is why all available motor transport was distributed among the armies. We must also maintain the unity of the formation to avoid its being split and encircled. While it appeared that the center - the Army of Paris, the Seventh Army, and the left of the Sixth Army - well consolidated could carry on without serious fissures, the same was not true of the left and the right.

To the left, the divergent axis of withdrawal given to the Tenth Army for extra-military reasons - consitution of the redoubt of Brittany - did away with the hope of maintaining unity with our Loire Front if the enemy should push forward in the direction of Saumur or

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Angers. The Command endeavored, however, to maintain in the interval between the Tenth Army and the Army of Paris units capable of delaying such separation. These units were light mechanized divisions and armored divisions.

To the right everything depended upon the rapidity with which the Second Group of Armies could break off, shift to its left the necessary forces for its protection, and thus parry the deep exploitation started by the enemy in the direction of the southeast.

(b) June 13.

The High Command urged the Second Group of Armies to hasten execution of its withdrawal - particularly that of its left in the Argonne - and prescribed organization of antitank obstacles and of a barrage position throughout the depth of the withdrawal zone, especially between the Loire and Jura, where the situation was the most threatening.

(c) June 14-15.

While the Tenth Army was withdrawing on the Orne and on Alencon, a rapid penetration was being made by enemy armored forces which had broken through our Champagne formation. Moving through the partitioned section of the Ornain and Meldancon, which was weakly held by elements of the Third Army, they reached Gray, Vesoul, and the Doubs River and then moved towards the Belfort Gap and the Vosges.

(d) June 18.

The Second Group of Armies was outdistanced while hastily constituting covering forces on its extreme left. Strongly attacked on the Sarre during its withdrawal and exposed to an attack debouching from the Rhine in Upper Alsace, it formed a square, under the orders of the Commanding General of the Third Army, in rear of the Moselle at Toul, Frouard, the canal of the Marne to the Rhine between Nancy and Sarrebourg, the crests of the Vosges, the Upper Moselle, and the Meuse at Neufchateau. This ended June 22 in the triangle Portieux, Donon, and Corcieux.

A fraction of the Eighth Army grouped around Belfort endeavored to force a passage north of the Doubs in the region of Baume-les-Dames. On June 18 it obtained permission to take refuge in Switzerland if necessary.

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While the partition and encirclement of our right was taking place, the Tenth Army on our left was submerged by the sudden thrusts of armored forces on Cherbourg and on Brest. In the center, in spite of strong enemy pressure to the East, the Third Group of Armies withdrew in order on the Seine and the Loire.

It was soon obvious, however, that the retreat would have to be continued toward the Massif Central - thanks to the assistance of successive valleys of the Cher, the Indre, the Creuse, and the Vienne - in order that a double threat might be escaped. This threat was constituted as follows:

To the West, from the forcing of the Loire at Saumur and Angers, in spite of the splendid conduct of elements hastily grouped on the left bank of the river and of the delaying action of the cavalry corps;

To the East, from the deep thrust towards the Morvan, and shortly afterwards towards the Haute Loire and Allier; this thrust was made by large motorized and armored units which had broken through the formation of the Sixth Army south of the Marne at Chateau Thierry and which had encountered only the remains of units and regional elements hastily engaged to defend river crossings.

The Command was endeavoring to delay encirclement. To the West it prepared and took advantage of cuts of the Charente and the Dordogne Rivers. To the East it ordered the Commanding General of the Fourth Group of Armies, who had under him the Commanding General of the Fourth Army, to bar the approaches of the Massif Central to enemy forces debouching west of the Allier River in the general direction of the southwest. Meanwhile the Commanding General of the Second Group of Armies, having the Second Army at his disposal, covered the north flank of the Army of the Alps and took over the defensive sector of the Rhone. He also barred the Rhone routes which led through the high valleys of the Loire and the Allier to the rear areas of the Massif Central and of the Army of the Alps.

The Army of the Alps, attacked by Italy on its normal front, was obliged to guard its flank on the Lower Isere and to cover progressively its rear areas on the east bank of the Rhone. The splendid resistance of our troops, whose outpost fortifications held their ground, denied the enemy the crossing of the Isere at Voreppe and enabled the Army of the Alps to come out of the struggle intact.

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At the time hostilities were about to cease, the High Command issued its last instructions. The withdrawal of the Third Group of the Armies on the Dordogne, whose passages were held and whose course was marked by demolitions below Bergerac, was to be covered on the left - on both sides of the Garonne - by the strong points of resistance of La Baise and the Lower Lot, and on the right by the delaying action of the Second Group of Armies covering the approaches of the Ridge of Naurouze between the last spurs of the Massif Central and the sea.

Conclusion of the armistice on June 25 ended this hopeless maneuver, carried out with remnants of units whose movements were made painfully on roads congested by refugees.

f. The German Maneuver as Seen by the French.

It was obvious from the outset of 1940 that the formation of the German forces was definitely planned with a view to offensive operations on the Western Front. Their total strength had been increased to 150 divisions and later to 190 divisions, of which ten were armored divisions.

The center of these forces was particularly oriented toward Luxembourg, Belgium and Southern Holland. Practically all the large units of the regular army - that is infantry divisions, armored divisions, and motorized divisions - and a large number of the divisions set up upon mobilization were assembled in the region situated north of the Moselle and on both sides of the Rhine above Mainz. Some were perfecting their instruction and completing their training, while others held the Siegfried Line north of the Moselle and improved their defensive organizations. The contact front, facing our positions, was held only by divisions constituted upon mobilization.

Germany was thus preparing for a powerful mass of attack capable of speedy intervention in Luxembourg, Belgium, or Holland. As early as April, many signs of preparation for a German attack north of the Moselle were noted - particularly the following:

- (1) Construction of bridges or landings on the Moselle and the Rhine.
- (2) Movement and assembly of armored forces in the region between the Moselle and the Lower Rhine.
- (3) Closing-in of the German formation west of the Rhine toward its western frontiers.

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(4) Distribution of maps of Luxembourg and Belgium to the troops.

(5) Increase in the number and size of the depots for materiel and ammunition west of the Rhine.

(6) Improvement of roads leading to the western frontiers.

(7) Interruption or reduction of passenger and freight traffic on the Reich's railways.

(8) Withdrawal of German funds in Holland.

(9) Reinforcement of anti-aircraft measures in large German towns.

These signs became more clearly defined and supplemented in the beginning of May. Preparation of many crossings over the Oure, the Sure, and the Moselle above Trier were particularly noted. News from Luxembourg, Belgium, and Holland proved the state of anxiety prevailing in these countries as a result of the ever-increasing German mass.

The German offensive was about to take place. It was actually launched on the morning of May 10.

Information gathered on May 11 indicated that "wing elements directed on Luxembourg and Holland were to constitute secondary masses only," and, as a matter of fact, it was confirmed on May 12, 13 and 14 that the center of gravity of the German attack was south of the Meuse in the direction of Bouillon. Sedan seemed to be most seriously threatened.

The crossing of the Meuse by the Germans on May 15 brought up a new problem. Was the German mass planning to move South to take the Maginot Line in rear, or was it planning to advance straight to the West in order to effect separation of the Group of Armies of the North from the main forces of the French Armies?

On May 16, all reports indicated that a bold exploitation was being made by the German armored forces in the direction Sedan and Guise. A German document, found during the night May 16-17, showed the march direction of the divisions of the Von Kleist Group - the 1st, 2nd, 6th, 8th, and 10th armored divisions and the 2nd, 13th and 29th motorized infantry divisions - and stated that all German armored divisions were to advance straight to the west. Any remaining doubt as to the axis of the effort of the German masses which had crossed the Meuse was thus dispelled.

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Laon, St. Quentin, Cambrai, Arras, Amiens, and Abbeville were successively reached by the advancing German mass of the Von Kleist group, while the protection of this movement was insured from the south by motorized divisions, which were relieved by infantry divisions as they advanced.

The German effort was oriented more and more toward the northwest, and on May 20 definite information indicated that the German armored mass, having effected the separation of the northern forces from the main bodies of the French armies, was turning towards the north in the general direction Boulogne and Calais, in order to annihilate the Allied forces in the north.

The first phase of the German maneuver ended in front of Dunkirk.

It was obvious on May 26 that the armored divisions had been withdrawn from the north and reassembled in the region of Montreuil and St. Omer and that motorized infantry divisions fighting on the Somme had been relieved. Thus a new mass was being constituted immediately after operations in Flanders.

On the other hand, definite signs of the preparation of an offensive began to appear June 1 on the northern bank of the Aisne from Pontavert to Vouziers; the contact was closing in on the Moselle and Rhine front, and assembly of materiel and effectives was noted in front of the Rhine. It was obvious that the enemy was preparing to launch powerful offensives from the sea to Switzerland within a short time.

Movements and assemblies of large armored units were located north of the Somme and east of Hirson. They indicated that the enemy effort would be made, on the one hand, on the Somme and, on the other, in Champagne.

A very violent offensive was launched June 5 from Abbeville to the junction of the Ailette Canal with the Aisne. Two mechanized masses, identified near Amiens and Peronne, shook the French front south of these two regions. Along the front of attack, approximately forty infantry divisions were either advancing in rear of the mechanized masses or endeavoring to break through the French Front.

Information soon indicated that the armored mass which had been debouching from the region of Amiens towards the south was now turning towards the southwest, then towards the west in order to encircle our troops retreating from the lower Somme toward the

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lower Seine. The mechanized mass operating south of Peronne seemed to have the mission of reaching the region of Montdidier by way of the right bank of the Oise, with the west of Paris as its objective.

East of the Oise enemy attacks, at first repulsed, later succeeded in reaching the plateaus north of the Aisne, and then in crossing the river itself. East of the confluence of the Aisne and the Ailette Canal, the many signs of an early attack, which had been reported June 1, became confirmed. On the morning of June 9, the enemy attacked on a front extending to the Meuse.

General Guderian's armored mass, identified since June 2 in the region of Hirson, was engaged June 10 on the Champagne Front. Its action, obviously oriented to the southeast, was designed to bring about, by an outflanking movement to the east, the fall of the Mountain of Rheims. Then it was to carry out to the south, by way of Chalons and Chaumont, an outflanking movement of our Lorraine and Alsace forces. At the same time many signs of preparation for an attack were disclosed on the Lorraine and Alsace fronts, particularly in the regions of Huningue and Neuf-Brisach. An attempt to cross the Rhine appeared to be imminent on June 13.

Estimates of German forces now available indicated that the German High Command had about 20 divisions in the Black Forest. Further, about 30 divisions were available for the battle or for movement in a new direction. Thus approximately 50 new divisions could be engaged against the French armies, which for some time had put all available forces in line.

On the morning of June 14, the First German Army attacked on the Lorraine front, and the following day the Seventh Army crossed the Rhine above Neuf-Brisach.

Fronts were being disrupted on all sides; German advances were increasing and tending to encircle our forces in the west and in the east; the Atlantic Coast was quickly occupied, and in the rear the three and a half divisions of our Army of the Alps engaged 29 Italian divisions.

The armistice was signed before a German Army whose forces were impaired by exhaustion and losses but whose men were exalted by victory and still capable of powerful and prolonged efforts.

g. Summary and Conclusions.

This study is not intended as a historical document giving

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a complete and accurate picture of operations. Too little time has elapsed since the armistice, and insufficient testimony has been given. This work constitutes merely a guide for more exhaustive studies; it may, however, warrant certain conclusions as to the reasons for German victory.

On May 10 the Allied armies included 104 divisions on the Northeast Front. Of this number, 29 were immobilized because they were fortress divisions or because they were second line divisions made up of old classes. Thus there remained 75 divisions capable of participating in active operations. Ten of these were British. Against these large units, the German Army could put into line 190 divisions, of which 140 were capable of participating in active operations. Numerical inferiority was still greater insofar as tanks and aviation were concerned.

After losses in personnel and materiel suffered in the north, there remained on June 4, the eve of the second German offensive, over 43 Infantry divisions, three armored divisions and three cavalry divisions from Longuyon to the sea. The mechanized equipment of these units was greatly reduced. On the same date, the German Army had reconstituted its ten Panzer divisions, and the enemy could choose its zones of attack. To support our fortified position and to oppose a possible attack through Switzerland, there remained but 17 fortress divisions and divisions made up of old classes.

These figures show that the superiority of the Germans in effectives, mechanized units, and aviation was unquestionable and that it constituted one of the principal military causes of our defeat.

However, each time the French could oppose equal means, they held their own and proved their valor as well as the effectiveness of their materiel, unfortunately insufficient in numbers. A number of examples will give proof of this assertion.

First of all, in the open, when the Germans used neither tanks nor aviation, they encountered great difficulties.

(1) In the Argonne - first between May 15 and 20 and later about May 22 - three or four French divisions held their ground successfully against approximately eight or ten German divisions. The losses of the enemy were very heavy and his gains were limited during this period to a few kilometers of terrain.

(2) On the Chemin des Dames, two French divisions held

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for two days, beginning June 5, against five German divisions operating without tanks but supported by a strong aviation.

(3) Farther to the east, the Fourth Army, in spite of its feeble means - six infantry divisions, two of which were light divisions of two regiments each, 1 armored division, and one light mechanized division, very much reduced and including but 150 tanks - checked for 48 hours on June 9 - 10 an adversary who employed exceptionally strong forces. His strength included 12 infantry divisions, four Panzer divisions, and two motorized infantry divisions. In addition, he had absolute mastery of the air.

Second, modern French materiel had good qualities which were recognized even by the Germans themselves.

(1) The reconnaissance regiment of the 3rd Light Mechanized Division left the region of Cambrai May 10. At the end of the day it had reached the Albert Canal after a journey of more than 200 kilometers. It went into action the same evening.

(2) The combat brigade of this same division - that is, the tanks and artillery - left the region of Cambrai May 10 for the position Wavre-Namur which constituted its first objective. This stretch of 150 kilometers was covered without incident; the materiel arrived in perfect condition and the different elements of the brigade fought each of the following days against the German Panzer divisions.

(3) It was ascertained that tonnage being equal, French armored tanks always proved superior to German materiel; the enemy's very heavy losses in light and medium tanks have confirmed this.

On June 6 a French second lieutenant of artillery saw one of our B. tanks immobilized because the tank commander was wounded. The officer entered the tank, found out how to operate the 75-mm. gun, started the vehicle, and came back shortly afterwards, having destroyed three German tanks.

In the region of Montcornet, Aspirant X, whose tank had been stopped by a breakdown, remained at his post and succeeded in putting out of commission eight German tanks and numerous cars before he was obliged to destroy his own tank and abandon it.

In the 1st Armored Division on the evening of May 14 a battalion of heavy tanks went into position at approximately 8 P.M. The next day at 8 A.M. it was attacked by enemy tanks four times

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as numerous. The German tanks, however, were immediately blocked by the first of our tanks and were obliged to turn back. At 11 o'clock a new enemy attack, supported by a violent aviation bombing and by heavy artillery, was no more successful than the first. Finally the tank battalion had to withdraw, but only when threatened with encirclement.

(4) Means for increasing the mobility of the 47-mm. guns were still being tested at the end of May, but when circumstances made it necessary to use these guns as antitank weapons, they were mounted on cross-country tractors and protected with light armor.

As a rule, batteries of these "tank chasseurs" could not be organized in time to render the services expected of them, but it is interesting to report the results obtained by one of them in a few days of campaign. Formed on May 30 at Versailles, the battery commanded by Second Lieutenant B. went into action on June 5 in the region of Molliens-Vidame. The same evening it opened fire at 2,000 meters against enemy tanks. Two tanks were destroyed by the first shells fired by two of the guns of the battery, and two other tanks were put out of commission shortly afterwards.

The next day this battery went into action in the same region -- the region of the Abbeville Road -- to check the attack of about 50 tanks, several of which were as heavy as 30 tons. It carried out its mission with complete success, destroyed ten enemy tanks, and suffered no losses itself. On June 7 toward Campaux, where Second Lieutenant B.'s battery had been ordered to withdraw, five German tanks were destroyed.

(5) Batteries of 75-mm. guns were used for direct fire against tanks. In the region of Aumale, the 1st Battalion of the 72nd Artillery Regiment, firing at short range, put 30 German tanks out of commission. One of the three batteries destroyed 19 tanks.

(6) Fortifications of the Maginot Line brilliantly resisted the enemy. The Chappy Farm was subjected on June 21 to a violent four-hour preparation of heavy artillery fire which did not harm any of its weapons. The two-battalion infantry attack which followed the bombardment failed completely, and the enemy suffered such losses that in the afternoon he had to ask for a suspension of arms in order to remove his dead and wounded.

The Maginot Line fulfilled its mission completely until June 27, two days after the armistice, when it ceased firing upon receipt of orders from the French High Command. All the works

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were intact when the fortifications were turned over to the German military authorities.

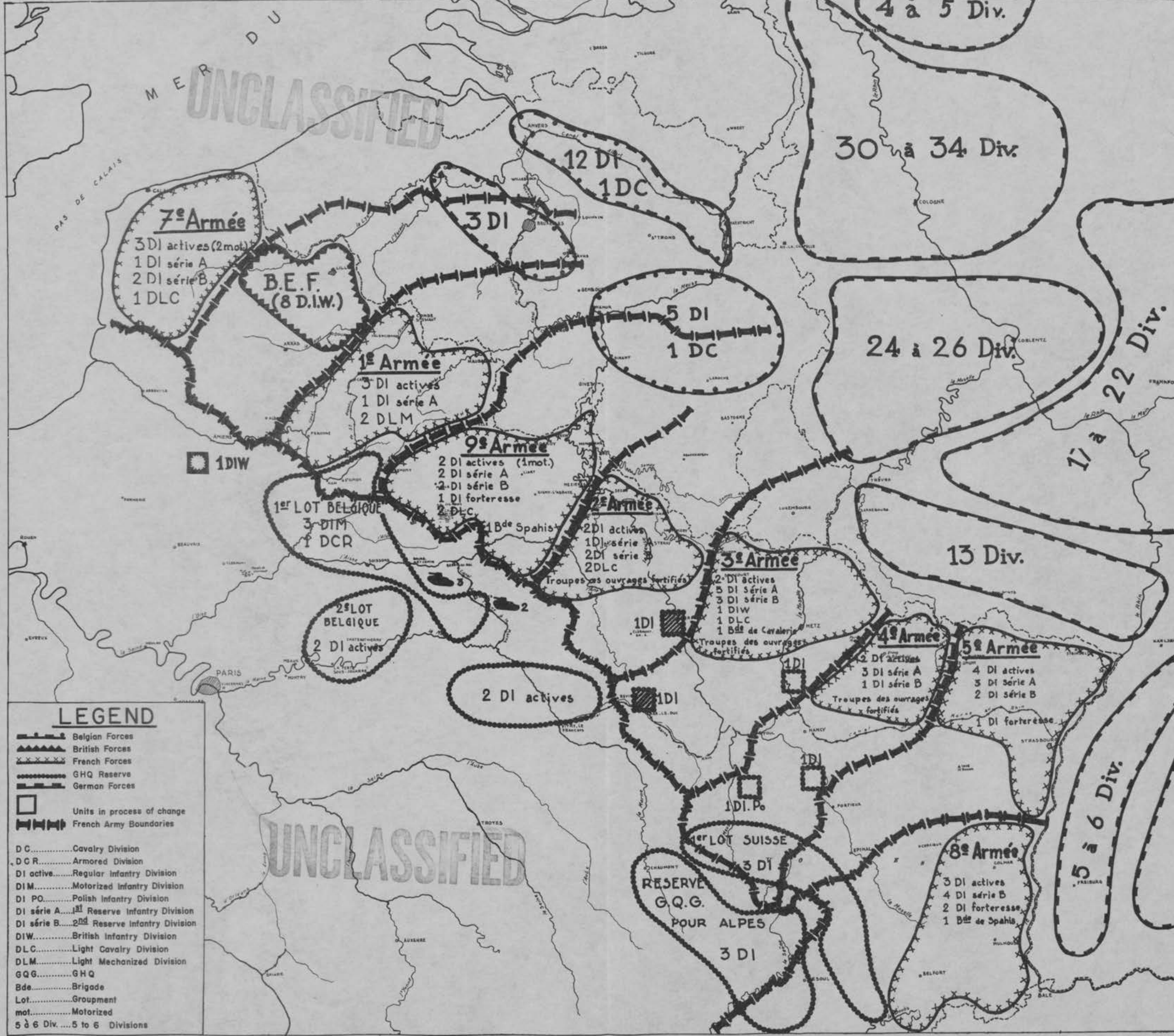
The French Army suffered a defeat which it would be ungracious not to admit, but at Rethondes, at the time of the signing of the armistice convention, Chancellor Hitler said "The French Army fought valiantly." This was an unquestionable tribute paid by the adversary himself.

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LEGEND

- Belgian Forces
- British Forces
- French Forces
- GHQ Reserve
- German Forces
- Units in process of change
- French Army Boundaries

- DC.....Cavalry Division
- DCR.....Armored Division
- DI active.....Regular Infantry Division
- DIM.....Motorized Infantry Division
- DI PO.....Polish Infantry Division
- DI série A.....1st Reserve Infantry Division
- DI série B.....2nd Reserve Infantry Division
- DIW.....British Infantry Division
- DLC.....Light Cavalry Division
- DLM.....Light Mechanized Division
- GQG.....GHQ
- Bde.....Brigade
- Lot.....Groupment
- mot.....Motorized
- 5 à 6 Div.....5 to 6 Divisions

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