

encircled, and XV Corps, with two armored divisions in the line and two infantry divisions (the 79th and 90th, which were following) in support, would hold a strong shoulder between Alençon and Argentan.⁶³

There seemed to be one serious obstacle that might hinder the maneuver: the Forêt d'Ecouvès blocked the southern approaches to Argentan. If the Germans were to prevent encirclement, they had to keep a gap open between Falaise and Alençon so that their troops might withdraw eastward toward Dreux and Paris. It was plausible then to expect the Germans to try to hold this prominent terrain feature on the southern shoulder of the gap.⁶⁴

General Haislip had instructed Leclerc to pass west of the forest. But Leclerc decided to send one combat command east of the woods, while another went through the forest and the third bypassed it on the west. He envisioned all three columns converging at Ecouché, a town five miles southwest of Argentan on the final Carrouges-Argentan objective line. There was one drawback to this plan: the combat command bypassing the Forêt d'Ecouvès on the right (east) would trespass on the main highway from Alençon to Argentan through Sées, which had been reserved for the 5th U.S. Armored Division. Leclerc nevertheless disregarded his division boundary and Haislip's order and ex-

ecuted his plan. The three French combat commands partially cleared the forest and fought their way to within sight of Ecouché and the Carrouges-Argentan line.

When French troops usurped the Alençon-Sées-Argentan highway on 12 August, the 5th Armored Division, fortunately, had already taken Sées. Unfortunately, a 5th Armored Division combat command north of Sées—at Mortrée, five miles southeast of Argentan—had to postpone its attack toward Argentan for six hours. Only after the French column cleared the road could gasoline trucks blocked south of Sées come forward to refuel the command. The attack did not jump off until late afternoon, and by then the Germans had interposed a new unit between the armor and Argentan. The attack, which if launched six hours earlier might have resulted in capture of Argentan, made little progress.

That day, 12 August, *Panzer Group Eberbach* assumed command in the Argentan sector. The *XLVII Panzer Corps* headquarters, having turned over its responsibility at Mortain to the *LVIII Panzer Corps*, arrived at Argentan. Since the *LXXXI Corps* headquarters had been severed from its divisions in the Argentan sector by the American attack and was out of contact with them, the *XLVII Panzer Corps* took control of the remnants of the *9th Panzer Division* in the Ecouvès forest. When a strong infantry battalion of the *116th Panzer Division*, which was moving from the Mortain sector, became available early in the afternoon, the *XLVII Panzer Corps* sent it toward Sées. The battalion reached Mortrée in time to block the 5th Armored Division attack.

⁶³ XV Corps Opns Instrs, 2200, 11 Aug, cited in XV Corps Narrative Outline, 1-14 Aug; Notes of Mtg, 0730, 12 Aug, XV Corps CofS Jnl and File.

⁶⁴ XV Corps G-2 Per Rpt 9, 0300, 12 Aug; Capitaine Jean Maigne, "Les Forces Françaises et la Jonction 'OVERLORD-DRAGON,'" *Revue d'Histoire de la Deuxième Guerre Mondiale*, No. 19 (July 1955), 17-33.

The entire *116th Panzer Division* moved to Argentan during the night of 12 August, and the *XLVII Panzer Corps* committed it piecemeal to build up a thin line of defense south of Argentan. The *708th Division*, "literally pulverized," was to be transferred on 13 August to the *Seventh Army*. The *LXXXI Corps*, which had only radio contact with the remnants of the *352d Division* (sent to the Chartres area for rehabilitation), with the newly arriving *331st Division*, and with the *kampfgruppe* of the *6th Parachute Division*, was placed under control of the *Fifth Panzer Army* with the mission of covering Eberbach's east flank and blocking an American drive into the center of France along a potential front of about one hundred miles.⁶⁵

Loss of Alençon and Sées completely changed the situation for the Germans. Kluge had suggested an attack against the *XV Corps* spearheads. Hitler had wanted Eberbach to attack well behind the spearheads. Either attack, if launched, might well have dealt the U.S. corps a crippling blow. Instead, Eberbach on 12 August had to commit the *116th Panzer Division* in defense, and because of continuing American pressure he was virtually certain he would have to do likewise with the *1st SS* and *2d Panzer Divisions*, scheduled to become available the following day, 13 August. Not only was the American advance upsetting German offensive plans, it had already deprived the *Seventh Army* of its supply

base, thereby making Hausser's forces entirely dependent for logistical support on the *Fifth Panzer Army*. The ammunition and fuel supply situation, as a consequence, was "dreadfully serious." Only three main roads were available for supply and troop movements. Even these the Germans could use only at night because of Allied aircraft and excellent flying weather. All the roads were so congested that vehicular traffic moved at a walk. Some committed divisions existed in name alone, and all were far below authorized strengths. On 12 August the French and American armored divisions claimed almost a hundred tanks destroyed and nearly fifteen hundred prisoners taken. Most alarming, the Germans could no longer disregard the fact that if the Canadians reached Falaise and the Americans reached Argentan, only thirteen miles would separate them from achieving a literal encirclement of the German forces on the western front. With this menace a distinct possibility, Eberbach redoubled his efforts to establish a stable defense at Argentan.⁶⁶

Eberbach had another reason for redoubling his efforts. Kluge was still planning to launch an attack in the Alençon sector, but because the relentless advance of the *XV Corps* created a new situation, he modified his plan for the attack scheduled now to begin on 14 August. In an order issued on the evening of 12 August, Kluge shifted the axis of attack from the southeast to a due east direction toward le Mêle-sur-Sarthe. Upon reaching le Mêle-sur-

⁶⁵ OB WEST, *a Study in Command*, p. 129; Telecons, Kluge and Eberbach, 2345, 12 Aug, and Blumentritt and Speidel (reporting telecon, Blumentritt and Jodl), 1510, 12 Aug, *AGp B KTB*; Telecon, Eberbach and Wiese, 0630, 13 Aug, *LXXXI Corps KTB*.

⁶⁶ Telecons, Eberbach and Kluge, 1750 and 2345, 12 Aug, and Blumentritt and Speidel, 1510, 12 Aug, *AGp B KTB*.

Sarthe–Mortagne area, Eberbach was to turn north and complete the destruction of the American forces. Kluge thought it possible that the XV Corps would be beyond (north of) the Argentan–Laigle line before the beginning of the attack, but Eberbach was to execute his mission nevertheless. Eberbach's forces were initially to include the *1st SS*, *2d*, and *116th Panzer Divisions* and elements of the *9th Panzer Division*, two *werfer* brigades, and a heavy artillery battalion—these to be reinforced by the *10th SS Panzer Division*.⁶⁷

Meanwhile, south of Argentan General Haislip on 12 August was still motivated by his desire to have XV Corps make contact with the Canadians. About to reach the line he had been instructed to secure, he assigned the 2d French Armored Division the objective of Argentan and instructed General Oliver to assemble his 5th Armored Division southeast of that town. He then notified General Patton rather pointedly that he was about to capture the last objective given by the army commander. Should Patton authorize the XV Corps to proceed north of Argentan, Haislip would be ready to move the American armored division through the French division in Argentan for a drive north to meet the Canadians. Haislip recommended he receive additional troops so he could also block all the east–west roads north of Alençon.⁶⁸

Haislip did not have long to wait for a reply. Very early on 13 August he received word from Patton to “push on

slowly in the direction of Falaise.” The axis of advance and the left boundary were both to be the Argentan–Falaise road. When the XV Corps reached Falaise, Haislip was to “continue to push on slowly until . . . contact [with] our Allies” was made.⁶⁹ Meanwhile, Patton was searching for additional forces he could attach to the corps.

With a definite mission to keep moving, Haislip was pleased when the 2d French Armored Division on 13 August finished encircling and clearing the Forêt d'Ecouvès. Leclerc took Carrouges and Ecouché, then built up a line between Carrouges and Argentan. A French patrol entered Argentan that afternoon and reached the center of the town, bringing the inhabitants short-lived hope of liberation, but German tanks soon forced the patrol to retire. That same morning the 5th Armored Division tried to advance north toward Falaise, but all efforts to get to Argentan or around its eastern outskirts failed. German guns well sited and skillfully concealed on dominating ground north of Argentan wrought a surprising amount of damage on the French and American attack formations.⁷⁰

Elements of the *1st SS* and *2d Panzer Divisions* had reached the Argentan sector early on 13 August despite road congestion, air raids, fuel shortages, and communications troubles. The artillery of the *1st SS* arrived first without infantry protection, then came the Signal

⁶⁷ Kluge Order, 2100, 12 Aug, *AGp B Lagebeurteilungen*, *Wochenmeldungen*.

⁶⁸ Msgs, Haislip to Leclerc and Oliver, 1845, 12 Aug, and Haislip to Patton, 2130, 12 Aug, XV Corps CofS Jnl and File.

⁶⁹ Msg, Gaffey to Haislip, 0040, 13 Aug, XV Corps CofS Jnl and File.

⁷⁰ XV Corps G-2 Per Rpt 11, 0300, 14 Aug; see Rousseau, *Bataille de Normandie*, pp. 40, 43–44; Even, *La 2e D.B.*, pp. 110–11; Maigne, *Les Forces Françaises et la Jonction 'OVERLORD-DRAGON'*, pp. 18–19.

battalion, later, tanks; the infantry would not arrive until the following day. The *2d Panzer Division* arrived in better condition, but only at half strength; the other half was to require an additional day for the road march. With the *116th Panzer Division* holding well at Argentan, Eberbach directed the *2d* into the Ecouché area and committed the *1st SS* in defense of the ground between Carrouges and la Ferté-Macé. Although these dispositions might have seemed adequate on paper, their actual strength was slight. Eberbach estimated that the *1st SS* had thirty tanks, the *2d* twenty-five, and the *116th* fifteen. The *9th Panzer Division* had been practically destroyed in the Forêt d'Ecouvès.⁷¹

Thus, developments had forced Eberbach to commit piecemeal the panzer units that were earmarked as his striking force in the more urgent task of bolstering the badly shattered southern flank of *Army Group B*. On 13 August events canceled Kluge's plan to inflict a crushing blow on the U.S. XV Corps.

It was clearly apparent to the German command that three weak panzer divisions would not be able to maintain for long, if at all, the slender defensive line established to oppose the XV Corps. On the morning of 13 August Dietrich, the *Fifth Panzer Army* commander, stated officially for the first time what in retrospect all commanders later claimed to have thought—that it was time to be-

gin to escape the Allied encirclement. "If the front held by the [Fifth] Panzer Army and the Seventh Army is not withdrawn immediately," he warned,

and if every effort is not made to move the forces toward the east and out of the threatened encirclement, the army group will have to write off both armies. Within a very short time resupplying the troops with ammunition and fuel will no longer be possible. Therefore, immediate measures are necessary to move to the east before such movement is definitely too late. It will soon be possible for the enemy to fire into the pocket with artillery from all sides.⁷²

Yet, contrary to expectations, the defensive line at Argentan did hold. It held not because of German strength but because of a cessation of the American attack. Early in the afternoon of 13 August the XV Corps attack came to an abrupt and suprising halt. General Bradley stopped further movement to the north. Patton had to inform Haislip not to go beyond Argentan. Haislip was to recall any elements that might be "in the vicinity of Falaise or to the north of Argentan." Instead of pressing the attack toward the Canadians, the XV Corps was to assemble and prepare for further operations in another direction.⁷³

⁷² Telecon, Speidel, Wiese, Gause, and Dietrich, 1035, 13 Aug. *AGp B KTB*.

⁷³ Msg, Gaffey to Haislip (received at XV Corps CP, 1415, 13 Aug), XV Corps CofS Jnl and File; Memo, Patton to Haislip, 13 Aug; TUSA Dir, 13 Aug.

⁷¹ Friedel Telecons, 1230 and 2140, 13 Aug. *AGp B KTB*.

CHAPTER XXVI

The Argentan-Falaise Pocket

Bradley's Decision

When General Bradley halted the XV Corps just south of Argentan on 13 August, the Canadian army was still several miles north of Falaise. The stretch of terrain—less than twenty-five miles—that separated Canadian and American forces became known as the Argentan-Falaise Gap. Why Bradley did not allow Patton to try to close the gap and seal the Argentan-Falaise pocket later became the subject of a considerable polemic.

Rumor soon after the event ascribed the halt to warnings by the Allied air forces that planes had dropped time bombs along the highways in the Argentan-Falaise area to harass German movements; further northward movement by the XV Corps would have exposed American troops to this hazard. Whether this had a part in shaping Bradley's decision or not, the fact was that fighter-bomber pilots had sown delayed-action explosives over a wide area between 10 and 13 August, though the bombs were fused for a maximum of twelve hours delay and thus could not have endangered the troops.¹

Perhaps more to the point was General Bradley's later explanation that a head-on meeting of Canadians and Amer-

icans would have been a "dangerous and uncontrollable maneuver" that (in General Eisenhower's words) might have caused a "calamitous battle between friends."² Yet General Bradley himself afterwards offered two solutions that might have been applied to co-ordinate the artillery fires of the forces coming together: a distinctive terrain feature or conspicuous landmark could have been selected as the place of juncture, or the Canadian or American axis of advance could have been shifted several miles east or west to provide a double (and stronger) barrier across the German escape routes without the danger of a head-on meeting.³

A disadvantage of bringing Canadians and Americans closer together was that it would have hampered artillery and particularly air operations. Close support missions would have become increasingly restricted and the danger of bombing error greater. As it was, the extremely fluid front necessitated considerable shifting of bomb lines to protect the ground troops and made the work of the Allied pilots a delicate mat-

¹ Stacey, *Canadian Army*, p. 204, n. 9; Patton, *War As I Knew It*, p. 105; *AAF III*, pp. 257-58.

² Bradley, *Soldier's Story*, p. 377; Eisenhower, *Crusade in Europe*, pp. 278-79; see also, Butcher, *My Three Years With Eisenhower*, p. 641. It would also have disarranged plans to "get the U.S. and British forces lined up and started together going east." Answers by Generals Smith and Bull to questions by Hist Sec, ETUSA, 14-15 Sep 45.

³ Bradley, *Soldier's Story*, p. 377.

ter. Yet for all the hazards of error, Allied aircraft operated in the Argentan-Falaise area with excellent effect until 17 August, when the bomb line in that sector was removed and close air support, at least officially, ceased.⁴

Another reason contributing to General Bradley's reluctance to send American troops beyond Argentan was his preference, as he later said, for "a solid shoulder at Argentan to a broken neck at Falaise." Although he afterwards stated that he had not doubted the ability of the XV Corps to close the gap (despite increasing resistance on the morning of 13 August), he had questioned the ability of the corps to keep the gap closed. Incorrectly believing that elements of nineteen German divisions were already stampeding eastward through the gap, he thought it conceivable that they would trample the thin line of American troops.⁵

Holding the XV Corps at Argentan conformed with General Bradley's concept of destroying the enemy by closing two jaws, for at Argentan the XV Corps formed the lower front teeth of a not yet solid mandible.⁶ Actually, the XV Corps was already in an exposed position. Both flanks were open. There were no German forces to speak of to threaten the right flank, but the situation was quite the opposite on the left.

American intelligence officers did not seem aware of Eberbach's mission to launch a massive attack against the deep XV Corps left flank, yet if Eberbach had been able to get it off, the attack would have struck exactly through a gap in the American line. Between the 1st Division troops firmly ensconced at Mayenne and French forces at Carrouges there was a gap of about twenty-five miles. American troops started to close the gap on the morning of 13 August, but until they actually did, a XV Corps advance beyond Argentan to close the Falaise gap would have extended the Mayenne gap. Although General Bradley did not mention this fact in his later account, it was reasonable for him to be concerned at the time with the exposed position of the XV Corps.

These reasons were sufficient to justify General Bradley's decision, but he may also have felt he could not let the XV Corps go to and beyond Argentan without exceeding his authority. Near Argentan the American troops were already across the army group boundary and impinging on the 21 Army Group zone. Since General Montgomery commanded the ground forces in France, Bradley needed his consent to go farther. Although Montgomery did not prohibit American advance beyond the boundary, neither did Bradley propose it.⁷

General Montgomery did not take the initiative, probably because he thought the Canadians would close the gap from

⁴ *AAF III*, pp. 253-54; 12th AGp Memo for Red (Kibler), 18 Aug. ML-205. Leigh-Mallory (in his "Despatch," Fourth Supplement to the *London Gazette* of December 31, 1946, p. 66) stated that he opposed the fixing of any bomb lines at all, for he felt they restricted close air support, denied fighter-bombers excellent targets, and allowed many enemy troops to escape. He would have preferred a less cautious policy, which would have permitted fighter-bombers to attack identified targets at will.

⁵ Bradley, *Soldier's Story*, p. 377.

⁶ See above, Ch. XXV.

⁷ Kibler, the 12th Army Group G-3, recollected long afterward that Bradley had telephoned Montgomery to ask permission to go beyond Argentan and that Montgomery had refused (Answers to Questions by Lt Col Hugh M. Cole, 29 May 45, ML-501), but Bradley denied ever asking (Bradley, *Soldier's Story*, p. 376).

the north. Early in August he had planned to have Patton's Third Army make a wide envelopment to the Seine. Instead, Bradley had reacted to the Mortain counterattack by suggesting and securing approval for a shorter envelopment—the right hook thrust by the XV Corps to Argentan. The virtue of this maneuver was that it took advantage of the Canadian attack on 8 August toward Falaise, an attack launched out of an entirely different context. Juncture of the two forces was implicit. Yet the Americans were at that time much farther from Argentan than the Canadians. Montgomery, estimating that the Germans would shift their defensive strength to protect their southern flank against the Americans, consequently felt that the Canadians, attacking from the opposite flank, could cover the shorter distance to Argentan more quickly.⁸

Halting the XV Corps at Argentan seemed in retrospect to many commanders, Allied and German, to have been a tactical error, a failure to take full advantage of German vulnerability.⁹ General Bradley, too, seemed afterwards to consider the halt a mistake, and he sought to refute criticism by placing the responsibility for the halt on Montgomery. In that connection, he recalled that he and Patton had doubted "Monty's ability to close the gap at Argentan" from the north, and had "waited impatiently" for word to continue northward. While waiting, Brad-

ley wrote, he and Patton saw the Germans reinforce the shoulders of the Argentan–Falaise gap and watched the enemy pour troops and matériel eastward to escape out of the unsealed pocket. It seemed to him and Patton, Bradley remembered, that Dempsey's British army by driving from the northwest was accelerating German movement eastward and facilitating German escape, actually pushing the Germans out of the open end of the pocket, like squeezing a tube of tooth paste. "If Monty's tactics mystified me," Bradley later wrote, "they dismayed Eisenhower even more. And . . . a shocked Third Army looked on helplessly as its quarry fled [while] Patton raged at Montgomery's blunder."¹⁰

It was true that the Germans were building up the shoulders of the gap by 13 August, but by that date they were not fleeing eastward to escape encirclement. Either Bradley and Patton were anticipating what was soon to occur or General Bradley's memory was faulty by several days. If Patton, in a subordinate role, could only rage, and if Bradley thought he might offend a sensitive Montgomery, Eisenhower, who was in France and following combat developments, might have resolved the situation had he thought it necessary to do so. Yet General Eisenhower did not intervene. Interfering with a tactical decision made by a commander who was in closer contact with the situation was not Eisenhower's method of exercising command. Long after the event, General Eisenhower implied that the gap might have been closed, which, he thought,

⁸ See 21 AGp Dir, M-518, 11 Aug; see above, Ch. XXV. On Montgomery's overly optimistic estimate of the speed with which the Canadians would get to Falaise, see Wilmot, *Struggle for Europe*, p. 417.

⁹ See, for example, Patton, *War As I Knew It*, p. 105, and MS # B-807 (Kuntzen).

¹⁰ Bradley, *Soldier's Story*, p. 377.

"might have won us a complete battle of annihilation."¹¹

If this had been clear to Bradley at the time, he probably would have picked up the telephone and proposed to Montgomery that the XV Corps proceed beyond the army group boundary to make contact with the Canadians. Yet to propose was, in effect, to recommend, particularly in a situation where Montgomery and Bradley were both army group commanders and where one was British, the other American. Because sending the XV Corps through and beyond Argentan was risky, Bradley probably felt he could not in good conscience recommend such a course of action without reservation. Because Montgomery, not Bradley, was the ground force commander and thus the responsible commander, Bradley, by so proposing, would be saddling Montgomery with responsibility for a course of action that Bradley himself was, apparently, unwilling to recommend wholeheartedly. For Montgomery would, more than likely, have felt impelled to accept the recommendation, given the circumstances of the command setup. Where the assumption of risk was involved, finesse, good manners, and the subtleties of coalition warfare required the responsible commander to make the responsible decision without prompting, and this only Montgomery—or Eisenhower—could have done.

What might have seemed clear to com-

manders from the perspective of a later vantage point was not so clear at the moment of decision. Bradley himself made the decision to halt, probably on the basis of five tactical considerations: (1) Montgomery, the ground force commander, had not moved the army group boundary, nor did he seem about to do so, and thus he appeared not to favor further American advance. (2) On the evidence of the increasing resistance to the XV Corps on the morning of 13 August, there was no certainty that American troops could move through or around Argentan and beyond. (3) Since the XV Corps was already in an exposed position by virtue of the vacuums on both flanks, there was no point in closing the Argentan-Falaise gap at the expense of further exposing the corps, particularly by enlarging the gap on the left. (4) Intelligence estimates inclined to the incorrect view that the bulk of the German forces had already escaped the pocket. (5) The Canadians were about to launch their second attack to Falaise, an effort that, it was hoped, would get troops beyond Falaise to Argentan and preclude further American advance into the 21 Army Group sector.

The Canadians at Falaise

Despite Montgomery's injunction for speed in getting to Falaise and beyond from the north, General Crerar, whose Canadian army had been stopped in the Caen-Falaise corridor by 9 August, was unable to mount a full-scale operation at once.¹² While Crerar regrouped his

¹¹ Eisenhower, *Crusade in Europe*, pp. 278-79; Pogue, *Supreme Command*, p. 214. Montgomery's chief of staff, Major-General Sir Francis de Guingand, believed that the Falaise gap might have been closed if Montgomery had not restricted the Americans by means of the existing army group boundary. "The Americans felt this [restriction]," he wrote. Guingand, *Operation Victory*, p. 407.

¹² Wilmot (*Struggle for Europe*, pp. 424-25) notes, "the evidence suggests that the thrust from the north was not pressed with sufficient speed and strength."

forces and arranged for air support, he launched a diversionary action on his right on 12 August in division strength, hoping thereby to outflank German positions along the Caen–Falaise road. On 14 August, as the diversion continued into its third day of difficult fighting without substantial advance, he kicked off his main effort.

The main effort was “a concentrated, very heavy blow on a decidedly narrow front,” much like the first attack seven days earlier, but it dispensed with artillery preparation to gain surprise, used smoke to provide cover, and employed a “short fierce stroke by medium bombers.”¹³ Smoke and dust made it difficult for armor and infantry to maintain proper orientation toward the objective, but two armored columns bypassed the resistance astride the main road and approached the objective from the northeast. More than 800 heavy bombers of the RAF and RCAF then dropped 3,700 tons of bombs in the area.¹⁴ Although several bomb loads fell short of their targets and inflicted almost 400 casualties and heavy equipment losses on Canadian and Polish units, the attack advanced to within three miles of Falaise on the first day.

With the Germans off balance, Canadian troops entered Falaise from the northwest on 16 August and cleared the town by the end of the following day. Artillery shells and air bombardment had transformed the town of William the Conqueror into a pile of rubble. Bulldozer operators, trying to open

routes for traffic, could hardly determine where the streets had been.¹⁵

Though the Canadians had finally reached Falaise, U.S. troops were still just south of Argentan. The gap had been narrowed, but fifteen miles still separated the Allies. “Due to the extraordinary measures taken by the enemy north of Falaise,” General Eisenhower wrote to Marshall, “. . . it is possible that our total bag of prisoners will not be so great as I first anticipated.”¹⁶

The Pocket Tightened

The task of filling the hole on the XV Corps left flank belonged to the First U.S. Army, specifically to the VII Corps. While the V and XIX Corps on the north exerted pressure on the Germans by attacking, respectively, toward Tinchebray and Flers, the VII Corps on the south was to drive from Mayenne to the northeast toward Fromental to cover the XV Corps left flank. In the case of each corps, the objective was the army group boundary, which corresponded with the right flank boundary of the Second British Army. In advancing to the southeast, the British troops would pass in turn across the fronts of all three First Army corps. (*Map 17*)

General Hodges had ordered the First Army to attack as early as 9 August, but not until the *Seventh Army* withdrew from Mortain did the operation get under way. On 12 August the V and XIX Corps initiated the attack. The VII Corps needed an additional day for

¹³ Stacey, *Canadian Army*, p. 201.

¹⁴ Leigh-Mallory, “Despatch,” Fourth Supplement to the *London Gazette* of December 31, 1946, p. 65.

¹⁵ Stacey, *Canadian Army*, pp. 201–03; Jean Boule and Léonce Macary, “Falaise n’est Plus,” in Herval, *Bataille de Normandie*, I, 368–95.

¹⁶ Msg, Eisenhower to Marshall, CPA 9–0228, 17 Aug, Pogue Files.

displacement south of Mortain to Mayenne.

In Gerow's V Corps sector, the 29th and 2d Divisions attacked abreast through a narrow sector of rough terrain lacking good roads, and three days later captured Tinchebray and high ground south of the town. With the corps front facing eastward and the troops out of contact with the enemy, the advance came to a halt. Hodges had hoped to trap a considerable number of Germans, but the prisoners taken during the four-day attack came to the disappointing total of 1,200, less than the number of casualties sustained by the V Corps.¹⁷

From positions near Sourdeval, Corlett's XIX Corps had attacked with the 28th Division. In hope of improving the division's performance, which he considered unsatisfactory, Corlett on 12 August provided the division a new commander, Brig. Gen. James E. Wharton, formerly assistant commander of the 9th Division.¹⁸ Several hours later General Wharton was mortally wounded, and the next day General Cota came from the 29th Division to take command of the 28th.

On 13 and 14 August, respectively, the 2d Armored and 30th Divisions, earlier part of the VII Corps, augmented the XIX Corps. Pivoting on Ger, the corps moved eastward against light resistance and seized Domfront, which was garrisoned by a battalion composed of stragglers, depot personnel, and soldiers recovering from minor wounds—many of whom were intoxicated when the Americans arrived. On 15 August the

corps made contact with the British several miles west of Flers, and on the following day British forces swept southward across the XIX Corps front, as they had across the V Corps front. Although the advance had been relatively rapid and casualties comparatively light, few Germans had been trapped.¹⁹

The VII Corps commenced its effort on 13 August after Collins released the 35th Division to the Third Army, reunited the combat commands of the 3d Armored Division under a new commander, Maj. Gen. Maurice Rose, brought the 9th Division to join the 1st at Mayenne, and placed the 4th Division in reserve south of Barenton.²⁰ Against an estimated 7,600 combat effectives, the 1st Division on the left and the 3d Armored Division on the right drove more than twenty miles northeastward from Mayenne on the first day. Fairly heavy fighting occurred on the following day around Rânes as resistance stiffened in defense of the highway between Flers and Argentan. Though the 9th Division moved into the center to strengthen the corps attack, strong opposition slowed the advance. Montgomery approved a request to cross the army group boundary, and at the end of 17 August the corps made contact with British troops at several points along its

¹⁹ [Ferriss], Notes; FUSA G-2 Jnl and File, 12 and 13 Aug; 30th Div AAR, Aug. and FO 24, 2300, 13 Aug; MS # B-807 (Kuntzen). See G. Hubert, A. Paillette, and A. Timothée, "Un Enjeu Féodal: Domfront," in Herval, *Bataille de Normandie*, I, 317-42, for an excellent account of how civilians helped the American troops liberate Domfront without bombardment.

²⁰ General Watson, relieved from command of the 3d Armored Division and reduced to the grade of colonel, became assistant division commander of the 29th Division, where he served with distinction and was later promoted to brigadier general.

¹⁷ *V Corps Operations in the ETO*, pp. 163-80.

¹⁸ On 28th Division problems, see, for example, CI 72 and the 109th Inf Jnl, 6-9 August.