FIELD MARSHAL ROMMEL

inference, it appeared that Hitler favored defense on the beaches since he had charged Rommel with specific responsibility for coastal defense even though the task might logically have belonged to the theater commander, Rundstedt. Although Rommel was subordinate to Rundstedt, he thus had a certain favored status that tended to undermine the chain of command. This was emphasized by the fact that he had direct access to Hitler, a privilege of all field marshals.

Despite a lack of cohesion in the command structure and an absence of coherence in defensive planning, the three commanders acted in unison when the Allies assaulted the beaches. Rommel gave battle on the coast, Rundstedt began to prepare a counterattack, and Hitler approved the commitment of theater reserves.

Their actions stemmed from traditional German military thought and training, which stressed the ideal of defeating an enemy by a decisive act rather than by a strategy of gradual and cumulative attrition.[6] As a consequence, the German military leaders, although fighting essentially a defensive battle, searched for a bold counterattack that would destroy the Normandy beachhead and drive the Allies back into the sea. While Rommel fought the tactical battle of the beaches, Rundstedt designated a special headquarters (which he had organized in 1943 to train armored units) to plan and launch a counterattack of decisive proportions. Under the command of the *OB WEST* armor specialist, General der Panzertruppen Leo Freiherr Geyr von Schweppenburg, *Panzer Group West* assumed this function.[7] An Allied bomber struck Geyr's headquarters on 10 June, killed several key members of the staff, and obliterated immediate German hopes of regaining the initiative.

To take the place of *Panzer Group West,* which could not be reorganized quickly after the bombing, the Germans planned to upgrade the *LXXXIV Corps* headquarters to an intermediate status pending its eventual elevation to an army headquarters. On 12 June, however, its commander, General der Artil-

[6] Herbert Rosinski, *The German Army* (Washington: Infantry Journal, Inc., 1944), 185ff; Fuehrer Dir 40, quoted in translation in Harrison, *Cross-Channel Attack,* App. A.

[7] See Harrison, *Cross-Channel Attack,* pp. 247, 348–49, 373–74. The commander of *Panzer Group West* is hereafter referred to as Geyr.

lerie Erich Marcks, was also killed by an Allied bomb.[8]

By mid-June Rommel was inclined to believe that the Allies had gained a firm foothold in France.[9] Experience in Sicily and Italy seemed to indicate that when Allied assault troops succeeded in digging in on shore, it was very difficult to dislodge them. On 12 June Hitler appeared to accept the validity of the danger, for on that date he recalled an SS panzer corps of two SS armored divisions—about 35,000 men—from the Eastern Front and dispatched them with highest transportation priority to the west. The mission of these units was to take part in the vital counterattack that was to destroy the Allied beachhead.

While the SS panzer corps and other reinforcements hurried toward Normandy, German troops on the Western Front were sustaining serious losses. Allied air superiority was hampering and delaying the movement of German men and supplies to the battle area, and Allied ground troops were swarming ashore with increasing amounts of equipment. As early as three days after the invasion, officers of the OKH intelligence section and of the OKW operations staff discussed the probable loss of Cherbourg.[10] Five days later, on 14 June, Rundstedt and Rommel agreed to leave only light German forces in defense of the port if the Americans should cut the Cherbourg peninsula and isolate the northern portion of it. Thus, only a few troops would be sacrificed in the north while the bulk of the German forces on the peninsula would withdraw and form a defensive line near its base to oppose an expected American attack toward the south. Two days later, on 16 June, as the field commanders, upon learning that the Americans were about to cut the peninsula, prepared to put the withdrawal plan from Cherbourg into effect, OKW transmitted Hitler's refusal to permit them to evacuate the port.[11]

FIELD MARSHAL VON RUNDSTEDT

Although Field Marshals Rundstedt and Rommel considered a strong and costly defense of Cherbourg useless, Hitler was not interested in conserving several thousand soldiers when he could expend them and perhaps keep the Allies

[8] *AGp B* Telecon, 2115, 11 Jun. There was some talk of having the upgraded corps take responsibility for the entire active front. *OB WEST KTB,* 12 Jun and *Anlagen* for period.

[9] Rommel to Keitel, *Beurteilung der Lage am 11.6.1944,* 12 Jun, *AGp B KTB Ia Tagesmeldungen; OB WEST, a Study in Command,* I, 3.

[10] Telecon, 1105, 9 Jun, *Handakte, Chef Abt. Fremde Heere West;* see MS # B-784 (Criegern).

[11] *Seventh Army KTB,* 14 and 16 Jun; *AGp B KTB,* Annex 52a to *Anlage 32;* Harrison, *Cross-Channel Attack,* pp. 413–14.

from gaining a major port, at least until the counterstroke, now planned for 25 June, was launched. While the master counterattack was being prepared to oust the Allies from Normandy, Hitler was unwilling to yield cheaply what he correctly judged to be an important link in the projected chain of Allied logistics.

Despite Hitler's wishes, the defense of Cherbourg was disappointing.[12] German troop confusion, inadequate provisioning of the fortress, and the vigor of the American attack were disheartening to the Germans. The field marshals concentrated their efforts on mounting the still pending major counterattack, even though Hitler continued to recommend counterattacks designed to aid the Cherbourg defenders.[13]

Conferring with Hitler at Soissons on 17 June, the field commanders agreed to launch through Bayeux what they all hoped would be the decisive counterattack.[14] A reorganized *Panzer Group West,* under the control of *Army Group B,* was to direct the tactical operation, which would now be launched no earlier than 5 July. The purpose of the attack was to split the Allies on the coast and dispose of each separately.

As tactical plans for the Bayeux offensive were being readied and troops and supplies assembled, the British launched their attack toward Caen on 25 June.[15] Almost at once the local commander defending Caen judged that he would have to evacuate the city. To retain Caen the *Seventh Army* on 26 June prepared to employ the troops assembling for the Bayeux offensive, not in the planned offensive mission but for defensive reasons, to counterattack the British. Before the commitment of this force, however, the situation eased and became somewhat stable. Nevertheless, German apprehension over the possibility of continued British attacks in the Caen sector did not vanish.

At this time not only the commanders in the west but also OKW passed from thinking in terms of offensive action to an acceptance of a defensive role.[16] "No matter how undesirable this may be," Rundstedt informed OKW, "it may become necessary to commit all the new forces presently moving up—in an effort to stop and smash . . . the British attack expected to start shortly southeast from

[12] After capture of the city, the American corps commander asked, but the German commander (who had been taken prisoner) refused to answer, why he had defended the high ground around Cherbourg, good outer defensive positions, instead of retreating to the better inner ring of forts to make his stand. Maj William C. Sylvan, former senior aide to Lt Gen Courtney H. Hodges, Deputy Comdr, First Army, Personal Diary (hereafter cited as Sylvan Diary), entry of 27 Jun. Major Sylvan kept his diary, dealing primarily with General Hodges' activities, with the approval of General Hodges. A copy is on file in OCMH through courtesy of Major Sylvan.

[13] Harrison, *Cross-Channel Attack,* pp. 411–12, 442; *AGp B KTB,* 17 Jun; *OB WEST KTB,* 24 Jun, *Anlage 295,* 27 Jun, *Anlage 355,* and 28 Jun, *Anlage 375; Der Westen* (Schramm); for a more detailed explanation, see Martin Blumenson and James B. Hodgson, "Hitler versus his Generals in the West," *United States Naval Institute Proceedings* (December, 1956).

[14] Eksparre Min, *AGp B KTB, Anlagen,* Fall 1940–Sep 1944, Annex 17; Notes in the Jodl Diary, 17 Jun; *Der Westen* (Schramm); Hans Speidel, *Invasion 1944* (Chicago: Henry Regnery Company, 1950), pp. 92–99.

[15] Ltrs, Rommel to Rundstedt, and Speidel to *OQu West,* 21 Jun, *AGp B Ia Operationsbefehle;* see above, Ch. I.

[16] *OB WEST KTB,* 25 Jun, *Anlage 306.* The best evidence of the changing attitude is found in *OB WEST KTB,* 26 Jun.

Caen." [17] So serious had the British threat appeared on 25 June that Rundstedt and Rommel fleetingly considered withdrawing to a line between Avranches and Caen.[18]

By withdrawing to an Avranches–Caen line the Germans would have good positions from which to hold the Allies in Normandy. Yet such an act might also be interpreted by higher headquarters as the first step in a complete withdrawal from France. Keitel and Jodl had agreed soon after the invasion that if the Germans could not prevent the Allies from breaking out of their beachhead, the war in the west was lost.[19] The point in question was a definition of the term *beachhead.* Would not a withdrawal from the lines already established give the Allies the space and maneuver room to launch a breakout attempt?

The alternatives facing the German field commanders late in June seemed clear: either the Germans should mount the Bayeux offensive and attempt to destroy the Allied beachhead in a single blow, or they should abandon hope of offensive action and defend aggressively by counterattacking the British near Caen.[20] The British, by acting first, had temporarily nullified the possibility of offensive action, and this seemed to crystallize a growing pessimism among the German commanders in the west.

Rundstedt had long been convinced that if only a defensive attitude were possible, it would be hopeless to expect ultimate success in the war.[21] Rommel, too, became persuaded that the German chance of victory was slim.[22] More than Rundstedt perhaps, Rommel felt that the Allied naval guns employed as long-range artillery would prevent the Germans from ever regaining the invasion beaches, and significantly he had plotted the first objectives of the Bayeux attack just outside the range of Allied naval gun fire.[23] By 15 June Rommel had admitted that the front would probably have to be "bent out" and Normandy given up because the danger of an Allied attack toward Paris from Caen was worse than a possible threat to Brittany.[24]

Hitler nevertheless remained firm in his resolve. Even though Rundstedt insisted that the focal point was Caen, Hitler kept thinking in terms of an attack west of the Vire River to save or regain Cherbourg. He cared little whether the reserves gathered near Caen were used for offensive or defensive purposes.

Tactical developments in the Caen sector bore out the apprehensions of the field marshals. There seemed to be no alternative but to commit additional reserves against the doggedly persistent British. The only troops available were

[17] Rundstedt to Jodl, 1800, 26 Jun, *OB WEST KTB, Anlage 340.*

[18] Telecon, Blumentritt to Speidel, 1610, 25 Jun, *AGp B KTB.*

[19] *ONI Fuehrer Conferences on Matters Dealing With the German Navy* (Washington, 1947), 12 Jun (also published as Doc 175–C, *Trial of the Major War Criminals Before the International Military Tribunal* (Nuremberg, 1949), XXXIV.

[20] *Der Westen* (Schramm).

[21] Guenther Blumentritt, *Von Rundstedt, the Soldier and the Man* (London: Odhams Press Limited, 1952), pp. 184, 198; Harrison, *Cross-Channel Attack,* p. 443.

[22] See B. H. Liddell Hart, ed., *The Rommel Papers* (London: Collins, 1953).

[23] *Pz Gp W KTB, Anlagen 10.VI.–9.VIII.44,* Annexes 6, 7, and 8.

[24] Telecon, Rommel to Pemsel, 2150, 15 Jun, *Seventh Army KTB, Anlagen Ferngespraeche und Besprechungen, 6.–30. VI. 44.*

those of the *II SS Panzer Corps* withdrawn from the Eastern Front and slated to initiate the Bayeux offensive. The corps jumped off on 29 June in an attack that, if successful, would disrupt the British beachhead, but it was in no sense the contemplated decisive master blow.

On that day, 29 June, Rundstedt and Rommel were at Berchtesgaden, where they listened as Hitler enunciated his strategy.[25] Acknowledging that Allied air and naval supremacy prevented a large-scale German attack for the moment, Hitler deemed that, until an attack could be launched, the Germans had to prevent the development of mobile warfare because of the greater mobility of the Allied forces and their supremacy in the air. The German ground troops must endeavor to build up a front designed to seal off the beachhead and confine the Allies to Normandy. Tactics were to consist of small unit actions to exhaust the Allies and force them back. In the meantime, the German Air Force and Navy were to disrupt Allied logistics by laying mines and attacking shipping. More antiaircraft protection against Allied strafing and bombing was to permit the German Army to regain a freedom of movement for troops and supplies that would enable the field forces to launch a decisive offensive sometime in the future.

Thus, the ground troops in Normandy were to assume a defensive role temporarily, while the Air Force and Navy tackled the important problems of logistics and mobility. Goering and Doenitz were to hamper Allied logistics and deny the Allies mobility; they were to give the German ground forces a measure of protection for their supply system, thereby assuring them a certain degree of mobility. Until these missions were executed, the ground forces had to hold every inch of ground in a stubborn defense. Unless Hitler could insure for his troops at least temporary protection from Allied planes, offensive maneuvers on a large scale were out of the question. Until he could secure a more favorable balance of supply, he could not launch the decisive action designed to gain a conclusive victory.

Whether or not Hitler believed that Goering and Doenitz with the obviously inadequate forces at their disposal could give him what he wanted, he proceeded on the assumption that they might.

When Rundstedt and Rommel returned to the west on 30 June, they learned that the German counterattack north of Caen had bogged down. The brief presence, for once, of German planes over the battlefield, until dispersed by Allied air forces, had been ineffective. The larger situation in Normandy resembled an intolerable impasse. While the Allied build-up proceeded smoothly, the Germans were having great difficulty reinforcing the battlefield; destroyed bridges and railroads and Allied air strafing during daylight hours made this task nearly impossible. With the balance of force in Normandy swinging in favor of the Allies, continued German defense seemed a precarious course of action. Such was the basis on which the field marshals now formally

[25] Wolfram's Min, 1 Jul, in *AGp B KTB,* Annex 33; Jodl Diary, 29 Jun; *ONI Fuehrer Confs; Der Westen* (Schramm); Harrison, *Cross-Channel Attack,* pp. 445ff.

recommended a limited withdrawal in the Caen area.[26]

Hitler refused. To withdraw, even in limited fashion, seemed to him to admit defeat in Normandy, acknowledgment that the Germans had failed against what he estimated to be only one third of the strength that the Allies would eventually be able to put on the Continent. He saw that because there were no prepared defensive lines in the interior of France, no fortified positions that could be occupied by withdrawing troops, defeat in Normandy meant eventual evacuation of France. The only possible place where the Germans could resume a defensive effort would be at the German border, and this made necessary rehabilitating and manning the unoccupied West Wall, the Siegfried Line.

Hitler had prohibited the erection of fortified lines of defense in France because he believed that their presence would tend to weaken the front by acting as a magnet for weary combat troops and for what he termed "defeatist" commanders. Furthermore, Hitler appreciated that, when troops withdrew, personnel tended to straggle and abandon equipment, actions Germany could ill afford. He was also aware that the Allies, with their superior mobility, would be able to advance more rapidly than the Germans could withdraw. Finally, he underestimated neither the damage to morale a withdrawal would occasion nor the ability to harass that the FFI and a hostile French population possessed.[27]

On the other hand, the German troops in Normandy occupied excellent and extremely favorable positions for defense. If the Germans contained the Allies and prevented the expansion of the beachhead, they would retain advantageous ground from which Hitler could launch the decisive action that could turn the course of the war. And yet to remain in Normandy and seek the decision there meant the acceptance of the risk of losing the entire committed force. If the Allies broke through the German defenses and developed a war of movement, the result would bring catastrophe to German hopes. Air power and mobility would enable the Allies to institute a blitzkrieg. Unlike that on the Eastern Front, where tremendous space cushioned the effect of breakthrough, mobile warfare on the Western Front was sure to bring the Allies quickly to the border of Germany.[28]

On the afternoon of 1 July Hitler announced his position unequivocally and declared his willingness to gamble: "Present positions are to be held," he ordered. "Any further enemy breakthrough is to be hindered by determined resistance or by local counterattack. The assembly of forces will continue. . . ." [29] The Germans were to take advantage of the terrain, prevent the expansion of the Allied beachhead, and remain as close to the coast as possible.

This seemed logical to the *OB WEST* operations officer, who felt that a return

[26] *AGp B KTB*, 1830, 29 and 30 Jun; Harrison, *Cross-Channel Attack*, p. 446.

[27] *ONI Fuehrer Confs*, 12 Jun; Harrison, *Cross-Channel Attack*, pp. 411, 412, 447; *OB WEST, a Study in Command*, I, 46–47; *Der Westen* (Schramm).

[28] *Der Westen* (Schramm).

[29] *OB WEST Ia KTB*, 1 Jul.

to the position warfare tactics of World War I was desirable. The Germans needed "to build an insurmountable barrier in front of the enemy along the tactically most adantageous line, from which the enemy numerical and materiel superiority must be beaten down with every conceivable means." If the Germans could fight a war of attrition over a long period of time, using all the guns in their arsenal, antiquated or not, they would perhaps be able some time in the future to launch a counterattack with specially chosen and trained troops to inflict a defeat on the Allied forces on the Continent.[30]

In complete disagreement, Rundstedt called Keitel, chief of the OKW, and stated that he did not feel up to the increased demands. Whether he meant the increased demands placed on him by higher headquarters or the increased demands of an impossible situation was perhaps a deliberate ambiguity.[31] Reading Rundstedt's message as a request for relief, as an admission of defeat, or simply as an expression of disagreement, Hitler relieved his commander in chief in the west on 2 July. Two days later, Hitler also relieved Geyr, the commander of *Panzer Group West,* who had had the temerity to initiate a report criticizing the "tactical patchwork" in the west—a report endorsed and transmitted up the chain of command to Hitler.[32] Of the field commanders who had met the Allied invasion three weeks before, only Rommel remained in command, and even he had supposedly asked Hitler at Berchtesgaden how he still expected to win the war.[33]

Hitler was not impressed with the professional abilities of his senior officers in the west. The Germans had failed in June. The Allies had established a firm beachhead in Normandy. Cherbourg had fallen. A major German counteroffensive had failed to materialize. A fresh armored corps had been committed with no apparent result.

The Germans had massed troops for a decisive counterattack that did not get started. When the German frame of reference changed from an offensive to a defensive cast, it seemed fortunate to find the bulk of the German strength in Normandy opposite the British. For the Caen sector appeared to lead directly to Paris, and that was where the Germans figured the Allies intended to go.

As the German ground action became defensive in character, Hitler placed his main reliance on air and naval effort and hoped that Goering and Doenitz would correct the balance of power then unfavorable to the Germans. Until this occurred, the German ground troops were to hold fast and preserve a vital condition—a restricted Allied beachhead—for the offensive action that was eventually to "throw the Anglo-Saxons out of Normandy." [34]

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[30] *"Ia Notitz fuer Chef,"* 1 Jul, *OB WEST KTB, Anlage 415.*

[31] *Taetigkeitsberichte des Chefs des Heerespersonalamtes,* 1 Jul; Harrison, *Cross-Channel Attack,* pp. 446–47. *OB WEST KTB,* 3 July, clearly states that Rundstedt requested relief for reasons of health and age. This contrasts with his later denials of ever having requested relief.

[32] *Der Westen* (Schramm); Rommel to Rundstedt, 2400, 30 Jun, *AGp B Ia Operationsbefehle; Pz Gp W KTB, Anlagen,* Annex 33a; Harrison, *Cross-Channel Attack,* p. 445, n.880. Headquarters have been personalized as much as possible in the citations in the interest of brevity.

[33] Liddell Hart, *The Rommel Papers,* pp. 480–81.

[34] *Handakte Chef Abt. Fremde Heere West,* Jun.

Tactical Dispositions

While the higher commands were preoccupied with offensive planning, the tactical units facing the Allies were occupied with the practical necessity of fighting a defensive war.

When the Allies landed in France, the German *Seventh Army* controlled Normandy and Brittany from the Orne River to the Loire. Commanded since September 1939 by Generaloberst Friedrich Dollman, who had led it to victory over the French in 1940, the army had its headquarters in comfortable buildings at le Mans. The long peacetime occupation duty had apparently dulled the headquarters' capacities, for even after the invasion it seemed to carry on business as usual. Subordinate commands complained of its bureaucracy in handling supplies, while higher headquarters sometimes felt a lack of personal initiative among its members.[35]

Doubts as to the efficiency of the *Seventh Army* headquarters had led to discussion of relieving the army of responsibility for the Normandy battlefield and of relegating it to Brittany. The commitment of *Panzer Group West* and the plan to upgrade a corps were attempts to replace the *Seventh Army* command, but because of the destruction of the *Panzer Group West* headquarters and the death of General Marcks, both by Allied bombings, the *Seventh Army* at the end of June still directed combat operations.[36] *(See Map I.)*

By then the task had become exceedingly complicated. From one corps in contact with the Allies at the time of the invasion, the subordinate headquarters in contact and under the *Seventh Army* had increased to six. Initially, the *LXXXIV Corps,* commanded by Marcks, had met the Allies. The *I SS Panzer Corps,* under General der Panzertruppen Josef Dietrich, had moved forward from the OKW reserve to assume on 8 June a portion of the front near Caen. Several days later the *II Parachute Corps,* under General der Fallschirmtruppen Eugen Meindl, had traveled from Brittany to the St. Lô sector. On 13 June the *XLVII Panzer Corps,* commanded by General der Panzertruppen Hans Freiherr von Funck, had come forward from the *Army Group B* reserve to the vicinity of Caumont. In midmonth, General der Infanterie Hans von Obstfelder had moved his *LXXXVI Corps* from the Bay of Biscay to take the front between Caen and the Seine River. The *II SS Panzer Corps,* commanded by Generaloberst Paul Hausser, had arrived in the Caen sector near the end of the month after having been recalled from the Eastern Front.[37]

These seemed too many corps for one army to handle. Consequently, on 28 June the Germans divided the Normandy front into what amounted to two army sectors. On that date *Panzer Group West* took control of the four corps on the right, while *Seventh Army*

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[35] *AGp B KTB,* 12, 13, 28 Jun; Interv by Hodgson with former Generalmajor a.D. Rudolf-Christoph Freiherr von Gersdorff, *Seventh Army* Chief of Staff, Washington, 28 Jul 53, OCMH Files.

[36] *AGp B KTB,* 12 Jun; *OB WEST, Anlage 101,* 12 Jun.

[37] James B. Hodgson, The Germans on the Normandy Front, 1 July 1944, OCMH MS R–49; see also James B. Hodgson, Command and Staff Roster, Western Command, June to September 1944, MS R–24a.

retained control of the two on the left.[38] The boundary lay just west of Caumont and almost corresponded with the boundary that separated the British and American fronts. On 1 July the corps that faced the Allies lined up from east to west in the following order: *LXXXVI, I SS Panzer, II SS Panzer, XLVII Panzer, II Parachute,* and *LXXXIV.*

Each of the two sectors facing the Allies at the beginning of July had about 35,000 combat troops in the line, but there was a great difference in tactical strength because of armament.[39] *Panzer Group West,* opposite the British, had approximately 250 medium and 150 heavy serviceable tanks, the latter including quite a few Tigers and King Tigers.[40] Opposite the Americans the *Seventh Army,* in contrast, had only 50 mediums and 26 heavy Panthers.[41] Of antiaircraft artillery in Normandy, *Panzer Group West* controlled the deadly dual-purpose guns of the *III Flak Corps* and had at least three times the quantity of the other antiaircraft weapons possessed by the *Seventh Army.* It had all three rocket projector brigades available in the west—the *Nebelwerfer,* which fired the "screaming meemies." It also had the preponderance of artillery.[42]

The imbalance of strength evolved from the nature of the battlefield terrain. In the western sector, where the Americans operated, the hedgerowed lowlands inhibited massed armor action and were ideal for defense. In the eastern sector, facing the British, the terrain was favorable for armored maneuver. Having hoped to launch a major counterattack in June, the Germans had concentrated the bulk of their offensive power there. At the end of the month, when the Germans were passing from an offensive to a defensive concept in Normandy, the presence of stronger forces on the eastern sector seemed fortuitous to them since Caen blocked the route to Paris.[43]

Hitler expected the Allies to make the capture of Paris their principal objective. He figured that the British Second Army would carry the main weight of the attack, while the U.S. First Army would protect the open flank. In this belief, he anticipated that the Allies would try to gain control of the middle reaches of the Orne River as a line of departure. From there he expected British forces totaling twenty or twenty-two divisions to strike toward Paris and to seek to meet and defeat the German Army in open battle west of the Seine.[44]

In order to forestall the anticipated action, the Germans planned to withdraw the armored divisions–all of which were under *Panzer Group West*—from front-line commitment and replace them

[38] *Seventh Army* exercised operational control over *Panzer Group West* until 1 July, when *Panzer Group West* came directly under *OB WEST.* Until 5 July *Panzer Group West* depended on the *Seventh Army* for supply; on 6 August *Panzer Group West* became the *Fifth Panzer Army.*

[39] See detailed estimated totals in Hodgson, R–49.

[40] For the characteristics of the German tanks, see below, Chapter III.

[41] *OKH Generalinspekteur der Panzertruppen Zustandsberichte, SS-Verbaende, XII.43–VII.44.*

[42] Ltr, I6/Stoart/Ia #3748/44, 21 Jun, *AGp B Ia Opns. Befehle;* MS # B–597 (Pickert); see Hodgson, R–24.

[43] *OB WEST KTB,* 25 and 26 Jun, and *Anlagen 315* and *340.*

[44] Estimate of Allied Capabilities and Intentions, Sitrep for 30 Jun, dated 1 Jul, *OKW/WFSt, Lageberichte, 1–7.VII.44;* Hitler Ltr of Instr, 8 Jul, quoted in full in *OB WEST* Ltr of Instr, 8 Jul, *AGp B Fuehrerbefehle; OB WEST, a Study in Command,* I, 38.

with infantry. On 1 July some 35,000 combat infantrymen were moving toward the front to make this substitution. When the infantrymen eventually supplanted the armor in defensive positions during the month of July, *Army Group B* hoped to have two army sectors nearly equally manned. Nine armored divisions, most relieved by the infantry, would be in immediate reserve.[45]

To obtain this hoped-for disposition, the Germans had reinforced the battle area in Normandy by virtually depleting by 1 July their reserves in the west. The *First Parachute Army,* under OKL control, was only a small headquarters theoretically performing an infantry training mission in the interior of France and could, in extreme emergency, be counted as a reserve force. OKW controlled only one parachute regiment; *OB WEST* had no units in reserve. *Army Group B* had an armored division and an armored regiment still uncommitted. The *Seventh Army* had not yet committed one SS panzer division and one parachute division. *Panzer Group West* had nothing in reserve.[46]

To get troops to the battlefield in Normandy, the *Seventh Army* had stripped its forces in Brittany of four divisions and two regiments, and a fifth division was to come forward early in July.[47] The commander of the Netherlands forces had furnished one division. *Army Group G* had contributed from its relatively meager forces in southern France six divisions—four infantry, one panzer grenadier, and one armored—all under orders or marching toward Normandy at the end of June.

Only the *Fifteenth Army* remained untouched. The few divisions it had sent to Normandy had been replaced by units brought from Norway and Denmark. At the beginning of July the *Fifteenth Army,* deployed between the Seine and the Schelde, still had seven divisions under direct control and directed four subordinate corps that controlled eleven additional divisions.

The Germans had refused to divert this strong force into Normandy because they expected a second Allied invasion of the Continent in that area. German estimates throughout June had considered an Allied invasion of the Pas-de-Calais—the *Kanalkueste*—a strong possibility.[48] They were convinced that launching sites of a new weapon—the V–1—on the coast of northern France and Belgium constituted a challenge the Allies could not ignore. The Pas-de-Calais was the section of continental Europe nearest to England, and an Allied assault there could be supplied most easily and supported by air without interruption. The fact that this Channel coast area also offered the shortest route to the Rhine and the Ruhr was not ignored.[49]

[45] See James B. Hodgson, "Counting Combat Noses," *Combat Forces Journal* (September, 1954), pp. 45–46, for a definition and explanation of German combat effectives.

[46] Hodgson, R–24, Order of Battle, 6 Jun and 3 Jul, Apps. D and F; MS # P–154.

[47] James B. Hodgson, German Troops Withdrawn from Brittany, 6 June to 15 July 1944, OCMH MS R–34.

[48] The term Pas-de-Calais is here and hereafter used in the loose sense as designating the coast line between the Somme River and Gravelines (near Dunkerque). See Harrison, *Cross-Channel Attack,* p. 450.

[49] Hitler Ltr of Instr, 8 Jul, cited n. 44; *OB WEST, a Study in Command,* I 37; JIC (44) 276 (O) (Final) and JIC (44) 287 (O) (Final), German Appreciation of Allied Intentions in the West, 26 Jun and 3 Jul, Pogue Files. For the V–1, see below, p. 34.