

RONCEY DOCKET

26 July 1944

Liebste Elise,

The American advance began yesterday. Bomb after bomb, shell after shell dropped on the poor Kameraden of the Panzer Lehr Division. I can only imagine that they're not up to the defence that der Führer, Adolf Hitler, has ordered. As the Amis push into us, we find they are truly a rich man's army. They use artillery shells as though they are rocks gathered from the ground, such is the frequency that we're ducking for cover. We'll pull back for now, allowing them to come forward. Then their thin-skinned tanks will hardly last once we turn our guns on them.

Heil Hitler, In Liebe, Oskar

28 July 1944

Liebste Elise,

I write by candlelight with the nub of a pencil. I should be sleeping, but I cannot. Goethe and I are in a burnt-out farmhouse in Normandy. Don't worry, he's a good man and handy with the Panzerschreck anti-tank rocket. He should come in handy as two American armoured divisions have us penned up like chickens near Roncey, southeast of St. Lô.

We're going to force our way through their lines tonight, reach our counterattack position, and defeat the Americans.

It has proven foolish to head along the road towards Hambye to Percy. Berlin would not give these orders, nor would Generalfeldmarschall Kluge. Now we are stuck with Sherman tanks everywhere but to the west. Several elements tried to break out towards the coast, but I do not know how they fared.

We will try too, either to great heroism or death. Goethe says the American lines are thin. A Panzer commander thinks he can get us through, fighting if we must. Quite a few vehicles to go, a few Panthers, some Panzers, many half-tracks, and even one Hummel.

Heil Hitler! In Liebe, Oskar

30, July 1944

Liebste Elise,

I have seen Roosevelt's butchers and I am still alive. Elise, It is hard to describe what I have lived through. Encountering the American lines, our reports proved false. They were well prepared for our movements, lining the roads with their half-tracks.

The night was silent until they opened up with their machine guns. Bullets peppered our column from both sides of the road. I could hear the metallic ping of bullets bouncing off our armour. Their tanks started firing and even with their weaker guns, the close range did us in.

I gunned our motor while Goethe fired the machine gun, fear gripped me when a Panzer exploded in front of us. The vehicle behind it burst into flames spilling men out onto the road. I fear that, in my panic, I ran at least one wounded soldier down.

I did not hear Goethe stop firing but when I pulled away from the battle his body slumped to the floor of our vehicle. I had no time to think, American artillery began to fall. Many vehicles were lost, few made it out. Only three others in our vehicle survived the race out of die Hexenkessel, the Witches Cauldron. The rest are lost.

As daylight broke I could see the pale faces of our soldiers. That's when the Jabo fighter-bombers attacked. More vehicles were hit. Exploding bombs, blinding flashes, white-hot metal fragments piercing through our armour. Another Kamerad shredded by the attack. I saw a great Panther knocked on its side as if it were a toy. Men were screaming from inside burning vehicles, a sound I will never forget.

I remembered the smell of my father's slaughterhouse. I never liked it, being the son of a butcher, though, I did as I was told. The SS gave me a way out of that, but the stench has returned. I will never forget it.

Tonight I write this from inside a church in Tussy-sur-Vire. It is quiet, the first quiet I've had in days. Tomorrow we'll head north and east to rejoin our Kameraden in defence of the Fatherland. I hope to live that long, to see you again, that is my only wish.

In Liebe, Oskar

Taken from a captured member of the 2. 'Das Reich' SS-Panzerdivision.

THE RONCEY POCKET

As the day wore on, Das Reich received orders to withdraw towards Percy to link up with reinforcements from the British sector. The combined force would then launch a concentrated counterattack against the Americans to stabilise the front. As they withdrew they discovered that the US 2nd Armored Division had already advanced across their path.

The Roncey Pocket scenario uses the **Headlights**, **Morning Light**, **Mobile Battle**, **Outnumbered**, **Prepared Positions**, **Reserves**, and **Surprise** special rules in the rulebook and on page 80.

YOUR ORDERS

GERMAN

With the American *Jabo* fighter-bombers swarming over the battlefield during the day, the only way to reach Percy in time is a night march. Speed is of the essence if you are to reach the assembly area before the Americans, so use your headlights. You must get through any light American screening force in your way and clear the roads leading to Percy.

AMERICAN

It seems that you have cut off a large German force in the Roncey Pocket and they want out. Hold your positions and contain the German forces trying to escape.

PREPARING FOR BATTLE

1. Set up the terrain as shown on page 81. Place the objectives at the points marked **X**. The table is 4'/120cm by 8'/240cm.
2. The German player places the bulk of their forces in nose-to-tail columns down the roads in the order listed. All of the vehicles have their headlights on. Note that the columns are facing in different directions. The Northern Column is moving eastward while the Southern Column is moving westward.
3. The American player places their starting troops in their deployment areas as shown on the map. Note that A Battery, 78th Armored Field Artillery Battalion starts the game held in Reserve.

BEGINNING THE BATTLE

1. The American troops begin the game in Prepared Positions, so the infantry and guns are in foxholes.
2. However, the Easy Company force at La Rampinniére is subject to the Mobile Battle special rule as they race into firing positions, and the 78th Armored Field Artillery Battalion force at La Chapelle is subject to the Surprise special rule when they discover the German column in their midst.
3. The American player has the first turn.
4. The battle is fought at night (see the Headlights special rule on page 80).

ENDING THE BATTLE

The battle ends when:

- The German player starts their turn holding any two of the objectives, or
- Morning Light ends the battle.

This game does not end when the first company on a side fails a Company Morale Check. Instead, the surviving company of that side continues to fight.

DECIDING WHO WON

If the German player holds any objectives, they win the battle having gained a position from which a break in the US cordon can be created during the day. If they hold two objectives, the German forces have broken through the American cordon and escaped to form a new defensive line. Should the Germans end the game with all three objectives, they have shattered the American cordon and Seventh Army will escape intact to fight again.

If the American player holds all of the objectives, they have held the pocket closed and the success of the breakout is ensured.

BREAKOUT MINI CAMPAIGN

If you are playing the Roncey Pocket scenario as part of a campaign with the previous two scenarios, your success in the String Of Pearls scenario will have an impact on this scenario.

- If the German player won the String Of Pearls scenario, they start the game with a two-gun Motorised SS-Artillery Battery at the rear of the Northern Column. The success in getting the supply wagons away in the previous scenario gives them enough ammunition to assist in the breakout.
- If the US player won the String Of Pearls scenario, the Germans are desperately short of fuel. Roll a die for each tank or self-propelled gun in the Northern Column (the

Southern Column has captured American fuel supplies at St. Denis-le-Gast). Any roll of a 1 results in the vehicle running out of fuel earlier in the march and not taking part in this battle.

As the last battle in the campaign, the winner of the Roncey Pocket scenario wins the campaign.

If you want your campaign to go further, add a scenario for the German counterattack at Mortain that tried to cut off the spearhead of the breakout. The degree of German success in escaping the Roncey Pocket could be used to determine the forces they have available at Mortain.

HEADLIGHTS

As the night wore on and dawn approached, the German troops turned on their headlights attempting to get to Percy before the fighter-bombers arrived at dawn. Long lines of vehicles moved down the narrow roads, oblivious to the fact they were driving right into the American spearhead.

The Roncey Pocket scenario is played at night using the Night fighting rules on page 154 of the rulebook.

Because the German vehicles start with their headlights on and are subsequently silhouetted against the light of their burning vehicles, US platoons may choose to re-roll the distance that they can see German teams.

The Germans fight using the normal night fighting rules as they have difficulty locating the American positions in the darkness.

As the road is blocked with traffic and burning vehicles, the German player leaves the model of any Destroyed vehicle in place, even unarmoured trucks. Unarmoured vehicles blocking the road in this fashion count as Difficult Going.

Because the roads are blocked, any vehicle Sent to the Rear remains in place as an obstacle in the same manner as a Destroyed vehicle, although they still count as being Sent to the Rear.

MORNING LIGHT

As the light of morning began to illuminate the battlefield, the German troops ceased their attacks and either laid low or abandoned their heavy equipment and filtered through the thinly held American lines.

At the start of the American turn nine, after taking any Company Morale Checks needed, the American player rolls a die. On a score of 5+, morning has broken and the game ends. Otherwise the game continues.

If the game continues, at the start of the next American turn, the player rolls two dice, with morning breaking on any roll of 5+.

Each subsequent turn they roll one more die until morning breaks on any roll of 5+.

OTHER PLACES, OTHER TIMES

Being trapped behind enemy lines was a terrible experience for those involved. Unfortunately for the German forces, this experience became increasingly common in the last two years of the war.

The Roncey Pocket scenario could also be used for troops fighting their way out of the Falaise Pocket two weeks later. The major difference here would be the opposition, with the 1st Polish Armoured Division, equipped by the British and operating with the First Canadian Army, being the blocking force.

OUTNUMBERED

The German force advancing towards St. Denis-le-Gast numbered some 2,500 troops. Desperate to escape the pocket, they launched repeated attacks against the US forces blocking their way.

At the start of any of their turns, before taking any Company Morale Checks, the German player may disband any Gepanzerte Panzergrenadier or Panzergrenadier Platoon in the Northern Column, removing it from the table.

In the Starting Step when Ambushes would be revealed you may deploy any Destroyed or removed Gepanzerte Panzergrenadier or Panzergrenadier Platoon from the Northern Column on table anywhere in the orange area without its vehicles.

The Northern Column is a confused mass of troops from many units. Because of their desperation to escape, they always pass any Company Morale Checks they are required to take, whether or not they have a Company Command team.

SURPRISE

The Red Legs of 78th Armored Field Artillery Battalion were exceptionally surprised to discover a German column in their midst. While some vehicles managed to bring fire on the column immediately, others took time to appreciate the direction of the threat.

The 78th Armored Field Artillery Battalion force starts the game Pinned Down with all of their vehicles Bailed Out. They can attempt to rally and remount in their first turn before engaging the column.

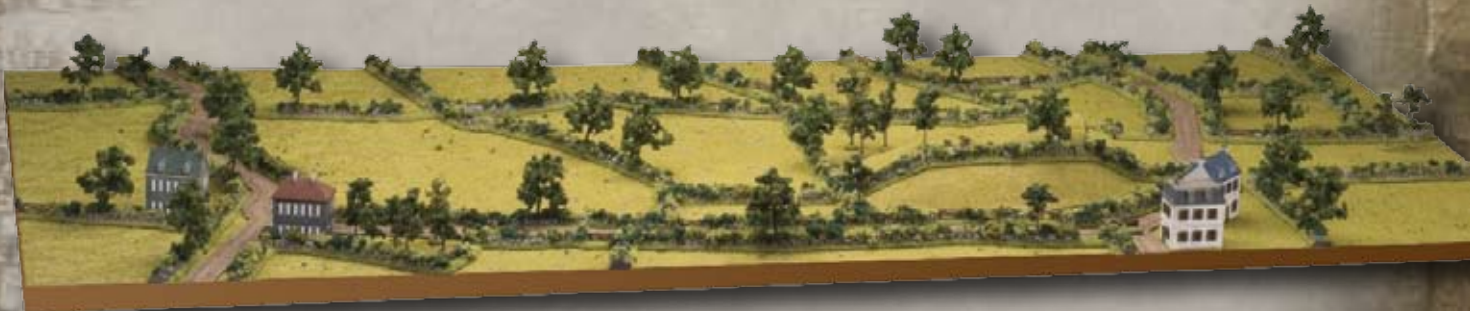
TERRAIN

The breakout took place through the Bocage country with its high hedges and small woods. The roads are narrow, overhung on both sides by the high banks. They are too confined for two tanks to pass, or even to shoot past each other, slowing the progress of the German columns seeking to escape encirclement, and limiting their options when they encountered the enemy.

The high ground at La Rampinniére is a gentle rise overlooking the stream running down a gully to the north. The hill is Easy Going. The stream is Very Difficult Going.

BOCAGE HEDGEROWS

All hedgerows on the table are Bocage hedgerows. These are taller than a tank, Very Difficult Going, and provide Bulletproof Cover to troops sheltering behind them. Teams must start adjacent to a Bocage hedgerow to cross it. The full Bocage rules are provided in more detail in the *D-Day* campaign book or on our web page, www.FlamesOfWar.com.



US EASY COMPANY, 67TH ARMORED REGIMENT

Captain McCartney set out with a platoon of tanks to reinforce an outlying platoon of Captain W C Johnson's Item Company at the crossroads of La Lande des Mortes, the site of a battle between the British and the French six hundred years earlier. His tanks were forced back to their main position around La Rampinière as Lieutenant Anderson's riflemen were overrun. There Easy Company and the rest of Item Company made their stand. Repeated infantry attacks were only held off with the assistance of the 78th Armored Field Artillery Battalion firing from the south.

The night had been eventful for this battalion too. B Battery was attacked around midnight by German infantry, but they drove off the assault. Later around 0215hrs a column of vehicles drove into La Chapelle, headlights on.

Captain Simard recognised German voices and sounded the alarm about the same time Sergeant Oxenreider's tank destroyer opened fire on the half-tracks at the rear of the column. Around the same time requests for fire support began to arrive from Captain McCartney's Easy Company.

EASY CO. 67TH ARMORED REGIMENT

Captain James R McCartney

1st Platoon, Easy Company

2nd Platoon, Item Co. 41st Armored Infantry Regiment

2nd Platoon, Easy Company

3rd Platoon, Item Co. 41st Armored Infantry Regiment

Mortar Platoon, II/41st Armored Infantry Regiment

Forward Observation Section,
78th Armored Field Artillery Battalion

78TH FIELD ARTILLERY BATTALION

Lieutenant Colonel H M Exton

B Battery, 78th Armored Field Artillery Battalion

A Battery, 78th Armored Field Artillery Battalion

Sergeant Kenneth Oxenreider
2nd Platoon, Charlie Co. 702nd Tank Destroyer Battalion

TANK COMPANY (CONFIDENT VETERAN)

Company HQ (with one M4 Sherman tank and one M4 (105) Sherman tank, at **1**)

Tank Platoon (with four M4A1 (76mm) Sherman tanks, two tanks with hedgerow cutters, at **1**)

Armored Rifle Platoon (with one squad, at **1**)

Tank Platoon (with four M4 Sherman tanks, two tanks with hedgerow cutters, at **2**)

Armored Rifle Platoon (with one squad, at **2**)

Armored Mortar Platoon (at full strength at **2**)

Two Observer M4 Sherman OP tanks (observing for artillery batteries below, one at **1**, one at **2**)

ARMORED FIELD ARTILLERY BATTALION (CONFIDENT VETERAN)

Company HQ (with Company Command Carbine team, 2iC Command Carbine team, two Carbine teams, mounted in two Jeeps armed with AA MG, two M3 half-tracks armed with .50 cal AA MG, at **5**)

Armored Field Artillery Battery (at full strength with two M3 half-tracks both armed with AA MG, at **3**)

Armored Field Artillery Battery (at full strength with two M3 half-tracks both armed with AA MG, in Reserve arriving within 16"/40cm of **6**)

One M10 3" GMC tank destroyer (immobilised, but still able to fight, at **4**)

GERMAN KAMPFGRUPPE WISLICENY

After overrunning a platoon of Item Company, 41st Armored Infantry Regiment at La Lande des Mortes (The Heath of the Dead), the main body of 2. 'Das Reich' SS-Panzerdivision moved southeast towards St. Denis-le-Gast, where another column had broken through the American encirclement.

Moving quickly along the roads with infantry marching through the fields alongside, the column soon bumped into the rest of Item Company and most of Easy Company, 67th Armored Regiment, at La Rampinière near the village of Grimesnil.

At almost the same time another German column from the force that overran St. Denis-le-Gast to the south was moving westward. These troops had followed a damaged American M10 3" GMC tank destroyer down the road to la Chapelle by mistake instead of escaping to the south. When the M10 tank destroyer pulled over at the La Chapelle crossroads for repairs, the German column passed it and began to drive through the positions of an American field artillery battalion. The Americans reacted first when the Intelligence Officer, Captain Simard, leapt aboard his half-track and opened fire.

KAMPFGRUPPE WISLICENY 3. SS-PANZERGRENADIERREGIMENT

NORD KOLONNE

- 2. 'Das Reich' SS-Stugabteilung
- 9. 'Das Reich' SS-Panzerartillerieregiment
- 10. 'Deutschland' SS-Panzergrenadierregiment

Sturmbannführer Günther-Eberhard Wisliceny

- 8. 'Deutschland' SS-Panzergrenadierregiment
- 8. 'Das Reich' Panzerregiment
- 7. 'Deutschland' SS-Panzergrenadierregiment

II/17. SS-Panzergrenadierregiment

SÜD KOLONNE

Obersturmführer Grieme

- 7. 'Das Reich' Panzerregiment
- 5. 'Der Führer' SS-Panzergrenadierregiment
- 6. 'Der Führer' SS-Panzergrenadierregiment
- 2. 'Das Reich' Panzerjägerabteilung
- 11. 'Deutschland' SS-Panzergrenadierregiment

SS-PANZERGRENADIERKOMPANIE (FEARLESS VETERAN)

NORTHERN COLUMN

(WITH HEAD AT **A** AND TAIL AT **B**)

- SS-Assault Gun Platoon (with three StuG III tank-hunters)
- One Hummel self-propelled gun as an Independent team.
- Gepanzerte SS-Panzergrenadier Platoon (with three squads, HQ equipped with Panzerfaust, mounted in half-tracks)

Company HQ (both teams equipped with Panzerfaust, in field car and motorcycle combination, with two Panzerschreck teams).

SS-Heavy Platoon (with two machine-gun sections and a mortar section, mounted in trucks)

SS-Panzer Platoon (with three Panzer IV tanks)

SS-Panzergrenadier Platoon (with three squads, HQ equipped with Panzerfaust, at **C**)

SS-Panzergrenadier Platoon (with three squads, no Panzerfaust, at **D**)

SOUTHERN COLUMN

(WITH HEAD AT **E** AND TAIL AT **F**)

Company HQ (both teams equipped with Panzerfaust, in field car and motorcycle combination)

SS-Panzer Platoon (with two Panzer IV tanks)

SS-Panzergrenadier Platoon (with two squads, HQ equipped with Panzerfaust, mounted in trucks)

SS-Panzergrenadier Platoon (with three squads, HQ equipped with Panzerfaust, mounted in trucks)

SS-Tank-hunter Platoon (with two Marder III M tank-hunters)

Gepanzerte SS-Panzergrenadier Platoon (with two squads, HQ equipped with Panzerfaust, mounted in half-tracks)