

available at Avranches during the first week in August.<sup>4</sup> (*Map IX*)

Except at Avranches, the situation along the front was far from desperate. Eberbach's *Panzer Group West*, which was to change its name on 5 August to the *Fifth Panzer Army*, was actively engaged only in one sector. The *LXXXVI Corps*, the *I SS Panzer Corps*, and the *LXXIV Corps* controlled quiet zones, as did the *LVIII Panzer Corps* headquarters, recently brought up from southern France. Only the *II SS Panzer Corps* was fighting hard by 2 August, having committed all three of its divisions against the British attack launched on 30 July south of Caumont toward the town of Vire.

Hausser's *Seventh Army* front, on the other hand, was hard pressed. In a narrow sector just east of the Vire River, the *II Parachute Corps* had only the *3d Parachute Division* to defend the town of Vire. West of the Vire River to the Forêt de St. Sever, the *XLVII Panzer Corps* controlled the *2d Panzer Division* (which had absorbed the *352d Division*) and the *2d SS Panzer Division* (which had absorbed the remnants of *Panzer Lehr* and the *17th SS Panzer Grenadiers*). On the left, *LXXXIV Corps* directed the *353d Division* and the *116th Panzer Division* on a front from the St. Sever forest to the Sée River. Provisional units, formed from remnants and stragglers (including the *5th Parachute Division*) and operating under the staff of the *275th Division*, covered the gap south of the Sée River and east of

<sup>4</sup> Telecons, Kluge and Speidel, 1025, 1 Aug, Gersdorff and Helmdach, 1055, 1 Aug, Tempelhoff and Zimmerman, 1230, 1 Aug, AGp B KTB; Tempelhoff Telecon, 1220, 1 Aug, AGp B KTB; OB WEST KTB, 1 Aug.

Avranches, and the weak *91st Infantry Division* was at Rennes.<sup>5</sup>

Since the *Seventh Army* (or any other outside ground headquarters) could not exercise effective command of the *XXV Corps* in Brittany, Kluge placed the corps directly under *Army Group B* as a matter of administration. Writing off the *XXV Corps* in this manner in accordance with Hitler's orders emphasized the floating nature of the Normandy left flank. The weak forces at Rennes were obviously unable to offer sustained resistance. A large opening between the Sée and Loire Rivers invited American exploitation eastward toward the Paris-Orléans gap.<sup>6</sup> To cover the gap thus exposed, Kluge on 2 August ordered the *First Army* to extend its control northward from the Biscay coast of France to the Loire River, take command of the forces along the Loire, and hold bridgeheads on the north bank at the crossing sites between Nantes and Orléans. On the same day Kluge also ordered the *LXXXI Corps* headquarters to hurry south from the coastal sector between the Seine and the Somme Rivers to take control of the arriving *708th Infantry* and *9th Panzer Divisions* on a refused *Seventh Army* left flank in the Domfront-Alençon sector.<sup>7</sup> With these measures taken, Kluge turned his atten-

<sup>5</sup> Situation Maps, 3 and 4 Aug, *LXXXI Corps Anlagen zum KTB, 1. Teil (Karten)*, 2.-24.VIII.44 (CRS 61 659/9); MS # B-741 (Ziegelmann); MS # A-894 (Gersdorff); MS # B-445 (Krueger); MS # B-179 (Hausser); AGp B KTB, 1 Aug; Hodgson, R-54 and R-58.

<sup>6</sup> A corridor devoid of major natural obstacles, bounded by the Seine and the Loire Rivers.

<sup>7</sup> MS # B-732 (Hold); MS # B-807 (Kuntzen); Msg, *Seventh Army* to *LXXXI Corps*, 3 Aug, *LXXXI Corps Befehle H Gr u. Armee*; Telecon, Gersdorff and Wiese, 0945, 4 Aug, *LXXXI Corps KTB*.

tion to regaining Avranches as the new anchor point of the defensive line in Normandy.

If Avranches were to be regained, a counterattack had to be launched immediately. Where to get the troops for it was the problem, and Hitler provided the solution. On 2 August, in ordering a strong armored counterattack, Hitler authorized a slight withdrawal to a shorter line (Thury-Harcourt through the town of Vire to the western edge of the Forêt de St. Sever). A shortened front and the arrival of new units would give Kluge the means with which to counterattack to Avranches.<sup>8</sup>

Specifically, Hitler first thought of disengaging the *II SS Panzer Corps* (the *9th SS*, the *10th SS*, and the *21st Panzer Divisions*) for the counterattack, but Kluge felt this impossible because of the British pressure south of Caumont. Kluge recommended that the *XLVII Panzer Corps*, which was nearer the critical sector, make the effort with the *2d* and *2d SS Panzer Divisions* reinforced at first by the *LXXXIV Corps' 116th Panzer Division* and later by the incoming *9th Panzer Division* (after the latter moved from Alençon to Sourdeval near Mortain). Since there was some question whether the *9th* would arrive in Alençon in time to participate, Kluge suggested that additional armor be secured by pulling the *1st SS* or the *12th SS Panzer Division* out of the Caen sector where the British appeared to have become quiet, a risk that Eberbach had agreed to accept. Jodl approved Kluge's proposals.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>8</sup> *Der Westen* (Schramm), p. 79; *OB WEST KTB*, entry 2330, 2 Aug, and *Anlage 1050*; Telecon, Kluge and Buttlar-Brandenfels, 1035, 3 Aug, *AGp B KTB*.

<sup>9</sup> Telecons, Kluge and Buttlar-Brandenfels, 1035,

This plan accepted, Kluge directed Hausser to launch an attack with the *XLVII Panzer Corps*, using the *2d SS*, the *2d*, and the *116th Panzer Divisions* in an initial effort and the *1st SS Panzer Division* as an exploiting force. The divisions were to be relieved from the line by 6 August through withdrawal to a shorter front.<sup>10</sup>

While the *LXXIV* and *II SS Panzer Corps* in the *Panzer Group West* sector prepared to withdraw during the night of 3 August in order to disengage the *1st SS Panzer Division*, Hausser planned to disengage the other three divisions from his *Seventh Army* front by executing a three-phase withdrawal. The *2d*, *2d SS*, and *116th Panzer Divisions* were to be pulled out of the line in that order on three successive nights starting 3 August and assembled in the area east of Mortain by 6 August. To make this possible, the *II Parachute Corps* was to extend its responsibility to the west to take control of a regiment of the *353d Division*, and the *LXXXIV Corps* was to integrate the arriving *363d* and *84th Divisions* into its front. The *XLVII Panzer Corps*, which was to direct the attack, received the *275th* as left flank cover. With three armored divisions moving abreast in an initial assault and a fourth ready to exploit initial success, the *XLVII Panzer Corps* commander, Funck, was to attack after dark on 6 August without artillery preparation.

<sup>10</sup> Aug, Kluge and Eberbach, 1135, 3 Aug, and Kluge and Jodl, 1210, 3 Aug, *AGp B KTB*.

<sup>10</sup> Telecon, Kluge and Hausser, 1615, 3 Aug, *AGp B KTB*; Kluge to Jodl, 1745, 3 Aug, *OB WEST KTB*, and *Anlage 1068*; *AGp B Operationsbefehle*, 3 Aug.



GENERAL HAISLIP

His objective was to reach the Cotentin west coast and secure Avranches.<sup>11</sup>

#### *Commitment of a Corps*

While the Germans thus made their decision and laid their plans, the Americans, who were exploiting the Avranches gap, were also coming to a decision that was to alter the OVERLORD plan. The first move in the new direction of what was to be a profound change lay in the circumstances of the commitment of the XV Corps.

Commanded by Maj. Gen. Wade H. Haislip, a West Pointer who had fought in France during World War I and had

recently been the Assistant Chief of Staff, G-1, on the War Department General Staff, the XV Corps headquarters had arrived on the Continent near the middle of July as a Third Army component. Because the single mission accorded the Third Army in early planning was securing Brittany and its ports, and because XV Corps was to become operational immediately upon commitment of the Third Army, it was expected that XV Corps would share the Brittany mission with VIII Corps. Yet the situation created by COBRA raised doubt as to the need of two corps in Brittany; thus the exact role of the XV Corps remained undefined except for projected commitment near Avranches.<sup>12</sup>

There was even doubt about the divisions the corps would control. Though the 4th Armored Division had been tentatively assigned to XV Corps, it was well employed as part of VIII Corps. To give XV Corps an armored force, Patton promised that if the 4th could not be made available, the recently arrived and assembled 5th Armored Division would be assigned. Because the 35th and 5th Infantry Divisions, also slated to come under the XV Corps, were in the V Corps sector, far from Avranches, it seemed more convenient to use the 83d and 90th Divisions, which had been pinched out near Périers. Trying to be ready for any eventuality, General Haislip alerted the 83d and 90th Division commanders to their possible assignment to the corps while at the same time keeping a close check on

<sup>11</sup> Msg, *Seventh Army to LXXXI Corps*, 3 Aug, *LXXXI Corps KTB, Anlagen, Befehle Heeres Gruppe, Armee, usw.*, containing text of Hausser's order; Telecon, Kluge and Gersdorff, 1615, 3 Aug, *AGp B KTB; Der Westen* (Schramm); *OB WEST KTB*, 4 Aug.

<sup>12</sup> TUSA Outline Plan, Opn OVERLORD, and Annex 1, Maps 4 and 5, TUSA AAR; 12th AGp Ltr of Instrs 1, 29 Jul; XV Corps Memo, Conf at the Office of the Asst CofS, G-3, TUSA, 281000 Jul 44, 29 Jul, XV Corps CofS's Jnl.

the 4th Armored "so that intelligent orders for it to side-slip into [the] zone of XV Corps" could be issued promptly. On 1 August Haislip learned that he was to control the 5th Armored, 83d, and 90th Divisions, but this too was to be changed.<sup>13</sup>

Where the XV Corps was to be employed was also somewhat a matter of conjecture. Early plans had projected a XV Corps advance along the north shore of Brittany, but at the end of July a zone on the left of VIII Corps seemed more probable. Since the immediate Third Army objective was the Rennes-Fougères area, it was reasonable to expect the XV Corps to be directed on Fougères as a preliminary for a subsequent advance to the southwest toward Quiberon. Early on 1 August, General Haislip learned that "the projected operation of the Corps toward the southwest had been cancelled, and that [a] new operation would be [started] towards the southeast."<sup>14</sup>

The reason for the change lay in the constriction and vulnerability of the Avranches bottleneck. To prevent German interference with American troop passage, a protective barrier was necessary. To ameliorate traffic congestion, a wider corridor was desirable. To attain these ends became the first combat mission of XV Corps, and to achieve



GENERAL EDDY

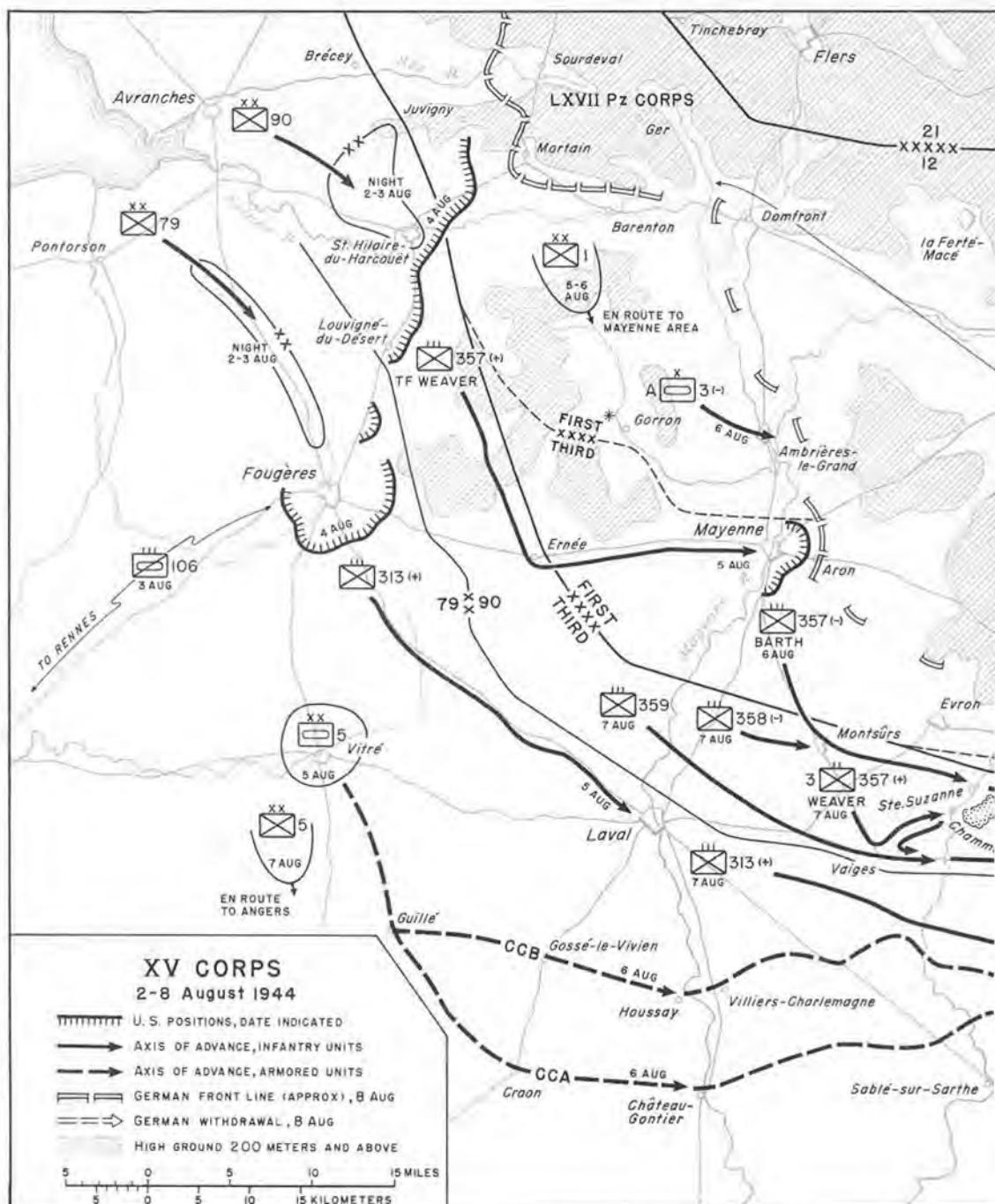
it the corps was to enter the gap between the diverging VIII and VII Corps. On 1 August the VIII Corps left flank extended almost to Rennes, while the VII Corps right flank reached for Brécey and beyond. Although the distance between Rennes and Brécey provided more than adequate room for the new corps, the few miles between Avranches and Brécey presented a problem. The approach march in particular was bound to be difficult, for units of XV Corps would have to pass through the already congested rear areas of the two adjacent corps.<sup>15</sup>

Although General Haislip wanted to move his armored component to the fore immediately in order to exploit German disorganization, traffic congestion was so bad that after two days the 5th Armored Division was still north of the Sée River.

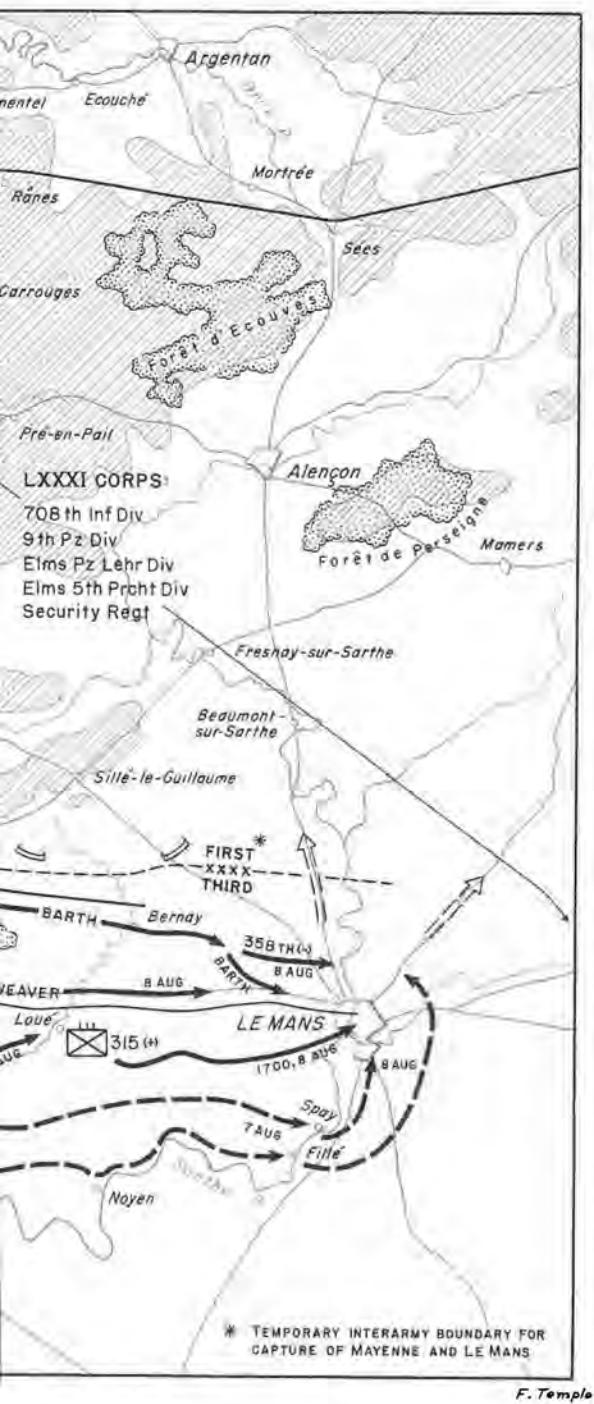
<sup>13</sup> XV Corps Memos, Conf at G-3 Office, Hq Third U.S. Army, 281600 Jul, 29 Jul, and Conf at CP VIII Corps, 282000 Jul 44, 29 Jul, both in XV Corps CofS's Jnl; Telecon, Allan and Borders, 30 Jul, and Memo, Haislip to Col Pearson Menoher, 31 Jul, both in XV Corps G-3 Jnl; XV Corps AAR, Aug 44.

<sup>14</sup> Memo, Goldstein for Menoher, 1 Aug; XV Corps Warning Order, 1000, 1 Aug. Unless otherwise noted, all sources cited in this section are from the XV Corps G-3 Journal and File.

<sup>15</sup> XV Corps G-3 Memo, 2 Aug.



MAP 12



There, the armor was temporarily halted to conform with new instructions from the army group commander, General Bradley.<sup>16</sup> Fortunately, the 90th Division was able to take over the first corps assignment of moving to Avranches and eastward to take blocking positions between the Sée and the Sélune Rivers.<sup>17</sup> (*Map 12*)

The 90th Division's reputation at the beginning of August was still somewhat blemished. The division's part in the battle of the hedgerows during July had done little to alter the general impression that the 90th was far from being combat effective, and there had been talk of breaking it up to provide replacements for other units.<sup>18</sup> However, under a new commander, Brig. Gen. Raymond S. McLain, the 90th was to have another chance to make good.

General McLain's first mission was to capture St. Hilaire-du-Harcouët, a town on the Sélune River not quite fifteen air miles southeast of Avranches. Possession of a Sélune River bridgehead at St. Hilaire would widen the Avranches corridor and establish an anchor point for blocking positions east of the coastal bottleneck. With St. Hilaire in hand, McLain was to set up a defensive line north to the Sée River to block enemy movement westward between the Sée and the Sélune.<sup>19</sup>

<sup>16</sup> Notes taken at G-3 Mtg, XV Corps CP, 0900, 1 Aug; Telecon, Haislip and Oliver, 2345, 2 Aug; Memo, Col Menoher for Maj Gen Lunsford E. Oliver, 2245, 2 Aug; XV Corps Warning Order, 1800, 2 Aug.

<sup>17</sup> goth Div Msg. 1 Aug; Memo, Menoher for VIII Corps, 1 Aug.

<sup>18</sup> Ltr, Lt Gen Raymond S. McLain (Ret.) to Mr. John B. Spore, ed., *Army Combat Forces Journal*, 16 Mar 54, author's extract in OCMH Files.

<sup>16</sup> 90th Div FO 17, 1 Aug, and AAR, Aug.

A task force under the command of Lt. Col. George B. Randolph was to screen the movement of a larger force under Lt. Col. Christian E. Clarke, Jr., that was to spearhead the division advance.<sup>20</sup> The leading units began to move an hour before midnight, 1 August. Although traffic was heavy and the troops had a "tough time" moving during darkness, Task Force Randolph swept aside a small number of enemy rear guards and on the morning of 2 August reached St. Hilaire. The main bridge was still intact. When Task Force Clarke arrived, the artillery took defiladed positions, other support units built up a base of fire, and an infantry skirmish line followed by light tanks charged across several hundred yards of open ground and crossed the bridge in the face of enemy shelling. The troops quickly eliminated the half-hearted resistance in the town. So rapid and aggressive had the assault been that casualties were few. With St. Hilaire in hand, General McLain brought the remainder of the 90th Division forward to a line north of the town in order to establish contact with the VII Corps at Juvigny, thus erecting a barrier against German attack from the east.<sup>21</sup> The performance of the division at St. Hilaire was far different from that in the Cotentin and augured well.

<sup>20</sup> Task Force Randolph consisted of the 90th Reconnaissance Troop and a company of light tanks of the 712th Tank Battalion. Task Force Clarke consisted of the 3d Battalion, 358th Infantry (motorized), the 344th Field Artillery Battalion (105-mm. howitzers), a platoon of the 315th Engineer Combat Battalion, a company of the 607th Tank Destroyer Battalion, and a signal detachment.

<sup>21</sup> Telecon, Gaffey and Menoher, 0845, 2 Aug; 90th Div AAR, Aug, FO 18, 2330, 2 Aug, and Intel Summary, 2 Aug.

As the 90th Division consolidated in the area east of Avranches, General McLain received an order from General Haislip to extend his defensive line seven miles from St. Hilaire south toward Fougères to the village of Louvigné-du-Désert. In compliance, Task Forces Randolph and Clarke occupied Louvigné shortly after midnight, 2 August.<sup>22</sup> By this advance, the XV Corps adequately covered the VII Corps right flank.

Though the VII Corps right flank was thus protected by the advance of the XV Corps, the VIII Corps—then making the main American effort—had its left flank open between Louvigné and Rennes, a 35-mile gap covered only by patrols of the 106th Cavalry Group.<sup>23</sup> To remedy the situation, General Patton, just before noon on 2 August, ordered General Haislip to move the 5th Armored Division south to Fougères, the hub of an important road network. To Haislip, Patton's order not only pertained to flank protection for the VIII Corps but also indicated that XV Corps was about to embark on a campaign of exploitation.<sup>24</sup>

As events developed, Haislip was in for disappointment. About the same time that Patton decided to cover the exposed VIII Corps flank, General Bradley, the army group commander, was visiting General Middleton's command post. Also concerned about the corps flank, Bradley and Middleton decided to send a strong force to Fougères at once.

<sup>22</sup> 90th Div Msg (Sitrep), 3 Aug.

<sup>23</sup> 106th Cav Gp Operational Map (3 Aug), VIII Corps G-3 Jnl and File.

<sup>24</sup> Ltr, Gaffey to Haislip, 2 Aug; XV Corps AAR, Aug, Warning Order, 1330, 2 Aug, and Outline Narrative, 1-14 Aug.

The only unit immediately available for this mission was the 79th Division, whose leading regiment was already at Pontorson on a projected move to follow the 6th Armored Division westward to Brest. Reversing the direction of the 79th Division "pursuant to instructions of army group commander," Middleton ordered occupation of Fougères before dark, 2 August, and establishment of contact with the 90th Division at Louvigné-du-Désert.<sup>25</sup> It was this set of instructions from General Bradley that prompted the halt of the 5th Armored Division north of the Sée River.<sup>26</sup>

Patton had acted simultaneously with Bradley to close the gap, the difference being the choice of the unit. Sending the 79th instead of the 5th Armored brought quicker action at Fougères and lessened traffic congestion around Avranches, but it also temporarily brought some complications to both the VIII and the XV Corps. The 79th Division replaced the 83d on the corps troop list, and the immediate result was some confusion: the XV Corps headquarters had "no wire to either division—90th Inf Div has no wire to anybody—79th Inf Div seems to have wire (only) to VII Corps"; and the 83d Division for a short time was simultaneously attached to two corps—VIII and XV—that were going in opposite directions.<sup>27</sup> Yet the shift was made with relative ease, primarily because uniformity of training and of staff pro-

cedures throughout the U.S. Army gave units flexibility. Throughout the campaign a brief telephone call was enough to set into motion an apparently complicated change.

To secure Fougères, reconnaissance troops of the 79th Division moved on the heels of a 106th Cavalry Group patrol into the town. The division occupied Fougères in force on the morning of 3 August and established contact with the 90th Division on the north.<sup>28</sup> As the 106th Cavalry Group (assigned to the XV Corps) continued to screen the area between Fougères and Rennes, apprehension over the VIII Corps left flank vanished.<sup>29</sup> The VIII Corps drove westward into Brittany, but the XV Corps, in contrast with earlier OVERLORD plans, faced to the southeast.

The orientation of XV Corps to the southeast reflected the reaction of the American high command to the changed situation brought about by the breakout. The 90th Division on the left and the 79th on the right held a defensive line from Juvigny to Fougères, facing away from Brittany, while the 5th Armored Division prepared to move south through Avranches toward the corps right flank.<sup>30</sup> In a sense, it was a fortuitous deployment that was to prove fortunate. For as the corps reached these positions, thinking on the higher echelons of command crystallized. The result altered a basic concept of the OVERLORD planning.

<sup>25</sup> VIII Corps Msg, 2 Aug, VIII Corps G-3 Jnl and File; VIII Corps FO 10, 2 Aug, and Sitrep 95, 2 Aug; XV Corps G-3 Notes, 2 Aug.

<sup>26</sup> TUSA Msgs, 2 Aug, XV and VIII Corps G-3 Jnls and Files.

<sup>27</sup> XV Corps G-3 Sec Memo and Notes of Mtg at G-3 Sec, 031400 Aug, 3 Aug; 83d Div G-2, G-3 Jnl and File, 2-3 Aug.

<sup>28</sup> 79th Div AAR, Aug, and Tel Msg, 1030, 3 Aug, VIII Corps G-3 Jnl and File; Wyche Diary.

<sup>29</sup> TUSA Msg, 1200, 3 Aug, and VIII Corps Msg, 2105, 4 Aug, VIII Corps G-3 Jnl and File; XV Corps G-3 Per Rpt 2 and Memo, 3 Aug.

<sup>30</sup> XV Corps G-3 Per Rpt 2, 3 Aug, and Plan of XV Corps Defense Between Fougères and La Sée River, 4 Aug.

*OVERLORD Modified*

In the midst of the fast-moving post-COBRA period, the utter disorganization of forces on the German left flank contrasted sharply with unexpected firmness in other parts of the German line. To exploit the collapse on the German left and to deal with continuing tenacity elsewhere, the Allied command seized upon the southeastern orientation of the XV Corps.

In the post-COBRA exploitation during the last days of July, when General Bradley had directed XIX Corps to advance along an axis projected through Tessy, Vire, and Domfront to Mayenne, Bradley thought the XV Corps might advance toward the upper reaches of the Sélune River, pinch out the VII Corps at Mortain, and meet the XIX Corps at Mayenne.<sup>31</sup> Unfortunately, XIX Corps had not gotten much beyond Tessy by 3 August. In contrast, XV Corps had met no "cohesive enemy front" in moving to the St. Hilaire-au-Harcouët-Fougères-Rennes line, and the 79th Division reported no enemy contact at all at Fougères.<sup>32</sup> To exploit this contrasting situation was tempting.

Preinvasion OVERLORD and NEPTUNE planners had expected the early Allied effort to be directed toward Brittany unless the Germans had decided to withdraw from France or were at the point of collapse, and actual operations during June and July had conformed to this concept. Since the Germans appeared on the verge of disintegration at the beginning of August, the Allies began to

consider the bolder choice offered by the planners: an immediate eastward drive toward the principal Seine ports of Le Havre and Rouen.<sup>33</sup>

The NEPTUNE planners had visualized the Allied right in Normandy making a wide sweep south of the *bocage* country, and as early as 10 July General Montgomery had suggested a maneuver of this kind eastward toward the successive lines Laval-Mayenne and le Mans-Alençon. Several days before COBRA and again several days after COBRA, Montgomery had reiterated this concept: he wanted the First U.S. Army to wheel eastward while the Third Army was occupied with operations in Brittany.<sup>34</sup>

During the latter days of July, when 21 Army Group planners considered in detail the bountiful advantages that might accrue from capture of Avranches, they were impressed by three opportunities that seemed immediately and simultaneously feasible: seize the Breton ports, destroy the German *Seventh Army* west of the Seine River, and cross the Seine before the enemy could organize the water line for defense. Thus assuming that the ground forces were about to fulfill the objectives of the OVERLORD plan, the Allies began to think seriously of post-OVERLORD operations directed toward the heart of Germany.

Occupying the OVERLORD lodgment area had always implied possession of

<sup>31</sup> COSSAC (43) 28, Opn OVERLORD, 15 Jul 43, SHAEF File GCT 370-42/Ops 'A,' Opn OVERLORD; SHAEF/17100/35/Ops, NEPTUNE, Summary of Jt Ops Plan, Phase II, 25 Apr 44; SHAEF/17100/35/Ops, NEPTUNE, Summary of Revised Jt Ops Plan—U.S. Forces for Phase II of Opn OVERLORD, 20 May 44, EUCOM Files, Box 3.

<sup>32</sup> 21 AGp, Dir M-510, 10 Jul, Ltr, M-512, Montgomery to Bradley, Dempsey, Patton, and Crerar, 21 Jul, and Dir, M-515, 27 Jul.

<sup>31</sup> XV Corps AAR, Aug, and Warning Order, 1 Aug.

<sup>32</sup> XV Corps G-2 Per Rpt 1, 2200, 3 Aug; 79th Div G-3 Per Rpt 37, 4 Aug.

the Breton ports, one of the most vital strategic objectives of the OVERLORD plan, before winter weather precluded further use of the invasion beaches. Now the planners were confident that a small force, one American corps of perhaps an armored division and three infantry divisions, "might take about a month to complete the conquest." The remainder of the Allied forces could turn to the other, more profitable opportunities: "round up" the Germans west of the Seine, drive them against the river, destroy them within the limits of the lodgment area, and, by seeking such distant objectives as Paris and Orléans, prepare to cross the Seine River.<sup>35</sup>

These speculations slighted a fundamental factor that had governed OVERLORD planning until that time: the belief that the Allies needed the Breton ports before they could move outside the confines of the lodgment area. Montgomery's planners had weighed the logistical merits of gaining Brittany against the tactical opportunities created by COBRA and by arguing for the latter presented a radically different conclusion. Until that moment the importance of the Breton ports could hardly have been exaggerated, for the very success of OVERLORD had seemed predicated on organizing Brittany as the principal American base of operations.<sup>36</sup>

General Eisenhower reflected the changing attitude toward the question of Brittany on 2 August. He believed that "within the next two or three days"

Bradley would "so manhandle the western flank of the enemy's forces" that the Allies would create "virtually an open [enemy] flank," and he predicted that the Allies would then be able to exercise almost complete freedom in selecting the next move. He would then "consider it unnecessary to detach any large forces for the conquest of Brittany," and would instead "devote the greater bulk of the forces to the task of completing the destruction of the German Army, at least that portion west of the Orne, and exploiting beyond that as far as [possible]." He did not mean to write off the need for the Breton ports, but securing both objectives simultaneously, he believed, would now be practical.<sup>37</sup>

On the same day, 2 August, General Bradley was still thinking along the lines of the original OVERLORD plan. Patton's forces then entering Brittany were still executing the American main effort, and the entire Third Army was eventually to be committed there to secure the ports. The St. Hilaire-du-Harcouët-Fougères-Rennes line, in the process of being established by the XV Corps, was no more than a shield to prevent interference with the Third Army conquest of the Brittany peninsula.<sup>38</sup> On the following day, 3 August, Bradley changed the entire course of the campaign by announcing that Patton was to clear Brittany with "a minimum of forces"; the primary American mission was to go to the forces in Normandy who were to drive eastward and expand the continental lodgment area.<sup>39</sup> Brittany had

<sup>35</sup> SHAEF G-3 Div, *Précis of 21 AGp's Appreciation and Plan* (21AGp/20748/G (Plans)), dated 29 Jul, 4 Aug, SHAEF File 18008, Post-OVERLORD Plng, G-3 Plans; see 21 AGp Dir, M-515, 27 Jul.

<sup>36</sup> Ruppenthal, *Logistical Support*, I, 467.

<sup>37</sup> Eisenhower to Marshall, S-56667, 2 Aug, Pogue Files.

<sup>38</sup> 12th AGp Dir for Current Ops, 2 Aug.

<sup>39</sup> 12th AGp Ltr of Instrs 2, 3 Aug.