

THE BATTLE OF ARRACOURT

NEW SCENARIOS FOR PANZER LEADER

By Alan R. Arvold

The Battle of Arracourt is considered by many historians to showcase American armored operations at their best during World War Two. Yet I have wondered over the years why this action was not included as a scenario in the *PANZER LEADER* game. My research showed that the battle lasted four days, during three of which, major combat occurred. While therefore too big to be put in the group of scenarios that came in the game, I felt that the Battle of Arracourt could be presented in the three-scenario format presented in this article.

In September 1944, in the area around the city of Nancy in Northeastern France, spearheads of the U.S. 4th Armored Division under Patton's Third Army were beginning their envelopment of the German forces entrenched in that city. The northern pincer of this envelopment was CCA of the 4th Armored Division. As this force pushed deeper into the enemy rear areas, the Germans began organizing a counterattack to blunt the American drive and reinforce their own troops in Nancy. The situation was critical for the Germans, as the American offensive had torn a gap between the German 1st and 19th Armies which, if exploited by the Americans, would give them a clear path to the Rhine. The Germans assembled an armored force—designated the 5th Panzer Army—which was composed of various depleted units such as the 11th and 21st Panzer Divisions, the 13th and 15th Panzergrenadier Divisions and three freshly raised Panzer Brigades; the 111th, the 112th, and the 113th. While this force was potentially very strong (it had over 350 tanks), it was divided between two different army commands, and because of disrupted communication and transportation lines, could not be committed *en masse*.

The Americans, meanwhile, were not without problems of their own. As their forces drove deep into the German rear, the Americans were suffering increasing difficulties with ever-lengthening supply lines. In addition, they lacked the reserves necessary to exploit the breach they had made in the German lines. They had to make do with the forces available and push them on to the limits of their endurance. By 14 September, CCA, 4th Armored had captured Arracourt, and pushed on east of the town to consolidate their position; it would be five days before their trailing units would catch up with them.

On the morning of 19 September 1944, CCA 4th Armored Division was scattered about the Arracourt area in small company-sized defensive positions, awaiting the arrival of those trailing units, which were off to the west at the Moselle River, pushing back a German counter-attack which had temporarily cut off CCA from friendly lines. The German 5th Panzer Army had allotted the 111th and 113th Panzer Brigades to attack CCA that morning, but the 111th was held up and would not reach the area until late afternoon. Only the 113th would be in its attack position that morning. The stage was set for the Battle of Arracourt.

