

had then moved the remainder of the division south from Vitré.

Impatient, General Walker phoned Irwin at noon, 8 August. Walker wanted Angers quickly, but he also wanted a reinforced infantry battalion sent to Nantes. If German activity at Lorient, Brest, and St. Malo indicated a pattern of behavior likely to be encountered at all the ports, it was reasonable to assume that strong and determined German forces held Nantes. Although his available troops permitted him only to contain the enemy in the area, Walker desired at least a token force to block the northern exits of Nantes and prevent the Germans from sallying forth unnoticed against American communications.

Irwin, who was already involved at Angers, his major objective, wanted to keep his units well consolidated so he could deal with any emergencies. Operating in what he considered a vacuum of information, he was uneasy because his "mission, zone of action, and adjacent forces [were] not clear," even though he was "using every agency" to find out what his neighbors were doing. Nevertheless, when he learned at the end of the afternoon of 8 August that Walker was "much exercised" because no troops were on the way to Nantes, Irwin sent out a call for trucks. They arrived early on 9 August, and a reinforced infantry battalion motored to Nantes. Encountering no opposition until reaching the outskirts of the city, the battalion destroyed a telephone center and a radio station, then set up blocking positions along the city's northern exits.

Meanwhile, the 11th Infantry on 8 August had captured intact a railroad

bridge southwest of Angers, and this gave direct access into the city. General Irwin funneled Col. Robert P. Bell's 10th Infantry across the bridge on 9 August and prepared a co-ordinated two-regiment attack for the following day.

General Walker visited the division and was satisfied with the preparations, but he characteristically "urged more speed in attack." Launched on 10 August, the drive carried American troops into the city, and, by the morning of 11 August, the 5th Division had almost two thousand prisoners and was in control of Angers. American aircraft destroyed the highway bridge south of the city by bombardment, thus isolating Angers from the south.<sup>9</sup>

Developments elsewhere had their effect on the XX Corps. On the basis of information that German reinforcements were moving into the le Mans-Alençon-Sées area, Third Army on 11 August directed Walker to assemble on the Mayenne-le Mans line three of the four divisions then assigned to him. With the 7th Armored, 35th, and 80th Divisions, he was to attack promptly from the Mayenne-le Mans line to the northeast to secure the Carrouges-Sées line. The intention apparently was to eliminate a potential German threat from the west against the exposed left and rear of the

<sup>9</sup> *The XX Corps, Its History and Service in World War II* (Osaka, Japan: The Mainichi Publishing Co., Ltd., 1951) (hereafter cited as *XX Corps*), pp. 74-77. On 8 August the Reconnaissance Troop supply section was transporting fuel and rations forward in convoy when the leading armored vehicle performing escort duty struck a mine and was destroyed. Hostile troops nearby opened fire. For braving the fire to rescue several wounded and unconscious soldiers who were lying in the road, S. Sgt. Wardie Barnett and T/5 Vincent Hughes were awarded the DSC.

XV Corps, which was driving north toward Argentan. In addition, Walker was directed to move the 5th Division, less a regiment to be left at Angers, northeast along the Loir River about fifty miles from Angers to a line generally between le Mans and Tours, there, as Patton put it, "to guard against a very doubtful attack on our [south] flank."<sup>10</sup>

The 7th Armored Division, which had recently landed at OMAHA Beach and was hurrying toward le Mans, was not immediately available, nor was the 35th Division, engaged at Mortain. But so urgent was the need to cover the exposed left flank of the XV Corps that Walker, directed again on 12 August to attack, initiated action on the 13th with the two regiments of the 80th Division at hand. Though the attack made good progress and swept away scattered German resistance, it ended in embarrassment as the 80th Division troops collided with XV Corps units moving across their attack zone.<sup>11</sup>

Meanwhile, the 5th Division was moving northeast from Angers. To General Irwin, who was less than fully informed on the big picture, "sudden and unexpected changes cause[d] considerable confusion in arrangements, transportation, and plans," particularly since there was "no indication of reasons for orders." His bewilderment increased during the next few days when orders "made no sense at all" and prompted "great confusion."

Between 12 and 16 August, Irwin received conflicting orders that indicated

not much more than changing directions of march. Strained communications, sketchy information, and a surprising absence of German opposition characterized his division's movements, and he could only guess that his ultimate objective might be Dreux, Châteaudun, or Orléans. In time, General Walker told him to remain south of the Chartres–Etampes highway. Finally Walker advised him to stand fast just south of Chartres. Irwin then assumed that he was "heading south of Paris to the east," but he hoped for a few days rest so that his troops could take care of long-needed mechanical maintenance.

Meanwhile, a 4th Armored Division combat command had relieved the battalion of the 5th Division at Nantes, and the 319th Infantry of the 80th Division had replaced Colonel Roffe's 2d Infantry, which Irwin had temporarily left at Angers. As these components joined the division near Chartres, Irwin again had a complete unit, and he would soon get a definite mission.<sup>12</sup>

### *The Drive to the East*

Despite Irwin's bewilderment as to the meaning of his apparently uncharted and aimless peregrinations, a well-defined course of action was emerging. Although the strands of significance were often improvised and tangled, they reflected a pattern of activity designed to exploit the German disorganization in western France. The general area of operations for those units not engaged at the Argentan–Falaise pocket lay between the Seine and Loire Rivers, an

<sup>10</sup> Memo, Patton for Gaffey, 8 Aug, XV Corps G-3 Jnl and File; see also TUSA AAR, I, 26, and Annex 2.

<sup>11</sup> See above, Ch. XXVI.

<sup>12</sup> Ltr, Patton to Walker, 11 Aug, and Msg, Patton to Walker, 12 Aug, XV Corps G-3 Jnl and File; Memo, 15 Aug, VIII Corps G-3 Jnl and File.

open, level plain ideally suited for armored operations. The chalk plateaus in the Evreux, Dreux, Chartres, and Châteaudun areas provided excellent airfield sites capable of insuring satisfactory air support for post-OVERLORD operations east of the Seine. Since securing this ground was an essential preliminary to breaking out of the lodgment area, the operations of the Third Army were oriented toward this goal.<sup>13</sup>

Depending on further developments in the fast changing situation, the most likely objectives toward which the Third Army could next direct its efforts were closing the Argentan-Falaise gap, cutting off at the Seine the Germans escaping from the pocket, and securing the Paris-Orléans gap. Accordingly, Patton on 13 August ordered his forces to assume flexible dispositions. The XV Corps at Argentan was already in position to secure the Argentan-Falaise gap. Patton gave the XX Corps the 7th Armored Division and instructed Walker to secure Dreux as the initial step in blocking German escape across the lower Seine. The XII Corps, with newly assigned subordinate units, was to concentrate in the area southeast of le Mans to be in position for an advance to the Paris-Orléans gap. Because of the fluid situation, Patton instructed all three corps commanders to be prepared to operate to the north, northeast, or east.<sup>14</sup>

The XII Corps headquarters had virtually completed the administrative task of landing and assembling the Third

Army units coming from England and dispatching them to the front. Although the corps headquarters had been scheduled to take control of the 7th Armored and 80th Infantry Divisions, neither proved available; the 80th was involved at Argentan, and the 7th Armored was moving toward Dreux. Fortunately, the 35th Division was about to complete its mission near Mortain, and Patton gave it, as well as the 4th Armored Division (coming from Brittany and VIII Corps control), to XII Corps. With these forces, XII Corps, in addition to protecting the south flank of the army, could advance toward the Paris-Orléans gap or, if necessary, support the XX Corps drive to the lower Seine.<sup>15</sup>

After Bradley halted the XV Corps at Argentan and after Patton ordered Haislip to split the corps and move two divisions eastward, Patton found himself on 15 August, for all practical purposes and exclusive of the VIII Corps in Brittany, in command of four corps of two divisions each. Half of the XV Corps (2d French Armored and 90th Infantry Divisions) was facing north in the Argentan area, while the XV Corps headquarters with the other half (5th Armored and 79th Infantry Divisions) was heading generally eastward, as were the XX Corps (7th Armored and 5th Divisions) and the XII Corps (4th Armored and 35th Divisions). On 15 August Patton directed the XII Corps to seize Châteaudun and Orléans and protect the army right flank along the Loire. He changed the objective of the XX Corps—instead of taking Dreux, the corps was to establish a bridgehead across

<sup>13</sup> PS SHAEF (44) 11 (Final), SHAEF Plng Staff, Post-NEPTUNE Courses of Action After Capture of the Lodgment Area, Sec. II: Method of Conducting the Campaign, 30 May, SGS SHAEF File 381, Post-OVERLORD Plng.

<sup>14</sup> See TUSA Dir, 13 Aug.

<sup>15</sup> TUSA AAR, Aug; Memo, Maddox for Evans, 13 Aug.

the Eure River at Chartres. He instructed the XV Corps to establish a bridgehead over the Eure at Dreux. Thus evolved the Third Army three-corps drive eastward to the Seine.<sup>16</sup> (*Map XII*)

Though General Patton alerted his corps commanders for advances beyond these objectives, General Bradley exerted a restraining influence. Bradley was concerned with the strain that the rapid advance was imposing on supply and communications facilities. In accord with OVERLORD planning, Bradley wanted to give the logistical apparatus time to develop installations that would provide a secure base for post-OVERLORD operations beyond the Seine. He therefore restricted Patton to Dreux, Chartres, and Orléans so that he, Bradley, could there regroup his forces and readjust the army boundaries.<sup>17</sup>

To secure Orléans was the mission of Maj. Gen. Gilbert R. Cook, a West Pointer who had fought in France during World War I, who had commanded XII Corps since 1943, and who in addition was deputy commander of the Third Army. To perform his first combat mission as corps commander, General Cook set up his headquarters at le Mans on 13 August and awaited the arrival of his widely separated units—the 4th Armored Division coming out of Brittany

and the 35th Division on the road from Mortain.

Since Patton had told him to “get started as soon as possible,” Cook formed an armored-infantry column composed of elements from both divisions and headed the column down the main road from le Mans to Orléans on 15 August.<sup>18</sup> The 4th Armored Division’s CCA under Colonel Clarke had driven from Nantes to St. Calais—more than a hundred miles—in one day, but after a short halt for refueling, the tankers moved on toward Orléans. Immediately behind came a 35th Division regimental task force, Col. Robert Sears’s 137th Infantry. The armor was eventually attached to the infantry, and both units then operated under General Sebree, the 35th’s assistant division commander.

There was little knowledge of enemy strength or dispositions save vague reports that the Germans were assembling forces to defend Châteaudun and Orléans. As a result of conflicting intelligence, Cook later received contrary messages from Patton advising him to proceed directly to Orléans and also to go by way of Châteaudun. To resolve the matter, Cook ordered Sebree to take Orléans if quick capture appeared feasible without reinforcement and if it appeared possible to hold the city with light forces after its capture.

With very few maps, without prior reconnaissance, lacking information of enemy dispositions, and ignorant of the natural obstacles of the region, tankers

<sup>16</sup> TUSA Dir, 15 Aug (confirming verbal orders, 14 Aug); 12th AGP Dir for Current Opns, 15 Aug; Telecon, Gay to Menoher, 1845, 15 Aug, XV Corps CofS Jnl and File; XV Corps AAR, Aug; Bradley, *Soldier's Story*, p. 379.

<sup>17</sup> Telecons, Gen Gaffey and Maj Gen Gilbert R. Cook, 1740, 15 Aug, and Gaffey and Hagan, 1540, 16 Aug; Memos, Gaffey for Haislip and for Walker, 15 Aug. All in XV Corps CofS Jnl and File. Rupenthal, *Logistical Support*, I, 484–88.

<sup>18</sup> This account is from the XII Corps, 4th Armd Div, and 35th Div AAR's; Extracts from Cook's Diary and XII Corps Historical Officer's Notes, CI 354, GL-140; Maj Randolph Leigh's XII Corps, Hosp Intervs, IV, GL-93 (319); and Koyen, *Fourth Armored Division*, pp. 27ff.

and infantrymen plunged boldly toward Orléans. Though all the bridges between St. Calais and Orléans had been destroyed, energetic reconnaissance revealed crossing sites. By dark of 15 August, the large Orléans airport, which had been strongly fortified with antiaircraft and antitank guns but left virtually undefended, was captured, and American troops were at the outskirts of the city.

About that time, because of changing plans on higher levels of command, Patton directed Cook to halt the advance on Orléans and secure Châteaudun. Cook objected, saying he could take both. Patton gave no immediate answer but called back later and authorized continuation of the attack on Orléans with the forces already committed. Cook again objected, this time to the restriction on employing his forces. Patton finally told him to go ahead and use his own judgment.

After meeting with Baade, Sebree, Clarke, and Sears on the morning of 16 August, Cook directed the attack to Orléans continued. While two columns of armor attacked the city from the north and northeast, the 137th Infantry assaulted Orléans from the west. The converging attacks crushed slight opposition, and that night the city of Joan of Arc was in American hands.

Meanwhile, Cook had also directed Baade to capture Châteaudun. General Baade sent Col. Bernard A. Byrne's 320th Infantry, and after an all-night march and a short sharp engagement against several hundred Germans with a few tanks, the regiment took the town by noon of 17 August.<sup>19</sup> Concentrating his

forces in the Châteaudun–Orléans area, General Cook awaited further instructions.

The speed of the XII Corps advance to Orléans dashed German hopes of organizing a defense of the Paris–Orléans gap. The *First Army* and the *LXXX Corps* headquarters had displaced from the Bay of Biscay region to Fontainebleau and Reims, respectively, on 10 August to form a line west of the upper Seine that would tie in with the *Seventh Army* and *Fifth Panzer Army* defenses west of the lower Seine. Developments at Argentan and Falaise and the lack of combat units for immediate attachment to the *First Army*, however, prevented more than a cursory defensive effort along the upper Seine south of Paris. The *LXXX Corps* instead built up defensive positions along the Marne River. The troops that had met the Americans at Orléans and Châteaudun had been miscellaneous rear-guard elements reinforced by remnants of the *708th Division* and hastily assembled antiaircraft and antitank units, all under the control of local commanders who had been instructed to prepare defensive positions with the aid of impressed French inhabitants. The *First Army*, for all practical purposes, commanded local strongpoints "of doubtful combat value."<sup>20</sup>

The loss of Orléans on 16 August, the weakness of the *First Army*, developments at Argentan and Falaise in Normandy, and the Allied invasion of south-

Intervs, ML-2234; information made available to the author by Generals Cook and Baade.

<sup>20</sup> *First Army* FO 2, 16 Aug, translated and reproduced in Annex 1 to TUSA G-2 Per Rpt 69, 19 Aug; principal German sources are MS # A-911 (Emmerich), MS # B-728 (Emmerich), and MS # B-034 (Schramm).

<sup>19</sup> Interv with 1st Lt Donald E. Severance, Hosp

ern France on 15 August prompted OKW and *OB WEST* to relinquish southwest France. Anticipating an Allied drive up the Rhône River valley and a continued eastward advance from Orléans, the Germans could foresee the eventual meeting between the *DRAGOON* (southern France) and *OVERLORD* forces. They therefore tried to avert the isolation of their own forces in southwest France. As the Germans in Normandy began their definite withdrawal out of the Argentan-Falaise pocket, a general withdrawal from the Bay of Biscay to Dijon started under the supervision of the *LXIV Corps*. The *16th Division* was assigned the task along the Loire of covering the northern flank of the withdrawal movement. Spread rather thin, the division garrisoned the towns at the Loire crossing sites with the exception of Nantes, Angers, and Orléans, which were in American possession. Perhaps a thousand infantrymen reinforced by some artillery pieces, a few antitank weapons, and a handful of tanks, guarded the Loire crossings at Saumur, Tours, and Blois.

The withdrawal from southwest France got under way as approximately 100,000 men moved northeastward, mostly on foot. The great majority had engaged in agricultural, construction, and security operations, and very few combat troops were among them. Their movement stimulated the FFI to activity that increased from relatively minor nuisance raids to major harassing action, including intensified FFI operations along the Loire River. At the same time, American pressure along the north bank of the Loire, both on the ground and in the air, increased.<sup>21</sup>

<sup>21</sup> MS # B-245 (Haeckel).

The American units that had swept from St. Calais directly to Orléans and Châteaudun had not come near the Loire River except at Orléans, although the need to capture Orléans had not eliminated General Cook's mission to protect the south flank of the 12th Army Group along the Loire. Since the American sweep to Orléans had followed routes along the north bank of the Loir River, a tributary of the Sarthe that parallels the Loire for about seventy miles, a buffer zone about twenty-five miles wide existed between the Loire and the Loir—a sort of no man's land inhabited by American and German patrols and by the FFI.

Contrary to later legend, General Patton appreciated the possibility that the German troops at the Loire might make sorties against the underbelly of the Third Army (and 12th Army Group) and become nuisances to U.S. lines of communication. He therefore requested General Weyland to have the XIX Tactical Air Command patrol the Loire River valley constantly. For the 24-hour coverage that was subsequently provided, a squadron of night fighters augmented the daylight operations of the XIX TAC fighter-bombers. Similarly, General Cook directed General Baade to keep artillery observation planes of the 35th Division over the Loir River valley.<sup>22</sup>

Despite these efforts, aerial surveillance could not take the place of ground action. Unless American troops destroyed the bridges across the Loire.

<sup>22</sup> XII Corps G-2 Per Rpts, 15-23 Aug, and AAR, Aug; Patton, *War As I Knew It*, p. 384; Memo, Patton for Gaffey, 8 Aug; [Taylor], *Development of Night Air Operations, 1941-1952*, p. 27.

the Germans would be able to raid U.S. lines of communication. General Cook therefore instructed the 4th Armored Division to sweep the north bank of the Loire between Tours and Blois. General Wood gave the mission to General Dager's CCB, which was moving from Lorient toward Orléans. CCB was to clear the north bank and destroy the bridges but was not to become involved in action that might delay its progress. In compliance, as CCB drove the 250 miles from Lorient to Vendôme (forty miles west of Orléans) in thirty-four hours, General Dager dispatched patrols to the river. These were sufficient to cause the Germans, already harassed by the FFI, to demolish the bridges themselves and withdraw to the south bank between Tours and Blois. A XII Corps task force composed of the 1117th Engineer Group and an attached artillery battalion performed the same function for the bridges between Blois and Orléans. With all the bridges destroyed, aircraft keeping the Loire River valley under surveillance, patrols guarding the buffer zone between the Loir and the Loire from Angers to Orléans, and the Germans manifesting little hostile intent, the southern flank of the 12th Army Group appeared secure. General Cook had accomplished his mission. His first assignment as XII Corps commander was also his last. In poor health for some time, he finally gave in to doctors' orders and relinquished his command.

The XX Corps mission to take Chartres had evolved out of a fluid situation that bred some confusion. After having attacked on the left of XV Corps on 13 August toward the Carrouges-Sées line, the same objective given to XV

Corps, and having collided with XV Corps units, XX Corps received new orders sending it to Dreux. General Walker's field order, issued on the morning of 14 August, directed an attack "on the axis le Mans-Nogent-le-Rotrou-Dreux-Mantes-Gassicourt to seize the line of the Seine between Meulan-Vernon."<sup>23</sup> As far as Dreux was concerned, this projected an advance to the north-east. But XV Corps on the XX Corps left was preparing on the same day to advance to the east, also on Dreux, with the two divisions departing the Argentan area. If the two corps converged on a single point, in this case Dreux, a confusion of major proportions was inevitable. During the evening of 14 August, therefore, Walker received a new mission—Chartres became the new XX Corps objective.

As a result of these changes, the initial commitment of the 7th Armored Division was fraught with haste and potential disorder. Having almost been sent into attack on the XV Corps left as it was hurrying from its recent unloading at OMAHA Beach toward le Mans, the 7th Armored Division on the afternoon of 13 August received orders to pass through le Mans, clear the roads to enable the 35th Division to advance on Orléans, and assemble near la Ferté-Bernard, fifty miles southwest of Dreux. While the division was assembling near la Ferté-Bernard, General Walker arrived at the command post at noon, 14 August. He ordered the division commander, Maj. Gen. Lindsay McD. Silvester, to begin his attack at once—toward Dreux and Mantes-Gassicourt.

<sup>23</sup> XX Corps FO, 14 Aug.



GENERAL WALKER HOLDING ROADSIDE CONFERENCE *with General Silvester.*

Though some division components were still coming from the beaches, Silvester had three armored columns advancing toward Dreux that afternoon.<sup>24</sup>

The columns encountered scattered resistance and advanced about fifteen miles to Nogent-le-Rotrou by evening. At that time Silvester received word of the change in objective. He was to move instead to Chartres.<sup>25</sup> Silvester immediately notified his subordinate commands of the change in direction, and by the

morning of 15 August the forces had shifted and consolidated into two columns.<sup>26</sup> The excellent road net, the sparseness of enemy opposition, and good command control had facilitated a difficult readjustment made during the hours of darkness. Yet, despite the shift of armored columns, considerable traffic intermingling occurred on 15 August between the 7th Armored and the 79th Divisions on the approaches to Nogent-le-Roi.

Still mindful of driving to the Seine, General Silvester sent Col. Dwight A. Rosebaum's CCA and Lt. Col. James W. Newberry's CCR north of Chartres and

<sup>24</sup> This account is taken from the XX Corps, 7th Armd Div, and 5th Div AAR's, Aug; *XX Corps*, p. 79; CI 285; Irwin Diary; personal documents loaned to the author by General Silvester.

<sup>25</sup> Telecon, Walker and Silvester, 2145, 14 Aug. 7th Armd Div G-3 Jnl.

<sup>26</sup> 7th Armd Div G-3 Jnl, entry 2255, 14 Aug.



into the area between Chartres and Dreux; he dispatched Brig. Gen. John B. Thompson's CCB to take the new objective. At the outskirts of Chartres by the evening of 15 August, CCB attacked with two forces. One force entered the town from the northwest; the other sought to enter from the southwest. The latter met determined opposition that came somewhat as a surprise because of the relatively light resistance encountered earlier. At a disadvantage in the failing light, the troops withdrew.

Meanwhile, the 5th Division, which had moved from Angers, was arriving at an area about eight miles southwest of Chartres.

Like the Americans, the Germans were surprised by the effectiveness of the Chartres defenses. The *First Army*, in command of the area between Chartres and the Loire, had designated Chartres as an "absorption point," where remnants of units (among them the *17th SS Panzer Grenadier* and *352d Divisions*) and stragglers from the Normandy battlefield were to be reorganized. As at Châteaudun and Orléans, a local commander was in charge of assembling these and rear-area troops (among them students of an antiaircraft training center at Chartres) into a coherent force. On the afternoon of 15 August, as the 7th U.S. Armored Division was approaching, General der Infanterie Kurt von der Chevallerie, the *First Army* commander, was holding a conference in the town to plan how newly arriving units that Hitler had ordered there—the *48th Division* from northern France and the *338th Division* from southern France—might best reinforce the defenses west of the Seine in general and the defenses of

Chartres in particular. Before the fight for Chartres terminated, regimental-sized portions of both new divisions (the *338th* tied to the artillery of the vanished *708th Division*) were committed there.<sup>27</sup>

CCB of the 7th Armored Division attacked Chartres again on 16 August and extended a precarious hold over part of the objective despite active resistance inside the town and the arrival of increasing numbers of new troops in wooded areas just south of the town.<sup>28</sup> Corps artillery, cautioned to be careful of the historic town and its cathedral, commenced to fire on 17 August in support of CCB, which encircled Chartres and fought to clear German troops from the town. Since the Germans continued to defend stubbornly, and because tanks were at a disadvantage in the narrow streets, General Walker ordered the 5th Division to aid the armor.

General Irwin, still not altogether informed on the broad picture, wished he had more information on the American armored dispositions, felt that the XX Corps was overextended, and believed that security against enemy infiltration was insufficient. He dispatched the 11th Infantry just as General Walker made his usual telephone call to urge speed. The 11th Infantry attacked toward Chartres on 18 August, and, despite stiff opposition that included tanks and artil-

<sup>27</sup> Hitler Order, *WFST/Op.Nr.* 772830/44 g.Kdos. *Chefs*, 11 Aug, quoted in *Msg, AGp B* to the armies, 0030, 12 Aug, *AGp B Fuehrer Befehle*; MS # B-732 (Hold), MS # B-003 (Hoehne), MS # B-728 (Emmerich), MS # P-166 (Casper); *First Army FO* 2, 16 Aug, translated and reproduced in Annex 1 to TUSA G-2 Per Rpt 69, 19 Aug.

<sup>28</sup> Col. Welborn B. Griffith, Jr., the XX Corps G-3 who was killed at Chartres, and 1st Lt. Mario J. Fortuna of the 38th Armored Infantry Battalion, who led an assault party in the capture of a nearby village, were awarded the DSC.



ARMORED BIVOUAC AREA near Chartres. The cathedral can be seen in the background.

lery, the combined efforts of armor and infantry succeeded in clearing and securing the remainder of the town.<sup>29</sup> More than two thousand prisoners were taken, a large German Air Force installation (including airport, warehouses, depots, a bomb assembly plant, and fifty planes) was captured, and the XX Corps was in possession of a historic gateway to Paris, only fifty miles away.

<sup>29</sup> S. Sgt. Clarence E. White of the 11th Infantry was instrumental in the success, establishing and maintaining an exposed artillery observation post. Though wounded, White adjusted fire until he collapsed from loss of blood. He was awarded the DSC.

At the same time, the XV Corps was making its sixty-mile advance from Argentan: the 79th Division toward Nogent-le-Roi, and the 5th Armored Division toward Dreux. The 5th Armored met only a few Germans at lightly defended roadblocks. Although German jamming of radios interfered with communications between unit commanders and the heads of their columns, the troops crossed the Eure River on the morning of 16 August, encircled Dreux, fired at some German troops fleeing eastward, and took the town that afternoon. Nine artillery pieces, six destroyed tanks, and a little more than two hundred