

Gen Eisenhower.

(152)

~~TOP SECRET.~~

M 538.

Copy No. ... 5 ...

16 - 12 - 44.

21 Army Group.

General Situation



1. The operations ordered in M 534 dated 2 Nov. 44 have now been completed and the enemy has been pushed back across the MEUSE on the front of Second Army.
2. The floods in the "island" area between ARNHEM and NIJMEGEN preclude for the present any operations northwards across the NEDER RIJN towards the IJSEL river.

Our next operations will therefore be directed south-eastwards from the NIJMEGEN area, between the RHINE and the MEUSE, vide para 12(a) of M 534.

3. The enemy is at present fighting a defensive campaign on all fronts; his situation is such that he cannot stage major offensive operations. Furthermore, at all costs he has to prevent the war from entering on a mobile phase; he has not the transport or the petrol that would be necessary for mobile operations, nor could his tanks compete with ours in the mobile battle.
4. The enemy is in a bad way; he has had a tremendous battering and has lost heavily in men and equipment. On no account can we relax, or have a "stand still", in the winter months; it is vital that we keep going, so as not to allow him time to recover and so as to wear down his strength still further. There will be difficulties caused by mud, cold, lack of air support during periods of bad weather, and so on. But we must continue to fight the enemy hard during the winter months.
5. The main objective of the Allies on the western front is the RUHR; if we can cut it off from the rest of Germany the enemy capacity to continue the struggle must gradually peter out.

A further, and very important, object of our operations must be to force mobile war on the Germans. We will therefore continue throughout the winter to conduct such operations as will :

- (a) gain intermediate objectives towards the RUHR.
- (b) place us in a good jumping-off position for a mobile campaign in the Spring.
- (c) wear down the enemy's strength at a greater rate than our own.

/ 6.

DECLASSIFIED

Authority J.C.S. MEMO
Date 1/17/73
By DJH, NARS Date 10/12/73

6. The future layout that we want to achieve is to face up to the RHINE from ORSOY northwards on a front of two armies, Second Army being on the right and Canadian Army on the left.

American formations are then to be included in 21st Army Group and, with the co-operation of strong airborne forces, the RHINE will be crossed.

Before we can begin to develop successfully large scale operations across the RHINE we must clear the enemy completely from the west of the river, and must join up with the American Ninth Army coming up from the south; we must in fact be in undisputed possession of all territory west of the RHINE from inclusive the general line ORSOY - VENLO northwards.

Intention.

7. To destroy all enemy in the area between the RHINE and the MEUSE from the present forward positions south of NIJMEGEN as far south as the general line ORSOY - VENLO, as a preliminary to crossing the RHINE and engaging the enemy in mobile war to the north of the RUHR.

Initial Grouping for the Operations.

8. This will be as follows :

<u>Canadian Army.</u>	<u>Second Army.</u>
HQ 2 Cdn Corps	HQ 8 Corps
HQ 1 Corps	HQ 12 Corps
HQ 30 Corps	-
-	3 DIV
2 Cdn DIV	52 DIV
3 Cdn DIV	7 Armd DIV
15 DIV	11 Armd DIV
43 DIV	-
49 DIV	4 Armd Bde
51 DIV	Royals
53 DIV	-
Gds Armd DIV	Belgian Bde
4 Cdn Armd DIV	Dutch Irregulars
Polish Armd DIV	-
-	
6 Gds Armd Bde	
8 Armd Bde	
31 Armd Bde	
33 Armd Bde	
34 Armd Bde	
2 Cdn Armd Bde	



All resources of 79 Armd DIV will be at the disposal of Canadian Army.

Re-grouping will be carried out as necessary during the progress of the operations.

/ Boundaries.

Boundaries.

9. Between First Canadian and Second British Armies, all incl Canadian Army :

GELDROP - HELMOND - BEEK - GEMERT -
BOXMEER - HEIJEN.

Above effective forthwith.

10. Between 21 Army Group and 12 Army Group.

Incl 21 Army Group, with equal running rights to 12 Army Group :

HASSELT - GENCK - ASCH - HEIKANT -
KINROY - KESSENICH - ITTERVOORT thence

All incl 12 Army Group :

ROERMOND - MUNCHEN GLADBACH - DUSSELDORF.

Above effective 0001 hrs 1st Jan 45.

First Canadian Army.



11. A strong offensive will be launched south-eastwards between the rivers RHINE and MEUSE, and carried as far south as the general line ORSOY - VENLO.
12. As the advance progresses the whole area will be cleared of the enemy and a firm flank will be formed on the RHINE. Reconnaissances will be carried out to determine the most suitable crossing places.
13. The operation will be given the name "VERITABLE".
14. Target date for the operation to be launched: as early as possible after 1-1-45, the date selected to be reported to me by Canadian Army by 22-12-44.
15. Dry or hard ground would be the most suitable conditions for the operation. If these conditions exist, then the basis of the operation will be speed and violence. The aim will be to pass armoured columns through to disrupt and disorganise enemy resistance in rear and to achieve the object in the quickest possible time.
16. If the ground is wet and muddy, then a slower and more methodical progress may be forced on us.
17. Two alternative plans will therefore be necessary.

/ 18.

ALL FORCES.

23. The weight of 2nd Tactical Air Force will be directed towards furthering the operations of Canadian Army.

18. When framing the Army plan, Canadian Army will keep 30 Corps HQ on the right, or MEUSE flank, and 2 Canadian Corps HQ on the left.

This positioning is necessary so that armies can be suitably and easily re-grouped for subsequent phases vide para 6, with all Canadian formations being able to be kept in Canadian Army.

19. Canadian Army will :

- (a) hold a secure bridgehead over the RHINE at NIJMEGEN. There must be no possibility of the enemy damaging the bridges by land or river action, or of interfering with our affairs by offensive action directed towards the "back door" of our offensive.
- (b) hold defensively the general line of the WAAL and MAAS westwards from NIJMEGEN, as at present.

Second British Army.

20. The tasks of Second Army will be : -

First: to hold a firm front facing east on the line of the MEUSE.

Second: to assist the attack of Canadian Army by every means possible.

21. The communications of Second Army will run eastwards to the MEUSE, will cross that river, and continue eastwards to the RHINE and beyond.

Bridging sites for the MEUSE crossings have been selected at :

GENNEP
BERGEN
WELL
LOTTUM



Work on the roads leading forward to these sites will be put in hand at once and, as Canadian Army makes progress southwards, so the bridges over the river will be constructed.

22. A very close watch will be kept on the enemy on the east bank of the MEUSE and every opportunity will be taken to harry and alarm him by means of patrols, raids, etc.

Air Forces.

23. The weight of 2nd Tactical Air Force will be directed towards furthering the operations of Canadian Army.

/ 12 Army Group ...

12 Army Group.

24. The area at present held by Second Army to the east of the MEUSE, i.e. from MAESEYCK southeast towards WURM, will be handed over to Ninth US Army on 20 Dec at an hour to be arranged mutually between army commanders.

7 Armd DIV will remain in position in this area, and will come under the operational command of Ninth US Army for use in a holding role; the division will remain under Second Army for administration.

25. At a date subsequent to 20 Dec Ninth US Army is to carry out an operation with the object of establishing its forward troops on the general line of the ROER and WURM rivers as far north as ROERMOND.
26. Early in January the left wing of 12 Army Group is to launch a strong offensive across the river ROER towards BONN and COLOGNE; the date for this offensive is not yet definitely settled.

Having reached the RHINE about COLOGNE it is intended that Ninth US Army shall turn northwards and operate so as to join hands with 21 Army Group west of the RHINE.

General.

27. The cover plan in connection with the forthcoming operations will be handled at Main HQ 21 Army Group; the utmost care will be taken to ensure secrecy below that level.
28. Tac HQ 21 Army Group will move to GELDROF on 27 Dec 44.
29. Acknowledge.



B. L. Montgomery

Field-Marshal,
C-in-C,
21 Army Group.