



Mike Updike Flames of War Overlord 2009

Kampfgruppe Olboeter III/26th SS Panzer Grenadiers, 12th SS Panzer Division Halting Operation Totalize 9-10 August 1944 Falaise, France

Sixty days had passed since the Allies made their landings at Normandy. For these sixty days the German army, in a large part due to the contributions of the 12th SS Panzer Division "Hitler Jugend," has been able to contain the Allies to a small beachhead bottled up in Normandy's Bocage country. Now the Allies have finally ruptured out of the confines of the Normandy lodgment. The British in the east with Operation Goodwood, and the United States in the west with Operation Cobra have finally broken the German lines and are now moving to encircle a large portion the German Army Group B with two pincer movements towards Falaise and Argentan.

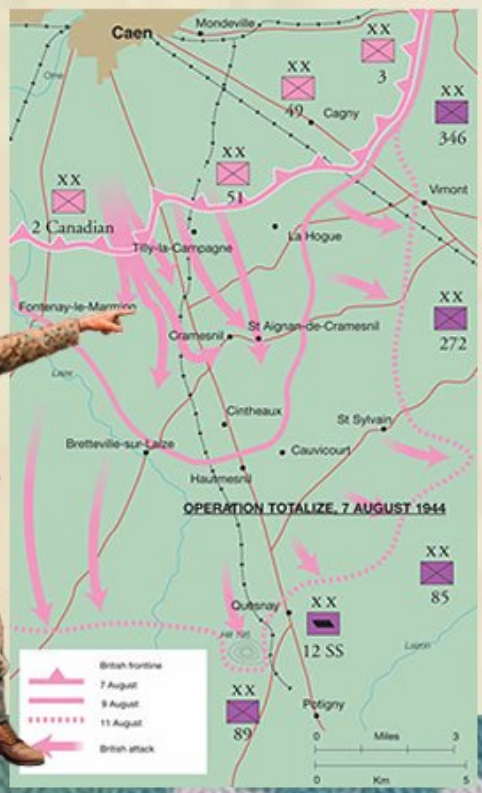


SS-Sturmbannführer
Erich Olboeter

The drive on Falaise was assigned by Montgomery to the newly formed 2nd Canadian Corps under Lieutenant General Guy Simonds. Simonds' corps attacked in a two phase operation called "Totalize." The first phase was very successful with three divisions of infantry overwhelming the German 85th Infantry Division and penetrating nearly seven miles towards Falaise. Now, the second phase would commence with two armoured divisions, the 4th Canadian and 1st Polish, exploiting the gaps created by the infantry. These divisions needed only to gain control of the high ground north of Falaise including Point 195 and Point 140. Point 195 had been seized nearly without a fight through infiltration by the British Columbia and Algonquin Regiments of the 4th Canadian Armoured Division. From this position the Canadians controlled the Laison River Valley approach to Falaise itself. It appeared that Operation Totalize was on the verge of achieving all of its objectives and trapping nearly all German forces left in Normandy. What could stop the Canadians now?

That question would be answered by Kurt "Panzer" Myer commander of the 12th SS Panzer Division's fanatical "boy soldiers" led by hardened East Front veteran officers and sergeants. Myer's "Hitler Jugend" division had been in reserve and without orders he immediately threw the 12th SS's depleted, but still powerful, Kampfgruppen into action. One of these Kampfgruppen was formed upon the remnants of III Battalion, 26th SS Panzer Grenadiers led by SS-Sturmbannführer Erich Olboeter. Olboeter's Battalion was now reduced to approximately company strength, but these Panzer Grenadiers were mounted in SdKfz 251 halftracks and they were reinforced with Jagdpanzer IV's of 1. Kompanie, 12th SS Panzer Jager Battalion and Tiger Tanks of 2. Kompanie, 101st SS Schwere Panzer Battalion.

SS Stuba Olboeter's Kampfgruppe formed a perfect mobile counterattack force for the 12th SS Panzer Division and with other elements of the 12th SS in completely destroyed the 4th Canadian Armoured Division's forces on from Point 195. Cut off in the open with nowhere to hide and no chance to dig in, the Canadians fought gallantly but were systematically demolished. Over the course of the day, they lost 240 men killed, wounded, or captured, and 47 tanks.



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Following the victory on August 9th, 1944, Kampfgruppe Olboeter took up a defensive position itself in the nearby Quesnay Woods which controlled the main road from Caen to Falaise. From here they wrecked further attacks conducted by the Canadians on the 10th as the Queen's Own Rifles and The North Shore Regiment attempted to clear the Quesnay Woods. Olboeter's troops waited until the last minute and then attacked the Queen's Own with withering surprise fire. The Canadians had altogether sustained another 165 casualties including 44 killed.

Lieutenant General Simond's Operation Totalize had failed. Kampfgruppe Olboeter along with the rest of the 12th SS Panzer Division would hold on to Falaise for another ten days while their brothers in the 2nd SS Panzer "Das Reich" would hold on to Argentan to the south. The Herculeaneum efforts by these two SS Panzer Division allowed much of the German's Army Group B to escape annihilation. Though defeated, catastrophe was avoided and these surviving forces would give Hitler the troops he would need for one more chance at turn the Allied tide four months later in the Battle of the Bulge.



Panzer Grenadiers
12th SS Panzer Division,
July 44



101st Schwere Panzer Tiger in Normandy, Summer 1944

References

- H. Meyer, *Kriegsgeschichte der 12. SS-Panzerdivision "Hitlerjugend"*, vol I (Munin Verlag, Osnabrück 1982)
- R. Gillis, "Into Harm's Way: Canadian Forces in Operation Totalize" in *Time Pieces*, Vol 6, 2005

