

The arrival of 2 Pz Div at this place puts a different complexion of the problem.

I have got to be very certain of my position, step by step; I must at all costs remain well balanced and able to handle easily any situation that may develop as the enemy reserves come into the battle.

I am now very strong defensively on the left of Second Army, in the CAEN sector; I would be stronger still if I had CAEN itself, but I am quite well positioned as things are at present.

I have not yet sufficient strength to be offensive on both flanks of Second Army.

I have therefore decided to be defensive in the CAEN sector on the front of 1 Corps, but aggressively so. I am going to put all my offensive power, ammunition and so on, into the offensive by 30 Corps on the right of Second Army.

(Liberation Campaign North West Europe, op cit, Ch III, Book I, p. 42)

531. Commenting on 7 Armd Div's withdrawal at Villers, one military writer states:

Thus the fruits of the initial success, which might have been turned into a striking victory, were handed back to the enemy. Erskine's troops had suffered no defeat after the first costly encounter with the single Tiger and if Bucknall [Lt-Gen G.S. Bucknall, C.B., M.C. and Bar, Commander, 30 Corps] had reinforced and persisted with the attack by 7th Armoured, he would have proved a serious threat to the rear of Caen and would have forced Panzer Lehr to abandon the Tilly salient in order to help close the gap which the Americans had created at Caumont. This great opportunity of disrupting the enemy line and expanding the Allied bridgehead was lost not so much in the woods and orchards around Villers-Bocage, as in the Corps Commander's mind.

.....

The failure of this operation, and the simultaneous repulse of the Highland Division's attempt to expand the bridgehead east of the Orne, led Dempsey to write at the time that there was 'no chance now of a snap operation with airborne troops either to seize Caen or to deepen the bridgehead on XXX Corps front. It is clear now that Caen can be taken only by a set-piece assault and we do not have the men or ammunition for that at this time.'

(Wilmot, op cit, pp 310-311)

(g) The First American Army

532. (i) V Corps In the two days following the initial landings, the operations of V Corps "were a continuation of the assault phase as all units sought to reach their D Day objectives" (Harrison, op cit, p. 336). During this time, 29 Inf Div operated in the western sector of the corps bridgehead and 1 Inf Div in the eastern sector. Early on the morning of 7 Jun, General Montgomery met General Bradley in the "OMAHA" transport area. The Army Group Commander "was anxious that the Allied Beaches be joined before Rommel could concentrate his forces against any single beach and there break through" (Bradley, op cit, p. 279). That same morning, General Bradley "slipped ashore on Omaha to prod Gerow on Montgomery's order for an early link-up of the beaches" (Ibid, p. 280; in his book, Mr. Harrison states that General Eisenhower gave the order for the link-up and that General Bradley, "gave orders accordingly" on the afternoon of 7 Jun. (Harrison, op cit, p. 352) The Bradley version, however, seems to be true. Cf Liberation Campaign North West Europe, op cit, Ch III, Book I, pp 1-2). In V Corps 29 Inf Div would thrust westward to make contact with VII Corps, while 1 Inf Div made contact with the British on their left.

533. 1 Inf Div's drive east against the enemy forces which continued to hold a narrow wedge along the Drome River valley to the sea, and south to the high ground across the Bayeux-Isigny highway, met with medium opposition. Squeezed by the British on the right and the Americans on the left, the enemy withdrew from the corridor during 8 Jun. Contact with 50 (N) Div, first made at Port-en-Bessin between 16 R.C.T. and 47 R.M. Cdo at noon on 8 Jun, was widened and made more secure the following day. By 8 Jun also, 1 Inf Div was within a few hundred yards of its southern D Day objective line.

534. While the 1st Division advanced east and south,

...the 29th Division on D plus 1 still found itself entangled in the enemy's coastal defenses and spent most of the day cleaning up the fragments of enemy units that were shattered but not destroyed by the initial shock of the landings.

(Ibid, p. 340)

The greatest advance made by 29 Inf Div on 7 Jun was along the coast to St.. Pierre-du-Mont. Elsewhere, the

division was able to advance little more than a mile from its original, narrow D Day beachhead. Although the division's territorial gains were not striking, "in reality the crust of enemy defenses was broken and the division was set for a full scale attack [on Isigny] on the morrow" (Ibid, p. 341). The attack to link up V and VII Corps beachheads, launched late on 7 Jun, made good progress during the following day. By the night of 8/9 Jun Isigny had been entered and cleared. By this time also the remainder of the division had established itself on the high ground north of the Aure River. (Ibid, p. 353)

535. From its D Day objective line,

... V Corps ordered a three- division attack designed simply to push out the lodgement area in conformity with the advance of the British on the left.

(Ibid, p. 366)

This move was evidently the outcome of a meeting between Generals Montgomery and Bradley on the morning of 9 Jun. General Bradley writes of this meeting:

Monty had called a meeting that morning at the fishing village of Port-en-Bessin to coordinate First Army movements with those of the British Second Army. Dempsey had plotted an attack south of the unspoiled town of Bayeux, partly to extend his beachhead and partly to envelop Caen from the west.

.....

Two Panzer divisions were dug in before Caen and Dempsey sought to outflank them in his attack from Bayeux. We were to parallel this British attack and drive south in the direction of Caumont. There Gerow was to establish a strong defensive outpost for V Corps.

(Bradley, op cit, pp 282-83)

536. By 9 Jun V Corps had an additional division under its command. This was 2 Inf Div which had started to land on 7 Jun and which became operational on 9 Jun. With a 5000 yard front north of Trévières, and thus in the centre of the corps front, it was given the main corps objective -- seizing the Forêt de Cérisy. 1 Inf Div, flanking 50 (N) Div, was to put its attack in on the left and was to seize the high ground between Agy and Vaubadon on the Bayeux-St. Lô road. 29 Inf Div was to gain the north bank of the Elle River from La Communette west to the Vire. A portion of its forces would also operate west of the Vire to establish contact with VII Corps. (Harrison, op cit, pp 366 ff).

537. "Enemy resistance broke first on either flank of the attack and then disintegrated all through the corps zone" (Ibid, p. 367). By the evening of 10 Jun, 29 Inf Div was in tenuous contact with VII Corps west of the Vire and had also reached the north shore of the Elle. In the centre, the newly landed 2 Inf Div had a more difficult time "because it hit the centre of the 352d Division, which despite the collapse of both wings continued to hold out during 9 Jun in strong defenses about Trévières..." (Ibid, p. 368). By midnight 9 Jun the town was occupied, the enemy commander having been ordered to withdraw to form a new defensive line along the Elle River some six miles to the south. This withdrawal "allowed the 2d Division on 10 June to march to its objectives west and south of the Forêt de Cérisy" (Ibid, p. 369). It was this lack of resistance that influenced General Dempsey to have 7 Armd Div disengage itself from Tilly and move on Villers-Bocage along an axis closer to the American advance (Supra, para 525).

538. Both 1 and 2 Inf Divs spent 11 Jun "virtually out of contact with the enemy, reorganizing the ground won and preparing for a new attack" (Ibid). The situation which had developed was as follows:

The 1st and 2d Divisions on 10 and 11 June were in fact facing a gaping hole in the German lines more than ten miles broad from Berigny due east to Longraye where the Panzer Lehr Division was attacking. This hole grew directly out of the D Day collapse of the left wing of the 716th Division followed by the capture of Bayeux and the smashing of the 352d left flank. The ten-mile-wide corridor opened the way through Caumont to the high wooded terrain in the vicinity of the Bois du Homme and le Bénv-Bocage. Occupation of that high ground would have placed V Corps in a deep southern wedge in Seventh Army lines which the Germans feared could be gradually reinforced and then exploited either to out-flank Caen or move decisively to drive westward toward Avranches.

(Ibid, pp 370-71)

539. The only force available to the enemy to plug the gap was the reconnaissance battalion of 17 SS Pz Gren Div, and it was this unit which 'literally held' the Caumont gap during 10 Jun. (Ibid, p. 372) "Plans were made that day to bring the XLVII Panzer Corps (General Funck) into the gap with the 2d Panzer Division..." (Ibid, p. 373). V Corps troops, meanwhile, had contacted the reconnaissance battalion of 17 SS Pz Gren Div and had been led to believe that it might represent the leading elements of an armoured counter-attack which had been expected since D Day. This belief was soon dispelled and the attack went on. After the rest and reorganization of the corps on 11 Jun,

... V Corps mounted a new attack, this time with the deepest southward penetration planned on the left flank of the 1st Division zone. This was designed primarily to assist the British Second Army attempt to outflank Caen.

(Ibid, p. 374)

1 Inf Div's advance to the high ground at Caumont would protect the right flank of 7 Armd Div's advance on Villers down the valley of the Aure (Supra, paras 525 ff). Conforming to 1 Inf Div's drive to Caumont, 2 and 29 Inf Divs were to continue to push southwest. It was hoped also that V Corps advance would relieve pressure on VII Corps, "which was making the main army effort aimed at the capture of Cherbourg" (Ibid, p. 374).

540. The attack on Caumont, starting on 12 Jun, made good progress. By the evening of the same day 1 Inf Div was on the outskirts of Caumont, astride the Caumont-St. Lô highway. By the following morning the town was cleared. In view of the strong enemy opposition to the British advance, 1 Inf Div was ordered to hold at Caumont while 2 and 29 Inf Divs pushed further south against the enemy in front of St. Lô. These divisions, however, made little headway against stubborn resistance by the enemy's 3rd Parachute Division and the remnants of the 352nd Infantry Division. On 13 Jun, therefore,

... the V Corps attack toward St. Lô was halted by order of General Bradley. The Carentan-Isigny link between his two corps was still thin and weak, and despite success in beating off the attack of 17th SS Panzer Grenadier Division, it still seemed possible that the enemy might try again. Furthermore, XIX Corps was just becoming operational in this area and it was necessary to adjust troop assignments between the corps.

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In calling off the southward push, General Bradley was also influenced by the desire to avoid a general engagement of V Corps which might absorb resources needed for First Army's main effort -- the VII Corps attack to cut the peninsula and take Cherbourg. Finally, since the British seemed to be stopped north of Tilly-sur-Seulles, any advance by V Corps would expose both flanks to possible enemy armoured attack.

(Ibid, pp 376-77)

541. (ii) VII Corps The fighting in the VII Corps area, as with the other Allied corps "aimed first at clearing the beachhead already staked out and second at pushing on toward D-Day objectives" (Harrison, op cit, p. 341). On 7 Jun 4 Inf Div managed to drive the enemy back some two miles to the north. In the centre of the corps, "the day was occupied chiefly with eliminating the strong enemy forces south of Ste. Mere-Eglise who on D Day had prevented firm junction between the 8th Infantry on the south and the 82d Airborne Division" (Ibid, p. 342). An enemy armoured attack on Ste. Mere-Eglise was beaten back, and at the end of 8 Jun "the enemy had retired west of the Merderet River..." (First United States Army Report..., op cit, p. 48). 82 A/B Div was unable to complete its D Day task of establishing a bridgehead over the Merderet. Indeed, "during the morning of 7 Jun it was touch and go whether a determined enemy counterattack might not break the division's hold on the east bank of the river" (Harrison, op cit, p. 345).

542. The task of capturing Carentan, the first step in joining UTAH with OMAHA beachheads, was given to 101 A/B Div. This proved to be a far more difficult operation than 29 Inf Div's capture of Isigny. Stubborn resistance by an enemy who realized the strategic value of the town, together with geographical factors which favored its defence, resulted in Carentan holding out until the early morning hours of 12 Jun. For the final assault, 101 A/B Div had to be reinforced by other units from VII Corps. The operation was also supported by elements from 29 Inf Div of V Corps, (with whom contact had been made by 10 Jun) operating in the eastern sector of the six-mile area between Isigny and Carentan. The enemy had scarcely been forced out of Carentan when he tried to regain the town by attacking it with 17 SS Pz Gren Div. This attack, coming in on 13 Jun, forced the Americans back to within 500 yards of the town before it was repulsed and the positions regained. By this time also

...V and VII Corps were securely joined, although the strip between them still lacked depth for adequate communications and defense. First Army, however, now had resources to deepen it and on 13 Jun the mission was assigned to XIX Corps, which became operational the next day.

(Ibid, p. 365)

543. After the lodgement area was cleared, VII Corps "organized a full-scale attack to the north" (Ibid, p. 386). This attack was launched mainly by 4 Inf Div along the wide corridor between the sea and the Merderet. Slow but steady progress was made, with resistance stiffening as the troops reached the enemy's main defensive line which stretched "north along the railroad from le Ham to Montebourg and thence northeast following the main highway to Quineville" (Ibid, p. 387).

This line held the enemy's "last prepared defensive positions south of the Cherbourg Landfront (landward fortifications of the port)" (Ibid, p. 388). By 14 Jun, after four days of hard fighting, 4 Inf Div had cleared the enemy from the corridor up to this main defensive line, but it was temporarily unable to advance beyond it.

544. Meanwhile,

On the VII Corps west flank on the Merderet River a similar delay of about a week in reaching D-Day objectives was caused principally by the original accidents that befell the airborne drops and by terrain difficulties in subsequent attempts to force the river crossing.

(Ibid, p. 396)

Hard fighting during 7 Jun by troops determined to gain a bridgehead across the Merderet was ultimately successful, and by 8 Jun the bridgehead was consolidated. "With all units west of the Merderet at last brought within a single bridgehead, the crossing was ready for exploitation in the first step of the major corps effort to cut westward across the peninsula" (Ibid, p. 401). This mission was given to 90 Inf Div, which had commenced landing on D Day. The attack, launched early on the morning of 10 Jun, went badly from the start, and it was not until 13 Jun that the division "struggled to its initial objectives roughly on a line from Gourbesville to Pont l'Abbé" (Ibid, p. 402). The poor showing of 90 Inf Div resulted in the divisional commander and two of his regimental commanders being relieved of their command.

545. The Corps Commander then decided to reorganize his attack scheme. 9 Inf Div and 82 A/B Div were ordered to pass through 90 Inf Div and seal off the peninsula. This attack began on 14 Jun, the day when 4 Inf Div, attacking north was forced to a halt. On 15 Jun, therefore, the Corps Commander ordered that "the main effort of the corps ...would be to cut the peninsula" (Ibid, p. 406). The attack to close the enemy's corridor on the western side of the peninsula went well.

By the end of 16 June, the 9th and 82d Division together had broken the last enemy defenses east of the Douve in their zones and had given impetus to what looked like a precipitate German withdrawal that might be followed rapidly to the sea. As a matter of fact, the way was open, and the withdrawal was actually the retreat of disorganized remnants; the 91st Division had been smashed beyond repair.

(Ibid, p. 408)

By 18 Jun, the last enemy road leading from the Cherbourg peninsula was in American hands and the advance to secure the port of Cherbourg itself again became the main corps objective.

(h) Air Force

546. The strength of Allied air power which was launched in support of the ground forces during D Day continued to protect and further the "NEPTUNE" operations during the first week of the assault. In the opinion of Air Chief Marshal Leigh-Mallory, the most important contribution which the air forces could make once the armies had joined in battle was to continue the work of dislocating the enemy's transportation system and so "... to impose the maximum delay and to inflict the heaviest casualties on the flow of reinforcements and supplies to the enemy armies" (Leigh-Mallory, op cit, p. 61). On D plus 1, Leigh-Mallory drew a line around the tactical area

... beyond which enemy movement by rail to the battle zone could not proceed. R.A.F. Bomber Command attacked Rennes, Alençon, Fougères, Mayenne and Pontaubault and followed up with attacks on the next two nights, on Dreux, Evreux and Achères. Within the boundary of the tactical area thus drawn, A.E.A.F. fighter bombers caused such destruction that after three days, all railway and major road movement by day had been virtually halted.

(Ibid. See also Appx "O" to this Report)

Outside the tactical area fighters of the United States VIII Air Force hammered away at enemy rail and road transport, while at night, inside the tactical area, specially trained R.A.F. crews harassed enemy movement.

547. On 12 Jun Air Chief Marshal Leigh-Mallory

...re-drew the boundary of the tactical area as follows - along the Seine to Vernon, thence to Dreux, Chartres, Le Mans, Laval and St. Nazaire. Within that area the tactical air forces policed all roads and railways. Outside that area the United States Eighth Air Force was busy attacking the Loire bridges to prevent any reinforcements from the south....

(Ibid)

548. The weather during June, which severely hampered air operations in general* had less effect on R.A.F. Bomber Command operations.

On every one of the seven nights after

*"For a whole fortnight after 6th June the weather was most unfavorable for air attack either by day or by night, with 6/10th to 10/10th cloud prevailing, and often hanging low, and it was a remarkable achievement that Bomber Command should have been able to operate in support of the invasion as it did..." (W.J. Lawrence, No. 5 Bomber Group. R.A.F., 1939-1945 (London, 1951), p. 193).

D Day Bomber Command was able to operate, mostly against roads and railways of immediate tactical importance, and, with the American heavy bombers largely inactive because of the unfavorable weather, this was of critical importance for the success of the invasion. Besides bombing railways, we were able to block essential road junctions by blowing up buildings round them and choking the cross-road with debris...; we were now able to keep the German reserves out of the battlefield during a most critical period by a whole series of heavy and extremely accurate attacks.

(Harris, op cit, p. 209)

549. Aside from the many and diverse operations in which the air forces were engaged -- such as reconnaissance, protecting the main naval approaches, giving direct support to the ground forces, acting as aerial observation posts, bringing in and escorting troop carriers, supplying the airborne forces, and so forth -- great attention was paid to air cover for the beachhead.

Commencing at 0430 hours on D Day and continued throughout the daylight hours during the assault period, a continuous fighter cover was maintained at nine squadrons strength over the whole assault area.

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The scale of effort described above was maintained, whenever weather permitted, until 13th June, when the force involved was reduced to three low cover and two high cover squadrons. All these squadrons operated from England.

.....

The strength of squadrons based on the continent was gradually built up in the first fourteen days of the operation; eight Spitfire, three Typhoon and three Auster squadrons moved in to, and were operating from, beachhead airfields *

*"The first British squadrons to land in France since 1940 were Nos. 130 and 303 which put down at 1200 hours on D plus 4 on a strip on "Gold" area. They were quickly followed by No. 144 (R.C.A.F.) Fighter Wing, consisting of Nos. 441, 442, and 443 squadrons, which at 1637 hours that same day, were airborne for a sweep" (Leigh-Mallory, op cit, p. 71). For a detailed description of the planning, location, construction, etc., of landing grounds in the Normandy campaign see (HS) 693.3013 (D1): Royal Engineers Battlefield Tour, Normandy to the Seine (B.A.O.R., 1946), Chapter VII, "The Construction of the First Landing Grounds in France."

by the end of this period.

During the following week, United States forces began moving in and nine Thunderbolt and three Mustang squadrons arrived. A further British contingent of one Spitfire, three Typhoon and one Auster squadrons arrived to make a total of thirty-one Allied squadrons operating from beach-head airfields three weeks after D Day.

(Leigh-Mallory, op cit, pp 69-71)

550. The reduction of the Allied air effort over the beachhead area was a result of the unexpectedly weak enemy air resistance. This weakness, it was felt, was due to the enemy's need to protect the Reich, to the destruction of his airfield facilities, to his lack of fuel and lubricants and to the difficulty he experienced in replacing consumed stocks. (Ibid, p. 71; see also supra, para 310) Although greatly weakened, the German Air Force was by no means impotent.

Throughout June, the [enemy] squadrons which showed the most aggressiveness were bomber units which operated by night, principally on sea mining in shipping lanes but also on bombing operations against shipping in the approach lanes and against the beaches. The fighter units operated mainly in a defensive role against Allied bomber attacks....

(Ibid, pp 71-72)

551. Mention has already been made of the air attacks against enemy submarines on D Day (supra, paras 316-317). Once the Allies had landed in Normandy, the U-Boats in the Bay of Biscay made every effort to reach the Channel and cut the Allies' waterborne line of communications and supply. R.A.F. Coastal Command, supported by aircraft from A.E.A.F., had anticipated the enemy's reaction.

The air patrols which had been planned to counter this move were already being flown and successes soon materialized. Off the Brest Peninsula and in the mouth of the Channel, thirty-six U-Boats were sighted by Coastal Command in the first four days of the assault and twenty-three were attacked. Six were destroyed and four seriously damaged. Sixteen of the attacks were at night.

.....

In almost every case the enemy fought back desperately with his anti-aircraft

armament, for in those four days the U-Boats were in too much of a hurry to be able to proceed submerged. They inflicted a high proportion of casualties on our attacking aircraft, but very few got through. Prisoners of war from the U-Boats have told us that the penetration of the Channel was a nightmare.

After D plus 4 the enemy was forced to change his tactics. During their sojourn in the Bay ports almost all the U-Boats had been fitted with the exhaustible air intake (Schnorkel), and from the fourth day of the assault until the end of June sighting mainly consisted of periscopes and 'Schnorkels' of U-Boats trying to get through by remaining submerged continuously

Between D plus 4 and the end of June forty-seven sightings of U-Boats were made by Coastal Command in southern waters and twenty-four were attacked. During this period at least one more U-Boat was sunk by aircraft and two kills were shared with ships of the Royal Navy, who were taking an ever increasing part in the policing of the Channel and its approaches. In addition, aircraft damaged another four U-Boats and shared with the Navy in damaging a fifth.

(Sholto Douglas, op cit,
pp 5127-28)

552. While these anti-submarine operations were underway, air attacks

... against enemy surface vessels, including naval vessels, were made by aircraft of A.E.A.F. and by R.A.F. Coastal Command. The first of these actions took place on the 6th June, when the enemy endeavoured to bring into action three heavy destroyers from the west coast of France. These ships were attacked west of Brest by R.A.F. Coastal Command. Some damage was caused, one was set on fire and the ships were delayed. On 3th June, they again attempted to move, but were met by Allied destroyers. One was sunk, one driven ashore and the third forced back to Brest.

(Leigh-Mallory, op cit, p. 77)

Smaller enemy surface vessels also received attention from the air.

One the night of 7th June, Beaufighters and Albacores attacked a formation of E-boats in the Channel; two E-boats were sunk and a further three damaged.

(Ibid)

(h) Navy

553.. The first week of the assault was a busy one for the Allied naval forces.* Upon their shoulders, rested the responsibility of nourishing the armies ashore while ensuring the stream of men and material essential for the 'build-up' remained uninterrupted. Thus during this period

... Task Force, Assault Force and Assault Group Commanders were fully occupied in combating the various forms of attack which the enemy tried to bring against the assault area, whilst at the same time developing their organizations, first afloat and later ashore, in order to speed up the unloading and turn round of shipping and craft.

(Report by the Allied Naval
Commander-in-Chief...,
op cit, p. 14)

554. Possibly the most aggravating type of attack on the naval forces was enemy bombers laying mines, especially pressure mines, in the sea lanes. These attacks were "almost impossible to prevent", and added further burden to the hard-working mine-sweepers engaged in widening the original ten lanes swept on D Day.** (Ibid). On the whole, attacks by enemy surface vessels were easier to cope with.

During the night of 6th/7 June, enemy R-Boats came out from Havre and E-Boats from Cherbourg. Both were intercepted by our coastal forces and the enemy was forced to retire after suffering damage. Similar sorties were made almost nightly from Havre and Cherbourg during the next few weeks but the measures taken by Task Force Commanders nearly always prevented the enemy from penetrating the protecting screen.

(Ibid, p. 13)

*The United States' contribution to the Allied naval forces engaged in "NEPTUNE" operations was "about 124,000 United States naval officers and men..." (Admiral Ernest J. King, U.S. Navy at War, 1941-1945 (Washington, 1946), p. 137). "By 1 June, when the loading of troops began, 2,493 United States Navy ships and craft had been assembled for the operation, and of these only 14 were unable to take part because of material difficulties" (Ibid).

**"The sweeping of the ten approach channels was the largest single minesweeping operation ever undertaken in war; 309 British, 16 Canadian, and 22 United States minesweepers took part" (Mr. A.V. Alexander, First Lord of the Admiralty, The Times, (London), 8 Mar 45).

555. It was not until D plus 3 that heavier enemy surface units attempted to strike at "NEPTUNE" operations. Early in the morning of 9 Jun an Allied destroyer force, (which included two Canadian destroyers* - H.M.C.S. Huron and Haida),

... consisting of eight destroyers operating under the orders of Commander-in-Chief, Plymouth, made contact with four enemy destroyers 20 miles north-west of the Iles de Bras. A spirited action followed, which resulted in two of the enemy being destroyed and the other two being damaged. This action virtually ended the threat to 'NEPTUNE' convoys from attack by enemy destroyers.

(Ibid, p. 14)

556. While ships and craft guarding the approaches of the Allied 'bridge to France' were combating enemy surface and submarine attempts to penetrate their protective screen, naval forces continued to give supporting fire to the army.

From D Day onwards Battleships, Monitors, Cruisers, Destroyers and L.C.G. (L) engaged enemy targets ashore until our armies had advanced beyond the range of their guns. Ships and craft on both flanks engaged coast defence batteries when these fired on our shipping or at the beaches.

(Ibid)

On the British sector, after D plus three

... Forces "J" and "G" required only one cruiser each to answer the few calls for fire; the remainder of the bombarding ships were accordingly disposed to cover the SWORD beaches and to support 1st Corps' operations between the sea and Caen.

(Report by Naval Commander, Eastern Task Force, op cit, p. 12)

557. The build-up of the army began almost immediately after the assault forces and their equipment had been put shore. Eight ship convoys were due to arrive on D plus 1 in the assault area. "The convoys all arrived on time but unloading was severely restricted

*For a graphic account of this action and the part played by Canadian destroyers see Schull, op cit, pp 286-95.

due to the unfavorable weather..." (Report by the Allied Naval Commander-in-Chief..., p. 12). However,

From p.m. D plus 1 until D plus 8 better weather enabled the rate of build-up to be progressed, despite some shortage of ferry craft due to casualties from the first two days. Convoys sailed from the U.K. and arrived in France on time. As had been anticipated, some difficulties naturally arose initially in the assault area with regard to the great volume of shipping that had to be unloaded and sailed back to England. This resulted in a slower turn round than had been planned, and for a period there was some shortage of ships to be reloaded in the U.K.

(Ibid, p. 13)

Some idea of the scale of sea traffic to and from the "NEPTUNE" area may be gathered when one realizes that during the first week of the assault, on an average day the following number of ships and craft arrived off the assault coast:

25 'Liberty' ships, 38 Coasters, 40 L.S.T., 75 L.C.T., 9 Personnel ships, 30 L.C.I.(L). The identification, unloading, marshalling and sailing of such a volume of shipping off an open coast was a gigantic problem....

(Ibid, Appx 9)

Further information regarding the build-up is given below.

THE BEGINNING OF THE BUILD-UP

558. The whole structure of the campaign during June 1944 rests on two opposing factors -- the Allied build-up and the German reinforcement of troops containing the bridgehead.

(a) The Allied Build-up

559. The Allied build-up, which commenced on D Day, gained momentum daily as an ever-increasing amount of men and equipment flowed across the Channel to the Normandy beaches. As we have seen, it was correctly anticipated by the Allied commanders that the enemy would do everything in his power to deny us the use of any ports (Supra, para 172). To alleviate the lack of port facilities, therefore, the Allied planners had conceived and put into operation a plan for bringing prefabricated harbours to the beaches (Supra, paras 49-50). A.H.Q. Report No. 42 sketches the planning period of the now-famous "Mulberry" harbours and the construction of their component parts in the United Kingdom prior to D Day. Here it will be sufficient to describe briefly their construction and operation in France in relation to the build-up.

560. The tremendous amount of material, labour and time needed for the organization, construction and assembly of the "Mulberries" in the United Kingdom meant, in effect, that the fabrication of their component parts had to be well underway many months before D Day. Originally, the "Mulberries" were designed to serve the invasion of Normandy as envisioned by General Morgan, and when COSSAC's plans were strengthened from a three- to a five-division seaborne assault on a broader front, it was too late to increase the scope and capacity of the two "Mulberries". (Hickling and Mackillop, op cit, p. 3) Nevertheless, "the enlarged scope of the assault and build-up involved a material increase in the number of minor craft to be employed and the MULBERRIES by themselves would not be able to shelter them all" (Ibid). It was decided, therefore, to provide small-craft shelters, called "Gooseberries", one for each assault beach. Each "Gooseberry" would "provide protection from the weather ... [and] give facilities for landing craft to be serviced and repaired and for their crews to get meals and rest" (Rear-Admiral H. Hickling, "The Prefabricated Harbour", R.U.S.I. Journal, August 1945, p. 272).

561. Basically, the main difference between a "Mulberry" and a "Gooseberry" was that the former had a larger and stronger breakwater and was provided with "Whale" piers. These latter were either "Stores" or "L.S.T." piers, and each consisted in the main of two principal elements, the pierheads and the floating pier roadway connecting the pierhead to the shore. The breakwaters were fashioned from blockships (codenamed "Corncocks"); "Bombardons", 200-foot floating steel break-

waters (a mile long when positioned outside the harbours); and "Phoenixes", huge concrete ships which formed the outer breakwater and the side arms of the harbour. "Mulberry 'B'", which served the British Second Army at Arromanches, used and improved the blockship breakwater of the "Gold" Beach "Gooseberry" located in the same position.

562. Prior to D Day all the components of the harbour were organized and assembled in suitable anchorages on the south coast of England as convenient as possible to the Normandy coast.

This involved a total of over 600 tows from all round the coast of Great Britain; 200 tugs were fully occupied for three months and ... the job was only just completed in time to enable the tugs to be serviced and ready to take on the second job of the cross-Channel tows.

(Hickling and Mackillop,
op cit, p. 24)

563. The towing of the "Phoenixes", "Bombardons", and other parts of the harbours, across the Channel was accomplished with greater speed and fewer craft casualties than had been expected. (Ibid, p. 27) In the Canadian sector, the first "Corncob" blockships arrived in the early afternoon of D plus 1 as the first step in constructing "Gooseberry No. 4", at Courseulles. (Report of Naval Commander, Force "J") The following day construction of the "Gooseberry" began* and was completed on D plus 4, "all ships being very neatly planted as planned" (Ibid, p. 15). All "Gooseberries" were completed by D plus 5. Moreover,

By D Plus 8, the Bombardon had been finished and was giving very good results with a wave suppression of about 40 per cent. By D plus 10 the Mulberry breakwaters were about half completed and the Whale Piers about one-third.

(Hickling, op cit, p. 281)

*On this day (8 Jun) also, "the port of Courseulles was opened to traffic and proved most suitable for working L.B.V. [Landing Barge, Vehicle] and minor landing craft except for two hours either side of low water" (Report of Naval Commander, Force "J", p. 13). The Commander goes on to say: "It was not long before Courseulles was handling 1,000 tons of stores per day..." (Ibid). The "Juno" anchorage was further improved by the construction of Naval Landing pontoons. On 9 Jun a 700-foot length of these pontoons was built out near the entrance to Courseulles harbour, and two more such lengths were constructed on the following day. These were used for discharging L.C.T. and for landing troops "dry-shod".

In the meantime, the flow of men and material across the Channel continued unabated.

564. While the "Gooseberries" and "Mulberries" were being constructed, men, vehicles and stores were being unloaded on the open beaches. As early as 1800 hrs, 8 Jun, 21,400 marching personnel, 3,200 loaded vehicles and 2,500 tons of bulk stores had been discharged on "Juno" Beach. (Report of Naval Commander, Force "J") The beaching of Stores Coasters and L.S.T. greatly aided the rate of discharge and permitted more economical use of smaller craft used for transferring material to the beach. By 13 Jun, when the "Gooseberry" shelter had been in operation for three days, a total of 56,773 marching personnel, 14,589 loaded vehicles and 19,710 tons of bulk stores had been moved over the "Juno" beaches alone. (Ibid)

565. Discharge of cargo "commenced at MULBERRY B on D plus 7 and exceeded 2,000 tons per day by D plus 10..."* (Hickling and Mackillop, op cit, p. 27). "Mulberry 'B'" was not yet complete, however. All the "Phoenixes" had not been 'planted', nor were the pierheads and roadways assembled to enable vehicles to be accepted from L.S.T. in the harbour. Before the final touches could be made, a critical situation arose which was to test fully the worth of both "Mulberries" and "Gooseberries". Admiral Ramsay describes it as follows:

On 19 Jun a north-easterly gale, unexpected and unforecast, began and at once stopped all unloading to the beaches. Conditions deteriorated rapidly and a large number of landing craft was soon in difficulties. Steps were taken to stop the sailing of further build-up convoys, but some of those already at sea had to continue, to prevent congestion in U.K. anchorages. Additional tugs were despatched to the Far Shore to assist ships and craft in difficulty until the weather moderated. Casualties were suffered by MULBERRY tows that were already at sea and all further sailings of these had also to be stopped. By 20th June a large number of ferry craft had been stranded by the onshore wind and had received serious damage. All the unloading was on this day suspended, although a quantity of stores had been discharged the two previous days in the shelter of MULBERRY B.... To meet this situation it was decided to dry out, regardless of risk of damage, a number of stores coasters and all L.S.T. awaiting discharge. It had previously

*"Mulberry 'B'" was designed to supply 7,000 tons of stores a day irrespective of weather. In addition, the harbour was to handle 1,200 vehicles a day. (Hickling and Mackillop, op cit, pp 1-2)

been considered that L.S.T. should not dry out except in an emergency, but the operation was so successful when attempted on a large scale that thereafter this became the normal method of discharge. Coasters were also beached successfully and only a few of these ships suffered damage. By the 21st June it was apparent that the continued high seas were seriously damaging the MULBERRIES. The BOMBARDONS protecting both harbours broke adrift and sank and generally proved useless to withstand weather with force 6 and above. The damage to blockships and the PHOENIX breakwaters was far more severe at MULBERRY A (ST. LAURENT) than at ARROMANCHES. GOOSEBERRY I [serving "Gold Beach" at Ouistreham] also lost all protective value.*

(Report by the Allied
Naval Commander-in-Chief,
op cit, p. 16)

566. The damage to "Mulberry 'A'" in the American sector was indeed severe.** Admiral King, U.S.N., describes it as follows:

When the storm ended on the morning of 22 June, the beach was a shambles. More than 300 craft had been washed up high and dry, many of them damaged beyond salvage. The only ferry craft undamaged were the DUKW's, which had remained safely parked ashore during the storm.

The blockships of the "Gooseberry" shelter had held together, although several of them had broken their backs and all had settled, but the storm had been disastrous to the "Mulberry". The concrete caissons had either broken apart or had become submerged in the bottom sands. The roadway to one of the Loebnitz pierheads had been smashed

*The First Lord of the Admiralty, Mr. A.V. Alexander, stated that "June, 1944, was the worst June of the present century" (Mr. A.V. Alexander presenting the Naval Estimates for 1945, The Times, 8 Mar 45). Of the storm, Admiral Hickling states: "it blew... such a summer gale from the North as had not been known in eighty years; it was a gale which was comparable only to that which in 1588 dispersed the Spanish Armada, and had we not had the Gooseberries and the half-completed Mulberries I think the Allied Armada would have shared the same fate as the Spanish..." (Hickling, op cit, p. 281).

**For the full story of "Mulberry 'A'", see Commander Alfred Stanford, Force Mulberry (New York, 1951).

by the impact of LCT's driven against it, and many of its pontoons were flooded. The causeway had held together but was twisted. Many of the steel caissons had carried away from their moorings and had drifted about as a menace to shipping. Others were flooded and half submerged.

(Admiral King, op cit, p. 141)

567. On the whole "NEPTUNE" area, an army estimate suggested "that from 19th to 24th June inclusive the unloading loss due to the gale was in the neighbourhood of 20,000 vehicles and 140,000 tons of stores" (Report by the Allied Naval Commander-in-Chief..., op cit, p. 16). "From the naval point of view, the most serious result of the gale was the stranding of about 800 craft of all types..." (Ibid). The build-up had been dealt a severe -- but by no means a decisive -- blow. Fortunately, on land, as we shall see, the armies were firmly established and aggressive. The enemy, who had no idea the Allies would bring their own harbours and shelters with them, were unable to take advantage of a time when these were rendered almost useless by the storm. Allied air activity had seen to that.

568. After the gale recovery was rapid.

All hands set to work to clear up the mess and to recommence the discharge of stores and vehicles; four days after the storm, the daily overall discharge had risen to 40,000 tons of cargo and the backlog of MT ships -- there were 55 on the British sector alone -- had been cleared in addition to subsequent current sailings.

(Hickling and Mackillop, op cit, p. 29)

The "Mulberries", however, had been badly battered, especially "Mulberry 'A'". "The British harbour though breached, had managed to survive and discharge in the harbour never actually ceased; even on the worst day of the storm some 800 tons of sorely needed ammunition was landed (Ibid). After a survey was made of the damage on the American beaches, it was decided

... to write off MULBERRY A as a harbour and to concentrate all the remaining equipment, including that which could be salvaged, on MULBERRY B; it was, however, decided to restore the GOOSEBERRY at MULBERRY A and to make it into an enlarged craft shelter by double banking the blockships with suitable PHOENIX equipment.

(Ibid, p. 30)

569. By the end of June, the grand total of ship and craft arrivals in France was as follows:

570	'Liberty' ships
180	Personnel ships
788	Coasters
905	L.S.T.
1,442	L.C.T.
372	L.C.I. (N).

(Report by the Allied Naval
Commander-in-Chief...,
op cit, Appx 9)

Daily rates of discharge of personnel, vehicles and stores over the three British beaches is given in the Report by the Naval Commander, Eastern Task Force, p. 14.

570. Admiral Ramsay's conclusions on the success of the build-up may be quoted:

...so far as I know, the position of the Expeditionary Force was never in doubt from D plus 2 onwards. The naval view had always been that the build-up plan should be an optimum plan at which we should aim but that its attainment was most improbable....

(Ibid, p. 18)

This opinion coming from one of the joint Commander-in-Chief, is a most important one. It was meant to refute the claim that the Royal Navy had not achieved the fullest possible results in the build-up.

(b) The Enemy Build-up

571. In his "Estimation of the situation on 11 June, 1944", Field Marshal Rommel wrote:

The course of the fighting in Normandy so far clearly shows that the objectives of the enemy are:

- (1) To establish a deep bridgehead between the Orne and the Vire as a base for a later attack with strong forces into central France....
- (2) To cut off the Cotentin peninsula and to take Cherbourg as quickly as possible, in order to gain a large and servicable harbour.

((HS) 981.013 (D46): German Situation Reports in Normandy, May-October, 1944)

Rommel went on to say that stubborn resistance by German coastal forces had slowed the course of Allied operations, despite the fact that the Anglo-Americans were employing

the "most powerful means of warfare" (Ibid). He continued:

The enemy is visibly reinforcing on land, under cover of very strong aircraft formations. The Luftwaffe and our navy are not in a position to offer him appreciable opposition, especially by day. Thus the strength of the enemy on land is increasing more quickly than our reserves can reach the front.

.....

The Army Group must content itself for the present with forming a cohesive front between the Orne and the Vire with the forces which are gradually coming up, and allowing the enemy to advance. In these circumstances it is unfortunately not possible to relieve troops still resisting in many coastal positions. The Army Group is trying to replace the panzer formations in action with infantry divisions as soon as possible, and to form mobile reserves with them.

In the next few days the Army Group intends to remove the centre of its operations to the Carentan-Montebourg area, in order to annihilate the enemy there and to divert the danger threatening Cherbourg. Only when this has been successfully accomplished can the enemy between the Orne and the Vire be attacked. Unfortunately, this operation can no longer be supported by our fighter formations, as there are no longer any airfields near the front at our disposal.*

(Ibid)

Field Marshal Rommel was careful to point out that his Army Group's operations would be rendered "exceptionally difficult, and even partially impossible" by the following conditions:

(a) The extraordinarily strong, and in some respects overwhelming superiority of the enemy Air Forces.

.....

(b) The effect of heavy naval artillery.

.....

(c) The material equipment of the Anglo-Americans with numerous new weapons and war material is far superior to the equipment of our [German] divisions.

(Ibid, p. 16)

*Compare Rommel's intentions with General Montgomery's statement on Rommel's probable action in supra, para 175.

Another condition lay in the possible further use by the Allies of large numbers of parachutists which might change the situation again.

572. Rommel had every reason to be apprehensive over the German build-up as compared with the Allies increasing strength in the bridgehead. As we have seen, by 12 Jun, enemy armoured divisions rushed to the Normandy front to hurl the Allies back into the sea not only failed in their mission but became inextricably engaged in the Normandy battle. During the first week of the assault, other German divisions and battle-groups were ordered to the Normandy front from their stations in Brittany and then from the south of France. On 12 Jun O.B. West was informed that 2 SS Pz Corps would be brought from the Russian front and placed at his disposal. On the same day, 1 SS Pz Corps was promised 1 SS Pz Div, then stationed in Belgium, "in the near future" (A.H.Q. Report No 50, paras 53 ff).

573. No attempt was made at this time, however, to employ any of the numerous infantry field or coastal static divisions north of the Seine defending the strongest section of the Atlantic Wall. The main reason for leaving Fifteenth Army's dispositions relatively undisturbed

...was the conviction of the highest commanders that a major blow, if not the main blow was about to be delivered further north, most likely at the Belgian coast. This ... is fully revealed by many entries in the War Diary of Fifteenth Army. Only fleeting thought was given to transfers from AOK 15 to AOK 7.

(Ibid, para 54)

It is no exaggeration to say that the enemy's build-up in Normandy was governed by the failure of his own Intelligence and the success of "FORTITUDE", the Allied deception plan (Supra, paras 51-63). As we have seen, long before the Normandy assault had been launched, it had been planned to deceive the Germans into believing that "NEPTUNE" was a preliminary and diversionary operation, designed to draw German reserves away from the Pas de Calais and Belgium. Once this had been accomplished, so the 'story' went, the Allied would launch their main attack through the Pas de Calais. It was this story, therefore, which the enemy had completely accepted -- to an extent far greater than the Allied commanders had imagined or hoped.

574. Rommel's need for infantry divisions to allow him to disengage his panzer divisions later drew the following comment from General Eisenhower:

Lack of infantry was the most important cause of the enemy's defeat in Normandy, and his failure to remedy this weakness was due primarily to the success of the Allies threat

levelled against the Pas de Calais.

.....

I cannot overemphasize the decisive value of this most important threat, which paid enormous dividends, both at the time of the assault and during the operations of the two succeeding months.

(Eisenhower, Report...,
op cit, p. 27)

575. The conviction that the Allies would attack the Pas de Calais is shown again in Rommel's "Estimation of the situation" for the week 12/19 Jun. In this appreciation Rommel noted that the Allies seemed to be concentrating in two particular areas preparatory to an attack into the French interior. These two areas were: (1) between Tilly-sur-Seulles and Caumont and (2) on both sides of the main Bayeux-St. Lo road to take possession of the St. Lo area. A jump-off from either one of these bases, he believed, would come at the same time as the attack on Cherbourg. Rommel continued:

In front of the 15th Army sector the focal points of air attack appeared clearly again as the Channel front on both sides of Cap Gris Nez and on both sides of the Somme. According to enemy regrouping and strategic and technical opportunities, a large-scale enemy landing on the Channel front on both sides of Cap Gris Nez or between the Somme and Le Havre must be expected. The general offensive out of the Normandy bridgehead and a new large scale landing may be made simultaneously, both having the Paris area as objective.

(German Situation Reports
in Normandy, op cit,
"Estimation of the
situation, 12/19 June,
1944")

576. The Allied armoured thrust to Caumont and Villers-Bocage indicated to the enemy "Allied intentions to collapse the Caen front by means of encirclement" (A.H.Q. Report No. 50, para 91). Faced with this possibility, which might parallel a second invasion, Hitler "now realized the necessity of weakening in favour of Normandy all fronts but Fifteenth Army's" (Ibid). In a directive prepared on 14 Jun, and received two days later, O.B. West was informed:

- 88 Corps was to be moved in from First Army.
- Pz Divs now committed were to be relieved by infantry divisions.
- One division was to be made available by each of the following: Armed Forces Commander Netherlands, Fifteenth Army, Nineteenth Army.
- In exchange, Fifteenth Army was to receive 363 ~~Inf Div~~ from Denmark, and 87 Inf Div from Norway; Nineteenth Army was to receive 198 Inf Div and small units from the home area.

(Ibid)

Thus, incredible as it may seem, Fifteenth Army was to be reinforced with an additional infantry division, so creating a situation whereby there was almost double the number of enemy divisions deployed in the quiescent Fifteenth Army area as in the active Seventh Army area. This was indeed a triumph of Allied deception, and again serves to illustrate how the success of "FORTITUDE" played a decisive part in slowing the German build-up well beyond previous Allied estimates (Supra, para 173).

577. In the welter of post-war accusations and counter-accusations by the German field commanders in France, there occurs time and again a hard core of agreement concerning the destructive influence of Hitler's constant interference in military tactics. Guided by his intuition, supremely confident of his own ability, and distrustful of his own military commanders, he insisted on keeping the tactical as well as the strategical reins in his own hands. This, quite naturally, placed his field commanders in the unenviable position of bearing the responsibility for a campaign without having the full control and management of their own forces. It restricted especially the field commander's power to manoeuvre his forces as he saw fit, which in turn resulted in lessening both the defensive and offensive abilities of his command and so drained the strength of his divisions. This situation, existing during the battle of Normandy as it had in other theatres at other times, shows up clearly in the meeting between Hitler, von Rundstedt and Rommel on 17 Jun at Margival. Some of the highlights of this meeting have been summarized as follows:

...Hitler spoke bitterly of his displeasure at the success of the Allied landings, for which he tried to hold his field commanders responsible.

...Rommel frankly described the hopelessness of the struggle against such tremendous superiority in the air, at sea and on the land.

...Rommel declared the 'fortresses' to be a senseless waste of material and men; but he warned in vain.

...Rommel predicted Allied thrusts, one towards Paris, the other to cut off Brittany.

...Rommel demanded unrestricted freedom of action in the West, assignment of first class panzer forces, air cover and naval support. Field Marshal von Rundstedt supported his demands.

...Hitler could not see the truth of this estimate, he confined himself to a monologue on the decisive effects of the guided missiles then being taken into use.

...Jodl promised reinforcements; Hitler talked of 'masses of jet-fighters' to shatter Allied air supremacy.

...Rommel doubted whether the Russian front could be held. He concluded his critical examination of the situation with an urgent request that the war be brought to an end. Hitler cut Rommel off abruptly. The gulf between Hitler and Rommel had widened.

(Ibid, para 99)

The significance of this meeting manifests itself without need for further comment.

578. On 20 Jun, the boundary between the Seventh and Fifteenth Armies was moved eastward to the Seine when 86 Corps, ordered to come under command of Seventh Army on 16 Jun, assumed command of the area between the Seine and the Orne. 711 and 346 Inf Divs, already engaged in the area, were placed under command of this corps. An additional two divisions -- 276 Inf Div from the southern Biscay coast and 16 G.A.F. Div from the Netherlands - had also been ordered to proceed to the corps area.

579. The enemy's rate of build-up, to which Allied commanders paid the closest attention, was well behind expectations. As early as 9 Jun there occurs in "21 Army Group Daily Intelligence Summary" the statement: "The enemy build-up is increasing but not at the breathless rate which had been anticipated..." ((HS) 215A21,023 (D7): Intelligence Summaries, 21st Army Group, 9 Jun 44). Two days later, the Intelligence summary noted that the enemy build-up was six divisions short of an expected 23 or 24 divisions. This, it was believed, was due to the enemy's fear of a second landing at the Pas de Calais, the damage done to the enemy's lines of communications, and the difficulty encountered by the enemy in moving his divisions to the "NEPTUNE" front. (Ibid, 11 Jun 44, Appx "A") Intelligence therefore made a new estimation which stated that "The more probable build-up by D plus 8 is now 6

Panzer - Panzer-Granadier; 2 Para; 10 Infantry: 18 divisions" (Ibid). This estimate, however, was in fact greater than the number of divisions engaged in the Normandy battle or in close reserve on D plus 14. (See Seventh Army Situation Map-20 Jun 44) This was due not to the failure of the enemy to order divisions to reinforce Seventh Army, but to the inability of these divisions to move with any speed to the battle area. The divisions not only experienced extreme difficulty in penetrating Leigh-Mallory's aerial "cordon sanitaire" (supra, paras 546-47) but were greatly hampered by the disruption to their lines of communication by the Allied Air Forces and the activities of the French Resistance. On 20 Jun 2 SS Pz Div was the only one of the panzer - panzer-granadier divisions in the battle area concentrated and positioned for an armoured counter-attack. The remainder, much to the chagrin of their commanders, continued to be held down in an infantry role. Until they could be relieved by infantry divisions, the Allies had little to fear for the safety of their bridgehead.

580. By 20 Jun, the V-1 campaign had been under way for a week. This campaign, upon which Hitler pinned so much faith and his commanders so much hope, began on the night of 12/13 Jun when the first guided missiles were launched against England. As a result of the success of the "CROSSBOW" operations (supra, para 73) during the first months of 1944 against the known V-1 and rocket sites, the enemy began to construct a number of well-camouflaged, modified sites in March, 1944 (Hill, op cit, p. 5590; see also C.M.H.Q. Report No. 137). "By the middle of May twenty such sites had been located, and by the 12th June the number had risen to 66. Forty-two were aligned on London and the rest on Bristol or south-coast ports" (Hill, op cit, p. 5590). Except for one or two experimental attacks on the modified sites prior to the end of May no further attacks were made on them after that date. Several reasons are advanced for this lack of aggressiveness. The new sites were small and well concealed thus making poor bomb targets. Consequently the results of the experimental bombing of the sites were poor. (Ibid) Also,

Unlike the 'ski-sites', they seemed to be intended as launching points and nothing more. The conclusion was that any stocks of pilotless aircraft held locally would not be kept on the sites themselves, but stored elsewhere or dispersed in the wooded country amongst which all the sites were placed.

(Ibid)

There was a further reason which Air Chief Marshal Sir Roderick Hill frankly admits:

I believe, however, that aligned with these causes was a psychological factor. It must be remembered that for many months past the chief threat had seemed to come from the 'ski sites'. The use of our bomber forces against the 'ski sites' had therefore been felt as a necessary,

but still unwelcome, diversion of effort at a time when interest was focussed on the coming European operations. To the officers responsible for directing offensive operations the success of the attacks on the 'ski sites' must have come as a great relief. In the circumstances, they would have been hardly human if they had not been more reluctant than perhaps they realized to recognize that the neutralization of the 'ski sites' had not averted the menace after all.

.....

I think, therefore, that at the end of May and in the first half of June the threat from the 'modified sites' was under-estimated, not in the sense of a failure to apprehend it intellectually, but in the sense that it was not felt as keenly as the original threat from the 'ski sites' six months earlier.

(Ibid, p. 5591)

581. We know now that the V-1 campaign had been ordered to commence on the afternoon of D Day. (Wilmot, op cit, p. 316) Furthermore, the Allied Air Commanders had been correct in their estimate that the pilotless aircraft were not stored near the modified sites, nor was certain material essential to the completion of the sites in the immediate area.

Most of the equipment and materials for completing the sites were still at depots well inland and so was much of the ammunition. Nearly 12,000 flying-bombs had been produced but, as a safeguard against air attack, they were dispersed in dumps scattered throughout Northern France, Belgium and Germany. Between these dumps and the launching sites almost every railway line was out of action. Regardless of these difficulties, Wachtel [the commander of the Flak Regiment 155, which was to conduct the V-1 operations] was instructed that operations much commence on the night of June 12th-13th.

(Ibid, p. 317)

The modest scale of attack which heralded the opening of the V-1 campaign quickly increased in intensity to an average of 100 "flying bombs" (as they came to be called) a day. (Hill, op cit, p. 5592) On 16 Jun Air Chief Marshal Hill gave orders which set in motion a plan, drawn up weeks beforehand, designed to counter the V-1 attacks. (Ibid; supra, para 77) A full story of the V-1 campaign against the United Kingdom is contained in Air Chief Marshal Hill's Despatch.... and in General Pile's Ack-Ack, Britain's Defence Against Air Attack.... Insofar as the battle of Normandy during June is concerned, far more hindrance to the Allied build-up was caused by the 19-22 Jun storm than by the V-1 attacks.

582. In the Canadian sector of the bridgehead, one of the flying bombs was observed flying from north to south over 3 Cdn Inf Div's area on 23 Jun and was forthwith engaged by gunners of 4 Cdn L.A.A. Regt. "Two hits were scored which caused the engine to miss badly," but the flying bomb continued its course into enemy territory (W.D., 4 Cdn L.A.A. Regt, June 1944: Appx 7). For the effect of the V-1 campaign on Canadian troops still in the United Kingdom, see Hist Sec, C.M.H.Q., Report No. 137, Enemy Air Attack & The Canadian Army in the United Kingdom, 1943-1945: The V Weapons.

THE BRITISH-CANADIAN SECTOR, 12-30 JUN

(a) The Defensive Role

583. The period now under review was for the most part one of static warfare for 1 Brit Corps. Caen remained in German hands. Commenting on the enemy's determination to hold the city, General Eisenhower has written:

By his anxiety to prevent the capture of Caen and the eastward extension of our beachhead, the enemy to some extent contributed to the accomplishment of our initial plan insofar as the capture of Cherbourg was concerned, and from D plus 6 or D plus 7 the battle developed in general as foreseen. This enemy anxiety in the east was manifested from D plus 1 onward, following the failure of our attempt to seize the city of Caen in our first rush inland. It was vital for the enemy to deny us the Seine Basin: partly as it afforded the last natural barrier defending the V-1 and V-2 sites; partly because he needed the river ferries to bring over supplies and reinforcements to his divisions in Normandy; partly because he feared a thrust on Paris which would cut off all his forces to the west; partly because he foresaw a threat to Le Havre, which was an invaluable base for his naval craft operating against the approaches to the assault area; but perhaps most of all because he wished to avoid the possibility of a link-up between those Allied forces already ashore and those which he expected to land in the Pas de Calais.

(Eisenhower, Report...,
p. 30)

584. It was only when the western portion of the Allied line had begun to swing southwards like a huge door on its hinge near Caen was it necessary, or feasible, to resume offensive activity in the eastern sector. But if 1 Brit Corps undertook few operations and instead dedicated itself chiefly to a holding role, the initiative nevertheless did not pass to the enemy. This is not to say that offensive operations were not contemplated; in actual fact, as we shall see, intensive planning and preparation went on throughout the period. The atmosphere, so to speak, was decidedly aggressive, and this served to prevent any decline in the morale of the troops.

585. It will be appropriate here to examine the dispositions adopted by 3 Cdn Inf Div in preparation for what appeared to be a static period of uncertain duration. On the right, in the salient where the bridgehead of 3 Cdn Inf Div reached its maximum depth, 7 Cdn Inf Bde held the area Putot-en-Bessin - Norrey-en-Bessin - Secqueville-en-Bessin. The left sector, Vieux Caillon - Les Buissons -

Villons-les-Buissons, was still occupied by 9 Cdn Inf Bde. The central sector along the wooded Mue valley was now guarded by 8 Cdn Inf Bde. 154 Inf Bde of 51 (H) Div was at this time responsible for the area Basly-Anguery, previously held by 8 Cdn Inf Bde; this assured the security of the right sector, which would otherwise have been too thinly held. A substantial armoured reserve was also in existence. On the right, behind 7 Cdn Inf Bde, 2 Cdn Armd Bde was concentrated in a central position based on Camilly. (W.D., H.Q. 2 Cdn Armd Bde, 11 Jun 44) Similarly, on the left, 4 Brit Armd Bde was concentrated around Colomby-sur-Thaon. (Message Log, G.S., H.Q. 3 Cdn Inf Div, 12 Jun 44, Serial 30)

586. The disposition of the armoured brigades was a result of the warning given the Army Commander by his Intelligence (Supra, para 507).

In particular, he [General Dempsey] told Crocker [commanding 1 Brit Corps] to concentrate his armour on the rising ground south of Douvres. 'This bit of ground,' he said, 'is the heart of the British Empire. Don't move your armour from there!'

(Wilmot, op cit, p. 302)

The possibility of an attack from the enemy's salient north and northwest of Caen, which offered the shortest route to the beaches, might lead to most serious consequences. It was over these beaches that the sector east of the Orne was supplied, and interference with these channels of maintenance would effectively cut off and render helpless both 6 Airborne Div and the elements of 51 (H) Div in that sector. For this reason the burden of defence rested mainly on 3 Brit Inf Div and 9 Cdn Inf Bde. This fact was made clear by Maj-Gen Rennie, G.O.C. 3 Brit Inf Div, during a visit to the Canadian formation. It was the British General's view that

...our [9 Cdn Inf Bde] position and that of 3 Br Div was vital as Rommel might try and overrun us with mass attack of tanks and try and capture the beachhead in our rear.

.....

Our role is to hold every German infantryman. If tanks get through they will be mauled by our A tk guns and armour but if no infantry gets through the tanks will have to come back and run the gauntlet again as they cannot stay without infantry. No infantry to pass is the Order of the day.

(W.D., H.Q. 9 Cdn Inf Bde, 13 Jun 44)

Had he attempted to penetrate this area, Rommel would have found that the "heart of the British Empire" was still an extremely healthy organ.