

The Huertgen Forrest: The Necessary Battle

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PREFACE

World War II histories about the European theater spend much of the time talking about the D-Day invasion, Operation Cobra, Market Garden, The Battle of the Bulge, and the final surrender of Nazi German. These events all occurred between June-September 1944 and December-May 1944-1945. Very little time is spent on the events that occurred between September and December of 1944. Before September the Allies had been doing many exciting things, opening up a second front on the beaches of Normandy, liberating Paris, and chasing the German Army across France. At the beginning of September, S.H.A.E.F, “Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Force” believed that the German Army was on the brink of defeat. During the months of June, July, and August alone, the German Army had suffered 1,210,600 casualties in campaigns in the east and west.¹ It was during the months of September to February that the Battle of the Huertgen Forest occurred.² The Huertgen Forest, a wooded area of 50 square miles sits on the border of Belgium and Germany about 5 miles south of the city of Aachen. Not much has been written about the events that took place in the forest and there are several reasons. Operation Market Garden overshadowed the beginning of the battle and the Battle of the Bulge overshadowed its end. American forces did most of the fighting in the Huertgen and British historians, who wrote many of the post war histories, spent little if any time concentrating on the Huertgen. In fact, very few American historians have written about it either, and when they do, they are highly critical about the decision to attack into the forest. Most of the books on the subject concluded that the American commanders made a huge mistake by entering the forest and should have bottled it up and gone around it. They are right, when they argue that the forest itself has very little strategically value. However, what makes the forest important is the Roer River. More important than the Roer River are the dams that control the river’s flow. The only way the Americans could capture the dams was to enter the forest. Without control of those dams, the Allies could not move over the Roer River because the Germans could blow up the dams, cutting off any American troops that had crossed it. Therefore, two out of three of the Allied Army groups would have troops that would not be able to cross the river into Germany.

As long as he held the huge Roer Dams containing the headwaters of that river, he could unleash a flash flood that would sweep away our bridges and jeopardize our isolated bridgeheads on the plains of Cologne. Destruction of the 180-foot-high Schwammenauel Dam, engineers said, would swell the Roer at Duren by 25 feet and create a raging torrent one and a half miles wide. Clearly we dared not venture beyond the Roer until first we had captured or destroyed those dams.³

General Omar Bradley

INTRODUCTION TO THE WAR

On 6 June 1944 British and American forces stormed the beaches of Normandy in an effort to open up a second front in the war against Nazi Germany. The beaches were taken but the Anglo-American forces had trouble breaking out of Normandy. Allied command had failed to take into account the terrain of Normandy, particularly the hedgerows, large bushes that made perfect defensive positions for the Germans to ambush the Allies. After an initial struggle, the Allied troops adapted to hedgerow fighting, and by 27 July they were moving again. Russia was attacking in the east, Rome had fallen, and the Germans were running back to the Fatherland giving up France with minimal fighting. It almost looked like the war would be over in 1944. As the Anglo American force began to move further and further into France, getting supplies, especially gas, began to become a problem. Instead of taking the time and men to open up another port to supply the troops, Eisenhower decided on a broad stroke to end the war. Operation Market Garden, a plan devised by British Field Marshal Sir Bernard Montgomery, was to use the Allied airborne divisions to capture the bridges that spanned the Rhine in Holland, which would give the British armored division an opened path to Berlin. Eisenhower decided to give Montgomery the troops needed for Market Garden instead of taking the time and opening the Port of Antwerp. The First Army, which originally supposed to enter Germany, south of the Ardennes Forest, was moved north of it, to protect Montgomery's right flank.⁴ Market Garden failed and because the Allies had not spent time to open up a port, October was destined to be the worst month in matters of supply the Allies were to experience during the campaign on the Continent. The 12th Army Group in September would be undersupplied by 4000 tons a day.⁵ It was not until the first of November that supplies of artillery ammunition were no longer in the critical stage. By the end of October the Allies had devised a way of getting supplies to the troops through the use of trucks, trains and airplanes. When the port of Antwerp was finally opened at the end of November, the Americans had already solved the supply problems. It would have made a difference if it had been opened in September. But it was not and Market Garden was a failure. The Allies, low on fuel and supplies, had to devise a new plan to defeat the Germans. To get into Germany, the Allies would have to break through the Siegfried Line, a series of defenses created to protect Germany from an invasion in the west. The Americans called it the Siegfried Line; the Germans called it the Western Wall. It was built in 1936 as a defensive line to counter France's Maginot Line. However, since France was no longer a threat, the majority of building from 1940 to 1944 was spent on the Atlantic Wall, to protect against an invasion from Great Britain.

Its intricate series of dragon's teeth, pillboxes, interconnected communications trenches, gun pits and foxholes in depth supported by an excellent road net that ran back to Cologne, Dusseldorf and other manufacturing sites less than 50 kilometers to the east, provided the Germans with not only an excellent defense system but also a base from which to launch a major offensive.⁶

As September began, most of the Allied troops had reached the edge of France. SHAEF, because of low supplies, ordered the troops to halt while they decided their next course of action. The Germans, on the other hand, were not waiting. They were preparing to put all of their might into the defense of the homeland.

In numerous sectors in the West the battle is now taking place on German territory. German towns and villages are being fought for. This fact must inspire us to fight with fanatical determination; in the combat zone, every able-bodied man must give his utmost. Every bunker, every town, every village must become a fortress against which the enemy will beat his head in vain or in which the German garrison goes under in hand-to-hand combat.

German Colonel-General Jodl, 16 September 1944.

There were three main army groups that would march into Germany. (see page 1) The first was the 21st Army Group under the command of Field Marshall Montgomery. They were still in the Holland area where Market Garden had taken place. Above Switzerland lay the 6th Army Group. Between the 21st Army Group and the 6th Army Group was the 12th Army Group under the command of General Omar Bradley. It consisted of the First, Third and Ninth armies. General Courtney Hodges was the commander of the First Army. Under Hodges were Major General Lenard Gerow, commander of V Corps, General Joseph Collin, commander of VII Corps, and General H Corlet, commander of XIX Corps. VII Corps consisted of the 1st and 9th Infantry Units and the 3rd Armored Division. V Corps controlled the 4th and 28th Infantry Division and the 5th Armored Division. In early September, General Hodges had to give these troops the order to halt, while supplies were moved to Montgomery to make way for Market Garden. General Collins and VII Corps lay west of the German town of Aachen at the Netherlands/Belgium border. As they waited there for more supplies, the first American soldier entered Germany and encountered the Siegfried line. The official army report reads:

At 1805 hours on 11 September, a patrol lead by Sergeant Warner W Holitzinger crossed into Germany near the village of Stolzemburg, a few miles northeast of Viaden, Luxembourg.

When Holitzinger encountered the Siegfried Line, he and his men found that most of the pillboxes and the defenses were unmanned. General Collins, on reading this report, felt that if they attacked the Siegfried Line now, they could easily break through it, before the Germans had time to reorganize from their hasty retreat from France and adequately began to defend their homeland. General Collins requested permission from General Hodges to form a reconnaissance group to probe the defenses of the Siegfried Line. The group was not going in to scout the area; it was going to attempt to break through the Siegfried Line. Collins hoped that if he were successful, he would be given more troops and supplies to advance his attack into Germany. General Hodges agreed to allow General Collins to form a reconnaissance group to probe the defenses of the Siegfried Line. He also let General Gerow of V Corps form a similar reconnaissance group south of the Huertgen. XIX Corps was still very low on fuel and still about 20 miles away from the German border. Collins planned to move into the Stolberg Corridor, an area between the city of Aachen to its north and the Huertgen Forest to its south. The goal was to try and break the Siegfried Line before the Germans had time to man it.

During World War I, General Pershing had major problems with German troops attacking his flanks out of the Argonne Forest. Well aware of Pershing's problem, Collins was adamant on making sure his flanks were protected. To secure his flank Collins

decided to move troops to the north and take the hills surrounding Aachen. He briefly flirted with the idea of invading the city but decided that it would be better just to surround it and wait for the XIX Corps to catch up. Aachen held no real significant military importance, but it was where Charlemagne was born and had once been the capital of the Holy Roman Empire, the first Reich. Losing the birthplace of the First Reich would be a demoralizing blow to Hitler and the Nazis. To protect his right flank Collins would move troops into the northern part of the Huertgen Forest. The goals would be to capture some of the northern towns and keep the Germans in the forest. Collins could then be sure that his flanks would be protected. This is how the battle of the Huertgen Forest began.

The 9th division was given the task of clearing the northern section of the Hurtgen Forest to prevent its use by the enemy as a base from which to counterattack or place fire against the south flank of the 3rd armored as it drove head on against the West Wall.[7](#)
General Joseph Colins

Because of low fuel, General Collins ordered his troops to stop west of the Roer River until more supplies could arrive. That was assuming his troops were able to make it that far, which they did not. Had his troops had enough gas, it would have been a disaster to cross the Roer River without controlling the Roer River dams, especially the Schwammenauel and the Urft. If Collin's troops crossed the Roer and the Germans destroyed the dams, the Americans on the east bank would have been completely cut off and could have been wiped out by the Germans. The dams were a crucial factor that was overlooked, not just by Collins, but by just about everybody involved in the process. It was just like the hedgerows of Normandy. No one considered them in the planning of the attack.

No terrain analysis or intelligence estimate of this [the dams] danger had been made by Supreme Headquarters, Allied Expeditionary Force (SHAEF), XII Army Group, or First Army, and for the first and only time my able G-2 and Corps Engineer failed to provide me with such an analysis or estimate.[8](#)

General Joseph Collins

THE START OF THE BATTLE

The firs are thick, and there are 50 square miles of them standing dismal and dripping at the approaches to the Cologne plain. The bodies of the firs begin close to the ground, so that each fir interlocks its body with another. At the height of a man standing, there is a solid mass of dark impenetrable green.

Sergeant Mack Morriss

General Collins would send the 1st Infantry Division to take the foothill surrounding Aachen and have the 9th Infantry Division capture the northern part of the Huertgen Forest. The 3rd Armored Division would then be free to attack the Siegfried Line. Intelligence estimated that the Germans had only 7000 men defending the area, mainly from the 105th Panzer Brigade and the 116th Panzer Division. The German commander

in charge of the defenses at the Stolberg area was General Brandenberg. He believed that the Americans would concentrate their attack on the city of Aachen. On 13 September the attack began and by 15 September the 1st Division had captured the ring of hills around Aachen. The 9th Infantry Division managed to take the town of Zweifall in the north area of the forest with little trouble. On 16 September, despite heavy resistance, the 9th Infantry Division was able to capture the town of Vicht and advance on Shevenhutte. With their flanks protected, the 3rd Armored Division began its assault on the Siegfried Line. Their initial success was due to the Germany's miscalculation of the American objectives. However, as the fighting continued, it became more and more obvious to General Brandenberg that the American attack was not towards Aachen and more likely towards Stolberg. Major William Sylvan, General Hodges aide-de-camp, was extremely worried about the American position once the surprise was up. "Colonel Dixon reported today, based on intelligence he had, the Germans now resolved to throw in everything on the present line in an attempt to hold the Americans before they could crack the defenses along it."⁹ The Germans sent in the 7th Army Group to stop the attack. On 17 September the 12th Division of the 7th German Army group counterattacked the American 3rd Armored Division in the town of Stolberg, where the Americans took heavy losses and were halted in their tracks. On September 18, Collins had the 3rd Armored Division retreat. The Germans laid an all out attack on the Americans and the fighting was brutal. The Americans had managed to gain a foothold in the northern part of the Huertgen Forest and the hills around Aachen, but the main objective had failed. The Americans' initial success was due to the fact that the Germans believed the main American attack would focus on Aachen and had left the Stolberg Corridor and the Huertgen with minimal defenses. When the Germans realized their mistake they were able to counterattack and throw the Americans off base. By 13 September more German reinforcements had also begun arriving in the forest to further improve the defense. The ill supplied Americans were inexperienced and did not know how to fight against pillboxes. Their training at home had not taught them the techniques they would need to survive in the wooded areas. "When the Germans, secure in their bunkers, saw the GIs coming forward, they called down presighted artillery fire, using shells with fuses designed to explode on contact with the treetops. When men dove to the ground for cover, as they had been trained to do and as instinct dictated, they exposed themselves to a rain of hot metal and wood splinters. They learned to survive a shelling in the Huertgen by hugging a tree. That way they only exposed their steel helmets."¹⁰ The Americans, as Sgt. Mack Morris reports, had not realized the extent of the German defenses in the forest. "In one break there was a teller mine every eight paces for three miles. In another there were more than 500 mines in the narrow break. One stretch of road held 300 teller mines, each one with a pull device in addition to the regular detonator. There were 400 anti tank mines in a three-mile area."¹¹ Even if it had achieved its goals, the first attack into the forest was a complete failure because the Americans were not going after the Roer River dams.

SCHMIDT

After General Collin's failure to break through the Stolberg Corridor, there was no question as to why American troops should attack into the Huertgen Forest. There were Germans in the forest and Hodges wanted them cleared out. He ordered General Collins

to make his main attack into the forest and move towards the Roer River. Between 6 and 9 October the 9th Infantry Division was reinforced with new troops and began its attack. Their goal was to capture the towns of Germeter, Vossenack, and Schmidt. With its high grounds and large network of roads, the Americans decided that if they controlled Schmidt they would be able to move through the whole forest. The town of Schmidt is also directly north of the Schwammenauel Dam and is the perfect spot for launching an attack to capture it.

In early October, after the First Army was able to narrow the VII Corps front, I was directed to renew the attack to break through the remainder of the forest and seize the town of Schmidt, north of the upper regions of the Roer River. No mention was made of the two major dams on the Roer and its Urft tributary south of Schmidt, north of the upper reaches of the Roer River. [12](#) General Collins

The Americans were making the right attack for the wrong reasons. The Americans often underestimated the Germans' will to defend the forest. Hitler came to this conclusion after meeting with his Generals: "In subsequent discussions about which terrain might be relinquished with least impunity, it was decreed that holding in Aachen sector was paramount. The Allies must not be allowed to cross the Roer River. In Particular, the Germans were to maintain at all cost bridgeheads west of the Roer at Juelich and Dueren."[13](#)

The Germans knew the value of the forest and they were going to try their hardest to protect the dams. As the Americans were planning their second attack, the Germans were busy reinforcing the forest. The Germans now had 5000 men plus an additional 1500 in reserve.

For the new attack into the forest, the Americans would deploy aircraft and artillery to accompany the infantry assault. When the attack began again the Allied bombers dropped ordinance on German targets and then the American artillery opened fire. While this method of attacking with airpower and artillery normally destroys the enemy, it had little effect on the Germans, who were extremely well dug in. All it really did was alert the Germans that an attack was imminent, and gave them a general idea where the attack would occur. Thus, when the infantry moved forward to attack, the Germans were waiting. Troops were cut down by German pillboxes, held up by barbwire and mines, and decimated by German snipers. By the middle of October the Ninth Infantry Division had suffered 4000-4500 casualties and had gained 3000 meters, while the Germans suffered about 3800 casualties.

The Germans knew how to defend the forest. This is clearly evident when on the night of 6 October when Major William Sullivan had heard chopping noises outside his foxhole in the forest. "The morning of the 7th, when the battalion reinstated the attack, they discovered the enemy had dug in deeply and covered their fox holes with logs. Artillery tree burst[14](#) failed to be effective against this type of emplacement, and artillery advantage now swung over to the enemy."[15](#)

The Germans knew that if the Americans crossed the Roer River and moved towards the Rhine, they probably would discover the forces Hitler was massing for the Ardennes Offensive. General Omar Bradley would later conclude "Had we secured them (the dams) early in November and pushed across the Roer, the enemy would never dared

counterattack us in the Ardennes.”¹⁶

German Field Marshal Walter Model was brought in to command most of the German forces in the Huertgen. Model had served in World War One, where he had been wounded twice. During World War II he had been credited with saving the German Army on the eastern front numerous times and raised from the rank of Corps Commander to Army Commander. Hitler was already beginning to plan a massive offensive and needed to buy time. Model was thought to be a great defensive General, and seemed to be a perfect fit for the forest.

THE DAMS

While Model was busy organizing the defense of the forest, the Allied commanders were trying to decide their next course of action. The big question among themselves was whether they should continue attacking German troops and try and end the war quickly, or wait until after the winter months when the weather would grow more favorable to attack. If Eisenhower waited, he could use the time to secure his supply lines and give his troops much needed rest, yet in doing so he would give the Germans time to develop new weapons and dig in deeper and deeper. Though the town of Aachen had fallen on October 21st, the Siegfried Line remained intact everywhere else.

Ike made his choice and predicated it in part on a measure of hope. We would hammer the enemy with all possible force in an effort to split his Armies west of the Rhine. Perhaps then when we reached that river, the morale of the Reich would crack and bring the war to an end...In his plan, 12th Army Group was to attack north of the Ardennes with the First and Ninth Armies, and south of that wooded barrier with the Third. All three were to push to the Rhine and seize the crossings there if they could.¹⁷
General Omar Bradley

For a plan like this to succeed, the Allies must control the Roer River dams. Patton’s attack from Metz through the Saar would be fine, but the First and Ninth Armies would have to cross the Roer River in order to reach the Rhine. Montgomery’s troops in the north would also have to cross the Roer. The first time that the dams are mentioned by an American in writing is late September. “Bank overflows and destructive flood waves can be produced on the Roer River by regulating the discharge from various dams. By Demolition of some of them great destructive waves can be produced which would destroy everything in the populated industrial valley of the Roer known as the Meuse and into Holland,” reported Maj. Jack A Houston.¹⁸

General Omar Bradley, judging from his statement on the attack on Schmidt, seemed to be well aware of the dams by at least the beginning of November. “In preparation for his main offensive, Hodges had endeavored to grab those dam sites on November 2nd with the 28th division. He came within a hair’s breath of snatching his objective but was downed when the 28th was counterattacked and thrown out of the town of Schmidt. Not until three months later did we secure those dams and thus secure the Roer for crossing.”¹⁹

Eisenhower seems to be equally aware: “Because the dams were located in difficult mountain country the attack was certain to be slow and costly. After an attack by the 28th

division had failed to make satisfactory progress a heavy assault was started by the First Army December 13.”²⁰

Both General Eisenhower and General Bradley conclude that they knew about the dams and that it was the goal of the attacks made in November to get them. Some have been skeptical of the generals and argue that they are just revising history to make it look like they saw the importance of the dams early on, but in reality they did not discover them until much later in the campaign. In his book A Dark and Bloody Ground, Edward Miller writes: “The Schwammenauel Dam was not an objective. None of the V Corps orders for the period (Field Orders 30,31, and 32, dated 21 October, 8 November, and 14 November) mention the dams as a target.”²¹

Field Orders are not supposed to give a reason for an attack; they are simply an order to attack. There was no point of making a plan to take the dams without controlling Schmidt. Once Schmidt was taken a new field order would have been given to take the dams. The first object was to take Schmidt.

In the United States Army’s official history about the Siegfried line campaign, Charles MacDonald writes that on 20 October SHAEF headquarters became well aware of the dams when a German prisoners explained that the Germans were prepared to blow them up to stop an American crossing over them.²² The American Command had indicated the first firm appreciation of the genuine value of the Roer River dams to the Germans when on 11 November both First and Ninth Army had directed no advance beyond the Roer except on army order.”²³ “By late November, tactical air headquarters had begun to dispatch reconnaissance flights over the dams almost daily. By judging all of the sources, it can be concluded that the American commanders probably realized the threat the dams posed by the end of October. All of the attacks into the forest from the beginning of November to the end of February were made with the dams in mind.

THE NOVEMBER OFFENSIVE

The Huertgen Forest had been divided in half and VII Corps controlled the northern sector while V Corps controlled the southern. At the beginning of November the American commanders had two goals. It would be up to General Gerow and his V Corp to capture the town of Schmidt in the southern part of the forest. The VII Corps under General Collins would attack into the middle and northern part of the forest, in an attempt to clear a path to the Roer River, so when the dams were captured, the Americans would be able to race across.

General Gerow would use the 28th Infantry Division to take Schmidt. The 28th is the oldest division in the armed forces of the United States, and its nickname was the Keystone Division, because of the Keystone patches that members wore on their shoulders. After its fighting in the forest, it was called the Bloody Bucket Division. The division, commanded by Major General Norman Cota entered the forest, as the remains of the 9th Infantry Division were being pulled out. They were going after Schmidt. The Germans had heavily fortified the town in anticipation of an attack. German troops also controlled all of the hills surrounding Schmidt and the Americans had to get those hills before they could go into the city. To help complete his task General Nota was given the 5th Armored Division. The attack was to follow the 9th Infantry Division’s previous attempt, go through Germeter, Vossenack, then cross the Kall River gorge to the town of

Kommerscheidt and then move on to Schmidt. Army Intelligence had discovered a trail that linked the towns of Vossenack and Germeter called the Kall Trail. If the trail could be cleared then the 5th Armored could move down it and participate in the liberation of Schmidt. The 28th Infantry Division along with the 5th Armored Division as an escort were ordered to follow this trail to their objective of Schmidt.

On 2 November, the day of the attack, the fog and mist were so bad that the Americans would be unable to use bombers to any effect. In fact, when air support did arrive, they mistakenly bombed American artillery causing some 25 casualties. The artillery attack that precluded the American attack again, seemed to do little except warn the Germans that an attack was on the way. The Americans encountered stiff resistance in Germeter and decided to go through the northern part of the town rather than attempt to capture it. The 112th Infantry Regiment of the 28th Infantry Division managed to capture Vossenack and hold it. The next day the 110th Infantry Regiment of the 28th Infantry Division, after some set backs, went on the attack. They were able to ford the Kall River and capture the town of Kommerscheidt. By the end of the day the 112th Regiment took the hills surrounding Schmidt from the Germans and the Americans soon controlled the town. However, the Americans had nothing to defend against armor and if German tanks attacked, the Americans would be defenseless. They needed some immediate tank support to stop a German counterattack. To help reinforce the troops holding Schmidt, Engineers were sent to clear the Kall trail; the only path that American tanks could use to reach Schmidt. As Sergeant Mack Morris reports, clearing the trail was no easy task.

"Huertgen had its roads, and they were all blocked. The German did well by his abatis, his roadblocks made from trees. Sometimes he felled 200 trees across the road, cutting them down so they interlocked as they fell. Then he mined and booby-trapped them. Finally he registered his artillery on them, and his mortars, and at the sound of men clearing, he opened fire."²⁴

Early in the morning on 4 November the Engineers declared the trail cleared and the Sherman tanks could now move out. However, as one soldier points out, the trail was not completely clear. "Lieutenant Fleig's tank had only just entered the woods and begun to advance along the slippery narrow woods trail when it was jarred suddenly by an explosion. It had struck a mine, which had evidently gone undetected when the engineers had swept the road. Although no one was injured, the mine disabled a track, and the tank partially blocked the trail."²⁵

Only three tanks would make it through and they remained in the town of Kommerscheidt. On 5 November the Germans counterattacked Schmidt and the 28th, without any tank support, suffered heavy loses. The Germans had a dozen tanks and one hundred and fifty men. The Americans were forced to retreat out of Schmidt and back through the town of Kommerscheidt. The three Sherman tanks that had made it through the Kall trail were here and this is where the remaining American troops decided to make their stand. Most of the American troops had continued retreating and the town was left with only two hundred American defenders plus the three tanks. The three Sherman tanks managed to knock out five German tanks and stop the Americans from losing any more land that night. While the Americans began planning another attack on the town of Schmidt the Germans began to surround the Kall trail and make sure that nothing could get through it. As American tanks began moving down the trail, the Germans would ambush them, permitting the Americans to get only six tanks and three tank destroyers

through. The Germans also launched a counterattack at Vossenack. They shelled the area and then began moving forward. On 7 November the Germans troops launched their main assault against the city. Few American troops remained to defend it. The battle was a stalemate; both sides fighting until they were completely exhausted. Colonel Peterson, commanding the 28th at Vossenack, was ordered to leave and report back to General Cota. On his way back to the headquarters he and two other men were ambushed on the Kall trail and forced to abandon their jeep. As they continued down the trail one of the men vanished and the other was killed by German fire. Mortar fire wounded Peterson's leg and he was forced to crawl until discovered by a medic. By 13 November all the 28th's officers were casualties. The 28th Infantry Division had suffered 6,184 combat casualties plus 738 cases of trench foot and 620 cases of battle fatigue, making it one of the most costly attacks of the war. The enemy had retaken the towns of Schmidt and Kommerscheidt. The Americans barely managed to hold onto Vossenack.

There are two main reasons that the attack failed. First, the Germans controlled Hill 400 or Castle Hill, which was located north of Schmidt in the Brandberg-Bernstein Ridge. From this hill the Germans were able to view the American troops' movement and could easily call down artillery fire upon them and order counterattacks. "The Germans were on the high ground looking down on us," reported Lt. Preston Jackson. [26](#)

The other big problem the Americans had was their inability to move armor through the forest to reinforce Schmidt. Try as they might to clear the Kall trail, the Germans found a way to mine it again. It became clear that the Americans were going to have to solve these problems if they wanted to take Schmidt.

While the 28th Infantry Division was making their attack, the 4th Infantry Division, transferred from the V Corps to the VII Corps, was being given orders of their own. The American Commanders needed a clear path through the forest. Assisted by the 5th Armored Division they would attack directly into the middle of the forest with the goals of capturing the towns of Huertgen, Kleinhau, Grosshau, and Gey and move towards Dueren, where they would be near the west bank of the Roer River. Once the Americans got to Grosshau they could launch an attack on Castle Hill. Delayed by bad weather, Operation Queen began on 16 November.

Prior to an infantry attack, an impressive Air armada consisting of eleven hundred planes from the 8th Air Force heavy bombers and eleven hundred bombers from the Royal Air Force Bomber Command made a bombing run through the forest. Before the battle even started the 4th Infantry Division was forced to release some of its troops to help the 28th Infantry Division's retreat out of the forest. There were no reinforcements available so the 4th Infantry Division was going in undermanned.[27](#) Accompanying the 4th Infantry Division was Ernest Hemingway who would later describe the Huertgen Forest as "Paschendale with trees."[28](#)

Even after platoon leader Bernard J. Ray sacrificed his own life to blow another gap in the concertina obstacle, the men could not get through...As he paused to prepare a demolition charge, an exploding mortar shell wounded him severely. Apparently aware that his task was useless unless he completed it in a matter of moments, Lieutenant Ray hastily connected the explosive to the caps in his pockets and the primer cord around his body. Having turned himself into a human torpedo, he set off the explosion.[29](#)

Despite this and other sacrifices, the 4th Division was only successful in moving one mile from 16-21 November. On 19 November General Hodges knew that the 4th Infantry Division was not making any progress and decided to bring troops from V Corps into the attack. Many have criticized Hodges for attacking into the middle of the forest, instead of making another attempt at Schmidt and the dams. Two separate attacks to capture Schmidt had failed and it became quite obvious that something else needed to be tried. Hodges attack plan would accomplish four crucial goals. First, it would allow the Americans to capture Castle Hill, which had hampered the two previous attacks on Schmidt. Second, if they controlled the area north of Schmidt, they could launch two attacks on the city, one from the north and one from the west. Third, controlling the roads and cities in the middle of the forest would hamper the German ability to move troops from the north of the forest into the south to better protect the dams. Finally, by controlling the middle of the forest, the Americans would have a clear path leading to the Roer River. Once the dams were captured, the Americans could shoot across the Roer. It became obvious that more troops would be needed to continue the attack. The V Corps would again join the fighting in the forest. The 8th Infantry Division from V Corps would help the 4th Infantry Divisions with capturing the towns of Huertgen, Kleinhau, Grosshau, and Gay and moving towards Dueren, where they would be near the west bank of the Roer River. To assist them, they were given the 5th Armored Division. The 2nd Ranger Battalion was brought in to replace the battered 28th Infantry Division as it evacuated the forest. For a time they would remain at Vossenack, defending it against German counterattacks. However, as one Ranger reports, they were not that eager to be there.

Vossenack was definitely not Ranger work. Rangers attacked, killed, and withdrew to wait for another job. Here at Vossenack the 2nd Battalion felt like the man in the carnival who has to stick his head through a hole and let people try to hit him with baseballs [30](#)

On 21 November the 8th Infantry Division made their first attempt at capturing the town of Huertgen. The attack was preceded by the usual air and artillery attacks that did little damage, but alerted the Germans that an attack was on the way. The 8th Infantry Division struggled through the roads to get to the town of Huertgen. The left flank of the 8th Infantry Division would attempt to open a roadway to get armor involved in the attack while the rest of the 8th made their way to Huertgen. For three days the division moved at a snail's pace. November 23rd was Thanksgiving and the American Commanders wanted the boys to have a special meal.

In the 8th Division's 22nd regiment, Paul Boesch dealing with his company commander who had broken under stress, was incredulous when advised by field phone that he would need to send out carrying parties to bring up a semblance of the traditional big dinner. He pleaded with his battalion commander to postpone the meal, but the division headquarters insisted. As the food arrived and the troops reluctantly left their foxholes to receive it, a tank destroyer choose to demolish a near-by abandoned tank that might have provided cover for German infiltrators. The fiery explosion alerted German gunners, who promptly brought down shells on the unprotected GIs. [31](#)

In four days the 8th Infantry Division had taken six hundred battle casualties. They had still not gotten to Huertgen. Finally the Americans decided to quit attempting to use the 8th Infantry's left flank to open up a road for the armor. Instead the 5th Armored Division would at early hours drive straight down the Germeter-Huertgen highway, even though it was guarded by the German army. Engineers were sent in to remove mines and to bridge a crater that would prevent armor from moving down the Highway. By the morning of November 25th the all clear sign was given and the 5th Armored Division began its approach. However the crater had not been bridged.

The commander of the first tank, Lt. J.A. Macaulay, was not easily discouraged. "I am going to try to jump the damned thing," he called back on his radio. Gathering speed, his tank roared up the muddy road. At the last moment the driver applied one more burst of speed. It was not enough. The tank slammed into the far wall of the crater, rolled to the left, and lay disabled on one side.[32](#)

By the afternoon, despite constant German artillery fire, the Engineers were able to bridge the crater and the tanks made their way down the road until the lead one struck a mine and became disabled, blocking all of the tanks behind it. The fighting on the 25th of November was a failure. The 8th Infantry Division regrouped and made another attack on 27 November. Many German troops had retreated into the city to defend it and the Americans were able to get their tanks through. By the end of the day they were in the city and by 28 November, the village was in American hands. On 29 November the 8th Division and the 5th Armored Division began the attack on Kleinhau. The weather cleared up a bit and airplanes were brought in to bomb the city. By mid-afternoon the city had been captured. The same day, the 4th Infantry made their attack on the city of Grosshau. With armor and infantry moving together, the Americans managed to take the city. This nine-day attack had cost the Americans 1,247 casualties. The Germans were estimated to have taken more casualties, especially considering the fact that they alone had 882 soldiers captured.

The American attacks into the forest during November were conducted to achieve two goals: have the 28th Infantry Division capture the town of Schmidt, and clear a path through the forest so that once the dams were captured, the Americans could march across the Roer and into the heart of Germany. The first goal was a complete failure while the second had achieved some success. To defeat heavily entrenched German troops, the Americans really needed a combination of infantry, armor, and airpower. The bad weather had severely limited the air attacks in November. Most of them were either delayed or canceled and the ones that were launched had limited effect. The Americans also had trouble with their tanks. They could not effectively move them through the forest. When they did manage to use armored units, the battles were successful, but without them, they were failures.

THE DECEMBER OFFENSIVE

On 20 October General Patton was worried that a dam near Metz could be used by the Germans to flood a river and isolate his troops from support. Therefore he ordered American aircraft to blow up the dam so it could not be used by the Germans. General

Hodges tried the same thing with the Roer River dams. If he could blow up the dams, it would isolate the Germans on the west side of the river, away from reinforcements and supplies in Germany. By the time the Americans had cleared out the Germans east of the Roer, the river would have moved back to its normal size and the American troops could cross it. The Royal Air Force would be put in charge of the mission. The attacks kept being postponed due to the bad weather. The dams were bombed on 3, 8, and 11 December. Minimal damage was done to the Urft and Schwammenauel Dams and the Allies concluded that the only option they had would be to capture the dams.

With December approaching, General Hodges concentrated on finishing the goal of moving troops to the edge of the Roer River and capturing the Brandberg-Bergstein ridge. Once the ridge was taken the Americans would have captured Hill 400, which lay at the east end of the ridge. Hill 400 or Castle Hill was an extremely high point in the forest and was used by the Germans to direct their shelling. The hill had helped decimate both the 9th and 28th Infantry Division attack on Schmidt in early November. On 2 December the attack was launched with the 8th Infantry Division and the 5th Armored Division. The tanks would soon run into mines and artillery fire. The tanks were taking serious damage from the two cities that the 28th Infantry Division had failed to capture in November. The Germans had taken back the cities and were using them as a base to fire artillery at the Americans. Besides artillery, the Americans also had to worry about mined roads. The Engineers were forced to wait until nightfall to avoid the artillery while they cleared the roads of mines. The next day the weather cleared and Allied Aircraft, followed by American Artillery, pounded German targets. Early on the morning of 3 December the Americans marched right into the city of Brandenburg. However, the Germans decided to launch a counterattack from the air, something the Americans had not experienced because of the Allies' superior air power.

Considerable hostile air activity occurred in the Division sector during that afternoon. Enemy planes, taking advantage of weather which grounded Allied fighters, strafed the frontline...Of over sixty [German] planes over the V and VII Corps front that day, eighteen were reported shot down, twelve of them by the 445th Anti-Aircraft Artillery Battalion, attached to the 8th Division.[33](#)

While things were going well, the Americans still had to capture Bergstein and Castle Hill. The men were worn out and reinforcements were needed. As the 2nd Ranger Battalion was called up to the fighting, the 8th Infantry began moving in on Bergstein. The attack began on 5 December. By night they had completed their objective. The 2nd Ranger Division, which had previously held Vossenack, was now assigned a new mission. On 6 December they were ordered to take Hill 400 (400 meters high). Hill 400 was also called Castle Hill. The 8th Infantry Division had thrown four different divisions at the Hill, only to be repulsed every single time. The Rangers moved into Bergstein, set up their command post and reinforced the city. Then they made plans to assault Castle Hill. Instead of an artillery bombardment to weaken German resistance, the Rangers opted to surprise the enemy. At dawn on December 7th they charged the hill.

At first light, shouting "Let's go get the bastards!," and firing from the hip, the Rangers charged. They got through the snow-covered field despite the small arms and mortar fire,

and started up the hill. Four machine guns were firing point blank on the Rangers, who kept moving up the hill, yelling and firing. Sgt. Bud Potratz remembered hollering, "Hi ho, Silver!"³⁴

By 0830 they had managed to chase the remaining German soldiers down the hill and began reinforcing it. Germans began firing their artillery on the Rangers and German infantry made five counterattacks to retake the hill. They also launched an attack against Bergstein, where the American command center supporting the Rangers lay. The Rangers in the city thwarted the German counterattack, and the Hill and Bergstein remained in American possession. In 1995 a Ranger by the name of Lieutenant Lomell who had stormed Point Du Hac in Normandy and Castle Hill remarked, "June 6, 1944 was not my longest day. December 7th 1944, was my longest and most miserable day on earth during my past 75 years."³⁵

The Rangers had accomplished their mission, and Hill 400 was taken. Before any more attacks were to be made, troops who had been fighting nonstop needed time to rest. The 83rd Infantry Division was sent in to replace the 4th Infantry Division. Their mission would be to capture the towns of Gey and Strass which contained important roads that the Germans used to move troops into the northern part of the forest. On 10 December one regiment of the 83rd attacked the town of Gey while the other attacked the town of Strass. The Americans initially managed to capture both towns, but German soldiers counterattacked and surrounded the Americans. By 12 December the tanks managed to break the siege and Gey and Strauss were firmly in American hands. With the towns under American control the Americans could begin the move west to the Roer River. It had taken the Americans from 16 November to 12 December to clear a way to the Roer River. The dams had still not been captured but when the attack against Schmidt came, the Americans would not have to worry about fire targeting them from Castle Hill. The new attack could be launched from the captured towns in the north as well as from the southwest of the forest and the Americans no longer had to worry about German reinforcements from the north.

General Hodges put General Gerow and his V Corps in charge of taking the town of Schmidt. General Gerow's plan was to have the 78th Infantry Division follow the same path the 28th Infantry Division had made in November. The attack began on 13 December and the progress was extremely slow. Gerow did not assign any troops to attack from the north; he was just following the old plan from November that had failed before. However, before Gerow's attack could continue the Germans launched a counteroffensive in the Ardennes forest.

THE BATTLE OF THE BULGE

After the July attempt on Hitler's life, Hitler began to take more and more control of the German armed forces. Hitler believed that the Germans would lose the war if they kept defending the Siegfried Line and then if it fell, the Rhine River. Germany needed an attack that would halt the Americans and British in the west and give him time to reinforce troops in the east. The plan was for Germans to march through the Ardennes Forest all the way to Antwerp, separating the American and British forces and denying the Allies a port that they could use to escape. The Americans never anticipated such a

move because the German Army did not have the resources to carry out such an attack. The German Generals also thought the attack would not succeed. Had they gotten their way, they would have attacked at Aachen and the Huertgen.

“At the same time we suggested a modified plan. In this, the 15th Army with a strong right flank would deliver an attack north of Aachen, towards Maastricht. The 6th Panzer army would attack south of Aachen, and cut in behind that place with the eventual object of establishing a bridgehead there.” The most they really hoped for, Manteuffel said, “was to pinch out the American forces that had pushed beyond Aachen as far as the Roer River.”³⁶

It is hard to guess what would have happened if the Germans had attacked Aachen and moved back into the forest. It was not a strategy that would have won the war, but it might have prolonged it for a time. However the Germans did not attack Aachen, they attacked through the Ardennes. Their attack was not as strong as Hitler wanted, because the Germans had put so much effort into the forest.

In the Aachen sector alone, at least five Panzer or Panzer like divisions had been reduced severely in strength and their rehabilitation dangerously delayed. One parachute and at least six Volks Grenadier Divisions, the latter originally scheduled to have been spared active commitment before the counteroffensive, had been similarly effected. The Siegfried Line fighting had also delayed use in the Ardennes of two corps headquarters and two assault gun brigades.³⁷

It can be concluded that the fighting in the forest probably slightly limited what the Germans could send to the Ardennes offensive, but the goal of fighting in the forest was not to eliminate German troops, it was to capture the Roer River dams.

CAPTURING THE DAMS

Towards the end of January the Allies had finished taking back the land the Germans had recaptured in their ill-fated Ardennes offensive. During the Battle of the Bulge, V and VII Corps had been busy holding their positions. SHAEF had put all of its offensives on hold while the bulk of its resources were used defeating the Germans in the Ardennes. Both Corps had to be content with holding their positions. Now that the Bulge had been contained the attack on the dams could commence. However something had changed between December and January. V Corps commander General Gerow had been given a promotion to become head of the Fifteenth Army Group.

In anticipation of a prolonged campaign east of the Rhine, we had formed in early January the Fifteenth U.S. Army under the command of Gerow. So swiftly had the enemy crumbled west of the Rhine, however, that we now abandoned plans for Gerow's Army in the line and ordered it to hold the west bank of the Rhine as a semi occupational Army.”³⁸ General Omar Bradley

A more cynical view would be that SHAEF was fed up with Gerow's lack of progress in the forest and found a pleasant way of getting rid of him without demoting him. The new commander of V Corps was General Huebner. As the Allies regained the offensive it became crucial that they control the Roer River dams. Eisenhower decided to begin the

new attack against Germany with the goal of reaching the Rhine River. Once they were at the Rhine, plans could be made for crossing it, and moving into the heart of Germany. As General Bradley explains, they could not go in full strength: "Early in November, Eisenhower had promised at the start of our winter offensive toward the Rhine that if the First and Ninth Armies did not break free by the turn of the year, he would pluck the Ninth Army out of the 12th Army Group and give it to Monty for his north of the Ruhr offensive."³⁹ Since the First and the Ninth armies had not broken free by the end of the year, the Ninth Army was given to Montgomery. He would be in charge of making the main thrust across the Roer and to the Rhine. Montgomery's plan was to hold the Ninth Army back while he sent in the rest of the 21st Army Group to attack the Germans. While they were engaging the Germans, the Ninth Army could cross the Roer into Germany with little or no resistance. The fate of the 21st Army Group hinged on the capture of the Roer River dams in the Huertgen Forest, because if they were not captured the Ninth could not cross, and the rest of Monty's troops would be forced to fight the Germans alone. General Huebner put General Parker and his 78th Infantry Division in charge of capturing the dams. However, General Huebner would also add the 7th Armored Division, the 82nd Airborne Division, and the 517th Parachute Infantry Combat Team to assist the 78th's task. The plan was to have two main thrusts, one that covered the route that the 28th Infantry Division had taken in November, and one from the northern town of Bergstein. The goal of both of the attacks was the town of Schmidt and after that, the elusive Schwammenauel Dam. Separate smaller attacks would branch out from the main ones to capture the Urft and smaller dams on the Roer.

On 3 February the attack began, and the Americans made swift progress. Without Hill 400, the Germans did not have a spot from which to observe and call artillery fire down upon the Americans. By 5 February the Urft and some of the smaller dams had been captured. However the main attack against Schmidt was moving along very slowly. All the roads leading to Schmidt were heavily mined and the armor had to wait for the Engineers to clear the area. By 7 February the Engineers had cleared the roads and the Sherman tanks, loaded with men, approached the town. They had to drive over a mile of open fields before they would reach the town, yet as they moved forward, they did not hear any German fire.

When the leading tank got almost to the edge of the village, it was hit by antitank shells and set on fire. The other tanks, seeing that the leading tank had been destroyed, wheeled around and started back toward the woods. The GIs on the ground saw the tanks turn around and thought a retreat had been ordered, so they started back towards the woods too.⁴⁰ Godfrey Stallings, Radio Operator

The infantry had to move into the town by itself, something they were used to doing. By nightfall of 7 February, they had managed to reach the edge of Schmidt, but the Germans still held most of the town. 10 February was approaching fast and Schmidt was still not under American control. 9th Infantry Division commander, General Craig was thrown in to assist with the attack. With Craig's help, the town of Schmidt fell and the Americans were in control. For the final drive to the Schwammenauel dam, the troops were poised to attack at daylight on 10 February, but on 9 February the Americans began to notice that the Roer River was beginning to rise. Fearing that the Germans had started to flood the

area, the attack began late that day. By 11:00 p.m. the Americans reached the dams. There was only token German resistance, and the Americans easily cleared out the defenders. Engineers were quickly brought forward to inspect the Schwammenauel Dam. The Germans had damaged the flood controls, which the American Engineers quickly repaired. The battle of the Huertgen Forest was finally over.

CONCLUSION

The Battle of the Hurtgen Forest lasted from 13 September to 10 February, roughly five months. The Americans were forced to put the 1st, 4th, 8th, 9th, 28th, 78th, and the 83rd Infantry Divisions, the 505th and the 517th parachute regiments, the 2nd Ranger Battalion, and the 5th and 7th Armored Divisions into the forest. They suffered 24,000 combat casualties along with 9,000 cases of diseases like trench foot and combat fatigue. The Germans were forced to employ eight divisions in the forest fighting, and it is estimated that they took slightly fewer casualties than the Americans. If the battle is examined by the casualty reports, it could be considered a failure. It took the Americans five months to control a forest, and the fighting cost them more casualties than the Germans. However, in Huertgen, the objective was not a war of attrition, it was to capture the dams, and the objective was completed. The first attempt to break through the Siegfried Line during Market Garden failed and the Americans needed to cross the Roer River to get to the Rhine. To do this they would have to fight through the forest to capture the Roer River dams. There is a lot of criticism about the planning, and some of it is justified. It was not until November, after a month and a half of fighting, that the American commanders realized what was their real objective should be. Once they did, they still had to deal with Germans who were determined to give their lives to protect the Fatherland. They would fight to the last man, no matter what the odds, to defend Germany. After the October campaign into the forest failed, Eisenhower could have waited until after the winter to begin Allied attacks into Germany. This would have allowed him to secure the supply lines and give the troops time to rest. However, he would have also given the Germans more time to prepare for the oncoming attack, and their counterattack in December would have been much stronger. So the Americans attacked even though the troops were tired and they were low on supplies. Eisenhower had to attack and he needed to control the Roer River for his plan of a broad attack along all German fronts. Maybe this was not that best strategy, but it was the one that was used and the control of the Roer River dams was essential. Some would argue that if the capture of the Roer River dams was so essential, why did the Americans also spend time fighting in the middle of the forest. The first two attacks on the town of Schmidt failed because the Germans controlled the northern sections of the forest. They were able to use the high ground they controlled to observe the American troops movement and call down artillery on them. They controlled all the roads in the northern part of the forest and could move troops to reinforce the southern part. VII Corps' march through the middle of the forest was necessary to capture Schmidt and the Roer River dams. The Americans could not have simply attacked the southern part of the forest. They tried twice and failed. The Americans could have attempted to bottle up the forest and move south of the Roer River, but because Eisenhower wanted a broad attack, going south of the Roer was out of the question.

The battle of the Huertgen forest seems to underlie a huge problem that the American Army faced. The Americans continued to ignore the effects of terrain on their plans. Most of the attack plans were made far from enemy lines without having someone there to observe what the troops were going up against. This is quite evident in the Thanksgiving Dinner incident when the commanders ordered that the men be served hot meals, not realizing that they had to remain in their foxholes at all times or face the wrath of German artillery. “None of the brass ever came forward to our positions; we were too far up front for them,” remarked soldier John Chernitsky.⁴¹

The Americans were not used to fighting in the forest and their training at home did not prepare them for what they would face. They had not been taught about fighting in the woods: things like hugging a tree instead of diving for the ground when artillery was coming your way. By the end of October a five-page report was issued to the troops, which explained how to fight in the woods, but there should have been more training. The new troops that were coming into the forest were often replacing casualties. Instead of whole units being replaced, individuals were added to units, as they were needed. This was a very unproductive practice.

My partner and I were assigned to the extreme left flank as an outpost there. By now it was dark and we took turns on watch. When dawn arrived, we discovered that we and the GIs in the adjacent hole had been left alone—evidently the company had moved out and forgotten us. Replacements meant so little that we were never really integrated into the unit with the rapid turnover in squads and platoons from the terrific casualties being sustained in the Huertgen. ⁴² Soldier Jerry Alexis

The problems with training and replacements were not specific to the Huertgen Forest, but the whole war. However, they were a factor in the high casualty rates. One of the reasons that the Huertgen Forest is not well known is because the American Generals spent little time talking about it. In his book Crusade in Europe, General Eisenhower had this to say about the Huertgen Forest: “Nevertheless, progress was slow and the fighting intense. On the right flank of this attack the First Army got involved in the Huertgen Forest, the scene of the most bitterly contested battles of the entire campaign. The enemy had all the advantages of strong defensive country, and the attacking Americans had to depend exclusively on infantry weapons because of the thickness of the forest. The weather was abominable and the German garrison was particularly stubborn, but Yankee doggedness finally won. Thereafter, whenever Veterans of the American 4th, 9th, and 28th Divisions referred to hard fighting they did so in terms of comparison with the Battle of the Huertgen Forest, which they placed on top of the list.”⁴³

General Omar Bradley also has little to say about the affair in his autobiography A General’s Story: “What followed over the next several weeks was some of the most brutal and difficult of the war. The battle—known as the Huertgen Forest—was sheer butchery on both sides. In three weeks, Collins advanced a mere six miles in miserable weather at a terrible cost.”⁴⁴

This is not much information from the commander of the European theater and the commander of the 12th Army Group. The main reason is that they had little to do with the planning of the attacks in the forest. Hodge, Gerow and Collins did most of it. The

only time they were really concerned about the fighting is when the lack of control of the dams prevented them from moving forward into Germany. General Joe Collins does talk about the battle in detail in his autobiography, Lightning Joe: "While it took two weeks, October 7-21, for the 1st and the 30th Divisions to capture Aachen, it required until December 9 for the VII Corps to clear the Hurtgen Forest, an essential preliminary to the seizure of the Roer dams, which in turn would determine when the Roer was safe to cross."⁴⁵

Collins argues that in order to take the Roer River dams he would have to go through the forest, and he concludes with the observation: "Costly as was the Aachen-Stolberg-Hurtgen battle to the First Army in casualties, ammunition, and equipment, it cost the Germans far more, and forced Rundstedt to deploy divisions, tanks, and gasoline intended for the Ardennes counteroffensive, weakening that supreme German effort and the subsequent defense of the Rhine."⁴⁶

While the American Commanders have always defended the Huertgen as a necessary battle, most historians have not. The main reason is the comparisons that can be made to the Vietnam War. "The same terrible war [Vietnam] of attrition, with no apparent strategically purpose, save that terrible "body count" had commenced. It was Hurtgen's Death Factory all over again", writes Charles Whiting, author of *The Bloody Forest*.⁴⁷ In his book, *Citizen Soldiers*, Stephen Ambrose remarks, "The forest they held, for which they had paid such a heavy price, was worthless. The battle did not shorten the war by one minute."⁴⁸ Charles Whiting also comments, "Here is the true story of the ill-conceived, ultimately useless, six-month long Hurtgen Campaign...of thousands of American soldiers that died, and the generals who refused to give up long after their objective had lost real meaning."⁴⁹ These are the same arguments that people make about the Vietnam War. There are some similarities between the Huertgen and Vietnam. There was similar terrain and because of it, the Americans had trouble moving around. In Vietnam and the Huertgen, the Americans would fight enemies who were outnumbered and out-manned, but would sacrifice anything to protecting their homeland. Despite these comparisons, the Huertgen was no Vietnam. After a rough start, the Americans formed a clear objective and went about the task of completing it. It was not the best situation for making an attack, but the Americans had no choice. In the end they completed their objective, and the Allies were able to cross the Roer River and defeat Germany.

Notes

¹ Charles B McDonald, *The Siegfried Line Campaign*, (Washington D.C.: Office of the Chief of Military History, Department of the Army, 1963), pp. 15.

² The Huertgen Forest is either spelled Huertgen or Hurtgen. Historians and the generals use the word Huertgen often, while Hurtgen is used more often in unit and oral histories of the soldiers who fought there, making it the Americanized form. Throughout this paper it will be spelled Huertgen. Furthermore, the Huertgen Forest really consists of the Wenau Forest, the Roetgen Forest and other smaller forests plus the Huertgen. The soldiers referred to the whole area as the Huertgen Forest.

³ Omar Bradley, *A Soldier's Story*, (New York: The Modern Library 1999), pp. 442.

⁴ Charles B McDonald, *The Siegfried Line Campaign*, (Washington D.C.: Office of the Chief of Military History, Department of the Army, 1963), pp. 619.

- 5 Charles B McDonald, *The Siegfried Line Campaign*, (Washington D.C.: Office of the Chief of Military History, Department of the Army, 1963), pp. 384.
- 6 Steven Ambrose, *Citizen Soldiers*, (New York: Simon and Schulster, 1997), pp. 114.
- 7 General J. Lawton Collins, *Lightning Joe*, (Baton Rouge: LSU Press, 1979), pp 269.
- 8 General J. Lawton Collins, *Lightning Joe*, (Baton Rouge: LSU Press, 1979), pp. 273.
- 9 Gerald Astor, *The Bloody Forest*, (Novesto: Presido, 2000), pp. 49.
- 10 Steven Ambrose, *Citizen Soldiers*, (New York: Simon and Schulster, 1997), pp. 168.
- 11 Steve Klunger, *Yank: The Army Weekly*, (New York: St Martin Press, 1991), pp. 232.
- 12 General J. Lawton Collins, *Lightning Joe*, (Baton Rouge: LSU Press, 1979), pp. 273.
- 13 Charles B McDonald, *The Siegfried Line Campaign*, (Washington D.C.: Office of the Chief of Military History, Department of the Army, 1963), pp. 397.
- 14 The Germans and the Americans would aim their artillery fire at the tops of the trees so when it exploded, it would send metal and wooden shrapnel towards the troops on the ground.
- 15 Gerald Astor, *The Bloody Forest*, (Novesto: Presido, 2000), pp. 73.
- 16 Omar Bradley, *A Soldier's Story*, (New York: The Modern Library 1999), pp. 442.
- 17 Omar Bradley, *A Soldier's Story*, (New York: The Modern Library 1999), pp. 434-435.
- 18 Charles B McDonald, *The Siegfried Line Campaign*, (Washington D.C.: Office of the Chief of Military History, Department of the Army, 1963), pp. 326.
- 19 Omar Bradley, *A Soldier's Story*, (New York: The Modern Library 1999), pp. 442.
- 20 Dwight D Eisenhower, *Crusade in Europe*, (New York: Double Day, 1950), pp. 329.
- 21 Edward G Miller, *A Dark and Bloody Ground*, (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1995), pp. 49.
- 22 Charles B McDonald, *The Siegfried Line Campaign*, (Washington D.C.: Office of the Chief of Military History, Department of the Army, 1963), pp. 374.
- 23 Charles B McDonald, *The Siegfried Line Campaign*, (Washington D.C.: Office of the Chief of Military History, Department of the Army, 1963), pp. 596.
- 24 Steve Klunger, *Yank: The Army Weekly*, (New York: St Martin Press, 1991), pp. 232.
- 25 Charles MacDonald and Sidney Mathews, Arnaville, Altuzzo, and Schmidt, (Washington D.C.: Office of the Chief of Military History, Department of the Army, 1952), pp. 232.
- 26 Gerald Astor, *The Bloody Forest*, (Novesto: Presido, 2000), pp. 108.
- 27 Charles B McDonald, *The Siegfried Line Campaign*, (Washington D.C.: Office of the Chief of Military History, Department of the Army, 1963), pp. 430-431.
- 28 Gerald Astor, *The Bloody Forest*, (Novesto: Presido, 2000), pp. 9.
Hemingway is referring to a World War I battle in which the British suffered heavy casualties
- 29 Charles B McDonald, *The Siegfried Line Campaign*, (Washington D.C.: Office of the Chief of Military History, Department of the Army, 1963), pp. 433.
- 30 Charles Whiting, *The Battle of the Hurtgen Forest*, (New York: Pocket Books, 1989), pp. .
- 31 Gerald Astor, *The Bloody Forest*, (Novesto: Presido, 2000), pp. 251.
- 32 Charles B McDonald, *The Siegfried Line Campaign*, (Washington D.C.: Office of the Chief of Military History, Department of the Army, 1963), pp. 446.
- 33 8th Infantry Division history (internet)

- 34 Steven Ambrose, *Citizen Soldiers*, (New York: Simon and Schulster, 1997), pp. 175.
- 35 Steven Ambrose, *Citizen Soldiers*, (New York: Simon and Schulster, 1997), pp. 177.
- 36 General J. Lawton Collins, *Lightning Joe*, (Baton Rouge: LSU Press, 1979), pp. 273.
- 37 Charles B McDonald, *The Siegfried Line Campaign*, (Washington D.C.: Office of the Chief of Military History, Department of the Army, 1963), pp. 594.
- 38 Omar Bradley, *A Soldier's Story*, (New York: The Modern Library 1999), pp. 529.
- 39 Omar Bradley, *A Soldier's Story*, (New York: The Modern Library 1999), pp. 000.
- 40 Gerald Astor, *The Bloody Forest*, (Novesto: Presido, 2000), pp. 353.
- 41 Gerald Astor, *The Bloody Forest*, (Novesto: Presido, 2000), pp. 167.
- 42 Gerald Astor, *The Bloody Forest*, (Novesto: Presido, 2000), pp. 122-123.
- 43 Dwight D Eisenhower, *Crusade in Europe*, (New York: Double Day, 1950), pp. .
- 44 Omar Bradley, *A General's Life*, (New York: Simon and Schulster, 1983), pp. 343.
- 45 General J. Lawton Collins, *Lightning Joe*, (Baton Rouge: LSU Press, 1979), pp. 279.
- 46 General J. Lawton Collins, *Lightning Joe*, (Baton Rouge: LSU Press, 1979), pp. 279.
- 47 Charles Whiting, *The Battle of the Hurtgen Forest*, (New York: Pocket Books, 1989), pp. 273.
- 48 Steven Ambrose, *Citizen Soldiers*, (New York: Simon and Schulster, 1997), pp. 177-178
- 49 Charles Whiting, *The Battle of the Hurtgen Forest*, (New York: Pocket Books, 1989), jacket.