CHAPTER SEVEN

DISPUTED TERRITORY: THE BATTLE IN THE DUTCH PROVINCES OF LIMBURG, NOORD-BRABANT AND ZEELAND

Introduction

The German invasion of the Netherlands was, as has been mentioned earlier, the task of the 18th Army. Part of this army was to attack the eastern front of Fortress Holland to the north of the major rivers. The German attack was, however, concentrated to the south of the rivers: “Simultaneously, to the south of the rivers the 18th Army’s main force is to take the bridges across the Hollands Diep at Moerdijk and the Oude Maas at Dordrecht in cooperation with special units.” The main bridges between Moerdijk and Rotterdam were to be captured by paratroops. It was essential for these troops to be joined quickly by the 18th Army. The link-up with the paratroops was not the only task assigned to the XXVIth Corps. During the march through Noord-Brabant this army corps was also to protect the left flank of the 18th Army against attacks from “enemy forces in the Antwerp area”. Which troops were to be deployed for the latter and which for further attacks on Fortress Holland was not yet clear: “The army will decide in due course whether following arrival in the Breda area units of the XXVIth Corps can be turned to the north for use in the battle for Fortress Holland.”

In view of the importance of the advance through Noord-Brabant, Hitler earmarked the 9th Panzer Division under the command of Generalmajor Alfred Ritter von Hubicki for this task, one of his ten armoured divisions. The path ahead for this division was to be cleared by two infantry divisions: the 254th Infantry Division, under the command of Generalleutnant Walter Behschnitt and the 256th Infantry Division, commanded by Generalmajor Alexander Kauffmann. The SS Verfügungsdvision, com
A German ferry across the river Maas, 13 May 1940.

Dutch command structure in Noord-Brabant and northern Limburg 10 May 1940