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Der Gegenangriff Vor Verrieres: German Counterattacks during Operation "Spring," 25–26 July 1944

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Der Gegenangriff vor Verrières

German Counterattacks during Operation "Spring": 25-26 July 1944

Roman Johann Jarymowycz

In the area of Panzer Group West the enemy attempted on the 25th and 26th July with 2 Canadian InfDiv and 1 Armoured Brigade to penetrate between Bourquebus and the Orne on a 7 km wide front. After hard fighting and counterattacks, 1st SS Panzer Korps gained a complete defensive victory.

Field Marshal von Kluge, 31 July 1944

The Canadian effort in Operation "Spring" has been well-documented by Canadian military historians. July 25th is perhaps the most investigated Canadian operation fought during World War II.¹ The German defense of Verrières Ridge was determined—Lieutenant-General G.G. Simonds' infantry paid dearly for each yard won. The enemy did not limit itself to positional defense and blocking tactics. In the break-in battle, or *kesselschlacht*, German doctrine called for counterattacks to be delivered as quickly as possible:

. . . surprise can overcome the enemy, without the enemy artillery or air forces having a chance to intervene. . . It is, therefore, essential to maintain reserves in at least every battalion sector, which come forward immediately after the barrage has ended before the British artillery can register—unsupported infantry will break.²

1 SS Panzer Korps delivered counterattacks at two levels: divisional reserve counterstrokes (by dedicated *kampfgruppen*³) and the corps operational reserve counterattack by the 9th SS "Hohenstaufen" Panzer Division. Severely reduced by the heavy fighting throughout June

Opposite: Soldiers silhouetted against gunfire in the early morning of 25 July 1944 near Fleury-sur-Ome.
(Photo by Michael M. Dean, NAC PA 131384)

and Operations "Charnwood," "Atlantic" and "Goodwood," the German formations facing II Canadian Corps continued to create strong panzer reserves, but they were seldom the equivalent of a weak Canadian brigade group and more often comprised a strongly reinforced battalion.

"Spring": Canadian Plans

Lieutenant-General Simonds planned "Spring" as a three-phase operation. The first phase required the capture of the line Tilly-la-Campagne—Verrières—May-sur-Orne. Phase 2 was the capture of line Fontenay-le-Marmion—Rocquancourt. On successful completion of Phase 2, ideally at first light, Simonds would order his armour to push forward and capture the high ground beyond Verrières—"The Cramenil Spur" and Cintheaux. With a little luck, a German collapse and some determined leadership by the reconnaissance regiments, British armoured cars could possibly reach the Laison River, if not Falaise itself, by nightfall.

There was later discussion regarding Simonds' operational aims. Senior Canadian officers considered "Spring" a breakout attempt, but Simonds insisted after the war it was a "holding attack"⁴ designed to draw German panzer divisions away from Operation "Cobra"—General Omar Bradley's attack at St. Lo. The U.S. breakout was also scheduled for 25 July and was supported by what became the *de rigueur* opening act for major Allied offensives in Normandy: massive air bombardment by heavy bombers.

Guy Simonds' resources were Major-General R.F.L. Keller's veteran 3rd Canadian Infantry Division and Major-General C. Foulkes' relatively green 2nd Canadian Infantry Division. For armour Simonds had three powerful formations: the 2nd Canadian Armoured Brigade (2 CAB), the 7th British Armoured Division (the "Desert Rats") and the Guards Armoured Division.⁵ Simonds was particularly well supported by indirect fire: the artillery of the four Canadian and British divisions, as well as three Army Groups Royal Artillery (AGRA), for a total of twelve field, nine medium and three heavy regiments.⁶

The Other Side of the Ridge

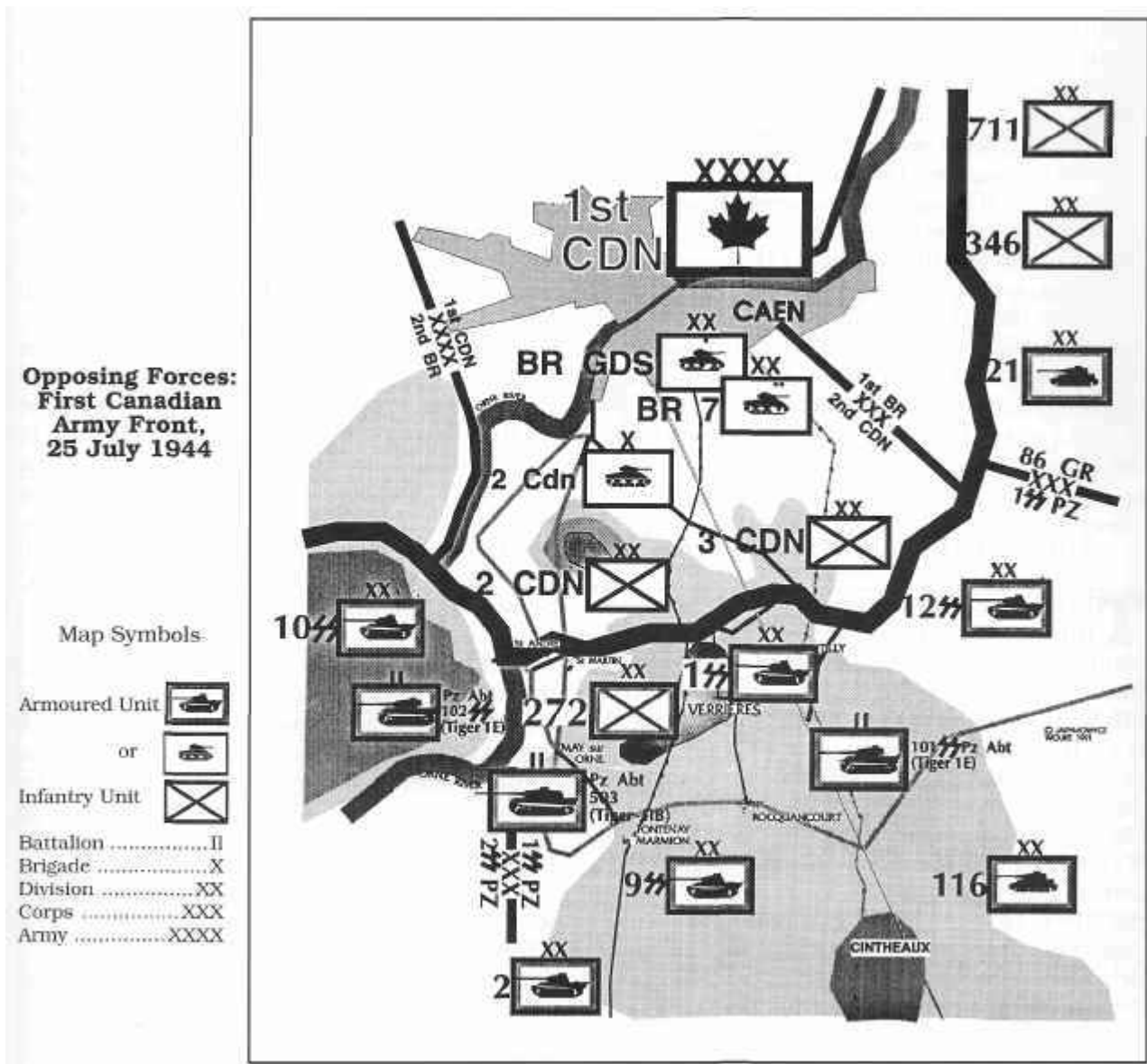
German defence doctrine adhered to the three level principle forged during the waning years of the First World War: a thinly held forward zone, a center main defence area and a rear area comprised of reserves ready to block or counterattack.⁷ Verrieres Ridge was held by two German Divisions: General Schack's 272nd Grenadier and SS *Generalmajor* Theodor Wisch's 1st SS Leibstandarte Adolf Hitler Panzer Division (1st SS LAH).



Jagdpanzer V - Jagdpanther

Simonds chose to distribute 2 CAB's regiments among the 2nd and 3rd Infantry Divisions. Foulkes and Keller further broke up their armour and allotted a squadron per attacking brigade. The brigadiers assigned their squadrons to the two battalions tasked with a Phase 2 objective—planned to be captured at "First Tank Light." As 2 CAB was distributed throughout the Corps, 7th British Armoured moved to Ifs and its armoured component, 22nd Armoured Brigade eventually concentrated in the area of Beauvoir Farm. The Guards Armoured Division was moved into the southern suburbs of Caen, just north of Ifs ready for the Phase 3 exploitation. It was never to be used.

The 272nd was one of the three "270" series raised in late-1943 and sent to France to train. It was composed of veterans and a varied mix of Germans and *Osten Truppen* (Russians and Poles). The division had spent the last six months training in the Perpignan area. In its first battle—Operation "Atlantic," 18-23 July,⁸ the 272nd had been roughly handled by the 2nd Canadian Infantry Division but still deployed three weak grenadier regiments, the Fusilier Battalion and its Panzer Jaeger Battalion (towed 75 mm Pak and Marder self-propelled anti-tank guns). Its artillery was mostly intact.⁹



The 1st SS LAH was simply the best German panzer division in the Third Reich. Its units' battle honours included the campaigns in Poland '39, France '40, and Greece '41. It had fought as a complete division in Russia in 1942-43 and was rebuilding in Belgium when the Allied invasion of Normandy began. The LAH had its normal panzer regiment (two battalions of main battle tanks: one with Panthers; the second equipped with Mark IVs) and two infantry regiments (six battalions of which one was mounted on half-track armoured personnel carriers). For infantry support the division had a *Sturmgeschütz* battalion (Stug III). To kill armour the LAH had its *Panzerjäger*

battalion augmented with a company of the deadly *JagdPanzer* TVTank destroyers.¹⁰

Both German divisions were supported by the artillery of 1st SS Panzer Korps, recently reinforced by 8th Werfer Brigade. LAH was also reinforced by the 272nd's Fusilier Battalion and 101 SS *schwer Panzer abteilung (sch Pz Abt)*—an independent Tiger battalion. The 272nd was augmented by three units under command: the reconnaissance battalion of 10th SS Panzer Division, an infantry battalion from 9th SS Panzer Division and an armour-heavy *kampfgruppe* from 2nd Panzer Division which served as the divisional reserve/

counterattack force. If this was not formidable enough, 503 *schPzAbt* (Tiger I and King Tiger lib) was also under command.¹¹

The left flank was protected by 10th SS Panzer Division and 102nd SS *schPzAbt* (Tiger I) firing from the high ground west of the Orne. In depth, the operational reserve for 1st SS Panzer Korps was 9th SS Panzer Division which had two *kampfgruppen* available south of Verrieres directly behind 272nd and 1st SS. Also available, but under OKW control was the recently arrived 116th Panzer Division, building up east of Cramesnill as well as the remainder of 2nd Panzer Division, south of May astride the Orne.¹²

THE GERMAN COUNTERATTACKS

There were three separate counterattacks during Operation "Spring." Each was conducted by at least a reserve battlegroup from one of three panzer divisions: 1st SS LAH; 9th SS *Hohenstaufen* and 2nd *Weiner Panzer*.¹³ It would be difficult to suggest which was the most effective. *Kampfgruppen* from LAH and 2nd Panzer savaged the North Nova Scotia Highlanders (NNS) and destroyed the Black Watch. The initial 9th SS attack failed to break Lieutenant-Colonel J.M. Rockingham's Royal Hamilton Light Infantry (RHLI) or recapture Verrieres but its left hook totally defeated Brigadier W.J. McGill's 5th Canadian Infantry Brigade, recaptured May-sur-Orne, St. Martin, and the approaches to Hill 67.¹⁴

The German army conducted a battle of manoeuvre. It fought and won under extremely adverse conditions: total Allied air and artillery supremacy. It was less Canadian incompetence than German skill and experience that gave Kluge ". . . a complete defensive victory."¹⁵

Counterattacks by 1st SS Panzer Division: Der Kampf am Tilly

The LAH held three of the four key positions on Verrieres: the stone villages of Tilly-la-Campagne, Verrieres and Rocquancourt. Each was defended by a reinforced company group

supported by tanks or assault guns.¹⁶ Three Canadian battalion attacks were launched against these objectives: Lieutenant-Colonel C. Petch's North Nova Scotia Highlanders attacked Tilly and were stopped dead. The presence of the 1st SS appears to have been a complete surprise, particularly the tanks dug into the village perimeter.

Petch pleaded with the commander of 9th Brigade to reinforce him. Brigadier D.G. Cunningham ordered "B" Squadron from the Fort Garry Horse (10th Canadian Armoured Regiment), scheduled to advance with the Highland Light Infantry during Phase 2, to move forward and help the Novies.¹⁷ The Canadian Shermans boldly moved forward but suddenly found themselves in a killing zone. SS *Untersturmführer* Gehrard Stiller's 7th Panzer Company destroyed most of "B" Squadron in a matter of minutes.¹⁸

Control of Tilly-la-Campagne meant that the 1st SS could dominate the Caen—Falaise highway as well as shoot directly into the flank and rear of British or Canadian squadrons trying to maneuver past Verrieres. When the Royal Regiment of Canada (RRC) attempted to advance on Rocquancourt, 1st SS Panzer Regiment sprung its trap. Using Rocquancourt as the anvil, Panthers and Tigers flanked the RRC axis of advance and hammered the supporting 1st Hussar Squadron and the exposed infantry.¹⁹ This was more properly, a counterattack by fire.

Further German counterattacks in Tilly were limited to reinforcing platoons that attacked and recaptured individual buildings or walled gardens held by the Novies. Petch's command, exposed, neither in nor out of the village, and too close for safe artillery support, remained locked in close quarter combat until night.

1st SS Counterattacks: Rocky at Verrieres

The RHLI, skillfully commanded by Rockingham, secured its own start line and quickly captured Verrieres. The village was the strategic center of the ridge and the 1st SS reacted promptly and violently:²⁰

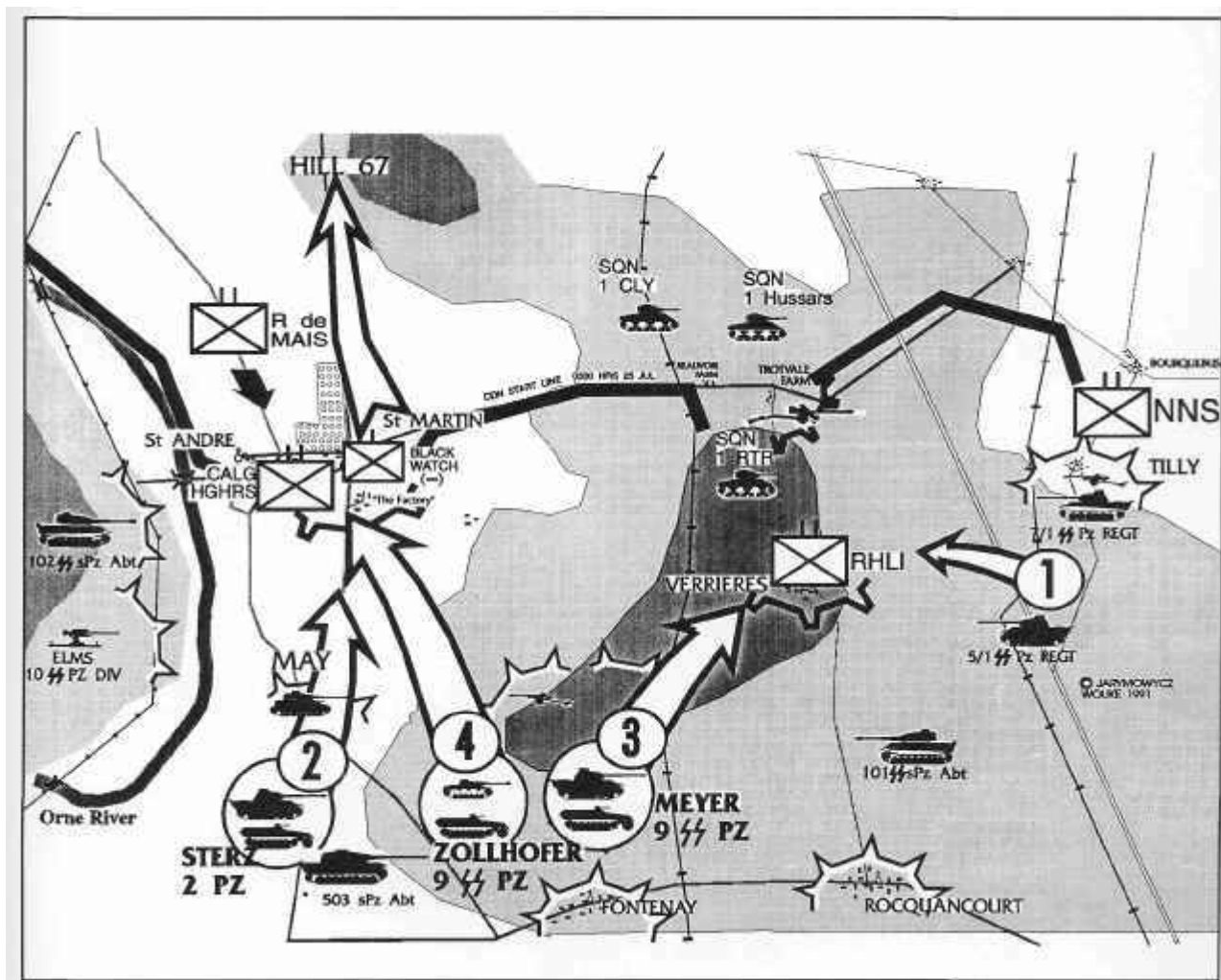
Counterattacks began Immediately, causing further casualties to troops and equipment. Four of our six pounder anti-tank guns were destroyed by direct fire from enemy tanks. At one period, three enemy tanks were In a forward company area before one was knocked out with a PIAT and the others withdrew.²¹

The Rileys were effectively supported by a troop of 17-pounders Rockingham deployed forward of Troteval Farm and by the British 22nd Armoured Brigade. Ordered by Simonds

to help the RHLI, the British sequentially allotted individual squadrons from the 4th County of London Yeomanry (CLY) and the 1st Royal Tank Regiment (RTR)²² to operate on the western flank of Verrieres village and hull down at the crest line of the ridge itself. The RHLI held firm.

The Counterattack by 272nd Division: Kampfgruppe Sterz

General Schack deployed the 272nd Division two regiments up with his depth regiment holding a reverse slope position centered on the village of Fontenay-le-Marmion,²³ the Black Watch objective in "Spring."²⁴ Below the ridge, and out of direct



Operation "Spring": Counterattacks, 25 July 1944 - 1000 to 2000 hours

Troteval Farm

Verrières

040-00/662 7AUG 44 F36//14 Task SA 1188 SA 1252 28.0



Preceding pages:

Left: This aerial photograph, taken on 7 August 1944, shows the village of Verrieres. The RHLI staged a successful defence of Verrieres against determined German counterattacks. Just visible at the top of the photo is the Troteval Farm.

Right: Tilly-la-Campagne is visible at the bottom left of the photo. At the top is Bourgebus.

(LCMSDS)

observation to Canadian gunners, were the self-propelled anti-tank guns and Tigers of 503rd *sch Pz Abt*. The division's reserve and counterattack force was *Kampfgruppe* Sterz, seconded from 2nd Panzer Division.

Major Sterz was the commander of *Panzerjäger Abteilung* 38, the 2nd Panzer Division's anti-tank battalion. His *kampfgruppe* consisted of the 3rd Panzer Regiment's *leichter zug* (light troop — actually, 4 MkrVs), a Panther company, his own *JagdPanzer* IV tank destroyers and a battalion of panzer grenadiers mounted in Sd.Kfz 251/Is (armoured half-tracks). Sterz's mission was to counterattack within Schack's divisional boundaries, specifically to restore any situation that threatened 272nd control of May-sur-Orne and Verrieres Ridge.²⁵

Sterz positioned his light troop under *Oberleutnant* P. Prien directly in May-sur-Orne as his own vanguard and harboured the remainder of the *kampfgruppe* in Laize-la-Ville, approximately 2.5 km or 15 minutes tank driving time away. Although their warning order came as early as 0530 hours, the counterattack was not launched until around 0945 hours after Prien reported contact with Canadian armour ("B" squadron, First Hussars, commanded by Captain J.W. Powell) and a battalion of infantry (the Black Watch, under Major Phil Griffin),²⁶ advancing towards May.

Sterz reached his start line south of May-sur-Orne at approximately 1000 hours and divided his command into three assault groups: the Panthers left; the panzer grenadier battalion center and the *JagdPanzer*s on the right.²⁷ Supported by 272nd divisional artillery and flanking fire from the 10th SS sector across the Orne, Sterz overran and destroyed the Black Watch.²⁸

Sterz continued by attacking the 1st Hussar Shermans and remnants of "B" Company, Calgary Highlanders who were still attempting to hang on to the northern section of May. Both sub-units were driven back. The 2nd Panzer



A German Nebelwerfer six-barrelled rocket projector. Allied troops called it "Moaning Minnie" because of the sound of its projectiles.

(CFPU PMR 83-757)



Captured German armour: Sd.Kfz 251/9 halftrack with 7.5 cm gun (left) and a Stug III.

(Photo by G.K. Bell, NAC PA 114156)

attack continued until it reached "The Factory" area²⁹ south of St. Martin, where it lost momentum in the face of a determined stand by the surviving platoons of the Calgaries and Support Company, Black Watch. Bombarded by heavy artillery stonks, Sterz disengaged at about 1330 hours. He had stopped 5th Brigade, cleared May and forced the Canadians to withdraw; however St. Martin, as well as parts of "The Factory" were still reported in Canadian hands.³⁰

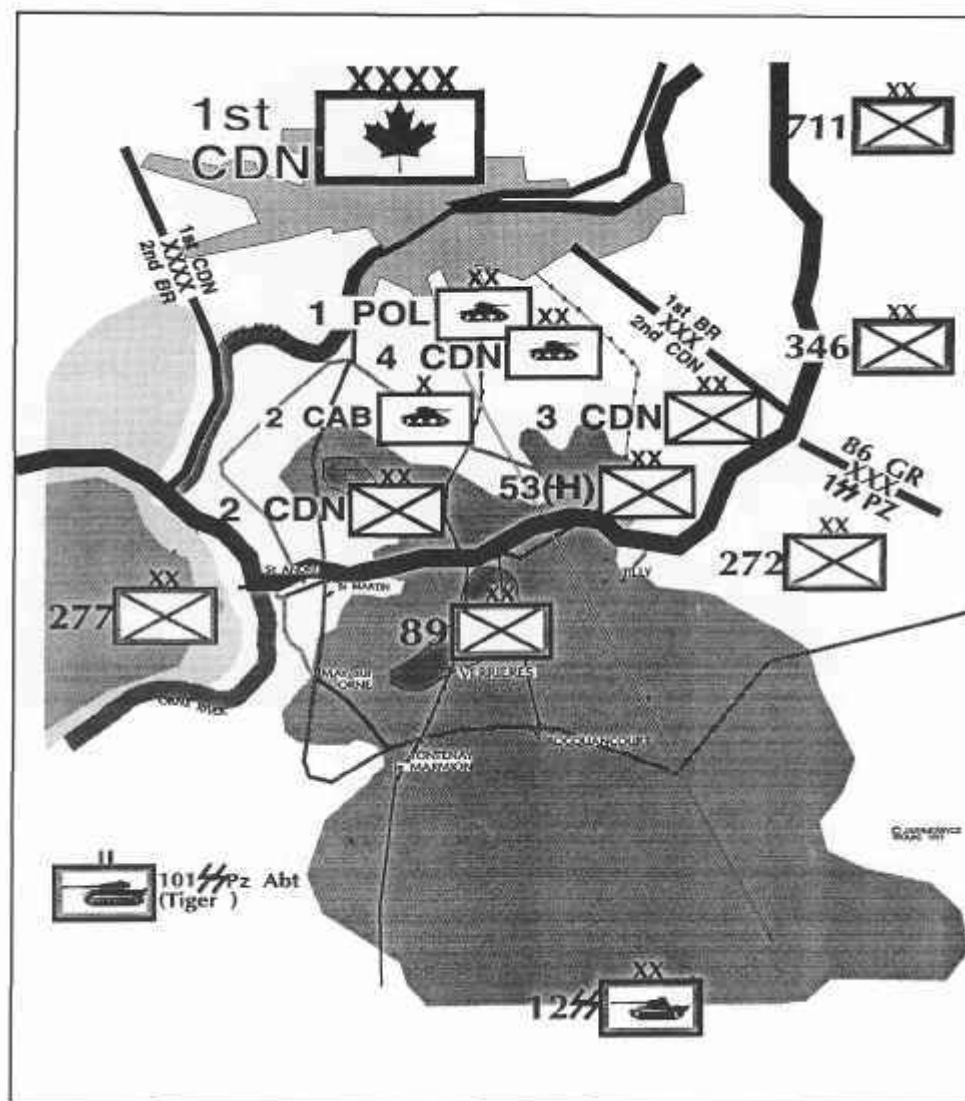
The Operational Reserve is released: The 9th SS Hohenstaufen

The Germans quickly appreciated "Spring" was a major effort by II Canadian Corps. By mid-morning its apparent success created serious worry for 1 SS Panzer Korps. Initial reports indicated that the Canadians had broken through the *HauptKampfLinie* (HKL, the Forward Edge of the Battle Area) and were on Verrieres Ridge in strength. Serious fighting was confirmed in Tilly-la-Campagne, Verrieres and May-sur-Orne. More alarming, British armour was observed massing for a further assault.³¹

Field Marshal Hans Kluge, commander of German forces in Normandy, visited the I SS Panzer Korps that morning and was fully briefed on the Verrieres situation. He quickly gave permission to release the operational reserve and launch the corps counterattack.³² The complete order, from Chief of Staff I SS Korps, *Oberfuhrer* Kramer to *Oberstrumbannfuhrer* Harzer took less than one minute.³³ The 9th SS instructions were to "attack north and reestablish the original HKL."³⁴

The Counterattacks by 9th SS: Kampfgruppen Meyer and Zollhofer

Hohenstaufen fielded two battlegroups. The armour-heavy *kampfgruppe*, commanded by *Oberstrumannfuhrer* Otto Meyer (no relation to Kurt Meyer of 12th SS Hitler Jugend), was composed of Panthers and Mk IVs of 9th SS Panzer Regiment, a panzer grenadier battalion, a company of engineers and a flak battery. The infantry-heavy *kampfgruppe* (the Panzer Grenadier Regiment "Hohenstaufen," a *Sturmgeschutz* company, and supported by the bulk of 9th SS Divisional artillery) was



Opposing Forces:
First Canadian
Army Front,
8 August 1944

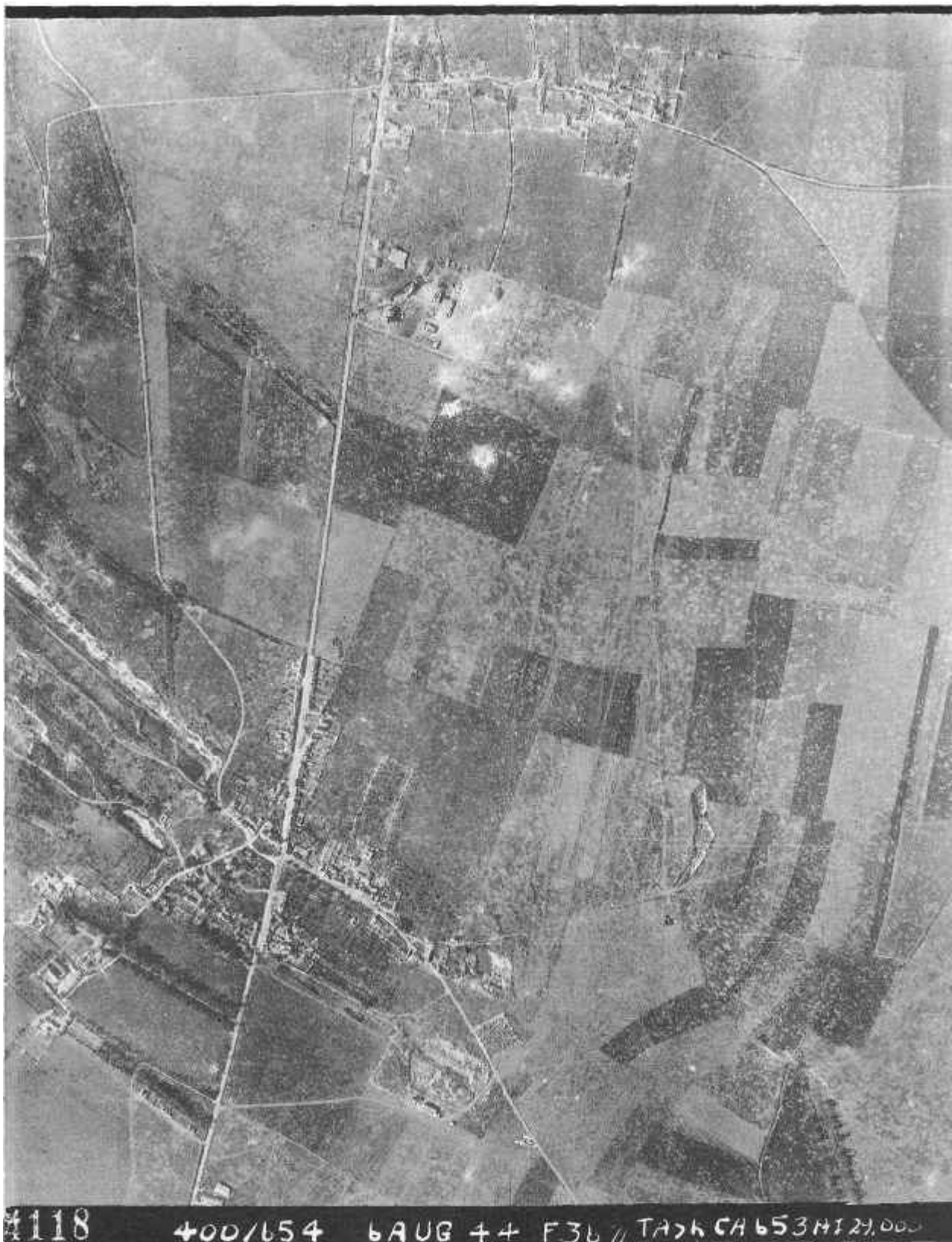
commanded by *Obersturmannfuhrer* Zollhofer.³⁵ Meyer was ordered to advance "east of Fontenay towards point 88" roughly the geographic center of Verrieres Ridge. Zollhofer was tasked to advance "west of Fontenay towards St. Martin."³⁶ Both attacks were launched around 1600 hours.

**"Wer die Hohe uberschreitet
ist ein toter Mann!"**

Although the 25th was occasionally overcast, the skies above Verrieres were full of Allied tank-killing aircraft. Given Simonds' strength in artillery and total domination of the sky,³⁷ Meyer's ability to advance from Bretteville

to his start line (north-east of Fontenay) was remarkable. Canadian and British observers reported the German advance³⁸ and Simonds, or the Commander of 4th Brigade, it is not clear who, quickly organized a reverse slope defence. It included elements of 22nd British Armoured Brigade, 4th Infantry Brigade, 1st Hussars, and 23rd Canadian Armoured Regiment.

As Meyer's panzers crossed the crest they ran into a well-orchestrated crossfire of 17-pounder and 6-pounder anti-tank guns, Shermans and supporting artillery. Canadian fire was so deadly that Meyer reported at 1750 hours: "Whoever crosses this ridge is a dead man!" Undaunted, he swung west to support Zollhofer's attack³⁹ against 5th Brigade.



This air photo shows St. Martin-de-Fontenay at the top and "The Factory" area just below it. At the bottom of the photo is May-sw-Orne.

(LCMSDS)

"Wo ist Zollhofer?"

The 9th SS left hook was late getting off the mark. The *Hohenstaufen* had considerable trouble crossing the crest near May and launching its attack. General Schack's HQ demanded "Where is Zollhofer?" By 1840 hours the *Hohenstaufen kampfguppe* had the joined battle and had begun to clear St. Martin. One reason for Zollhofer's delay was that he had run into a Canadian counterattack ordered by Simonds.⁴⁰

Le Regiment de Maisonneuve was returned to Brigadier Megill's command and directed to capture May. The battalion attack began promisingly enough but soon ran into heavy flanking fire from 272nd defenders still in St. Andreas well as 10th SS and 102nd SS Tiger fire from across the Orne. Just as the

Montrealers were making progress, they, like the Black Watch earlier, ran into a German counterattack: Zollhofer. The Maisies were forced back to their start line. They were to remain there until 8 August.

Once the Maisonneuves had withdrawn, Zollhofer continued his attack through "The Factory" and into St. Martin. The 9th SS history credits Zollhofer with reaching the high ground north of St. Andre. There is some argument as to the extent of the German victory. However, Black Watch and Calgary war diaries confirm that the two battalions withdrew to Basse and Fleury-sur-Orne, north of Hill 67, and out of view of St. Martin and St. Andre.⁴¹ Clearly, St. Martin and "the Factory" were recaptured and only the original foothold in St. Andre remained in Canadian hands.

Tiger tank pointing to Bourgebus.

(Photo taken in August 1946 by G. Noble, PMR 82-064)



Once 9th SS had reestablished the *HKL*, major German counterattacks against Verrieres Ridge ended.⁴²

"Spring": The Final Results

The German tally sheet for "Spring" shows the following: Tilly was held and would remain in German hands until 8 August.⁴³ The 1st SS had lost Verrieres village to the Rileys. Despite the best efforts of two experienced German panzer divisions, the Canadians hung on to the center of the ridge. The 5th Brigade front was a shambles. The 2nd Panzer recaptured May; 9th SS recaptured St. Martin and, according to the *Hohenstaufen* history, reached Hill 67.⁴⁴ The Calgaries, Camerons and Black Watch were forced back leaving only the Regiment de Maisonneuve clinging to St. Andre, which they never quite controlled: "Le 28 juillet le Batalion recevait l'ordre de nettoyer complètement le village de Saint-Andre. La compagnie a reussi a s'approcher de Feglise, toujours infestee d'Allemands."⁴⁵

For the Germans, the battle for Verrieres was a doctrinal success. They had given II Canadian Corps a bloody setback. "Heirbei hatte der Feind hohe blutige Verluste."⁴⁶ Quick counterattacks succeeded except in the one area where Simonds ordered 22nd Armoured to support Rockingham. If "Spring" was indeed planned as a "holding attack" it appears to have failed. Before 25 July there were seven panzer divisions and three heavy tank battalions⁴⁷ deployed within the II Corps zone of operational influence. After "Spring" there was only one: 12th SS Hitler Jugend supported by one weak Tiger company.⁴⁸

Attack is fire that advances, Defense is fire that counterattacks.

Auftragstaktik

NOTES

1. Particularly detailed tactical accounts are: Terry Copp. "Fifth Brigade at Verrieres Ridge." *Canadian Military History*. Vol. 1, Nos. 1&2. R.H. Roy. *Canadians in Normandy*, Terry Copp and Robert Vogel. *Maple Leaf Route: Falaise.*, and J. A. English, *The Canadian Army and the Normandy Campaign*.
2. RG 24 Vol. 10,844. Int Sum No. 38. Apx A to 53 (W) Div. Translated account of captured operational notes (17 June—7 July) made by 2nd Panzer Division.
3. *Kampfgruppen* were the forerunners of modern battlegroups, normally composed of at least one battalion-sized unit or equivalent. Typical organization included one panzer element (tanks, Panzer)agers/Stug Ills) and an armoured infantry element. This was generally augmented by artillery, engineers and anti-aircraft elements. Battlegroups had not yet been formalized into British/Canadian doctrine in the summer of 1944.
4. RG 24 Vol. 20,275, Simonds' memo 31 January 1946 *Attack by RHC — Operation Spring*. [Reproduced in *Canadian Military History* Vol.1, Nos.1&2.] RG 24, Vol. 12,745 Interview Lieutenant-General Simonds and C.P. Stacey, 19 March 1946. See also: RG24 Vol. 10,808; RG 24 Vol. 10,934 and The II Corps Operation instruction for Spring issued 24 July states: "2 Cdn Corps will capture the high ground in area 0756 and 0757, will exploit to widen the gap...and further exploit SOUTHWARDS to seize high ground about CINTHEAUX 0853."
5. RG 24. War Diary (WD) II Canadian Corps: *Operation Instruction Number Three Operation Spring*. 24 July 1944. RG24 Vol. 14,046. *Log, 2nd Canadian Armoured Brigade*. 2 CAB comprised three armoured regiments: 6th Armoured Regiment (First Hussars), 10th Armoured Regiment (The Fort Garry Horse), 27th Armoured Regiment (The Sherbrooke Fusiliers). On 24 July its strength was 160 Shermans (A2/A4) of which 23 were Freflys (17-pounders). Within 24 hours the Armoured Fighting Vehicle (AFV) strength was 122 tanks. British armoured divisions each had one armoured brigade (three tank regiments) plus the armoured reconnaissance regiment which was equipped with Cromwell tanks and armoured cars. Each British or Canadian regiment had three tank squadrons for a total of approximately 60 tanks. German battalions (Panzer *Abteilung*) averaged 68-88 tanks.
6. RG 24 Vol. 10,826 CCRA *Conference on Operation "Spring" 23 Jul 44*. 2 Cdn AGRA, 8 British AGRA and 3rd British AGRA (on call) each 3 Medium Regiments and 1 Field Regiment.
7. Donald Graham. *Sans Doctrine: British Army Tactics in the First World War. in Men at War*. Edited by Travers and Archer. Chicago: Precedent, 1982.
8. The Canadian Official History ends Operation "Atlantic" on 20 July. However, it is clear in German records that the battle does not end until 22-23 July and continues with determined counterattacks launched against St. Andre—St. Martin and Hill 67 by battlegroups from 272nd Infantry Division, 2nd

- Panzer Division, 1st, 9th and 1 Oth SS Panzer Divisions, all supported by 102nd SS *sch Pz Abt* (independent Tiger I battalion). The 272nd was particularly bloodied in the fighting withdrawal from Caen/Fleury and the struggle for St. Andre against the Camerons and 27th Canadian Armoured Regiment.
9. Bundesarchiv/Militärarchiv, RH 26-272/5. *Geschichte der 272. I.D.*, S.25. Jenner Martin, *Die 216/272. Infanterie-Division*. Bad Nauheim, 1964.
 10. The German Army had two "main battle tanks": the Panther Mark V and the Pzkw Mark IV. There were two versions of its heavy tank: Pzkw Vis Tiger I and Tiger II (King or Royal Tiger). The rest were "assault guns," that is, AFVs with no turret. In Normandy this included assault guns like the *Sturmgeschütz* and the Jagd Panzers (JgdPz Mk IV: JagdPanther) and self-propelled anti-tank guns (Marders, Nashorns).
 11. Bundesarchiv RH 19 IX/20. Geheime Kommandosache, Heeresgruppe B, 1a. *Morgenmeldung* 25.7. Rudolf Lehmann/Rolf Tiemann: *Die Leibstandarte. Band TV/I*. Munin Verlag — Osnabrück, 1986. The German army in Normandy used its Tigers and JagdPanthers as independent firebrigades. Nor was it unusual for a panzer division to have its Panthers lent to another formation. Several Panzer divisions did not have Panthers; their second Mk IV battalions were in Mailly-le-Camp, in the process of reequipping with the new Mk Vs as the invasion began.
 12. Militärarchiv RH 19 IX/20; Rudolf Lehmann/Rolf Tiemann, and F.J. Straub, *Geschichte der 2. (Wiener) Panzer-Division*. Aufl. Neckargemund, 1977 Herbert Furbringer, *9 SS-Panzer-Division: 1944: Normandie*. Editions Heimdal, Bayeux, 1988.
 13. 1st SS was the original praetorian guard, the 9th, like its sister, the 10th was recruited from Hitler Jugend cadres and Germans living outside the Reich. 2nd Panzer remained in Vienna after the *Anschluss* and recruited from the area.
 14. C.P. Stacey, *The Official History of the Canadian Army in the Second World War. Volume III. The Victory Campaign*. Ottawa: Queen's Printer, 1960. See also: Copp, Copp/Vogel, English, Roy.
 15. RG 24 Vol. 20,431 Translation weekly report to HQ Army Group B from 1st SS Panzer Korps 31 July 1944.
 16. 7 Company, 1st SS Panzer Regiment was in Tilly; 5 Company, 1st SS Panzer Regiment and an *Sturmgeschütz* platoon, occupied Verrieres. Rudolf Lehmann/Rolf Tiemann and R.J.J., correspondence with Gerhard Stiller, Stuttgart. January-March 1990. Stiller commanded 7 Company of 1st SS Panzer Regiment, equipped with Mk IV Hs.
 17. RG24Vol. 14,234 WD 10th Armoured Regiment (Fort Garry Horse). 25 July 1944. RG 24; *Report on Attack on Tilly-la-Campagne 25 Jul 44*. LtCol C. Fetch, 28 Jul 44.
 18. Stiller correspondence. "B" Sqn was engaged "Rear to front; right to left; in sequence."
 19. DHist 112.3 ID.003D *Report on Operation Spring 25 July prepared by Capt. J. Swettenham*; Lehmann/Tiemann.
 20. BA/MA RH 21-5/50. *Kriegstagebuch des Panzer-Armeeoberkommando 5.I.Teil*. Angefangen: 10 June 1944; Gesschloffen: 8 August 1944. *Morgenmeldung* 25 July 1944 and, Rudolf Lehmann/Rolf Tiemann.
 21. DHist Brigadier J.M. Rockingham, letter C.P. Stacey, 27 October 1948 and, Brereton Greenhous, Kingsley Brown Sr, Kingsley Brown Jr. *Semper Paratus — The History of the Royal Hamilton Light Infantry*. Hamilton: The RHLI Historical Association, 1977.
 22. RG 24 7th British Armoured Division WD and 7th Armoured Division Intelligence Summary Nos 45 and 46 — 25-26 July 1944. Robin Neillands. *The Desert Rats — 7th Armoured Division 1940-1945*. London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1991.
 23. Helmut Ritgen, *Kampfum May-sur-Orne am 25 Juli 1944*. Unpublished paper. Moorkamp, 1990. also: BA/MA RH 26-272/5 and Jenner; Straub.
 24. RG 24 Vol. 18,511 WD: 2 *Cdn Inf Div OO No. 1 (Operation Spring) 24 Jul 44* and, 5 *Cdn InfBde OO No. 1, (Operation Spring) 24 Jul 1944*. See also Terry Copp, "Fifth Brigade."
 25. BA/MARH 26-272/5; Helmut Ritgen; Jenner; Straub.
 26. Powell and Griffin took command when their COs were killed/wounded earlier. See Copp *et al*.
 27. BA/MARH26-272/5;; HelmutRitgen; Jenner; Straub.
 28. Straub.
 29. Factory: extensive mine works including central shaft NW-SE (St. Andre—Verrieres). "Spring" veterans and military historians insist 272nd used the main tunnel to shield troops/counterattack 5th Brigade. See: Copp *et al*.
 30. The *Abenmeldung* of Panzergruppe West does not report May clear of Canadians until late in the afternoon. The 9th SS fully expected to fight for St. Martin and May: BA/MS RH 21-5/50.
 31. BA/MA RH 21-5/50; RH 19 IX/M.
 32. Kluge was impressed by the Canadian effort but not fooled by it. "Where are the heavy bomber attacks?" he asked. When reports of "Cobra" reached him his attention quickly shifted west. He approved the 9th SS counterattack before he left, circa 0900 hours. BA/MARH 21-5/49.
 33. Dr. Jean Pierre Benamou. *Normandie Album Memorial 6 Juin — 22 Aout 1944*. Editions Heimdal. Bayeux 1988. p.386. Herbert Furbringer. *9.SS-Panzer-Division*. Munin-Verlag GMBH. Osnabrück, 1987.
 34. Furbringer. Orders were passed by telephone. Battle procedure for 9th SS took approximately 7 hours: 0930—1600. This includes delays imposed by Allied air strikes.
 35. Furbringer. Armour strengths for 9th SS are reported as 14 *Sturmgeschütze*; 21 Panzer IV and 23 Panthers for 25 July. Regiment "*Hohenstaufen*," was the first of two panzer grenadier regiments in 9th SS.
 36. "*Ostwärts Fontenay vorbei auf Hohe 88 als 1. Angriffsziel*" and "westlich an Fontenay vorbei über May auf St. Martin." Furbringer p. 340. Compared to Canadian divisional and brigade orders for "Spring," one can only admire the tactical latitude extended to German field commanders. But that was the result of operational experience.
 37. German records refer to downing "Mustangs" and "Thunderbolts." RG 24 Vol. 10,934 7th British Armoured Division WD reported some 30 German

- tanks ("...A Shooting Gallery!") hull down in an arc south of Verrieres village. First rate Typhoon targets.
38. RG24 Vol. 13, 711 Operations Log. II Canadian Corps. 25 July 1944.
 39. Furbringer. p.340. The 9th SS history notes bitter close quarter fighting in St. Martin; "*Hohenstaufen*" tank-killing teams armed with *Panzerfausts* and sticky bombs stalked Canadian Shermans.
 40. RG 24 Vol. 14, 109. WD 5th Canadian Brigade.
 41. RG24 Vol. 14, 109. WD 5th Canadian Brigade and RG 24 War Diaries Black Watch and Calgary Highlanders.
 42. Operation "Cobra" was launched by General Omar Bradley on 25 July. By the 26 July it became obvious that "Spring" had failed but "Cobra" was to succeed. German panzer units' reconnaissance parties and at least one vanguard began to shift west towards the American sector.
 43. The battles for Tilly-la-Campagne are well-recorded in the histories of the LAH and include a poem "*Wir Haben es 'das Feldzugs' genannt, mit Uebermacht wurde es vielfach berannt...etc...*," a song "*Der Kampf und Tilly*"; and privately published articles: Gehard Stiller, "*Normandie 1944, eine Erinnerung*"; Rolf Ehrhardt "*Titty-Montecassino der 7.Kp*"; Heinz Wolf et al and others.
 44. Furbringer. "*und gibt die beherrschende Hohe 67, nordlich von St. Andre, preis.*" p 197.
 45. Jacques Gouin. *Bon Coeur et Bon Bras: Histoire du Regiment de Maisonneuve 1880-1980*. Bibliotheque du Quebec 1980. page 104. RG 24: WD Regiment de Maisonneuve.
 46. "The enemy took high bloody casualties." BA/MARH 19 IX/M. The success of the Royal Hamilton Light Infantry showed just what properly supported Canadian infantry were capable of. Once can only speculate what would have occurred if the 2nd Canadian Armoured Brigade, 7th British Armoured Division and the Guards Armoured Division, grouped in mass and shot in by the considerable artillery and air already available, had been launched into the German center. German casualties were also high during the July 25-27 period. The total for 6 June to 27 July 1944 was 127,247 (including "3,017 officers: 11 generals, 8 General staff officers and 180 commanders"). Given the previous week's totals, the Germans lost 10,384 all ranks during "Cobra"/"Spring." However, it must be assumed that the bulk of these casualties were taken in the St. Lo area from Bradley's forces. RG 24 Vol 20, 431. Weekly report HQ Army Group B la No. 6070/44 gkdes. 31 July 1944.
 47. 2nd Panzer; 21st Panzer; 116th Panzer; 1st SS; 9th SS; 10th SS and 12th SS Hitler Jugend. The Tiger Battalions were 503rd, 101st SS and 102nd SS. There is also evidence that the only *JagdPanther* battalion on the western front was sent against the Canadians and appeared briefly in May. Also elements of 341st Stug Brigade may have been attached to LXXXVI German Corps.
 48. 2nd Panzer began to thin out on 27 July. By 29 July it was south of St. Lo. 116th Panzer was regrouped with XLVII Panzer Korps and was in position east of Vire by 29 July. 21st Panzer was regrouped with II SS

Panzer Korps and arrived in the Vire area by 2 August. 503rd *schPzAbtwus* split up. 3 Kompanie had been withdrawn to Paris to be reequipped with Konigs Tigers. 654th *schPzJgabt* (JagdPanthers) was south of Caumont by 30 July. 1st SS LAH thinned out during the night of 27 July, KGs from 1 SS Panzer Regiment were sent east. By 3 August the bulk of the division was regrouped with XLVII Panzer Korps and in the Avranches area. 9th SS Panzer Abts packed up early and was near Gouvix on 29 July. By 1 August it was between Villiers Bocage and Vire, well east of Mont Picon and regrouped with II SS Panzer Korps. 10th SS Panzer Division began to thin out on 26 July. By 1 August it had KGs at Aunay-sur-Odon and Bougy. The GHQ heavy battalions were withdrawn as well: 101st *schPzAbt* was relieved on 26 July, one company held Bougy, by 2 August two Tiger companies were deploying west of Mortain. The company in Bougy was later brought back and grouped with 12th Hitler Jugend. The famous tank ace, Micheal Wittman would fight his last battle trying to stop the Canadian breakout during "Totalize." 102nd *sch Pz Abt* was ordered east toward Mortain area on the night of 2nd August. All that faced Simonds by 8 August was 12th SS Hitler Jugend (north of Falaise) and Wittman's Tiger Company. See RH 19 IX/20; 21-5/49; RG 24; Furbringer; Lehmann; Meyer; Straub et al. Also: Roger Edwards, *Panzer—A Revolution in Warfare, 1939/1945*. London: Arms and Armour Press, 1989, and Eric Lefevre, *Panzers in Normandy*, London: Plaistow Press, 1990.

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