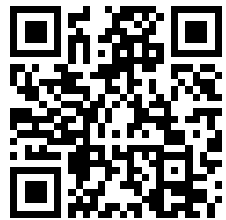
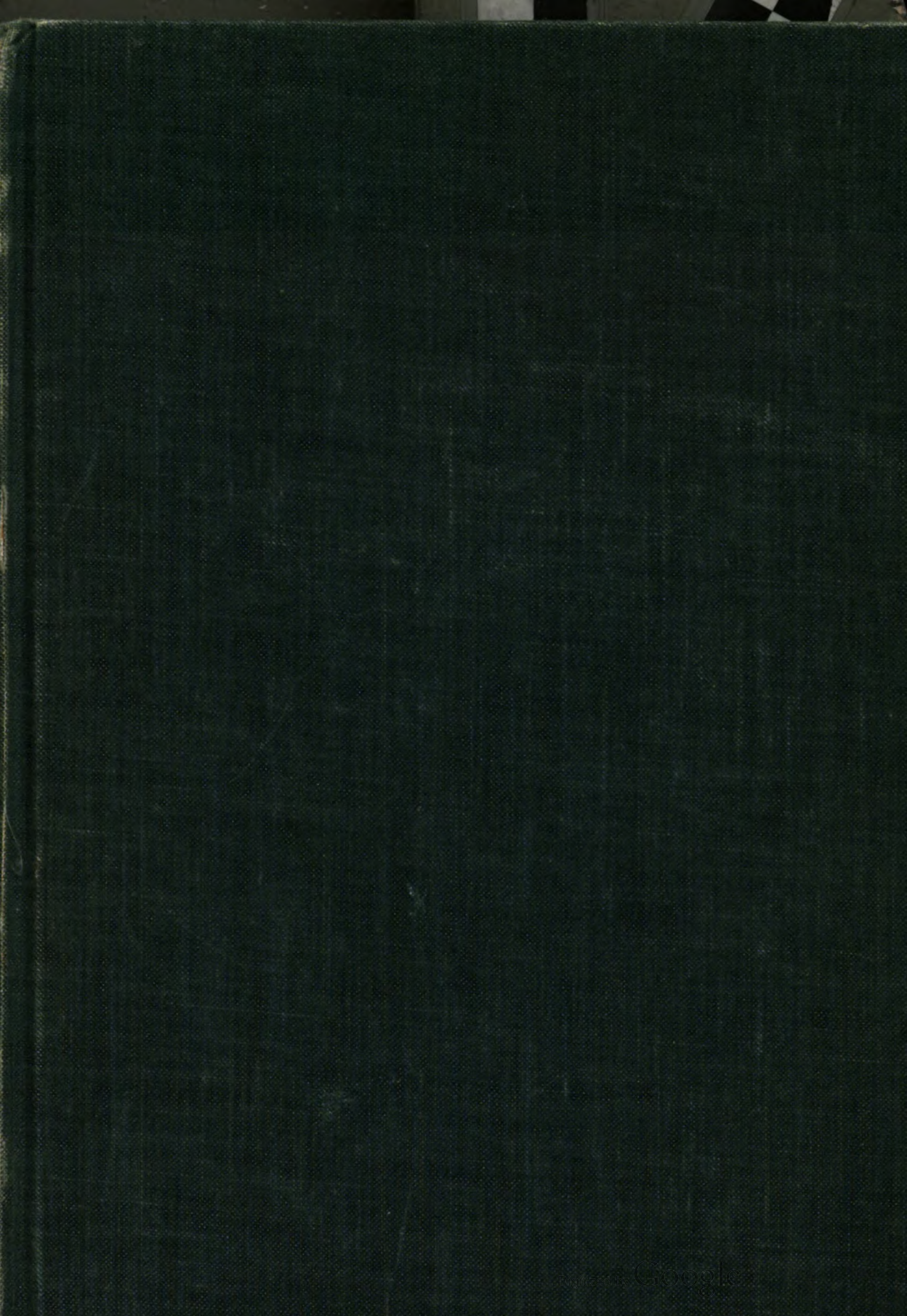

This is a reproduction of a library book that was digitized by Google as part of an ongoing effort to preserve the information in books and make it universally accessible.

Google™ books

<https://books.google.com>





PROPERTY OF

*The
University of
Michigan
Libraries*

1817

ARTES SCIENTIA VERITAS

**HISTORY OF
THE SECOND WORLD WAR
UNITED KINGDOM MILITARY SERIES
Edited by SIR JAMES BUTLER**

The authors of the Military Histories have been given full access to official documents. They and the editor are alone responsible for the statements made and the views expressed.

VICTORY
IN THE WEST

VOLUME II

The Defeat of Germany

BY

MAJOR L. F. ELLIS
C.V.O., C.B.E., D.S.O., M.C.

WITH

LIEUT.-COLONEL A. E. WARHURST

LONDON: 1968

HER MAJESTY'S STATIONERY OFFICE

D
756
.E48
v. 2

First published 1968

© *Crown copyright 1968*

Printed and published by
HER MAJESTY'S STATIONERY OFFICE

To be purchased from
49 High Holborn, London W.C.1
423 Oxford Street, London W.1
13A Castle Street, Edinburgh 2
109 St. Mary Street, Cardiff CF1 1JW
Brazennose Street, Manchester 2
50 Fairfax Street, Bristol 1
258-259 Broad Street, Birmingham 1
7-11 Linenhall Street, Belfast BT2 8AY
or through any bookseller

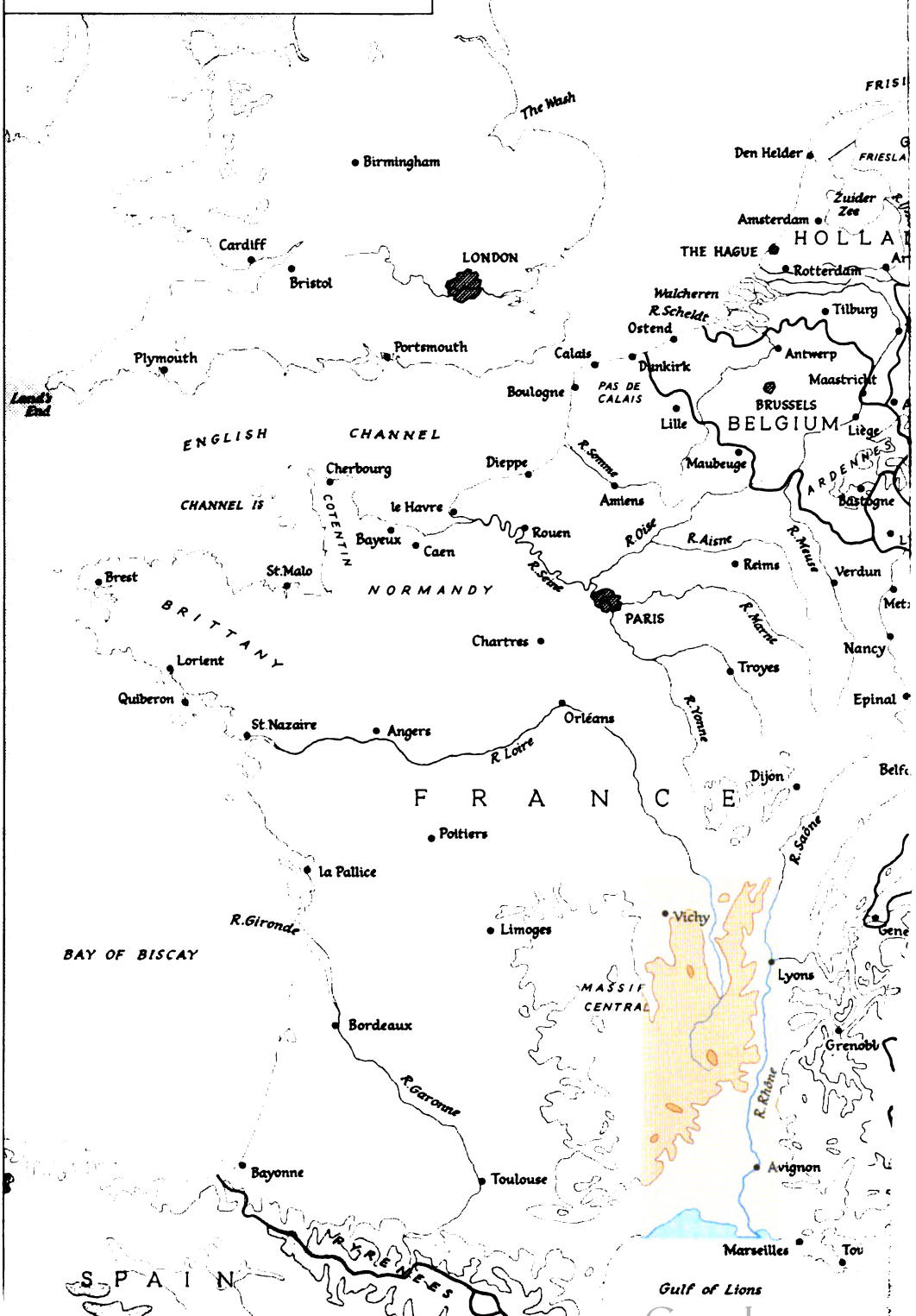
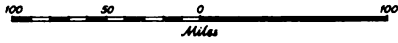
Price £4 10s. od. net

Printed in England

Maps by Ordnance Survey

CENTRAL EUROPE

At the outbreak of war
3rd September 1939



*Stacks
Division
Dutch
590504-128
1-29-70*

CONTENTS

	<i>Page</i>
FOREWORD	xvii
CHAPTER I. ADVANCE INTO BELGIUM	1
Situation in Europe, September 1944	1
Strategy and logistics	1
Second Army's advance to Brussels and Antwerp	4
First Canadian Army across the Somme	6
Montgomery plans seizure of Rhine bridges	7
Twelfth Army Group's progress	8
Eisenhower orders 'broad front' advance	9
Position of German armies	11
Canadians capture le Havre	13
Strategic arguments	16
Quebec Conference, September 1944	18
Control of strategic air forces	19
Eisenhower at Brussels, 10th September	21
Montgomery's directive, 14th September	26
CHAPTER II. THE ARNHEM OPERATION	29
Plan for operation	29
Enemy situation	31
Operation launched, 17th September	31
Nijmegen bridges captured, 20th September	39
XXX Corps' drive to Arnhem held up	40
1st Airborne Division withdrawn, 26th September	44
Arnhem fighting described	45
Plan and operation assessed	50
Air support	53
Allied and German casualties	55
CHAPTER III. CHANNEL PORTS AND THE SCHELDT	59
First Canadian Army's task	59
Capture of Boulogne, 21st September	60
Calais taken, 1st October	63
Fighting south of the Scheldt	66
Operations near Antwerp	69
Strategy and logistics	71
Hitler orders counter-attack in north	74
September air operations	75

	<i>Page</i>
CHAPTER IV. STRATEGIC AFFAIRS AND THE SCHELDT	77
Strategic argument continues	77
Montgomery changes his plan	80
Canadians plan clearance of Scheldt	81
Arguments on command and strategy	84
Importance of Antwerp	94
Fighting around Nijmegen	97
Operations west of the Maas	98
I Corps' attack towards Tilburg	100
Canadians seal off South Beveland	101
Clearance of the 'Breskens pocket'	103
 CHAPTER V. THE CAPTURE OF THE SCHELDT	 109
The opposing forces	109
I Corps advances on Bergen op Zoom	109
The South Beveland isthmus	110
Canadians attack causeway to Walcheren	113
Flooding of Walcheren	115
Assault from the sea	118
Second Army attack westward	123
I Corps drives north in coastal area	125
Germans reorganise	126
Fighting on the Mark line	126
Opening of the Scheldt	127
Sinking of the <i>Tirpitz</i>	128
 CHAPTER VI. LOGISTICS	 131
British position in autumn	131
Petrol and ammunition	133
Twelfth Army Group maintenance	135
Sixth Army Group supplies	137
Importance of Antwerp	138
Shaef Administrative Appreciation, November	138
Ammunition and manpower shortages	141
Intelligence estimates of German situation	142
Unconditional surrender policy	146
The Morgenthau Plan	147
V-weapon campaign	148
Allied strategic bombing offensive	150
Tactical air forces attack communications	154
Brussels conference, 18th October	154

CONTENTS

vii

Page

CHAPTER VII. OPERATIONS IN THE AUTUMN

OF 1944	157
Eisenhower's directive, 28th October	157
German movements	159
Fighting in Venlo pocket and at Geilenkirchen	160
American offensives in north and south	161
The Roer reached	163
Strasbourg captured	165
Strategic arguments	165
Eisenhower visits London	169
Further Intelligence estimates	170

**CHAPTER VIII. THE GERMAN COUNTER-
OFFENSIVE**

	175
Allies sceptical of rumoured offensive	175
German plans and preparations	176
Hitler's directive, 10th November	178
Counter-offensive starts, 16th December	179
American reactions	180
German progress	182
Montgomery in command of northern front	183
Americans' stubborn defensive actions	184
German advance halted	186
Air operations	187
Allies counter-attack	191
Contribution of Allied air forces	192
Operations assessed	194
Americans clear the Ardennes	197

CHAPTER IX. HIGH LEVEL AFFAIRS. 199

Arguments over command structure	199
Eisenhower plans future operations	203
Montgomery's press conference	205
Yalta Conference arranged	207
Tedder visits Moscow	208
Eisenhower's plan	209
Anglo-American talks at Malta	212
The Yalta Conference, February 1945	213
Plans for control of Germany	214

	<i>Page</i>
CHAPTER X. THE STRATEGIC AIR OFFENSIVE AND MARITIME OPERATIONS	219
Disagreements on bombing policy	219
New directive, 15th January	221
Operations in January and February	222
‘Clarion’ and ‘Bugle’	224
Bombing of Dresden	226
March operations	227
Air minelaying	228
Air and naval operations in the Scheldt	230
Air attacks on enemy shipping	233
German small battle units	233
Renewed U-boat activity	234
End of V-weapon offensive	235
CHAPTER XI. THE NIJMEGEN FRONT AND ‘BLACKCOCK’	237
Situation on Nijmegen front, November–December	237
Attack on Kapelsche Veer	238
German attacks on Nijmegen bridges	240
XII Corps launches ‘Blackcock’	242
German counter-attack	244
Roer salient cleared	247
Germans attack in Alsace: position of Strasbourg	247
Colmar pocket eliminated	249
American operations in north	249
Montgomery’s directive for Rhineland operations	250
CHAPTER XII. THE BATTLES OF THE RHINELAND	253
The ‘Veritable’ battleground	253
Opposing forces, plans and preparations	254
‘Veritable’ launched, 8th February	257
Traffic block at Nutterden	262
‘Grenade’ postponed by Roer floods	264
Hard fighting for XXX Corps	265
Air support	266
Goch captured	267
II Canadian Corps enters battle	268
‘Veritable’ progress reviewed	270

CONTENTS

ix

	<i>Page</i>
'Grenade' launched, 23rd February	271
Canadians launch 'Blockbuster'	272
British and American forces meet	274
German rearguard actions	276
'Veritable' and 'Grenade' completed	277
Kesseling replaces von Rundstedt	277
CHAPTER XIII. THE CROSSING OF THE	
RHINE	279
American operations since February.	279
First Army across Roer	280
Rhine bridge seized at Remagen	282
Third and Seventh Armies clear Saar Palatinate	283
Allied casualties	284
Twenty-first Army Group plans Rhine crossing	285
Preparatory air attacks	287
Assault across Rhine, 23rd-24th March	288
Airborne assault	290
The bridgehead expanded	292
CHAPTER XIV. FROM THE RHINE TO THE	
BALTIC	295
Allied and German situations in late March	295
Allies break out from Rhine	296
Eisenhower changes his plan	297
Churchill stresses importance of Berlin	302
The 'National Redoubt' factor	302
The Ruhr is surrounded	304
Second Army drive to the Elbe	305
Allied and German reorganisation	309
Belsen liberated	309
VIII Corps reaches Elbe	310
Transport and supply problems	312
Canadian progress in north	313
President Roosevelt dies	315
Bremen captured	316
Strategic bombing policy reviewed	316
Air attacks on German Navy	317
CHAPTER XV. TO LEIPZIG AND THE DANUBE	
319	
Bradley's command strengthened for drive on Leipzig.	319
Further Rhine crossings	320

	<i>Page</i>
Ruhr 'pocket' cleared	322
Americans advance on whole front	323
Ninth Army halted at Elbe	326
Co-ordination of advance with Russians	327
American and Russian armies make contact	328
Advance to the Danube	329
German defences collapsing	331
Prague to be left to the Russians	332
CHAPTER XVI. THE GERMAN SURRENDER AND END OF THE WAR IN EUROPE	333
Early German peace overtures	333
Developments in Berlin	334
Himmler's peace feelers	335
Hitler commits suicide	336
Twenty-First Army Group crosses Elbe	337
German collapse in north	338
Surrender at Lüneburg Heath.	339
Denmark liberated	341
Americans drive to Salzburg and Czechoslovakia	341
Unconditional surrender at Reims	343
Ratification ceremony at Berlin	344
CHAPTER XVII. REFLECTIONS	347
Eisenhower's strategy discussed	347
The Antwerp question	350
Decision to aim at Leipzig	351
Eisenhower's qualities as Allied commander	352
Differences on command	353
German conduct of campaign	354
Allied co-operation	356
Montgomery's qualities	357

APPENDICES

	<i>Page</i>
I. THE COMBINED CHIEFS OF STAFF	361
II. SUPREME HEADQUARTERS ALLIED EXPEDITIONARY FORCE	363
III. ALLIED NAVAL FORCES ENGAGED	365
IV. THE ALLIED ARMIES	367
Part I. Forces engaged	367
II. Notes on British Army weapons and equip- ment	383
III. Notes on some Army services	385
V. THE ALLIED AIR FORCES	389
Part I. Forces engaged	389
II. Notes on Allied aircraft and weapons employed	397
III. The rôle of air power in Overlord	398
VI. THE ENEMY	401
Part I. German Command in the West	401
II. German Land Forces encountered by the Allies	403
III. German Air Force	404
VII. ALLIED CASUALTIES AND NOTES ON LOGISTICS	405
Part I. Allied strengths and casualties	405
II. Logistics	408
VIII. RESISTANCE, CIVIL AFFAIRS AND MILITARY GOVERNMENT	411
Part I. France	411
II. Belgium	413
III. Holland	416
IV. Denmark	420
V. Military Government in Germany	421
IX. FIELD-MARSHAL MONTGOMERY'S PRESS CONFERENCE, 7th JANUARY 1945	425
X. THE GERMAN SO-CALLED 'NATIONAL REDOUBT'	429
XI. CODE NAMES MENTIONED IN TEXT	433

GENERAL MAPS

	<i>Page</i>
Central Europe—At the outbreak of war, 3rd September 1939	v
Le Havre	13
Arnhem.	35
Boulogne	61
The Scheldt	126
The Ardennes	177
Rhineland—Operation Veritable	253
Rhineland—Operation Grenade	276

SITUATION MAPS

Situation morning 1st September 1944	24
The Arnhem Operation, September	44
1st Airborne Division Perimeter—Oosterbeek, 20th September	49
September Progress	72
Venlo Sector, October	96
The Maas and the Roer, November–December	160
The November Offensives	166
The Ardennes, Situation 24th December 1944	186
The Ardennes, Situation 16th January 1945	193
Nijmegen Bridgehead, December 1944	240
Operation Blackcock, January 1945	242
The Southern Front, January	248
Closing to the Rhine, February–March	284
Rhine Crossing, Twenty-First Army Group, March	294
Advance to the Baltic, April–May	316
To Leipzig and the Danube, American Advance April–May	
1945	332

SKETCH MAPS

	<i>Page</i>
The Broad and Narrow Fronts	16
The Arnhem Plan	29
Fly-in Routes of the Airborne Divisions, September 1944	33
Calais	64
Scheldt Estuary	67
The Breskens Pocket	104
Walcheren	116
The Allies' Supply System, 1st December	134
Second Tactical Air Force—Airfields, 1st December	140
Bomb Attacks on German Communications, 17th to 27th December 1944	188
Germany, Occupation Zones	217
Strategic Air Offensive, January to March 1945	221
The Ruhr and Strategic Air Offensive in Ruhr, January to March	225
Antwerp Approaches	231
Kapelsche Veer	239
Rhineland Operations, Twenty-First Army Group, February	250
German Defence Sector North of the Reichswald, January	260
The German National Redoubt	303
Allied Advances, March to May 1945	344
Western Holland	419

ILLUSTRATIONS

The majority of the illustrations are from copyright photographs supplied by the Imperial War Museum. In selecting the most suitable from its vast national collection the help of the Director and Staff of the Museum is gratefully acknowledged.

Following page

1. <i>Overlord Commanders.</i> General Eisenhower, Admiral Ramsay, Field-Marshal Montgomery, General Bradley, General Bedell Smith, Air Marshal Tedder, Air Marshal Leigh-Mallory	4
2. Brussels welcomes her liberation on September the 3rd, 1944	4
3. Fly-in to Arnhem of 1st Airborne Division	54
4. Covering the road to Arnhem bridge	54
5. Bridge over the Waal at Nijmegen captured on September the 20th, 1944	54
6. Dropping a re-supply for airborne troops at Arnhem	54
7. A few of the German troops who surrendered when Boulogne was captured on September the 22nd, 1944	62
8. One of the guns which had been firing on Dover from Cap Gris Nez	62
9. <i>The King visiting Second Army in the autumn.</i> His Majesty King George VI, Field-Marshal Montgomery, General Dempsey, Sir Piers Legh and others	98
10. General Marshall	98
11. General Bedell Smith	98
12. General de Guingand	98
13. Invasion of Walcheren	120
14. Commandos landing at Westkapelle	120
15. The Westkapelle dyke broken by bombing	120
16. Troops landing at Flushing	120
17. Air Marshals Tedder, Coningham and Broadhurst	138
18. Anti-air defence of the 'Island' when, later, it was flooded by the enemy.	138
19. Crossing the Sloe channel between South Beveland and Walcheren	138
20. Petrol pipe lines described on page 134	138
21. German V-1 in flight	148
22. German jet-propelled Me.262	148
23. German rocket-fired V-2 being launched	148
24. Field-Marshal von Rundstedt	182
25. Field-Marshal Model	182

	<i>Following page</i>
26. General Hodges	182
27. General Patton	182
28. General Bradley	182
29. <i>At the Yalta Conference.</i> President Roosevelt, Mr. Churchill, Marshal Stalin, Admiral Cunningham, Admiral Leahy, Air Marshal Portal and others	214
30. Hamburg—bombed dock area	214
31. A 'Communications' target: bombed oil-train	214
32. Mittelland Canal bombed	226
33. Air Marshal Harris	226
34. Lancaster dropping 'Grand Slam' (22,000 lbs. bomb)	226
35. Bielefeld Viaduct cut by bombers on March the 14th, 1945	226
36. German U-boat sunk by Coastal Command	234
37. Seehund captured at Kiel	234
38. Admiral Dönitz	234
39. Admiral Burrough	234
40. Veritable—the northern road to Cleve	264
41. Cleve	264
42. General Vandenberg	264
43. General Spaatz	264
44. General Doolittle	264
45. Part of the airborne assault over the Rhine on March the 24th, 1945	292
46. A Buffalo landing on the east bank	292
47. Bridge over the Rhine being built	292
48. Completed bridge in use	292
49. <i>The Prime Minister crossing the Rhine!</i> With Field-Marshal Brooke, C.I.G.S. and Miss Mary Churchill	292
50. Naval craft for Rhine crossing	292
51. Remagen Bridge captured by the United States First Army on March the 7th, 1945	292
52. Advancing to the Elbe	310
53. A Typhoon fighter-bomber leaving a winter airfield	310
54. Field-Marshal Kesselring	310
55. General Student	310
56. General Jodl	310
57. Bremen in April, 1945	310
58. Entering Bremen	310
59. British jet-propelled Meteor in flight	310
60. Buffaloes crossing the Elbe	310
61. Field-Marshal Montgomery receiving the German surrender on May the 4th, 1945	340

FOREWORD

THE first volume of this history of the Allies' *Victory in the West* described the landings in France and the subsequent winning of the Battle of Normandy; this second and concluding volume tells of the operations which led to the defeat of Germany, with special reference to the part played by the British Twenty-First Army Group. Before starting to read it the reader is reminded that the campaign had only been made possible by two factors on which all else depended.

First, the campaign could not have been fought at all if the western Allies had not possessed the maritime power to make full use of the seas.

All the Allied forces which defeated Germany in the west and all their material equipment reached the Continent from overseas. The combined maritime power expressed by the Allies' naval and air forces and their merchant shipping enabled them to control and use sea communications stretching thousands of miles across the oceans of the world.

Moreover, the Allies' mastery in the air was not only a necessary ingredient of their maritime power but of other operations of war. The most significant revolution of warfare during the present century has been effected by the development of air power. The essential part it played in the war against Germany will be realised as operations are described in the following chapters.

Yet in spite of the Allies' maritime power, the strength of their armies and their mastery in the air,

the campaign could not have been fought successfully in 1944-45 if Germany had not at the same time been fighting for life against Russia.

In June 1944, Germany had some sixty divisions with which to oppose the Allied invasion of the western front and about twenty opposing the Allies in Italy. At the same time she had over two hundred divisions fighting the Russian armies on the eastern front. Relative strengths changed during the war but it is certainly true that the Western Allies defeated less than half of the German forces and that more than half were defeated by Russia—assisted by over £400,000,000 of war material provided by her Western Allies. In assessing the achievement of the Allies' *Victory in the West*, the magnitude of the Russian achievement in the east must never be forgotten.

In this, as in our previous volume, attention is focused on operations under British command; in spite of the greater numbers of the

American forces, only enough is told of their operations to explain the conduct and progress of the fighting and the setting in which their operations and those under British command took place. It must also be remembered that French, Polish, Belgian, Dutch, Norwegian and Czechoslovak fighting men contributed to the Allied victory, so far as they were able. We are deeply grateful for permission to take advantage of the research on which the histories of the United States Army in World War II are based, as we are for permission to make use of the Official History of the Canadian Army in the Second World War.

We also acknowledge with gratitude the help we have had from the historical sections of all the Services and from the Library and photographic collection of the Imperial War Museum. We have also made great use of Captain S. W. Roskill's *War at Sea*, and especially of his detailed study of maritime operations concerning Overlord, for Captain G. R. G. Allen, R.N., who collaborated in our first volume, left in 1961 soon before its publication to take on other historical work. Similarly when Air Chief Marshal Sir James Robb had to withdraw in 1961, we had the advantage of being able to use the history of *The Strategic Air Offensive against Germany* by Sir Charles Webster and Noble Frankland which was by then published. We have also enjoyed much help and advice from leading commanders who were concerned, and from members of the Advisory Panel to the Editor of the British War Histories. From the Editor himself, Sir James Butler, we have had great help, never-failing patience and much good counsel.

We also wish to thank Mr. B. M. Melland and Mr. A. M. Sefi for the study and translation of captured German documents; Mr. D. K. Purle who, under the guidance of Colonel T. M. Penney, has drawn most of the maps and diagrams; and finally our research assistants, Lieut-Colonel G. W. Harris, the late Lieut-Colonel H. F. Joslen, and Miss D. J. Dawson, to whom we are especially grateful. To them all we acknowledge thankfully how much we owe to their work.

Our main source of information has been the vast collections of contemporary records and those captured from the enemy. References to published sources have been given but our far more numerous references to contemporary documents, which are not available for public inspection, are included only in a confidential edition. This should be available for use by students when the archives are opened. We have had absolute freedom to use these and other relevant documents and have never been asked to modify our text to conform to an official view. We alone are responsible for what is written and for any mistakes that may be detected.

CHAPTER I

ADVANCE INTO BELGIUM

IN less than three months a radical change had been wrought in the European situation. When the Allies had landed in Normandy on June the 6th, 1944, the German armies were already being driven back on the Russian and Italian fronts but they were still in undisturbed occupation of France, Belgium, Holland, Denmark and Norway; the Channel was not safe for British shipping and, from bases on the Bay of Biscay, German U-boats could still attack Allied shipping in the Western Approaches and the Atlantic ocean. By September the 1st (when this volume opens) the Allies had defeated the German armies in the West, almost the whole of France had been liberated and the German troops that were still on French soil were in full retreat. Except for a few beleaguered ports, the Channel, Biscay and French Mediterranean coasts were in Allied hands and U-boats had lost all bases in France from which they could operate. Although still short of port facilities, the western Allies had now undisputed freedom to pour their military strength into the Continent. In the east, too, the German front had been forced back over hundreds of miles by the Russian armies. On all sides Germany was being driven in on herself and on her own resources; no longer could she look for succour from conquered countries. The end of Nazi dominance in Europe was clearly in sight. The only question, now, was how soon and how best could the Allies effect the Germans' final defeat.

A difference of opinion about what should be the Allies' future strategy in the attack on Germany from the west had been revealed during the latter half of August, as recorded in our previous volume.¹ Put shortly it was as follows. In Field-Marshal Sir Bernard Montgomery's view the strength of the Allied armies should be concentrated, under a single commander, for one overwhelming thrust north of the Ardennes, to capture the Ruhr and go on to take Berlin. The view of the Supreme Commander, General Dwight D. Eisenhower, was that Germany should be attacked on both sides of the Ardennes and though the greatest strength should be employed in the northern thrust to the Ruhr, a secondary thrust through the Saar should also be strong and should be supported on the south by the

¹ L. F. Ellis, *Victory in the West*, vol. I, 'The Battle of Normandy' (H.M.S.O., 1962), pp. 459-64, 474-76.

Allied armies coming up from the Rhône valley after their recent landings on the French Mediterranean coast. Before the end of August the Supreme Commander told Field-Marshal Montgomery that this latter policy was the strategy he intended to pursue. It will be wise to keep an open mind on the respective merits of these contrasted views till the realities of the situation are more fully exposed in tracing the course of events; the estimate of German capacity to maintain effective resistance was still largely a matter of speculation, while various factors which would affect Allied strategy could not yet be appreciated.

There is, however, one factor which was beginning to show signs of conditioning the Allies' conduct of future operations—namely the supply situation. The unforeseen slowness of the Allies' progress during the first seven weeks after the landings in Normandy had given them a temporary advantage, for while confined in a small lodgement area short lines of communication had facilitated their build-up of supplies. But after their break-out this advantage was soon neutralised by the equally unforeseen speed of their advance. Logistical plans made before D-day had been based on an assumption that the enemy would be forced back gradually to the Seine, which might be reached in ninety days; there was then likely to be a pause of some weeks, while the Allies built up strength to force the Seine position and resume their advance. Instead they had made comparatively small territorial gains in the first seven weeks but their subsequent progress had been so rapid that the Seine had been first reached in seventy-nine instead of ninety days and, almost without pause, they had crossed the river and continued to advance even more rapidly. Their fighting troops had outpaced the rate at which railway communications could be developed or forward maintenance areas established; they were at present mainly depending on supplies brought forward by road from maintenance areas hundreds of miles behind them in Normandy or at times by air from Britain. The Breton ports, with the small exception of St. Malo, were still in the enemy's hands; but the importance of these ports had figured largely in logistical planning for it had been assumed that they would be discharging over 14,000 tons a day by the beginning of September. In that belief the Allies' plans had provided for the support of twelve American divisions on the Seine by D+90 (September the 4th); they did not contemplate a further advance at that strength till D+120 and not before D+150 did they provide for the support of a 'minor advance beyond the Aisne'. By September the 1st, however, still denied the use of the Breton ports, some sixteen American divisions were being maintained with their leading forces 150 miles beyond the Seine though they were being halted from time to time by shortages. For the moment the difficulty of supplying

Twenty-First Army Group was less acute for its lines of communication were shorter than those of the United States Twelfth Army Group and fewer divisions were involved, yet the landing of British supplies had been reduced and one corps had been grounded temporarily in order that transport could be released to maintain the British advance. There had been as yet no serious hold-up and the retreating enemy was still being vigorously pursued, but no reserve stocks had been built up with the armies. In Field-Marshal Montgomery's view the pursuit could only be maintained with sufficient speed and in sufficient strength to effect Germany's defeat in 1944 (which he then believed to be possible) if the Allied effort was concentrated on one powerful thrust and not spread across a broad front as General Eisenhower intended.

General Eisenhower's strategy was of course affected by several considerations of which logistics was only one, though very important, but in the view of an American official historian 'these decisions to cross the Seine and continue the pursuit, and to augment the forces employed south of the Ardennes . . . carried with them a supply task out of all proportion to planned capabilities . . . With the supply structure already severely strained by the speed with which the last 200 miles had been covered, these decisions entailed the risk of a complete breakdown'.¹ The point has not yet been reached at which it would be profitable to pursue discussion of supply problems in relation to operations, but enough has been said to make it clear that logistics, which should be the servant of any practical strategy, were at this time threatening to become its master.

The map at page 24 shows the positions reached by the Allies' advancing armies by September the 1st and such information as is given on the German situation map for that date. It should be realised, however, that the defeated German forces were in retreat, their armies widely dispersed and their communication system largely disrupted; information on their own maps is surprisingly accurate, but their other surviving records for the first days of September do not tell what was the strength of the formations at their disposal.

Though the beginning of a new volume has inevitably involved a break in the historical record, the dawn of September the 1st did not mark any pause in Allied operations. On that day the pace of Twenty-First Army Group's advance was indeed quickened. It was still acting in accordance with the directive which Field-Marshal Montgomery had issued on August the 26th. The tasks now confronting Twenty-First Army Group (First Canadian and British

¹ R. G. Ruppenthal, *Logistical Support of the Armies*, vol. II (Dept. of the Army, Washington, D.C., 1959), p. 6.

Second Armies), he had then said, were:

To operate northwards and to destroy the enemy's forces in N.E. France and Belgium.

To secure the Pas de Calais area and the Belgian airfields.

To secure Antwerp as a base.

Its eventual mission would be to advance eastwards on the Ruhr. The United States First Army would be on the right flank, its principal offensive mission being, for the present, to support Twenty-First Army Group in the attainment of these objectives.

Lieut-General Sir Miles Dempsey's British Second Army was advancing with XXX Corps on the right and XII Corps on the left, VIII Corps being grounded.¹ By September the 1st the leading troops of XXX Corps (Guards and 11th Armoured Divisions) had crossed the Somme and early that morning they set off again to capture Arras and cut the Arras-St. Pol road. Travelling fast and brushing aside or by-passing opposition, the leading troops of the Guards Division reached the high ground north of Arras (the Vimy ridge) soon after midday and the 1st Welsh Guards, who had been the last British troops to leave Arras in May 1940, re-occupied the town that afternoon; Douai and the nearby airfield were occupied that evening. Stiff opposition by German SS troops in Albert and Bapaume, which had been by-passed by the tanks, was finally overcome by the 50th Division. Meanwhile 11th Armoured Division on the left of the Guards found St. Pol to be held by the enemy but nearly reached Lens while the 8th Armoured Brigade, under their command, overcame some resistance in Doullens.

Next day XXX Corps were ordered not to proceed beyond the Carvin-Douai area for Field-Marshal Montgomery had arranged for a corps of the First Allied Airborne Army to be dropped ahead of the Second Army front in the area Courtrai-Lille-Ypres in order to facilitate the army's further advance. During the day, however, the weather forecast was unfavourable for such an airborne operation and Field-Marshal Montgomery cancelled it rather than delay the army's advance. About midnight XXX Corps was ordered to advance on Brussels and Antwerp starting as early as possible. Meanwhile American armour reached Tournai that night.

September the 3rd is a notable day in the records of those who took part in the Guards Armoured Division's dash for the Belgian capital, with 231st Infantry Brigade (from 50th Division) under their command. The Guards advanced on two routes with a brigade group on each. Leading the 32nd Guards Brigade on the right was the Welsh

¹ The composition of Second Army's three corps at this time was as follows: VIII Corps—3rd Division, 43rd Division (from September the 2nd); XII Corps—7th Armoured Division, 15th and 53rd Divisions; XXX Corps—Guards Armoured and 11th Armoured Divisions, 50th Division and 43rd Division (to September the 2nd).



I. OVERLORD COMMANDERS

General Bradley

Admiral Ramsay

**Air Marshal
Leigh-Mallory**

General Bedell Smith

Air Marshal Tedder

General Eisenhower

Field-Marshal Montgomery



2. Brussels welcomes her liberation by the British Second Army on September the 3rd, 1944

Guards group, moving by the route through Ath and Hal; leading the 5th Guards Brigade on the left was the Grenadier group taking the road via Lessines and Ninove. Each group was preceded by a squadron of the Household Cavalry, reconnoitring in armoured cars. It was a glorious morning and only at a few places was the advance held up temporarily, on one route or the other, by enemy resistance. In the racing columns and throughout the countryside excitement grew as place after place was passed through, and when Brussels was reached in the early evening the whole population was in the streets, almost frenzied with joy. The Household Cavalry's scout cars were the first to reach the city boundary; at the outskirts the Grenadiers were temporarily delayed by enemy resistance; the Welsh Guards were thus the first to enter the city in force and eventually they harboured that night in the Boulevard Waterloo near the burning Palais de Justice, set alight by fleeing German forces. Later the Grenadiers occupied the northern area of the city and next day they went on to capture Louvain after a sharp fight.

Meanwhile the 11th Armoured Division were racing towards Antwerp. They had to overcome strong opposition at several places, especially approaching Lille, but their leading troops were only twenty miles from Antwerp that night.

That day Admiral Sir Bertram Ramsay, the Supreme Commander's Naval Commander-in-Chief, sent a telegram to Shaef 'for Action', with copies to Twenty-First Army Group, the Admiralty and the Naval C-in-C Nore, which read:

'It is essential that if Antwerp and Rotterdam are to be opened quickly enemy must be prevented from

- (i) Carrying out demolitions and blocking in ports
- (ii) Mining and blocking Scheldt and the new waterway between Rotterdam and the Hook.

2. Both Antwerp and Rotterdam are highly vulnerable to mining and blocking. If enemy succeeds in these operations the time it will take to open ports cannot be estimated.

3. It will be necessary for coastal batteries to be captured before approach channels to the river routes can be established.'

Next day (the 4th) the 11th Armoured Division entered Antwerp and secured, undamaged, the docks on the north bank of the Scheldt. This rapid seizure of the city and the dock area was facilitated by the information volunteered by members of the Belgian Resistance—organised as the 'White Brigade'—and indeed the French and Belgian Resistance movements had given valuable assistance to both British divisions throughout their spectacular advance. Timely (though not invariably accurate) information

about the whereabouts and strength of the enemy, and readiness to take charge of prisoners, enabled the British troops to move at greater speed and to ignore pockets of the retreating enemy not directly threatening the routes they were taking. Members of the French Resistance were particularly active in helping 50th Division to secure the open left flank which had been exposed by XXX Corps' advance. The division's 151st Brigade had a good deal of fighting with enemy troops, who were trying to hold rearguard positions in order to cover the retreat of the German Fifteenth Army, but the country south-east of the Lille-la Bassée canal was cleared by the 4th of September.

By then Second Army's XII Corps was coming up on the left and on the 4th was about twenty-five miles short of Ghent. Its 7th Armoured Division had crossed the Somme on one of XXX Corps' bridges because those on XII Corps front had been destroyed by the Germans; by-passing St. Pol, which was left for the 53rd Division to clear, 7th Armoured drove north against scattered enemy opposition to pass to the west of Lille but found the bridges over the many canals in that area demolished or strongly defended and the enemy particularly firm in the la Bassée-Lille area. Permission was again obtained to swing right into XXX Corps' sector and the division passed behind the 151st Brigade and advanced down the Escaut valley towards Ghent, while the 53rd Division having cleared St. Pol struck north into the canal area west of Lille.

While these events were taking place Lieut-General H. D. G. Crerar's First Canadian Army, on Second Army's left flank, had begun the tasks it had been given by Field-Marshal Montgomery, namely the capture of le Havre and other northern French ports and the clearance of the coastal area up to Bruges.¹ Early on September the 1st, the British I Corps had turned to the left, after crossing the Seine, to secure le Havre and St. Valéry-en-Caux; II Canadian Corps had embarked on a threefold advance which could hardly be completed in the short time which had been needed by Second Army to drive straight to Brussels and Antwerp. At this date II Canadian Corps comprised four divisions, namely, the 2nd and 3rd Canadian Infantry Divisions and the 4th Canadian and 1st Polish Armoured Divisions. When Antwerp fell on September the 4th, the 4th Canadian Armoured Division had crossed the Somme near Abbeville and the 1st Polish Armoured Division was nearing St. Omer; the 3rd Canadian Infantry Division had taken le Tréport, crossed the Somme at Abbeville, advanced northwards to Montreuil and was approaching Boulogne; and the 2nd Canadian Infantry Division had found Dieppe free of the enemy, who withdrew before

¹ See *Victory in the West*, vol. I, p. 465.

they had time to damage the harbour seriously.¹ Some 800 Canadians who lost their lives during the raid on Dieppe in 1942 are buried there and on September the 3rd General Crerar attended a memorial service and took the salute at a ceremonial march-past to mark the liberation of the port.² Meanwhile the Canadian Army's British I Corps moved on St. Valéry-en-Caux and on the more important port of le Havre. In 1940 St. Valéry had been the scene of the 51st (Highland) Division's surrender to Rommel. Now in 1944 the division re-entered St. Valéry as victors, to find that the fugitive German forces had left. After clearing up the St. Valéry area the division then moved down the coast (on the 4th) to join the 49th Division for the capture of le Havre, a more urgent and much more difficult task. Le Havre is a place of some natural strength with a pre-war port capacity of about 20,000 tons daily. It was protected by outlying forts, a deep anti-tank ditch and extensive fieldworks, covered by minefields and flooding; it was garrisoned by over 11,000 troops and well equipped with artillery. On the 4th the two divisions closed round the perimeter and the German commander was called on to surrender but refused. Preparations for an assault were begun and naval and air bombardments were arranged in order to soften up the defences.

As Second Army troops were entering Brussels on September the 3rd and Antwerp was about to fall, Montgomery and Dempsey met Lieut-Generals Omar N. Bradley and C. H. Hodges, commanding the United States Twelfth Army Group and their First Army, to plan their further advance on Germany. According to Allied Intelligence there were only two German armies ahead of them, namely the Fifteenth, which was being driven north-eastwards in the coastal country, and the survivors of the Seventh making eastwards for the Siegfried Line. Into the gap developing between these diverging armies Montgomery decided to thrust Second Army. Resuming the advance on the 6th and maintaining the pace at which they had advanced from the Seine in the last few days, they would seize bridges over the Rhine between Wesel and Arnhem before the enemy could establish a firm front. Airborne troops would be used to capture the main bridges ahead of the Army. The operation was named 'Comet'.

Accordingly Second Army resumed its advance on the 6th, with XXX Corps using two roads—through Eindhoven, Grave and Nijmegen to Arnhem and through Tilburg and Zaltbommel to Renkum, seven miles west of Arnhem.

To keep pace with the army group's advance and to facilitate its

¹ The first British vessel entered the harbour on the 7th of September and by the end of the month discharges averaged over 3,000 tons a day.

² See C. P. Stacey, *The Victory Campaign* (The Queen's Printer, Ottawa, 1960), p. 304.

progress Air Marshal Sir Arthur Coningham moved forward most of his Second Tactical Air Force by a series of leap-frog jumps. By the 5th of September 84 Group, supporting the Canadian Army, had its headquarters on the river Bresle and had six wings on airfields within a radius of about ten miles; 83 Group, supporting the British Second Army, had its headquarters near Brussels, with five wings on airfields round the outskirts of the city. Despite a spell of bad flying weather which had reduced the scale of air support army operations were well covered. Sweeping over roads and railways, 83 Group attacked the retreating enemy whenever weather allowed, inflicting considerable damage. Similarly, 84 Group worked closely with the Canadian Army in its advance through the coastal area and its attacks (described later) for the capture of the Channel ports.

In the first week of September, after conferring with Generals Bradley, Hodges and Patton,¹ General Eisenhower had restated what later came to be called the 'broad front' strategy. (Map page 16). Hoping to keep the enemy stretched so that he would be unable to organise an effective defence at the Siegfried Line (West Wall), General Eisenhower authorised General Bradley to allocate additional petrol stocks to the Third Army just when Hodges' First Army was running out of 'gas' at the Belgian border, and ordered both these American armies towards the Rhine. Patton was to advance towards Mannheim and Frankfurt; Hodges to shift from his northward course to an eastward axis toward Cologne and Bonn, a change of direction which had been agreed by Montgomery. To cover the gap that had opened between the First and Third Armies, Hodges was to send one corps through the Ardennes to Koblenz.²

General Bradley's Central Group of Armies—the United States Twelfth Army Group—would thus be pursuing two objectives. Most of its First Army had been advancing in a north-easterly direction, supporting the British Second Army's advance on the Ruhr, while on its right it was keeping touch with the Third Army which was advancing eastwards towards the Saar. In the first few days one corps of the First Army (XIX) had turned towards Tournai (in the British sector) (Map page 24); a second (V) was moving towards the Landrecies-Valenciennes region at the Belgian border; the third corps (VII) on the Army right was suddenly ordered to turn north through Avesnes, Maubeuge, Mons towards Ath. Only a reinforced cavalry group was to keep touch with the Third Army. By turning northwards First Army cut off a large amorphous fraction of the retiring German forces. Harassed from the air, ambushed by

¹ Lieut-General G. S. Patton commanded the United States Third Army.

² See F. C. Pogue, *The Supreme Command* (Dept. of the Army, Washington, D.C., 1954), p. 254; M. Blumenson, *Breakout and Pursuit* (Dept. of the Army, Washington, D.C., 1961), p. 686.

Resistance groups and attacked by American spearheads, they were finally encircled near Mons. With little ammunition, fuel or communications they blundered into road blocks and were thrown into confusion on contact. Great damage was done by American tanks and by the United States Ninth Air Force to motor and horse-drawn transport, and in three days, 25,000 Germans, a remnant of twenty disorganised German divisions, were taken prisoner.

A new directive from General Eisenhower, dated September the 4th, was received by Montgomery on the 5th.

After affirming that enemy resistance on the entire front showed signs of collapse and estimating that the weak and partly disorganised German forces there amounted in all to the equivalent of little more than twenty divisions, he stated that the enemy could only prevent the Allied advance into Germany by bringing reinforcements from Germany and other fronts and by manning the more important sectors of the Siegfried Line. It was doubtful if he could do this in time and in sufficient strength, but if so he was likely to concentrate on blocking the two main approaches to Germany by way of the Ruhr and the Saar, the former being regarded probably as the more important. 'Our best opportunity for defeating the enemy in the West is to strike at the Ruhr and the Saar . . .'. That being the case, 'the mission of Northern Group of Armies [i.e. Twenty-First Army Group] with that part of Central Group of Armies [i.e. United States Twelfth Army Group] which is operating north-west of the Ardennes, is to secure Antwerp, breach the Siegfried Line covering the Ruhr and seize the Ruhr'. The missions of the Central Group of Armies 'exclusive of that part operating north-west of the Ardennes', were to capture Brest; to protect the Allied armies' southern flank; 'to occupy the Siegfried Line covering the Saar, then to seize Frankfurt. This operation should be started as soon as possible to forestall the enemy in this sector but the part of Central Group of Armies operating north-west of the Ardennes against the Ruhr must first be adequately supported.' Lastly, the Central Group of Armies was to take any opportunity of destroying enemy forces withdrawing from south-west and southern France. Allied naval and air forces would continue to support ground forces and the First Allied Airborne Army would operate in support of the Northern Group of Armies up to and including the crossing of the Rhine 'and then be prepared to operate in major operations in the advance into Germany'.

There was, however, one significant example of the somewhat indefinite phrasing of the Supreme Commander's objectives. In a belief that the retreating German armies could at present offer only ineffective resistance his mind was fixed on the chance of a quick crossing of the Rhine and a rapid conquest of one (or both) of the

enemy's all-important industrial areas. In stating his objectives he said that one was 'to secure Antwerp', which had just been captured when his directive was received. The city and harbour are more than sixty miles from the sea and unless, or until, that sixty-mile stretch of intervening Scheldt estuary was also secured, the mere possession of Antwerp was of comparatively little military value. There was nothing in the wording of the directive to show that the *use* of Antwerp, involving the freedom of the Scheldt, was of any special or pressing importance—though Admiral Ramsay's message pointing out that Antwerp's port was otherwise useless had called special attention to it only the day before. Apart from Ramsay, only the Germans (or so it seems) saw the essential value of the Scheldt. To them it was both a way of escape and a barrier to the Allies' *use* of Antwerp. The German C-in-C West's war diary of the 4th stated that 'by the advance to Antwerp the enemy have closed the ring round Fifteenth Army. A threat to Breda must be expected . . .'. Elements of that army were ordered to withdraw, fighting, on the coastal 'fortresses' (Boulogne, Calais, Dunkirk and Ostend) but a fairly strong force was to 'withdraw via Flushing towards Breda'. With eyes fixed on the Rhine the Allied commanders did not at first seem to realise the immediate importance of preventing the escape of the Fifteenth Army and of obtaining the use of the Scheldt estuary.¹ Yet by the capture of Antwerp city 'the ring round the Fifteenth Army' was *not* closed and one of the most important ports in West Europe was left unusable. On the other hand, Hitler's directive of the same date (4th) stated that the Allied break-through towards Antwerp (which in fact fell that day) made it very important to hold the 'coastal fortresses' and 'defence area', 'also Walcheren Island with Flushing harbour, the bridgehead at Antwerp, and the Albert Canal position as far as Maastricht'. The commanders of 'Calais defence area' and Walcheren Island were given the same independent authority as 'fortress' commanders, and the First Parachute Army²

¹ The German Naval Operation Staff, Berlin, signalled Naval Group West on September the 6th to mine and obstruct the Scheldt 'energetically'. Until possession was gained of ground held by the enemy on both sides of the Scheldt, the Royal Navy alone could do little to free Antwerp but the war diary of C-in-C Nore noted that 'on 8th September the sweeping of a channel between South Falls and the Schelde entrance, with a branch to Ostend, was commenced'.

² According to Hitler's directive, this new improvised army would consist of the First Parachute Army Headquarters with its training and depot organisation from eastern France and the German home command; the 3rd, 5th and 6th Parachute Divisions (not yet fit for action after their Normandy fighting and now refitting in northern Holland and Germany); LXXXVIII Corps from Holland with the bulk of the 719th and 347th Infantry Divisions; training groups of the Armed SS and Herman Göring Depot Regiment (also from Holland); assorted security units from Belgium, northern France and Germany; and thirty heavy and ten light anti-aircraft batteries.

By the middle of September this army had only five divisions in action (page 31 below); the three parachute divisions mentioned above were not fit for operations till November.

was placed under command of Army Group B for operations on the Antwerp-Albert Canal line. For some time Hitler had realised that Field-Marshal Model could not continue to command the Army Group and also hold over-all command as Commander-in-Chief West; he had decided to recall Field-Marshal von Rundstedt and to reappoint him to the latter command. Von Rundstedt took over as C-in-C West on September the 5th, while Model retained command of Army Group B.

It is impossible to give an exact picture of the enemy in these first few days of September, when the broken armies which had been defeated in France were struggling back towards the German frontier with many of their battered and shrunken divisions either reduced to mere battle groups or withdrawn for rehabilitation. The attempts to halt the Allies south of Paris on the Seine-Yonne-Dijon line and subsequently east of Paris on the Somme-Marne line had both been defeated by the speed of the Allies' advance. On the 3rd of September Hitler had recognised (in a directive of that date) that since 'it is impossible to bring up reinforcements quickly and in sufficient numbers, no line can be specified at the present time which must and can be held with certainty'. The armies facing the Allies 'must contest every foot of ground in a stubborn delaying action', in order to gain time to move up new forces, to supplement the western defences from the Zuider Zee to the Swiss frontier, and to assemble a 'mobile combat force' west of the Vosges mountains with which to attack the deep American flank and safeguard construction of the western defences.

The positions to which the German armies were being forced back at this time were broadly speaking as follows, apart from those still holding the Channel ports. (Map page v.) In the northern coastal sector the Fifteenth Army was retreating before the Canadian Army towards the line of the Scheldt from Antwerp to the sea and across it to Walcheren and the Dutch mainland. To the south of the Fifteenth Army the broken elements of the Seventh Army were escaping before the British Second and American First Armies towards Aachen and the Ardennes. South of the Ardennes was the retreating German First Army which had come from south of the Loire and the Biscay coast and was making for the Siegfried Line. Finally, retiring through Dijon towards the Belfort Gap, was the Nineteenth Army, driven before the American and French armies which had landed on the Mediterranean coast. Most of the armoured divisions of the Fifth Panzer Army were being withdrawn for rehabilitation to the Saar and further south with a view to counter-attack; the rest of Fifth Panzer Army was now under Seventh Army. As the German armies fell back towards the prepared positions of the Siegfried Line and its extensions,

reinforcements were sent forward from the Reich and from occupied Holland—notably the First Parachute Army designated by Hitler in the directive quoted above. A firmer front was soon to take shape; but in early September it was changing daily.

On September the 6th the Guards Armoured Division, leading XXX Corps, set out from Louvain to capture two bridges over the Albert Canal on the road to Arnhem, a preliminary of operation 'Comet' (page 7). (Map page 24.) One bridge was found to be virtually destroyed, with the opposite bank firmly held by the enemy;¹ the other, at Beeringen, had also been blown but was still usable by infantry. A small foothold beyond the bridge was quickly seized in face of opposition which at first was light but was steadily reinforced. Working through the night under shell fire and mortaring the Royal Engineers completed a Bailey bridge by the early hours of the 7th, and while the bridgehead beyond the canal was enlarged and strengthened a group of the Welsh Guards' tanks and infantry took the cross-roads in Helchteren and pressed forward towards Hechtel on the road to Eindhoven. They met a German battalion forming up on the road, killed many and took 150 prisoners, but ran into further opposition when approaching Hechtel and could make no further progress that night. In the days that followed the rest of the Guards Division were engaged in fighting off the enemy's persistently renewed efforts to recapture the Beeringen–Helchteren area, in clearing stoutly held places on the flanks, and in fighting for Hechtel, for the latter was not captured till the 12th.² Other units of the division by-passed the opposition and fought their way forward to the Escaut Canal where, on the evening of the 10th, the Irish Guards captured intact the de Groot bridge near Neerpelt, further forward on the direct road to Eindhoven and Arnhem.

Meanwhile, acting under the Comet plan, now being superseded by 'Market Garden',³ the 'Arnhem Operation', the 11th Armoured Division on the left had been trying to break out of Antwerp through the enemy's defence of the industrial area on the north of the city. But the German hold on the Albert Canal was being strengthened by reinforcements coming down from the north; only the infantry brigade of the 11th Armoured Division attacked and they failed to break through the enemy's defence of the built-up area. Lieut-General B. G. Horrocks, commanding XXX Corps, ordered 50th

¹ A miscellaneous collection of troops in full retreat, formed into a battle group by Lieut-General Chill, had been turned about, on the initiative of its commander, to defend the line of the Albert Canal as the British XXX Corps reached Brussels and Antwerp.

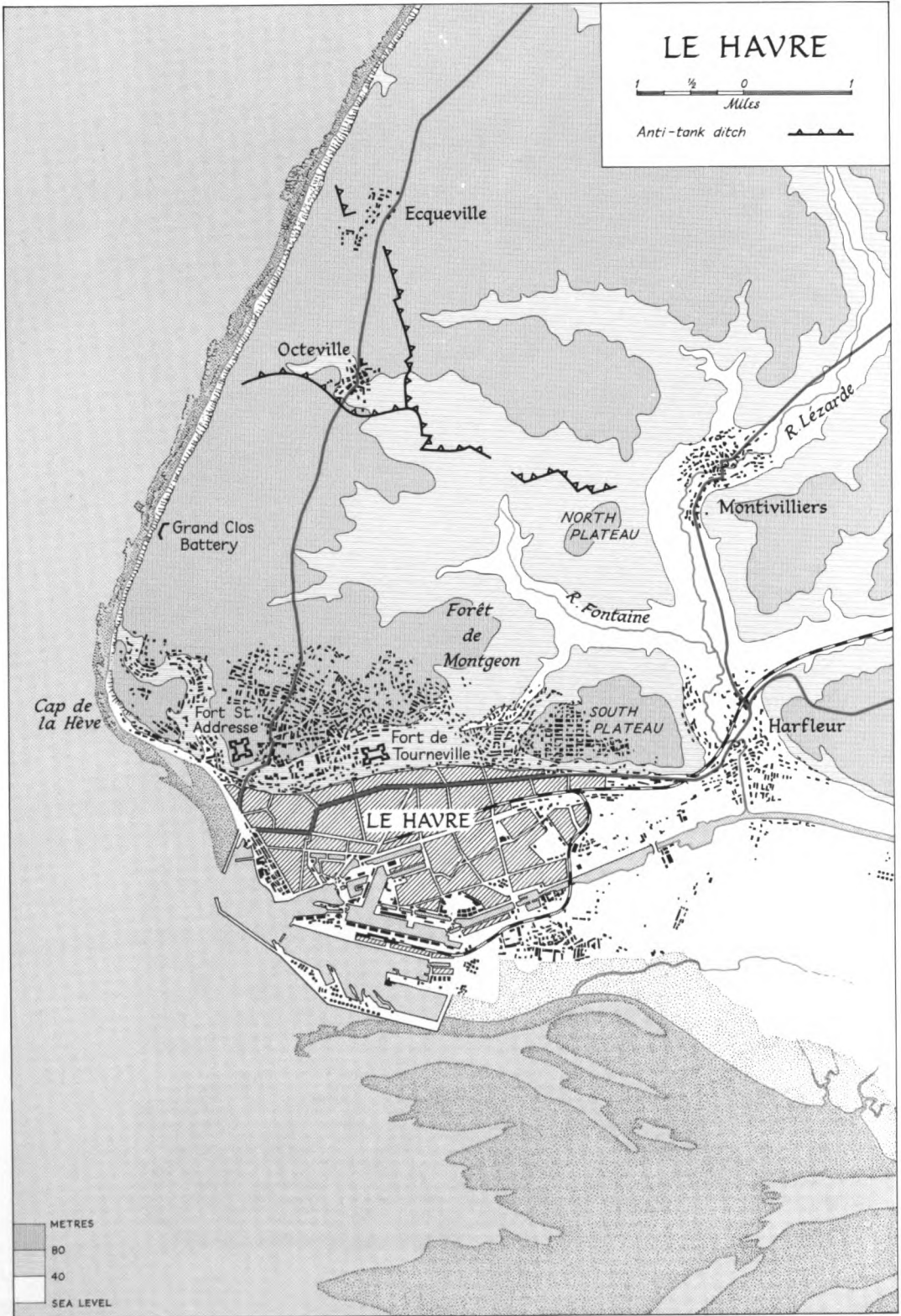
² When the opposition at Hechtel was finally overcome 150 German dead were counted and 200 wounded and 500 unwounded prisoners were taken, together with three tanks, thirteen guns and numerous mortars and machine guns. The German troops that had held out so long belonged to the First Parachute Army. (See L. F. Ellis, *Welsh Guards at War* (Gale & Polden, 1946), pp. 216–24).

³ To be described in the next chapter.

LE HAVRE



Anti-tank ditch



METRES
80
40
SEA LEVEL

Division, on the 7th, to capture a bridgehead over the Albert Canal at Gheel. Only one of the division's brigades (69th) was immediately available, for the 151st was in Brussels and the 231st at Antwerp being taken over by XII Corps. The 69th attacked across the canal early on the 8th and having started the construction of a bridge went on to capture a village on the way to Gheel. Next day the 151st Brigade, having been relieved from Brussels, joined the 69th on their right with tanks of the Sherwood Rangers Yeomanry from the 8th Armoured Brigade, and after having beaten off a stiff counter-attack entered Gheel with tank support on the 10th against strong opposition. Fighting in the town was fierce and bitter and little headway was made while heavy casualties were incurred. The troops were eventually withdrawn next day to the south of the town. There followed successive counter-attacks and attempts to subdue the British bridgehead but all were beaten off and on the 12th XII Corps took over to free XXX Corps for 'Market Garden'.

During the week that followed there was a considerable regrouping of Second Army's forces in preparation for Market Garden—the revised Comet plan to secure bridges over the Rhine, using a single axis and more airborne troops to facilitate the army's advance. In these preparatory moves General Dempsey transferred 11th Armoured Division to the right flank to join VIII Corps which had come forward, and XII Corps was moved eastwards to cover the left flank while still holding Antwerp till its defence could be taken over by the First Canadian Army; the latter had been busy during the week in clearing the Channel area to the left of the British, an area which extended from le Havre to Bruges.

The country behind le Havre's main town and harbour rises steeply to high ground which extends to the sheer cliffs of Cap de la Hève and the northern coast. The valleys of two rivers, Lézarde on the west and its tributary Fontaine, divide the ground into two plateaux; between the Lézarde and the Fontaine is the 'north plateau'; west and south of the latter is the 'south plateau', overlooking the town and harbour and, about three miles inland, clothed by the Montgeon forest. Starting from the Lézarde valley where it passes Montvilliers and continuing to the coast near Octeville was a wide and almost unbroken anti-tank ditch, strengthened by extensive mine-belts and wire and covering numerous field-works and strong-points with concreted dugouts. From the crest of the southern plateau two forts covered the town and harbour entrance, and on the coast near Cap de la Hève the Grand Clos battery threatened approaching ships. The German garrison (under-estimated at some 8,700) was well equipped with artillery and mortars; the conformation of the ground and the German defences made it a difficult position to capture.

Naval and air bombardment to soften the defences began on the 5th. The monitor H.M.S. *Erebus* opened fire with her 15-inch gun but was herself hit by the 14·8-inch gun of the Grand Clos battery and had to withdraw temporarily for repairs. On that day, too, Bomber Command attacked the south-western part of the town where it was believed that the garrison had headquarters. On the 6th, the defence works on the south plateau were bombed heavily and so on the 8th was the north-western part of the town, some 4,000 tons in all being dropped. Heavy rain interrupted all operations on the 9th but then the weather cleared, and although the sodden ground delayed the start of the ground attack, naval and air bombardment was resumed on the 10th. After sixty aircraft of Bomber Command had attacked the Grand Clos battery, *Erebus*, this time accompanied by the battleship *Warspite*, opened fire and the battery was soon silenced. Bomber Command made two further heavy attacks during the day in which nearly a thousand bombers dropped some further 4,900 tons on the defences. Meanwhile a strong counter-battery shoot by the divisional artillery, strengthened by two heavy and six medium regiments of the 4th and 9th Army Groups of the Royal Artillery, reduced the strength of the German defences still further. Almost as soon as the last heavy bomber attack finished at 5.30 in the afternoon of the 10th, an attack by I Corps began which was to continue through the night.

The 49th Division, with the 34th Tank Brigade under command, set out from the north-east to capture the defences of the north plateau, subsequently crossing the Fontaine valley to gain a bridge-head on the south plateau below the Montgeon forest. Flail tanks of the 79th Armoured Division's 22nd Dragoons had first to breach the extensive minefields and, working under enemy fire in darkness and on rain-sodden ground, thirty-four flails and two command tanks became casualties; in the attack on strong-points which followed six AVREs¹ were also put out of action. Yet steady progress was made and at midnight, using artificial moonlight,² the 51st (Highland) Division and the 33rd Armoured Brigade came in on their right attacking from the north. The breaching of minefields in semi-darkness and the crossing of the anti-tank ditch was difficult, dangerous and slow work but by early morning the advance was steadily gaining ground. During the 11th, with further support by bombers and rocket-firing Typhoons, 49th Division conquered the defences of the south plateau, overcame strong-points in the Harfleur area, and began to advance westwards through le Havre; by night-fall they had reached Fort de Tourneville (the old fort of Sanvic).

¹ Assault Vehicles Royal Engineers (for description, see vol. I, p. 543).

² Reflection of searchlight by low cloud.

Meanwhile the 51st Division had cleared the Montgeon forest, taken Oteville, cleared the high ground nearly to Cap de la Hève, and forced their way into the outskirts of le Havre to attack Fort St. Adresse. The battle was resumed on the 12th. Fort de Tourneville surrendered during the morning and the wounded garrison commander (in his pyjamas but wearing medals) gave himself up. Fort St. Adresse surrendered at about 3.30 p.m. and when all mopping up was completed over 11,300 prisoners had been taken. Our own casualties had amounted to under 500. The enemy's systematic demolitions in the harbour had been done so thoroughly that although clearance was begun at once shipping could not use the port until October the 9th.

While the Canadian Army's I Corps was thus engaged in the capture of le Havre, its II Canadian Corps had been widely extended in operations for the capture of the other Channel ports and in the clearance of the coastal belt up to Bruges. Hitler's directive of September the 4th had specified Boulogne, Dunkirk and 'the Calais defence area' as 'fortresses'. Their garrisons were to be reinforced by troops of the Fifteenth Army and they were to be held to the last—orders which had considerable effect on the Canadian Army's actions in the following weeks.

The movements of their II Corps may be followed more easily on the map at page 24; the 3rd Canadian Infantry Division moved northwards on Boulogne and, after clearing part of the Cap Gris Nez area to the north, found the port strongly defended. Fighting for high ground which dominates all approaches and overlooks the harbour showed that heavy artillery and air bombardment would be needed to overcome the defences, and the organised attack was delayed till the guns and aircraft engaged in the capture of le Havre became available. Meantime, the 2nd Canadian Infantry Division advanced north-eastwards towards Dunkirk and its wide, outlying defences in Loon-Plage, Bergues and Bray Dunes. After heavy fighting Loon-Plage was occupied on the 9th and the Canadians closed in on the other defended places, while II Corps' armoured car regiment (the 18th) pushed on through Ostend to Bruges. Of the armoured divisions, the 4th Canadian reached the Ghent Canal three miles south of Bruges and by the 12th had fought their way across and pushed on to the Canal de Dérivation de la Lys. The enemy had withdrawn from Bruges and troops from the 18th Armoured Car Regiment and from the 4th Canadian Armoured Division entered the beautiful old city on the 12th. By then the 1st Polish Armoured Division had advanced against sporadic opposition through Ypres and Roulers to the Ghent Canal at Aeltre. Ghent (which had already been reached and partly occupied by British Second Army troops on the 6th) was taken over on the 11th. Thus when le Havre

fell on the 12th, II Canadian Corps had largely cleared the coastal belt with its flying-bomb sites up to the Bruges area with the important exception that Boulogne, Cap Gris Nez, Calais and Dunkirk still remained in enemy hands, as did both shores of the Scheldt estuary.

During the second week of September the influence of logistics on strategy became more obvious. To Field-Marshal Montgomery the difficulties of supply pointed to the desirability of the strategy he advocated; to General Eisenhower they endorsed the wisdom of the alternative strategy he had decided to pursue. (See adjoining sketch.)

On September the 4th, Field-Marshal Montgomery sent the following personal telegram to the Supreme Commander:

X
 'I would like to put before you certain aspects of future operations and give you my views. (1) I consider we have now reached a stage where one really powerful and full blooded thrust towards Berlin is likely to get there and thus end the German war. (2) We have not enough maintenance resources for two full blooded thrusts. (3) The selected thrust must have all the maintenance resources it needs without any qualification and any other operation must do the best it can with what is left over. (4) There are only two possible thrusts one via the Ruhr and the other via Metz and the Saar. (5) In my opinion the thrust likely to give the best and quickest results is the northern one via the Ruhr. (6) Time is vital and the decision regarding the selected thrust must be made at once and paragraph 3 above will then apply. (7) If we attempt a compromise solution and split our maintenance resources so that neither thrust is full blooded we will prolong the war. (8) I consider the problem viewed as above is very simple and clear cut. (9) The matter is of such vital importance that I feel sure you will agree that a decision on the above lines is required at once.'

The Supreme Commander's reply was dated September the 5th. It was transmitted in two parts. The second part reached Montgomery on the 7th; the first part not until the 9th. General Eisenhower's most significant statements were the following:

- X
- (1) While agreeing with your conception of a powerful and full-blooded thrust towards Berlin, I do *not* agree that it should be initiated at this moment to the exclusion of all other maneuvers . . .
 - (2) We must immediately exploit our success by promptly breaching the Siegfried Line, crossing the Rhine on a wide front and seizing the Saar and the Ruhr . . .
 - (3) While we are advancing we will be opening the ports of Havre and Antwerp, which are essential to sustain a

powerful thrust deep into Germany. No re-allocation of our present resources would be adequate to sustain a thrust to Berlin.

- (4) Accordingly my intention is initially to occupy the Saar and the Ruhr, and by the time we have done this, Havre and Antwerp should be available to maintain one or both of the thrusts you mention . . . I have always given, and still give, priority to the Ruhr and the northern route of advance . . .¹

On September the 7th Montgomery replied to the second part of Eisenhower's letter, the first part having not yet reached him.

'My maintenance is stretched to the limit. First instalment of 18 locomotives only just released to me and balance still seems uncertain. I require an air lift of 1000 tons a day at Douai or Brussels and in last two days have had only 750 tons total. My transport is based on operating 150 miles from my ports and at present I am over 300 miles from Bayeux. In order to save transport I have cut down my intake into France to 6000 tons a day which is half what I consume and I cannot go on for long like this. It is clear therefore that based as I am at present on Bayeux I cannot capture the Ruhr. As soon as I have a Pas de Calais port working I would then require about 2500 additional 3-ton lorries plus an assured air lift averaging minimum 1000 tons a day to enable me to get to the Ruhr and finally Berlin. I submit with all respect to your paragraph 3 that a reallocation of our present resources of every description [that is of both fighting strength and supplies] *would* be adequate to get *one* thrust to Berlin.'²

But the Supreme Commander was not convinced. In a long report to the Combined Chiefs of Staff on 'the situation as at 9th September', prefacing a statement of his 'intentions in the near future', he recognised that 'the hostile occupation in force of the Dutch Islands at the mouth of the Scheldt is certain to delay the utilisation of Antwerp as a port and thus will vitally influence the full development of our strategy'. He contended that 'our best opportunity of defeating the enemy in the West lies in striking at the Ruhr and Saar . . . The first operation is one to break the Siegfried Line and seize crossings over the Rhine. In doing this the main effort will be on the left . . .' and he set out the immediate missions he had assigned to the army groups as follows:

'Northern Group of Armies. Antwerp having been seized, Northern Group of Armies, with that part of Central Group of Armies which is operating north-west of the Ardennes, will breach the Siegfried Line covering the Ruhr, then seize the Ruhr . . . First Allied Airborne Army supports Northern Group of Armies in attaining first objectives . . .

¹ Printed in *The Memoirs of Field-Marshal Montgomery* (Collins, 1958), pp. 272-3.

² Author's italics. Loc. cit., pp. 273-4.

Central Group of Armies, less that part operating north-west of the Ardennes, will (a) capture Brest, (b) protect the south flank of the Allied Expeditionary Force, (c) occupy the Siegfried Line covering the Saar, then seize Frankfurt . . . (d) take advantage of any opportunity of destroying enemy forces withdrawing from southern and south-west France.'

It will be noticed that while the capture of Brest is put first among the tasks of the Central Group of Armies there is no similar emphasis on the importance of gaining the *use* of Antwerp. Indeed, in a further paragraph on 'logistical developments' Antwerp is not specifically mentioned. Dealing with 'ports to support rapid exploitation' it is only said that 'our main requirement is deep-water ports beyond the Seine; probably Brest and le Havre will be opened initially for Central Group of Armies and ports in the Low Countries initially for Northern Group of Armies'.

General Eisenhower's report then turned to 'future intentions'.

'Once we have the Ruhr and the Saar, two of Germany's main industrial areas will be strangled and her capacity to wage war will have been largely destroyed . . . During our advance to the Ruhr and the Saar the deep-water ports of Havre and Antwerp or Rotterdam will be opened . . . At the moment and until the Channel ports have been developed and the rail lines therefrom restored, our supply situation is stretched to breaking point; from this standpoint the advance beyond the Siegfried Line involves a gamble that I am prepared to take in order to gain full advantage from the present disorganisation of the German armies in the West.'

We need not here quote the report's tentative forecasts of possibilities for further advance; the extracts quoted reveal the Supreme Commander's immediate policy. On the one hand he saw the urgent need to improve supply: on the other was the necessity to press forward the attack while the enemy was largely disorganised. The former required the speedy capture of deep-water ports but to wait for their capture would delay the advance; the latter could succeed only if done at once, before the enemy had time to consolidate his defence. He had concluded that the right course was to press on towards the Ruhr and the Saar while the going was good, accepting a consequent delay in the capture of ports.

This report was sent to the Combined Chiefs of Staff for consideration at the 'Octagon' conference which opened in Quebec on September the 12th. The three weeks from August the 15th to September the 5th, the day on which the Prime Minister and British Chiefs of Staff sailed for Canada, were among the most dramatic of the European war. In that short period Rumania and Finland retired from the war and Bulgaria attempted to do likewise; the

Allied armies in the West advanced 250 miles to Brussels, Namur and Verdun, the French and Americans landed in the south of France and drove swiftly to Lyons, and in Italy the Allied armies under Field-Marshal Sir Harold Alexander attacked northwards to Florence and beyond; while in the East the Russian armies drove from the Rumanian frontier to Yugoslavia and into Bulgaria, cracking the whole Axis pattern in south-east Europe. In such fluid circumstances, the optimism reflected in General Eisenhower's statement of 'future intentions' was not an isolated phenomenon: on September the 5th the British Joint Intelligence Committee submitted a long report on the conditions which made an early German collapse probable, concluding that 'whatever action Hitler may now take it will be too late to affect the issue in the West where organised German resistance will gradually disintegrate under our attack, although it is impossible to predict the rate at which this will take place . . .'. The British Chiefs of Staff considered this report at their meeting at sea on the 8th; Field-Marshal Sir Alan Brooke, Chief of the Imperial General Staff, though inclined to think the report 'somewhat optimistic', saw no reason to disagree with it, a view apparently shared by the British and United States Chiefs of Staff as a result of reports from their Intelligence, but President Roosevelt and Mr. Winston Churchill remained sceptical of such estimates (see page 142 below).

General Eisenhower's report was considered by the Combined Chiefs of Staff on the first day of the Octagon conference, and was approved with one addition on a question of emphasis. At the instance of the British Chiefs of Staff, their approval was worded thus:

- ✓ 1. The proposals set out in your letter of the 9th of September are approved by the Combined Chiefs of Staff.
2. The Combined Chiefs of Staff, in transmitting this approval, draw your attention to:
 - X (a) The advantages of the northern, as opposed to the southern, line of approach into Germany. They note with satisfaction that you are apparently of the same mind.
 - X (b) The necessity for opening up the north-west ports, Antwerp and Rotterdam in particular, before the bad weather sets in.'

This action was confirmed by the President and Prime Minister in the final report of the conference on September the 16th.

Meanwhile, the pace and pattern of advance in the early days of September had pointed to the need of some reorganisation of air force commands. So long as all the Allied strategic air forces and

much of the tactical air forces were based in England and so long as the Supreme Commander, his deputy, Air Chief Marshal Sir Arthur Tedder, and his Air Commander-in-Chief, Air Chief Marshal Sir Trafford Leigh-Mallory, together with Shaef and all the complicated machinery of high-level air force control were also in England, no difficulty had arisen; but now Shaef was in France with Forward Shaef soon to be established in Versailles; most of the tactical air forces were in France and were associated with separate army groups under the Supreme Commander. Leigh-Mallory's position as Air Commander-in-Chief was becoming redundant and when in October he was appointed Air Commander-in-Chief, South-East Asia, it was decided not to appoint a successor at Shaef.¹ In future Air Marshal Coningham, commanding the British Second Tactical Air Force, and Major-General Hoyt S. Vandenberg, commanding the United States Ninth Air Force, would be under direct control of the Supreme Commander through his deputy, Sir Arthur Tedder, with an Air Staff at Shaef. This arrangement would not imply any change of policy in the use of tactical air forces.

During the Octagon conference in mid-September the Combined Chiefs of Staff decided to make a more radical-looking change in the control of strategic air forces. It was recorded in Volume I that the Supreme Commander had been made responsible for their direction before Overlord was launched, on the understanding that the Combined Chiefs of Staff would review the arrangement when the Allied armies had been formally established on the Continent. At a meeting at which the President and the Prime Minister were present in Quebec during the Octagon conference it was decided, on September the 14th, that executive responsibility for the control of strategic bombers should now be vested jointly in the Chief of Air Staff, Royal Air Force, and the Commanding General, United States Army Air Forces. To represent them 'for the purpose of providing control and co-ordination' the Deputy Chief of Air Staff, Royal Air Force and the Commanding General, United States Strategic Air Forces in Europe were designated. The over-all mission of the strategic air forces was repeated as 'the progressive destruction and dislocation of the German military, industrial and economic system and the direct support of Land and Naval forces'. Under this general mission they were to direct their attacks, subject to the exigencies of weather and tactical feasibility, against 'the systems of objectives and in the order of priority now established by the Supreme Commander Allied Expeditionary Force'.

Thus, General Eisenhower's initial authority to 'direct' the strategic bombers in all air operations out of England 'in preparation

¹ Leigh-Mallory's appointment at Shaef ended officially on October the 16th.

for and in support of Overlord¹ was now restricted to his right to call 'either for assistance in the battle or to take advantage of related opportunities', though for the time being, as told above, under the new command these attacks were to be directed against 'the systems of objectives and in the order of priorities now established by the Supreme Commander'. What followed this change of command will be seen later. X

As told above (page 13) the operation at first named 'Comet' had been developed by the 10th and renamed 'Market Garden'.² It was a bold and imaginative plan which if successful would outflank the Siegfried Line and give the Allies a bridgehead over the Rhine at Arnhem before the enemy could gather enough strength to prevent it. But in order to succeed it must be made in adequate strength and 'that part of the Central Group of Armies which was operating north-west of the Ardennes' must work in close concert with Second Army. Subject to being satisfied on those important matters Montgomery had planned for the operation to begin on September the 15th when he met the Supreme Commander at Brussels on the 10th. General Eisenhower's headquarters were still hundreds of miles away on the west coast of the Cotentin. For several days he had been practically confined there by an accident to his knee when his aircraft had had to make a forced landing some miles away from his headquarters; he now flew to Brussels for a conference in his aeroplane on the 10th with Field-Marshal Montgomery. He also saw General Bradley and other members of his staff on the 9th, 10th and 11th. Eisenhower was accompanied by Sir Arthur Tedder and leading members of his staff who included Lieut-General Sir Humfrey Gale, his chief administrative officer; only Tedder was present when he met Montgomery on the 10th. X

There is no formal record of what took place but it seems clear that the plans for a continuance of Second Army's advance and, with the help of the Airborne Army, the seizure of a bridgehead across the Rhine at Arnhem were approved, though Montgomery's demands for priority of supplies were not fully accepted. Field-Marshal Montgomery telegraphed that night to Lieut-General Sir Archibald Nye, the V.C.I.G.S., (the C.I.G.S. being absent in Quebec) that 'Everything was very friendly and amiable but we got no further'. The same day Tedder sent his account of the meeting to the Chief of Air Staff, Air Chief Marshal Sir Charles Portal: X

'... Today I accompanied Eisenhower when he flew to Brussels to meet Montgomery. In our talks there the advance to Berlin

¹ See *Victory in the West*, vol. I, p. 43.

² It is popularly known to the English layman as 'the Arnhem operation'.

was not considered as a serious issue and I do not think it was so intended. The real point is the degree of priority to be given to the American Corps which is operating on Montgomery's right, and the extent to which Montgomery should control its operations. There was useful discussion on this and I expect Eisenhower will clear this point with Bradley tomorrow. Montgomery made great play over the word "priority", he insisted that in his interpretation the word implies absolute priority, to the exclusion of all other operations if necessary. Argument on such a basis was obviously futile, Eisenhower made it clear that he did not accept such an interpretation. Our fight must be with both hands at present, the moment for the left hook had not yet come and could not come till Northern Army Group maintenance was securely based on the Channel Ports.

I feel that the discussion cleared the air but Montgomery will of course dislike not getting a blank cheque. It will assist in ensuring that the Ruhr thrust gets the proper priority which we all feel that it should have.'

Montgomery, for his part, telegraphed to Eisenhower next day:

'I have investigated my maintenance situation very carefully since our meeting yesterday. Your decision that the northern thrust towards the Ruhr is not repeat not to have priority over other operations will have certain repercussions which you should know. The large scale operations by Second Army and the Airborne Army northwards towards the Meuse and Rhine cannot now take place before 23 September at the earliest and possibly 26 September. This delay will give the enemy time to organise better defensive arrangements and we must expect heavier resistance and slower progress. As the winter draws on the weather may be expected to deteriorate and either [sic] get less results from our great weight of air power. It is basically a matter of rail and road and air transport and unless this is concentrated to give impetus to the selected thrust then no one is going to get very far since we are all such a long way from our supply bases. We will do all that is possible to get on with the business but the above facts will show you that if enemy resistance continues to stiffen as at present then no repeat no great results can be expected until we have built up stocks of ammunition and other requirements.'

The following day (the 12th) General Eisenhower sent his Chief of Staff (Lieut-General Walter Bedell Smith) to see Montgomery and decide how far his difficulties could be met. On the 13th he (Eisenhower) wrote:

'Last night Bedell reported to me the details of his conference with you. From this report I understand the following:

To assure adequate maintenance for 21 Army Group's advance to the Ruhr, linked with operation Market, you desire 1,000 tons

of supplies per day delivered by air lift in the Brussels area. This tonnage of air lift cannot be guaranteed, as your plans require the use of all transport aircraft in operation Market for an expected period of from 7 to 10 days and for that particular period transport of supplies by air will necessarily be suspended. In order to meet this particular situation the U.S. Communication Zone has been instructed to make every effort to transport 500 tons of supplies per day to the Brussels area by motor truck. The motor transport required will be provided by immobilising U.S. divisions and certain other U.S. tactical units, and by using every other expedient. Naturally, these measures are emergency ones and must be temporary but I am willing to give effect to them for a limited time to enable you to cross the Rhine and capture the approaches to Antwerp. To these deliveries by motor transport of approximately 500 tons per day, we will add another 500 tons per day of deliveries by air lift, except for the period when you require all cargo-carrying aircraft for operation Market. When all aircraft are being used in the airborne operation additional maintenance over the 500 tons delivered daily by U.S. transport for 21 Army Group must be provided by your own emergency measures. I understand this arrangement will meet your minimum requirements. The arrangement can continue until about the first of October; by then it is anticipated you will have reached your initial major objective.' X

He went on to give assurances that the United States First Army would have supplies adequate for the task assigned to it and to suggest a conference with Bradley to facilitate the co-ordination of its operations with those of Second Army.

'I understand that operation Market will now be launched on the 17th. This is very encouraging, every day gained will be an advantage to us and in addition will permit the reassembly at an earlier date of U.S. airborne divisions which may be badly needed by Bradley soon. I also understand that you are pressing hard to open the Scheldt Estuary and that in your plans for reducing Walcheren Island you contemplate using airborne troops for the attack which First Allied Airborne Army is unwilling to agree to because of expected difficulties. When outline plans are discussed by Belchem¹ with Brereton's² staff, these difficulties may be overcome. In any event I consider that the use of Antwerp is so important to future operations that I am prepared to go a long way to make the attack a success.' X

In a message to the V.C.I.G.S., Montgomery had given a somewhat different version of what he understood to have been agreed.

'Following my meeting with Ike as reported in my telegram M.186 I sent him a telegram to confirm his decision that Ruhr

¹ Brigadier R. F. K. Belchem, B.G.S. (Ops) Twenty-First Army Group.

² Lieut-General L. H. Brereton, commanding the First Allied Airborne Army.

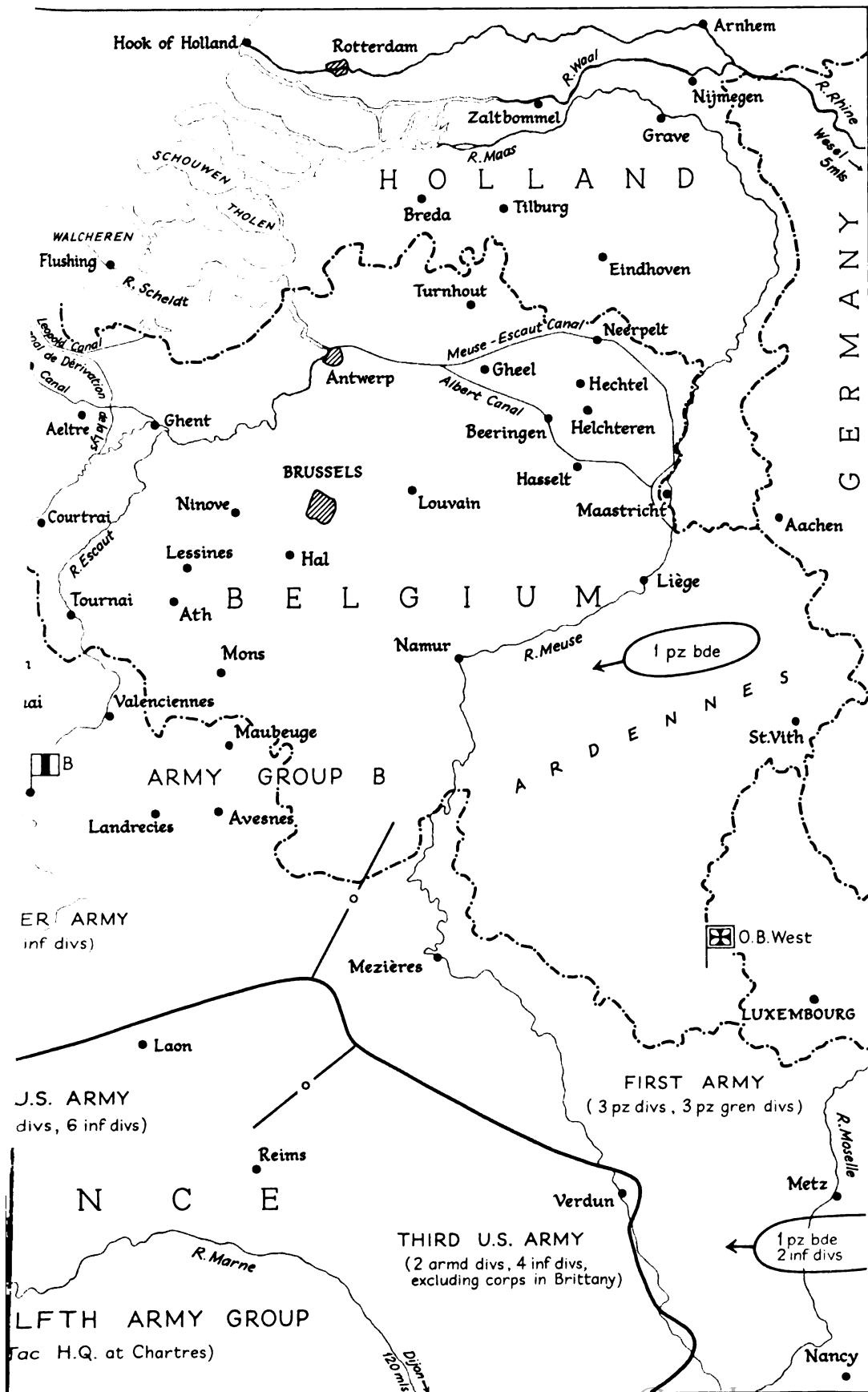
thrust would have no (repeat no) priority and pointing out what repercussions of that decision must be as regards my operations. This produced electrical results. Ike has given way and he sent Bedell to see (? word omitted) today. The Saar thrust is to be stopped. Three American divs are to be grounded and transport used to give (? extra) maintenance to 21st Army Group. The whole of maintenance 12th Army Group is to be given to 1st U.S. Army on my right and that army is to co-operate closely with me and I am to be allowed to deal direct with Hodges. Airborne Army H.Q. (? had) refused my demand for airborne troops to help capture Walcheren as not (repeat not) being a suitable (? job) for airborne troops and they are now going to be ordered by Ike to do what I ask.

As a result of these changed conditions I have now fixed D (D) day for operation Market (repeat Market) previously known as Comet for Sunday next 17th Sept. So we have gained a great victory. I feel somewhat overcome by it all but hope we shall now win the war reasonably quickly.'

Clearly he was very pleased but the 'victory' was hardly as great as he believed. If the Saar thrust was to be 'stopped' the stoppage was only to be temporary. Eisenhower had no intention of abandoning his plan to advance on both the Ruhr and the Saar, to link up with the forces coming up from the Mediterranean and so eventually to reach the Rhine on a 'broad front'. The operations of the American armies during this first fortnight of September were a complete antithesis of Montgomery's advocated concentration on one overwhelming thrust into Germany.

In the second week of September the American armies continued their advance, so far as their supplies made this possible, with comparatively little hindrance from the retreating Germans. First Army troops reached the Albert Canal, took Namur and Liège on the Meuse and were nearing Aachen; the city of Luxembourg was freed and the German border was crossed near St. Vith. Meanwhile Patton's Third Army, further south, had won small bridgeheads over the Moselle and the outer defences of Metz had been reached. On the southern flank a body of retreating German troops from central and southern France was caught between the American Third Army and Sixth Army Group which, driving up from the Mediterranean coast, met Third Army on the 12th north of Dijon.

On September the 10th Bradley had issued a new directive, in which the following was the gist of his orders. Twelfth Army Group would advance eastward to secure bridgeheads over the Rhine from Mannheim to Cologne, both inclusive; First Army was to cross in the vicinity of Koblenz, Bonn and Cologne, maintaining contact with Twenty-First Army Group and protecting the American left (north) flank, and Third Army was to cross in the vicinity of Mannheim and



Mainz and, if sufficient forces were available, was also to secure a bridgehead near Karlsruhe.

On the 12th Bradley wrote at length to Eisenhower that both First and Third Armies said that they had on hand ammunition for five days fighting and enough petrol to carry them to the Rhine. Third Army had launched 'a strong attack' to force the Moselle which Patton believed would succeed and 'open up the way for his rapid advance to the Rhine' with his thrust directed on the axis Metz-Frankfurt. Bradley continued: 'In view of the present tactical commitments and the state of supply of both Armies, I have told Patton to continue his attack, but that if by Thursday night [this was dated Tuesday] he has not been able to force a crossing of the Moselle with the mass of his forces, he will discontinue that attack, assume the defensive along the southern flank and along the front from Nancy to the vicinity of Luxembourg, and make his main effort north of the Moselle river.'

On the 13th General Eisenhower issued a new directive.

After his recent conferences with both army group commanders and the Naval C-in-C he was confirmed in his previously expressed conviction that the early winning of deep-water ports and improved maintenance facilities in the rear were prerequisites to a final all-out assault on Germany proper.

'Our port position today is such that a stretch of a week or ten days of bad weather in the channel—a condition that is growing increasingly probable as the summer recedes—would paralyse our activities and so make the maintenance of our forces exceedingly difficult, even in defensive roles . . . without improved communications speedy and prolonged advance by our forces, adequate in strength and depending on bulk oil, ammunition and transport, is not a feasible operation . . .

The general plan . . . is to push forward our forces to the Rhine, secure bridgeheads over that river, seize the Ruhr and then concentrate our forces preparatory to a final non-stop drive into Germany. During this time we must secure the following bases: Northern Group of Armies must secure the approaches to Antwerp or to Rotterdam quickly so that one of these ports with the lines of communication radiating from it can provide adequate maintenance for them deep into the heart of Germany; they must also secure other channel ports. Central Group of Armies must reduce Brest promptly so that this place may be available for staging our troops. It is important too that physical junction should be established between Southern Group of Armies in their advance from the south and the right of Central Group of Armies, so that the supply lines from Marseilles may assist in supporting the right of Central Group of Armies as soon as Southern Group of Armies can make available any surplus capacity.

My plan of manoeuvre is to push hard over the Rhine in the north with Northern Group of Armies, First U.S. Army and First Allied Airborne Army, while Third U.S. Army, except for a limited advance as explained below, is confined to holding and threatening action until the initial objectives are attained on the left. Northern Group of Armies, swinging generally northward from present position, will advance promptly to seize a bridgehead over the Rhine and prepare to seize the Ruhr. For this purpose, additional maintenance will be provided, until about 1st October, if necessary . . . Central Group of Armies must push its right only far enough, for the present, to hold adequate bridgeheads beyond the Moselle thus creating a constant threat to the enemy and preventing him from reinforcing further north by transferring troops from the Metz area. As soon as this is accomplished all possible resources from Central Group of Armies must be thrown in to the support of First U.S. Army's drive to seize bridgeheads near Cologne and Bonn, in preparation for assisting in the capture of the Ruhr. After Northern Group of Armies and First U.S. Army have seized bridgeheads over the Rhine, Third U.S. Army will advance through the Saar and establish bridgeheads across the Rhine. This advance will be initiated at an earlier date, if maintenance of Third U.S. Army becomes possible. . . . After attainment of these Moselle bridgeheads, the operations on our left will take priority, until the Rhine bridgeheads are won, in all forms of logistical support with the exception of (A) adequate measures for security and continuous reconnaissance by the forces on the right; (B) resources necessary for securing and developing ports.'

Clearly this would depend on who decided what maintenance was to be allotted to the Third Army, and on this Eisenhower's intentions seem to have been open to different interpretations, for until that time General Bradley had continued to allocate equality of supplies to the two armies under his command. Notified by Bradley on the 14th that Third Army had crossed the Moselle in force, Eisenhower replied on the 15th that if Hodges could be fully supplied to the time he reached his first principal objective 'there was no reason why Patton should not keep acting offensively if conditions for offensive action were favourable'.¹

On the 14th Field-Marshal Montgomery issued a further directive, of which the following are the governing clauses:

'Together with 12th Army Group, we will now begin operations designed to isolate and surround the Ruhr; we will occupy that area as we may desire. *Our real objective therefore is the Ruhr.* But on the way to it we want the ports of Antwerp and Rotterdam, since the capture of the Ruhr is merely the first step on the northern route of advance into Germany.

¹ Pogue, *The Supreme Command*, p. 255.

First Canadian Army

Complete the capture first of Boulogne, and then Calais. Dunkirk will be left to be dealt with later . . . The whole energies of the Army will be directed towards operations designed to enable full use to be made of the port of Antwerp . . . Having completed the operations for the opening of Antwerp Canadian Army will operate northwards on the general axis Breda-Utrecht-Amsterdam.

Second British Army

The first task of the Army is to operate northwards and secure the crossings over the Rhine and Meuse in the general area Arnhem-Nijmegen-Grave. An airborne corps of three divisions is placed under command Second Army for these operations . . . The thrust northward to secure the river crossings . . . will be rapid and violent without regard to what is happening on the flanks. The Army will establish its strength on the general line Zwolle-Deventer-Arnhem facing east, with deep bridgeheads to the east side of the Ijssel River.

The First U.S. Army is to move eastwards . . . to capture Bonn and Cologne and to establish a deep bridgehead . . . on the east side of the Rhine. The Army is then to advance eastwards round the south face of the Ruhr. These operations to be timed so as to be co-ordinated carefully with the move of the Second Army round the north face of the Ruhr.'

This was the plan submitted to General Eisenhower on the 10th, as described in the next chapter.

CHAPTER II

THE ARNHEM OPERATION

ON Sunday the 17th of September Operation 'Market Garden' was launched. Its aim, as stated in Field-Marshal Montgomery's directive issued three days before, was to secure crossings over the Rhine and Maas¹ in the general area Arnhem-Nijmegen-Grave by the use of airborne troops and a 'rapid and violent' thrust by Second Army: the army was then to establish itself in strength on a line between Zwolle (on the Zuider Zee) and Arnhem, facing east with deep bridgeheads east of the Ijssel river. It was to be the beginning of operations with the United States First Army designed to isolate and surround the Ruhr. The purpose of Market Garden (hereafter referred to as the Arnhem Operation) was thus ambitious. Leading troops of General Dempsey's Second Army (XXX Corps)² had needed four days' hard fighting to cross the defended Albert Canal at Beeringen and win a small bridgehead over the Meuse-Escaut Canal only about fifteen miles ahead; now they were expected to win a bridgehead 65 miles away over the Lower Rhine at Arnhem in as short a time or less, assuming that their road would be largely cleared for them by an airborne corps³ of the newly formed First Allied Airborne Army (Lieut-General Lewis H. Brereton) and later enlarged on either flank by Second Army's VIII and XII Corps. But in this section of the front the Allies were no longer pursuing a retreating enemy. Across their advance a German front had been reformed and since the 4th of September the German commanders had been building up the defence as quickly as they could. This was realised but it was thought that they could not build a strong front quickly enough to prevent the success of such a combined thrust by airborne and ground forces as Field-Marshal Montgomery had planned and General Eisenhower had strongly approved—'I must say that it not only is designed to carry out most effectively my basic conception with respect to this campaign but it is in exact accordance with all the understandings that we now have'.

¹ The Dutch name for this river where it flows westwards to the sea is 'Maas': the name where it flows from the south through France and Belgium is the 'Meuse'.

² XXX Corps—Guards Armoured Division, 43rd and 50th Divisions; VIII Corps—11th Armoured Division and 3rd Division; XII Corps—7th Armoured Division, 15th and 53rd Divisions.

³ British I Airborne Corps—British 1st Airborne Division, United States 82nd and 101st Airborne Divisions.

The road to be taken by Second Army's XXX Corps started from their small bridgehead over the Meuse-Escout canal near Neerpelt and went northwards via Eindhoven, St. Oedenrode, Veghel, Grave and Nijmegen to Arnhem. Three areas *en route* were to be secured in advance of the army by I Airborne Corps of three divisions under command of Lieut-General F. A. M. Browning, namely the United States 101st Airborne Division—to 'seize bridges and defiles [subsequently defined as in the area Eindhoven, Zon, Veghel] on XXX Corps' main axis of advance so as to ensure the speedy pass-through of that corps to the Grave, Nijmegen and Arnhem crossings'; the United States 82nd Airborne Division—to 'seize and hold the bridges at Nijmegen and Grave with the same object in view' and 'the capture and retention of the high ground between Nijmegen and Groesbeek' was 'imperative in order to accomplish the division's task'; and the British 1st Airborne Division—to 'capture the Arnhem bridges, with sufficient bridgeheads to pass formations of Second Army through'.¹ It was also intended to land the 52nd (Airportable) Division to the north of Arnhem as soon as an airstrip was available there but the course of events prevented this and the division was not employed. (Map page 44.)

The air transport for the fly-in of all three airborne divisions would be commanded by Major-General P. L. Williams of the United States IX Troop Carrier Command; it would consist of aircraft of that command and of 38 and 46 Groups of the Royal Air Force—amounting in all to just over fifteen hundred aircraft, about a quarter being British, and about 2,500 towed gliders. The aircraft would only be enough to fly in, at one time, less than half of the airborne forces; it would need lifts spaced over three consecutive days to carry all of them and their equipment. This was one disadvantage which had been accepted in planning the operation, and there were others. For instance, the fly-in was to be made by day which would be of advantage to the airborne troops but would expose aircraft to the greatest danger from enemy flak. It was believed that this danger could be minimised by strong covering air forces accompanying each fly-in and by a choice of flying routes which would as far as possible avoid areas in which flak defence was known to be strongest. As less than half of the airborne troops would be flown in on the first

¹ The main water obstacles and their widths were:

Wilhelmina Canal at Zon	80 to 100 feet
Willems Canal at Veghel	average 80 feet
River Maas at Grave	normally 800 feet
Maas-Waal Canal	200 feet
River Waal at Nijmegen	September normal 850 feet
Lower Rhine at Arnhem	Summer normal 300 feet

To provide for the possible demolition of bridges by the enemy, XXX Corps had assembled near the start of the advance a vast amount of bridging material, 2,300 vehicles and some 9,000 sappers of the Royal Engineers with Pioneers.

day, a proportion of those landed would have to protect the dropping zones for subsequent lifts which therefore would lose any advantage of surprise. These disadvantages were realised but were not regarded as likely to prejudice the success of operations as planned. The spirit of optimism ran high, the end of the war still appeared to be within sight; it was felt that the troops could take the foreseen difficulties in their stride and could overcome any defence they were likely to encounter.

By the middle of September, Second Army's front, stretching from the east of Hasselt to Antwerp, faced General Student's First Parachute Army across the Meuse-Escaut Canal, except where XXX Corps had won the bridgehead near Neerpelt (from which the road to be used would split Student's army through the middle), and at Aart where XII Corps were already fighting hard to extend another small bridgehead on the road from Gheel to Turnhout. Student had shown great energy in building up a coherent defence of the country for which he was responsible, using his own troops and any others he could get hold of. Varying in strength and efficiency, they were divisions made up by troops and staffs from training depots, or of 'remnants' collected during the retreat from France, and their fighting value can only be judged by the measure of their resistance to the Second Army's advance. In General Student they had a forceful commander. At this date he had four 'divisions' or divisional battle groups defending the canal across Second Army's front with a fifth opposite the left flank of the adjoining American sector. From east to west were the 176th Division, the Parachute Training Division 'Erdmann', the 'Battle Group Walter', the 85th Division and the 719th; two other formations would come under his command, namely the 59th Division (from the Fifteenth Army from across the Scheldt in the coastal area) and 107th Panzer Brigade from the Reich which had been ordered to Aachen. Both were quickly brought into action against XXX Corps when the Arnhem operation took shape.

With the operation timed to begin on Sunday the 17th, preparatory air actions started on the Saturday night, when nearly three hundred heavy bombers of Bomber Command attacked known concentrations of flak which would be passed over on the fly-in and enemy airfields which were within the *Luftwaffe's* fighter range of Allied objectives. One of these airfields had just been occupied by a force of the enemy's new jet fighters and these were temporarily immobilised by the bombers' cratering of their runways. Early on Sunday morning over eight hundred Fortresses of the United States Eighth Air Force, with a strong escort of fighters, attacked targets (mainly anti-aircraft positions) along the fly-in routes, while medium bombers of the Second Tactical Air Force

x x

x x

x

x x

x x

x x

x x

attacked enemy barracks at Nijmegen, Arnhem, Ede and Cleve and their Typhoons shot up gun positions in the Arnhem-Nijmegen area.

Meanwhile, on twenty-two airfields in England over fifteen hundred transport aircraft and nearly five hundred towed gliders had begun taking off for Holland. They were escorted at different stages by nearly four hundred fighters of the Air Defence of Great Britain and over five hundred fighters of the United States Eighth and Ninth Air Forces. The troop-carrying aircraft followed the routes shown on the adjoining sketch map.

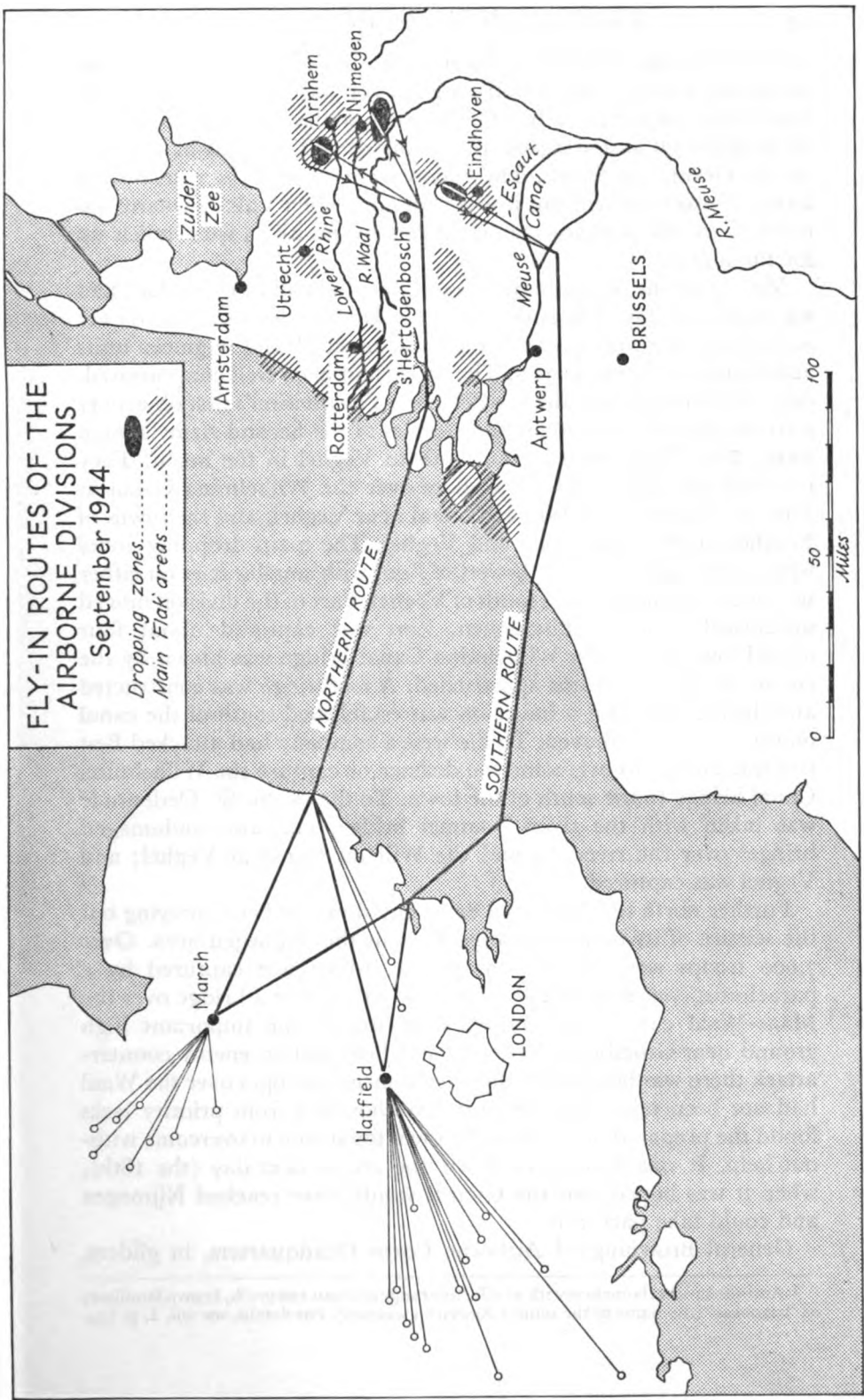
By the southern route troops of the American 101st Airborne Division were flown in to the Eindhoven-Veghel area; by the northern route the American 82nd Airborne Division went to the Grave-Nijmegen area; while the British 1st Airborne Division, taking the same course to s'Hertogenbosch, then flew on to Arnhem. To ensure that so large a number of aircraft, each with its appointed load of men and equipment, duly started from widely dispersed airfields in time to take their place punctually in the streams flying to the Continent, was a notable example of good organisation. They began arriving at their objectives at about one o'clock and by shortly after two o'clock on that Sunday afternoon the last plane had released its load and turned for home. Some 46 gliders failed to reach their goal for various reasons;¹ 34 aircraft were lost and 291 were damaged, chiefly by enemy flak; no enemy aircraft tried to interfere and most of the flights were very accurate. Of the three airborne divisions over 19,000 airborne troops arrived on or near their drop or landing zones on this first day.

As the airborne troops finished landing, XXX Corps began to advance from their Neerpelt bridgehead on the canal (page 31). At two o'clock their artillery started heavy counter-battery fire and concentrations on selected targets. At half past two 50th Division's heavy mortars opened up and two minutes later a field artillery barrage was brought down, four hundred yards ahead of the front line extending a thousand yards on either side of the road. Three minutes later, as the barrage began to move slowly forward, the Guards Armoured Division drove out of the bridgehead, their leading group² being supported by a battalion of the 50th Division.³ Typhoons of 83 Group supported the advance in touch with the leading unit through a contact car. For a time all went well but after the barrage had passed the enemy hidden in roadside woods

¹ Twenty-nine came adrift over England and six over the sea; a further eleven came down on the Continent before reaching their goal. But twenty-seven Air/Sea Rescue launches patrolled the sea daily while flights were in progress and very few men were lost in the sea. During the whole operation 228 were saved by Air/Sea Rescue Service.

² The 2nd Armoured Battalion and the 3rd Battalion of the Irish Guards.

³ 2nd Battalion The Devonshire Regiment.



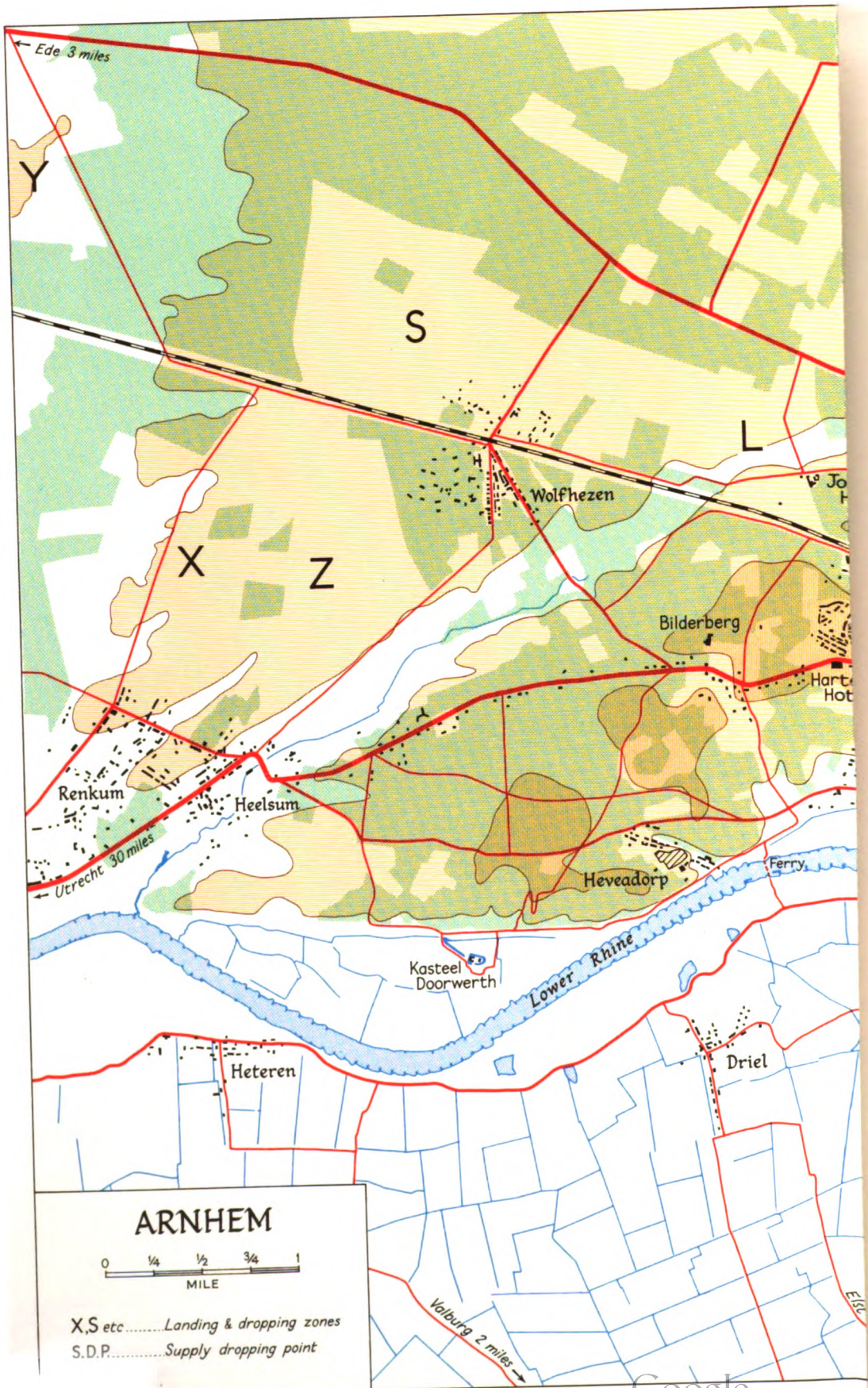
and hedges came to life. In a few minutes nine of the Guards' leading tanks were knocked out by anti-tank guns or 'bazookas'.¹ Ditches confined tanks to the road but Guardsmen of the battalion riding on them deployed and attacked after supporting Typhoons had beaten up the German positions. The enemy were soon on the run and the advance was resumed, but it was 7.30 p.m. when Valkenswaard was reached by the foremost troops and there positions were taken up for the night.

Meantime the airborne divisions, landed ahead of them, had had an impressive day. The American 101st Division had assembled over 6,700 parachute infantry with signals, medical and engineer units and divisional headquarters. The drops had been well concentrated, only one being outside the correct zone. The division's first objectives were distributed over some fifteen miles of the Second Army's main route, from Eindhoven in the south to Veghel in the north. They involved the capture of the bridges over the Wilhelmina Canal at Zon, the Aa river and Willems Canal near Veghel, and the towns of Eindhoven, St. Oedenrode and Veghel. The main dropping zones were a mile and more north-west of Zon, with smaller ones on either side of the canal and river south of Veghel. Part of the division moved southwards towards Eindhoven. Zon was captured about four o'clock but the nearby Wilhelmina Canal bridge was blown by the enemy as the Americans approached. A footbridge was constructed and during the night a battalion was established south of the canal on the way to Eindhoven. To the west a company had attacked Best but was unable to overcome the defence or capture the Wilhelmina Canal bridge to the south of the town. To the north, St. Oedenrode was taken with the river Dommel bridge, and also undamaged bridges over the river Aa and the Willems Canal at Veghel; and Veghel was captured.

Further north the American 82nd Division had been carrying out the seizure of its immediate objectives in the Nijmegen area. Over 7,000 troops were landed, the Grave bridge was captured by a parachutist *coup de main* and by the end of the day a bridge over the Maas-Waal canal was secured at Heumen; the important high ground near Groesbeek was seized and held and an enemy counter-attack there was beaten off. But the Nijmegen bridges over the Waal had not been taken, for the only battalion free from priority tasks found the prepared defences in the town too strong to overcome without help. It was decided to renew the attack next day (the 18th), when it was hoped that the Guards would have reached Nijmegen and could take part in it.

General Browning's I Airborne Corps Headquarters, in gliders,

¹ Anti-tank rocket launchers with an effective range of about 100 yards, known familiarly as 'bazookas' (the name of the similar American weapon). For details, see vol. I, p. 554.



was flown in by the Royal Air Force and set up near Groesbeek. Communication was established with England and with Second Army but not with the 1st or 101st Airborne Divisions. X

Still further north the first flight of the British 1st Airborne Division had been landed outside Arnhem, on the north bank of the Lower Rhine. Their object was the seizure of the road and rail bridges in the town but, as will be seen from the map opposite, the areas selected for landing (marked S, X and Z) were six miles away to the west in the broken, much wooded country which embraces Arnhem on the north bank. First, twelve pathfinder aircraft dropped an Independent Parachute Company at the landing zones and when the main flight arrived all ground aids were operating. The troops landed included divisional headquarters and some of the divisional troops, and the 1st Parachute and most of the 1st Airlanding Brigade Groups—in all some 5,700 men. The first task of the parachute brigade, with the 1st Reconnaissance Squadron ahead of them, was to seize the bridges; that of the airlanding brigade was to hold the dropping zones on which the division's remaining brigade (the 4th Parachute) was to be landed next day and then to join the latter in forming a defensive arc covering the Arnhem bridgehead. Most of the troops were landed in or near the correct zones and on time; the last arrived soon after two o'clock that Sunday afternoon. This was reported by the aircraft on their return but no news from the division itself was received during the rest of the day. ✓

On the morning of the 18th leading troops of the Guards Armoured Division resumed their advance but were delayed by further opposition covering a small river-crossing south of Eindhoven. An attempt to use a secondary road on the right flank was abandoned when it was found to be strongly held. Eindhoven was not reached till the afternoon. The town had been captured earlier by the American airborne troops and the road was clear to the broken canal bridge at Zon. The fact that the bridge was blown had been telephoned back to XXX Corps during the morning and the necessary bridging material was on its way forward. While Eindhoven was being taken other troops of the 101st Airborne Division had renewed the effort to capture the second canal bridge, near Best, but the enemy there had been reinforced by the first units to arrive from the German 59th Division and counter-attacked strongly. Bitter and indecisive fighting continued throughout the day and, though the enemy was eventually beaten off with the timely help of aircraft escorting the airlift which was then coming in, Best and the bridge remained in German hands. The second day's airlifts had all been delayed by fog in England, but when this cleared during the afternoon a further contingent of the 101st Division X

landed—over 2,500 men, some 150 jeeps and over 100 trailers. Though there had been some casualties to troop-carrying aircraft it was considered that the fly-in was 95 per cent successful.

In the Nijmegen area, the American 82nd Division had faced an early attack on its eastern flank which threatened the ground on which the second flight was to be landed; fortunately for them this had been postponed till the afternoon and by then the enemy had been beaten off. Even so the fly-in was handicapped by haze and low cloud and there were some failures to reach the correct zones. Of a large glider-borne flight carrying over 1,800 troops, more than 50 field and anti-tank guns, 200 jeeps and 120 trailers, some were lost or went astray while only about eighty per cent of the supplies dropped were recovered; in protecting the fly-in over 20 fighters were lost. With the Guards still held up behind the broken bridge at Zon the airborne division's available force was not strong enough both to hold the ground they had won and to capture the Nijmegen bridges that day. The German defence there had been reinforced first by troops of the 9th SS Panzer Division, subsequently relieved by some of the 10th SS Panzer Division.

On the 18th the second lift for the 1st Airborne Division also did not get to Arnhem till the afternoon. They carried the 4th Parachute Brigade and the remainder of the 1st Airlanding Brigade, with other details and some resupply. For various reasons over twenty gliders failed to reach their landing zone and there were some casualties among aircraft carrying troops or supplies. Heavy flak was encountered *en route* but although enemy fighters had been active in the morning they were unable to penetrate the Allies' fighter screen while the fly-in was in progress. Over 4,000 troops were landed, the majority on area Y, (and about 100 tons of supplies) but the aircrafts' delay in leaving England would mean that the brigades were late in starting for their objectives.

Meanwhile, the two corps which were to support the main advance by capturing the ground on either flank had both broken through the German front on the Meuse-Escaut canal by assault crossings in face of stiff opposition—VIII Corps on the right near Lille St. Hubert and XII Corps on the left near Lommel. At both points the canal was bridged and the advance continued. But General Browning and General Horrocks, commanding XXX Corps, were becoming anxious. The Guards were still held up while the bridge at Zon was being built and the Nijmegen bridge was not yet taken. And the last entry that night in the Airborne Corps war diary reads:

'Day closed with still no news of 1st Airborne Division'.

Tuesday the 19th, however, started with greater promise. By 6.15 a.m. the Engineers' work on the Zon bridge was completed and

the Guards resumed their interrupted advance. Half an hour later the leaders reached Veghel; by 8.30 a.m. they were through the fourteen miles of unguarded road in hostile territory to the north and made contact with the 82nd Airborne Division near Grave. Behind them the road was filled by following troops. Among these was the first of two Independent Armoured Groups which were to reinforce the airborne troops holding the Eindhoven-Veghel sector of the route.¹ One squadron of the tanks remained with the Americans holding Eindhoven. The rest joined those fighting for the canal bridge near Best. The enemy, further reinforced with armour and artillery of the German 59th Division, had again attacked, and the American airborne troops were heavily engaged, but when they were joined by the British tanks and self-propelled guns the enemy was routed. Over a thousand German prisoners were taken, more than three hundred dead were counted and fifteen 88-mm guns destroyed. But though the canal bridge near Best was captured it had meanwhile been blown by the enemy, who still held Best itself.

While this action was in progress the 101st Division's third air-lift flew in—at little more than half strength. Thick fog over the Channel had led to the recall of many aircraft and those which arrived had to fly low as they approached the landing zone. Seventeen were shot down and forty-two gliders landed in enemy territory. Even so, the airborne division received some artillery just when it was needed. For shortly afterwards enemy tanks and assault guns approached from the east,² firing on the Zon bridge. Some vehicles about to cross by the bridge were destroyed and for a time the movement of traffic all along the road behind them was held up; but newly arrived anti-tank guns of the airborne troops were rushed forward, the enemy was forced to withdraw and the flow of traffic was resumed. It was again held up after dark when over seventy German aircraft raided Eindhoven, causing damage and congestion of the traffic passing through the town. When that was again on the move in the early hours of the 20th the second Independent Armoured Group arrived to join the defence of the area.

The 19th had been somewhat disappointing in the Nijmegen area. After the Guards reached Grave they turned to the right and went by the bridge at Heumen to the southern outskirts of Nijmegen where they were joined by a battalion of the 82nd Airborne Division. The two corps commanders, Generals Browning and Horrocks, and Major-General J. M. Gavin, commanding the airborne division, arranged for a renewed attack for the capture of the road and

¹ This first group consisted of the 15th/19th Hussars, a squadron of the Royals in armoured cars and a battery of self-propelled 25-pdr guns; the second of the 44th Battalion Royal Tank Regiment with armoured cars and artillery.

² These were from the newly arrived 107th Panzer Brigade which had about 40 tanks and assault guns and a grenadier battalion.

railway bridges across the Waal and that afternoon a combined attack by tanks and infantry began. But the enemy's positions were by now strongly defended, casualties mounted and several of the Guards' tanks were knocked out; as darkness approached it was decided to make a stronger attack early next day.

The rest of the 82nd Airborne Division strengthened their defence of the large area they now held south of the river but bad weather forced a postponement of the fly-in of their glider infantry regiment (intended to join in the attempt to capture Nijmegen bridge) and interfered sadly with a resupply mission. Running into thick fog and low cloud some aircraft were turned back. Many that reached the area dropped supplies from too great a height and they were widely dispersed; at most something like twenty per cent was recovered. This was a blow, for the division was getting short of food and ammunition. The expected fly-in to Arnhem that day (19th) with the parachutists of the 1st Polish Parachute Brigade was also cancelled on account of bad weather but some of their gliders and a resupply mission flew in north of the river during the afternoon.

So far there had been almost complete failure of wireless communication with the troops at Arnhem but in the course of the day a trickle of messages was received at the airborne corps headquarters. From these it was learnt that the 2nd Parachute Battalion had captured the north end of the road bridge at last light on Sunday the 17th, the bridge being intact but the south end held by the enemy. By Tuesday the north end was apparently no longer held but elements of the 1st Parachute Brigade were 'in its vicinity'. (In fact they were able to deny the enemy use of the bridge till the 20th.) After 'confused fighting' in the western outskirts of Arnhem the rest of the division had failed to reach the bridge and was apparently holding the suburb of Oosterbeek, between the railway and the river. It could be inferred that the prearranged supply dropping point had not been secured and this was confirmed by the last messages received. These said that supplies dropped were almost all in enemy hands and asked for a resupply to be dropped on a small designated area in Oosterbeek 'at the earliest'. A few messages from Arnhem were also received during the 19th by XXX Corps, Second Army and I Airborne Corps' base in England, but these did not make any material addition to what is recorded above.

Early on Wednesday morning (the 20th) a further message from Arnhem giving particulars of the Heveadorp ferry was received, followed by a request that the Polish Brigade should now be landed south of the river near Driel, to cross by the ferry and concentrate to the west of Oosterbeek. It had originally been intended that they should land on area K, south of Arnhem bridge, on the 19th by which time enemy flak in that area should have been overcome.

That morning part of the 82nd Division and of the Guards Armoured Division resumed their attack for the capture of the Nijmegen bridges. The enemy held stoutly to the buildings, entrenched gardens and old fort which covered the road bridge approach and the position was only taken after hard fighting which lasted all day. In the afternoon troops of the airborne division, with tanks of the Guards giving supporting fire, attacked across the Waal about a mile downstream, in canvas assault boats provided by the Guards. Artillery, mortars and British Typhoons had hammered the German defence of the opposite bank, but the Waal is a strong, fast-flowing river some 300 yards wide at that point and though covered by the Guards' fire the assaulting paratroops suffered heavily in the fast current of the bullet-swept crossing. In spite of severe casualties they persisted courageously and, on landing, overran the defences; they soon had a small bridgehead from which they turned to fight their way up stream towards the bridges. They had captured the northern end of the railway bridge when tanks of the Grenadier Guards burst across the road bridge (in spite of fire from snipers in the super-structure and '88' guns posted to cover it) and joined the Americans coming to meet them on the north bank. An Engineer officer made demolition charges safe and German personnel found in the demolition chambers were captured. That night the bridgehead north of the Waal was strengthened, for though the road and railway bridges were now in Allied hands there were still more enemy to be cleared from both banks.

Two messages were received from the 1st Airborne Division at Arnhem during that Wednesday evening (20th). The first read:

'Essential every effort is made to ensure earliest arrival Guards Division at Arnhem. Situation at bridge critical'.

The second, giving their situation at five minutes past three that afternoon, read:

'Enemy in strength attacking main bridge. 1 Para Brigade situation critical. Under attack also from east and west. Am forming perimeter defence at Hartenstein. Earliest relief essential. Still retain control Heveadorp ferry crossing.'

Back down the main road tanks of the German 107th Panzer Brigade had tried for a second time to reach the bridge at Zon early on the 20th. For a time traffic was interrupted but the enemy were driven off by airborne troops and tanks of the recently arrived Independent Armoured Groups (page 37) in a running fight which lasted some hours. The flow of traffic was resumed by about eleven o'clock but all the delays caused by the enemy up to this time—the blowing of Zon bridge, the attacks there on Tuesday and

Wednesday, and the air raid on Eindhoven on Tuesday night—had set back XXX Corps' movement a long way behind schedule. When the last German attack was made early on the 20th something like 1,000 vehicles of the Guards Armoured Division were still on the road between Zon and Grave; behind them corps troops were held up all the way back down the 30-mile road from Hechtel, where the 43rd Division was just about to join the stream. The corps had 20,000 vehicles to move with only one road to advance by.

Early on the Thursday, the 21st, the Household Cavalry tried but failed to find a way to Arnhem through the enemy's now close defence of the Nijmegen bridgehead but they pinpointed the enemy's position astride the main road south of Elst, and this was later confirmed by a captured German map. Twenty enemy tanks were also reported moving southwards from Arnhem to the Elst area.

At 11 a.m. the Irish Guards received orders to break through the German position and advance up the main road to Arnhem. They started forward at 1.30 p.m. but the enemy by then had strengthened his position and twenty minutes later the Guards' advance was brought to an end. For as they came into view of unseen enemy gunners their three leading tanks were knocked out, blocking further advance; and though a Guards battalion attacked on foot both frontally and on the flanks they failed to make headway. They could not ask for immediate support from aircraft overhead, for their contact car had broken down.

The nature of the country between the Waal at Nijmegen and the Lower Rhine at Arnhem largely explains this hold-up. Known to the Allied troops as 'the Island', it is flat low-lying land, drained by innumerable ditches and waterways which separate its fields in place of hedges. Most of its few roads are built up above the level of surrounding country and all are flanked by waterways. The main road to Arnhem, in particular, ran between deep, wide ditches within which advancing tanks were firmly enclosed; there was no escape on either hand. The going was much obscured by orchards; traffic on the raised roads was itself very exposed but defences hidden in woods and orchards on the flanks were hard to locate. During much of these operations it rained heavily, adding to the difficulty of movement through this water-bound land.

When the Irish Guards' tanks failed to get through the defence of the main road on the 21st others tried to find a way round on the left. They got past an old fort on the north bank and knocked out three enemy tanks, but darkness prevented further action that night. Meanwhile the 43rd Infantry Division had been ordered forward to continue the advance and one brigade (the 130th) had already taken over defence of the Nijmegen bridges.

The 1st Polish Parachute Brigade was due to be flown in on the

21st as reinforcement of the 1st Airborne Division at Arnhem. In accordance with the message received on the 20th (page 38) they were now to be dropped south of the Rhine near Driel; but bad weather interfered with air operations and only about 750 men arrived that afternoon to find that the Heveadorp ferry, by which they were to join the 1st Division in the Oosterbeek area, had meanwhile been captured by the enemy during the previous night. Yet the airborne division gained some advantage that day; their artillery made wireless contact with the medium artillery of XXX Corps and from then on the latter gave invaluable support. Major-General R. E. Urquhart, commanding the 1st Airborne Division, has since written: 'It is doubtful if any medium unit has ever shot so many rounds with such accuracy at such a range and at targets so close to our own troops. Many attacks were broken up as a result of its fire and its support may have made all the difference to the ability of the defence to hold out for the time that they did.' From a few messages received and from information given by an officer who had made his way back from Arnhem it was learned that supplies dropped north of the river had done little to improve the position: they now had 'rations for one per three men' and were running short of ammunition and petrol. It was apparent that little if anything was known at their divisional headquarters about the troops of 1st Parachute Brigade who had reached the north end of the bridge on the night of the 17th. This was indeed confirmed in a report of the Arnhem situation as at 8.30 p.m. on *the 21st*, issued by Airborne Corps Headquarters just after three o'clock on the morning of *the 22nd*. The substance was this:

'Headquarters of the 1st Airborne Division had no knowledge of 1 Parachute Brigade for 36 hours; it was last known to be holding the north end of main bridge at Arnhem, covering it with fire and having removed [demolition] charges. Latest civilian reports state there are no British troops in the town except for few isolated snipers holding out near the bridge. Remainder of division holding a tight defence locality in Oosterbeek. No longer retain control of ferry crossing at Heveadorp. Regular accurate mortaring and shelling by self-propelled guns for the last two days. Casualties heavy to Airlanding Brigade, to 4 Parachute Brigade fairly heavy, to 1 Parachute Brigade not known but believed to be heavy. Supply situation of Division, less 1 Parachute Brigade, satisfactory after supply drop on 20th. Division's resources stretched to the utmost. Officer and sergeant succeeded in making their way from Arnhem to Nijmegen through the enemy lines with information.'

The sender of the message cannot have known that very little of the supplies dropped on the 20th had been recovered: he was right in saying that resources were 'stretched to the utmost'.

On that day (22nd) and the two which followed, misfortune dogged affairs in 'the Island'. The 22nd was a very misty morning. Taking advantage of this, some of the Household Cavalry slipped out of the Nijmegen bridgehead round the west of the enemy's defence and went on to reach the Poles near Driel; and as the mist cleared a brigade of the 43rd Division (the 214th) tried to break through close country held by the enemy. Not until late afternoon was Oosterhout¹ captured by their leading battalion; the second battalion then moved through Valburg to Driel where they joined the Poles, taking two Dukws loaded with supplies and ammunition for the 1st Airborne Division. On their way the battalion had ambushed and destroyed five enemy tanks approaching from Elst. The Dukws, however, stuck in a muddy ditch and could not be launched. A second brigade (the 129th) attacked along the Guards' axis in the afternoon, but gained little ground.

On the 22nd the enemy's 107th Panzer Brigade again attacked from the east and their 59th Division from the west and the main road was blocked between Veghel and Uden. The 32nd Guards Brigade Group was ordered back to help the 101st Airborne troops to clear it and after hard fighting the enemy was beaten off by the afternoon of the 23rd. By then traffic had again been stopped for many hours.

By the evening of the 23rd the 130th Brigade had been relieved of responsibility for the Nijmegen bridges² and they too joined the Poles at Driel. Their progress had been slow for the road beyond Valburg was under fire from German guns and the division had been given Dukws as transport so as to have these unwieldy but useful vehicles forward to assist in river crossings. It was intended that part of the 130th Brigade and the Poles should cross the river that night to reinforce the airborne troops on the north bank but only enough assault-boats were available for a one-battalion crossing and these were given to the Poles. They had to contend with a strong current and enemy fire and only about 200 got over. The 214th Brigade had attacked Elst from the west; they also established a position across the main road on the south of the town.

On the 24th more assault boats were sent forward from Nijmegen but two lorry loads took a wrong turning and drove into enemy lines and two others slid off the road into a ditch from which they could not be recovered; the only lorry load which reached the Poles carried no paddles! At dusk everything was ready for a battalion assault by the 130th Brigade near Heveadorp ferry and another crossing by the Poles further upstream—everything, that is, except

¹ A village three miles north-west of Nijmegen.

² By the 6th Brigade of the 50th Division, with the Royal Netherlands Brigade under its command.

the necessary assault boats. The infantry battalion had none and the Poles barely enough for one parachute battalion. It was decided that the former would cross, but bringing the assault boats across from the Poles delayed the start till about 1 a.m. By then a strong current and enemy fire made the crossing slow and perilous but about 250 men¹ of the 43rd Division got over that night. Meanwhile a further 550 men of the Polish Brigade had been flown in to Nijmegen and moved forward to the Driel area. There were then about 1,000 Poles and about three battalions of the 43rd Division close up to the high bank of the southern shore which hid them from the enemy firing from positions in the wooded hill country north of the river. The country south of the river, including the railway line and main road to Nijmegen, and all the ground to the east of them, was held by the enemy as far south as a line from Elst to Bommel. There was now little hope that a strong bridgehead over the Rhine could be gained in the immediate future. If not, what remained of the 1st Airborne Division must be withdrawn from Arnhem for they had been fighting without rest or relief for eight days already.

On the 24th General Horrocks went forward to Driel and there met Major-General Sosabowski, commanding the Polish Parachute Brigade, and Major-General G. I. Thomas, commanding 43rd (Wessex) Division. After reconnoitring the position, he ordered plans for their withdrawal to be prepared and sent across to General Urquhart: the order to carry them out could be issued later if need be. He then went back to consult General Dempsey at St. Oedenrode and while there the road behind him was again cut by the enemy south of Veghel. The attack had been made from the west and after a number of vehicles had been knocked out all traffic was held up for the enemy established a firm road block.² Troops of the 101st Division were being moved up rapidly, and others were brought back from Uden with some tanks of the Independent Armoured Group; the 7th Armoured Division was moved forward to join in clearing the road. But though repeated attempts were made the position was not liquidated till early on the 26th. The road occupied by the enemy had been mined and it was not re-opened for traffic till early afternoon. Meantime the flanking corps after hard fighting had reached the position shown on the map facing page 44. On the right VIII Corps had driven the enemy out of successive delaying positions, first on the Willems Canal at Zomerren where the bridge on the Deurne road was destroyed and strong counter-attacks were met; and secondly on the line Deurne-Helmond. British progress on this

¹ Of the 4th Battalion The Dorsetshire Regiment.

² The German troops engaged came from 59th Division and were mostly from parachute battalions supported by self-propelled artillery. The 107th Panzer Brigade had been too hard hit on the 23rd to take further part in this repeated attempt to cut off the rear of the Allied advance as ordered by Model.

flank cut in behind 107th Panzer Brigade's attacks on XXX Corps' axis and forced its withdrawal. On the left XII Corps' 53rd Division had had heavy casualties in clearing the ground south of the Wilhelmina Canal, their toughest fight being at Wintelre, west of Eindhoven, which the Germans successfully defended for two days; north of the canal the 15th Division suffered nearly as heavily in its five days' fight for the capture of Best.

General Horrocks had, however, made his way round the enemy's position early on the 25th and rejoined his headquarters at Nijmegen. There he learnt that nothing had been heard of the 43rd Division troops who had crossed the Rhine from the south bank so he sent orders that the airborne division would withdraw that night.

In the 'Island' that day Bommel was captured on the right and the enemy was finally driven out of Elst but the road north to Arnhem was still held by the Germans. Engineer units with assault and storm boats had been brought up and concentrated at Valburg in preparation for the withdrawal. When it was dark some were to move to a point opposite the ground held by the airborne division, some to the Heveadorp ferry site from which it was hoped to reach men of the 43rd Division who had crossed the river. A diversionary force also went to Heteren, three miles downstream, to simulate an assault crossing there.

At nine o'clock that night all the artillery and machine gun units with the 43rd Division and the medium guns of XXX Corps on the south of the river opened fire on the enemy surrounding the position still held by the airborne division on the opposite bank. Half an hour later the assault-boats had picked up their first loads from the north bank and started back, quickly followed by stormboats manned by men of two Canadian engineer companies. In the small hours of the 26th the current of the river quickened and in order to contend with it assault-boat crews were helped by many of the 'passengers'. Enemy fire was intermittent but the aim was too high and in the darkness casualties were light; at dawn, however, the enemy's firing lowered to water level and casualties quickly increased. In the last boats to get away hardly any were not wounded and when finally, in broad daylight, the order to stop was given there were still some three hundred men waiting on the far bank. A load of life-belts had been left there and those who could swam over. This withdrawal by a force so closely surrounded by the enemy was well planned and well executed. Until it was nearly completed the enemy did not realise what was going on.

Downstream at the Heveadorp site the enemy had been alert and a burning factory on the north bank dimly lit the area. About fifty men of the 43rd Division were brought back but it was learnt that

the others who had crossed on the previous night had landed so widely dispersed and so close to the enemy that they had not been able to assemble before they were overpowered, fighting in small groups.

After having been warmed and fed all returned men were transported or marched to rest or to hospital in Nijmegen.

With the return of General Urquhart and the remainder of his division the story of their nine days' fighting became better known.

Arnhem is an attractive, well-built town of nearly 100,000 inhabitants, with pleasant suburbs which stretch along the north bank of the Lower Rhine, surrounded by the broken, wooded and largely open country which embraces them. The 1st Airborne Division was chiefly concerned with the suburb of Oosterbeek, lying between the open country to the west in which they had been landed and Arnhem town, where lay the railway and road bridges which were their main objectives. From Utrecht, 35 miles away to the west, two alternative roads lead to Arnhem, one running north of the railway through Ede and the other south of the railway through Heesum; from Heesum there is also a branch road which goes to Arnhem by Heveadorp, keeping nearer to the river. As the map facing page 35 shows, much of the surrounding country was covered by large areas of open heath and woodlands; tree-lined roads, gardens and fences in the residential suburbs added to their beauty but increased the difficulties of troops advancing on the town in face of opposition. Exactly where and in what strength opposition would be met was of course not known. But 'it was not expected that any mobile force larger than a brigade group, with very few tanks and guns, could be concentrated against the airborne troops before relief by the ground forces'. It was certainly not known that Field-Marshal Model had a headquarters in Oosterbeek and was having his lunch there on the 17th when he was told that Allied troops were landing from the air little more than a mile away! He left hurriedly to organise the local defence and to order up reinforcements. That was one of the unforeseeable happenings at Arnhem and it was most unfortunate, for it meant that when the first of the airborne troops had assembled and set out for Arnhem they very soon found that some of the reconnaissance regiment of the 9th SS Panzer Division and of the local defence forces were in positions to oppose them. Chief of the latter was an SS Panzer Grenadier Replacement and Training Unit, 'Battalion Krafft'. Its strength was about 400, part of them N.C.O.s and old soldiers, the rest recruits in training; its equipment included some anti-tank and anti-aircraft guns and mortars.

It was also not known that (according to General Student) a copy of an Allied operational order, taken from someone shot down during one of the other airborne landings, was in his hands at his command post at Vught, near s'Hertogenbosch, two hours later.

The first task of the 1st Airlanding Brigade was to protect the areas on which the second flight of the division was to be landed next day and troops of the brigade moved off quickly to take up suitable positions. The chief task of the 1st Parachute Brigade was to capture and hold the Arnhem bridges, over six miles away from their starting point after the drop.¹ The brigades' three battalions were to take separate roads; the 1st Parachute Battalion, the Utrecht-Ede road north of the railway; the 3rd, the Utrecht-Heelsum road south of the railway; and the 2nd, the alternate road from Heelsum keeping nearer to the river. This will be referred to as 'the river road'.

The 1st Battalion crossed the railway at Wolfhezen station but found that the road from Ede was being patrolled by enemy armour and, leaving a company to cover them from the west, they turned eastwards towards Arnhem. They found that the enemy not only held the road but woods to the south of it beyond Johanna Hoeve and they were soon involved in fighting which continued into the night.

The 3rd Battalion on the central road drove off German armoured cars as the first of the column entered Oosterbeek but its rear was heavily fired on from Bilderberg and an attack failed to dislodge the enemy. More opposition was met as the column moved into Oosterbeek and when the enemy had not been dislodged before darkness fell positions were taken up for the night.

The divisional commander, General Urquhart, had gone forward to see what was happening but his jeep was hit and his wireless put out of action; as the road back to divisional headquarters on the landing ground was under mortar fire he remained that night with the battalion in Oosterbeek. One company of the 3rd Battalion, directed to by-pass the opposition ahead, moving on the left flank by the railway line, reached the main road bridge during the night and joined the 2nd Battalion, the greater part of which had arrived already by the river road.

For the 2nd Battalion, which set out quickly to reach the main bridge by the river road, had encountered serious opposition first as they approached the line of the railway which branches southward to Nijmegen and crosses the river by the Arnhem railway bridge (blown by the enemy just as they were about to seize it); pushing

¹ It was to be preceded by two troops of the 1st Reconnaissance Squadron, racing forward to reach the main bridge, but a scattered landing prevented them from moving off quickly.

forward beyond the railway line, they met fire from higher ground on their left known as Den Brink but, having got past that, further opposition was light. Brushing it aside and sending a company to destroy German headquarters in the town, they pushed on to the main road bridge and seized the northern end just before dark. They were joined during the night and early hours of the 18th by the company from Oosterbeek, referred to above, and by brigade headquarters troops which included a troop of 6-pdr anti-tank guns, a party of Royal Engineers, the brigade signal section and defence platoon, a platoon of the Royal Army Service Corps and an observation party from the division's light artillery. There were thus about 600-700 of all ranks in position to hold the north end of the bridge when day broke on the 18th but attempts during the night to gain the rest of the bridge had been stopped by the enemy's hold of its southern end.

That morning the enemy sent a column of armoured cars and half-track trucks across the bridge from the south; eleven were destroyed as they arrived at the north end, by fire from the airborne troops holding it and from guns of the 1st Airlanding Light Regiment R.A. in Oosterbeek, directed by its observation party from the highest building held near the bridge. In the afternoon a heavy German attack drove in part of the airborne troops' bridgehead but was finally beaten off. Prisoners taken came from II SS Panzer Corps. Earlier in September the corps had been ordered to the country north-east of Arnhem to recuperate and refit after its hard fighting in Normandy; it consisted of the much depleted 9th and 10th SS Panzer Divisions. On learning of the Allied airborne attack Field-Marshal Model had promptly ordered its immediate employment to defeat the threats at Arnhem and Nijmegen.

In the early hours of the 18th, the 3rd Battalion which had been halted for the night in Oosterbeek had resumed its advance, avoiding the opposition ahead by moving on to the river road. The leading troops got to just short of St. Elisabeth hospital, where the railway and river converge to within a few hundred yards. They were little more than a mile away from the party at the road bridge but there they were stopped by the enemy who held strongly the built-up area ahead and had also broken in behind them and engaged the rear of the battalion. Meanwhile the 1st Battalion north of the railway, finding that it could make no progress, turned southwards and joined in the fight but it only succeeded in breaking through to the hospital area in the evening and lost heavily in doing so.

During the morning General Urquhart, moving in the confused street fighting, took cover in a house facing the hospital on the approach of a German self-propelled gun. Fortunately he had not been seen, but unfortunately the gun took up a position in front of

the house while its crew stood about in the road. And there they remained while the noise of nearby battle continued late into the night. General Urquhart and two officers with him were trapped.¹ While his whereabouts was unknown Brigadier P. H. W. Hicks, commander of the 1st Airlanding Brigade, took command of the division.

Meanwhile the overdue second lift had come in on the landing zone during that afternoon (the 18th); it brought the 4th Parachute Brigade and the rest of the 1st Airlanding Brigade and divisional troops and was followed by a resupply drop of which some eighty per cent was duly recovered.

The 1st Battalion The Border Regiment of the Airlanding Brigade closed in to positions west of Oosterbeek, while the 7th Battalion The King's Own Scottish Borderers was sent to Johanna Hoeve to protect the landing zone L on which Polish gliders were to land in the third lift; of the third battalion, the 2nd Battalion The South Staffordshire Regiment, half had come in with the first lift and had been sent forward to reinforce the 1st Parachute Brigade; the remainder was now ordered to join them.

The 4th Parachute Brigade also sent one battalion, the 11th Parachute Battalion, to support the fight to reach the bridge; the other two battalions, the 10th and 156th, advanced towards Arnhem north of the railway but met strong opposition in the woods east of Johanna Hoeve.

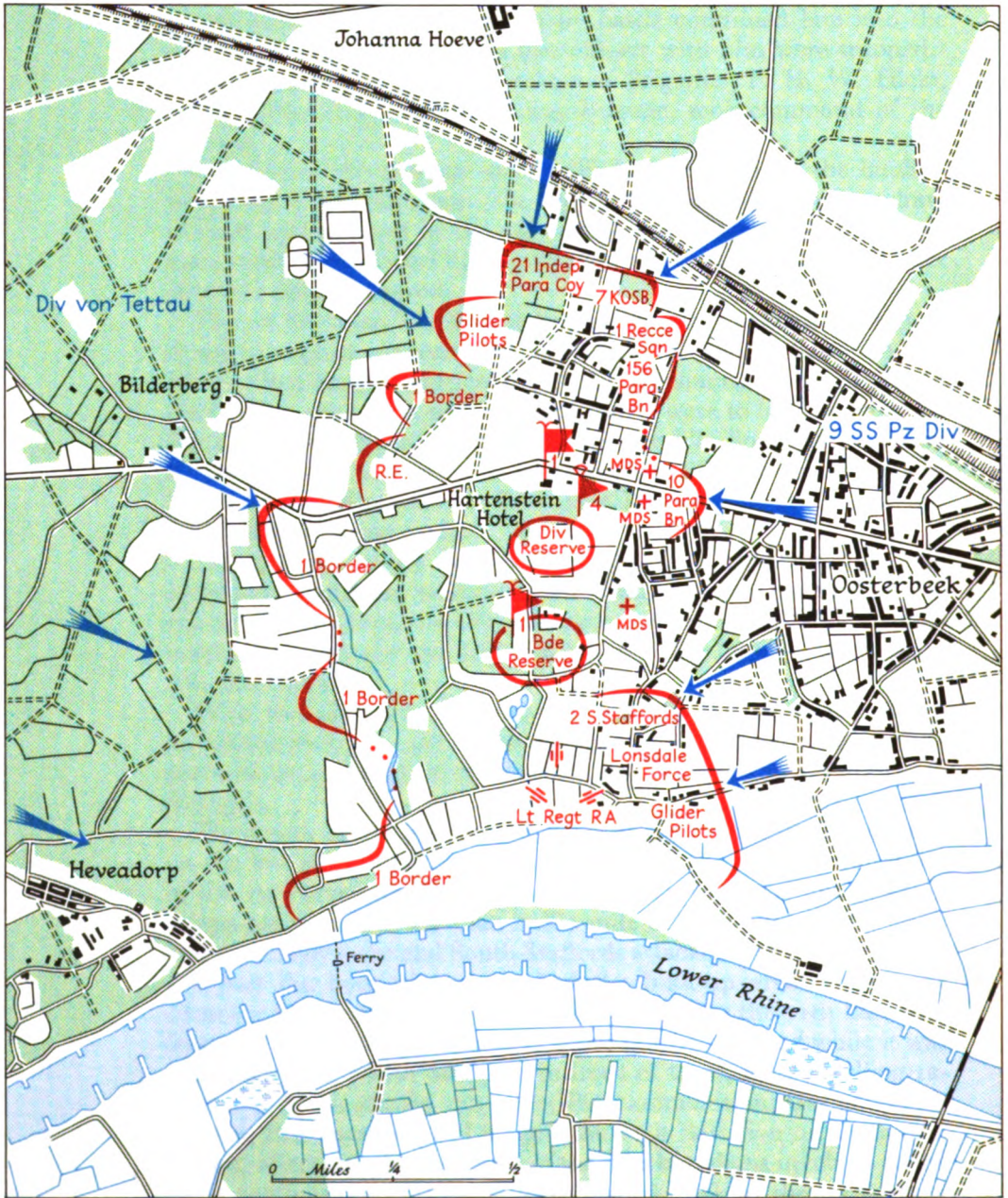
With the arrival in the forward area of the above-mentioned battalions from the 4th Parachute and 1st Airlanding Brigades a renewed attack south of the railway was launched before dawn on the 19th.

The attack on the 19th began at about 3.30 a.m. with an advance on the low river road by the much reduced 1st and 3rd Battalions of the 1st Parachute Brigade in which, after hard fighting, leading troops got to within less than half a mile of the bridge before being overcome. Next, the 2nd South Staffords attacked on the higher road, got past the hospital and reached the built-up area beyond the Museum Gardens. Owing to a misunderstanding the 11th Battalion from the 4th Brigade prepared to move northwards and while it was regrouping the South Staffords in front of them, after repelling repeated German attacks, ran out of Piat² ammunition; German tanks overran their position and caught the 11th Battalion on the move. By mid-afternoon the remnants of the four battalions involved in the day's confused street fighting were beaten back to the outskirts of Oosterbeek. Their *combined* strength was reduced to little more than

¹ Just before this Brigadier G. Lathbury, commanding the 1st Parachute Brigade, was wounded in this area.

² Projector Infantry Anti-Tank (see vol. I, p. 541).

1ST AIRBORNE DIVISION PERIMETER Oosterbeek 20th September 1944



Divisional front..... —••

German attacks..... —▶

Main Dressing Station..... + MDS

H.Q. Div (Airborne), Bde (Para)..... 🚩

The Div reserve consisted of Glider Pilots, RASC, RAOC; the Airlanding Bde reserve of Glider Pilots.

400 men and eight 6-pdr anti-tanks guns; the parachutists were formed into 'Lonsdale force', named after Major Lonsdale who took command.

When the German gun in front of the house where General Urquhart was trapped moved to another position he was able to join troops in the vicinity; from there he returned to his headquarters, now at Hartenstein Hotel in Oosterbeek—he had been missing for thirty-six hours.

Meanwhile the 10th and 156th Battalions of the 4th Brigade had been unable to break through the German defences in the woods north of the railway and in the afternoon General Urquhart ordered Brigadier J. W. Hackett, commanding the 4th Brigade, to break off the attack and advance on Arnhem south of the railway. While they were withdrawing Polish gliders in the third airlift came in and the Borderers protecting the landing zone were also withdrawn south of the railway. Severe fighting continued and the withdrawal was very costly. When the two parachute battalions reached the Oosterbeek area next day their combined strength was less than 150 men and they were incorporated in the defence of the Oosterbeek area which was now being organised for defence to save what remained of the division. How it was held at first is best seen on the adjoining map.

The positions of glider pilots in the defence will be noted. They had been trained to use their weapons and after landing their cargoes they were assembled as fighting formations and filled a valuable rôle in the 1st Airborne Division's defence.

The German forces at Arnhem had steadily increased. By the evening of the 17th a battle group of the 9th SS Panzer Division had been formed in the town and joined by the reconnaissance regiment of the 10th SS Panzer Division and a battalion of heavy mortars, and during the night by a panzer grenadier battalion with ten obsolete tanks from the Reich. By the 20th, another panzer grenadier battalion, an artillery regiment and three battalions of flak guns from the Ruhr had been added to their strength. Against the airborne troops' west flank the improvised Division von Tettau, which since Antwerp fell had been holding a defence line on the Waal under Armed Forces Command Netherlands, concentrated some six battalions of various types, mostly of low fighting value, by the evening of the 18th; two more with six tanks were received next day. More battalions came in later, two on the east and three on the west, and more tanks, some of which were Tigers.

Meanwhile the 2nd Parachute Battalion at Arnhem bridge was virtually immobile in buildings round its north end. At first the enemy's attempts to capture them were repelled or if houses were lost they were recovered at the point of the bayonet. But they had

no adequate reply to the continuous close-quarter fire from guns, tanks and mortars which set buildings alight and reduced them one by one to smouldering ruins. Piat ammunition ran out and their 6-pdr guns could no longer be manhandled about. The area was swept by enemy machine guns so that it was dangerous to move from one building to another but mounting casualties were collected in the cellars of a building used as headquarters, till it too was set ablaze. There was no place to which the wounded could be moved, and nothing with which to combat fire; to save the wounded from burning they were surrendered to the enemy. The latter removed them to hospital but during the hold-up of fighting infiltrated the position and made it untenable. Efforts to break out were unsuccessful and soon after daybreak on the 21st the last small party was overwhelmed and the fight to hold the bridge-end was finished. Half of those who had held the position had been killed or wounded: most of the rest had been captured as the position was destroyed during the course of the fighting.

In the following days enemy pressure round the Oosterbeek position was maintained and casualties multiplied. The position held was almost continuously under fire by guns and mortars but not till the 24th did the enemy make any significant impression. On that day an attack by tanks and infantry drove into the eastern flank for some distance but it was eventually stopped by gunfire brought to bear by XXX Corps' medium guns with which contact had been established on the 21st. Since then they had been giving able support but a post-war report records that the German fire, concentrated on the small area held by the airborne division, was provided by 10 heavy mortars, 10 heavy rocket projectors, 12 light and heavy infantry guns, 30 light and 4 medium field howitzers, 2 10-cm cannon, 20 '88s' and 105-mm flak guns. There was more heavy fighting on the 25th and some lesser penetration but everywhere the airborne troops held on grimly with numbers getting smaller, short of ammunition, hungry, thirsty and very tired but still undefeated. All arms took part in the defence and used their weapons effectively against the encircling enemy. Their final withdrawal that night has already been told (page 44).

The Arnhem operation had been regarded by General Eisenhower as sufficiently important to justify delay in opening the Scheldt. If it had succeeded in enabling Second Army to secure bridges over the Lower Rhine and establish a front on the Ijssel facing eastwards (as was its ultimate aim) it would have assisted and, if fully exploited, might well have shortened the subsequent campaign. It is therefore desirable to see why it failed to do so and why it only succeeded in

winning a valuable salient and a bridgehead over the Waal which had no *immediate* effect on the Allies' advance into Germany.

The wisdom of its plans and the conduct of operations are both in some respects open to question, but bad fortune and bad weather were also against success. It was a misfortune that Field-Marshal Model was at Oosterbeek on the 17th and able to issue orders for defence before the 1st Parachute Brigade could start from the dropping zone for their six-mile march into Arnhem. Had he not been present a larger airborne force might well have reached the bridge earlier that evening. It was also unfortunate that the commander of the German front facing Second Army (Student) received a copy of British-American plans, which had been captured on the first day, showing him what to expect and therefore how to act quickly. The advent of bad weather was also a misfortune which will be discussed later.

The task set was a difficult one—difficult because of physical conditions in which the battle must be fought and military conditions which must be satisfied if it were to succeed. Of the former, dependence on adequate flying weather, and confinement of the main advance to a single road have been noted in the preceding pages. The military conditions which had to be satisfied were that, with the help of airborne troops, passage over all water-obstacles *en route* should be secured quickly so that in four days or less the army could advance over sixty miles into enemy territory to form a firm bridgehead beyond the Rhine; and that in so short a time German opposition would be unable to prevent this. The operational plan assumed that these conditions could be fulfilled and that, if they were, the operation should succeed. But on that 'if' success depended and in the event none of the required conditions were satisfied. The essential road bridges were not secured quickly; the army did not advance at the speed required; and the enemy's reaction was more effective than was expected—largely because they were given more time than it was intended to give them and because they were not retreating but moving forwards to stop the Allies' advance. At every point speed, or the lack of it, was the deciding factor. The 1st Airborne Division's inability to reach the Arnhem bridge quickly and in sufficient strength to deny its use for more than three days to an enemy stronger than was expected to be already on the spot was a factor in which a faulty plan and bad flying weather played a large part. Of some 6,000 airborne troops landed outside Arnhem on the first day only about 600 reached the north end of the road bridge; the rest were stopped by the enemy in the outskirts of the town. Bad weather in the next crucial days delayed the landing of the rest of the division (over 6,000 men) till the enemy's defence was too strong to break through and the whole of the bridge was in enemy hands.

Thus bad weather and the enemy combined to prevent the airborne troops from capturing the Arnhem bridge and holding it for more than a few days. But they were never expected to do so without the help of Second Army's XXX Corps, and when the enemy prevented XXX Corps from reaching Arnhem the airborne division's efforts were bound to fail.

Mistakes made both in planning and in the conduct of operations partly explain why the necessary speed was not attained by XXX Corps. It was planned that the first troops of 101st Division would be dropped over a mile away from the Zon bridge; that those of 82nd Division should give priority to the capture of high ground at Groesbeek rather than to the capture of the Nijmegen road bridge; and to drop the 1st Division six miles away from the bridge at Arnhem which was its main objective. But the quick capture of these bridges was the chief reason for the use of airborne troops and a *coup de main* party, at least, could have been dropped close to each main bridge. Apparently the risk of air losses from enemy flak near the bridges was allowed to count for more than the risk of failure from the loss of speed; the advantage of surprise was forfeited for greater security. In the event the Zon bridge could not be used by the army till the 19th, the Nijmegen bridge not till the 21st and the Arnhem bridge was never reached. When full allowance is made for faults in planning, for delays caused by bad weather and for the difficulty of advancing quickly by a single road through enemy territory, it is true to say that the deciding factor in all that happened was the German defence and the speed with which it was organised by Model and Student.

It was the German defence which prevented all but 600 of the 1st Airborne Division's 10,000 men who were landed at Arnhem from ever reaching the road bridge that was the division's main objective.

It was the German defence which slowed the advance of XXX Corps and the capture of Nijmegen and the bridgehead and prevented the final advance through the 'Island' to Arnhem and the airborne troops who had waited for them for nine days, surrounded at the last by stronger enemy forces and under constant attack.

The advent of bad weather was a great misfortune. Only the first day's airlift went according to plan. The lift to Arnhem on the 18th was five hours late¹ and the other airborne divisions were delayed correspondingly. On the 19th, when the third lift was to have dropped the Polish parachutists south of the bridge at Arnhem, many aircraft could not leave their bases in England because of

¹ The troops of the airlanding brigade, flown in on the 17th and kept back to hold the landing zone, were thus delayed a further five hours on the 18th till they and the newly landed 4th Parachute Brigade could start for their objectives; the enemy had correspondingly longer for the build-up of his defence.

heavy fog. On the 20th they were still unable to take off. On the 21st less than half reached the dropping zone. No flight was possible on the 22nd and by then the north end of the Arnhem bridge had been lost. Moreover the fog which prevented the dropping of the Poles at Arnhem on the 19th also prevented the landing of glider-borne infantry of the 82nd Division at Nijmegen; with them the attempt to capture Nijmegen bridge that night might well have succeeded. To count on good flying weather for three consecutive days was perhaps the biggest risk taken—and it proved to be too great for the success of operations as planned. But the handicap of bad weather, occasional attacks by enemy aircraft and the strength of flak defence did not prevent the Allied air forces from performing their difficult part in the operation, if not always up to time. Moreover, the supply of close air support at Arnhem was inadequate for the following reasons.

Conditions to be observed in order to secure maximum tactical air support for army operations in Overlord were intended to continue those that had been proved in the campaigns in North Africa and Italy. These were as follows:

- (i) In the tactical air force with an army group an air group was associated with each army (83 Group with Second Army, 84 Group with First Canadian Army) and the air group headquarters and army headquarters were situated alongside each other to facilitate co-operation.
- (ii) The tactical air group normally controlled all tactical air forces on its army front.
- (iii) If a tactical air force could not provide all the air support required by its army group it referred to the next higher air headquarters (Air C-in-C, Allied Expeditionary Air Force), who would allot additional support from other tactical air forces, or would apply (to Shaef) for strategic air support to be arranged.

The tactical air headquarters concerned with the Arnhem operation was by now in Belgium. But when General Eisenhower had set up a First Allied Airborne Army Headquarters it was expressly 'to plan and control airborne operations'. The First Allied Airborne Army was in England and plans for the airborne operation were made in England. Second Tactical Air Force's representative missed an important planning conference for this operation when bad weather prevented his flying from Belgium and his point of view was not represented. In the final plan the local tactical air group (83 Group) was ordered to be grounded during the time of airlifts and resupply. When these were postponed for several hours because of bad weather in England, 83 Group's aircraft remained grounded till released from England. During those hours the whole Arnhem

operation had no close air support from Second Tactical Air Force.

Nevertheless, the flying-in of the airborne troops in itself was a remarkable achievement, from the marshalling of the aircraft and gliders over England, their protection on the flight across enemy-held territory and finally the successful landing of the troops on the designated zones with comparatively minor losses. With great gallantry the crews of the supply-carrying aircraft refused to take evasive action until their drop had been completed and concentrated all their energies on getting supplies to the hard-pressed troops of the 1st Airborne Division. 38 and 46 Groups flew 630 sorties on this task; they lost 54 aircraft and had 281 damaged. General Urquhart sent this message to the commander of 38 Group:

'We were given a very good start by the R.A.F. The result of the dropping of the parachutists and the glider landings was quite first class. . . . We are full of admiration for the way in which the aircraft faced the flak, which thickened up considerably after the initial stage. The Division was by then occupying a very small area, which was thickly covered either by trees or houses, and this made the re-supply task extremely difficult and hazardous.'

The table below gives a summary of the air operations:

Air forces in the Arnhem Operation (excluding gliders)
16th September evening to 26th September evening

Task	Formations	Sorties flown	Aircraft		Crew lost
			Lost	Damaged	
Transportation of troops and supplies	R.A.F. 38 & 46 Groups and U.S. VIII & IX A.F. (1)	5,546	153	1,242	504 ⁽³⁾
Protection and army support	R.A.F. 2 T.A.F. & A.D.G.B. and U.S. VIII & IX A.F. (2)	9,794	104	176	116
Heavy bombing of flak areas	R.A.F. Bomber Comd. and U.S. VIII A.F.	1,386	4	20	38
Air-Sea Rescue	R.A.F. Coastal Comd.	251	None	No Record	—
	Totals	16,977	261	1,438	658 ⁽³⁾

(1) Bombers and transport aircraft. (2) Fighters.

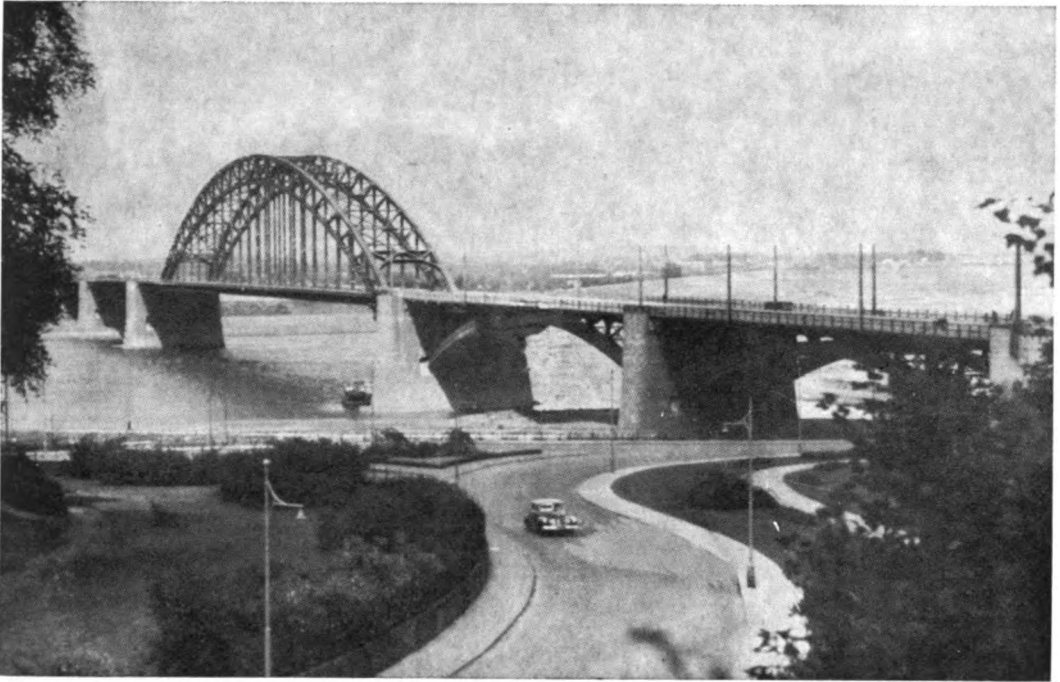
(3) 152 of the Royal Army Service Corps loading and dropping supplies were also lost.



3. Fly-in to Arnhem of 1st Airborne Division



4. Covering the road to Arnhem bridge



de Hond, Oosterbeek

5. Bridge over the Waal at Nijmegen captured by the British Second Army on September the 20th, 1944



6. Dropping a re-supply for airborne troops at Arnhem

After landing six miles from their objective it was probably unwise to direct the 1st Parachute Brigade's three battalions to march on Arnhem by three widely separated roads, where the enemy could oppose them singly while they could give no support to each other; and with wireless sets not working their difficulties were greatly increased. General Urquhart does not agree. He argues that the country was such that because units could not support each other, especially when they got to the built-up areas, 'the more avenues of approach that could be used the better'. It was certainly unwise of the airborne commander to leave headquarters in order to find out how the advance was proceeding; by being trapped in the fighting area he lost control for a vital thirty-six hours. It is moreover hard to find any real excuse for the fact that communications, both within the 1st Division at Arnhem and with I Airborne Corps or with 83 Group and Second Army, proved to be wholly inadequate. Good communications are of the first importance in airborne operations and the British airborne division had surely been long enough preparing for action to make certain of its equipment. The number of men who were taken prisoner at Arnhem during the course of the nine days' fighting is probably explainable in part by the fact that separate parties moving through unfamiliar woods or built-up areas lost touch and were cut off and captured piecemeal.

The unexpected presence in the neighbourhood of two enemy armoured divisions, though battered from their Normandy fighting, was a major factor in the operation.

Yet by holding the north end of the bridge at Arnhem till the 21st the 1st Airborne Division denied its use by German forces in building up the defence at Nijmegen: thereby they helped XXX Corps to capture Nijmegen and its bridges. By still holding out in Oosterbeek for a further five days though virtually surrounded and under constant attack, they prevented the German forces engaged against them from being used against XXX Corps while the latter's position on 'the Island' was still vulnerable. Their stout-hearted fight had not therefore been in vain. But they had suffered grievously. Over 10,300¹ were involved, of whom 1,300 were killed or died of wounds and over 1,700 seriously wounded. 400 doctors and men of the field ambulances who were in charge of them remained with them and so fell into enemy hands, as did many of the 300 men who could not be brought away when daylight prevented further evacuation. In addition some 3,800, many of them wounded, had been captured during the course of fighting at the bridge, in striving to reach it, or in holding the final position in Oosterbeek under continuous attack from all sides. 2,587 were brought away and 240 more made their

¹ This figure includes men of the 1st Polish Parachute Brigade and glider pilots who fought with the division north of the river.

way back in the weeks that followed. Many of the latter had been hidden by Dutch civilians who showed wonderful courage and kindness at great risk to their own lives. Members of the Dutch Resistance had indeed given all the help they could to the airborne troops throughout their time at Arnhem and during the other airborne operations. They ran great risk of German reprisals and the troops have much to thank them for. After the action the Germans took severe revenge on the population.

In the records of Army Group B the fighting at Arnhem by troops of the 9th and 10th SS Panzer Divisions and those of the division under von Tettau is described as 'bloody hand-to-hand fighting with cold steel' and their own casualties as 'very heavy'. According to figures now available these amounted to about 3,300 men, including about 1,100 dead.

In operations south of the river casualties, killed, wounded and missing, were as follows: American airborne divisions—3,542, Second Army—3,716.¹

With the return of the 1st Airborne Division and the failure to win a bridgehead at Arnhem the operation was over; but there was more fighting needed to hold the bridgehead on 'the Island' north of the Waal at Nijmegen and to strengthen and enlarge the flanks of the ground leading to it. It must be left to a later chapter to describe this.

Five Victoria Crosses were awarded for acts of valour at Arnhem, four of them posthumously. The latter were to:

Captain Lionel Ernest Queripel, The Royal Sussex Regiment, commanding a company of the 10th Battalion of The Parachute Regiment. Despite being wounded several times he continued to lead and inspire his men in the attack and when his battalion had to withdraw on the 19th of September he remained behind to cover his men.

Flight-Lieutenant David Samuel Anthony Lord, 271 Squadron, Royal Air Force, pilot and captain of an aircraft dropping supplies at Arnhem on the 19th of September. With one wing on fire from German anti-aircraft guns he dropped most of his supplies on the dropping point, turned and made a second run to drop the remainder, all under intense fire. He ordered his crew to abandon the aircraft, while he remained till it crashed in flames.

Lieutenant John Hollington Grayburn, The Parachute Regiment, commanding a platoon of the 2nd Battalion at Arnhem bridge. Though wounded early in the battle and several times later, he and his platoon repelled attack after attack by German infantry and tanks and as numbers fell he took charge of his

¹ The American airborne casualties are from the 17th to the 25th; the Second Army for one day longer.

company. His courage and inspiring leadership played a major part in enabling the bridge to be held so long. He was killed in action on the 20th of September.

Lance-Sergeant John Daniel Baskeyfield, The South Staffordshire Regiment. He continued to man his anti-tank gun in the perimeter at Oosterbeek against German tanks at short range, despite being wounded. When the gun was knocked out he took over another when the crew had been killed. He was himself killed still firing it.

One officer lived to receive his Victoria Cross, namely Major Robert Henry Cain, The Royal Northumberland Fusiliers, attached to The South Staffordshire Regiment, in which he commanded a company. In the attack to relieve the bridge and in the perimeter at Oosterbeek he repeatedly stopped German tank attacks with a Piat gun at very close range, despite many wounds. When Piat ammunition ran out, he stopped a tank attack with a 2-inch mortar.

On the 8th of October General Eisenhower sent the following letter to General Urquhart:¹

'Dear General Urquhart:

The Chief of the Imperial General Staff has just informed me that, due to the great losses the First British Airborne Division suffered at Arnhem, it will probably not be possible to reconstitute it. This occasions me the same deep regret that I know you must feel, because in this war there has been no single performance by any unit that has more greatly inspired me or more highly excited my admiration, than the nine day action of your Division between September 17 and 26.

There is no question that these sentiments are shared by every soldier, sailor and airman of the entire Allied Expeditionary Force now battling toward the Rhine River.

Before the world the proud record that your Division has established needs no embellishment from me, but I should like every survivor of that gallant band to realise, not only how deeply this whole Command appreciates his example of courage, fortitude, and skill, but that the Division's great battle contributed effectively to the success of operations to the southward of its own battleground.

Your officers and men were magnificent. Pressed from every side, without relief, reinforcement or respite, they inflicted such losses on the Nazi that his infantry dared not close with them. In an unremitting hail of steel from German snipers, machine-guns, mortars, rockets, cannon of all calibers and self-propelled and tank artillery, they never flinched, never wavered. They held steadfastly.

¹ Printed in Major-General R. E. Urquhart's *Arnhem* (Cassell, 1958), pp. 197-8.

THE ARNHEM OPERATION

For nine days they checked the furious assault of the Nazis and when, on 26th September, they were ordered to withdraw across the river, they came out a proud and haughty band—paratroopers, air-landing men, glider pilots, clerks, cooks and batmen, soldiers all—two thousand strong out of seven thousand five hundred that entered the battle.

The Allied Expeditionary Forces salute them.

My profound admiration and warm regards to you, personally.

Sincerely,

Dwight D. Eisenhower.

CHAPTER III

CHANNEL PORTS AND THE SCHELDT

WHILE following to its conclusion the spectacular advance of Second Army and a corps of the First Allied Airborne Army in an effort to gain a bridgehead over the Rhine, it has been necessary to postpone the account of the First Canadian Army's actions during the latter half of September. In Field-Marshal Montgomery's directive of the 14th he had written: 'We have captured the port of Antwerp but cannot make use of it as the enemy controls the mouth of the Scheldt; operations to put this matter right will be a first priority for Canadian Army'. 'The whole energies of the Army', he ordered, 'will be directed towards . . . Antwerp' but he went on to order that they were 'to complete the capture first of Boulogne, and then of Calais', Dunkirk being 'merely masked' for the present to be dealt with later. For operations 'designed to enable full use to be made of the port of Antwerp' airborne troops, he wrote, would be available to co-operate and air operations against the island of Walcheren had already begun, with attacks on road and rail bridges, coastal batteries and other artillery including flak. Canadian Army's I Corps Headquarters and 49th Division were to be brought up from le Havre to the Antwerp area 'as early as possible', their 51st Division being grounded and its transport used for maintenance or movement as long as it was required by the Canadian Army. That army was to take over Antwerp from Second Army beginning on the 17th—the day on which the latter was to set out on its narrowly concentrated thrust towards Arnhem.

How very different were the widely extended tasks given to the Canadian Army! Not only had they first to capture two of the defended Channel ports and to 'mask' a third; they must also drive the Germans from their strong bridgehead south of the Scheldt and from their dominating positions north of the estuary in Walcheren and South Beveland. All this would be necessary to secure 'full use of the port of Antwerp'. It was a very heavy programme for an army which consisted of two armoured and four infantry divisions, one of which was at that time grounded in order that its transport might be used elsewhere. It is not surprising that General Crerar asked to be given command of Second Army troops which had hitherto been

holding the Antwerp area; neither is it surprising that Second Army could not spare them when it was just starting on the Arnhem operation.

After some redistribution of their existing forces the Canadian deployment on September the 17th was as follows:

- (1) On the fifty-mile Channel front was the 3rd Canadian Infantry Division, starting to capture Boulogne and Calais; while Dunkirk was now to be 'masked' by the 4th Special Service Brigade from le Havre, in order to relieve the 2nd Canadian Infantry Division for operations in the Antwerp area.
- (2) On the fifty-mile front which turned eastwards at the Bruges-Ghent Canal were the 4th Canadian Armoured Division and the 1st Polish Armoured Division pushing northwards to clear the German bridgehead on the south bank of the Scheldt.
- (3) The 2nd Canadian Infantry Division was moving across to hold Antwerp and its environs. (These four divisions constituted II Canadian Corps.)
- (4) The army's other corps headquarters (the British I Corps) with its 49th Division had been ordered to move as quickly as possible to the twenty-mile sector on the east of Antwerp (at present held by Second Army) with its eventual right flank reaching to Herenthals, Turnhout, Tilburg and beyond.

It will help the reader to follow what was achieved during the rest of September if the actions in each of these four tasks of the Canadian Army are told in turn.

(i) *The Channel ports*

On the day when I Corps troops closed round the defences of le Havre (September the 5th) the 3rd Canadian Infantry Division had come up against the outlying defences of Boulogne. Next day Field-Marshal Montgomery had written to General Crerar, 'I want Boulogne badly', and asked how soon it could be captured. The official Canadian history says that Crerar 'was already working on the problem'¹ but he does not seem to have recognised any great need for haste. After seeing Montgomery three days later (on the 9th) he issued a directive which, while restating II Canadian Corps' orders 'to proceed, without delay, to capture Boulogne, Dunkirk² and Calais', continued: 'If no weakness in the defences of these ports is discovered, and decisively exploited, in the course of operational reconnaissance—then a deliberate attack, with full fire support, will

¹ Stacey, *The Victory Campaign*, p. 329.

² As told above, on the 14th Montgomery directed that Dunkirk should be left to be dealt with later: for the present it would be merely masked.



require to be staged, in each case'. Four days later (on the 13th) he wrote to Montgomery that the 'fall of le Havre has favourable potential influences' and it was 'most important that the effect so gained should not be more than lost by an unsuccessful attack on the next objective, Boulogne. I, therefore, want Simonds¹ to button things up properly, taking a little more time, if necessary, to ensure a decisive assault'.² After full air attack had been arranged, which took two days, and artillery and assault vehicles which had been used in the capture of le Havre (135 miles away) had been brought up, it was decided that Boulogne should be attacked on the 17th.

The German defence of Boulogne had been well prepared. The main town lies at the mouth of the river Liane, on low land rising gradually to a ring of high ground which surrounds it. On the main ridge, which runs south-east from Fort de la Crèche and culminates in Mont Lambert, are Bon Secours, Marlborough and St. Martin Boulogne, all of which, with Mont Lambert, were included in the defence zone, heavily protected by wire and minefields with many concrete emplacements providing for cross-fire between neighbouring features. To the south, high ground near Herquelingue, St. Etienne and Nocquet, nearer the coast, had been similarly fortified. Well to the north, centred on la Trésorerie, was a series of outlying defences, while inside the main ring of fortified features were further small hills forming strong-points in which artillery was concentrated. The strength of the enemy garrison under General Heim was variously estimated as from 5,500 to 10,000; it consisted mainly of 'fortress battalions', not of high category, but partly of artillery and engineers of the German 64th Infantry Division, heavy coast defence guns facing seawards, at least twenty-two '88's, some nine 15-cm howitzers and numbers of anti-tank guns. Under German orders about 8,000 civilians left the city between the 11th and the 13th of September, Canadian Civil Affairs Officers arranging for their transportation, feeding and accommodation.³

The Canadians' attacking forces consisted of their 3rd Infantry Division less one brigade supported by tanks of the 10th Armoured Regiment (The Fort Garry Horse), three strong armoured assault teams (Flails, Crocodiles and AVREs) of the British 79th Division's 31st Tank Brigade, and the guns of five field, seven medium, three heavy and two heavy anti-aircraft regiments—some 328 Canadian and British guns in all. Bomber Command and the Second Tactical Air Force provided strong air support and before and during the attack 'Winnie' and 'Pooh', 14-inch guns manned by the Royal

¹ Lieut-General G. G. Simonds, commanding II Canadian Corps.

² Stacey, *op. cit.*, p. 337.

³ Hitler's order read: 'The defensive strength of the fortresses is to be increased . . . by the ruthless evacuation of the population'.

Marine Siege Regiment, and two 15-inch guns manned by the Royal Artillery's 540th Coast Regiment, all stationed near Dover, engaged the heavy Cap Gris Nez batteries, firing across the Channel at over 23-miles range.

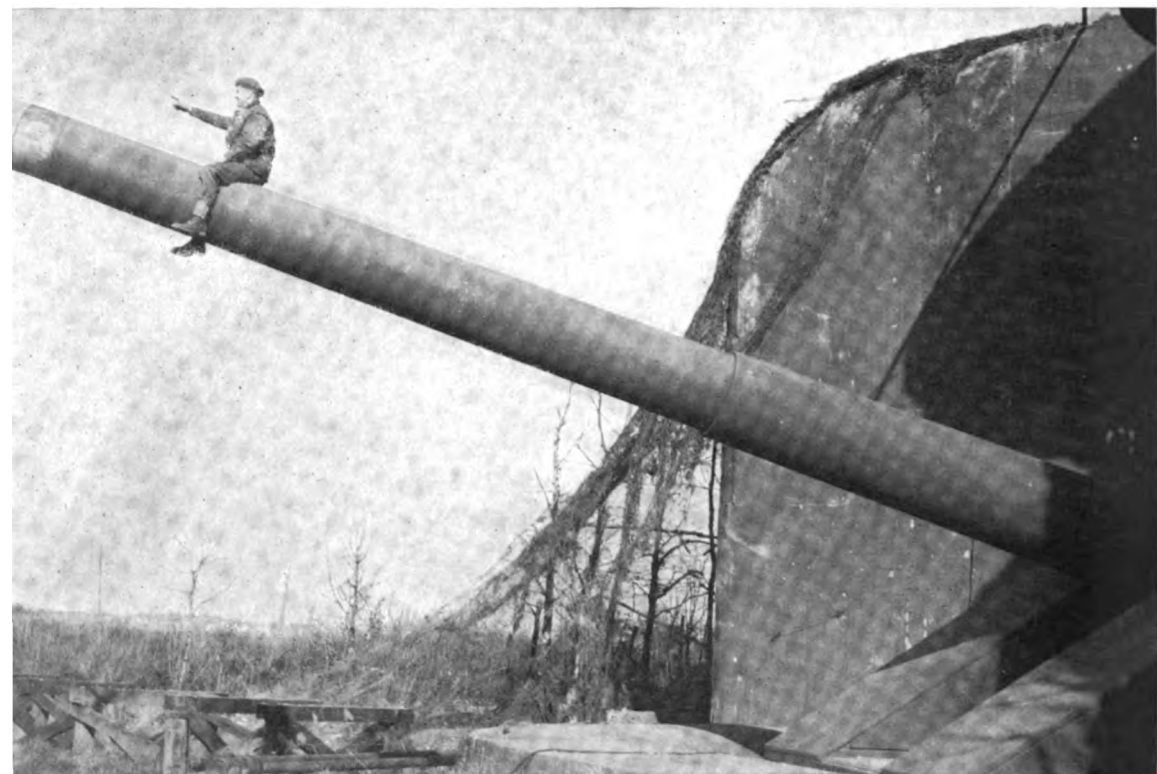
While the enemy thus had the advantage of strong and well prepared defensive positions, the attackers had advantages of mobility and specialised equipment, a high preponderance of artillery, and uninterrupted freedom to make full use of strong air forces. But 'deliberate' had been the keynote of General Crerar's directions and characterised the action which followed: it took six days to complete the capture of Boulogne.

During the final stage of preparations forty-nine air attacks on German battery positions and other defences were made by medium and fighter-bombers of 2 and 84 Groups of the Second Tactical Air Force, and at 8.25 a.m. on the morning of the 17th Lancasters and Halifaxes of Bomber Command began raining bombs on enemy defences of the high ground stretching from the north of Marlborough to the south of Mont Lambert. After nearly an hour and a half of heavy air and artillery bombardment the 3rd Canadian Division attacked with the 9th Brigade on the left and the 8th on the right, one battalion of the 8th Brigade having set out half an hour earlier to attack the outlying northern defences in the neighbourhood of la Trésorerie and Wimereux. Later in the morning Bomber Command made further heavy attacks on five strongly defended positions on the southern outskirts of Boulogne, including a strong-point near le Portel and others on the hills to the south of Outreau, at Nocquet and St. Etienne. In all 688 heavy bombers dropped 3,391 tons of bombs on the Boulogne defences that day. But as soon as the opening air bombardment stopped enemy shelling began and the Canadian advance was slowed down by gunfire, minefields and wire. Yet if progress was slow it was also sure. Though few of the first objectives were wholly secured that day, a wedge was driven into the defences and the eastern outskirts of the upper town were reached near the Citadel. On the 18th Mont Lambert and the strongly defended nearby hills were captured; tank columns reached the Liane river; and the Citadel was taken with 200 prisoners, including 16 officers. On the 19th the outlying defences near la Trésorerie to the north were captured and, though fighting in Marlborough and the northern parts of Boulogne continued, the Liane river was crossed in the south. On the 20th St. Etienne and Honrville were taken, the town factory-area was cleared and the harbour reached. Next day (the 21st) the harbour area was cleared and most of the northern parts of the town, and further up the coast most of Wimereux was taken. The end came on the 22nd. Fort de la Crèche to the north surrendered in the early morning, after seventy-seven medium



7. A few of the 9,517 German troops who surrendered when Boulogne was captured by the First Canadian Army on September the 22nd, 1944.

11,300 had surrendered when le Havre was captured on September the 12th; a further 7,500 surrendered when Calais was taken on October the 1st



8. One of the guns which had been firing on Dover from Cap Gris Nez before the fortified position was captured by First Canadian Army on September the 29th, 1944

bombers of 2 Group had attacked it with over four hundred 500-lb bombs on the previous evening. Le Portel, to the south, was surrendered by General Heim in the afternoon as a renewal of the Canadian attack was preparing. The last position to give up held an '88' gun on the end of the harbour breakwater.

The capture of Boulogne had cost the Canadians some 634 casualties. The Germans lost 9,517 prisoners including 250 wounded: the number of enemy killed is not known. Much of the port equipment had been demolished and several ships had been sunk across the harbour mouth. The port was not usable by the Allies until October the 12th. But its importance was enhanced by the fact that it was planned to fix nearby the terminal of a pipe line under the ocean (PLUTO) carrying petrol direct from England.

The Canadian historian writes: 'It was the German artillery that caused most of our losses', and he attributes this to the fact that 'ammunition stringency prevented a really heavy artillery counter-battery programme being undertaken before the actual day of the assault'; but he also writes that Headquarters First Canadian Army held that 'Despite the proved lack of material effect of ground and air bombardment on the defences it is considered that both the R.A.F. and the artillery bombardment were extremely effective in neutralising the enemy defences'. The German commander, on the other hand, claimed that as the result of the air bombardment 'amongst personnel, casualties were almost negligible' and that there was little effect on permanent installations. An unusually complete after-action operational research report of Twenty-First Army Group comments on Canadian Intelligence, alleging that bombs were wasted on 'batteries' which did not exist, while eight enemy batteries were in action on the 17th which had not previously been detected.¹

With the final capture of Boulogne in sight, Bomber Command had turned to the attack on Calais. On September the 20th over 3,000 tons of bombs were dropped by some 600 aircraft on the Calais defences.

Three days after the surrender of Boulogne the 3rd Canadian Infantry Division, having moved up the coast, began their attack on Calais. Its immediate capture was important, for though its potential capacity as a port was comparatively small its heavy coastal batteries and those on Cap Gris Nez, if left in German hands, could deny Allied ships safe access to the more important harbour of Boulogne.²

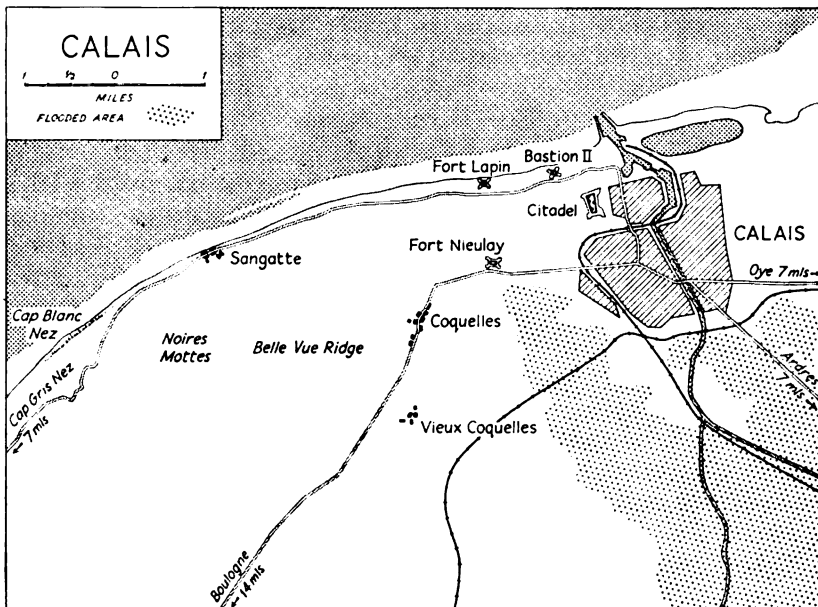
As far back as September the 5th, Calais and Cap Gris Nez had been invested by the 7th Infantry Brigade and 7th Reconnaissance

¹ Stacey, *op. cit.*, pp. 339, 344.

² The importance of this factor had been impressed on General Crerar by Captain A. F. Pugsley, R.N., Captain (Patrols) commanding the Navy's patrols and striking forces in the area.

Regiment, covering a front of more than 20 miles. On the 10th the machine-gun regiment of the 2nd Canadian Division had taken over the south-eastern perimeter (from Oye to Ardres) while the 7th Brigade occupied high ground seven miles south-west of Calais, threatening the Gris Nez batteries. During the next ten days the brigade gradually advanced their position, and on the night of the 16th of September attempted the capture of the enemy's fortified batteries at the cape, assisted by the 6th Armoured Regiment, the 12th Field Regiment of the Royal Canadian Artillery and a battery of their 3rd Medium Regiment. The attack 'made no impression', however, and on the 18th the task of containing Cap Gris Nez reverted to the 7th Reconnaissance Regiment while the 7th Brigade prepared to share in the 3rd Division's attack on Calais.

The defences of Calais were in some strength but they depended on large areas of flooding rather than on surrounding hills. Much of



the low-lying ground west and south of the city was criss-crossed by ditches and covered by widespread inundations. The chief built-up area is enclosed by the bastioned wall and ditch of ancient fortifications and is protected by a citadel on the west and by two outlying forts. The slightly higher ground further west had been developed by field works with strong-points near Noires Mottes and at Vieux Coquelles, and areas covered by minefields and wire, supported by field, anti-tank and anti-aircraft guns. There were some six naval batteries near the coast, spread from the west of the harbour

to the west of Sangatte. Canadian Intelligence estimated the garrison at from six to eight thousand. According to the German commander's own statements afterwards, nearly two-thirds were needed to man naval guns and port installations and only 2,500 were infantry. The Canadian after-action report based on prisoners statements was that 'army personnel were old, ill, and lacked both the will to fight and to resist interrogation; naval personnel were old and were not adjusted to land warfare; only the air force A.A. gunners showed any sign of good morale—and were also the only youthful element of the whole garrison'.

On September the 25th the attack by the 3rd Canadian Infantry Division less one brigade was supported by the 2nd Canadian Armoured Brigade and Flails, AVREs and Crocodiles of the British 31st Tank Brigade from the 79th Armoured Division. Late on the previous afternoon a hundred and twenty-six bombers of Bomber Command had attacked targets in Calais. Owing to a mistaken report that the attack had been cancelled German anti-aircraft batteries were not shelled by artillery and eight bombers were brought down by flak. At 8.15 a.m. on the 25th Bomber Command renewed the attack on Calais, some 1,300 tons of bombs being dropped by over 300 aircraft, though some 500 bombers had been turned back by bad weather. As at le Havre and Boulogne, damage was done to the enemy's defences and morale but there could be no smothering of resistance by the bombers which had arrived: many concrete and other defences remained to oppose the assault. At 10.15 a.m. when the air bombardment stopped the Canadians launched their attack. On the left 8th Brigade advanced against the defences at Noires Mottes and Cap Blanc Nez. The latter was captured that evening with 200 prisoners—'most of them were found dead drunk';¹ and the former, having been attacked all day, surrendered early next morning, yielding a further 285 prisoners who included the gun crews of the Sangatte battery. Simultaneously the 7th Brigade had attacked the Belle Vue and Coquelles defences. The heavy bombers had missed many but light bombers and artillery, then and later, attacked them strongly. At both Vieux Coquelles and Coquelles itself there was heavy fighting till their defence was overcome with the help of the 6th Armoured Regiment but by the morning the coast had been reached and the road towards Fort Lapin. On that morning Bomber Command again attacked Calais and units of 7th Brigade 'clawed their way forward during the day and by the end of it were within striking distance of the inner line of fortifications'.² On the 27th, 342 Lancasters again dropped over 1,700 tons on the

¹ Stacey, *op. cit.*, p. 349.

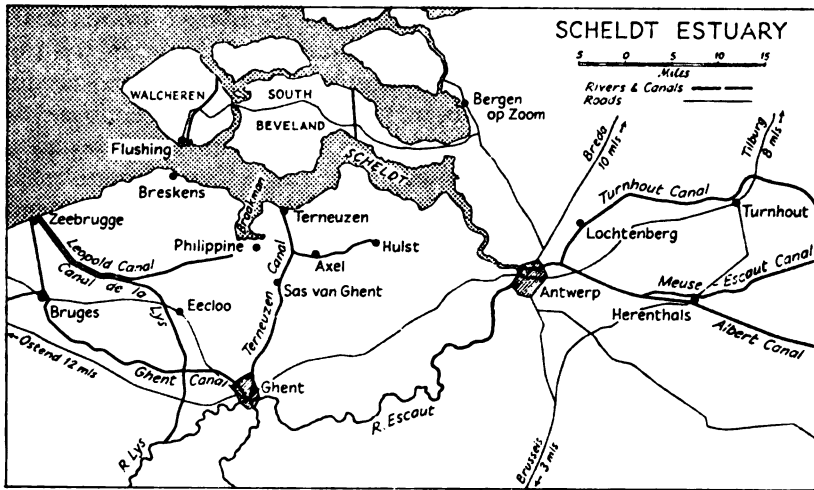
² *Loc. cit.*, p. 350.

inner defences and in subsequent fighting Fort Lapin was captured, Fort Nieulay was taken and, across the flooded areas, factories in the outskirts of the city were reached. Next day, after yet another attack by Bomber Command, the German commander sought an armistice to evacuate civilians and twenty-four hours was allowed till noon on the 30th. Those who left were received and cared for by the Canadian Civil Affairs staff. When fighting was then resumed German opposition crumbled. The Canadians soon broke into Bastion 11 and the Citadel, and began clearing the city. Everywhere the enemy simply waited to be taken prisoner and at 7 p.m. their commander surrendered. By October the 1st Calais was finally cleared of Germans. In all some 7,500 prisoners were taken: the total Canadian casualties had been under 300. The number of enemy killed and wounded is not known. The fact that here and at Boulogne Canadian casualties altogether had been less than a thousand while over 17,000 Germans had surrendered indicates the effect on the morale of the garrisons subjected to repeated heavy air bombardments.

Meanwhile the 9th Brigade had captured the remaining coastal batteries at Cap Gris Nez after Bomber Command had attacked them with over 3,000 tons of bombs on the 20th, nearly 3,000 tons on the 26th and another 850 odd tons on the 28th. There were three German batteries with eleven guns, eight of which had a range of over 25 miles: they were protected by minefields, electrified fences, reinforced bunkers and anti-tank positions holding field artillery and machine guns. Beginning soon after six in the morning of the 29th two Canadian battalions attacked with the support of specialised armour and artillery and by mid-morning the entire position was in Canadian hands, with 1,600 prisoners. That night, for the first time in four years, Dover was finally free from the menace of enemy shells and British minesweepers were already clearing a channel into Boulogne.

(ii) *South of the Scheldt*

In following the story of the Canadian operations south of the Scheldt during the second half of September, the reader will find it helpful to identify on the map and bear in mind four of the many intersecting canals which mark that low-lying country. First, crossing the battlefield from west to east is the *Ghent Canal* connecting Ostend, Bruges and Ghent. By the middle of September this was already in Canadian hands and beyond it the enemy was being pressed northwards towards the Scheldt. Next is the *Terneuzen Ship Canal* which runs northward from Ghent to Terneuzen, on the south bank of the Scheldt, roughly dividing the country which stretches between Antwerp and Ostend. At the middle of September the enemy were still in possession of the coast from Zeebrugge running



north-eastwards to the mouth of the Scheldt and held all the south bank of the estuary to the outskirts of Antwerp. But their retreating forces had been pushed back to the twin canals which, starting near Zeebrugge on the coast, run inland south-eastwards for some 14 miles and then diverge—the *Canal de Dérivation de la Lys* to turn southwards: the *Leopold Canal* to swing eastwards to the foot of the Braakman inlet from the Scheldt. This Leopold Canal was to prove a firmly defended southern bastion of the enemy's last bridgehead south of the Scheldt; it covered the harbour of Breskens, the departure point of the most-used of the crossings to Flushing, by which the German Fifteenth Army were escaping via Walcheren.

Responsibility for clearing the enemy from country south of the Scheldt estuary had been laid on the 4th Canadian Armoured and the 1st Polish Armoured Divisions of II Canadian Corps. Much of the land was below sea-level, honeycombed with ditches and lesser canals, which Hitler had ordered to be inundated over wide areas as a measure of defence. The well-built roads were raised on embankments and were fully exposed. It was a retreating enemy whom the Canadians faced but where, as on the Leopold Canal and at other places, he was determined to stand the country made it difficult for armoured divisions to dislodge him.

The 4th Canadian Armoured Division, responsible for clearing the whole area west of the Terneuzen Canal, made a determined attempt to break through the Leopold Canal line about five miles north-east of Bruges on September the 13th. There the Lys and Leopold Canals run side-by-side, separated only by a high bank. The double crossing was made by an infantry battalion, The Algonquin Regiment, who won a small bridgehead from the defenders; but the German command was quick to realise the danger

which threatened, additional troops were ordered up and the Canadian foothold was heavily counter-attacked. Fighting went on all morning of the 14th. Sustained enemy shelling and mortar fire prevented all attempts to bridge the canals and to reinforce the bridgehead, and as casualties mounted and ammunition began to run short, the assaulting troops were withdrawn. The Algonquin had had nearly 150 casualties including six officers. After this experience the corps commander decided to 'maintain contact, and exert some pressure without sacrificing our forces in driving out an enemy who may be retreating'.¹ In fact further inland where the Lys Canal turned southwards he *was* retreating. The 4th Armoured Division maintained their pursuit beyond Eecloo and, crossing the Dutch frontier on the night of the 19th, captured Sas van Ghent, with over 100 prisoners, and took Philippine next evening. All the country south of the Leopold Canal and west of the Terneuzen Canal was now clear of the enemy except for a blocking force near the tip of the Braakman inlet.

Meanwhile, to the east of the Terneuzen Canal, the 1st Polish Armoured Division had also made good progress. Pushing northwards across the main lateral road from Ghent to Antwerp they forced the Hulst Canal on the 18th, after heavy fighting, and on the 19th captured Axel. On the 20th they reached the southern shores of the estuary at several points and captured Terneuzen; by the 22nd they had systematically mopped up all resistance between there and Antwerp. South of the Scheldt only the country enclosed by the Leopold Canal remained in German hands—but this would still involve hard fighting.

The air forces had done their utmost to stop the withdrawal of the German Fifteenth Army across the Scheldt to Walcheren Island while at the same time giving continuing support to the Canadian operations for the capture of the Channel ports and objectives. The medium bombers of 2 Group made attacks at night and during the day against the ferries between Breskens, Terneuzen and Flushing and other landing places on the island, and they and other aircraft of 84 Group attacked vessels in transit. Bad visibility and the smallness of targets made it difficult to report with certainty the results of such attacks but the German reports show that ferrying operations were severely hampered; on the 11th they reported that the volume of movement across the river had by then been lowered by 40 per cent; that crossings were then only possible at night; and that owing to severe damage to the loading areas there was little ferrying at Breskens and no traffic during hours of daylight. Breskens had been heavily bombed on the 11th and shipping operations between the

¹ Stacey, *op. cit.*, p. 363.

north and south banks of the Scheldt came almost to a standstill on the 16th. A considerable number of barges were sunk or damaged as were many other vessels and at least one heavily loaded ship was sunk with considerable loss of life. No enemy aircraft tried to interfere but anti-aircraft defence of the crossings was severe and 40 Allied aircraft were destroyed by it.

As at the Seine crossings it was found that while aircraft could inflict delay and damage to retreating armies they alone could not prevent large numbers from escaping capture or destruction. On September the 23rd Army Group B reported that between the 5th and 22nd more than 82,000 men, more than 530 guns, 4,600 vehicles of all types, 4,000 horses and much miscellaneous material had been ferried across the river in face of incessant Allied air attacks and heavy seas.

(iii) *The Antwerp Area*

On September the 16th the 2nd Canadian Infantry Division handed over to the 4th Special Service Brigade the task of containing Dunkirk and themselves began taking over the Antwerp area; by the 18th, Second Army was relieved of its responsibility in Antwerp and could concentrate wholly on its Arnhem operations. During the following days the Canadian division fought a number of inconclusive skirmishes in the northern outskirts of the city and dock area and on the south bank of the Albert Canal. On the 20th they beat off a strong counter-attack and on the 22nd a bridgehead over the canal was won and the enemy withdrew behind the Antwerp-Turnhout Canal. After winning a small bridgehead over the latter near Lochtenberg on the 24th the Canadians were however forced to withdraw by heavy counter-attacks before the position they had won was strong enough to hold. A second attempt was made on the 28th but their effort to bridge the canal (which is some 50 feet wide) was defeated by the enemy's heavy mortar and machine-gun fire and for the time further effort to cross the canal was abandoned. At that time the north bank from Antwerp to about Turnhout was held by three divisions of the German Fifteenth Army, the Lochtenberg sector being defended by the 346th Division.

(iv) *East of Antwerp*

On the 13th of September Montgomery had told Crerar to 'bring up H.Q. I Corps and 49th Division to Antwerp area earliest possible. Ground 51st Division completely, by dumping all loads from all vehicles and using all its transport to lift 49th Division to Antwerp', and he had confirmed this order in his directive of the 14th. There is evidence that Crerar perhaps thought I Corps might be needed to complete the capture of Calais if the enemy defended it strongly and that supplies in the forward area were as yet inadequate. This possibly explains why Montgomery's order of the 13th was not

passed on to I Corps till the 19th and their move to take over the Antwerp sector did not begin till the 21st. On the evening of the 22nd 49th Division's advanced troops relieved troops of the Second Army near Herenthals on the Escaut Canal. The enemy was found to be pulling back and reconnaissance troops of 49th Division crossed the canal and followed him closely while the rest of the division completed its move forward. On the morning of the 24th the division reached the Turnhout Canal. Turnhout was occupied though the enemy was holding the north bank of the canal, but an easily bridgeable site was found a few miles to the west and the enemy was kept occupied by a diversionary attack 2,000 yards away while a bridge was built. On the 25th six battalions were across and the bridgehead was enlarged during the next three days in spite of considerable opposition and several heavy enemy counter-attacks in which some 800 German soldiers were taken prisoner. On the 26th the 2nd Canadian Infantry Division in the Antwerp area was placed under operational control of I Corps, as was the 1st Polish Armoured Division, which came under I Corps command on the 28th.

Thus, during the second half of September the British Twenty-First Army Group had made useful progress, though less rapid than had been hoped. On the left First Canadian Army had captured Boulogne and Calais, contained Dunkirk and cleared the enemy from all the country south of Antwerp and the Scheldt except the Breskens pocket enclosed by the Leopold Canal. But Antwerp's sea approaches and the Dutch islands which commanded them remained in enemy hands. On the right the British Second Army, in combined operations with British and American airborne troops, had captured a bridgehead over the Waal at Nijmegen though on both sides of the salient that led to it the enemy still occupied territory well to the south of the river.

In that significant fortnight the American armies had also found that their rapid advances during the preceding weeks were halted when the retreating enemy turned to stand at bay as he fell back to the defences of the Siegfried Line. Twelfth Army Group's First Army was fighting in difficult country but had captured Maastricht, cleared the southern pendant of Holland and penetrated the Siegfried Line covering Aachen, which was half surrounded by a thrust round its southern flank. Further south in the Eifel country another small break had also been made which threatened Prüm. In the Third Army sector some of the Metz forts were brought under fire. South of these the Moselle was forced and Nancy had fallen after heavy fighting had beaten off sustained counter-attacks by troops of the Fifth Panzer Army. Further south the United States Seventh Army,

commanded by Lieut-General Alexander M. Patch, and the First French Army under General Jean de Lattre de Tassigny, constituting the United States Sixth Army Group under General Jacob L. Devers, had fought their way forward towards the Vosges country and the Belfort gap and by the end of September had captured Epinal.¹ The Sixth Army Group had come under General Eisenhower's command on the 15th of September.

In the last week of the month General Bradley's forces in the north were being strengthened as his Ninth Army, commanded by Lieut-General William H. Simpson, began arriving in the forward area from Brittany. It had been engaged there in a bitter campaign to capture Brest which had lasted over forty days and cost almost ten thousand American dead and wounded. When the surviving garrison of some 20,000 German troops surrendered on September the 18th, artillery, naval bombardment, repeated heavy air attacks and enemy demolition had rendered useless the port to which Overlord planners had originally attached such importance.

The Allies' progress made during this month is shown on the adjoining map giving the approximate position of the Allied and German armies on the 1st, 15th and 30th of September. There had been much stiff fighting in the last fortnight and many of the enemy had been killed or captured; in places the Allied positions had been considerably improved but nowhere had their advance been as rapid or as lightly contested as it had been in the previous fortnight and nowhere had there been a substantial break through the enemy's consolidating defence. Regarded as a whole Allied progress, though real, had been disappointing. The high hope with which September had opened had not been fulfilled. The German armies' defeat in Normandy had proved to be less conclusive than was at first believed and their power of recovery to be greater than was thought feasible. The Allies' belief in the possibility of a quick ending of the war had been based on insecure foundations and perhaps influenced by wishful thinking, but the slowing down of the Allied advance is explainable by their own conduct of operations as well as that of the enemy. It had been caused by three interacting factors, namely (1) Allied strategy, (2) logistics, and (3) enemy opposition.

(1) Until the whole course of the campaign can be taken into account the ultimate consequence of General Eisenhower's strategy cannot be finally measured, but whatever the eventual outcome may be the immediate effect of his decision in favour of a 'broad front' policy is not hard to see. It had made possible General Eisenhower's report to the Combined Chiefs of Staff on September the 29th that 'with the linking of Central and Southern Groups of Armies a

¹ See H. M. Cole, *The Lorraine Campaign* (Dept. of the Army, Washington, D.C., 1950), chaps. II-V *passim*.

continuous Allied front has been produced from the Mediterranean to the North Sea'. But it had also made it possible for the German armies to reform their defence. So General Eisenhower had also to report that 'except in the Low Countries the enemy has succeeded in establishing a comparatively stable and cohesive front approximately along the German frontier', and he believed that 'the enemy's only real capability' was 'the defence of the Western frontier of Germany for as long as possible'. The Allies were to find that the enemy could maintain this defence as long as the Allied situation in regard to supplies was inadequate to sustain their attacks without pause and in greater strength.

(2) The outstanding fact about the Allies' logistical position was that during September their armies had outrun the normal systems of supply and had only achieved what they did by augmenting the improvised measures which they had already adopted in August. The first fortnight was the most difficult. Railways which had been put out of action by Allied bombing and sabotage by the Resistance or a retreating enemy could not be rehabilitated as fast as divisions could move; air transport could only carry on average about a thousand tons a day when not required for airborne operations¹; the main bulk of supplies had to be moved by road, travelling daily several hundred miles from rear maintenance areas in Normandy to roadheads within reach of the advancing armies. Heroic efforts were made to overcome this handicap by providing for non-stop delivery on routes kept clear of all other vehicles.²

In the British sector some of the First Canadian Army's objectives in the coastal area did not involve so long a haul from the Normandy maintenance area as did others which were farther forward, and though petrol was short on some days no operations were held up. I Corps had been grounded for several days and its transport used for supply but by the end of the month some small reserves had been accumulated. Second Army had advanced from the Seine with only six of its eight divisions, the transport of two (VIII Corps) being used at first to maintain the six at full fighting efficiency. From the 12th of September the bulk of supplies moved by rail to just short of the Seine, across the river by road transport, then again by rail to railhead near Brussels. The grounded VIII Corps was brought forward in time for the Arnhem operation. By the end of the month a railway bridge across the Seine was built and through trains were

¹ During September Allied planes flew 11,000 sorties and delivered more than 30,000 tons of supplies to the armies in the field.

² American Red Ball Express—consisted of long-distance road convoys carrying maintenance stores from base to army roadheads. Best delivery figures were in the last week of the month when over 8,000 tons per day were delivered on a round trip of over 700 miles. The American Red Lion Express carried 650 tons of supplies daily from the Normandy area to the British roadhead near Brussels during the Arnhem operation.

running from Normandy to Brussels; Ostend was opened for stores and bulk petrol and the arrival from England of five 6-ton transport companies eased the supply position of Twenty-First Army Group still further.

Having further to travel to more widely spread forces the logistical position of the American armies was more frustrating. Though considerable supplies were being carried forward by air and the rehabilitation of railways progressed steadily, the main bulk of the army's immediate needs was being carried by road transport throughout the month. On some days the advance was held up at various points by shortage of petrol and, as German opposition consolidated in front of it in the middle of September, Twelfth Army Group was virtually brought to a halt by the absence of accumulated supplies necessary to maintain sustained attacks. For most of the month supplies reaching the forward area averaged less than 500 tons a division daily against the standard requirement of 650 tons. The armies are described as 'living on a starvation diet'; they 'consumed virtually everything they received' and could build up no reserves. The advance, which had been rapid, gradually 'ground to a halt'.¹

It would be out of place in the history of British operations to describe in detail the original difficulties of the American armies in relation to General Eisenhower's decisions on strategy—namely, while giving some preference to the advance towards the Ruhr to maintain as far as possible a simultaneous advance south of the Ardennes towards the Saar, with the Sixth Army Group (maintained through Marseilles) advancing on the southern flank. It is enough to point out how closely strategic decisions and logistics affected each other in slowing down the Allies' advance.

(3) Allied estimates of the strength of the German forces confronting them did not greatly differ from Field-Marshal von Rundstedt's reports. General Eisenhower told the Combined Chiefs of Staff on the 29th of September that 'in the West the number of enemy divisions is estimated at a nominal 50, equivalent in manpower to about 25 divisions; 6 of these are Panzer or Panzer Grenadier divisions equipped with some 450 tanks . . .'. Von Rundstedt stated on the 21st that his own forces had a total fighting equivalent of twenty-one complete Volksgrenadier divisions and six to seven armoured divisions.

When the Allies had failed to capture Arnhem and it was not yet certain that they could hold the Nijmegen bridgehead, von Rundstedt reported to OKW on the 24th that apparently the Allies intended a quick capture of the area between the Maas and the Waal

¹ See Ruppenthal, *Logistical Support of the Armies*, vol. II, p. 169.

and from there and Aachen a pincer attack on the Ruhr. He advised the abandonment of Fifth Panzer Army's unpromising counter-attack in the south and the transfer of a panzer corps with three panzer brigades to the threatened and decisively important right (i.e. north) wing. This would involve consequent withdrawals by Fifteenth and First Parachute Armies in the north behind the Maas, Waal and extended West Wall (Siegfried Line) and step by step withdrawal to the Vosges positions in the south. But OKW replied by telephone the same day that Hitler would not accept any of these recommendations, and on the 25th von Rundstedt received a new Führer directive, the gist of which was as follows:

'The enemy has transferred the main weight of his attacks to Holland and the approaches to the northern Vosges. In the south he has for the most part committed his available forces; but he still has strong formations in England at his disposal, including airborne divisions, with which to exploit and extend any success he may gain in southern Holland, by means of fresh landings from the air and from the sea in Western and Northern Holland, or possibly even in Germany between Wilhelmshaven and Emden. The main effort of our counter-measures must therefore be transferred to the northern part of the western front, in order to hold the Netherlands and to enable the extension of the West Wall defences to be constructed, thereby protecting the area of the Ruhr.

My orders are:

1. The enemy in the Arnhem-Nijmegen area is to be destroyed by concentric attack. The main weight of this attack must be put in between the Waal and the Maas in order to gain possession of the Nijmegen-Grave road, and thus prevent further reinforcement of the enemy north of the Maas.
2. Fifteenth Army's southern front and First Parachute Army's western front must be held along their present line. The enemy bridgehead across the canal south of Helmond is to be eliminated or at the very least securely sealed off.
3. The gap between the adjacent wings of Fifteenth Army and First Parachute Army at Veghel is to be closed by means of a concentric attack in order to provide the first necessary condition for the destruction of the enemy north of the Maas.'

In issuing these orders it seemed to Hitler that, a defensible front having been reached, the necessity for retreat no longer existed; Hitler's mind was now occupied with plans for a major counter-offensive.

The retreat of the German armies had indeed been conducted with skill and their redistribution for the defence of the long frontier of the Reich under disadvantages which beset them was a remarkable

achievement. Their fighting strength had greatly diminished, and in some cases was now largely reinforced by troops who were neither fully prepared nor physically fit for active fighting; but they had proved that though they could not prevent the Allies' advance they could seriously delay it—at any rate while the Allies could not get adequate supplies to maintain persistent attack on so wide a front and German reinforcements were being gathered from training depots, rehabilitation centres or security forces. Time was important to both opponents though for different reasons. With the Germans preventing access to Antwerp and holding Arnhem, Aachen and Metz, *rapid* advance was no longer open to the Allies by either of the chosen routes leading to the heart of Germany.

Yet in the Allied air forces the Allies had one growing advantage which the enemy could not match. According to the C-in-C West war diary, Model reported on September the 15th:

'By employing their air force chiefly in front of the spearheads of their attack the enemy are succeeding not only in harassing our movements, but often in completely eliminating them. Considerable losses in personnel and equipment have occurred during transport to the front, which often cannot take place at the required time. For example, six ammunition trains became casualties, and of these one train contained 128 tons of close-combat anti-tank weapons urgently required by my Army Group.'

He also asked for priority to be given to the Me.262 jet-propelled aircraft as fighters.

Subject to the dictation of weather, the day-to-day support of the tactical air forces depended mainly on the nature of the immediate Army operations. In September (and indeed always) they provided information by reconnaissance over and forward of the Army front, supplied overhead protection for Allied troops and collaborated in attacks on enemy positions. In September they had joined in both static operations and times of rapid advance.

Equally the strategic bombers were busy in both tactical support of the armies and the strategic offensive against Germany. New advantages had opened to them when the enemy's early warning system had been overrun or driven back by the Allied armies' advance and when new scientific aids increased the accuracy of their bombing attacks in darkness and daylight. Moreover the *Luftwaffe* was continuously restricted by the Allied destruction of oil supplies and the increasing shortage of trained pilots. Bomber Command dropped 52,587 tons of bombs in September and the United States Eighth Air Force 36,332 tons.

Of the total tonnage dropped by Bomber Command, 50 per cent was in tactical support of the Army, 7 per cent in destruction of oil supplies, 28 per cent on German towns; of the Eighth Air Force tonnage, 40 per cent was on communications, 10 per cent was on Army support, 19 per cent on oil, and 19 per cent on factories. Of Bomber Command's twelve major attacks on German towns, the largest was a third attack on Kiel. It was attacked on the night of September the 15th by 490 bombers. The damage inflicted was catastrophic and all but six of the aircraft returned safely. At no time did the German Air Force offer serious interference with the Allies' operations.

On September the 25th a new directive was issued to the Allied strategic bombers which will be described later since it did not affect their part in September operations.

CHAPTER IV

STRATEGIC AFFAIRS AND THE SCHELDT

Two days before the Arnhem operation was launched—i.e. on September the 15th—General Eisenhower had written to his army group commanders saying, ‘We shall soon, I hope, . . . be in possession of the Ruhr, the Saar and the Frankfurt area. I have been considering our next move’, and naming possible courses of subsequent operations. ‘Clearly, Berlin is the main prize . . . There is no doubt whatsoever, in my mind, that we should concentrate all our energies and resources on a rapid thrust to Berlin. Our strategy, however, will have to be co-ordinated with that of the Russians . . .’. After setting out various considerations which might affect Allied operations in Germany he added:

‘Clearly, therefore, our objectives cannot be precisely determined until nearer the time, so we must be prepared for one or more of the following:

- a. to direct forces of both Army Groups on Berlin astride the axes Ruhr–Hanover–Berlin *or* Frankfurt–Leipzig–Berlin, *or* both.
- b. Should the Russians beat us to Berlin, the Northern Group of Armies would seize the Hanover area and the Hamburg group of ports. The Central Group of Armies would seize part, or the whole, of Leipzig–Dresden depending upon the progress of the Russian advance.
- c. In any event, the Southern Group of Armies would seize Augsburg–Munich. The areas Nuremberg–Regensburg would be seized by Central or Southern Group of Armies, depending on the situation at the time.

Simply stated, it is my desire to move on Berlin by the most direct and expeditious route, with combined U.S.–British forces supported by other available forces moving through key centres and occupying strategic areas on the flanks, all in one co-ordinated, concerted operation.

It is not possible at this stage to indicate the timing of these thrusts or their strengths, but I shall be glad to have your views on the general questions raised in this letter.’

Field-Marshal Montgomery replied three days later. The following are his most important paragraphs:

- (1) I suggest that the whole matter as to what is possible and what is NOT possible, is very closely linked up with the administrative situation. The vital factor is time; what we have to do, we must do quickly.
- (2) In view of para. 1, it is my opinion that a concerted operation in which all the available land armies move forward into Germany is not possible; the maintenance resources, and the general administrative situation, will not allow of this being done *quickly*.
- (3) But forces adequate in strength for the job in hand could be supplied and maintained, provided the general axis of advance was suitable, and provided these forces had complete priority in all respects as regards maintenance.
- (4) It is my own personal opinion that we shall not achieve what we want by going for objectives such as Nuremberg, Augsburg, Munich, etc., and by establishing our forces in central Germany.
- (5) I consider that the best objective is the Ruhr, and thence on to Berlin by the northern route. On that route are the ports, and on that route we can use our sea power to the best advantage. On other routes we would merely contain as many German forces as we could.
- (6) If you agree with para. 5, then I consider that 21 Army Group, plus First Army of nine divisions, would be adequate. Such a force must have *everything it needed in the maintenance line*; other Armies would do the best they could with what was left over.
- (7) If you consider that para. 5 is not right, and that the proper axis of advance is by Frankfurt and central Germany, then I suggest that 12 Army Group of three Armies would be used and would have all the maintenance. 21 Army Group would do the best it could with what was left over; or possibly the Second British Army would be wanted in a secondary role on the left flank of the movement.
- (8) In brief, I consider that as time is so very important, we have got to decide what is necessary to go to Berlin and finish the war; the remainder must play a secondary role. It is my opinion that three Armies are enough, if you select the northern route, and I consider that, from a maintenance point of view, it could be done. I have not studied the southern route.
- (9) I consider that our plan, and objectives, should be decided *now*, and everything arranged accordingly. I would not myself agree that we can wait until nearer the time, as suggested . . . in your letter.'

General Eisenhower replied to this on the 20th, beginning his letter with the somewhat surprising statement that 'Generally speaking I find myself so completely in agreement with your letter of 18 September that I cannot believe there is any great difference in our concepts' and, later, 'I am quite confident that we see this thing almost identically'. Yet, put shortly, though Eisenhower regarded the northern route via the Ruhr as the shortest way to Berlin, in this letter he was only considering the planning of the final advance *after the Ruhr, the Saar and the Frankfurt area were in the Allies' possession* and was inviting the opinions of his commanders on how they should then move into Germany 'all in one co-ordinated, concerted operation'. This would be the completion of his 'broad-front strategy'. On the other hand, Montgomery, knowing that the Ruhr, the Saar and Frankfurt were not yet in Allied hands, argued that 'our plan and objectives should be decided *now*' as 'the vital factor is *time*'.

In view of the critical position reached in the Arnhem operation on September the 21st Montgomery felt that he could not leave his headquarters to attend the conference which Eisenhower had called for the following day, so his chief of staff, Major-General Sir Francis de Guingand, represented him. While Montgomery still expected to secure a bridgehead over the Rhine at Arnhem from which his main thrust would be made north of the Ruhr, he felt that 'to take quick advantage of favourable situation in the Nijmegen area it is essential that the right corps of Second Army [VIII] should develop at once a strong thrust on the axis Gennep-Cleve-Emmerich', from which it would later be directed on the north-west corner of the Ruhr. In order to do this he asked that Twelfth Army Group should take over the existing VIII Corps sector 'at once'. Details of his intentions would be explained by de Guingand. (Map page 96.)

As reported at Shaef, the principal decisions taken during Eisenhower's conference on the 22nd were, first, that 'all concerned differentiate clearly between the logistical *requirements for attaining objectives covered by present directives* including seizing the Ruhr and breaching the Siegfried Line, and *the requirements for the final drive on Berlin*'; that 'the fact will be generally accepted that the *possession of an additional major deepwater port* on our north flank is an *indispensable pre-requisite for the final drive deep into Germany*'; and that the envelopment of the Ruhr from the north by Twenty-First Army Group, supported by United States First Army, 'is the *main effort of the present phase of operations . . .*'.¹ Twelfth Army Group was 'to take over as quickly as possible the sector now held by 8th British Corps [and] continue its thrust, so far as its current resources permit, towards

¹ Author's italics.

Cologne and Bonn', and 'be prepared to seize any favourable opportunity of crossing the Rhine and attacking the Ruhr from the south when the maintenance situation permits. The remainder of Twelfth Army Group to take no more aggressive action than is permitted by the maintenance situation after the full requirements of the main effort have been met'. Twenty-First Army Group was 'to open the port of Antwerp as a matter of urgency and to develop operations culminating in a strong attack on the Ruhr from the north'. Sixth Army Group was to continue operations for the capture of Mulhouse and Strasbourg because these would not divert logistical resources (coming through Mediterranean ports) from other army groups, and their operations should contain enemy forces and so assist the northern thrust.

On September the 27th, after the British airborne division had been withdrawn from Arnhem, Montgomery issued a new directive. The First Canadian Army's main task was to complete operations now in progress to enable us to use Boulogne and Calais and 'to have the free use of the port of Antwerp'. The early completion of these operations was vital. The right wing of the army would 'thrust strongly northwards on the general axis Tilburg-Hertogenbosch and so free Second Army from its present commitment of a long left flank facing west'.¹ Second Army's main task, while holding firmly the Nijmegen bridgehead, was now 'to operate strongly with all available strength from the general area Nijmegen-Gennep against the N.W. corner of the Ruhr', the right directed on Krefeld; while doing so its left must seize every opportunity to secure a bridgehead over the Rhine, preferably at Wesel. Meanwhile the United States First Army would co-operate by putting its 7th Armoured Division to clear the British VIII Corps sector west of the Meuse and would 'develop as early as possible a strong offensive movement eastwards up to the Rhine', directed on Cologne and Düsseldorf.

These orders show a major change in Montgomery's plans. Instead of his earlier intention to advance from the Ijssel eastwards into Germany on the north of the Ruhr he now wrote: 'We will first gain contact with the Ruhr, get bridgeheads over the Rhine, and then decide on a plan for further action'. He realised now that progress would have to be planned by stages and that 'the opening of the port [Antwerp] is absolutely essential before *we can advance deep into Germany*'.²

¹ General Crerar had intended to seal off South Beveland by pushing two divisions of I Corps up to Bergen op Zoom and to Roosendaal, a short distance east of Bergen. But, as s'Hertogenbosch was some forty miles east of Roosendaal, Montgomery's new orders would result in the I Corps divisions being sent off at a tangent and, as will be seen, the operations due north from Antwerp suffered accordingly.

² Author's italics.

In stating that the First Canadian Army's vital task was to develop operations designed to enable us to have free use of the ports of Boulogne, Calais and Antwerp, Montgomery was but emphasising the objective he had given them on September the 14th (page 27). Then he had also written to General Crerar that, time being 'of the utmost importance', he was anxious that the Scheldt operations should proceed simultaneously with those against Boulogne, Dunkirk and Calais. After receipt of Montgomery's letter, planning for the freeing of Antwerp was at once put in hand. The difficulties involved were considerable. Opening the Scheldt required the clearance of Germans from the 'Breskens pocket' on the south bank and from South Beveland and the island of Walcheren covering the north bank. All of these and the approaches to them were largely 'polder' land reclaimed from the sea, against which they were protected by massive walls and earthworks. The polderlands were liable to flooding and were authoritatively regarded as being 'généralement impropres aux opérations militaires', and at the time had been extensively flooded on Hitler's orders;¹ but on this occasion the Canadians had no choice but to destroy, capture or neutralise the defences they contained. (Map page 126.)

These tasks had been given to II Canadian Corps under General Simonds who, after studying appreciations and plans prepared by General Crerar's planners, foresaw that operations would fall into three phases, namely, *the sealing off and clearance of South Beveland* by the 2nd Canadian Infantry Division with the 1st Polish Armoured Division on the right, directed on Bergen op Zoom and Roosendaal; *clearance of the 'Breskens pocket'* on the south bank of the Scheldt by the 3rd Canadian Infantry Division; and finally, *a seaborne assault landing on Walcheren Island* by the 4th Special Service Brigade with the co-operation of the Royal Navy. For this the naval and military forces should be 'married up and trained' at once. Simonds also urged that all parts of Walcheren below sea level should be completely flooded by having the sea walls broken by heavy bombers. This would not only hamper the enemy's movement of reserves and supplies but would confine the garrison to the remaining high ground, which should then be bombed night and day to lower the defenders' morale. Simonds also proposed the use of some parachute troops, but after a conference held by General Crerar on the 23rd, attended by representatives from Twenty-First Army Group, First Airborne Army, the Royal Navy and the Royal Air Force, it was learned that after consultation with General Brereton and Air Chief

¹ On September the 7th an OKW letter was passed on verbatim to Army Group B in which it was stated that 'Fifteenth Army is to ensure that everything is done to put Northern Belgium under water by blowing the locks and dykes, as soon as the bulk of our forces have been withdrawn behind the sector to be flooded'.

Marshal Leigh-Mallory General Eisenhower had decided that lack of firm ground north of the estuary made the use of airborne troops unsuitable.

The proposed flooding of Walcheren by bombing the dykes raised questions about both political desirability and practical feasibility. To let the sea into the island and so ruin its farmlands and orchards for years to come was everywhere recognised as a dreadfully harsh measure to inflict on friends. On the other hand it offered the prospect not only of saving the lives of Allied soldiers but also of opening Antwerp more speedily, and thereby shortening the war and the ordeals of the Dutch people. As for cutting the dykes by bombing, some experts thought it could not be done. Among them was the Chief Engineer at Canadian Army Headquarters. The dyke on the western face of the island, near Westkapelle, dated from the fifteenth century and was extremely solid, being 25–30 feet high and over 300 feet wide in some places. The army engineers, supported by Dutch engineers and seamen, thought it unlikely that even the most accurate bombing could effect a breach and, even if it did, that the gap would quickly silt up. But Simonds after further study held to his opinion and three days later Bomber Command undertook to try to breach the dykes as soon as weather and technical conditions permitted, provided they received authority to do so from the Supreme Commander. On the 1st of October it was learned that 'The Supreme Commander has approved the project to flood the island of Walcheren'.¹ Shaef was asked for leaflets to be dropped warning the population of the plans when heavy air bombardment was imminent.

In regard to the more conventional type of air preparation the Canadians maintained that it should be heavy and prolonged, in view of the abundance of concrete and steel in the German defences. A start had been made about the middle of September with some small Bomber Command attacks on Walcheren batteries, 600 tons of bombs being dropped, but bad weather and the more urgent requirements in the ports of the Pas de Calais and elsewhere cut them short. Towards the end of the month Air Chief Marshal Leigh-Mallory, with General Eisenhower's approval, proposed to Field-Marshal Montgomery that for the time being, because of the need to concentrate on targets in Germany, the Scheldt preparations should be limited to specially selected objectives and only about three days before the final assault should the heavy bombers return in force to see the operation through. Montgomery agreed, and added: 'I do not see how D-day can be before about 15 October. Possibly later'. He was writing on the 28th of September.

¹ Stacey, *The Victory Campaign*, p. 376.

So far as the Second Tactical Air Force was concerned its main task at the Scheldt in September had been to harass the withdrawal of the Fifteenth Army, as described in Chapter III. Otherwise its only other operations there during the period were small attacks by fighter-bombers on garrison headquarters and radar stations on Walcheren.

Before continuing the story of operations which eventually resulted in the freeing of Antwerp it will be advisable to recount the sequence of events which led Montgomery to make a further and final change of plan which eventually brought success to the battle for the Scheldt.

On October the 4th Field-Marshal Sir Alan Brooke, the C.I.G.S., flew to Versailles to attend a meeting the following day of General Eisenhower with his naval and air commanders-in-chief, army group commanders and leading members of his staff. Montgomery and his chief of staff were present. The general progress was reviewed in the light of decisions taken at the meeting on September the 22nd (page 79) and 'the fact stood out clearly that access to Antwerp must be captured with the least possible delay'. Afterwards the C.I.G.S. wrote in his personal diary: 'I feel that Monty's strategy for once is at fault. Instead of carrying out the advance on Arnhem he ought to have made certain of Antwerp in the first place. . . . Ike nobly took all blame on himself as he had approved Monty's suggestion to operate on Arnhem . . .'.¹

On October the 4th Montgomery issued a new directive covering the eventual regrouping of his forces for the change in direction ordered on the 27th (page 80), and arranged to meet Generals Bradley and Hodges on the 8th to co-ordinate plans. But on the day before they met, he telegraphed General Eisenhower telling him that the overall situation in his area forced him to postpone the attack of Second Army toward Krefeld,² for the Nijmegen bridge-head must first be strengthened with infantry and the enemy must be cleared from the country west of the Maas which threatened his eastern flank. He had hoped that the United States First Army would do this but the task was too much for the American 7th Armoured Division which had been allotted to it, so it would have to be done by Second Army. He had asked Bradley and Hodges to meet him, for 'the operations of Second Army and United States First Army are very intimately related and it is my opinion that the present system of command is most unsatisfactory'.

When Bradley and Hodges arrived for the meeting on the 8th they brought with them General George C. Marshall, Chief of Staff of the United States Army, who was over from Washington visiting General

¹ Diary quoted by Arthur Bryant in *Triumph in the West* (Collins, 1959), p. 291.

² But earlier in the day Bomber Command had attacked the traffic centres of Cleve and Emmerich, in preparation for the offensive.

Eisenhower. Montgomery took advantage of the opportunity to have a private talk with General Marshall which he thus describes in his published *Memoirs*.

'... I had a long talk with him, alone in my office caravan. I told him that since Eisenhower had himself taken personal command of the land battle, being also Supreme Commander of all the forces (land, sea and air), the armies had become separated nationally and not geographically. There was a lack of grip, and operational direction and control was lacking. Our operations had, in fact, become ragged and disjointed, and we had now got ourselves into a real mess. Marshall listened, but said little. It was clear that he entirely disagreed.'¹

He may well have been surprised to hear such unbridled criticism from one of General Eisenhower's army group commanders but there is no known record of what he thought.

At that meeting with Bradley and Hodges the suggestions made by General Eisenhower in a letter which he sent by General Bradley were considered. These are reflected in the directive which Montgomery issued on the 9th of October. Its essential features are as follows:

'... Enemy reactions to our operation have been so great that we must first eliminate certain commitments before we proceed to launch the Second Army towards Krefeld and the Ruhr. There are three factors which influence our present situation, and these are outlined below.'

'Firstly, the Nijmegen bridgehead.' The bridgehead 'must be securely held and maintained' and 'for the present, infantry formations will be necessary . . . in addition to airborne forces'.

'Secondly, the enemy situation west of the Meuse . . . This area must be cleaned up, and the enemy pushed back eastwards over the river.'

'Thirdly, the need to open up Antwerp quickly. The use of Antwerp is vital to the Allies . . . operations to open the port must have priority as regards troops, ammunition, and so on.'

Second Army would hold and maintain a firm bridgehead at Nijmegen and would immediately develop operations designed to drive the enemy back to the east side of the Meuse between Gennep and Roermond. For this United States 7th Armoured Division and the 1st Belgian Brigade, with American units attached to it, would come under command of Second Army at once. First Canadian Army, responsible for freeing Antwerp, would be strengthened by an American infantry division and, if need be, by the British 52nd (Lowland) Division which was due to begin landing through Ostend on the 13th. This additional strength should certainly help to speed

¹ *Memoirs of Field-Marshal Montgomery*, p. 284.

up the clearance of the Scheldt, but Montgomery was still looking at both the Scheldt and the Ruhr—in cricketing parlance was adopting a ‘two-eyed stance’.

On the same day (October the 9th) General Eisenhower telegraphed to him:

‘The recent gale has materially reduced the intake at Cherbourg while Arromanches, which we counted on to assist materially in supply for U.S. forces, has been severely damaged. This re-emphasises supreme importance of Antwerp. . . . I must repeat, we are now squarely up against the situation which we have anticipated for months; our intake into Continent will not support our battle. All operations will come to a standstill unless Antwerp is producing by middle of November. I must emphasise that I consider Antwerp of first importance of all our endeavours on entire front from Switzerland to Channel. I believe your personal attention is required in operation designed to clear entrance.’

Montgomery did not apparently regard this as necessitating any immediate alteration of the operations he had ordered that day, for he replied to Eisenhower on the 14th that Second Army was at present operating as ordered in his directive of October the 9th and ‘*when the enemy has been pushed back to the east of the Meuse*¹ it is my intention to move Second Army westward with its right flank on the Rhine and clean up the country up to about a north and south line through Tilburg. This will enable Canadian Army to transfer its weight more to the west.’

But this was written before he received a long letter from Eisenhower which was dated the 13th but did not reach Montgomery till the 15th. It was Eisenhower’s reply to a paper on the subject of command which Montgomery had addressed to Bedell Smith and is described by the American historian of *The Supreme Command* as ‘one of his [Eisenhower’s] most explicit letters of the war’.² Both Montgomery’s paper and Eisenhower’s reply are given in full.

Field-Marshal Montgomery’s ‘Notes on Command in Western Europe: 10 October, 1944

1. The present organisation for command within the Allied forces in Western Europe is not satisfactory.

2. When we invaded Normandy the command set-up was quite clear. The Supreme Commander exercised his functions of command through the following:

A Naval C-in-C. An Air C-in-C. A ground force commander who exercised operational command and control over all the land forces.

¹ Author’s italics.

² Pogue, *The Supreme Command*, p. 297.

This organisation was good, and with it we won probably one of the greatest victories the world has ever seen.

3. Having won this great victory we then gave up this organisation of command. The ground force commander was the first to go, and the Supreme Commander himself assumed direct control of the land forces and operational direction of the land battle. Now the Air C-in-C has gone. The present organisation gives the Supreme Commander a Naval C-in-C only. The Supreme Commander himself controls and directs the activities of the land forces; and presumably he uses the Deputy Supreme Commander to keep an eye on the air forces, as he is an R.A.F. officer.

4. I think the point to note here is that direct operational command of land armies in modern war involves very close touch with subordinate commanders, and is a whole-time job. It involves being well forward and having a good grip on the battle. A Supreme Commander has great responsibilities on countless matters; only he himself can decide if he can, in addition, assume the direct operational command of the land battle—with all that this implies. If however he wished to control the land operations directly, the only solution would be to divide the theatre up into fronts, appointing a definite commander for each geographical objective and area.

The Land Forces

5. These have been separated on a national basis and not on a geographical basis. There is no longer any question of one commander being responsible for certain definite operations, and being given direct operational control of all the forces allotted to capture the objective laid down.

6. Both British and American armies are involved in the capture of the Ruhr, and it has been laid down that the main effort of the present phase of operations is to capture that area. But the job is not handed over to one commander; two commanders are involved, i.e. the commanders of the two Army Groups whose armies are concerned.

7. An attempt was made to solve this problem of command by producing a formula. See SHAEF FWD 15510 dated 23-9-44. In theory this may have seemed a suitable solution; but in practice it is not the answer. A formula is possibly very suitable in political life, when the answer to most problems is a compromise between conflicting interests. But in battle very direct and quick action is required; a compromise will never produce good results and may often produce very bad ones; delays are dangerous and may lead to the initiative passing to the enemy.

8. Taking the capture of the Ruhr as an example. The following are involved. 21 Army Group, First U.S. Army. The Ruhr is a definite and clear-cut military objective; its capture is clearly a

whole-time task for one commander, and he should be given operational command and control of all the forces allotted to capture that objective.

There are only three possible alternatives:

A. The Supreme Commander himself should move his H.Q. up to the northern front, and take direct command of the operations against the Ruhr. As to whether this is possible, I do not know. But I do know that the task is a whole-time job for one commander, and he must keep in close touch with the tactical battle.

B. C-in-C 21 Army Group should be named as the commander, and C-in-C 12 Army Group should be under his operational command. As was done in Normandy in fact, and with the very best results.

C. C-in-C 12 Army Group should be named as the commander, and C-in-C 21 Army Group should be under his operational command.

9. It is my very definite opinion that if we are to make a success of the operations in the northern part of the Allied battle front, then we must adopt *at once* one of the alternatives given in para 8. I consider that there are no other alternatives possible. I would like to say that if the Supreme Commander were to decide on alternative C, I would be proud to serve under my very great friend Omar Bradley.

10. The "pursuit" phase that followed the battle of Normandy is over for the present; we are back again to the "dogfight" battle, like we had in Normandy, where close control and co-ordination are essential. The present operations of the Allies in the northern sector are tending to become untidy and ragged; there is not that close control and co-ordination that we had in Normandy, and which is so necessary. And there cannot be close control and good co-ordination unless one commander is in charge, and that commander is in the closest touch with the changing tactical battle. Such control cannot be exercised from SHAEF by means of telegraphs; command of the modern battle has got to be personal command by means of orders issued verbally, and often very quickly, by an overall commander who is fully in touch with every aspect of the tactical situation.

The Air Forces

11. I can refer to the air command only in so far as this has repercussions on the Army.

12. It seems now to be clear that there is to be no Air C-in-C. 2nd T.A.F. and Ninth Air Force will presumably receive their orders from the staff at SHAEF.

13. If para. 8 above is agreed, then I do not see how we can carry on without an Air C-in-C. The ground force commander in the

D*

northern sector would be directing the operations of two Army Groups and two Air Groups, and he would want some Air C-in-C with whom he could deal—as we had in Normandy.

Summary

14. I do not believe it is possible to conduct operations successfully in the field unless there exists a good and sound organisation for command and control.

15. I do not believe we have a good and sound organisation for command and control.

16. It may be that political and national considerations prevent us having a sound organisation. If this is the case I would suggest that we say so. Do not let us pretend we are all right, whereas actually we are very far from being all right in that respect.

(signed) B. L. Montgomery'

Three days later the Supreme Commander replied:

'The questions you raise are serious ones and I will discuss them later in this letter. However, they do not constitute the real issue now at hand. That issue is Antwerp.

In your latest communication to me on the subject of the capture of the approaches to Antwerp, you clearly point out that you have made this your first order of business and have very properly decided that, of your three commitments, the one that involves movement further toward the Rhine must be postponed until the capture of the approaches to Antwerp can be secured. I do not know the exact state of your supply, but I do know in what a woeful state it is throughout the American and French forces extending all the way from your southern boundary to Switzerland. By comparison, you are rich! If you could have a similarly clear picture of that situation you would understand why I keep reverting again and again to the matter of getting Antwerp into a workable condition. I have been informed, both by the Chief of the Imperial General Staff and by the Chief of Staff of the United States Army that they seriously considered giving me a flat order that until the capture of Antwerp and its approaches were fully assured, this operation should take precedence over all others. You and I agreed that the great chance to seize the bridges to the northward and the opportunity for crossing the Rhine and outflanking the Siegfried Line before the enemy forces could collect themselves was well worth the risk, and, as you know, I was a strong supporter of that operation. Moreover, I consider that, while it was not completely successful, it was worth while, and that we did get a substantial advantage. However, all this serves merely to re-emphasise *now* the importance of that port to our future operations, and, as you know, I have been for some weeks ready to furnish additional troops

from U.S. sources for the purpose, provided only that you desired them, and that they could be gotten up to you and supplied.

With all the above you are quite familiar, and I do not mean to be repeating myself about something that is well known to us both. The reason for re-stating it, however, is that the Antwerp operation does not involve the question of command in any slightest degree. Everything that can be brought in to help, no matter of what nationality, belongs to you.

In order that we may continue to operate in the same close and friendly association that, to me at least, has characterised our work in the past, I will again state, as clearly as possible, my conception of logical command arrangements for the future. If, having read these, you feel that you must still class them as "unsatisfactory", then indeed we have an issue that must be settled soon in the interests of future efficiency. I am quite well aware of the powers and limitations of an Allied Command, and if you, as the senior commander in this Theater of one of the great Allies, feel that my conceptions and directives are such as to endanger the success of operations, it is our duty to refer the matter to higher authority for any action they may choose to take, however drastic.¹

With one of your statements I am in emphatic agreement. This is that for any one major task on the battlefield there must be a single *battlefield* commander, a man who can devote his entire attention to that particular operation. This is the reason we have Armies and Army Groups. When, however, we have a battlefront extending from Switzerland to the North Sea, I do not agree that one man can stay so close to the day by day movement of divisions and corps that he can keep a "battle grip" upon the overall situation and direct it intelligently. This is no longer a Normandy beachhead! Operations along such a wide front break themselves into more or less clearly defined areas of operation, one of which is usually the most important and best supported operation, the others secondary and supporting in character. The overall commander, in this case myself, has the function of adjusting the larger boundaries to tasks commensurate to the several groups operating in these several areas, assigning additional support by air or reinforcements by ground and airborne

¹ 'It is interesting to note that these differences were confined to the Command. Montgomery accepted the disappointment, and the Combined Chiefs of Staff were not called on officially to take notice of the divergence of opinion. Despite the size and gravity of the issue, it was not indeed by its nature a matter for their intervention. The alternative referred solely to a plan of campaign whose object and shape they had already approved, and involved forces already within the theatre, which no action of theirs could reinforce immediately. While both sets of Chiefs of Staff, and the Prime Minister, were informed personally of the discussion, and while they both followed it with keen interest, they were not therefore in any way implicated in the result. It is indeed a good illustration, on the largest scale, of the type of circumstance dividing the responsibilities of a theatre from those of the central Command.' (John Ehrman, *Grand Strategy*, vol. V (H.M.S.O., 1956), p. 381.)

troops, when he has a general pool, and shifting the emphasis in maintenance arrangements.

Specifically, I agree that one commander should be responsible for the immediate attack upon the Ruhr, but, as we have advanced across France and up towards the Rhine, it has been impossible to foretell with exactitude which particular commander would be in position to provide the strength, necessary for the task.

My present plan is based upon the conviction that 21 Army Group, with its commitments in Antwerp, for cleaning up the many Germans still lying west of its northerly flank, and thereafter for thrusting into the northern sections of Holland, will be left with such depleted forces facing eastwards that it could be expected to do nothing more than to carry out strong flanking operations supporting the main attack upon the Ruhr. For this reason the plan calls for assigning the capture of the Ruhr to 12th Army Group with 21st Army Group operating in a supporting role on the north. You will recall, also, that in attempting to look beyond that particular point in the operations, it was believed that 21st Army Group would have, by that time, cleaned up all of its important commitments to the westward, and would be concentrated north of the Ruhr with the bulk of its strength ready to participate in the direct thrust upon Berlin.

Originally I had hoped that matters along the Antwerp and western coast of Holland would be so rapidly cleared up that the bulk of 21st Army Group would be in a position to make a major attack upon the Ruhr. For that attack I was quite prepared to assign the necessary U.S. strength to your operational command but when this matter was discussed at our recent conference you apparently agreed with the conclusion that 21st Army Group could not produce the bulk of the forces required for the direct Ruhr attack.

I have never hesitated to put under your command U.S. divisions, corps, or anything else that was needed for immediate requirements of the battle. I have no interest in this subject other than the quick winning of the war. As an example, for the immediate task you have, we turned over to you the 7th U.S. Armoured Division, and are bringing up another which is available to you if necessary.

But your letter brings up the question of nationalism as opposed to military considerations. It would be quite futile to deny that questions of nationalism often enter our problems. It is nations that make war, and when they find themselves associated as Allies it is quite often necessary to make concessions that recognise the existence of inescapable national differences. For example, due to differences in equipment, it is necessary that the 12th Army Group depend primarily upon a Line of Communications that is separate so far as possible from that of 21st

Army Group. Wherever we can, we keep people of the same nations serving under their own commanders. It is the job of soldiers, as I see it, to meet their military problems sanely, sensibly, and logically, and, while not shutting our eyes to the fact that we are two different nations, produce solutions that permit effective co-operation, mutual support and effective results. Good will and mutual confidence are, of course, mandatory.

With respect to your concern about an Air Commander-in-Chief, I confess myself at a loss to understand it. Leigh-Mallory was never an Air Commander-in-Chief in the sense that he controlled, in his own name, all of the forces available for operations in this theatre. Both the U.S. Strategic Air Force and Bomber Command reported only to me, and it was through Tedder, acting as my representative, that co-ordination was achieved. The two Strategic Forces have been removed from my immediate command, but are available to me upon call, a function which I continue to exercise through Air Chief Marshal Tedder. In addition, I have made him *personally and directly responsible for co-ordination of all air matters in this theater*. So far as the separate Tactical Air Forces, the 2d T.A.F., the 9th Air Force and the Provisional Air Force supporting Devers, he does this from the same location and by exactly the same means, as did Leigh-Mallory when he was here. Air Chief Marshal Tedder is immediately available to you at any moment for consultation when you require, for any operation, greater air power than is immediately available to you from 2d T.A.F.

These are my plans, and the reasons therefor, stated in the frankest possible way. Like all other plans in war, they are subject to modifications if unforeseen conditions occur, but I am certain that under them all of us can operate effectively and with full cooperation.'

After receiving this letter on the 15th, Montgomery at once changed his plan. He replied on the 16th:

'You will hear no more on the subject of command from me. I have given you my views and you have given your answer. That ends the matter and I and all of us up here will weigh in one hundred per cent to do what you want and we will pull it through without a doubt. I have given Antwerp top priority in all operations in 21 Army Group and all energies and efforts will be now devoted towards opening up that place. Your very devoted and loyal subordinate Monty.'

He also issued a new directive to Twenty-First Army Group, which began with the statement that:

'1. The free use of the port of Antwerp is vital to the Allied cause, and we must be able to use the port soon.

2. Operations designed to open the port will therefore be given complete priority over all other offensive operations in 21 Army Group, without any qualification whatsoever.

3. The immediate task of opening up the approaches to the port of Antwerp is already being undertaken by Canadian Army and good progress has been made.

The whole of the available offensive power of Second Army will now be brought to bear also.'

First Canadian Army: 'will concentrate all available resources on the operations designed to give us free use of the port of Antwerp. The right wing of the army will be pulled over towards Antwerp, so that its operations can exert a more direct influence on the battle for possession of the area Bergen op Zoom-Roosendaal-Antwerp'.

Second Army: 'will hold securely the ground already in possession. The whole available offensive power of the Army will be employed in a strong thrust westwards on the general axis Hertogenbosch-Breda, with the right flank on the Meuse. . . . In order to allow of operations being developed quickly . . . all other large-scale offensive operations in Second Army will be closed down'.

Other paragraphs gave instructions for the implementation of these orders and the directive closed with the statement:

'I must impress on Army Commanders that the early use of Antwerp is absolutely vital. The operations now ordered by me must be begun at the earliest possible moment; they must be pressed with the greatest energy and determination; and we must accept heavy casualties to get quick success.'

Thus immediate operations were now decided but the difference of opinion on what should be the long-term strategy was not settled to Montgomery's satisfaction and it will be found that he reverted to it later. Though the personal relations of General Eisenhower and Montgomery were not impaired by disagreement their opinions were never reconciled. Montgomery's habit of mind and his methods differed radically from those of the Supreme Commander. General Eisenhower put great reliance on consultation with his commanders and the principal members of his staff: he showed his skill in adjudication and the reconciliation of divergent views rather than by personal initiation of policy. Montgomery, on the other hand, had supreme confidence in his own judgment and little reliance on the opinion of others. He not only initiated his own plans but wrote out his own directives. Where Eisenhower's letters and directives sometimes left room for different interpretations, Montgomery's left no doubt about his exact meaning and made his orders unmistakably clear. But as Eisenhower pointed out, the strategic issue could not be decided wholly on its military merits. However good were the

relations between the British and American armies, they remained two armies, not one; however willing Montgomery and Bradley were to serve under each other, the question of command had political repercussions of which the Supreme Commander was forced to take cognizance. Moreover each army group commander argued the importance of opportunities on his own front though it might be to the prejudice of others; their opinions could not be entirely dispassionate or disinterested but the Supreme Commander could not wholly ignore them. After approving the strategy recommended by his planners before the campaign opened he continued to take advice in consultation with his army group commanders in carrying it out. There is no evidence that Montgomery was shown that original statement of long-term strategy when it was issued to Eisenhower's naval and air commanders-in-chief in May 1944 for their concurrence. Its main features, which were stated in our first volume, may well be repeated here:

The planners argued that although Berlin was the ultimate goal the Ruhr was the industrial and economic heart of western Germany and German resources would therefore be concentrated to defend it. 'Thus an attack aimed at the Ruhr is likely to give us every chance of bringing to battle and destroying the main German armed forces.' A study of the physical conformation of northern France and the Low Countries, the territory which lay between Normandy and the Ruhr, led to the conclusion that the two most promising lines of approach would lie 'north of the Ardennes, on the general line Maubeuge-Liège' and 'south of the Ardennes, on the general line Verdun-Metz-Saarbrücken'. Of these the northern route is the more direct; moreover, 'an advance along the Channel coast and north of the Ardennes is through the best airfield country available' and 'with the capture in turn of the Channel ports' as far east as Antwerp, the adoption of the northern route 'would facilitate the maintenance problem and enable a faster rate of advance to be sustained'. Yet the northern route alone 'should not be adopted as it leads only to a head-on collision of the opposing main forces on a narrow front with no opportunity of manoeuvre'. It was contended that 'as operations progress and our superiority becomes more marked we must advance on a front sufficiently broad, to threaten an advance by more than one of the "gaps" into Germany. By so doing we should be able to keep the Germans guessing as to the direction of our main threat, cause them to extend their forces, and lay the German forces open to defeat in detail'. They concluded that 'the best method of undertaking operations aimed at the heart of Germany and the defeat of her armed forces would be to advance on two mutually supporting axes, in order to retain flexibility of manoeuvre: (a) with our main axis of advance on the line Amiens-Maubeuge-Liège-the

Ruhr, (b) with a subsidiary axis of advance on the line Verdun-Metz'.¹

By mid-September the arrival of the Sixth Army Group, supplied through Marseilles, made a third line of advance possible in the south (page 77) and the Allied front now stretched from the sea to Switzerland.

This is commonly referred to as the 'broad front' strategy. Contrasted with it is the 'narrow front' strategy advocated by Montgomery. He first enunciated it in August after the defeat of the German army in Normandy, urging that:

'The quickest way to win this war is for the great mass of the Allied armies to advance northwards, clear the coast as far as Antwerp, establish a powerful air force in Belgium, and advance into the Ruhr. The force must operate as one whole, with great cohesion and so strong that it can do the job quickly. Single control and direction of the land operations is vital for success. This is a *whole time* job for one man.'²

Although the strategy of a single line of advance north of the Ardennes was at variance with the broad front strategy using more than one line of advance which Eisenhower was pursuing, he exaggerated this difference by frequently referring to Montgomery's alternative as 'a single pencil-like thrust', which was to parody a concentration of 'the great mass of Allied armies' for an advance 'northwards to the Ruhr' which was what Montgomery urged. Eisenhower had indeed directed a large part of his forces to attack north of the Ardennes but he was not willing to put them all under a single commander or to give them first call on all available supplies; though he gave the northern advance some priority it was not to the exclusion of the complementary advance by the southern route which he desired also to keep going as vigorously as the supply situation permitted. Montgomery complained and still argued after the war³ that if the Supreme Commander had given full priority to the northern attack the campaign could have been ended more quickly, but this is open to question. It is very doubtful if much quicker progress could have been *maintained* unless the supply position had been improved equally quickly.

The importance of Antwerp had first been mentioned in August by Montgomery himself, and thereafter constantly emphasised by Eisenhower, whose directive on September the 4th read:

'The mission of Northern Group of Armies, with that part of Central Group of Armies which is operating north-west of the

¹ *Victory in the West*, vol. I, p. 82.

² *Loc. cit.*, p. 460.

³ See *Memoirs of Field-Marshal Montgomery*, pp. 285-6.

Ardennes, is to secure Antwerp, breach the Siegfried Line covering the Ruhr and seize the Ruhr.'

When he approved the Arnhem operation he realised that it would delay the clearance of the Scheldt but wrote on the 13th offering help 'to enable you to cross the Rhine and capture the approaches to Antwerp', concluding 'in any event I consider that the use of Antwerp is so important to future operations that I am prepared to go a long way to make the attack a success'; moreover, one decision at his conference on the 22nd was: '21st Army Group to open the port of Antwerp as a matter of urgency and to develop operations culminating in a strong attack on the Ruhr from the north'. On the 8th of October he wrote that the gaining of the Rhine north of Bonn must be retained by Twenty-First and Twelfth Army Groups as first mission, but on the 9th he sent Montgomery the message emphasising the overriding importance of Antwerp, quoted on page 85 above. He followed this on the 10th by writing, 'nothing I may ever say or write with respect to future plans in our advance eastward is meant to indicate any lessening of the need for Antwerp, which I have always held as vital, and which has grown more pressing as we enter the bad weather period'.

Montgomery's post-war statement that Antwerp was given priority by the Supreme Commander for the first time on October the 9th¹ is hardly justified. For Eisenhower's directives never gave any but long-range objectives and left his commanders to decide how they would deal with operations to achieve these. He had made it clear that Montgomery's long-term objective was the Ruhr but had repeatedly stressed the importance of the intermediate Antwerp, and seeing that Montgomery recognised this in his orders to First Canadian Army he had left the matter in Montgomery's hands. Montgomery has since written in his *Memoirs*:

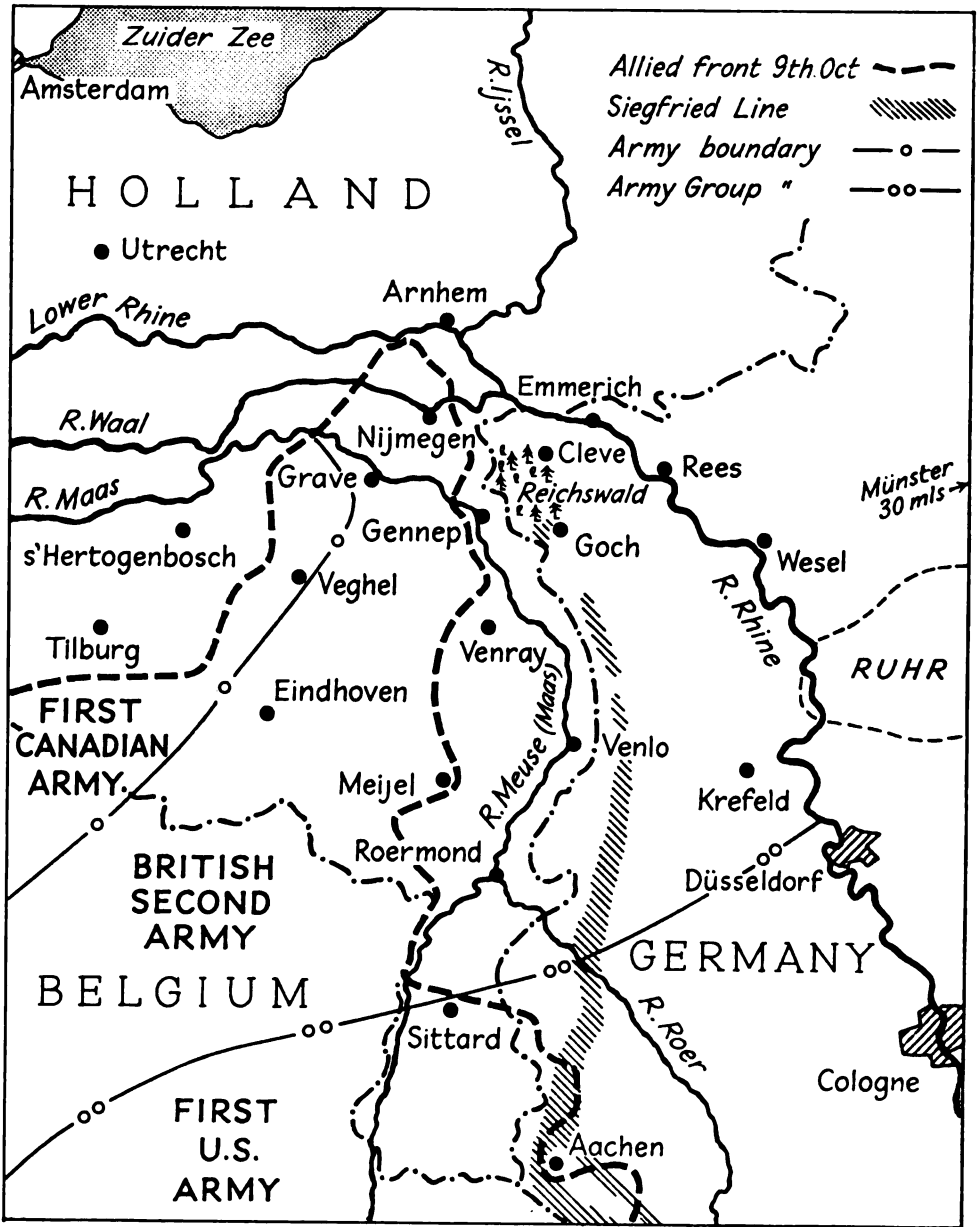
'... I must admit a bad mistake on my part—I underestimated the difficulties of opening up the approaches to Antwerp so that we could get the free use of that port. I reckoned that the Canadian Army could do it *while* we were going for the Ruhr. I was wrong.'²

But it can fairly be said that Eisenhower should share the blame. For he saw the time pass till October the 9th with but little progress towards the opening of Antwerp without giving any indication that he was dissatisfied or making any definite request that more should be done about it. It is even more remarkable that there is no evidence that the Admiralty ever stressed the importance of Antwerp, in spite of Admiral Ramsay's early warning on September the 3rd (page 5).

¹ Ibid.

² Loc. cit., p. 297.

VENLO SECTOR



In the records of the Chiefs of Staff Committee Antwerp is never mentioned during this period, though on the initiative of Field-Marshal Sir Alan Brooke the Combined Chiefs of Staff, at their meeting in Quebec on September the 12th, drew the Supreme Commander's attention to it when approving his progress report (page 19). Admiral Ramsay vehemently condemned Twenty-First Army Group's delay in the matter at the meeting with Eisenhower attended by Brooke and Montgomery on October the 5th (page 83),¹ but by then Calais had been taken and operations to clear the Breskens pocket and secure the way to South Beveland were in active progress, and training for the combined operations to capture Walcheren had begun. If on the capture of Antwerp docks the crucial importance of the Scheldt had *immediately* been realised and followed by strong action without any delay, it is possible that Walcheren might have been taken before its mainland approaches were strengthened by the enemy's Fifteenth Army, which would have had to fight or surrender south of the Scheldt; Antwerp might have been opened sooner and Allied progress in the autumn of 1944 might have been correspondingly accelerated. As it happened at the time, the *immediate* importance of the Scheldt was recognised by the enemy but neither the Supreme Commander nor Field-Marshal Montgomery saw the urgency of the moment—nor apparently did the naval authorities, other than Admiral Ramsay.

Leaving speculation as to what *might* have happened, and knowing the circumstances which led to progressive changes of Montgomery's plans during early October, we must now revert to the operations of his armies during that period.

It will be convenient to see first what had been happening in Second Army's area since the Arnhem operation was concluded by the withdrawal of the 1st Airborne Division from Arnhem during the night of September the 25th.

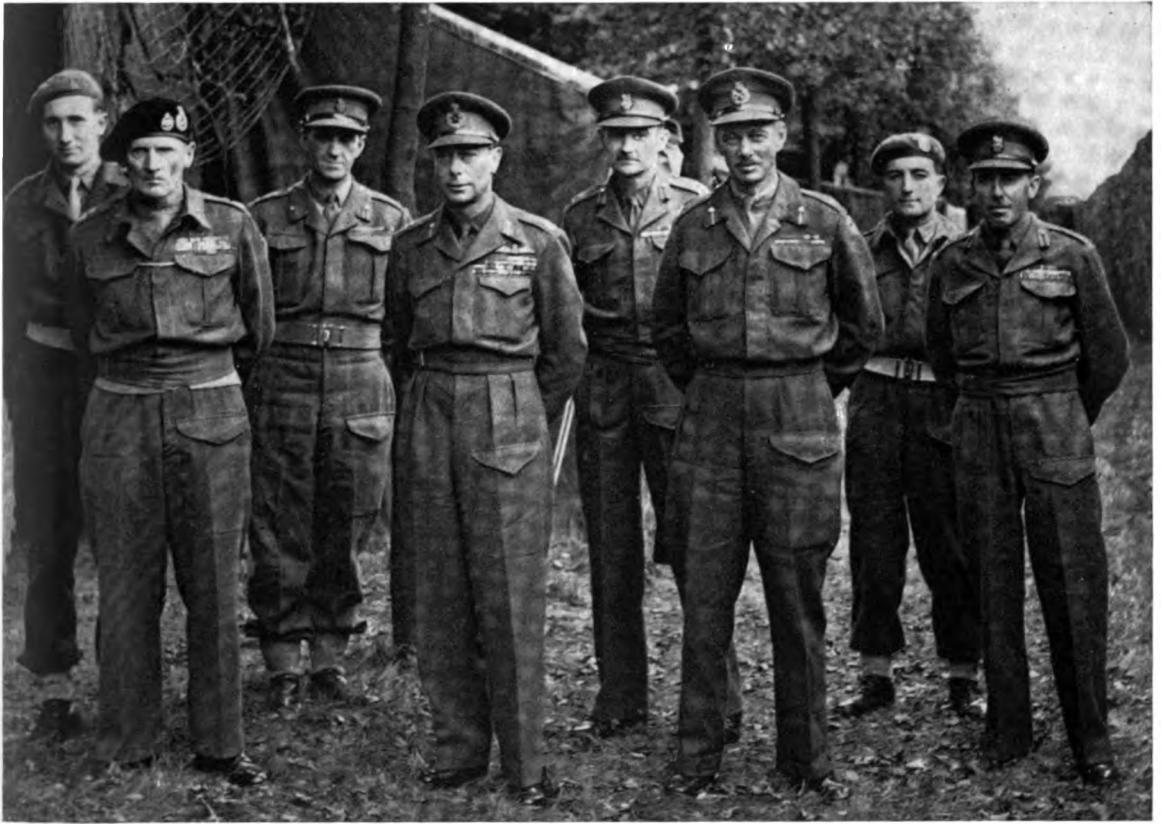
The *enemy's* intentions were quickly shown by a number of sharp but largely unsuccessful attacks all round the Nijmegen bridgehead, by attempts to break in behind Nijmegen and also by increased activity in the depths of the Reichswald Forest where two armoured divisions were beginning to arrive from the Aachen front. Not content with these efforts he tried hard to destroy the vital bridges at Nijmegen. The German Air Force made a sharp attack after dark on the 26th and followed this with some further 200 aircraft primarily directed against the Nijmegen bridges next day. But they were met by more than double that number of Second Tactical Air Force fighters, some of which were just beginning to operate from three new airfields in the corridor between Eindhoven and Grave. The Germans

¹ See Arthur Bryant, *Triumph in the West*, p. 291.

not only failed to hit the bridges but, according to the detailed log of Second Tactical Air Force, had 46 planes shot down during the attempt. The enemy then adopted more novel tactics. At night on the 28th of September a party of 'frogmen' swam down the Waal with floating demolition charges, and succeeded in attaching some to each bridge. A complete span of the railway bridge was blown into the river and about 80 feet of roadway from the other one. The Engineers quickly repaired the latter gap and by next evening had also completed an additional Bailey bridge, on barges, between the two, much of the work being done under observed artillery fire. Most of the enemy's intrepid swimmers were either captured or killed, but to guard against any more enterprises of this kind the river was flood-lit at night, anti-tank guns were posted along the banks and booms were laid upstream.

After three days during which the Second Tactical Air Force and Air Defence of Great Britain flew well over 2,000 sorties of all kinds over the battle area and its approaches from Utrecht to Münster and back to Venlo, October opened with more German attacks. North of the Waal these were first directed against XXX Corps' right held by the 50th Division and then spread to its left where the 43rd Division was disposed. At the same time the American 82nd Airborne Division, south-east of Nijmegen, was subjected to several hard though disjointed attacks. Here and there the enemy initially gained some ground but lost it all again to counter-attacks by day or by night. Fighting then died down somewhat and did not seriously interfere with the re-grouping for operations ordered by Montgomery on September the 27th (page 80). On October the 4th he amplified these in the further directive (page 83), which was largely concerned with the long-term plans for the Canadian Army after the full use of Antwerp had been secured. That army would then gradually move across to relieve the left corps of Second Army and assume responsibility for the Nijmegen area. Thus eventually some of the Canadian Army formations would be available to reinforce Second Army in its operation to close with the Ruhr. This long-term design would retain much of its relevance for the rest of the campaign though within its framework there would be variations in emphasis, timing and detail, but for the time being it was largely inoperative. For almost as soon as it was written as already told (page 83) Montgomery found he must amend his priorities. Although the enemy attacks against Second Army in the north, around Nijmegen, seemed to have lost some of their sting, momentarily at least, the Germans' defence against Allied attack was everywhere resolute and well-handled.

Closely related to the then imminent Krefeld offensive was the situation on the right flank of the army group. The American 7th



9. THE KING VISITING SECOND ARMY IN THE AUTUMN

Field-Marshal
Montgomery

His Majesty
King George VI

General
Dempsey

Sir Piers
Legh



10. General Marshall



11. General Bedell Smith



12. General de Guingand

Armoured Division, which General Bradley had allocated to the clearance of the area still held by the Germans on the west of the Maas about Venlo, had quickly run into 'considerable opposition'. Three enemy divisions were identified west of the river and the British VIII Corps was now made responsible for their defeat; two of their divisions, the 11th Armoured and 3rd Infantry, with the American 7th Armoured Division, attacked on October the 12th. By the 16th, after hard fighting, the enemy's hold on the northern part of the area had been overcome and the Allied divisions were closing in on Venray; VIII Corps was about to commit its fourth division (the 15th) to complete the operation, when orders were received from Second Army that under Montgomery's new plan the 15th Division was not to be used on this front but to join XII Corps in the attack westwards from the Nijmegen corridor. VIII Corps was left to continue attacking with its existing resources, and Venray was captured, but after the 20th of October no further progress had been made when, as will be told in a later chapter, the enemy counter-attacked strongly on the 27th (page 159). On the left of Twenty-First Army Group, the enemy's opposition was slowing Canadian progress both north of Antwerp and south of the Scheldt by extremely fierce fighting in physical conditions which favoured the defence. To this we must now return.

At the end of September General Crerar had been ordered to England for medical treatment of an illness from which he had been suffering for some time. In his absence General Simonds took his place as Army Commander and Major-General C. Foulkes of the 2nd Canadian Infantry Division replaced General Simonds in command of II Canadian Corps.

It will be well to remind ourselves that General Simonds' programme of operations to clear the Scheldt and so open the port of Antwerp fell into three phases, namely (i) the sealing off and clearance of South Beveland, now to be done by the 2nd Canadian Division, directed on Bergen op Zoom (to this had been added protection of Second Army's left flank by the Polish Armoured and 49th Divisions, directed on Tilburg and s'Hertogenbosch some 40 miles further east); (ii) clearance of the south bank of the Scheldt by the 3rd Canadian Division; and (iii) capture of Walcheren Island north of the estuary through an amphibious assault by the 4th Special Service Brigade (Commandos) with the co-operation of the Royal Navy and Bomber Command. It will be convenient to describe these three phases of the Canadian Army's Scheldt battle in that order, remembering that though described in turn much of the action occurred simultaneously (Map page 126.)

To the east of Antwerp at the beginning of October I Corps was in the neighbourhood of the Antwerp-Turnhout Canal. Immediately

opposed to the corps was the German LXVII Corps with orders to prevent a northward advance from Antwerp at all costs. With the addition of some marines, parachutists and others the German corps now had on its front the equivalent of three infantry divisions, nominally the 346th, 711th and 719th, the latter strengthened by two additional battalions and, by the end of the month, by the 280th Assault Gun Brigade and the 559th G.H.Q. Heavy Anti-tank Battalion. North-east of these stood three German infantry divisions under LXXXVIII Corps, charged with covering Tilburg and s'Hertogenbosch against any attempt by Second Army to extend its salient westwards. Northwards again, and facing generally towards Grave and Nijmegen, stood LXXXIX Corps with one division—the left wing of the German Fifteenth Army. Two of these corps headquarters and five divisions had escaped across the Scheldt. The country between the Turnhout Canal and the line from s'Hertogenbosch to Bergen op Zoom was scrubby heathland interspersed with sand dunes, woods and coppices.

At the end of September the Canadian Army's I Corps had a bridgehead over the Turnhout Canal¹ from which 1st Polish Armoured Division and the 49th Infantry Division, reinforced by a regiment of the 2nd Canadian Armoured Brigade,² advanced north-eastwards towards Tilburg. But first Merxplas was attacked. The enemy held grimly to their positions, well supplied with artillery, mortars, minefields and booby traps.³ After several attempts the town was taken and many defended farms in its neighbourhood were cleared. The Poles then advanced northwards up the Turnhout-Tilburg railway with the 49th Division deployed on both flanks; some six miles east of Turnhout contact was made with Second Army's left flank. Strong opposition was met across the road through Poppel to Tilburg but the Polish Division thrust ahead into Baarle Nassau, the small enclave of Belgian territory a mile or so inside the Dutch frontier, and with Second Army pushing northwards east of Poppel on its own front, 49th Division captured the town (on October the 4th) and headed up the main road for Tilburg. On the 5th the Poles took Alphen. Although much hampered by low cloud and haze, 84 Group had helped by carrying out one or two 'Winkle'⁴ operations with success.

Two days earlier, Colonel-General Jodl⁵ had reminded von Rundstedt that the speedy opening of the Scheldt was obviously

¹ See page 70.

² 27th Armoured Regiment (The Sherbrooke Fusiliers Regiment).

³ Corporal J. W. Harper, Hallamshire Battalion The York and Lancaster Regiment, was posthumously awarded the Victoria Cross for gallantry in this action.

⁴ In 'Winkle' operations the forward troops marked their own positions with smoke and the air forces selected targets ahead of these positions.

⁵ Chief of Operations Staff at OKW.

vital to the Allies and, if this was to be prevented, the line Antwerp–Tilburg–s’Hertogenbosch must be held to the last. That night ‘Battle Group Chill’ (85th Division) near s’Hertogenbosch was ordered to prepare for a move and on the 5th it was placed under the German LXVII Corps to restore the situation in the Poppel–Baarle Nassau area. On the 6th, together with 719th Division, a concentric attack was made and although this gained no ground it involved bitter fighting in which Polish losses of men and tanks were severe. Apart from this Lieut-General J. T. Crocker, commander of I Corps, had to adjust his plans before continuing the offensive. Not only had he a lightly covered fifteen-mile left flank from Alphen to the Turnhout Canal near St. Leonard, but Montgomery’s directive of the 4th and consequent regrouping of Second Army’s left made a short halt inevitable.

Meanwhile the 2nd Canadian Infantry Division, in the northern outskirts of Antwerp and on the west section of the Turnhout Canal, had been held up at Lochtenberg in the first attempts to get a bridgehead there (page 69). Two brigades crossed into the bridgehead of the 49th Division eight miles further east and then wheeled westwards along the north bank of the canal; on September the 25th they captured St. Leonard and, after hard fighting, secured Brecht on October the 1st. Then one brigade drove south-west along the canal for five or six miles and occupied Lochtenberg. At the same time the division’s third brigade at Antwerp finally ejected the Germans from Merxem, the suburb north of the Albert Canal. Enemy resistance had everywhere been stubborn but the 2nd Division now drew away from the canal and started a more direct advance towards the South Beveland isthmus—the first phase of Simonds’ programme for the clearance of the Scheldt.¹

While the right of the division moved across from the Brecht direction and cleared the wooded country as far as Cappellen a second brigade advanced five or six miles northwards through the watery lands that border the Scheldt estuary and captured Putte. So far the enemy had been fighting a delaying action, but with the loss of Putte, at the Dutch frontier, on the 5th resistance became more determined.² This did not prevent the Canadians from gaining

¹ The first and second phases were to be conducted simultaneously, the third, ‘the capture of Walcheren’, would then follow.

² A captured document issued by General von Zangen, commander of the German Fifteenth Army, on October the 7th included the following statements: ‘The defence of the approaches to Antwerp represents a task which is decisive for the further conduct of the war. Therefore, every last man in the fortifications is to know why he must devote himself to this task with the utmost strength . . . After overrunning the Schelde fortifications, the English would finally be in a position to land great masses of material in a large and completely protected harbour. With this material they might deliver a death blow at the North German plateau and at Berlin before the onset of winter . . . The German people is watching us. In this hour, the fortifications along the Schelde occupy a role which is decisive for the future of our people. Each additional day that you deny the port of Antwerp to the enemy and all its resources will be vital.’

another three miles by the evening of the 6th. Early on the 7th, another brigade launched an attack and by nightfall, after a violent action, succeeded in breaking into Hoogerheide, a large village little more than a mile from Woensdrecht, the key to the land entrance into South Beveland. Reporting that the situation there had 'taken a serious turn' and that 'the overland connection with the island of Walcheren is in danger', the Germans hastily summoned a battle group from the 85th Division which was facing the Poles near Alphen. The Canadians renewed their attack next morning but could make little progress in and around Hoogerheide where their main effort was directed. Late in the afternoon air reconnaissance confirmed information from Dutch civilians that a large German force, with guns and tanks, was assembling in the woods south of Bergen op Zoom and an urgent call was made for 84 Group support. Despite the extremely bad weather a number of Typhoon fighter-bombers were quickly on the scene and caused considerable trouble to the Germans as they later admitted. At the same time the Canadians made ready for the enemy counter-attack which was clearly on the way. It duly began that night and increased in weight after daylight, causing some local withdrawals; but the troops at Hoogerheide maintained their hold through what was described as 'a nasty day'.¹ Prisoners were being taken from the German 6th Parachute Regiment (of Normandy repute), the vanguard of the 85th Division, but for the moment the Germans had saved Woensdrecht and the vital isthmus.

On the 9th the 2nd Canadian Division was joined by a regiment of tanks and a company of infantry from the 4th Canadian Armoured Division, and two brigades of the 2nd Division renewed the attack next day along the five-mile front. In the confused situation around Woensdrecht the two opponents were within grenade-throwing distance of one another, and the attacking Canadians were involved in bitter fighting during the next few days. Two infantry companies, who had taken a circuitous route along the dykes near the estuary, eventually succeeded in reaching the railway embankment a mile or so to the west of Woensdrecht, and there they stayed though repeatedly counter-attacked. But the rest of the troops involved could gain very little new ground in two days of hard fighting. Bad weather on the 10th virtually ruled out any air support, though conditions were better on the 11th. For the most part the Canadian attacks were met by the German 346th Division and part of the 70th from Walcheren and the 6th Parachute Regiment but with the situation admittedly 'tense' Fifteenth Army ordered the rest of Chill's 85th Division, with extra infantry and anti-tank guns, to

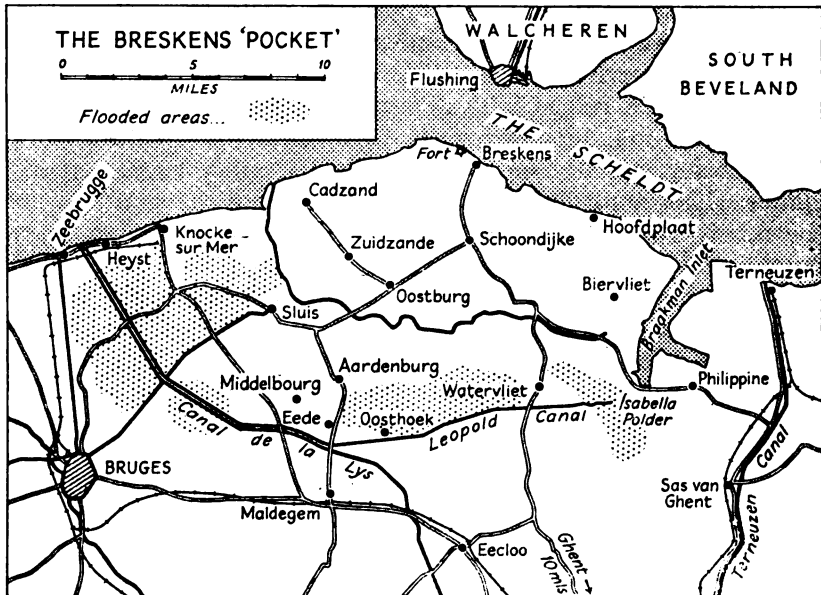
¹ Stacey, *op. cit.*, p. 383.

move across at once from the Tilburg front by motor transport. Their orders were to cut in behind the head of the Canadians and re-establish the routes into South Beveland. Hurriedly thrown into the battle on the 12th, Chill's division effected little and the other two divisions could do no better. The Canadians threw back all their attacks, being strongly supported in good weather by 84 Group's fighters which not only struck at the counter-attacking troops but flew nearly 200 sorties in armed reconnaissance of the approach routes to the battle area. On the 13th the Canadians again attacked, aiming at the railway and Woensdrecht station just to the west of Korteven. The enemy, who were securely dug in, fought desperately and, despite good support by artillery and fighter-bombers, the Canadian attack failed. After severe enemy counter-attacks while the Canadians regrouped, a new attack went in at 3.30 a.m. on the 16th. Behind a heavy barrage from all available medium and field guns the division fought its way through the straggling Woensdrecht village and on to a low ridge beyond. Supported by tanks of the 10th Canadian Armoured Regiment and by pre-arranged fighter-bomber strikes against the strong-points, the infantry held their gains. Though remaining in close contact, the enemy were exhausted and von Rundstedt recognised that he had failed to prevent the sealing off of the isthmus. His war diary recorded at the end of the day: 'In the area of the Scheldt estuary a permanent recapture of the land connection with Walcheren can no longer be expected. C-in-C West therefore consents to the flooding of the area.' But the gain had cost the 2nd Canadian Division alone some 1,600 casualties and completion of its task would take another heavy toll.

In the meantime attempts to buttress the right flank had also met with only limited success. In effect the enemy was still firmly in occupation of a wedge-shaped piece of country roughly marked by Alphen, St. Leonard and Hoogerheide. In the last ten days I Corps' divisions had all advanced about 15 miles, but its two wings were still being held a good 25 miles apart.

Meanwhile operations to clear the south bank of the Scheldt had begun—the second phase of General Simonds' planned operations for the freeing of Antwerp.

The Canadian attack on the Breskens pocket, 'Scheldt Fortress South' as it was called by the Germans, was to produce fighting as fierce as that around Woensdrecht. Half of the pocket was enclosed by the Scheldt estuary and the North Sea, the rest by the 25-mile stretch of the Leopold Canal which ended in the east in the Isabella polder, only a mile south of the Braakman inlet from the Scheldt. That mile-wide gap was strongly garrisoned and well fortified and the Canadians had made unsuccessful efforts to break through on the 22nd of September and the 5th of October.



The German last-ditch defence of 'Scheldt Fortress South' depended mainly on their 64th Infantry Division, formed in the recent summer chiefly from experienced soldiers on leave from the Russian front. Not having been engaged in the Normandy battle, the division had been specially selected for its present task and its fighting power had been much enhanced by weapons, ammunition and food handed over by the Fifteenth Army as it withdrew across the Scheldt. Including naval and air force elements the division mustered about 11,000 officers and men, over 500 machine guns and mortars, some 200 anti-tank and anti-aircraft guns (including 23 'eighty-eights') and about 70 artillery pieces of 75-mm and upwards. There were also five batteries of long-range naval guns in concrete positions near the coast between Breskens and Knocke sur Mer. Allied planes permitting, the divisional commander General Eberding could expect further support from similar guns emplaced around Flushing. He had been given the independent authority of a fortress commander by Hitler.

It was explained in the previous chapter (page 67) that the western stretch of the Leopold Canal and the Lys Dérivation Canal ran side by side, the two only separated by a high bank, and that costly attempts by the 4th Canadian Armoured Division to cross this double obstacle in the middle of September had been unsuccessful. Since then the 4th Division had covered the length of the Leopold Canal with armoured car and light anti-aircraft regiments. Now that the 3rd Canadian Infantry Division was available after its

capture of Calais it was decided to attack the enemy holding the 'Breskens pocket' from both south and north-east. The plan was to make a frontal assault from the south across the Leopold Canal near Maldegem where, the Lys Canal having turned away to the south, the Leopold Canal was the only obstacle to overcome; and to follow this with a water-borne assault from the north-east in amphibious vehicles, landing on the Scheldt coast to the west of the Braakman inlet on the way towards Breskens.

The assault over the Leopold Canal by the 3rd Division's 7th Brigade began in the early hours of October the 6th without any preliminary bombardment or air attack to give the enemy warning. But 27 'Wasps'¹ had moved into position below the near canal bank and at 5.30 a.m. they began flaming enemy trenches on the far side, while two infantry battalions started paddling across in canvas boats. One battalion gained a foothold near Oosthoek with comparative ease: a kapok footbridge was soon in use and the troops set out to extend their position. The second battalion was less fortunate. The enemy recovered from the Wasps' attack more quickly and covered the crossing by enfilade machine-gun fire; though the engineers eventually got another footbridge across and a small foothold was won on the far bank the Canadian position there suffered heavily from mortar and small-arms fire and was counter-attacked repeatedly. With support from the fighter bombers of 84 Group, which flew over 200 sorties that day, the Canadian infantry held their positions till nightfall and a third battalion was put across after dark. Next day the enemy claimed (mistakenly) that Canadian penetrations had been 'eliminated or sealed off' but although no substantial advance was made during the following days, the two bridgeheads were eventually united and by the 9th enough ground on the left had been won to provide cover for bridging operations to begin where the Maldegem-Aardenburg road crossed the canal. The Germans had admitted by then that their attempt to eliminate the bridgehead had failed in the face of 'tenacious resistance'. In this not only 84 Group but the light bombers of 2 Group had given daily support.

Early that morning, October the 9th, the Canadian 3rd Division's 9th Brigade began landing from the Scheldt on the coast lying westwards of the Braakman inlet. Their amphibious operation had started on the evening of the 7th, when 100 Buffaloes² carrying the troops left Ghent on the canal that leads to Terneuzen. They lost a little time in getting through the locks at Sas van Gent and found those at Terneuzen so badly damaged that a détour had to be made

¹ A 'Carrier Universal' modified to carry a flame gun and a tank of flame fuel.

² Landing Vehicles Tracked (L.V.T.s). Capacity: one 17-pdr or 25-pdr gun; or one Carrier Universal; or 24 men.

with the help of ramps and winches. Some vehicles were damaged and the assault had to be postponed for 24 hours. Shortly after midnight on the 8th the Buffaloes left Terneuzen and sailed westwards close inshore, with a motor boat carrying the naval liaison officer from Canadian Army Headquarters as navigator and guide. There were two assault columns, each carrying a battalion in 48 Buffaloes. One was making for a beach two miles short of Hoofdplaat, the other for one closer to the Braakman. As the mouth of the inlet was passed the guns ashore fired coloured marker shells on the selected beaches. Just after 2 a.m. the leading craft touched down practically without opposition. By 5 a.m. the Buffaloes were on their way back for their next load and four hours later the bridgehead was nearly a mile deep with the reserve battalion about to land on the right and thrust for Hoofdplaat. But as the rest of the brigade moved southwards a hard fight developed. The Germans had been completely surprised but their commander reacted quickly, reserves were ordered up and soon infantry and engineers were being ferried over from Walcheren (thanks to bad flying weather) while heavy guns in Breskens and Flushing were brought into action. But Hoofdplaat was captured on the 10th and Biervliet on the next day.

On October the 10th infantry of 4th Armoured Division, still covering the rest of the Leopold Canal, failed to force the enemy's peripheral defence either at Isabella gap or near Watervliet, so it was decided that the 3rd Division's 8th Brigade should be landed across the Braakman inlet to support the left of the 9th Brigade by a drive southwards. At the same time an improvement of the weather made possible intensive air support. In four days 84 Group and 2 Group flew over 1,300 sorties against all types of target in the pocket and on the 11th and 12th Bomber Command dropped 1,150 tons of bombs on the batteries around Breskens and Flushing. The strain proved too great for the enemy. On the 14th they gave way in the Isabella-Watervliet sector and the troops of the 4th Armoured Division made contact with the 8th Brigade as it came down from the north. Both of the 3rd Division's brigades were fighting through a countryside where anything moving along a dyke or road was a conspicuous target. On the 18th the 8th Brigade having turned westwards got to within six miles of Oostburg, the hub of what remained of 'Scheldt Fortress South'; while the 9th Brigade reached a point on the coast only about two miles from Breskens.

The enemy's defence of the Leopold Canal was also showing signs of loosening where the 3rd Division's bridgehead north of Maldegem had been strengthened by their completion of Bailey bridges over the canal on the road to Aardenburg; Eede was occupied on the 16th and two days later the leading brigade of the British 52nd (Lowland) Division began to relieve the tired Canadian

brigade in the Leopold bridgehead.¹ On the 19th troops of the 52nd Division went forward and occupied Aardenburg without opposition, the enemy having fallen back on a secondary defence line running from Breskens through Schoondijke to Sluis. On the 21st the Canadians attacked and captured Breskens.

Thereafter the final elimination of 'Scheldt Fortress South' proceeded to its inevitable end. Fort Frederik-Hendrik, on the coast, surrendered on the 24th, Cadzand, after a sharp delaying counter-attack, was captured on the 29th. Inland, Schoondijke was cleared after a stiff fight on the 24th, Oostburg on the 26th, and Zuidzande on the 29th. The enemy was now penned in the last corner of the pocket. On November the 1st a formidable strong-point east of Knocke sur Mer was taken after a hard fight and on the same day the 'Fortress Commander', General Eberding, was captured in a nearby village. Sluis with its ancient fortifications was taken and the north bank of the Leopold Canal was cleared. On November the 2nd Knocke and Heyst were taken and the area south of Knocke and Zeebrugge was found to be empty of Germans. The Breskens pocket had been eliminated.

The enemy had fought with determination and skill. A Canadian Army Intelligence summary described the German 64th Division who had been mainly responsible, under General Eberding, as 'the best infantry division we have met'. Some 12,700 prisoners had been taken; the number of killed and wounded is not known. The 3rd Canadian Division's own casualties numbered just over 2,000.²

Meanwhile South Beveland had been cleared and the battle for Walcheren Island had begun though the operations north-east of Antwerp were still in progress. All this will be described in the next chapter.

¹ It will be remembered that the addition of this division to the First Canadian Army's forces for the Scheldt operation was notified in Montgomery's directive of October the 9th (page 84).

² Stacey, *op. cit.*, p. 400.

CHAPTER V

THE CAPTURE OF THE SCHELDT

WHILE the clearance of the south shore of the Scheldt was being achieved by the capture of the 'Breskens pocket', Field-Marshal Montgomery's change of orders on the 16th of October (page 92) directed the Canadian Army to concentrate on its immediate task of freeing the Scheldt, while the British Second Army turned westwards to clear the country still held by the enemy south of the Maas. Considerable regrouping was involved but when this had been done the Second Army had one corps (VIII¹) holding the east flank of the Eindhoven-Nijmegen 'corridor'; XXX Corps holding the Nijmegen bridgehead over the Waal; and XII Corps disposed on the west flank of the 'corridor', directed to clear the enemy from the s'Hertogenbosch-Tilburg area and the country south of the lower Maas as far west as Breda. This left the Canadian Army to clear the area between Breda and the coast and from South Beveland and Walcheren, whose capture would ensure command of the Scheldt and so give the Allies their badly-needed use of Antwerp's great port.

Opposing Twenty-First Army Group's impending attacks the German Fifteenth Army had seven infantry divisions south of the lower Maas, three of them under LXXXVIII Corps holding the country to be cleared by Second Army, and four under LXVII Corps opposite the Canadian Army. An eighth infantry division was on its way from North Holland and the two corps had also several units of assault and heavy anti-tank guns in close reserve; and there were other troops defending South Beveland and Walcheren.

Relieved of its task of protecting the flank of Second Army, the Canadian Army's I Corps moved westwards into the coastal area and began its attack northwards on the 20th, with its 49th Division on the right and the 4th Canadian Armoured Division on the left. As described in the last chapter (page 103) the 2nd Canadian Infantry Division had fought its way up the coast from Antwerp as far as Woensdrecht, opposite the east end of the South Beveland isthmus. The 49th Division reached Wuestwezel taking about 500 prisoners during the day: the 4th Armoured Division heading for Esschen met stiffer opposition and on the 21st was sharply counter-attacked from the directions of Breda and Bergen op Zoom. The enemy were

¹ Less the 15th Division, which was transferred to XII Corps.

driven off after stiff fighting in which a number of German assault guns were destroyed and a further 500 prisoners were taken. Then, after Esschen had been bombed by Spitfires of 84 Group, it was captured on the 22nd. An immediate counter-attack was beaten off, and the 4th Armoured Division turned westwards towards Bergen op Zoom, which was its next objective.

On the 22nd the 49th Division moving towards Breda was strongly attacked by a German division (245th) which had been relieved by the one from northern Holland; it had been ordered to retake Wuestwezel with the support of LXVII Corps artillery but the attack was defeated with heavy losses and the division was then authorised to concentrate on blocking the approach to Breda.

Meanwhile the British Second Army had begun its attack westwards from the flank of the 'corridor'. Tilburg and s'Hertogenbosch were still held by the enemy when XII Corps began their advance but Second Army's operations, which eventually took both towns and drove all German troops from south of the Maas while the Canadian Army's I Corps cleared the coastal area, will be described later. It will be convenient first to continue the account of the Canadian operations for the freeing of Antwerp—the task which Montgomery had now given '*complete priority over all other offensive operations in Twenty-First Army Group without any qualification whatsoever*'.¹

On October the 23rd the Canadian 2nd Division began the final clearing of the Woensdrecht area in preparation for operations against South Beveland and Walcheren; two brigades attacked northwards towards Korteven and the country between it and the sea. The enemy fought hard to retain connection with the Beveland isthmus and the Canadians' progress was slow. But with the 4th Armoured Division already in possession of Esschen the German troops of LXVII Corps in the Korteven area were in danger of encirclement and the corps commander had sought and been given permission to begin a general withdrawal. On the 24th the Canadian progress was rapid against less opposition; Korteven and the country between it and the coast were cleared and the 2nd Canadian Division turned to attack the isthmus leading to South Beveland.

The isthmus, rescued from the sea many years ago by draining and built-up dykes, stretched for some eleven miles from the mainland to the point where a ship canal crossed it to give shipping from the Rhine direct access to Antwerp. The isthmus was of further importance to the Dutch economy as it carried a European railway to the port of Flushing, its last stage on an artificial causeway between

¹ Author's italics.

South Beveland and Walcheren. Where the Beveland isthmus left the mainland it was only one mile wide: during most of its length its width was only from two to three miles: but where it was crossed by the canal it broadened out to almost five. Clearly if the isthmus were strongly defended it would be a difficult position to take. It was therefore planned that while it was attacked from the mainland there should also be a waterborne assault on South Beveland from the Terneuzen area¹ south of the Scheldt. This would serve to 'turn' the canal line and would facilitate the clearance of the rest of South Beveland.

The German defence left in Walcheren and South Beveland consisted of the 70th Infantry Division largely filled by men from other fronts who had gastric troubles—it was known as a 'stomach' or 'whitebread' division; various naval and anti-aircraft artillery units; and a fortress regiment of three battalions plus a few small infantry detachments. But the defences were almost everywhere behind water and the west coast of Walcheren was formidably protected by a chain of heavily concreted coastal batteries which will be described later.

On the 24th of October a brigade of the Canadian 2nd Division began their attack on the isthmus at four-thirty in the morning, after half an hour's preliminary bombardment by seven regiments of supporting artillery. It was misty and raining and no air support was possible till the afternoon. The leading infantry cleared the opposition just ahead of the start line without difficulty but two columns of armoured cars, tanks and infantry in armoured trucks, aiming at a quick seizure of the canal ahead, were soon in trouble; slipping and slithering along the narrow dykes they were halted by craterings and road blocks and became easy targets for anti-tank guns covering the isthmus. As vehicle losses mounted it became clear that to push the cork down the neck of the Beveland bottle was a task for infantry, though mines, wire and water were likely to make it a tedious one. The brigade's infantry pushed on by themselves through the night and by the early hours of the 25th had advanced three miles and captured Rilland, which Typhoon fighter bombers had attacked on the previous evening, to good purpose according to German reports. Short stiff fights here and there continued as they advanced and by dark the Canadians were within five miles of the canal. A second brigade was then ordered to go through them at first light on the 26th and as it did so news was received that the 52nd Division's leading troops had crossed the Scheldt and were landing on South Beveland to the west of the canal which confronted the Canadians.

The leading troops of the 52nd Division (two battalions of the

¹ The assault was to be made by the 52nd (Lowland) Division.

156th Brigade) had sailed earlier that morning, from Terneuzen and smaller harbours eight miles further east, in Buffaloes of the 79th Armoured Division, with the naval liaison officer at Canadian headquarters as navigator. He recorded:

'It was an extremely dark night, with no moon and some mist, and visibility was very low. On the run up the coast . . . I was very thankful to see the two red lights which had been arranged to mark the place to cross the river. They gave us an excellent line and landed us up exactly where I wanted . . . Punctually at 0430 the artillery barrage started up and plastered the beaches near us . . . We were very close, not more than 200 yards away, and we could smell the explosive, but no shells fell short . . .'

After a voyage of some eight or more miles the leading troops began landing, almost dead on time, on the two selected beaches on the shore of South Beveland. The follow-up was to be transported in 176 Buffaloes, 25 L.C.A.s,¹ and 27 Terrapins² under the control of the Royal Engineers' 1st Assault Brigade of the 79th Armoured Division: it would be accompanied by a squadron of amphibious (DD) tanks proceeding under their own power. In addition to the infantry of two brigades, engineer and medical units would be carried and some artillery. After establishing a bridgehead troops were to push north-westwards as quickly as possible to prevent enemy interference with the forthcoming crossing from Breskens³ to Flushing as part of the combined assault on Walcheren. The landings on South Beveland were effected without difficulty but an unexpectedly large sea wall or dyke had to be blown and it took two hours to get the assaulting battalions ashore complete; enemy shelling started from inland and a mortar scored a direct hit on one craft, causing severe casualties to the brigade's advanced headquarters. The dyke was an obstacle to rapid landing, but soon 'follow up' units were arriving, beach organisation was taking shape and a ferry service across the Scheldt was working well. As darkness fell, with 200 prisoners taken, a sizeable bridgehead had been secured, its right a mile or so south of Hoedekenskerke on the eastern shore and its left about two miles from Ellewoutsdijk on the southern face.

Meanwhile more infantry of the 2nd Canadian Division were passing along the isthmus and soon after daybreak on the 27th they were able to see that all the canal bridges were down and the enemy

¹ Landing Craft Assault, capacity 36 men. On this occasion they were landed at Ostend, taken by train to Ghent and then lifted by cranes into the Terneuzen Canal.

² Terrapin—the British equivalent to the American Dukw.

³ It should be realised that the taking of Breskens, described in the last chapter (page 107), was only achieved on the 21st and as yet the conditions of the defences at Flushing were largely unknown.

holding the far bank. After reconnaissance an assault was made on the five-mile length of the canal. Several first efforts to cross it near the north end were defeated by enemy mortars and an '88', and in an attempted boat-crossing at night all but one of the boats were sunk. But by scrambling over broken bridges in the centre of the canal early on the 28th, a small bridgehead was formed and two counter-attacks were driven off; and at the south end more infantry reached the canal by wading waist-deep through water and, having groped their way across the lock, they fell upon the surprised enemy just before dawn and took 120 of them prisoner. With the canal crossed it was soon bridged by the Engineers and one Canadian infantry brigade advanced on Goes, which was taken without much difficulty, while another brigade bearing south-west captured Gravenpolder and made contact with troops of the 52nd Division. Nearer to the coast the 52nd Division's first brigade to land (156th) was pushing on from Ellewoutsdijk and the 157th Brigade was fully assembled in the bridgehead. There had been two consecutive days of good flying weather and 84 Group had been able to support the advance by attacking gun and mortar positions, points of resistance, headquarters and troops on the move.

The artificial causeway, carrying to Walcheren the road and railway which runs through Middelburg to Flushing, was defended round its eastern end by a German rearguard in prepared defences. Early on the 31st the Canadians attacked and by ten o'clock that morning the defenders were overcome and 150 taken prisoner. The last German had been driven out of South Beveland but the way into Walcheren was not yet open, for the west end of the connecting causeway was even more strongly guarded.

The causeway leading from South Beveland to Walcheren was some 1,200 yards long and about 40 yards wide, with sodden reed-grown mud flats at either side. It was 'as straight as a gun barrel'¹ and offered no cover except bomb craters and some roadside slit trenches dug by the Germans. The causeway carried not only the railway line (of which one track had been removed), but a main road and the usual Dutch bicycle track. At the western end it abutted on one of the few small areas of Walcheren which had not been flooded by the Allies' bombing, but there was a wide water-filled ditch for some distance along either side of the embanked causeway. From flank positions on Walcheren's main enclosing dyke enemy fire covered all movements on the causeway. Just west of centre the causeway was scarred by a transverse 'furrow' filled with water armpit-deep, and near the Walcheren end was a strongly constructed road block with guns protecting it. Neither wheeled

¹Stacey, *The Victory Campaign*, p. 403.

nor tracked vehicles could hope to get across: the Canadian brigade commander decided that the position must be taken by infantry.

The first attempt was made in the afternoon of October the 31st. It met the fire of artillery, mortars and machine guns and made little progress, so after losing heavily the infantry were withdrawn that evening. A fresh attempt was made by another unit at 11 p.m. but it was later withdrawn after getting no further. Next morning after strong artillery preparation a third attack was made. It got through the roadblock but was held up at the extreme west end of the causeway. Fighting went on all morning till the leading company was at last on the mainland of Walcheren and was being reinforced. But the enemy had not lost his grip. About 5.30 p.m. he made a strong counter-attack and, notwithstanding vigorous air attacks by 84 Group, the Canadians were driven back on to the causeway three hundred yards away from the western end. There a defensive position was taken up. On November the 2nd at 4 a.m. the Canadians attacked again and at 6.30 were back in positions on the mainland at about 200 yards on either side of the causeway. For the next seven or eight hours small groups of Canadian infantry clung to their exiguous bridgehead against the unabated enemy opposition. Then under cover of a heavy rocket attack by Typhoons they were relieved by a battalion of the 157th Brigade of the 52nd (Lowland) Division.¹

More of the 157th Brigade had advanced to the Walcheren causeway when it was decided to out-flank the causeway by a crossing of the Sloe Channel in boats and then wading on the mud shore for nearly a mile along a path taped by Engineers. At 3.30 on the morning of the 3rd this was done without serious opposition and was later reinforced by further crossings by the 156th Brigade on the 4th. Both brigades then linked up and began an advance towards Middelburg: German opposition in Walcheren was beginning to collapse.

On November the 1st, while the above operations were taking place, Walcheren was being attacked at other points, namely by an amphibious attack on Flushing across the Scheldt and by a seaborne assault at Westkapelle.

To the British Walcheren was a name of ill-omen for the island had been the scene of a fiasco in their wars with Napoleon. The 1944 invasion was to be more satisfactory though the cost was high both for the invading forces and the local inhabitants. Much of the island is below the level of the sea, held out by sand dunes along its shores, the gaps in which were closed by built-up dykes. The largest dyke is at Westkapelle; running for about three miles around the western

¹ The 2nd Canadian Infantry Division was taken out of the Scheldt battle having suffered over 3,600 casualties in the past five weeks.

coast of the island, it is the oldest and most solid in all Holland and is between 200 and 250 feet wide.

The Germans' main defences, sited to prevent a landing from the west and to cover approaches to the estuary, were thirty coastal and field batteries in the dune belts round the seaward half of the island. These contained about fifty guns of calibres between 220- and 75-mm, the majority being emplaced in concrete and manned by naval personnel. Solidly built strong-points which supported them included a large number of anti-aircraft guns as well as flame-throwers, rocket projectors and searchlights. A variety of obstacles covered the foreshore and beaches and, like those met in Normandy, were fitted with shells that burst on impact. Thick belts of barbed wire and mine-fields protected the dunes and strong-points. The town of Flushing had been turned into a fortress, with several batteries around its perimeter and the streets furnished with every kind of weapon and obstacle that German ingenuity could devise. On the eve of the assault Walcheren's total garrison was estimated at about 4,000 men, but eventually it produced some 8,000 prisoners. The island's capture looked a formidable proposition. It remained to be seen how stout were the hearts of those who manned its defences.

As told in Chapter IV (page 81) plans for its assault had been initiated in the middle of September and in the following weeks had been developed in the light of events elsewhere, the resources available, our increasing knowledge of the problem and the result of air reconnaissance and preparatory operations. Final arrangements provided for concentric and more or less simultaneous attacks on the island from three directions. The first was the forcing of an entry on the eastern side by troops from South Beveland which had begun on the 31st of October and has been described already (page 114); the second was the landing at Flushing of a brigade group from Breskens; and the third was a seaborne assault on Westkapelle by a Special Service brigade group sailing from Ostend. Artillery in South Beveland and on the Breskens coast would support these operations, together with strong contingents of tactical aircraft. The Westkapelle assault would be accompanied by a squadron of gun and rocket-firing craft of the Royal Navy; heavy gun support for the landing would be provided by the 15-inch guns of *Warspite*, *Erebus* and *Roberts*.

Operations to reduce Walcheren had begun on October the 2nd when the Dutch inhabitants were warned by radio and leaflets that heavy bombardment was imminent. Next day 259 Lancasters and Mosquitos of Bomber Command, with fighter escorts from Air Defence of Great Britain, made the first attempt to breach the Westkapelle dyke. Pathfinders put down their markers at 1 p.m. and, in the next two hours, waves of bombers aimed 1,270 tons of

high explosive at the dyke. Enemy anti-aircraft guns opened fire but at no time did German aircraft put in an appearance. A reconnaissance sortie during the raid reported a hundred-yard breach and the sea pouring through it rapidly,¹ and later in the day water was seen spreading well into the fields below Westkapelle—an impressive demonstration of Bomber Command's precision bombing. On the 7th of October the floods had widened and spread beyond the town of Middelburg, threatening to cut the island in two. On the same day some 120 bombers struck at the sea walls near Flushing—at points west of the town and bordering the Sloe Channel. Here again the sea could soon be seen seeping inland. Four days later some more Lancasters hit the dyke outside Veere, on the opposite side of the island, and another substantial hole was made. After a small number of planes had revisited Westkapelle on the 17th to put finishing touches to their earlier effort, the air attacks ceased. With 2,672 tons of bombs, 481 aircraft of Bomber Command had completed the task set them with virtually no losses. Except for Flushing and Middelburg, the dunes and a segment of country on the east, every part of the island was under water as the map opposite shows, and all enemy positions in the low ground had been made untenable. The local people were suffering great hardship but events were to show that a large proportion of the German defence would be nullified—the desired result of this distasteful military action.

As we have seen already (page 82), the softening up of Walcheren's defences by heavy and fighter-bombers had begun in a modest way about the middle of September but the main air effort against the island was to be concentrated into the three or four days immediately preceding the assault. Exception was to be made for the bombing of the dykes (described above) and for dealing with what were termed 'specially selected objectives'. Against the latter the Second Tactical Air Force made several rocket and bomb attacks on radar stations and ammunition stores and, in conjunction with Bomber Command, attacked batteries around Flushing which were proving a hindrance to the Canadian operations then proceeding in the Breskens area south of the estuary. In these attacks the two commands dropped some 1,600 tons of bombs between the 1st and 23rd of October, often in very difficult weather conditions, and lost seven aircraft to the Flushing anti-aircraft guns.

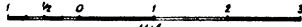
With the flooding of the island clearly effective, November the 1st was set for the seaborne assaults with a proviso that weather might cause a variation of two or three days. Approving the decision, Admiral Ramsay signalled Simonds: 'Red hot. Best of luck'.²

¹ As a result, ten aircraft carrying 'Tallboys' (12,000 pounders) were ordered to return home without releasing their bombs.

² Stacey, *op. cit.*, p. 413.

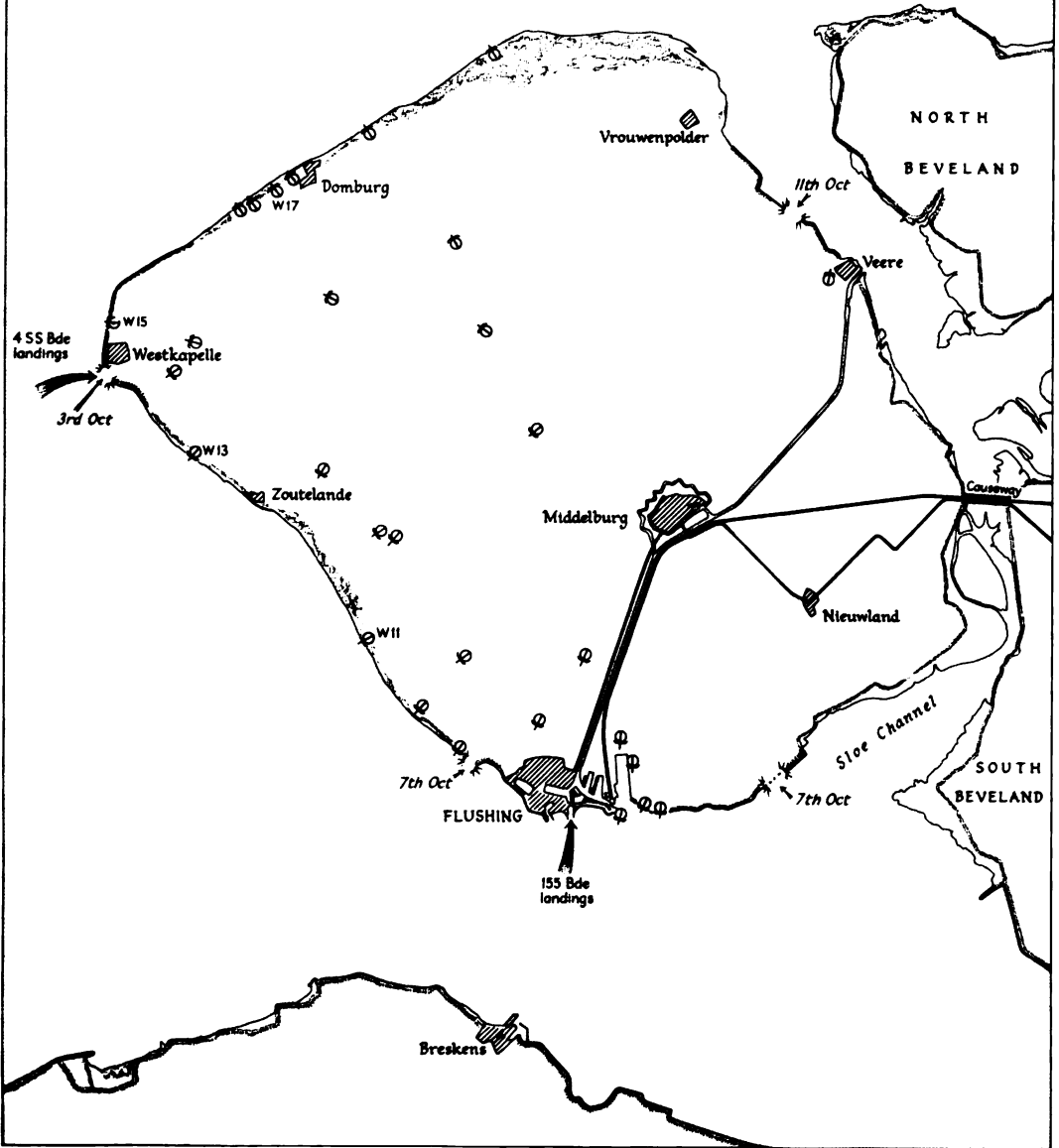
WALCHEREN

Showing flooded areas 31st October 1944



Miles

German batteries.....⊕



The final phase of air preparation began on October the 28th, a day comparatively good for flying. From then to the 30th, Bomber Command and the Second Tactical Air Force concentrated on the enemy's batteries—the former attacking the main batteries on the western face between Zoutelande and Domburg, the latter aiming at those round Flushing. All the attacks were made in daylight, the heavy bombers being strongly escorted by aircraft of Fighter Command (hitherto 'Air Defence of Great Britain'), but on the 31st the weather went to pieces again and the daylight programme was abandoned. No enemy aircraft were seen during these operations.

On the 29th of October, at Sir Arthur Tedder's morning conference of Shaef air staff (attended on this occasion by Sir Charles Portal) it was stated that the Army had proposed that 'Bomber Command should launch a heavy attack on the town of Flushing in preparation for the amphibious assault'. After discussion Tedder ruled that on military grounds heavy bombers should not be used. Bomber Command were also opposed to it for humanitarian reasons for Air Chief Marshal Sir Arthur Harris, its C-in-C, feared that the bombing of Flushing would result in heavy civilian casualties. It also appears that Harris personally expressed his views to the Prime Minister who thereupon told the British Chiefs of Staff that a veto must be placed on the bombing of Flushing town unless the Combined Chiefs of Staff should decide otherwise. When told this next morning the Supreme Commander replied that the plans had already been revised 'to exclude the bombing of the town of Flushing'. But on the 31st Shaef signalled the British Chiefs of Staff that since the earlier cables it had become apparent that the Germans were reinforcing Flushing and strengthening the defences of its southern outskirts; the Supreme Commander therefore asked that the Combined Chiefs of Staff be requested to sanction his using fighter-bombers against these strong-points, and unless he had their decision that evening he proposed to authorise the use of them against the Flushing waterfront so long as his army and air commanders considered it necessary. At 5.45 p.m. General Sir Hastings Ismay¹ telephoned Bedell Smith to say that:

'The position of His Majesty's Government is that while every effort should be made to spare the Dutch non-combatants in the town, the view of the Supreme Allied Commander must prevail.'

After dark, 35 Mosquitos from No. 2 Group of the Second Tactical Air Force began to attack the Flushing waterfront defences.

This incident has been described in some detail for it emphasises the need for different services working together to choose words

¹ Chief of Staff to Mr. Churchill.

THE UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN LIBRARIES

carefully if they are to be understood correctly. The First Canadian Army had asked that Bomber Command *should attack four pin-pointed targets* in order to 'destroy defences, disrupt communications and demoralise the enemy' in Flushing, but an air officer at Shaef translated this as a request for 'area bombing' and Tedder himself, at his meeting on the 29th, enquired why the Army was 'asking that Flushing should be flattened'—which was *not* what the Army had requested.

In the meantime, during the final phase of the air preparations the forces assigned to the seaborne assaults had been gathering together at their embarkation points. Naval Force 'T' for the Westkapelle assault, commanded by Captain A. F. Pugsley, had assembled at Ostend by the 28th with its support squadron, under Commander K. A. Sellar, detailed to cover the landings. Loading of vehicles and bulk stores began at once. In the next three days the L.C.A.s and the Buffaloes carrying amphibious Weasels¹ had sailed or swum from Terneuzen to Breskens under cover of extensive smoke screens, ready for the Flushing assault. By that time the main body of the army's supporting artillery (300 guns) was deployed in the vicinity of Breskens and Fort Frederik-Hendrik.

The weather on the 31st was unpromising and indicated that air operations next day would probably be severely restricted, but Admiral Ramsay and General Simonds were agreed that the operations should proceed provided the weather got no worse. In the afternoon they met Captain Pugsley and Brigadier Leicester² at Ostend and decided that the expedition would sail but empowered the two force commanders when afloat ' . . . to postpone the attack and return to port if in their opinion on all available information . . . the assault is unlikely to succeed'.³ On this basis the troops began to embark. After a further consultation about 10 p.m. Ramsay and Simonds reaffirmed their decision and the force sailed at 3.15 next morning. First light on November the 1st was expected at 6.30 a.m. and the landing at Westkapelle was set for a quarter to ten.

The Flushing landing was timed to begin four hours earlier. There No. 4 (Army) Commando was to make the initial assault and secure a bridgehead for the 52nd Division's 155th Brigade to pass through and clear the town. At 4.45 a.m. the Commando and its attached troops (which included some 30 Dutch soldiers from No. 10 (Inter-Allied) Commando) left Breskens harbour in their landing craft, as 300 guns, two-thirds of them heavier than 25-pounders, opened on

¹ Made in U.S.A. Assault tracked vehicle; cargo capacity, half ton.

² Brigadier B. W. Leicester, R.M., had commanded the 4th Special Service Brigade since the Normandy landings. While his men had been training near Ostend, on relief from Dunkirk, his headquarters was in Bruges, alongside Captain Pugsley's. The latter was the naval commander of the operation.

³ Stacey, *op. cit.*, pp. 413-4.

the Flushing defences and the enemy's known batteries. While the Commandos crossed the estuary they could hear the last of 2 Group's Mosquitos turning for home. They had met with bad weather and the effect of their bombs¹ and cannon-fire could not be seen but one fire was started which silhouetted a windmill, giving a useful guide to the intended landing place.

At a quarter to six, five minutes after the guns switched to targets on the flanks, the reconnoitring party closed the beach and dashed ashore. Before a shot had been fired they were 'winkling' surprised Germans out of nearby dug-outs, had captured a 75-mm anti-tank gun and set up a signal lamp to guide incoming craft. A few minutes later the covering troops landed, stormed another gun at the corner of the beach and were soon in control of a small beachhead. Casualties in the dark had so far been light, but when the main body of the Commando began to arrive at 6.30 a.m. considerable fire from machine guns and small calibre cannon met them from either flank. One landing craft struck a stake and sank near the shore and one or two others were holed, but losses were still light and a 'landing craft obstacle clearance unit' (or LCOCU) had begun work despite enemy shelling. The Commandos were soon joined by the 4th Battalion The King's Own Scottish Borderers and other units of the 155th Brigade, and set about clearing the town—pill-box by pill-box, house by house and street by street—guided by a Dutch officer, formerly Police Inspector of Flushing. The capture of the port and its shipbuilding yards with old and new fortifications involved fierce fighting and attacks by aircraft of 84 Group.

While the attack on Flushing was being launched on November the 1st, the seaborne force had arrived off Westkapelle soon after dawn. It consisted of over 150 craft of various kinds escorted by a support squadron of twenty-seven gun- and rocket-firing craft and was covered by the 15-inch guns of the bombarding force, the battleship *Warspite* and the monitors *Erebus* and *Roberts*. The Westkapelle lighthouse was in sight when, in the headquarters frigate, H.M.S. *Kingsmill*, Pugsley and Leicester had to decide if they should go on or turn back. They knew by signal from Canadian Army headquarters that it was unlikely that any air support, air spotting or air smoke would be available but the sea was calm and although the sky was overcast it appeared to be clearing; air support might be practicable later in the day. They quickly decided to go on and signalled the prearranged codeword 'Nelson' to Canadian headquarters. With the support squadron in the lead the force moved forward, the squadron directed to close the shore deliberately

¹ On the average each plane dropped one 500-lb bomb and fired about 70 rounds from its 20-mm guns.

drawing the enemy's fire away from troop-carrying craft and accepting the losses that might ensue.

The 4th Special Service Brigade's intention was to capture Westkapelle, and from there thrust along the dunes, south-eastwards to Flushing and north-eastwards round the coast, the Flushing thrust to have priority. The assault was to be delivered at the gap in the dyke that had been made by Bomber Command, and the first step was to secure the shoulders of the gap with covering parties of Commandos and armoured assault teams landed direct from beached craft. Five minutes later (and for the next hour) the main body would arrive in amphibians that had been swum out of L.C.T.s. They were then to pass through the gap in their Buffaloes and Weasels and wheel left and right.

At a quarter past eight *Warspite* and *Roberts* opened with their 15-inch guns, the battleship on the Domburg battery (W.17)¹ and *Roberts* on targets south of the gap which included W.13.¹ *Roberts* also engaged W.15¹ in place of *Erebus* who was temporarily unable to fire owing to trouble with her turret mechanism. Their fire was directed without the aid of the proper 'spotter' aircraft but steps had been taken to make use of light reconnaissance planes from Breskens (Air O.P.s) until the English bases of spotter aircraft were clear of fog. At 8.35 a.m. the army's medium, heavy and super-heavy artillery opened from the Breskens area.

When five miles short of the coast, the support squadron split into two groups, one on either side of the approach route, to draw the enemy's fire. Soon all its craft were being straddled or near-missed and one of the leaders in the southern group was holed by a Westkapelle gun. The hole was plugged with hammocks and the craft pressed on, making smoke, but later the guns of W.13 hit her several times, the magazine exploded and she sank with the loss of the greater part of her complement. Though the enemy batteries were now concentrating on the squadron it drove on, hoping by its speed and zigzagging to get under the enemy's guard and engage at pointblank range. Three gun craft of the southern group closed the shore together, but all were hit and set on fire and it was not long before they blew up and sank. Others of the northern group were either severely damaged or suffered the same fate. A few minutes before the scheduled H-hour the five rocket craft began to fire their salvos. Some covered their shore targets well but most of the craft

¹ Main armament of batteries (guns found on examination and not entirely agreeing with previous Intelligence):

W.13—Four 150-mm in concrete casemates; two 75-mm in casemates and three 20-mm flak.

W.15—Four 3·7-in British A.A. in concrete casemates; two 3-in British A.A. in open emplacements.

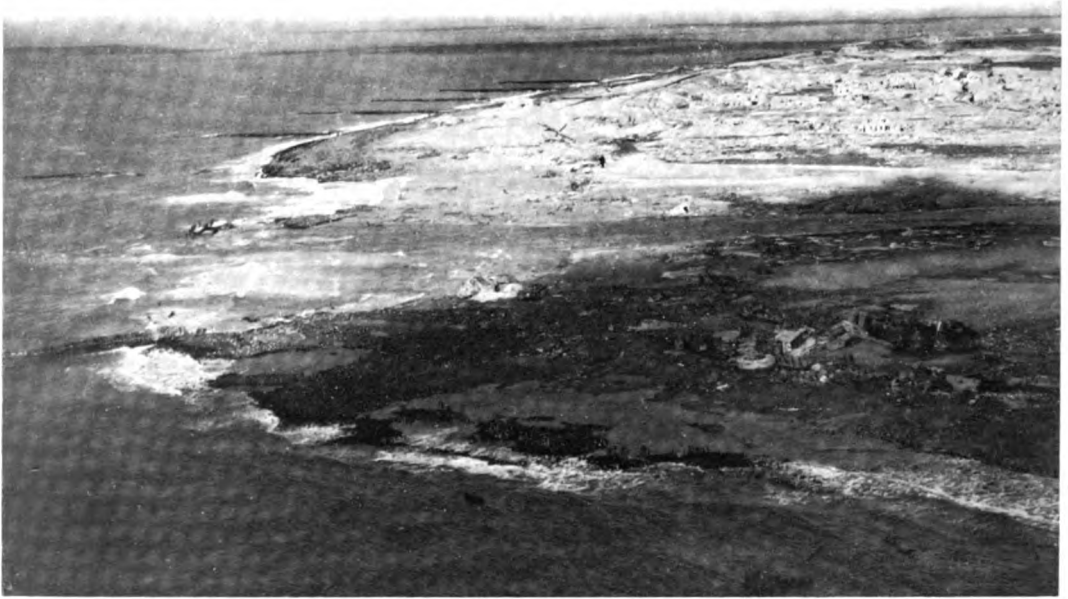
W.17—Four 220-mm French in open concrete emplacements; one 150-mm field gun.



13. Invasion of Walcheren



14. Commandos landing at Westkapelle



15. The Westkapelle dyke broken by bombing



16. Troops landing at Flushing

were hit and some momentarily thrown off course; one, swinging away, discharged its rockets among other craft in the squadron. This mishap caused the L.C.I.s¹ carrying the leading Commandos to take evading action and they were 15 to 20 minutes late at the touchdown. Two gun craft with orders to beach on the shoulders of the gap at H-hour, in order to give close support to the troops as they landed alongside, did so on time and found themselves targets for guns in some nearby pill-boxes. They put up a gallant fight but one was burnt out on the beach and the other, badly battered, sank.

The survivors of the support squadron kept up a hail of fire along the beaches on both sides of the gap and were supplemented by Typhoon fighter-bombers of 84 Group. Their intervention at this critical juncture was (to quote a signal from the headquarters ship) an 'undoubtedly vital factor in turning scale to our advantage at a time when 80 per cent [of the] support craft [were] out of action due to enemy fire'.² Under this close naval and air cover the first wave of the assault duly touched down a few minutes after ten o'clock.

Two of the L.C.I.s had been hit during the run in but all three successfully grounded and, meeting no opposition, the Commandos secured the left shoulder of the gap without much difficulty and were soon fanning out to cover Westkapelle and its W.15 battery; both targets were captured soon after midday. Two L.C.T.s³ carrying armoured assault teams were hit repeatedly by guns from emplacements to the south of the main battery and were forced to return to Ostend without unloading. The two remaining beached in the gap but several vehicles were bogged as they struggled to get forward. Eventually, out of 24 starters, only two command tanks, three flails, two AVREs and a bulldozer survived to join in the fight.

By about half past ten the first three waves of the assault, comprising Nos. 41 and 48 (Royal Marine) and most of No. 10 (Inter-Allied) Commandos, had landed. Several L.C.T.s which brought them in were hit by shells, one being sunk while two others were later lost on mines, but casualties to assault troops were so far relatively light. The four big guns of W.13 had run out of ammunition and the battery was thus left with only its lesser armament to oppose No. 48 (Royal Marine) Commando who were soon busy clearing a radar station and some strong-points on their way to the main battery. The first attempt to capture it was repelled by accurate machine-gun fire but after several small fighter-bomber strikes had been delivered, a fresh attack went in later. Covered by *Roberts* and guns from *Breskens* it succeeded, and the battery surrendered with

¹ Landing Craft Infantry; capacity, 100 men.

² Stacey, *op. cit.*, p. 418.

³ Landing Craft Tank; capacity, five tanks or twelve trucks.

about 100 prisoners. Of the four 150-mm guns in concrete one was found with its casemate split and the personnel dead, the others had been blown up by their crews. Patrols of No. 48 Commando scoured the W.13 area after dark, collecting more prisoners, but this was as far as the thrust towards Flushing got that night.

During the morning the last two waves of the assault, which included No. 47 (Royal Marine) Commando, 4th Special Service Brigade headquarters, Royal Engineers and medical detachments, etc., had come ashore relatively intact though a number of their Buffaloes were lost on mines or hit by shells. All morning the support squadron had been attacking under heavy fire and with all Commandos ashore, Westkapelle village cleared and the battery (W.15) captured, Captain Pugsley decided that craft no longer fit for action should withdraw to Ostend. Out of a total complement of about a thousand men (of whom over half were Royal Marines) the squadron had had some 170 killed and 200 wounded; of its twenty-seven craft only seven remained capable of further action. The support squadron's outstanding courage had contributed very greatly to the success of the landings.

The 'Beach Maintenance Area' was taking shape. It was an uphill struggle, however; shelling was persistent, mostly from the Domburg guns, and mines at sea and on land took a heavy toll of craft, amphibians, bulldozers and engineer equipment. In one case a landing craft carrying Pioneers was sunk with 28 casualties.

At 3 p.m., leaving No. 10 (Inter-Allied) Commando in the Westkapelle area to serve as a firm base, No. 41 (Royal Marine) Commando had set out along the sandhills for Domburg, supported by about fifty Spitfires which bombed and strafed enemy positions ahead and then the main battery. The last stages of the advance were slowed by surrendering Germans rather than by serious opposition. Soon after dusk W.17 gave up without a fight and Domburg was entered, though a few more determined rearguards remained to be captured.

This concluded the first day of the Flushing and Westkapelle assaults which produced some 350 prisoners, caused over 800 naval and military casualties and saw 84 Group fly altogether nearly 400 sorties to cover the navy and support the army and to keep the German Air Force away from the island. Losses of naval craft were heavy and only fourteen out of forty of the army's amphibians south of the gap were serviceable at the end of the day. The German C-in-C West's war diary recorded:

'As Walcheren cannot be reached by sea or land, the length of the fighting there depends entirely on the steadfastness of the garrison which cannot possibly receive support from the outside.'

Not only was this true but the few positions which the enemy still held could neither support each other, for they were widely separated, nor could they get help from their commander, Lieut-General Daser: he and about 1,000 men were with his headquarters in the island capital at Middelburg, almost completely isolated by flood-water. In the final elimination of these remnants of German defence, Commandos of the 4th Special Service Brigade and all three brigades of the 52nd Division were involved. The most difficult task was the clearance of Flushing by No. 4 Commando and the 155th Brigade, for the enemy were widely distributed in warehouses and other buildings and supported by men firing from cranes and enemy shipping in the docks, who had to be tackled from upper storeys and roof tops. When the last solid building was captured and a big adjoining bunker was taken on November the 4th, the Flushing garrison commander and a large collection of troops surrendered. Meanwhile to the north-west No. 47 (Royal Marine) Commando, supported from the sea by the monitor *Erebus* and by Typhoons from the air, having cleared several strong-points on the coast, had captured Zoutelande on the 2nd and the casemated battery W. 11 on the 3rd. From the east side of the island 156th Brigade moved on Veere (which capitulated on the 6th) and the 157th Brigade reached Middelburg on the same day. They found the town already joyously celebrating the arrival of a party of the 155th Brigade who had swum out in amphibious vehicles from Flushing and persuaded General Daser to surrender with his 2,000 surviving troops. There remained one casemated battery and strong-point with about 1,000 of the enemy between Veere and Domburg. These were captured by the 8th by the Commandos supported by fighter-bombers of 84 Group and three surviving tanks of the original assault teams of the 79th Armoured Division. The only Germans left on Walcheren were then all prisoners of war.

We return now to the story of the Second Army after it had been reoriented by Montgomery's directive of October the 16th in order to bring the whole of its offensive power to bear on the Antwerp situation by means of 'a strong thrust westwards on the general axis s'Hertogenbosch-Breda', its right moving along the river Maas and its left passing some ten miles to the south of Tilburg. As recorded on page 109 above, its consequential regrouping had left XII Corps disposed on the left flank of the Eindhoven-Nijmegen corridor, facing westwards. On the corps' right were its 53rd Infantry and 7th Armoured Divisions, with the 4th and 33rd Armoured Brigades; on the left were the 51st and 15th Infantry Divisions and the 6th

Guards Tank Brigade; with the corps were specialised units of the 79th Armoured Division and the 3rd Army Group of Royal Artillery.

When the advance of XII Corps began on October the 22nd the weather prevented flying but later that day visibility improved and all calls for immediate army support were met by the Second Tactical Air Force, attacking enemy troops and local headquarters. Stiff opposition was met by the 7th Armoured Division, particularly at Middlerode, but the 53rd Division by hard fighting gained a first footing in s'Hertogenbosch early on the 24th. By then the 51st Division, on their left, had joined the attack from near Veghel and after taking Schijndel had reached Boxtel,¹ where the bridge was found to have been blown by the enemy and the position was defended strongly. Further south, the 15th Division were moving on Tilburg.

Meanwhile the Second Tactical Air Force attacked the Maas bridges at Hedel and Moerdijk and the German Fifteenth Army's headquarters at Dordrecht, with a strong force of medium bombers, Typhoons and Spitfires. The Fifteenth Army's last reserves had already been committed and on the 25th von Rundstedt and Model, realising the growing danger of the British threat, agreed on a spoiling attack against their *eastern* flank from the direction of Venlo; it was to start on the 27th. (But this was not, of course, known to the Second Army whose VIII Corps had meanwhile somewhat improved the positions they held on the eastern flank.)

Two days were occupied by the 53rd Division in house-to-house fighting to capture the old fortress town of s'Hertogenbosch and in bridging the network of waterways which intersected the town and hindered its clearance. A small counter-attack on the western outskirts was beaten off on the 27th, when resistance ceased and the garrison commander surrendered. By then the 7th Armoured Division had driven in a German infantry screen, advanced ten miles and taken Udenhout. Meanwhile further south a column of the 15th Division and of the 6th Guards Tank Brigade had captured Oisterwijk after a vigorous action, and the main body of the 15th Division joined in converging assaults on Tilburg. The town was taken on the 27th, as the enemy was withdrawing and the inhabitants

¹ The story is told that in 1794 the young Colonel Arthur Wellesley stood beside a soldier dying of wounds received in a savage attack by the French at Boxtel in Holland. The man's name was Thomas Atkins and seeing the grief on his Colonel's face he gasped, 'It's all right, Sir, it's all in the day's work'. Fifty years later the Duke of Wellington, by then Commander-in-Chief of the British Army, was asked to suggest a name for printing as a specimen signature on a form relating to soldiers' pay. The Duke paused long, thinking of the campaigns he had fought in, and remembering the spirit shown by the dying soldier at Boxtel he replied—'Private Thomas Atkins'—a nickname which has been given ever since to soldiers of the British Army. (Extract from Army Training Memorandum No. 51, 1944.)

were already celebrating their liberation.¹ Clearance of the town was completed on the 28th, when the 15th Division and later the 6th Guards Tank Brigade were ordered immediately *to rejoin VIII Corps on the east flank*, on whom the enemy's planned 'spoiling attack' mentioned above had fallen. That action and its result will be described later (page 159).

The progress made by XII Corps and by the Canadian Army's I Corps in the coastal area had by now made von Rundstedt realise that Fifteenth Army's front must be reduced and on the 26th he ordered the defence to fall back to the general line Roosendaal-Breda-Dongen-Afwaterings Canal. Next morning Jodl telephoned him to say that Hitler's orders were that any withdrawals must be made as slowly as possible and, on resuming the clearance of the country northwards after the taking of Tilburg, XII Corps found that if the Germans were withdrawing they were determined to delay the British attackers as long as possible. Advancing from Udenhout on Loon op Zand the 7th Armoured Division soon ran into trouble and though the 51st Division came up on the right a screen of anti-tank guns and well dug-in infantry took two days to overcome and the capture of Dongen, further west, took even longer. After these places were cleared, however, progress was steadier and by the evening of the 31st the Second Army divisions reached the ten-mile stretch of the Maas from near Keizersveer to the Afwaterings Canal's junction with the river. West of s'Hertogenbosch, however, the 'island' enclosed by the canal and the river was still occupied by the enemy.

Meanwhile the Canadian Army's I Corps had continued to fight their way northwards in the coastal area. By nightfall on the 27th the 1st Polish Armoured Division, close to the inter-army boundary, had developed a flanking attack on Breda, having cut the road from Tilburg; at the same time the 2nd Canadian Armoured Brigade had got to within a few miles of Breda and the United States 104th (Timberwolf) Division, which had been lent to the Canadians to assist in the freeing of Antwerp, had captured Zundert after a hard fight. On the 29th Breda was cleared by the Poles in house-to-house fighting and after a three-day battle Bergen op Zoom was taken by the 4th Canadian Armoured Division; but some days passed before the whole of I Corps was across the length of the Breda-Roosendaal-Bergen op Zoom line.

Early on the 29th von Rundstedt again urged that Fifteenth Army be allowed to withdraw behind the Waal but Hitler ordered that it must stand fast south of the Maas, though agreeing that

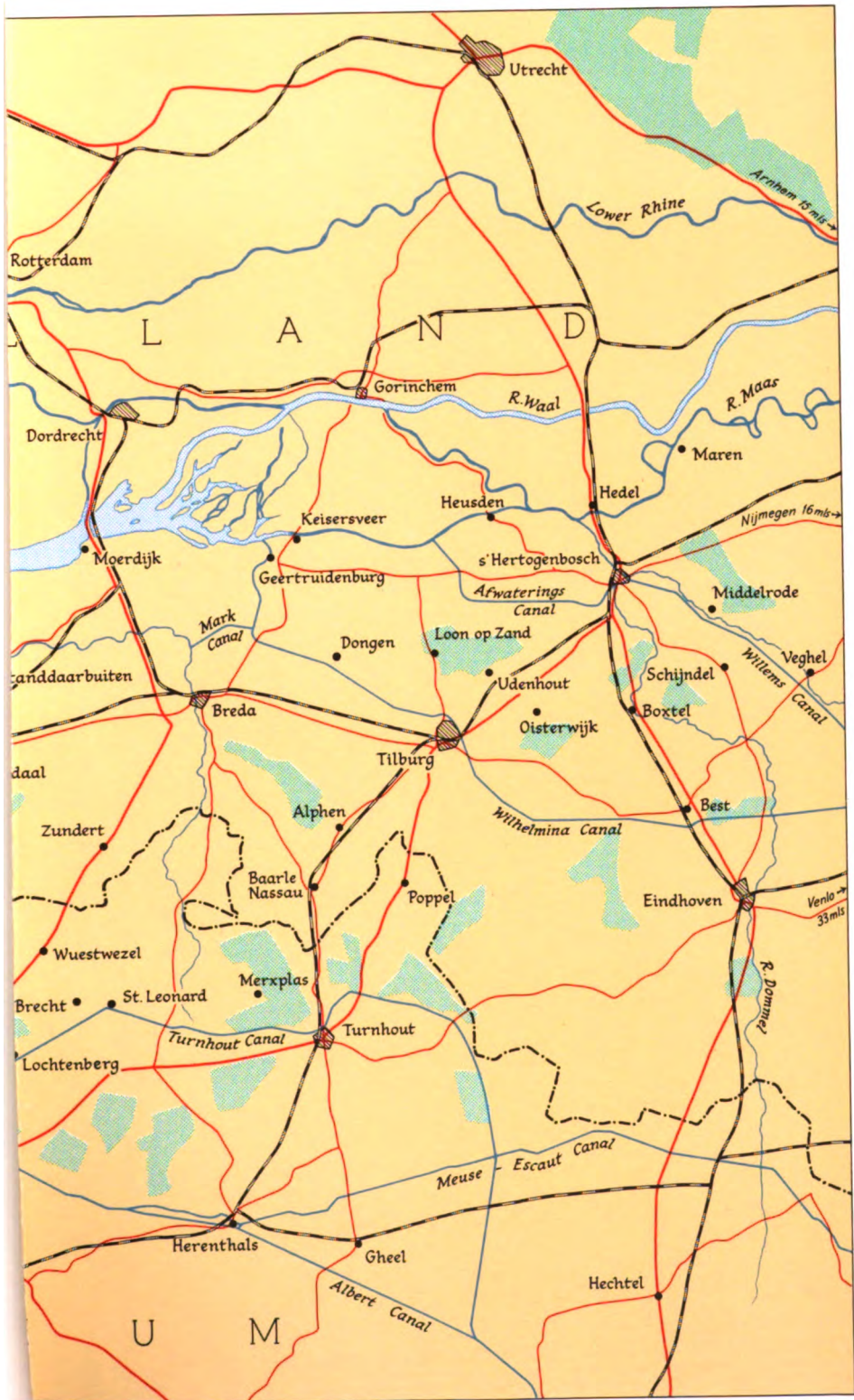
¹ A British officer proposed the health of Queen Wilhelmina, on which an elderly Dutchman with glass held high cried in English—'Ladies and Gentlemen—Lloyd George'. (*The Story of 79th Armoured Division* (Hamburg, 1945), p. 186.)

elements in danger of being destroyed might be taken back into enlarged bridgeheads. Later in the day as the situation deteriorated further von Rundstedt asked for new orders. Hitler's directive reached him the same evening but it repeated previous instructions about the stand-fast and bridgeheads while ordering strong reinforcements for Fifteenth Army. But a more important decision was that Student, commanding the First Parachute Army, was to assume command of all operations in north-west Holland from midnight the same day—a first step towards von Rundstedt's proposal, made a fortnight before, that there should be three army group headquarters in the West. Meanwhile the line Bergen op Zoom—Breda—s'Hertogenbosch was already broken and von Rundstedt authorised withdrawal to the line of the river Mark and the Mark Canal, determined not to see the Fifteenth Army destroyed south of the Maas if he could avoid it.

On the 27th, I Corps issued new orders. The Poles, with the 2nd Canadian Armoured Brigade under command, were to drive ahead for Moerdijk and its vital Maas bridges; the American 104th Division was to bear north-west for the river Mark near Standdaarbuiten; the 49th Division was to make good the route northwards from Roosendaal, while the 4th Canadian Armoured Division drove ahead via Steenberghe to Willemstad on the estuary.

After taking Breda the Poles soon reached the line of the river Mark and the Mark Canal, with the American 104th Division on the river some eight miles further west. But after severe hard-fought actions neither division had succeeded in establishing bridgeheads beyond the Mark by the end of October. Their every attempt to do so was promptly and effectively countered. Certainly the enemy's Fifteenth Army was fighting well, but it had had more than 8,000 men taken prisoner in the last twelve days; its casualties in killed and wounded are not known, but must have been considerable.

As November opened the German Army still held two bridgeheads to the south of the lower Maas, a small one just to the west of s'Hertogenbosch facing XII Corps and another along the line of the Mark that was opposite I Corps. The 51st Division of XII Corps attacked across the Afwaterings Canal on the 4th with the 7th Armoured Division co-operating on the left flank. Heavily supported by the corps artillery and the widespread activity of 84 Group, the operation continued throughout the night, meeting little serious resistance. Bridges over the canal were quickly built (the Germans being heard blowing their Maas bridge at Heusden) and by the following afternoon XII Corps' task was completed. I Corps, on the other hand, had a strenuous time and all its divisions met violent opposition. To the Fifteenth Army's 'deliberate' withdrawal, Hitler added the order that if the Moerdijk bridges fell intact into Allied



hands the specially chosen commander of its strong defending force would answer with his head. By the 5th, however, the unrelenting pressure of I Corps, greatly assisted by bombs and rocket attacks of 84 Group,¹ had broken the Mark line and in the next three days the corps closed to the Maas, though not quickly enough to prevent the Germans from destroying the Moerdijk bridges.

I Corps now assumed responsibility for the line of the Maas upstream as far as Maren, north-east of s'Hertogenbosch, relieving XII Corps, and II Canadian Corps was directed to take over the Nijmegen sector from Second Army's XXX Corps.

With the fall of Flushing on the 4th both shores of the Scheldt were held by British and Canadian troops. On the 2nd of November an attempt had been made to pass minesweepers up to Breskens but they were driven back by guns near Zeebrugge, three of them being hit. With Zeebrugge in Canadian hands on the 3rd, however, a force of sweepers sailed from Ostend and reached Breskens safely, and '... one of the most difficult minesweeping operations of the war was put in hand'. Next day fifty mines were swept between Breskens and Terneuzen and six sweepers went on to Antwerp, detonating five more mines on the way. But to sweep eighty miles of the estuary and river was a large task and more than ten squadrons of minesweepers were engaged, working from both ends. Heavy weather made the 7th a blank day, but by then over 100 mines had already been swept. Sweeping was then resumed, and though one vessel was sunk with all hands the operation proceeded energetically and beat by a week the estimate to complete in twenty-eight days. In all a total of 267 had been swept. On the 26th Captain H. G. Hopper, R.N. (Captain Minesweeping, Sheerness), who was in charge, reported that the operation was complete though the risk of odd mines must be accepted. Three coasters reached Antwerp that day and on the 28th of November the first convoy of nineteen Liberty ships, the majority of them over 7,000 tons, arrived safely; the first to berth was a Canadian-built ship—the *Fort Catarqui*.

The Battle of the Scheldt was over.

At last the port of Antwerp would be available for use by the Allies. Sixty days had elapsed between its capture on September the 4th and the winning of the land defences of the Scheldt on November the 4th. In those sixty days the First Canadian Army had been wholly responsible for the land operations in the coastal area, culminating in the seaborne assault on Walcheren Island, the clearance of both banks of the Scheldt estuary and the freeing of Antwerp's port. During those two months they had advanced from the Seine to the Scheldt and the Maas, capturing on the way the ports of le Havre,

¹ During this week 84 Group flew 1,200 sorties, attacked with 250 tons of bombs and about 1,000 rockets but lost ten planes to the German anti-aircraft defence.

Dieppe, Boulogne, Calais and Ostend. In that time they had taken 68,000 prisoners and killed an unknown number. They had also bottled up in Dunkirk the German garrison. In this achievement they had themselves suffered some 17,000 casualties of whom 3,000 were killed in action or died of wounds. The part they played in the Allied actions of those months was outstanding.

Since the Allied advance through northern France into Belgium and Holland there had been little naval activity off the coast. Only small Coastal Force actions took place off le Havre in September and off Boulogne and Calais on the night of the 1st of October, but while the amphibious assault of Walcheren was being planned and prepared, German E-boats engaged in minelaying in the Scheldt estuary and along the Belgian coast and the German explosive motor boats ('Linsen') and one-man torpedo carriers ('Marder') re-appeared. These made several attempts to attack bridge and lock gates in stretches of the Scheldt held by the Allies but did no serious damage; they also tried to attack our minesweepers off the Belgian coast with a strong force of explosive motor boats but the foray was a fiasco, chiefly because the weather was bad, and thirty-six enemy boats were lost. A fresh German flotilla of sixty was sent to Dutch bases and they made four sorties before the end of October; but the losses they suffered were out of all proportion to the little success they had. Yet Admiral Dönitz and the German Naval Staff insisted that these and other types of 'small battle units' should persist in their suicidal operations and it will be seen later that both they and U-boats gave further trouble towards the end of campaign.

Although naval operations off Norway and in northern waters have not so far been regarded as within the orbit of Overlord operations it seems desirable here to record the sinking of the *Tirpitz* by Bomber Command on November the 12th. She was one of the newest German battleships with such speed and power that no single British ship could have engaged her on equal terms. In January 1942 she had been brought from the Baltic to be stationed on the west coast of Norway and had one eventful foray. If she had been allowed to get to sea, she would have constituted a most formidable danger, either by moving westwards into the Atlantic where vast cargoes of men and supplies on which the success of Overlord depended were crossing from America, or eastwards to Russia, thus threatening the convoys of material to sustain the Russian progress so essential to Overlord's success. As long as she was present in Norway her influence was bound to make itself felt in all waters, from Murmansk to the American seaboard, for which the Home Fleet was mainly responsible. But British Intelligence and air reconnaissance made sure that she should not escape to sea unseen and fifteen attacks were made which seriously damaged but did not

destroy her. In these much naval and air effort was expended; in the end she was first battered into immobility and finally destroyed by Bomber Command in the Norwegian harbour wherein she had so vainly sought shelter. About a thousand of her crew were trapped inside her when she sank, thus sharing her inglorious end.¹ When she had been destroyed the German Navy had no capital ship left with which they could seriously threaten the Allied command of sea communications.

¹ S. W. Roskill, *The War at Sea*, vol. III, pt. II (H.M.S.O., 1961), pp. 168-9.

CHAPTER VI

LOGISTICS

IN the opening chapter of this volume the effect of logistical conditions on the Allies' progress was noted and it has been a recurring theme in subsequent chapters. With the coming into use of Antwerp's port logistical difficulties would soon be greatly eased but in October and November that happier state of affairs had not yet been achieved. The position which had been reached before Antwerp was available should be appreciated.

September had seen much improvisation of efforts to maintain the momentum of advance to Germany in spite of the difficulties imposed by long and congested lines of communication; but at the end of the month stocks forward were not sufficient anywhere to support further major operations and a considerable backlog of ordnance stores and other items of equipment would have to be made good before the formations would be restored to full offensive efficiency.

At this time in Twenty-First Army Group, the tonnage of stores that could be landed through the ports (some 13,000 tons) was sufficient for the daily maintenance of the army group and to provide a small build-up of reserves for Second Army's projected attack towards the Ruhr. This as already explained was cancelled early in October. Rail and road transport was adequate to handle the available tonnage and as transport and port capacity increased an army group roadhead would be built up in the Brussels area using sites earmarked for the Advanced Base, which began to be established on October the 6th. At that time shipping available to Twenty-First Army Group was limited by the fact that so far only small coasters could use the captured Channel ports; it was estimated that they could land some 12,000 tons a day but in fact only about 10,000 tons was achieved by these small coasters. They had been in continuous use since D-day and were now frequently in need of repair; this and bad weather account for the smaller total. It would have been useless for larger ships to use the Mulberry harbour at Arromanches, which was the only British-operated port then able to take big ships, for the tonnage of stores in the Rear Maintenance Area was already larger than it had yet been possible to move forward. When Boulogne opened on the 12th of October two larger berths became available but the intake from then till Antwerp opened only averaged some 11,000 tons daily. Stocks in the Rear Maintenance Area in Normandy and continuing improvements to rail facilities enabled increased quantities of these to be carried

forward. Vehicles and tanks were brought to the Continent by M.T. ships to Arromanches and by landing ships and craft to the Channel ports; but these vessels were also suffering from a similar need of repair. Priority was given to tanks and when Antwerp opened Twenty-First Army Group had a serious backlog of vehicles to make up. North of the Seine the ports in use by the British for stores were Dieppe, Boulogne and Ostend, and Calais for Landing Ships Tank (L.S.T.s) including those fitted as train ferries. By the end of November 150 locomotives from the United Kingdom had been landed from rail-fitted L.S.T.s at Dieppe and Calais.

The time lag in opening ports will have been noted. At Dieppe it was short as the Germans did not carry out demolitions there (page 7). But Ostend and Boulogne each needed a fortnight before any stores could be landed and more time still before they reached full capacity; a brief account of the work involved will not be out of place here. Minesweepers had to sweep a channel to Ostend and then sweep inside the port. Meanwhile the naval port clearance party was making a passage through the fourteen wrecks which blocked the entrance; by the 24th of September a channel 150 feet wide and 7 feet deep had been cleared and next day the first merchant ships entered the harbour. Work on widening and deepening this channel continued till mid-November. Ashore, though many of the quays had been completely destroyed, some were only partially demolished and obstructed with debris. The latter were cleared and repaired by the Royal Engineers and at the end of September 1,000 tons a day could be unloaded there; by the end of November this figure had risen to 5,000 tons a day, in both cases exclusive of bulk petrol pumped ashore from tankers. At Boulogne twenty-six craft had been sunk to block the harbour entrance, all touching and mostly piled on top of each other; a channel was made through these by the naval party 300 feet wide and 8 feet deep and the first two coasters passed through on the 12th of October; wreck clearance was completed a month later. Inside the port the demolitions had been thorough, possibly accentuated by our own bombing. In some cases quays were heavily cratered with cranes wrecked and others were destroyed, but by mid-October sufficient had been cleared for five coasters to berth.

The railways north-east of the Seine, overrun in the advance, were in much better condition than those to the south-west, and the civilian staffs of the French and Belgian State Railways in the former area were eager to run their own railways and carry out repairs. This was of great benefit to Twenty-First Army Group whose transportation personnel had therefore only to exercise direction in this sector, except when assistance in major repairs was necessary. Similarly the Belgian canal authorities co-operated well in

repairing canals and in organising civilian-operated barge traffic under military direction.

With the capture of the coal-mines of northern France and Belgium a large part of the coal needed for running railways became available, but to maintain this an adequate supply of pitprops had to be organised from the Ardennes, a ton of pitprops being necessary for the mining of forty tons of coal. Coal still had to be imported from the United Kingdom and, as the winter started, competing demands from the forces and other users of coal—ports, hospitals, power stations, local manufacturers—made a strong allocating organisation necessary. It was found possible to allot some to essential civilian purposes, but none was available yet for civilian domestic heating. Captured stocks of German rations and a certain amount of imported food, medical supplies, petrol and transport were also released for civil use, but the problem of dealing with refugees, evacuation of displaced persons and accommodation was becoming serious, particularly in Second Army area.

The 500-ton air-lift allocated by Shaef during the Arnhem operation was gradually reduced after its conclusion, and after the Second Army's redistribution to assist the Canadian Army in the freeing of Antwerp, the tonnage of supplies reaching the Second Army roadhead was reduced to maintenance requirements and the build-up of the army group roadhead (later the Advanced Base) was increased steadily.

It had been calculated that before a further major advance by both Twenty-First Army Group's armies could take place, the Advanced Base must contain 20,000 tons of supplies, 40,000 tons each of P.O.L. (petrol, oil and lubricants) and of ammunition, and proportionate stocks of engineer, ordnance and other stores. By the end of October the tonnages accumulated of the three major items were—19,000 tons of supplies, 23,000 tons of P.O.L. and 4,000 tons of ammunition. During this month 60,000 tons of the main natures of ammunition had been brought up from Normandy, leaving about 40,000 still in the Rear Maintenance Area there. Notwithstanding the hard fighting described in the last chapter, stocks of Twenty-First Army Group were increased by the time Antwerp was opened at the end of November. By then stocks of the principal commodities in the Advanced Base, in the Rear Maintenance Area back in Normandy, and in Channel ports were as follows:

	<i>Advanced Base</i>	<i>Channel ports</i>	<i>R.M.A., Normandy</i>
Supplies . . .	15,000 tons	31,000 tons	11,000 tons
P.O.L.	79,000 "	27,000 "	26,000 "
Ammunition . .	32,000 "	Nil	25,000 " (1)

(1) By the end of December only 670 tons of heavy ammunition remained there.

The supply of ammunition was becoming a problem, for Twenty-First Army Group had been using it faster than the War Office could provide it. On the 7th of November Field-Marshal Montgomery decided to limit expenditure during, but *only* during, quiet periods. The Advanced Base was to be stocked up to scales laid down in the original War Office 'Maintenance project' of 14 days reserve and 14 days working margin in rear of army holdings.

In a wholly mechanised army and a large air force, a vast quantity of petrol is used daily. As explained in our first volume the greater part was carried to the Continent in bulk by small tankers but some came in jerricans¹ as ordinary stores. During September a serious shortage of jerricans developed (the Americans had a similar shortage); this added to the importance of a quick extension of bulk supply over the long distance from ports of entry to the forward area. The Normandy petrol pipelines were linked up and extended to provide a through route from Cherbourg and Port en Bessin to Rouen, and from the 3rd of October piped petrol was pumped into storage tanks at Darnétal, north of the Seine, just outside Rouen. Meanwhile Ostend had been selected for the intake of bulk petrol, work on pipes and storage was carried out there and on the 30th of September the first tankers berthed and started to discharge. During the Arnhem operation in September some 6,000 tons of petrol in cans were flown in by air for British use, and jerrican filling-points, established in army areas, were filled initially by road tankers, supplemented in October by railway tankers. By mid-October British supplies were sufficient for 500 tons a day to be railed from Ostend to the Americans, increased later in the month to 1,000 tons a day. At the end of the month tanker discharge at Port en Bessin stopped, two Tombolas² having been put out of action in a storm early in the month; and a new source came into use, namely a set of 'Pipe Lines Under The Ocean' (PLUTO) from Dungeness to Boulogne. The overland pipelines as developed by the end of November are shown on the adjoining sketch map, which also shows the 'Pluto' lines from England.

Two sets of pipes were planned originally—one from the Isle of Wight to Cherbourg, the other from Dungeness to Boulogne. The former was not very successful and only operated for 17 days from the 18th of September, delivering some 3,000 tons in that time. Meanwhile three pipes were laid by the 1st of November from Dungeness to Boulogne, and six by the 1st of December; teething troubles delayed output which was 300 tons on the former day and

¹ The 4½ gallon 'spare can' on every vehicle, the normal petrol container for forward reserves and for distribution to formations.

² The name given to a system of carrying petrol from tankers to storage tanks ashore by buoyed pipes.

660 tons on the latter; eventually, with eleven pipes operating, output rose to an average of 3,100 tons a day during March and April 1945; on the last day of the campaign 3,500 tons were delivered.

The American logistical position at the beginning of October was considerably worse than that of the British.¹ Twelfth Army Group had twenty divisions forward, ten in First Army, two in the Ninth and eight in the Third, while to the rear, one was in Brittany and six were at the American base, grounded or marrying up with their equipment. Deliveries to the armies by the Communications Zone, augmented by the former using their own transport, had not permitted the First and Third Armies to accumulate reserves of more than two days of supply and two American 'units of fire,'² while the Ninth Army's reserves were negligible. These 'Com Z' deliveries were running at about five-sixths of the prescribed forward area daily maintenance tonnage with no build-up for reserves.

Not only, however, was there a shortage in the forward area, but stocks at the base were well below prescribed levels; nearly 19 days of supplies were held but petrol stocks were under 5 days and some types of ammunition in major use almost ran out in early October. The ammunition was there but still on board ship, for storms, troop-landings and shortage of port capacity had delayed its unloading. Cherbourg's reconstruction was far from complete in October and the clearance of stores landed was still inadequate; the beaches and small ports in use were adversely affected whenever bad weather struck; the British Mulberry, though available for American use, was badly served for their purposes by rail and road. Their shortage of port capacity was primarily due to lack of the Breton ports of Brest, Lorient and Quiberon Bay;³ the decision in early August (Volume I, page 404) to send only one corps into Brittany and to concentrate on the eastward drive to the Seine explains why no effort was made to capture any but Brest. The fast advance through France and the capture of Antwerp city led General Eisenhower to decide in early September against the capture and development of Quiberon Bay and other ports in that area, but le Havre was allocated to the Americans. Brest was not captured till the 18th of September, by which time American bombardment and German demolition had rendered it useless as a port.

¹ Material on the American logistics is largely based on Ruppenthal, *The Logistical Support of the Armies*, vol. II.

² About 600 tons a division.

³ In Overlord planning Quiberon Bay was to be developed into an improvised port with a capacity of 7,000 tons daily by D + 90, rising to 10,000 tons by D + 150.

Unloadings in the first three weeks of October showed no improvement on September; they were less than 25,000 tons daily, which was below the figure required to maintain the American forces at normal standards without anything going to reserve. It was not till the first week in November that the outlook really brightened; Cherbourg's clearance problem had by then been alleviated; the two new American-operated ports of le Havre and Rouen had been opened in mid-October; and rail deliveries to the forward area had risen by about fifty per cent. Meanwhile the October ammunition situation had enforced a still more stringent rationing in Twelfth Army Group than it had had at the end of the previous month and this cut operations to the bone, the only major operations in October being the capture of Aachen and the attack on Metz. General Bradley postponed the intended moves of some of his divisions from the base to the front till the turn of the month and concentrated on building up reserves so that for the start of his November offensive he had twenty-seven divisions forward with reserves roughly as below:

	<i>Armies</i>			<i>Communications Zone</i>	
	<i>First</i>	<i>Third</i>	<i>Ninth</i>	<i>Advance Section</i>	<i>Base, etc.</i>
Divisions .	12	9	6		
Supplies .	13 days	6 days	10 days	5 days	11 days
Petrol .	7 "	7 "	9 "	0 "	6 "
Ammunition .	5 units of fire	5 units of fire	5 units of fire	60,000 tons	No figure available

In mid-November unloading over the beaches stopped and the railways finally supplanted the Red Ball Express.¹

This build-up of stocks in the Advance Section of the Communications Zone, which had a somewhat similar function to that of the British army group roadhead in the Brussels area, was an essential prerequisite of a return to the normal American system of supply, which had been disrupted by the unexpected speed of the break-out and advance from the Normandy bridgehead. With adequate stocks in its depots the Advance Section would become again the sole agency through which the United States armies would arrange for their day-to-day needs; their reaching back to the base area in Normandy would stop. Advance depots were being built up in the Liège-Namur-Charleroi area to serve the First and Ninth Armies, and in the Verdun area for the Third Army. Petrol pipelines were extended from Cherbourg to the Paris area.

¹ Defined in chapter III, page 72.

Transport of stores by air did not contribute much to American maintenance from October onwards. Air delivery by heavy bombers, which had been authorised in the second half of September, was stopped at the end of that month because of its relative extravagance as a means of transport. Bad weather and lack of forward airfields cut down deliveries from then on and Twelfth Army Group averaged less than 500 tons a day from this source up to mid-December.

The Mediterranean line of communication did not meet with as many frustrations as the one in Normandy. Both the ports of Marseilles and Toulon when captured were blocked by sunken ships and heavily mined, but the damage was not as great as at Cherbourg. Rehabilitation was mainly concentrated on Marseilles and the first Liberty ship berthed there on the 15th of September; on the 20th Toulon came into minor use. Off-loading bulk petrol had started on the 9th. By mid-October about 13,000 tons of stores were being discharged daily, railheads had been established at Epinal for Seventh Army and at Besançon for the First French Army and 12,000 tons a day were reaching them by rail. By mid-November railheads had been extended to Lunéville in the north and to Clerval, halfway to Belfort. Till the 20th of November almost all forward stocks went into the armies' reserves, but rail deliveries then reached 14,000 tons a day and the 'Continental Advance Section', supporting the Sixth Army Group, began to build up army group reserves in depots in the Dijon-Langres area. Till these were filled there was no surplus tonnage which the Supreme Commander could allot to Twelfth Army Group. At this time Seventh Army had nine divisions and First French Army seven. By mid-December Seventh Army reserves were about 80,000 tons, while the Advance Section held roughly 53,000 tons.

In mid-September General Eisenhower had arranged for three divisions coming direct from America in October to be landed at Marseilles, so as to utilise the port's maintenance capacity; at the end of that month he transferred two divisions from Twelfth Army Group to the Sixth and a third in October with the same object.

Through the autumn, and indeed during the whole campaign, the Allies had one incalculable advantage. Their ports, bases and lines of communication were kept free from any interference by the enemy air forces. Allied mastery in the air never failed to keep their long supply lines inviolate.

On October the 20th, knowing that the port of Antwerp was likely to be available soon, the Combined Chiefs of Staff ordered a study of the possibility of launching an all-out offensive that might end the war in 1944. A new draft directive to the Allied commanders in Europe was considered by the Combined Chiefs of Staff and referred first to General Eisenhower (who said that clearance of the

approaches to Antwerp was a *sine qua non* before any final all-out battle) and then to the British Chiefs of Staff for their comments. The British Joint Planning Staff, after studying it, reported on October the 29th that in their opinion the earliest date that could be suggested for the war's end was January the 31st, 1945, and at the latest, May the 15th, 1945; to launch an all-out offensive before Antwerp was open to shipping 'would be to court failure'. On November the 1st General Marshall directed that nothing be done about the matter until further notice.

The importance which was attached to the use of Antwerp's port has been frequently referred to in previous chapters; it is therefore well to realise that its final opening effected nothing less than a complete revolution in the Allies' position! So far, extended and inadequate communications had meant that practically all their operations had had to be conducted 'with the brake on'; in future no such handicap would cramp their style. From the middle of December, when Antwerp should be in full operation, the Allies would have easily accessible port capacity in *excess* of their needs, even when in February 1945 they would reach their maximum strength. General Eisenhower would then have under his command 84 divisions and 285 squadrons of aircraft stationed on the Continent. Shaf would not only have to meet requirements for the final operations of these great Allied forces but also for the most urgent needs of liberated countries, of vast numbers of prisoners from the beaten and surrendered German armies, and of released Allied prisoners of war.

For all these and more than these, Shaf was in the last resort responsible for seeing that needs could be met and effectively distributed, either through the normal administration of the Services or by the special organisations for dealing with Civil Affairs, for which the Supreme Commander was also responsible.

During November, when Antwerp's port was not yet available for full use, Shaf made a detailed and careful study of the probable requirements till the end of April, by which time it was reckoned that the Allies would have victory in sight. The report of their appreciation is much too long a document to be referred to in detail here but a few items will be enough to underline the importance of its conclusions.

The 2·6 million members of the Allied forces (Army and Air Force) whose needs as a fully efficient fighting force could hardly be met in November, when Antwerp's port was not available, would have grown by April to 3·4 million. Total imports were expected to be 2 million tons in November and should be 3 million tons in April. Port capacity was just sufficient for the November figure but in April was expected to be nearly a million tons in excess of the Shaf



17. Air Marshal Coningham

Air Marshal Broadhurst

Air Marshal Tedder



18. Anti-air defence of the 'Island' when, later, it was flooded by the enemy



19. Crossing the Sloe channel between South Beveland and Walcheren



20. Petrol pipe lines described on page 134

requirements. This excess capacity would be allocated to the civil governments of France and Belgium (Holland would have to be considered later) but it was doubtful if sufficient shipping could by then be made available to them for full use to be made of this allotment.

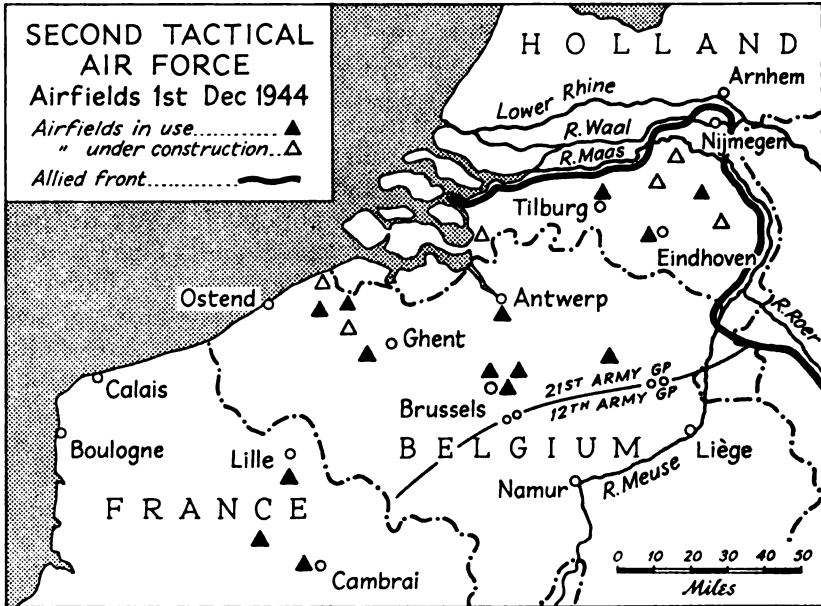
Roughly half of Shaef's million ton increase in imports referred to above would be needed for the maintenance and reserves of the armed forces, which would rise from about $1\frac{1}{2}$ million tons in November to 2 million tons in April. Some 35 per cent of this tonnage would be petrol which was handled in a different way from other supplies and is considered in a later paragraph. The other half million tons was required for ancillary purposes under Shaef control and the two items that would absorb most of it were Civil Affairs and coal, both of which required military direction. Civil Affairs' requirement would rise by 150,000 tons and coal imports by 250,000 tons. Without the use of Antwerp nothing like these increased demands could have been met by the Allies.

Fortunately local coal resources were able to play a large part in meeting the essential military and civil requirements of the Allied forces, as the tonnage that could be imported was but a fraction of their needs. In November the requirement was 2 million tons and by April it would be 3.6 million tons—nearly equal to the total port capacity which would then be available to the Allies. The mines in France, Belgium and Holland were expected to meet their quota in November, production would steadily increase through the winter and by April some German mines, primarily those round Aachen, would also be producing for the Allies.

Petrol was brought to the Continent partly in jerricans, partly by pipes under the Channel (Pluto, see page 134), but the major part was carried in tankers; it reached the forward area by a combination of pipelines and tank trucks, rail and road. In November pipeheads with good storage capacity were at Ghent and Boulogne for the British and near Paris and Lyons for the Americans; pipelines for the latter would be extended forward towards Metz and through Dijon respectively, while in the north separate pipelines for the British and Americans would be laid from Antwerp to the east and south-east.

Another item specially mentioned in this study was 'Winterisation', which in November absorbed some 750,000 tons of the very restricted tonnage imported. This included the supply of warm and seasonable clothing to millions of men fighting in severe winter conditions; the building of depots to house vast quantities of a great variety of stores and equipment; hospitals for the wounded and the sick; and the development of airfields capable of use in winter weather. As the Allies advanced on Germany the tactical air forces moved

forward. In the British area, the airfields in use by Second Tactical Air Force at the end of November are shown on the adjoining sketch map. At that time all but five squadrons were on the Continent.



Some of their airfields had only grass runways; none were up to all-weather standards and all were short of necessary buildings. The normal materials in use for the quick construction of an airfield with runways and administrative buildings for *one wing* were, in addition to timber, etc., (i) pierced steel plank, or (ii) prefabricated bitumen surfacing, or (iii) steel-mesh track; these needed from 650 to 3,500 tons of material, the most effective, pierced steel plank, being the heaviest. The tonnage of supplies required for the winterisation of airfields alone was therefore very considerable.

When all this, and much more had been assessed and taken into full account the Shafef staff decided that from a logistical view the opening of the port of Antwerp should *'prove a turning point of the campaign in north-west Europe'*. Ability to introduce a large bulk of the maintenance requirements of the forward armies and air forces would so shorten lines of communication of the Northern and Central Army Groups that *'no great difficulty should be encountered in supporting projected operations during the coming winter or deep thrusts into the heart of Germany next spring'*.¹ Time was to show that the opening of Antwerp did indeed prove to be a turning point of the Overlord campaign.

¹ Author's italics.

The port of Antwerp was to be operated under British control with separate berths and marshalling yards allotted to the Americans; rail and road exits would be jointly controlled. It was decided to use civilian stevedoring firms for the discharge of cargo from ships, as some 7,000 stevedores and 10,000 dockers were found to be available.

Two long-term logistic problems caused great anxiety to the Americans in the fall of 1944; these were ammunition and manpower. Restrictions on expenditure of main types of ammunition¹ had to be imposed shortly after the Normandy landings and remained throughout the campaign. Initially this was due to inadequate discharge from ships but by July it had become obvious that the present rate of shipment from the United States was not going to prove adequate, and behind this was the grim fact that production was less than the mounting demands from overseas theatres. At the beginning of November stocks in America of certain items no longer existed and current shipments were moving direct from factories to dockside. Production of the items in greatest demand was increasing but its effect would not be felt yet. In the meantime the Americans increased their fire power by using captured guns and ammunition.

Manpower difficulties in the theatre also had begun to be felt as early as July for the casualty rate among infantry riflemen was proving to be much higher than was expected. Since then replacements had been transferred from other arms which were in excess of requirements and a large number of these were retrained as riflemen, but although this brought the replacement pool at the beginning of November up to some 30,000 riflemen this was short of the need by about 8,000. By that time little had been done to comb out fit men from rear area jobs and replace them with those who had become unfit for front line service. Then in the cold wet weather of the November offensives casualties rose to twice the October figures, over 118,000 battle and 'non-battle' casualties being incurred.² The War Department could increase but little the flow of replacements from America, but the theatre comb-out was intensified and training courses expanded.

Twenty-First Army Group largely escaped the ammunition problem, but the manpower problem affected them as it had the Americans. At the beginning of October their wastage in infantry riflemen was running at a higher rate than the War Office could make good; formations were some 2,000 men under establishment and the reinforcement pool, which should have been 8,000 strong,

¹ 81-mm mortars; 105-mm and 155-mm howitzers; and heavy artillery—8-inch guns and howitzers, 240-mm howitzers.

² 56,300 'non-battle' casualties, with a high incidence of trench foot. (Twenty-First Army Group had few casualties from this.)

was dry. It was decided that a second division¹ would have to be broken down, though this would solve only part of the problem. (See below, pages 158 and 369.)

The opinion of the British Chiefs of Staff quoted above (page 138) that May the 15th, 1945 at latest might see the war's end, and Shaef Staff's conclusion that after the opening of Antwerp 'no great difficulty should be encountered in supporting projected operations during the coming winter or deep thrusts into the heart of Germany next spring', show that in spite of disappointing progress during the autumn the underlying confidence of the Allies in the nearness of victory was not shaken. It will be well to see how their Intelligence had been shaped during these autumn months.

At the beginning of September, with the battle of Normandy won, Paris liberated and the Germans in retreat through Belgium before the advancing Allied forces, the Joint Intelligence Committee in London produced a highly sanguine report on 'German Strategy and Capacity to Resist'. Their conclusions were that although the Germans had an organised front in the east, in the west they had nothing but disorganised remnants incapable of holding an Allied advance in strength into Germany itself. Organised resistance would 'gradually disintegrate under our attacks', though it was impossible to predict the rate of such a process. The Combined Intelligence Committee of the Combined Chiefs of Staff took a similar view of the situation, and predicted that 'organised resistance under the effective control of the German High Command . . . is unlikely to continue beyond 1st December 1944, and that it may end even sooner'. The C.I.G.S. thought the Joint Intelligence Committee's estimate 'somewhat optimistic', while the Prime Minister roundly declared: 'It is at least as likely that Hitler will be fighting on the 1st January as that he will collapse before then. If he does collapse before then, the reasons will be political rather than purely military.'

Inevitably, such views as those expressed by the Joint Intelligence Committee had to be modified as the Allied advance slackened and the Germans were able to reorganise their forces. The Joint Intelligence Committee themselves admitted before the end of September that the Germans had rallied, now that they were fighting on their own frontiers, and on the 26th a Shaef Intelligence report indicated that the enemy had recovered his balance and was showing more fighting spirit. There were no signs of collapse 'and in present circumstances of fighting [we] consider this unlikely'.

By late September reports were reaching Allied Intelligence of a final intensive comb-out of manpower in Germany to produce the

¹ The 59th Division had been disbanded in August (vol. I, p. 453).

extra strength needed for the armed forces, the armaments industry and the building of defence fortifications. Workers were sorted out largely on the basis of their physical fitness, and more and more effort was called for, especially from the foreign labour force. Foreign women, for instance, were drafted to heavier work so as to leave the lighter jobs for German women and older men, and the foreign workers' ration cards were freely used as a weapon to intimidate or encourage them to greater output. German women of the 1919-1928 age group were ordered to register for comb-out purposes and, the school-holidays having been extended indefinitely, 12-14 year-olds were to be employed in light industrial work. The comb-out seems to have achieved a considerable degree of success, for in November it was reported that 'hundreds of thousands of workers' had been thus released for work on armaments, especially women in the 45-50 age group.

At the beginning of October it was reported that work on the digging of entrenchments had been made compulsory for juveniles. This particular occupation, indeed, came to absorb a huge amount of effort, and by the middle of December it was estimated that between 1.7 and 1.8 million men, women and children were engaged on this task. (1 million foreigners, 400,000 German men and women, 165,000 young people, 125,000 Armed Forces, and 47,000 'leaders'.)

The Allies had to acknowledge that they had deceived themselves in their September predictions, and the Joint Intelligence Committee, while still firmly of the opinion that the Germans could not withstand a major Allied offensive, recognised that they had managed to stabilise their positions on all fronts except South-East Europe. By the middle of October Twenty-First Army Group Intelligence admitted that the enemy had been able 'to effect comparative stabilisation with the formation of a crust thicker than had been thought possible in previous issues of this Review'. A week later enemy morale on the Canadian front in the north was reported to be 'extremely high', and by the end of the month reports of a fresh build-up of a reserve of German armour in Westphalia¹ were issued by both American and British Intelligence. By the middle of December Shaef Intelligence had identified 74 divisions or their equivalent, which they estimated to be of comparable value to a normal 39 divisions.² It was realised that that could indicate a

¹ The German province which extended from the Ruhr to the upper reaches of the Weser river; it contained good tank training areas.

² German maps subsequently captured show that Allied Intelligence had been fairly successful in tracing the number of enemy divisions (75) at about this date. But though many German formations were much reduced in strength there is reason to believe that they were frequently under-estimated in Allied appreciations of their comparable value.

build-up for a spoiling attack but they did not think that the evidence warranted such a conclusion.

At the beginning of this period the Joint Intelligence Committee produced a report on the state of the German Air Force which accurately reflected the low ebb reached by that organisation. The loss of its bases in France and Belgium had had a restrictive effect on its operations, while the acute shortage of aviation fuel, mainly due to Allied strategic bombing, not only meant that operational flying and training alike were severely limited, but had even led to the suspension for days on end of routine defensive fighter patrols in the West. The G.A.F. was now said to be concentrating on building up its main defensive categories of aircraft at the expense of its offensive forces—the long-range bomber force had already decreased by twenty per cent since mid-August—but the new jet-propelled fighters were very slow in coming into service.

Reports of the use of Me. 262 and Arado (Ar.) 234 jet fighters increased slowly throughout the period.¹ The first operational sighting of Me. 262 aircraft had been made by British fighters in July, and by October about 50 were thought to be in use. Their potential value was admitted, for attempts to intercept them met with no success, but they seem to have been curiously ineffective in operation. Their hit and run raids on Allied airfields in Holland were reported to have done little harm, and they were obviously reluctant to attack any large formation of strategic bombers.

Meanwhile in Germany an intensive production drive to build up the fighter force was reported to have made considerable headway. On October the 26th Shaf calculated that the enemy's first line single-engined fighter strength was now around 2,000 aircraft, and that this figure would rise to 2,500 by the end of the year. No exact figures were available for the production of the new jet fighters, but it was thought to be at the rate of about 100 a month; to achieve this, production of other types of aircraft had had to be considerably curtailed. Lack of aviation fuel was the most serious long-term problem but there was still enough available for the effective operation of the single-engined fighter force; the main limiting factor for this was lack of experienced pilots. They were now used less for offensive action over the field of battle than for the protection of German communications from strategic bombers in flights over Germany.

¹ The Messerschmitt 262 was a twin-engined high-speed bomber, but was used as a fighter. It was first met in battle in the summer of 1944 but not in numbers till March 1945. Range—750 miles; service ceiling—36,300 feet; maximum speed—600 miles per hour; armament—four 30-mm guns. It could carry 12 rockets under each wing. The Ar. 234's performance was much the same as that of the Me. 262, except that it could carry a bomb load of one ton. These two remained the only satisfactory jet aircraft used by the *Luftwaffe* which accepted 527 of them during 1944.

Even at the time of their most optimistic forecasts in the military sphere, the Allied Intelligence agencies never entertained any solid hopes of an active revolt by the German population against the Nazi government. Indeed, it was recognised that devotion to Hitler and to fanatical Nazi beliefs was still general, and some authorities doubted whether those beliefs could ever be affected by Allied counter-arguments. In mid-October the Joint Intelligence Committee in London recorded reports of declining morale and war-weariness among German civilians. 'Nevertheless, there is little sign that the mass of the German people have the energy, the courage or the organisation to break the reign of terror and take active steps to bring the war to an end.' The Army leaders were the only possible source of such action, and the failure of the plot of July the 20th had almost destroyed such a possibility. The Shaeff authorities took a similar view of the situation—in spite of apathy and war-weariness, there was no sign that the civilian population had the will or means to revolt against the régime. Himmler kept a tight control over the country, and resistance was as difficult as ever. 'It remains to be seen what the privations of the next few months bring forth, but by and large it would appear that it is the military machine, this time, which has to be defeated.' The Central Intelligence Committee in Washington arrived at the same conclusions.

'The present German government, or any Nazi successor, is unlikely to surrender. Control by the Party appears strong enough to prevent governmental overthrow or internal disintegration prior to an extensive collapse of military resistance . . . the lack of visible symptoms indicates that German national life is still mobilized behind the war effort. This support is not likely to break down until the military debacle has reached its final stage.'

As the pace of Allied advance slackened and finally halted in the autumn, the rise in morale of the German forces at the front already noted seems to have been matched by an upsurge of spirits on the civilian front. Reports from Sweden in early November spoke of the high morale obtaining in Berlin, and the British naval attaché in Stockholm commented: 'There is some evidence that German morale has been temporarily strengthened by the slowing up of the Allied campaign in the West, and the holding up of the Russian attack in East Prussia.'

Nor could the Allies draw any comfort from the prospects of an imminent economic collapse in Germany. Shortages and rationing were becoming weekly more severe, working hours were increased, entertainment non-existent, but the national war effort continued.

'Notwithstanding the inevitability of a progressive deterioration of production, including war production, there is no prospect

that economic collapse will terminate the enemy's military resistance. As long as the German leaders retain their determination to fight and the German people retain their fear of the German leaders—and it is not envisaged that economic developments will exert any influence on these psychological factors—military resistance will continue to the best of the enemy's ability. What economic deterioration will ensure is that the quality of this resistance will continue to decline.'

Bound up with the whole question of German morale at this time was the problem posed by the Allied policy of 'unconditional surrender' and by what is known as the Morgenthau Plan. The policy of unconditional surrender was first formulated by President Roosevelt at the Casablanca conference in January 1943, and endorsed by the Prime Minister. At Teheran in December there was further discussion about a joint three-Power declaration of such a policy to the German people. The question was referred to the European Advisory Commission in London, and meanwhile in their final report the overall objective of the war was defined as follows:

'In conjunction with Russia and other Allies to bring about at the earliest possible date the unconditional surrender of the Axis Powers.'

Soon after this, the President appears to have had some qualms on the subject. He was at pains to point out that the United Nations did not intend to enslave the German people. On the contrary, once Nazism and Prussian militarism had been eradicated, they would be encouraged to develop as useful and respectable members of the European family. In January 1944 the Joint Intelligence Committee had produced a report on unconditional surrender which concluded that there was 'ample evidence' that Nazi propaganda about the fate of the German people under such a formula was helping to stiffen morale among the mass of the people, while the Chiefs of Staff recommended that a joint three-Power declaration defining the future of Germany should be issued before Overlord was launched; but after some desultory conversations in London, the matter was allowed to slide.

A separate but allied issue was the question of the possible post-war dismemberment of Germany. In England, discussions about the advantages of such a policy had been pursued in the Foreign Office since 1942, and at the Teheran conference in December 1943 the President, Prime Minister and Marshal Stalin had informal talks on the subject, in the course of which Stalin supported a more drastic line of action proposed by the President. He was 'for splitting Germany into smallish pieces so that she could not reunite and he said that if she attempted to do so we must be prepared to use force'. The subject was pursued at intervals in London throughout

the first half of 1944, and in August the Post-Hostilities Planning Staff concluded that it would be to our strategic advantage to have Germany split into three or more independent states.

The American Morgenthau Plan itself appeared in the late summer of 1944 and 'was taken up by the President with sudden enthusiasm'.¹ The plan was drastic, calling for the dismemberment and de-industrialisation of Germany and providing for Allied military control of the country for twenty years and a total absence of any aid save what was a military necessity. Reactions to the plan were mixed. In the United States it was strongly opposed by the Secretary of War, Mr. Henry Stimson, and by Mr. Cordell Hull, the Secretary of State. In London, when the Cabinet learned of the Morgenthau Plan from the Prime Minister, who was about to meet President Roosevelt at Quebec for the Octagon conference in September, they reacted strongly.

'A policy which condones or favours chaos is not hard; it is simply inefficient. We do not favour a soft policy towards Germany: but the suffering which she must undergo should be the price of useful results for the United Nations, ordered and controlled by ourselves. If the President takes this line—which is contrary to everything in the plans we and the Americans have prepared—you will perhaps think fit to persuade him of its unwisdom.'

But the President was at that time pressing the plan strongly, and a descriptive paper was initialled and marked 'O.K.' by himself and the Prime Minister. This stated:

'This programme for eliminating the war-making industries on the Ruhr and in the Saar is looking forward to converting Germany into a country primarily agricultural and pastoral in its character.'

A stronger weapon for use by the German propaganda machine could scarcely be imagined, but the paper seems to have been initialled in a curiously casual fashion. A year later, when Morgenthau was seeking permission to publish a book about his plan, Churchill could remember nothing about it and asked to be reminded of the details. The only initialled draft of the paper in London was marked 'superseded', and there was no copy of any revised draft on our files.

Argument about the plan continued in London through the autumn of 1944. Mr. Eden and the Foreign Office felt it would be in our own interests not to dismember Germany, while the Chiefs of Staff upheld the plan for purely military reasons. At a

¹ F. S. V. Donnison, *Civil Affairs and Military Government, North-West Europe, 1944-1946* (H.M.S.O., 1961), p. 199.

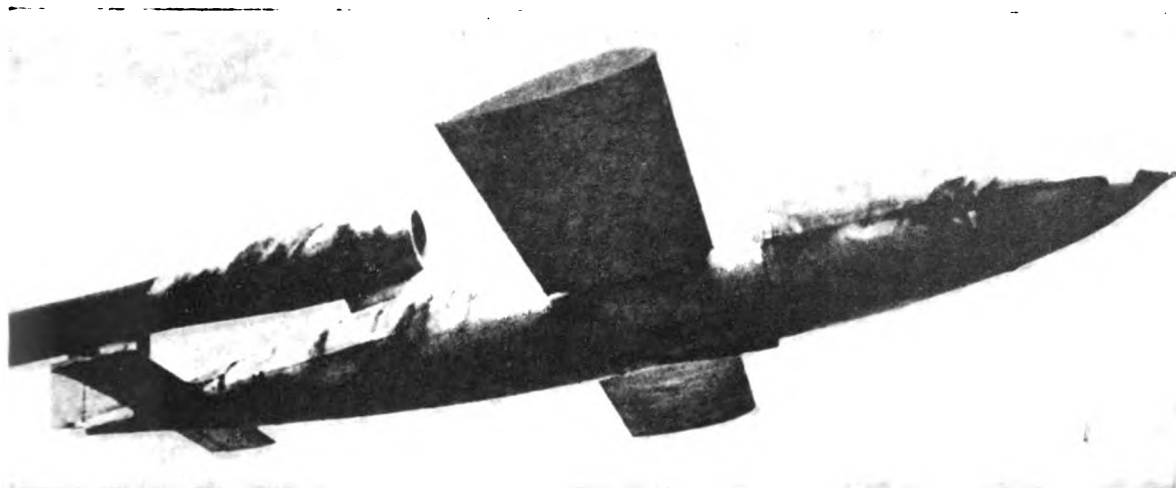
conference in Moscow in October different schemes for the control and break-up of Germany were discussed by the Prime Minister and Marshal Stalin, and the Russians were still thinking seriously of the Morgenthau Plan. The British objections were stated clearly by the Foreign Office.

‘Departmental examination in London is incomplete, but there are clearly many difficulties. To destroy German industry would make an end to the chance of reparations from Germany; would permanently impoverish that country and also the rest of Europe by reducing the general volume of trade; and would land us with the formidable problem of some ten million unemployed Germans.’

The Morgenthau Plan was never adopted as Allied policy but it was pounced upon without delay by the German propaganda machine and seems to have been one factor in bolstering up German morale throughout the last winter of the war.

Reports of some rise in German morale in the autumn and some improvement of her military strength did not shake the Allies’ belief that the war would end before the next summer. Allied optimism was based on a knowledge of the Allies’ growing strength and on their current estimate of German inability to withstand it for any length of time. For General Eisenhower expected that by February he would have under his command a total force of 84 divisions and some 285 air force squadrons, all at strength and fully supplied. Fewer German divisions than the Allies had were available for the western front in October and many of these were under strength and ill supplied; with the Allies’ continuing attack on the enemy’s resources and the pending renewal of the Russian advance there seemed no likelihood that the German position could be so radically strengthened by February that General Eisenhower’s armies could be effectively matched.

Since the *Luftwaffe’s* defeat in the Battle of Britain and their failure to prevent the Allied landings in Normandy, Hitler had relied on his V-weapon attack on England to hamper Allied operations; this was referred to in our previous volume (page 266). When the Allies had gradually overrun the launching sites in Normandy and the Pas de Calais from which the flying bombs had been fired on England Hitler ordered a more direct attack on continental targets in the path of the Allies’ advance. But though, again, V-weapons inflicted damage to life and property they did nothing that hindered the Allied advance or seriously interfered with their supplies. We need only interrupt this history of Overlord to note the casualties



21. German V-1 in flight



22. German jet-propelled Me.262



23. German rocket-fired V-2 being launched

suffered and the military equipment absorbed in the Allies' defence against V-weapons in the last four months of 1944.¹

General Eisenhower had ruled that fighter aircraft of the Allied tactical air forces could not be spared for defence against V-weapon attacks on continental targets: all defence must be by anti-aircraft artillery. In this the Americans collaborated, for Twenty-First Army Group alone could not provide all that was needed to protect Antwerp (the enemy's chief target) and Brussels in the British sector; in the American sector, Paris and Liège were less seriously attacked.

'V-1' was a flying bomb weighing a ton, carried by a pilotless aircraft; it flew a straight course of up to about 150 miles at a steady height and a speed of 200-400 miles an hour, was traceable by radar, observable in transit, and could be shot down by aircraft or a near shell-burst from anti-aircraft artillery. 'V-2' was a forty-six foot rocket, with a range of 200 to 220 miles carrying a warhead which also weighed a ton; its trajectory in flight rose to a height of 50 miles and it travelled at a speed that could not be observed and hit the ground at over 2,000 miles an hour. No effective defence against 'V-2' was discovered. In September it was first turned on England and France. The first V-2 landed on Antwerp on the 13th of October; the first V-1 to land on Antwerp did so on October the 23rd. Thereafter both were mainly concentrated on Antwerp, with a lesser number falling on Brussels and Liège. Meanwhile the V-2 attack on England continued.

From early September till the end of 1944, 5,097 flying bombs (V-1) and 994 rockets (V-2) were fired against continental targets. In that time military casualties amounted to 792 killed and 993 injured, while 2,219 civilians were killed and 4,493 seriously injured. The highest damage done by a single V-2 was caused by one which fell on a large Antwerp cinema; it killed 242 military personnel and 250 civilians and seriously injured a further 500. Damage done to Antwerp's port after it was opened at the end of November was only slight. On December the 24th four berths suffered minor damage to sheds, railway lines and roads but not enough to delay work in the dock. Another V-2 damaged a sluice-gate at the entrance to the docks from the Scheldt but this only increased the time of locking in and out by eight minutes. In 1944 no serious damage was done to shipping by V-2 nor any by V-1: the story of V-weapons in 1945 will be told later and a summary given of the V-weapon attack on England and continental targets.

In defence of Antwerp and the Scheldt estuary against the German Air Force the British deployed 216 3.7-inch and 486 40-mm anti-aircraft guns, with seven searchlight batteries, six smoke companies

¹ The full story of V-weapons, their development and operations against England, is described by Basil Collier in *The Defence of the United Kingdom* (H.M.S.O., 1957).

(two of which were American), a Royal Air Force balloon barrage over the estuary, a local coastguard force for mine-watching and a lighted decoy site six miles downstream from Antwerp port. For defence against German flying bombs a further 120 British 3·7-inch and 192 American 90-mm anti-aircraft guns were brought into action, with about half as many light guns. The gun lay-out was moved more than once when flying bombs arrived from different areas in Germany and Holland; and special restrictions were imposed for the safety of Allied aircraft using adjacent tactical air-fields. An early warning system was improvised to track the approach of flying bombs; it consisted of first, wireless observer posts from 85 Group Royal Air Force, then a belt of army radar stations and, finally, identification observer posts before the guns. The Belgian civil defence services were strengthened, equipped and trained and post-raid relief and repair services were built up to sustain the morale of the large volume of civilian labour employed on tasks of military importance. A civil defence regional column to assist was brought over from the United Kingdom.

Turning now to the strategic air forces, by the end of October neither the Deputy Supreme Commander nor those to whom their control had been transferred (page 20) were wholly satisfied by the results of the new directive issued on the 25th of September (page 76) after the Octagon conference. That directive had given the heavy bombers, as *first priority*, the petroleum industry, with special emphasis on petrol, including storage; and as *second priority* the German rail and water-borne transportation system and tank, ordnance and mechanical transport production plants and depots. The bombing of 'important industrial areas' was given no priority but was authorised when weather or tactical conditions made it impossible to attack other primary targets. The direct support of land and naval operations at the Supreme Commanders request was to be a continuing commitment.

It may be well to remind the reader that by the beginning of August it had been reported that German consumption had exceeded finished production of oil by about three hundred thousand tons and, in September, that the production of automotive fuels had fallen to less than twenty-five per cent of that in April. The attack on 'Oil' was thus in August reducing the mobility and efficiency both of the German air forces and of their armies and there were good reasons to believe that if given priority it might become a decisive factor in the defeat of Germany. Similarly the combined attack on German communications, which had largely been the original justification of General Eisenhower's authority to direct all the strategic air forces at the opening of the Overlord campaign, needed revision, for their programme had been largely overtaken by events. In the battle of

Normandy enemy communications between Germany and the west had depended mainly on the use of the elaborate railway systems of France and Belgium; it was against these that the strategic air forces had been specially directed and had so successfully handicapped operations of the German armies in the west. In the first weeks of September, however, the Allied armies had been already nearing the frontiers of the Reich; what remained of the railway system up to the Rhine was either in Allied hands or in easy reach of attack by their tactical air forces; but a sustained strategic attack on German communications in the Reich, combined with that on 'Oil', should strangle both the German economy and their army and air operations. For such operations over Germany, the effective use of huge strategic air forces based in England needed control based less on the Supreme Commander's knowledge of how land operations progressed than on detailed information in regard to conditions in Germany, and on close analysis of the effects of strategic bombing.¹ These could best be made in England by expert organisations which had been set up for the purpose, though General Eisenhower's power to demand and control the heavy bombers when needed for direct support of the armies must be carefully preserved. Accordingly the Combined Chiefs of Staff had decided on the change of the control of the strategic air forces which was noted in an earlier chapter (page 20) and the issue of the September directive had followed.

On October the 25th Sir Arthur Tedder wrote to Air Chief Marshal Sir Charles Portal enclosing a memorandum of his views and proposals, for he was concerned about the actual conduct of the main bomber offensive and argued that 'we can only make the full weight of our air power felt if we set all our various air forces to work at once toward one common objective; if we do that', he concluded, 'I believe air power will be decisive—and quickly'. Oil targets, city areas, depots, marshalling yards, canals, factories and so on did not in his view 'build up into a really comprehensive pattern'. 'The one common factor in the whole German war effort from political control down to the supply of troops in the front line was', he said, 'communications.' While admitting the importance of oil, as restricting air movement and as a key to the paralysis of road traffic, he argued that our main concentration should be against the

¹ A fortnight before the campaign opened the Commander-in-Chief Allied Expeditionary Air Force (Sir Trafford Leigh-Mallory) had instituted daily meetings, attended by Sir Arthur Tedder and air commanders, to review target systems in the light of current Intelligence and the progress of the land campaign. After General Eisenhower moved his headquarters to the Continent in September these meetings were held only weekly, under the direction of Sir Arthur Tedder. But a Combined British and American Strategic Targets Committee to keep under review specific target systems, and an Anglo-American Oil Targets Committee of experts, to nominate targets and study the effect of air attacks on the enemy resources, continued their regular meetings in London closely associated with the Air Ministry and other departments.

Ruhr—rail centres, oil targets, the canal system, and centres of population.

The records of Bomber Command's operations in October seemed to show that the directive of September the 25th had had but little if any effect. Over sixty-six per cent of the Command's efforts in October was devoted to the area-bombing of German towns and only about six per cent of the Command's tonnage for the month was devoted to oil targets, but nearly twenty-four per cent was for army support in operations which the armies had specially requested. Moreover, of the towns bombed many contained important 'communications' targets such as rail and waterborne transport systems, and tank, ordnance and mechanical transport production plants and depots which were named as 'second priority' targets in the September directive. In bombing such towns Sir Arthur Harris was in fact 'killing two birds with one stone'—by bombing industrial towns which also contained 'second priority' targets. There were, too, other considerations affecting his choice. Bad weather in Europe had come unexpectedly early. Oil plants were recognised as 'visual' targets and there were many days in October on which these targets could not be attacked in daylight by Bomber Command. Moreover the Command could not attack during daylight many targets east of the Ruhr because they were beyond the range of the British long-range fighter escort for big bombers which was available at that time. Finally a navigational aid, which would enable Bomber Command to identify and hit small isolated targets such as factories engaged in oil production, was only becoming available by the beginning of October and aircrew experience in its use was still limited. The bomb tonnage dropped in October, in British tons, was:

<i>Type of target</i>	<i>Bomber Command</i>	<i>Eighth Air Force</i>	<i>Joint total</i>
Army support	14,467	Nil	14,467
Oil	3,650	4,750	8,400
Communications	175	17,286	17,461
Towns	40,551	833	41,384
Other objectives	2,361(1)	16,092(2)	18,453
Total	61,204	38,961	100,165

Notes: (1) Includes about 1,000 tons on naval support. Four U-boats were sunk when their pens were bombed in an attack on Bergen on October the 4th.

(2) Includes roughly 4,000 tons on airfields and aircraft factories and 11,500 tons on other industrial plants and works.

The effect of Sir Arthur Tedder's paper is reflected in a new directive issued by Air Marshal Sir Norman Bottomley, Deputy Chief of Air Staff, to Bomber Command on November the 1st.

This was not intended to change the September directive but to clarify it by giving a more exact definition. 'Oil' was again given 'first priority' but the only 'second priority' on which strategic air force operations were to be directed was 'enemy lines of communications', with particular emphasis upon the Ruhr. Other second priority objectives which had been listed in September were not now distinguished. The only other notable change was in the clause dealing with 'important industrial areas'. These targets for area bombing were still given no priority and only authorised for attack 'when weather or tactical conditions were unsuitable for operations against primary targets', but a proviso was added that 'as far as operational and other conditions allow' attacks on towns were 'to be directed so as to contribute to the maximum destruction of the petroleum industry and dislocation of the target systems indicated above'.

In a covering letter Sir Norman Bottomley sought to underline the significance of this directive. Oil, he said, was still to hold the highest priority so as to prevent rapid recovery which would immediately be reflected in the enemy's strength and war economy. The communications campaign was to be undertaken 'in conjunction with but subordinate to the offensive against oil targets'. With regard to area bombing targets, attention was particularly drawn to the Ruhr. But while the intention of the directive was clearer, so too was the persisting difference of opinion between Sir Norman Bottomley and Sir Arthur Harris. Though a larger tonnage was dropped on oil targets in November, the latter retained his unshakable belief in the supreme value of area attacks on German towns and his scepticism in regard to the value of attacks on both oil and communications. The figures for November were as follows:

<i>Type of target</i>	<i>Bomber Command</i>	<i>Eighth Air Force</i>	<i>Joint total</i>
Army support	5,689	5,788	11,477
Oil	13,030	14,417	27,447
Communications	4,887	13,520	18,407
Towns	28,860	973	29,833
Other objectives	556	1,392	1,948
Total	53,022	36,090	89,112

On the other hand, a systematic attack on German communications by *tactical* air forces was already under way. Much of what the Second Tactical Air Force did to assist the armies in their principal operations has been described. But when the armies' progress had been slowed down in September and the enemy showed signs of succeeding in the formation of a coherent front, Sir Arthur Tedder

had begun work on plans for a systematic cutting of enemy communications that would hamper the movement of German troops and supplies. On September the 10th General Bradley had asked Shaef to arrange for the cutting of railways between the Siegfried Line and the Rhine and this was begun by the United States Ninth Air Force on September the 11th. At that date, however, Field-Marshal Montgomery was planning the Arnhem operation and he did not want rail-cutting ahead of Twenty-First Army Group's advance. Till the 25th of September the Second Tactical Air Force was indeed fully occupied in connection with First Canadian and British Second Armies' operations, but when the attempt to win a bridgehead at Arnhem was abandoned Field-Marshal Montgomery approved Second Army's request that rail-cutting of German communications north of the Ruhr should begin, so far as other army operations allowed. Twenty-First Army Group submitted a list of railways to be cut and a comprehensive programme for this was drawn up by Air Marshal Coningham and issued to his air force on September the 28th. From then on Second Tactical Air Force, when not required for the other forms of support to army operations, devoted its effort to rail-cutting and other means of hampering German movement. This task continued to the end of the year and beyond, till the Rhine was crossed. A brief summary of various types of work which 'support of army operations' involved may be illustrated by particulars of 23,073 sorties flown by the Second Tactical Air Force in October. In close support of army operations 7,594 were flown; on armed reconnaissance by day 4,013 and by tactical bombers at night 645; fighter operations to ensure the minimum interference with army operations by enemy aircraft, on rail-cutting and other attacks on German communications, 3,028; in photographic reconnaissance and observation of the enemy's positions and movements, 5,225; and beyond these tactical operations, on the escort and protection of strategic bombers in action, 2,568.

It was not expected that a rail-cut by tactical aircraft would take on average more than twenty-four hours to repair but repeated attacks on an important stretch of line could stop or greatly delay the traffic on it. In October over 350 cuts were made on railways north-east and north-west of Arnhem, from Zwolle to Amsterdam. During the same time more than 200 locomotives and over 2,000 railway coaches or trucks were believed to have been destroyed or damaged as well as many motor and horse-drawn transport vehicles.

Two days after Montgomery had issued his directive of October the 16th, General Eisenhower and Sir Arthur Tedder met the Field-Marshal and General Bradley at Brussels to decide on the operations

of their respective army groups in the immediate future. A note of the decisions reached at the conference was issued by Shaef on October the 22nd. It was agreed that Twenty-First Army Group would first devote all its resources to the early opening of Antwerp (and Montgomery's plans were approved) while Twelfth Army Group would, as early as possible, open an offensive to gain a footing over the Rhine south of Cologne—probable starting date between the 1st and the 5th of November. Initially the United States Ninth Army would move from the Luxembourg area to protect the left flank of the United States First Army during its drive to the Rhine but, at a time to be decided by General Bradley, he would direct Ninth Army northwards to clear the country between the Rhine and the Meuse and might then place Ninth Army under the Commander-in-Chief Twenty-First Army Group. As soon as possible after operations for the opening of Antwerp had been completed British Second Army would begin an attack south-eastwards between the Meuse and the Rhine as far as the line Venray-Rees—probable starting date the 10th of November; and if the situation west of the Ruhr made it desirable Second Army would drive still further southwards to the assistance of Twelfth Army Group. Simultaneously with Second Army's attack southwards between the rivers, Twenty-First Army Group would, if possible, begin operations northwards across the Lower Rhine.

Then followed the momentous change of plan forecast in General Eisenhower's letter of October the 13th (page 90):

'Twelfth Army Group will have charge of the operations for the capture (or encirclement) of the Ruhr. Ninth U.S. Army will operate north of the Ruhr and First U.S. Army south of the Ruhr.'

Third Army, when logistics permitted, was to advance in a general north-easterly direction and would protect the right flank of First Army. The British 6th Airborne Division, which was still in England, was allotted to Twelfth Army Group and United States 82nd and 101st Airborne Divisions were to be released from their present rôle after Second Army had completed operations for clearing the approaches to the Scheldt.

Thus for the first time a main part of the northern thrust into Germany was given to United States forces: Twenty-First Army Group would no longer have responsibility for the capture of the Ruhr.

The Supreme Commander's decisions included one that during the advance to the Rhine, General Bradley was to locate his command post in the vicinity of Headquarters United States First Army, ensuring a direct telephone line between Bradley's Tactical Headquarters and those of Montgomery.

CHAPTER VII

OPERATIONS IN THE AUTUMN OF 1944

WITH Antwerp's port at last becoming available to Allied shipping a new phase, and that the final one, of the war with Germany was about to open: no longer would Allied progress be limited by the availability of supplies, once the port was brought into full working order and their distribution was organised. Though this would inevitably take some little time the Allies' future ability to sustain their attack with full vigour would then be certain.

The plan for future operations, agreed in outline at the Brussels' meeting on October the 18th (page 155 above), had since then been re-defined, in part, in a directive issued by the Supreme Commander on October the 28th and subsequently modified on November the 2nd. This read:

'The general plan subject always to prior capture of the approaches to Antwerp, is as follows:

- (a) *Making the main effort in the north,*¹ decisively to defeat the enemy west of the Rhine and secure bridgeheads over the river; then to seize the Ruhr and subsequently advance deep into Germany.
- (b) To conduct operations so as to destroy the enemy in the Saar, to secure crossings over the Rhine, and to be prepared to advance from the Saar later in accordance with the situation then prevailing. *All of these operations are to be timed so as best to support the main effort to which they are subsidiary.*¹
- (c) On the right, i.e. the southern, flank making full use of maintenance available from the Mediterranean, to act aggressively with the initial object of overwhelming the enemy west of the Rhine and subsequently of advancing into Germany.'

In amplification of the general plan the directive went on to state that operations could be divided into three phases which would, however, overlap; the first being the battle west of the Rhine, taking advantage of any opportunity to seize bridgeheads. In this phase, the Central Group of Armies *north* of the Ardennes were to advance

¹ Author's italics.

to the Rhine, target date November the 10th, and gain bridgeheads south of Cologne. Concurrently, the Northern Group of Armies, having completed operations to open Antwerp, their primary task, would attack the enemy west of the Meuse and advance to the Rhine; target date of their attack also the 10th of November. The second phase was to cover operations leading to the capture of bridgeheads over the Rhine and the deployment of Allied forces on the east bank. During these two phases the Central Group of Armies *south* of the Ardennes would occupy the Saar and secure crossings over the Rhine, their operations being so timed as best to assist the main effort in the north. The third phase would cover the advance from the Rhine but was not outlined in the directive.

Field-Marshal Montgomery's directive to Twenty-First Army Group, in accordance with the Supreme Commander's plan, was issued on November the 2nd.

The operations to open Antwerp and drive the enemy north of the Lower Maas (in south-west Holland) would be completed; and then Second Army would drive the enemy east of the Meuse in the Venlo area. (Map page 160.) This would require a regrouping of forces in which First Canadian Army would take over responsibility for the front from the sea to the Reichswald forest. The regrouping would take time but without waiting for its completion the British Second Army would start on the clearance of the enemy from the west bank of the Meuse on November the 12th and as soon as possible extend its flank southwards to Geilenkirchen, taking over some of the Twelfth Army Group front. In the regrouping the American divisions which had been lent to Twenty-First Army Group for the Arnhem operation, the safeguarding of the right flank and the capture of country north of Antwerp, would be successively returned to the American Army: they consisted of the 82nd and 101st Airborne Divisions, the 7th Armoured Division and the 104th Infantry Division—and their help had been invaluable. The airborne divisions, in particular, had fought extremely well not only in the Arnhem operation but after that was ended; in hard subsequent fighting they had held the ground won, though at the cost of over 3,400 casualties. If the other American divisions serving with Twenty-First Army Group had played a smaller and therefore less conspicuous part they, too, had fought with distinction.

There was a further and more intimate loss which Second Army was destined to suffer at the end of this month. As already explained the British manpower situation had made it necessary to disperse the 59th Division (Volume 1, page 453): now a second had to go and the War Office had decided that it should be the 50th. This was a Territorial division with a very distinguished record. It had gone to France in January 1940 and was the last division to leave Dunkirk.

In April 1941, it had been sent to the Middle East. There it fought through the Western Desert campaign and in Sicily before returning to England to prepare for the Normandy assault in 1944. It was one of the first to land on D-day and it had been engaged in the fighting ever since. The Prime Minister tried to save it but infantry were required to make good losses and could not be found from any other source. On the 29th it was moved back to Belgium, where it was reduced to cadre strength. Some units were transferred to other divisions, some were disbanded or placed in suspended animation while their personnel were drafted away; the skeleton of the division returned to the United Kingdom to become a training division.

On November the 6th Field-Marshal Montgomery went to England for four days' leave. On the day before he returned General Crerar rejoined from sick-leave and resumed command of the First Canadian Army, General Simonds reverting to the command of II Canadian Corps.

During the next few days the Canadian Army took over the Nijmegen front while Second Army moved to the right to complete the clearance of the enemy's remaining hold on ground west of the Meuse. As mentioned in Chapter V (page 125), the enemy had made a surprise counter-attack there on October the 27th which merits a word of explanation.

As early as the 9th of October von Rundstedt had realised that the greatest danger on the western front lay in the Aachen sector. Within the next few days he had decided that an armoured reserve was needed behind this sector and he ordered the Fifth Panzer Army headquarters to leave the Nancy sector in the south on the 14th of October and take over the front from Aachen north to the Reichswald. At the same time the XLVII Panzer Corps headquarters and the 15th Panzer Grenadier Division also moved north from that sector into Army Group B reserve in the Venlo area and the 9th Panzer Division came south from the Arnhem sector to join them; both divisions were nearly at full strength.

It was this force that made the surprise attack on Second Army's VIII Corps at Meijel early on the 27th of October and drove in the outposts of the American 7th Armoured Division. The division counter-attacked but met a fresh German attack and by the 29th the latter had penetrated some six miles. But by that evening, unknown to the Germans, the British 15th Division with the 6th Guards Tank Brigade had moved from Tilburg and concentrated behind the American division and next day they attacked the Germans, who were advancing again to secure better positions for defence. Hard fighting ensued and that night the 15th Panzer Grenadier Division was withdrawn; but mud and mines assisted the 9th Panzer Division to delay VIII Corps' advance and on the 8th of

November Meijel was still in German hands though the 9th Panzer had gone back into reserve. On this day the American 7th Armoured Division returned to Twelfth Army Group, but by then most of the British 53rd and 51st Divisions had been moved to the Meuse front on completion of their tasks in driving the enemy back over the lower Maas as described in Chapter V.

Second Army, having carried out the move to its new position, renewed its attack on the enemy's remaining bridgehead west of the Meuse in the Venlo sector. The line from which its attack started on November the 14th is shown on the sketch map opposite, which also shows how the British front was held by three corps.¹ The first to attack was XII Corps in the centre. Its aim was to clear the enemy from all the ground west of the Meuse, from the Wessem Canal in the south to Venlo in the north. On its left VIII Corps was to clear the rest of the enemy-held territory between Venlo and the Canadian Army's southern flank.

From their start on the 14th XII Corps made good progress and by the evening of the 16th had practically cleared the enemy from all the country up to the Zig Canal. Crossing the canal in spite of stiffer opposition XII Corps continued their advance north-eastwards and on the 18th Beringe was taken. From there progress was slowed by wet ground and tank obstacles and on the 23rd they came up against a heavily mined area west of Blerick, a suburb of Venlo on the left bank of the Meuse. Meanwhile VIII Corps on XII Corps' left had for a time been held up on the Deurne Canal, which the enemy at first defended strongly, but by the 19th the Germans had withdrawn and VIII Corps continued their advance, hindered chiefly by a profusion of mines and booby traps and by soaked ground. Roads made of logs had to be built in many places to get supplies forward. In the soaked ground tanks were a liability rather than an asset but the Weasel (an amphibious jeep) came into its own as a most valuable form of transport. By the evening of the 25th VIII Corps had reached the Meuse up to the Canadian front, only a few enemy strong-points close to the river remaining on the west bank. On December the 3rd, with strong artillery and Typhoon support, XII Corps made a well-planned attack against Blerick. Flails were used to breach minefields, bridge-crossing AVREs to bridge an anti-tank ditch and Kangaroos (armoured personnel carriers) to take the attacking infantry close to their objective by lanes which had been cleared through the enemy defences: from that point the taking of the town proved to be a walk-over. A well executed cover plan had

¹ The composition of Second Army's three corps at this date was: XXX Corps—Guards Armoured Division, 43rd and U.S. 84th Divisions, 8th Armoured Brigade; XII Corps—7th Armoured Division, 49th, 51st and 53rd Divisions, 4th and 33rd Armoured Brigades; VIII Corps—11th Armoured Division, 3rd and 15th Divisions, 6th Guards Tank Brigade.

misled the enemy as to the direction from which the attack would come and casualties were remarkably few.

While these operations were proceeding XXX Corps had prepared to clear the ground between XII Corps and the American northern flank. The United States Ninth Army's XIX Corps attacked on the 16th, aiming at Julich and Linnich on the Roer river. Two days later the British XXX Corps attacked Geilenkirchen and a string of villages astride the Wurm river about three miles further east. The United States 84th Division (temporarily under command of the British XXX Corps), assisted by British flail and gun tanks, attacked on the right and was through the Siegfried Line pill-boxes by midday; the British 43rd Division then attacked on its left. Many tanks, carriers and other vehicles bogged down in the appallingly bad going when off the roads but the initial enemy opposition was not determined and some 800 prisoners were taken. Next day Geilenkirchen was captured after a stiff fight. In clearing the woods some three miles north of the town infantry of the 15th Panzer Grenadier Division were encountered—and driven off, as were some tanks of 9th Panzer Division in an action on the British right where British 'Crocodiles' proved to be a valuable asset to the American troops. Two days later a battalion of the 10th SS Panzer Division attacked the 43rd Division and a hard fight ensued. But the weather had broken; the Meuse was in flood and XXX Corps was being supplied by DUKW-ferry as the bridge approaches were under water. In forward areas maintenance was by amphibious jeeps (Weasels). For the time being XXX Corps was not required to go further in the waterlogged country between the Meuse and the Roer and the United States 84th Division returned to the American Ninth Army. Throughout the fighting Spitfires and Typhoons of 83 and 84 Groups had given valuable close support whenever the weather allowed.

During October the American armies had engaged in two principal actions. In the north two corps of the First Army launched an attack on Aachen, which Hitler had ordered to be held to the last. XIX Corps and one division of VII Corps were involved in stubborn fighting, supported by heavy air attack, which continued till the 14th, when the outskirts of the town were entered and fighting in the streets began. The city was nearly encircled during the 16th and all the enemy's attempts to relieve the garrison were repulsed. Artillery bombardment assisted the general reduction of opposition and the garrison was finally surrendered on the 21st of October. Earlier the United States First Army's second corps (VII), which had started a 'reconnaissance in force' on September the 13th, had

entered the northern outskirts of the Hürtgen forest, striking north-eastwards towards Düren to cut enemy communications with Aachen. In difficult woodland fighting two small breaches were quickly made in the double line of fortifications of the Siegfried Line and encouraged by this success the corps commander was authorised to continue the advance. Bitter fighting continued throughout October for the enemy succeeded in checking progress by making skilful use of prompt counter-attacks and the forest's natural advantage for the defence. The few main roads were easily defended from the thick woods hemming them in on either side; the fire-breaks and forest tracks were soon deep in mud from the heavy rains and fog of that October; and in the gloom of the forest, barbed wire, mines and ambushes were easy to hide in unexpected places. Little of importance was gained by the very costly fighting during that month but First Army's determination to advance through the forest was maintained with American pertinacity. First Army's three corps fighting on a front of some 70 miles had no reserve behind them.

Further south the United States Third Army had begun their attack on the outlying fortifications of Metz on October the 3rd. Part of Fort Driant was taken after bitter fighting but continued heavy resistance led to the withdrawal of American forces on the 12th. Fighting for Maizières-les-Metz continued to the end of the month but the Third Army's shortage of ammunition compelled the postponement of further operations for the capture of the city till the supply position improved, and eventually the city was not taken till the 19th of November. (Map page 166.)

Still further south the Sixth Army Group seized high ground dominating the Meurthe valley in the St. Dié area, taking nearly 6,000 prisoners; but their attempted advance over the Vosges to Colmar had to be stopped for the time being on account of increasing severity of the weather: native troops of the French African divisions were unable to endure the extreme cold of the Vosges mountains.

Most of the American army operations between these areas of heavy fighting in October are described by one of their historians as 'aggressive patrolling' and the improvement of local positions.¹ No more was possible while the American armies lived virtually from hand to mouth and no reserve of supplies could be collected with which to maintain anywhere a large-scale or strong attack. In spite of this General Eisenhower continued to press for the continuance of such offensive operations as were possible, his aim being to drain the enemy's strength and to prevent the Germans from bettering their

¹ Pogue, *The Supreme Command*, p. 305.

own positions. But he himself was troubled at this period not only by the comparative shortage of ammunition supplies in France but by a realisation that production at home in the United States was apparently falling behind the rate of consumption which must be allowed for at the front. He felt that the matter was of such urgent importance that in November he took the unprecedented step of broadcasting to the American people a personal appeal for increased output and more rapid dispatch. Moreover, it seemed to him that the American planners had miscalculated the proportion of infantry needed in a balanced army. The shortage of infantry had been embarrassing American operations and by the end of October an enquiry into means by which the deficiency could be made good had been ordered throughout the American forces in the European theatre of operations.

During November the American Twelfth Army Group resumed operations designed to reach the Rhine from the position that had been won north and east of Aachen and in the Hürtgen forest. Acting on General Eisenhower's directive of the 28th of October (page 157), Bradley regrouped his forces. The American Ninth Army moved to the north of Aachen and took over *in situ* the American First Army's XIX Corps, leaving its own VIII Corps with First Army in the Luxembourg area. The main attack to the Rhine would be launched by the First Army's VII Corps and the Ninth's XIX Corps. One division of the First Army's V Corps was first to capture Schmidt and the high ground overlooking the upper Roer. Starting on November the 2nd, Schmidt was reached next day but enemy reaction was quick and violent; the 116th Panzer Division counter-attacked early on the 4th and the Americans were thrown out of the village. They had suffered heavy casualties and were unable to re-take the place. Chiefly because the weather was unsuitable for air support the main attack was delayed till the 16th; it then opened after a very strong daylight attack by 2,400 heavy bombers. The Eighth Air Force dropped 3,400 tons on six designated target areas in the valley of the Inde river between the existing front and the Roer, while Bomber Command dropped 5,600 tons on Düren and Julich. The areas bombed were too far forward to be of immediate assistance to the attacking formations, though considerable damage was done to enemy troops and communications in assembly areas. German resistance to the offensive was strong on the right, but in the more open ground on the left the leading troops of Ninth Army fought their way to the Roer by the 28th and First Army's left reached the outskirts of Inden; but its right was still fighting towards the north-eastern edge of the Hürtgen forest. Divisions exhausted in the forest fighting were replaced and First Army's attack was renewed, the Roer being reached on the 15th of December. Five days

after the main attack started First Army's V Corps joined the offensive, attacking north-eastwards through Hürtgen village to protect VII Corps' right flank. When this was achieved, V Corps turned south-east and captured Bergstein on the high ground overlooking the Roer river but, three miles to the south, Schmidt and part of the forest were still in German hands. In all seventeen divisions took part in the efforts to fight their way to the Rhine, while the Germans reinforced this front during the fighting with eleven divisions, including two panzer. In reaching the Roer the First and Ninth Armies suffered over 35,000 casualties, but were still twenty-five miles from the Rhine.

General Bradley had asked early in November that Bomber Command should attack the two large dams near Schmidt, one on the Roer and the other on its tributary the Urft. While these dams remained in German hands it was not feasible to continue the offensive beyond the Roer as at this season they were holding back enough water to flood the Roer valley and to make maintenance of bridges across that river an impossibility. It was hoped that Bomber Command would be able to repeat its success against the earth dykes of Walcheren, but visibility was bad and though 2,000 sorties were flown only a limited number of bombs were dropped; the target was hit but no break was made. On the 12th of December Shaef stopped the bombing because it was diverting too much effort from strategic targets. On the 13th two divisions of V Corps made another attempt to capture Schmidt and the Roer dams. Some ground was gained but the attack was halted because of the German counter-offensive described in the next chapter.

Thus, during November and the first half of December, the main attack north of the Ardennes as defined by the Supreme Commander had gone less than half way to the Rhine. In the prolonged fighting south of Aachen, which an official historian describes as the Battle of the Hürtgen Forest, beginning on September the 14th and ending on December the 12th, the American troops engaged 'represented a force of approximately 120,000 men, and individual replacements augmented the number by many thousands. More than 24,000 Americans, killed, missing, captured, and wounded, fell prey to the forest fighting. Another 9,000 succumbed to the misery of the forest itself, the wet, and the cold—trench-foot, respiratory diseases, combat fatigue. The total: 33,000.' He describes it as 'a basically fruitless battle' which he says 'should have been avoided'. 'This is the real tragedy of the battle of the Hürtgen Forest.'¹

On the other hand, Third Army's operations south of the Ardennes, designed 'to destroy the enemy in the Saar', which were to

¹C. M. MacDonald, *The Battle of the Hürtgen Forest* (New York, 1963), pp. 195-6, 205.

be 'subsidiary', made much greater progress. With the start of his main offensive put off till the 16th, Bradley had authorised Patton to start first and the latter attacked on the 8th of November, even though the weather prevented any air support. In spite of delays caused by the Moselle being in flood, with bridges out of action, Metz was captured by the 22nd and the eastward advance continued. In early December bridgeheads were secured across the Saar river and the Siegfried Line was penetrated in some places. As the concrete defences were so strong it became necessary to pause while ammunition of the heaviest calibres was brought up. Since its offensive opened on the 8th of November, Third Army's casualties had amounted to nearly 27,000.

Further south Sixth Army Group attacked on the 13th of November with the Seventh Army aiming at Strasbourg and the First French Army advancing through the Belfort gap. The Rhine was reached by the French on the 20th near the Swiss frontier and Strasbourg was entered on the 23rd by the Seventh Army. On the 27th General Eisenhower directed Seventh Army to assist Patton's attack by breaching the Siegfried Line between the Saar and the Rhine, and by mid-December the German frontier had been crossed on a twenty-two mile front and a penetration made into the Siegfried Line defences of the Rhine plain. South of Strasbourg, however, the Germans still held a bridgehead area which included Colmar and extended to the Vosges. Since November the 13th Sixth Army Group had suffered some 28,000 casualties.

Valuable in themselves as General Patton's operations were it will be recognised that they had little direct reference to the Supreme Commander's orders. Patton's attack, which was to be 'so timed as best to support the Central Group of Armies' main effort in the north', had in fact fully occupied Third Army and had been allowed to continue without regard to the little progress made by Twelfth Army Group's main effort. Moreover, General Bradley's Command Post had remained at Luxembourg where it had been established on October the 14th within easy reach of Patton's headquarters but nowhere near those of First Army and Twenty-First Army Group, as General Eisenhower had ordered (page 155).

On November the 28th the Supreme Commander visited Field-Marshal Montgomery at his Command Post at Zonhoven and spent the night there. Montgomery expressed his disappointment with the failure of operations, during the past month, to realise Eisenhower's directive of October the 28th. For very little progress had been made in what had been stated as 'the main effort in the north' while much strength had been expended on the attack on the Saar which was to be subsidiary to the former. He returned to his old argument for greater concentration on the main effort in the north and his

advocacy of a single commander to have charge of it. After the evening's discussion he telegraphed to the C.I.G.S. describing the views and proposals which he had made, and followed it with a second message after Eisenhower had left next day. His messages show that though the discussion had ended inconclusively he believed (but mistakenly) that Eisenhower had accepted his contentions and been convinced by his arguments. To make sure of this he wrote to him on the 30th as follows:

'My dear Ike,

In order to clear my own mind I would like to confirm the main points that were agreed on during the conversations we had during your stay with me on Tuesday night.

2. We have definitely failed to implement the plan contained in the SHAEF directive of 28 October, as amended on later dates. That directive ordered the main effort to be made in the north, to defeat decisively the enemy west of the Rhine, to gain bridge-heads over the Rhine and Ijssel rivers, and to deploy in strength east of the Rhine preparatory to seizing the Ruhr. We have achieved none of this; and we have no hope of doing so. We have therefore failed: and we have suffered a strategic reverse.

3. We now require a new plan. And this time *we must not fail*. The need to get the German war finished early is vital, in view of other factors. The new plan *MUST NOT FAIL*.

4. In the new plan we must get away from the doctrine of attacking in so many places that nowhere are we strong enough to get decisive results. We must concentrate such strength on the main selected thrust that success will be certain. It is in this respect that we failed badly in the present operations.

5. The theatre divides itself naturally into two fronts: one north of the Ardennes and one south of the Ardennes. We want one commander in full operational control north of the Ardennes, and one south.

6. I did suggest that you might consider having a land force commander to work under you and run the land battle for you. But you discarded this idea as being not suitable, and we did not discuss it any more.

7. You suggested that a better solution would be to put 12 Army Group and 21 Army Group both north of the Ardennes, and to put Bradley under my operational command¹.






8. I said that Bradley and I together are a good team. We worked together in Normandy, under you, and we won a great victory. Things have not been so good since you separated us. I believe to be certain of success you want to bring us together

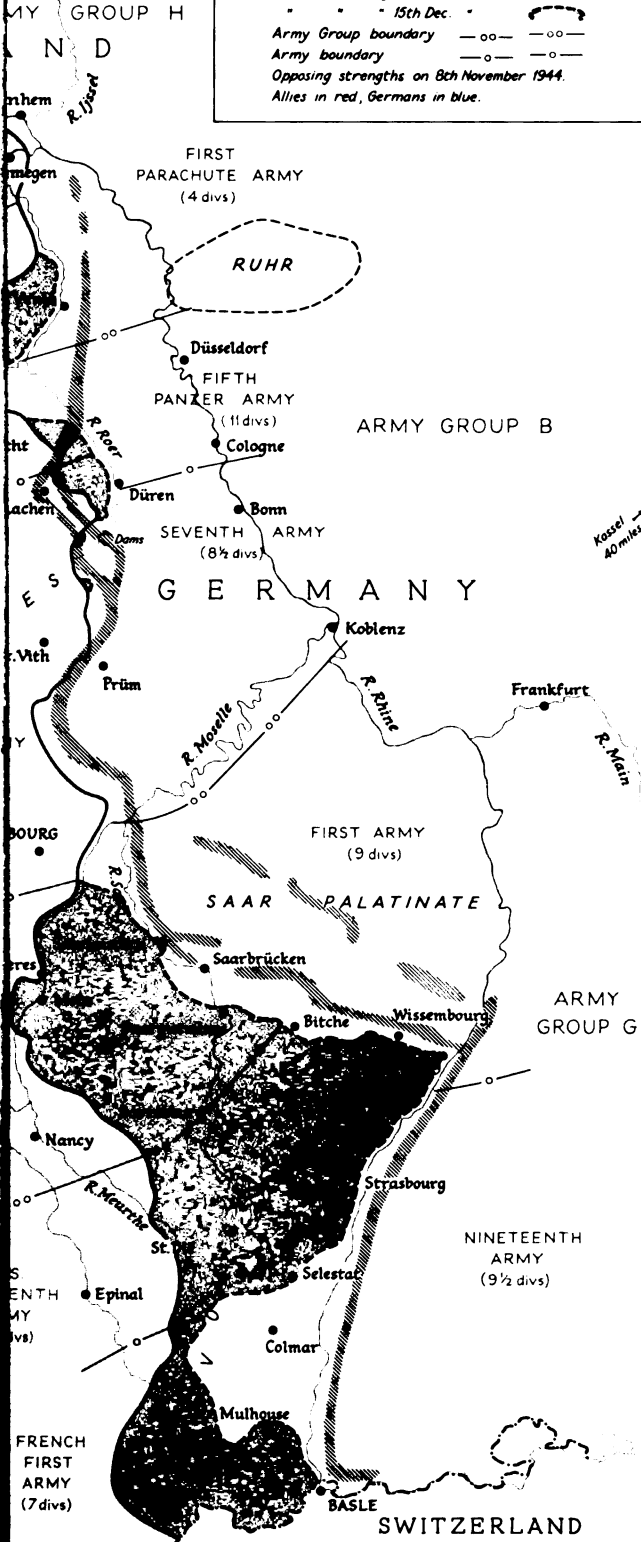
¹ This paragraph, in particular, appears to show a misunderstanding of General Eisenhower's views and of anything he had suggested.

THE NOVEMBER OFFENSIVES

10 5 0 10 20 30 40 50 60

Miles

- Siegfried Line (West Wall) 
- Area occupied by 7th Nov 1944 
- " " " 15th Dec. " 
- Army Group boundary 
- Army boundary 
- Opposing strengths on 8th November 1944.
- Allies in red, Germans in blue.



the
east
and
at
me
rat
at
red
ho
us-
ing
ds
:d.

166

adv
eve
vie
sec
sho
beli
ten
he

—
1
Eise

again; and one of us should have the full operational control north of the Ardennes; and if you decide that I should do that work—that is O.K. by me.

9. The above are the main points. I am certain there is no time to lose in deciding on the plan for the spring campaign. We can well carry on during the winter; but what is done during the winter must all lead up to what is to be done in the spring. Therefore we must decide NOW the big plan for the spring, and work backwards from it.

10. I am keeping Wed. 6 Dec., Thurs. 7 Dec. next week free for a meeting at Maastricht with you and Bradley. Will you let me know which day you select. I suggest that we want no-one else at the meeting, except Chiefs of Staff: who must not speak.

Yours ever,
(Signed) B. L. Montgomery.'

But Eisenhower did not agree with Montgomery's reading of the situation; he was annoyed by the repeated references to past 'failures' and by his return to the proposal for a change in command arrangements. The suggested meeting with General Bradley at Maastricht was fixed for December the 7th and there the programme of future operations was again discussed. It was soon obvious that Montgomery had not moved from the position he had taken up at Zonhoven on November the 28th and 29th nor had he fully grasped the significance of Eisenhower's intentions. Sir Arthur Tedder, who attended the Maastricht meeting, wrote a report of the discussion which was issued next day by Shaef. It included the following significant sentences and concluded with a summary 'as regards future strategy' which recorded what was and what was not agreed. Field-Marshal Montgomery is reported as having said that:

'The only area in which mobile war could be waged is the area North of the Ruhr. We must, therefore, concentrate the whole of our available effort on the drive across the Rhine North of the Ruhr, operations on the rest of the Front being purely containing ones . . .

'S.A.C. agreed that the primary object was to cut off the Ruhr . . . his information was that the country East and North East of Bonn was quite unfit for mobile warfare. On the other hand, movement on the line Frankfurt-Cassel did appear quite practicable. A crossing at Bonn might be a useful subsidiary. He was *not* prepared to check the present operations on the Saar Front, and should they result in our reaching the Rhine he saw great advantages in making the main supporting thrust on the line Frankfurt-Cassel. By launching the converging attacks from widely separate points we would exploit the enemy's greatest weakness—his immobility, and his consequent inability to

switch his forces across a wide front. He wished, however, the two alternatives to be fully examined by the Staffs.' Montgomery 'could not agree that a thrust from Frankfurt offered any prospect of success. In his view, if it were undertaken neither it nor the thrust North of the Ruhr would be strong enough.' Eisenhower said 'it was his intention to entrust this main attack to 21 Army Group, and for the purpose he would place under command of 21 Army Group a strong U.S. Army of, say, 10 Divisions.' On the question of command, Field-Marshal Montgomery said that, 'in his view all operations North of the Ardennes should be under one command; all South of the Ardennes under another.' Eisenhower responded that 'we did not propose to operate in the Ruhr itself: the Ruhr, therefore, offered the most logical and practical boundary, the main attack North of the Ruhr coming under 21 Army Group, the supporting drive South of the Ruhr coming under 12 Army Group, covered on the right flank by 6 Army Group. . . .

- (a) It was *AGREED* it was essential to keep up the pressure throughout the winter and, if possible, clear the enemy back to the Rhine.
- (b) It was *AGREED* that the primary object was to cut off the Ruhr from the rest of Germany and thereby force the enemy to fight.
- (c) It was *AGREED* that the main attack should be North of the Ruhr.
- (d) The starting point and direction of the supporting attack South of the Ruhr cannot be decided at this stage, but Field-Marshal Montgomery considers it should *not* be on the Frankfurt-Cassel line.
- (e) S.A.C. proposes to entrust the main attack to 21 Army Group, and for the purpose will place under command a strong U.S. Army.
- (f) S.A.C. does *not* agree Field-Marshal Montgomery's proposal that all operations North of the Ardennes come under one Commander. S.A.C. has decided that the inter-Group boundary shall be the Ruhr.
- (g) The factors affecting the Bonn-Frankfurt alternatives are to be examined by the Staffs.'

Meanwhile, the argument had been carried into a wider sphere, for after his meetings with Eisenhower at Zonhoven on November the 28th and 29th (page 165) Montgomery had not only written to the Supreme Commander his critical letter of the 30th but had reported to the C.I.G.S. his dissatisfaction with the way in which General Eisenhower was planning future operations. To Montgomery these involved a dispersal of Allied strength which would prove fatal to any

rapid ending of the war, and a continuance of the faulty command structure which (in his view) had already proved ineffective.

The Prime Minister, too, was uneasy about many aspects of the war on all fronts, and on December the 6th he telegraphed to President Roosevelt:

'As we are unable to meet, I feel that the time has come for me to place before you the serious and disappointing war situation which faces us at the close of this year. Although many fine tactical victories have been gained on the Western Front and Metz and Strasbourg are trophies, the fact remains that we have definitely failed to achieve the strategic object which we gave to our armies five weeks ago. We have not yet reached the Rhine in the northern part and most important sector of the front, and we shall have to continue the great battle for many weeks before we can hope to reach the Rhine and establish our bridgeheads. After that, again, we have to advance through Germany. . . .

. . . it is clear that we have to face, in varying degrees of probability:

- (a) A considerable delay in reaching, still more in forcing, the Rhine on the shortest road to Berlin.
- (b) A marked degree of frustration in Italy.
- (c) The escape home of a large part of the German forces from the Balkan peninsula.
- (d) Frustration in Burma.
- (e) Elimination of China as a combatant.

When we contrast these realities with the rosy expectations of our peoples, in spite of our joint efforts to damp them down, the question very definitely arises, "What are we going to do about it?" . . . Our British plans are dependent on yours, our Anglo-American problems at least must be surveyed as a whole, and the telegraph and the telephone more often than not only darken counsel.¹

Though sympathetic, President Roosevelt did not appear to share Mr. Churchill's anxieties and replied that ' . . . our agreed broad strategy is developing according to plan' and that a meeting of the Combined Chiefs of Staff could not be arranged at that time.²

The British Chiefs of Staff also were concerned about the way operations on the western front were developing and Montgomery's letters increased their misgivings. At General Eisenhower's suggestion he and Sir Arthur Tedder came over for a meeting in London on December the 12th with the British Chiefs of Staff and the Prime Minister, at which Eisenhower's future policy was discussed. After

¹ Printed in W. S. Churchill, *The Second World War*, vol. VI (Cassell, 1954), pp. 234-6.

² Loc. cit., pp. 237-8. A meeting was eventually arranged for early February and is known by the code name 'Argonaut'.

hearing his intentions the Chiefs of Staff were not reassured by what they learned, which included a statement that he (Eisenhower) did not hope to cross the Rhine before May.¹ On the 18th they submitted a memorandum to the Prime Minister, arguing that the strength of the Allied Command would not justify the double enveloping movement which Eisenhower contemplated and would involve a departure from the Combined Chiefs of Staff's endorsement of priority to be given to the main advance into Germany by the northern route. They recommended that the Prime Minister should urge the Combined Chiefs of Staff to ask Eisenhower for his plan of operations in the winter and spring, with an account of the general disposition of his forces.

Then further discussion was interrupted by the German action described in the next chapter.

The Allies' recognition that there had been some increase of the German strength on the western front during the autumn included their knowledge that the enemy had formed an armoured reserve, represented by Sixth SS Panzer Army.

The Allies were at first inclined to underrate the potential of this new armoured reserve. Twenty-First Army Group regarded its main function as that of resting and refitting tired panzer divisions from the line. 'Some at least of its divisions must now be re-equipped on a reduced establishment which is believed unlikely to exceed 100 tanks. Whether the Army will ever take the field as such is open to doubt.' A week later, Shaef calculated that the state of readiness of the panzer reserve was not very high—'they have been reforming only for periods of two months or less, probably with indifferent personnel and scanty equipment'; on November the 26th, by which time the Sixth SS Panzer Army was known to be west of the Rhine and forward of Cologne, Shaef reported: '. . . in any case it is far from certain that Sixth Panzer Army is yet operational; reports describe the divisions as still engaged in training and digging, and there seems to be no intention of committing them before a graver crisis has developed'. A week later the Sixth SS Panzer Army's precise location was in doubt, though it was thought still to be in the Cologne sector. 'None of the divisions is in the line, or even known to be close up; equipment (tanks) is still seen to be coming up by rail and the divisions are apparently still engaged in training.'

Knowledge of the enemy's supply difficulties, particularly in fuel, was one of the major continuing factors in Allied Intelligence estimates throughout the last quarter of 1944. Shaef Intelligence reports in November regularly referred to the German Army's

¹ About this date Montgomery's Chief of Staff said that Montgomery's 'target for the major assault crossing of the Rhine would be mid-March which was the earliest that conditions of flooding and icing were likely to allow'.

severe shortage of fuel for mechanical transport and tanks, and other shortages particularly stressed were M.T. spare parts, small arms and automatics and artillery ammunition. There seems little doubt that these repeated estimates had an important influence on encouraging Allied scepticism of the possibility of any major German counter-offensive. For instance, the Shaef Intelligence summary of November the 12th under-estimated the potential of Sixth SS Panzer Army on just such grounds.

'Formidable though it is, this Army is incapable from lack of size and of gasoline, of staging a true counter-offensive. It is capable still, if given a little more time, of staging a spoiling attack of considerable power, and if an opportunity offers, both it and the attendant risk might be taken. However, the Army's most obvious use is in counter attack, if and when and whenever a determined Allied thrust towards the Rhine Province develops.'

Another element in such Allied thinking was the widely-held but erroneous belief that von Rundstedt, not Hitler, was now in a real sense in command in the west. As Twenty-First Army Group's Intelligence put it: '... the present and efficient handling of the enemy forces on the Western front would suggest that Rundstedt suffers less since he resumed supreme command in the West from intuitions from afar than during his chaotic period in Normandy. The war from the military side would now seem to be in the hands of soldiers, a change making the enemy easier to understand but harder to defeat.' This belief in the rational basis of current German planning probably accounts more than anything else for the Allied conviction that the panzer reserves would not be used for an independent German counter-offensive, but would be husbanded to meet the Allied threat in the north.

'Von Rundstedt is unlikely to risk this precious [reserve] now amounting to five Panzer divisions ... forward of Cologne-Bonn until the Allies advance over the Roer to present a threat ...; or until the Allies offer the enemy opportunity to take them off balance so that an abrupt counter-stroke could put paid to future Allied prospects for the winter. This latter is unlikely ... The moral prize would be great, for never was there greater need of a fillip, and to disrupt our winter campaigning would be a gain worth many risks. To lose Sixth Panzer Army in the doing of it would however be a disaster perhaps irreparable, for the Rhine can best be defended this side and with those five Panzer divisions removed might otherwise not be defended at all. It seems probable then, if von Rundstedt continues to conduct operations unimpeded, that he will wait to smash our bridgeheads over the Roer, then hold his hand.'

Five days later, the United States Twelfth Army Group produced an almost identical assessment of the situation.

'Von Rundstedt is unlikely to risk this precious guard over the Rhine, now amounting to five Panzer divisions, until the Allies advance east of the Roer and cannot be stopped by such tactical reserves as are available, or until the Allies offer the enemy opportunity to take us off balance so that an abrupt counter-stroke could nullify any future Allied prospects for the winter.'

Of almost equal importance as a factor in producing a high degree of self-confidence among the Allies was the renewed optimism and belief in an early victory as Allied attacks began to move forward again in late November and early December.¹ Allied preoccupation with their own plans for a major attack in the north led to a not unreasonable belief that the Germans themselves would therefore be equally concerned with that front to the exclusion of others. In October Shaef Intelligence had concluded that the enemy had a 'growing conviction that the really critical sector is in the North, opposite the Ruhr'. As the German armoured reserves were built up, this belief was strengthened. '6 Panzer Army', reported Shaef Intelligence in mid-November, 'is moving up from its refitting area and . . . at least three of its five divisions [are reported] as being located behind the front in the Aachen sector. And so, as anticipated, it is here that the enemy regards the threat as the greatest.'

By the second week of November a shift in German air policy was apparent to Allied Intelligence. 'Evidence has recently accumulated that the Germans intend to make available in the immediate future, for the tactical support of their armies in the West, a large proportion of the air forces at present in Germany. The enemy has been at great pains to keep this major redistribution a secret.' Preparations for the reception of these aircraft, which were to be concentrated between Düsseldorf and Aachen, had begun in the last week of October and were to be completed by November the 12th. When the movement was completed, the serviceable fighter force on the Western front would have been increased from about 250 to about 900 single-engined aircraft. But the usefulness of this increased force was likely to be limited, the Joint Intelligence Committee felt, by the continued acute shortage of aviation spirit and by the inadequate training of fighter pilots, especially for close support operations.

The Combined Intelligence Committee in Washington was likewise sceptical of the effectiveness of the *Luftwaffe* at this period.

¹ This mood of self-confidence was not confined to the theatre of operations. In mid-November the Combined Intelligence Committee in Washington reported that, in spite of Germany's newly-formed cohesive front in the West and the formation of new divisions, 'it is unlikely that sufficient forces can be made available to defend any of the main fronts against continuous and heavy Allied pressure . . . there is such a substantial deterioration in her military power that no real recovery appears to be possible'.

'The German Air Force is at present incapable of exercising more than a local or limited influence on the course of military operations.' Because of the shortage of fuel and loss of bases and other difficulties, it would remain so incapable in spite of the 'possible' increase in strength of the fighter force.

By the beginning of December Shaef was noting 'accumulating evidence' that the *Luftwaffe* was reinforcing its single-engined tactical fighter force at the expense of the strategic defences of the Reich. But the evidence was not interpreted in such a way as to give warning of any impending large attack, nor does the *Luftwaffe* appear to have intensified its activity in the first weeks of December. The Shaef report for the week ending December the 17th indicated no change in the intensity or policy of enemy fighter activity over the battle area—'the normal 100–200 sorties were flown on 4 of the 7 days'.

Meantime General Eisenhower was still asking that the Chiefs of Staff should give urgent consideration to ways of reducing the German will to resist. At the end of November the Armistice and Post-War Committee produced a paper in which alternatives to actual dismemberment were considered—Germany might be weakened by reshaping her constitution on the lines of a confederation, or federation or simply by decentralisation. The Americans and Russians remained firmly in favour of a more drastic policy but the British Cabinet was still unconvinced. In December a special committee was appointed to report to the British Cabinet; they found that the Nazi leaders were able to make most effective use in their propaganda of public utterances by prominent people among the Allies regarding the treatment reserved for Germany and Germans after the war. The Allies had therefore the task of showing the German people that 'unconditional surrender' was not a synonym for extermination. There was no indication of any decrease in the efficiency of the Nazi Party's machine; indeed the Party had managed to increase its control over the Wehrmacht and there was no sign of any collapse in the Army's will to resist. Shaef's assessment of German morale was that while apathy and war-weariness were reported to be prevalent among civilians, 'as a nation they continue the struggle, because there is no other option left to them, unless they desire death or a concentration camp'.

CHAPTER VIII

THE GERMAN COUNTER-OFFENSIVE

By the beginning of December rumours of an approaching German attempt to recapture Antwerp had reached Shaef but little credence was given to them. It was also noted in Shaef Intelligence summaries of early December that a good deal of enemy movement on the Ardennes front was observable, from which it was deduced that 'the enemy seems now to be making great efforts to withdraw divisions from the line and refit them before they are finally exhausted . . . a more economic policy than burning divisions completely up while frantically forming new ones'. The Twenty-First Army Group weekly Intelligence review of December the 3rd, quoted on page 171, after rehearsing what was known (or believed) of the Sixth SS Panzer Army 'now amounting to five panzer divisions (1, 2, 9 and 12 SS and 2)' and judging how von Rundstedt was most likely to employ it, concluded that 'The bruited drive on Antwerp . . . is just not within his potentiality'.

At this time Shaef had identified a nominal sixty-four German divisions under Field-Marshal von Rundstedt facing the Allied front: in the newly-formed Army Group H in the north, eleven divisions; in Army Group B in the centre Model had some twenty-five divisions; in Army Group G in the south were twenty-one divisions; and there were seven unlocated. But many of these were considerably below strength and their fighting value was estimated to be equivalent to some thirty-one divisions. Opposed to these German forces General Eisenhower had some sixty-five divisions: nineteen in Montgomery's Twenty-First Army Group; twenty-nine in Bradley's Twelfth Army Group; and seventeen in Devers' Sixth Army Group. In furtherance of Eisenhower's strategy General Bradley's troops were pursuing attacks north of the Ardennes against the Roer, in an effort to reach the Rhine near Cologne, and south of the Ardennes, against the Saar. In the sixty-five miles of difficult Ardennes country between these two offensive concentrations Bradley had only one corps (VIII), at that time of only four divisions,¹ and some light cavalry

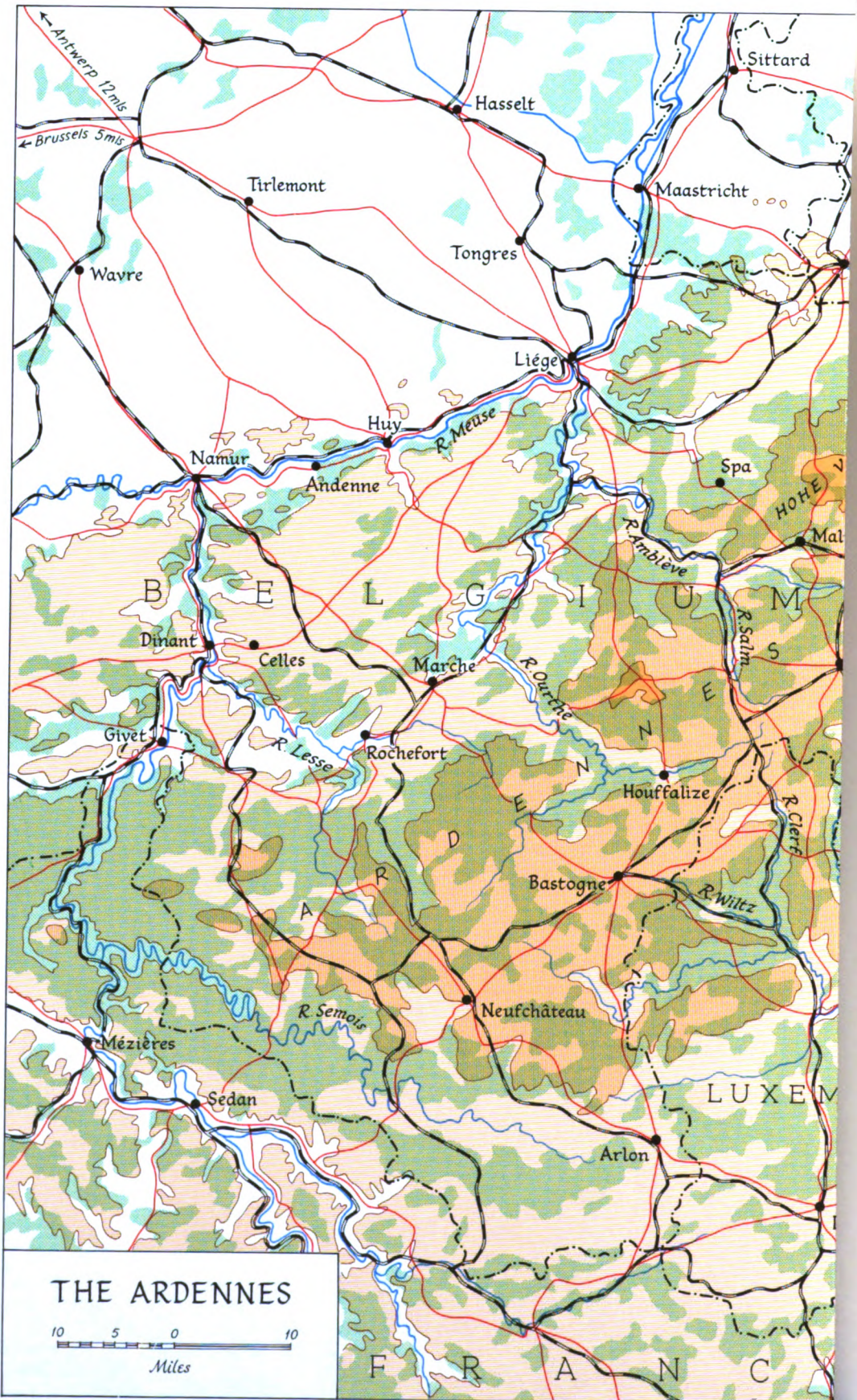
¹ One of these, the 106th Infantry Division, was a new division with no previous fighting experience and it had only arrived on the Ardennes front on December the 11th. The two other infantry divisions (4th and 28th) were refitting after heavy casualties in the November fighting in the Aachen sector. 9th Armoured Division was in action for the first time as a complete division.

tanks, for he regarded the Ardennes as a quiet sector in which no major attack was physically practicable in December. So Bradley was using it as a sector in which to rest and make good divisions which had had hard fighting, or to give newly arrived troops a first taste of front-line experience. What was known of the enemy in the same area seemed to indicate that the German commanders were using the Ardennes front for a similar purpose. The true significance of the enemy's movements and intentions was thus completely misunderstood by the Allies; rumours that an attack through the Ardennes was being prepared as a first step toward the recapture of Antwerp were treated sceptically; memories of the German armies' advance through the Ardennes in May 1940 were regarded as irrelevant.

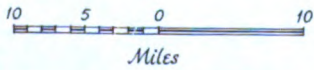
So when the enemy attacked that 'quiet' sector early in the morning of December the 16th the Americans were taken by surprise and the significance of the attack was not at first appreciated. It will help the reader to understand what subsequently happened if he is here let into the well-kept secret of what had been going on behind the German scene, largely undiscovered or misunderstood by Allied Intelligence and so not anticipated by Allied commanders.

When von Rundstedt was recalled in September to command the German armies in the West, Hitler told him that new divisions which were being formed in the Reich would be ready to come into operation in November. Little more than a fortnight later the Allied advance was virtually halted by an improvised and largely inadequate supply system and the enemy began consolidating a cohesive defence. General Eisenhower's armies with their limited supplies were so widely distributed that in spite of losses von Rundstedt's available forces could be sufficiently concentrated to oppose them effectively where their threat was greatest. By an almost 'miraculous' effort, as Hitler described it, but in reality by the employment of military personnel not employed in the fighting and of over two hundred thousand civilians, German defence works were developed and manned, in spite of the Allies' superiority on the ground and their mastery of the air. By October the 19th, some new divisions and other reinforcements had already been brought forward for von Rundstedt's defence but his strength had, he said, fallen by over 80,000 men in the past six weeks; he considered that, including fortress troops, his armies amounted to the equivalent of only some 27 full infantry and 6½ panzer divisions, less than half the Allied number at his estimate.

But Hitler and his staff had for long been planning a counter-offensive and on October the 22nd Hitler summoned the Chiefs of



THE ARDENNES



Staff of von Rundstedt (General Westphal) and Model (General Krebs) to his headquarters in East Prussia. There they were told that the new divisions would be ready for action in November but were not to be tied down in defence, for in the long run passive defence could not prevent further decisive losses of territory. That could only be achieved by attack. Hitler had therefore decided that an offensive should be launched from the Eifel 'because of the weakness of the enemy forces in that region'. The object was to destroy enemy forces north of the line Antwerp-Brussels-Luxembourg and thereby bring about a turning point in the campaign in the West. The recapture of Antwerp would split the enemy front and separate the British from the Americans. The Fifth and Sixth SS Panzer Armies were to make the main attack while the Seventh Army covered their southern flank, all under Army Group B.

Ten days later von Rundstedt was sent a letter of instruction on 'basic principles' of the projected operation from Hitler, with a covering note from Jodl which included a warning that 'the gamble of the far-flung objective is *unalterable* although, from a strictly technical standpoint, it appears to be disproportionate to our available forces'. *Unalterable* also was the disposition of armies—on the right Sixth SS Panzer Army: in the centre, Fifth Panzer Army: on the left Seventh Army. They would attack abreast and simultaneously. The employment of certain named divisions was also expressly ordered by Hitler.

Both von Rundstedt and Model when they learnt of these plans agreed at once that Hitler's object was unrealisable by the forces available and they tried hard to get a more limited plan accepted, but without any avail. They were told that 'The Führer has decided that the operation is *unalterable in every detail*' and repeated attempts to get a more reasonable plan accepted were consistently dismissed as 'feeble thoughts'.¹

Von Rundstedt soon began to receive further orders, for instance on the reorganisation of command, on security and deception, and on the assembly of forces for the coming offensive. From these it was clear that Hitler and not von Rundstedt was in fact to be in control, for Hitler's detailed orders trespassed openly on the traditional province of a theatre commander and left von Rundstedt no scope for the proper exercise of his decision or initiative. The order of November the 5th required Student's Army Group H to take over the front from Roermond to the coast, and the transfer of Fifteenth Army headquarters to Model's Army Group B to relieve secretly the Fifth Panzer Army in the Aachen sector. The move of Sixth SS Panzer Army from Westphalia to the Cologne plain west of the

¹ S. Westphal, *The German Army in the West* (Cassell, 1951), pp. 180-1.

Rhine was a main part of the deception plan and the assembly of Model's other armies behind the sectors in which they were to attack was also ordered. Security required the greatest secrecy to be observed and in order to deceive the Allies the operation would be known as '*Wacht am Rhein*' (Watch on the Rhine), to give the false impression that forces were being assembled to cover Cologne ready to ward off an expected attack by the Allies, aimed at that city and the Ruhr. Only a very few high-level and named army leaders were to know anything of the true intentions. Movement during daylight except in the Cologne-Julich area (seeming to endorse a defensive explanation) was forbidden: it had to be under cover of darkness. To limit the power of Allied aircraft the operation was planned for a period of bad flying weather and was to be launched on November the 25th. It was not then ready and was eventually postponed till December the 16th.

Hitler's 'operational directive' was issued on November the 10th. It went into considerable detail but made no major change from the 'unalterable' plan of the original letter of instruction. A 50-mile front was to be attacked between Monschau and Echternach. The main effort would be made in the north of the Ardennes where Sixth SS Panzer Army was to cross the Meuse in the Liège sector and drive north-westwards to recapture Antwerp and the line of the Albert Canal: in the centre Fifth Panzer Army was to cross the Meuse in the Namur sector and advance north-westwards to Brussels, whilst Seventh Army covered the southern flank through Luxembourg. Later Fifteenth Army would cover the northern flank. The troops to be used were listed in detail showing a total of four armies, eleven corps and thirty-eight divisions (fifteen panzer and panzer-grenadier and twenty-three infantry divisions), with nine artillery corps and seven Werfer brigades in addition to the artillery already deployed on the existing front. But largely because of losses in the November fighting, Model's final operation order, of December the 9th, named only three armies in the initial attacking forces, composed of seven armoured and thirteen infantry divisions. On the north would be Sixth SS Panzer Army of three corps and nine divisions; in the centre Fifth Panzer Army of three corps and seven divisions; and on the south Seventh Army with two corps and four divisions. These were approximately the divisions with which the German attack opened on the 16th of December. A further nine divisions were shown in OKW reserve but, in the event, only five ever reached the battle. The Fifteenth Army was not included in the initial attack but was to assist with a subsidiary attack and protect the northern flank of the Sixth SS Panzer Army as far as the river Meuse. At a later stage Army Group H would co-operate in the final destruction of the Allied forces that remained to the north of Army

Group B's offensive. Indeed, on the 16th of December, the war diary of C-in-C West records that von Rundstedt warned Army Group H to prepare for such a task (page 238 below). On November the 18th von Rundstedt also received a twelve-page instruction on assault tactics, for which subordinate commanders were eventually to be briefed: and, typical of Hitler's distrust of army leaders, copies of these briefs were to be sent to Hitler for his approval.

In following the account of what happened the reader should have in mind this outline of what was planned. (See also maps facing pages 177 and 186.)

Before the German attack opened Hitler moved his headquarters from Berlin to the *Adlerhorst* (eagle's nest) at Ziegenberg, near Frankfurt. This had been built for his headquarters in the German attack in 1940.

The morning of December the 16th was just what Hitler wanted. The sky was covered by low-lying cloud beneath which mist and fog obscured movement on the ground and made air reconnaissance and attack impracticable. During the night there had been the usual desultory gun-fire from enemy batteries in positions already known though none from other positions to give away the fact that additional artillery had been brought up. But at 5.30 a.m. the front was lit up by a heavy and continuous bombardment by all available artillery and mortars, while salvos of V-1s flew westwards overhead. The firing continued for an hour during which Model's assaulting infantry moved forward to the attack, through fading darkness and heavy mist, with panzer divisions closely following.

On the right one infantry division of the Sixth SS Panzer Army attacked at Monschau without success, but the army's main attack by I SS Panzer Corps of five divisions was made further south in and north of the Losheim gap. There a parachute division broke through on the boundary between the American First Army's V and VIII Corps, driving back the weak cavalry tank screen of the latter covering this sector. A strong battle group of the 1st SS Panzer Division, commanded by Colonel Peiper, penetrated through this gap that night¹ and, advancing by minor roads, reached the bridge over the Amblève at Stavelot on the evening of the 17th and captured it next morning. North of this penetration V Corps held the German attack towards Elsenborn on the 16th but when the enemy was reinforced next day by another panzer division the Americans

¹ Before daylight on December the 17th a flight of JU-52s disgorged a few hundred German paratroops in rear of the neighbouring American positions, but they were soon rounded up. (C. B. Macdonald, *The Siegfried Line Campaign* (Dept. of the Army, Washington, D.C., 1963), p. 611.)

were forced to pull back into more closely knit positions on high ground there, still holding firmly the Elsenborn ridge; reinforcing formations from VII Corps now began to strengthen the defence of this northern shoulder.

On the left the Fifth Panzer Army had attacked on a thirty-mile front with seven *divisions* against five *regiments* of the American VIII Corps (American regiments corresponding approximately to British brigades). The Americans held most of their positions but could not prevent infiltration and on the night of the 16th a panzer division broke through on the Prüm-Clerf road but was held at Clerf all day on the 17th. Further south the German Seventh Army's four *divisions* attacked against less than three American *regiments*; on the 17th one German parachute division broke through towards Wiltz but the other divisions were delayed and lost heavily as the Americans held on to positions which gave them observation of the German bridging sites north-west of Echternach.¹

Low cloud prevented the American air forces from giving close support to their forward troops on the 16th but attempts were made to cut railway lines and destroy bridges in rear of the German attack. On the 17th the weather was better and over 1,200 sorties were flown. The German Air Force was also out in some strength, trying to provide cover for the ground attack. The Americans claimed sixty-eight enemy aircraft destroyed for the loss of sixteen of their own, and did great damage to advancing columns on the ground where traffic was spotted in many places moving or halted nose to tail. It was arranged that Second Tactical Air Force would next day support the American Ninth Air Force, so far as its own commitments allowed.

General Bradley was at Versailles discussing future plans with General Eisenhower when first news of the German attack on the 16th reached Shaef. It was too early to judge the seriousness of the attack but it was decided to reinforce VIII Corps' defence at once by two armoured divisions—namely the 7th Armoured Division from the Ninth Army in the north and 10th Armoured Division from Third Army in the south. Both were at the time out of the line and started immediately. They moved quickly and joined the battle on the evening of the 17th, the 7th at St. Vith and the 10th on the southern flank. When Bradley returned to his Advanced H.Q. at

¹ The Germans had also organised an infiltration force, under a Lt-Col. Skorzeny, in American uniforms and in captured tanks and vehicles, which was planned to break through to the Meuse when the main attack had penetrated the American positions; it would seize supply installations and would disrupt communications in the American rear. The opportunity to use the force for this purpose never occurred; instead most of it took part in an unsuccessful attack on Malmédy before dawn on December 21st, when it was beaten off by the Americans. Only one jeep-load reached the Meuse, at Dinant on the night of the 23rd, where they and their vehicle were impounded by the British.

Luxembourg next day the position as known there was obscure. Little exact information had come through for forward communications had been largely disrupted by the enemy barrage or infiltration. Bad weather hampered effective air reconnaissance and rumour and false reports went unverified. On the 17th General Eisenhower ordered two divisions of the United States XVIII Airborne Corps (in Shaefer reserve) from Reims to Bastogne to join the First Army, and the next day two more American divisions, the 17th Airborne (from England) and the 11th Armoured (from Normandy), to join the Twelfth Army Group. On the 18th Bradley ordered Patton to cancel the Saar offensive, which his Third Army was preparing to launch on the 19th, and to move a corps of three divisions to the help of VIII Corps as quickly as possible. The move began that night and when Patton was summoned to meet Generals Eisenhower, Bradley and Devers at Verdun on the 19th he brought his outline plan for counter-attack which was approved. During the conference Eisenhower decided that Third Army's Saar front should be shortened and, so that Patton could concentrate a second corps against the Ardennes attack, Devers' Sixth Army Group was ordered to take over a sector of Third Army's existing Saar front, prepared to yield ground if need be in the Alsace sector though the line of the Vosges was to be held firmly. General Eisenhower also ordered the British 6th Airborne Division from England to join Twenty-First Army Group.

Throughout these first few days the American position remained highly critical. General Bradley had no reserve behind the most weakly-defended Ardennes sector, nor an outline plan should the enemy break through it. But commanders of broken defences in the Ardennes had shown great determination and sagacity in trying to hold on to key points, blocking roads or blowing river bridges; their men had fought with spirit and determination, in spite of the inevitable confusion and loss that must follow complete surprise when some positions were overrun and communications were broken.¹ Bradley's first concern was to confine the advance between the northern and southern shoulders of the German penetration and to slow down, if he could not at first stop, the enemy's progress while the American armies got, as it were, their 'second wind'. Their impromptu and in places unco-ordinated defensive fighting

¹ Two regiments of the raw 106th Infantry Division held on to high ground of the Schnee Eifel where they were surrounded by the enemy. Out of touch with any other American troops, they held on till the 19th. They then received orders from the divisional commander in St. Vith to withdraw; but after hard fighting their attempts to break through the surrounding enemy failed and the regimental commanders surrendered with over 7,000 men. With greater initiative and more skilled leadership they might have done better but it must be realised that they had no battle experience, no knowledge of what was happening elsewhere and had received no supplies for three days.

was stoutly conducted, and though the German advance continued to push westwards its progress was slowed by the delay imposed by the American troops and the Allied air forces, giving the defence time to take shape.

On the 20th the positions reached by Hitler's armies were approximately as follows. In the north Sixth SS Panzer Army, aiming to reach the Meuse between Liège and Huy, had failed to capture the Elsenborn ridge or Malmédy or the two huge American petrol dumps a few miles north of Stavelot.¹ Crossing to the north bank of the River Amblève at Stavelot, the battle group of the 1st SS Panzer Division had recrossed at Stoumont and advanced towards Werbomont, but they were driven back to Stoumont by the 82nd Airborne Division, diverted from its move to Bastogne, and other American troops cut the Germans' supply route behind them by recapturing Stavelot bridge. Sixth SS Panzer Army's initial attack was now decisively stopped, barely half way to its objective on the Meuse.

Meanwhile on their left, Fifth Panzer Army had done somewhat better despite their failure to capture either St. Vith or Bastogne. Leading units of one panzer division had reached the river Ourthe and were approaching Hotton and another panzer division had reached the Ourthe at Ortheuville but was held up there for two days for petrol delayed by Allied air attacks. The American 7th Armoured Division and elements of VIII Corps were still holding the St. Vith road centre, and then westwards to within about six miles of Houffalize. Further south Bastogne was held with its even more important road junction, controlling amongst others the main road to the Meuse at Namur. Bastogne had been attacked early by Fifth Panzer Army troops but the timely arrival of the American 101st Airborne Division and a Combat Command of the 10th Armoured Division from the south to reinforce tanks of VIII Corps' 9th Armoured Division had defeated all attempts to capture it. But it was soon to be surrounded by troops of three divisions of the Fifth Panzer and Seventh Armies.

General Eisenhower returned to Versailles on the 19th and he says that 'when it became apparent that General Bradley's left [or northern] flank was badly separated from his right [or southern] flank and the situation of his [Bradley's] own Headquarters, located at Luxembourg, limited his command and communication capabilities to the area south of the penetration, I realised that it would be impracticable for him to handle the American forces both north and south of the large salient which was being created. I therefore fixed a boundary running east and west through the breach in our lines,

¹ One had been used as a block of fire on the road to Liège, the other had been moved across the Meuse as First Army Headquarters also moved back from Spa to behind the river.



24. Field-Marshal von Rundstedt



25. Field-Marshal Model



26. General Hodge



27. General Patton



28. General Bradley

generally on the axis Givet-Prüm, giving both places inclusive to the Northern Group. All forces north of the boundary, including the major part of the U.S. First and Ninth Armies and part of the Ninth Air Force, I placed respectively under the operational command of Field-Marshal Montgomery and Air Marshal Coningham, Commander-in-Chief of the Second Tactical Air Force. This left General Bradley suitably located to command the forces on the southern flank of the salient, comprising mainly the U.S. Third Army and XIX Tactical Air Command,¹ considerably reinforced.²

Not unnaturally Bradley strongly disliked the change, foreseeing that such a step might endanger American credit, although he said that 'certainly if Monty's were an American command I would agree with you entirely' and he wrote subsequently that 'there was ample justification to the Army Group on the north taking temporary command of all armies on that side of the penetration'.³ Unhappily both at Shaef and in Bradley's armies there was already a good deal of antagonistic feeling and criticism of Montgomery (with which Bradley was in sympathy) and it will be seen later that this was increased by a press conference held by Montgomery in January. For the moment, however, the wisdom of this decision was quickly apparent.

The American reaction had so limited and slowed the enemy's advance that he had no longer any advantage of surprise; the German advance had lost its momentum and the spontaneous response of the Americans had to that extent been successful, but what was now required was a definite plan of action to stop and finally defeat the enemy. It had been easy for General Bradley to maintain personal touch with General Patton and with the situation to the south of the German penetration, but at Luxembourg, where his tactical headquarters remained, he had not felt able to visit either of his army commanders in the north and depended for his ability to help them on telephone conversations or signals that were likely to be interrupted by the enemy's advance. On the other hand Field-Marshal Montgomery suffered from no similar handicap. His team of personal liaison officers had visited the northern armies and had reported what they had learned of the situation from discussions with commanders in the field; not being involved in the battle he had been able to study what was happening and to realise what was

¹ Two tactical commands (IX and XXIX) of the Ninth Air Force (strengthened by two fighter groups of the Eighth Air Force) were now put under operational control of Air Marshal Coningham, enough fighter-bombers being transferred southwards to bring the air forces supporting General Patton up to eight groups—i.e. equal to those with the American armies north of the new army group boundary.

² *Report by the Supreme Commander to the Combined Chiefs of Staff . . .* (H.M.S.O., 1946), p. 94.

³ Omar N. Bradley, *A Soldier's Story* (Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1951), pp. 476-7.

needed. On the 20th, when he was ordered to take control of the northern battlefield, he met General Hodges and General Simpson, commander of United States Ninth Army, with an immediate programme of action, namely, first to make the American defence absolutely secure and as soon as that had been done to counter-attack from the north. As a precautionary measure he had already ordered the British 29th Armoured Brigade to take over the defence of the Meuse bridges at Givet, Dinant and Namur, and the British XXX Corps¹ (which was not in action) to take positions covering exits from the Meuse in the Wavre-Tirlemont-Tongres areas with reconnaissance forces forward. So that the United States First Army could concentrate on its closure of the northern flank, the Ninth Army would take over the Aachen front including most of the troops of First Army's VII Corps at present involved there. That corps (commanded by Major-General J. Lawton Collins) with 2nd Armoured Division from the Ninth Army would move at once to a position behind the First Army's right flank, where there was a gap between it and the Meuse. It would prepare to counter-attack as soon as possible.² The policy by which these moves were dictated was defined in a signal sent by Montgomery to the C.I.G.S.: 'My policy in the north is to get the show tidied up and to ensure absolute security before passing over to offensive action and that action will be taken by VII Corps only when that Corps is fully assembled and ready to deal a hard blow.' The changes were quickly carried out but, as will be told below, a further German penetration westwards in the next few days made it necessary to bring the 2nd Armoured Division of VII Corps forward to complete the American defences between the Marche sector and the Meuse. The counter-attack was therefore delayed.

When describing what happened in those next few days it is desirable to realise the true significance of what had already been achieved by the First and Ninth American Armies of General Bradley's command. In the first four days, notwithstanding the advantage of surprise and the employment of stronger forces, the Sixth SS Panzer Army, which Hitler intended to deliver the main blow, had been defeated in its effort to drive back the northern shoulder of the defence; south of Bütgenbach it had gone little

¹ XXX Corps was on its way to join the First Canadian Army for the impending Rhineland battle. It returned to Second Army and on the 20th of December it comprised the Guards Armoured, 43rd, 51st and 53rd Divisions, plus 6th Guards and 34th Tank and the 29th and 33rd Armoured Brigades.

² The reconstituted VII Corps would consist of the 84th Division (which General Hodges had previously ordered to take charge of the Marche area, thus denying to the enemy the main road to Namur); the U.S. 75th Division (which had been newly landed and ordered to join the First Army's defence of the northern flank) and the 2nd Armoured Division. Later the U.S. 3rd Armoured Division was added to General Collins' VII Corps for the projected counter-attack.

further westwards than the river Salm and in no great strength. Fifth Panzer Army had failed to capture the most important road junctions at St. Vith and Bastogne and only one division was west of the Ourthe and it was short of petrol. The Meuse, which von Rundstedt had said must be reached on the first day if the operation were to succeed, was still twenty to thirty miles away. German progress had been slowed and its direction shaped largely by the help of American divisions which had started promptly and had moved quickly on General Eisenhower's or General Bradley's or Hodges' orders to build up a containing northern flank against the enemy's offensive. The measure of success during these first four days largely determined the ultimate fate of the German counter-offensive. On the evening of the 20th von Rundstedt ordered the main weight of the attack to be transferred from the Sixth to the Fifth Panzer Army in view of the former's lack of progress.

In the days which immediately followed Montgomery's appointment the German armies maintained their attack with great determination but they were eventually thwarted in every effort to make significant progress by the American armies' equally determined defence of key positions. In the north-east the Sixth SS Panzer Army kept up violent attacks by six divisions in the Monschau-Bütgenbach-Malmédy area but on the 23rd they abandoned the action without gaining any ground and went over to the defensive. Ahead of them their most forward troops (the battle group 'Peiper') which had been stopped at Stoumont (page 182)—out of petrol, with their supply line cut behind them—abandoned their tanks on the 24th and eight hundred men escaped on foot through surrounding woods, eventually joining the rest of their division east of Trois Ponts. On the night of the 21st, troops of the Fifth Panzer Army finally entered St. Vith in the course of severe fighting and next day Montgomery ordered that the surrounding defences should be withdrawn. By holding St. Vith for six days the American 7th Armoured Division, with elements of VIII Corps infantry and tanks from the original front, had performed a most valuable function, and as Montgomery told them they could return with all honour to more secure positions.¹ They fought their way back to the Manhay sector, threatened by a division of the Sixth SS Panzer Army which had just captured the Fraiture crossroads. The American front there had been a salient southwards to Vielsalm which Montgomery had ordered to be straightened out by withdrawal to the line Trois Ponts-Manhay. Further west a division of the Fifth Panzer Army was repulsed by VII Corps in the Hotton area.

The adjoining map shows where the principal panzer divisions

¹ H. M. Cole, *The Ardennes: Battle of the Bulge* (Dept. of the Army, Washington, D.C., 1965), p. 413.

were at midnight of December the 24th and the position of the American divisions engaged against them. It will be noted that Bastogne was still held by American troops and was still coveted by the Germans; it was keeping the best part of two enemy divisions from making progress. Only part of one division had got near to the Meuse at Dinant, namely the 2nd Panzer Division which had reached the neighbourhood of Foy Notre Dame and the woods near Celles on the evening of the 23rd. They were almost without petrol and although when daylight came on the 24th they could see the river from the higher ground on which they waited for supplies they could not move. On their right, blocking any attempts to go westwards by the panzer divisions following them,¹ was the American VII Corps; in front of them, guarding the Dinant bridge, was the British 29th Armoured Brigade and a brigade of the British 53rd Division which had been ordered forward to Givet and Dinant as two brigades of the Guards Armoured Division moved up to the river.

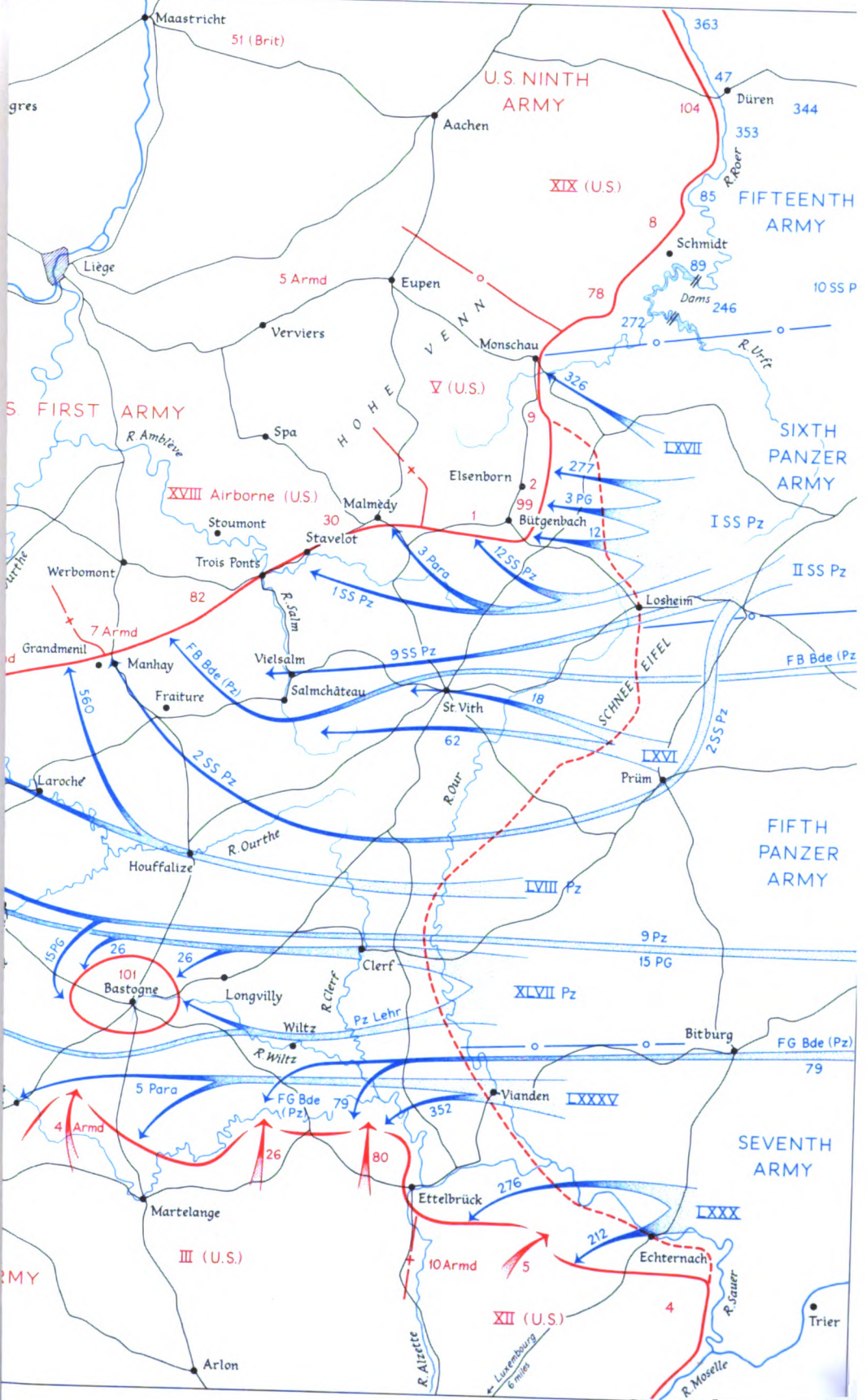
So far the bad weather, which Hitler desired, had been of some advantage to the enemy by seriously limiting the work of the Allied air forces which, however, attacked enemy troops whenever possible. But heavy rain had turned the unmetalled Ardennes by-roads which the German armoured divisions and transport were compelled to use into muddy tracks which made fast movement impossible and columns vulnerable to air attack. On the 23rd there was a drastic change. A spell of fine, cold, clear weather began, with frost to harden roads but with snow to render moving troops and vehicles conspicuous to aircraft. The Allied air forces were quick to seize the opportunity in the next few days. The enemy's supply columns (for which their 2nd Panzer Division waited near the Meuse) were approaching Celles when aircraft virtually stopped them. Another German armoured division tried to reach them with supplies through Ciergnon, further south, but was also prevented by persistent air attacks.²

On Christmas day a battle group of the American 2nd Armoured Division from VII Corps, with assistance from a regiment of the British 29th Armoured Brigade, attacked the 2nd Panzer Division and eliminated their detachment at Foy Notre Dame; in the next two days the rest of the enemy in the area were destroyed or taken prisoner, though 600 abandoning their weapons and equipment escaped on foot. The Americans took over 1,200 prisoners and captured or destroyed 82 tanks, 83 guns and some 440 vehicles. The Allies' casualties in this action were 244 men and 27 tanks.

The German armies got no further. Their advance had come to a feeble end. On the 26th the enemy suffered another serious defeat. Their

¹ 16th Panzer, plus 9th Panzer and part of 15th Panzer Grenadier from OKW reserve.

² Panzer Lehr.



prolonged effort to capture Bastogne was foiled when General Patton's Third Army troops fought a way through the besiegers and relieved the courageous garrison. All the enemy's attempts to take Bastogne by direct assault had been defeated and the garrison had acted so aggressively that the Fifth Panzer Army's divisions were not only denied the roads radiating from the town but were forced to bypass it by wide détours. On the 21st Bastogne had been completely surrounded by the enemy but when called on to surrender or suffer 'annihilation' Brigadier-General A. C. McAuliffe's¹ only reply is said to have been 'Nuts'; and though his ammunition was dwindling repeated enemy attacks were beaten off. When the weather cleared on the 23rd 750 tons of supplies (and four much-needed doctors) were dropped from the air or were landed by glider in this and the next three days. A heavy German air attack was made on the night of the 25th, followed on the 26th by a strong effort to break through the defensive belt; American fighters helped to spoil several German attacks and though a small penetration of the defences was made by a newly arrived German panzer grenadier division, the grenadiers were destroyed inside the perimeter. On that day (26th) tanks of the United States 4th Armoured Division of Patton's counter-attacking III Corps broke through the German besieging force from the south and Bastogne was relieved. By holding the town for ten days in spite of the enemy's determined attempts to capture it the American defenders had rendered memorable and distinguished service.

After a march of 120 miles from the Saar, this Third Army corps had launched its counter-attack against the enemy's southern flank on the 22nd, its main effort being made along the Arlon-Bastogne road. Four days of hard fighting ensued until, on the 26th, the leading tanks of the United States 4th Armoured Division broke through into Bastogne, taking with them 40 truckloads of very welcome supplies. Two other divisions drove back the enemy towards Wiltz and the same day (the 26th) Patton's XII Corps consolidated the southern shoulder by driving the left flank of the enemy's Seventh Army back to the river Sauer.

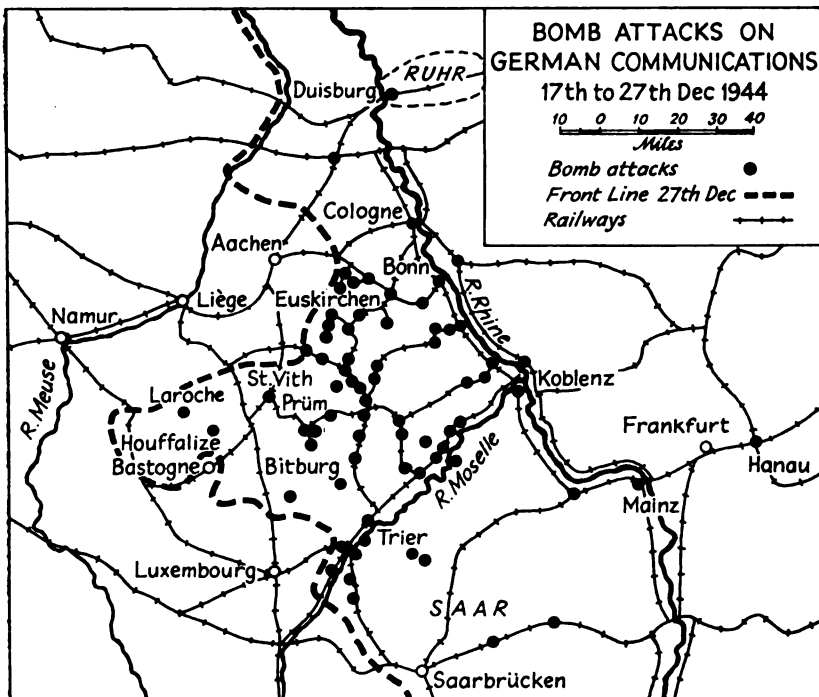
As early as December the 24th von Rundstedt had urged Hitler to call off the offensive but Hitler said No;² he expected at that time that Bastogne would soon be taken. But the result of the offensive was, in fact, decided for him: the rest was to be merely a last chapter in the tale of its defeat.

The part played by the air forces during this German offensive grew in importance day by day as the German forces moved westwards into virtually unprotected country. Such flying as was possible

¹ Commanding General United States 101st Airborne Division, in command of the Bastogne garrison.

² Westphal, *op. cit.*, p. 185.

in the bad visibility of the first days had limited direct army support during the confused fighting which followed the break through the original Ardennes front, but the Allied tactical air forces flew 1,200 sorties on both the 17th and 18th, mainly against the enemy's concentration areas and roads leading towards the battle. On the night of the 17th of December aircraft of Bomber Command made a heavy attack on Duisburg. On the succeeding days the Allies' attacks were concentrated against the most important communications centres on the Rhine from Cologne to Koblenz and westwards between the Rhine and the battle. As the weather improved there was great air activity on both sides. When once the battle took shape, with the American troops firmly holding the 'shoulders' north and south and the enemy's attack confined by the extending defence of the flanks, full advantage was taken of every chance to attack the traffic-congested, tortuous roads by which he must move through the broken wooded country. Key roads radiating from such places as St. Vith, Bastogne, Vielsalm, Houffalize and Laroche were cut repeatedly and the resulting traffic jams were attacked mercilessly, while communications leading to the battle were kept under almost continuous bombardment by aircraft of all types, from the largest strategic bombers to smaller types of fighter bombers. Between the 17th and 27th of December a total of approximately 31,000 tons of bombs was dropped on the main centres shown on the following map.



Between December the 17th and the 27th was seen one of the most striking demonstrations of Allied air power since the D-day assault on the Normandy beaches. Their attacks had begun at or beyond the Rhine on centres of supply, on railways, roads and bridges leading to the battle and on transport, stationary or on the move. Heavy bombers concentrated mainly on the larger centres both by day and at night; medium bombers, rocket-firing planes and fighters attacked railways and roads and transport columns; and all appropriate forces attacked persistently concentrations or columns of men or supplies seen in the battle area. American fighter-bombers caused heavy losses to the forward armoured columns of the German Sixth SS Panzer Army; in the tangle of roads and railways in the St. Vith region progress was seriously slowed. The first armoured division of Fifth Panzer Army to cross the Ourthe had then to wait helplessly for two days for supplies that had been prevented from reaching it; and when the division eventually reached the neighbourhood of Celles it was rendered helpless and was destroyed while unable to move for lack of petrol. The battle was kept under close observation by armed reconnaissance and in the Ardennes country, which confined movement almost wholly to the roads, the enemy were easily distinguished.

All six of the Allied air forces¹ had played a notable part in helping to bring the German penetration to an end by December the 27th. Both their strategic and tactical attacks had been of paramount concern and of almost equal importance as seen by von Rundstedt. The 'traffic desert', as he called it later, with the resulting decrease in mobility and manoeuvrability, was constantly his main problem. The *Luftwaffe* had made a supreme effort to win temporary air superiority during these first ten days, flying about 500 sorties a day, but this could not begin to match the Allied air forces' average total of over 3,000 a day. Nowhere did the *Luftwaffe* prevent the Allied air forces from pursuing their devastating attacks on German communications, troops and supply columns. In this intense ten days of fighting the Allies lost over 300 planes but it was estimated that some 750 of the *Luftwaffe* were destroyed.

On January the 1st the enemy made one carefully prepared raid outside the battle area when 13 British and 4 American tactical airfields were attacked by over 900 German planes. They had gained considerable surprise by maintaining wireless silence and flying at tree-top level to evade radar detection as they approached by circuitous routes. Some of the Allies' aircraft were just taking off to relieve others in giving close support to the Army, and although

¹ The following air forces were involved in the Ardennes fighting:

British—Bomber Command, Fighter Command, Second Tactical Air Force;

American—Eighth Air Force, Night Air Force, First (Provisional) Tactical Air Force.

when the attack began many were in the air, many others were attacked on the ground; 150 were destroyed and 111 damaged; 46 personnel were killed, 6 of them in air combat. But 270 aircraft of the *Luftwaffe* were destroyed and 40 damaged by anti-aircraft fire or by fighters, and the 260 German aircrew killed included many experienced pilots whom the enemy could ill-afford to lose at this stage of the war. They had indeed lost much more than they had gained in this operation. Among the British planes destroyed was the personal aircraft of Field-Marshal Montgomery; when General Eisenhower learnt of this he promptly replaced it by one of his own.

The outstanding feature of the air battle was the ease and harmony with which three American and three British air commands collaborated in complicated actions for which there had been no time for overall planning or preparation. It was, of course, the first duty of the British Second Tactical Air Force to protect and support Twenty-First Army Group, but when the American front was attacked it was at once arranged, as already mentioned, that the British air force would help to the limit of their essential commitments. And when Montgomery was put in temporary command of the American northern flank the concurrent transfer of American air formations to the commander of the Second Tactical Air Force was done without friction and functioned smoothly.

On December the 25th Bradley visited Montgomery at Hasselt; Bradley had fixed the 28th for the start of a southern counter-attack by Patton and wanted Montgomery to start the northern attack on the same day. But Montgomery's counter-attacking force (First Army's VII Corps) was fully engaged holding the northern flank from Hotton to near the Meuse. VII Corps would be relieved by the British XXX Corps but its divisions could not be freed and ready to launch their counter-attack before the 3rd of January. (Even as this was decided parts of two SS panzer divisions were preparing to attack in the Grandmenil area: they gained some ground but lost it next day and with the end of the year Hitler recognised that the offensive could get no further towards its original objective. Three panzer divisions of the Sixth SS Panzer Army were now directed to concentrate in the Bastogne area.) Montgomery drew Bradley's attention to the serious deficiency of infantry in the American divisions engaged, and in default of other available reserves he suggested that the southern flank might be examined to see whether a shortening of the front by straightening out salients could produce infantry reinforcements. Next day, however, Shaef informed him that 17,000 infantry replacements were to be sent to the First and Third Armies by the end of December.

On December the 28th General Eisenhower visited Montgomery's command post at Hasselt. He approved the latter's plans for the

northern counter-attack and went on to discuss his plans for future action when the German counter-offensive had been finally dealt with. (See page 203 below.) These plans for the future will be more conveniently described in the next chapter for they did not affect immediate operations in the Ardennes.

For some time evidence had been accumulating that the Germans were preparing an attack in Alsace on the Sixth Army Group's front. It was launched about midnight on December the 31st and will be described later in chapter XI, together with operations on Twenty-First Army Group front in the period of the Ardennes fighting.

The end of the Ardennes counter-offensive can be told shortly though it involved some very hard fighting in atrocious weather. When Bradley's counter-attack began on the 30th some of the severest fighting of the whole battle took place around Bastogne. The enemy had brought three more divisions to join in their attempts to take the town but made no appreciable effect on the unshakeable determination of its defenders; the southern counter-attack by Patton's Third Army made at first slow but steady progress against the German forces and the severe weather. On the 3rd of January Montgomery's counter-attack from the north began. The main attack was south-eastwards towards Houffalize by the First Army's VII Corps with its right on the Ourthe. On its right it was supported by a simultaneous attack by the British XXX Corps which had relieved the American VII Corps in the Marche sector. A thaw bringing mist and mud made the first day's progress slow but thereafter a severe frost and six inches of snow made it even slower. In intense cold enemy mines and booby traps hidden by snow added greatly to the natural difficulties of the country.

The British attack was made by two divisions supported by three army groups of artillery. On the right the 6th Airborne Division and the 29th Armoured and 34th Tank Brigades, advancing east from assembly positions east of Givet, had a very hard fight with the Germans in Bure which changed hands several times in the next few days. On the left the 53rd Division and the 33rd Armoured Brigade, despite enemy counter-attacks, cleared the area south-east from Marche and captured Grimbiemont, where they were relieved on the 8th by the 51st Division. Next day the Germans started to vacate their most westerly positions and on the 11th the 51st Division secured Laroche. Resistance again stiffened but the western branch of the Ourthe river was reached on the 13th and next day contact was made with the reconstituted United States VIII Corps attacking from the south.

Meanwhile on the northern flank the United States VII Corps had met stiff resistance but secured Fraiture and its crossroads on the 6th, cutting one of the enemy's chief maintenance routes: on the 13th they cut the Houffalize-St. Vith road and on the 15th entered the ruins of Houffalize, which had been heavily bombed by Bomber Command while occupied by the enemy. On VII Corps' left XVIII Airborne Corps had meanwhile attacked and, turning eastward, had reached the Salm river near Salmchâteau. In Third Army's counter-attack from the south two corps were engaged during this time—namely, III and VIII. By the 16th they had reached a line from opposite Wiltz through Longvilly to Houffalize and had established firm contact with First Army's VII Corps. With this junction of First and Third Armies, the command of the First Army was by General Eisenhower's order returned to General Bradley and the British XXX Corps rejoined the First Canadian Army. The Ninth Army remained under British command. As will be seen later, General Bradley continued his attack in very hard fighting and by the end of the month all the ground lost in the German attack had been regained.

A statistical summary of air operations in the Ardennes battle will help to show its magnitude:

From December the 16th to January the 16th

<i>Air Force</i>	<i>Sorties flown</i>	<i>Bombs in Long tons</i>	<i>Allied aircraft lost</i>
United States			
Ninth Air Force with Eighth attached . . .	23,264	10,371	286
Eighth Air Force—Bombers	15,333	36,326	61
" " "—Fighters	12,997	—	67
Total . . .	51,594	46,697	414
British			
Second Tactical Air Force.	5,636	1,418	190
Bomber Command . . .	6,511	23,072	43
Total . . .	12,147	24,490	233
Grand Total . . .	63,741	71,187	647

The above figures are based on contemporary records available. They show that the Allied air forces fought with their usual courage in face of strong opposition from the *Luftwaffe* and consistent ground defence. The enemy's flak defence of the railway system at its crucial points was as strong as they could make it, that of their army not inconsiderable, and their fighter defence of the larger centres was often heavy, all contributing to Allied losses. Though the German

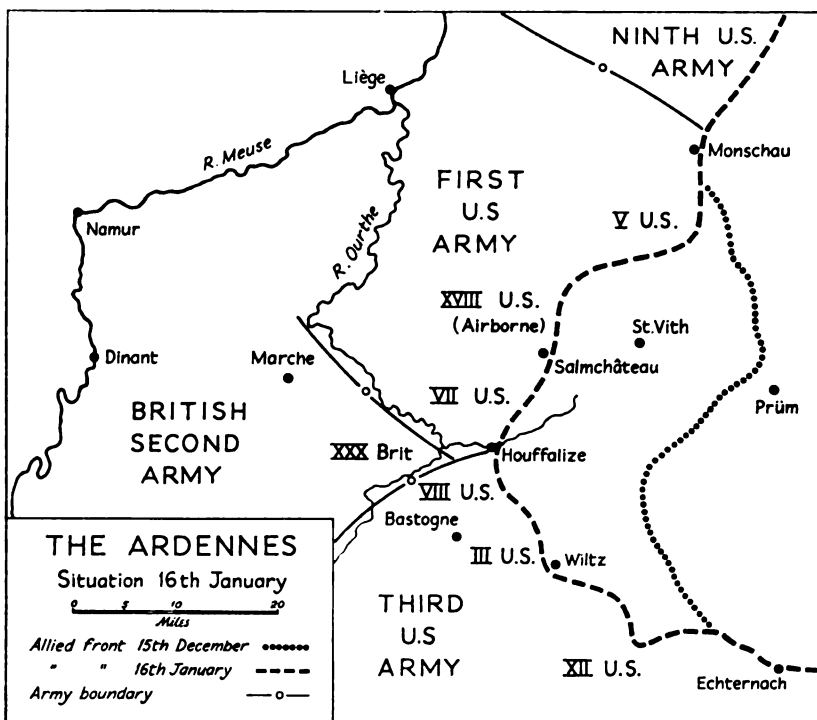
offensive in the Ardennes cost the Allied air forces much, the value of what they achieved was immeasurably more.

General Bayerlein, commanding Panzer Lehr Division, said the fact that he had to leave 53 tanks by the roadside between the 11th and 15th of January for lack of petrol, lack of spare parts or repair or recovery facilities was at least partly due to air attacks on petrol transport, as well as such indirect factors as, for instance, the fact that the roads through Houffalize had been rendered absolutely impassable through air attack, and long and rough by-pass roads had to be used.

Von Rundstedt said afterwards that Allied air activities 'devastatingly contributed to the halting of the Ardennes offensive' and it was 'the lack of manoeuvrability and the inability to bring supplies up which caused the undertaking to fail'.

The Allied air forces were indeed largely responsible for the failure of the German counter-offensive.

The situation in the Ardennes on January the 16th is shown on the adjoining sketch map. With the German counter-offensive defeated,



though there were still a few miles of the Ardennes to be cleared of the enemy, it is possible to consider the conduct of the German action and its effects.

And first it is worth realising,

- (i) that two panzer and one infantry *armies* had attacked a 50-mile front defended only by four infantry and one armoured *divisions* with no planned second line of defence and no reserve behind them;
- (ii) that having penetrated in two places they had at first no other American forces ahead of them in the gaps they had opened except elements of the dispersed but not defeated divisions whose front had been broken through; but these were able to delay them while the northern flank was being formed and St. Vith and Bastogne were reinforced to become bastions in the path of the German advance;
- (iii) that they made no real progress against the American defence of the shoulders, even though formed in emergency and in positions that had not previously been prepared;
- (iv) that they were finally stopped without even reaching the Meuse, let alone Antwerp.

The fact that in December the weather was bad and the country difficult does not excuse their failure, for the offensive was specifically planned for bad weather and the nature of the Ardennes country was well known to them. They had advanced through it rapidly in 1940 (but that was in May) and had themselves occupied it for more than four years. Except for the remarkable skill and secrecy with which their armies, with artillery and initial supplies, were assembled close to the Allied front, unsuspected by the Allied troops facing them and undetected by Allied Intelligence, the Germans can claim no credit for the conduct of this operation—it was not an impressive performance. It was badly conceived by Hitler and his plan was to be ‘unalterable’ in spite of the protests of von Rundstedt and Model; neither did any of the German commanders show ability to conduct operations successfully in face of Allied unyielding opposition.

On the Allies’ side it is obvious that they too had little to be proud of except the determined and effective way in which American troops had fought in most testing circumstances. The setback to Allied progress and the heavy casualties and loss of valuable time were direct results of the way in which General Bradley had disposed his forces in pursuance of General Eisenhower’s ‘broad front’ policy. In the desire to maintain major attacks both north and south of the Ardennes he had risked the chance of an enemy counter-attack through the virtually unguarded country which separated them, notwithstanding somewhat inconclusive Intelligence reports and in spite of the fact that General Eisenhower had drawn his

attention to the weakness of First Army's dispositions on the Ardennes front. Bradley wrote afterwards: "I do not blame my commanders, my staff, or myself, for the situation that resulted. We had taken a calculated risk and the Germans hit us harder than we anticipated he could." Time has not altered that opinion. I would rather be bold than wary even though wariness may sometimes be right.¹ The point at which *unwariness* becomes folly is perhaps a matter of judgment. But there can be few who would not question General Bradley's further decision to remain at Luxembourg, separated from personal contact with Generals Hodges and Simpson or continuous and full awareness of the progress of his armies' struggle with the enemy forces. He said afterwards that the reason he gave for his action, when asked at the time if he meant to 'stay put in Luxembourg', was not for any military consideration but because 'I'm not going to budge this C.P. It would scare everyone else to death.'² Eisenhower challenged the wisdom of that resolution and recommended him to pull back: he should perhaps have done more than 'recommend' it. As the German advance continued westwards and communications with Hodges became progressively more uncertain General Eisenhower recognised that if Bradley would not move to where he could easily reach Hodges he must give Montgomery charge of the northern operations. Bradley can only blame himself for the necessity of that timely transfer of control.

The cost, to both opponents, was heavy. The total Allied casualties up to the end of January, by which time all the ground lost since the 16th of December had been recovered, amounted to 76,890. They consisted of 75,482 Americans and 1,408 British, the details being as follows.

	<i>Killed</i>	<i>Wounded</i>	<i>Missing</i>
U.S. Armies . . .	8,497	46,170	20,905
British Corps . . . (to 17th January)	200	969	239

The total of enemy casualties is not known exactly. Figures in one contemporary German estimate give the total as 81,834, including 12,652 dead; another records the total of 92,234. What is known for certain is that the Allies took over 50,000 prisoners in these operations. In addition to personnel casualties there was of course much destruction of material, and considerable loss and damage to civilian life and property.

¹ Bradley, *op. cit.*, p. 464.

² *Loc. cit.*, p. 466.

Hitler gained nothing of any value from all this death and destruction. At a conference he held on December the 28th (that is when the fighting was not finished though he saw that it had failed to achieve its object) he claimed that 'a tremendous easing of the situation has come about. The enemy has had to abandon all his plans for attack.'¹ Though he admitted that the offensive had 'not resulted in the decisive success which might have been expected' he was at that date insisting on the continuance of the attack and was asserting that 'only the offensive will enable us once more to give a successful turn to this war in the West'.² He showed no recognition of the fact that while the German losses were virtually irreplaceable the Allies' far greater resources made the renewal and increase of their own strength comparatively certain; the pursuit of the Allies' planned assault and the enemy's defeat were only postponed. Hitler had in fact done what, and only what, had been foreseen as possible when Twenty-First Army Group's Intelligence Review indicated what he *might* do if the Allies gave him an opportunity to take them off balance, 'so that an abrupt counter-stroke could put paid to future Allied prospects for the winter'. But in doing this he had so weakened the position of the Army of the West that it never recovered.

In January the enemy remaining on the Ardennes front were engaged in a hard-hitting withdrawal before the Allied armies but in the south it was troops of General Patch's Seventh Army who had at first to withdraw before the enemy's attack in Alsace (see page 249 *et seq.*).

On the 18th of January, when the United States First Army reverted to General Bradley's command, General Eisenhower had issued an operational directive in which he said: 'My intention is to launch strong offensives north of the Moselle thereby regaining the strategical initiative'. If the current American counter-offensive in the Ardennes maintained its good progress then Bradley was required to advance north-east on the axis Prüm-Euskirchen (i.e. towards Bonn and Cologne) and to press this attack with all possible vigour so long as there was a reasonable chance of securing a decisive success. As an alternative, 'we must be prepared to pass promptly to the defensive in the Ardennes and to attack in the sector of Northern Group of Armies'. Montgomery and Bradley must now complete their plans for this latter attack so that it could be launched with the minimum delay once the Supreme Commander decided to discontinue the offensive in the Ardennes.

¹ But before the Ardennes counter-offensive was foreseen Montgomery was planning for an assault crossing of the Rhine in '*mid-March*' and notwithstanding the German counter-attack the crossing began on *March the 24th* (page 288). In effect Allied plans were not seriously delayed.

² Chester Wilmot, *The Struggle for Europe* (Collins, 1952), p. 605.

General Bradley's First Army captured St. Vith on January the 23rd and four days later the Third Army reached the Our river to the south. At a bridge over the river a big concentration of enemy vehicles was trapped and almost completely destroyed by air attacks, and other bridges, communication centres and road junctions on the enemy line of retreat were consistently attacked by the Ninth and Second Tactical Air Forces. The enemy's Sixth SS Panzer Army, of four panzer divisions, had been withdrawn and ordered to entrain for the Eastern Front, but the rest of the German forces continued to fight hard as they were forced back from the remainder of the country they had occupied. Progress was made but the Roer dams remained in German hands at the end of the month. Meanwhile the United States Third Army, driving eastwards, had cleared the rest of the country which had been involved in the Ardennes fighting. On February the 1st General Eisenhower issued a new directive. 'Great successes have been won in the Russian offensive and the enemy has been made to withdraw forces from the Western front. It is of the greatest importance therefore that we should close the Rhine north of Düsseldorf as speedily as possible.' Twenty-First Army Group's twin operations in the north were to start on the 8th of February from Nijmegen (operation 'Veritable') and on the 10th from the river Roer ('Grenade'). For the latter the United States Ninth Army (still under Field-Marshal Montgomery's command) was to be made up by Bradley to ten divisions. When the United States First Army had taken the dams and had closed to the Roer river, Twelfth Army Group would assume an aggressive defence on the remainder of its front. So this momentous January ended—with the Ardennes counter-offensive a thing of the past, and all eyes fixed on the Rhine.

What had been happening in January, on Twenty-First Army Group front further north and the Sixth Army Group front in the south, will be told in chapter XI.

CHAPTER IX

HIGH LEVEL AFFAIRS

WHEN progress of the German counter-offensive had been stopped and its defeat seemed certain, Eisenhower visited Montgomery at Hasselt on December the 28th in order to co-ordinate the Allied counter-attack from north and south of the German penetration. When this had been agreed (page 190) Montgomery reverted to the discussion at Maastricht on December the 7th (page 167), reiterating the statement of his views on the main northern effort and its command. General Eisenhower showed no change of opinion and again no conclusion was reached; but in a mistaken belief that his arguments had convinced General Eisenhower, Montgomery wrote him the following letter on the 29th:

'My dear Ike,

It was very pleasant to see you again yesterday and to have a talk on the battle situation.

2. I would like to refer to the matter of operational control of all forces engaged in the northern thrust towards the Ruhr, i.e. 12 and 21 Army Groups. I think we want to be careful, because we have had one very definite failure when we tried to produce a formula that would meet this case; that was the formula produced in SHAEF FWD 15510 dated 23-9-44,¹ which formula very definitely did not work.

3. When you and Bradley and myself met at Maastricht on 7 December, it was very clear to me that Bradley opposed any idea that I should have operational control over his Army Group; so I did not then pursue the subject. I therefore consider that it will be necessary for you to be very firm on the subject, and any loosely worded statement will be quite useless.

4. I consider that if you merely use the word "co-ordination", it will not work. The person designated by you must have powers of operational direction and control of the operations that will follow on your directive.

¹ This directive from Eisenhower to Bradley read: '. . . In accordance with your tactical plans agreed upon with the Field-Marshal [Montgomery], you should direct Hodges to exert his main effort to meet the Field-Marshal's developing requirements. To save time, particularly in such emergencies as immediately needed adjustments of inter-army group boundaries or in suddenly arising tactical situations, the Field-Marshal should communicate his desires directly to Hodges. The Field-Marshal will, whenever he finds it mandatory to take any tactical action without prior consultation with you, be responsible for informing you by the most rapid means. Each Army Group Commander will, of course, immediately report to me any development that, in his judgment, prejudices the accomplishment of tasks assigned to his Army Group.'

5. I would say that your directive will assign tasks and objectives to the two Army Groups, allot boundaries, and so on. Thereafter preparations are made and battle is joined. It is then that one commander must have powers to direct and control the operations; you cannot possibly do it yourself, and so you would have to nominate someone else.

6. I suggest that your directive should finish with this sentence: "12 and 21 Army Groups will develop operations in accordance with the above instructions.

From now onwards full operational direction, control, and co-ordination of these operations is vested in the C-in-C 21 Army Group, subject to such instructions as may be issued by the Supreme Commander from time to time."

7. I put this matter up to you again only because I am so anxious not to have another failure. I am absolutely convinced that the key to success lies in:

- (a) *all* available offensive power being assigned to the northern line of advance to the Ruhr;
- (b) a sound set-up for command, and this implies one man directing and controlling the whole tactical battle on the northern thrust.

I am certain that if we do not comply with these two basic conditions, then we will fail again.

8. I would be grateful if you would not mention to Bradley the point I have referred to in para. 3. I would not like him to think that I remembered that point and had brought it up.

Yours always, and your very devoted friend,

Monty.¹

On the 30th General Eisenhower received a cable from the United States Chief of Staff (General Marshall) referring to statements in the British press advocating the appointment of a single ground commander. It read in full:

'My feeling is this: under no circumstances make any concessions of any kind whatsoever. You not only have our complete confidence but there would be a terrific resentment in this country following such action. I am not assuming that you had in mind such a concession. I just wish you to be certain of our attitude on this side. You are doing a fine job and go on and give them hell.'²

¹ Printed in Montgomery's *Memoirs*, pp. 317-19.

² Pogue, *The Supreme Command*, p. 386.

What happened at Shaef that day is told by the historian of *The Supreme Command*: 'Several of General Eisenhower's closest advisers at Shaef now counselled him to force a showdown with the Twenty-First Army Group commander. General Smith, who favoured such a course, discussed frankly with Montgomery's Chief of Staff [who visited Shaef that day] the difficulties which were arising.'¹ General de Guingand has since published his account of what happened. After Montgomery had been given command of the northern flank in the Ardennes he was depicted in the British Press 'as the man of the hour who had saved the situation after an American Commander's failure. The American Press naturally took the opposite view, and . . . Bradley's position became increasingly difficult. His troops . . . received ample supplies of the British daily newspapers and there was, therefore, a great danger that they might lose confidence in their Commander.' On hearing of this, de Guingand telephoned Bedell Smith and the reply decided him to fly to Shaef as quickly as possible.² Arriving there he learned that 'the matter had practically reached a stage where nothing more could be done about it' but he was taken over to see Eisenhower. 'We entered Ike's office to find him at his desk looking very serious indeed. Tedder, the Deputy Supreme Commander, sat near him . . . apparently reading a document . . .'

'The Supreme Commander looked really tired and worried . . . He told me that Bradley's position had become intolerable, and that there was every chance that he would lose the confidence of his troops . . . He asked me whether my Chief fully realised the effects of the line taken up by the British Press, and how Monty himself had helped to create this crisis by his campaign for a Land Force Commander and by the indiscreet remarks he had passed. Eisenhower went on to say that he was tired of the whole business, and had come to the conclusion that it was now a matter for the Combined Chiefs of Staff to make a decision . . . With Montgomery still pressing for a Land Force Commander it was impossible for the two of them to carry on working in harness together. He had already prepared a signal to General Marshall, Chairman of the Combined Chiefs of Staff in Washington, which was, in fact, being vetted at that very moment. He handed over the draft for me to read. I was stunned by what I read. In very direct language, it made it crystal-clear that a crisis of the first magnitude was indeed here . . . The Supreme Commander had decided to make an issue of the matter and was quite prepared to go himself, if the Combined Chiefs of Staff considered this to be the right solution.

¹ *Ibid.*

² De Guingand's account as quoted on this and the following pages is taken from his *Generals at War* (Hodder & Stoughton, 1964), pp. 106-112 *passim*.

Since the Americans were the strongest ally, it really meant that Monty would be the one to go . . . I was aware that the Supreme Commander knew very well how difficult it often was for my Chief to understand the atmosphere of events outside his own zone, and how his refusal to leave his own Headquarters except to visit his formations was largely responsible for this . . . [I] finished by imploring Eisenhower to delay sending the signal for twenty-four hours so as to give me an opportunity to solve the impasse.'

'At first neither Eisenhower nor Tedder appeared inclined to agree to this, and they stressed the damage which had already been done.' Bedell Smith, however, advised delay and it was finally agreed that the signal should be held up to give de Guingand an opportunity to act. 'But it was quite a time before they came round to this point of view.' Delayed by fog, de Guingand flew back to Montgomery's headquarters the following day and told Montgomery what had happened at Shaef. He was 'completely taken by surprise and found it difficult to grasp what I was saying'. De Guingand told him of 'the signal that was waiting to be sent off to Washington . . . I believed the situation could be put right, but that it required immediate action . . . [I] suggested that he send a "most immediate" signal off to Eisenhower . . . I had already prepared a draft . . . He was able to use this as the basis . . .' Here is the signal:

'Dear Ike,

I have seen Freddie and understand you are greatly worried by many considerations in these very difficult days. I have given you my frank views because I have felt you like this. I am sure there are many factors which have a bearing quite beyond anything I realise. Whatever your decision may be you can rely on me one hundred per cent to make it work and I know Brad will do the same. Very distressed that my letter may have upset you and I would ask you to tear it up.

Your very devoted subordinate Monty'¹

To this Eisenhower replied on January the 1st:

'Dear Monty,

. . . I received your very fine telegram this morning. I truly appreciate the understanding attitude it indicates . . . With the earnest hope that the year 1945 will be the most successful for you of your entire career, as ever, Ike'.

¹ Montgomery's *Memoirs*, p. 319.

The drafted signal to General Marshall was not sent. But on the previous day, that is before the signal to Marshall had been drafted, Eisenhower had written to Montgomery as follows:

'Dear Monty,

Enclosed is my outline plan covering operations as far as they can be foreseen¹. The immediate thing is to give the enemy in the salient a good beating, destroying everything we can. Following upon that, the plan concentrates everything for the destruction of the enemy north of Prüm-Bonn, and gives to you and Bradley each a specific task. The plan also provides for great strength north of the Ruhr when the Rhine is crossed. In these principal features it exactly repeats my intentions as I gave them to you verbally on the train, on the 28th.

In the matter of command I do not agree that one Army Group Commander should fight his own battle and give orders to another Army Group Commander. My plan places a complete U.S. Army under command of 21 Army Group, something that I consider militarily necessary, and most assuredly reflects my confidence in you personally. If these things were not true this decision would, in itself, be a most difficult one.

You know how greatly I've appreciated and depended upon your frank and friendly counsel, but in your latest letter you disturb me by predictions of "failure" unless your exact opinions in the matter of giving you command over Bradley are met in detail. I assure you that in this matter I can go no further.

Please read this document carefully and note how definitely I have planned, after eliminating the salient,² to build up the 21 Army Group, give it a major task, and put that task under your command. Moreover, Bradley will be close by your H.Q.

I know your loyalty as a soldier and your readiness to devote yourself to assigned tasks. For my part I would deplore the development of such an unbridgeable group of convictions between us that we would have to present our differences to the Combined Chiefs of Staff. The confusion and debate that would follow would certainly damage the goodwill and devotion to a common cause that have made this Allied Force unique in history.

As ever, your friend,

Ike.³

¹ It will be seen that they only went as far as the Rhine.

² The 'salient' referred to was the German penetration in the Ardennes.

³ Montgomery's *Memoirs*, pp. 320-1.

The outline plan referred to was as follows:

'My outline plan of operations, based on the current situation and prospects, is as follows:

Basic plan—to destroy enemy forces west of Rhine, north of the Moselle, and to prepare for crossing the Rhine in force with the *main effort north of the Ruhr*. The several tasks are:

- a. To reduce the Ardennes salient by immediate attacks from north and south, with present command arrangements undisturbed until tactical victory within the salient has been assured and the Third Army and Collins's Corps have joined up for a drive to the north-east. Bradley then to resume command of the First U.S. Army. (Enemy action within the salient indicates his determination to make this battle an all-out effort with his mobile forces. *Therefore we must be prepared to use everything consistent with minimum security requirements to accomplish their destruction.*)
- b. Thereafter First and Third Armies to drive to north-east on general line Prüm-Bonn, eventually to Rhine.¹
- c. When (a) is accomplished, 21st Army Group, with Ninth U.S. Army under operational command, to resume preparations for "VERITABLE".
- d. All priorities in building up strength of U.S. Armies in personnel, material and units, to go to 12th Army Group.
- e. The front south of Moselle to be strictly defensive for the present.
- f. I will build up a reserve (including refitting divisions) which will be available to reinforce success.
- g. As soon as reduction of Ardennes salient permits, H.Q. 12th Army Group will move north, in close proximity to 21st Army Group H.Q.
- h. From now on, any detailed or emergency co-ordination required along Army Group boundaries in the north will be effected by the two Army Group commanders with power of decision vested in C.G. 21 Army Group.

The one thing that must now be prevented is the stabilisation of the enemy salient with infantry, permitting him opportunity to use his Panzers at will on any part of the front. We must regain the initiative, and speed and energy are essential.

At conclusion of the battle for the salient, assignment of Divisions to Army Groups and changes in boundaries will be announced.

(Sgd.) Dwight D. Eisenhower'

¹ It will be noted that First and Third Armies are to drive north-eastward to the Rhine in the Bonn area (para. b). This and para. (c) appear to indicate that the alternative of a subsidiary attack from the Frankfurt area which was discussed at Maastricht was not contemplated at present.

A week later, on the 7th of January, Field-Marshal Montgomery gave a press conference which was well reported widely in the British and foreign press but had unfortunate consequences. His account of the battle, as seen only from his own point of view, was out of perspective. After he had spoken he distributed a previously prepared note of what he had said and it was this, in his own words, which was quoted verbatim at length or in part in most of the press. He began as follows:

'Rundstedt attacked on 16 December; he obtained tactical surprise. He drove a deep wedge into the centre of the First U.S. Army and split the American forces in two. The situation looked as if it might become awkward; the Germans had broken right through a weak spot, and were heading for the Meuse. As soon as I saw what was happening I took certain steps myself to ensure that if the Germans got to the Meuse they would certainly not get over that river. And I carried out certain movements so as to provide balanced dispositions to meet the threatened danger . . . I was thinking ahead.

Then the situation began to deteriorate. But the whole allied team rallied to meet the danger; national considerations were thrown overboard; General Eisenhower placed me in command of the whole Northern front.

I employed the whole available power of the British Group of Armies; this power was brought into play very gradually . . . Finally it was put into battle with a bang, and today British divisions are fighting hard on the right flank of First U.S. Army.'¹

It will be noticed that in this opening description of the battle and of what 'I' did there is no mention of the parts played by the Supreme Commander or by Generals Bradley, Hodges or Patton in the holding of the shoulders of the salient and prompt reinforcement of the defence of Bastogne, which had largely determined the failure of the German attack in the first four most critical days before Montgomery was appointed to take command of the American northern flank. Beyond the report handed to the press he paid a warm tribute to 'the good fighting qualities of the American soldier', the importance of team-work, and the support of General Eisenhower, 'the captain of the team'. 'He bears a great burden, he needs our fullest support, he has a right to expect it, and it is up to all of us to see that he gets it.'

Next day (the 8th) Montgomery's speech as recorded in this

¹ The full report of what he said as handed to the press is quoted in Montgomery's *Memoirs*, pp. 311 *et seq.*

'hand out' was widely quoted in the British and American press.¹ But before the daily newspapers were received at the front a broadcast on the well-known wavelength used by the British Broadcasting Corporation was monitored at General Bradley's headquarters where it at once aroused an uproar of anger and resentment. This report began with the statement that 'Field-Marshal Montgomery came into the fight at a strategic moment' and 'he scored a major success . . .'. It went on to say that 'he took over scattered American forces, planned his action and stopped the German drive', and ended: 'The Battle of the Ardennes can now be written off, thanks to Field-Marshal Montgomery'.² At Shaef and General Bradley's headquarters annoyance was exacerbated when the newspapers arrived and the reports of Montgomery's press conference speech (as quoted from his hand-out) showed that he had made no mention of the American generals' part in holding the German advance before his appointment to command the northern flank, but only spoke of what 'I' had done. None the less, in spite of the offending broadcast Montgomery's own speech as reported in the hand-out was well received on the whole in Britain and America.

At the front it was only on the 10th that it became known that the broadcast of January the 8th made on the B.B.C. wavelength had been transmitted by the German radio and was cleverly slanted in a way calculated to give most offence to the Americans. When this became known it was too late to undo the harm that had been done and some of the press continued to be critical of the way the battle had been fought. By the 18th of January the Prime Minister thought it desirable to make the following statement in Parliament:

'I have seen it suggested that the terrific battle which has been proceeding since 16th December on the American front is an Anglo-American battle. In fact, however, the United States troops have done almost all the fighting and have suffered almost all the losses. They have suffered losses almost equal to those on both sides in the battle of Gettysburg. Only one British Army Corps has been engaged in this action. All the rest of the 30 or more divisions, which have been fighting continuously for the last month, are United States troops. The Americans have engaged 30 or 40 men for every one we have engaged, and they have lost 60 to 80 men for every one of ours. That is a point I wish to make. Care must be taken in telling our proud tale not to claim for the British Army an undue share of what is undoubtedly the greatest

¹ The London *Times*, after reporting the 'hand-out' version in full, added his warm praise of the American soldier and in particular of four American divisions and his views on battle control and the principles to be observed if success was to be achieved. He also paid high tribute to General Eisenhower.

² Printed in *The Daily Telegraph*, 11/1/45.

American battle of the war and will, I believe, be regarded as an ever famous American victory.¹

There is no need to dwell on this matter here but as the outcome occasioned much trouble at the time and caused the Supreme Commander 'more distress and worry than did any similar one of the war'² the full text of the Field-Marshal's 'hand-out' and of the intentionally misleading German broadcast are given in Appendix IX.

Meanwhile, doubts of the wisdom of General Eisenhower's intentions which the British Chiefs of Staff retained after their discussion with him at the London meeting of December the 12th (see page 169), coupled with affairs in the Mediterranean theatre which are outside the scope of this volume, led them to ask the Prime Minister to urge that the time was ripe for a further meeting of the Combined Chiefs of Staff. In support of this request the recommendations in their memorandum submitted to the Prime Minister in December (page 170) were now forwarded to the British Joint Staff Mission in Washington, with an accompanying brief for discussion with the American Chiefs of Staff. This concluded:

'Clearly General Eisenhower's plans will be influenced by the result of the hard fighting now in progress and cannot be finally decided until Air Chief Marshal Tedder has returned from Moscow with information regarding future Russian plans.

We consider, however, that General Eisenhower should be in a position to submit his appreciation and plan to the Combined Chiefs of Staff in sufficient time for them to consider it at the meeting proposed in the near future.

The Combined Chiefs of Staff can then fully satisfy themselves that the basic essentials of our strategy in the West are fulfilled, namely:

- (a) All available offensive power must be allotted to the Northern front—i.e. from about Prüm northwards; and
- (b) one man must have power of operational control and co-ordination of the ground forces employed on this front.'

The Americans agreed at once that Eisenhower should be instructed to submit his plans and the general disposition of his forces, and the request was sent to him on January the 10th; they preferred to wait for his reply before discussing the British views but

¹ Hansard 1944-45, paras. 415-8.

² Eisenhower, *Crusade in Europe* (New York, 1948), p. 356.

meanwhile they opposed firmly any change in the system of command.¹

After protracted negotiations a tripartite 'summit' meeting of the Allied leaders and Chiefs of Staff was arranged. It would be held at Yalta in the Crimea beginning on February the 4th, and would be preceded by a preliminary Anglo-American conference of the Combined Chiefs of Staff at Malta. The President and Prime Minister would be present at both meetings. Meanwhile General Eisenhower had expressed his need of further information about the offensive plans of the Russian Command. The Combined Chiefs of Staff agreed and, with the active backing of the President and Prime Minister, Marshal Stalin was asked to receive a qualified member of Eisenhower's Staff for consultation. He at once consented and Sir Arthur Tedder left by air for Moscow at the end of December. He was delayed in Egypt by bad weather and when he had not arrived by January the 6th the Prime Minister asked Stalin by telegram 'whether we can count on a major Russian offensive on the Vistula front or elsewhere during January'. Stalin replied next day:

'It is important that we should be able to take advantage of our supremacy over the Germans in artillery and in the air.

This demands clear flying weather and an absence of low mists which hinder aimed artillery fire. We are preparing an offensive, but the weather is at present unfavourable. Nevertheless, taking into account the position of our Allies on the Western Front, G.H.Q. of the Supreme Command has decided to accelerate the completion of our preparations, and, regardless of the weather, to commence large-scale offensive operations against the Germans along the whole Central Front not later than the second half of January.'

Thus Eisenhower could now proceed with the knowledge that German forces in the east would be fully occupied there in the next few weeks and could not be used to strengthen the western front—news which was soon confirmed when Tedder returned from Moscow.

He had reached Moscow on January the 15th and was accompanied by the heads of the British and American missions there when he met in conference Marshal Stalin and General Antonov. Marshal Stalin informed them that a large-scale offensive involving 150–160 Russian divisions had been prepared and held in abeyance for favourable weather but, in view of the German attack on the Western front and the messages he had received from the President

¹ It was indeed unfortunate that the command structure should be criticised by the British Chiefs of Staff at a time when the reports of Montgomery's Ardennes press conference and the German version were causing resentment in American military circles.

and the Prime Minister, he had decided to launch the Russian offensive at once, regardless of weather. He described the Russian Army's tasks on the fronts involved, indicating precisely the objectives of each attack initiated on or after January the 12th. They proposed to continue their attacks for two to two and a half months, the ultimate objective being the line of the Oder.

Sir Arthur Tedder followed with a description of the Allies' plans, and after this fruitful exchange of information the following among other matters were discussed: the danger to security of enemy agents left behind when the German armies were driven out of occupied territory; estimates of the enemy's and Allies' strategic reserves; German strength in artillery, ammunition and tanks; comparison of respective armaments of German tanks and those of Russia and the Western Allies; the state of German morale and food situation; and the bombing of synthetic oil plants supplying petrol to the Eastern front.

In concluding a very helpful meeting Marshal Stalin said in effect: 'We have no treaty, but we are comrades. It is proper and also sound, selfish policy that we should help each other in times of difficulty.'

After the Combined Chiefs of Staff had asked Eisenhower for his plans on January the 10th they received his reply on the 20th. It was in considerable length and, in view of what the reader already knows of the progress of the campaign and the persisting differences of opinion between Eisenhower and Montgomery in their discussion of the strategy adopted, it is not necessary to quote Eisenhower's reply in full. It divided forthcoming operations into three phases:

- (1) The destruction of the German forces West of the Rhine and the closing of the Rhine.
- (2) The seizing of bridgeheads over the Rhine from which to develop operations into Germany.
- (3) The destruction of the German forces East of the Rhine and the advance into Germany.'

These phases were then elaborated, with an estimate of the Allied and enemy forces expected to be available, a description of the nature of the terrain involved, and the respective advantages of each area north and south of the Ruhr; of these, the following extracts are sufficient to show the Supreme Commander's mind.

'4. . . . Before proceeding to this examination I wish to emphasise that the attack North of the Ruhr is definitely the one that we must hold in front of us as our principal purpose. . . .

6. (a) An advance on the Frankfurt–Kassel axis would secure early the important industrial area around Frankfurt. The Germans in the West are likely to accord a priority to the defence of this area second only to that of the Ruhr, and there should therefore be an opportunity of destroying considerable German forces although we should have less opposition to our advance than would be the case in the North. Moreover, the occupation of the Frankfurt–Giessen area offers very suitable airfield sites both to support a further advance and to help support of operations North of the Ruhr.

7. (a) An advance North of the Ruhr offers the quickest means of denying the enemy the industries in the Ruhr. The eastern exits from the industrial area could be cut by enveloping the area on the north and east, and the southern exits by air action . . .

(b) Because of the importance of the Ruhr to the German economy, and because of the fact that this route offers the most direct and obvious approach to the centre of Germany, this area is likely to receive first priority from the point of view of defence. While I should be glad of an opportunity of defeating the bulk of the German forces on favourable terrain, I would have to deploy a superior force rapidly across the Rhine to ensure success. It will not, however, be possible to maintain more than some 35 divisions across the Rhine in this sector until the railway has been extended over the river.

8. The country between the Ruhr and Frankfurt is easily defensible and is not suited to offensive operations.

9. To sum up. An examination of Phase Three suggests that operations across the Rhine North of the Ruhr offer the greatest strategic rewards within a short distance, but that this area will be most strongly held by the enemy. An advance in the Frankfurt area offers less favourable terrain and a longer route to vital strategic objectives. *Depending on the degree of enemy resistance it may be necessary to use either or both of these two avenues.*¹

He amplified this in a later paragraph with the statement that:

‘The possibility of failure to secure bridgeheads in the North or in the South cannot, however, be overlooked. I am therefore making logistical preparations which will enable me to *switch my main effort from the North to the South should this be forced upon me . . .*’¹

Eisenhower continued:

‘21. My plan is as follows:

- (a) to carry out a series of operations North of the Moselle immediately with a view to destroying the enemy and closing the Rhine North of Düsseldorf. South of the Moselle we shall remain on the defensive.

¹ Author's italics.

- (b) After closing the Rhine in the North to direct our main effort to the destruction of all enemy forces remaining West of the Rhine both in the North and in the South.
- (c) To seize bridgeheads over the Rhine in the North and in the South.
- (d) To deploy East of the Rhine and North of the Ruhr the maximum number of divisions which can be maintained (estimated at some 35 divisions). The initial task of this force assisted by air action will be to deny the industries of the Ruhr to the enemy.
- (e) To deploy East of the Rhine, on the axis Frankfurt-Kassel, such forces, if adequate, as may be available after providing 35 divisions for the North and essential security elsewhere. The task of this force will be to draw enemy forces away from the North by capturing Frankfurt and advancing on Kassel.'

It will be noticed that there was now no mention of a possible attack in the Bonn area.

The Supreme Commander's plans were discussed by the British Chiefs of Staff and their suggested modifications were submitted to the Combined Chiefs of Staff at Malta. The British proposed a new directive embodying the following:

'In preparing your plans you should bear in mind our views as follows:

- (a) All the resources which can be made available for offensive operations should be concentrated on one main thrust. This thrust should be made in the maximum possible strength with sufficient fresh formations held available to keep up the momentum of the advance. Only such forces as cannot be employed to support this main thrust should be used for subsidiary operations. Only if the main thrust is held and the subsidiary operations prosper should the latter be exploited.
- (b) If tactical considerations allow, this main thrust should be made in the north, in view of the overriding importance to the enemy of the Ruhr area.
- (c) The best results will be achieved if one Land Force Commander, directly responsible to you, is given power of operational control and co-ordination of all ground forces employed in the main thrust.'

The American Joint Chiefs of Staff replied at once, disagreeing with the need for a new directive and approving General Eisenhower's plans; specifically they agreed completely with his plan to

have a secondary effort to supplement the main thrust. They argued that:

‘. . . The narrow front of the main thrust, the lack of surprise, the small number of our divisions employed initially and which build up only to a total of 35, and the enemy capabilities which we must recognise—all these are reasons convincing us there must be a strong secondary effort.’

There thus appeared to be a serious difference of opinion but although when discussed at Malta it resulted in a prolonged and, at times, acrimonious discussion (the last phase of the debate being ‘shrouded in the decent obscurity of a closed session’¹) the ground for disagreement was not really so great as appeared. For it was largely due to the somewhat loose use of words and phrases in recent months which were open to misinterpretation. The ‘main effort in the north’ had originally meant ‘*the capture of the Ruhr and advance by the northern route*’; it was at other times defined as ‘*north of the Ardennes*’, seeming to involve one major operation extending both north and south of the Ruhr. It was for such a single operation that the British Chiefs of Staff supported Montgomery’s contention that a single commander should be made responsible. But by now General Eisenhower meant the ‘main effort’ to be ‘*north of the Ruhr*’: he intended no major attack on the Ruhr itself but only its containment; the ‘main effort’ north of the Ruhr would be under a single commander but would be supported by a subsidiary attack south of the Ruhr starting from the Frankfurt area. Eisenhower’s arguments in favour of such a widely separated subsidiary attack were accepted after discussion by the Combined Chiefs of Staff, on the understanding that the main attack north of the Ruhr would not be weakened to support other fronts—there must be no suggestion that priority might be transferred to the subsidiary attack even if it met with less opposition than was being encountered in the north, nor would the northern attack be delayed till the whole of the Rhine was reached. On this understanding Eisenhower’s Chief of Staff (Bedell Smith) and the British reconsidered the summary of Eisenhower’s plan which is reproduced on pages 209–11 above and they recommended that, with one or two minor verbal changes in paragraph 21 (which clarified but did not alter its meaning), his plans should be accepted. On being asked, Eisenhower at once agreed to the proposed rewording, adding to his acceptance:

‘You may assure the Combined Chiefs of Staff that I will seize the Rhine crossings in the north immediately this is a feasible operation and without waiting to close the Rhine throughout its length. Furthermore, I will advance across the Rhine in the

¹ John Ehrman, *Grand Strategy*, vol. VI (H.M.S.O., 1956), p. 89.

North with maximum strength and complete determination as soon as the situation in the South allows me to collect the necessary forces and do this without incurring unreasonable risks.'

The Supreme Commander's plans as amended were then discussed in a closed session on February the 1st, and approved at the plenary meeting of the President and Prime Minister and their Combined Chiefs of Staff on the 2nd. Eisenhower had been led to make his intentions clearer but had not been required to vary his plan or to change his form of command: the British had been satisfied that there would be no dispersal or weakening of forces required for the main effort north of the Ruhr, which would consist of the Canadian First, the British Second and the United States Ninth Army and would be under a single commander (Montgomery) whom Eisenhower had chosen.¹

The second decision of importance to Overlord followed consideration of affairs in the Mediterranean theatre and, in particular, of the situation in Italy and of Allied troops in Greece.² On the recommendation of the British Chiefs of Staff it was agreed that five divisions of the Allied forces in Italy and part of the United States Twelfth Air Force should be transferred to the Western Front. These were to consist of three Canadian divisions to join the First Canadian Army as soon as possible and two of the British divisions shortly to return to Italy from Greece. Of the Twelfth Air Force, two fighter groups were to be moved from Italy to France at once and, later, as much more as could be released without hazard to the Italian campaign.

Among many other matters discussed at Malta which concerned the Western campaign were an expected renewal of a threat to shipping by the enemy's new U-boats, and arrangements with Russia for the co-ordination of strategic air attacks in the shrinking area which separated the Eastern and Western fronts. These were carried forward to the fuller conference at Yalta.

On February the 2nd the President and Prime Minister with their Combined Chiefs of Staff moved to Yalta to confer with Marshal Stalin and the Russian General Staff. Much of the first day was devoted to an exchange of information about the three Allies' operations in progress or projected for the final defeat of Germany, and to the elucidation of questions on which further information was

¹ Early in January Mr. Churchill first raised with General Eisenhower the question of whether the Supreme Commander's hands would be strengthened for the impending battles by the appointment of a soldier instead of an airman (i.e. Alexander in place of Tedder) as his Deputy; but General Eisenhower was anxious not to disturb his existing command arrangements and no change was made.

² For an understanding of the strategic situation on the Mediterranean front, which is outside the limits of this history of Overlord, the reader is referred to *Grand Strategy*, vol. VI, by John Ehrman.

desired. All were agreed on the need to co-ordinate operations so that there would be no 'let up' which might give the enemy time to transfer his forces from one front to another. The Western Allies emphasised the desirability of more effective liaison with the Soviet command but the Russians maintained that the British and American Missions in Moscow could provide all the contacts that were desirable at present: as operations developed any need of closer liaison could be reviewed and adjusted. The Russian's continued advocacy of a bomb-line which would prevent the Western Allies from bombing strategic targets lying to the east of it without express permission of Soviet authorities was not agreed and was left for further discussion by the Air Staffs. The existing arrangements under which strategic bombing could be authorised (i) south of the latitude of Vienna—by the Supreme Allied Commander, Mediterranean, and (ii) north of the latitude of Vienna—by the Commanding General, United States Strategic Air Forces and the British Deputy Chief of Air Staff still held.¹ In both cases any changes were to be communicated to the Red Army Staff, and copies sent to the Combined Chiefs of Staff for information. In the event, these arrangements, intended to stand only pending further agreement, remained in force until almost the end of the war in Europe.

Some of the other matters discussed at Yalta called for political decision though involving military action—such as plans and policies for the occupation and control of Germany after she had been forced to surrender unconditionally. On this, the Allied leaders declared:

'We have agreed on common policies and plans for enforcing the unconditional surrender terms which we shall impose together on Nazi Germany after German armed resistance has been finally crushed. These terms will not be made known until the final defeat of Germany has been accomplished.

Under the agreed plans the forces of the three Powers will each occupy a separate zone of Germany. Co-ordinated administration and control has been provided for under the plan through a Central Control Commission consisting of the Supreme Commanders of the three Powers with Headquarters in Berlin. It has been agreed that France should be invited by the three Powers, if she should so desire, to take a zone of occupation, and to participate as a fourth member of the Control Commission. The limits of the French Zone will be agreed by the four Governments concerned through their representatives on the European Advisory Commission.

It is our inflexible purpose to destroy German militarism and Nazism and to ensure that Germany will never again be able to

¹ See Ehrman, *Grand Strategy*, vol. VI, pp. 99–102.



29. AT THE YALTA CONFERENCE

Admiral
Cunningham

Air Marshal
Portal

Admiral
Leahy

Russian officers with
Marshal Stalin

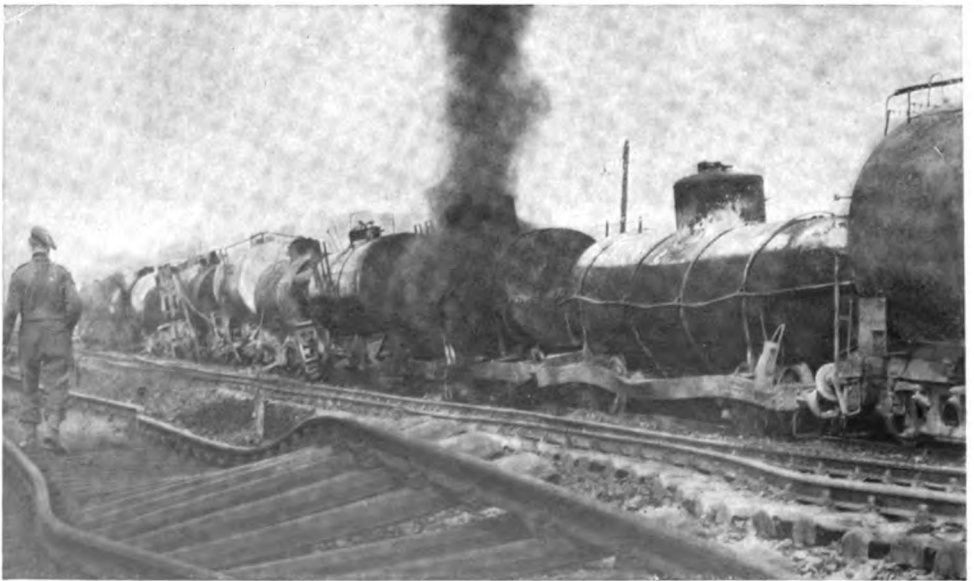
Mr. Churchill

President Roosevelt

Marshal Stalin



30. Hamburg—bombed dock area



31. A 'Communications' target: bombed oil-train

disturb the peace of the world. We are determined to disarm and disband all German armed forces; break up for all time the German General Staff that has repeatedly contrived the resurgence of German militarism; remove or destroy all German military equipment; eliminate or control all German industry that could be used for military production; bring all war criminals to justice and swift punishment and exact reparation in kind for the destruction wrought by the Germans; wipe out the Nazi Party, Nazi laws, organisations and institutions; remove all Nazi and militarist influences from public office and from the cultural and economic life of the German people; and take in harmony such other measures in Germany as may be necessary to the future peace and safety of the world.

It is not our purpose to destroy the people of Germany, but only when Nazism and militarism have been extirpated will there be hope for a decent life for Germans and a place for them in the comity of nations.'

Many of the other discussions concerned matters which are not within the scope of this history—such as operations in the Pacific and in Burma and China and long-range bomber operations against Japan. The meeting was not designed to decide in detail matters involving political decisions. The most significant and important outcome of the Yalta meeting was (or was thought to be) the adoption of a 'Declaration on Liberated Europe' which provided for 'concerting the policies of the three Powers and for joint action by them in meeting the political and economic problems of Liberated Europe in accordance with democratic principles'.

The text of this declaration was as follows:

'The Premier of the U.S.S.R., the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom and the President of the United States of America have consulted with each other in the common interests of peoples of their countries and those of Liberated Europe. They jointly declare their mutual agreement to concert during the temporary period of instability in Liberated Europe the policies of their three Governments in assisting the peoples liberated from the domination of Nazi Germany and the peoples of the former Axis satellite States of Europe to solve by democratic means their pressing political and economic problems.

The establishment of order in Europe and the rebuilding of national economic life must be achieved by processes which will enable the liberated peoples to destroy the last vestiges of Nazism and Fascism and to create democratic institutions of their own choice.

This is a principle of the Atlantic Charter—the right of all peoples to choose the form of government under which they will live—the restoration of sovereign rights and self-government to

H•

those peoples who have been forcibly deprived of them by the aggressor nations.

To foster the conditions in which the liberated peoples may exercise these rights, the three Governments will jointly assist the people in any European Liberated State or former Axis Satellite State in Europe where, in their judgment, conditions require—

- (a) to establish conditions of internal peace;
- (b) to carry out emergency measures for the relief of distressed people;
- (c) to form interim Governmental authorities broadly representative of all democratic elements in the population and pledged to the earliest possible establishment through free elections of governments responsive to the will of the people; and
- (d) to facilitate where necessary the holding of such elections.

The three Governments will consult the other United Nations and provisional authority or other Governments in Europe when matters of direct interest to them are under consideration.

When, in the opinion of the three Governments, conditions in any European Liberated State or any former Axis Satellite State in Europe make such action necessary, they will immediately consult together on the measures necessary to discharge the joint responsibilities set forth in this Declaration.

By this Declaration we reaffirm our faith in the principles of the Atlantic Charter, our pledge in the Declaration by the United Nations, and our determination to build in co-operation with other peace-loving nations a world order under law, dedicated to peace, security, freedom and the general well-being of all mankind.

In issuing this Declaration, the three Powers express the hope that the Provisional Government of the French Republic may be associated with them in the procedure suggested.'

After agreeing arrangements designed to establish 'a strong, free, independent and democratic Poland', and a general review of the Balkans question, the report of the conference, which included the above declaration, closed with a final avowal of faith.

'Only with continuing and growing co-operation and understanding among our three countries and among all the peace-loving nations can the highest aspiration of humanity be realised—a secure and lasting peace which will, in the words of the Atlantic Charter, "afford assurance that all the men in all the lands may live out their lives in freedom from fear and want"'.
'

Victory in this war and establishment of the proposed International Organisation will provide the greatest opportunity in all history to create in the years to come the essential conditions of such a peace.'

This was signed by Mr. Churchill, President Roosevelt and Marshal Stalin.

The tragic failure of the Russians to implement the Yalta resolution which soon followed and the fall of the 'Iron Curtain' on so many hopes, belong to post-war history rather than to this account of the military operations which brought the Allied nations victory in Europe.

Before reverting to the story of Allied operations, it will be convenient to explain shortly a matter touched on in the report of the Yalta conference, namely the plan for control of Germany after all armed resistance had been finally crushed.

In the autumn of 1943 a European Advisory Commission had been set up by the three Allied Governments. Subsequently the Commission recommended, and the three Allied Governments approved, that for the purposes of Allied occupation Germany should be



divided into an Eastern Zone occupied by Russian forces, a North-Western Zone occupied by British forces and South-Western Zone occupied by United States forces. Berlin was to be similarly divided and occupied and supreme authority in Germany was to be exercised, on instructions of the respective Governments, by their respective commanders-in-chief, each in his own zone and jointly, as members of a tripartite Control Commission, in matters affecting Germany as a whole.

It was agreed at Yalta, as mentioned above, that France would be invited to take a zone of occupation and to participate as a fourth member of the Control Commission.

The zones of occupation as finally planned for the then existing Germany are shown on the adjoining map. After Germany's final defeat they were adjusted to coincide with her redrawn eastern frontiers.

It will be noted that Berlin, the capital of Germany, was to be under inter-allied control although it would be well within the Eastern Zone to be occupied by the Russian armies.

CHAPTER X

THE STRATEGIC AIR OFFENSIVE
AND
MARITIME OPERATIONS
(January to March 1945)

As the Allies close in on Germany it becomes more difficult to make any clear distinction between the heavy bombers' strategic offensive and their tactical operations in support of the armies. But although the Allied plans had been rudely interrupted by the German counter-offensive and the heavy bombers had been involved in its defeat, their record of operations in December shows that devotion to their strategic targets had only been diminished by a reduction in the amounts dropped on oil. In that month they had delivered on German targets a total of 85,866 tons of bombs, of which 36,815 tons were attributed to the Ardennes battle. In the last three months of 1944 they had indeed dropped the huge total of 275,143 tons (163,266 tons by Bomber Command and 111,877 by the United States Eighth Air Force). This greatly exceeded their combined effort in 1943, when their total for the whole year was 201,642 tons.

Until the middle of January 1945 the strategic bombers were working under the directive issued on November the 1st (page 152) which, it will be remembered, gave as their first priority German 'oil' and as second priority German 'communications' with special reference to the Ruhr; when weather or tactical considerations made such attacks impracticable attacks were to be made on industrial towns, particularly those containing priority objectives. The November directive had been accepted without demur by the United States Eighth Air Force but the Commander-in-Chief of Bomber Command had questioned its wisdom and had maintained his argument in a vigorous correspondence with the British Chief of Air Staff (Sir Charles Portal) and the Deputy Supreme Commander (Sir Arthur Tedder) who were themselves not wholly agreed as to the relative importance of the two targets systems to which priority was given in the directive. Agreeing that both oil and communications were complementary objectives, alike hampering movement

in both military operations and industrial economy, they agreed that both should be given priority before all else, always excepting the continuing liability to give support to the army when required by the Supreme Commander; but Sir Arthur Harris had a radically different opinion. While the Chief of Air Staff put oil first and communications next in importance and Sir Arthur Tedder would merely reverse their order, Sir Arthur Harris maintained that if vigorously pursued the destruction of towns by area bombing should be put before everything, believing that it would bring the war to an end more quickly than anything else. It is neither necessary nor desirable here to go into a detailed account of this major difference of opinion¹; it persisted till the war ended and may remain a matter of controversy. When victory has been described it will be time to review the campaign and some discussion of air operations will then be appropriate; for the present it is better to stick to the account of what was done, without stopping to speculate on what might have been done differently. Meantime it should be noted that Sir Arthur Harris did not neglect the priority targets to which he personally attached comparatively little urgency; they *were* being attacked by Bomber Command though, as such, they were not given the priority named in the November directive. After the issue of that directive twenty-four per cent of the tonnage dropped by Bomber Command that month was aimed at oil targets but fifty-four per cent on German towns.

In December Allied air operations were affected, after the 16th, by the enemy's Ardennes counter-offensive; the December record of Bomber Command shows ten per cent on army support and seven per cent on oil but an increase of attacks on the second priority, enemy lines of communication (e.g. railway marshalling yards, bridges and canals affecting reinforcement and supply of enemy forces and the German economy) which accounted for thirty-three per cent of the total, while approximately a similar percentage (thirty-three per cent) was also dropped on German towns, many of which included second priority targets.

Compared with Bomber Command's 49,040 tons dropped in December 1944, the United States Eighth Air Force had dropped 36,826 tons: of the American total more than nine per cent was in support of Army operations and over seventy per cent on communications; roughly seven per cent was on each of oil, airfields and industrial plants and town areas. In comparing any analysis of the total weight of bombs dropped by the two air forces, it should be realised that many of the bombs carried by Bomber Command were much heavier than any carried by the Eighth Air Force, and

¹ It is dealt with fully in Sir Charles Webster and Noble Frankland, *The Strategic Air Offensive against Germany, 1939-1945*, vol. III (H.M.S.O., 1961), ch. XII.

STRATEGIC AIR OFFENSIVE

January to March 1945



therefore even a smaller tonnage of bombs often required a larger number of sorties to be flown by the American air force. It should also be realised that the classification of such figures can at best be only approximate, for some actions are entered in contemporary records under certain headings when with equal truth they might have been included in a different category, as explained below on page 223. In one month a Bomber Command 2,000-ton attack on a town area is entered as such, and while no priority had been given to towns this town was selected with the knowledge that it contained large marshalling yards and railway works, a second priority target; but an Eighth Air Force attack on the same town in the following month (by 2,031 bombers which dropped 4,431 tons) is entered in the record under marshalling yards which, as a communications target, was to be given second priority. The totals of bombs dropped in the month are the most accurate that can be arrived at, but the targets to which they are ascribed should be read as indicative rather than exactly described or distinguished.

On January the 15th a new directive was issued to the strategic air forces. This again ordered *first priority* to be given to oil—described as the ‘petroleum industry, with special emphasis on petrol (gasolene) including storage’. *Second priority* was again given to ‘German lines of communications . . . Those (air forces) based in United Kingdom will place particular emphasis upon the Ruhr’.

A paragraph on ‘*Important Industrial Areas*’ read:

- ‘3. When weather or tactical conditions are unsuitable for operations against the systems of objectives mentioned above, attacks are to be delivered on important industrial areas with blind bombing technique as necessary. As far as operational and other conditions allow, these are to be directed so as to contribute to the maximum destruction of the petroleum industry and the dislocation of the target systems indicated above.’

There followed three new paragraphs on ‘*Counter Air Force Action*’:

- ‘4. Largely as a result of the concentration of our strategic bomber effort on the enemy’s petroleum industry and his communications system, and due to our preoccupations on the battle-front, we have allowed the G.A.F. to recover a great deal of its fighting strength. Moreover, the enemy has concentrated his efforts particularly on developing his fighter force at the expense of other branches of the G.A.F. In this effort to increase the efficiency of his fighter force, he has turned to the rapid development of jet fighters and there is every evidence of his intention to produce them on a large scale as early as possible.’

5. Already he has a considerable number of these aircraft in operation. They are superior in speed and armament to our conventional fighters. As soon as they are available in sufficient numbers, and as soon as the enemy has developed suitable tactics for their efficient employment, they will doubtless be employed systematically against our strategic bombers. The conditions which are likely to confront the conduct of our strategic offensive in the near future are therefore serious, unless the enemy's production and employment of jet aircraft is checked in some way.
6. In addition, the employment of these aircraft over the battle-front will place our tactical air forces and the armies themselves at considerable disadvantage. This particularly applies to reconnaissance and to the employment of these aircraft in a ground attack rôle. It has therefore been decided that we shall employ the necessary amount of strategic effort to neutralise this grave threat. The G.A.F. and primarily its jet production, training and operational establishments now become primary objectives for attack.'

Finally there was a paragraph on '*Attack of Enemy U-boat Organisation*':

- '8. In view of the growing menace of the German U-boat developments, it has been decided that certain objectives in the enemy's U-boat organisation will be attacked whenever possible by marginal effort or incidental to operations covered by the preceding paragraphs in this directive.'

The usual paragraphs on 'Direct Support of Land and Naval Operations' and on Special Operations were also repeated. A directive which named so many target categories (army and naval support, oil, communications, industrial towns, counter-air force actions and U-boat organisation) clearly left commanders-in-chief of strategic air forces much scope in their selection of targets aimed at. How they made use of their freedom of choice will be seen as the story continues.

Much of January, so far as the Eighth Air Force was concerned, was affected by the concluding stage of the German excursion into the Ardennes which, though noted in chapter VIII describing the Ardennes fighting, is included here in the total sum of what the strategic bombers did in January 1945. In that month Bomber Command dropped a total of nearly 33,000 tons. Of this 6,736 was for army support, 9,028 on oil targets, 11,874 on twenty-eight towns and 2,205 on communications. In the same month the United States Eighth Air Force dropped nearly 35,000 tons; of these they devoted 3,603 tons to army support, 3,158 to oil, 1,973 to towns and industrial plants and 24,712 tons to communications.

Throughout this volume statistics recording the work of the strategic air forces have been grouped under headings which most nearly correspond with those used in their daily records. Thus, 'army support' usually recorded actions asked for by the Army. But for their actions in December and January a different grouping could be adopted with equal truth. The comparatively small figure for 'army support' shown in the monthly totals for those two months refers to action on specific requests made by the Army; but in December and January the strategic air forces devoted a major part of their strength to a successful attempt to destroy enemy communications and airfields from beyond the Rhine to the Ardennes battlefield. The railway centres and marshalling yards in the valley of the Rhine from the Ruhr to Karlsruhe and at Frankfurt were heavily bombed, and every railhead west of the Rhine serving the enemy's Ardennes forces was rendered useless by the end of December, while medium bombers of the United States Ninth Air Force destroyed among other targets 64 bridges out of 67 attacked. All these were recorded under 'towns' or 'communications' but they might surely be described as 'army support'? If so, the strategic air forces' combined total under army support in December and January would be not the 8,450 tons shown in the December records and 10,339 tons shown in January, but 36,815 tons in December and 35,808 tons in January. The combined totals for each month would not be affected. Only more of the grouping of some actions would be shown under army support and less under towns and communications.

Large as is the combined total of bombs dropped on Germany in January (67,814 tons) it was greatly exceeded in February and nearly doubled in March. The targets attacked in February as shown in the records were as follows:

Strategic Bombers—Tonnage of bombs dropped in February 1945

<i>Types of Target</i>	<i>Bomber Command</i>	<i>Eighth Air Force</i>	<i>Combined Tonnage</i>
Army Support	6,131	Nil	6,131
Oil	14,100	5,413	19,513
Communications	3,129	35,856	38,985
Towns and Industrial Plants . .	21,761	3,746	25,507
Other objectives	768	1,073	1,814
Totals	45,889	46,088	91,977

As the Allies closed in on Germany all their air forces were involved, in many cases on similar types of targets. Both strategic and tactical forces would now combine in several joint operations,

for example 'Clarion', 'Bugle' and the isolation of the Ruhr described below. The strategic forces had lists of places to be bombed with reference to their importance in Germany's war economy, prepared by the Combined Strategic Targets Committee¹ formed in October 1944. Their directive of January the 15th laid down the priorities to be given to various types of target; one of their commitments was direct support of land operations. The main task of the tactical forces was still to facilitate the armies' advance. Sir Arthur Tedder at Shaef co-ordinated the effort of the tactical forces and arranged that the strategic forces gave the approved help for which the armies asked. The integration of all these plans was a difficult and complicated business, of which Sir Arthur Tedder declared:

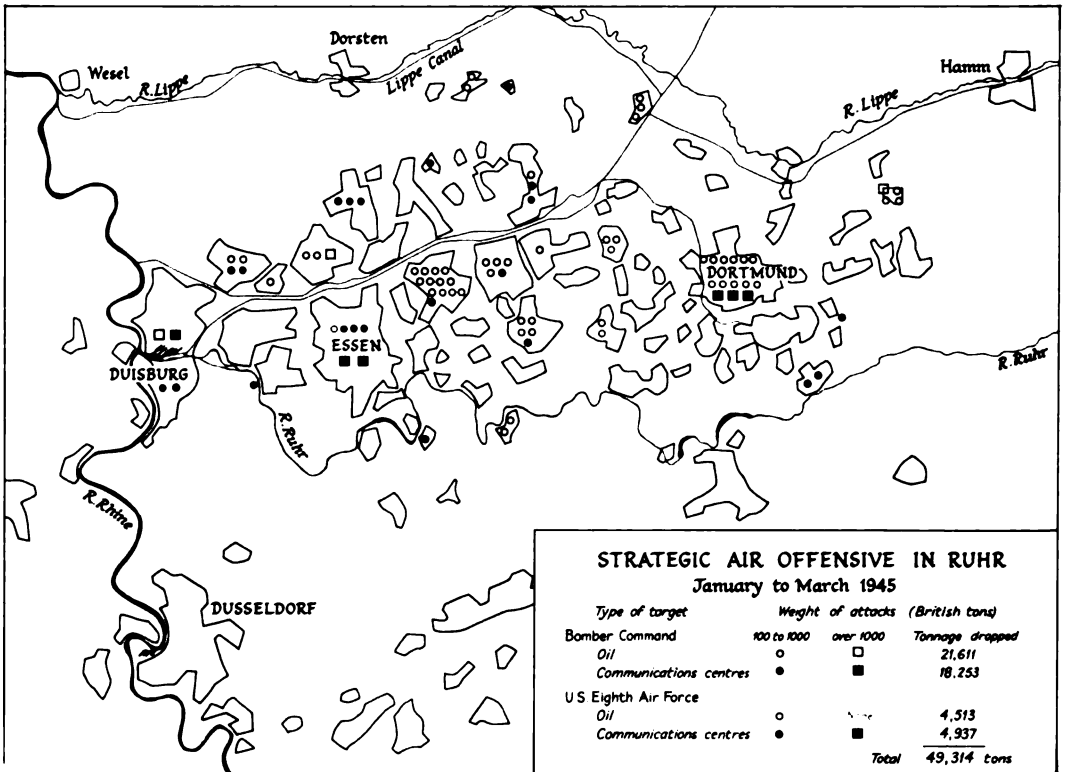
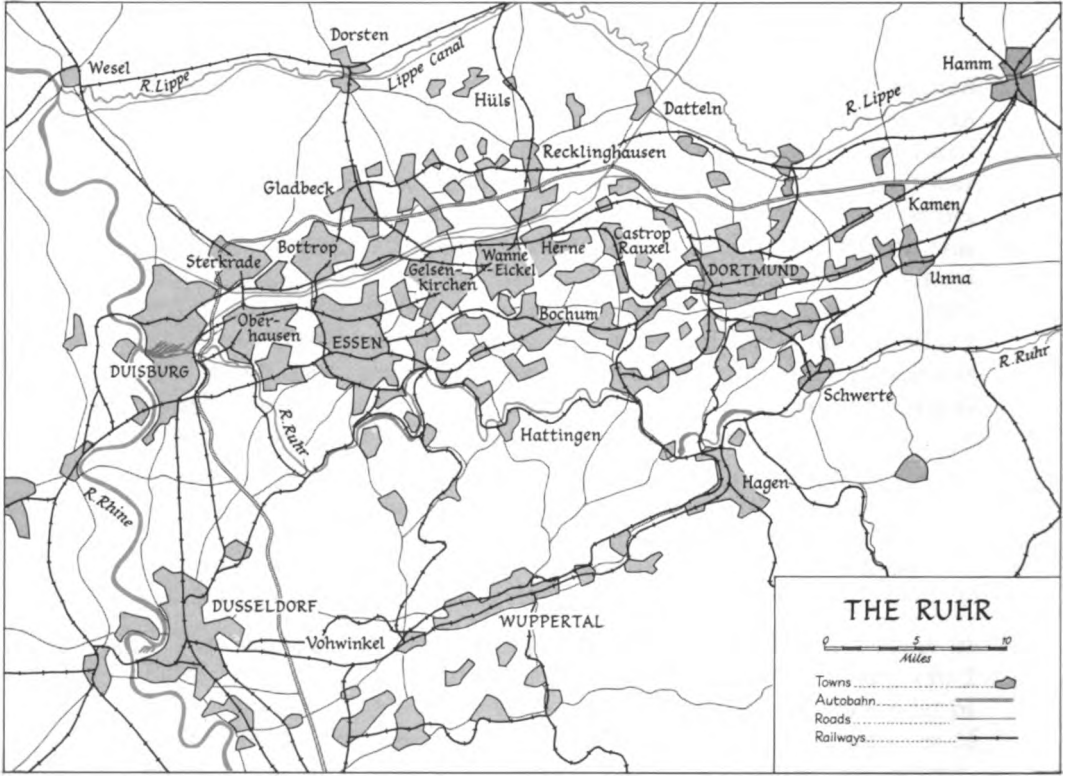
'The fact that the operations of the immense Strategical Air Forces are supposed to be directed by a committee advised by a series of committees and sub-committees is so remarkable and constitutes such a unique method of conducting military operations that there is no risk of its being forgotten.'²

The tonnage of bombs dropped on communications targets in February is partly accounted for by Operation Clarion. Clarion had been proposed in December by General Carl Spaatz, commander of United States Strategic Air Forces in Europe, but for a number of reasons had been held in abeyance. Eventually, when the meteorological experts had forecast a spell of four days' fine weather after February the 20th, Clarion had been ordered to take place on the 22nd. The aim was to spread damage to the German communication system as widely as possible on a single day. All the Western Allies' air forces in Europe took part in it. Each air force was allotted an area in which to draw up its own schedule of targets, consisting of bridges, marshalling yards, rolling stock, rail crossings and signal installations. Many lightly defended or unprotected targets were included, so that bombers could fly low enough to ensure accuracy and fighters could follow up the bombing with machine-gun or cannon attacks.

On February the 22nd more than 6,000 sorties were flown with this object; that day a total of over 7,000 tons of bombs was dropped on German communications, including attacks by heavy, medium and fighter bombers and other tactical aircraft. No exact result could be expected from so widely diffused an operation; but photographs taken on aerial reconnaissance during the following days showed that through-running on many railways was made impossible

¹ The committee consisted of representatives of: the Directorates of Intelligence and Bomber Operations of the Air Ministry, United States Strategic Air Forces in Europe, Foreign Office Economic Advisory Branch, Bomber Command and Eighth Air Force. Other officers and experts were summoned for special problems.

² Webster and Frankland, *op. cit.*, vol. III, p. 207.



and large concentrations of bomb-damage were apparent at still more marshalling yards, railway centres and depots. The evidence of a limited number of photographs was only illustrative of more widespread interference with the railway system but, even if damage was only temporary, the extensive range and ubiquitous nature of Clarion was an impressive demonstration of the Allies' air superiority and their far-reaching air power.

General Spaatz and other American air commanders advocated a repetition of the Clarion plan by another widely spread one-day attack on German communications but Sir Arthur Tedder argued for a more concentrated attack on oil and communications in the Ruhr (to be known as Operation Bugle) by which the strategic bombers could also assist the armies effectively as they neared the Rhine. The Ruhr was the enemy's only source of coal now available to the Reich and the recent bombing of rail centres throughout Western Germany had largely disorganised the distribution of coal. But there were seventeen key railway centres in the Ruhr of which eight were still active. These and the main oil production centres should receive concentrated attack. In the end it was decided that Bugle should come before any repetition of Clarion.

Bad weather interfered with the arrangement for simultaneous operations in Bugle by Bomber Command and the Eighth Air Force but on March the 11th and 12th Bomber Command made their heaviest daylight attacks on the Ruhr during the war. On the 11th over a thousand aircraft dropped 4,662 tons on Essen and on the 12th over 1,100 aircraft dropped 4,800 tons on Dortmund; also more than 1,000 aircraft attacked oil targets in the Ruhr that month. The Eighth Air Force meanwhile, flew nearly 3,000 sorties against railway and oil targets in the Ruhr. The tactical air forces attacked rail communications north and south of the Ruhr.

In the isolation of the Ruhr starting in February, Bomber Command made fourteen, the Eighth Air Force nine and the Ninth Air Force twenty-three attacks on bridges and viaducts on the general line Bremen-Marburg-Koblenz. On the 14th of March the Bielefeld viaduct carrying the Hanover-Hamm railway was destroyed by a ten-ton bomb of Bomber Command and the by-pass round previous damage was wrecked by six-ton bombs. On the 24th the Ruhr was sealed off from the rest of Germany.

Apart from the Rhine, the Dortmund-Ems and the Mittelland canals were the most important inland waterways in Germany. The former runs northward from the Ruhr into the river Ems and thence to the sea; the latter, from its junction with the Dortmund-Ems canal just west of Gravenhorst, to eastern and central Germany. Both were carried by viaducts across a number of rivers, at which points they were especially vulnerable to air attack. Some damage had been

inflicted in the previous year but in the first three months of 1945 both canals were breached three times and finally rendered unusable. One of the most important results was the hold up in the prefabrication of German U-boats. These were being built in sections by firms in different parts of Germany, moved by canal, assembled at eight yards in northern ports and finally put together in three shipyards at Hamburg, Bremen and Danzig.¹

The strategic bombers also contributed much to the armies' operations during February and March. Their part in Veritable and the Rhine crossing by Twenty-First Army Group is described in chapters XII and XIII. Two major attacks were also made in co-operation with Twelfth and Sixth Army Groups. The first was for the United States First Army, when on March the 2nd Bomber Command made a heavy attack on Cologne, over 850 bombers dropping some 2,900 tons on the already devastated city; and the second near Saarbrücken, as the Seventh Army opened their attack on the Palatinate (page 283).

A plan to make heavy bombing attacks on important centres in the path of the advancing Russian armies was carried out in February and March as part of the programme of the Allied strategic bombers. The towns selected were Berlin, Leipzig, Dresden and Chemnitz. Of these Dresden was to have the heaviest attacks by Bomber Command and the Eighth Air Force, sustained over several days. The history of this much-debated affair is a long one. In discussing strategic bombing policy in August, 1944, Sir Charles Portal put forward a suggestion which was ultimately to be of great importance: 'Immense devastation could be produced if the entire attack was concentrated on a single big town other than Berlin and the effect would be especially great if the town was hitherto relatively undamaged'. In the event '... when the blow of "catastrophic force" came to be delivered it fell not on Berlin but on Dresden'. In February 1945 '... the Anglo-American desire to assist the Russian land campaign had by that time added a powerful motive for the selection of that particular town . . .'.²

With a pre-war population of more than 600,000, Dresden was at that time swollen by an influx of homeless refugees, fleeing before the approaching Russian enemy. Its marshalling yards had been bombed several times by American aircraft but the city was virtually intact. On the night of February the 13th, just over 800 aircraft of Bomber Command inflicted one of the most devastating attacks of the war in Europe. In daylight on the 14th this was followed by more than 400 of the Eighth Air Force. A third attack was made on

¹ For a full account of this project, see Webster and Frankland, *op. cit.*, vol. III, page 273 *et seq.*

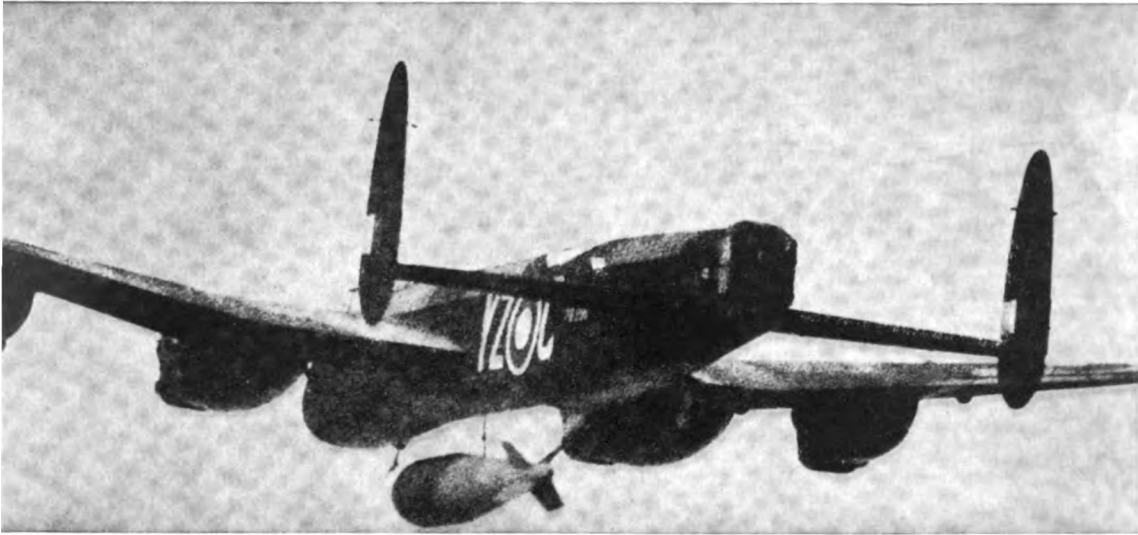
² *Loc. cit.*, p. 55.



32. Mittelland Canal bombed



33. Air Marshal Harris



34. Lancaster dropping 'Grand Slam' (22,000 lbs. bomb)



35. Bielefeld Viaduct cut by bombers on March the 14th, 1945

the 15th by over 200 American bombers, and on March the 2nd the Americans struck again with more than 400 bombers. These repeated blows proved utterly ruinous to the city. Heavy attacks by both air forces were subsequently made on Chemnitz and on Leipzig, and on Berlin the Eighth Air Force mounted a massive operation by more than 1,100 bombers on February the 26th. Dresden was therefore only a part of this concerted action yet by far the greatest damage was inflicted on that city.

The moral issues involved in some aspects of the strategic air offensive against Germany, which had vexed some sections of the public throughout the war, were intensified by the report of Dresden's devastation. Something more will be said on the subject in the final chapter's consideration of the conduct of the campaign.

Air attacks on Germany's northern ports will be referred to later (page 235) in connection with maritime operations and the enemy's renewal of the U-boat offensive.

In all, the greatest weight of bombs in any single month was dropped on Germany and German-occupied country in March, 1945. The record is as follows:

Strategic Bombers—Tonnage of bombs dropped in March 1945⁽¹⁾

<i>Type of Target</i>	<i>Bomber Command</i>	<i>Eighth Air Force</i>	<i>Combined Tonnage</i>	<i>Percentage of Total</i>
Army Support	8,664	2,885	11,549	8·6
Oil	18,938	8,538	27,476(2)	20·6
Communications (Railways and canals)	5,597	27,606	33,103	24·8
Towns and Industrial Plants	29,797	11,829	41,626	31·2
Other objectives (U-boat bases and airfields)	4,641	15,104	19,745	14·8
Totals	67,637	65,962	133,599	100

(1) It should also be noted that in February and March the huge tonnage of bombs rained on Germany by the strategic air forces was further increased by nearly 70,000 tons dropped by the bombers and fighter-bombers of the Allied tactical air forces.

(2) In addition the United States Fifteenth Air Force from Italy dropped 5,600 tons on oil targets in March. By the end of the month German oil production had been cut to little more than a trickle.

In the first three months of 1945 Bomber Command and the United States Eighth Air Force each dropped over 146,000 tons on Germany and occupied territory—a combined total of over 293,000 tons. A separate book would be needed to give full detail of this huge total. Some account of attacks in direct support of armies is given in describing their operations. Bomber Command had continued the attack on industrial towns (many of them containing important second priority targets). Eleven of these were in the Ruhr, including

attacks on Dortmund and Essen, and forty-six other towns which included Chemnitz and repeated Mosquito attacks on Berlin. Eleven bridges and viaducts, and thirty-seven oil installations and plants were also attacked. Their continuous service of minelaying in enemy waters should also be noted here.

Air minelaying by Bomber Command had been carried on throughout the Overlord campaign, aimed at the disruption of enemy shipping in coastal waters and, if the war be viewed as a whole, there is little doubt that air minelaying was both the more economical and more effective way of disrupting the enemy's coastal traffic than direct air attacks. Between April 1940 when the air-laying of mines began and the end of the war in 1945, 48,148 mines were laid by the Royal Air Force in the home theatre. The mines sank 762 enemy merchantmen and warships as well as 17 U-boats and damaged a further 196 ships and 17 more U-boats; 533 aircraft were lost in minelaying. In the naval historian's view 'minelaying provided by far the biggest contribution made by Bomber Command to victory at sea'.¹

In January 1945, bad weather with severe icing restricted mining operations to six nights. Nevertheless, apart from sinking of enemy ships an important success was achieved by helping to force the Germans to close down the U-boat training area in the Gulf of Danzig. With improving weather in February and March many more mines were laid, especially off the southern Norwegian coast and in the Western Baltic.

The figures for mining in the first three months of 1945 are as follows:

*Bomber Command Air Minelaying operations (in Home Theatre)
January-March 1945*

Month	Aircraft sorties to lay mines	Mines laid	Enemy vessels sunk by mines		Enemy vessels damaged	
			No.	Tonnage	No.	Tonnage
January .	159	668	18	42,673	8	9,177
February .	291	1,354	23	25,642	13	43,490
March .	270	1,198	26	69,449	11	48,557
Totals .	720	3,220	67	137,764	32	101,224

In addition to the above, four U-boats were sunk and three damaged by air-laid mines in this period.

¹ Roskill, *The War at Sea*, vol. III, pt. II, p. 275.

Early in 1945 the Germans had begun to feel the shortage of minesweepers, especially in the western Baltic where traffic congestion became acute; by the middle of March they were forced to send merchant ships to sea without proper escorts of sweepers and losses rose accordingly. But direct air attack at sea and especially the bombing of enemy harbours also played an important part in inflicting losses and damage on the enemy's minesweeping fleet especially in the last months of the war.

After the Allies had seen their plans and projects temporarily frustrated by the enemy's Ardennes counter-offensive in December 1944, the first months of 1945 had been, for the armies and air forces engaged, perhaps one of the most solidly satisfying periods of the Overlord campaign. The serious set-back to the Allies' affairs which threatened in 1944 had given place, in 1945, to a complete realisation of their highest hopes. It will be seen later that the enemy had not only been driven out of all temporary gains in the Ardennes but from all of Germany west of the Rhine; the river had been crossed in several places and when March ended the Allies were on their way to the heart of Germany.

But the elation of those concerned in the campaign on land could only be shared vicariously by some of the naval and air forces employed on maritime operations; their own satisfaction was justified by their knowledge of a difficult and tedious job well done rather than by any conspicuous success. Throughout these winter months they had battled ceaselessly with cold winds, turbulent seas and an elusive foe to ensure the sustenance of the Allied forces and the most urgent needs of liberated peoples. Day after day and night after night they had taken the air or had put to sea and after long endurance they had returned, more often than not, with no obvious achievement to compensate for their labours. Yet though some of their work was on a limited scale it was indeed very important—limited because the German Navy had by then been practically reduced to small-size operations in confined waters but important because of the Allies' dependence on supplies brought from England daily to be landed in French and Belgian ports. Of these Antwerp was by now the most important. It was nearest to the Allied front and offered the largest facilities; by the turn of the year over 25,000 tons of supplies were being landed there daily, despite the Germans V-weapon offensive which continued into March (see page 235).

The convoys for Antwerp assembled in and sailed from the Thames and their safe passage was the responsibility of the Commander-in-Chief The Nore, Admiral of the Fleet Sir John Tovey. On the Continent a 'Naval Officer in Charge' administered each captured port, subject to the broad control of the Allied Naval Commander-

in-Chief Admiral Sir Bertram Ramsay, until, alas! the latter was killed in a flying accident on January the 2nd.¹ Ramsay had first become famous for his conduct of operation Dynamo, by which most of the British Expeditionary Force had been withdrawn from Dunkirk in 1940; subsequently he had been associated in the planning and execution of the invasion of North Africa, had commanded the Eastern Naval Task Force in the assault on Sicily and had held the highest naval responsibility in the assault on Normandy in 1944 and throughout the Overlord campaign. His wisdom and experience were held in very high regard. On January the 19th Vice-Admiral Sir Harold Burrough was appointed to General Eisenhower's staff as Allied Naval Commander-in-Chief in Ramsay's place.

An inshore patrol on the waters off the Allies' northern flank was maintained by a squadron of coastal vessels and assault craft known as 'Force T'; working from Belgian and Dutch bases, it was commanded by Captain Pugsley who had conducted the assault on Walcheren in November. In close co-operation with the Navy, aircraft of Coastal Command kept ceaseless and aggressive watch on the sea.

Knowing the value of Antwerp the Germans concentrated the only naval attack of which they were capable on the traffic to and from that port. Their policy was to use aircraft and their small surface vessels to mine the Scheldt; to send their E-boats (of which they had about 50, distributed between Den Helder, IJmuiden and Rotterdam) to attack Allied convoys at sea; to use short-range 'small battle units' in the estuary of the river and longer-range midget submarines (Seehunds) and occasional patrols of conventional U-boats to attack Allied shipping in the Channel east of Dungeness and off the east coast of Britain as far north as Yarmouth. Their most dangerous threat was minelaying in the Scheldt where the sinking of one large ship might have stopped all traffic to and fro for several days.

Apart from the German E-boats, the enemy's 'small battle units' consisted at this time of the following: 87 Linsen (explosive motor boats), 26 Seehunds (midget submarines), 20 Biber and 30 Molch (one-man submarines) with an additional 120 Molch in reserve at inland bases.

The air defence of convoys using the Thames-Scheldt route depended mainly on No. 16 Group of Coastal Command. The Royal Air Force and the Royal Navy conferred on the best measures to be adopted for integrating the operations of the two services and the following tactics were finally adopted. Frigates were fitted with radio telephones (but this was not completed until the end of

¹ From January the 1st all ports on the French Channel coast were under a Senior Officer, British Operated Ports (France), responsible to the Flag Officer Dover.



February) with which they could communicate direct with patrolling aircraft. When an enemy was sighted by an aircraft it called up the surface forces and, while shadowing the enemy, gave constant information of his movements, thus helping the warships to find their quarry. To deal with the enemy's minelaying in the Scheldt the Army strengthened gun defences on the banks, while the Navy patrolled the narrow waters and employed a strong force of minesweepers continuously; during the hours of darkness no air patrols were permitted there so that Army guns and warships had freedom to engage any aircraft sighted. But as it turned out January the 23rd was the last recorded day of mine-laying by the German Air Force. On that occasion about a score of Ju.88s dropped so many that British naval minesweepers exploded thirty-six in the next five days. The Navy strengthened the convoy escorts to deal with E-boat attacks in the open sea and, in the outer Scheldt, kept numerous motor torpedo-boats and motor launches, controlled by frigates on patrol, to counter all types of enemy activity. Normally the enemy striking forces left harbour at dusk and tried to regain port before daylight. The E-boats and other small assault craft were very

difficult to locate from the air and still harder to attack; and some enemy surface craft were well supplied with flak. At the beginning of the year Coastal Command were carrying out a great deal of necessary but unrewarding flying.

Two groups of Coastal Command were employed to maintain the following duties: daylight patrols against midget submarines westward of Walcheren, covering the convoy route in the Scheldt approaches; night patrols close in to Den Helder, IJmuiden and the Hook of Holland respectively, and further west to locate E-boats on their way to the English coast; and patrols round the south-west corner of Norway.

Second Tactical Air Force undertook to patrol the waterways off Schouwen and Beveland islands when tide and weather were favourable for Biber or Linsen operations and to provide strikes on request.

No. 16 Group of Coastal Command had available two Beau-fighter squadrons, one and a half Wellington squadrons for night flying and two Fleet Air Arm squadrons. Eight day-reconnaissance flights were made to the Elbe estuary in January and, with the better weather, twenty-six in February. On only one day was any shipping seen—a small coaster. On twenty nights, patrols covered the same stretch of coast and small enemy craft were attacked but without result.

On the 17th of January, thirty-two Beaufighters, supported by fighters of Fighter Command, attacked the enemy anchorage at Den Helder. Heavy flak was encountered and only one enemy patrol boat was sunk for the loss of six aircraft—a costly repulse. All E-boat sallies were detected; aircraft were not often able to attack them successfully owing to their smallness and speed but shadowing and reporting their movements, both before and after attack, were of increasing value in enabling the naval patrols to intercept them. During January fighter-bombers of the Second Tactical Air Force also made daylight sweeps over the Maas delta and attacked targets in the Vianen and Hellevoetsluis area. Two attacks were made on the Biber/Molch depot at Poortershaven and Linsen motor boats were bombed in the Hellevoetsluis area damaging many of them. In February, apart from an attack on Amersfoort (where there was a Molch depot) no anti-midget-submarine operations took place. Four attacks were made on Dunkirk.

At the beginning of the year Coastal Command's No. 18 Group had two Wing Strikes, one of four Mosquito squadrons and the other of four Beaufighter squadrons, stationed in eastern Scotland and patrolling north of Den Helder. By the end of January this force had been increased and daily reconnaissances continued off the Norwegian coast. Wing Strikes followed up if suitable targets were

reported and when possible they were escorted by fighters of Fighter Command. There was very little enemy traffic off Norway during daylight. When defended anchorages were attacked German fighters were usually encountered and some aircraft were lost, but in one escorted strike in which the escort fighters suffered loss, five enemy aircraft were destroyed. Coastal Command also had two more groups operating in the waters round the south and west of England and off Ireland and north-west Scotland.

During January and February Coastal and Fighter Commands and Second Tactical Air Force flew 2,295 sorties and made 645 attacks against enemy shipping; 18 vessels were sunk with total tonnage of 28,306 tons and four were damaged with total tonnage of 7,581 tons; in these operations the Allies lost 44 aircraft. In March the weather improved, long-range fighter protection was increased and 1,780 sorties were flown. Forty-four German ships (24,090 tons) were sunk and fourteen damaged for the loss of 28 aircraft.

E-boat operations in January and February caused the loss of four Allied ships (of a total tonnage of 9,004 tons) from torpedo attacks and fifteen (of a total tonnage of 35,912 tons) from mines, while five ships with a total tonnage of 14,401 tons were damaged. In March ten Allied ships were lost (35,682 tons) and one damaged. Five E-boats were sunk in these three months. E-boat activity in February had been reduced by damage to E-boats and shelters at Poortershaven and Ijmuiden in daylight attacks by Bomber Command, followed up by an attack by the United States Eighth Air Force on Ijmuiden.

During January and February Seehund made 77 sorties and lost 14 craft. They sank one trawler, an L.S.T., a cable ship and probably a French destroyer. In March 29 sorties were made with the loss of 9 Seehund. They sank three ships, totalling 5,267 tons.

In the operations by minor German craft only E-boats and Seehunds achieved anything; Biber, Molch and Linsen that started out were either destroyed or lost at sea with nothing to show for their courage.

The record of E-boats and Seehunds in these three months is as follows:

Type	German Vessels		Allied shipping sunk by		Damaged by	
	Sorties	Loss	Torpedo	Mine	Torpedo	Mine
E-boat	303	5	tons	tons	tons	tons
Seehunds	106	23	12,972	67,626	1,345	20,232
			9,282	—	2,628	—
Totals	409	28	22,254	67,626	3,973	20,232

It will be noted that comparatively few ships were sunk by torpedoes and far more by the mines laid by these craft.

But while these operations against the German minor war vessels had been engaging much attention, another and more serious threat had also involved both naval and air forces during these months. In 1944 Allied Intelligence had reported that numbers of prefabricated and greatly improved submarines were under construction and likely to be brought into service shortly. They might constitute a serious threat to Allied shipping—not only in passage from England to the Continent but also while bringing supplies across the Atlantic. This situation was fully discussed at the Argonaut conference (page 213) and measures to cope with it had been agreed. Convoy escorts were to be strengthened and further minefields were to be laid in the south and western approaches; without changing the policy of strategic bombers, a proportion of their effort was to be directed against U-boat assembly yards and pens at Hamburg, Bremen and other submarine bases. At the same time Coastal Command would continue patrolling British waters, especially the Irish Sea and the English Channel, where U-boats might lie in wait for Allied convoys.

In January a U-boat was detected in the busy waters off the North Foreland. She continued to patrol the Channel without inflicting damage to Allied shipping till February the 6th when she sank an American ship of 7,240 tons in convoy off the Kent coast; she was damaged by the convoy's counter-attack but was able to return to Germany. That incident is not important in itself but it marks a revival of the submarine offensive which the Allies had long foreseen as possible.

That January twenty U-boats had left Norwegian bases outward bound. They included the first of the new Type XXIII U-boats.¹ By the end of the month there were thirty-nine U-boats in our home waters and five on more distant patrols. German hopes centred chiefly on attacking Allied traffic in the Irish Sea, which six penetrated, while another six reached the English Channel. Between them they sank seven merchantmen with a combined tonnage of 30,426 tons, but four U-boats were sunk by warships and two others damaged and withdrawn; two more were sunk from unknown causes.

February saw double the number of the January sailings of U-boats outward bound, including a second of Type XXIII; forty-one put to sea and by the end of the month there were fifty-one on patrol in our home waters. Yet the U-boats had more than twice as many losses as in the previous months and for a smaller

¹ These Type XXIII U-boats, designed for coastal work, had a displacement of 256 tons submerged. Their maximum speeds were 9½ knots surfaced and 12½ knots submerged (for one hour), and their maximum cruising ranges 4,300 miles surfaced and 175 miles submerged. They had a crew of 14 and carried 2 torpedoes (Roskill, *op. cit.*, Appendix X).



36. German U-boat sunk by Coastal Command



37. Seehund captured at Kiel

38. Admiral Dönitz



39. Admiral Burrough

result; twelve were sunk, nine by warships, one by aircraft, one shared and one from an unknown cause.

In March thirty-seven U-boats put to sea. In the Channel they suffered seriously; five merchantmen totalling some 25,000 tons were lost there but four submarines were destroyed and in other coastal waters U-boats fared as badly; three were accounted for off Northern Ireland and one off the coast of Scotland. The final score for March amounted to fifteen U-boats sunk, eleven of them by warships or by mines laid by them and four by aircraft of Coastal Command. In all, Allied shipping lost to them a total of ten merchantmen (44,728 tons) and three small naval vessels.

In the first three months of 1945 twenty-two U-boats had been sunk by warships, five by aircraft, one shared and five from unknown causes; they had in turn sunk twenty-eight Allied ships totalling 104,074 tons. All these had been lost at sea but in the same period a further eighteen U-boats had been destroyed or sunk in the repeated attacks by bombers on the harbours of Hamburg, Bremen and Wilhelmshaven. Moreover, in a later chapter describing operations in April it will be found that eighteen more U-boats were destroyed in air attacks on the North German ports by the strategic air forces. It is worth noting here that in part of a report of one of Hitler's Naval Conferences in January, Admiral Dönitz had told him that 'the difficulties involved in the new submarine offensive do not lie in operations at sea, but entirely in the threat to home bases by the enemy air force'. To which Hitler replied that he fully agreed.

As these two German sea offensives failed, so did their much vaunted V-weapon offensive fail. By the end of March the Germans were forced to close it down after having launched, since June 1944, 10,492 V-1 flying bombs and 1,403 V-2 rockets against England and a slightly larger number against targets on the Continent, 11,988 V-1s and 1,766 V-2s. Casualties caused by these two weapons in England were 8,938 killed and 24,504 seriously injured and on the Continent about 5,400 killed and some 22,000 seriously injured. (These figures include those already given on page 149.) The enemy had failed to achieve his object in either place: he had not broken the morale of the civilians nor interrupted the flow of supplies to the armies.

In the 65 square miles of Greater Antwerp only 1,214 V-missiles fell but they were responsible for the death of over half the civilians killed on the Continent. In the port area only 150 flying-bombs and 152 rockets fell; they sank two large cargo ships and fifty-eight smaller vessels and caused frequent damage to railways, roads, quays and cranes but without any major interference in the overall working of the port.

CHAPTER XI

THE NIJMEGEN FRONT AND 'BLACKCOCK'

BEFORE going on to describe operations after the Ardennes fighting it is desirable here to look back a little to the Nijmegen front during the time when the enemy's Ardennes counter-offensive was in progress (chapter VIII).

A previous chapter (V) described the clearing of the enemy from the west of the Nijmegen corridor and his forced withdrawal back across the lower Maas. It will be well to see what had happened in that northern part of Twenty-First Army Group's front after it was taken over by the First Canadian Army in November.

The most important outcome of the Arnhem operation in September (chapter II) had been the winning of the Nijmegen bridges over the Rhine (known in its lower reaches through Holland as the Waal) and a firm bridgehead beyond them. This consisted of about half of the 'island' between the Waal and the Lower Rhine. From November, Nijmegen and the bridgehead were part of the forty-mile front held by General Simonds' II Canadian Corps. At the beginning of December the bridgehead itself was held by the British 49th and 51st Divisions; the German troops facing them were the 6th Parachute Division. (See sketch map page 240.)

At that time, when the water levels in the Lower Rhine and the Waal had risen to appropriate height, the Germans had blown the river dyke and the railway embankment just to the south of Arnhem. Within two or three days a large part of the 'island' between Nijmegen and Arnhem was under three feet of water which was steadily spreading. In accordance with arrangements already made for such an eventuality the Nijmegen bridgehead was contracted and the few remaining civilians moved away with their livestock. As the flooding extended the enemy's 6th Parachute Division put in a sharp pre-dawn attack on the 49th Division's positions in the eastern corner of the bridgehead about three miles upstream from Nijmegen. There was some infiltration to start with but within a few hours a counter-attack by local reserves drove the Germans out, taking prisoner over a hundred of them and killing about sixty. The Nijmegen bridges were well covered and patrolling continued actively on our side, most of it by boat. For a while the Germans

were content with shelling and renewed attempts to break the bridges with mines and explosives floated down the Waal, but such damage as they did to booms and nets was quickly repaired.

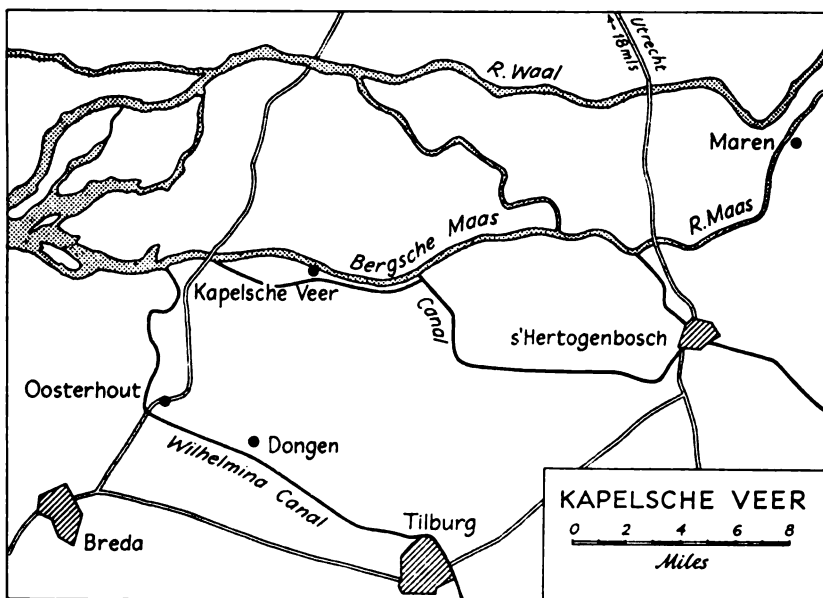
On the left of General Simonds' II Canadian Corps, General Crocker's I Corps held the Maas front from Maren to the sea (thus covering s'Hertogenbosch and Tilburg). The island of Tholen and the adjacent coast were patrolled by the 18th Canadian Armoured Car Regiment; Beveland and Walcheren were the responsibility of Headquarters Lines of Communication. The front had been quiet lately and (as told in previous chapters) Allied Intelligence believed that the German forces were in no condition to begin any large-scale offensive operations.

Then on December the 16th the enemy launched their unpredicted counter-offensive in the Ardennes and broke through the American front (chapter VIII). The Canadian Army was not directly affected but, so that Second Army could concentrate all its attention on events in the Ardennes while the German counter-offensive was in progress, the British 3rd Division of VIII Corps, and its front along the Maas as far south as Venlo, was put under II Canadian Corps. This arrangement lasted till the middle of January and temporarily extended First Canadian Army's total front from 140 to 175 miles. As the enemy's progress was reported during the first few days it seemed possible that the Canadian Army might well soon be involved. For the Canadian Intelligence branch began to get information pointing to a coming attack on the Maas front north of Tilburg. In particular it was discovered that an advanced enemy post at Kapelsche Veer had been reinforced. This place is a lonely little hamlet on an island between the Bergsche Maas and a secondary stream of the principal river. The island is a strip of polder land, seven miles long and only a mile across at its widest point, where Kapelsche Veer stands at the head of a tiny harbour, the southern end of a ferry over the river.

The war diary of the Commander-in-Chief West shows that on the first day of the Ardennes attack von Rundstedt ordered Army Group H to be ready to follow up 'as soon as retrograde movements by the enemy can be recognised . . .', and later on that day added that ' . . . if the operations of Army Group B continue to develop as successfully as they seem to promise up to now and headway is quickly made in the direction of Antwerp, an advance by strong elements of 25th Army across the lower Maas can contribute materially to success by completing the large envelopment of enemy forces in the area north of the front under attack'—that is the Ardennes. On the 18th he ordered Army Group H to be ready to launch an advance at twenty-four hours' notice from December the 22nd. The war diary of LXXXVIII Corps shows that on the 21st

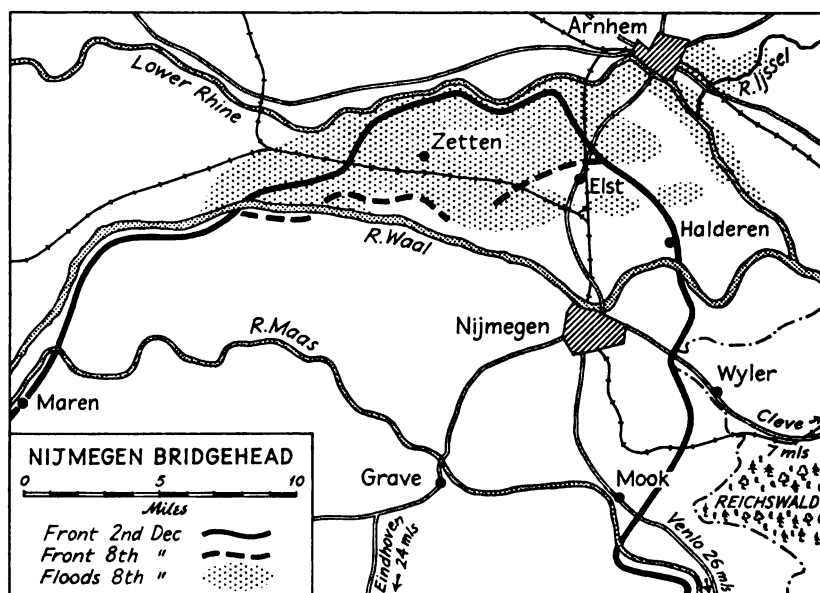
three divisions were to be ready to cross the Maas when ordered, and seize the Wilhelmina Canal from Oosterhout to Dongen on the way to Breda. An outpost at Kapelsche Veer was immediately 'increased to one company'; at first this was found by the German 711th Division but later replaced by their 6th Parachute Division; with the 712th Division, these were the three named for the projected attack across the river Maas. The 712th was to 'thrust across the Maas on both sides of Kapelsche Veer'.

But the Ardennes advance had *not* 'continued to develop as successfully' as it had promised. Instead it had been finally stopped on December the 26th (page 186). There was by then no reason to fear any supporting attack on the Maas front but the Canadians decided to eliminate the enemy post at Kapelsche Veer. On December the



30th it was accordingly attacked by troops of the 1st Polish Armoured Division. Some progress was made and a few prisoners were taken but the garrison of parachutists held their position firmly, supported by guns from behind the Maas, and after having some 50 men killed or wounded without further gain the Poles were withdrawn. A week later they renewed their attack but the parachutists fought fiercely and then counter-attacked and when the Poles had had another 120 men killed or wounded without overcoming the garrison they were withdrawn. On January the 13th the 47th (Royal Marine) Commando suffered 49 casualties in another fruitless attack. On the 26th troops of the 10th Canadian Infantry Brigade and a tank regiment of the 4th Canadian Armoured Division, supported by

virtually all the fire power of I Corps, launched a carefully prepared attack. Starting early on a freezing morning it was at first unsuccessful but fighting was continued through 'five days of frigid misery'; gradually troops of the Lincoln and Welland Regiment, later assisted by a company of The Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders of Canada, closed in on the snow-covered hamlet after capturing the outlying buildings that had survived the shelling and resisted till the end. Early on the morning of the 31st it was found that no living German remained south of the main river except a few wounded prisoners. The character of 'this struggle by the frost-bound Maas' is shown by the fact that the commander of the 6th Parachute Division, when interrogated after the war, estimated that his losses were 300 to 400 'serious casualties' plus 100 more men frost-bitten. In the final fight the Canadians had 234 casualties of whom 65 (including 9 officers) were killed, and they found 145 German dead on the battlefield.¹



Further up the Waal, meanwhile, the Germans had renewed their attempts to damage or destroy the Nijmegen bridges. On January the 13th they attacked with a flotilla of one-man midget submarines (Biber), but our guns broke up the attack well short of Nijmegen. Look-out posts saw only about four of these contraptions but the war diary of the German Naval Operations Staff recorded that 17 Biber were used and that the enterprise was a failure. Day and night

¹ Stacey, *The Victory Campaign*, p. 454.

patrols of the Second Tactical Air Force were over the area whenever the weather permitted and although a single aircraft was occasionally sighted, usually a jet, the German Air Force gave the well-guarded bridgehead a wide berth.

Shortly before daylight on the 18th of January the German 6th Parachute Division opened another attack on the 49th Division. This time it was near Zetten, about nine miles south-west of Arnhem, an area occupied by the 49th Division when the floods began to subside at the end of December. Some outposts were overrun and a confused and inconclusive fight ensued during the rest of the day. Next morning the Germans staged another attack but meanwhile the 49th Division had organised a counter-attack which, after some difficult fighting, regained most of Zetten and by the evening of the 21st our original positions were re-established. The enemy had lost 340 prisoners and, by our calculations, another 470 killed and wounded. Casualties to the 49th Division and supporting troops amounted to 220.

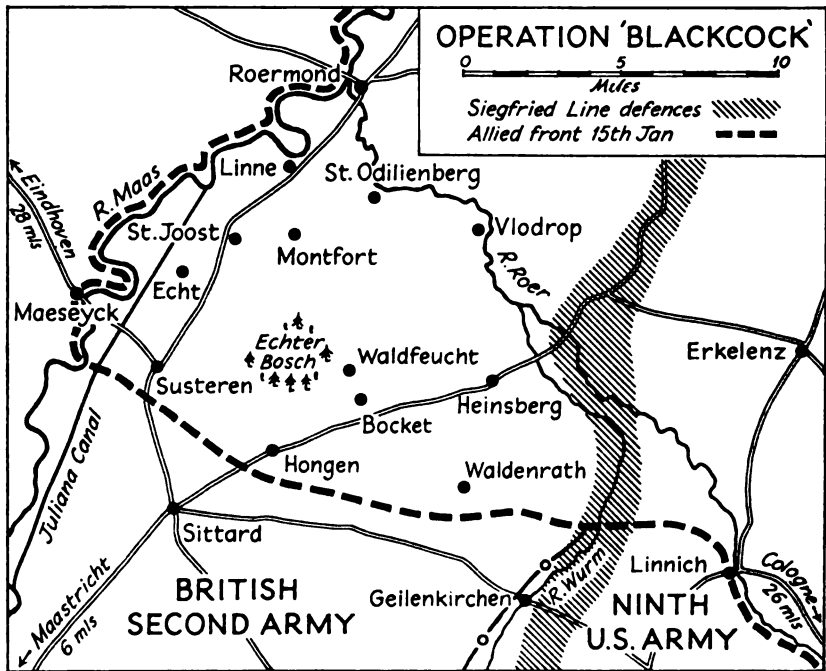
South-east of Nijmegen the Canadian front now ran directly southwards for twenty-five miles facing the Reichswald Forest and along the left bank of the Maas towards Venlo, where they linked with the left of VIII Corps. Opposing 2nd and 3rd Canadian Divisions were troops of the German 84th and 190th Infantry Divisions of LXXXVI Corps, whose forward localities were roughly based on Wyler (on the Nijmegen-Cleve road), the western fringes of the Reichswald Forest and on the right bank of the river Maas.

The Canadian divisions were determined to dominate 'no-man's-land'. It was open and undulating country criss-crossed by rough tracks strewn with the booby-trapped remnants of gliders wrecked in the Arnhem operation and liberally sprinkled with anti-personnel mines. The relatively high ground behind the front lines gave good observation. Clashes were frequent and bitter; sometimes between small reconnaissance parties seeking information and prisoners, or between strong fighting patrols; and there were raids by both sides supported by artillery. On the whole the Canadians had the better of the exchanges; their morale remained high and much valuable information was gained.

On the 9th of January, Montgomery had warned Second Army that its XII Corps¹ must open 'Blackcock' on the 15th. This was an operation, postponed by bad weather in November, designed to eliminate a German salient south-west of the river Roer between Roermond and Geilenkirchen.

¹ XII Corps comprised 7th Armoured Division, 43rd and 52nd Infantry Divisions, 6th Guards Tank and 8th Armoured Brigades, strong detachments from 79th Armoured Division, the 3rd and 9th Army Groups Royal Artillery with guns of VIII Corps to the north and United States XIII Corps to the south available to assist from the flanks. 83 Group Second Tactical Air Force was in support.

The front to be attacked by XII Corps ran from the river Wurm, just north of Geilenkirchen, to the Juliana Canal near Maeseyck on the river Maas. The area to be cleared was roughly triangular, its sides marked by the Roer and the Maas and its apex at the old fortress town of Roermond where the two rivers met. Many small streams ran across the front between the opposing front lines and for the most part the battlefield was overlooked by higher ground beyond the Roer. The only roads of any standing were those that radiated from Sittard to Geilenkirchen, Heinsberg and Roermond but these, like the lesser routes and the adjoining countryside, needed hard dry weather if our armoured and other vehicles were to function adequately. As it was, it alternately froze, thawed, fogged, snowed and rained; on the other hand it never changed from being bitterly cold.



In the past two months the enemy had strengthened his positions. With the aid of impressed labour he had organised three main lines of defence as offshoots of the Siegfried Line which ran northwards of Geilenkirchen. The first comprised a continuous length of trenches and weapon pits with trip wires and mines in front and some reserve positions about half a mile in rear; the second lay about two miles behind the first. Both ran across the front to join the positions along the Juliana Canal and then continued northwards to the all-round

defences of Roermond; a third extended from the Siegfried Line to Heinsberg and a short distance beyond. The whole system was manned by two divisions, 183rd Volksgrenadier at the Siegfried end, 176th in the west, each with three infantry regiments. Air reconnaissance and counter-battery reports indicated that the infantry were unusually well supported by artillery, there being available something like 90 field, 36 medium and 20 dual-purpose 'eighty-eights', plus 18 75-mm assault guns. As the German position was strongest on the right where it embodied the Siegfried Line, XII Corps commander (General Ritchie) decided to start his attack on the left with 7th Armoured Division and as it progressed to follow with attacks by 52nd Division in the centre and 43rd Division on the right.

Delayed by thick fog, the attack began at 7.30 a.m. on January the 16th when an infantry brigade group (131st) of 7th Armoured Division started forward on the west of the road through Susteren and Linne to Roermond, which the division was to clear. They met some heavy shelling and small-arms fire but, crossing small streams on their way, got a good hold on a village north-west of Susteren, taking a number of prisoners. After the collapse of a tank-carried bridge the engineers, hampered by fog, mud and accurate enemy shelling, worked through the night to bridge the stream. A second column of the 7th Armoured Division moved forward and reached Susteren on the 17th. Part of the town was captured without much difficulty and, after a strong counter-attack had been defeated, all had been cleared by evening. Meantime the advance northward had been resumed despite the rough going and minefields; troops nearer the Juliana Canal fared best and by midnight had captured Echt after a sharp fight. To their right, however, some strong enemy positions astride the main road about a mile north of Susteren effectively held up the remainder. Here fighting went on all night and it was late afternoon of the 18th before the main axis had been cleared of Germans and obstacles to a point abreast of Echt, a task that had involved five infantry battalions, a tank regiment, a variety of armoured devices and large numbers of engineers.

By then a start had been made by the leading group of a composite force—8th Armoured and 155th Infantry Brigades. After Susteren it wheeled east towards the Echterbosch to clear the wooded area that straddled the routes ahead. The group kept on the move all night, but after daylight it became clear that every village and hamlet would involve a fight. Being almost back on his own frontier the enemy knew the ground well, and was adept at obstructing the few tracks that traversed the boggy countryside. He appeared well supplied with assault guns, of which a 'brigade' was now on the way according to the German records, and there were repeated

reports of 'Tiger tanks'¹ being seen in ones and twos. Some sharp actions ensued and progress was made in places, but by the evening of the 19th it was obvious that our armoured regiments were at a disadvantage in such conditions and the 8th Armoured Brigade was withdrawn to join the 52nd Division's advance from the south early next morning.

The 52nd Division had begun its attack on the Sittard-Heinsberg axis at dawn on the 18th. Preceded by concentrations on the enemy's defences and gun areas from most of the artillery in XII Corps, a reinforced infantry brigade (156th) took the lead accompanied by mine-clearing, flame-throwing and bridging tanks of the 79th Armoured Division. The first objectives were a number of villages marking the course of another stream, the nearest being on the rising ground beyond it and somewhat to the west of Hongen, an outpost guarding the road itself. This involved movement across ground that a thaw had turned into mud. Soon even the lightest vehicles were in difficulties and it was two hours before the first assault bridge was effectively launched. The German defence was skilful and determined and caused the leading battalion 75 casualties² but, as footholds were increased and more troops got across, a three-mile-wide bridgehead was gained. Fighting continued till dark, by which time Hongen had been captured and the engineers were replacing a blown bridge that had carried the main road. Next morning a second brigade (the 157th) moved over the stream and the day was spent in clearing several more villages. The main weight of the division was next concentrated on making ground to the north. In the afternoon of the 20th Bocket was secured against light resistance and in the early hours of the 21st the 155th Brigade entered Waldfeucht from the west, unhindered except for falling snow. After daylight, however, the town was heavily shelled and then struck by a counter-attack which produced some of the fiercest fighting of the XII Corps operation. German infantry first slipped into the town from the north-east. They were accompanied by a Tiger tank which was unsuccessfully hunted with grenades and PIATs before getting away after causing a lot of trouble.

Meanwhile two more Tigers had reached the western outskirts, together with some assault guns which quickly knocked out three of our own tanks from a squadron moving up to reinforce. In bitter fighting throughout the morning our tanks lost seven more to the

¹ No tank unit is named in the German records but our own tanks were among those which landed in Normandy on D-day and were unlikely to have mistaken an assault gun for a tank.

² Fusilier Dennis Donnini, 4th/5th Battalion The Royal Scots Fusiliers, was posthumously awarded the Victoria Cross for gallantry in this action. (Nineteen years of age, Donnini was the son of an Italian confectioner in a Durham mining village who had never taken out naturalisation papers.)

Tigers, or to bazookas sniping from roofs and cellars. But the Scottish infantry were not to be shifted or outdone and eventually they destroyed both the Tigers¹ with their 6-pdr anti-tank guns. Fighting continued until dark, and before then the Germans had begun to retreat; by midnight all were completely ejected from Waldfeucht. Artillery fire had been most effective throughout, the Forward Observation Officers being greatly helped by air observation planes, which were able to fly in weather that denied the area to other aircraft for most of the day. Throughout these operations the weather had restricted 83 Group's flying to those squadrons based on Eindhoven airfield but twenty-four Typhoons had been able, with apparent success, to bomb the village of Waldfeucht where a German headquarters and some reserves had been located. Mediums of the Ninth Air Force had also managed to include Erkelenz, just east of the Roer, in their daylight attacks on enemy communications and, after dark, a number of British light bombers also found targets among the woods about five miles north-east of Heinsberg. Roads, railways and troop areas on the far side of the Roer were to receive attention whenever the weather permitted, but it was some days before any major effort became possible.

During the fighting at Waldfeucht the 52nd Division had been forcing its way through the enemy's second defence line on a front of about two miles, supplemented by the advance of the 43rd Division which had just come into action on its right. For the most part, however, the Germans were still fighting with spirit.

An intended move of two German divisions from the Cologne area had not materialised but the 341st Army Assault Gun Brigade had arrived. The XII SS Corps commander, in charge of the sector, had also brought in troops of the German 59th Division from higher up the Roer valley. Another stiff action revealed that the 606th Division zbV, holding the Maas downstream from Roermond, had also sent its parachute regiment to oppose the 7th Armoured Division's progress.

With the (renamed) 1st Commando Brigade² coming under its command from VIII Corps, the 7th Armoured's intention was to sweep north-eastwards from Echt with its own two brigades while the Commandos cleared the country that adjoined the river Maas. As the centre brigade set out for Montfort, it ran into trouble at St. Joost, only two miles from Echt, and the resulting fight lasted the greater part of two days. The newly arrived German parachutists put fresh vigour into the tiring 176 Division and were supported by numerous self-propelled guns which inflicted severe losses on our

¹ Inspection showed them to be from '5 Coy Pz Abt Tiger FKL 301'.

² Formerly the 1st Special Service Brigade.

armour. Prisoners were taken by both sides but, as more troops were brought to the task and Crocodiles were able to get within flaming distance of German 'suicide squads', the 7th Armoured Division gained the upper hand and the place was finally cleared after dark on the 21st.

The actions at St. Joost and Waldfeucht marked the peak of the Germans' resistance. The enemy had been favoured by the weather's limitation on flying. For almost a week bad visibility had either confined the majority of Allied planes to their airfields or made it impossible for them to pick up their targets. On the 22nd of January, however, the skies cleared. During the day 83 Group flew over 700 sorties, and gave XII Corps all the help it could. Among nine close-support missions, 24 Typhoons attacked Montfort for the 7th Armoured Division, 60 more bombed targets at Heinsberg for the 52nd Division and others, using rockets as well as bombs, struck at defended localities which were objectives of the 43rd. That night 2 Group Mosquitos attacked road and rail movement approaching the front from beyond the Roer and a number of village objectives on the near side of the river. With the weather remaining good over the next two days similar programmes were continued, the enemy's positions, motor and horse-drawn transport, railway engines, wagons and lines being attacked throughout the battle area and its approaches.

With little response from their own air forces¹ the Germans now showed signs of being chiefly concerned to get away. Our own air reports and German prisoners' statements, with other indications, showed that their main body was now preparing to retire towards Erkelenz and the shelter of the Siegfried defences while the rest, in the north, fell back to cover Roermond. XII Corps' mopping-up operations gathered momentum. Heinsberg, with mines scattered all around it, fell to the 52nd Division on the 24th; on the left the 7th Armoured Division's brigades closed to the Roer from near Vlodrop to St. Odilienberg and the Commandos² vigorously cleared northwards to Linne and beyond. On the opposite flank the 43rd Division drove up to the Wurm, making contact with troops of the United States XIII Corps who had begun to move forward along the right bank of the river. On the 26th of January the war diary of the German High Command contained the entry: 'Roer bridgehead no longer exists. . . . The reinforcements moving up came too late'.

¹ When asked what his unit rules were for identifying aircraft, a captured German anti-aircraft gunner replied: 'If the plane is silvery looking, it's American. If it has a dark colour, it's British. If it can't be seen at all, it's German'.

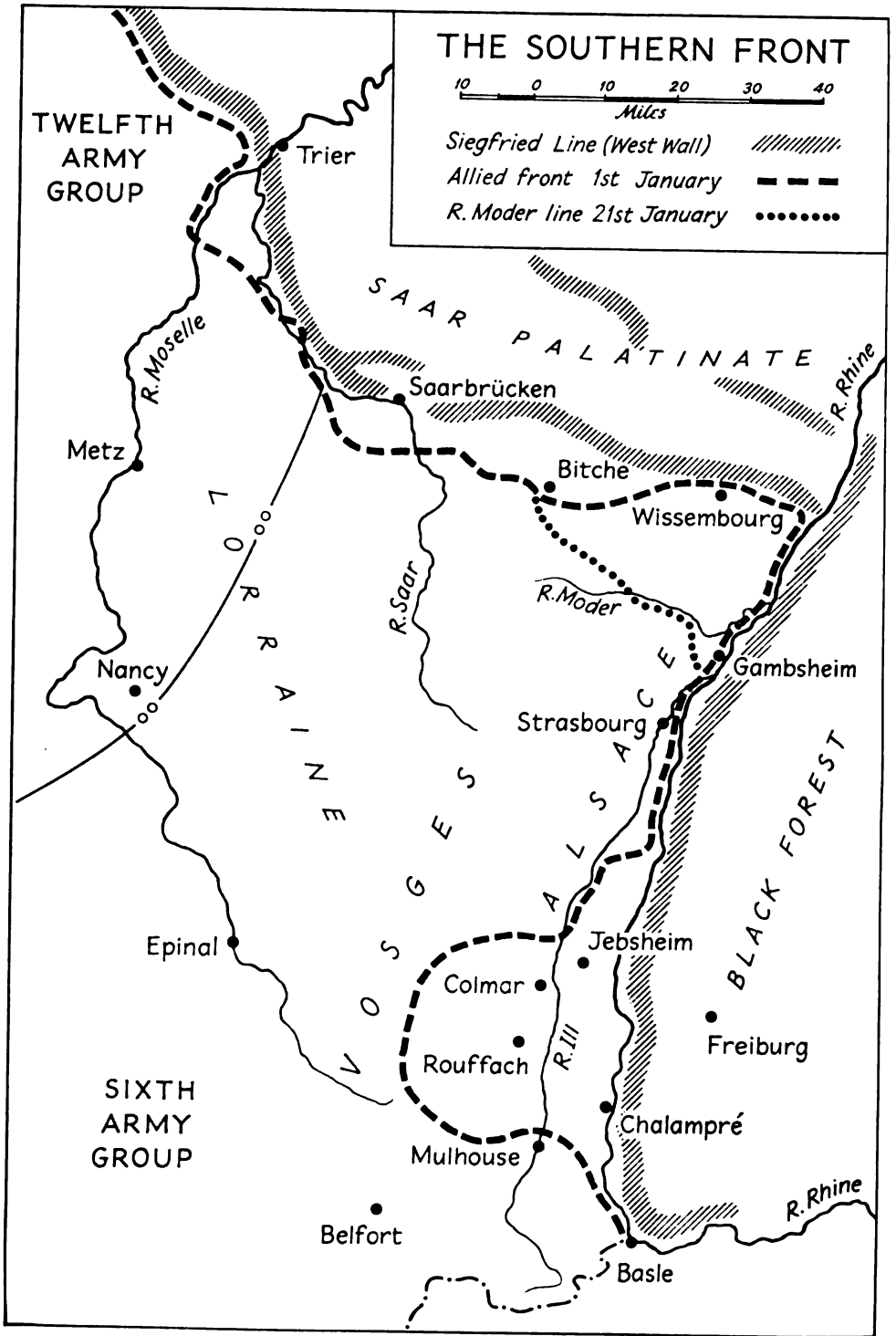
² Lance-Corporal H. E. Harden, Royal Army Medical Corps, attached to 1st Commando Brigade, was posthumously awarded the Victoria Cross for gallantry during these actions.

Operation 'Blackcock' had taken longer than expected but otherwise went very much according to plan. XII Corps' casualties were just over 1,500 officers and men, more than half of them being in the 52nd Division and its attached 8th Armoured Brigade. Tanks lost through enemy action totalled 104, a quarter of them flame-throwing and mine-clearing vehicles. Slightly under 2,200 prisoners had passed through the corps cages up to the 27th and a few hundred were added in the next three or four days. Happily the XII Corps sickness rate kept low, despite the unusually severe weather.

In January the enemy remaining on the Ardennes front were engaged in a hard-fighting withdrawal before the American Twelfth Army Group but in the south it was troops of General Patch's Seventh Army who had at first to withdraw before an enemy attack in Alsace.

That attack had been launched at about midnight on the 31st of December. Its possibility had been foreseen by General Eisenhower on December the 19th when he decided that the Third Army's front should be reduced in order to free troops to attack the southern flank of the German penetration in the Ardennes. The front of the adjoining Seventh Army was to be correspondingly extended and was to be held defensively but later General Patch was told to retire if need be as far as the line of the Vosges mountains, even if this involved the evacuation of Strasbourg. On hearing of this the French strongly protested on both humanitarian and political grounds and, failing to convince General Eisenhower, General de Gaulle appealed to the President and the Prime Minister. The former was not willing to limit the Supreme Commander's discretion but Mr. Churchill, accompanied by the C.I.G.S., flew to Versailles on January the 3rd and sat in at a conference with General Eisenhower and leading members of his Staff. Afterwards General Eisenhower and the Prime Minister met General de Gaulle and General Juin, Chief of Staff to the French Minister of Defence. Before the meeting General Eisenhower had already decided to modify his plan for withdrawal, if need be merely swinging Seventh Army's VI Corps back from its sharp salient with its left resting on the Vosges and its right extending southwards generally towards Strasbourg, which would be firmly held. This change was acceptable to General de Gaulle. Subsequently Eisenhower authorised Sixth Army Group to regard their main position as the line of the Vosges but to defend the Strasbourg area as long as possible consistent with the overriding necessity of maintaining the integrity of their forces, which was not to be jeopardised.

The sector in Alsace held by Seventh Army's eight divisions when



the Germans attacked it in the first hours of January the 1st, is shown on the adjoining map. Seven enemy divisions were employed at the outset and limited penetrations were made west and south of Bitche but were successfully contained. Meantime one German division attacked across the Rhine at Gambenheim, ten miles north of Strasbourg, and established a bridgehead, whereupon five more German divisions, of which two were panzer, attacked south from between Wissembourg and the Rhine, forced back the American right, crossed the Moder river and joined forces with the Gambenheim bridgehead. In accordance with General Eisenhower's orders the American defence gave ground to the Moder river but contained the German bridgehead south of that river despite strong attempts to expand it by the two panzer divisions. The enemy continued to fight stubbornly to enlarge the gain but on the 25th Hitler ordered attacks in the lower Vosges and lower Alsace to cease.

On the 7th the Germans had tried to enlarge their Colmar pocket towards Strasbourg in the French sector of the front and at one point made about ten miles before being held. In the middle of January the French troops, strengthened with two American divisions, in turn started to eliminate the Colmar pocket. At this time it was much the same size as before the Ardennes fighting. It was held by seven German divisions, with an eighth in reserve behind the Rhine.

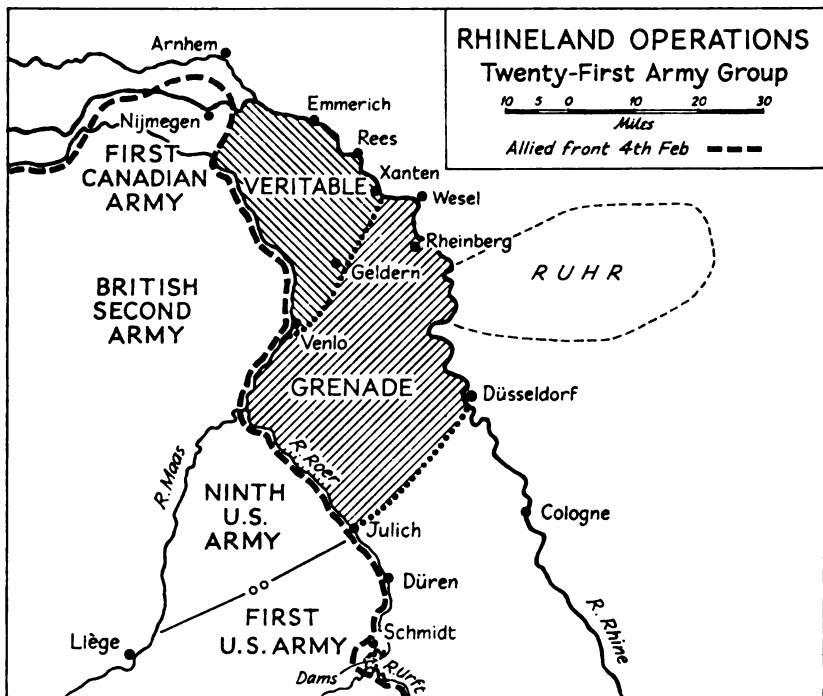
On the 20th the French opened their attack from the south, and two days later attacked from north and south. Fighting was bitter with frequent German counter-attacks and progress in the south was limited, but by the 27th Jébsheim in the north had been captured. Eventually four American divisions and eight French were involved, and on the 5th of February the northern and southern attacks joined up at Rouffach, cutting off some Germans in the Vosges though most got back before the net closed. The Germans then withdrew across the Rhine blowing the final bridge over the river, at Chalampré, on February the 9th. Colmar itself had been captured on the 2nd. Allied casualties in the fighting were just over 15,000 (American 4,673, French 10,791); and the enemy prisoners taken were also over 15,000 (by the Americans 6,387, by the French 9,387).

In the north during the last fortnight of January General Bradley's First Army struck eastwards while his Third Army continued to drive the last of the German troops from the remainder of the country they had overrun in the Ardennes. On the 1st of February General Eisenhower had ordered that Veritable should start not later than the 8th of February, and Grenade not later than the 10th; Ninth Army would be made up to a strength of ten divisions and General Bradley would continue operations to secure the Roer dams, but elsewhere on his front would assume an aggressive defence

forthwith. First Army continued its advance on the dams. The Urft reservoir dam was secured on the 4th of February, on the 7th Schmidt was captured and the ridge overlooking the Roer dam was reached, but there stiff enemy resistance developed and the main Roer dam was only captured on the 10th. Third Army having meanwhile cleared the enemy from the last of the ground occupied in the Ardennes counter-offensive, General Patton showed his interpretation of 'aggressive defence' by launching a strong thrust towards Prüm and other probing attacks southwards.

In the Rhineland battle, Veritable had started on the 8th.

Montgomery's directive for these Rhineland operations had been issued on January the 21st and modified on February the 4th. His intention was: 'To destroy all enemy in the area west of the Rhine from the present forward positions south of Nijmegen as far south as the general line Julich-Düsseldorf, as a preliminary to crossing the Rhine and engaging the enemy in mobile war to the north of the Ruhr'. First Canadian Army, keeping its left on the Rhine, was to attack south-eastwards as far as the general line Xanten-Geldern (operation Veritable); United States Ninth Army, supported

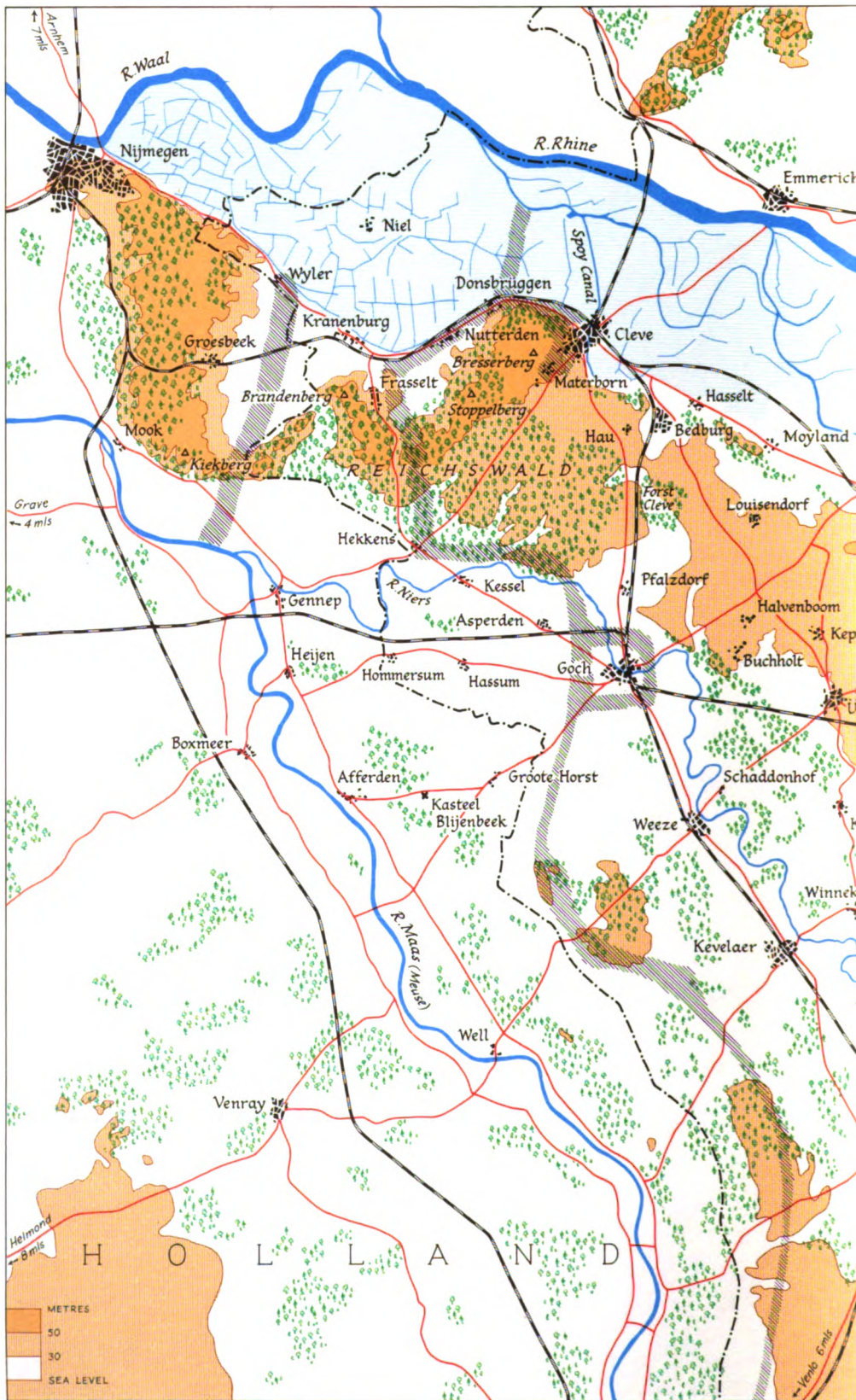


in the early stages by the left wing of Twelfth Army Group, was to attack north-eastwards with its right on the line Julich-Düsseldorf (operation Grenade); British Second Army was to hold firmly in the

centre facing east. The initial grouping would give First Canadian Army three corps headquarters and a total of four armoured and seven infantry divisions, five independent armoured brigades and four infantry formations of brigade status, while the British Second Army would have two corps headquarters, one armoured, one airborne and two infantry divisions plus three other brigades. Ninth Army would have three corps and ten divisions. The target date for Veritable was the 8th of February. The American attack was expected to start on the 10th. Having faced up to the Rhine from Nijmegen to Düsseldorf the armies would cross the river at Rees, Xanten and Rheinberg; possibly also at Emmerich. He added that plans were being made to set up a Netherlands District, with its own troops, to take over the Lower Maas front and the Scheldt islands. The support of British and American heavy bombers for Veritable was reasonably assured but, as it was always possible that the Combined Chiefs of Staff might switch the strategic effort at short notice to targets of higher priority elsewhere, First Canadian Army and 84 Group were to have alternative plans ready.

Air Marshal Coningham confirmed that the American XXIX Tactical Air Command was under his operational control, as well as the Second Tactical Air Force, and would be strongly reinforced before Grenade was launched.

The latest Intelligence indicated that there were about twelve enemy divisions facing the three armies, with the proportion opposite the Canadians tending to increase. In addition, it was estimated that von Rundstedt could collect another eleven divisions of all kinds, but some would certainly be switched to the east and others held back to guard the Ruhr.



CHAPTER XII

THE BATTLES OF THE RHINELAND

(February and March)

THE areas west of the Rhine from which the converging attacks under Twenty-First Army Group were to clear the enemy, in order to cross the Rhine and advance on the 'heart of Germany' by the northern route, are shown on the sketch map on page 250 so that readers unfamiliar with the country involved can appreciate their relationship.

The battleground on which Veritable was to be fought was confined between the Meuse (or Maas) and Rhine (or Waal). Natural features, the enemy's defence works and unkind weather combined to make an advance very difficult. Formerly covered by the sea, the highest ground was still barely 300 feet above sea level in 1945. While the rivers were some twenty miles apart at the final objective, they were separated by only six where the battle started south of Nijmegen. Beyond that initial bottleneck the main features of the area were flooded land along the flanking rivers and undulating, wooded country between them. In the Maas valley flooding was limited by rising ground, but along the Rhine it was normally contained, two or three miles back from the river, by winter dykes which stretched almost without interruption from Wesel down to Nijmegen. These dykes could easily be cut to flood adjoining land. At the north-western corner of the area, facing the start line, was the Reichswald, a state forest and a dominating feature in the opening battle. Eight miles long and some four miles wide, it was divided into blocks of trees by sandy 'rides' that were only wide enough for one-way traffic. Two paved roads crossed the forest from the north and met at Hekkens on the southern outskirts. Most of the Reichswald was even or gently rolling country above flood level but a curving ridge of high ground ran from its north-west corner towards Cleve. Between the northern fringe of the forest and the main road from Nijmegen to Cleve is a narrow corridor of arable land rising to the curved ridge about Materborn, which overlooks Cleve. As the Germans had breached the main dyke four miles east of Nijmegen, the low-lying plain north of the Nijmegen-Cleve road was already extensively flooded.

It will be seen on the adjoining map of the Veritable country that many smaller woods marked the country south-east of the Reichswald; of these the Hochwald and Balbergerwald are the most noteworthy. Across the area the enemy had built three defensive belts. The first was across the face of the Reichswald; the second, through the forest east of the road from Kranenburg to Hekkens and on to Goch and Geldern (this was the northern extension of the Siegfried Line but had none of the steel and concrete fortifications of the formidable original further to the south); the third defensive belt stretched from opposite Rees (on the Rhine) southwards in front of the Hochwald and Balberger woods (referred to in orders as 'the Hochwald lay-back') and again on to Geldern. There were also wired and mined trench systems covering the corridor north of the Reichswald to Materborn and Cleve and from there down to Goch. Each of these defensive belts consisted of two or three lines of trenches 600 to 1,000 or more yards apart, covered by extensive minefields and wire; they included where possible farmhouse and village strong-points and stretches of anti-tank ditch; towns such as Cleve and Goch were similarly protected by extensive field works. At the outset it was obvious that the main lines of advance, subject to the state of the ground and the area flooded, would be north and south of the Reichswald.

At the beginning of February the German front from near Nijmegen to about Roermond and from there to Julich was held by General Schlemm's First Parachute Army of Army Group H (whose commander, Student, had just been relieved by Colonel-General Blaskowitz, himself transferred from Army Group G in the far south). Schlemm's army consisted of II Parachute Corps, with 190th Infantry and 8th Parachute Divisions in the Roermond-Venlo sector and LXXXVI Corps of 84th and 180th Infantry Divisions with elements of the 7th Parachute Division in the north. About half-way between Venlo and Düsseldorf XLVII Panzer Corps was assembling, with the 116th Panzer and 15th Panzer Grenadier Divisions in army group reserve. On the 6th of February the 84th Infantry Division in the Reichswald was reinforced by a regiment of the 2nd Parachute Division from Arnhem; this was put in the gap between the Maas and the forest; there were also two battalions of elderly and unfit personnel in rear positions. The only German armour in the Reichswald was some 36 self-propelled heavy anti-tank guns; there were also about 100 pieces of artillery. The rest of the LXXXVI Corps front south of the Reichswald along the Maas was garrisoned by the 180th Division.

The German OKW situation map of February the 7th showed the British XXX Corps and its formations either 'unlocated' or still south of Roermond. In fact XXX Corps had been transferred to

the First Canadian Army and was disposed immediately behind the northern front ready to lead the coming attack. Considerable movement northwards of troops, equipment and stores had been involved. Some British divisions, tank brigades and artillery groups began leaving the Ardennes on the 18th of January but others, from the Blackcock area south of Roermond, were unable to start before the end of the month. Many formations had long journeys, but these were much exceeded by one or two of the United States Ninth Army's reinforcements which were coming from the Seventh Army, south of the Saar, for Grenade.

The movement for Veritable was first, to the 'concentration area' which extended roughly from Louvain and Antwerp in the south to Helmond and s'Hertogenbosch in the north, and thence to the final 'assembly area' whose forward limit was the front line between Boxmeer and Nijmegen. Both areas were well served with railways practically up to the Maas and when a first railway bridge over the river, below Grave, was opened on the 8th, a single line was through to Nijmegen the same day. On the other hand, with one or two exceptions the roads were quite incapable of bearing heavy military convoys, even under good conditions, and when a thaw occurred early in February, just as the traffic reached its peak, it required eighty companies of Engineers and Pioneers to maintain them and build diversions. Military Police were reinforced and altogether 1,600 men were employed on traffic control duties. To confuse the enemy and avoid detection the final moves into the assembly area were delayed until the last possible moment, and made under cover of darkness. Behind the Mook-Boxmeer front numerous dumps of petrol, ammunition, stores, etc. were built up and two of the Army Groups Royal Artillery were deployed to support the opening attack; until H-hour, everything and everybody was hidden during daylight, thanks largely to the cover provided by Second Tactical Air Force.

Plans were based on having to provide for a force of 340,000¹ men, for more than a thousand guns (not including anti-tank and light anti-aircraft weapons) and for 150 to 200 miles of travel by some 77,000 vehicles. This meant moving 10,000 tons forward each day, three-quarters of it for daily maintenance and the balance for establishment of reserves. Ammunition was expected to be the largest item with POL (Petrol, oil and lubricants), rations, engineer equipment and ordnance stores following in that order.

The forces allotted to Veritable by General Crerar were II Canadian Corps² under General Simonds and the British XXX

¹ First Canadian Army's peak strength during the operation was 450,000, with another 25,000 prisoners and civilian workers to feed.

² When Veritable opened II Canadian Corps consisted of: 49th Infantry Division, 2nd Canadian Armoured Brigade and, from the 10th, 2nd Canadian Infantry Division.

Corps¹ under General Horrocks. The United States Ninth Army would have three corps and ten divisions for Grenade.

The Canadian plan was for Veritable to be started by XXX Corps, who would be followed by II Canadian Corps as the battle area widened. General Crerar envisaged the operation as having three phases, namely:

Phase 1. The clearing of the Reichswald and the securing of the line Gennep-Asperden-Cleve.

Phase 2. The breaching of the enemy's second defensive system east and south-east of the Reichswald, the capture of the localities Weeze-Üdem-Calcar-Emmerich and the securing of the communications between them.

Phase 3. The 'break-through' of the Hochwald 'lay-back' defence lines and the advance to secure the general line Geldern-Xanten.

But he stressed the fact that any opportunity to make a break-through possible must be exploited vigorously.

The air forces assigned to the operation included not only virtually the whole of the Second Tactical Air Force but, subject to the needs of the campaign, the light and medium bombers of the Ninth Air Force and the heavies of Bomber Command and the Eighth Air Force. All had been taking part in far flung preliminary air attacks on enemy headquarters, roads, railways and bridges leading to the battle area from as far as the Ijssel crossings and the Ruhr.

The final air plan made no departure from the normal procedure for air support. Operations of 83 and 84 Groups were co-ordinated by the latter and, if the task was beyond their combined fifty-nine squadrons², 84 Group passed the requirement to Second Tactical Air Force who, if necessary, put it to higher authority. To expedite impromptu support, particularly when an overhead 'cab-rank' was operating, a Forward Control Post was located at XXX Corps headquarters; alongside it was a Mobile Radar Control Post to take over the direction of aircraft when visibility was bad. In addition, the leading divisions were provided with Contact Cars who could exercise even closer control when the Forward Control Post thought it necessary.

After having to postpone its night's programme for two hours because of the weather, Bomber Command entered the battle at

¹ XXX Corps consisted of: Guards Armoured Division; 2nd Canadian (till the 10th), 3rd Canadian, 15th, 43rd, 51st and 53rd Infantry Divisions; 6th Guards, 8th and 34th Armoured Brigades; 2 Canadian, 3, 4, 5 and 9 AGRAs; eleven regiments of 79th Armoured Division; 74 and 106 A.A. Brigades.

² On the eve of Veritable, 83 Group contained twelve Typhoon, thirteen Spitfire, five Tempest and three reconnaissance squadrons; 84 Group had nine Typhoon, fourteen Spitfire and three reconnaissance squadrons.

10 p.m. on the 7th, attacking Cleve and Goch through which ran two of the enemy's main routes into the battle area. 286 aircraft dropped 1,397 tons of high explosive on Cleve, severely damaging the centre and southern parts of the town, and at Goch the roads and defensive positions were hit by 475 tons from 151 bombers. German night fighters came on the scene just as the bombers turned for home and pursued the Goch force as far as Brussels, shooting down two Lancasters. Around midnight, to the south of these attacks, 95 Halifaxes and Stirlings of 38 Group¹ had bombed billeting areas and defences at Calcar, Üdem and Weeze, for the loss of one aircraft with engine trouble.

At five in the morning of February the 8th the artillery opened a programme which during the course of the day was to provide a concentration of fire exceeding any the British had employed previously in this war. In all some 1,050 pieces² were engaged in the bombardments—roughly half of them field guns of seven divisions, the remainder being heavier weapons of five artillery groups and two anti-aircraft brigades. Gunners concentrated on the enemy's batteries and mortars, command posts and communications and localities in the path of our intended advances. Simultaneously, the divisional 'Pepperpot' groups swept the forward positions ahead with a variety of weapons.³

At 7.40 a.m., after feint smoke screens had been laid across the front to induce the enemy to man his guns and bring down his defensive fire, came a period of ten minutes' silence to enable sound-ranging and flash-spotting sections to mark down a number of new, hostile battery and mortar areas before the bombardments were renewed. With the first of the day's Spitfires and Mosquitos now flying in overhead, the counter-battery fire steadily increased, the barrage began to build up and the assaulting columns closed to their start lines. At 10.30 a.m. the full barrage made its first lift and the advance began.

The initial assault and completion of the first phase was the responsibility of XXX Corps. It was led by infantry brigade groups of the 51st (Highland), 53rd (Welsh), and 15th (Scottish) Divisions and the Canadian 2nd and 3rd Divisions, the 3rd Division starting in the evening. Progress on the first day will be told in that order. All the brigade groups included gun tanks from the armoured

¹ 38 Group will be remembered as carriers of airborne troops but, since the beginning of February, had been operating as bombers under the Second Tactical Air Force in conjunction with 2 Group.

² 25-pdr (576); 4.5- and 5.5-in (280); 155-mm, 7.2-in, 8-in and 240-mm (122); 3.7-in A.A. (72). Total, 1,050.

³ Medium machine guns (188); 4.2-in mortars (80); 40-mm Bofors, A.A. (114); 75-mm Sherman tanks (60); 17-pdr A.Tk. guns (24). Total, 466. Rockets—12 × 32-barrelled projectors.

brigades¹ and equipments from the 79th Armoured Division.² Surprised by the scope of the assault and severely hit by the bombardments, the opposition was at first for the most part light and gave less trouble than the state of the ground, sodden by the heavy rain that had followed the recent thaw. The stiffest resistance was met on the right where the 51st Division was required to clear a wide sector that included the south-west corner of the Reichswald, and the gap between it and the Maas where a main road ran to Gennep. The division set the 154th Brigade to secure a commanding ridge just inside the forest and expected to follow it up, early in the afternoon, with the 153rd Brigade directed at the road. The 154th Brigade's left wing fared best and by mid-afternoon had reached the northern end of the ridge, but its right was delayed by enemy holding out in villages short of the forest and by an anti-tank ditch where three crossings were to be made. At one place flail tanks cleared a lane, exploding about thirty mines, and an engineer tank then successfully dropped a box girder bridge while a bulldozer ramped the ditch with fascines, rubble, a burnt-out German tank and some farm carts. This crossing was in use by mid-afternoon; of the other two, one was not completed till late in the evening and the third had to be abandoned because of mud. Meanwhile, the infantry had been pushing on but opposition grew stronger and it was four in the morning before the whole ridge had been secured. It was not until after midnight that 153rd Brigade's leading units were established at the southernmost corner of the forest, in close proximity to a strong body of Germans.

The 53rd Division had the task of making good the northern half of the Reichswald and, in particular, the Brandenburg and Stoppelberg features. It had a narrow sector and led with the 71st Brigade for the Brandenburg, intending to follow through with the 160th Brigade to force the Siegfried defences and take the Stoppelberg. As the leading columns began crossing the valley there was little enemy opposition but the ground soon became a quagmire and all vehicles, except a few of the broad-tracked Churchills, became bogged. Fortunately the anti-tank ditch proved less formidable than expected and the infantry scrambled across it to reach the forest. By two o'clock they were on the Brandenburg hill and began mopping up the not very tough troops of the German 84th Division. The 160th Brigade starting from Groesbeek was slowed by congestion on the one available road and by accurate mortar and artillery

¹ Armoured Brigades: 34th, associated with 51st and 53rd Divisions; 6th Guards, associated with 15th Division; 8th, associated with 43rd Division, less one regiment divided between 2nd and 3rd Canadian Divisions.

² 79th Armoured Division: Eleven regiments, administered in Veritable by H.Q. 90th Armoured Brigade, namely three regiments of mine-clearing Flails and two each of flame-throwing Crocodiles, amphibious Buffaloes, troop-carrying Kangaroos and engineer tanks.

fire as the forest was reached. However, late in the day an attack was launched, supported by Churchill tanks, and by 2 a.m. the leading units were through the Siegfried defences and mopping up on the far side of the Kranenburg-Hekkens road. Meanwhile, the rest of the brigade group moved on through the forest to attack along the hills that led to the Stoppelberg.

The 15th Divisional Group was faced with the task of seizing the key ground about Cleve, first breaching the Siegfried defences on the way. The division led with two brigades and the opening phase went well, the 46th Brigade on the right and the 227th on its left having more trouble with mines and mud than with the enemy. (The adjoining specimen section of the Allies' map used by the attacking formations shows the nature and position of the enemy's defences but the symbols used here are inevitably out of scale.) Flails succeeded in opening one gap on the right but elsewhere were bogged soon after the start and infantry had casualties in the uncleared minefield. With close support from artillery and flame-throwers the 46th Brigade had cleared the long straggling village of Frasselt by dark and the 227th Brigade captured Kranenburg. The 44th Brigade, which was to force the Siegfried defence line, had been delayed when its Special Breaching Force of nearly 300 heavy armoured vehicles was virtually brought to a standstill along the rough track which had been carrying traffic of the two leading brigades for most of the day. Eventually a detour was made with the aid of bulldozers, but it was four in the morning before a start could be made on the Siegfried Line.

To its important task of opening the main Nijmegen-Cleve road up to Kranenburg the 2nd Canadian Division assigned its 5th Brigade, its first objective being to capture Wyler and a small area to the south. After some stiff fighting the town was taken by 6.30 p.m. with 300 prisoners and the Engineers set to work clearing the road of obstructions, mines and prepared demolitions. By nine o'clock the Engineers could report all routes free of mines.

The rôle of the 3rd Canadian Divisional Group was to secure the left or northern flank of the 2nd Canadian and 15th (Scottish) Divisions, and to clear the area between the Nijmegen-Cleve road and the Rhine. So that the maximum artillery support could be given in the first instance to the Reichswald attacks, and then be available for the operations further north, the division did not start until six in the evening, its plan being to do most of the clearing with two brigades and then to pass the third through to deal with the defensive positions that ran northwards to the river from about Donsbruggen and Cleve. By February the 8th the greater part of the division's area was submerged by water from broken dykes.

Covered by an extensive smoke screen to prevent observation

from beyond the Rhine, and preceded by radar-controlled Typhoon strikes on their several objectives, each brigade began by deploying two battalions to maintain the advance through the night with the aid of artificial moonlight. Only on the right could part of one brigade and a few tanks use dry ground; the remainder had to move either in amphibians or assault boats. Niel, about three miles north of Kranenburg, gave a lot of trouble but village and strong-point garrisons were usually ready to surrender. By the afternoon of the 9th both brigades were up to the Rhine in the north, and closing to the Donsbruggen–Rhine defences—their first tasks virtually accomplished.

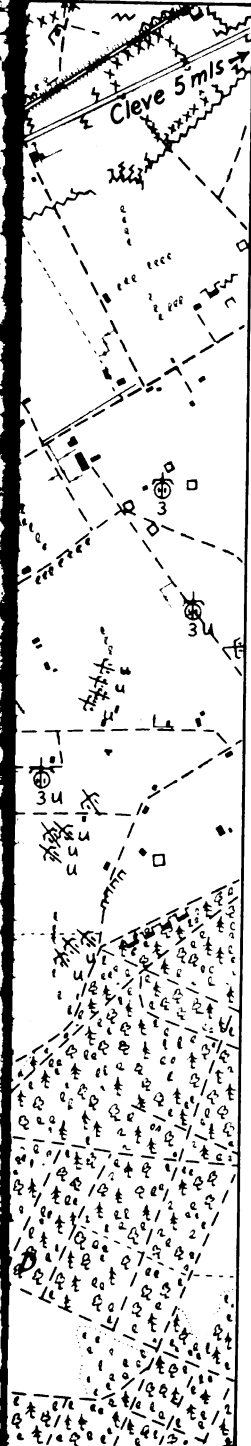
The 8th of February had opened with weather that promised well for air operations and tactical reconnaissance planes were airborne shortly before 8 a.m., with squadrons of 83 and 84 Groups beginning the pre-arranged support about half an hour later. Unfortunately, low cloud then began to cover the Rhineland and recourse was had to the Mobile Radar Control Post which meant bombing 'blind' and practically cancelled the important artillery reconnaissance programme. The bad conditions also severely handicapped the Ninth Air Force in their morning attacks on Nutterden and Materborn. In the afternoon the weather improved a little and some effective work was done until dark by fighter-bombers and 2 Group against positions north of the Nijmegen–Cleve road, Nutterden and Materborn, and against continuous though scattered movement towards the Reichswald from the south, duly observed by reconnaissance planes. Numerous attacks were made on known enemy headquarters and their signal systems, one being a rocket-firing Typhoon strike against the First Parachute Army headquarters near Emmerich, where the telephone exchange buildings were badly damaged and, as was later discovered, the general commanding the army's artillery was killed. Further afield, Spitfires and Typhoons on armed reconnaissance made several attacks on rail lines and traffic heading for the Rhine—resumed after dark by 2 Group Mosquitos, on both sides of the river. Despite indifferent weather a total of 1,201 sorties were flown by the Second Tactical Air Force, and 167 by the Ninth Air Force. No German aircraft were seen over the battle area.

As soon as he heard the opening artillery bombardment and received reports of its intensity, General Schlemm, commanding the First Parachute Army, was satisfied that this heralded Field-Marshal Montgomery's main attack and confirmed the view he had always held that the Reichswald, and not Venlo, was the threatened area. After some opposition by his seniors Schlemm was allowed to move his reserve, the 7th Parachute Division, from below Geldern into the line on the left of the 84th Division. By then (early evening) the latter had already had five or six battalions shattered and lost over

EICHSWALD

naissance

- Light machine g
- Light mortar ;
- Mobile gun - 11g
- Mobile guns in
- Anti aircraft g
- Mobile anti tank
- Anti tank ditch
- Communication
- Weapon pit ;
- Unconfirmed ;



1,200 men taken prisoner and it seemed to the commander of LXXXVI Corps that if the British could push on through the night they must inevitably secure Cleve and achieve a break-through.

This was what XXX Corps was endeavouring to do, to 'press forward', as Horrocks had signalled. He also put the 43rd Division, in Nijmegen, at one hour's notice to move from 1 p.m. next day, and the Guards Armoured Division, in Tilburg, at one hour's notice from the following midnight. Veritable had made a good start, but the key to exploiting gains before enemy reinforcements arrived in strength was the main Nijmegen-Cleve road, which was already menaced by the flood situation to its north where the water level had risen eighteen inches during the latter half of the day.

On the 9th low-hanging clouds and heavy rain persisted well into the afternoon and not only curtailed air support but made movement more difficult than ever. Nevertheless, the Siegfried defences were breached astride the northern boundary of the Reichswald and good progress was made on XXX Corps' extreme right. There, accompanied by tanks from the 34th Armoured Brigade, the 51st Division's 153rd Brigade had cleared the enemy's anchor position in the Kiekberg woods and was across the Gennep road at two points behind them. In the meantime the 152nd Brigade had taken over the lead in the Reichswald itself. After stiff fighting, and some good work with the bayonet against a battalion of paratroops who were just about to counter-attack, its forward elements had reached the Frasselt road less than two miles from the valuable road centre of Hekkens, but it came up against some strongly held entrenchments about midnight and was forced to wait for daylight.

Meanwhile, the 53rd Division had made good progress into the northern tongue of the Reichswald. The 160th Brigade attacked the Stoppelberg feature, and the hill was secured during the morning; the brigade later pushed on to the edge of the forest, whence it overlooked Materborn. It was evident that the enemy had been reinforced, not only in this area but further south in the forest, where he made several attacks until late afternoon against the 158th Brigade that had been following up from south of Frasselt. All the attacks were firmly repulsed and cost him heavy casualties as well as six guns. Although a fair proportion of the tracked, tactical vehicles of the three brigades and their supporting units had reached the forest and were useful in all these operations, the low ground to the west of it, and the divisional axis, had been almost obliterated under the strain. Only by closing it to traffic for most of the day, and reinforcing the sappers with large working parties, had some improvement gradually been achieved.

Further north, in the 15th Division's area, the traffic problem was even worse by the end of this day. Not only were the secondary

routes by then virtually unusable but the main Nijmegen–Cleve road, on which much depended, had inevitably become congested and had a foot and a half of flood water across it in places. The day's most important advances were made by the 44th Brigade, supported by tanks of the 6th Guards Armoured Brigade and equipments from the 79th Armoured Division. The advance had begun before dawn against the Siegfried defences just north-east of Frasselt. The anti-tank ditch had delayed for a time but by nine o'clock three crossings were in use and some 200 prisoners collected from adjacent trenches. Within another hour the brigade cleared a pair of knolls between the forest and Nutterden, capturing a troop of self-propelled 'eighty-eights' and another 200 prisoners; Nutterden itself had already been entered and only needed mopping up. In order to make up time the brigade was ordered to push on at once for Materborn. While its left tackled the obstacles that blocked the main road beyond Nutterden the rest of the brigade drove eastwards and, as darkness fell, gained a sound footing on the Bresserberg ridge, just off the western outskirts of Cleve and barely a mile from Materborn village. But opposition quickly stiffened. Newly arrived troops from the German 7th Parachute Division spent most of the evening trying to regain the Bresserberg positions, though with no success, but the enemy still blocked the road between Cleve and Materborn village. The 'Materborn gap' was not yet clear.

Having heard, however, that 'the Materborn feature' had been 'seized', General Horrocks had ordered the 43rd Division to start from Nijmegen at 7 p.m. and to pass through the 15th for Goch, Üdem and Weeze.

The division, with tanks of the 8th Armoured Brigade under command, led with the 129th Brigade followed by the 214th, and used at the outset only one route, the road through Kranenburg to Nutterden. With the infantry riding 'quick lift' on the tanks and other tracked vehicles, and enlivened by a few German aircraft that tried to bomb the road with the aid of flares, the head of the 129th Brigade took three hours to cover the ten miles to Nutterden. Though delayed by defended road blocks and our own bomb craters the leading battalion reached Cleve shortly after first light, but very soon the whole brigade became involved in a series of bitter encounters with German infantry, paratroops, self-propelled guns and single tanks. Confused fighting raged all day and, although all counter-attacks were driven off, the brigade group was pinned down among the ruins of Cleve. Meanwhile the 214th Brigade, due to make for Materborn village, had also been stopped for several hours in Nutterden. When the three-miles-long column approached Nutterden soon after daylight, expecting to turn eastwards for Materborn at the far end of the village, it found the road and side

tracks packed tight with the vehicles and mechanical devices of what seemed like 'a representative proportion of First Canadian Army'.¹ About eight o'clock, when due to have two hours' priority over the road, the 15th Division's 227th Highland Brigade came up, followed by part of the 43rd's reconnaissance regiment which the divisional commander now wanted to push on ahead of the 214th Brigade. The result was an appalling jam, from which the Wessex brigade was unable to extricate itself until the middle of the afternoon. Skirting the Reichswald it then headed for Materborn village but the attack was eventually brought to a halt about half a mile short of target. Clear at last of the congestions resulting from General Horrocks' attempt to move two divisions along the same axis, stretches of which were under two or three feet of water, the brigade closed up during the night, thankful that it had three days' rations with it.

In the Reichswald the 53rd Division had been busy mopping up its area and using its lightest vehicles to bring forward supplies, ready to wheel across the Hekkens-Cleve road in the direction of Goch. Hekkens had defied the 51st Division all day, and although the enemy had been driven from some villages to the south of the forest, Gennep had not been captured. On XXX Corps' northern flank, the 3rd Canadian Division's 9th Brigade, travelling in amphibians and well beyond the range of its own marooned artillery, had captured Donsbruggen after dark and during the night continued towards the Spoy Canal which barred the way to the Rhine ferries at Emmerich and elsewhere north-east of Cleve.

While water and mud had put the brake on ground movement, low cloud and rain had affected air operations so severely on both the 9th and the 10th that close support was virtually ruled out, and the Second Tactical Air Force was practically confined to wrecking the enemy command system and isolating the battlefield. Attacks were made on known headquarters and traffic and bridges on roads and railways leading to Wesel from the east and to the Reichswald from the south. Despite all the air force's efforts, the enemy had managed to move in elements of the 6th Parachute Division (from Arnhem) and the 7th Parachute Division (from Geldern). About midday on the 10th, von Rundstedt sent a signal to Blaskowitz emphasising the incalculable consequences of a break-through to the Rhine and the necessity of holding Cleve at all costs. Later in the day he decided to move up his armoured reserve—the 15th Panzer Grenadier and 116th Panzer Divisions—under headquarters XLVII Panzer Corps.

This decision resulted from the turn of events on the Roer, across which the United States Ninth Army was due to start Grenade on

¹ H. Essame, *The 43rd Wessex Division at War, 1944-1945* (William Clowes, 1952), p. 206.

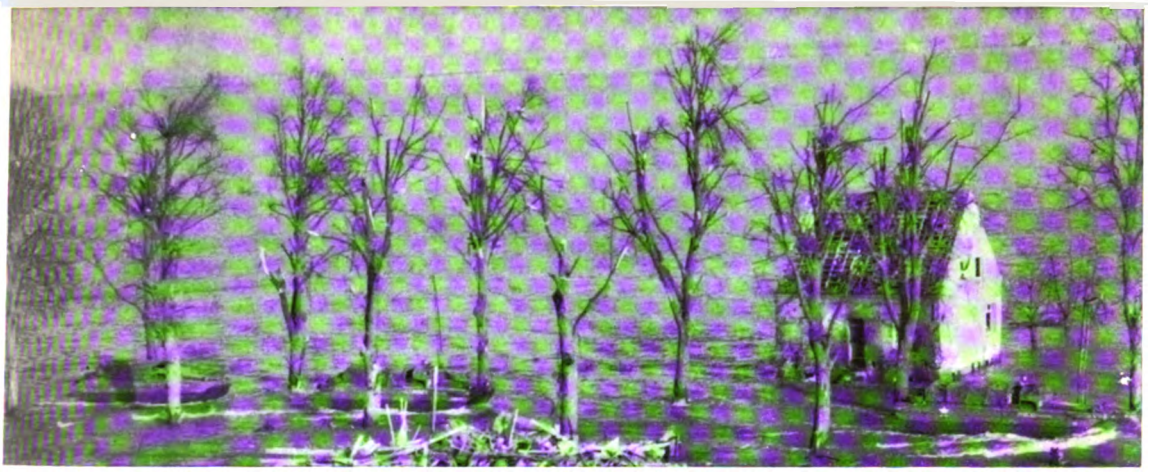
February the 10th. There had been so much rain that the Roer was in spate and on the 9th Montgomery agreed with General Simpson, commanding the Ninth Army, that his attack must be postponed for twenty-four hours. Meanwhile, as already mentioned (page 250) the United States First Army had been engaged in bitter fighting for the two reservoirs formed by the Roer dams, but at the last minute, with Hitler's approval, the Germans blew the discharge valves and released something over a hundred million tons of water into the Roer. Within the next few hours the river had risen another five feet, flowing at a speed well in excess of the safe maximum for bridging. On the 10th Montgomery visited the Roer and saw that Grenade must be postponed for some days. Veritable would meanwhile have to carry a greater burden, and he obtained Eisenhower's approval for two American divisions to join Second Army along the Maas, and so release two British divisions to reinforce General Crerar's Army. Montgomery then placed the 52nd (Lowland) and 11th Armoured Divisions at First Canadian Army's disposal on the 12th.

By blowing up the discharge apparatus instead of the dams the Germans had created a long-term flood rather than a short-lived torrent, and estimated that it would delay the Allied operations for eleven days. American engineers held the same view, and forecast that an assault across the Roer would not be practicable before about the 23rd, and then only if there was no more excessive rain. While the postponement would delay the progress of Veritable and mean heavier casualties, it must make things easier for Grenade when the time came. Whenever the weather permitted, XXIX Tactical Air Command was out in strength on reconnaissance, and attacking enemy communications, traffic and headquarters, while the Ninth Army used the time to adjust its plans, rehearse the assault and increase its build-up of ammunition, stores and equipment.

In the north, after the frustrations of the first few days, Veritable had begun to open out though physical conditions left little room for manoeuvre; the operation had become what General Eisenhower was to describe later as 'a bitter slugging match'.¹

On the 11th the 15th Division had fought their way into Cleve against determined opposition, and enabled the 43rd Division's brigade to disengage, though not before it had broken up an early morning attack by paratroops and taken 180 of them prisoner. Hardly a house was now standing in Cleve and next day the town was finally cleared and handed over to the 3rd Canadian Division, whose amphibious 9th Brigade had meanwhile forced the Spoy Canal and was mopping up the island villages between it and the Rhine ferries. The Scottish division's 46th Brigade set out for Calcar

¹ *Report by the Supreme Commander . . .*, p. 107.



40. Veritable—the northern road to Cleve



41. Cleve



42. General Vandenberg



43. General Spaatz



44. General Doolittle

with a mobile column of all arms but soon ran into the enemy's heavy and well-directed artillery fire; only on the following morning was Hasselt secured. Immediately beyond this the opposition increased considerably and it would take additional troops and a week of hard fighting to capture the Moyland area, little more than two miles down the road from Hasselt. Meanwhile a brigade of the 43rd Division had captured Materborn village with the support of a regiment from the 8th Armoured Brigade. Some self-propelled guns and a few tanks gave trouble till destroyed but the enemy infantry offered little resistance. With the Materborn 'gap' open at last the brigade continued eastwards for the ridge about Hau, as a preliminary to a right-handed wheel for the Goch area. The advance to Hau proved a stiff proposition and involved a night of close-quarter fighting among farmsteads and houses before the village was secured. Strong counter-attacks then followed in quick succession and, for the time being, it was a matter of holding on grimly to what had been gained. The 43rd Division's second brigade had also taken Bedburg but attempts to make the higher ground just to the south were strongly countered by German infantry and tanks, backed by heavy shelling and mortaring.

The enemy had reacted strongly to the 15th and 43rd Divisions' threats to Calcar and Goch. Both were areas of vital importance for the retention of the more open country west of Wesel and, with the aid of General von Lüttwitz' XLVII Panzer Corps, the Germans had managed to improvise a new check line between Moyland and the Cleve Forest to connect with the entrenchments that already existed between Cleve and Goch. To this extent the intervention of the panzer corps had been effective but less so than intended, for its orders from First Parachute Army were to recover Cleve and the commanding ground to its west. Von Lüttwitz had accordingly directed the 116th Panzer Division through Hau and Materborn and the 15th Panzer Grenadier Division, on its left, through the eastern half of the Reichswald. But when the divisions advanced on the morning of the 12th they ran into the advancing brigades of the 15th, 43rd and 53rd Divisions and by nightfall had lost heavily and been thrown on to the defensive. With a group from the 346th Division from across the Rhine and more paratroop reinforcements, XLVII Panzer Corps now became responsible for the front to the north of Goch and LXXXVI Corps for the remainder to the Maas.

Meanwhile, in the centre and on the right of XXX Corps' front important progress had been made in the general direction of Goch. In the centre, moving on a broad front across the Cleve-Hekkens forest road, the 53rd Division and regiments of the 34th Armoured Brigade had met and repulsed the 15th Panzer Grenadier Division's counter-attack, destroying four of their 'Jagdpantners' and some

Mark IV tanks. Losses, however, were heavy on both sides and the Welsh division was to need three days' hard fighting to eliminate the paratroops and panzer grenadiers from the south-east corner of the Reichswald. On the 53rd's right, Hekkens, the southern cornerstone of the main Reichswald defences, had been taken by the 51st Division after some fierce fighting in which the corps artillery had given great assistance. From Hekkens a successful assault in tracked amphibians was then made on to some commanding ground beyond the Niers and thence to Kessel on the road to Goch. In the meantime, near the Maas, after crossing the Niers at night in assault boats, other Highland division troops had vigorously cleared Gennep and pushed on another two miles to establish XXX Corps' right flank around Heijen. Not only did the capture of Gennep enable Second Army to begin bridging the Maas nearby, but the 51st Division's other gains along the Niers had brought the Mook-Goch road into use as XXX Corps' main supply route. In addition they made the concrete forest road from Hekkens available for the troops in the Cleve neighbourhood, who had been much dependent on DUKWs and Sapper ferries to carry their goods across the flooded areas that are shown on the map.

For some days the weather had been too bad for close air support except for one brief interlude when the Cleve Forest, and defended localities along the Niers, were bombed and 'winkled' by Typhoons and Spitfires, a marked feature of the operations being the effective and pre-arranged anti-flak work of the Royal Artillery. The 14th, however, was a brilliantly clear day and within the period of twenty-four hours the Allied strategic and tactical air forces flew altogether something like 9,000 sorties against targets along or behind the battle front, and against others deep into Germany—a scale of effort unequalled since the Normandy days. Second Tactical Air Force completed over 1,800 sorties and the Ninth Air Force a few hundred more. In the Veritable area some 32 separate 'cab-rank' attacks were made, on occasion barely 300 yards ahead of the leading troops, while the pre-arranged missions included targets in and around such places as Goch, Weeze, Udem, Kevelaer and Xanten, as well as Wesel where Eighth Air Force bombers destroyed a span of the road bridge. Unfortunately, these excellent conditions were immediately followed by another blank, bad-weather period.

The 14th was also notable for a new move by General Crerar. The state of the ground and the lack of elbow-room still offered no opening for an armoured division; pressure must be maintained by using more infantry. The infantry of the Guards Armoured Division had just come into the line and would shortly be followed by the 52nd (Lowland) Division; two Canadian infantry divisions were also close at hand and comparatively fresh. The Army commander

accordingly told General Simonds to take over Horrocks' left sector on the 15th and, with the 2nd and 3rd Canadian Divisions, to operate his II Canadian Corps on the Cleve-Üdem axis and then towards Xanten. At the same time he directed XXX Corps to concentrate on a Goch-Weeze-Kevelaer thrust-line.

XXX Corps now had the 43rd, 53rd and 51st Divisions converging on Goch. With a peace-time population of some ten thousand, Goch was a pivotal point in the enemy defences, well provided with strong-points, entrenchments and anti-tank ditches. The river Niers flowed through the town, and a mile or so away an escarpment overlooked it from the north.

Avoiding the Cleve Forest, and then skirting Pfalzdorf which was about to fall to the 53rd, the 43rd Division headed for the escarpment north-east of Goch with the 15th Division getting ready to follow it up. In heavy fighting by each of its brigades in turn the 43rd broke through the 15th Panzer Grenadier Division and, in a vigorous night attack, quickly covered four or five miles to secure the escarpment on the 17th and also to cut the Goch-Calcar road. General Horrocks afterwards described this as the turning point in the battle. After dark the divisional engineers opened seven crossings over the outer anti-tank ditch at the foot of the escarpment and next morning the 15th Division's leading brigade took up the attack. Greatly helped by the special equipments of the 79th Armoured Division the Scots forced an inner anti-tank ditch and by midnight were fighting in the environs of Goch, as were troops of the 53rd Division to their right and a brigade of the 51st on the far side of the river Niers. Next day, the 19th, the garrison commander surrendered but confused fighting among the rubble-strewn streets continued for another forty-eight hours. Early on the 19th II Parachute Corps, commanded by General Meindl, had taken over the front on both sides of Goch¹ with the 7th Parachute Division and what remained of the 84th, but all his efforts to save the situation proved to be too late and by the evening of the 21st Goch was free of German troops.

While this key position was being captured XXX Corps had also been gaining ground to the flanks. On arrival alongside the Maas the 52nd Division lost no time in making good Afferden and the adjacent woods, but when it sought to strike eastwards for Weeze it found the old, shell-proof frontier fortress of Kasteel Blijenbeek and the road beyond to Groote Horst fanatically defended by paratroops, with an anti-tank ditch (twenty feet wide and full of water) which delayed progress for some time. In the country to the left of the 52nd, the 32nd Guards Brigade had been operating as the link between it and the main body of the 51st Division while the latter moved down through Asperden on Goch. The Footguards quickly took Hommer-

¹ Between XLVII Panzer Corps on his right and LXXXVI Corps on his left.

sum and Hassum, but when they veered southwards found the ground too boggy for tanks to accompany them, and meeting very strong opposition they were withdrawn. At the same time, troops of the 15th Division who were not engaged with Goch had swung away to the left over the Goch-Calcar road, to clear the woods of parachutists east of the river Niers and around Buchholt. Further to the left again the 43rd Division was also across the road and, with 8th Armoured Brigade tanks, had taken Halvenboom to protect the flank of the Canadian corps.

When General Simonds took command of the northern sector on the 15th the entire area between the Cleve-Calcar road and the Rhine was under water, with the road itself submerged in places. II Canadian Corps was disposed as follows: in the Nijmegen-Mook area were the 2nd Division and the 2nd Armoured Brigade; in Cleve was the 3rd Division's 7th Brigade: and working among the floods were amphibious groups from the 9th Brigade, some of whom had established themselves on the Rhine bank opposite Emmerich after stiff fighting; the 8th Brigade was in divisional reserve and the Scottish 46th Brigade astride the Moyland Woods was under command of 3rd Division. General Simonds ordered the 7th Brigade to open the way to Calcar and the 2nd Division to move a brigade group to Cleve, in preparation for an advance on Üdem.

With a regiment of the 6th Guards Armoured Brigade in close support the 7th Brigade attacked on the 16th. On the right, the advance went well and Louisendorf and 240 prisoners were taken. But on the left it ran into the grenadier regiment of the 116th Panzer Division and units of the 346th Infantry and 6th Parachute Divisions. A renewal of this attack among the Moyland woods on the 17th achieved little. Mines and self-propelled guns put several tanks and troop-carrying Kangaroos out of action and shells detonating in the tree-tops caused a lot of casualties; but in the open country to the south an advance under heavy fire eventually got abreast of the eastern end of the woods. The Germans regarded Moyland as vital to the defence of Calcar and the road to Wesel, and two newly arrived regiments of the 6th Parachute Division were put into the battle. Then, with the 46th Brigade Group overdue for relief, Simonds committed the 2nd Division whose 4th Brigade had been in Cleve since the morning of the 16th. On the 18th he ordered the brigade to attack next day for the high ground on the far side of the Goch-Calcar road about three miles to the south of Calcar, and while the 5th Brigade took over from the 46th in the western part of the Moyland woods the 7th Brigade was to start clearing from the opposite end; regiments of the 2nd Canadian Armoured Brigade were to relieve the Guards' tank battalions and support the Canadian operations.

The Moyland reliefs were completed during the morning of the 19th, and the 4th Canadian Brigade Group formed up about a mile to their south with some 450 field, medium and heavy guns¹ to support them. At noon the guns opened and as the barrage moved forward the two leading battalions, each preceded by a squadron of tanks, headed for their initial objectives 2,500 yards away. But the heavy going, aggravated by more rain the night before, soon began to take its toll; several Kangaroos and tanks were bogged down and a number of tanks were victims of mines and a screen of 'eighty-eights' along the Goch-Calcar road. Although their casualties were heavy, both battalions had elements across the road by early afternoon and a counter-attack against their right flank was successfully held, a hundred prisoners being taken in a few hours, mostly from a parachute battalion.

Von Lüttwitz' XLVII Panzer Corps had just been reinforced by the Panzer Lehr Division and at 8 p.m. he committed it against the 4th Canadian Brigade in company with troops of the 116th Panzer Division; throughout the night successive waves of Germans, supported by guns and mortars, attacked the Canadian positions among the farms along the Goch-Calcar road. Towards midnight both commanding officers were reporting that enemy tanks and infantry were all over the place, shooting up their battalion headquarters and isolating companies. Yet, although it seemed 'touch and go' at times, the Canadians held their ground through the night as the brigade reserve and a battalion from the 6th Brigade moved up to re-establish the position. After a strong enemy daylight attack had been beaten off a Canadian counter-attack was launched at 9.30 a.m. An hour's stiff fighting saw contact being regained with the Canadian forward units but it was 2 p.m. before the position was fully restored and the wounded could be evacuated. About 6 p.m. the Germans attacked again, but again they were thrown back in what was to prove their last serious attempt to break the Canadians on the road; for the time being both 116th Panzer and Panzer Lehr had had enough. The field was strewn with their dead, and at least eleven tanks and six of their 88-mm self-propelled guns had been destroyed. In those two hard-fought days the casualties of the 4th Brigade's infantry battalions alone totalled 400, at a time when the weather had deprived it of any close air support.

The Canadian 3rd Division's 7th Brigade had launched a fresh attack for Moyland on the 19th. Paratroops of the German 6th Division supported by additional gunfire from across the Rhine desperately counter-attacked the Canadian thrusts and kept up their attacks on the 20th, till brought to a halt barely fifty yards from the

¹ From divisional artilleries of 2nd and 3rd Canadian, 15th, 43rd and 53rd Divisions, and 5th Army Group Royal Artillery.

Canadian position. Then with a well-coordinated plan for artillery, tank and flame-thrower support, and favoured with weather that permitted close air support for the first time for five days, the 7th Brigade staged another assault for Moyland on the 21st. Greatly helped by seventeen separate low-level strikes by rocket-firing Typhoons of 84 Group, the brigade group won the day and drove the enemy survivors back towards Calcar.

On the 22nd a battalion of the 5th Brigade entered Moyland village unopposed, except perhaps at the Schloss Moyland whose aged Baroness had survived, with a few retainers, in its vast and unheated cellars. She made it clear that she thoroughly disapproved of what had been going on! Clearing a thickly wooded area of a determined opponent had again proved a tedious and costly task. Quite apart from the losses in the many other units engaged, the Canadian 7th Brigade's three infantry battalions suffered 485 casualties between the 16th and 21st of February.

As has been mentioned, fighters of the Second Tactical Air Force had been virtually grounded from the 17th to the 20th although heavier aircraft were able to operate to a limited extent. In daylight attacks on Wesel town and its marshalling yards, where congestion had been observed, Bomber Command dropped 1,400 tons of high explosive and the Eighth Air Force aimed 160 tons at the bridges. With better weather on the 21st, however, and in addition to the close support in the Moyland fight, aircraft from 83 and 84 Groups struck at entrenchments, fortified houses, gun positions, etc., at places just behind the front such as Calcar, Keppeln and Kasteel Blijenbeek, while mediums from 2 Group and the Ninth Air Force bombed targets further back at Xanten, Rheinberg and Geldern. For its part the German Air Force strove to attack the Cleve area, but was severely restricted by our 'sentry go' over its jet aircraft bases to the north of the Ruhr.

On the 22nd the long-planned 'Clarion' operation against the German transport system was carried out as described in chapter X (page 224). In this 83 and 84 Groups operated in their normal armed reconnaissance areas and 2 Group's Mosquitos made low-level daylight attacks ranging as far afield as Kiel. In all, Second Tactical Air Force flew 1,735 sorties that day and though they lost 33 aircraft, they claimed 200 locomotives, wagons, trucks and barges destroyed with 1,200 damaged, plus over a hundred rail cuts.

In a fortnight's heavy and continuous fighting the forces under General Crerar's command had driven the enemy steadily eastwards; the narrow six-mile front between the Rhine and the Maas (at which Veritable had started) had been widened to twenty miles between the two rivers by February the 22nd but there was still a coherent enemy front. The casualty rate on both sides was rising steadily.

Our own losses in Veritable now totalled over 6,000, of whom about 80 per cent were British. The Germans, we estimated, must have had some 20,000 men put out of action. Our troops had buried 'a very great number' of their dead and had taken well over 11,000 prisoners.

Already the second phase of Veritable had been reached (page 256) and General Simonds was disposing his corps for a strong attack on the high ground between Calcar and Üdem and beyond it the strong natural defensive position, the Hochwald-Balbergerwald (known to the Germans as 'the Schlieffen Position'), strengthened by the last belt of prepared defences between the Rhine and the Maas. The operation would be known by the code word 'Blockbuster'. For this the Canadian corps would consist of the Canadian 2nd and 3rd Infantry and 4th Armoured Divisions, and the British 43rd Infantry and 11th Armoured Divisions from XXX Corps. The latter, with the British 15th, 53rd, 51st and 52nd Infantry Divisions, plus the 3rd Infantry and Guards Armoured Divisions waiting to be called forward, would be responsible for the southern half of the front. They would strike eastwards, protecting the Canadian right flank, and southwards to clear the country alongside the Maas, facilitating the United States Ninth Army's Grenade attack north-eastwards to the Rhine above Wesel.

On February the 22nd the attack by XXX Corps had continued, the 15th Division starting from near the Goch-Üdem railway east of the Niers, followed on the 24th by the 53rd Division on the direct road from Goch to Weeze. Both soon encountered heavy opposition: the 15th by the Panzer Lehr Division; the 53rd by panzer grenadiers and the 6th and 8th Parachute Divisions. Mines, mud and an anti-tank ditch added to the difficulties of the advance, but at a cost of some heavy fighting and 900 casualties XXX Corps' front was carried to within two miles of Weeze (and a further 800 prisoners had been taken). The 15th Division was then relieved by the British 3rd Division and withdrawn to reserve.

By February the 22nd the Roer floods had so far subsided that the United States Ninth Army, which had been waiting ready to join in the Rhineland battle since Veritable began, launched Grenade early on the 23rd. (Map facing page 276.)

After a forty-five minute bombardment of the German positions between and overlapping Düren and Roermond by over a thousand guns of the Ninth Army, plus others of the American First and British Second Armies on the flanks, the four assault divisions of the Ninth Army's two leading corps lowered their assault boats into the Roer and began crossing at half-past three in the morning on the 23rd. Fighting the river (still in flood) as well as the enemy, assaulting divisions had a difficult day but bridging operations started almost immediately and, with moderate opposition except for

harassing fire on the crossing sites and mines on the far shore, the success of the crossing was assured by nightfall. Bridgeheads up to four miles deep were held, including the road and rail centres of Julich and Baal; twenty-eight battalions of infantry were over the river and nearly seven Class 40 bridges were in use. The third corps, on the left, had liquidated several enemy pockets that had remained west of the river, and the army's casualties (1,074) were less than had been anticipated. Four infantry and Volksgrenadier divisions that were identified as expected had yielded 1,100 prisoners. To cover Ninth Army's southern flank, two divisions of the United States First Army crossed the river simultaneously astride of Düren with much the same difficulties and progress. Throughout the day the Ninth Air Force gave effective support, flying over 900 sorties to attack enemy strong-points, movement, communication centres and marshalling yards and to provide overhead cover for the crossing places.

Next day, with additional light bridges working, the build-up continued actively and progress was made everywhere. While the United States First Army on the southern flank fought their way into Düren, Ninth Army's right-hand corps cleared Hambach Forest, another in the centre developed a substantial salient towards Erkelenz, and the third was ordered to cross the Roer. During the day Field-Marshal Montgomery visited General Simpson, and stressed the importance of taking full advantage of continuing good weather and the enemy's lack of immediate reserves; every legitimate risk should be taken to get forward.

That night German planes in twos and threes made repeated strikes at the crossing places and managed to hit two of the bridges. Next night there were 220 enemy planes over the Roer valley, attacking roads and towns. But they paid heavily, 18 aircraft being destroyed by anti-aircraft fire. Despite the appearance of elements of the 9th and 11th Panzer Divisions from the Cologne neighbourhood, and of the 338th Infantry Division which had been diverted while on its way to Calcar from the Colmar front 250 miles away, the pace of the ground advances increased. By the evening of the 26th all three corps of the Ninth Army were across the Roer, at least in part, and had some armour with them. They had then taken 6,000 prisoners at a cost to themselves of 3,368 casualties. The First Army on their right flank continued to make corresponding progress and, with its right flank thus protected, the Ninth Army began developing its main thrust for the Rhine opposite Düsseldorf.

The Canadian operation Blockbuster opened on the 26th with a 600-gun bombardment of the enemy's positions. 43rd Division was on the extreme northern flank; then came the 2nd and 3rd Canadian Divisions attacking the Calcar-Üdem ridge (outpost zone of the

Hochwald-Balbergerwald), with the 4th Canadian Armoured Division close behind ready to break through, and the British 11th Armoured Division on the Canadian southern flank. XXX Corps' 3rd and 53rd Divisions attacked on the Weeze-Kevelaer line. There was no sign of any softening of the German defence and in fact Hitler had that day declared that there must be no withdrawals whenever the crisis might come; and only the day before Blockbuster opened von Rundstedt reported that he saw no acute danger of an Allied break-through between the Maas and the Rhine. He was more anxious about the American Third Army's threat to Trier, 80 miles further south. He may have thought differently next morning as he listened to the Canadian bombardment. Heavy cloud severely curtailed the use of aircraft but, following the bombardment, troops of the 2nd and 3rd Canadian Divisions advanced in artificial moonlight, made by searchlights playing on the low cloud, while Bofors guns fired tracer overhead to help the leaders to keep direction. Only in some places was the first shaken defence effective. Seventeen supporting tanks were put out of action and in the 3rd Canadian Division a sergeant of The Queen's Own Rifles of Canada¹ was posthumously awarded the Victoria Cross for his outstanding gallantry that day. By evening the defence had stiffened considerably; 1,100 casualties were suffered in the next twenty-four hours and something like 100 tanks were destroyed or disabled. The next few days were to be filled with the noise of gunfire as the Canadians fought to a finish for each mile gained. This was no wonder, for the so-called 'Schlieffen Position' was the Germans' last line of effective defence on the west of the Rhine.

The 11th Armoured Division was engaged in what the latter's historian described as '... a slow, miserable and costly operation ... confronted by impenetrable forests, impassable bogs, numerous craters, roadblocks, mines and every form of demolition'.² After a night of hard fighting, its leading group reached the railway south of Üdem on the 27th, with 350 prisoners, four self-propelled guns and two tanks to its credit. Its attacks developed across the higher ground north of Kervenheim and thence down its reverse slopes, facing the Schlieffen defences and overlooked from the tree-clad hills. After very stiff fighting off the south-west corner of the Balberger, the division had come within a mile of Sonsbeck by the 3rd of March. Meanwhile the British 3rd Division had taken Kervenheim on March the 1st³ and then headed for Winnekendonk, which they were to gain two days later.

¹ Sergeant Aubrey Cosecons.

² *Taurus Pursuant: History of 11th Armoured Division* (B.A.O.R. publication, 1945), p. 85.

³ Private James Stokes, The King's Shropshire Light Infantry, was posthumously awarded The Victoria Cross for gallantry in this action.

3rd Canadian Division, after clearing Üdem, had pressed eastwards. Supported by regiments of the 2nd Canadian Armoured Brigade, the division put two brigades into the Balberger woods and while some groups cleared slowly eastwards others veered southwards to come down on Sonsbeck. The 4th Canadian Armoured Division, in the centre of the corps front, was to strike eastwards for Xanten, abreast the embanked railway line which the engineers would convert into II Canadian Corps' main supply road. Shortly before daylight on the 27th the division's spearhead group had started down the reverse slopes of the Calcar ridge for its first objective, a rounded 200-foot hill that filled the western end of the Hochwald gap. A slender foothold was all that could be secured on the first day against some fresh paratroop reinforcements and extremely heavy concentrations from a large share of the 700 mortars and 1,000 guns now estimated to be opposing the Canadian Army. The Germans only gave ground slowly and it was not until the night of the 3rd that there were signs of their beginning a withdrawal. By then the 2nd Canadian Division, meeting similar opposition, had cleared a major portion of the Hochwald north of the railway and had joined with the 4th Armoured in the fight to open the gap.¹ As it did so the 43rd Division took over the ground gained by the Canadians' left, and secured Calcar. While the division moved on towards Marienbaum, its reconnaissance regiment and sappers, operating mostly by night, busily mopped up enemy detachments between the Calcar-Xanten road and the river Rhine.

As II Canadian Corps gained more ground eastwards from the Calcar-Üdem line XXX Corps found that resistance was gradually loosening on the less constricted Maas flank. Leaving its newly joined 1st Commando Brigade to strike up the Maas valley, the 52nd Division swung eastwards and released the 51st Division to prepare for the Rhine crossing. By the 3rd of March, as the Commandos reached Well (where the Second Army promptly began bridge building) the 52nd was making good progress through the wooded country south-west of Weeze and were finding that painted signs, such as '*Sieg oder Siberien*' . . . ('Victory or Siberia'), '*Lieber Tod wie Tyrannie*' . . . ('Better Death than Tyranny'), were fixed on most houses in this part of Germany. On the Lowland division's left the 53rd Division had taken Weeze and then headed down the main road through Kavelaer to link up with the United States Ninth Army. In the afternoon of the 3rd both the 52nd and 53rd Divisions met reconnaissance elements of the Americans beyond Kavelaer and next morning no effective German troops remained west of Geldern.

¹ Major Frederick Albert Tilston, The Essex Scottish Regiment, was awarded the Victoria Cross for gallantry on the 1st of March. He was wounded several times and lost both legs.

Despite reinforcement from the Cologne area (page 272) and the subsequent switching of Panzer Lehr Division with some panzer grenadier units from the Canadian front, nothing had been able to hold the Ninth Army for long once its break-through began on the 28th—the first good flying day for some time. The 1st of March saw their most spectacular advances. By evening the army's right was in Neuss, almost opposite Düsseldorf, with a single division in control of München-Gladbach, the largest German city captured so far; the American centre was well past the city on the west and wheeling for Kempen and the Rhine; the left had one motorised task force in Roermond, and another in Venlo where the Royal Engineers at once started to bridge the river. The Ninth Army's battle was almost won but the impetus must be maintained if maximum loss was to be inflicted on the retreating enemy and one of the eight Rhine bridges in the army's sector was to be seized intact. On the 1st of March, as reports of progress flooded in, General Eisenhower was at General Simpson's headquarters and showed much interest in Ninth Army's effort to capture a Rhine bridge; but the American columns were unable to prevent the first four bridges from being destroyed as their tanks arrived. Four were still standing northwards of Duisburg and the Americans did not succeed in preventing the enemy's orderly withdrawal over the Rhine. Simpson suggested¹ to Montgomery that, if he failed to 'jump' a bridge, he should mount a deliberate crossing a few miles below Düsseldorf and he was confident that it would succeed, but Montgomery thought it wiser to assault the Rhine on a broad front with a well-prepared and co-ordinated plan. The Ninth Army pushed ahead as far as Orsoy by the 5th, but before then the Germans had blown the last four bridges.

Montgomery had visited the Ninth Army's forward areas on the 28th, the day before Eisenhower was there, and wrote to the C.I.G.S. of how impressed he was by the army's progress and high morale. Later he told of its efforts to seize a bridge over the Rhine.

In General Schlemm, commander of the First Parachute Army, the Allies were up against an opponent with experience in fighting rear-guard actions in Russia and in Italy before, in November 1944, he was promoted to his present command in the West. But in addition to practical experience Schlemm, in the Rhineland battle, had both ground and weather on his side; ground which drew from General Eisenhower the comment²: 'Probably no assault in this war has been conducted under more appalling conditions of terrain than was that one'; and weather so unfit for air operations that it was only on the 28th of February that the Second Tactical Air Force,

¹ The Ninth Army history infers that the suggestion was made on the 5th or 6th of March.

² Supreme Commander's letter of the 26th of March to G.O.C.-in-C. First Canadian Army. (Stacey, *The Victory Campaign*, p. 524.)

with 1,117 sorties, could give support on any large scale during the last fortnight.

When the Ninth Army's threat first developed Schlemm had been ordered to hold a bridgehead west of the Rhine at all costs, so that the barges carrying Ruhr coal could still use the river down to Wesel and then turn eastwards up the Lippe for the Dortmund-Ems Canal and northern Germany. At first he had aimed to hold a general line from Krefeld through Geldern to about Marienbaum but, with the Ninth Army driving northwards down the Rhine from Neuss and the Canadian Army emerging from the Hochwald, his aim was to shrink his bridgehead without allowing Allied troops to reach the Wesel escape route before his own troops. He was not willing to have his isolated army caught, though Berlin had warned that should a Rhine bridge be lost he would pay for it with his life, and not one fit man or a single piece of fighting equipment was to be evacuated across the river without Hitler's express permission.

As contacts between XXX Corps and the Americans continued, Horrocks' drive wheeled sharply to the north-east and the 53rd Division was given as its right-hand boundary the Geldern-Wesel road; on its left the Guards Armoured, now in action as a division, was to pass through the British 3rd Division for Kapellen and the hills around Bonninghardt. By the evening of the 6th, as the Americans reached Rheinberg, the 53rd Division was in the large forest to the south of Alpen. The Guards, after stiff fighting at Kapellen and in the woods to the east, captured Bonninghardt and its commanding ground.

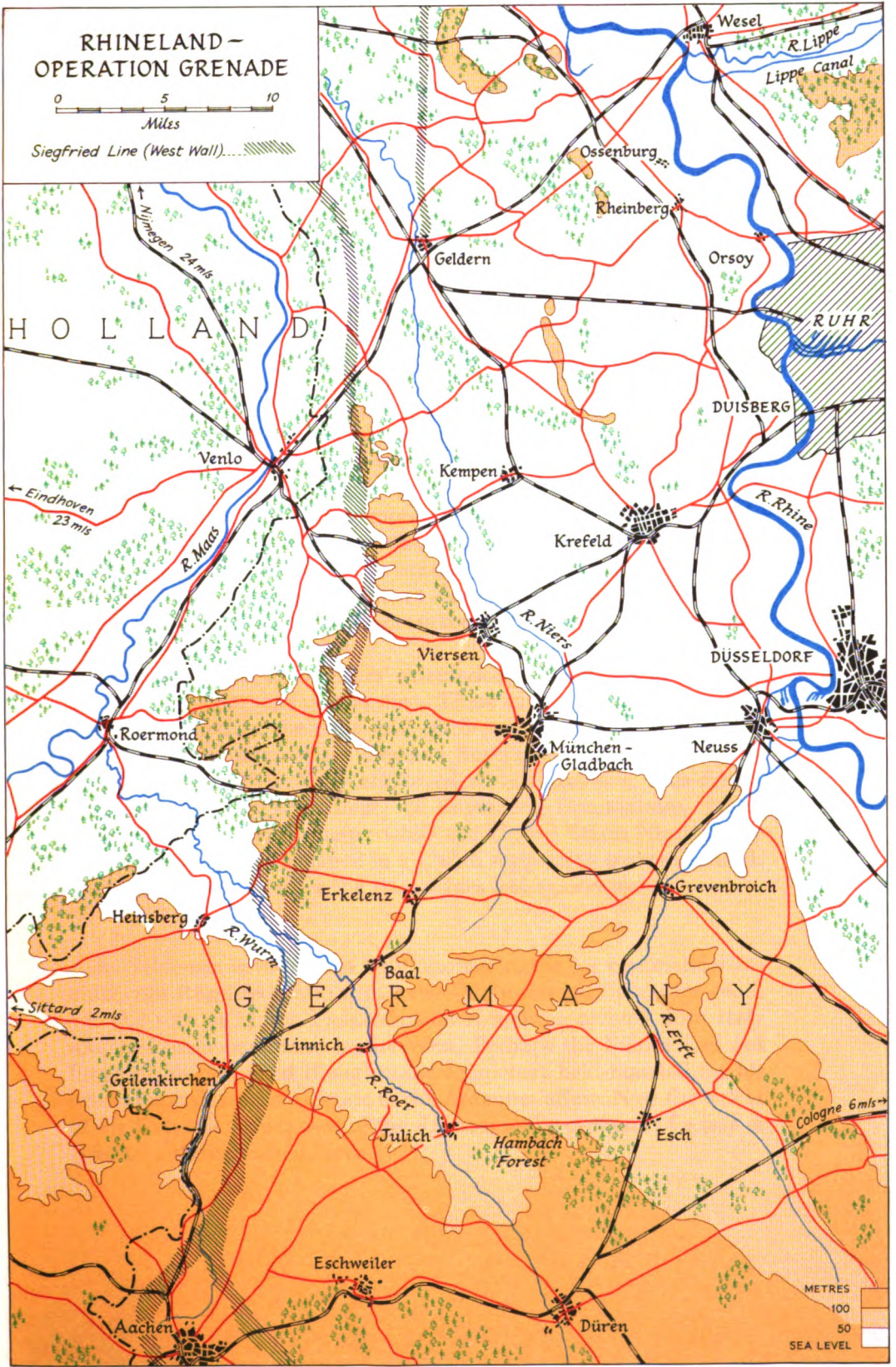
To the north, progress had been somewhat slower. Sonsbeck had duly been taken by the 3rd Canadian Division and the 11th Armoured was pinched out into Army reserve; but on the rest of II Canadian Corps' front all approaches to Schlemm's last lateral communications in front of Wesel were most stubbornly defended. Veen, a small village east of Sonsbeck, and Xanten at the north-west corner of the bridgehead, became the main objectives of Simonds' corps. Attacks on both places began on the 6th but in the face of fanatical resistance required greater weight and were reorganised. It was not until the 9th, and after heavy casualties, that the 4th Canadian Armoured Division had cleared Veen and the 2nd Canadian and 43rd Divisions had together dealt completely with the Xanten area. By then, also, XXX Corps' Guards Armoured Division had broken Schlemm's lateral near Menzelen after a very stiff battle, and the 52nd Division had cleared Alpen with severe losses. A few miles away the Americans had moved forward to Ossenburg 'where the Germans made a strong-point of every house'.¹

¹ *Conquer: The Story of Ninth Army* (Washington, 1947), p. 192.

RHINELAND - OPERATION GRENADE



Siegfried Line (West Wall).....



As the front narrowed and divisions were stood down, control of all Anglo-Canadian operations passed to General Simonds and, on the evening of March the 8th, the Headquarters of XXX Corps reverted to the Second Army.

There was little sign of disorder as the German bridgehead slowly shrank. By the 9th Schlemm had got three of his corps away and was holding with rear parties from four divisions under II Parachute Corps. On the 10th they inflicted appreciable casualties on the 52nd Division as it strove to reach the Rhine. At 10.40 that morning an air observation plane reported that both the Wesel bridges had been demolished.

The Rhineland battle was over. It had been a grim struggle to the bitter end in the north, where Canadian Army's casualties in the last seven days were almost as high as in any previous week. British and Canadian casualties in the month's fighting were approximately 15,500, with 22,000 Germans taken prisoner and another 22,000 estimated as killed or seriously wounded. The United States Ninth Army's battle casualties in the 17 days of Grenade had been just under 7,300, with 29,000 prisoners taken and 16,000 enemy estimated killed or seriously wounded.

Thus, according to the Allies' calculations, Veritable and Grenade had cost the Germans 90,000 men. These came from nineteen divisions, identified at the time and confirmed later by the captured daily situation maps of the German Supreme Command (OKW). The First Canadian Army employed eleven divisions, plus fifteen brigades (or their equivalent) of Engineers, Commandos, tanks, guns and specialised armour; while the United States Ninth Army had twelve divisions engaged in all, with supporting troops on much the same scale. Together the two armies lost 23,000 men.

As Schlemm withdrew to fight another battle his commander-in-chief, von Rundstedt, also withdrew—but in his case it was for good. On the 10th of March Field-Marshal Kesselring arrived from Italy and took over command in the West. Perhaps the Führer had not forgiven his old, tired though most competent field-marshal for his critical and detached attitude to the Ardennes affair. Now the defeat of the German armies west of the Rhine was the occasion of a *coup de grâce* to a distinguished career.

CHAPTER XIII

THE CROSSING OF THE RHINE

WHILE the grim, month-long battle of the Rhineland (Veritable and Grenade) was described in the previous chapter, the rest of the far-flung American front, extending to the Swiss frontier, was left at about February the 10th (Chapter XI). We must now see what had been happening on the American front between that date and March the 10th when the Rhineland battle was ended, the Rhine had been reached and those of the defeated enemy who had not been killed or captured were forced back over the river. (Map facing page 284.)

The reader will remember that by February the 10th when Veritable had just begun, the United States Sixth Army Group in the south had halted the German attack in Alsace and had eliminated the enemy's Colmar pocket; in the centre, the United States Twelfth Army Group's First Army captured the Roer dams and closed to that river, while its Third Army was probing the enemy's defences; the United States Ninth Army, under Twenty-First Army Group's command, waited for the Roer floods to subside so that Grenade could begin. In the month that followed while the Rhineland battle was being won all the American positions were notably improved. At first the American First Army, poised on the west bank of the Roer, had also to wait until February the 23rd, when the subsidence of the flood-water released from the dams made it possible for them to cross the river and for Ninth Army to launch Grenade. In that pause General Patton's Third Army had pushed forward in the Eifel with two 'probing attacks' in accordance with General Eisenhower's order to maintain 'aggressive defence'. The first was directed at Prüm, an important communications centre and a key position behind the defences of the Siegfried Line which lay immediately west of the town; the second attack was aimed at Bitburg, twenty-four miles south of Prüm and also covered by the Siegfried defences. Stretched across the rugged hill-country of the Eifel, Hitler's West Wall (as the Siegfried Line was called by the Germans) constituted a formidable obstacle. Its two-or-three-mile-wide belt of pill-boxes, bunkers, fire trenches and gun positions, protected by barbed wire and 'dragons' teeth', was at this time made more difficult to approach by the state of the ground; successive frosts followed by thaws and heavy rains had transformed much of it into almost impassable quagmire while some of the streams which intersected it were roaring torrents. Yet much ground on

Third Army's front north of the Moselle had been captured by the 22nd of February; Prüm was taken and Bitburg neared and, south of the Moselle, a third corps of Patton's army had also won a small bridgehead over the Saar south of its junction with the Moselle near Trier. Still further south, in General Devers' Sixth Army Group sector, elimination of the Colmar pocket meant that the Allied armies had now a solid front on the Rhine from the Swiss border to the line of the Moder river, north of Strasbourg.

With Grenade about to be launched and the advance of the United States First Army, a massive programme of preparatory air operations had started on the 21st, as described in chapter X. This was designed to weaken the German defence as a whole, and to assist Twenty-First Army Group and Twelfth Army Group in particular, by the isolation and reduction of the Ruhr's war-making capacity. These air operations had a threefold object, namely: (i) to isolate the Ruhr from central and southern Germany by cutting the main railways connecting that unique industrial area with the rest of the Reich, along an 'interdiction line' in a rough curve southwards from Bremen to the Rhine at Koblenz; (ii) to attack continuously west of that line the enemy's communications and transport system; and (iii) to prepare the battle area for the impending Rhine crossing by Twenty-First Army Group. In the next few weeks much of the industrial power of the Ruhr was dissipated in the dust of explosions from a rain of bombs which fell almost daily from the air.

Veritable was making good headway when, simultaneously with the launching of operation Grenade by the United States Ninth Army on February the 23rd (as told on page 271), General Bradley's Twelfth Army Group launched an attack by its First Army designed to protect the flank of Grenade and ultimately to close to the Rhine south of Düsseldorf. The enemy defence of the Roer on First Army's front had been somewhat weakened by the movement of German divisions northwards to strengthen the opposition to Twenty-First Army Group's attack, but enough was left to defend Düren and oppose the crossing of the still swollen Roer river. After a heavy opening bombardment, assault crossings were forced by First Army both north and south of Düren and, almost before necessary bridges had been completed, a bridgehead had been established, Düren was entered and advanced forces of the First Army thrust forward into the enemy's retreating rear-guards. First Army's main advance was made by its left corps (to match and protect the advance of Ninth Army in Grenade) while its central and southern corps moved forward more steadily. The enemy's resistance was soon characteristic of a general retreat in which only an attempt could be made to delay the Allies' advance by holding road junctions and communication centres in key towns or villages, using in each case a

number of assault and anti-aircraft guns and mortars and groups of supporting infantry. There was some evidence that in the German army morale was declining, for in many places the acceptance of defeat was now apparent among battalion and regimental commanders when captured and many non-commissioned officers and men seemed to have reached a state of indifference. But there were other places in which the enemy fought with the traditional skill and determination of well trained and disciplined German troops and in such places there was hard fighting and some vigorous counter-attacks were met before the enemy was overcome.

In the fighting of the First and Third Armies during this period the air forces of the United States IX and XIX Tactical Air Commands played a considerable part. Not only was their reconnaissance an essential aid in a rapidly moving battle but their close collaboration with the ground forces was at times a decisive factor. Fighter-bombers attacked the enemy's withdrawing armies on the roads between the Roer and the Rhine with great effect and where the Army's advance was held up temporarily by the rearguard defences of towns or villages a call on the co-operating aircraft often succeeded in loosening up the defence, and resulted in its quick overthrow. There were also several occasions when the state of the roads and countryside made it impossible to reach with supplies the most advanced formations which had broken through the defence but had not yet cleared the country behind: in these cases aircraft of the United States Ninth Air Force flew essential supplies of food and ammunition to the isolated troops, and dropped them at the front. Further ahead railways and marshalling yards, bridges, troop concentrations and headquarters west of the Rhine were also attacked whenever weather allowed, but there were many days when flying was not practical. The railway and road communication systems east of the Rhine were also attacked, especially connections between Düsseldorf and Koblenz and the intermediate towns along the river bank. In this rail and road interdiction the tactical air forces played a part in the general attack on German communications which, with oil, was a priority in the programme of the strategic bombers.

By March the 1st, six days after the First Army had advanced from the Roer, the enemy's attempt to hold the Erft river had been broken, the river had been bridged in several places and there was then no other easily defensible position west of the Rhine: already the river was in range of American guns. North of the Moselle Third Army had captured Bitburg and reached the Kyll river; south of the Moselle it had broken through the Siegfried Line defences and was clearing Trier, where it captured the bridge over the Moselle intact.

On March the 3rd General Eisenhower issued a further directive.

The gist of this was that as soon as possible after the objectives of Veritable and Grenade were assured Twelfth Army Group was to 'initiate operations in force' to invest Cologne and close to the Rhine north of the Moselle, for the protection of communications to the north while preparations were being made for crossing the Rhine there, and 'for the elimination of enemy forces west of the Rhine which constitute an obstacle or potential threat to our subsequent Rhine crossing operations'. On this date Veritable and Grenade met in the neighbourhood of Geldern.

First and Third Armies acted on General Eisenhower's directive with great energy and, in the week following its issue, closed on the Rhine and eliminated most of the opposition north of the Moselle. The Rhine was soon reached by First Army, Cologne was entered on the 5th and on the 7th the railway bridge at Remagen was seized before its defenders could fire the demolition charges necessary to destroy it. Troops were at once raced forward to form a bridgehead on the far bank, which was quickly enlarged and firmly secured in the following days, as will be told later. The American First Army thus had the gratification of being the first to obtain a firm footing east of the Rhine. Third Army assaulted across the Kyll river and its armour was overlooking the Rhine by the evening of the 7th. Contact was made next day with First Army, surrounding a considerable body of the enemy in the upper Eifel. As much as possible of the enemy's opposing army (the Seventh) had been withdrawn to the south of the Moselle in an effort to protect the Saar Palatinate.

With virtually all of the Rhineland north of the Moselle in Allied hands, General Eisenhower issued a further directive on March the 8th. The target date of Twenty-First Army Group's assault crossing of the Rhine in the north, March the 24th, was confirmed. While the crossing was being prepared the United States Sixth Army Group was to 'initiate offensive operations in the Saar', with the object of keeping 'all possible German forces away from the main effort in the north, by defeating the enemy west of the Rhine, closing on the Rhine from the Moselle southward and establishing bridgeheads over the Rhine in the Mainz-Mannheim sector'. Twelfth Army Group was to assist the Saar attack by striking south-east from the Moselle in rear of the enemy and protecting the left flank of Sixth Army Group.

The tasks laid on the armies employed by the two American army groups concerned differed widely. General Patch's Seventh Army faced the strong defences of the Siegfried Line stretching across its northern front from Saarbrücken on the river Saar to Lauterbourg on the Rhine (see map facing page 284): it had first to break this formidable defence before defeating the enemy in the Palatinate and reaching the Rhine—a task which was likely to

involve slow and bitter fighting. On the other hand, General Patton's Third Army had already eliminated most of the German opposition north of the Moselle: it would be able to cross the Moselle wherever it chose and then to strike south-eastwards to the Rhine; apart from this advantage, it also held the now enlarged Trier bridgehead in the angle formed by the Moselle and the river Saar from which to strike eastwards or to the south, with no prepared defences to hinder it and reasonably good roads to carry armoured columns to the Rhine.

The German First Army was responsible for the defence of the Siegfried Line; what remained of the enemy's Seventh Army was to oppose the American Third Army's advance from the Moselle.

In the south the American Seventh Army's progress, slowed at first by extensive minefields and other Siegfried Line defences, had much hard fighting but broke the Siegfried Line east of Saarbrücken before spreading eastwards to meet the United States Third Army in the advance to the Rhine. The Third Army, after sharp fighting to break the German defences outside the Trier triangle, put other troops across the Moselle further east behind the enemy and then surrounded and eventually captured a large part of the German Seventh Army, captured Koblenz from the south, and cleared the west bank of the Rhine from Koblenz to the point near Mannheim reached by the United States Seventh Army. On March the 22nd the Third Army had taken Oppenheim and nearby had effected a second Rhine crossing for Twelfth Army Group and seized a bridgehead almost unopposed on the east bank. In less than a fortnight the Saar Palatinate had been won. The battle had cost the United States Third and Seventh Armies together more than 12,000 casualties but, while the total German casualties are not known, the American armies had secured 107,000 prisoners.

Full advantage had been taken of the unexpected opportunity offered by the capture undamaged of the Rhine bridge at Remagen on March the 7th. By the 24th, when Twenty-First Army Group began their assault crossing in the north, the United States First Army held a bridgehead east of the river twenty-five miles wide and eight miles deep, containing three corps with nine divisions and most of the Army artillery. All the enemy's attempts to eliminate or prevent the bridgehead's expansion had been unsuccessful. At first only engineers and anti-aircraft units had been available, then panzer battlegroups and other forces—a nominal sixteen divisions in all—had arrived, too late and too weak, and were committed piecemeal. The captured bridge had finally collapsed under attacks by the *Luftwaffe*, artillery, floating mines and swimmers with demolition charges, but by the 24th eight newly constructed bridges were in use.

General Eisenhower had seen the realisation of his highest hope—to defeat the enemy on the west of the Rhine and close up to the whole length of the river before advancing eastward. The fighting that had been necessary to achieve this had not involved any interference with full support of Montgomery's operations or hindered the planned crossing in the north on the day fixed in advance.

In February and March, after ironing out the German bulge in the Ardennes, the Allies had sustained over 96,000 casualties but had captured over 280,000 prisoners in closing to the Rhine. In the Veritable and Grenade operations of Twenty-First Army Group the First Canadian and United States Ninth Armies had together had 23,000 casualties but taken some 50,000 prisoners in one of the hardest and longest battles of the war. Twelfth Army Group had had the largest number of casualties (nearly 40,000) but captured the biggest number of prisoners (over 185,000). Sixth Army Group figures for the clearance of the Colmar pocket and operations in the Saar and Palatinate were over 33,000 casualties with 47,000 prisoners taken.

The figures are revealing. Twenty-First Army Group's arduous but successful conduct of the Rhineland battle has been told in the previous chapter. In February the Supreme Commander's first order to the United States Twelfth Army Group to maintain 'aggressive defence' till the success of the Rhineland battle was secured had been liberally interpreted; there had been no large-scale attacks but no division had remained quiescent. Every corps had continued to press forward in one place or another; the casualties they suffered show the determination with which they had maintained their advance when they met serious opposition. The huge numbers of prisoners taken, particularly in March, also show the deterioration of the opposition and the ineffectiveness of the German Command, still governed by Hitler's 'no retreat' policy. The American divisions, on the other hand, had been manoeuvred with skill and foresight so as to take the enemy by surprise and attack where they were not expected. Often their columns had been widely separated but logistics had been well managed and their supply of food and ammunition had never failed. At times supply roads in rear areas had been maintained only by the help of thousands of French, Belgian and Dutch civilians. With the armies, partners in their success, was the constant close support of the tactical air forces and the less conspicuous help of the strategic bombers. After the crippling defeat of Hitler's Ardennes counter-offensive and his further losses in the Rhineland and Saar battles, the Rhine itself had been crossed in two places by the Allies; already there were two army bridgeheads east of the river and on March the 24th three more armies were beginning the major crossings in the north.

It was expected that the crossing in the north would be made in the face of severe opposition and be a difficult operation, for the river below Duisburg was 500 yards wide and in flood; it was known that holding the far bank were three divisions of the German II Parachute Corps and two infantry divisions of LXXXVI Corps, with XLVII Panzer Corps in reserve. Field-Marshal Montgomery's final directive for the operation had been issued on March the 9th. It gave as his intention for Twenty-First Army Group 'to cross the Rhine north of the Ruhr and secure a firm bridgehead, with a view to developing operations to isolate the Ruhr and to penetrate deeper into Germany'. His plan in outline was:

'To cross the Rhine on a front of two armies between incl. Rheinberg and Rees, Ninth Army being on the right and Second Army on the left.

To capture the communication centre of Wesel.

To expand the initial lodgement area on the east bank of the Rhine:

(a) southwards for a sufficient distance to secure the road centre of Wesel from enemy ground action.

(b) northwards to enable the river to be bridged at Emmerich and the road centre at that place to be used.

(c) eastwards and north-east in order to secure rapidly a good and firm bridgehead from which further offensive operations can suitably be developed.

To position the three armies of 21 Army Group east of the Rhine, and north of the Ruhr, so that further operations deeper into Germany can be developed quickly in any direction as may be ordered by Supreme H.Q.'

There followed long, detailed orders which need not be repeated here.¹

¹ Twenty-First Army Group's Order of Battle for the Rhine crossing was as follows:

British Second Army: XII Corps (Assault): 7th Armoured Division, 15th, 52nd and 53rd Divisions, 4th and 34th Armoured Brigades, 1st Commando Brigade, 115th Infantry Brigade (less part in XXX Corps), 31st and 33rd Armoured Brigades (less part in XXX Corps) from 79th Armoured Division, 3, 8 and 9 AGRAs, 100th A.A. Brigade, 11 AGRE; *XXX Corps (Assault):* Guards Armoured Division, 3rd (British), 3rd Canadian, 43rd and 51st Divisions, 8th Armoured Brigade, 4 and 5 AGRAs, 106th A.A. Brigade, 13 AGRE; *XVIII U.S. Airborne Corps (Assault):* 6th British and 17th U.S. Airborne Divisions; *II Canadian Corps (Follow-up):* 4th Canadian Armoured Division, 2nd Canadian Infantry Division, 2nd Canadian Armoured Brigade, 2 Canadian AGRA, 107th A.A. Brigade; *VIII Corps (Army Reserve):* 11th Armoured Division, 6th Guards Armoured Brigade; *Army Troops:* 10 AGRE and 12 AGRE (Airfields).

United States Ninth Army: XVI Corps (Assault): 8th Armoured Division, 30th, 35th, 75th and 79th Infantry Divisions; *XIX Corps (Follow-up):* 2nd Armoured Division, 29th, 83rd and 95th Infantry Divisions; *XIII Corps (Army Reserve):* 5th Armoured Division, 84th and 102nd Infantry Divisions; *Army Troops.*

First Canadian Army: Netherlands District (having taken over from I (Brit) Corps): 1st Polish Armoured Division, 4th Commando and 116th Royal Marine Brigades; *I Canadian Corps**: 5th Canadian Armoured Division*, 1st Canadian*, 5th (British)* and 49th (British) Infantry Divisions, 1st Canadian Armoured Brigade*; *II Canadian Corps:* see under British Second Army.

* Re-equipping after transfer from Italy.

The opening assault was to be made by two corps of the British Second Army and by a corps of the United States Ninth Army (still under Montgomery's command). Both the Allied tactical and strategic air forces were to give maximum support, as was a huge disposition of artillery; the first assault crossing was to be followed shortly after by a corps of airborne troops landing close ahead.

These tasks all required special and careful preparations, namely:

- (i) To assemble the necessary troops in the forward area between the Maas and the Rhine for the crossing and follow-up, undetected by the enemy before the crossing started.
- (ii) To re-equip several tank regiments with Buffaloes and train the assaulting troops for a broad river crossing in amphibious vehicles.¹
- (iii) To develop communications by both rail and road as close up to the Rhine as possible.
- (iv) To establish rail and roadheads for the large quantity of material needed for the river crossing and the rapid construction of both temporary and more permanent bridges; and to accumulate large reserves of supplies, ammunition and stores in the forward area for the advance deep into Germany.
- (v) To perfect arrangements for co-operation with air forces.

Planning and much preparatory work had been carried on behind the scene while the battles for the Rhineland were in progress but, in the time available after that exhausting fight had been completed and all the left bank of the Rhine had been cleared of the enemy, good organisation and great energy were involved in final preparation for what lay ahead. A great part of the troops, stores and equipment moved by road. The traffic on the roads into the roadheads established was so heavy that seven battalions of American combat engineers had to be borrowed for road and bridge maintenance as Twenty-First Army Group's total engineer and pioneer resources were only sufficient for the assault and for maintenance in corps areas. Behind the army area, rehabilitated Belgian and Dutch civil Roads Departments took over. Airfield construction also went on apace between the Maas and the Rhine and two wings of the Second Tactical Air Force and a group of the United States Ninth Air Force moved up on to newly made airfields before the assault took place.

Second Army extended its roadhead (No. 10 Army Roadhead) between the Maas and the Rhine as soon as the Rhineland battles permitted. For this the area Goch-Geldern-Venlo was selected and

¹ A large part in these preparations for an amphibious assault was undertaken by Second Army's XII Corps and by 79th Armoured Division.

by the 8th of March, when stocking was able to start in earnest, four main road routes across the Maas between Gennep and Venlo had been opened and a fifth came into use two days later; four of these involved bridging the Maas with floating Bailey bridges 640 to 1,220 feet long, but none would take loaded tank transporters weighing 70 tons each, which had to cross by bridges at Grave or Venlo by arrangement with the First Canadian and United States Ninth Army respectively. For rail access to this advance roadhead a new railway bridge under construction at Gennep could not be completed before the assault but the Canadian Army had a railhead at Mook and a new line was built from there to link up with the railway at Gennep; this produced four new railheads in the Goch area between the 15th and 20th of March. Second Army planned to bring into the roadhead area before the assault was launched 118,000 tons of ammunition, petrol, supplies and other stores (engineer stores accounting for a quarter of the total); all but the engineer stores came in by road and with the help of the new railheads the tonnage target was exceeded. The troop build-up was carried out by night during the final week and entailed the move of 662 tanks, more than 4,000 tank transporters and 32,000 vehicles. Among the heavy loads brought in were thirty-six of the Royal Navy's Landing Craft Vehicle (Personnel) (LCV(P)) which would be used in the fast river current for casting bridge anchors and laying booms and for protection of bridges from enemy waterborne attacks. To hide from the enemy the nearer crossing places, the assaulting troops would assemble some miles back with their D.D. tanks; there they would be loaded in amphibious Buffaloes after dark and advance to the river and swim across. Similarly the Ninth Army moved up 138,000 tons of ammunition, etc. to the München-Gladbach area.

The normal principles of air control in an airborne operation were reverted to in order to avoid the unfortunate organisation of air support used in the Arnhem operation, whereby none was available when a fly-in or resupply was in progress. All air forces co-operating with the troop-carrying fly-in were now put under Second Tactical Air Force control and responsibilities were allocated so that Air Vice-Marshal H. Broadhurst, the officer commanding 83 Group, had air control of the battlefield, a semi-circle of fifty miles radius beyond the Rhine, and was responsible for air support, anti-flak measures and air cover in this area, with 84 Group and the American XXIX Tactical Air Command at his disposal; the escort forces of Fighter Command and Ninth Air Force accompanying the troop-carrying aircraft would not proceed east of the Rhine; Eighth Air Force fighters would cross the Rhine on armed reconnaissance and patrol but keep outside the 50-mile area controlled by 83 Group.

Some of the air operations before the crossing involved the

strategic and tactical air forces, for instance the interdiction programme designed to isolate the Ruhr which started on the 19th of February and the strategic bombing of the Ruhr in Bugle with its attendant tactical operations (both described on page 225). These largely met Twenty-First Army Group's request that the battlefield north and south of the Ruhr should be isolated west of the line Zwolle-Rheine-Hamm-Siegen-Bonn. Then in the last three days before the crossing air attacks by both strategic and tactical forces in the neighbourhood of Wesel were intensified on enemy communication centres, barracks, camps, defences and German air bases likely to be used against the assault. Eighth Air Force made heavy attacks on jet aircraft bases in the Rheine area and further afield. During this preparatory period the Headquarters of C-in-C West near Frankfurt were put out of action by fighter-bombers of XIX Tactical Air Command and those of Army Group H were attacked by Second Tactical Air Force. Harassing raids were carried out by night and reconnaissance by day and photographs showed the widespread damage inflicted on communications by the attacks.

On the further bank north-west of Wesel the ground rises to a height of a hundred and fifty feet and is well wooded; this is known as the Diersfordter Wald and was the airborne troops' objective. The Rhine plain in this sector is about five to ten miles wide, flat and fairly featureless; to prevent flooding there is a low dyke built close to the river bank, to retain the river's normal summer water level, and a much larger one built well back to contain winter and spring floods. The abnormal rise in the river level during the winter of 1944-45 flooded all the low-lying polders inside the winter dykes and exceptionally heavy rainfall had water-logged large areas of low-lying ground outside these dykes, but in fine weather during early March the ground began to dry out quickly. (Map facing page 294.)

On the night of the 23rd of March Twenty-First Army Group's assault across the Rhine was launched under the covering fire of some 3,500 field, medium and heavy guns. The first division to assault was the 51st (Highland) Division¹ of XXX Corps in the Rees sector. At 9 p.m. the four assault battalions of its two leading brigades, mounted in about 150 Buffaloes, advanced in columns through the flood water on the west bank, entered the river at their appointed places and swam across. A good landfall was made on the far shore but mud slowed down the amphibians in getting clear of the water and prevented the D.D. tanks from landing at full strength. Little opposition was met at first and by first light part of Rees had been occupied by the 153rd Brigade and the 154th Brigade had entered the village of Speldrop a mile to the north-west; but the

¹ 9th Canadian Brigade was temporarily under command of the 51st Division for the assault phase.

German 8th Parachute Division fought back hard and held their ground in Rees and a counter-attack cut off the British troops in Speldrop. After daylight a stronger attack with tanks was made to regain Speldrop but without success; part of the force by-passed this village to the west and pressed on northwards.

An hour after the 51st Division's assault the 1st Commando Brigade of XII Corps crossed about two miles downstream of Wesel, supported by all corps artillery; twenty-four Buffaloes took one Commando across to form a bridgehead, while a second to lead the assault on Wesel crossed by stormboat, and shortly after they had landed Bomber Command dropped 1,100 tons of high explosive on that town. This heavy attack on an objective so close to our own positions required very precise bombing, and every possible precaution had to be taken to avoid mistakes or inaccuracies. It was, however, the culmination of a long series of attacks in close support of the armies, and Bomber Command had by this time considerable experience of such operations. Montgomery, in a message to Sir Arthur Harris, said: 'My grateful appreciation for the quite magnificent co-operation you have given us in the battle of the Rhine. The bombing of Wesel last night was a masterpiece and was a decisive factor in making possible our entry into that town before midnight.'¹ By first light the whole brigade was in the town; only one patch of tough opposition had been met. Soon after it became light the German commander was killed when his headquarters, found only fifty yards from tactical headquarters of the brigade, was captured.

At 2 a.m. on the 24th the United States Ninth Army's assault south of Wesel and the XII Corps assault by the 15th (Scottish) Division opposite Xanten began. The assault in the Xanten sector by two brigades of 15th Division was made by four battalions mounted in Buffaloes and stormboats. On the right the two-battalion attack went according to the book, immediate objectives being secured before first light. The German defenders in that half of the divisional sector were their 84th Division, nothing like as tough fighters as their 7th Parachute Division which opposed the battalions of the brigade on the left. The latter were also faced with an awkward ground hazard, for a mile and a half of the far bank of the Rhine in that sector was stone pitched and the Buffaloes could not climb it. The battalion assaults were therefore widely separated and the personnel following up in stormboats were more exposed to fire and suffered accordingly: immediate objectives were still being fought for at first light.

The Ninth Army assault was made by XVI Corps with one division north of Rheinberg, followed an hour later by another

¹ Arthur Harris, *Bomber Offensive* (Collins, 1947), p. 255.

attacking across the Rhine east of that town; leading battalions crossed in powered assault boats and stormboats, support battalions in Buffaloes and in landing craft of the United States Navy. Opposition was generally light (from the German 180th and Hamburg Divisions) and tanks were rafted across by mid-morning.

When the time for the airborne assault drew near the guns fell silent and eyes turned westward searching the skies for heads of the flying columns. They were a splendid sight. After they had passed over just before ten o'clock the sky ahead filled with parachutes—but anti-aircraft shell explosions could be seen among the aircraft and some were hit and crashed in flames, although in the hour before they arrived British and American medium bombers had attacked all known flak sites round the eastern half of the landing area and Second Army artillery had concentrated on similar sites in the western half.

This 'armada of the air'—two divisions of the United States XVIII Airborne Corps—started its flight to the Diersfordter Wald in front of the 15th Division in two separate columns; the British 6th Airborne Division from England and the American 17th Airborne Division from airfields round Paris. Guarded by Fighter Command and Ninth Air Force fighters, they linked up at Wavre, near Brussels, and flew side by side in almost perfect weather to Weeze whence they diverged to their respective dropping and landing zones.¹ The British 6th Airborne Division flew in with its two parachute brigades leading in American aircraft, one brigade dropping at the north-west corner of the woods where some opposition was met but soon overcome. The other dropped on the north side of the Mehr-Hamminkeln road, a mile and a half west of the latter place; there German fire was more intense but objectives were secured by mid-afternoon. The American aircraft carrying this brigade suffered heavily as they turned for home and passed over a pocket of enemy flak which had not been suppressed by the preparatory anti-flak bombing; 16 aircraft were destroyed and 47 damaged out of the 121 involved. After the parachutists, the gliders flew in, towed by aircraft of Nos. 38 and 46 Groups, to land on four zones round Hamminkeln. German flak guns concentrated on the gliders in preference to their tugs; about half the gliders were damaged in the air or in landing and a number did not land in the right place. Opposition on the ground was at first vigorous and effective and it looked as though nearly half the glider-borne force had been put out of action; but part of the airlanding brigade landed well and six bridges over the Issel river² which were its objectives were captured intact. Two of

¹ The total of over 1,500 aircraft and 1,300 gliders took 2½ hours to pass a given point. Together they landed nearly 17,000 men, 600 tons of ammunition and 800 vehicles and guns.

² Not to be confused with the Ijssel near Arnhem.

these were secured by *coup de main* parties which landed with great accuracy and speedily took the bridges assigned to them.

By nightfall all organised resistance west of the Issel had been overcome, a counter-attack from the north had been beaten off and casualties had been found to be less than expected—about 1,400 out of a landed strength of 7,220—but a quarter of the glider pilots were casualties. About 1,500 prisoners were taken. Three Forward Visual Control Posts were landed by glider and within two hours one was in operation controlling air support for the division; in September 1944 no such British equipment had been available light enough to be taken into action this way. During the night the Germans made further counter-attacks and infiltrated between some positions but no ground was lost.

The United States 17th Airborne Division also flew in with its parachute regiments leading. The first, dropped on the southern edge of the Diersfordter Wald, found its landing zone obscured by smoke from fires still burning from the bombing of Wesel during the night. This led to some dispersion but enemy resistance was not strong and all objectives were soon taken. The second parachute regiment, due to land east of the wood, was dropped too far north in a strongly held German area; they fought their way south and by mid-afternoon had secured their objectives. Most of the American glider regiment made a good landfall despite the smoke from Wesel. They landed close to bridges over the Issel river which were their objectives, but intense German flak and small-arms fire was directed on the gliders as the hour-long procession came in and less than a third landed unhit. Small battles raged over the whole American landing zone but German resistance soon began to crumble and two of the bridges over the Issel were secured intact and held against several enemy counter-attacks with tanks; XII Corps artillery from behind the Rhine gave fire support. The American airborne division, which landed 9,650 strong, incurred about 1,300 casualties and captured some 2,000 prisoners that day. Transport aircraft losses were not high except in the formations carrying the second parachute regiment: of the 114 involved 21 were shot down and 59 damaged. A resupply was flown in after the troops by 240 heavy bombers of the Eighth Air Force which dropped 600 tons of supplies and equipment of which 80 per cent was duly recovered; 16 aircraft were shot down by ground fire.

Meanwhile, in the river assaults on this first day, the right-hand brigade of the 15th Division found the German defence on their front so loosened up that they joined forces early in the afternoon with the 6th Airborne Division, while the United States 17th Airborne Division and the Commandos also made contact. The 15th Division's left flank fought hard all day and was firmly established late in the

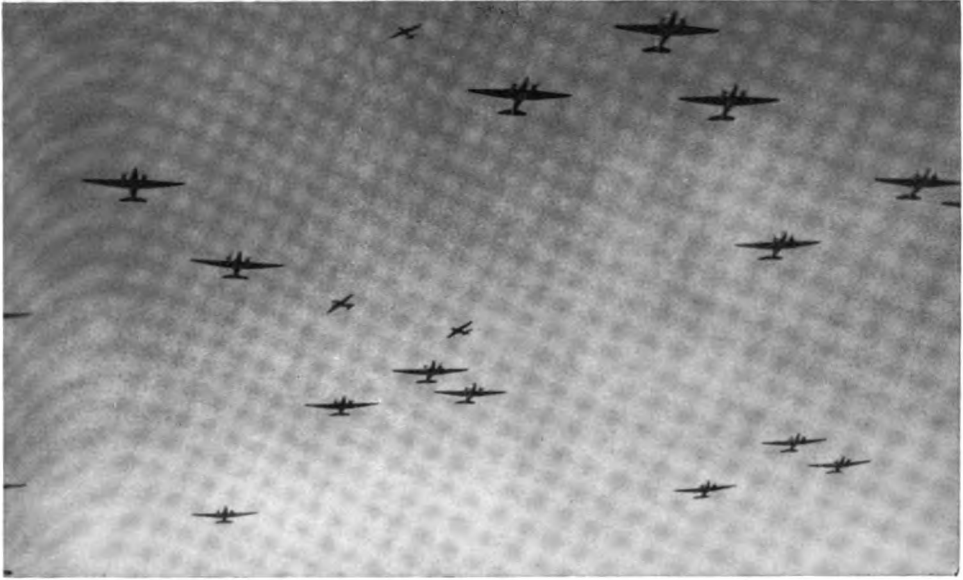
day at the neighbouring villages of Haffen and Mehr as the result of an attack by the reserve brigade, helped by the D.D. tanks which crossed the river on the right and attacked from there. But the enemy held firmly at the stream east of Mehr. Work started on all three bridges over the Rhine for the sector and the light one was completed before midnight.

51st Division's commander, Major-General T. G. Rennie, was killed in the bridgehead that morning. The corps commander came across the Rhine in the afternoon to ensure that operations proceeded satisfactorily and next morning Major-General G. H. A. MacMillan from the 49th Division took command of 51st Division. By midnight of the 24th most of the village of Speldrop had been secured and the beleaguered men there relieved. The rest of the division pressing forward was held up on the outskirts of Bienen that evening and the 152nd Brigade got half way towards Haldern in stiff fighting with the 15th Panzer Grenadier Division. Delay in the capture of Rees and enemy fire interfered with Rhine bridging operations but ferries were working effectively that day and bridges were begun.

The United States Ninth Army captured Dinslaken that night and had the distinction of completing the first bridge across the Rhine for Twenty-First Army Group, a 'treadway' bridge 1,150 feet long finished by 4.20 p.m.—a very fast time. The progress on this flank forced the Germans to split their reserve and move their 116th Panzer Division to bestride the Lippe river.

By the end of this first day Twenty-First Army Group had gained a firm footing on the far bank of the Rhine. The airborne attack had achieved its purpose of disrupting the enemy's artillery positions and rear defences. The Prime Minister and the Chief of the Imperial General Staff, who, with General Eisenhower, were visiting Field-Marshal Montgomery, had watched its fly-in from a hill near Xanten. The air forces played a great part in this crossing. Bomber Command dropped over 1,900 tons of bombs on marshalling yards and other targets in the Ruhr; the United States Eighth Air Force bombers continued their attacks on airfields and jet-aircraft bases, and only a bare handful of jets were seen that day; more than 1,000 Eighth Air Force fighters swept the skies ahead and claimed 53 enemy aircraft destroyed in combat. Nearer the battle Ninth Air Force mediums made a final attack on communication centres, while over the battle itself Nos. 83 and 84 Groups of the Second Tactical Air Force and the United States XXIX Tactical Air Command maintained squadrons in the air all day. Apart from the troop-carrying and resupply aircraft, the Allied air forces flew 7,700 sorties in all in the twenty-four hours up to sunset on the 24th, and lost 56 aircraft.

From the 25th the expansion of the bridgehead gathered speed. In the airborne corps sector the American division extended its right



45. Part of the airborne assault over the Rhine on March the 24th, 1945



46. A Buffalo landing on the east bank



47. Bridge over the Rhine being built

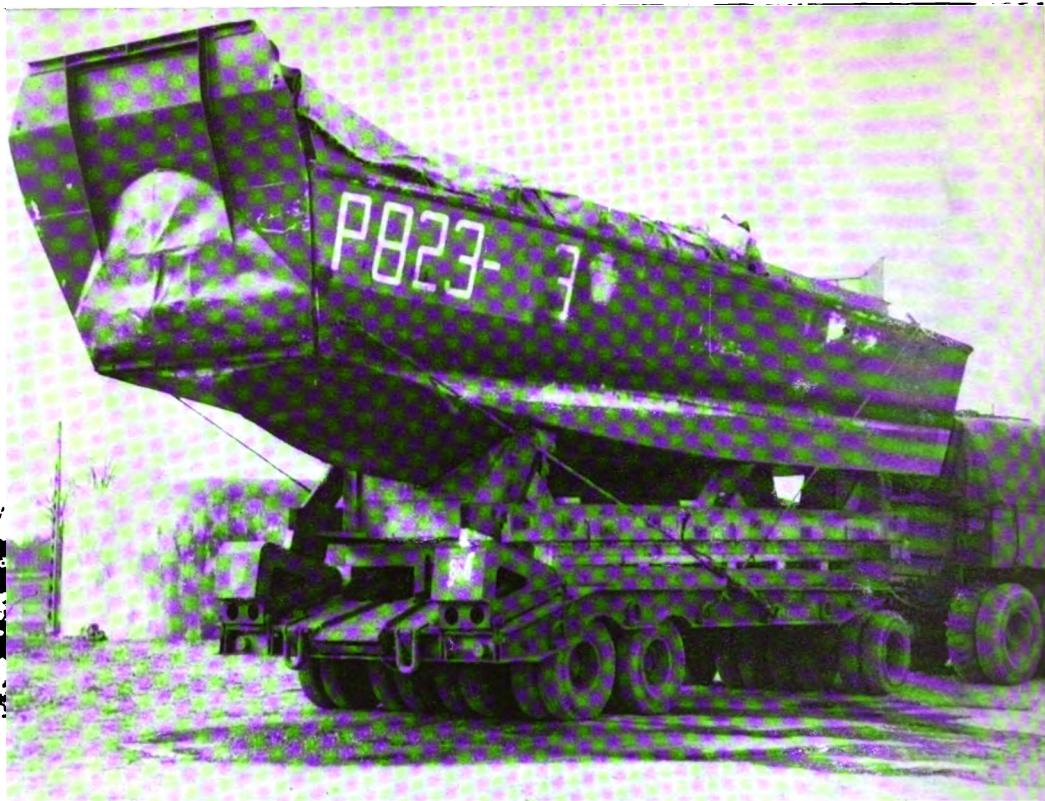


48. Completed bridge in use

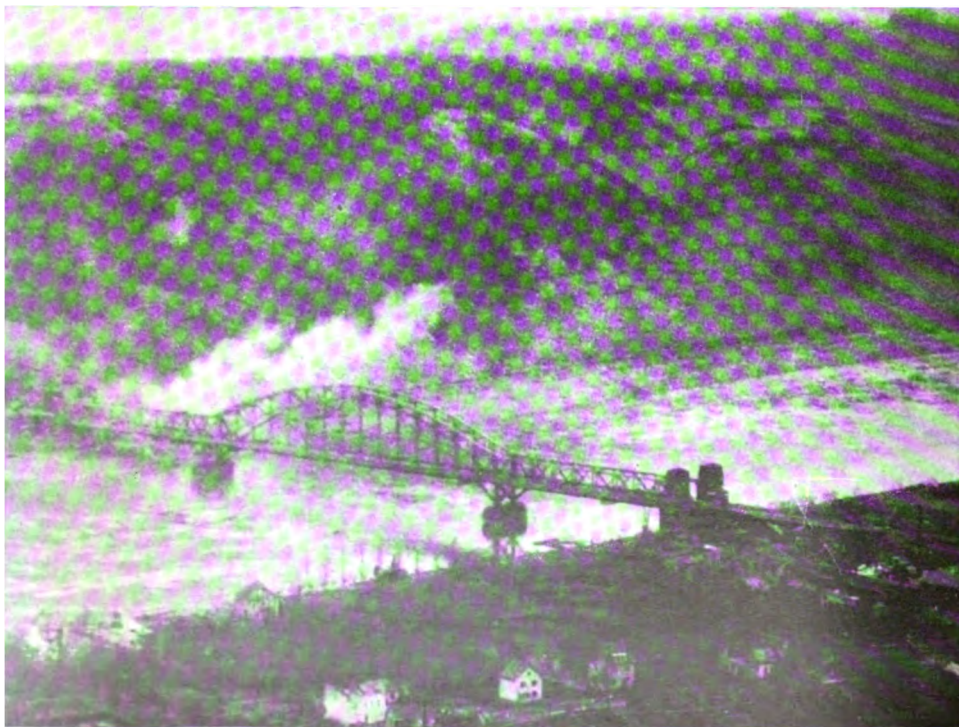


49. THE PRIME MINISTER CROSSING THE RHINE!

left:
Miss Mary Churchill
Field-Marshal Brooke, C.I.G.S.



50. Naval craft for Rhine crossing



51. Remagen Bridge captured by the United States First Army on March the 7th, 1945

to the Lippe river by midnight on the 25th, meeting very stiff opposition east of Wesel where the Commandos had been counter-attacked without success throughout the previous night; and the British 6th Airborne Division, after holding German attacks on the night of the 24th and through the following day, handed over its left sector to XII Corps. Next day (the 26th) the whole airborne corps pressed forward and against weakening resistance reached the line Schermbeck-Erle during the night of the 27th, where the 6th Guards Armoured Brigade which had by now joined them passed through the American airborne troops on the right.

A third infantry division of the United States Ninth Army had started to cross into the bridgehead on the night of the 25th and it was followed by an armoured division. German opposition steadily stiffened and the Americans had hard fighting, but by the night of the 27th they had closed on the built-up outskirts of the Ruhr from the Rhine to Sterkrade and had cleared most of the wooded area north from there to the Lippe canal.

During this fighting to extend the bridgehead both the Second Tactical Air Force and the United States XXIX Tactical Air Command gave close support to the ground forces, finding many targets among the convoys of horse and motor vehicles, tank transporters and petrol lorries hurrying away from the battlefield, or attacking strong-points and artillery positions. Against the large number of Allied fighters in the air German air attacks on the bridgehead were ineffectual. Further afield, Bomber Command attacked Hanover, Münster, Osnabrück and Paderborn.

Meanwhile in XII Corps the 15th Division attacked northwards against stubborn resistance and repeated counter-attacks and by the evening of the 26th had made contact with XXX Corps on the left and secured a small bridgehead over the Issel river north of Hamminkeln, which it expanded next day; the division had 824 casualties in these four days. On the 25th the corps' first Bailey bridge opened; on the 26th the 53rd Division crossed the Rhine and next day attacked through Hamminkeln to Dingden; and the 7th Armoured Division, crossing on the 27th, pushed forward that day on its right to three miles north-east of Brunen.

In XXX Corps sector on the 25th the 51st Division finally cleared Rees and made progress northward, though slowly, in hard fighting against the German defence; it now had the whole of the 9th Canadian Brigade attacking on its left and they captured Bienen early on the 26th after an all-night fight. It was not till this time that their first bridges were finished. That night the 43rd Division came into action and went on to capture Mechelen early on the 28th; by then most of the 3rd Canadian Division was across and advancing west to take Emmerich; the 51st Division had secured Isselburg.

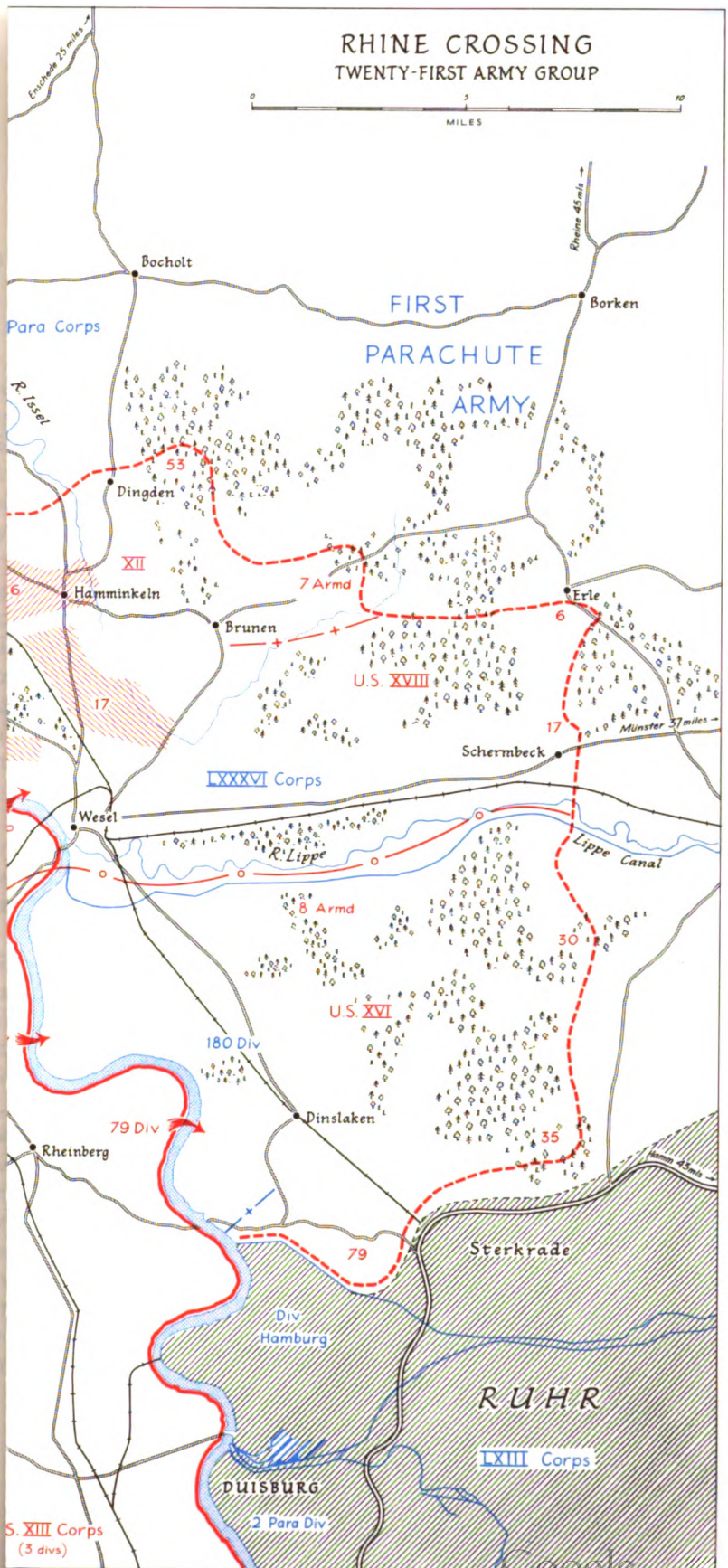
The latter had had a very tough fight and suffered 859 casualties in these four days.

VIII Corps took no part in the assault; it was earmarked to lead Second Army's break-out, in which it would advance on the right of XII Corps and pick up the 6th Airborne Division and the 1st Commando Brigade as it went through.

Second Army's casualties up to the 27th in the capture and expansion of the bridgehead totalled 3,968, United States Ninth Army's 2,813¹; prisoners captured were 11,161 and 5,098 respectively. The bridgehead was now some 35 miles wide and 20 miles deep.

¹ Includes United States 17th Airborne Division's casualties, 24th to 29th of March, totalling 1,346.

RHINE CROSSING TWENTY-FIRST ARMY GROUP



CHAPTER XIV

FROM THE RHINE TO THE BALTIC

(March–April 1945)

IF the Allies' progress during the last months of 1944 had been disappointingly slow, the first three months of 1945 had seen a radical improvement of their affairs and also the fulfilment of General Eisenhower's policy. January had been spent in the final defeat of the German attacks in the Ardennes and Alsace, and the recovery of almost all ground that had been temporarily lost; in February the Allied armies had resumed the offensive and thereafter had progressively defeated German forces on the west of the Rhine; in March all these had been eliminated and the river had been crossed in several places. Before the end of the month the Allies had started on their advance towards 'the heart of Germany', leaving the Rhine safely behind them.

Much had been achieved while the fighting moved eastwards to the Rhine. Engineers had quickly repaired some forward airfields and by the last weeks of March many airstrips along the river became usable. Much railway damage had been made good simultaneously so that by then the railheads for Twenty-First Army Group were at Nijmegen, Goch and, for the United States Ninth Army, at Krefeld (maps pages 253 and 276); for the American Twelfth Army Group at Euskirchen and Trier; and for the Sixth Army Group at Strasbourg and nearby Saverne. Sea ports, from Cherbourg to Antwerp and in the south at Marseilles, were all working at full speed, and Lines of Communication were reorganised and carried through towards the Rhine; the largest proportion of supplies moved forward by rail but considerable amounts by road, barge or pipeline. Losses in battle had been replaced and the Allied forces to go forward through Germany were at full strength and well supplied, though at first they would have to rely largely on road transport after crossing the Rhine. Additional transport companies were made available to the Allied armies for their advance. Petrol pipe-heads were still some distance back from the Rhine except for Ninth Army's which was close up; Second Army and the United States First Army had theirs at the Meuse, Third Army's was near Metz and Seventh Army's twenty miles south of Saarbrücken. At the outset under Field-Marshal Montgomery's command were 32 divisions (of which 13 in the United States Ninth Army were American),

plus six armoured brigades and two brigades of Commandos, together roughly equal to three additional divisions; under General Bradley were 30; General Devers had 26, of which 11 were French; and Shaeff had three American airborne divisions in reserve: in all the equivalent of 94 Allied divisions under General Eisenhower's command. The Allied air forces numbered more than 10,000 aircraft.

By comparison, the remaining German divisions on the western front were estimated by Allied Intelligence on March the 25th as a nominal 65 but this figure had less meaning than ever; four represented only Staffs, twelve were small battle groups and many of the remainder were only relics of the Rhineland, Ardennes and Saar-Palatinate battles. The First Parachute Army alone showed evidence of a more healthy condition; its four parachute divisions and two panzer-type divisions were to some extent rested and refitted. It was estimated that the *Luftwaffe* had some 1,000 aircraft in the West, of which 80 were jet-propelled and intended for ground attack.

Field-Marshal von Rundstedt had been retired on March the 10th and Field-Marshal Kesselring was now in nominal command of the enemy's western armies but these were so weak and widely dispersed, their communications so badly disrupted and the means of transportation so disjointed and uncertain, that no overall commander could now exercise effective control over his whole front. Yet there was little indication of any weakening of the German Command's intention to fight on with the depleted and dispersed forces remaining. Though weakened by ill-health, distraught by events and facing defeat on all fronts, Hitler still dominated the German scene. The armed forces, the Party and the whole German nation still looked to him as the 'Führer'. The national will had been surrendered to him for so long that power of independent decision was atrophied. It was over this enfeebled Germany that the Allies were now setting out to win final victory.

The day after Twenty-First Army Group made their assault crossing north of the Ruhr, the United States First Army began its advance eastwards from the Remagen bridgehead. By then the bridgehead had been extended; it stretched for some 30 miles from Bonn to near Koblenz and for some nine miles east of the river; and it already included virtually the whole of the American First Army. On March the 25th three corps attacked eastwards below the southern face of the Ruhr, and by the 28th forward armour had reached Marburg and was wheeling northwards to enclose the Ruhr. On the 28th Twenty-First Army Group broke out of its bridgehead in the north, from which the United States Ninth Army (under Montgomery's command) struck along the Ruhr's northern face to meet the First Army coming up from the south of the Ruhr to complete the containment of the enemy's defending armies in that vital area.

General Eisenhower had directed that when Twenty-First and Twelfth Army Groups had effected this junction their armies would mop up and occupy the whole area east of the Rhine enclosed by their advance and prepare for a further advance into Germany.

Montgomery's orders had been issued to his army commanders on March the 27th and were confirmed in his directive of the 28th. His intention was to exploit the present situation rapidly and to drive hard for the line of the river Elbe, so as to gain quick possession of the plains of northern Germany. On the right would be the United States Ninth Army, its right directed on Magdeburg; it would also assist Twelfth Army Group in mopping up the Ruhr. On the left would be Second Army, its left directed on Hamburg. Having reached the Elbe these two armies would halt for further orders. Meanwhile First Canadian Army would open up the supply route to the north through Arnhem, then clear the north-east of Holland, the coastal belt eastwards to the Elbe, and West Holland. Ninth and Second Armies would each attack with two corps forward, the third corps of each army being responsible for the protection of their army's open flank. Great stress was laid on the need of leading with armoured and mobile columns to go 'flat out' and on the importance of seizing any airfields. Montgomery wrote to General Eisenhower on the same day (27th) telling him of this plan.

On the 28th of March the leading troops of Twenty-First Army Group had begun the advance which Field-Marshal Montgomery had ordered when that evening he received the following message from General Eisenhower:

'I agree generally with your plan up to the point of gaining contact with Bradley to the east of the Ruhr. But thereafter, my present plans which are now being co-ordinated with Stalin are outlined in the following paras.

As soon as you and Bradley have joined hands in the Kassel-Paderborn area Ninth Army will revert to Bradley's command. He will then be responsible for occupying and mopping up the Ruhr and with minimum delay will make his main thrust on the axis Erfurt-Leipzig-Dresden and join hands with the Russians.

Your Army Group will protect Bradley's northern flank with the inter-army group boundary similar to Second Army's right boundary, Münster-Hanover inclusive to Bradley, thence Wittenberge or Stendal as decided later.

When your forces reach the Elbe it might be desirable for Ninth Army to revert again to your operational control to facilitate the crossing of that obstacle. If so, necessary orders will then be issued.

Devers will protect Bradley's southern flank and be prepared later when the situation permits to advance and join hands with the Russians in the Danube Valley. The situation, as you say, is good.'

On the same day Eisenhower had sent the following message to Marshal Stalin via the Allied Military Mission in Moscow, with copies to the Combined Chiefs of Staff, the British Chiefs of Staff and Shaef (Main).

'My immediate operations are designed to encircle and destroy the enemy forces defending the Ruhr, and to isolate that area from rest of Germany. This will be accomplished by developing offensives around north of the Ruhr and from Frankfurt through Kassel line until I close the ring. The enemy thus enclosed will then be mopped up.

I estimate that this phase of operations will end late in April or even earlier, and my next task will be to divide the remaining enemy forces by joining hands with your forces.

For my forces the best axis on which to effect this junction would be Erfurt-Leipzig-Dresden. I believe, moreover, this is the area to which main German Governmental Departments are being moved. It is along this axis that I propose to make my main effort. In addition, as soon as the situation allows, a secondary advance will be made to effect a junction with your forces in the area Regensburg-Linz, thereby preventing the consolidation of German resistance in Redoubt in Southern Germany.

Before deciding firmly on my plans, it is, I think, most important they should be co-ordinated as closely as possible with yours both as to direction and timing. Could you, therefore, tell me your intentions and let me know how far the proposals outlined in this message conform to your probable action.

If we are to complete the destruction of German armies without delay, I regard it as essential that we co-ordinate our action and make every effort to perfect the liaison between our advancing forces. I am prepared to send officers to you for this purpose.'

Montgomery had had no warning of the Supreme Commander's change of plan and, coming just as his Twenty-First Army Group had started to carry out his own directive of the 28th, Eisenhower's message came as a great shock. He sent a reply saying:

'I note from FWD 18272 that you intend to change the command set up. If you feel this is necessary I pray you do not do so until we reach the Elbe as such action would not help the great movement which is now beginning to develop.'

General Eisenhower then telegraphed to Montgomery a fuller explanation of his earlier message.

'My plan is simple, it aims at dividing and destroying the enemy forces and joining hands with the Russian Army. Subject to any information which Stalin may give me, the axis Kassel-Leipzig appears the most direct line of advance for achieving this object.

On this axis our forces will also overrun the important industrial area of Leipzig and the area to which German Ministries are moving.

I intend therefore to have my main disposable strength concentrated centrally ready to move, after our Leipzig objective has been attained, first, if feasible, to the north to secure the important naval, shipping and political objectives across the Elbe, or southwards to destroy any effective concentration which the enemy forces may succeed in creating. Which course I will adopt must depend upon how a very fluid situation develops.

Bradley must bring the situation in the Ruhr under control before he can initiate the thrust to Leipzig. Certain forces of Ninth and First Armies must be employed to achieve this quickly. These must be reinforced and relieved speedily by divisions of the Fifteenth Army¹ using the Rhine bridges of Ninth and First Armies. Clearly one commander should control a mopping up task of this nature, in such a densely populated area. Furthermore, it is Bradley who will be straining to unleash his thrust to the east and it is very desirable that he should be in a position to judge when the Ruhr situation warrants it.

For these reasons I must hold to my decision that Ninth Army will pass to Bradley's command when firm junction is effected at Paderborn. Naturally I will give you at least twenty-four hours warning before Ninth Army is withdrawn from your command and my chief concern in selecting the moment will be to maintain the general blow of the advance. As I have told you already, it appears probable that an American formation will again come under your command at a later stage, for operations beyond the Elbe.

You will see that in none of this do I mention Berlin. So far as I am concerned, that place has become nothing but a geographical location; I have never been interested in those. My purpose is to destroy the enemy forces and his powers to resist.

When the time comes, we must manifestly do everything possible to cross the Elbe without delay, drive to the Baltic coast at Lübeck and seal off the Danish peninsula.'

In view of this explanation there was nothing that Montgomery could do to affect the Supreme Commander's decision, but he was not unnaturally surprised by it and its significance must not be missed.

As early as September the 15th the Supreme Commander had written:

'We shall soon, I hope, . . . be in possession of the Ruhr, the Saar and the Frankfurt area . . . *Clearly, Berlin is the main prize . . .*

¹ The United States Fifteenth Army had recently been formed to carry out occupation duties for other American armies. It contained four divisions and had recently become operational.

There is no doubt whatsoever, in my mind, that we should concentrate all our energies and resources on a rapid thrust to Berlin.

Our strategy however, will have to be co-ordinated with that of the Russians, so we must also consider alternative objectives.' After naming these alternatives, and other possible ones should the Russians 'beat us to Berlin', he concluded: '*Simply stated, it is my desire to move on Berlin by the most direct and expeditious route*¹, with combined U.S.-British forces . . . moving through key centres and occupying strategic areas on the flanks all in one co-ordinated, concerted operation.'²

Since that was written in September General Eisenhower had made it clear that apart from the planned attack in the north he attached great importance to a complementary advance through the Frankfurt area, but he had said nothing hitherto to indicate that he had changed his mind as to the prime importance of Berlin as 'the main prize' on which 'all our energies and resources' should be concentrated.

On April the 1st Marshal Stalin replied to General Eisenhower's telegram.

'Your plan to divide the German forces by joining up your forces with the Soviet forces coincides entirely with the plan of the Soviet High Command.

I also agree with you that the place for the joining up of our forces should be in the Erfurt, Leipzig, Dresden area. The Soviet High Command considers the main blow of their forces should be delivered in that direction.

Berlin has lost its former strategic importance. In the Soviet High Command plans secondary forces will therefore be allotted in the direction of Berlin.

The plan to form a second ring by joining up Soviet forces with your forces somewhere in the Vienna, Linz, Regensburg area is also approved by the Soviet High Command.

The main blow by the Soviet forces will begin in approximately the second half of May. The additional blow in the Vienna, Linz area is already being executed by the Soviet forces. This plan, however, may be subject to alterations if circumstances change, for example, if the German troops retreat rapidly the dates may be moved forward. Much also depends on the weather.

The perfecting of communications between our troops is being considered by the General Staff and a decision will be communicated later.

The number of German troops on the Eastern front is gradually being increased. Transfers to the Eastern front in addition

¹ Authors italics.

² See page 77 above.

to the 6 SS Tank [Panzer] Army have been as follows: three divisions from northern Italy and two divisions from Norway.'

On April the 2nd, General Eisenhower issued a directive giving effect to the plan he had indicated to the Russians, with copies to the Combined Chiefs of Staff and to the British. The orders which Montgomery had given to Twenty-First Army Group were not substantially changed, except that the United States Ninth Army was to be transferred back to Twelfth Army Group on the 4th while retaining as Twelfth Army Group's northern boundary the existing boundary between Ninth and Second Armies, which reached the Elbe at Wittenberge. Twenty-First Army Group would continue to advance to the river Leine and capture Bremen and thereafter advance to the river Elbe, in conjunction with and protecting the northern flank of Twelfth Army Group. There Twenty-First Army Group would seize any opportunity of capturing a bridgehead over the Elbe and be prepared to conduct operations beyond that river. Twelfth Army Group would mop up the enemy forces enclosed in the Ruhr and in conjunction with Twenty-First Army Group launch a thrust with its main axis Kassel-Leipzig, establishing the right flank of its advance on the line Erz Gebirge mountains-Bayreuth. The Sixth Army Group would protect Twelfth Army Group's southern flank and be prepared to launch a thrust on the axis Nuremberg-Regensburg-Linz, to prevent the consolidation of German resistance in the south. Nothing was said of Berlin.

The relegation of Berlin to a position of minor importance and the withdrawal of the United States Ninth Army from Twenty-First Army Group meant a significant change of General Eisenhower's strategic plans as declared in January and endorsed by the Combined Chiefs of Staff at Malta. In these it was agreed that the main advance into Germany was to be made on the northern route and by the Northern Group of Armies specially strengthened by the addition of American forces and aiming at the heart of Germany; now the main advance was to be made by Central Group of Armies with American forces reverting to that group for a new aim, directed not at Berlin but at Leipzig. It is true that Eisenhower's plan at Malta provided for the possibility of switching the main effort to the Frankfurt area if this proved the more favourable way of advance to 'the heart of Germany', but he had not indicated that he no longer regarded Berlin as the heart's core.¹ Montgomery was not alone in being perturbed by this sudden change of direction.

The new plan, and Eisenhower's procedure in communicating it to Marshal Stalin before it had been notified to the Combined

¹ The identification of Berlin with 'the heart of Germany' seems to have been generally assumed but never officially stated.

Chiefs of Staff, brought an emphatic protest from the Prime Minister, made by telephone on the 29th. He stressed the importance of the capture of Berlin by Allied forces in order to counter-balance the prestige which Russian armies were about to gain by capturing Vienna and overrunning Austria, pointing out that if the Russians were also to secure Berlin they would be able to claim that they had won the decisive victory; the influence of the democratic Powers in Europe would be weakened while that of the Communists was enhanced. In having regard to these political considerations the Prime Minister was also influenced by the fact that since the Yalta Conference there had been a steady and most disturbing deterioration of relations with Russia, but of this General Eisenhower would be unaware for it concerned matters which were outside the scope of his military command; what was now in question was the wisdom or otherwise of General Eisenhower's new policy, *not only from a military but also from a political point of view.*

Surveying the scene towards the end of March, the Supreme Commander had become impressed by three facts. First, the encirclement of the Ruhr and with it Model's army group would remove any probability of a coherent resistance by the enemy in the centre. Second, the Russians had already about a million men on the river Oder within 40 miles of Berlin, while the Allies were still about 200 to 300 miles from the capital, separated by country intersected by many waterways. Third, there was some evidence that Hitler intended in the last resort to withdraw his remaining forces into a 'national redoubt' in Bavaria and Austria, where in mountainous country their final destruction might be difficult and expensive. These considerations, and there were others which buttressed his decision, led Eisenhower to favour a strong thrust through the centre of Germany, by the shortest distance between the Western and Eastern fronts. By establishing strong forces in this central position, and reaching Leipzig and one of Germany's richest remaining industrial areas, the Allies could strike north or south as required. To the British, however, the seizure of Berlin and the northern ports and the liberation of Denmark and Norway outweighed any risk of a last stand in the south by remnants of the beaten German armies and led them to discount the story of a 'national redoubt'. But Shaf Intelligence took the threat more seriously; their summary on March the 11th contained these statements:

'National Redoubt

Accumulated ground information and a limited amount of photographic evidence now make it possible to give a rather more definite estimate of the progress of plans for the "Last Ditch Stand" of the Nazi Party . . . The main trend of German defence



policy does seem directed primarily to the safeguarding of the Alpine Zone. Although, both in the East and the West, Allied attacks are thrusting towards the heart of North Germany, defences continue to be constructed in depth in the South, through the Black Forest to Lake Constance, and from the Hungarian frontier to West of Graz, while in Italy, Kesselring continues to hold his ground desperately as the defence lines in the foothills of the Italian Alps are built up in his rear.¹ . . . Air cover shows at least twenty sites of recent underground activity (as well as numerous natural caves) mainly in the regions of Feldkirch, Kufstein, Berchtesgaden and Golling, where ground sources have reported underground accommodation for stores and personnel. The existence of several reported underground factories has also been confirmed. In addition, several new barracks and hutted camps have been seen on air photographs, particularly around Innsbruck, Landeck and the Berghof.² It thus appears that ground reports of extensive preparations for the accommodation of the German Maquis-to-be are not unfounded. As regards the actual amount of troops, stores and weapons already within the Redoubt area, only ground information is available. The evidence indicates that considerable numbers of SS and specially chosen units are being systematically withdrawn to Austria; that a definite allocation of each day's production of food, equipment and armaments is sent there; and that engineer units are engaged on some type of

¹ When this was written Kesselring was thought to be still commanding the German forces in Italy.

² Hitler's residence in Berchtesgaden.

defence activity at the most vital strategic points . . . It seems reasonably certain that some of the most important ministries and personalities of the Nazi régime are already established in the Redoubt area. The Party organisation is reported to be in the Vorarlberg region, the Ministry for Propaganda and the Diplomatic Corps in the Garmisch-Partenkirchen area, and the Reichs Chancellery at Berchtesgaden, while Göring, Himmler, Hitler and other notables are said to be in the process of withdrawing to their respective personal mountain strongholds.'

In the light of this Intelligence report it is understandable that General Eisenhower took the matter seriously; nevertheless the British Chiefs of Staff held to their opinion that quick and strong action in the north was of far greater importance than any that might be needed in the south.¹

The Supreme Commander was puzzled by the British questioning of his plan and on April the 1st he explained it to Mr. Churchill, who after hearing it pressed his own argument no further. The United States Chiefs of Staff replied to the British objections that they considered General Eisenhower's strategic conception was 'sound from the overall viewpoint of crushing Germany as expeditiously as possible' and 'should receive full support'. They also held that he 'should continue to be free to communicate with the Commander-in-Chief of the Soviet Army'. (It is noteworthy however that in future when such an occasion arose he consulted the Combined Chiefs of Staff before approaching Russia.) The result of General Eisenhower's decision will be considered when this history of military operations is reviewed in our last chapter.

The Ninth Army (still part of Twenty-First Army Group) had begun the advance on the 28th. Leaving one corps to cover the northern face of the Ruhr, the leading armour of its two advancing corps moved so rapidly that a link with the United States First Army was effected on April the 1st at Lippstadt, in the Paderborn area. In so doing they had cut through the German First Parachute Army of Army Group H and enclosed some, with the greater part of Model's Army Group B, in the Ruhr. First Army's spearhead, starting from the Remagen bridgehead, had swung northwards at Marburg to enclose the Ruhr, captured the Paderborn area after a stiff fight, and met Ninth Army troops at Lippstadt. The two advancing corps of Ninth Army continued rapidly north-eastwards and crossed the river Weser; the leading division reached the Leine by the 6th, and was established beyond it near Hildesheim on the 8th. (Map facing page 316.)

¹ The true facts about the so-called 'National Redoubt', as subsequently discovered, are described in Appendix X.

On the Ninth Army's left the British Second Army's two leading corps, driving for the Elbe,¹ had made no less rapid progress; by the 8th, VIII Corps had a division across the Leine river north of Hanover and the armoured spearhead of XII Corps had reached the Weser just below Verden, where the river turns north-westwards toward Bremen after its long northward flow from the mountains north-east of Frankfurt. Leading troops of both corps had advanced roughly a hundred and fifty miles from the Rhine and the forward divisions and some of those following had been involved on the way in stiff fighting. No coherent front had been met but at numerous well chosen places the enemy had taken advantage of defensible positions to do their best to stop the Allied advance. The 11th Armoured Division of VIII Corps, for example, had reached Emsdetten (some fifty miles from the bridgehead) on the 31st of March and had bridged both the nearby Ems river and the Dortmund-Ems Canal. As they were well ahead of XII Corps at this time the 11th Armoured Division moved into their sector and became involved in hard fighting for a steep, heavily wooded ridge which carried the best road to Osnabrück but was strongly defended near the small country town of Ibbenburen. An infantry attack by the 3rd Monmouthshires, covered by the fire of the 2nd Fife and Forfar Yeomanry, was launched up the road which climbed the ridge and some progress was made, but the infantry were driven back by the defenders, well placed in the bordering woods (tough troops from the German N.C.O.s' Training School at Hanover).

This delay enabled XII Corps to catch up; they found Rheine on the river Ems (the centre of a ring of airfields) to be a mass of rubble as a result of Allied heavy bomber attacks; it was only lightly defended but the far bank of the river and beyond it the Dortmund-Ems Canal were firmly held with the bridges blown. So 7th Armoured Division of XII Corps swung south of the town to cross by the bridges VIII Corps had built south of Ibbenburen and there ran into the VIII Corps' fight. In a second attack the Monmouthshires had fought their way to the top of the ridge; the enemy had been strongly reinforced and had thrown them back, but one company held their ground won. Fresh troops of the 7th Armoured Division (2nd Battalion The Devonshire Regiment) then made a new attack, the enemy's position was captured and the

¹ The composition of these two corps of Second Army was:

VIII Corps: initially 11th Armoured and 6th Airborne Divisions and 1st Commando Brigade, later joined by 15th Division and 6th Guards Armoured Brigade; the latter was in the airborne corps break-out and then under United States Ninth Army for a few days.

XII Corps: initially 7th Armoured, 52nd and 53rd Divisions and 4th Armoured Brigade, later joined by 3rd Division from XXX Corps. (15th Division had remained in the bridgehead in reserve.)

Monmouthshire company relieved.¹ The fighting south of Ibbenburen had not prevented the leading divisions of VIII Corps from fighting their way forward on more southerly minor roads; Osna-brück was captured on the 4th and the Weser reached on the 5th. Meanwhile XII Corps ordered three brigades, one of the 52nd Division and two of the 53rd Division, to clean up the German forces, by then driven back into Ibbenburen. The balance of the 52nd advanced across the Dortmund–Ems Canal at Rheine, where but slow progress was made against a newly arrived Panzer Training Regiment ‘Grossdeutschland’; but the 7th Armoured Division raced ahead on the left of VIII Corps to reach Diepholz on the 5th, some forty miles ahead of the 52nd Division advancing from Rheine. From there the 7th Armoured Division was ordered to snatch a bridge over the Weser—still a further forty miles ahead. A fresh infantry division (the 3rd) was brought up from XXX Corps to hold the long left flank that had opened up in this advance.

When the 7th Armoured Division found all the Weser bridges in the Verden area blown or strongly held, they were ordered to turn westward to capture Wildeshausen and Delmenhorst on the main Arnhem–Bremen road, in an attempt to cut off the German First Parachute Army which appeared to be withdrawing on Bremen. On the 10th Wildeshausen was secured in a stiff fight and held against a strong counter-attack by the 15th Panzer Grenadier Division. By then the 53rd Division had come up, crossed the Weser south of Verden (still firmly held by the enemy) and attacked the German 2nd Naval Division at Rethem, where a main road to Hamburg crosses the Aller river. The German opposition to the 52nd Division in its advance from Rheine was still stubborn despite the progress of the remainder of XII Corps. VIII Corps² now had a firm bridgehead beyond the Leine river extending as far north as the junction of this river with the Aller; and there on the night of the 10th the 11th Armoured Division secured a bridgehead over the Aller. They had had hard fighting with the 12th SS Training Battalion and a group of the 325th Division recently arrived from Denmark, and aircraft of the German Air Force, though losing a number to British Tempests, had delayed the bridging operations both on the Weser and the Leine.

To enable the main body of Second Army to advance rapidly

¹ The Monmouthshire Regiment's repeated attacks were very costly and when they were relieved they were withdrawn from the battle. For great gallantry and outstanding bravery during the action Corporal E. T. Chapman was awarded the Victoria Cross.

² It is worth noting that in this long advance the 6th Airborne Division moved faster than the 11th Armoured Division, despite the fact that the latter was equipped with the latest tank, the Comet, fast and low-slung, with strong hitting power in its 77-mm gun. This was partly the result of poor roads and bad going across country but also because the strength of the German defence was lightest on the British right.

towards the Elbe, XXX Corps,¹ on the left flank, had started from the Rhine bridgehead on the 30th of March with the Guards Armoured Division in the lead. They reached Enschede at the end of the Twente canal on the 1st of April after a number of minor tussles with German rearguards; from there they took two roads with a brigade on each. On the right a very tough fight developed short of Bentheim against a group of the German 8th Parachute Division and not till the 4th of April was this town secured. The left brigade of the Guards division advanced on the main Arnhem-Bremen road to capture Lingen on the Ems; it was mainly delayed by blown bridges but shortly before midnight on the 2nd the way through the last intermediate town was made good and the Scots/Welsh group² started on a ten-mile 'midnight dash' for Lingen, with full headlights on and shooting up anything in the way. By 4 a.m. on the 3rd the Ems was reached but the enemy blew the bridge as they arrived. After it was light a Household Cavalry patrol reconnoitring to the north found an intact bridge three miles downstream; it had a solid road block on it covered by three '88's and was prepared for demolition; a Coldstream Guards group was detached to capture it and did so, with the bridge intact, under the leadership of Captain Ian Liddell, for whose outstanding bravery the Victoria Cross was awarded.

The 3rd Division, following behind the Guards, crossed this bridge and, attacking Lingen from the north, hit the rear of a battalion of the Panzer Training Regiment Grossdeutschland and captured the commanding officer and his staff; this quickened the capture of the town (where the German 7th Parachute Division was also met) yet it fell, after hard fighting, only on April the 6th, after which XXX Corps could press on again towards Cloppenburg.³ For the time being the 3rd Division now joined XII Corps.

It will help the reader to understand the widely separated operations of Twenty-First Army Group during this April fighting if Second Army's advance to the Elbe is first completed without interruption and then the closely related but distinct fight of the Canadian Army for the freeing of Holland and the clearance of the German coastal area is described separately as a consecutive story.

¹ XXX Corps consisted of the Guards Armoured Division, 3rd, 43rd and 51st Divisions and the 8th Armoured Brigade.

² The 2nd Battalion of the Scots Guards carried by the tanks of the 2nd Armoured Battalion of the Welsh Guards.

³ In the three-corps advance from the bridgehead to the Leine each corps, in addition to its armoured division, included an independent armoured brigade. Thus General Dempsey had over 1,000 tanks deployed at the front. By April the 6th tank casualties were considerable. Over 125 were knocked out by enemy weapons, or were too severely damaged for forward workshop repair, and some further 500 were put out of action for more than twenty-four hours.

But there is one exception that must be made. On April the 5th Field-Marshal Montgomery had instructed General Crerar that one armoured division should advance on the Meppen-Oldenburg axis to protect Second Army's left flank. The actions of this division (4th Canadian Armoured Division), though still under command of First Canadian Army, must therefore be included in the account of Second Army's progress.

When given this order this, the most easterly Canadian division that had broken out of the bridgehead, was engaged near Almelo and Coevorden but a force was at once sent to secure Meppen and the Ems crossings there. The crossings were forced on the 8th and on the 10th the 4th Canadian Division was moving towards Oldenburg while XXX Corps, on its right, was advancing from Lingen towards Cloppenburg; as told above XII and VIII Corps had by then gained bridgeheads over the Weser and the Leine on the north of Hanover.

In the fortnight from the 28th of March to the 10th of April there were eleven good flying days and on these Second Tactical Air Force flew over 4,500 armed reconnaissance sorties in addition to providing pre-arranged and immediate support on the front of all four corps and fighter cover over the battlefield. The armed reconnaissance aircraft claimed some 50 enemy armoured fighting vehicles and over 2,800 motor vehicles destroyed or damaged, and also a number of railway engines and trucks. Some 90 Mosquitos of No. 2 Group attacked movement nightly from the 30th of March between the Ijsselmeer (or Zuider Zee) and the Elbe, moving their area eastward on the night of the 6th to include Lübeck and Berlin; they claimed damage to over 1,000 motor vehicles, 25 railway engines, 350 wagons and 58 trains. During this time Second Tactical Air Force was still flying from bases west of the Rhine, but on April the 8th its squadrons began using airfields that had been captured around Rheine.

On the 10th of April General Bradley visited Field-Marshal Montgomery to co-ordinate plans, as he now had the Ruhr sufficiently under control to be able to launch his final drive to the Elbe; Generals Dempsey and Simpson were also present. Montgomery decided that he too would push on to the Elbe without pause, Second Army's two leading corps outflanking Bremen which would be dealt with later by Dempsey's third corps. Bradley agreed to Ninth Army being responsible for its own left flank protection, relieving Montgomery of this responsibility laid on him a fortnight earlier by General Eisenhower (page 297), and he also agreed that after the Elbe was reached he would take over the 40-mile sector on the river from Wittenberge to Darchau. Following Montgomery's new orders Second Army was reorganised for the tasks which lay

ahead. To provide XXX Corps with four infantry divisions for the capture of Bremen, Dempsey ordered the 3rd and 52nd Divisions to be transferred to it from XII Corps as operations progressed, and the Guards Armoured Division to move from XXX Corps to XII Corps.

The Germans had to reorganise their higher command at this time. Field-Marshal Kesselring was no longer in touch with the northern part of the front from Headquarters O.B. West, now being driven back towards Austria, but a new Headquarters, O.B. North-West, was being formed from Headquarters Army Group H, to be commanded by Field-Marshal Ernst Busch; this would comprise all troops in the Netherlands under General Blaskowitz, and, covering the front roughly from Bremen to Magdeburg, First Parachute Army under General Student, and a new 'Army Blumentritt'.

On the 11th of April VIII Corps advanced on the Celle-Uelzen axis with the 15th Division and with the 11th Armoured Division on minor roads to the left. The 15th Division reached Celle against patchy opposition on the 12th and had to bridge the Aller before they could go on. Demolitions on the main road held them back next day but, switching to a minor road, they made a fast advance that night and were almost into Uelzen just before daylight on the 14th. There they ran into a German force advancing to meet them, a group from the 233rd Panzer Training Division from Denmark, which had just joined the improvised Panzer Division 'Clausewitz'. The 15th Division was unable to make further progress during the day and was hit that night by another group of the 'Clausewitz' Division, which it beat off after bitter hand-to-hand fighting. The Germans lost twelve self-propelled guns and ten armoured troop-carriers, and though the British personnel casualties were comparatively light sixty-three vehicles were destroyed. On the 15th the division closed in on the town. Meanwhile the 11th Armoured Division had secured a bridgehead over the Aller west of Winsen on the 11th against stiff resistance when, on the 12th, enemy delegates asked for a truce to negotiate the hand over of a German concentration camp at Belsen, a few miles to the north. Agreement was reached for British guards to go forward while the 11th Armoured switched its thrust to Winsen, captured that town, bridged the Aller and on the 15th advanced past Belsen. It was not till the British guards began to take over the camp that the full horror of its condition came to light. Put very briefly: in the main camp, designed for 8,000 people, there were some 40,000 men, women and children, all in the last stages of exhaustion from prolonged and deliberate starvation; there had been no food or water in the camp for four days and both typhus and typhoid were rampant. There were also about 10,000 dead and unburied bodies about the camp and at the far

end were huge open pits, containing thousands of bodies in various stages of decomposition. The camp was staffed by SS personnel. Immediate steps were taken to alleviate conditions, and within forty-eight hours British Hygiene Sections, a Light Field Ambulance and a Casualty Clearing Station were at work in the camp.¹

This almost unbelievable revelation of German wickedness was but the first of many German camps that were uncovered by the British as the war ended. But the United States Third Army had uncovered the camp at Ohrdruf on April the 4th, and Buchenwald and Nordhausen camps had been overrun on the 11th.

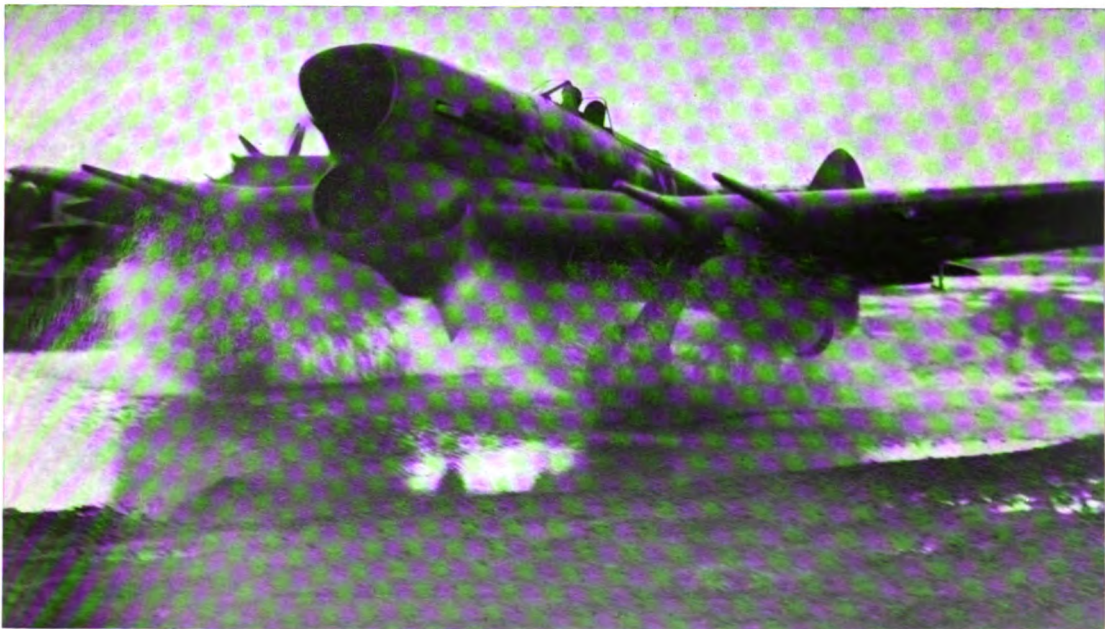
With Ninth Army making spectacular progress and reaching the Elbe by the 11th, the British drive was turned northward to cross the Elbe in the Darchau-Hamburg sector and the still intact railway bridge at Lauenburg became VIII Corps' immediate objective. At this time Montgomery did not consider that he would need any American assistance for operations beyond the Elbe other than this change of boundary but later he had to revise this decision (page 315). In the meantime all three of VIII Corps' divisions had taken part in the attack on Uelzen mentioned above. While the 15th Division attacked the town, the 6th Airborne and 11th Armoured Divisions, by-passing it to the south and north respectively, endeavoured to join hands beyond the town and hem in its garrison. But they were unable to do so in time to prevent a regimental group of Panzer Division Clausewitz escaping from the trap on the night of the 17th; next day Uelzen was captured. On the same day the 11th Armoured Division captured Lüneburg and continuing forward were halted at nightfall by blown bridges and thick mist about four miles short of the Elbe at Lauenburg. Next day the forward troops fought their way to the Elbe but the bridge was blown by the enemy before it was reached.

Back on the Aller XII Corps had failed to capture Rethem on the 11th but the enemy withdrew across the river that night. An out-flanking operation over an unguarded crossing place five miles downstream helped the 53rd Division to gain the high ground north of the town and bridge construction was started on the 12th. The division, with the 4th Armoured Brigade under command, now turned north-west to capture the high ground north of Verden and the town itself. The ground was strongly defended (with German Marines counter-attacking at night) and Verden was not secured till the 17th but the 7th Armoured Division crossed the Aller on the 15th and took the lead. Leaving an infantry brigade to mop up by-passed enemy troops, they switched to minor roads in order to avoid cratering and by the evening of the 19th were across the Bremen-Hamburg

¹ See Donnison, *Civil Affairs and Military Government, North-West Europe . . .*, pp. 219-24.



52. Advancing to the Elbe



53. A Typhoon fighter-bomber leaving a winter airfield



54. Field-Marshal Kesselring



55. General Student



56. General Jodl



57. Bremen in April, 1945



58. Entering Bremen



59. British jet-propelled Meteor in flight



60. Buffaloes crossing the Elbe

autobahn a few miles short of Hamburg. Behind them the brigade mopping up the Soltau area had some hard fighting but 8th Hussars freed Fallingbostal to the south of Soltau and had the satisfaction of releasing 10,000 British and American prisoners and 12,000 Allied nationals from an enemy prisoner-of-war camp. When the camp was relieved it was found to be already guarded by men of the 1st Airborne Division who had been taken prisoner at Arnhem. They were in immaculate turn-out under the command of Sergeant-Major Lord, of that division.

Under Second Army's regrouping the 52nd Division bridged the river Aller at Verden and came under command of XXX Corps for the attack on Bremen. In its place the Guards Armoured Division joined XII Corps in order to advance on the left of the 7th Armoured Division, helping to isolate Bremen by destroying the enemy in the Zeven area and going on to capture Stade in the Cuxhaven peninsula. Attacking on the 18th, one group of the Guards met stiff opposition south of Visselhovede but captured the town next day; it was then counter-attacked by part of the German 2nd Naval Division, which penetrated to group headquarters; it took two hours to beat off this attack in which a German regimental commander and some 440 of his men were taken prisoner. The other group, meeting much less opposition, reached to within four miles of Zeven.

Meanwhile the 4th Canadian Armoured Division¹ continued its advance on the left of Second Army after crossing over the Ems at Meppen on the 8th, and, overcoming patchy opposition, captured Friesoythe, which was stoutly defended, in a dawn attack. The attacking battalion's headquarters was then strongly attacked by a by-passed body of German paratroops. The division then turned north to cross the Küsten canal, for the ground on the south side was boggy and better country for an armoured attack on Oldenburg lay north of the canal. As this move would open a gap between the 4th Canadian Armoured Division and Second Army troops at Wildeshausen Field-Marshal Montgomery instructed General Crerar to fill it with an infantry division. For this the 2nd Canadian Division was brought from Groningen, over 100 miles away. XXX Corps meanwhile had had two hard fights, despite close support by Royal Air Force fighters and medium bombers: on the left, by the 43rd Division in capturing Cloppenburg on the 14th; and on the right, by the 3rd Division attacking northwards towards Delmenhorst. The village of Brinkum was first attacked without tank support, but was held strongly by the Germans; with the arrival of armour it was secured on the 16th in stiff fighting. A second division (51st) was then added

¹ The British 1st Special Air Service Regiment was under 4th Canadian Armoured Division's command from the 8th of April.

to the attack and by the 19th the Bremen-Delmenhorst road had been cut and the leading troops were within three miles of Delmenhorst. Next day the enemy vacated the town, which was a German military hospital centre. During this time the 4th Canadian Armoured Division gained a small bridgehead across the Küsten canal on the night of April the 16th *en route* for Bad Zwischenahn and then Oldenburg. Attempts to build a bridge were at first foiled by enemy shelling and mortaring. The bridgehead was reinforced and in the next two days attacks were beaten off with assistance from the Royal Air Force and the Canadian artillery which punished the enemy heavily as they withdrew. Despite enemy attacks a bridge was then completed early on the 19th and, with tanks across, the bridgehead was consolidated. The Royal Air Force flew 278 sorties in support of the bridgehead operations on these three days, including medium-bomber attacks on enemy positions covering Oldenburg.

In these first weeks of April the British Second Army had driven forward through some 200 miles of Northern Germany to the Elbe. They had met strong opposition at many places, especially at the numerous waterways. The engineers had had to construct more than 200 bridges *en route*, often under enemy fire, and Second Army had taken 78,108 prisoners of war while suffering 7,665 casualties since leaving the Rhine bridgehead. Maintenance beyond the Rhine had depended mainly on road transport, for the building of railway bridges over the river would take some weeks. Three possible sites in Twenty-First Army Group sector were at Wesel, Emmerich and Nijmegen/Arnhem. Wesel was allotted to the Americans; at Emmerich, construction by the British started but would take a month. Second Army was allotted an extra 5,000 tons of road transport and obtained a further 2,700 tons by grounding artillery and armoured units not required in the fast advance ordered. On the 10th of April a further allotment of 5,000 tons of road transport was received but by April the 19th, when the Elbe had been reached, combined stocks at forward roadheads at Rheine and Sulingen (thirty miles south of Bremen) had been falling steadily. On the 16th XXX Corps was ordered to send its own transport back to the Rhine roadhead to collect its ammunition requirements for the capture of Bremen. XII Corps took similar action for Hamburg on the 19th and VIII Corps for the Elbe battle on the 22nd. Petrol stocks at the forward roadheads were steadily diminishing in spite of the aid of airlifts and rationing, but VIII Corps had enough for the projected advance from the Elbe to the Baltic and on the 26th additional transport for a further 5,000 tons was received by Second Army, and for 2,700 tons more by the beginning of May.

Meanwhile First Canadian Army¹, with much shorter Lines of Communication from its roadhead at Nijmegen, had no similar difficulty. On April the 18th another roadhead was brought into use in the Almelo area. The First Canadian Army had had an equally strenuous time and their story must be brought up to date.

It will be remembered that the Rhine bridgehead did not include the town of Emmerich, but the full strength of the Canadian Army could not be deployed without the use of another bridge over the Rhine at that point. It had therefore been decided to capture the town from the bridgehead; this was achieved after a three-day battle and the Rhine bridged by midnight on April the 1st. But before the Emmerich bridge was available for traffic, II Canadian Corps had already put its three Canadian divisions across over the Rees bridges. Two more bridges at Emmerich were constructed quickly after the first was opened. On the 2nd leading troops of the Canadian Army's II Corps had reached the Twente canal and, after gaining bridgeheads against the German 6th Parachute Division, had broken out to the north on the 4th of April with 4th Armoured Division (right) and 2nd Infantry Division (centre), while 3rd Infantry Division (left) cleared the west flank towards the river Ijssel. The country to the north was crossed by many streams, rivers and canals but inhabited by a friendly Dutch population. It was decided to drop small parties of Special Air Service troops in the area in order to confuse the enemy while saving bridges and airfields for the following Canadians. The parachutists would be assisted by reconnaissance vehicles and Belgian Special Air Service jeeps operating ahead of the Canadians. On the night of the 7th, 47 Stirlings of the Royal Air Force from 38 Group dropped nearly 700 of all ranks from the 2nd and 3rd Régiments de Chasseurs Parachutistes. In the main they achieved their object, took 200 prisoners and caused many casualties among the enemy at a cost of 90 of their own: a few of the parties held their objectives for a week before they were relieved. But the Canadian attack now made fast progress. The Ems estuary near the German border was reached by the Polish Armoured Division on the 18th. Groningen was captured and cleared by the Canadians on the 16th after four days' fighting among the houses. On the east bank of the Ijssel the Canadians captured Zutphen on the 8th after a stiff fight, Deventer with strong air support on the 10th and Zwolle was cleared easily. Then they made a quick dash to Leeuwarden, 70 miles to the north,

¹ First Canadian Army was composed of:

I Canadian Corps: 5th Canadian Armoured, 1st Canadian and 49th British Divisions and 1st Canadian Armoured Brigade.

II Canadian Corps: initially 4th Canadian Armoured, 2nd and 3rd Canadian Divisions and 2nd Canadian Armoured Brigade, later joined by 1st Polish Armoured Division from Netherlands District.

and occupied the town on the 18th. Pockets of resistance in the surrounding country were mopped up and by the 19th the only part of Northern Holland remaining in German hands was an area west and south of Delfzijl on the Ems estuary.

While Northern Holland was thus being cleared of the enemy I Canadian Corps set out to clear the enemy from the country south of the Ijsselmeer. At the beginning of April the Nijmegen bridgehead was expanded to the Lower Rhine from the point where it separated from the Waal to some eight miles downstream of Arnhem. Troops of the 49th Division then crossed the river eastward to the Zevenaer area ready to capture Arnhem from the east as the Germans appeared to be prepared for an attack from the south. Further north the 1st Canadian Division concentrated south of Deventer to attack across the Ijssel and capture Apeldoorn; on the 11th it crossed the river (which was 350 feet wide) in Buffaloes of the 79th Armoured Division and met only light resistance. Rafts and a bridge were built by daylight next morning, tanks crossed and the division advanced on Apeldoorn where it encountered strong resistance.

On the 12th, after fighter-bombers and Typhoons had attacked and artillery had bombarded the Arnhem defences, the 49th Division assaulted across the Ijssel in Buffaloes and stormboats, and in small landing craft manned by the Royal Navy; little opposition was met, rafts and a bridge were quickly built and Canadian tanks crossed to support the infantry. Resistance in the town was not strong, though determined in places, and by the 14th Arnhem was clear of the enemy. Next day the 5th Canadian Armoured Division passed through, driving for the Ijsselmeer. On the 16th stoutly defended positions were met in the Barneveld area and that night a force of several hundred troops under a regimental commander of the German 361st Division tried to break through the 5th Armoured Division Headquarters, which had warning through a wireless interception and was prepared. Hand-to-hand fighting developed, guns firing over open sights at close range; by morning 75 Germans had been killed and 150 were prisoners, while Canadian losses were comparatively light. That same night the Germans pulled out of Apeldoorn, but not till the 18th were the Canadians able to reach the Ijsselmeer as the Germans held open a corridor along the southern shore by which as many as possible of the remaining troops of their LXXXVIII Corps¹ got back into Western Holland. A supply route could now be made through Arnhem but orders were issued that no

¹ The German LXXXVIII Corps defending Arnhem and the Ijssel consisted of 346th, 361st, 6th Parachute and 149th Divisions. In the rest of Western Holland were XXX Corps Headquarters and 34th SS 'Nederland', 249th, 11th Naval, 219th, 703rd and 617th zbV Divisions and 20th Brigade H.Q. zbV.

advance would be made west beyond the Eem and Grebbe rivers. The 1st Canadian and 49th Divisions closed up to these and the 5th Canadian Armoured Division moved to Northern Holland. Nearly 9,000 Germans were taken prisoner in these I Canadian Corps operations.

On April the 12th it was learned that the President of the United States of America had died suddenly. It had been realised for some time by Mr. Churchill and others nearer to him that President Roosevelt's health was failing but this sudden collapse came as a serious shock to the American people and indeed to the world. Mr. Churchill especially felt deeply the loss of a major partner in the war against Germany and the close personal friendship which had developed during its day-to-day conduct. From the outset they had shared a common objective and had sustained each other in a real unity of purpose. As Churchill wrote later, 'it may be said that Roosevelt died at the supreme climax of the war . . .'.¹ For the American armed forces the death of their President involved also the loss of their Commander-in-Chief. Mr. Harry Truman as Vice-President was to succeed Mr. Roosevelt in both capacities. He was comparatively little known but was soon to show that he was ready to uphold the same ideals and to pursue them with the same vigour as his famous predecessor.

By the 17th of April Field-Marshal Montgomery had decided that Twenty-First Army Group was not strong enough to carry out quickly all the tasks allotted to it, even though General Bradley had already agreed to take over the Elbe front from Wittenberge to Darchau. General Eisenhower now agreed to put an American corps under Montgomery's command to help in the capture of ground beyond the Elbe. He visited Montgomery on the 20th and approved his plan first to capture Bremen, then to complete the clearance of the Emden-Wilhelmshaven and Cuxhaven peninsulas and force the crossing of the Elbe; beyond the Elbe he would capture Lübeck and finally clear the area up to the Danish frontier. The United States XVIII Airborne Corps, put under Montgomery's command, would form a right flank beyond the Elbe from Darchau to Wismar. For this last task the American corps was not expected to be needed before the 4th of May. By the 19th of April Twenty-First Army Group had outflanked Bremen and reached the Elbe, Montgomery's objectives of the 10th; both these obstacles appeared to need strong artillery support and for neither was there enough ammunition forward. Transport was sent back to bring up ammunition from behind the Rhine and the capture of Bremen was given preference to the crossing of the Elbe.

¹ Churchill, *The Second World War*, vol. VI, p. 412.

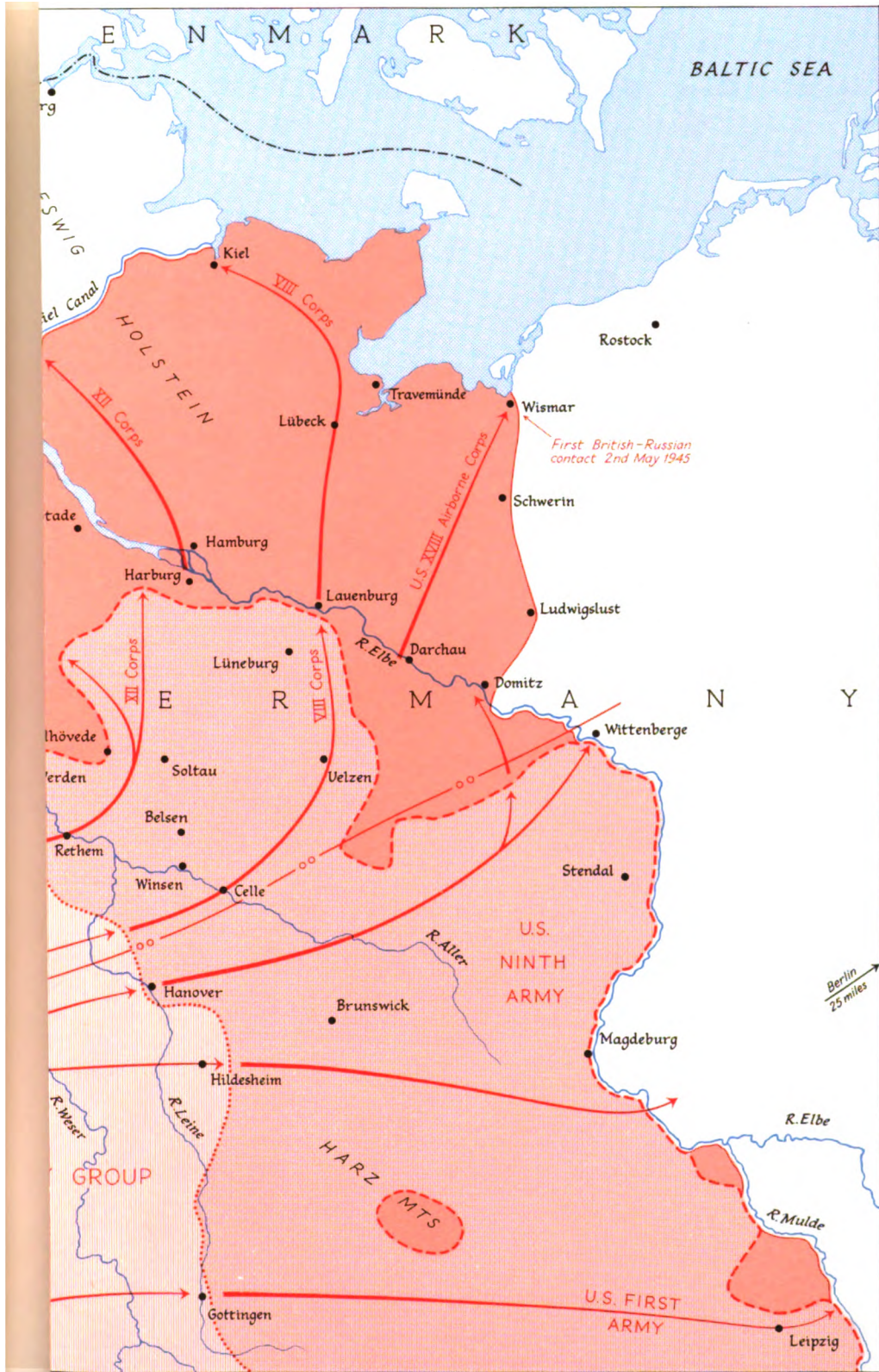
From the 20th of April the four infantry divisions of XXX Corps (3rd, 43rd, 51st and 52nd) closed in round the city of Bremen, finding patches of stiff opposition, especially on high ground in the north, where 83 Group of the Royal Air Force assisted in loosening some of the enemy's positions. The fighting continued through the next five days while steady progress was made against a stubborn defence. On the 25th, after heavy and medium bomber attacks, the city itself was assaulted with two heavy and four medium regiments of artillery supporting the infantry. German resistance had been thoroughly shaken and only round the garrison headquarters was a hard core of opposition met; this was liquidated by the 43rd Division during the night of the 26th. The garrison commander and the commander of the city's defence were captured and the city was clear of the enemy by the 27th. To the north the Guards Armoured Division had captured Zeven and freed 8,000 British and Allied prisoners, mostly sailors, from a camp at Westertimke nearby. XXX Corps then advanced on Cuxhaven while, west of the Weser, the Canadians were pressing on from the Küsten canal towards Wilhelmshaven against strong enemy opposition.

With the greater part of Bremen captured on the 26th Field-Marshal Montgomery ordered the assault crossing of the Elbe to be made on the night of the 28th. On the 27th, knowing that the Russians had invested Berlin on the 25th, General Eisenhower sent Montgomery a signal urging speed to the Baltic.

In this Twenty-First Army Group drive from the Rhine to the Elbe the greatest contribution of tactical aircraft was made by armed reconnaissance, in which over 10,000 sorties were flown, but army support and offensive fighter operations each took about half that number. In all, Second Tactical Air Force flew over 28,000 sorties on various tasks for Twenty-First Army Group as they advanced. During the same month, strategic air operations were much less than in March, Bomber Command dropping a total of 34,954 tons and Eighth Air Force 41,632 tons.

On March the 25th Mr. Churchill had first raised the question of whether the time had not come to discontinue the bombing of German towns, and certainly the speed of the Allied advance across Germany and the disorganised state of the enemy's resistance pointed to a near end of the campaign. A premature decision to restrict the strategic bombing offensive might prolong the war but a delayed decision might produce needless damage. After full discussion with the Air Staff, the Chiefs of Staff agreed that 'no great or immediate additional advantage can be expected from the attack of the remaining industrial centres of Germany' but pointed to other tasks of direct assistance to both Army and naval operations which





should be continued.¹ A new directive to the strategic bombers, dated April the 16th, was prepared and submitted for approval to the Combined Chiefs of Staff in Washington, and the same day Sir Charles Portal sent an order of the day for promulgation to Bomber Command by Sir Arthur Harris. This began:

'The tasks given to the British and American strategic air forces in Europe were to disorganise and destroy the German military, industrial and economic systems and to afford direct support to our forces on land and sea. In the first of these tasks we are now at the point of having achieved our object . . . Henceforth the main tasks of the strategic air forces will be to afford direct support to the allied armies in the land battle and to continue their offensive against the sea power of the enemy . . .'.²

With this order of the day the ending of the strategic air offensive against Germany was signalled.

This being decided, there was no more heavy bombing of towns as such, and the strategic aircraft attacks were confined almost entirely to the direct support of military and naval operations. The one exception was Berlin, which was raided fifteen times by Mosquitos which dropped in all over 1,200 tons of bombs on the city before the Russians approached. In support of Twenty-First Army Group's attack on Bremen the town was heavily bombed, as were four towns in the path of the United States Twelfth Army Group's advance to the Leipzig area; these were believed to hold important German headquarters, signal centres or large barrack areas. To hinder the movement of troops some railway communications were bombed in the Leipzig area and others leading to the supposed 'Redoubt' area in Bavaria and Austria in the south, where Hitler's 'Eagle's Nest' at Berchtesgaden was also bombed. Final attacks were also made on a number of enemy airfields and oil production. The 25th of April saw the virtual end of the heavy bombers' participation in the Allied advance and they were turned to other tasks. Both Bomber Command and the Eighth Air Force made their preparations for dropping food to Western Holland (Appendix VIII, Part III) and Bomber Command also started to fly home prisoners of war released from German camps. Nos. 38 and 46 Groups had been doing this since the beginning of the month; they flew in nearly 8,000 tons of supplies to the armies during the month and took out over 35,000 ex-prisoners of war and some 6,000 hospital patients.

In support of the naval anti-U-boat campaign the air attacks on ports and base facilities were maintained up to the day of surrender

¹ The Air Ministry notified Sir Arthur Harris on April the 6th and a message to the same effect, signed by General Eisenhower, was sent by Sir Arthur Tedder to Sir Norman Bottomley and General Spaatz on April the 10th.

² Webster and Frankland, *The Strategic Air Offensive* . . ., vol. III, p. 119.

early in May, ending in a crescendo in which Typhoons of the Second Tactical Air Force, flying from German airfields, made rocket attacks on U-boats in the western Baltic. During the last few weeks many types and sizes of aircraft had taken part—from the biggest bombers of Bomber Command and the United States Eighth Air Force to patrols of Coastal Command, aircraft of the Fleet Air Arm and Typhoons of the Second Tactical Air Force. The full actions cannot be described in detail but a few highlights must be given. During April and the first week of May 65 U-boats were destroyed by Allied action in the Baltic and Home Waters. Of these, 10 were sunk by naval surface craft and 1 was destroyed by a mine. Bomber Command and Eighth Air Force destroyed 18 by bombing their ports and bases, namely Kiel (10), Hamburg (3) and in other Baltic waters (5). Coastal Command concentrated largely on the passage from the Baltic to Norway, to which U-boats were steadily moving though many still in training were incapable of diving. These stayed on the surface to fight it out and in all 26 U-boats were sunk. (Liberators destroyed 11, Beaufighters 5, Mosquitos 5 and other aircraft 5.) Typhoons of Second Tactical Air Force added to this score by sinking 10 in the first week of May before they reached the Kattegat—3 of them being of the new Type XXI.¹ But it was learnt afterwards that 12 Type XXI U-boats had completed 'working-up' and 91 were doing acceptance trials or training their crews. It was well that the war ended before they were available. During 1945 a total of 151 German U-boats were sunk; 52 by ships, submarines and aircraft of the Allied navies, 75 by land-based aircraft and 24 by mine, accident and unknown causes.²

In the course of the above-mentioned attacks on Kiel and other Baltic bases, severe damage was also caused to surface ships of the German Navy. During attacks on Kiel on April the 9th the pocket battleship *Admiral Scheer* was sunk and the heavy cruiser *Admiral Hipper* and the light cruiser *Emden* were both severely damaged, the latter being hit again on the 13th. On the 16th the pocket battleship *Lützow* was damaged in the harbour at Swinemünde.

Operations of the American armies in April are told in the next chapter.

¹ These Type XXI U-boats, designed for Atlantic work, had a displacement of 1,819 tons submerged. Their maximum speeds were 15½ knots surfaced and 17 knots submerged (for one hour); and their maximum cruising ranges 15,500 miles surfaced and 365 miles submerged. They had a crew of 57, could carry 20 torpedoes and were armed with two light anti-aircraft guns (Roskill, *The War at Sea*, vol. III, part II, Appendix X).

² For a fuller account of these naval and air operations against U-boats the reader is referred to Roskill, *op. cit.*, ch. XXIV.

CHAPTER XV

TO LEIPZIG AND THE DANUBE

American Operations in April 1945

BEFORE continuing the final account of Twenty-First Army Group's advance into Germany, the American armies' simultaneous progress must be described. And first it will be well to remind ourselves of what had been done by the United States Ninth Army while it was still under Field-Marshal Montgomery's command.

As Twenty-First Army Group set out for the Elbe, troops of the Ninth Army had closed the northern face of the Ruhr and had effected a junction with forces of the United States First Army at Lippstadt on April the 1st. By then the First Army had broken out of the Remagen bridgehead, closed the south face of the Ruhr and wheeled to the north at Marburg, reaching Paderborn on the 31st. While the next day's meeting between advanced forces of the two American armies was effected, Twelfth Army Group's Fifteenth Army had closed the western or Rhine boundary of the Ruhr and large German armies were completely surrounded with no way of escape.

But even as these movements began at the end of March General Eisenhower had notified Field-Marshal Montgomery that, as soon as the encirclement was achieved, Ninth Army was to be transferred to Twelfth Army Group, to join First Army in mopping up the surrounded enemy and in occupying the Ruhr. The two army groups would meanwhile prepare for further advances. Throughout the campaign advance by the northern route had been regarded as the most favoured way to 'the heart of Germany'—partly because it seemed to offer the most advantageous and direct route to Berlin, the German capital and the administrative centre of the state. Eisenhower's directive of March the 25th had given no indication that he had abandoned this view, but three days later he told Montgomery that he had changed his mind. He had decided that when the two army groups met in the Paderborn area the Ninth Army should be returned to Twelfth Army Group which, after clearing and occupying the Ruhr, would drive eastwards to the Leipzig-Dresden area rather than to Berlin. His reasons for this were given in the last chapter (pages 298-9) and need not be repeated here but among them was his belief that the Russian armies would reach the capital

first. He had foreseen the possibility of this in September when he had named Berlin as his most favoured objective, for he had then added:

‘(b) Should the Russians beat us to Berlin, the Northern Group of Armies would seize the Hanover area and the Hamburg group of ports. The Central Group of Armies would seize part, or the whole, of Leipzig–Dresden depending upon the progress of the Russian advance.’ (Page 77.)

Judging by the relative positions of the Allied and Russian armies at the end of March, he felt sure that the Russians would ‘beat us to Berlin’.

To give effect to his revised plan, General Eisenhower issued a new directive on April the 2nd. The gist of this so far as it affected the American armies stated that his intention was ‘to divide and destroy the enemy forces by launching a powerful thrust on the axis Kassel–Leipzig’ to make junction with the Soviet forces in that area. On April the 4th the United States Ninth Army was to revert to Twelfth Army Group who would mop up the encircled enemy forces in the Ruhr, Twenty-First Army Group meanwhile advancing to the Leine river. Thereafter both army groups would advance to the Elbe, Twelfth Army Group on the axis Kassel–Leipzig with its right at Bayreuth and its left at Wittenberge. Bridgeheads over the Elbe would be captured and preparation made to conduct operations beyond the Elbe. Sixth Army Group would protect the southern flank of Twelfth Army Group west of the Bayreuth area and be prepared to thrust on the axis Nuremberg–Regensburg–Linz to prevent consolidation of German resistance in the south. The following pages and the maps facing pages 332 and 344 show how these orders were carried out and, with the simultaneous actions of Twenty-First Army Group and the Russian armies, brought the war with Germany to an end.

As the First Army’s advance from the Remagen bridgehead got well under way Twelfth Army Group’s Third Army expanded its Oppenheim bridgehead in a northerly direction towards Frankfurt, reinforcing its well-planned *coup de main* with more Rhine crossings downstream of Mainz. The Sixth Army Group’s Seventh Army had crossed the Rhine in the early hours of the 26th of March, when a corps opened its assault astride Worms with infantry of two divisions in assault and stormboats, accompanied by D.D. tanks. Though a few assault boats and D.D. tanks were sunk by mortar and small-arms fire, the far shore was reached with little opposition and held in spite of two German counter-attacks. By evening the Seventh Army, well supported by its associated XII Tactical Air Command, held a bridgehead some fifteen miles wide and seven miles deep and contact had been made on the left with the Third Army. On the

28th General Patch attacked from this bridgehead with two corps, and added a third on the 31st. There followed some heavy resistance on the flanks, particularly at Aschaffenburg, where the army crossed the river Main, and to the south when it pushed to the south-east from Heidelberg. By then, the First French Army had crossed the Rhine at Speyer and nearby to seize the Karlsruhe–Stuttgart area. Although General Devers had given its commander, General de Lattre de Tassigny, no definite date for his assault the latter was anxious to make it as soon as possible, as he feared that the American Seventh Army might otherwise advance into the area earmarked for the French Army, which might then be condemned ‘to a secondary rôle in the invasion of the Reich’. In this de Lattre was strongly encouraged by General de Gaulle, who was determined to seize a sector along the Rhine and thereby strengthen France’s claim to a zone of occupation. He wired de Lattre that a rapid crossing of the Rhine by his army was ‘a question of the highest national interest’.¹ The French Army assault, early on the 31st, initially made good progress and by the 4th of April had secured Karlsruhe. By then, however, the whole of the Sixth Army Group’s front, except its extreme left alongside the Third Army, was meeting relatively strong opposition from troops of the German Army Group G.

By the 28th, progress by General Bradley’s two armies from their original bridgeheads had been considerable. Following a first entry into Frankfurt by Third Army troops on the 26th, behind a medium-bomber attack on its marshalling yard by the Ninth Air Force, the area was finally cleared in the next forty-eight hours and Patton’s armour began heading into the ‘Frankfurt Corridor’ in the general direction of Kassel, with a portion from the right making towards the Thuringian forest. Concurrently, Patton’s left had secured Wiesbaden and pushed on northwards to make contact with the First Army which, in its turn, had by then begun the ‘wheel’ round the Ruhr northwards for the Paderborn area which has already been described (page 304).

As the Third and First Armies pushed ahead, each with elements of two corps leading, with armour closely backed by motorised infantry, the shape of the combined advance became markedly two-pronged. While the Third never lost sight of its duty to secure the Kassel area its main weight was directed to the complementary task of driving the enemy back eastwards, over the Werra river and the upper reaches of the Weser. This meant that Patton’s mind was set on getting to Gotha and Erfurt as quickly as possible.

General Bradley had told the First Army that its immediate task was to mop up the German armies encircled in the Ruhr and

¹ Pogue, *The Supreme Command*, pp. 432–3.

prepare then to drive eastwards. With the United States Ninth Army returned to his command it was arranged that the inter-army boundary between the First and Ninth Armies should follow the river Ruhr from the Rhine upstream to Nuttlar and thence to about Paderborn, with Simpson's Ninth Army dealing with the industrial area in the north and Hodges' First Army taking the rugged territory to the south. There were caught in the 4,000 square miles of the Ruhr 'pocket' not only most of Army Group B's Fifth Panzer and Fifteenth Armies but also elements of the split First Parachute Army of Army Group H, plus large numbers of the Ruhr's anti-aircraft personnel. In the last week of March Model's armies had been forbidden to withdraw to other positions and were unable to build up tenable new ones when forced to fall back, and they had been unable to stop or escape the converging Allied attacks. While the United States Fifteenth Army held the west bank of the Rhine against any enemy attempts to interfere with the flow of traffic over the river, the First Army attacked from the south with one corps and from the east with a second. At the same time the Ninth Army drove at the north-east (or Lippstadt) corner with one corps and directly at the northern face with another. In all, some eighteen divisions became involved.¹

In the first few days Model launched several strong attempts to break out, both in the north around Hamm and in the south from the Siegen area, but all were thoroughly defeated; and, as other Allied columns thrust out across Germany, help from outside the Ruhr became less and less likely. For those inside the Ruhr the only prospect was eventual surrender, despite all Hitler's orders to the contrary. Stubborn and sometimes fanatical resistance was offered at several key communication centres, but for the most part Model's troops withdrew when faced with a strong attack and, from about the 10th, they surrendered in such large numbers that it became almost impossible for a plane to distinguish friend from foe; the American support by the Ninth Air Force was therefore discontinued. On April the 14th the pocket was split when columns from north and south met at the Ruhr river near Hagen, and early on the 18th all organised resistance came to an end.

Since the encirclement enormous quantities of equipment and 320,000 Germans had been captured: more than had been captured in either Tunisia or Stalingrad. Among the prisoners were thirty general officers but not Field-Marshal Model, who took his own life

¹ Composition of American Ruhr force:

Fifteenth Army—One infantry and two airborne divisions.

First Army—One armoured and seven infantry divisions.

Ninth Army—One armoured, five infantry and one airborne division. All came under XVI Corps from April the 9th when XIX Corps was freed for the drive eastwards.

on the 21st of April. At the cost of 2,452 casualties to the Ninth Army and losses on a slightly greater scale in the First Army, twenty-one divisions were removed from the enemy's order of battle—a fact that made all the difference to Bradley's current and future operations.

Eisenhower (and the American Joint Chiefs of Staff) had long looked forward to using the Allied airborne and airportable forces *en masse* in a strategic rôle. In mid-March he was thinking of 'a huge airborne operation . . .', of seven to ten divisions, to be set down east of the Ruhr in the general area of Kassel. By the 27th of March, however, he saw that his armies were advancing so fast on the ground that he would need all his available transport aircraft for supplying the swift-moving columns.¹ An airborne operation, except on a reduced scale, would be out of the question. How large and vital the airlift of supplies became will be seen later.

Outside the Ruhr, favoured by weather that was ideal both for speed on the ground and supply from the air, the Ninth Army in the north, moving two corps up, had forced the Weser alongside the British, had Hanover under attack and was across the river Leine by the 9th of April. In the centre the First Army, again with two corps up, had also crossed the two rivers and was approaching the Harz mountains. To the south Patton, with three corps in action, had secured Gotha and much of the Thuringian forest, with his outer flank being protected by Devers' left, which meanwhile had moved up through the Hohe Rhon mountains.

While Twelfth Army Group closed up and prepared for the further advance eastwards towards Leipzig, to gain contact with Soviet forces and seize a bridgehead over the Elbe, General Bradley visited Field-Marshal Montgomery on the 10th (as mentioned on page 308).

To prevent General Bradley's armies from colliding with the Russians at some point along his 200-mile front the Supreme Commander had given them a 'stop-line'. This ran from Bayreuth in the south to Chemnitz and thence, passing a few miles east of Leipzig, along the Mulde river to where it flowed into the Elbe at Dessau. From there it continued northwards down the Elbe, via Magdeburg, to the boundary with Twenty-First Army Group at Wittenberge.

The start of the Twelfth Army Group advance towards Leipzig had been set for April the 11th, but the Ninth Army was able to better it and by nightfall on the 10th had its two corps pushing vigorously eastwards against 'little or no resistance', with spearheads only a few miles short of Brunswick. Next day the drive accelerated and an armoured division, from the corps on the right,

¹ On April the 4th the United States Ninth Air Force delivered 3,200 long tons altogether to Twelfth and Sixth Army Groups—a record day for any theatre during the war.

roared ahead to reach the Elbe on both sides of Magdeburg shortly before midnight on the 11th. The tanks had made 57 miles since morning, and 226 miles altogether since crossing the Rhine nineteen days earlier. By the following evening (12th) two infantry battalions had been ferried across the river, in the face of some heavy artillery fire and stiff opposition when they reached the far bank. At the same time the armour of a second corps on the left had been closing up to the 'stop line' on a broad front and only narrowly missed snatching a bridge at Tangermünde, 30 miles downstream of Magdeburg and just 53 miles from the German capital—a fact which did not escape Simpson's notice, as will be seen. Though forced to give up their original bridgehead in the next few days, the Ninth Army secured another a few miles further south of Magdeburg which they expanded and held. Unable to ignore these threats to Berlin, over 400 German planes tried desperately to interrupt the American bridging operations, only to lose heavily from anti-aircraft fire and see havoc created on their own overcrowded airfields by the fighter-bombers of XXIX Tactical Air Command.

Meanwhile the United States First Army had also been making rapid progress though it had further to go to its stop line. It was also incurring somewhat heavier casualties than the other American armies as its sector contained two areas of relatively strong resistance. In the Harz mountains there were the remnants of several divisions of the German Eleventh Army, which had been scratched together at the beginning of the month to fill the gap left in the line by the encirclement of Army Group B in the Ruhr, only to be surrounded themselves soon after. Behind them, round Magdeburg, were units of General Wenck's Twelfth Army, in process of formation east of the Elbe, hastily sent westwards with the hopeless task of trying to open exits for the forces trapped in the Ruhr pocket. There were also a number of towns further east, such as Dessau, Halle and Leipzig, with their munitions factories and synthetic oil plants wrecked by the Allied bombers but still bitterly defended. Leaving infantry to contain and probe these stumbling blocks the First Army's mechanised columns took to the gaps in between and drove almost unopposed for the Mulde, where the corps on the right seized two bridges intact on the 15th.

Leipzig itself still held out but the road and rail network with southern Germany was now cut, which meant that just as Army Group B in the Ruhr had been severed from Field-Marshal Kesselring, now C-in-C West, a fortnight previously, so Army Group H in the north was now beyond his reach. Army Group G in the south was left with its nominal Seventh, First and Nineteenth Armies to oppose Patton and Devers.

Patton had perhaps less opposition in front of him than anyone

and the further he went the more it deteriorated. Avoiding the very difficult country in the Thuringian mountains wherever possible the mobile columns of his three corps headed through the Erfurt area in the north and the Coburg area to the south. By the 15th the Third Army's spearheads were practically on the stop line; on the left along the Mulde outside Chemnitz, in the centre at Plauen and Hof, ten miles short of the westernmost corner of Czechoslovakia, and on the right at Bayreuth, with the Seventh Army's left protecting the flank.

In accordance with the second of the tasks set the Sixth Army Group by the Supreme Commander on April the 2nd, to be 'prepared to launch a thrust on the axis Nuremberg-Regensburg-Linz, to prevent consolidation of German resistance in the south', General Devers had directed the Seventh Army to the line Bayreuth-Nuremberg-Crailsheim-Ludwigsburg (near Stuttgart), and the First French Army to the line Stuttgart-Kehl (opposite Strasbourg) in preparation for clearing the Black Forest later.

To protect the Third Army's flank the Seventh had begun by moving the greater part of two corps north-eastwards through the Würzburg-Hohe Rhon country; then, as Third Army swung towards Bayreuth, it generally conformed by making a right wheel in the general direction of Nuremberg. The going was good and by the 14th Patch's left had reached Bamberg where, among much else, 1,500 German miniature tanks were found in store. During this fortnight, however, the strongest opposition had been met by the army's right hand corps to the north of Stuttgart where five German divisions, with strong SS elements, were dug in along some river lines. Their anchor position at Heilbronn proving difficult to subdue, an armoured division attempted a left hook through Crailsheim but, after holding the position for two days with its supply lines cut, it was ordered to withdraw. The Seventh Army's Official Report states: 'The successful evacuation of Crailsheim probably would not have been possible without the air re-supply operation carried out by the 441st Group, IX Troop Carrier Command. The superb fighter screen maintained by the XII Tactical Air Command was also a decisive factor.' Although the airfield was under enemy fire, petrol, rations and ammunition were delivered for the loss of one aircraft destroyed by a direct hit—one mission among the many which had already delivered over 25,000 tons east of the Rhine since the beginning of the month.

Meanwhile the First French Army had been expanding its holdings beyond Karlsruhe both towards Stuttgart and more directly southwards into the Black Forest and the Rhine valley, Kehl being secured on the 15th.

With the Western Allies' capture of 10,000 prisoners a day during

March now running at treble this figure it had become clear that (to quote a Twenty-First Army Group Intelligence Review):

‘. . . there are still thousands of German soldiers who continue to fight bravely and well; not merely because they are fanatics, but because they are good soldiers. But there are not enough; nor is there enough equipment to turn the scale.’

On the 15th of April General Simpson presented General Bradley with a plan for the Ninth Army to expand its bridgehead beyond the Elbe and drive in strength for Berlin. But by direction of General Eisenhower Simpson was ordered to ‘. . . hold [his] zone on the line of the Elbe and await the advance of the Russian forces’.¹ It will be recalled that about the end of March Eisenhower had stipulated that the army groups were not to push on from the Elbe without further orders. On the 14th of April he telegraphed his intention to the Combined Chiefs of Staff. His plan was as follows: ‘A. In the central area to hold a firm front on the Elbe. B. To undertake operations to the Baltic at Lübeck and to Denmark. C. To make a powerful thrust in the Danube valley to join with the Russians and break up the southern redoubt. D. As the thrust on Berlin must await the success of these three operations I do not include it as a part of my present plan. The essence of my plan is to stop on the Elbe and clean up my flanks.’ In amplification of this he telegraphed next day to General Marshall saying that not only were the Baltic and Bavarian objectives more important than Berlin, but that to plan for an immediate effort against the German capital ‘would be foolish in view of the relative situation of the Russians and ourselves. . . . While it is true we have seized a small bridgehead over the Elbe, it must be remembered that only our spearheads are up to that river; our centre of gravity is well back of there’.²

He had originally been given a single military objective—namely the destruction of Germany’s armed forces—and that military task he would pursue with wholehearted concentration till it was completed. He was never required to have any other object in mind, or to take any action for political reasons though it might influence the balance of power after Germany’s defeat. He was not convinced that he should move towards Berlin with forces that might prove inadequate and in a difficult logistical situation, while he was sure that the Baltic coast and northern ports were of greater military importance. On the 15th, the Supreme Commander issued a directive to his ground, naval and air forces in accordance with the plan

¹ *Conquer* . . . , p. 304.

² *Command Decisions*, ed. K. R. Greenfield (Dept. of the Army, Washington, D.C., 1960): chap. 19, ‘The Decision to Halt at the Elbe’, by F. C. Pogue, p. 382.

he had outlined to the Combined Chiefs of Staff. No mention was made of Berlin.

Orders by the American army group commanders followed in the next two days. In his, Bradley directed the Ninth and First Armies to defend the Elbe–Mulde line where they stood and to hold the existing Elbe bridgehead ‘as a threat to Berlin’ unless driven back by superior enemy forces; Third Army, on the other hand, was to launch ‘a powerful attack to gain contact with the Soviet forces in the Danube valley, and seize Salzburg’. Devers ordered Seventh Army’s left to protect the Third Army’s flank and drive on to clear western Austria, while its right was to help the First French Army in the urgent task of destroying the enemy’s Nineteenth Army in the Stuttgart–Black Forest area before it could escape.

It was now important to make junction with the Russian forces without any clashes or incidents. The problem became one of some urgency when, on the 16th of April, three Russian armies moved forward from their positions on the Oder and the Neisse, their main effort being directed at Dresden with a subsidiary one aimed at Berlin. With the approval of the Combined Chiefs of Staff Eisenhower hastened to bring the Russians up to date about his own intentions, and followed this on the 22nd with the proposal that as the converging armies now seemed likely to meet in the Wittenberg¹–Dresden area he had chosen the easily recognisable Elbe–Mulde line, on his central front, as the general boundary between the two forces. If, however, the Soviet High Command desired him to push on to Dresden itself he would be ready to do so. In an unusually prompt reply the Soviet command indicated on the following day that the Elbe and the Mulde were acceptable as a common border. They confirmed this on the 24th saying that they intended to clear up to the east bank of this river line, and added that they also intended to clear the Moldau valley in Czechoslovakia. This last provision meant that Prague would be taken by the Russians, as Vienna had been only a few days previously and as would Berlin at any moment now. Whereas Eisenhower had specifically mentioned the Elbe boundary as applying ‘on my central front’, the Russians gave no such limitation. The British Chiefs of Staff therefore urged that it be made clear that the Elbe line did *not* apply in the northern sector, otherwise their road to the Baltic would be blocked by the Russians.

Following a request from Montgomery that one American corps be made available to reinforce his forthcoming thrust to the Baltic (page 315) Eisenhower cautioned Bradley on the 17th that Twelfth Army Group must complete its build-up to the Elbe *before* initiating

¹ Wittenberg, south-west of Berlin. Not to be confused with Wittenberge, north-west of Berlin.

its big offensive to the south-east. His build-up, maintenance and regrouping problems had, however, been very much eased by the opening of a railway bridge over the Rhine at Wesel on April the 8th and of another at Mainz on the 14th, each over 2,200 feet long and built in nine to ten days. But apart from the organisational tasks the army group still had some days of mopping-up to do west of the Elbe-Mulde line. During this time Eisenhower visited Montgomery to ensure that the latter had all he needed to secure Lübeck and seal off the Jutland peninsula.

Magdeburg, having rejected a Ninth Army demand for surrender, required a deliberate corps attack supported by all the Ninth Air Force medium, and many of its fighter bombers, before it was finally cleared on the 18th of April. By then, the place was 'a shambles'. Further back from the Elbe, practically as far as Hanover, Brunswick and the Harz, the Ninth Army's supply columns and communications were constantly being harassed by sundry groups, sometimes with tanks or assault guns, who emerged from the woods that covered the area. As these troubles were overcome, others arose when, on the 20th, the Ninth Army became responsible for another 40 miles of the Elbe line downstream of Wittenberge, which hitherto had been in the Twenty-First Army Group sector (page 315). Yet the Ninth Army considered that mopping-up had been completed on the 24th.

By then the First Army had also closed to its stop line, the Mulde, though not without some stiff actions. Leipzig and Halle required a good deal of house-to-house clearance of troops plentifully equipped with bazookas and small arms, before being taken on the 19th. The village strong-points, road blocks and minefields in the Harz country took ten days in all to clear and Dessau, near the Ninth Army boundary, did not fall until the 22nd. Though the American tank radios now crackled with the overlap of Russian communications, and air reconnaissance reported their wagon trains moving towards Dresden, nothing was known precisely of their progress until a First Army patrol made contact with Marshal Koniev's vanguard on the Elbe at Torgau on the 25th. The first formal meeting between the local divisional commanders took place next day and the link-up was quickly extended for nearly fifty miles downstream of Torgau. Except for minor patrol action, this meeting marked the end of offensive operations by the First Army.

Junction with the Red Army split the German forces in two, leaving each to fight its own battle as best it could. Since the beginning of April well over a million prisoners had been taken and more were pouring in as resistance weakened. To add to the problem of handling and feeding such large numbers, immense crowds of Displaced Persons (and even German civilians) required attention as

they fled westwards from the Russians. Most urgent tasks of all were the care of the Allied prisoners¹ freed by the armies' advance, and the supply of medical aid to the survivors in the ghastly concentration camps.

Before proceeding to the closing events in the south, the reader is advised to note two factors that greatly affected the plans and operations of the Third and Seventh (American) and First (French) Armies. The first is the course of the river Danube. Rising in the Black Forest the Danube flows north-eastwards for some 200 miles through Ulm to Regensburg where it turns, almost at right angles, south-eastwards for Linz, Vienna and beyond. The second is the mistaken belief in the existence of a 'national redoubt' which, to quote General Bradley, was 'too ominous a threat to be ignored and in consequence it shaped our tactical thinking during the closing weeks of the war'.² This was thought to consist of an outer ring covering the Danube from the Black Forest to Vienna; and of an inner core, to the south of Munich, based on the Alps of western Austria and northernmost Italy, and stretching from the Swiss border to Salzburg, with Innsbruck, the Brenner Pass and Bolzano marking its middle. Some discovered facts about the so-called 'National Redoubt' are recorded in Appendix X.

Keeping parallel to the Czech border the Third Army advanced south-east from the Bayreuth area on April the 22nd with three corps, aiming for the Danube astride its Regensburg bend and thence for Linz and Salzburg. By the 26th the left had some tank groups within a few miles of the Austrian frontier, and the centre and right had their vanguards across the Danube on both sides of Regensburg where a German officer directed them to some barges that were found to contain poison gas. Patton described much of his progress so far as 'simply a road march', his battle casualties having totalled less than a hundred a day for the fourteen divisions now in action. As his thrusts were leaving him with an open left flank, the army commander welcomed a decision by Bradley that the First Army was to extend southwards behind him—an arrangement which eventually saw the First Army holding a defensive front 160 miles in length. Despite the many rivers that flowed across the front into the Danube, notably the Isar and the Inn, by the end of April the Third Army's main bodies had made another sixty miles to close on Passau at the Austrian border, and reconnaissance tanks from its left wing had penetrated almost to Linz. Patton was then perfecting plans for two of his corps to swing away from the Danube for Salzburg and the country to the south of Linz.

¹ The Germans had now agreed to leave all prisoners in their camps and to abandon their previous policy of moving them back, by forced marches, as the Allies advanced.

² Bradley, *A Soldier's Story*, p. 537.

Meanwhile the Sixth Army Group's advance had also prospered as it veered more directly southwards. By the 23rd it had struck three crucial blows at what had seemed a co-ordinated, though fragmentary, German front between Nuremberg and Stuttgart. The much bombed Nuremberg, strongly furnished with dual-purpose 88-mm guns, 'furiously' resisted Seventh Army's attack for five days encouraged by the gauleiter of this 'town of the Party rallies', who had sent a 'battle vow' to his Führer when the attack began and duly received grateful thanks and a high-ranking order. The place fell on April the 20th, Hitler's birthday, and the gauleiter's body was later found in a cellar. At the same time the Seventh Army's southern flank had come abreast of Stuttgart and helped the First French Army to capture the city (which de Gaulle was most anxious to see included in the French occupation zone). On the 22nd the leading groups of both armies had reached the Danube, and lost no time in crossing. Seventh Army's right secured Ulm and the French, while mopping-up the Black Forest area, were also making good time to the Swiss frontier. With the German Army Group G's Nuremberg-Stuttgart-Black Forest line shattered and its three armies rapidly disintegrating, Patch's eyes were set on Munich and the Brenner, de Lattre's on Austria's Vorarlberg province south-east of Lake Constance. By April the 30th Seventh Army had captured Augsburg and Munich (in both cases receiving some help from underground, anti-Nazi movements), and its spearheads were entering the Alpine passes that led to Innsbruck. On their way the Americans had set free 30,000 prisoners in the Dachau concentration camp—the first camp of the Nazi régime—and had cleared Landsberg, where Hitler had written 'Mein Kampf' when there in gaol. The French in the meantime had driven up the right bank of the Rhine to near Basle, and along the northern shore of Lake Constance to begin turning south into Austria.

Although the emphasis in this story has been on the achievements of the ground forces, it is essential to remember that without the delivery of supplies by air (for which air supremacy was a prerequisite) the armies would never have been able to move so far in such a short period of time. During the thirty days of April the United States IX Troop Carrier Command delivered 54,000 long tons of freight (including 10,000,000 gallons of petrol) to the American and French armies, as well as six complete field hospitals; and on their return journey the aircraft flew 46,000 patients out of the battle areas. On some occasions stores were landed on makeshift airstrips within two miles of the front line and in the face of anti-aircraft and small-arms fire. Come what might, the Troop Carrier Command was determined to deliver its cargoes on schedule.

Simultaneously with the sweep through southern Germany other French forces under Sixth Army Group control, with extensive bomber and fighter support, had completely eliminated the German pocket on the Biscay coast that had been denying the use of Bordeaux port. In Italy, as a result of the Allies' final offensive and their drive from the Appenines to the foothills of the Alps, the German armies had collapsed and their Command had signed an instrument of unconditional surrender at Field-Marshal Alexander's headquarters on April the 29th. Mussolini had been caught and killed the previous day by Italian patriots. On the 30th, from somewhere near the Kiel canal, Field-Marshal Keitel admitted that there was no hope of relieving Berlin. Attempts to do so by turning round Wenck's Twelfth Army from the Elbe front about Magdeburg, and by diverting another nominal 'army' from elsewhere had proved quite futile. The Russians had not only completely surrounded the capital but were relentlessly fighting through the streets to the Chancellery. British and American formations under Twenty-First Army Group had just secured bridgeheads across the lower Elbe and were about to break out for the Baltic coast near Lübeck, a hundred miles to the west of Stettin which the Red Army had reached four days previously.

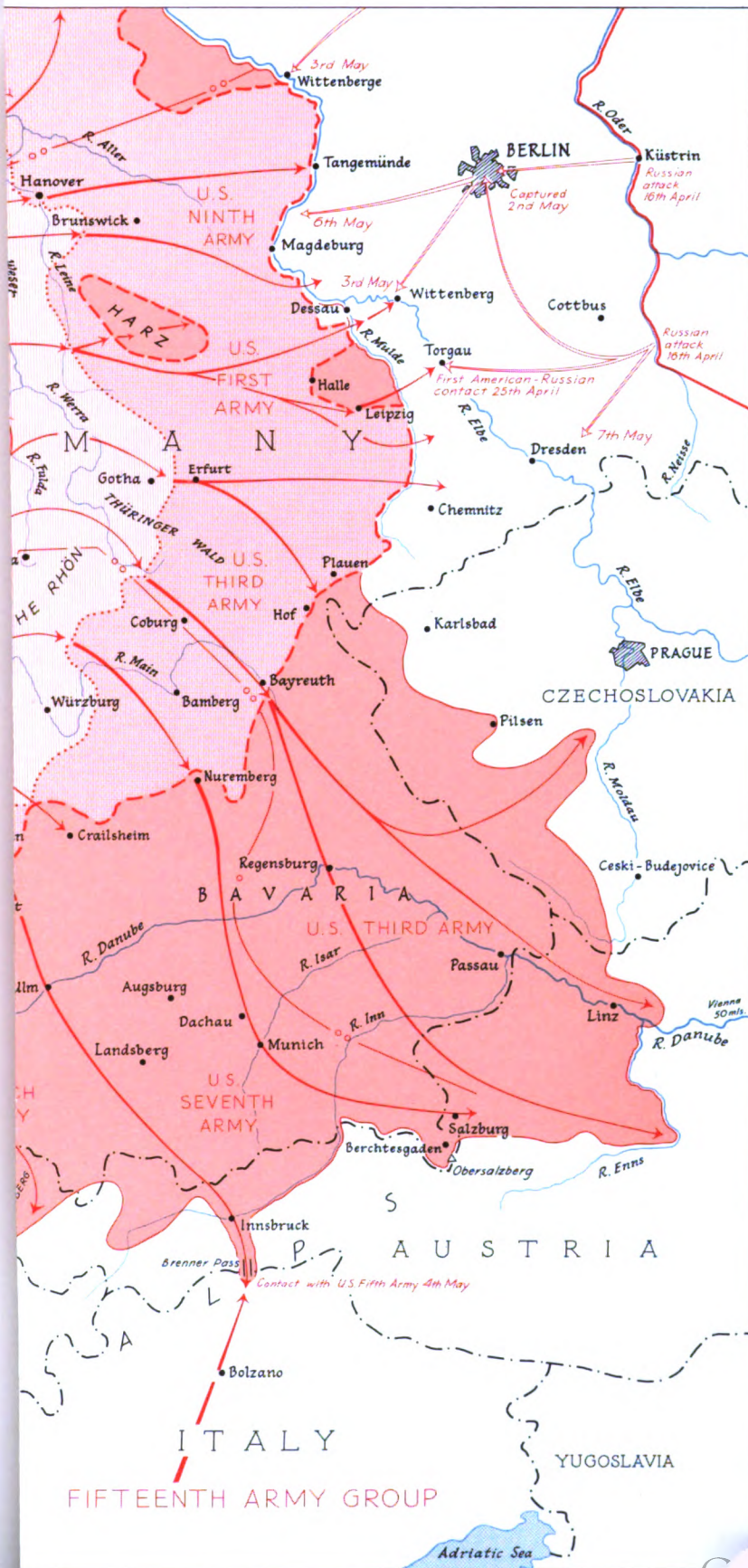
In view of the fluid state of affairs and the consequent need to agree demarcation lines with the Russian Command, Eisenhower telegraphed his immediate intentions to Moscow on April the 30th. In the north he was now launching a thrust from the lower Elbe to the Baltic with the object of establishing 'a firm operational east flank on approximately the line Wismar-Schwerin-Domitz', and in the centre was adjusting his positions along the Elbe and Mulde rivers as already agreed. So far as Czechoslovakia was concerned, for the moment his forces would stand along the 1937 frontier line but later, should the situation require, he might advance them as far as Karlsbad, Pilsen and Budejovice. He noted that the Soviet forces would be clearing the country up to the east bank of the Elbe and Moldau rivers, and added: 'With knowledge of our mutual plans, adjustments of contacts in this area should readily be made . . .' by the local commanders. On the southern flank his armies were to deal with the general area of Linz, and there he thought a suitable tactical boundary might be the north-south railway east of Linz and the valley of the river Enns. It was too early for him to make any proposals for the country further south, as it was a matter he must co-ordinate with the Supreme Allied Commander in the Mediterranean Theatre.

Particularly noteworthy in this communication were General Eisenhower's views about Czechoslovakia, for the British authorities, mindful of the Yalta understanding that Berlin, Vienna and Prague should be taken by whoever got there first, were just then

recommending that his armies should go on to capture the Czech capital. The Foreign Secretary had first raised the subject with the Americans in the last week of April, when he was attending the inauguration of the United Nations at San Francisco. On the 30th, the Prime Minister put it to the President. 'There can be little doubt', he said, 'that the liberation of Prague and as much as possible of the territory of western Czechoslovakia by your forces might make the whole difference to the post-war situation in Czechoslovakia, and might well influence that in nearby countries . . . Of course', he added, 'such a move by Eisenhower must not interfere with his main operations against the Germans, but I think the highly important political consideration mentioned above should be brought to his attention'.

The suggestion, however, was not welcome in the United States. Marshall had already told Eisenhower on the 28th that such a proposal might be made, and in passing it on for his comments had declared: 'Personally and aside from all logistic, tactical or strategical implications I should be loath to hazard American lives for purely political purposes'. In his reply next day, Eisenhower said that first priority in his offensive must go to the northern thrust to Lübeck and Kiel and the southern drive towards Linz and the Austrian redoubt. If additional means were available he planned to attack enemy forces still holding out in Denmark, Norway and Czechoslovakia. The first two, he felt, should be dealt with by the Western Powers but, in his opinion, the Red Army would clear Czechoslovakia and certainly reach Prague before the American forces. He assured General Marshall: 'I shall not attempt any move I deem militarily unwise to gain a political prize unless I receive specific orders from the Combined Chiefs of Staff'.¹ Such orders were never given; and on the 1st of May the President replied to Mr. Churchill that he approved the Supreme Commander's plan not to move initially beyond Pilsen and Karlsbad. He also made it clear he supported the Marshall principle that strategy be left to the commander in the field without regard to post-war political considerations. There the matter rested while Eisenhower awaited the Soviet reaction to his latest suggestions about boundaries.

¹ Pogue, *The Supreme Command*, p. 468.



CHAPTER XVI

THE GERMAN SURRENDER AND END OF THE WAR IN EUROPE

THE pace and progress of the Allies' advance, the rate at which disjointed fragments of the German armies were being destroyed, and the embarrassing number of prisoners surrendering combined to make it obvious that the end was not far off, but towards the end of April there were also other distinct but closely related happenings, known only to a few of the Allied leaders, which finally brought operations to an end within the first week of May.

It had been made public that the Allies would never accept anything less than unconditional surrender of the enemy and as long ago as 1943 a secret protocol had been agreed which pledged the three Governments to consult together in the event of a German approach for a total surrender. The terms of unconditional surrender had been subsequently laid down by the European Advisory Commission.

In December 1944 an offer, received in London, that Swedish intermediaries might contact Himmler with a view to negotiating a settlement, was firmly squashed by the Prime Minister and both Washington and Moscow were immediately given full details. In February an informal overture on behalf of the German Command in Italy was first made to the United States Office of Strategic Services (O.S.S.) in Switzerland, but the overwhelming defeat of the German armies in Italy led to their unconditional surrender, which was signed at Allied Headquarters at Caserta on April the 29th, 1945. With this surrender the forces of Army Group G, immediately to the north of Italy, were placed in a hopeless position, and on May the 2nd the German commander approached the United States Sixth Army Group with a view to surrender. This took place, again unconditionally, on May the 5th—officially the cease-fire was to be effective from noon on May the 6th but, as Eisenhower pointed out in his report to the Combined Chiefs of Staff, it really took effect immediately.

The next German peace feeler came from enemy-occupied Denmark, where the Danish Freedom Council reported that Colonel-General Lindemann, the German commander, was willing to

surrender all Wehrmacht forces under his control but not SS and police formations. A day or two later came reports through Stockholm that Field-Marshal Busch was prepared to surrender Hamburg immediately the British had reached the Baltic, thus to prevent any possibility of SS troops being sent in to reinforce the garrison.

For the explanation of what occurred in connection with the question of surrender during the last days of April we must also look to Hitler's headquarters in his specially constructed Bunker beneath the German Chancellery in Berlin, but only a compressed account need be given in this history of military operations in Overlord, for it was not known to the Allied commanders at the time.

Hitler had been living there for some months. He is described '... according to universal testimony' as 'a physical wreck'. 'All witnesses of the final days agree when they describe his emaciated face, his grey complexion, his stooping body, his shaking hands and feet, his hoarse and quavering voice, and the film of exhaustion that covered his eyes.' But his 'personal magnetism remained with him to the end', as witness 'the extraordinary obedience which he still commanded in the last week of his life, when all the machinery of force and persuasion had disappeared, the failure and cost of his disastrous rule was apparent, and only his personality remained'.¹

His birthday occurred on April the 20th and a large number of his staff and personal intimates visited the Bunker to greet him. There was a sort of reception after which a staff conference was held at which among others Göring and Himmler were present. With the Russian and American armies threatening to meet shortly and so cut communications between northern and southern Germany, the Ministries in Berlin were hastening out, most of them going to Bavaria. Hitler had appointed Grand Admiral Dönitz to take command of all the German forces in the north and Kesselring of all in the south, should communication become impossible. At the conference on the 20th the Führer was urged to move to one or other of these headquarters without more delay, but he had not decided what he would do; no arguments availed to make him take a decision and eventually the conference dispersed with nothing settled. Göring, having taken leave of Hitler, went to the new southern headquarters on the Obersalzberg above Berchtesgaden, leaving behind him as his deputy Lieut-General Koller, his Chief of Staff of the *Luftwaffe*.

For two days Hitler did not make up his mind; then on April the

¹ H. R. Trevor-Roper, *The Last Days of Hitler* (Macmillan, 1947), pp. 79-80. This is the fullest British account of the events of these last weeks in Berlin. The most useful German account is in P. E. Schramm, *Kriegstagebuch des Oberkommandos der Wehrmacht, 1940-1945*, vol. IV/2 (Frankfurt a. M., 1961), pp. 1694-8. This includes an unofficial account written for *Time* magazine (21st May 1945) by Dr. G. Herrgesell, one of the official stenographers present in the Bunker.

22nd, at his staff conference, he announced that he had decided to remain with the defence of Berlin to the end; when Berlin fell he would shoot himself. By then Russian shells were already raining on the city and the Russian armies were moving inwards north and south of the capital; it would be captured in a matter of days. General Koller went to join Göring and on the 23rd persuaded him that, with the end so near, he should ask Hitler to agree that Göring, as his named successor¹, should take over command of the Reich without delay. The request was sent by wireless telegram asking for a reply by that night and adding: 'If no reply is received by ten o'clock tonight, I shall take it for granted that you have lost your freedom of action, and shall consider the conditions of your decree as fulfilled, and shall act for the best interests of our country and our people'.²

This proposal to take over the total leadership of the Reich while the Führer was still living seemed to Hitler an act of treachery, a proof of treason. He at once ordered Göring to resign all the offices he held and cancelled the decree providing for his succession; subsequently Göring and his staff were all put under arrest.

Meanwhile Berlin was virtually surrounded and Russian troops were fighting forward in the city. Himmler, a second candidate for the inheritance of Hitler's power, decided that as the Führer was as good as dead the time to act had come.³ At Lübeck on the night of the 23rd he met Count Bernadotte, the head of the Swedish Red Cross who was in Germany arranging for the evacuation of Scandinavian prisoners to Sweden, and told him that he (Himmler) now felt free to ask the Swedish Government to let the Allies know that he was ready to surrender the armies on the western front and so enable the western Allies to advance rapidly eastwards, while the German armies in the east fought on as long as possible to hold back the Russians from further occupation of Germany. Bernadotte warned him that the western Allies were not likely to accept such an offer, but he agreed to take a letter from Himmler to the Swedish Minister for Foreign Affairs and to report Himmler's proposals in full.⁴ The Swedish Minister shared Bernadotte's doubts but this was clearly an overture of such importance that it was passed on to the

¹ By a decree of June the 29th, 1941.

In April 1945, Göring held the following important posts and many lesser ones: C-in-C German Air Force; Reich Minister for Air; Chairman of the War Cabinet; Prime Minister of Prussia; President of the Reichstag.

² Trevor-Roper, *op. cit.*, p. 145.

³ At this date the most important offices held by Himmler were the following: Reichsführer SS and Chief of the German Police; Reich and Prussian Minister of the Interior; C-in-C Replacement Army; Party Commissioner (of the Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiter Partei) for all racial questions; Reich Commissioner for the Consolidation of the German racial character (*Reichskommissar für die Festigung deutschen Volkstums*).

⁴ Count F. Bernadotte, *The Fall of the Curtain* (Cassell, 1945), pp. 56-60.

Allies on April the 25th; the British and American Ambassadors in Stockholm were given a full account of the offer, which was immediately transmitted to London and Washington.

The result was as predicted. The War Cabinet agreed that Stalin should be informed immediately of Himmler's offer but that Himmler should be told that nothing short of unconditional surrender to all three major Powers would be acceptable. On the 25th the Prime Minister telephoned General Eisenhower to tell him of these developments, and that evening also spoke to President Truman in Washington. The latter immediately endorsed the message which had been sent to Stalin from London. This read:

'... There can be no question as far as His Majesty's Government is concerned of anything less than unconditional surrender simultaneously to the three major Powers. We consider Himmler should be told that German forces, either as individuals or in units, should everywhere surrender themselves to the Allied troops or representatives on the spot. Until this happens the attack of the Allies upon them on all sides and in all theatres where resistance continues will be prosecuted with the utmost vigour.'

'Knowing you', Stalin replied, 'I had no doubt that you would act just in this way'.

The Allied reply to Himmler was sent via Stockholm, and conveyed by Bernadotte to Major-General Schellenberg, Himmler's Intelligence Chief, on April the 27th. On the 28th the news of what had taken place broke in the British and American Press and Hitler was informed of Himmler's action. He reacted furiously to this 'final betrayal' by one of his most intimate and trusted helpers and immediately ordered Himmler's arrest. But Himmler's 'treachery' also led Hitler to decide how he should end his own life. He returned to his personal quarters with Eva Braun, who had been living in the Bunker for some time. On the 29th he at last decided on his end. He appointed Grand Admiral Dönitz to succeed him, dictated his political testament, made his will, married Eva Braun and arranged that they should be burned together after they had both committed suicide.

On April the 30th Hitler shot himself and his body was then burned as he had arranged.¹ His death marked the inglorious end of the man who had caused such widespread misery and death as had never been known before.

¹ Trevor-Roper, *op. cit.*, chs. 6-7. According to the Russian account, based on investigations made at the time but only published in 1965, Hitler did not shoot himself but took poison. See R. Ainsztein, 'How Hitler died: the Soviet version', in *International Affairs*, vol. 43, no. 2, April 1967.

While Hitler had been preparing his end, Twenty-First Army Group's VIII Corps had crossed the Elbe below Lauenburg¹ on the 29th. At two o'clock that morning, on completion of strong artillery bombardment, one brigade of the 15th (Scottish) Division and a Commando brigade assaulted across the river in Buffaloes and stormboats supported by D.D. tanks. Two brigades followed up, rafts were built, ferries were established and the Royal Engineers began building bridges, the first being opened that night. Close support had been given throughout these operations by the tactical air forces and 14 enemy aircraft were destroyed when weather conditions enabled the *Luftwaffe* to break cloud and attack during short periods. Opposition was not great and over 1,350 prisoners were taken that day and a similar number in enlarging the bridgehead on the 30th. The 6th Airborne Division started to cross the river on the afternoon of the 30th, and were followed in the evening by the 11th Armoured Division who had orders to break out to the Baltic. By nightfall on the 1st of May its leading troops, meeting some opposition, were fifteen miles south-west of Lübeck. On the 30th the *Luftwaffe* tried hard to destroy the British bridges and ferries, but 83 Group of Second Tactical Air Force fought them off each time they appeared and claimed to have destroyed 32 enemy planes for the loss of only 3 of their own. In providing continuous cover of the armies throughout the crossing of the Elbe and following days, 83 Group had some of its severest fighting.² The *Luftwaffe* in a dying flare up tried to stop the Allies and in the six days of the operation lost 128 aircraft shot down by 83 Group, who lost 29 of their own.

Meanwhile on the 30th the United States XVIII Airborne Corps had crossed eight miles upstream of VIII Corps, building two bridges by May the 1st, and secured a bridgehead in which the United States 82nd Airborne and 8th Divisions were assembling, and where they were joined by the British 6th Airborne Division.

On the 2nd of May German opposition collapsed on the whole front and the 11th Armoured Division occupied Lübeck, meeting only a little sniping there, while the 5th Division³ closed up in the area behind them; 15,784 prisoners were counted in Lübeck alone. On the right the United States XVIII Airborne Corps quickly secured the line Domitz-Ludwigslust-Schwerin-Wismar, the last named town falling to the British 6th Airborne Division, whose

¹ On either side of Lauenburg the Elbe was about 800 to 1,000 feet wide, held by a miscellaneous enemy force estimated at about 6,000 men of low category supported by over 100 guns. The German 245th Division was believed to be reforming in the Lübeck area.

² In which a squadron of Meteors took part, the first occasion for British jet aircraft to fly on operations.

³ Transferred from Italy as decided at the Malta conference (page 213 and footnote to page 285).

leading troops were the 1st Canadian Parachute Battalion riding on the tanks of The Royal Scots Greys; that evening the Russian III Tank Corps made contact with the 6th Airborne Division at Wismar. It was fitting that the first British division to land in Normandy on D-day, 1944, should be the first to reach the Baltic in 1945 and the first to make contact between British and Soviet forces. The 11th Armoured Division moved up to the Baltic at Travemünde next day. The biggest numbers of prisoners were taken by the United States XVIII Airborne Corps, some 100,000 on the 2nd and about 150,000 on the 3rd, when the German Third Panzer and Twenty-First Armies surrendered. The Allied forces had less than 1,000 casualties.

Other surrender negotiations were on the way; on the 29th of April Major-General Wolz, commander of the Hamburg garrison, received a letter from Major-General L. O. Lyne, commander of the British 7th Armoured Division (which had closed up to Hamburg on the south), demanding the city's surrender. General Wolz replied asking for an interview with General Dempsey. On the 3rd of May he formally surrendered the city to Dempsey and 7th Armoured Division took over that day.¹ Other German forces had been surrendering in the field to the American armies during these final days of the war.

The Allied commanders were well prepared for such an eventuality. In July 1944, the Post Hostilities Planning Staff in London had proposed certain principles which should guide Allied commanders in the West when faced with the offer of large-scale military surrenders, and these principles were quickly endorsed by both the British and United States Chiefs of Staff. On August the 16th, 1944 Generals Alexander and Eisenhower were sent these instructions, which were forwarded by the latter to his army and army group commanders two days later. Three main principles were laid down: terms of surrender must be unconditional and 'clearly and expressly limited to immediate military objects of local surrender'; no commitments of any kind were to be made to the enemy; and capitulation was to be made without prejudice to, and would be superseded by, any subsequent general instrument of surrender imposed by the United Nations. Both General Eisenhower and his commanders were thus fully briefed when these German overtures for surrender began.

Admiral Dönitz, having learnt of Hitler's death and his own nomination and being faced with a rapidly deteriorating military situation, was still determined to put off as long as possible any surrender to the Russians. On May the 2nd he offered to send a delegation to Field-Marshal Montgomery's headquarters on the

¹ M. Lindsay & M. E. Johnston, *History of 7th Armoured Division*, pp. 154-7 (B.A.O.R. publication, 1945).

following day. Led by General-Admiral von Friedeburg, C-in-C of the German Navy, and General Kinzel, Chief of Staff to Field-Marshal Busch, the delegation reached Montgomery's tactical headquarters on Lüneburg Heath at 11.30 a.m. on the 3rd, and asked him to accept the surrender of the three German armies that were withdrawing before the Russians between Rostock and Berlin. This Montgomery refused pointblank—these armies, he pointed out, must surrender to the Russians—but he was willing to accept the surrender of any individual soldiers who came in with their hands up in the usual way. He also refused to discuss any special arrangements for protecting German civilians either in the east or west except in the context of a general surrender, but asked the delegation if they were prepared to surrender to him 'all German forces on my western and northern flanks, including all forces in Holland, Friesland with the Frisian Islands and Heligoland, Schleswig-Holstein and Denmark'. This could be treated as a tactical battlefield surrender of forces immediately opposing him and those in support in Denmark and accepted immediately.¹ The Germans at first refused, but when the military situation on the whole Western front was shown them on Allied maps—a situation of which they had been ignorant until that moment—they agreed to recommend such an unconditional surrender to Field-Marshal Keitel. Von Friedeburg and another officer took the Allies' terms back to Keitel that night while Kinzel and a fourth member of the delegation remained at Twenty-First Army Group headquarters.²

Dönitz and Keitel, still hoping to delay the Russians, agreed to Montgomery's named terms, but they instructed von Friedeburg to get in touch with General Eisenhower and try to arrange for a further partial capitulation in the West. Von Friedeburg arrived back at Lüneburg Heath on the afternoon of the 4th and, in the presence of Press correspondents attached to Twenty-First Army Group, the Instrument of Surrender was signed at 6.30 p.m., to take effect from 8.00 a.m. on May the 5th. The text was as follows:

- '1. The German Command agrees to the surrender of all German armed forces in Holland, in northwest Germany including the Frisian Islands and Heligoland and all other islands, in Schleswig-Holstein, and in Denmark, to the C-in-C 21 Army Group. This to include all naval ships in these areas. These forces to lay down their arms and to surrender unconditionally.

¹ A proposition authorised by General Eisenhower, who added: 'If, however, any larger offer such as to surrender Norway and forces on other fronts is proposed, the emissaries should be sent at once to my Headquarters'.

² *Memoirs of Field-Marshal Montgomery*, pp. 334-9.

2. All hostilities on land, on sea, or in the air by German forces in the above areas to cease at 0800 hrs. British Double Summer Time on Saturday 5 May 1945.
3. The German Command to carry out at once, and without argument or comment, all further orders that will be issued by the Allied Powers on any subject.
4. Disobedience of orders, or failure to comply with them, will be regarded as a breach of these surrender terms and will be dealt with by the Allied Powers in accordance with the accepted laws and usages of war.
5. This instrument of surrender is independent of, without prejudice to, and will be superseded by any general instrument of surrender imposed by or on behalf of the Allied Powers and applicable to Germany and the German armed forces as a whole.
6. This instrument of surrender is written in English and in German. The English version is the authentic text.
7. The decision of the Allied Powers will be final if any doubt or dispute arises as to the meaning or interpretation of the surrender terms.'

B. L. Montgomery
Field-Marshal

4 May 1945
1830 hrs.

Friedeburg
Kinzel
Wagner
Pollek
Freidel

Even at this stage, the German conviction that they could somehow continue to resist in the East while capitulating in the West led to some ironic exchanges. 'The German delegation', Montgomery told the C.I.G.S., 'raised the question of status of OKW which is situated at Flensburg and from which they are still conducting operations against Americans and Russians. I said that by the terms of surrender OKW were my prisoners as from 0800 hours tomorrow and I could not allow them to conduct operations against the Russians and Americans after that time. This caused some consternation. I do not think the German delegation saw the humour of this situation'. But clearly this was the end of the road. Dönitz was now prepared to surrender Norway and everything else in the West, and von Friedeburg was to be flown to Shaef the next day to go into these matters. 'It looks as if the British Empire part of German war in Western Europe is over', Montgomery concluded. 'I was persuaded to drink some champagne at dinner tonight.'

The willingness of General Lindemann, the German commander-in-chief in Denmark, to surrender his forces to Twenty-First Army



61. Field-Marshal Montgomery receiving the German surrender on May the 4th, 1945



Group (see page 333 above) was matched by British eagerness to liberate that country. The arrival of British forces at Lübeck on May the 2nd was greeted with relief in London. On the following day reports arrived from Sweden of small reconnaissance parties of Russians being parachuted into south-east Zealand, and of Soviet forces arriving at Warnemünde, north of Rostock, the starting point of the ferry to Gedser from whence ran a direct overland route to Copenhagen. This emphasised the importance from a political point of view of the early occupation by Twenty-First Army Group of the Danish islands and of Copenhagen. Twenty-First Army Group had armoured columns ready to push into Denmark and were also prepared to drop a small airborne force into Copenhagen, and General Eisenhower fully appreciated the necessity of getting to Copenhagen before the Russians; by the 4th reports from Stockholm showed that the reported Russian parachutists amounted to no more than two men, plus possibly a few agents infiltrated into Denmark among the flow of German refugees.

On May the 5th the Foreign Office representative at Shæf reported that the German confusion in Jutland was such that Field-Marshal Montgomery was unable to push his armoured columns through Denmark for another twenty-four hours, but Major-General R. H. Dewing, head of the Shæf Mission to Denmark, and a company of airborne troops flew into Copenhagen that day, flying in twelve Dakotas with a strong fighter escort and receiving 'a great reception'.

The only part of the country in fact occupied by Russian troops was the Baltic island of Bornholm, which fell within their sphere of operations. Although the German forces on the island had already been included in the general surrender of German forces in Denmark to Twenty-First Army Group, the Russians landed on the island on May the 9th. They finally withdrew in the spring of 1946. The rapid movement from the Elbe bridgehead northwards to the Baltic was a fine performance on the part of the British troops concerned. The whole of the Schleswig peninsula and Denmark was thus effectively sealed off.

Meanwhile in the centre of the western front the American Third Army was moving substantial forces into position for a possible thrust into Czechoslovakia, having been told, on Eisenhower's instructions, to leave the Salzburg area to the Seventh Army. On May the 3rd, as the Third Army's right crossed the lower Inn *en route* for Linz, and met the Sixth SS Panzer Army which was now trying to cope with attacks from both rear and front, the Seventh Army's left closed on Salzburg and its right entered Innsbruck.

Early on the 4th, Salzburg capitulated without giving much trouble and, in high spirits, the Seventh Army men (including

some from General Leclerc's 2nd French Armoured Division¹) hurried on to Berchtesgaden and the Obersalzberg which they reached in the afternoon. Many of the chalets of Hitler's intimates were still smouldering from the recent Allied bombings and fires started by the SS guards; within a short time the American and French troops destroyed what remained, together with all their Nazi trappings. The Seventh Army's right, at Innsbruck, had meanwhile acted no less promptly. Driving into a rainy night, with headlights full on because of the risks from mines and a slippery road, the column reached the top of the Brenner Pass before dawn on the 4th. Later that morning, a few miles inside the Italian border, they joined hands with troops of the American Fifth Army who had come up from Italy. Away to their right, the First French Army had now reached points some twenty miles south-east of Lake Constance.

Having heard, that morning, that the Soviet High Command was in 'full agreement' with his proposals, General Eisenhower ordered Twelfth Army Group to advance into Czechoslovakia and seize Budejovice, Pilsen and Karlsbad. At the same time, in view of the widespread collapse of resistance on his northern front, and the fact that American troops were already nearer to Prague than the Red Army was, Eisenhower told Bradley to prepare to continue his advance as far as the Moldau and Elbe rivers, there to make junction with the Russians. He then cabled his intentions to Moscow, saying he was prepared, if necessary, to continue the advance to the line of the Moldau and Elbe rivers 'to clear the west banks of the rivers in conjunction with the Soviet move to clear the east banks'. Shortly before midnight next day (the 5th) the answer came from General Antonov, Chief of Staff to the Russian Army. To avoid 'a possible confusion of forces', Antonov asked General Eisenhower specifically 'not to move the Allied forces in Czechoslovakia east of the originally intended line, that is, Budejovice, Pilsen, Karlsbad'. He added that the Soviet forces had stopped their advance to the lower Elbe east of the line Wismar, Schwerin and Domitz at the Supreme Commander's request, and that he hoped General Eisenhower 'in turn' would comply with Russian wishes relative to the advance of his forces in Czechoslovakia. Next morning Eisenhower assured the Soviet Command that he would meet their wishes, and so left Prague and most of Czechoslovakia to be liberated by the Red forces.

In the short time available to him, however, Patton had tried his best to effect the liberation himself. At seven-thirty in the evening of the 4th, General Bradley had telephoned to say 'the green light was

¹ Leclerc's division had served under the Seventh Army on the Strasbourg front in the previous autumn. It was later detached for the Bordeaux operations, but on their conclusion rejoined the Seventh Army to be in at the death.

open for the attack on Czechoslovakia', though only as far as the Pilsen line. Early next morning Patton had two corps on the move, accompanied by a small 'token force' from Twenty-First Army Group's Czech Armoured Brigade (which was then still investing the German 'fortress' of Dunkirk). There was little trouble, except from road obstructions and a few snipers. By the 6th the Third Army had seven or eight divisions across the Czech border; Pilsen was in the hands of one of the leaders and patrols were in the vicinity of Prague. On the Danube, the Linz sector had been captured. In view of radio reports that Czech patriots were fighting the German garrison in Prague, Patton was anxious to go to their help, but was told to stand where he was and to use patrols for local security only. When writing of these events shortly afterwards, Patton said: 'I was very much chagrined, because I felt, and I still feel, that we should have gone on to the Moldau river . . .'. Even¹ on the 7th, Mr. Churchill himself made a final appeal to Eisenhower, but it was too late. The Supreme Commander's undertaking had already reached Moscow and the general ceasefire was in force.

For after all forces in the north had been surrendered to Montgomery on May the 4th, von Friedeburg went on to Reims to see Generals Eisenhower and Susloparoff, who had been authorised to take the Russian part in the full surrender negotiations. Von Friedeburg at first attempted to surrender the remaining German forces on the western front, 'on which basis', Eisenhower reported, 'we flatly refused to discuss the matter with him'. Von Friedeburg then explained that he was without authority to make a full and complete surrender of all forces everywhere, but he would try to obtain such authority from Dönitz. His message to Dönitz suggested two alternative courses of action—either he himself should be given authority to sign an act of unconditional and simultaneous surrender in all theatres, or General Jodl, Chief of Operations, and the commanders-in-chief of the three armed services should be sent to sign the same act. As it proved impossible to get through direct, the message was forwarded through Twenty-First Army Group headquarters. The reply, received next day, said that General Jodl was on his way with powers from Dönitz, and that no further negotiations should take place until his arrival. This was not until the evening of the 6th, when it soon became clear that the Germans were stalling for time, 'their purpose being to evacuate the largest possible number of German soldiers and civilians from the Russian front to within our lines'. They asked for a further meeting on the 8th for the signing of a surrender, with a further 48-hour interval thereafter before the ceasefire became effective, allegedly to get the necessary instructions

¹ G. S. Patton, *War As I knew It* (Boston, 1947), pp. 324-7.

to their outlying units but in fact as another device to gain time. General Eisenhower then told them that 'I would break off all negotiations and seal the western front preventing by force any further westward movement of German soldiers and civilians unless they agreed to my terms of surrender', and that all fighting should cease 48 hours from midnight that night (the 6th). The German delegation, convinced of the hopelessness of any further delay, then recommended Dönitz to accept, and his agreement was received in the early hours of May the 7th. The surrender was signed by Jodl at 2.41 a.m., and Eisenhower reported to the Combined Chiefs of Staff:

'The Mission of this Allied Force was fulfilled at 0241, local time, May 7th, 1945'.

The Russians were not satisfied, however, that all the desirable formalities had been observed and at their request it was agreed to have a formal ratification of the surrender in Berlin, to be executed by the following German representatives: Chief of the High Command, Commander-in-Chief of the Army; Commander-in-Chief of the Navy; and Commander-in-Chief of the Air Forces. As Eisenhower had already received the surrender at Reims he did not think it necessary for him to sign at Berlin on behalf of the Western Allies, so he appointed Air Chief Marshal Tedder to act as his representative. The final ratification of surrender was signed just before midnight on May the 8th, the German signatories being Field-Marshal Keitel, Admiral von Friedeburg and General Stumpff. Marshal Zhukov and Air Chief Marshal Tedder signed on behalf of the Allies, with General de Lattre de Tassigny and General Spaatz signing as witnesses. The full text was as follows:

1. We the undersigned, acting by authority of the German High Command, hereby surrender unconditionally to the Supreme Commander, Allied Expeditionary Force and simultaneously to the Supreme High Command of the Red Army all forces on land, at sea, and in the air who are at this date under German control.
2. The German High Command will at once issue orders to all German military, naval and air authorities and to all forces under German control to cease active operations at 2301 hours Central European time on 8th May, 1945, to remain in the positions occupied at that time and to disarm completely, handing over their weapons and equipment to the local allied commanders or officers designated by Representatives of the Allied Supreme Commands. No ship, vessel, or aircraft is to be scuttled, or any damage done to their hull, machinery or equipment, and also to machines of all kinds, armament, apparatus, and all the technical means of prosecution of war in general.

!

3. The German High Command will at once issue to the appropriate commanders, and ensure the carrying out of any further orders issued by the Supreme Commander, Allied Expeditionary Force and by the Supreme High Command of the Red Army.
4. This act of military surrender is without prejudice to, and will be superseded by any general instrument of surrender imposed by, or on behalf of the United Nations and applicable to Germany and the German armed forces as a whole.
5. In the event of the German High Command or any of the forces under their control failing to act in accordance with this Act of Surrender, the Supreme Commander, Allied Expeditionary Force and the Supreme High Command of the Red Army will take such punitive or other action as they deem appropriate.
6. This Act is drawn up in the English, Russian and German languages. The English and Russian are the only authentic texts.⁷

On this final and unconditional surrender of all German forces on land, at sea and in the air the campaign in Western Europe was ended. After bearing such heavy responsibilities throughout the war, those in command had now to face, without pause, the further and almost equally heavy responsibilities of military government—to ensure that the terms of the surrender were duly observed and, as far as lay in their power, to encourage the German people's own efforts to recover from the terrible damage they had suffered under the Hitler régime. The story of the British share in military government is told by Mr. F. S. V. Donnison in *Civil Affairs and Military Government, North-West Europe, 1944-1946*. The account of post-war German recovery in the years that followed the end of hostilities does not belong to the history of war but to the triumphs and disappointments of peace, for which the military forces were not responsible. They had done their full part in winning victory in the West.

CHAPTER XVII

REFLECTIONS

THIS account of the Overlord campaign is a 'success story', from the day in June, 1944 when British and American forces landed in Normandy to the date in May, 1945 when, beaten everywhere, on land, at sea and in the air, all the remaining German armed forces surrendered unconditionally to the Allies. As they fought their way eastwards through France, Belgium, Holland and Germany the Allies were, at times, held up temporarily by the enemy's opposition—but in the autumn of 1944 more by their own inability to bring forward supplies quickly enough to maintain the pace of their advance. The strategy on which General Eisenhower fought the campaign achieved, in less than a year, a crushing and complete victory in the West.

Yet General Eisenhower's conduct of the campaign has found critics and will doubtless continue to be debated. A chief bone of contention is strategy: it was a recurring theme throughout operations. Before launching Overlord on D-day Eisenhower had issued a directive to his commanders, 'in order to permit advance planning of command and administrative control incident to eventual establishment of two distinct zones of advance on the Continent'.¹ This was based on his acceptance of his planners' pre-D-day advice as quoted on page 82 of our first volume and again on page 93 of this second volume. This advised that the most promising lines of approach to Germany would be north and south of the Ardennes, aiming respectively at the Ruhr and Metz-Saarbrücken. Of these the northern route was more advantageous but 'the northern route alone should not be adopted'. As operations progressed and the Allies' superiority became more marked the advance should be on a front sufficiently broad to threaten more than one of the 'gaps' into Germany: it should be by two mutually supporting axes in order to keep the Germans guessing as to the direction of our main threat, and cause them to extend their forces while the Allies retained flexibility of manoeuvre.

After the German defeat in Normandy it was argued by Field-Marshal Montgomery that if all the offensive power of the Allies were concentrated in a single strong attack in the north, victory would be certain and would come more quickly. As a general principle concentration in attack is most likely to succeed but it is

¹ *Victory in the West*, vol. I, p. 83.

not a principle to be applied irrespective of all other considerations. If sufficient forces are available a supplementary, supporting attack is also desirable. In this case enough troops were or soon would be available and also the necessary supplies; at the beginning of September what *was* deficient was enough transport to maintain two rapidly-moving attacks from bases three or four hundred miles in rear. Montgomery's argument was that if the secondary advance were halted and all supplies reaching the front were used to maintain one concentrated advance, the war could be ended quickly.

No one can say how the campaign would have developed if 'the great mass of the Allied armies' operating as one whole had been concentrated in a single strong attack in the north, for it is not known how such an attack would have fared or how the enemy would have responded if the Third Army's second line of pursuit had been stopped at the Seine. For one thing much would have depended on the speed with which the Allies brought Antwerp or Rotterdam into use and on the manner in which the Mediterranean landings were followed up. These and other unknown factors make it useless to speculate on the likely success or failure of one concentrated attack. What *is* known is that as the campaign was fought in September pace and pressure could not always be maintained without pause by either of the Allied army groups.

In late August, 1944 the German armies which had been defeated in Normandy were largely disorganised and in full retreat. It was surely right to pursue them hotly, to prevent them if possible from forming any cohesive front, and to overtake and capture as many as possible. Before the Supreme Commander had taken over from Field-Marshal Montgomery he wrote to him on August the 24th: '*. . . the principal thing we must now strive for is speed in execution*',¹ and Montgomery had stated his intention '*to keep the enemy on the run straight through to the Rhine and bounce our way across that river before the enemy succeeds in reforming a front to oppose us*'.² Persistence of pace and pressure are indeed the key to success in pursuit: any pause, even for a day, may forfeit it.

At the end of August, at home, in America and at the front, a strong spirit of optimism ruled. The enemy had been so badly beaten in Normandy that it seemed unlikely that he could recover, and possible that the war might end before Christmas. A series of victories in France, in Italy and on the Russian front, combined with reports of growing dislocation inside Germany, led the military authorities in Britain and the United States to forecast the possibility of an early surrender and when the second Quebec conference,

¹ Pogue, *The Supreme Command*, p. 251. Author's italics.

² Montgomery, *Normandy to the Baltic* (B.A.O.R. publication, 1946), p. 150. Author's italics.

'Octagon', opened early in September an atmosphere of high enthusiasm prevailed. In that atmosphere the Combined Chiefs of Staff approved General Eisenhower's account of his 'broad front' strategy of maintaining pressure on the enemy both north and south of the Ardennes and, as soon as possible, joining with the armies that had landed on the Mediterranean coast to extend the Allied front in the south. At the same time the Supreme Commander's attention was drawn to the advantage of advancing by the northern route. Even while the Combined Chiefs of Staff were thus endorsing his choice of strategy Eisenhower authorised Field-Marshal Montgomery to launch the Arnhem operation (chapter II) in an effort to seize a bridgehead over the Rhine while the enemy was still in retreat—or so it was believed. That had been true when Antwerp's port was captured undamaged on September the 4th, but it was no longer true when the Arnhem operation began on the 17th. In that interval Twenty-First Army Group had made no direct effort to secure the use of the port by capturing the Scheldt, the German Fifteenth Army had been allowed to strengthen its defences while the rest escaped northwards and other enemy forces were brought forward to defend the area through which the Arnhem operation was to advance.

There is no need to retell the story of the hard fighting which occupied Twenty-First Army Group after the Arnhem operation had been finished. The defended Channel ports were captured, the Breskens pocket was cleared from the south bank of the Scheldt, South Beveland and Walcheren island from the north bank, and the enemy driven back over the Lower Maas. The Scheldt had by then been captured and was being cleared of mines, but Antwerp port remained useless to the Allies for 83 days after its capture. Meanwhile the enemy had re-formed a coherent front, based largely on the Siegfried Line, and the American forces which faced it were halted while supplies and ammunition were built up for a renewal of the advance. In November, still without the use of Antwerp, a series of advances was restarted with the intention of reaching the Rhine north and south of the Ardennes, but progress was slow against determined opposition and Montgomery blamed the Supreme Commander's leadership for attacking in so many places at once without adequate supplies. His criticism was reflected by the dissatisfaction of the British Chiefs of Staff and in the Prime Minister's telegram to the President on December the 6th (see page 169). In that he pointed to the 'serious and disappointing war situation which faces us at the close of this year'. Although many fine tactical victories had been gained on the Western front, 'the fact remains that we have definitely failed to achieve the strategic object which we gave to our armies five weeks ago'.

The President's reply, including the statement that 'our agreed broad strategy is developing according to plan', was presumably influenced by a 'personal report' dated December the 3rd which General Eisenhower had addressed to the Combined Chiefs of Staff and the British Chiefs of Staff in London. This personal report is too long to be reproduced here. It told how Overlord had been developing (as seen by General Eisenhower), but it left the British fearing that the broad-front strategy under Eisenhower's command would delay the end of the war. Then followed Eisenhower's visit to England and his meeting with the Prime Minister and Chiefs of Staff on December the 12th, during which he had spoken about crossing the Rhine in the north by about the end of May. This only confirmed the Chiefs of Staff in the fear that the end of the war was likely to be needlessly delayed. The steps by which British dissatisfaction developed till settled at the meetings in Malta and Yalta are told in chapter IX.

There is one passage in General Eisenhower's personal report which was not questioned by the British Chiefs of Staff, namely his approval of the Arnhem Operation. '. . . It was hoped that through rapid exploitation both the Siegfried Line and the Rhine might be crossed and strong bridgeheads established before the Germans could recover sufficiently to make a definite stand in the Arnhem area', and after stating reasons that 'made it impossible to gain all that we wished' he added: 'But the strength devoted to the northward attack was all that we could sustain'.

'The all-out effort in this attempt of mine imposed a delay in capturing Antwerp the effects of which have been felt throughout later operations. I still consider, however, that it was a gamble worth taking, a conviction, I believe, shared by every responsible officer of this force.'

Nevertheless, the author of this volume is convinced that in approving the Arnhem operation General Eisenhower made a serious mistake. Before he took over command on September the 1st he had pointed to the pressing need of Antwerp port and it had been captured *undamaged* four days later. His naval commander-in-chief, Admiral Ramsay, had pointed out that day the importance of the Scheldt which, alone, gave access to the port. When General Eisenhower approved the operation on September the 10th he knew that no immediate steps had been taken to capture the Scheldt quickly or to prevent the enemy from strengthening its defence. He knew that his armies' supply position was, as he said, already 'stretched to the breaking point' (page 18 above). The use of Antwerp port would quicken the whole pace of the advance and he realised that the Arnhem 'gamble' would delay the capture of the Scheldt. It is

difficult to avoid the conclusion that General Eisenhower should have said on the 10th of September that not another day should be lost before Twenty-First Army Group freed Antwerp port. This is not merely the author's hindsight, for Eisenhower saw at the time that even if Arnhem succeeded in establishing a bridgehead beyond the Rhine it would *not* solve the supply difficulty till the Scheldt was captured and Antwerp in use (page 16).

There is no evidence that the British Chiefs of Staff Committee ever discussed the question but the opinion of their chairman, the C.I.G.S., on October the 5th was: 'I feel that Monty's strategy for once is at fault. Instead of carrying out the advance on Arnhem he ought to have made certain of Antwerp in the first place'.¹ And Field-Marshal Montgomery's admission after the war—that he was wrong in thinking the Canadian Army could free Antwerp 'while we were going for the Ruhr'—has already been quoted (page 95).

In the light of General Eisenhower's knowledge that Twenty-First Army Group was just about to break out from the Rhine bridgehead, almost 300 miles from Berlin, his decision in March, 1945 to aim not at Berlin but at Leipzig is understandable. In all the discussions on strategy during the autumn of 1944, Berlin had either been named or implied as the Allies' target in Germany. But in September 1944 General Eisenhower had foreseen that the Russians might be the first to reach Berlin, in which case the Allies would aim at Leipzig, the principal industrial area after the Ruhr.² When a Russian army's advanced troops were already 35 miles from the capital, Eisenhower was at that time justified in changing the direction of the Allies' main thrust. He felt it was more important to divide the enemy west of the Elbe by making a central thrust to Leipzig and to establish the Allied left flank on the Baltic coast near Lübeck in order to prevent the Russian occupation of Schleswig-Holstein. From a military point of view he thought it unsound to keep Berlin as a major objective, in view of the fact that it was already only 35 miles from the Russian lines. But it is open to question whether he should have told the Russians of his new plans so early. He said he was 'the first to admit that a war is waged in pursuance of political aims',³ and it is surprising that he ignored the political importance of the capture of Berlin because it was not specifically ordered by the Combined Chiefs of Staff.

¹ Sir Alan Brooke's personal diary, quoted by Arthur Bryant in *Triumph in the West*, p. 291.

² See page 77 above.

³ Pogue, *op. cit.*, p. 446.

Some of General Eisenhower's directives were rather loosely worded and he did not always see that his immediate intention was being carried out. For instance he had decided, according to the Shaef report of his meeting with Montgomery, Tedder and Bradley on October the 18th, that while First Army would open an offensive as early as possible 'to gain a footing over the Rhine south of Cologne' and Ninth Army would clear the country 'between the Rhine and the Meuse', Third Army, 'when logistics permitted', was to 'advance in a general north-easterly direction and would protect the right flank of First Army'. For the advance to the Rhine, General Bradley was 'to locate his command post in the vicinity of Headquarters First Army, ensuring a direct telephone line between Bradley's Tactical HQ and those of Montgomery'. What happened in the month which followed that meeting is shown on the map facing page 166. Bradley had not moved his Tactical HQ from Luxembourg and First Army north of the Ardennes had made little progress towards the Rhine against stiff opposition. But Third Army, not waiting for First Army to move, was ordered to advance south of the Ardennes and, irrespective of First Army, had fought its way forward at a cost of 27,000 casualties.

It had been universally recognised that Eisenhower's influence on all who took part in Overlord secured a unity and sense of common purpose that overrode all disparate tendencies. In this he followed the example of President Roosevelt and Mr. Winston Churchill who determined at the outset that 'everything else must be secondary to the solidarity of the Anglo-American Alliance'. It is generally agreed that, working with the Combined Chiefs of Staff, 'the Anglo-American Coalition in World War II was the closest and most effective partnership in war that two great powers had ever achieved'.¹ General Eisenhower had done much to ensure this by insisting that no national prejudice or rivalry should prevent either the composite structure of his headquarters staff or leaders of the troops under his command from working as a team with but a single aim—namely to defeat the enemy. In accordance with American tradition he rode with a loose rein; General Patton claims that he had to make the greatest possible use of any loophole in the Supreme Commander's orders to push the battle on his front.² When his commanders did this General Eisenhower welcomed their enterprise and determination to get forward.

The United States Chiefs of Staff were informed by General Eisenhower's planners before D-day of the strategy he proposed to adopt and throughout the campaign they never interfered or tried to influence him in favour of any other course. Only at the Malta

¹ K. R. Greenfield, *American Strategy in World War II* (Baltimore, 1963), p. 47.

² Pogue, *op. cit.*, p. 293.

conference did they join with the British Chiefs of Staff in modifying slightly the wording of a paragraph in Eisenhower's current statement of future strategy. In view of the situation towards the end of March, they did not disapprove of his direct approach to Marshal Stalin or of the decision to make Leipzig rather than Berlin the object of his main advance.¹ When General Eisenhower took command on September the 1st the British Chiefs of Staff were aware of his lack of practical experience of a large-scale command in the field; but they did not openly question his strategy till December and, whatever they thought of his strategy, they came to regard very highly his many great qualities as Supreme Commander.

During the autumn it was not unnatural for the American commanders to resent the Supreme Commander's continued emphasis on the importance of the advance in the north and the priority given to the Arnhem operation. Conscious that they were responsible for the far larger share of the campaign, they knew that not only did the Supreme Commander have a British deputy and British naval and air commanders-in-chief, but also that his three deputy chiefs of staff were all British. It seemed to the American commanders that British influence at Shaef was out of proportion to the British contribution to the combined effort. Montgomery and the British Chiefs of Staff were probably slow to realise what American commanders felt about this, but since they did feel so it is understandable that Montgomery's repeated proposals that he should be given command of all the armies destined for the main northern attack were resented by the Americans.

Ever mindful of the casualty rates in the 1914-18 war, Field-Marshal Montgomery was determined to achieve his object and gain his objectives with the minimum of loss and the exercise of good generalship. His battles must be 'tidy', his forces well-balanced and his preparations methodical in every respect. To many American commanders he appeared over-cautious, and on two occasions he seemed to them to overdo his preparations. After the Reichswald battle had ended on March the 10th, he spent a fortnight on preparations for the crossing of the Rhine. And after his leading troops reached the Elbe on the 19th of April, it was almost ten days before he made an assault crossing and only succeeded in forestalling the Russians on the Baltic by a matter of hours.

Montgomery's dealings with Eisenhower during the autumn and his almost daily reports to the C.I.G.S. in London give the impression that his attention was somewhat distracted by his obsessive belief that Eisenhower's strategy and conduct of operations would prolong the war. Handicapped by a sense of frustration when his

¹ See pages 212 and 304 above.

argument for concentration in the north was rejected he can have had little satisfaction in furthering a policy which he considered to be near-disastrous. For a time in the autumn of 1944 his command does not show the sureness of touch which usually distinguished his leadership. But he never failed to carry out faithfully Eisenhower's directions.

In contrast to the Allies' consistently aggressive strategy, a close study of the German conduct in the Overlord campaign shows that when once the Allies had established a firm landing in Normandy the enemy was always on the defensive, except for the Ardennes counter-offensive, till compelled to surrender in May 1945. Every German action was virtually dictated by the Allies' movements. In view of Germany's war on two fronts she could never have been victorious in either, but if the western campaign had been left to the leading German generals the enemy's pattern would have been both different and wiser. As it was, they were left with no real initiative: the German response to the Allies' Overlord campaign was governed throughout by Hitler's over-all direction.

The Allies' pre-D-day cover plan appeared to Hitler to threaten a major landing in the Pas de Calais area and General Montgomery's conduct of the armies which landed seemed also to foreshadow a break-out to the east; Hitler's response was therefore to hold his Fifteenth Army in the Pas de Calais area and concentrate the remaining available armour facing the Caen area. When the American armies broke out southward from St. Lô, Hitler ordered the Mortain counter-attack in a futile effort to close the gap in the Cotentin front and so annihilate the United States Third Army driving southwards. When Third Army turned eastwards and the German armies facing the bridgehead began to be enclosed, withdrawal was ordered, but too late to avoid the slaughter of large numbers in the Falaise gap. German armies everywhere in the West were then in full and rapid retreat and in early September Hitler admitted that no line could be specified which could be held with certainty; he ordered the defence of the Channel ports and the Scheldt and elsewhere the retreating armies were to contest every foot of ground in a stubborn delaying action as they fell back to the Siegfried Line.¹ His acknowledgement that the retreat was unavoidable coincided with the American necessity to relax pressure owing to shortage of supplies reaching the front. At this time, Field-Marshal von Rundstedt was reappointed C-in-C West and a rapid reorganisation of the retreating German armies was achieved; as the enemy moved back towards the German

¹ See page 11 above.

border and the fortifications of the Siegfried Line a continuous front again soon faced the Americans. But before the end of September advancing formations of the United States Sixth Army Group, coming up from the Mediterranean, joined hands with the right of the United States Twelfth Army Group and came under General Eisenhower's command, extending the Allied front to the Swiss boundary. One effect of the extension of General Eisenhower's 'broad front' was to force on the enemy a corresponding extension of their own front—far more than they could defend for long.

All the German armies that were fully trained and imbued with the old discipline consistently fought with their accustomed skill and determination but some of the later formations brought to battle were neither adequately trained nor sufficiently fit physically to stand for long the rigours of active service, a fact which may help to account for some of the large numbers of prisoners that were taken as the campaign progressed. In October and November there was heavy fighting on much of the front and places such as the Scheldt estuary and Aachen in the north, and Metz and the Saar in the south strongly resisted defeat. But though the defenders fought well it was not well enough to stop the Allies' steady progress.

In December Hitler, against the advice of his most experienced generals, launched the ill-conceived counter-offensive against a weakly held 60-mile stretch of the American front in the Ardennes. The enemy was firmly held on either flank but advanced some 45 miles in 10 days of December, only to lose in January all the ground he had won. The Allies had 76,000 casualties but the number of Germans killed, wounded, and taken prisoner was even greater and they lost much valuable material. The German counter-offensive in the Ardennes was Hitler's attempt to recapture Brussels and Antwerp, destroy the Allies to the north and effect a 'turning point in the campaign in the West and perhaps even in the whole war'. And though for ten days the Germans gained a local initiative, the counter-offensive was an inadequate response to the Allies' steady gains.

In the heavy fighting of the following six weeks the Allies drove them back to the Rhine and those who were not killed or captured got across the river, closely followed by the Allies. April was for the remaining German armies a month of unrelieved tragedy. Major commands were separated from each other as communications were disrupted, and at last Hitler's orders, if received, went unheeded; the Ruhr was lost with the surrender of 300,000 men and the one remaining aim was to stop the pursuing Allies as they spread throughout the Reich. The German economy was in ruins and Allied armies from east and west were rapidly overrunning the intervening country. Finally the Führer saw that all was lost and

committed suicide. The end of the Nazi régime had come ingloriously and with it unconditional surrender and Allied victory.

Since the day on which 7,000 ships guarded by some 11,000 aircraft had enabled some 156,000 men of the Allied armies to land on the fortified shores of Normandy in the largest combined operation that had ever been known and which will always be famous, and in the days which followed in the succeeding eleven months, the Allied forces had pursued a single course towards a confidently expected victory. Under the authority of the President of the United States and the British Prime Minister the Combined Chiefs of Staff had constantly to decide questions of policy but never found it necessary to interfere with General Eisenhower's strategy, for it had their approval.

The wonderful example of co-operation in the combined operations on D-day was reflected throughout the campaign that followed, when seemingly diverse objectives were seen to weave the pattern of victory. No difference of opinion ever affected unity of effort or warped the course of action. The co-operation which marked D-day was still at work in April 1945. Ships and aircraft of the Allied navies and air forces were still sinking U-boats; the strategic air forces were bombing Baltic harbours and army targets such as Berchtesgaden; the armies of Twenty-First Army Group and the United States Twelfth and Sixth Army Groups were putting an end to what remained of the German armies of the West with the help of the tactical air forces. As a result of these combined operations unconditional surrender came on May the 7th, 1945.

The reader who has come to the end of this long though inevitably compressed account of the British part in Overlord may well look back and try to realise the significance of the attainment. Though the British forces, which included the Canadians, were smaller in number than those of our American ally, Twenty-First Army Group had played a full part in the initial landings on D-day, in the overcoming of Hitler's Atlantic Wall, the establishment of a firm bridgehead in France and in the winning of the battle of Normandy, which was the key that opened the way to all that followed. They had gone on to capture the Channel ports, Brussels and Antwerp and, with the help of American airborne troops, they had advanced 65 miles into enemy territory and won a bridgehead beyond Nijmegen on the Waal. Then, after hard fighting and with the help of the Royal Navy, they had cleared the Scheldt and freed Antwerp port, facilitating rapid supply of the Allied armies. They had helped the American armies to defeat the enemy's counter-offensive in the Ardennes and then fought their way to the Rhine in one of the

hardest battles of the war. Thereafter they had made a large crossing of the Rhine at its widest point and established a firm bridgehead on its eastern bank, while the Americans made other crossings further up the river. Then whilst the latter spread rapidly throughout Germany, the British Army Group advanced to the Elbe, clearing the northern coast and capturing Bremen. Finally they had gone north to the Baltic, taking Hamburg and Lübeck and securing the unconditional surrender of the German forces that faced them in the north. Throughout the campaign the Royal Navy had never failed to bring the supplies they needed nor the Royal Air Force to protect the armies from attacks by the *Luftwaffe*, and to aid the armies' attacks on the German defence, while the strategic air forces flew deep over Germany to destroy its war-making strength and weaken its economy.

It is a brave story of eleven months' hard fighting under the distinguished leadership of Field-Marshal Montgomery. His high reputation as the outstanding British field commander had been enhanced by victory in the battle of Normandy and by his faithful adherence to General Eisenhower's directives, though he sometimes questioned their wisdom. Knowledge of Montgomery's keen interest in their welfare and appreciation of his abilities inspired the affectionate confidence and respect of all who served under him and of the peoples they represented.

The indomitable courage and fighting spirit which had withstood the withdrawal from Dunkirk and the shock of Pearl Harbour had led to the shores of the Baltic and the middle reaches of the Danube. Germany had been wholly defeated and the world saved from the evil domination of Nazism.

'There must be a beginning of any great matter, but the continuing unto the end until it is thoroughly finished yields the true glory.'¹

¹ Sir Francis Drake, 1587.

Appendices

APPENDIX I

The Combined Chiefs of Staff

BRITISH CHIEFS OF STAFF

Chief of the Imperial General Staff
(Chairman of the
Chiefs of Staff Committee)
Field-Marshal Sir Alan Brooke

Chief of the Air Staff
Marshal of the Royal Air Force
Sir Charles Portal

*First Sea Lord and
Chief of the Naval Staff*
Admiral of the Fleet
Sir Andrew Cunningham

*Deputy Secretary (Military) of
the War Cabinet and Chief of Staff to
the Minister of Defence*
General Sir Hastings Ismay

*Chief of Combined Operations*¹
Major-General R. E. Laycock

Secretary
Major-General L. C. Hollis

UNITED STATES JOINT CHIEFS OF STAFF

*Chief of Staff to the
Commander-in-Chief of the U.S.
Armed Forces*
(Chairman of the Joint
Chiefs of Staff Committee)
Fleet Admiral William D. Leahy

Chief of Staff of the U.S. Army
General of the Army
George C. Marshall

*Commander-in-Chief of the U.S. Fleet
and Chief of Naval Operations*
Fleet Admiral Ernest J. King

*Commanding General,
U.S. Army Air Force*
General of the Army
Henry H. Arnold

Secretary
Brig-General A. J. McFarland

BRITISH JOINT STAFF MISSION IN WASHINGTON²

Head of the Mission
Field-Marshal Sir John Dill
(until November, 1944)
Field-Marshal Sir Henry Maitland Wilson
(from January, 1945)

¹ Attended those meetings of concern to him.

² Representing the British Chiefs of Staff at the Combined Chiefs of Staff meetings which the British Chiefs of Staff were unable to attend.

APPENDIX II

Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Force¹

Supreme Commander
General Dwight D. Eisenhower

Deputy Supreme Commander
Air Chief Marshal Sir Arthur W. Tedder (Br.)

Naval Commander-in-Chief
Admiral
Sir Bertram H. Ramsay (Br.)
(killed 2.1.45)
Vice-Admiral
Alan G. Kirk (U.S.)
(acting)
Vice-Admiral
Sir Harold M. Burrough (Br.)
(from 19.1.45)

Air Commander-in-Chief
(to 15.10.44)
Air Chief Marshal
Sir Trafford L. Leigh-Mallory (Br.)

Chief of Staff
Lieut-General Walter Bedell Smith (U.S.)

Deputy Chiefs of Staff
Lieut-General Sir Frederick E. Morgan (Br.)
Lieut-General Sir Humfrey M. Gale (Br.)
Air Marshal Sir James M. Robb (Br.) (Air)

Principal Staff Officers
Assistant Chiefs of Staff
G-1 Division (Personnel) — Major-General Ray W. Barker (U.S.)
G-2 Division (Intelligence) — Major-General K. W. D. Strong (Br.)
G-3 Division (Operations) — Major-General Harold R. Bull (U.S.)
G-4 Division (Supply) — Major-General Robert W. Crawford (U.S.)
G-5 Division (Civil Affairs) — Lieut-General A. E. Grasett (Br.)
Chief Engineer — Major-General H. B. W. Hughes (Br.)
(to Dec. 1944)
— Brig-General Beverly C. Dunn (U.S.)
(from Dec. 1944)

¹ Pogue, *The Supreme Command*, Appendix C.

Chief Medical Officer

— Major-General Albert W. Kenner (U.S.)

Chief Signal Officer— Major-General C. H. H. Vulliamy (Br.)
(to Mar. 1945)— Major-General Francis H. Lanahan, Jr.
(U.S.) (from Mar. 1945)*Naval Chief of Staff*Captain M. J. Mansergh (Br.)
(to 7.3.45)Captain H. W. Faulkner (Br.)
(from 8.3.45)*Chief of Air Staff*

(from 16.10.44)

Air Marshal

Sir James M. Robb (Br.)

Deputy Chiefs of Air Staff

Air Vice-Marshal

H. E. P. Wigglesworth (Br.)

Major-General

David M. Schlatter (U.S.)

*Heads of Shaef Missions**France*

— Major-General John T. Lewis (U.S.)

*Belgium &**Luxembourg*

}

— Major-General G. W. E. J. Erskine (Br.)

Holland

— Major-General J. K. Edwards (Br.) (to Feb. 1945)

Major-General J. G. W. Clark (Br.) (from Feb. 1945)

Denmark

— Major-General R. H. Dewing (Br.)

Norway

— Lieut-General Sir A. F. Andrew N. Thorne (Br.)

APPENDIX III

Allied Naval Forces Engaged

IN our Volume I, Appendix II, were listed the Allied Naval Forces which took part in Operation Neptune, the naval assault of Normandy, and in operations in support of the advance to the Seine. Below are briefly listed the forces which participated in the part of the campaign covered by this second volume, from the 1st of September, 1944 to the end of the campaign on the 7th of May, 1945.

Naval Commander-in-Chief

Admiral Sir Bertram H. Ramsay (Br.) (killed 2.1.45)

Vice-Admiral Alan G. Kirk (U.S.) (acting)

Vice-Admiral Sir Harold M. Burrough (Br.) (from 19.1.45)

Naval Chief of Staff

Captain M. J. Mansergh (Br.) (to 7.3.45)

Captain H. W. Faulkner (Br.) (from 8.3.45)

Force T—Captain A. F. Pugsley (July 1944 to May 1945)

Landing craft, some armed with guns and rockets; motor launches; landing barges.

Le Havre Bombarding Force (September 1944)

Battleship H.M.S. *Warspite*

Monitor H.M.S. *Erebus*

Walcheren Bombarding Force (November 1944)

Battleship H.M.S. *Warspite*

Monitors H.M.S. *Erebus*

H.M.S. *Roberts*

Minesweeping Force A—Captain H. G. Hopper (November 1944)

Minesweepers for the Scheldt estuary.

Minesweeping Force B—Captain T. W. Marsh (November 1944)

Minesweepers for the Scheldt approach.

Salvage and Port Clearance Parties

Force U—Captain P. H. G. James (February to April 1945)

Landing craft for the Rhine crossing.

There were 839 British vessels in the Expeditionary Force at the close of the campaign, of which 110 were warships or auxiliary craft and the remaining 729 small motor and landing craft.

No ships or craft of a new type were introduced by the Allied Navies during the period covered by this volume.

Protection of Convoys

Naval Commanders-in-Chief as below were responsible for the security of convoys sailing to and from the Continent in their respective areas:

- Nore* — Admiral of the Fleet Sir John C. Tovey
Portsmouth — Admiral Sir Charles J. C. Little (to 1.3.45)
 Admiral Sir Geoffrey Layton (from 2.3.45)
Plymouth — Admiral Sir Ralph Leatham
Mediterranean — Admiral Sir John H. D. Cunningham

Principal forces hunting U-boats and protecting convoys

- Forces* Nos. 26 and 27
Escort Groups 2nd, 3rd, 4th, 11th, 12th, 14th and 19th
Destroyer Flotilla 21st
Naval Air Forces 810 and 822 Fleet Air Arm Squadrons; 103, 105, 107, 110, 112 and part of 63 U.S. Navy Squadrons (attached to R.A.F. Coastal Command—Appendix V, Part I)

The groups and flotilla normally comprised about eight ships each.

Convoys

Convoys to the Continent contained ships of many of the Allied nations, manned by their national crews; the greater number were British, manned by the Merchant Navy, and American, manned by their Merchant Marine. Though the German U-boat menace was much reduced these ships were exposed to the hazards of torpedo, mine and bomb and their crews made a valuable contribution to the Allied success.

In the last month of the campaign when the tonnage delivered to the Continent reached its peak, the following number of ships discharged at the Channel ports, Cherbourg to Antwerp inclusive:

<i>Type of ship</i>	<i>Nationality</i>	<i>No. of ships</i>	<i>Gross tonnage</i>
Cargo ships	British . . .	245	629,135
	American . . .	174	1,234,173
	Other Allies . . .	66	159,895
Oil tankers	British . . .	20	102,096
	American . . .	1	7,218
	Other Allies . . .	5	35,324
Total . . .		511	2,167,841

Many of the ships made more than one trip in the month; the total of their crews was over 30,000 men.

APPENDIX IV

The Allied Armies

Part I

FORCES ENGAGED¹

THE lists which follow show the principal Allied formations employed between the 1st of September, 1944, and the 7th of May, 1945, the period covered by this volume; formations and units which left the theatre before the latter date are marked with a †. The lists do not form a complete order of battle, for many specialist and administrative units have been omitted owing to limitations of space and the great variety of their tasks.

ALLIED EXPEDITIONARY FORCE

Supreme Commander

General Dwight D. Eisenhower

BRITISH	UNITED STATES	UNITED STATES
TWENTY-FIRST ARMY GROUP	TWELFTH ARMY GROUP	SIXTH ARMY GROUP
<i>Commander-in-Chief</i> Field-Marshal Sir Bernard L. Montgomery	<i>Commanding General</i> General Omar N. Bradley	<i>Commanding General</i> General Jacob L. Devers

TWENTY-FIRST ARMY GROUP

Commander-in-Chief

Field-Marshal Sir Bernard L. Montgomery

Chief of Staff

Major-General Sir Francis W. de Guingand

Principal Staff Officers

<i>Brigadier-General Staff (Operations)</i>	— Brigadier R. F. K. Belchem
<i>Brigadier-General Staff (Intelligence)</i>	— Brigadier E. T. Williams
<i>Major-General i/c Administration</i>	— Major-General M.W.A.P. Graham
<i>Deputy Adjutant-General</i>	— Brigadier C. Lloyd (to Dec. 1944) Major-General M. S. Chilton (from Jan. 1945)
<i>Deputy Quartermaster-General</i>	— Major-General R. G. Feilden

¹ See Lieut-Colonel H. F. Joslen, *Orders of Battle Second World War, 1939-1945*, vols. I and II (H.M.S.O., 1960).

Attached to the Staff

Major-General, Royal Armoured Corps — Major-General G. W. Richards
Major-General, Royal Artillery — Major-General M. E. Dennis
Chief Engineer — Major-General J. D. Inglis
Chief Signal Officer — Major-General C. M. F. White

SECOND ARMY

General Officer Commanding-in-Chief
 Lieut-General Sir Miles C. Dempsey

Chief of Staff
 Brigadier M. S. Chilton (to 22.1.45)
 Brigadier H. E. Pyman (from 23.1.45)

FIRST CANADIAN ARMY

General Officer Commanding-in-Chief
 Lieut-General H. D. G. Crerar

Chief of Staff
 Brigadier C. C. Mann

G.H.Q. AND ARMY TROOPS

79th Armoured Division—Major-General Sir Percy C. S. Hobart
1st Tank Bde.† 11th, 42nd† and 49th Royal Tank Regt. (C.D.L.)
30th Armoured Bde. 22nd Dragoons (Flails)
 1st Lothians and Border Horse (Flails)
 2nd County of London Yeomanry (Westminster
 Dragoons) (Flails)

31st Armoured Bde. 1st Fife and Forfar Yeomanry (Crocodiles)
 (from 5.9.44) 4th Royal Tank Regt. (L.V.T.s)
 7th Royal Tank Regt. (Crocodiles)
 49th Armoured Personnel Carrier Regt.
 (Kangaroos and C.D.L.)
 1st Canadian Armoured Personnel Carrier Regt.
 (Kangaroos)

33rd Armoured Bde. The Staffordshire Yeomanry (D.D. tanks)
 (from 18.1.45) 1st Northamptonshire Yeomanry (L.V.T.s)
 1st East Riding Yeomanry (L.V.T.s)
 11th Royal Tank Regt. (L.V.T.s)

1st Armoured Engineer Bde. 5th, 6th and 42nd Armoured Engineer Regts.
 (A.V.R.E.s and L.V.T.s)

Divisional Troops R. Signals—79th Armoured Divisional Signals

Netherlands District—Major-General A. Galloway (from 2.4.45)
 R. Signals—No. 5 Wireless Group

C.D.L. = Searchlight; L.V.T. = Landing Vehicle Tracked; D.D. = Duplex Drive (Amphibian); AVRE = Assault Vehicle, Royal Engineers.

Independent Armoured and Infantry Brigades

<i>4th Armoured Bde.</i>	The Royal Scots Greys 3rd/4th County of London Yeomanry (Sharpshooters) 44th Royal Tank Regt. 2nd Bn. The King's Royal Rifle Corps (Motor)
<i>6th Guards Armoured Bde.</i>	4th Armoured Grenadier Guards 4th Armoured Coldstream Guards 3rd Armoured Scots Guards
<i>8th Armoured Bde.</i>	4th/7th Royal Dragoon Guards 13th/18th Royal Hussars The Nottinghamshire Yeomanry 12th Bn. The King's Royal Rifle Corps (Motor)
<i>34th Armoured Bde.</i>	9th Royal Tank Regt. 107th and 147th Regts. R.A.C.
<i>1st Canadian Armoured Bde.</i>	11th Armoured Regt. (The Ontario Regt.) 12th Armoured Regt. (Three Rivers Regt.) 14th Armoured Regt. (The Calgary Regt.)
<i>2nd Canadian Armoured Bde.</i>	6th Armoured Regt. (1st Hussars) 10th Armoured Regt. (The Fort Garry Horse) 27th Armoured Regt. (The Sherbrooke Fusiliers Regt.)
<i>115th Bde.</i>	4th Northamptonshire Regt. 5th and 30th Royal Berkshire Regt. 3rd Monmouthshire Regt. (ex-11th Armoured Division)
<i>116th Bde. Royal Marine¹</i>	Nos. 27, 28 and 30 Bns. Royal Marines
<i>305th Bde.¹</i>	622nd, 624th and 639th Regts. R.A.
<i>306th Bde.¹</i>	626th, 628th and 636th Regts. R.A.
<i>308th Bde.¹</i>	627th, 629th and 633rd Regts. R.A.
<i>1st Commando Bde.</i>	Nos. 3 and 6 Commandos Nos. 45 and 46 (Royal Marine) Commandos
<i>4th Commando Bde.</i>	No. 4 Commando Nos. 41, 47 and 48 (Royal Marine) Commandos No. 10 (Inter-Allied) Commando†

¹ These brigades of Royal Marines and Royal Artillery and the regiments on page 380 had been retrained as infantry to meet the deficiency referred to on page 142.

APPENDIX IV

*Other Formations and Units**Armoured*

1st Household Cavalry Regt. (Armoured Car)
 G.H.Q. Liaison Regt. R.A.C. (Phantom)
 2nd Armoured Replacement Group
 2nd Armoured Delivery Regt.
 25th Canadian Armoured Delivery Regt. (The
 Elgin Regt.)

Artillery

H.Q. Army Groups R.A. (A.G.R.A.s): 3rd, 4th, 5th, 8th, 9th, 17th and 59th†; 1st and 2nd Canadian

Super Heavy Regts.: 3rd and 61st

Heavy Regts.: 1st, 32nd, 51st, 52nd, 53rd, 56th
 and 59th

Medium Regts.: 3rd, 7th, 9th, 10th, 11th, 13th,
 15th†, 51st, 53rd, 59th, 61st, 63rd, 64th, 65th,
 67th, 68th, 69th, 72nd, 77th, 79th, 84th, 107th,
 121st and 146th; 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th, 5th and 7th
 Canadian

Field Regts.: 4th R.H.A.; 6th, 25th, 32nd, 86th,
 90th (ex-50th Division), 98th, 110th†, 116th†,
 147th, 150th†, 166th and 191st†; 11th and 19th
 Canadian

Survey Regt.: 11th

H.Q. Anti-Aircraft Bdes.: 31st, 50th, 74th, 75th, 76th, 80th, 100th, 101st, 103rd, 105th, 106th and 107th; 5th Royal Marine

Heavy Anti-Aircraft Regts.: 60th, 64th, 86th, 90th,
 98th, 99th, 103rd, 105th, 107th, 108th, 109th,
 110th, 111th, 112th, 113th, 115th, 116th, 118th,
 121st, 132nd, 137th (Mixed), 139th (Mixed),
 146th, 155th (Mixed), 165th, 174th, 176th and
 183rd (Mixed); 3rd Royal Marine; 2nd Canadian

Light Anti-Aircraft Regts.: 4th, 20th, 26th, 32nd,
 54th, 71st, 73rd, 93rd, 109th, 113th, 114th,
 120th, 123rd, 124th, 125th, 126th, 127th, 133rd,
 139th, 149th and 150th; 4th Royal Marine

Searchlight Regts.: 1st, 2nd, 41st, 42nd and 54th

†'Mixed regiments' were composed in part of women of the Auxiliary Territorial Service.

Engineers

H.Q. Army Groups R.E. (A.G.R.E.s): 8th, 10th, 11th, 12th, 13th, 14th and 18th; 1st Canadian

G.H.Q. Troops Engineers: 2nd, 4th, 7th, 8th, 13th, 15th, 18th, 19th, 48th, 50th (ex-50th Division) and 59th (ex-59th Division)
 Airfield Construction Groups: 13th, 16th, 23rd, 24th and 25th
 Army Troops Engineers: 2nd, 6th and 7th; 1st and 2nd Canadian
 2nd and 3rd Bns. Royal Canadian Engineers

Signals

Twenty-First Army Group Headquarters Signals
 Second Army Headquarters Signals
 First Canadian Army Headquarters Signals
 No. 5 Headquarters Signals (at Shaef)
 Air Formation Signals Nos. 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17 and 18
 1st Special Wireless Group

Infantry

4th Royal Northumberland Fusiliers (Machine Gun)
 First Canadian Army Headquarters Defence Bn. (Royal Montreal Regt.)

Army Air Corps

The Glider Pilot Regt.†: 1st and 2nd Wings

Special Air Service

1st and 2nd Special Air Service Regts.
 The Belgian Special Air Service Regt.
 2nd and 3rd French Parachute Bns.

European Allies

<i>1st Belgian Bde.</i>	I, II and III Belgian Bns.
<i>Royal Netherlands Bde. (Princess Irene's)</i>	Composite force of infantry, artillery and reconnaissance sub-units
<i>Czechoslovakian Armoured Bde.</i>	1st, 2nd and 3rd Czechoslovakian Armoured Regts. The Czechoslovakian Field Artillery Regt. The Czechoslovakian Motor Bn.
<i>1st Polish Parachute Bde.†</i>	1st, 2nd and 3rd Polish Parachute Bns.

CORPS

I Corps—Lieut-General J. T. Crocker

- Corps Troops* R.A.C.—Inns of Court Regt. (Armoured Car)
 R.A.—62nd A/Tk., 102nd L.A.A. and 9th Survey
 Regts.
 R.E.—I Corps Troops Engineers
 R. Signals—I Corps Signals

I Airborne Corps†—Lieut-General F. A. M. Browning

- Corps Troops* R. Signals—I Airborne Corps Signals

VIII Corps—Lieut-General Sir Richard N. O'Connor (to 1.12.44)
 Lieut-General E. H. Barker (from 2.12.44)

- Corps Troops* 2nd Household Cavalry Regt. (Armoured Car)
 R.A.—91st† and 63rd A/Tk., 121st L.A.A. and
 10th Survey Regts.
 R.E.—VIII Corps Troops Engineers
 R. Signals—VIII Corps Signals

XII Corps—Lieut-General N. M. Ritchie

- Corps Troops* R.A.C.—1st Royal Dragoons (Armoured Car)
 R.A.—86th A/Tk., 112th L.A.A. and 7th Survey
 Regts.
 R.E.—XII Corps Troops Engineers
 R. Signals—XII Corps Signals

XXX Corps—Lieut-General B. G. Horrocks

- Corps Troops* R.A.C.—11th Hussars (Armoured Car)
 R.A.—73rd A/Tk., 27th L.A.A. and 4th Survey
 Regts.
 R.E.—XXX Corps Troops Engineers
 R. Signals—XXX Corps Signals

I Canadian Corps—Lieut-General C. Foulkes

- Corps Troops* C.A.C.—1st Armoured Car Regt. (The Royal
 Canadian Dragoons)
 R.C.A.—7th A/Tk., 1st L.A.A. (Lanark and Ren-
 frew Scottish) and 1st Survey Regts.
 R.C.E.—I Corps Troops Engineers
 R.C. Signals—I Corps Signals

II Canadian Corps—Lieut-General G. G. Simonds

- Corps Troops* C.A.C.—18th Armoured Car Regt. (12th Manitoba
 Dragoons)
 R.C.A.—6th A/Tk., 6th L.A.A. and 2nd Survey
 Regts.
 R.C.E.—II Corps Troops Engineers
 R.C. Signals—II Corps Signals

A/Tk. = Anti-Tank; L.A.A. = Light Anti-Aircraft.

DIVISIONS

- Guards Armoured Division*—Major-General A. H. S. Adair
- 5th Guards Armoured Bde.* 2nd (Armoured) Grenadier Guards
1st (Armoured) Coldstream Guards
2nd (Armoured) Irish Guards
1st (Motor) Grenadier Guards
- 32nd Guards Bde.* 5th Coldstream Guards
2nd Scots Guards
3rd Irish Guards
1st Welsh Guards†
- Divisional Troops* 2nd Armoured Recce. Welsh Guards
R.A.—55th and 153rd Field, 21st A/Tk. and 94th
L.A.A. Regts.
R.E.—Guards Armoured Divisional Engineers
R. Signals—Guards Armoured Divisional Signals
- 7th Armoured Division*—Major-General G. L. Verney (to 21.11.44)
Major-General L. O. Lyne (from 22.11.44)
- 22nd Armoured Bde.* 5th Royal Inniskilling Dragoon Guards
1st and 5th Royal Tank Regt.
1st Bn. The Rifle Brigade (Motor)
- 131st Infantry Bde.* 1/5th, 1/6th† and 1/7th† Queen's Royal Regt.
2nd Devonshire Regt. (ex-50th Division)
9th Durham Light Infantry (ex-50th Division)
- Divisional Troops* R.A.C.—8th King's Royal Irish Hussars
R.A.—3rd and 5th Regts. R.H.A.; 65th A/Tk. and
15th L.A.A. Regts.
R.E.—7th Armoured Divisional Engineers
R. Signals—7th Armoured Divisional Signals
- 11th Armoured Division*—Major-General G. P. B. Roberts
- 29th Armoured Bde.* 23rd Hussars
2nd Fife and Forfar Yeomanry
3rd Royal Tank Regt.
8th Bn. The Rifle Brigade (Motor)
- 159th Infantry Bde.* 1st Cheshire Regt. (ex-115th Bde.)
4th King's Shropshire Light Infantry
1st Herefordshire Regt.
- Divisional Troops* R.A.C.—15th/19th King's Royal Hussars
R.A.—13th Regt. R.H.A.; 151st Field, 75th A/Tk.
and 58th L.A.A. Regts.
R.E.—11th Armoured Divisional Engineers
R. Signals—11th Armoured Divisional Signals

Recce. = Reconnaissance.

- 1st Airborne Division*†—Major-General R. E. Urquhart
- 1st Parachute Bde.* 1st, 2nd and 3rd Parachute Regt.
- 4th Parachute Bde.* 10th, 11th and 156th Parachute Regt.
- 1st Airlanding Bde.* 1st Border Regt.
2nd South Staffordshire Regt.
7th King's Own Scottish Borderers
- Divisional Troops* R.A.—1st Airlanding Light Regt.
R.E.—1st Airborne Divisional Engineers
R. Signals—1st Airborne Divisional Signals
- 3rd Division*—Major-General L. G. Whistler (to 21.1.45)
Major-General A. Galloway (to 24.2.45)
Major-General L. G. Whistler (from 25.2.45)
- 8th Bde.* 1st Suffolk Regt.
2nd East Yorkshire Regt.
1st South Lancashire Regt.
- 9th Bde.* 2nd Lincolnshire Regt.
1st King's Own Scottish Borderers
2nd Royal Ulster Rifles
- 185th Bde.* 2nd Royal Warwickshire Regt.
1st Royal Norfolk Regt.
2nd King's Shropshire Light Infantry
- Divisional Troops* R.A.C.—3rd Recce. Regt.
R.A.—7th, 33rd and 76th Field, 20th A/Tk. and
92nd L.A.A. Regts.
R.E.—3rd Divisional Engineers
R. Signals—3rd Divisional Signals
Machine Gun—2nd Middlesex Regt.
- 5th Division*—Major-General R. A. Hull
- 13th Bde.* 2nd Cameronians
2nd Wiltshire Regt.
5th Essex Regt.
- 15th Bde.* 1st Green Howards
1st King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry
1st York and Lancaster Regt.
- 17th Bde.* 2nd Royal Scots Fusiliers
2nd Northamptonshire Regt.
6th Seaforth Highlanders
- Divisional Troops* R.A.C.—5th Recce. Regt.
R.A.—91st, 92nd, and 156th Field, 52nd A/Tk. and
18th L.A.A. Regts.
R.E.—5th Divisional Engineers
R. Signals—5th Divisional Signals
Machine Gun—7th Cheshire Regt.

6th Airborne Division—Major-General R. N. Gale (to 7.12.44)
Major-General E. L. Bols (from 8.12.44)

- 3rd Parachute Bde.* 8th and 9th Parachute Regt.
1st Canadian Parachute Bn.
- 5th Parachute Bde.* 7th, 12th and 13th Parachute Regt.
- 6th Airlanding Bde.* 12th Devonshire Regt.
2nd Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire Light
Infantry
1st Royal Ulster Rifles
- Divisional Troops* R.A.C.—6th Airborne Armoured Recce. Regt.
R.A.—53rd Airlanding Light and 2nd Airlanding
A/Tk. Regts.
R.E.—6th Airborne Divisional Engineers
R. Signals—6th Airborne Divisional Signals

15th (Scottish) Division—Major-General C. M. Barber

- 44th (Lowland) Bde.* 8th Royal Scots
6th Royal Scots Fusiliers
7th King's Own Scottish Borderers
- 46th (Highland) Bde.* 9th Cameronians
2nd Glasgow Highlanders
7th Seaforth Highlanders
- 227th (Highland) Bde.* 10th Highland Light Infantry
2nd Gordon Highlanders
2nd Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders
- Divisional Troops* R.A.C.—15th Recce. Regt.
R.A.—131st, 181st and 190th Field, 97th† and
102nd (ex-50th Division) A/Tk. and
119th L.A.A. Regts.
R.E.—15th Divisional Engineers
R. Signals—15th Divisional Signals
Machine Gun—1st Middlesex Regt.

43rd (Wessex) Division—Major-General G. I. Thomas

- 129th Bde.* 4th Somerset Light Infantry
4th and 5th Wiltshire Regt.
- 130th Bde.* 7th Hampshire Regt.
4th and 5th Dorsetshire Regt.
- 214th Bde.* 7th Somerset Light Infantry
1st Worcestershire Regt.
5th Duke of Cornwall's Light Infantry
- Divisional Troops* R.A.C.—43rd Recce. Regt.
R.A.—94th, 112th and 179th Field, 59th A/Tk. and
110th L.A.A. Regts.
R.E.—43rd Divisional Engineers
R. Signals—43rd Divisional Signals
Machine Gun—8th Middlesex Regt.

- 49th (West Riding) Division*—Major-General E. H. Barker (to 29.11.44)
Major-General G. H. A. MacMillan (to 24.3.45)
Major-General S. B. Rawlins (from 28.3.45)
- 56th Bde.* 2nd South Wales Borderers
2nd Gloucestershire Regt.
2nd Essex Regt.
- 146th Bde.* 4th Lincolnshire Regt.
1/4th King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry
Hallamshire Bn. York and Lancaster Regt.
- 147th Bde.* 1st Leicestershire Regt.
11th Royal Scots Fusiliers
7th Duke of Wellington's Regt.
- Divisional Troops* R.A.C.—49th Recce. Regt.
R.A.—69th, 74th (ex-50th Division), 143rd and
185th† Field, 55th A/Tk. and 89th
L.A.A. Regts.
R.E.—49th Divisional Engineers
R. Signals—49th Divisional Signals
Machine Gun—2nd Princess Louise's Kensington
Regt.
- 50th (Northumbrian) Division†*—Major-General D. A. H. Graham (to 16.10.44)
Major-General L. O. Lyne (to 21.11.44)
Major-General D. A. H. Graham (from 27.11.44)
- 69th Bde.†* 5th East Yorkshire Regt.†
6th and 7th Green Howards†
- 151st Bde.†* 6th†, 8th† and 9th Durham Light Infantry
- 231st Bde.†* 2nd Devonshire Regt.
1st Hampshire Regt.†
1st Dorsetshire Regt.†
- Divisional Troops* R.A.C.—61st Recce. Regt.†
R.A.—74th, 90th† and 124th† Field, 102nd A/Tk.
and 25th L.A.A. Regts.
R.E.—50th Divisional Engineers
R. Signals—50th Divisional Signals†
Machine Gun—2nd Cheshire Regt.†
- 51st (Highland) Division*—Major-General T. G. Rennie (killed 24.3.45)
Major-General G. H. A. MacMillan (from 25.3.45)
- 152nd Bde.* 2nd and 5th Seaforth Highlanders
5th Queen's Own Cameron Highlanders
- 153rd Bde.* 5th Black Watch
1st and 5th/7th Gordon Highlanders
- 154th Bde.* 1st and 7th Black Watch
7th Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders

Divisional Troops R.A.C.—2nd Derbyshire Yeomanry
 R.A.—126th, 127th and 128th Field, 61st A/Tk. and
 40th L.A.A. Regts.
 R.E.—51st Divisional Engineers
 R. Signals—51st Divisional Signals
 Machine Gun—1/7th Middlesex Regt.

52nd (Lowland) Division—Major-General E. Hakewill-Smith

155th Bde. 7th/9th Royal Scots
 4th King's Own Scottish Borderers
 6th Highland Light Infantry

156th Bde. 4th/5th Royal Scots Fusiliers
 6th Cameronians
 1st Glasgow Highlanders

157th Bde. 5th King's Own Scottish Borderers
 7th Cameronians
 5th Highland Light Infantry

Divisional Troops R.A.C.—52nd Recce. Regt.
 R.A.—79th, 80th and 186th Field, 1st Mountain,
 54th A/Tk. and 108th L.A.A. Regts.
 R.E.—52nd Divisional Engineers
 R. Signals—52nd Divisional Signals
 Machine Gun—7th Manchester Regt.

53rd (Welsh) Division—Major-General R. K. Ross

71st Bde. 1st Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire Light
 Infantry
 1st Highland Light Infantry
 4th Royal Welch Fusiliers

158th Bde. 1st East Lancashire Regt.
 7th Royal Welch Fusiliers
 1/5th Welch Regt.

160th Bde. 6th Royal Welch Fusiliers
 2nd Monmouthshire Regt.
 4th Welch Regt.

Divisional Troops R.A.C.—53rd Recce. Regt.
 R.A.—81st, 83rd and 133rd Field, 71st A/Tk. and
 116th† and 25th (ex-50th Division)
 L.A.A. Regts.
 R.E.—53rd Divisional Engineers
 R. Signals—53rd Divisional Signals
 Machine Gun—1st Manchester Regt.

1st Canadian Division—Major-General H. W. Foster

1st Canadian Bde. The Royal Canadian Regt.
 The Hastings and Prince Edward Regt.
 48th Highlanders of Canada

- 2nd Canadian Bde.* Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry
The Seaforth Highlanders of Canada
The Loyal Edmonton Regt.
- 3rd Canadian Bde.* Royal 22e Regt.
The Carleton and York Regt.
The West Nova Scotia Regt.
- Divisional Troops* C.A.C.—4th Recce. Regt. (4th Princess Louise
Dragoon Guards)
R.C.A.—1st (R.C.H.A.), 2nd and 3rd Field, 1st
A/Tk. and 2nd L.A.A. Regts.
R.C.E.—1st Canadian Divisional Engineers
R.C. Signals—1st Canadian Divisional Signals
Machine Gun—The Saskatoon Light Infantry
- 2nd Canadian Division*—Major General C. Foulkes (to 9.11.44)
Major-General A. B. Matthews (from 10.11.44)
- 4th Canadian Bde.* The Royal Regiment of Canada
The Royal Hamilton Light Infantry
The Essex Scottish Regt.
- 5th Canadian Bde.* The Black Watch (Royal Highland Regt.) of Canada
Le Régiment de Maisonneuve
The Calgary Highlanders
- 6th Canadian Bde.* Les Fusiliers Mont-Royal
The Queen's Own Cameron Highlanders of Canada
The South Saskatchewan Regt.
- Divisional Troops* C.A.C.—8th Recce Regt. (14th Canadian Hussars)
R.C.A.—4th, 5th and 6th Field, 2nd A/Tk. and 3rd
L.A.A. Regts.
R.C.E.—2nd Canadian Divisional Engineers
R.C. Signals—2nd Canadian Divisional Signals
Machine Gun—The Toronto Scottish Regt.
- 3rd Canadian Division*—Major-General D. C. Spry (to 22.3.45)
Major-General R. H. Keefer (from 23.3.45)
- 7th Canadian Bde.* The Royal Winnipeg Rifles
The Regina Rifle Regt.
1st Bn. The Canadian Scottish Regt.
- 8th Canadian Bde.* The Queen's Own Rifles of Canada
Le Régiment de la Chaudière
The North Shore (New Brunswick) Regt.
- 9th Canadian Bde.* The Highland Light Infantry of Canada
The Stormont, Dundas and Glengarry Highlanders
The North Nova Scotia Highlanders
- Divisional Troops* C.A.C.—7th Recce. Regt. (17th Duke of York's
Royal Canadian Hussars)
R.C.A.—12th, 13th and 14th Field, 3rd A/Tk. and
4th L.A.A. Regts.

R.C.E.—3rd Canadian Divisional Engineers
 R.C. Signals—3rd Canadian Divisional Signals
 Machine Gun—The Cameron Highlanders of
 Ottawa

- 4th Canadian Armoured Division*—Major-General H. W. Foster (to 30.11.44)
 Major-General C. Vokes (from 1.12.44)
- 4th Canadian Armoured Bde.* 21st Armoured Regt. (The Governor General's Foot Guards)
 22nd Armoured Regt. (The Canadian Grenadier Guards)
 28th Armoured Regt. (The British Columbia Regt.)
 The Lake Superior Regt. (Motor)
- 10th Canadian Infantry Bde.* The Lincoln and Welland Regt.
 The Algonquin Regt.
 The Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders of Canada (Princess Louise's)
- Divisional Troops* C.A.C.—29th Recce Regt. (The South Alberta Regt.)
 R.C.A.—15th and 23rd Field, 5th A/Tk. and 8th L.A.A. Regts.
 R.C.E.—4th Canadian Armoured Divisional Engineers
 R.C. Signals—4th Canadian Armoured Divisional Signals
- 5th Canadian Armoured Division*—Major-General B. M. Hoffmeister
- 5th Canadian Armoured Bde.* 2nd Armoured Regt. (Lord Strathcona's Horse (Royal Canadians))
 5th Armoured Regt. (8th Princess Louise's (New Brunswick) Hussars)
 9th Armoured Regt. (The British Columbia Dragoons)
 The Westminster Regt. (Motor)
- 11th Canadian Infantry Bde.* The Perth Regt.
 The Cape Breton Highlanders
 The Irish Regt. of Canada
- Divisional Troops* C.A.C.—3rd Armoured Recce Regt. (The Governor General's Horse Guards)
 R.C.A.—17th and 8th Field, 4th A/Tk. and 5th L.A.A. Regts.
 R.C.E.—5th Canadian Armoured Divisional Engineers
 R.C. Signals—5th Canadian Armoured Divisional Signals

1st Polish Armoured Division—Major-General S. Maczek

<i>10th Polish Armoured Bde.</i>	1st and 2nd Polish Armoured Regts. 24th Polish Armoured (Lancer) Regt. 10th Polish Motor Bn.
<i>3rd Polish Infantry Bde.</i>	1st (Highland), 8th and 9th Polish Bns.
<i>Divisional Troops</i>	10th Polish Mounted Rifle Regt. 1st and 2nd Polish Field, 1st Polish A/Tk. and 1st Polish L.A.A. Regts. 1st Polish Armoured Divisional Engineers 1st Polish Armoured Divisional Signals

LINES OF COMMUNICATION

Headquarters Lines of Communication

Major-General R. F. B. Naylor (to 31.12.44)

Major-General G. Surtees (from 1.1.45)

Nos. 11 and 12 Lines of Communication Areas

Nos. 4, 5, 6, 9, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20 and 21 (ex-No. 101 Beach Sub-Area)

Lines of Communication Sub-Areas

Nos. 7 and 8 Base Sub-Areas

Engineers

Nos. 2, 3, 5 and 6 Railway Construction and Maintenance Groups

Nos. 3, 4 and 7 Railway Operating Groups

No. 1 Canadian Railway Operating Group

Nos. 1 and 3 Railway Workshop Groups

Nos. 2, 6, 8, 9, 10 and 11 Port Operating Groups

Nos. 1, 2, 4, 5 and 6 Port Construction and Repair Groups

Nos. 2, 3 and 4 Inland Water Transport Groups

Signals

Nos. 2, 12, 13 and 17 Lines of Communication Headquarters Signals

No. 1 Canadian Lines of Communication Headquarters Signals

Infantry

5th King's Regt.

1st Buckinghamshire Bn. Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire Light Infantry

18th Durham Light Infantry

600th, 601st, 606th, 607th, 608th, 609th, 611th, 612th, 613th, 614th, 616th, 617th, 619th, 623rd, 625th, 630th, 631st and 637th Regts. R.A.

(see note page 369)

UNITED STATES TWELFTH ARMY GROUP

Commanding General

General Omar N. Bradley

Chief of Staff

Major-General Leven C. Allen

FIRST ARMY	<i>Commanding General</i> —General Courtney H. Hodges <i>Chief of Staff</i> —Major-General William B. Keen
THIRD ARMY	<i>Commanding General</i> —General George S. Patton, Jr. <i>Chief of Staff</i> —Major-General Hugh J. Gaffey (to 2.12.44) Major-General Hobart R. Gay (from 3.12.44)
NINTH ARMY	<i>Commanding General</i> —Lieut-General William H. Simpson <i>Chief of Staff</i> —Major-General James E. Moore
FIFTEENTH ARMY	<i>Commanding General</i> —Lieut-General Leonard T. Gerow <i>Chief of Staff</i> —Colonel O. C. Mood

Corps

<i>III Corps</i>	Major-General John Millikin (to 16.3.45) Major-General James A. Van Fleet (from 17.3.45)
<i>V Corps</i>	Major-General Leonard T. Gerow (to 15.1.45) Major-General Clarence R. Huebner (from 16.1.45)
<i>VII Corps</i>	Lieut-General J. Lawton Collins
<i>VIII Corps</i>	Major-General Troy H. Middleton
<i>XII Corps</i>	Major-General Manton S. Eddy (to 19.4.45) Major-General Stafford LeR. Irwin (from 20.4.45)
<i>XIII Corps</i>	Major-General Alvan C. Gillem, Jr.
<i>XVI Corps</i>	Major-General John B. Anderson
<i>XVIII Airborne Corps</i>	Major-General Matthew B. Ridgway
<i>XIX Corps</i>	Major-General Charles H. Corlett (to 16.10.44) Major-General Raymond S. McLain (from 17.10.44)
<i>XX Corps</i>	Major-General Walton H. Walker
<i>XXII Corps</i>	Major-General Ernest N. Harmon
<i>XXIII Corps</i>	Major-General James A. Van Fleet (to 16.3.45) Major-General Hugh J. Gaffey (from 17.3.45)

	<i>Divisions</i>
<i>Armoured Divisions</i>	2nd, 3rd, 4th, 5th, 6th ¹ , 7th, 8th, 9th, 11th, 13th, 14th ¹ and 16th
<i>Infantry Divisions</i>	1st, 2nd, 4th ¹ , 5th, 8th, 9th, 26th, 28th ¹ , 29th, 30th, 35th, 65th, 66th, 69th, 70th ¹ , 71st ¹ , 75th ¹ , 76th, 78th, 79th ¹ , 80th, 83rd, 84th, 87th ¹ , 89th, 90th, 94th, 95th, 97th, 99th, 102nd, 104th and 106th
<i>Airborne Divisions</i>	17th and 82nd

UNITED STATES SIXTH ARMY GROUP

Commanding General

General Jacob L. Devers

Chief of Staff

Major-General David G. Barr

SEVENTH U.S. ARMY	<i>Commanding General</i> —Lieut-General Alexander M. Patch <i>Chief of Staff</i> —Major-General Arthur A. White
FIRST FRENCH ARMY	<i>Commanding General</i> —General Jean de Lattre de Tassigny <i>Chief of Staff</i> —Brig-General Valluy (to 1.3.45) Brig-General Gonzalez de Linares Colonel Demetz (from 13.4.45)

Corps

<i>VI U.S. Corps</i>	Major-General Lucian K. Truscott (to 24.10.44) Major-General Edward H. Brooks (from 25.10.44)
<i>XV U.S. Corps</i> ²	Major-General Wade H. Haislip
<i>XXI U.S. Corps</i>	Major-General Frank W. Milburn
<i>I French Corps</i>	Lieut-General Emile Béthouart
<i>II French Corps</i>	Lieut-General de Larminat (to 24.9.44) Lieut-General Goislard de Montsabert (from 25.9.44)

Divisions

<i>U.S. Divisions</i>	
<i>Armoured:</i>	10th ² , 12th and 20th
<i>Infantry:</i>	3rd, 36th, 42nd, 44th, 45th, 63rd, 86th ² , 100th and 103rd
<i>Airborne:</i>	101st ²
<i>French Divisions</i>	
<i>Armoured:</i>	1re, 2e ² , 5e
<i>Infantry:</i>	1re de Marche, 2e Marocaine, 3e Algérienne, 4e Marocaine de Montagne, 9e Coloniale, 27e Alpine, 1re, 10e, 14e

¹ These divisions also fought in Sixth Army Group during the campaign.

² These formations also fought in Twelfth Army Group during the campaign.

UNITED STATES FORMATIONS UNDER
 TWENTY-FIRST ARMY GROUP COMMAND
 (for specific operations between 1.9.44 and 7.5.45)

<i>Armies</i>	First and Ninth
<i>Corps</i>	V, VII, XIII, XVI, XVIII Airborne and XIX
<i>Armoured Divisions</i>	2nd, 3rd, 5th, 7th and 8th
<i>Infantry Divisions</i>	1st, 2nd, 8th, 9th, 29th, 30th, 35th, 75th, 78th, 79th, 83rd, 84th, 95th, 99th, 102nd, 104th and 106th
<i>Airborne Divisions</i>	17th, 82nd and 101st

FIRST ALLIED AIRBORNE ARMY

Commanding General

Lieut-General Lewis H. Brereton (U.S.)

Deputy Commander

Lieut-General F. A. M. Browning (Br.)

Chief of Staff

Brig-General Floyd L. Parks (U.S.)

<i>Airborne Corps</i> ¹ :	I British and XVIII United States
<i>Airborne Divisions</i> ¹ :	1st and 6th British; 13th, 17th, 82nd and 101st United States

Part II

NOTES ON BRITISH ARMY WEAPONS
 AND EQUIPMENT

FOR information concerning the first three months of the campaign, and an occasional retrospective survey, the reader is referred to Volume I, Appendix IV.

During the period covered by Volume II the basic organisation of the British Army remained as it had been at the start of the campaign, the division being the largest formation to have a fixed composition. In order to obtain the most effective application of all available resources, the divisional commanders almost invariably operated with brigade or regimental 'groups' to whom they assigned a large proportion of the additional tank, artillery, engineer and other units placed at their disposal. Resources within the army group inevitably changed as experience and research indicated. Particularly was this true as radar and signalling equipment developed and Allied air superiority reduced the need for many anti-aircraft units, thus releasing their personnel for other types of artillery, for work with searchlights or as infantry.

¹ Also shown in the Army Groups in which they operated.

New equipment and weapons were as follows:

Comet Tank. A development of the fast Cromwell but with heavier armour and a new high-velocity 77-mm gun. Good armour piercing performance but very much better with high explosive and against enemy infantry. One armoured division was fully equipped in time for the Rhine crossing and the subsequent drive across north Germany.

Churchill Tank. The number with thicker armour was increased and all 6-pdr guns were replaced by 75-mm guns.

C.D.L. Tank. A Grant tank which could operate an armoured searchlight and still fire its gun. First used operationally at the Rhine crossing in small numbers.

Artillery. The only new guns were super-heavy 8-in and 240-mm howitzers in two regiments of the Army Groups R.A. (A.G.R.A.s).

The rocket made a return as a field artillery weapon in the guise of 'Land Mattress'. In this rôle it was first used in the Walcheren operation by the Canadian Army, by a battery of 30-barrelled projectors manned by L.A.A. personnel. Shortly afterwards a battery was in operation in British Second Army. Though much less accurate than a gun it was a good counter-mortar weapon under suitable conditions.

Throughout the period of this book the policy was to provide as many self-propelled guns as possible.

By January 1945, a great advance had been made by the adaptation to ground warfare of the variable time (V.T.) fuze which operated under the influence of the target. Further to increase the effectiveness of artillery, more Air Observation Post squadrons and aircraft, with their Royal Artillery pilots, were made available.

Armoured Personnel Carriers (Kangaroos). These were doubled in number, each army having its own regiment. This could lift two infantry battalions at a time. Essentially an assault vehicle. In the later stages some 400 were in regular use in Twenty-First Army Group.

Landing Vehicles Tracked (Buffaloes). First used off south bank of the Scheldt in early October. Lightly armoured and equipped with one 20-mm and two machine guns. Propelled by specially shaped tracks. Maximum speed 25 m.p.h. on land, 7 m.p.h. in water. Crew of three soldiers. Capacity: one field gun, Bren carrier, bulldozer or two tons cargo. One regiment could carry an infantry brigade assaulting with two battalions up. 600 L.V.T.s in Twenty-First Army Group.

Terrapin I. Wheeled amphibian. Capacity, 9,000 lbs cargo. British equivalent of the American Dukw.

M29c (Weasel). Tracked amphibious jeep. Capacity, half a ton. Particularly good in mud.

Radar. Developments in this field made the Army's anti-aircraft fire increasingly effective, notably against the flying bomb. Some progress was also being made in adapting radar for use in ground operations, but no offensive equipment of this nature was introduced before the campaign ended.

Part III

NOTES ON SOME ARMY SERVICES

ONE outstanding feature of this campaign was the complete mechanisation of the armies. The implications of this may not at first sight be obvious. Not only were millions of men dependent on mechanical transport for the food on which they lived, for the arms and ammunition with which they fought, but also for almost every sort of movement. From a bicycle or the smallest motor car to the heaviest tank or the largest lorry, all men and materials depended at some point on movement by wheels; and to keep the wheels turning a vast number of men and vehicles were needed. Every army unit had its establishment of vehicles and drivers for its daily needs but for the major transport of the armies the Royal Army Service Corps (and its Canadian and American counterparts) were mainly responsible. But mechanisation applied not only to wheeled transport vehicles but also to Army fighting vehicles, including artillery of many calibres and tracked vehicles of many types and uses. Their repair and recovery after damage in battle was the responsibility of the Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers. Without these corps the armies would soon have been at a standstill and unable to fight. It is not possible in the space available here to describe their multiple and essential duties but it will be well to point to two in particular of the results of mechanisation which were fundamental to the armies' part in the victory of Overlord.

Mechanisation greatly increased the pace of the armies' advance and in doing so gave new emphasis to the importance of roads and bridges on which wheeled transport depended. The daily journeys backwards and forwards over several hundreds of miles between the supply bases and the fighting at the front required a huge amount of maintenance on the heavy lorries employed by the Royal Army Service Corps (to mention here only one transport organisation) while the upkeep of roads and bridges subjected to such heavy traffic and the passage of tanks and other tracked armoured vehicles added to the strain on those roads not built for this purpose. A few illustrations may be quoted.

In large-scale moves to counter the German offensive in the Ardennes and in the final clearance of the enemy from the west bank of the Rhine (Veritable) fifty companies of Engineers and thirty companies of Pioneers maintained 400 miles of existing and 100 miles of newly-made roads and built 95 bridges. For the Rhine crossing 16 floating bridges of various types were built; and beyond the Rhine 508 bridges had to be built between the Rhine and the Elbe. In all 1,525 bridges were built for Twenty-First Army Group during Overlord, over 2,000,000 tons of stone were quarried for road work, and 125 airfields were also constructed or repaired. And it will be realised that the American armies had to provide for the heavy traffic of larger forces and had much longer mileage of roads to deal with in the extensive area for which they were responsible.

Another formation which played an essential part in operations at every level was the Royal Corps of Signals, aided in every unit by regimental

signallers. It is no exaggeration to say that without a complete system of communications between commanders of every rank and units of every size, Overlord would never have been possible. For armies without adequate communications would be as useless as human beings without any nervous system. The upkeep of signal equipment and of radar sets for the artillery was another task of the Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers.

Another service of universal importance to the whole Army (and similarly to all the Allied naval and air forces) was the care of health and hygiene. In Twenty-First Army Group the British Royal Army Medical Corps and the Royal Canadian Army Medical Corps were responsible, with medical officers attached to front-line units, doctors in casualty clearing stations and hospitals, and the nursing sisters of Queen Alexandra's Imperial Military Nursing Service and of the Royal Canadian Army Medical Corps, whose skill and never-failing care were largely responsible for the recovery of many men wounded in battle. Blood transfusion, modern surgery and the use of up-to-date drugs and penicillin saved many badly wounded men from death or permanent disablement. There was never, during the campaign, any serious epidemic.

Other contributors to the welfare of the troops were the Navy, Army and Air Force Institutes (Naafi) and a number of voluntary organisations, including the British Red Cross and St. John's Ambulance War Organisation, the Y.M.C.A. clubs and the Entertainments National Service Association (Ensa).

The armed forces owed a great deal to the example and devoted service of the naval, army and air force chaplains both at the forefront of the fighting and behind the front lines.

A major part in promoting the comfort of the armies was the two-way postal service between the forces engaged in Overlord and their friends and families at home. Letters from men on active service were flown home and then distributed by the Post Offices; letters from home addressed to men overseas by name, rank and number were flown out and distributed almost miraculously by the army Postal Service and reached them whether they were engaged in battle or behind the front.

Though not a military formation, the public press and broadcasting services played a highly valuable rôle in circulating news of what was happening at the front and at home. This helped to sustain the spirit of both the nation at home and the men on active service. Over a hundred accredited correspondents of newspapers, the B.B.C. and the American Broadcasting Station in Europe sailed with the first Allied troops to be landed in France on D-day and their numbers were steadily increased as more troops followed and more ground was won. Towards the end of Overlord the body of accredited press correspondents with the forces represented every type of newspaper and periodical and radio corporations and photographic services for both motion and still pictures. To the soldier secrecy is a most important weapon: to the press it is anathema. But civilian effort had produced the fighting formations and the equipment needed to achieve victory, and both soldiers and civilians wished to know all about the war that did not have to be kept from the enemy.

Knowledge of the war's progress and of conditions at home was the surest way to maintain morale of the troops and of the public. General Eisenhower has recorded that the accredited press representatives 'could, with complete safety and mutual advantage, be taken into the confidence of the commander' and he 'found that correspondents habitually responded to candour, frankness and understanding'.¹ Certainly the troops and people at home avidly seized on the newspapers which reached them regularly and waited eagerly for the B.B.C.'s frequent broadcasts.

Also to be remembered with gratitude are the civilians whose labours at home in farm and factory provided the Services so liberally with the means and weapons with which Overlord was won.

¹ Eisenhower, *Crusade in Europe*, p. 329.

APPENDIX V

The Allied Air Forces

Part I

FORCES ENGAGED

IN Volume I of *Victory in the West*, Appendix VI, were listed the principal Allied air forces which were engaged in Overlord up to the end of August 1944.

Between the 1st of September, 1944 and the close of the campaign on the 7th of May, 1945 two major changes in headquarter organisation took place, both on the 16th of October, 1944. From that date Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Air Force ceased to exist and was absorbed into Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Force; and Air Defence of Great Britain reverted to Air Ministry control and was redesignated Fighter Command.

The principal components of the Allied air forces supporting the campaign in its final stage are shown below.

ALLIED EXPEDITIONARY AIR FORCE

Air Commander-in-Chief (to 15.10.44)

Air Chief Marshal Sir Trafford L. Leigh-Mallory (Br.)

Senior Air Staff Officer (to 15.10.44)

Air Vice-Marshal H. E. P. Wigglesworth (Br.)

ROYAL AIR FORCE—SECOND TACTICAL AIR FORCE

Air Marshal Commanding

Air Marshal Sir Arthur Coningham

Senior Air Staff Officer

Air Vice-Marshal V. E. Groom

34 Recce. Wing

16 Squadron
69 Squadron
140 Squadron

Spitfire
Wellington
Mosquito

No. 2 Group—Air Vice-Marshal B. E. Embry

136 Wing
137 Wing
138 Wing
139 Wing
140 Wing

418 (RCAF), 605 Squadrons
226, 342 (Fr) Squadrons
107, 305 (Pol), 613 Squadrons
98, 180, 320 (Dutch) Squadrons
21, 461 (RAAF), 487 (RNZAF)
Squadrons

Mosquito
Mitchell
Mosquito
Mitchell
Mosquito

No. 83 Group—Air Vice-Marshal H. Broadhurst

39 (RCAF) Recce. Wing	400 (RCAF), 414 (RCAF), 430 (RCAF) Squadrons	Spitfire
121 Wing	175, 184, 245 Squadrons	Typhoon
122 Wing	3, 56, 80, 486 (RNZAF) Squadrons 616 Squadron	Tempest Meteor
124 Wing	137, 181, 182, 247 Squadrons	Typhoon
125 Wing	41, 130, 350 (Belgian) Squadrons	Spitfire
126 (RCAF) Wing	401 (RCAF), 402 (RCAF), 411 (RCAF), 412 (RCAF) Squadrons	Spitfire
127 (RCAF) Wing	403 (RCAF), 416 (RCAF), 421 (RCAF), 443 (RCAF) Squadrons	Spitfire
143 (RCAF) Wing	438 (RCAF), 439 (RCAF), 440 (RCAF) Squadrons	Typhoon
A.O.P.s	653, 658, 659, 662 Squadrons	Auster

No. 84 Group—Air Vice-Marshal L. O. Brown (to 9.11.44)

Air Vice-Marshal E. C. Hudleston (from 10.11.44)

35 Recce. Wing	2, 4 (PR), 268 Squadrons	Spitfire
123 Wing	164, 183, 198, 609 Squadrons	Typhoon
131 (Pol) Wing	302 (Pol), 308 (Pol), 317 (Pol) Squadrons	Spitfire
132 (Nor) Wing	66, 127, 322 (Dutch) Squadrons	Spitfire
135 Wing	33, 222, 274 Squadrons 349 (Belgian) Squadron	Typhoon Spitfire
145 (Fr) Wing	74, 340 (Fr), 341 (Fr), 345 (Fr), 485 (RNZAF) Squadrons	Spitfire
146 Wing	193, 197, 263, 266 Squadrons	Typhoon
A.O.P.s	652, 657, 660, 664 (RCAF), 665 Squadrons	Auster

No. 85 Group—Air Vice-Marshal C. R. Steele (to 25.4.45)

Air Vice-Marshal D. A. Boyle (from 26.4.45)

142 Wing	276 Air/Sea Rescue Squadron	Spitfire, Walrus
148 Wing	264, 409 (RCAF) Squadrons	Mosquito
149 Wing	219, 410 (RCAF), 488 (RCAF) Squadrons	Mosquito

Airfield Construction 5352, 5353, 5354, 5355, 5357

Wings

Airfield Construction 5001, 5002, 5005, 5006, 5007, 5008, 5009, 5012,
Squadrons 5013, 5014, 5017, 5022, 5023

Balloon Wing 159

Balloon Squadrons 965, 967, 974, 976, 991, 992, 997, 980

Balloon Unit "M"

Recce. = Reconnaissance; RCAF = Royal Canadian Air Force; RAAF = Royal Australian Air Force; RNZAF = Royal New Zealand Air Force; Fr = French; Pol = Polish; A.O.P. = Air Observation Post; PR = Photographic Reconnaissance; Nor = Norwegian.

Royal Air Force Regiment—Brigadier M. A. Green

Armoured Squadrons	2742, 2757, 2777, 2781, 2804, 2806	
Light Anti-Aircraft Squadrons	2701, 2703, 2715, 2734, 2736, 2760, 2768, 2773, 2791, 2794, 2800, 2809, 2812, 2817, 2819, 2823, 2824, 2826, 2834, 2838, 2845, 2872, 2873, 2874, 2875, 2876, 2880, 2881	
Rifle Squadrons	2713, 2717, 2719, 2724, 2726, 2729, 2731, 2738, 2740, 2741, 2749, 2750, 2765, 2768, 2770, 2786, 2798, 2805, 2807, 2811, 2816, 2827, 2829, 2831, 2843, 2844, 2848, 2853, 2856, 2862, 2863, 2865, 2868, 2871, 2879, 2883	

Royal Air Force—Special Groups

No. 38 Group—Air Vice-Marshal L. N. Hollinghurst (to 17.10.44)
 (Airborne Air Vice-Marshal J. R. Scarlett-Streatfeild (from 18.10.44)
 Forces)

161 (Special Duties) Squadron	Stirling, Hudson
190, 196, 295, 299, 570, 620 Squadrons	Stirling
296, 297, 298, 644 Squadrons	Halifax

No. 46 Group—Air Commodore A. L. Fiddament (to 15.9.44)
 (Transport) Air Commodore L. Darvall (from 16.9.44)

48, 233, 271, 437 (RCAF), 512, 575 Squadrons	Dakota
--	--------

UNITED STATES NINTH AIR FORCE

*Commanding General*Lieut-General Hoyt S. Vandenberg¹*Chief of Staff*

Brig-General Victor H. Strahm

9 Photographic Reconnaissance Group (Provisional) (4 squadrons)	Lightning, Havoc, Mustang
--	---------------------------------

U.S. IX Tactical —Major-General Elwood R. Quesada (to 20.4.45)

<i>Air Command</i>	Brig-General Ralph F. Stearley (from 21.4.45)	
70 Wing ²	36, 365, 404, 474 Groups ² (12 squadrons)	Thunderbolt, Lightning
	67 Tactical Reconnaissance Group (3 squadrons)	Mustang
	422 Night Fighter Squadron	Black Widow, Havoc

¹ Names from W. F. Craven and J. L. Cate, *The Army Air Forces in World War II*, vol. III (Chicago, 1951), and M. Maurer, *Air Force Units of World War II* (Dept. of the Air Force, Washington, D.C., 1961).

² In the United States Army Air Force, wings correspond to the Royal Air Force groups and groups to the Royal Air Force wings.

U.S. XIX Tactical Air Command—Major-General Otto P. Weyland

100 Wing	48, 354, 362, 367, 368, 371, 405 Groups (21 squadrons)	Thunderbolt, Mustang
	10 Photographic Reconnaissance Group (3 squadrons)	Lightning, Mustang
	425 Night Fighter Squadron	Black Widow, Havoc

U.S. XXIX Tactical Air Command—Brig-General Richard E. Nugent
(Provisional)

	366, 370, 373, 406 Groups (12 squadrons)	Thunderbolt, Mustang
	363 Tactical Reconnaissance Group (3 squadrons)	Lightning, Mustang

U.S. 9th Bombardment Division—Major-General Samuel E. Anderson

97 Wing	409, 410, 416 Groups (12 squadrons)	Havoc, Invader, Marauder
98 Wing	323, 387, 394, 397 Groups (16 squadrons)	Marauder
99 Wing	322, 344, 386, 391 Groups (16 squadrons)	Marauder, Invader
	1 Pathfinder Squadron	Marauder

*Under operational control of First Allied Airborne Army:**U.S. IX Troop Carrier Command*—Major-General Paul L. Williams

52 Wing	61, 313, 314, 315, 316, 349 Groups (24 squadrons)	Dakota
53 Wing	434, 435, 436, 437, 438 Groups (20 squadrons)	Dakota
50 Wing	439, 440, 441, 442 Groups (16 squadrons)	Dakota
	Pathfinder Group (Provisional) (4 squadrons)	Dakota

UNITED STATES FIRST TACTICAL AIR FORCE
(PROVISIONAL)*Commanding General*

Major-General Ralph Royce (to 28.1.45)

Brig-General Gordon P. Saville (to 21.2.45)

Major-General Robert M. Webster (from 22.2.45)

Chief of Staff

Colonel Clarence E. Crumrine

U.S. XII Tactical—Brig-General Gordon P. Saville (to 28.1.45)*Air Command* Brig-General Glenn O. Barcus (from 29.1.45)

64 Fighter Wing	27, 50, 86, 324, 358 Groups (15 squadrons)	Thunderbolt
-----------------	---	-------------

	69 Tactical Reconnaissance Group (4 squadrons)	Lightning, Mustang
	415 Night Fighter Squadron	Beaufighter
	417 Night Fighter Squadron	Black Widow
42 Bomb Wing	17, 320, 31 (FAF), 34 (FAF) Groups (14 squadrons)	Marauder
<i>First French Air Corps</i> —Brig-General Paul Gerardot		
	1 (FAF), 3 (FAF), 4 (FAF) Groups (9 squadrons)	Spitfire, Thunderbolt
	I/33 Photographic Reconnaissance Squadron	Lightning
	II/33 Tactical Reconnaissance Squadron	Mustang
<i>French Western Air Forces</i> —Colonel C. Milinior		
	Group Patrie (4 squadrons)	Potez, Morane, Simoun, Spitfire, Dauntless, Douglas, Maryland, Dewoitine, Ju.88
	Naval Group (2 squadrons)	Dauntless

ALLIED STRATEGIC AIR FORCE

ROYAL AIR FORCE—BOMBER COMMAND

Air Officer Commanding-in-Chief

Air Chief Marshal Sir Arthur T. Harris

Deputy Air Officer Commanding-in-Chief

Air Marshal Sir Robert H. M. S. Saundby

Senior Air Staff Officer

Air Vice-Marshal H. S. P. Walmsley

No. 1 Group—Air Vice-Marshal E. A. B. Rice (to 11.2.45)

Air Vice-Marshal R. S. Blucke (from 12.2.45)

12, 100, 101, 103, 150, 153, 166, 170, 300 (Pol),
460 (RAAF), 550, 576, 625, 626 Squadrons

Lancaster

No. 3 Group—Air Vice-Marshal R. Harrison15, 75, 90, 115, 138, 149, 186, 195, 218, 514,
622 Squadrons

Lancaster

No. 4 Group—Air Vice-Marshal C. R. Carr (to 11.2.45)

Air Vice-Marshal J. R. Whitley (from 12.2.45)

10, 51, 76, 77, 78, 102, 158, 346 (Fr), 347 (Fr),
466 (RAAF), 640 Squadrons

Halifax

FAF = French Air Force.

- No. 5 Group*—Air Vice-Marshal The Hon. R. A. Cochrane
(to 15.1.45)
Air Vice-Marshal H. A. Constantine (from 16.1.45)
9, 44 (Rhodesian), 49, 50, 57, 61, 106, 189, Lancaster
207, 227, 463 (RAAF), 467 (RAAF), 617,
619, 630 Squadrons
- No. 6 R.C.A.F. Group*—Air Vice-Marshal C. M. McEwen, R.C.A.F.
408, 415, 419, 420, 424, 425, 426, 427, 428, Lancaster,
429, 431, 432, 433, 434 R.C.A.F. Squadrons Halifax
- No. 8 Pathfinder Group*—Air Vice-Marshal D. C. T. Bennett
7, 35, 83, 97, 156, 405 (RCAF), 582, 635 Lancaster
Squadrons
105, 109, 128, 139, 142, 162, 163, 571, 608, 627, Mosquito
692 Squadrons
- No. 100 Bomber Support Group*—Air Vice-Marshal E. B. Addison
23, 85, 141, 157, 169, 239, 515 Bomber Support Mosquito
Squadrons
171, 199, 462 (RAAF) Bomber Support Halifax
Squadrons
192 Bomber Support Squadron Mosquito,
Halifax
214 Bomber Support Squadron Fortress
223 Bomber Support Squadron Fortress,
Liberator

UNITED STATES EIGHTH AIR FORCE

Commanding General

Lieut-General James H. Doolittle

Deputy Commander

Major-General Earle E. Partridge

Chief of Staff

Brig-General John H. Samford

7 Photographic Reconnaissance Group Lightning,
(4 squadrons) Spitfire*1st Air Division*—Major-General Robert B. Williams (to 21.10.44)
Major-General Howard M. Turner (from 22.10.44)91, 92, 303, 305, 306, 351, 379, 381, 384, 398, Fortress
401, 457 Groups (48 squadrons)*2nd Air Division*—Major-General William E. Kepner44, 93, 389, 392, 445, 446, 448, 458, 466, 467, Liberator
491 Groups (44 squadrons)

3rd Air Division—Major-General Earle E. Partridge

34, 94, 95, 96, 100, 385, 388, 390, 447, 452, 486, Fortress
487, 490, 493 Groups (55 squadrons)

VIII Fighter Command—Brig-General Francis H. Griswold (to 16.10.44)

Colonel Benjamin J. Webster (to 18.4.45)

Colonel Robert W. Humphreys (from 19.4.45)

65 Wing	4, 56, 355, 356, 479 Groups (15 squadrons)	} Mustang, Thunderbolt
66 Wing	55, 78, 339, 353, 357 Groups (15 squadrons)	
67 Wing	20, 352, 359, 361, 364 Groups (15 squadrons)	

ROYAL AIR FORCE—HOME COMMANDS

FIGHTER COMMAND

Air Marshal Commanding

Air Marshal Sir Roderic M. Hill

Senior Air Staff Officer

Air Vice-Marshal W. B. Callaway (to 31.1.45)

Air Vice-Marshal G. H. Ambler (from 1.2.45)

No. 10 Group—Air Vice-Marshal J. B. Cole-Hamilton (to 31.10.44)

Air Commodore A. V. Harvey (from 1.11.44)

26 Squadron	Mustang
504 Squadron	Meteor

No. 11 Group—Air Vice-Marshal H. W. L. Saunders (to 31.10.44)

Air Vice-Marshal J. B. Cole-Hamilton (from 1.11.44)

25, 29, 151, 307 (Pol), 406 (RCAF), 456 (RAAF) Squadrons	Mosquito
64, 118, 122, 126, 129, 165, 234, 303 (Pol), 306 (Pol), 309 (Pol), 315 (Pol), 316 (Pol), 442 (RCAF), 611 Squadrons	Mustang
124, 310 (Czech), 312 (Czech), 313 (Czech), 331 (Nor), 332 (Nor), 441 (RCAF), 451 (RAAF), 453 (RAAF) Squadrons	Spitfire

No. 12 Group—Air Vice-Marshal M. Henderson (to 31.12.44)

Air Vice-Marshal J. W. Baker (from 1.1.45)

1, 91, 602, 603 Squadrons	Spitfire
125 (Newfoundland) Squadron	Mosquito

No. 13 Group—Air Commodore J. A. Boret

19, 65 Squadrons	Mustang
329 (Fr) Squadron	Spitfire

COASTAL COMMAND

Air Officer Commanding-in-Chief

Air Chief Marshal Sir W. Sholto Douglas

Senior Air Staff Officer

Air Vice-Marshal A. B. Ellwood

540, 541, 542, 544 Photographic Reconnaissance Squadrons	Spitfire, Mustang, Mosquito
278, 279, 280, 281, 282 Air/Sea Rescue Squadrons	Warwick, Sea Otter, Walrus, Hurricane
517, 518, 519, 521 Meteorological Squadrons	Halifax, Fortress, Spitfire, Hurricane

No. 16 Group—Air Vice-Marshal F. L. Hopps

119 Squadron	Swordfish
236 Squadron	Beaufighter
254 Squadron	Beaufighter, Mosquito
524, 612 Squadrons	Wellington
810, 822 Fleet Air Arm Squadrons (attached)	Barracuda

No. 18 Group—Air Vice-Marshal S. P. Simpson

58, 502 Squadrons	Halifax
86, 206, 224, 311 (Czech), 547 Squadrons	Liberator (Leigh Light)
143, 235, 248, 404 Squadrons	Mosquito
144, 455 (RAAF), 489 (RNZAF) Squadrons	Beaufighter
210 Squadron	Catalina (Leigh Light)
330 (Nor) Squadron	Sunderland
333 (Nor) Squadron	Catalina, Mosquito

*No. 19 Group—Air Vice-Marshal Sir Brian E. Baker (to 30.11.44)
Air Vice-Marshal F. H. M. Maynard (from 1.12.44)*

10 (RAAF), 228, 422 (RCAF), 461 (RAAF) Squadrons	Sunderland
14, 304 (Pol), 407 (RCAF) Squadrons	Wellington (Leigh Light)
179 Squadron	Warwick (Leigh Light)
103, 105, 107, 110, 112 United States Navy Squadrons (attached)	Liberator
63 United States Navy Squadron detachment (attached)	Catalina

No. 15 Group of this command is not listed here as it operated outside the campaign area.

Part II

NOTES ON ALLIED AIRCRAFT
AND WEAPONS EMPLOYED

WHILE the overall numerical strength of the Allied air forces remained substantially the same as it had been at the start of the campaign, the main feature of their operations during its second period was the employment of an ever increasing proportion of the aircraft and equipment which had proved the most effective during the preceding months.

In Royal Air Force Bomber Command the Lancaster bomber squadrons were built up from 38 to 57, largely in replacement of the Halifax whose maximum bomb lift¹ was 11,000 lbs as against the Lancaster's 15,000 lbs and maximum range 1,650 miles as against 1,850. At the same time, the command's unarmed and unarmoured Mosquitos, which could reach Berlin with a 4,000-lb bomb, were doubled in number. The United States Eighth Air Force, on the other hand, was content with its Fortress and Liberator bombers but urgently needed to provide them with more long-range fighter escorts, namely Mustangs, which operated over Berlin and even beyond. By re-equipping Lightning and Thunderbolt units the Mustangs were eventually doubled.

Other Allied commands saw a number of changes in aircraft but on a smaller scale. The first squadron of British jet fighters, Meteors, was in action under Second Tactical Air Force in late April, 1945 during the Elbe crossing, with a maximum speed of 445 m.p.h. and a service ceiling of 42,000 ft. They did not meet any German aircraft and so used their four 20-mm guns against ground targets. Halifaxes were doubled in No. 38 Group (Airborne Forces) and not only increased its lift but made the group much more effective for bombing. In the Ninth Air Force several squadrons of Marauders and Havoc medium bombers were re-equipped with Invaders. Though armed with 18 machine guns this aircraft had a higher speed and greater range than its predecessors.

Radar aids were steadily developed, both British and American, and as the ground forces approached the German frontier became increasingly effective and much more accurate, G-H being the most efficient all-weather technique. At the same time bomb sights were improved.

The only new bomb produced during the period was the British 'Grand Slam', of 22,000 lbs high explosive, which could be carried by suitably modified Lancasters. It was first used operationally on the 14th of March, 1945. Altogether Bomber Command dropped 41 Grand Slams before the campaign ended, with considerable success against bridges and viaducts.²

¹ Average weight of bombs dropped by some British aircraft during the war: Halifax, 6,834 lbs; Lancaster, 9,186 lbs; Mosquito, 2,101 lbs.

² Webster & Frankland, *The Strategic Air Offensive* . . . , vol. III, pp. 202-205.

THE RÔLE OF AIR POWER IN OVERLORD

THE most outstanding feature of Overlord was the major part played by Allied air power. The fighting in North Africa, Sicily, Italy and the Mediterranean had shown conclusively that without the collaboration of appropriate air forces neither the navy nor the army could fight with full effect: air forces had become an essential factor in war at sea, on land and in the air.

After the outbreak of the Second World War two main types of air forces were developed. The tactical air forces resulted from our experience of fighting in the Middle East and North Africa. They gave close support to the Allied armies by protecting them from interference by the enemy's air forces and by attacking the enemy's ground forces. Secondly, there were the heavy bombers, organised as strategic air forces. These formed what was virtually a *fourth arm*, knowing no boundary or enemy front, able to attack any position of strategic importance to the enemy within their range—to maintain a separate *strategic air offensive* independent of any other arm. Bomber Command, which provided the strategic bombers for Britain, had started the war with aircraft which were inadequate and crews insufficiently trained for the long-distance bombing of Germany but since then great advances in design and power had been developed and matched by the United States. In April, 1944 Bomber Command and the United States Eighth Air Force had available together a daily average of over 2,000 heavy bombers and trained crews. By April, 1945 they had together a daily average of nearly 4,000, in spite of considerable losses in action.

During the progress of Overlord both the skill of aircrews and the operational possibilities of aircraft greatly improved and by the last six months reached their peak. In that period the strategic offensive finally achieved three main objectives, namely, a drastic reduction of the German war production and supply of oil and petroleum, widespread damage and destruction of enemy communications throughout Germany, and the destruction and damage of numerous German industrial towns and cities. By then the bombers had won virtual superiority in the air, first in daylight and eventually in darkness, by the development of new scientific techniques (mainly due to radar and radar counter-measures), the provision of new and more powerful bombs and, finally, by the Allied armies' advance and consequent capture of German-occupied territory and the overrunning of the enemy's early warning system.

There were and have remained some who disapproved of the strategic air offensive on moral grounds. But during the campaign there was no widespread expression of disapproval or evidence that the public questioned the view that such air attacks helped to reduce the German war-making capacity and were therefore justified. Certainly no moral considerations affected Germany's bombing policy, which was limited only by Allied progress on the Continent and her own need to concentrate on her fighter defence of the Reich.

All air forces worked together when desirable, including the other British air forces, Fighter Command and Coastal Command, intended mainly for home defence against enemy air attack and for maritime operations in home waters. These joined in the Overlord fighting as required. Finally, both the Allies had each a large transport command, whose first task was the conveyance of airborne troops into battle but which was also of great value for the carriage of supplies in extension of other lines of communications. They were also used to repatriate Allied prisoners of war released at the end of the war.

Thanks to Allied air superiority valuable advantage had been gained on three occasions by the use of the First Allied Airborne Army. At the opening of the assault on D-day a British airborne division had seized a bridgehead over the Orne on the eastern flank and in the west two United States airborne divisions had secured a way through a large flooded area by which the enemy had tried to hamper an Allied landing. In the Arnhem operation one British and two American airborne divisions had facilitated the seizure of a bridgehead over the Waal at Nijmegen and the winning of a 60-mile salient in enemy-held territory. Two Allied airborne divisions had joined in the assault across the Rhine. This use of airborne troops on a large scale with appropriate weapons and equipment was further conclusive proof of the value and power of air forces and of their multiple uses in war. Certainly the Allied air forces contributed a large share in the winning of a striking victory.

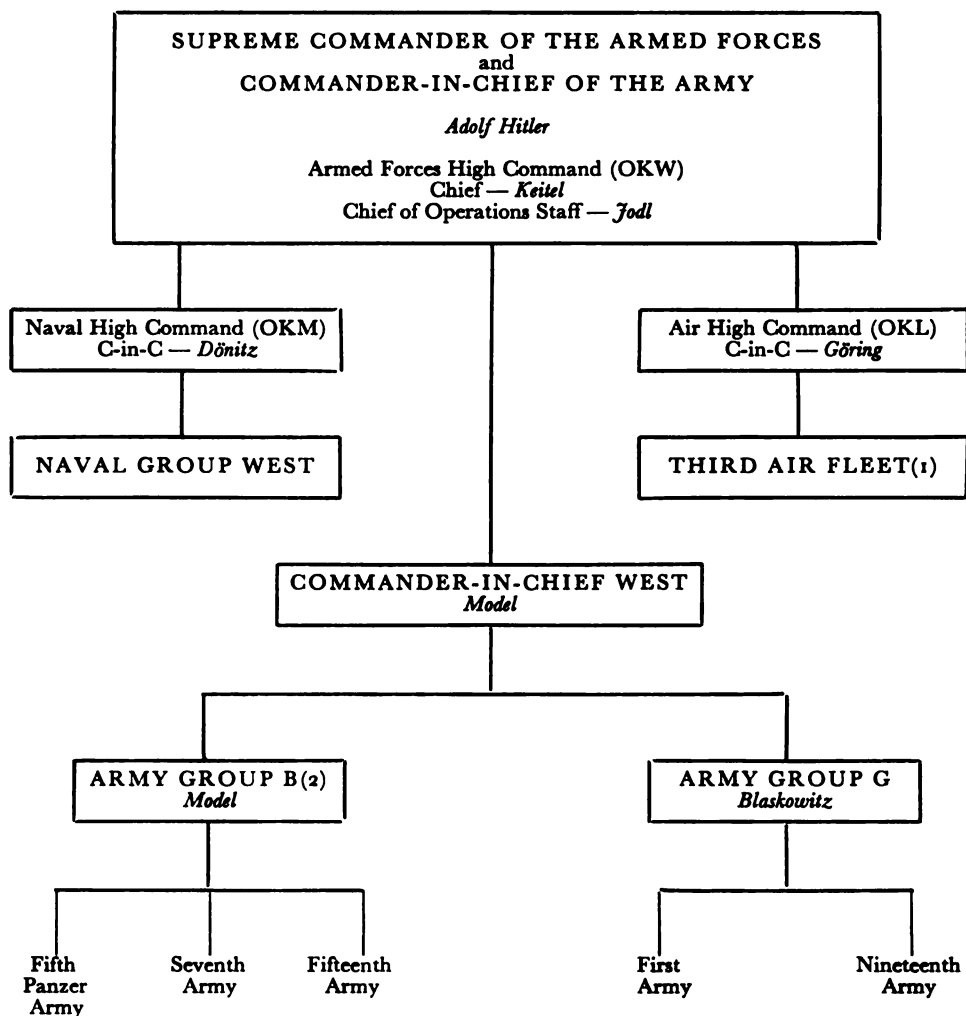
APPENDIX VI

The Enemy

Part I

GERMAN COMMAND IN THE WEST¹

September 1st, 1944



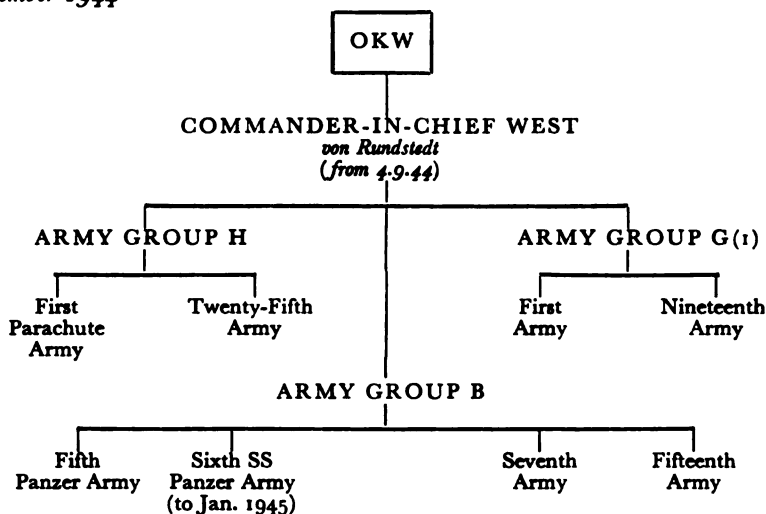
Notes: (1) Third Air Fleet: renamed Air Command West, September 1944.

(2) Armed Forces Command Netherlands also under command Army Group B.

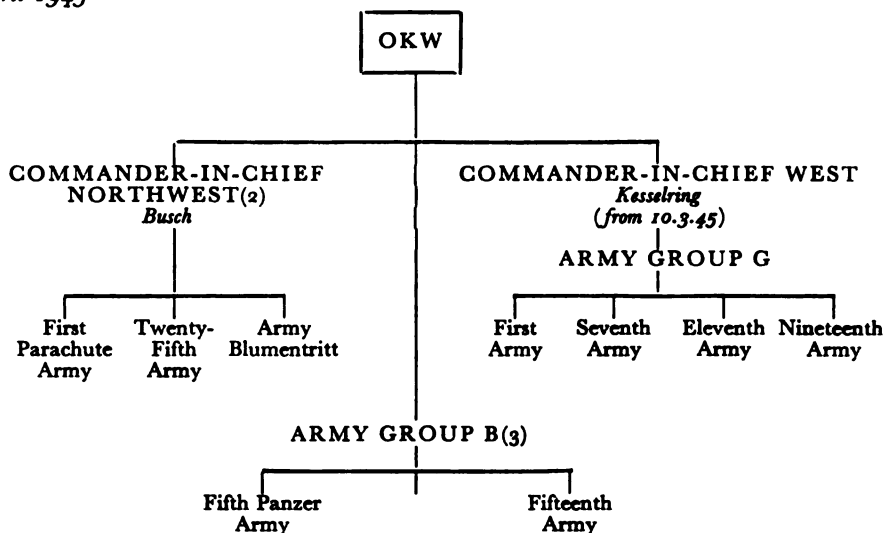
¹ These tables are compiled from material in Schramm, *KTB des Oberkommandos der Wehrmacht and Die Höheren Dienststellen der Wehrmacht* (Institut für Zeitgeschichte, Munich, 1953).

Two major changes in organisation in the West were made on the dates noted below:

10th November 1944



7th April 1945



Notes: (1) From 26.11.44 to 21.1.45 the part of this force in the Upper Rhine was under the command of Himmler, directly under O.K.W.

(2) O.B. Northwest was formed from Army Group H.

(3) Army Group Commanders were as below:

Army Group B *Model*.

Army Group G *Blaskowitz, Balck, Hausser and Schulz*.

Army Group H *Student and Blaskowitz*.

Part II

GERMAN LAND FORCES ENCOUNTERED BY THE ALLIES

BETWEEN September the 1st, 1944 and May the 7th, 1945 the Allied forces encountered the following German formations:

Panzer Corps: I SS, II SS, XXXIX, XLVII and LVIII.

Infantry Corps: II Parachute, IV Luftwaffe, XII SS, XIII SS, XIII (Felber), XIV SS, XVIII SS, XXV, XXX, LIII, LXIII, LXIV, LXV z.b.V. (V-weapons), LXVI, LXVII, LXXIV, LXXX, LXXXI, LXXXII, LXXXIV, LXXXV, LXXXVI, LXXXVIII, LXXXIX, XC and Feldt.

Panzer Divisions: 1st SS, 2nd SS, 9th, 9th SS, 10th SS, 11th, 12th SS, 21st, 116th, Panzer Lehr, 233rd Training and Clausewitz.

Panzer Grenadier Divisions: 3rd, 15th, 17th SS and 25th.

Infantry Divisions: 2nd Mountain, 2nd Parachute, 3rd Parachute, 5th Parachute, 6th SS Mountain, 6th Parachute, 7th Parachute (Erdmann), 8th Parachute, 9th VG (*Volksgrenadier*), 12th VG, 16th VG, 18th VG, 19th VG, 26th VG, 27th SS, 28th SS, 30th SS, 34th SS, 36th VG, 45th, 47th VG, 48th, 49th, 59th, 62nd VG, 64th, 70th, 79th VG, 84th, 85th, 89th, 91st, 106th, 159th, 167th VG, 172nd Div. Staff, 176th, 180th, 183rd VG, 189th, 190th, 198th, 212th VG, 219th, 226th, 245th, 246th VG, 249th VG, 256th VG, 257th VG, 265th, 269th, 272nd VG, 275th, 276th, 277th VG, 326th VG, 331st, 338th, 340th VG, 344th, 346th, 347th, 348th, 352nd VG, 353rd, 361st VG, 363rd VG, 405th, 406th Div. Staff, 416th, 462nd VG, 526th Div. Staff, 553rd VG, 559th VG, 560th VG, 604th Div. Staff, 606th Div. Staff, 703rd, 708th VG, 711th, 712th, 716th, 719th, 805th Div. Staff and 906th Div. Staff.

During the last weeks of the campaign the following formations of divisional status were also engaged by the Allies among others of a more ephemeral kind: 21st Flak, 22nd Flak, 2nd Naval, 11th Naval, 63rd, 149th, 325th 'Shadow', 471st Div. Staff, 480th, 490th, 616th Div. Staff, 617th Div. Staff, 905th z.b.V., Hamburg, Alpen, Bayern, Thüringen and Donau.

The basic organisation and equipment of the German land forces remained to the end of the war substantially as described in Volume I, Appendix V. The only major change was the introduction in the autumn of 1944 of the Volksgrenadier Division, a slightly smaller version of the standard '1944 Establishment', only some 10,000 strong, though with a larger number of small automatic weapons and bazookas. This division existed side by side with the '1944' division.

The 'divisional staffs' (*Division Nummer*) were divisional headquarters of the Replacement Army in Germany, which, with a variable number of battalions under command, fought as divisions. This was one of the means by which the Germans were able to reinforce the front during the autumn of 1944 and again in the following spring.

Seven independent panzer brigades, with a fighting strength of roughly half a panzer division, were met in the autumn of 1944. Somewhat stronger were the armoured Führer Grenadier and Führer Escort Brigades which fought in the Ardennes battle.

Part III

GERMAN AIR FORCE

IN September 1944 the Third Air Fleet was downgraded to Air Command West and became subordinate to Air Command Reich, which thus assumed control over both strategic and tactical operations in the defence of Germany. The production of defensive, single-engined fighters and jets, however, had been steadily increasing and reached its peak in the autumn. But it was made at the expense of bomber output and included no new types. The night fighter force remained formidable, though severely handicapped by the overrunning of its early warning system, the Allied attacks on oil and the lack of adequately trained pilots.

By transfers from the eastern front and almost everywhere in Germany some 2,300 aircraft were collected for the Ardennes offensive. But almost immediately following its failure a large-scale withdrawal of fighters was necessary to counter the Russians at the Oder.

As the western Allies crossed the Rhine the deterioration of the German Air Force was clear. The chain of command had fallen to pieces and purely numerical strength had lost its meaning. By the end of April all operations against the western Allies had ceased. All that remained of the German Air Force was in Austria and Bohemia, and operated intermittently against the Russian forces until the final surrender.

APPENDIX VII

Allied Casualties and Notes on Logistics

Part I

ALLIED STRENGTHS AND CASUALTIES

WAR in 1944-1945 was still basically a matter of flesh and blood. In the Overlord campaign over five and a half million men of the Western Allies' naval, army and air forces took part. Of these some four and a half million men were in the armies. The detail of these huge numbers is given in the tables below; though many of the figures must be approximate they are the most accurate that can be derived from the available archives. Of course they did not all take part in the actual fighting. More than half were engaged in work which made the fighting possible.

It is estimated that approximately 45 per cent of the armies, that is about two million men, were engaged at some time in active operations. Of these, 164,954 were killed or died of wounds, 538,763 were wounded, and 78,657 were missing or taken prisoner by the enemy (many of them only captured after being wounded and incapacitated).¹ Of the million air force personnel involved, only the air crews of officers and other ranks were engaged in offensive operations: they suffered approximately 61,000 casualties killed, wounded and missing. Naval records show a total of 10,308 casualties of whom 5,332 were killed or died of wounds and 4,976 were wounded. Those were the costs in flesh and blood of Overlord, so far as they can be calculated. But it should be added that 33,442 civilians were killed or severely wounded in England by German flying bombs (V-1) or rockets (V-2)², and some 27,400 civilians were killed or severely wounded on the Continent by V-weapons during the Overlord campaign (page 235 above).

¹ Non-battle casualties (sick and accidents) are not included in these figures: for Twenty-First Army Group they totalled 230,769; for the United States forces 417,291 (Ruppenthal, *Logistical Support of the Armies*, vol. II, p. 317).

² For comparison, in the whole war 112,932 civilians were killed or severely wounded in the United Kingdom by German bombing and 403 by their cross-Channel guns (B. Collier, *The Defence of the United Kingdom*, Appx. L).

Table 1. Allied strength in the campaign on 30.4.45

Nationality	Army	Navy(1)	Air Force	Total
British	835,208	16,221	460,000(2)	1,311,429
Canadian	183,421	—	34,000(2)	217,421
Australian, New Zealand	—	—	12,500(2)	12,500
American	2,618,023	7,035	447,482(3)	3,072,540
French	413,144	—	24,000(4)	437,144
Other Allies(5)	34,518	—	15,500(2)	50,018
Total.	4,084,314	23,256	993,482	5,101,052

- Notes: (1) Royal Navy and United States Navy in the campaign area.
 (2) Royal Air Force: Bomber Command, Fighter Command, Coastal Command (Nos. 16, 18 and 19 Groups), Second Tactical Air Force and Special Groups (Nos. 38 and 46).
 (3) United States Army Air Forces: Eighth Air Force, Ninth Air Force, First (Provisional) Tactical Air Force and IX Troop Carrier Command.
 (4) First French Air Corps, French Western Air Forces and French squadrons in Royal Air Force commands.
 (5) Other Allied contingents: Belgian, Czechoslovakian, Dutch, Norwegian and Polish.

Table 2. Estimated numbers that took part in the campaign

	Army	Navy	Air Force	Total
Strength 30.4.45	4,084,314	23,256	993,482	5,101,052
Add:				
Casualties: killed, proportion of wounded and missing(1)	308,262	5,928	55,165	369,355
Allied Navies on D-day(2)	—	170,701	—	170,701
Total.	4,392,576	199,885	1,048,647	5,641,108

- Notes: (1) Wounded who were invalidated out or downgraded to a non-active service category are included here; they are estimated from the table on page 619 of *Army Medical Services, Campaigns*, vol. IV, by F. A. E. Crew (H.M.S.O., 1962).
 (2) No firm figure for naval forces is obtainable; adding the large figure on D-day to the much smaller figure for April 1945, as done here, can only give an indication of the numbers involved.

Table 3. *Allied casualties in the campaign*(a) *Allied Armies, 6.6.44 to 7.5.45.*

<i>Nationality</i>	<i>Killed or died of wounds</i>	<i>Wounded</i>	<i>Missing or captured</i>	<i>Total</i>
British	30,276	96,672	14,698	141,646
Canadian	10,739	30,906	2,247	43,892
American	109,824	356,661	56,632	523,117(1)
French	12,587	49,513	4,726	66,826
Other Allies	1,528	5,011	354	6,893
Total	164,954	538,763	78,657	782,374

(b) *Allied Navies, 6.6.44 to 7.5.45.*

<i>Navies</i>	<i>Killed or died of wounds</i>	<i>Wounded</i>	<i>Total</i>
Royal Navy	4,230	3,334	7,564
U.S. Navy	1,102	1,642	2,744
Total	5,332	4,976	10,308

(c) *Allied Air Forces, 1.4.44 to 7.5.45.(2)*

<i>Air Forces</i>	<i>Killed or died of wounds</i>	<i>Wounded</i>	<i>Missing or captured</i>	<i>Total</i>
Royal Air Force	16,589	1,746	5,314	23,649
U.S. Army Air Force	14,034	5,545	18,067	37,646
French Air Force	222	49	58	329
Total	30,845	7,340	23,439	61,624

Notes: (1) These figures differ from the ones in Pogue, *The Supreme Command*, page 543, as in the United States the Air Force is part of the Army, while here they are being shown separately as accurately as possible.

(2) This period includes preparatory air operations.

Part II

LOGISTICS

1. *Tonnage of stores discharged on the Continent*

THE table below shows the tonnage discharged in April 1945, the last month of the campaign.

It is of interest to compare this with the tonnage discharged in July 1944, when bulk petrol was only 83,030 tons and other stores British 514,145 and American 621,322. Little then came through ports: of the British tonnage 50 per cent came ashore over the beaches and 35 per cent through the Mulberry artificial harbour; of the American 90 per cent came over the beaches.

Tonnages discharged at Continental ports in April 1945

<i>Port</i>	<i>Exclusive of Bulk P.O.L.</i>	<i>Bulk P.O.L.</i>	<i>Total</i>
BRITISH			
Antwerp	435,830	288,809(1)	724,639
Ghent	60,500	3,671	64,171
Ostend	91,505	16,526	108,031
Calais and Boulogne	4,893(2)	91,438(3)	96,331
Total	592,728	400,444	993,172
AMERICAN			
Antwerp and Ghent	905,780	—	905,780
Le Havre and Rouen	406,146	144,721	550,867
Cherbourg and minor ports in Normandy	228,585	161,045	389,630
Southern France	484,631	153,871	638,502
Total	2,025,142(4)	459,637	2,484,779
Allied total	2,617,870	860,081	3,477,951

Notes: (1) For British and American use.

(2) At Calais, where 119 locomotives and 58 coaches and wagons were also discharged by train ferry.

(3) At Boulogne by Pluto (Pipe Lines under the Ocean).

(4) Excluding cased vehicles (see Ruppenthal, *Logistical Support of the Armies*, vol. II, pages 109, 124).

2. *Coal*

The extensive advances made by the Allies in September 1944 brought the coalfields of Northern and Southern France, Belgium and the Netherlands into their hands (the Netherlands coal mines were in the province of Limburg, near Maastricht). The French mines were still producing coal when overrun by the advancing armies but in Belgium and the Netherlands production was virtually at a standstill. The distance of the Allies from their base ports made indigenous coal a vital military necessity, particularly for railways, as neither shipping nor port capacity could be made available to import coal at the scale needed. Every Allied assistance

possible was given to the national governments to restore and increase production.¹ The table below shows the approximate scale of pre-war production, what was achieved in October 1944 and how much this had been increased by April 1945. An indication of Allied requirements was given on page 139 but it must be realised that not all of the net pithead production in the table would be available to the Allies.

Monthly Net Pithead Production in tons

<i>Country</i>	<i>Pre-war</i>	<i>October 1944</i>	<i>April 1945</i>
France	4,000,000	1,100,000	2,350,000
Belgium	2,500,000	650,000	1,050,000
Netherlands	1,200,000	150,000	400,000
Total	7,700,000	1,900,000	3,800,000

The tonnage brought to the Continent in these months was 91,000 and 263,000 tons respectively and in April German mines produced 100,000 tons.

The contribution to the winning of the war made by these Allied countries in this commodity, to the almost total exclusion of their own needs, was a vital one.

¹ Donnison, *Civil Affairs and Military Government . . .*, pp. 397-403.

APPENDIX VIII

Resistance, Civil Affairs and Military Government

Part I

FRANCE

WITH General Eisenhower's assumption of direct command on September the 1st and the advance up the Rhône by the 'Dragoon' forces landed from the Mediterranean, the liberation of France was nearing completion. As told in our previous volume, the Allied landings in Normandy on June the 6th and the subsequent defeat of the German armies had seen a widely spread outbreak of sabotage by Resistance groups, planned in secrecy and carried out with great courage and at fearful risk of discovery by German secret police. The Resistance groups were armed and largely made effective by the leaders and trained agents, together with ammunition, supplies and means of communication, flown secretly into France by the British Special Operations Executive, which had been fostering the Resistance movement since 1940. No authentic account of these operations was allowed at the time nor subsequently until 1966, when the British Government decided to publish a history of *SOE in France* by M. R. D. Foot, based on the available records. It is a long and detailed history of operations that have importance in British military history. Much of it is beyond the scope of the present volume but the following passages, describing the work of S.O.E. in the months before General Eisenhower took direct command, may well be quoted¹:

'The systematic outbursts of sabotage that greeted Overlord all over France were of great direct tactical help to the invasion . . . ; plans to assist Overlord and Dragoon turned out not only successful, but much more successful than anybody had dared to hope. . . . Not only did the forces of French resistance, acting with S.O.E.'s weapons and under S.O.E.'s general direction, produce more than a thousand railway cuts in France in a week, nearly two thousand in three weeks; they produced and maintained railway stoppages at an even greater rate than the air forces were able to do. . . . after 6 June 1944 no train left Marseilles for Lyons without being derailed at least once . . . until the whole route had been freed. In the German Seventh Army area, where the bulk of the Normandy fighting took place,

¹ M. R. D. Foot, *SOE in France* (H.M.S.O., 1966), pp. 440-1.

more of the rail cuts noted by the [German] army staff in July and August were attributed to "terrorists" than to air action.' Moreover, by June 'thanks to S.O.E.'s success in raising hundreds of secret forces of lightly armed infantry scattered all over the country, the enemy could no longer rely on control of his own rear areas or his lines of communication with his base. . . . All the Germans' ammunition and reinforcements and most of their food had to come up to the fighting fronts across hundreds of miles of territory infested by resisters, most of whom had been trained and practically all of whom had been armed by S.O.E. . . .

The whole strength of all the sections operating into France . . . did not amount to three brigades; the front-line strength of agents actually deployed did not amount to one. Yet the effort they produced was certainly not less than that of half a dozen divisions, of three brigades each; and the Germans devoted eight—admittedly about the worst eight—of their sixty-odd divisions in France to the attempt to hold down their rear areas while Overlord was going on.'

General de Gaulle had won general acceptance as the champion of resistance in France and her North African territories. Many had joined him in refusing to admit that the French *nation* was defeated and took every opportunity of swelling the ranks of the Resistance. In Algiers a French Committee of National Liberation had been formed under his presidency and in metropolitan France a Council of National Resistance. The latter did not comprise all the Resistance groups and some were not in sympathy with all the General's aims. Though the Allies realised that he had been received with acclamation on his visits to Normandy and later by the people of Paris, they did not feel justified in accepting him as head of state before French liberation was completed. However, they had recognised him as head of the reconstituted French Army with General Koenig in command of all the Resistance forces—the French Forces of the Interior (F.F.I.), formed in secrecy while a large part of the country had been still occupied by the German armies and secret police; and in July 1944 the Allies accepted the French Committee of National Liberation in Algiers as the *de facto* authority for the civil administration of metropolitan France.

By that time French Resistance was assisted by other forces besides S.O.E. The Americans had the O.S.S. (Office of Strategic Services), the British the S.A.S. (Special Air Service troops); and the French had their own mission under General Koenig. But as few opportunities for subversive action remained when the Allied advance was halted for the time being on September the 15th, the F.F.I. was disbanded. Its strength was about 400,000. Of these some 100,000 were absorbed into the reconstituted regular French Army, 40,000 transferred to the Navy and Air Force, and others to the Gendarmerie and Garde Mobile.¹

¹ Charles de Gaulle, *War Memoirs*, vol. III (Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1960), pp. 34-5.

After the liberation of Paris de Gaulle proceeded to rebuild the national administration, appointing Ministers and heads of Departments after consultation with outstanding leaders of the Resistance. In September he toured the country, stabilising the administration. In October de Gaulle announced the formation of a Consultative Assembly of 248 members, 170 of whom would come from the Resistance, including all eighteen members of the Council of National Resistance. On the 23rd the British and American Governments formally recognised his Government and General Eisenhower proclaimed approximately three-quarters of France to be the Zone of the Interior, under the control of the French Government; the Allies' Combined Chiefs of Staff soon after approved General de Gaulle's proposal to enlarge the French regular Army to sixteen divisions, with other troops to guard the Allied lines of communication. One division was already operational under General de Lattre in the Alps, another joined him during the German counter-offensive in the Ardennes and two more in time for the advance beyond the Rhine. A fifth, though not fully operational, took part in April 1945 in the elimination of the 90,000 Germans holding ports on the Biscay coast.¹

So by Christmas France was steadily recovering her independence under de Gaulle's leadership and the Resistance was becoming a thing of the past.

The cost of Resistance was high. Of 200,000 French men and women killed in German concentration camps, 75,000 had belonged to the Resistance; a further 20,000 were killed in action or shot soon after their arrest in France. Nearly all the captured S.O.E. agents, over 200 in concentration camps, were deliberately butchered in two distinct massacres, one in September 1944, the other in March 1945. Only about thirty lived to tell the tale of their captivity.²

Part II

BELGIUM

FROM the earliest days of the German occupation, Belgian resistance grew slowly and spasmodically in the face of increasingly severe intimidation. By early 1944 most of the scattered Resistance movements had been co-ordinated into two main groups: the Secret Army, a purely military organisation, and the civilian Front d'Indépendance et Libération (F.I.L.). There were in addition a number of small groups which operated on their own.

The Secret Army was reckoned to have about 45,000 active members, of whom about 6,000 had received some sort of arms from S.O.E. while others might be armed with weapons captured from the Germans or hidden since 1940. It was organised in five zones, each of which was in wireless touch with London and contained a London agent. The F.I.L.

¹ Loc. cit., pp. 133, 141, 159.

² Foot, op. cit., pp. 424-5.

was a national front containing patriotic representatives of the non-collaborating political parties but animated largely by an energetic Communist minority. It claimed to express the will of the Belgian people more democratically than the Government in exile, and as there was no other civilian group of any size the Government had perforce to work with it. In the winter of 1943-1944 the Comité National de Coordination (C.N.C.) was formed to embrace all the smaller civilian movements and the F.I.L.; but their liaison with S.O.E. was slow to develop and the lion's share of equipment went to the better organised Secret Army.

In the weeks immediately preceding the Allies' cross-Channel invasion, and in the first three months of the Overlord campaign, clandestine operations were concentrated against communications, particularly railways (see the German maps at pages 112 and 400 of Volume I). There was also a good deal of canal sabotage and any number of miscellaneous incidents. In a country as compact as Belgium these actions had considerable effect and helped to build up the 'zone of delay' behind the German front in Normandy. Open mobilisation of the Secret Army began on the 31st of August, not with the intention of launching guerilla warfare, for which the troops were ill-equipped, but to bring formed bodies into the open to receive the Allies, feed them with tactical information, relieve them of responsibility for mopping up stranded enemy forces, and finally to undertake the maintenance of order and essential services. Some guerilla action had started earlier in the Ardennes, the most strongly armed of the zones, where young men who had disappeared to avoid deportation became soldiers of the maquis in the forest camps and wore the green beret of the Chasseurs Ardennais Division; here in the latter half of August the roads became danger spots for German convoys and isolated vehicles. The maquis were supported by three parties of Belgian Special Air Service troops dropped in and near the Ardennes. A fourth party was dropped further north, near Hasselt, where it organised ambushes against the Germans until overtaken by the Allied advance. One small underground group played a large part in preventing the retreating Germans from destroying the coal mines. But the greatest achievement was the saving intact of the Antwerp docks. All the Resistance groups in Antwerp combined under the command of Lieutenant Reniers of the Engineers, appointed by the Secret Army; the German preparations were watched, delayed and sabotaged where possible and finally neutralised as the Allies drew near, while the Secret Army went into the attack against the German demolition parties and prevented them from carrying out their task.¹

When the British entered Brussels on September the 3rd they were met by a self-constituted Belgian Military Mission, drawn from the ranks of the Resistance and extremely cooperative. The Belgian central administrative machinery was intact but without its head, as King Leopold III, who had remained in Belgium when his Government escaped to England in 1940, had departed with the Germans, whether of his own choice or

¹ *Belgium under Occupation*, ed. J.-A. Goris (New York, 1947), pp. 197-9; G. Lovinfosse, 'La Résistance Belge et les Alliés' (paper read at the Second International Conference on the History of the Resistance, Milan, 26th-29th March 1961).

under compulsion was not clear. In the next fortnight the Shaef Mission under Major-General G. W. E. J. Erskine was established in Brussels and M. Pierlot, the emigré Prime Minister, flew in from London with his Ministers. On the 19th Parliament was convened, Prince Charles, the King's brother, was appointed Regent and M. Pierlot formed a new Government. This included members of the Resistance and the Communist Party, but was not popular because of its emigré elements.¹ The main problems facing it were the distribution of food and the reopening of the coal mines, the latter of great importance to the Allies who were relying on indigenous production to meet military needs, particularly those of the railways. The food situation was serious and, in spite of a fairly good harvest, a black market developed which the Government was unable to control. In October members of the Resistance, who had been unwilling to hand in their arms, were invited to enlist in the army and the gendarmerie, both of whom were badly under strength. With the 18th of November set as the date for the demobilisation and disarming of the Resistance a crisis developed within the Government. General Erskine, whose task was to help the Government to prevent any disorders likely to interfere with Allied operations, called on the dissident Resistance and Communist members to help prevent a clash between the Resistance and the Allied forces. Arms were duly collected and handed in, and a large demonstration in Brussels on November the 25th was successfully dealt with by the Belgian police without calling on Allied armoured vehicles, which were being held in reserve.² But the worsening food situation, exacerbated by the German counter-offensive in the Ardennes and relieved only by large quantities supplied by the Allies, led to the downfall of the Government in February 1945. M. van Acker, a Resistance leader, formed a new all-party administration which tackled its problems with energy.

In spite of her political difficulties, Belgium ended the war in much better economic shape than her neighbours to north and south. The presence of Allied forces throughout the winter led to large-scale employment of labour and reactivation of industry; while United States requirements of Congo uranium were a source of a steadily growing dollar balance.

A word about Luxembourg may be added here as General Erskine's Shaef Mission was made responsible for the Grand Duchy in the last weeks of the war. (From September 1944 to March 1945 it was in the American forward zone of operations.) Six Resistance groups existed side by side, all in wireless contact with London. There was little armed resistance or sabotage, but much passive resistance and strike activity; one of the main tasks of these groups was the care of families of those executed, arrested or deported by the Germans. There were no political problems, the Luxembourgers remaining loyal throughout to the Grand Duchess in exile in England.

¹ Donnison, *Civil Affairs and Military Government* . . . , pp. 113-127.

² Pogue, *The Supreme Command*, pp. 329-331.

Part III

HOLLAND

FROM the earliest days, resistance to the German occupation was widespread among the people of Holland. The increasingly repressive régime of the German *Reichskommissar*, Arthur Seyss-Inquart, completely failed to break the people's spirit or to check the growth of the Resistance, hampered though that was by Gestapo infiltration.

S.O.E.'s organisation of Dutch Resistance began in 1941, but by the winter of 1943 London received confirmation of long-held suspicions that the whole Dutch network was under Gestapo control. But the Germans had caught S.O.E.'s agents at such an early stage that there were few threads leading to any real centre of Resistance; it remained stubbornly active, though ill-organised and riddled by German agents. Not until shortly before the Normandy landings did S.O.E. get Dutch permission to resume operations; even then priority was low and only five agents and a wireless operator were dropped successfully. In July and August four more small parties with wireless sets were dropped into Holland.

The Allies then had some contact with the Resistance but the latter had little equipment and its isolated acts of sabotage could not affect operations in Normandy. But the situation changed completely as the Allies raced forward to the Dutch frontier at the beginning of September and it seemed that all Holland might be liberated at a stroke. On the 31st of August an order from Shaef set up the Dutch Forces of the Interior (N.B.S.), under the command of Prince Bernhard and including the para-military wings of the Dutch Resistance. Most of the non-military organisations were too loosely knit to deserve the name but the flourishing clandestine press, actively circulating its well-written illegal newspapers, was the obvious line of approach to them.

The Dutch Resistance now had reasonably high priority and, as the risks attaching to air operations decreased, dropping of arms began in earnest. Two further parties containing five agents and two wireless operators were dropped shortly before the Arnhem operation, in which four 'Jedburghs' (mixed teams of Dutch, British and Americans) flew in with the airborne forces. On the first day of the operation the Dutch Government called for a general strike on the Dutch railways (destined to remain unbroken till May 1945), secret messages were sent calling for railway sabotage and indicating ways of assisting the airborne troops at Arnhem, and General Eisenhower broadcast a message to the population on the Allied route to Arnhem to stand by to assist. Valuable local help was given to the British at Arnhem by the Resistance, while at Rotterdam three potential blockships were sunk in an attempt to preserve the port. The wave of excitement and sabotage occasioned by the Arnhem operation continued into October and it was not till November that German counter-measures began to have serious effects. The Germans deported large numbers of men and ruthless reprisals were taken for any incident; over 400 lives are said to have been exacted for an attack on the Gestapo chief, Rauters. S.O.E. lost a number of agents and communications were

kept open only with difficulty. Finally the population was warned to avoid violent action, air supply operations were drastically reduced to stop reprisals and the remaining S.O.E. agents were ordered to lie low.

Two Belgian S.A.S. parties had been dropped into Holland, one north-west of Arnhem two days before the operation began, the other into north-eastern Holland at the end of September. The one near Arnhem in particular received great assistance from the Resistance and was able to send out much information about V-2 rocket sites, enemy movements and other matters. It was also of great service in assisting the return of the airborne troops who had escaped from the Germans at Arnhem and were looked after by the Resistance. Both S.A.S. parties were brought out in March.

Before the Arnhem operation, both the Shaef Mission to the Netherlands and the Netherlands Military Administration had established themselves in Brussels. The latter represented the Dutch Government which had escaped to England in 1940 with Queen Wilhelmina: it was to provide the interim Government for the period which would necessarily elapse between liberation and the setting up of constitutional civil government.¹ But the setback at Arnhem and the slow Allied advance in the autumn and winter gave these two bodies little to do beyond the administration of relief supplies. Civil Affairs' chief task in the army areas of southern Holland was the care of refugees from battle and flood. In the main item of planning, the relief of Western Holland, they were not allowed full responsibility. The population there numbered some three and a half millions, over forty per cent of whom were concentrated in the three great cities of Amsterdam, Rotterdam and The Hague. By 1944 the standard ration in Holland was 1,600 calories a day: in Western Holland it was less.² In retaliation for the general strike begun in September, Seyss-Inquart imposed an embargo on the movement of food supplies from the agricultural districts of Eastern Holland to the urban areas of Western Holland, where the situation became desperate.

By early November the Allies had cleared the enemy from the province of North Brabant up to the Lower Maas and would soon have the use of Antwerp for bringing in the supplies needed for the advance into Germany. Western Holland would be by-passed by the Allies' advance, which would be made against the Germans' main forces defending the approaches to the Ruhr and the Saar; the line of the lower Maas would be held with as few troops as possible. Plans were made to take food into Holland beyond the river after liberation, though this would not be for some time; in the meantime Sweden and the International Red Cross were making efforts to take in food but, though neither the Allies nor Germany put any serious obstacles in the way, nothing was achieved in 1944. By mid-January the situation in Western Holland had deteriorated so far that Queen Wilhelmina addressed identical notes to King George VI, President Roosevelt and Mr. Churchill, declaring: 'Conditions . . . have at present become so desperate, that it is abundantly clear that, if a major catastrophe,

¹ See Donnison, *op. cit.*, p. 129 *et seq.*

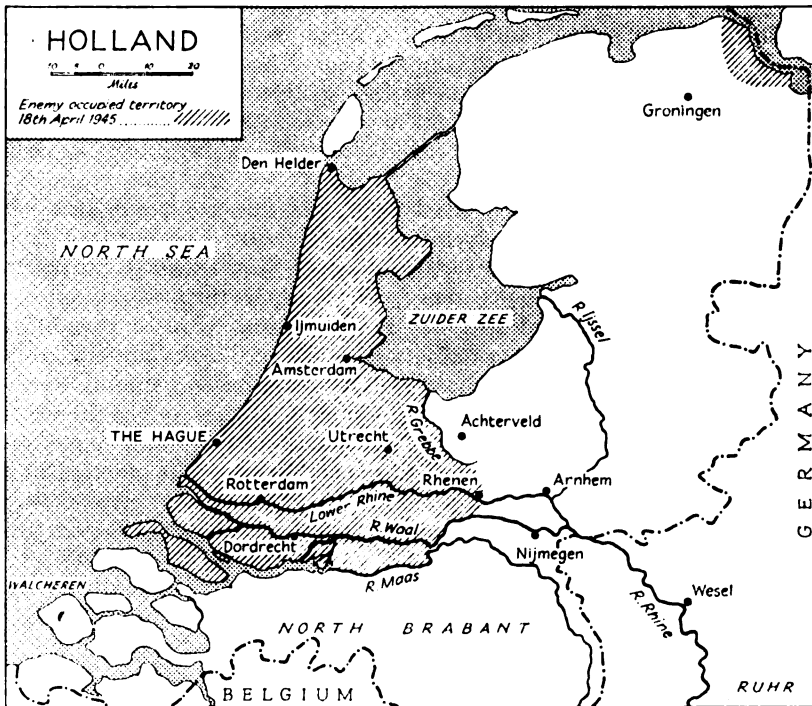
² *Loc. cit.*, p. 141.

the like of which has not been seen in Western Europe since the Middle Ages, is to be avoided in Holland, something drastic has to be done *now*, that is to say *before* and not *after* the liberation of the rest of the country'.¹ The Allies, fully occupied in recovering the ground lost in the Ardennes counter-offensive, were still unable to help. But in the first three months of 1945 some food did reach Western Holland from abroad: in January two Swedish ships delivered 3,200 tons, in March an International Red Cross ship brought further supplies, and the Germans themselves sent in 2,600 tons of rye. Yet the daily content of a Dutch working man's ration had scarcely exceeded 500 calories in that period and in the larger cities the death rate was nearly double that for the same period in 1944.

In mid-March the possibilities were considered of military action to liberate Holland after the Rhine crossing, then being prepared. The main argument against military action in Western Holland was the cost to the Dutch themselves. The enemy, over 200,000 strong, showed no sign of withdrawing and was expected to use flooding to assist his defence operations, while Allied bombing and shelling west of Utrecht would cause very heavy civilian casualties. Secondly, the considerable transport and engineer resources needed for such operations could be supplied only at the expense of the main attack on Germany. General Eisenhower considered that the 'most rapid means of ensuring liberation and restoration of Holland may well be the rapid completion of our main operations'; he added that so long as cohesive enemy resistance continued it was militarily inadvisable to undertake operations west of Utrecht, and suggested that the Royal Netherlands Government should be warned of the great cost to Dutch lives and property inherent in any other course.

With Twenty-First Army Group's crossing of the Rhine set for the end of March, all was ready for the re-emergence of the Resistance. Wireless communications had been maintained and members were relatively well armed, the Dutch Forces of the Interior having some 9,000 armed men in the regions still occupied by the Germans. In Eastern Holland matters progressed straightforwardly; the Resistance smoothed the way for the Canadian advance which was assisted by French S.A.S. troops, and took over responsibility without special incident. The Canadian advance into Western Holland started from the Ijssel river on April the 11th, by which date the Allies had already penetrated deep into Germany. As the Canadians advanced the Germans began to open the sluices on the Zuider Zee and at Ijmuiden on the North Sea coast, while at the same time Seyss-Inquart had informal talks with the Resistance in which, in return for an Allied standstill in Holland, he offered to stop the flooding, to cease executions and Gestapo activity, and to open the port of Rotterdam for relief supplies. On the 23rd the Combined Chiefs of Staff authorised General Eisenhower to arrange a local truce, without prejudice to the overall policy of unconditional surrender and in consultation with the Soviet military authorities. The first official meeting between the Allied and German authorities took place on the 28th at Achterveld, east of the Grebbe Line at which I Canadian Corps had been halted (page 315).

¹ Stacey, *The Victory Campaign*, p. 583.



On the 30th a second meeting was attended by Seyss-Inquart himself and, on the Allied side, by General Bedell Smith, Major-General Susloparoff, the Russian representative, and Prince Bernhard, Commander-in-Chief of the Netherlands forces. The *Reichskommissar* accepted the Allies' relief proposals and agreed to stop further flooding, but resisted all arguments to surrender the remaining German forces in Western Holland without instructions from Germany.¹

Allied plans for immediate relief were ready. Stocks of food, coal and medical supplies would go in by land and air and later by sea; the land supplies would be organised initially by I Canadian Corps and eventually by Headquarters Netherlands District, while air supply would be carried out by the strategic air forces. Even before official talks with Seyss-Inquart had begun, arrangements for air supply were made with the German military authorities and the first drop, of half a million rations, was made on airfields close to Rotterdam and The Hague on April the 29th. Air supply continued until May the 8th, a total of over eleven million rations (10,850 tons) being dropped of which Bomber Command carried about two-thirds. Twenty-First Army Group later heard from the Dutch Resistance that not more than one-eighth of these supplies had been lost and the Dutch Government sent their 'eternal thanks' to the Allies.

Road supply began on the 2nd of May when twelve British and Canadian transport platoons, comprising 360 3-ton lorries, began a daily

¹ See Donnison, *op. cit.*, p. 145, and Stacey, *op. cit.*, p. 607.

delivery of about 1,000 tons across the Grebbe Line to Rhenen; a further 200 lorries, with petrol but without drivers, were handed over to the Dutch for distribution of these supplies from Rhenen. On May the 5th minesweeping and buoying of a channel to Rotterdam was completed and the first coasters carrying food and coal docked; but barge traffic from Arnhem and Nijmegen was held up till the 9th because of acoustic mines near Dordrecht.

On May the 5th General Blaskowitz, the military commander in Western Holland, formally surrendered the German forces in that area, some 120,000 strong, who were covered by the Instrument of Surrender signed at Field-Marshal Montgomery's headquarters the previous day.

Geographically Holland was not in a position to assist the Allied military effort with Resistance activity such as guerilla warfare and could only help in a small way by sabotage. But this in no way diminishes the actions of the Dutch Resistance. For the most part they fought their own underground war against the Germans; it was an extremely fierce and brutal war, but the only way of fighting open to them. The official Dutch figures for losses in the war are 210,000 dead, of whom 131,000 were deported Jews and forced labourers who died in Germany; of the remainder, 23,300 lost their lives as members of the Resistance.

Part IV

DENMARK

EARLY in 1943 S.O.E. started to assist Resistance elements in Denmark to form a central organisation and a sabotage campaign began against shipyards and factories working for the Germans. German reaction led to the resignation of the Danish Government and in August the Germans took direct control of the country. In the autumn a Freedom Council, partly Communist, was formed with S.O.E.'s chief agent as a member; sabotage continued and some 50 incidents took place in the first half of 1944. Reckless German reprisals after an incident in a gun factory in Copenhagen in June led to popular demonstrations and finally to a spontaneous strike. The Freedom Council backed the popular demand and in the end the Germans gave way; this put the Council into a position of clear national leadership with high prestige.

The strengthening of Danish Resistance was now given higher priority owing to its strategic position on the route of reinforcements being brought back to Germany from Norway. By September 1944 only some 5,000 men had been armed and organised, but through the winter arms and other equipment were smuggled in by air and sea and by the end of the campaign the Danes had light arms for some 25,000 men, as well as 12 wireless sets. This was achieved in the face of increased Gestapo activity and casualties to Resistance members, who caused 250 incidents in this period, mainly against rail movements and weapon factories. In October the Resistance destroyed 20 German aircraft on a Danish airfield as a 'thank you' to the Royal Air Force for a brilliant attack made by them

on the Gestapo headquarters at Aarhus, in Jutland. Similar attacks were made in March and April 1945 on the Gestapo headquarters in Copenhagen and Odense.

In January 1945 the Danish Commander-in-Chief, General Gortz, took command of the 'secret army' under the orders of Shaef. The delay in arranging this had been political. It became practicable when the old political parties and the Freedom Council agreed that both would be represented in the initial Government after liberation. So Denmark ended the war politically united and with pride in the contribution of her Resistance, which had been real and effective and had achieved destruction and delay which could not have been attained by other means.

Part V

MILITARY GOVERNMENT IN GERMANY

MILITARY Government in Germany was defined by Twenty-First Army Group in the following terms:

'The conduct of affairs vis-à-vis the civil population is totally different in liberated friendly territories and in Germany. In the former we are dealing with our Allies . . . We therefore respect their sovereignty and their institutions, and we endeavour to work in harmony with them . . . In Germany, on the other hand, it is the duty of commanders to impose the will of the Supreme Commander upon the German people. The diplomatic approach to the civil authority which is used in liberated territories will be replaced by the issue of orders, obedience to which will be exacted . . . Germany will be made to realise that this time she has been well and truly beaten in the field by force of arms and must now do as she is ordered. Military Government is the instrument, so far as the civil population is concerned, by which these orders will be conveyed and enforced.'¹

Military Government on these lines would have to start as soon as the Allies crossed the German frontier.

Military Government was first established by the Americans in September 1944, but the areas captured (near Aachen) were so small that German administration was resuscitated and controlled at town and village level, and *bürgermeisters* were appointed and made responsible for administration.

Occupation of German territory by British forces first took place near Geilenkirchen, in November. Here it was decided that the German population should be evacuated, for the security of military operations; they were put in a concentration camp near s'Hertogenbosch where they had to be fed. Cattle were handed over to the nearby Dutch authorities, houses commandeered for Allied forces. Later, when British advances continued, Germans were confined to their own homes.

¹ Donnison, *Civil Affairs and Military Government* . . . , p. 205.

Early in 1945 Field-Marshal Montgomery asked the War Office for Major-General G. W. R. Templer, to take charge of Civil Affairs and Military Government at his headquarters. From then on it was treated as a military service, for the time was soon to come when its problems would be of more importance than military operations.¹

When Twenty-First Army Group's Rhineland battle opened in February the towns, which had been reduced to rubble by bombing, contained few civilians; but at Bedburg, near Cleve, a large hospital with a mental wing was found comparatively undamaged with staff, patients and about 2,000 Germans from the country around. This became a German refugee centre and some 8,000 were collected there by the end of February; this figure rose to 24,000 at the time of the Rhine crossing, as for security reasons the assembly areas were cleared of Germans. A *bürgermeister* was appointed to run this colony with a German staff, under the general control of a Military Government officer, and tentage was supplied by the Army. Near Goch a sorting camp was set up for displaced persons, usually known as D.P.s: these were nationals of other countries who had been transferred from their own countries to work for the Germans. Local administrative officials were not at that time among the civilians remaining in areas occupied by the Allies; not till after the break-out from the Rhine bridgehead did civil administration begin to be overrun virtually intact. By then the small Military Government detachments were becoming widely and thinly dispersed in the gap between the forward corps and British I Corps Headquarters, which after leaving First Canadian Army had taken over the administration of the rear portion of Second Army's area at the Rhine. Detachments had to stay to see orders were obeyed, to deal with D.P.s and ex-prisoners of war and to see that the Germans started and kept up utility services. Detachments generally acquitted themselves well in some tough and difficult situations.²

In the armies' advance across Germany from the Rhine military barrier lines were set up on the waterways to collect D.P.s, first on the Rhine and the Ijssel, then on the Dortmund-Ems Canal, after that on the Weser and finally at the Elbe. None was impassable but they enabled most of the D.P.s to be collected, screened and put into camps. In the second half of April the number in Second Army's area reached 55,000 and this rose above 100,000 at the time of the surrender, even though 80,000 west-bound D.P.s had by then been passed back to their countries of origin.³

At the time of the German surrender the situation which faced Twenty-First Army Group was appalling. Over a million German civil refugees had gathered in its area, fleeing before the Russians, and more than a million and a half unwounded men of the German armed forces had surrendered and were now prisoners; food would shortly be exhausted, transport and communication services had ceased to function and

¹ Loc. cit., pp. 207-10, 213-4.

² Loc. cit., pp. 211-3, 341.

³ Loc. cit., pp. 347-8.

industry and agriculture were largely at a standstill.¹ How these problems, and the similar ones facing the other Allied occupying powers, were solved after the surrender is outside the scope of this history; but the reader will find the answer in F. S. V. Donnison's *Civil Affairs and Military Government North-West Europe, 1944-1946*.

¹ *Memoirs of Field-Marshal Montgomery*, p. 356.

APPENDIX IX

Field-Marshal Montgomery's Press Conference

- (i) Field-Marshal Montgomery's press conference, January the 7th, 1945.
- (ii) The German broadcast on January the 8th, 1945.

(i)

The following is the full text which the field-marshal handed out to press correspondents as a record of what he had said at the conference on January the 7th, 1945:

‘1. *Object of this talk*

I have asked you to come here today so that I can give you some information which may be of use to you, and also to ask you to help me in a certain matter.

2. *The story of the present battle*

Rundstedt attacked on 16 Dec. ; he obtained tactical surprise. He drove a deep wedge into the centre of the First US Army and split the American forces in two. The situation looked as if it might become awkward ; the Germans had broken right through a weak spot, and were heading for the Meuse.

3. As soon as I saw what was happening I took certain steps myself to ensure that *if* the Germans got to the Meuse they would certainly not get over that river. And I carried out certain movements so as to provide balanced dispositions to meet the threatened danger ; these were, at the time, merely precautions, i.e., I was thinking ahead.

4. Then the situation began to deteriorate. But the whole allied team rallied to meet the danger ; national considerations were thrown overboard ; General Eisenhower placed me in command of the whole Northern front.

I employed the whole available power of the British Group of Armies ; this power was brought into play very gradually and in such a way that it would not interfere with the American lines of communication. Finally it was put into battle with a bang, and today British divisions are fighting hard on the right flank of First US Army. You have thus the picture of British troops fighting on both sides of American forces who have suffered a hard blow. This is a fine allied picture.

5. The battle has been most interesting; I think possibly one of the most interesting and tricky battles I have ever handled, with great issues at stake. The first thing to be done was to "head off" the enemy from the tender spots and vital places. Having done that successfully, the next thing was to "see him off", i.e. rope him in and make quite certain that he could not get to the places he wanted, *and also* that he was slowly but surely removed away from those places. He was therefore "headed off", and then "seen off". He is now being "written off", and heavy toll is being taken of his divisions by ground and air action. You must not imagine that the battle is over yet; it is by no means over and a great deal still remains to be done.
- The battle has some similarity to the battle that began on 31 Aug 1942 when Rommel made his last bid to capture Egypt and was "seen off" by the Eighth Army. But actually all battles are different because the problem is different.
6. What was Rundstedt trying to achieve? No one can tell for certain. The only guide we have is the message he issued to his soldiers before the battle began; he told them it was the last great effort to try and win the war, that everything depended on it; that they must go "all out".
- On the map you see his gains; *that* will not win the war; he is likely slowly but surely to lose it all; he must have scraped together every reserve he could lay his hands on for this job, and he has not achieved a great deal.
- One must admit that he has dealt us a sharp blow and he sent us reeling back; but we recovered; he has been unable to gain any great advantage from his initial success.
- He has therefore failed in his strategic purpose, unless the prize was smaller than his men were told.
- He has now turned to the defensive on the ground; and he is faced by forces properly balanced to utilise the initiative which he has lost.
- Another reason for his failure is that his air force, although still capable of pulling a fast one, cannot protect his army; for that army *our* Tactical Air Forces are the greatest terror.
7. But when all is said and done I shall always feel that Rundstedt was really beaten by the good fighting qualities of the American soldier and by the team-work of the Allies.
- I would like to say a word about these two points.
8. I first saw the American soldier in battle in Sicily, and I formed then a very high opinion of him. I saw him again in Italy. And I have seen a very great deal of him in this campaign. I want to take this opportunity to pay a public tribute to him. He is a brave fighting man, steady under fire, and with that tenacity in battle which stamps the first class soldier; all these qualities have been shown in a marked

degree during the present battle. I have spent my military career with the British soldier and I have come to love him with a great love; and I have now formed a very great affection and admiration for the American soldier. I salute the brave fighting men of America; I never want to fight alongside better soldiers. Just now I am seeing a great deal of the American soldiers; I have tried to feel that I am almost an American soldier myself so that I might take no unsuitable action or offend them in any way.

I have been given an American identity card; I am thus identified in the Army of the United States, my fingerprints have been registered in the War Department at Washington—which is far preferable to having them registered at Scotland Yard!

9. And now I come to the last point.

It is team-work that pulls you through dangerous times; it is team-work that wins battles; it is victories in battle that win wars. I want to put in a strong plea for Allied solidarity at this vital stage of the war; and you can all help in this greatly. Nothing must be done by anyone that tends to break down the team spirit of our Allied team; if you try and “get at” the captain of the team you are liable to induce a loss of confidence, and this may spread and have disastrous results. I would say that anyone who tries to break up the team spirit of the Allies is definitely helping the enemy.

10. Let me tell you that the captain of our team is Eisenhower. I am absolutely devoted to Ike; we are the greatest of friends. It grieves me when I see uncomplimentary articles about him in the British Press; he bears a great burden, he needs our fullest support, he has a right to expect it, and it is up to all of us to see that he gets it.

And so I would ask all of you to lend a hand to stop that sort of thing; let us all rally round the captain of the team and so help to win the match.

Nobody objects to healthy and constructive criticism; it is good for us.

But let us have done with destructive criticism that aims a blow at Allied solidarity, that tends to break up our team spirit, and that therefore helps the enemy.’

The whole or extracts from Montgomery’s ‘hand out’ were quoted in the next day’s newspapers. Press comments were generally confined to the conduct of the battle as he had described it. The *London Times* is almost alone in adding what Montgomery said in addition to the above, mainly further praise for the quality of the American soldier, naming particular American formations that had greatly distinguished themselves in the battle, and some elaboration of his views on battle philosophy.

(ii)

The following is the text of the German broadcast of January the 8th, as picked up by an American monitoring service and reported in *The Daily Telegraph* of January the 11th, 1945.

'Field-Marshal Montgomery came into the fight at a strategic moment. He scored a major success across the Laroche road, which American tanks cut on Saturday.

Many tanks, as well as British and American infantry, are coming up. Gains of from 1,000 to 3,000 yards were made yesterday. Our forces are not more than 12 miles apart on opposite sides of the salient. The American Third Army from the south made two and a half miles at one point.

To the south of the line at a point two miles north of Strasbourg the Germans have about 500 to 600 men and some tanks across the Rhine river.

In the three weeks since Montgomery tackled the German Ardennes offensive he has transformed it into a headache for Rundstedt. It is the most brilliant and difficult task he has yet managed. He found no defence lines, the Americans somewhat bewildered, few reserves on hand and supply lines cut.

The American First Army had been completely out of contact with Gen. Bradley. He quickly studied maps and started to "tidy up" the front. He took over scattered American forces, planned his action and stopped the German drive.

His staff, which has been with him since Alamein, deserves high praise and credit. The Battle of the Ardennes can now be written off, thanks to Field-Marshal Montgomery.'

APPENDIX X

The German So-Called 'National Redoubt'

AN examination of the contemporary German evidence available to us shows quite conclusively that the so-called 'National Redoubt' never existed outside the imaginations of the combatants. At first sight, the absence of any explicit references to such a redoubt in surviving high-level German documents up to late April, 1945 suggests that it was nothing more than a creation of Allied fears and forecasts of the most likely trend in Hitler's thought. Indeed the very name 'National Redoubt' seems to have been introduced by the Allies, who borrowed it from the Swiss.

The Allies were, in fact, correct in their surmise that Hitler would sooner or later think along such lines, for on the 24th of April, 1945 a directive signed by him was issued, laying down in outline some general measures necessary for the preparation of an inner fortress (*Kernfestung*) in the Alps to serve as a 'last bulwark of fanatical resistance'. The text was as follows:

I. Now that the German theatre of operations has been cut in two between Berlin and Leipzig, by far the greater part of the Armed Forces is in the southern half of the country. Within this area the Alps constitute an inner fortress [*Kernfestung*], i.e. the region bounded by a line running: Lindau-Swiss frontier to Stelvio Pass-Ortler-Adamello-Lake Garda-Feltre-Caporetto-Karawanken Mountains-Graz-Bruck on the Mur-Mariazell-northern edge of the Salzburg and Bavarian Alps.¹ The strength of this fortress zone lies in the nature of the terrain and in the defences in the southern part of the area.

It must be regarded as a last bulwark of fanatical resistance and preparations made accordingly.

II. The following measures are necessary:

- (1) This area will in future be closed to all German and foreign civilians, the necessary action to be taken by the Head of the Party Chancery, the Reich Minister of the Interior, and the Governors [*Obersten Kommissare*] of the operational zones of the Alpine Foreland and the Adriatic Coastal region.
- (2) The Reichsführer SS and Chief of the German Police will arrange for the removal of all superfluous foreign workers.

¹ See map page 303.

- (3) Additional accommodation will be found for British, American and French prisoners of war, the necessary orders to be issued by the Commander-in-Chief Replacement Army.
 - (4) Supplies for the Armed Forces and civilian population will be stockpiled in the area to the maximum extent possible.
 - (5) Warlike stores of all kinds, especially for mountain warfare, will be moved into the area by the Chief of Armaments Supply to the Armed Forces and by the Quartermaster General of the Army. Long-range courier aircraft and a large number of Fieseler Storchs will be made available by OKL.
 - (6) Emergency factories for the production of munitions, especially of infantry ammunition, bazookas and explosives, will be set up by the Reich Minister of Armaments and War Production.
- III. The senior military commander in the area of operations will assume the duties and powers of a Fortress Commander [*Festungskommandant*].
- IV. As regards the Party and civil government, I am conferring on the Gauleiter and Governor [*Reichsstatthalter*] of Tyrol, Franz Hofer, the Powers of a Gauleiter and Reich Defence Commissioner [*Reichsverteidigungskommissar*] in accordance with the terms of my decrees of 19 and 20.9.1944.
- V. Detailed orders by the Chief of OKW for the execution of these instructions will follow.
- VI. In conformity with the Führer's Basic Order of 11.1.40 this order will be reproduced only in summarised form.

(Signed) ADOLF HITLER

Certified correct:

WINTER

Lieutenant-General.'

This directive was countersigned by the deputy Chief of the Armed Forces Operations Staff, Lieut-General Winter, who had taken charge of that half of the Operations Staff which was sent south to Berchtesgaden on April the 20th when Germany was on the point of being cut in two by the Allied armies. It must, therefore, already have been typed before Winter left for Berchtesgaden on the 20th. Yet, strangely enough, Winter makes no mention of such an order in his post-war account of the activities of Operations Staff South; he merely states that when the setting-up of this staff was being prepared, it had to be done with the idea that the war might be prolonged for some time to come by continued resistance in the

Alpine zone. This notion he found incomprehensible in the light of the existing situation, and on arrival in Berchtesgaden (on April the 24th) he saw at once that further resistance was out of the question if only because of the impossibility of maintaining supplies.

The original texts of the war diaries kept by both the northern (A) and southern (B) parts of OKW Operations Staff after their separation on April the 20th contain no reference to Hitler's directive nor to any Alpine 'inner fortress'. The most that is spoken of in the documents of the time is the 'southern area' (*Südraum*), i.e. that part of Germany lying to the south of the Allied division of the country, in which Field-Marshal Kesselring was to exercise supreme command over all troops remaining in the area and to conduct operations under the direction of the OKW Operations Staff B when all further control from the north became impossible. The only explicit references to an Alpine fortress occur in a report by General Koller, Chief of Staff Luftwaffe, of an interview with Jodl early on April the 23rd in which Jodl asked him to take a copy of the Führer's order on the Redoubt to Göring; in a message recorded at OKW South on the 28th, referring to the reconnoitring, development and supply of a fortress area in the Alps 'on the Führer's orders';¹ and in the amended *post-war* version of the war diary of OKW North. This diary maintained that, in spite of 'continual talk' of withdrawing into the 'so-called Alpine Fortress . . . nothing whatever deserving the name "redoubt" exists'.

'To make the thing possible . . . the whole of the western Austrian and German Alpine territory would have to be organised and equipped as a large scale fortress zone. But no preparations whatever for this have been made. Consequently there can be no question of any last stand in the redoubt.

Yet the enemy, and especially the Americans, have every appearance of regarding the likelihood of severe fighting against the German Alpine fortress as coming so far within the realm of possibility that their operations are being directed towards preventing the accomplishment of this supposed German plan.'²

This account of the matter is probably a reasonably accurate one. The task of organising and maintaining such a defence could easily be seen to be impracticable, though obviously there must have been some discussion of it before Hitler's directive was issued. Lieut-General Wollmann, appointed Inspector of Fortifications West at the end of March, stated after the war that he had no knowledge of any fortifying of an 'Alpine Fortress'. Nor does the presence of various Government departments, military and civil, in the area have any bearing on the matter, as some of these had moved there even, according to some statements, as far back as February, a not unnatural development at that time.

From the little that remains of Hitler's own utterances during the last two months of the war, whether at first or second-hand, nothing can be

¹ P. E. Schramm, *Kriegstagebuch des Oberkommandos der Wehrmacht*, vol. IV/2, pp. 1447-8.

² J. Schultz, *Die Letzten 30 Tage* (Stuttgart, 1951), entry for 21 April 1945.

discerned of any clear intention to make a 'last-ditch' stand in the Alps or anywhere else in particular, unless it were in Berlin as the Russian threat to the city increased. The idea of the Alpine redoubt certainly does not seem to have been in his mind in late March. Indeed, the greater the threat to Berlin, the more tenaciously did Hitler cling to the idea of holding out there at all costs. When the division of German territory became imminent he issued his directive of April the 15th, making alternative arrangements depending on whether he should be in the north or in the south. On the 20th (his birthday) the moment arrived when OKW had to be split and Hitler still had not made up his mind either way. However on the 22nd, to the dismay of his closest associates, he decided in a fit of despair to remain in Berlin and there await the end. The most important members of Hitler's entourage either stayed with him in Berlin or moved with the OKW 'A' Staff on its journey north-westwards. It is noticeable that throughout these last weeks the *Schwerpunkt* of Hitler's concern centred increasingly on the battle for Berlin and, understandably, on those parts of German territory which were immediately threatened by the Russian advance. It is curious that the presence of the Red Army on Austrian soil and at the very threshold of the Alps should apparently have engaged so little of his attention, if he was intending to move to that region for a last stand.

The progressive severance of Hitler's thinking from the realities of the situation, his constant preoccupation with relatively unimportant detail, and his capacity for buoying himself up with false hope all make it extremely doubtful whether he was ever capable of giving sustained, far-reaching thought to such a solution as an Alpine fastness to be defended to the last, a solution which necessarily implied defeat everywhere else and thus ran completely counter to his repeated and vehement refusals to consider any prepared withdrawal anywhere. The directive of the 24th of April is cast in terms which clearly show that no preparation had actually been begun up to that time in the Alpine area, and one is left with the inescapable impression that, whatever his subordinates may have been thinking, or may have encouraged their enemies to think, for Hitler the notion of a 'redoubt' was no more than a momentary idea that passed through his mind, only to vanish again immediately afterwards.

APPENDIX XI

Code Names Mentioned in Text

ARGONAUT . . .	The Malta/Yalta Conference, January–February 1945.
BLACKCOCK . . .	XII Corps attack in the Roermond–Geilenkirchen area, January 16th–26th.
BLOCKBUSTER . . .	II Canadian Corps attack against the Hochwald–Balbergerwald position, February 26th–March 10th.
BUGLE	Strategic air forces' attack on oil and communications in the Ruhr, March 11th–20th.
CLARION	Widespread air attack on German communications system, February 22nd.
COMET	Second Army plan to seize Rhine bridges between Wesel and Arnhem. Superseded by 'Market Garden'.
DRAGOON	Allied landings in the south of France, August 1944.
EUREKA	The Teheran Conference, November 1943.
GRENADE	U.S. Ninth Army's Rhineland attack, February 23rd–March 10th.
JEDBURGHES	Inter-Allied groups dropped into occupied territory to aid the Resistance.
MARKET GARDEN	Second Army and airborne operations to seize bridges at Nijmegen and Arnhem, September 17th–26th.
MULBERRY	Artificial harbour off the Normandy coast.
OCTAGON	The Second Quebec Conference, September 1944.
PLUTO	Scheme to supply petrol from England to the Continent by submarine pipeline.
VERITABLE	First Canadian Army's Rhineland attack, February 8th–March 10th.

Index

INDEX

*Only those forces and individuals mentioned in the text are included in this index.
Other names will be found in the appendices.*

- Aa R.: 34
Aachen: 11; American drive for, 24, 70, 136, 161, 355; German forces in sector, 31, 75, 97, 159, 172; advance from, 163-4, 184
Aardenburg: 105-7
Aart: 31
Abbeville: 6
Administration and Logistics: supply problems affect operations, 2-3, 16-18, 24-6, 71-3, 131-6, 162, 347, 350-1; opening of ports, 7n, 15, 25, 63, 73, 127, 136-7; and allocation, 18, 141; September supplies, 72-3, 131; in October/November (British), 131-5; (American), 135-6; importance of Antwerp, 138-40, 408; coal, 139, 408-9; ammunition and manpower, 141-2, 163; port administration, 229; 'Veritable' supplies, 255; and beyond Rhine, 286-7, 295, 312-3
Admiral Hipper: bombed, 318
Admiral Scheer: sunk, 318
Advanced Base: 131, 133
Aeltre: 15
Afferden: 267
Afwaterings Canal: 125-6
Airborne Forces:
 Command of, 23n, 53; glider pilots, 49, 55n, 291; operational use reviewed, 52, 399; casualties to, 55-6, 158, 291; organisation, 383
Forces Engaged:
First Allied Airborne Army: 4; supporting Northern Group, 9, 17, 22-4, 26, 29; 81
See also British and Canadian and United States Armies
Airborne Operations:
 Allied: at Courtrai cancelled, 4; and 'Comet', 7, 12; in Arnhem operation, 27, ch. II *passim*; considered for Walcheren, 23, 59, 81-2; in Rhine crossing, 290-1; not needed at Kassel, 323; reviewed, 399
 German: raid in Ardennes, 179n
Aircraft:
 Allied: first operational use of jets, 337n; types in use, 389-96; numbers available, 397; jets described, 397
 German: jets in use, 31; jet types, 75, 144; production, 144, 296, 404; jet production as Allied objective, 221-2
Airfields: occupation and construction by Allies, 8, 97, 140, 286, 295, 308, 385; attacks on enemy, 31, 227, 288, 317
Air Forces, Allied:
 Strategic Forces: control of, 20-1, 91, 150-1, 224; directives to, 76, 150-3, 219, 221-2, 317; and relief in Holland, 317, 419; rôle, 398
 Tactical Forces: Shaf in direct command, 20; in strategic operations, 224-5; in maritime operations, 233, 318; rôle, 398-9
 See also Royal Air Force, United States Army Air Force and Appendix V
Air/Ground Co-operation: at le Havre, 14; in Arnhem operation, 31-2, 53-4; at Channel ports, 61-6; 68; in Scheldt operations, 82-3, 99, 106, 115-8, 120; at Nijmegen, 97-8; 124; in Roer Valley, 163-4; in Ardennes, 180, 186-9, 192-3, 197, 219, 223; 241; in 'Blackcock', 245-6; in 'Veritable', 256-7, 260, 266, 270, 275-6; in 'Grenade', 272; in Rhine crossing, 280, 287-93; in Eifel, 281; in drive from Rhine, 308, 312, 316-7, 325, 328, 337; reviewed, 356
Air Mastery: 75-6; and logistics, 137, 330; 176; in review, 357, 399
Air/Sea Rescue Service: 32n
Air Transport and Supply: in Arnhem operation, 32-41 *passim*, 48, 52-4, 56; 133-4, 137; in Eifel, 281; in Rhine crossing, 287, 290-1; beyond Rhine, 317, 323, 325, 330
Albert: 4
Albert Canal: Germans defend, 10-11; Allies cross, 12-13, 24, 69, 101; 178
Alexander, Field-Marshal the Hon. Sir Harold: in Italy, 19, 331, 338; 213n
Aller R.: 306, 309-11
Allied Military Mission (Moscow): 214, 298
Almelo: 308, 313
Alpen: 276
Alphen: 100-3
Alsace: 181; German attack in, 191, 196, 247-9, 279
Amblève R.: 179, 182
Ammunition: Allied shortages of, 134-5, 141, 162-3
Amphibious Operations: in Scheldt, 105-6, 111-2, 118-22; in 'Veritable', 259-60; in Rhine crossing, 287-90, 320; in Holland, 314; in Elbe crossing, 337
Amphibious Vehicles; Buffalo, 105n, 384; Terrapin, 112n, 384; Dukw, 112n; Weasel 118n, 384; D.D. tank, 368n
Amsterdam: 27, 154
Anglo-American Relations: 352, 356
Antonov, General A.I.: 208, 342
Antwerp: 4; Ramsay advises on, 5; captured, 5; importance of opening port, 9-10, 16-19, 23, 25-7, 59, 80, 83-5, 88-92, 94-7, 100-1, 110, 138-40, 155; 12-13; Canadian task, 27, 66-70; 31, 75; in Scheldt operations, 81, 93, 99, 101, 109, 356; Second Army also employed, 92, 123; port opened, 127; its control, 141; V-weapon attacks on, 149, 229, 235; 157-8; German objective

Antwerp—*cont.*

from Ardennes, 175-8, 194, 238, 355; convoys to, 229-35; 295; reflections on, 348-51; Belgian resistance at, 414

Antwerp-Turnhout Canal: 69-70, 99-101

Apeldoorn: 314

Ardennes, The: separates Ruhr and Saar thrusts, 1, 8-9, 93-5, 157, 164-8, 347, 349; German counter-offensive in, ch.VIII *passim*, 203-4, 219, 223, 249, 354-6

'Argonaut': see Malta and Yalta Conferences

Arlon: 187

Armies: see British and Canadian, French,

German and United States Armies

Armistice and Post-War Committee: 173

Armoured Assault Teams: in capture of ports,

14, 61, 65; at Walcheren, 121, 123; in

'Veritable', 258

Arnhem: in 'Comet', 7; landing at, 35-6, 38,

41; bridges at, 35, 38, 46-7, 49; first news

from 38-9; XXX Corps trying to reach,

40-4; withdrawal from, 44, 50; described,

45; operations in, 46-50; 74; German

moves from, 159, 254, 263; captured, 314,

Arnhem Operation ('Market Garden'): pre-

parations for, 12-13, 21-3, 31-2; tasks in,

27-30; operations, ch.II, 72, 79, 95; re-

viewed, 50-6, 349-51; air support in, 54;

154

Arras: 4

Arromanches: 85, 131

Aschaffenburg: 321

Asperden: 256, 267

Ath: 5, 8

Atkins, Thomas: 124n

Atlantic Charter: 215-6

Atlantic Ocean: 128

Atlantic Wall (Normandy): 356

Augsburg: 77-8, 330

Austria: and Russia, 302; and 'National

Redoubt', 302-3; and Sixth Army Group,

327, 330

Axel: 68

Baal: 272

Baarle Nassau: 100

Bad Zwischenahn: 312

Balbergerwald: in 'Veritable', 254, 271, 273-4

Baltic Sea: 128; in maritime operations, 228,

318, 356; Allied objective, 299, 326-7,

331, 351; reached, 337-8, 353, 357

Bamberg: 325

Bapaume: 4

Barneveld: 314

Baskeyfield, Lance-Sergeant J.D.: 57

Basle: 330

Bastogne: Germans unable to capture, 182,

185-7, 190-1, 194, 205; relieved, 187; 188

Bavaria: and 'National Redoubt', 302, 317;

334

Bayerlein, Lieut-General F.: 193

Bayreuth: and Twelfth Army Group, 301,

320, 323, 325, 329

Bedburg: 265

Beeringen: 12, 29

Belchem, Brigadier R.F.K.: 23

Belfort: 137; - Gap, 11, 71, 165

Belgian Armed Forces:

1st Belgian Brigade: 84

Belgian Special Air Service Regt: 313

Belgium: 1; Allies advance into, 4, 94, 347;

Resistance in, 5, 9, 413-5; airfields in, 8,

140; 81n; German activity off coast, 128,

230, 234-5; ports in, 132, 134, 137-40;

railways and canals in, 132, 151; coal

production in, 133, 139, 408-9; civil

affairs in, 139, 415; and V-weapons,

149-50, 235; 284, 286; national govern-

ment re-established, 414-5

Belle Vue: 65

Belsen: 309

Bemmel: 43-4

Bentheim: 307

Berchtesgaden: in 'National Redoubt', 303-4;

bombed, 317, 356; 334; captured, 342

Bergen: 152

Bergen op Zoom: in Scheldt operations,

80n-1, 92, 99-100, 102, 109-10, 126

Bergstein: 164

Bergues: 15

Beringe: 160

Berlin: Allied objective, 1, 16-17, 21, 77-9,

90, 93, 169; replaced by Leipzig, 299-302,

319-20, 326-7, 351, 353; 145; and post-war

control, 214, 218; bombed, 266, 228, 308,

317; attacked by Russians, 316, 327, 331,

335; American threat to, 324, 326-7; and

Hitler's Bunker, 334-6; surrender ratified

in, 344

Bernadotte, Count F.: 335

Besançon: 137

Best: in Arnhem operation, 34-5, 37, 44

Bielefeld Viaduct: 225

Bienen: 292-3

Biervliet: 106

Bilderberg: 46

Biscay, Bay of: 1, 11, 331

Bitburg: 280-1

Bitche: 249

'Blackcock' operation: 241-7

Black Forest: and 'National Redoubt', 303;

and First French Army, 325, 327, 330

Blaskowitz, Colonel-General J.: commands

Army Group H, 254, 309; 263

Blerick: 160

'Blockbuster' operation: 271-7

Bocket: 244

Bolzano: 329

Bonn: as American objective, 8, 24, 26-7, 80,

95, 196, 211; 167-8; German forces at,

171; 203-4, 288; in drive from Rhine, 296

Bonninghardt: 276

Bon Secours: 61

Bordeaux: 331, 342n

Bornholm: 341

Bottomley, Air Marshal Sir Norman: 20,

152-3, 317n

Boulogne: 6; a 'fortress', 10, 15; 16; Canadians

capture, 27, 59-63, 128; port opened, 63,

131-2; bombing assessed, 65; and 'Pluto',

134, 139

Boxmeer: 255

Boxtel: 124

Braakman Inlet: 67-8, 103-6

- Bradley, Lieut-General Omar N.: in conferences, 7-8, 21-3, 83-4, 154-5, 167; 24, 26; and Brest, 71; and command, 87, 93, 166, 199-203; 99; and logistics, 136; 154; and his H.Q., 155, 165, 182-3, 195, 352; and November offensives, 163-5; and Ardennes battle, 175-6, 180-5, 190-2, 194-7; and Montgomery's press conference, 205-6; 249; and closing to Rhine, 280; and drive from Rhine, 296-7, 299, 308, 315, 321; and Ruhr, 321, 323; and Elbe, 323, 327, 342; and Danube, 326, 329; and Czechoslovakia, 342
- Brandenburg: 258
- Braun, Eva: 336
- Bray Dunes: 15
- Brecht: 101
- Breda: 10, 27; and Lower Maas, 92, 109-10, 123, 125-6; 239
- Bremen: bombed, 225, 234-5, 280; 226; in drive to Elbe, 301, 305-12, 315-7, 357
- Brenner Pass: 329-30, 342
- Brereton, Lieut-General L.H.: 23, 29; and Walcheren, 81
- Breskens: 67-8; captured, 106-7; and Walcheren, 112, 115, 118, 120-1; 127
- 'pocket': 70; clearance of, 81, 97, 103-7, 349
- Bresle R.: 8
- Bresserberg: 262
- Brest: as American task, 9, 18, 25; captured, 71; useless as port, 135
- Bridging: to Nijmegen, 12, 30n, 36, 98; 113; for railways, 255, 312, 328; 272, 275; over Rhine, 283, 292-3, 313; 287; over Elbe, 337; statistics, 385
- Brinkum: 311
- BRITISH AND CANADIAN ARMY:
- Weapons and equipment, 383-4; mechanisation, 385; services, 385-7; total engaged in Overlord, 406; total casualties, 407
- Forces Engaged:
- Twenty-First Army Group: logistics, 2, 17-18, 22-4, 72-3, 131-5, 140-1, 286-7, 295, 312-3; drives to Belgium, 3-4; and Antwerp, 5, 25, 80-1, 91-2, 94-7, 109, 155, 349, 351; new directive to, 9; and Arnhem operation, 22-3, 26, 154; September progress, 70; 77-8, 86-7; Ruhr to Americans, 155; November operations, 158; location of tactical H.Q., 165, 190, 339; 166-8; Intelligence, 170-1; in Ardennes, 175, 181-4, 190-2, 196, 199-200; 203-4; northern front, 237; in Rhineland battles, 250-3, 280, 284; in Rhine crossing, 282-8; drives from Rhine, 295-7, 301, 315-6, 320, 323; crosses Elbe, 331, 337, 356-7; accepts German surrender, 339; and Denmark, 340-1;
- Northern Group of Armies: *see* Twenty-First Army Group
- British Second Army: into Belgium, 4-7, 11, 15; and air support, 8, 53, 154; in Arnhem operation, 13, 21-3, 27, ch.II *passim*, 59-60, 69-70; logistics, 72, 131-3, 286-7, 295, 312; directed to Ruhr, 79-80; to Meuse, 83-5, 158-60; to Lower Maas, 92, 109-10, 123-5; in Nijmegen bridgehead, 97-9; 100, 155; in Ardennes, 184n, 238; 213; in 'Blackcock', 241; in Rhineland battles, 251, 264, 271, 274; crosses Rhine, 285-6, 294; to Elbe, 297, 301, 305-12 *passim*, 422
- First Canadian Army: 3; tasks in the coastal belt, 6-7, 13-15, 27, 59-60, 63, 70; and air support, 8, 53, 154; 11; logistics, 72, 133, 313; in Scheldt operations, 80-5, 92, 95, 99, 107n, 109-10, 118, 127, 351; 98; and naval liaison, 106, 112, 118-9; and Lower Maas, 125; and Nijmegen bridgehead, 158-9, 237-41; and troops from Italy, 213, 285n; in 'Veritable', 250-1, ch.XII *passim*, 284; crosses Rhine, 285n, 313; clearing Holland, 297, 307, 313-5
- Corps:
- I: 6-7; at le Havre, 14-15; to Antwerp, 59-60, 69-70, 72; in Scheldt operations, 80n, 99-101, 103, 109-10; and Lower Maas, 125-7, 238, 240, 285n; 422
- VIII: grounded, 4, 72; in Arnhem operation, 13, 29, 36, 43; on Meuse, 79-80, 99, 109, 160, 238, 241; counter-attacked, 124-5, 159; 245; in Rhine crossing, 285n, 294; to Baltic, 305-12 *passim*, 337
- XII: into Belgium, 4, 6; in Arnhem operation, 13, 29, 31, 36, 44; and Lower Maas, 99, 109-10, 123-7; on Meuse, 160-1; in 'Blackcock', 241-7; in Rhine crossing, 285n, 286n, 289-91, 293; to Elbe, 305-12
- XXX: into Belgium, 4-7, 12; in Arnhem operation, 13, 29-41 *passim*, 44, 50, 52, 55; in Nijmegen bridgehead, 98, 109, 127; at Geilenkirchen, 160-1; in Ardennes, 184, 190-2; in 'Veritable', 254-67, 271-7; in Rhine crossing, 285n, 288, 293; to Bremen, 306-12 *passim*, 316
- I Airborne: in Arnhem operation, 29n, 30, 34, 36-8, 41, 55
- I Canadian: from Italy, 285n; clearing Holland, 313-5; relief in Holland, 418-9
- II Canadian: in coastal belt, 6, 15-16; clears Channel ports, 60-6; in Scheldt operations, 67, 81, 99, 102-7, 110-23; on Nijmegen front, 127, 237-8; 159; in 'Veritable', 255-6, 267-76 *passim*; in Rhine crossing, 285n; clearing Holland, 313
- Netherlands District: 251, 285n, 313n
- Armoured Divisions:
- Guards: takes Brussels, 4; 12; in Arnhem operation, 29n, 32, 35-40; 160n; in Ardennes, 184n, 186; in 'Veritable', 256n, 261, 266, 271, 276; 285n; to Elbe, 307, 309, 311, 316
- 7th: 4n, 6; in Arnhem operation, 29n, 43; 123-6, 160n; in 'Blackcock', 241n, 243, 245-6; 285n, 293; to Elbe, 305-6, 310-1; takes Hamburg, 338

BRITISH AND CANADIAN ARMY, *cont.*Armoured Divisions—*cont.*

- 11th: takes Antwerp, 4-5; 12-13; in Arnhem operation, 29n; 99, 160n; in 'Veritable', 264, 271, 273, 276; 285n; to Elbe, 305-6, 309-10; reaches Baltic, 337-8
- 79th: at le Havre, 14; at Channel ports, 61, 65; in Scheldt operations, 112, 123; 124; in 'Blackcock', 241n, 244; in 'Veritable', 256n, 258, 262, 267; in Rhine crossing, 285n, 286n; 314
- 4th Canadian: in coastal belt, 6, 15; in Scheldt operations, 60, 67-8, 102-10 *passim*, 125-6; 239; in 'Veritable', 271-6 *passim*; 285n; from Rhine, 308, 311-3
- 5th Canadian: 285n; clearing Holland, 313n-5
- 1st Polish: 6, 15; in Scheldt operations, 60, 67-8, 70, 81; 99-101; and Lower Maas, 125-6, 239; 285n; reaches Ems estuary, 313
- Infantry Divisions:**
- 3rd: 4n; in Arnhem operation, 29n; on Meuse, 99, 160n, 238; in 'Veritable', 271, 273, 276; 285n; to Bremen, 305-7, 309, 311, 316
- 5th: 285n; across Elbe 337
- 15th: 4n; in Arnhem operation, 29n, 44; on Meuse, 99, 159-60; 109n, 123-5; in 'Veritable', 256-71 *passim*; in Rhine crossing, 285n, 289-91, 293; to Elbe, 305n, 309-10; crosses Elbe, 337
- 43rd: 4n; in Arnhem operation, 29n, 40, 42-4; on Meuse, 98, 160-1; 184n; in 'Blackcock', 241n, 243, 245-6; in 'Veritable', 256n, 258n, 261-76 *passim*; 285n, 293; to Bremen, 307n, 311, 316
- 49th: 7; takes le Havre, 14; east of Antwerp, 59-60, 69-70, 99-101; in Scheldt operations, 109-10, 126; 160n; in Nijmegen bridgehead, 237, 241; 255n, 285n, 292; takes Arnhem, 313n-5
- 50th: into Belgium, 4, 6, 12-13; in Arnhem operation, 29n, 32, 42n; 98; dispersed 158-9
- 51st: 7; takes le Havre, 14-15; 59, 69; and Lower Maas, 123-6; 160; in Ardennes, 184n, 191; 237; in 'Veritable', 256-67 *passim*, 271, 274; 276; 285n; to Bremen, 285n, 288-9, 292-3; to Bremen, 307n, 311, 316
- 52nd: 30; in Scheldt operations, 84, 106-7, 111-4, 118, 123; in 'Blackcock', 241n, 243-7; in 'Veritable', 264, 266-7, 271, 274, 276; 285n; to Bremen, 305n-6, 309, 311, 316
- 53rd: 4n, 6; in Arnhem operation, 29n, 44; and Lower Maas, 123-4; 160; in Ardennes, 184n, 186, 191; in 'Veritable', 256-76 *passim*; 285n, 293; to Elbe, 305n-6, 310
- 59th: 142n, 158
- 1st Canadian: 285n; clears Holland, 313-5

- 2nd Canadian: 6, 15; at Antwerp, 60, 69-70; 64; in Scheldt operations, 81, 99, 101-3, 109-14; 241; in 'Veritable', 255-9, 267-76 *passim*; 285n, 311; clearing Holland, 313
- 3rd Canadian: 6; takes Channel ports, 15, 60-6; in Scheldt operations, 81, 99, 104-7; 241; in 'Veritable', 256-9, 263-76 *passim*; in Rhine crossing, 285n, 293; clearing Holland, 313

Airborne Divisions:

- 1st: at Arnhem, 29-45 *passim*, 49, 51-2, 55-7; prisoners freed, 311
- 6th: 155; in Ardennes, 181, 191; in Rhine crossing, 285n, 290-1, 293-4; to Baltic, 305n, 306n, 310, 337-8

Armoured Brigades:

- 4th: 123, 160n, 285n, 305n, 310
- 5th Guards: 5
- 6th Guards Tank (later Armoured): 123-5, 159-60, 184n, 241n, 256n, 258n, 262, 268, 285n, 293, 305n
- 8th: 4, 13, 160n, 241n, 243-4, 247, 256n, 258n, 262, 265, 285n, 307n
- 29th: 184, 186, 191
- 30th: 258n
- 31st Tank (later Armoured): 61, 65, 285n
- 33rd: 14, 123, 160n, 184n, 191, 285n
- 34th Tank (later Armoured): 14, 184n, 191, 256n, 258n, 261, 265, 285n
- 1st Canadian: 285n, 313n
- 2nd Canadian: 65, 100, 125-6, 255n, 268, 274, 285n
- Czechoslovakian: 343
- Infantry Brigades:**
- 32nd Guards: 4, 42, 267
- 44th: 259, 262
- 46th: 259, 264, 268
- 69th: 13, 42n
- 71st: 258
- 115th: 285n
- 129th: 42, 262
- 130th: 40, 42
- 151st: 6, 13
- 152nd: 261, 292
- 153rd: 258, 261, 288
- 154th: 258, 288
- 155th: 118-9, 123, 243-4
- 156th: 112-4, 123, 244
- 157th: 113-4, 123, 244
- 158th: 261
- 160th: 258, 261
- 214th: 42, 262
- 227th: 259, 263
- 231st: 4, 13
- 1st Parachute: 35, 38-9, 41, 46, 48, 51, 55
- 4th Parachute: 35-6, 41, 48-9, 52n
- 1st Airlanding: 35-6, 41, 46, 48, 52n
- 1st Commando: 245-6, 274, 285n, 289, 291, 293-4, 305n
- 4th Special Service (later Commando): 60, 69, 81, 99, 118n, 120, 122-3, 285n
- 4th Canadian: 268-9
- 5th Canadian: 259, 268, 270
- 6th Canadian: 269
- 7th Canadian: 63-5, 105, 268-70
- 8th Canadian: 62, 65, 106, 268

- 9th Canadian: 62, 66, 105-6, 263-4, 268, 288n, 293
 10th Canadian: 239
 1st Belgian: 84
 Royal Netherlands: 42n
 1st Polish Parachute: 38, 40, 42-3, 52
 British Armoured and Infantry Regiments:
 1st Airborne Reconnaissance Sqn.: 35, 46n
 1st Bn. Border Regt.: 48
 Coldstream Guards: 307
 Commandos: No. 4, 118-9, 123; No. 10 (Inter-Allied), 118, 121-2. *See also* under Royal Marines
 2nd Bn. Devonshire Regt.: 32n, 305
 4th Bn. Dorsetshire Regt.: 43n
 22nd Dragoons: 14
 2nd Fife and Forfar Yeomanry: 305
 Grenadier Guards: 5, 39
 Hallamshire Bn. York and Lancaster Regt.: 100n
 Household Cavalry: 5, 40, 42, 307
 8th Hussars: 311
 15th/19th Hussars: 37n
 Irish Guards: 12, 40; 2nd (Armoured) Bn., 32n; 3rd Bn., 32n
 King's Own Scottish Borderers: 4th Bn., 119; 7th Bn., 48-9
 King's Shropshire Light Infantry: 273n
 3rd Bn. Monmouthshire Regt.: 305-6
 Parachute Regt.: 1st Bn., 46-8; 2nd Bn., 38, 46, 49, 56; 3rd Bn., 46-8; 10th Bn., 48-9, 56; 11th Bn., 48; 156th Bn., 48-9; Independent Coy., 35
 1st Royal Dragoons: 37n
 Royal Northumberland Fusiliers: 57
 4th/5th Bn. Royal Scots Fusiliers: 244n
 Royal Scots Greys: 338
 Royal Sussex Regt.: 56
 44th Bn. Royal Tank Regt.: 37n
 2nd Bn. Scots Guards: 307n
 Sherwood Rangers Yeomanry: 13
 2nd Bn. South Staffordshire Regt.: 48, 57
 1st Special Air Service Regt.: 311n
 Welsh Guards: 4-5, 12; 1st Bn., 4; 2nd (Armoured) Bn., 307n
 Canadian Armoured and Infantry Regiments:
 Algonquin Regt.: 67-8
 Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders of Canada: 240
 6th Armoured Regt.: 64-5
 10th Armoured Regt.: 61, 103
 18th Armoured Car Regt.: 15, 238
 27th Armoured Regt.: 100n
 Essex Scottish Regt.: 274n
 Lincoln and Welland Regt.: 240
 1st Parachute Bn.: 338
 Queen's Own Rifles of Canada: 273
 7th Reconnaissance Regt.: 63-4
 French Regiments:
 Régiment de Chasseurs Parachutistes: 2nd, 313; 3rd, 313
 Royal Artillery:
 A.G.R.A.s: 3rd, 124, 241n, 256n, 285n; 4th, 14, 256n, 285n; 5th, 256n, 269n, 285n; 8th, 285n; 9th, 14, 241n, 256n, 285n
 1st Airlanding Light Regt.: 47
 Anti-Aircraft Brigades: 74th, 256n; 100th, 285n; 106th, 256n, 285n; 107th, 285n
 540th Coast Regt.: 62
 Royal Canadian Artillery:
 2nd A.G.R.A.: 256n, 285n
 3rd Medium Regt.: 64
 12th Field Regt.: 64
 Royal Engineers: bridge building by, 12, 36, 98, 275, 292-3, 312, 337, 385; in Arnhem operation, 30n, 44, 47; at ports, 132
 A.G.R.E.s: 10th, 285n; 11th, 285n; 12th, 285n; 13th, 285n
 1st Assault Brigade: 112
 Royal Canadian Engineers: 44, 113, 313, 385
 Royal Army Service Corps: 47, 54, 385
 Pioneer Corps: 30n, 385
 Lines of Communication Headquarters: 238
See also Appendix IV, Part I
 British Broadcasting Corporation (B.B.C.): 206, 386-7
 Brittany: and logistics, 2, 135; 71
 Broadhurst, Air Vice-Marshal H.: 287
 Brooke, Field-Marshal Sir Alan, C.I.G.S.: 19, 21; on Antwerp, 83, 88, 97, 351; 142; and Montgomery, 166, 168, 184, 275, 340, 353; and Strasbourg, 247; at Rhine crossing, 292
 Browning, Lieut-General F.A.M.: in Arnhem operation, 30, 34, 36-7
 Bruges: Canadian objective, 6, 13, 15; 118n
 Bruges-Ghent Canal: 15, 60, 66
 Brunen: 293
 Brunswick: 323, 328
 Brussels: liberated, 4-5, 19, 356; 83 Group at, 8; meetings at, 21-2, 154, 157; railhead opened at, 72-3; British advanced base at, 131, 136; and V-weapons, 149; German objective from Ardennes, 177-8, 355
 Buchenwald: 310
 Buchholt: 268
 Budejovice: 331, 342
 'Bugle' operation: 224-5, 288
 Bure: 191
 Burrough, Vice-Admiral Sir Harold: 230
 Busch, Field-Marshal E.: C.-in-C. North-West, 309, 334, 339
 Bütgenbach: 184-5
 Cadzand: 107
 Cain, Major R. H.: 57
 Calais: a 'fortress', 10, 15-16; capture of, 27, 59-60, 63-66, 69, 80-1, 97, 105, 128; in use as port, 132
 Calcar: in 'Veritable', 256-7, 264-74 *passim*
 Canadian Army: *see* British and Canadian Army
 Canal de Dérivation de la Lys: in Canadian operations, 15, 67-8, 104-5
 Cap Blanc Nez: 65
 Cap de la Hève: 13, 15
 Cap Gris Nez: Canadian objective, 15-16, 62, 64, 66
 Cappellen: 101
 Casablanca Conference ('Symbol'): 146
 Carvin: 4

- Cassel:** *see* Kassel
- Casualties:** 'non-battle', 141, 164, 405; from V-weapons, 149, 235, 405
- Battle Casualties:**
- Allied: in Arnhem operation, 55-6; at Brest, 71; in Canadian operations Sep./Oct., 107, 114n, 122, 128; American in Nov., 164-5; in Ardennes, 195; in 'Blackcock', 247; in Colmar pocket, 249; in 'Veritable/Grenade', 277; in Saar, 283; Feb./Mar. summary, 284; in Rhine crossing, 291, 293-4; in Ruhr clearance, 323; in whole campaign 405
 - German: at Mons, 9; in Canadian operations Sep./Oct., 15, 63, 66, 107, 115, 126, 128; at Arnhem, 56; at Brest, 71; at St. Dié, 162; in Ardennes, 195; in 'Blackcock', 247; in Colmar pocket, 249; in 'Veritable/Grenade', 277; in Saar, 283; Feb./Mar. summary, 284; in Rhine crossing, 294; north of Arnhem, 315; in Ruhr, 322; beyond Rhine, 325-6, 328, 337-8
- Celle:** 309
- Celles:** 186, 189
- Central Intelligence Committee:** 145
- Chalampré:** 249
- Channel, The:** U-boats in, 1, 230, 234-5; ports needed, 18, 22; ports captured, 59-66, 93, 349, 356; ports in use, 131-3; 354
- Chapman, Corporal E.T.:** 306n
- Charleroi:** 136
- Chemnitz:** bombed, 226-8; American objective, 323, 325
- Cherbourg:** and logistics, 85, 134-7, 295
- Chief of Air Staff:** *see* Portal, Air Chief Marshal Sir Charles
- Chief of the Imperial General Staff (C.I.G.S.):** *see* Brooke, Field-Marshal Sir Alan
- Chiefs of Staff:**
- British: and 'Octagon', 18-19; and Antwerp, 19, 97, 351; and Flushing, 117; and 'all-out' offensive in 1944, 138, 142; and post-war Germany, 146-7; and strategy in West, 169-70, 207, 211-3, 298, 301, 304, 327, 349-50, 353; and bombing, 316; on surrender, 338; membership, 361
 - American: and strategy in West, 19, 207, 211, 304, 352; oppose change in command system, 200, 207-8; and airborne operations, 323; on surrender, 338; membership, 361
 - Combined: and strategy in West, 17-19, 71, 170, 209, 298, 301, 326-7, 349-51, 356; and strategic bombing, 20, 151, 251, 317; and Intelligence, 73, 142; and command, 89n, 201, 203; and Antwerp, 97; and Flushing, 117; and 'all-out' offensive in 1944, 137; and 'Argonaut', 169, 207-8, 211-4; and German morale, 173; and Russia, 208-9, 301, 304; and Czechoslovakia, 332; and surrender, 333, 344; and Anglo-American relations, 352; membership, 361; and French Army, 413; and relief in Holland, 418
- Chill, Lieut-General K.:** 12n, 101-3
- Churchill, Rt. Hon. W. S.:** at 'Octagon' conference, 18-20; on command, 89n, 219n; 117, 142; and Morgenthau plan, 146-7; and 50th Division, 159; on progress of war, 169-70, 207-9, 349-50; on of war, 169-70, 207-9, 349-50; on Ardennes battle, 206; at Malta and Yalta, 213-7; on Strasbourg, 247; at Rhine crossing, 292; on Berlin, 302, 304; and death of President Roosevelt, 315; and bombing, 316; on Prague, 332, 343; and surrender 333, 336; and Anglo-American relations, 352; 356
- Ciergnon:** 186
- Civil Affairs:** in France, 61, 66, 138-9; in Belgium, 133, 138-9, 415; in Holland, 133, 138-9, 417
- 'Clarion' operation:** 224-5, 270
- Clerf:** 180
- Clerval:** 137
- Cleve:** bombed, 32, 83n; 79; in 'Veritable', 253-68 *passim*
- Forest: 265-7
- Cloppenburg:** 307, 311
- Coal:** 133, 139, 408-9
- Coastal Defences, Enemy:** Grand Clos Battery, 13-14; at Cap Gris Nez and Calais, 62-6; on Walcheren, 115, 120, 123; at Zeebrugge, 127
- Coburg:** 325
- Corvorden:** 308
- Collins, Major-General J. L.:** 184, 204
- Colmar:** 162, 165; captured, 249, 279-80; 272
- Cologne:** American objective, 8, 24, 26-7, 80, 155, 158, 175, 196; German forces at, 170-1, 177-8, 272, 275; bombed, 188, 226; captured, 282
- Combined Intelligence Committee:** 142, 172
- Combined Strategic Targets Committee:** 224
- 'Comet' operation:** 7, 12-13, 21
- Command Arrangements:** tactical air forces, 19-20, 91; strategic air forces, 20-1, 91, 150-1; U.S. Sixth Army Group joins Overlord, 71; Montgomery-Eisenhower argument, 85-91, 166-9, 199-202
- Commandos:** *see* British and Canadian Army, Royal Marines
- Communications (Road, Rail, Canal):**
- Allied: supply routes, 2, 72-3, 131-7, 160-1, 286-7, 295, 312, 328, 385; in 'Veritable', 255, 259, 261-3, 385. *See also* Bridging
 - German: in strategic bombing, 76, 152-3, 189, 192-3, 220-8, 317, 398; and in directives, 150-3, 219-22; Tedder presses for higher priority, 151-2, 219-20; in tactical air attacks, 153-4, 188-9, 192-3, 197, 224-5, 270, 281; Ardennes roads break up, 186
- Communications (Signal):** failure at Arnhem, 38, 55; ground/air, 32, 40, 256, 281, 291; in Ardennes battle, 181-3, 195
- Concentration Camps:** 309-10, 330

- Conferences: Quebec, 18-20, 97, 147, 348-9; Casablanca, 146; Teheran, 146; Moscow, 148; Malta/Yalta, 169n, 208, 213-8, 234, 331, 350
 Coningham, Air Marshal Sir Arthur: 8, 20, 154; and Ardennes fighting, 183; and 'Veritable', 251
 Control Commission for Germany: 214, 218
 Convoys: 229-35, 357, 366
 Copenhagen: 341
 Coquelles: 65
 Coseons, Sergeant A.: 273n
 Courtrai: 4
 Crailsheim: 325
 Crerar, Lieut-General H. D. G.: 6; and Channel ports, 59-60, 62-3n; in Scheldt operations, 69, 80n-1; ill, 99, 159; in 'Veritable', 255-6, 264, 266, 270; beyond Rhine, 308, 311
 Crimea Conference: *see* Yalta
 Crocker, Lieut-General J. T.: 101, 238
 Cuxhaven: 311, 315-6
 Czechoslovakia: 325; and Russia, 327, 331-2, 341-3
 Czechoslovakian Armoured Brigade: 343
- Dachau: 330
 Danish Freedom Council: 333, 420-1
 Danube R.: American objective, 297, 326-7, 329-30, 343, 357
 Danzig: 226; Gulf of -, 228
 Darchau: 308, 310, 315
 Daser, Lieut-General W.: 123
 Deception: by Germans in Ardennes, 177-8
 de Guingand, Major-General Sir Francis: 79, 83, 170n; and Montgomery, 201-2
 Delfzijl: 314
 Delmenhorst: 306, 311-2
 Dempsey, Lieut-General Sir Miles: 4; in conferences, 7, 43, 308; 13, 29; and surrender of Hamburg, 338
 Den Brink: 47
 Den Helder: 230-2
 Denmark: 1; as Allied objective, 299, 302, 326, 332; Germans surrender in, 333, 339-41; Resistance in, 420-1
 Dessau: 323-4, 328
 Deurne: 43; - Canal, 160
 Deventer: 27, 313-4
 Devers, General J. L.: commands U.S. Sixth Army Group, 71; and Ardennes, 175, 181; 280; in advance from Rhine, 296-7, 321-7 *passim*
 Dewing, Major-General R. H.: 341
 Diepholz: 306
 Dieppe: captured, 6, 128; 1942 raid, 7; port opened, 7n, 132
 Diersfordter Wald: 288, 290-1
 Dijon: 11, 24; and logistics, 137, 139
 Dinant: 180n, 184, 186
 Dingden: 293
 Dinslaken: 292
 Domburg: 117, 120, 122-3
 Domitz: 331, 337, 342
 Dommel R.: 34
 Dongen: 125, 239
- Dönitz, Grand Admiral K.: and German Navy, 128, 235; 334; Hitler's successor, 336; negotiates surrender, 338-40, 343-4
 Donnini, Fusilier D.: 244n
 Donsbruggen: 259-60, 263
 Dortmund: bombed, 225, 228
 Dortmund-Ems Canal: 225, 276; and Second Army, 305-6
 Douai: 4
 Doullens: 4
 Dover: 62, 66
 Dresden: as alternative to Berlin, 77, 320; bombed, 226-7; Allied objective, 297-8, 300, 319; left to Russians, 327-8
 Driel: 38, 41-3
 Duisburg: 188, 275
 Dungeness: and Pluto, 134; 230
 Dunkirk: a 'fortress', 10, 15-16; masked, 27, 59-60, 69, 128, 343; 81; in 1940, 158, 230, 357; bombed, 232
 Düren: American objective, 162-3, 271-2, 280
 Düsseldorf: 80, 172; in 'Grenade', 197, 210, 250-1, 254, 272, 275; 280; bombed, 281
 Dutch Armed Forces: Royal Netherlands Brigade, 42n; in No. 10 (Inter-Allied) Commando, 118
- Eberding, Major-General K.: 104, 107
 E-boats: in Scheldt, 128, 230-3
 Echt: 243, 245
 Echtersbosch: 243
 Echtermach: 178, 180
 Ede: 32, 45-6
 Eden, Anthony: 147, 332
 Eecloo: 68
 Eede: 106
 Eem R.: 315
 Eifel: in American operations, 70, 279, 282; 177
 Eindhoven: Second Army drives for, 7, 12, 30, 35; American airborne troops capture, 32-5; bombed, 37, 40; airfields at, 97, 245
 Eisenhower, General Dwight D.: on strategy, 1-3, 8, 16-19, 24, 71, 77, 79, 93-4, 165-8, 203-4, 207-13, 284, 295, 297-304, 326, 347; in conferences, 8, 21-2, 79-80, 83, 97, 155, 167-70, 181, 190, 207, 315, 328, 350; directives, 4 September 9, 94, 13 September 25, 23 September 199, 28 October 157-8, 163-5, 352, 18 January 196, 1 February 197, 249, 279, 3 March 281, 8 March 282, 25 March 297, 319, 2 April 301, 320, 15 April 326; on Antwerp, 10, 16-18, 23, 25, 79-80, 83, 85, 88-9, 94-7, 137-8, 350-1; control of strategic bombers, 20-1, 150, 317n; and Arnhem operation, 21-3, 27, 29, 50, 57-8, 83; 26; on Berlin, 77, 299-302, 319-20, 326-7, 351; and Walcheren, 82, 117; on 'command', 84-91, 165-7, 199-203; relations with Montgomery, 92, 201-3, 353-4, 357; and logistics, 135, 137-8; 149, 162; and ammunition shortage, 163; and Alsace, 165, 247-8; 173; and Ardennes, 175, 180-3, 185, 190-2, 194-5, 204-5; and co-ordination with Russians, 208, 298-300, 304, 327, 331, 342-3, 351;

- Eisenhower, General Dwight D.—*cont.*
 and Rhineland operations, 264, 275; 292;
 in advance from Rhine, 296-7, 315-6,
 323, 327-8; and Prague, 331-2, 341-3;
 and surrender negotiations, 333, 336,
 338-9, 343-5; conduct of campaign
 assessed, 347-53; and relief in Holland,
 418
- Elbe R.: 232; British drive to, 297, 305-12,
 357; Allied objective, 301, 315-6, 320;
 American 'stop line', 323, 326-8, 331;
 crossed, 324, 337, 353; 342, 351
- Ellewoutsdijk: 112-3
- Elsenborn: 180, 182
- Elst: 40m, 42-4
- Emden: 74, 315
- Emden*: bombed, 318
- Emmerich: 79, bombed, 83n, 260; 251;
 Canadians aim for, 256, 263, 268, 293;
 285, 312-3
- Ems R.: 225; crossed, 305, 307-8, 311;
 Poles reach estuary, 313-4
- Emsdetten: 305
- Enns R.: 331
- Enschede: 307
- Epinal: 71, 137
- Erebus*, H.M.S.: at le Havre, 14; at Wal-
 cheren, 115, 119-20, 123
- Erfurt R.: 281
- Erfurt: 297-8, 300; and U.S. Third Army,
 321, 325
- Erkelenz: 245-6; in 'Grenade', 272
- Erle: 293
- Erz Gebirge Mountains: 301
- Escaut Canal: *see* Meuse-Escaut Canal
- Esschen: 109-10
- Essen: bombed, 225, 228
- 'Eureka': *see* Teheran Conference
- Europe: Allied situation in, 18-19
- European Advisory Commission: and un-
 conditional surrender, 146, 333; and post-
 war Germany, 214, 217
- Euskirchen: 196, 295
- Fallingbistel: 311
- First Allied Airborne Army: *see* Airborne
 Forces
- Flensburg: 340
- Flushing: Germans withdraw through, 10,
 67-8; in Scheldt operations, 104-6, 110-23,
 127
- Fontaine R.: 13-14
- Fort Catarqui*: berths at Antwerp, 127
- Fort de la Crèche: 61-2
- Fort de Tourneville: 14
- Fort Driant: 162
- Fort Frederik Hendrik: 107, 118
- Fort Lapin: 65-6
- Fort Nieulay: 66
- Fort St. Adresse: 15
- Foulkes, Major-General C.: 99
- Foy Notre Dame: 186
- Fraiture: 185, 192
- France: liberated, 1, 19; Resistance in, 5-6,
 9, 72, 411-3; airfields in, 8, 140; civil
 affairs in, 61, 66, 138-9; German activity
 off coast, 128, 229, 234-5; ports in 131-7;
 railways in, 132, 151; and coal, 133, 139,
 408-9; and V-weapons, 149, 235; and
 post-war Germany, 214, 218, 321; 284;
 and Biscay coast, 331; government re-
 established, 412-3
- Frankfurt: American objective, 8-9, 18, 25,
 298-301, 320-1; in strategic arguments,
 77-9, 167-8, 210-2; bombed, 223, 288
- Frankland. Noble: in Foreword XVIII
- Frasselt: 259, 261-2
- French Air Forces: 393, 406-7
- French Armed Forces:
 Clear Biscay coast, 331; operational
 strength, 406, 413; casualties, 407
- Forces Engaged*:
- First French Army: lands in France, 19; at
 Belfort Gap, 71, 165; logistics, 137; March
 strength, 296; crosses Rhine, 321; drives
 from Rhine, 325, 327, 329-30, 342
- 2nd Armoured Division: 342
- See also* Appendix IV, Part I
- Friedeburg, General-Admiral H-G. von:
 339-40, 343-4
- Friesoythe: 311
- Gale, Lieut-General Sir Humfrey: 21
- Gambsheim: 249
- Gaulle, General Charles de: and Strasbourg,
 247; and post-war Germany, 321, 330; and
 France, 412-3
- Gavin, Major-General J. M.: 37
- Geilenkirchen: and XXX Corps, 161; 241
- Geldern: in 'Veritable', 250, 254, 256, 260,
 263, 276; bombed, 270; junction with
 Americans at, 274; 286
- Gennep: Second Army objective, 79-80, 84;
 in 'Veritable', 256, 258, 261, 263, 266;
 287
- GERMAN AIR FORCE:
 In September, 75-6, 97; Allied Intelligence
 estimates, 144, 172-3, 221-2, 296; 148;
 in Ardennes fighting, 180, 189-90,
 192, 404; minelaying by, 231; 241;
 in 'Veritable', 270, 272; at Remagen,
 283; in Rhine-Elbe fighting, 306,
 337; assessed, 357, 404
- GERMAN ARMY:
 High Command of the Armed Forces
 (OKW): 73-4; and blowing of
 Belgian dykes, 81n; 142; and reserves
 for Ardennes offensive, 178, 186n;
 246; situation maps, 254, 277; sur-
 renders, 339, 343-5; command struc-
 ture, 401
- Army in the West: defeated and retreating
 1, 3, 7, 11; coastal 'fortresses' to be
 held, 10; defence strengthened, 10-12,
 29, 31, 51-2; autumn recovery, 71-5,
 142-3, 170, 176; strength end Septem-
 ber, 73; and November, 166 (map);
 and early December, 175; and end
 March, 296; surrenders, 339-40; con-
 duct of campaign assessed, 354-5;
 command of, 401-2

Forces Engaged:

Commander-in-Chief West H.Q. (OB West): and Antwerp, 10; von Rundstedt succeeds Model, 11, 176, 354; 75; and Scheldt operations, 103, 122; and Lower Maas, 125-6; and Ardennes offensive, 177-9, 238; Kesselring replaces von Rundstedt, 277, 296; H.Q. bombed, 288; cut off from northern forces, 309, 324

H.Q. OB North-West: formed from Army Group H, 309

Army Group B: command, 11; and Arnhem, 45, 56; and Scheldt, 69, 81n; 159; and Ardennes offensive, 175, 177-9, 238; cut off and captured in Ruhr, 304, 322, 324

Army Group G: 175; resisting in south, 321, 324; shattered, 330; surrendered, 333

Army Group H: on northern front, 175, 177; support to Ardennes offensive, 178-9, 238; 254; H.Q. bombed, 288; part cut off in Ruhr, 304, 322; reorganised, 309

Third Panzer Army: from Russian front, 338

Fifth Panzer Army: to Saar front, 11, 70, 74; to Aachen front, 159; in Ardennes offensive, 177-8, 180, 182, 185, 187, 189; cut off in Ruhr, 322

Sixth SS Panzer Army: in Cologne sector, 170-2; composition, 175; in Ardennes offensive, 177-9, 182, 184-5, 189-90, 197; on Russian front, 301, 341

First Army: in south, 11, 283, 324

Seventh Army: retreats eastward, 7, 11; in Ardennes offensive, 177-8, 180, 182, 187; in Saar, 282-3; 324

Eleventh Army: hastily formed, 324

Twelfth Army: under formation, 324, 331

Fifteenth Army: retreats up coast, 6-7; escapes across Scheldt, 10-11, 31, 67-8, 83, 97; to reinforce Channel 'fortresses', 15; holding front north of Antwerp, 69, 74, 109, 124-6, 349; to blow Belgian dykes, 81n; in Scheldt fighting, 100-2, 104; in Ardennes offensive, 177-8; cut off in Ruhr, 322; 354

Nineteenth Army: in south, 11, 324, 327

Twenty-First Army: from Russian front, 338

Twenty-Fifth Army: in Holland, 238

'Army Blumentritt': improvised, 309

First Parachute Army: to Albert Canal, 10, 12; in Arnhem operation, 31, 51, 74; takes over Holland front, 126; in 'Veritable', 254, 260, 265, 275; March strength, 296; part cut off in Ruhr, 304, 322; and Bremen, 306; 309

Armed Forces Command Netherlands: 49 Corps:

I SS Panzer: in Ardennes, 179

II SS Panzer: at Arnhem, 47

XLVII Panzer: 159; in 'Veritable', 254, 263, 265, 267n, 269; 285

XII SS: in 'Blackcock', 245

XXX: in Holland, 314n

LXVII: north of Antwerp, 100-1, 109-10

LXXXVI: 241; in 'Veritable', 254, 261, 265, 267n; 285

LXXXVIII: 10n; and Lower Maas, 100, 109; 238, 314

LXXXIX: and Lower Maas, 100

II Parachute: in 'Veritable', 254, 267, 277; 285

Armoured Divisions:

1st SS Panzer: in Ardennes, 175, 179, 182, 185

2nd SS Panzer: 175

9th SS Panzer: at Arnhem, 36, 45, 47, 49, 56; 175

10th SS Panzer: at Arnhem, 36, 47, 49, 56; 161

12th SS Panzer: 175

2nd Panzer: in Ardennes, 175, 186

9th Panzer: on Meuse, 159-61; 186n, 272

11th Panzer: in 'Grenade', 272

116th Panzer: 163, 186n; in 'Veritable', 254, 263, 265, 268-9; 292

233 Panzer Training: 309

Panzer Lehr: 186n, 193; in 'Veritable', 269, 271, 275

Panzer Division 'Clausewitz': 309-10

Infantry Divisions:

15th Panzer Grenadier: on Meuse, 159, 161; 186n; in 'Veritable', 254, 263, 265, 267; 292, 306

34th SS: 314n

59th: in Arnhem operation, 31, 35, 37, 42-3; 245

64th: 61; in Breskens pocket, 104, 107

70th: at Walcheren, 102, 111

84th: 241; in 'Veritable', 254, 258, 260, 267; 289

85th ('Battle Group Chill'): 12n, 31; north of Antwerp, 101-3

149th: 314n

176th: 31; in 'Blackcock', 243, 245

180th: in 'Veritable', 254; 290

183rd: 243

190th: 241; in 'Veritable', 254

219th: 314n

245th: north of Antwerp, 110; 337n

249th: 314n

325th: 306

338th: 272

346th: north of Antwerp, 69, 100, 102; in 'Veritable', 265, 268; 314n

347th: 10n

361st: 314

606th zbV: 245

617th zbV: 314n

703rd: 314n

711th: 100, at Kapelsche Veer, 239

712th: 239

719th: 10n, 31; north of Antwerp, 100-1

Hamburg: 290

von Tettau: at Arnhem, 49, 56

'Battle Group Walter': 31

2nd Naval: 306, 311

11th Naval: 314n

2nd Parachute: 254

3rd Parachute: 10n

5th Parachute: 10n

6th Parachute: 10n; in Nijmegen bridge-head, 237, 241; at Kapelsche Veer, 239-40; in 'Veritable', 263, 268-9, 271; 313-4

GERMAN ARMY, Infantry Divisions—*cont.*

7th Parachute ('Erdmann'): 31; in 'Veritable', 254, 260, 262-3, 267; 289, 307
8th Parachute: in 'Veritable', 254, 271; 289, 307

Brigades:

107th Panzer: in Arnhem operation, 31, 37n, 39, 42-4
280th Assault Gun: 100
341st Army Assault Gun: 245
20th H.Q. zbv: 314n

Regiments:

Panzer Training 'Grossdeutschland': 306-7
6th Parachute: 102
Herman Göring Depot: 10n

Battalions:

12th SS Training: 306
559th G.H.Q. Heavy Anti-Tank: 100
'Battalion Kraft': 45

See also Appendix VI

GERMAN NAVY:

Special craft (linsen, marder, seehund, biber, molch), 128, 229-33, 240; warships sunk and damaged, 128-9, 318. *See also* Maritime Operations

Forces Engaged:

Naval Group West: 10n
Naval Operations Staff Berlin: 10n, 240
See also E-boats, U-boats

Germany: early defeat appears possible, 3, 19, 137, 348; Allied Intelligence on manpower, 142-3; and morale, 143, 145-6, 148, 173; Allied post-war policy for, 146-8, 173, 214-5, 217-8; surrender, ch.XVI *passim*. *See also* National Redoubt, Strategic Bombing

Gheel: 13, 31

Ghent: advance to 6, 15; in Scheldt operations, 68, 105, 112n; 139

Ghent Canal: *see* Bruges-Ghent Canal

Giessen: 210

Givet: in Ardennes battle, 183-4, 186, 191

Gliders: in Arnhem operation, 30, 32-4, 36-8, 48-9; in Rhine crossing, 290-1

Glider pilots: 49, 55n, 291

Goch: in 'Veritable', 254, 257, 262-71 *passim*; 286, 295

Goes: 113

Göring, Field-Marshal H.: 304, 334-5

Gotha: 321, 323

Grandmenil: 190

Grave: 7; in Arnhem operation, 27-30, 32-4, 37, 40; and German forces, 74, 100; 97; and bridges, 255, 287

Gravenhorst: 225

Gravenpolder: 113

Grayburn, Lieutenant J. H.: 56

Grebbe R.: 315

'Grenade' operation: ordered, 197, 249-50, 255; postponed, 263-4; launched, 271-2, 275-7

Grimbiermont: 191

Groesbeek: in Arnhem operation, 30, 34, 52; 258

Groningen: 311, 313

Groote Horst: 267

Hackett, Brigadier J. W.: 49

Haffen: 292

Hagen: 322

Hal: 5

Halder: 292

Halle: 324, 328

Halvenboom: 268

Hambach Forest: 272

Hamburg: 77; and U-boats, 226, 234-5, 318; bombed, 235, 318; British objective, 297, 310-2, 320; surrendered, 334, 338, 357

Hamm: 225, 288; in Ruhr encirclement, 322

Hamminckeln: 290, 293

Hanover: Allied objective, 77, 320; 225; bombed, 293; American objective, 297, 323; British north of, 305; 328

Harden, Lance-Corporal H. E.: 246n

Harfleur: 14

Harper, Corporal J. W.: 100n

Harris, Air Chief Marshal Sir Arthur: 117; and bombing policy, 152-3, 219-20; 289, 317

Hartenstein: 39

Harz Mountains: 323-4, 328

Hasselt (Belgium): 31, 190

Hasselt (Germany): 265

Hassum: 268

Hau: 265

Hechtel: 12, 40

Heesum: 45-6

Heidelberg: 321

Heijen: 266

Heilbronn: 325

Heim, Lieut-General F.: 61, 63

Heinsberg: 242-6

Hekkers: in 'Veritable', 253-4, 259-66 *passim*

Helchteren: 12

Heligoland: 339

Helmond: in Arnhem operation, 43; 74, 255

Herenthals: 60, 70

Herquelingue: 61

Heteren: 44

Heumen: 34, 37

Heveadorp: ferry in Arnhem operation, 38-9, 41-2, 44-5

Heyst: 107

Hicks, Brigadier P. H. W.: 48

Hildesheim: 304

Himmler, Heinrich: 145, 304; and surrender negotiations, 333, 335-6; in Berlin, 334

Hitler, Adolf: directives, 3 September 11, 4 September 10, 15, 25 September 74, 29 October 126, 10 November 178; orders, 61n, 67, 81, 104, 125-6, 249, 273, 322; and Ardennes counter-offensive, 74, 171, 176-9, 184, 186-7, 190, 194, 196; still dominates Germany, 142, 145, 296; and V-weapons, 148; his H.Q., 177, 179, 334; on U-boats, 235; 264; and von Rundstedt, 277; 284; and 'national redoubt', 302-4, 429-32; 330; last days in Berlin, 334-6; his death, 336, 355-6; his influence on campaign assessed, 354-5

Hochwald: in 'Veritable', 254, 256, 271-6 *passim*

- Hodges, Lieut-General C. H.: in conferences, 7-8, 83-4; and command link with Montgomery, 24, 199n; 26; in Ardennes battle, 184-5, 195, 205; 322
- Hoedekenskerke: 112
- Hof: 325
- Hohe Rhon Mountains: 323, 325
- Holland: in German occupation, 1, 12, 90, 109; Resistance in, 56, 416-8, 420; and Arnhem operation, 56, 74; and flooding of Walcheren, 82, 115-6; German command in, 126, 177, 309; and Lower Maas, 126-7, 158; and German naval activity, 128, 230-5; and civil affairs, 139, 417; and coal, 139, 408-9; airfields in, 140; and V-weapons, 150; 284, 286; clearance in north, 297, 307, 313-5, 347, 418; relief supplies for, 317, 417-20; in German surrender, 339, 419-20
- Hommersum: 267-8
- Hongen: 244
- Honrville: 62
- Hoofdplaat: 106
- Hoogerheide: 102-3
- Hook of Holland: 5, 232
- Hopper, Captain H. G.: 127
- Horrocks, Lieut-General B. G.: 12; and Arnhem operation, 36-7, 43-4; and 'Veritable', 256, 261-3, 267, 276
- Hotton: 182, 185, 190
- Houffalize: 182, 188, 191-3
- Hull, Cordell: 147
- Hulst Canal: 68
- Hürtgen: forest, 162-4; village, 164
- Huy: 182
- Ibbenburen: 305-6
- Ijmuiden: 230-3
- Ijssel R.: in Arnhem operation, 27, 29, 50, 80; 166; in 'Veritable' air cover, 256; 290n; Canadians cross, 313-4
- Ijsselmeer: *see* Zuider Zee
- Inde R.: 163
- Inden: 163
- Inn R.: 329, 341
- Innsbruck: and 'national redoubt', 303; and U.S. Seventh Army, 330, 341-2
- Intelligence, Allied: on German capacity to resist, 142-6, 170-1, 326; on German morale, 146-8, 173; on likelihood of German counter-offensive, 171-5, 194, 196; on U-boats, 234; on Kapelsche Veer attack, 238; on enemy in Rhineland, 251; on German strength in March, 296; on 'national redoubt', 302-4
- Isabella Polder: 103, 106
- Isar R.: 329
- 'Island, The': in Arnhem operation, 40, 42, 44, 52, 55-6; 237
- Isle of Wight: 134
- Ismay, General Sir Hastings: 117
- Issel R.: 290-1, 293
- Isselburg: 293
- Italy: Allied successes in, 1, 19, 348; transfer of forces from, 213, 285n; and German 'national redoubt', 303, 329; surrender of German forces in, 331, 333; U.S. Seventh Army reaches, 342
- Jebsheim: 249
- Jodl, Colonel-General A.: and Scheldt, 100, 125; 177; in surrender negotiations, 343-4
- Johanna Hoeve: 46, 48
- Joint Intelligence Committee: on Germany, 19, 142-6, 172
- Joint Staff Mission: 207, 361
- Juin, General A. P.: 247
- Juliana Canal: 242-3
- Julich: and U.S. Ninth Army, 161, 250, 272; 163; Germans at, 178, 254
- Jutland: 328, 341
- Kapellen: 276
- Kapelsche Veer: 238-9
- Karlsbad: 331-2, 342
- Karlsruhe: 25, 223; and First French Army, 321, 325
- Kassel: strategic arguments over, 167-8, 210-1; American objective, 297-8, 301, 320-1; 323
- Kasteel Blijenbeek: 267, 270
- Kattegat: 318
- Kehl: 325
- Keitel, Field-Marshal W.: 331; in surrender negotiations, 339, 344
- Keizersveer: 125
- Kempen: 275
- Keppeln: 270
- Kervenheim: 273
- Kessel: 266
- Kesselring, Field-Marshal A.: succeeds von Rundstedt as C.-in-C. West, 277, 296; no longer commands northern sector, 309, 324, 334
- Kevelaer: 266-7, 273-4
- Kickberg: 261
- Kiel: bombed, 76, 270, 318; British objective, 332
- Kingsmill, H.M.S.: 119
- Kinzel, General E.: 339-40
- Knocke sur Mer: 104, 107
- Koblenz: American objective, 8, 24; bombed 188, 225, 280-1; U.S. Third Army captures, 283; 296
- Koller, Lieut-General K.: 334-5
- Koniev, Marshal I. S.: 328
- Korteven: 103, 110
- Kranenburg: in 'Veritable', 254, 259-60, 262
- Krebs, General H.: 177
- Krefeld: and Second Army, 80, 83-4, 98; 276; and U.S. Ninth Army, 295
- Küsten Canal: 311-2, 316
- Kyll R.: 281-2
- La Bassée: 6
- Lake Constance: 303; and First French Army, 330, 342
- Landing Craft: in Scheldt operations, 112, 118-22; in convoys, 132; on inshore patrols, 230; in Rhine crossing, 287; in Holland, 314
- Landsberg: 330
- Langres: 137

- Laroche: 188, 191
 Lathbury, Brigadier G.: 48n
 La Trésorerie: 61-2
 Lattre de Tassigny, General J. de: 71; and advance across Rhine, 321, 330; 344
 Lauenburg: 310, 337
 Lauterbourg: 282
 Leclerc, Brigadier-General J. P.: 342
 Leeuwarden: 313
 Le Havre: and I Corps, 6-7, 13-15, 127; as port, 16-18, 135-6; 59-61; bombing assessed, 65; 128
 Leicester, Brigadier B. W.: 118-9
 Leigh-Mallory, Air Chief Marshal Sir Trafford: 20; and Walcheren, 81-2; 91, 151n
 Leine R.: Allies cross, 301, 304-6, 320, 323
 Leipzig: in strategic plan, 77, 297-302, 319-20, 351, 353; bombed, 226-7, 317; captured, 323-4, 328
 Lens: 4
 Leopold Canal: and Canadians, 67-8, 70, 103-7
 Le Portel: 62-3
 Lessines: 5
 Le Tréport: 6
 Lezarde R.: 13
 Liane R.: 61-2
 Liddell, Captain I.: 307
 Liège: and U.S. First Army, 24, 136; 93, 149; in German Ardennes plan, 178, 182
 Lille: 4-6
 Lille St. Hubert: 36
 Lindemann, Colonel-General G.: 333, 340
 Lines of Communication: *see* Administration and Logistics, Communications
 Lingen: 307-8
 Linne: 243, 246
 Linnich: 161
 Linz: Allied objective, 298, 300; Sixth Army Group task, 301, 320, 325; U.S. Third Army task, 329, 331-2, 341, 343
 Lippe R.: 276, 292-3; - Canal, 293
 Lippstadt: and Ruhr encirclement, 304, 319, 322
 Lochtenberg: 69, 101
 Logistics: *see* Administration and Logistics
 Lommel: 36
 London: Eisenhower's December visit, 169
 Longvilly: 192
 Lonsdale, Major R. T. H.: 49
 Loon op Zand: 125
 Loon-Plage: 15
 Lord, Flight-Lieutenant D. S. A.: 56
 Lord, Sergeant-Major J. C.: 311
 Lorient: 135
 Losheim: 179
 Louisendorf: 268
 Louvain: and XXX Corps, 5, 12; 255
 Lower Maas R.: *see* Maas R.
 Lübeck: Allied objective, 299, 351; bombed, 308; British task, 315, 326, 328, 331-2, 337, 341, 357; 335
 Ludwigsburg: 325
 Ludwigslust: 337
 Luftwaffe: *see* German Air Force
 Lüneburg: 310; - Heath, 339
 Lunéville: 137
 Lüttwitz, General H. von: 265, 269
 Lützow: bombed, 318
 Luxembourg: and U.S. First Army, 24, 155, 163; 25; Bradley's H.Q. at, 165, 180-3, 195, 352; 177
 Lyne, Major-General L. O.: 338
 Lyons: 19; and logistics, 139
 Lys Canal: *see* Canal de Dérivation de la Lys
 Maas R. (and *see* Meuse R.): and Arnhem, 27-30n, 73-4; north of Antwerp (Lower Maas), 92, 109-10, 123-7, 158, 237-40, 251, 349; 241; in 'Blackcock', 242, 245; in 'Veritable', 253-5, 258, 264-74 *passim*; 286-7
 Maas-Waal Canal: 30n, 34
 Maastricht: 10, 70; December meeting at, 167-8, 199, 204n
 McAuliffe, Brigadier-General A. C.: 187
 MacMillan, Major-General G. H. A.: 292
 Maeseyck: 242
 Magdeburg: and U.S. Ninth Army, 297, 324, 328; 309, 331
 Main R.: 321
 Mainz: American objective, 25, 282; 328
 Maizières-les-Metz: 162
 Maldegem: 105-6
 Malmedy: 180n, 182, 185
 Malta Conference ('Argonaut'): 208; and strategy, 211-3; and U-boats, 213, 234; reviewed, 301, 350, 352
 Manhay: 185
 Mannheim: American objective, 8, 24, 282-3
 Manpower: Allied shortages, 141-2, 158-9, 163; German shortages, 142-3, 176, 323
 Marburg: 225; in Ruhr encirclement, 296, 304, 319
 Marche: 184, 191
 Maren: 127, 238
 Marienbaum: 274, 276
 Maritime Operations: minesweeping, 10n, 66, 127, 132, 231; at le Havre, 14; at Walcheren, 81, 99, 115, 118-22; in September/October, 128; sinking of *Tirpitz*, 128-9; in January/March, 228-33; convoy protection, 229-35, 357, 366; anti-U-boat, 234-5, 318, 356; in April, 317-8
 Mark: River, 126; Canal, 126
 'Market Garden': *see* Arnhem Operation
 Marlborough: 61-2
 Marseilles: and Sixth Army Group, 25, 94; as port, 137, 295
 Marshall, General G. C.: visits Eisenhower and Montgomery, 83-4; on Antwerp, 88; and 'all-out' effort in 1944, 138; and command question, 200-3; and Berlin, 326; and Prague, 332
 Materborn: in 'Veritable', 253-4, 260-3, 265
 Maubeuge: 8, 93
 Mechelen: 293
 Mediterranean: landings from, 2, 11; advance from, 19, 24; 72; supply line from, 80, 137, 157; 348-9, 355
 - Theatre: forces from, 213, 285n
 Mehr: 290, 292
 Meijel: 159-60
 Meindl, General E.: 267

- Menzelen: 276
 Meppen: 308, 311
 Merchant Navy: 131-2, 233-5, 366
 Merxem: 101
 Merxplas: 100
 Metz: 16; and U.S. Third Army, 24-6, 70, 136, 162, 165; German forces at, 75, 355; 93-4; and logistics, 139, 295; 169, 347
 Meurthe R.: 162
 Meuse-Escaut Canal: 12; in Arnhem operation, 29-31, 36; 70
 Meuse R. (*and see* Maas R.): Americans reach, 24; 29n; Venlo sector, 80, 83-5, 99, 155, 158-61; and Ardennes, 178, 180n, 182, 184-6, 190, 194, 205; 295, 352
 Middelburg: 113-4, 116, 123
 Middlerode: 124
 Military Government: in Germany, 217-8, 328, 345, 421-3
 Minelaying: by Bomber Command, 228; by enemy, 230-1
 Minesweepers: in Scheldt, 10n, 127, 231; at Channel ports, 66, 132; German shortage of, 229
 Mittelland Canal: 225
 Model, Field-Marshal W.: commands Army Group B, 11; at Arnhem, 43n, 45, 47, 51-2; on Allied air forces, 75; 124; in Ardennes battle' 175, 177-9, 194; in Ruhr, 302, 322; death, 322
 Moder R.: 249, 280
 Moerdijk: 124, 126-7
 Moldau R.: 327, 331, 342-3
 Mons: 8-9
 Monschau: 178-9, 185
 Montfort: 245-6
 Montgeon Forest: 13-15
 Montgomery, Field-Marshal Sir Bernard L.: on strategy, 1-3, 16-17, 24, 78-9, 92-4, 165-8, 209, 284, 347-9; directives, 26 August 3, 6, 14 September 26, 29, 59, 69, 81, 27 September 80, 98, 4 October 83, 98, 9 October 84, 107n, 16 October 91, 99, 109, 123, 154, 2 November 158, 21 January 250, 9 March 285, 28 March 297; 4; conferences, 7, 21, 60, 79, 83, 97, 154, 167-8, 190, 199, 308, 315, 323, 328, 352; 9; and Arnhem operation, 21-4, 26-9, 154, 349; and Antwerp, 59, 69, 82-3, 85, 91, 95, 97, 110, 123, 155, 351; and Channel ports, 59-60; and Berlin, 78, 299; and command question, 84-8, 91, 166-7, 199-203, 212, 353; relations with Eisenhower, 92-3, 353; 134; on leave, 159; 170n; and Ardennes battle, 175, 183-5, 190-1, 195; press conference, 183, 205-7, 425-8; and Rhineland operations, 196-7, 260, 264, 272; and Rhine crossing, 196n, 275, 289, 292; 213, 241; and drive to Baltic, 295, 297-8, 301, 308, 310-1, 315-6, 319, 327; accepts German surrender, 338-40, 343; 341; his conduct of the campaign assessed, 353, 357
 Montvilliers: 13
 Mont Lambert: 61-2
 Montreuil: 6
 Mook: in 'Veritable', 255, 266, 268; 287
 Morgenthau plan: 146-8
 Moscow: Tedder visits, 207-9
 Moscow Conference, October 1944: 148
 Moselle R.: U.S. Third Army crosses, 24-6, 70, 165; offensive north of, 196, 204, 210, 280-2; offensive south of, 282-3
 Moyland: 265, 268-70
 'Mulberry' (artificial harbour): 131, 135
 Mulde R.: American 'stop line', 323-5, 327-8, 331
 Mulhouse: 80
 München-Gladbach: 275, 287
 Munich: American objective, 77-8, 330; 329
 Münster: bombed, 98, 293; 297
 Namur: captured, 19, 24; 136; in Ardennes battle, 178, 182, 184
 Nancy: and U.S. Third Army, 25, 70; 159
 'National Redoubt': American objective, 298, 326, 332; described, 302-4, 329; 317; and Hitler, 429-32
 Naval Operations: *see* Maritime Operations
 Nazi Party: control of Germany by, 145-6, 173, 296; Allies determined to destroy, 214-5; and 'national redoubt', 302-4; end of regime, 356-7
 Neerpelt: 12, 30-2
 Neisse R.: 327
 Netherlands, The: *see* Holland
 Neuss: 275-6
 Niel: 260
 Niers R.: 266-8, 271
 Nijmegen: Second Army aim, 7, 27; in Arnhem operation, 30-45 *passim*, 52-3, 55-6, 70, 356; bridgehead at, 73-4, 80, 83-4, 97-8, 109, 237, 241, 314; 79; corridor to, 99, 123; German attacks on bridges, 97-8, 237-8, 240; Canadians take over sector, 127, 159; in 'Veritable', 197, 250, 253-5, 259-62, 268; and logistics, 295, 312-3
 Ninove: 5
 Nocquet: 61-2
 Noires Mottes: 64-5
 Nordhausen: 310
 Normandy: Allied landing in, 1, 159, 230, 354, 356; rear maintenance area, 72-3, 131-7 *passim*; command system in, 85-9, 166; 93; German defeat in, 142, 347-8
 North Sea: 72, 89, 103
 Norway: 1; and German Navy, 128-9, 232-4, 318; 228; and liberation, 302, 332; and German surrender in, 339n-40
 Nuremberg: American objective, 77-8, 301, 320, 325, 330
 Nutterden: 260, 262
 Nuttlar: 322
 Nye, Lieut-General Sir Archibald, V.C.I.G.S.: 21, 23
 Obersalzberg: 334, 342
 Obstacles, anti-invasion: on Walcheren, 115
 'Octagon': *see* Quebec Conference
 Octeville: 13, 15

- Oder R.: Russian forces at, 302, 307
Office of Strategic Services (O.S.S.): 333
Ohdruf: 310
Oil, German: strategic bombing of, 75-6,
150-3, 219-28 *passim*, 281, 317, 398
Oisterwijk: 124
Oldenburg: 308, 311-2
Oostburg: 106-7
Oosterbeek: and Arnhem, 38, 41, 45-51,
55, 57
Oosterhout (Nijmegen): 42
Oosterhout (Breda): 239
Oosthoek: 105
Oppenheim: and U.S. Third Army, 283, 320
Operational Research: 63
Orsoy: 275
Ortheuville: 182
Osnabrück: 293, 305-6
Ossenberg: 276
Ostend: 10; Canadians capture, 15; 66; port
opened, 73, 132; in Scheldt operations,
84, 112n, 115, 118, 121-2, 127; and bulk
petrol, 134
Our R.: 197
Ourthe R.: 182, 185, 189, 191
Outreau: 62
- Paderborn: bombed, 293; in encirclement of
Ruhr, 297, 299, 304, 319, 321-2
Paris: 11; in logistics, 136, 139; 142; V-
weapon attacks on, 149; 290
Pas de Calais: 4; ports in, 17, 82; 148, 321
Passau: 329
Patch, Lieut-General A. M.: 70; and Alsace,
196, 247; and Saar-Palatinate, 282; and
drive from Rhine, 321, 325, 330
Patton, General G. S.: 8, 24-6; captures
Metz, 165; in Ardennes battle, 181, 183,
187, 190-1, 205; in Eifel and Saar, 250,
279-80; crosses Rhine, 283; in drive from
Rhine, 321, 323-4, 329; and Czecho-
slovakia, 342-3; 352
Peiper, Lieut-Colonel J.: 179, 185
Petrol: supply by Pluto, 63, 134; in logistics,
132-7, 139, 295, 312; German shortage
of, 144, 170-1, 173, 193
Pfalzdorf: 267
Philippine: 68
Pilsen: 331-2, 342-3
Plauen: 325
'Pluto': 63, 134, 139
Poland: freedom for, 216
Polish Armed Forces:
1st Polish Armoured Division: 6, 15; in
Scheldt operations, 60, 67-8, 70, 81;
99-101; and Lower Maas, 125-6
239; 285n; reaches Ems estuary, 313
1st Polish Parachute Brigade: at Arnhem,
38, 40, 42-3, 55n
Poortershaven: 232-3
Poppel: 100-1
Portal, Air Chief Marshal Sir Charles: 20-1,
117; and strategic bombing, 151, 219, 226,
317
Port en Bessin: 134
Ports: *see* Administration and Logistics
Post-Hostilities Planning Staff: 147, 338
- Prague: 327, 331-2, 342-3
Prisoner-of-War Camps: 311, 316, 329n
Prüm: 70; in Ardennes battle, 180, 183, 196;
203-4, 207; U.S. Third Army captures,
250, 279-80
Pugley, Captain A. F.: 63n; in Scheldt
operations, 118-9, 122; 230
Putte: 101
- Quebec Conference ('Octagon'): 18-20; and
Antwerp, 19, 97; 147, 348-9
Queripel, Captain L. E.: 56
Quiberon Bay: 135
- Radar: for air force, 75, 152, 397; for army,
150, 384
Railways: *see* Communications
Ramsay, Admiral Sir Bertram: and Antwerp,
5, 10, 95-7, 350; and Walcheren, 116,
118; killed, 230
Rear Maintenance Area: 131, 133-4
Red Ball Express: 72n, 136
Rees: and Second Army, 155; in Rhine
crossing, 251, 285, 288-9, 292-3; 254, 313
Regensburg: American objective, 77, 298,
300-1, 320, 325, 329
Reichswald Forest: German forces in, 97,
159, 241; Canadians take over sector,
158; in 'Veritable', 253-66 *passim*, 353
Reims: 181; surrender at, 343-4
Remagen: U.S. First Army captures bridge,
282-3; advances from, 296, 304, 319-20
Renkum: 7
Rennie, Major-General T. G.; killed, 292
Resistance: in Belgium, 5, 9; in France, 5-6,
9, 72; in Holland, 56; in Germany, 330.
See also Appendix VIII
Rethem: 306, 310
Rheinberg: in Rhine crossing, 251, 285, 289;
in 'Grenade', 270, 276
Rheine: 288; and XII Corps, 305-6; air-
fields open at, 308; roadhead at, 312
Rhine R.: Allied objective, 7-10, 16-17, 24-6,
80, 88, 155-8, 163-72, 175, 197, 203, 284,
348-52; at Arnhem (Lower Rhine), 21-3,
27, ch.II *passim*, 79, 88, 95, 314; in Holland
(*and see* Waal), 85, 110, 237; and air
targets, 151, 154, 188-9, 223, 225, 280-1;
in German deception, 178; crossing of,
196n, 204, 251, ch.XIII *passim*, 320-1
353, 357; drive from, 209-12, 295, 325, 328,
330, 351; and Alsace, 249, 280; and Rhine-
land battles, 250-1; ch.XII *passim*, 355-6;
German bridges over, 275-7; and Eifel
280-3, 355; and Palatinate, 282-3, 355
Rhineland battles: *see* 'Veritable' and 'Gren-
ade' and ch.XII *passim*
- Rhône: 2
Rilland: 111
Ritchie, Lieut-General N. M.: 243
Roberts, H.M.S.: at Walcheren, 115, 119-21
Roer R.: clearing to, 161, 163-4, 175, 241-2,
245-6; 171-2, 197; flooding of, 263-4, 271,
279; crossed, 271-2, 280-1
- Dams: bombed, 164; and U.S. First Army,
197, 250, 279; and German use, 264

- Roermond: 84, 177; in 'Blackcock', 241-3, 245-6; 254-5; in 'Grenade', 271, 275
- Roosendaal: in Scheldt operations, 80n-1, 92; 125-6
- Roosevelt, President F. D.: at 'Octagon' conference, 19-20; on progress of war, 169, 349-50; and Morgenthau plan, 146-7; at Malta and Yalta, 208, 213-7; on Strasbourg, 247; death of, 315; and Anglo-American relations, 352, 356
- Roskill, Captain S. W.: in foreword, xviii
- Rostock: 339, 341
- Rotterdam: as port, 5, 18-19, 25-6, 348; as E-boat base, 230
- Rouen: 134, 136
- Rouffach: 249
- Roulers: 15
- ROYAL AIR FORCE:**
- Rôle in war, 357, 398-9; operational strength, 397, 406; aircraft and weapons, 397; casualties, 407. *See also* Air/Ground Co-operation, Maritime Operations, Strategic Bombing
- Forces Engaged:*
- Air Defence of Great Britain (later Fighter Command): at Arnheim, 32, 54; 98; at Walcheren, 115, 117; 189n; against German shipping, 232-3; at Rhine crossing, 287, 290
- Bomber Command: at le Havre, 14; in Arnheim operation, 31, 54; at Boulogne, 61-2; and Calais, 65-6; in September, 75-6; directives to, 76, 150-3, 219-22, 317; and Walcheren dykes, 82, 115-6, 120; 83n, 91; in Scheldt operations, 99, 106, 116-8; sinks *Tirpitz*, 128-9; in October, 152; in November, 153, 163-4; in Ardennes battle, 188-9, 192, 223; Oct./Dec. summary, 219; in December, 220; in January, 222; in February, 223-7; in March, 225-7; in minelaying, 228; against E-boats, 233; and U-boats, 235, 318; in 'Veritable', 256, 270; in Rhine crossing, 289, 292-3; in April, 316-7; and relief in Holland, 317, 419
- Coastal Command: 54; in winter operations, 229-35; in April, 318
- Fighter Command: *see* Air Defence of Great Britain
- Second Tactical Air Force: airfields in use, 8, 140, 286, 308; control of, 20, 87, 91; in Arnheim operation, 31, 53-4; at Boulogne, 61-2; and Scheldt, 83, 116-7; at Nijmegen, 97-8, 241; 124; attacks German communications, 153-4, 225, 270; October summary, 154; in Ardennes battle, 180, 183, 188-90, 192, 197; in maritime operations, 232-3, 318; in 'Veritable', 251, 255-7, 260, 263, 266, 270, 275; in Rhine crossing, 287-8, 292-3; in advance to Elbe, 308, 312, 316; attacks U-boats, 318; in Elbe crossing, 337
- Groups:
- No. 2: at Boulogne, 62-3; and Scheldt, 68, 105-6, 117, 119; in 'Blackcock', 246; 257n; in 'Veritable', 260, 270; in 'Clarion', 270; 308
- No. 16: in maritime operations, 230, 232
- No. 18: in maritime operations, 232
- No. 38: to Arnheim, 30, 54; bombing, 257; at Rhine crossing, 290; 313; delivering supplies, 317
- No. 46: to Arnheim, 30, 54; at Rhine crossing, 290; delivering supplies, 317
- No. 83: H.Q. near Brussels, 8; in Arnheim operation, 32, 53, 55; 161; in 'Blackcock', 245-6; in 'Veritable', 256, 260, 270; in 'Clarion', 270; in Rhine crossing, 287, 292; at Bremen, 316; at Elbe crossing, 337
- No. 84: H.Q. on R. Bresle, 8; 53; at Boulogne, 62; and Scheldt, 68, 100-6 *passim*, 110, 113-4, 119, 121-3; on Lower Maas, 126-7; 161; in 'Veritable', 251, 256, 260, 270; in 'Clarion', 270; in Rhine crossing, 287, 292
- No. 85: and V-weapons, 150
- No. 271 Squadron: at Arnheim, 56
- See also* Appendix V, Part I
- Royal Marines:**
- Siege Regt.: 61-2
- 116th Brigade: 285n
- Commandos: No. 41, 121-2; No. 47, 122-3, 239; No. 48, 121-2
- ROYAL NAVY:**
- C.-in-C. Nore, 5, 10n, 229, 366; mine-sweeping, 10n, 66, 127, 132, 231; at le Havre, 14; in Scheldt operations, 81, 99, 106, 112, 115, 118-23, 127; in port clearance, 132; protecting convoys, 229-33, 357, 366; hunting U-boats, 234-5, 318, 356; in Rhine crossing, 287; in IJssel crossing, 314; operational strength, 365, 406; casualties, 407
- Forces Engaged:*
- Force T: 118-22
- Fleet Air Arm: 232, 318
- See also* Appendix III
- Ruhr, The: Allied objective, 1, 8-9, 16-18, 22-7, 29, 77-80, 86-7, 90, 93-5, 157, 166, 199-200, 250, 347, 351; German efforts to defend, 74, 251; Second Army to attack, 84-5, 98, 131; in Morgenthau plan, 147; bombing of, 152-4, 219, 223-5, 227, 256, 280, 288, 292; Twelfth Army Group to capture, 155; boundary between army groups, 167-8, 203-4, 209-13; in German deception plan, 178; encirclement of, 285, 293, 296, 302, 304; and mopping up, 297-9, 301, 319-22, 355
- Rundstedt, Field-Marshal G. von: re-appointed C.-in-C. West, 11, 354; and Arnheim operation, 73-4; and Scheldt, 100, 103, 122; and Lower Maas, 124-6; and German attack from Venlo, 124, 159; Allies forecast action of, 171-2; and Ardennes battle, 175-7, 179, 185, 187, 189, 193-4, 205, 238; and Rhineland battles, 251, 263, 273; retired, 277
- Russia: 146; relations with West, 215-7, 302

- Russian Armed Forces: progress of, 1, 19, 197, 302, 319-20, 326-7, 331-2, 338-9, 348, 351, 353; co-ordination with, 77, 207-9, 213-4, 218, 226, 297-301, 304, 323, 327, 331, 342; junction with Americans, 328; and with British, 338; in Denmark, 341; and German surrender, 343-5
- Saar, The: Allied objective, 1, 8-9, 16-18, 24, 26, 77, 79, 157; 11; in Morgenthau plan, 147; and U.S. Third Army, 164-5, 167, 175, 181, 187; and Sixth Army Group, 181, 282; 255; German defence of, 355 - Palatinate: 282-3
- Saar R.: and U.S. Third Army, 165, 280, 283; and U.S. Seventh Army 165, 282
- Saarbrücken: 93; bombed, 226; and U.S. Seventh Army, 282-3, 295; 347
- St. Dié: 162
- St. Etienne: 61-2
- St. Joost: 245-6
- St. Leonard: 101, 103
- St. Malo: 2
- St. Martin Boulogne: 61
- St. Odilienberg: 246
- St. Oedenrode: 30, 34, 43
- St. Omer: 6
- St. Pol: 4, 6
- St. Valéry-en-Caux: 6-7
- St. Vith: 24; in Ardennes fighting, 180-2, 185, 188, 192, 194, 197
- Salm R.: 185, 192
- Salmchâteau: 192
- Salzburg: 327, 329, 341
- Sangatte: 65
- Sas van Ghent: 68, 105
- Sauer R.: 187
- Saverne: 295
- Scheldt, The: key to Antwerp, 5, 10; Germans hold, 10-11, 16-17, 59-60, 67, 70, 354-5; and mine, 10n, 231; minesweeping to, 10n; opening of, 23, chs.III-V *passim*, 155, 349, 356; and Arnhem operation, 50, 350-1; German ferries bombed, 68-9, 83; minesweeping of, 127, 231; German naval operations in, 128, 230-2; 149
- Schellenberg, Major-General W.: 336
- Schermbeck: 293
- Schijndel: 124
- Schlemm, General A.: 254, 260, 275-7
- Schleswig-Holstein: 339, 341, 351
- Schlieffen Position: 271, 273
- Schmidt: 163-4; captured, 250
- Schnee Eifel: 181n
- Schoondijke: 107
- Schouwen: 232
- Schwerin: 331, 337, 342
- Seine R.: and logistics, 2-3, 72, 132, 135
- Sellar, Commader K. A.: 118
- Shaef (Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Force): Naval C.-in-C., 5, 229-30, 350; in France, 20; Air C.-in-C. redundant, 20, 86-8; and air force control, 20, 91; Sixth Army Group under command, 71; initial strategic plan, 93-4; November logistics study, 138, 142; divisions in reserve, 181, 296; Missions, 341, 364, 415
- 417; British strength in, 353; organisation, 363-4
- s'Hertogenbosch: 32; and Canadian Army, 80, 99-101, 126-7; and Second Army, 92, 109-10, 123-5; 238, 255
- Shipping: available to Allies, 131, 135, 366; Allied and German losses, 233-5
- Siegen: 288, 322
- Siegfried Line (West Wall): German defence in, 7-9, 11, 70, 74, 246, 349, 354-5; Allied objective, 16-18, 21, 79, 88, 95, 350; 154; breached, 70, 161-2, 165, 259, 261-2, 281-3; described, 242, 254, 279
- Simonds, Lieut-General G. G.: 61; in Scheldt operations, 81-2, 99, 101, 103, 116, 118; temporarily commands army, 99, 159; 237; in 'Veritable', 255, 267-8, 271, 276-7
- Simpson, Lieut-General W. H.: captures Brest, 71; in Ardennes, 184, 195; in 'Grenade', 264, 272, 275; 308; and Ruhr, 322; and Berlin, 324, 326
- Sittard: 242, 244
- Skorzeny, Lieut-Colonel O.: 180n
- Sloe Channel: 114, 116
- Sluis: 107
- Smith, Lieut-General W. Bedell: meeting with Montgomery, 22, 24, 85, 117; de Guingand's Shaef visit, 201-2; present at 'Argonaut', 212
- Soltau: 311
- Somme R.: 4, 6, 11
- Sonsbeck: 273-4, 276
- Sosabowski, Major-General: 43
- South Beveland: 59; Canadian objective, 80-1, 97, 99, 101-3, 109-13, 349; causeway to Walcheren captured, 113-4; 232, 238
- Spa: 182n
- Spaatz, General C.: 20; and 'Clarion', 224-5; 317n, 344
- Special Air Service Troops: 311n, 313
- Special Operations: 222. *See also* Appendix VIII
- Speldrop: 288-9, 292
- Speyer: 321
- Spoey Canal: 263-4
- Stade: 311
- Stalin, Marshal J.: and post-war Germany, 146, 148; Tedder visits, 208-9; at Yalta, 213-7; co-ordination with Eisenhower, 298-300, 353; and surrender negotiations, 336
- Standdaarbuiten: 126
- Stavelot: 179, 182
- Steenbergen: 126
- Stendal: 297
- Sterkrade: 293
- Stimson, Henry: 147
- Stockholm: 145; and surrender negotiations, 334, 336, 341
- Stokes, Private J.: 273n
- Stoppelberg: 258-9, 261
- Stoumont: 182, 185
- Strasbourg: and Sixth Army Group, 80, 165, 169, 342n; and German Alsace attack, 247-9; 280, 295
- Strategic Bombing: control of, 20-1, 150-1; operations, September 75-6, October 152,

- November 153, December 220, January-March 222-8, April 317-8, 356; directives for, 76, 150, 152-3, 219, 221-2, 224, 317; arguments on policy, 150-3, 219-20; Strategic Targets Committee, 151n, 224; Oil Targets Committee, 151n; co-ordination with Russians, 213-4; anti-U-boat, 234-5, 318
- Strategy, Allied: Eisenhower and Montgomery differ, 1-2, 16-17, 77-9, 92, 165-8, 209, 349; and logistics, 2-3, 16-17, 71-3, 78, 347, 350-1; Eisenhower's plan, 8, 16-18, 79, 93-4, 347; and Montgomery's, 16, 78, 94, 347-8; and German defence, 71-2, 166, 349; Leipzig instead of Berlin, 77, 297-302, 304, 319-20, 351; British Chiefs of Staff dissatisfied, 169-70, 207, 211, 349-50; Rhine reached on broad front, 284; assessed, 347-51
- Strengths:
- Allied: 1 September, 24(map); maximum expected, 138; November, 166(map); December, 175; increase from Italy, 213, 285n; 'Veritable/Grenade', 251; end March, 295-6
 - German: September, 24(map), 73; November, 166(map); December, 175; for Ardennes, 178; end March (Allied estimate), 296
- Student, Colonel-General K.: and Arnhem operation, 31, 46, 52; 126; and Army Group H, 177, 254; 309
- Stumpff, Colonel-General H.-J.: 344
- Stuttgart: 321, 325, 327, 330
- Sulingen: 312
- Supplies: *see* Administration and Logistics
- Susloparoff, Major-General I.: 343
- Susteren: 243
- Sweden: 145; and surrender negotiations, 333, 335; 341
- Swinemünde: 318
- Switzerland: Allied right at, 11, 85, 88-9, 94, 280, 355; 333
- Tangermünde: 324
- Tedder, Air Chief Marshal Sir Arthur: control of air forces, 20, 91, 224; in conferences, 21, 117-8, 154, 167, 169, 352; on strategic bombing, 151-2, 219-20, 225, 317n; and rail cutting, 153-4; and Montgomery, 201-2; visits Moscow, 207-9; 213n; signs ratification of surrender, 344
- Teheran Conference ('Eureka'): 146
- Terneuzen: in Scheldt operations, 66, 68, 105-6, 111-2, 118, 127
- Ship Canal: 66-8, 105, 112n
- Tholen Island: 238
- Thomas, Major-General G. I.: 43
- Thuringia: - Forest, 321, 323; - Mountains, 325
- Tilburg: 7; and Canadian Army, 60, 80, 99-100; and Second Army, 85, 109-10, 123-5, 159; German forces at, 101, 103; 238
- Tilston, Major F. A.: 274n
- Tirlemont: 184
- Tirpitz: sunk, 128-9
- Tongres: 184
- Torgau: 328
- Toulon: 137
- Tournai: 4, 8
- Tovey, Admiral of the Fleet Sir John: 229
- Travemünde: 338
- Trier: and U.S. Third Army, 280-1, 283, 295
- Trois Ponts: 185
- Truman, President H.: becomes President, 315; on Prague, 332; and surrender, 336
- Turnhout: 31; and I Corps, 60, 69-70, 100
- Canal: *see* Antwerp-Turnhout Canal
- Twente Canal: 307, 313
- U-boats: losses, 152, 228, 234-5, 318; new types, 213, 234, 318; and strategic air forces, 222, 226-8, 235, 318; in maritime operations, 230, 234-5, 318, 356
- Üdem: in 'Veritable', 256-7, 262, 266-8, 271-4
- Uden: 42-3
- Udenhout: 124-5
- Uelzen: 309-10
- Ulm: 329-30
- Unconditional Surrender: Allied policy, 146, 214, 333, 336, 338; signed, 339-40, 343-5
- United Nations: 146, 332, 338
- UNITED STATES ARMY:
- Total engaged in Overlord, 406; total casualties, 407
- Forces Engaged:*
- Sixth Army Group (Southern Group of Armies): links up with Overlord forces, 24-5, 355; nearing Vosges, 71; logistics, 80, 94, 137, 295, 323n; 162; takes Strasbourg, 165; 168; and Ardennes, 175, 181; Germans attack in Alsace, 191, 247, 279-80; 197; attacks Saar Palatinate, 226, 282, 284; in advance from Rhine, 296, 301, 320-1, 325, 330, 356; and Biscay coast, 331; and German surrender, 333
- Twelfth Army Group (Central Group of Armies): logistics, 2-3, 17, 73, 135-7, 140, 295, 323n; 7; September objectives, 8-9, 18, 24-6, 94-5; and Arnhem operation, 21, 24; September progress, 70-1; 77-8; takes over British VIII Corps sector, 79-80; command questions, 87, 166, 168, 199-200; to capture Ruhr, 90, 155; November progress, 157-8, 163-5; in Ardennes battle, 172, ch.VIII *passim*, 204; 226; and Roer dams, 249-50; closes to and crosses Rhine, 279-84; drives from Rhine, 296-7; objective Leipzig, 297, 301, 317, 319-20, 323; mops up Ruhr, 322; reaches Elbe, 324; advances on Danube, 327; enters Czechoslovakia, 342; 356
- First Army: supporting British, 4, 7-8, 23, 27-9, 78-80, 83, 86; objective Cologne/Bonn, 8, 11, 24-6, 155, 196, 204; September progress, 70; logistics, 135-6, 295; captures Aachen, 161; in Hürtgen Forest, 161-2; closes to Roer, 163-4, 352; in Ardennes battle, 179, 181-4, 190-2, 195-7, 205;

UNITED STATES ARMY, First Army *cont.*

attacks Roer dams, 197, 249-50, 264; 226; crosses Roer, 272, 279-81; crosses Rhine, 282-3; encircles Ruhr, 296, 299, 304, 319-23; to Elbe/Mulde line, 323-4, 327-8; meets Russians, 328; 329

Third Army: to aim for Frankfurt, 8, 24-5, 348; crosses Moselle, 24-6, 70, 164-5; logistics, 135-6, 295; 155; captures Metz, 165; in Ardennes battle, 180-1, 183, 187, 190-2, 197, 204, 247, 249-50; drives to Rhine, 279-82; crosses Rhine, 283; drives from Rhine, 320-1, 323, 325; to Danube, 327, 329; into Czechoslovakia, 341-3; 352, 354

Fifth Army: in Italy, 342

Seventh Army: nears Vosges, 70-1; logistics, 137, 295; captures Strasbourg, 165; German attack in Alsace, 196, 247-9; clears Saar Palatinate, 226, 282-3; crosses Rhine, 320; drives from Rhine, 321, 325; to Austria, 327, 329-30, 341-2

Ninth Army: captures Brest, 71; logistics, 135-6, 295; 155; closes to Roer, 161, 163-4; and Ardennes, 180, 183-4, 192; in 'Grenade', 197, 204, 249-51, 255, 263-4, 271-2, 274-7, 352; in Rhine crossing, 213, 285-7, 289, 292-4; encircles Ruhr, 296-7, 299, 304, 319-20, 322-3; reverts to Bradley's command, 297, 299, 301; in drive from Rhine, 308, 310, 323-4, 328; gains bridgehead over Elbe, 324; threat to Berlin, 326-7

Fifteenth Army: under Bradley, 299, 319, 322

Corps:

III: in Ardennes, 187, 192

V: 8, 163-4; in Ardennes, 179

VI: 247

VII: 8; at Aachen, 161; 163-4; in Ardennes, 180, 184-6, 190-2, 204

VIII: 163; in Ardennes, 175, 179-82, 185, 191-2

XII: in Ardennes, 187

XIII: 241n, 246, 285n

XVI: 285n, 289, 322n

XVIII Airborne: in Ardennes, 181, 192; in Rhine crossing, 285n, 290; 315, 337-8

XIX: 8; at Aachen, 161; 163, 285n, 322n

Divisions:

4th: in Ardennes, 175n

8th: 337

17th Airborne: in Ardennes, 181; in Rhine crossing, 285n, 290-4

28th: in Ardennes, 175n

29th: 285n

30th: 285n

35th: 285n

75th: in Ardennes, 184n; 285n

79th: 285n

82nd Airborne: in Arnhem operation, 29n-39 *passim*, 52-3; 98, 158; in Ardennes, 182; 337

83rd: 285n

84th: 160-1; in Ardennes, 184n; 285n

95th: 285n

101st Airborne: in Arnhem operation, 29n-37 *passim*, 42-3, 52; 158; in Ardennes, 182, 187n

102nd: 285n

104th (Timberwolf): 125-6, 158

106th: in Ardennes, 175n, 181n

2nd Armoured: in Ardennes, 184, 186; 285n

3rd Armoured: in Ardennes, 184n

4th Armoured: in Ardennes, 187

5th Armoured: 285n

7th Armoured: 80, 83; under Second Army, 84, 90, 98-9, 158-60; in Ardennes, 180, 182, 185

8th Armoured: 285n

9th Armoured: in Ardennes, 175n, 182

10th Armoured: in Ardennes, 180, 182

11th Armoured: in Ardennes, 181

Advance Section: 136

Communications Zone: 23, 135-6

Continental Advance Section: 137

See also Appendix IV, Part I

UNITED STATES ARMY AIR FORCE:

Command, 20; operational strength, 397; 406; aircraft and weapons, 397; rôle in war, 398-9; casualties, 407

Forces Engaged:

First (Provisional) Tactical Air Force: 91, 189n

Eighth Air Force: in Arnhem operation, 31-2, 54; September summary, 75-6; October, 152; November, 153, 163; in Ardennes battle, 183n, 189n, 192, 223; Oct./Dec. summary, 219; December, 220; January, 222; February, 223-7; March, 225-7; against E-boats, 233; and U-boats, 235, 318; in 'Veritable', 256, 266, 270; in Rhine crossing, 287-8, 291-2; April, 316-7; in relief in Holland, 317, 419

Ninth Air Force: 9; control of, 20, 87, 91; in Arnhem operation, 32, 54; attacks German communications, 154, 223, 225; in Ardennes battle, 180, 183, 188-9, 192, 197; 245; in 'Veritable/Grenade', 256, 260, 266, 270, 272; in Eifel, 281; in Rhine crossing, 286-7, 290, 292; in advance from Rhine, 321-3, 328

Twelfth Air Force: in Italy, 213

Fifteenth Air Force: in Italy, 227.

Air Commands:

IX Tactical Air Command: 183n, 281

XII Tactical Air Command: 320, 325

XIX Tactical Air Command: 183, 281, 288

XXIX Tactical Air Command: 183n,

251, 264; in Rhine crossing, 287,

292-3; 324

IX Troop Carrier Command: 30, 325, 330

- 441st Group: 325

See also Appendix V, Part I

UNITED STATES NAVY:

Numbers engaged in Overlord, 406; and casualties, 407

Urft R.: 164; - dam, 164, 250

- Urquhart, Major-General R. E.: at Arnhem, 41, 43, 45-9; pays tribute to R.A.F., 54; on tactics at Arnhem, 55; receives letter from Eisenhower, 57
- Utrecht: 27, 45-6, 98
- Valburg: 42, 44
- Valkenswaard: 34
- Vandenberg, Major-General H. S.: 20
- Veen: 276
- Veere: 116, 123
- Veghel: in Arnhem operation, 30, 32-4, 37, 42-3; 74, 124
- Venlo: 98-9; and German attack from, 124, 158-60; 260; captured, 275; 286-7
- Venray: 99, 155
- Verden: 305-6, 310-1
- Verdun: 19, 93-4; and logistics, 136; 181
- 'Veritable' operation: ordered, 197, 204, 249; Montgomery's directive for, 250-1; described, ch.XII *passim*, 356-7; forces allotted, 255-6
- Versailles: 20; meetings at, 83, 247; 180
- Vielsalm: 185, 188
- Vienna: 214; and Russians, 300, 302, 327, 331
- Vieux Coquelles: 64-5
- Visselhovede: 311
- Vlodrop: 246
- Vorarlberg: 304, 330
- Vosges Mountains: in German defence, 11, 74, 165; and Sixth Army Group, 71, 162, 181, 247-9
- V-weapons: German attack, 148-9, 229, 235; Allied defence, 149-50
- Waal R.: in Arnhem operation, 30n, 40, 49; bridges at Nijmegen captured, 34, 37-9, 53; and bridgehead, 70, 109, 237, 241, 356; Germans attack bridges, 97-8, 238, 240
- Walcheren: German defence of, 10-11, 59, 106, 111; Allied plans for attack, 23-4, 81-2, 109-12; bombing of, 59, 82-3, 115-8, 164; German Fifteenth Army escapes via, 68-9; Canadian Army captures, 97, 99, 101n, 114-23, 127, 349; causeway to, 110-1, 113-4; 230, 238
- Waldfeucht: 244-6
- Warmemünde: 341
- Warspite, H.M.S.: at le Havre, 14; at Walcheren, 115, 119-20
- Watervliet: 106
- Wavre: 184, 290
- Weapons and equipment: army, 383-4; air force, 397
- Webster, Sir Charles: in foreword, xviii
- Weeze: in 'Veritable', 256-7, 262, 266-7, 271, 273-4; 290
- Well: 274
- Wellington, Duke of: 124n
- Wenck, Lieut-General W.: 324, 331
- Werbomont: 182
- Werra R.: 321
- Wesel: 7, 80; in 'Veritable', 253, 263-71 *passim*, 276; Germans demolish bridges, 277; bombed, 288-9, 291; in Rhine crossing, 285, 289, 293; railway bridge at, 312, 328
- Weser R.: in American drive from Rhine, 304, 321, 323; in British, 306
- Wessem Canal: 160
- Westertimke: 316
- Westkapelle: dyke bombed, 82, 115-6; assault from sea at, 114-5, 118-22
- Westphal, Lieut-General S.: 177
- West Wall: *see* Siegfried Line
- Wiesbaden: 321
- Wildeshausen: 306, 311
- Wilhelmina Canal: in Arnhem operation, 30n, 34, 44; 239
- Wilhelmina, Queen: 125n, 417
- Wilhelmshaven: 74; bombed, 235; 315-6
- Willems Canal: 30n, 34, 43
- Willemstad: 126
- Williams, Major-General P. L.: 30
- Wiltz: 180, 187, 192
- Wimereux: 62
- 'Winkle' operations: 100
- Winnikendonk: 273
- Winsen: 309
- Wintelre: 44
- Winterisation: 139
- Wismar: 315, 331; 6th Airborne Division captures, 337-8; 342
- Wissembourg: 249
- Wittenberg: 327
- Wittenberge: in drive from Rhine, 297, 301, 308, 315, 320, 323, 327-8
- Woensdrecht: 102-3, 109-10
- Wolfhezen: 46
- Wolz, Major-General A.: 338
- Worms: 320
- Wuestwezel: 109
- Wurm R.: 161; in 'Blackcock', 242, 246
- Würzburg: 325
- Wyler: 241, 259
- Xanten: in 'Veritable', 250-1, 256, 266-7, 270, 274, 276; in Rhine crossing, 289
- Yalta Conference ('Argonaut'): arranged, 169n, 208; summarised, 213-8; and Prague, 331; in reflections, 350
- Ypres: 4, 15
- Zaltbommel: 7
- Zangen, General G. von: 101n
- Zealand: 341
- Zeebrugge: 66-7, 107, 127
- Zetten: 241
- Zeven: 311, 316
- Zevenaar: 314
- Zhukov, Marshal G. K.: 344
- Ziegenberg: 179
- Zig Canal: 160
- Zomerem: 43
- Zon: in Arnhem operation, 30, 34-7, 39-40, 52
- Zonhoven: 165, 167-8
- Zoutelande: 117, 123
- Zuider Zee: 11, 308, 314
- Zuidzande: 107
- Zundert: 125
- Zutphen: 313
- Zwolle: in Arnhem operation, 27, 29; 154, 288; captured, 313

