



In the event, Operation 'Lüttich' failed which was to have the gravest consequences for the German armies in Normandy. On August 12, troops of the US 120th Infantry, 30th Division, re-entered Mortain and relieved the men who had been trapped on Hill 317 for five days. Although this picture of troops

pushing through Juvigny-le-Tertre, eight kilometres west of Mortain, was taken one week earlier, nevertheless it is a perfect illustration to show American forces once again on the advance. The GIs seen in the photo are members of the 1st Division which reached Mortain on August 3.

To meet this end, the 9. SS-Panzer-Division, the 10. SS-Panzer-Division and either the 21. Panzer-Division or the 12. SS-Panzer-Division, were to be withdrawn from the sector of the 5. Panzer-armee (the previous day Panzergruppe West had been renamed 5. Panzer-armee) 'regardless of the risk'. Hitler demanded that the 'greatest daring, determination, imagination must give wings to all echelons of command. Each and every man must believe in victory.'

That afternoon von Kluge and his staff had finally accepted that Operation 'Lüttich' had failed, and they were on the point of considering withdrawal when Hitler's order to continue the attack arrived. Consequently, that evening, von Kluge telephoned Eberbach to inform him that not only would he not receive the reinforcements he had requested to strengthen the thinly-held Falaise sector, but also he was to lose two panzer divisions immediately and a third soon afterwards. Apologising, von Kluge confessed to Eberbach that he could foresee that the failure of this attack could lead to collapse of the entire Normandy front, but 'the order is so unequivocal that it must be obeyed'. On August 8 he informed Hausser of the arrival of the 10. and 12. SS-Panzer-Divisions and ordered him to commit them as soon as possible to resume the drive toward Avranches. Until this new attack was ready, the positions already reached were to be held.

On August 9, the Germans sent emissaries up Hill 317. Accompanied by a



This is Rue d'Avranches looking westwards, taken just a few metres from the main junction in the centre of the village.

soldier bearing a white flag of truce, SS-Unterscharführer Tetzlaff of the 17. SS-Panzer Grenadier-Division reached the American lines at 6.30 p.m. With due formality the German offered 'honourable' conditions of surrender but the response by Lieutenant Ralph A. Kerley commanding E Company was less formal. According to American testimony it was 'short and unprintable'!

Nevertheless, the situation was critical and the 30th Division commander, Major General Leland S. Hobbs, debated whether his positions might not be 'practically untenable'. On the 9th he got his answer from a somewhat exasperated Major General J. Lawton Collins, the VII Corps commander, who sharply retorted: 'Stop talking about untenable'.