

330, the dominating terrain near the base, then contented himself with patrolling since he knew he could expect no assistance from the forces in the main battle at Brest.<sup>52</sup>

When the 8th Division, pinched out before Brest, arrived on Crozon in mid-September, General Stroh (supported by the attachment of Task Force A and the 2d Ranger Battalion) directed an attack that overran a defensive line maintained by the 343d Division. The German division commander, Rauch, surrendered on 17 September, a day before the garrison in the city of Brest capitulated. The final action on Crozon occurred on 19 September when troops scaled the wall across the throat of the Quélern and pushed to the Pointe des Espagnols. Only a group of diehards about Ramcke remained. That Ramcke too was ready to surrender was obvious when he sent a message asking Brig. Gen. Charles D. W. Canham, the 8th Division's assistant commander, for his credentials. Canham replied that his troops served to identify him. Claiming later to have fired the last shell from his remaining 75-mm. assault gun, Ramcke surrendered during the afternoon of 19 September.<sup>53</sup>

The action on Crozon had been far from easy. In taking 7,638 prisoners on the peninsula, for example, the 8th Division between 15 and 19 September incurred casualties of 72 killed and 415 wounded.

The final action occurred on 20 September when Task Force A drove down to Douarnenez to demand the surrender of an isolated group of three hundred Germans. Though they refused at first

<sup>52</sup> TF A Opns, 1 Aug-22 Sep.

<sup>53</sup> Ramcke, *Fallschirmjaeger, Damals und Danach*, p. 67; Ninth U.S. Army Opns, Brest-Crozon.

to surrender, a few artillery rounds and the threatening presence of a single fighter-bomber overhead proved sufficient persuasion.

The operations against Brest had been a series of actions against approximately seventy-five strongpoints. The heavy-walled forts of massive stonework were for the most part pivots of resistance rather than bastions of a line, their real importance coming from their dominating sites. The Americans had generally advanced after probing for weak spots, moving against open flanks, turning those flanks, and finally reducing outer works by fire before destroying the individual strongpoints at close range. Local actions, often seemingly unrelated—"At one time we had three separate wars going in the division," General Gerhardt later stated—produced an over-all pressure that was hammered home by increasing amounts of artillery fire and by air attacks. The actual conquest of the garrison had come as the result of action by the combined arms—heavy artillery fire, infantry assault, engineer blasting operations, and the use of flame throwers. Bunkers and pillboxes of reinforced concrete, sometimes nine feet thick, did not always require close-in action toward the last because in many instances the constant pounding of bombs and shells had prepared the Germans mentally for capitulation.<sup>54</sup>

Air support normally did not directly aid the advance of small units in the same way that close support artillery, mortars,

<sup>54</sup> Marshall and Westover, Kergonant Strong Point; CI 14 (2d Div); 2d Div Ltr of Instrs, 2000, 14 Sep; Interv with Capt Robert E. Garcia, Hosp Intervs, ML-2234; Ltr, Gerhardt to OCMH, 26 Apr 56; 29th Div AAR, Sep.

and machine guns did. The principal function of the planes was to destroy or neutralize strongpoints a thousand yards or more behind the enemy front, though the immediate effect weakened morale among the Germans in close contact. Air also restricted enemy movement, (particularly of reserves), kept gun crews under cover and away from firing positions, and limited hostile observation.<sup>55</sup>

From 25 August through 19 September, the VIII Corps received continuous air support except during periods of inclement weather. Fighter-bombers on alert status alone flew approximately 430 separate missions involving more than 3,200 sorties. Fighter-bombers of the IX and XIX Tactical Air Commands also attacked fifty targets on planned missions between 4 and 7 September. Medium and heavy bombers of the Eighth and Ninth Air Forces and of the Royal Air Force attacked coastal and heavy antiaircraft batteries, forts, block-houses, strongpoints, and defensive installations in the inner ring of the Brest defenses.<sup>56</sup>

Despite the impressive amount of air power employed at Brest, difficulties had ensued because of inadequate communications and because the corps was conducting an independent operation hundreds of miles from the main front. Aircraft had to be diverted to Brest, and good weather on one front did not always signify the same for the other. The

heavy and medium bomber effort had been less effective than expected because the planes were sometimes assigned tasks beyond their capabilities. Yet if certain selected targets proved invulnerable to bombardment and shelling, the effect of tons of explosives dropped from the air and the expenditure of almost 500,000 rounds of artillery had lent authority to the tightening grip around the city.

American casualties totaled 9,831; prisoners numbered 38,000, of which more than 20,000 were combat troops. The 2d Division had advanced approximately eight miles at a cost of 2,314 casualties. It had expended more than 1,750,000 rounds of small arms ammunition, 218,000 rounds of heavy caliber, had requested 97 air missions—fulfilled by 705 fighter-bombers, which dropped 360 tons of bombs. The 29th Division, expending a similar amount of ammunition, had lost 329 killed and 2,317 wounded. Casualties of the 8th Division for the month of September were close to 1,500.<sup>57</sup>

The VIII Corps turned over the captured fortress of Brest and the prisoners to the Brittany Base Section of the Communications Zone on the evening of 19 September, and the combat troops moved into assembly areas to rest, receive winter clothing, and repair armament and transport. Task Force A was soon dissolved. The 29th Division departed on 24 September to rejoin the First Army, and on 26 September the VIII Corps headquarters and the 2d and 8th Divisions began to move by rail and motor to Belgium and Luxembourg for

<sup>55</sup> CI 87 (29th Div), Air Support at Brest; Bradley, *Effect of Air Power*, 128ff.; 12th AGP Immed Rpt 65, Close Air Support of Ground Forces Around Brest, 26 Sep.

<sup>56</sup> Air Chief Marshal Harris suggests (*Bomber Offensive*, p. 214) that without heavy bombers the Allies would have been able to capture Brest (and other fortified ports) only after much more prolonged siege warfare.

<sup>57</sup> VIII Corps G-1 Per Rpt, 19 Sep; CI 16 (2d Div); Ninth U.S. Army Opns, Brest-Crozon; 8th Div AAR, Sep.



DRYDOCK DESTRUCTION AT BREST

commitment in a new zone, still under Ninth Army control.<sup>68</sup>

In an unrelated action occurring at the same time as the capture of Brest, the 83d Division, which was protecting the Third Army south flank, had accepted a mass German surrender at the Loire River. Allied successes in Normandy and on the Mediterranean shores of France had prompted German forces in southern France to withdraw. The German prisoners taken at the Loire were from the rearmost portion of troops that

had been withdrawing from southwest France since mid-August, a group, mostly noncombatant military personnel, under Generalmajor Botho H. Elster, formerly commandant of Biarritz. When the Germans lost contact with a screening force that was to have provided escort to Dijon, they became increasingly harassed by Allied planes and the FFI. By 5 September, Elster's columns stretched virtually unprotected more than thirty miles along the roads generally between Poitiers and Châteauroux. The commander of twenty-four men of the Intelligence and Reconnaissance Platoon, 329th Infantry, 1st Lt. Samuel W. Magill, displayed initiative and daring by taking his unit south of the Loire to make con-

<sup>68</sup> Story of Ninth Army, pp. 53-55. Some heavy equipment was moved by water transport through the English Channel. Edwards, *Operation NEPTUNE*, p. 269.

tact with Elster on 8 September. Two days later Elster surrendered to General Macon, the 83d Division commander. Elster conducted his force—754 officers, 18,850 men, and 10 women, plus 400 civilian automobiles, 500 trucks, and 1,000 horse-drawn wagons—in three columns across the Loire at Orléans, Beaugency, and Mer into hastily constructed prisoner of war enclosures.<sup>59</sup>

### *The Best Laid Plans*

The capture of Brest gave the Allies a totally destroyed city and a thoroughly demolished port. The desolation was appalling. The Germans had wrecked everything that might be of any use to the Americans, Ramcke later boasting that he had done so "in good time."<sup>60</sup> Twisted bridge structures blocked the Penfeld River channel. The wharves, drydocks, cranes along the waterfront, even the breakwaters enclosing the naval basin and the commercial port, had been ruined. Scuttled ships lay in the harbor.

The American operation had also contributed to the destruction. Bombs and shells from air and ground, including white phosphorus and jellied gasoline, had burned and gutted practically every building in the downtown section of Brest as well as in Recouvrance. Demolished houses had tumbled into the streets, filling thoroughfares with rubble. Even after bulldozers cut paths through the piles of brick and masonry, weak-

ened and collapsing walls made passage hazardous. The French inhabitants who had been evacuated before the siege returned to find their city virtually obliterated.<sup>61</sup>

The vast amount of reconstruction and repair necessary to rehabilitate the port led the Allies to confirm a decision already made—that use of Brest was not necessary. The difficult operation at Brest had contrasted bleakly with the triumph of the pursuit, and Allied commanders had been as disappointed by the siege of Brest as they had been elated by the surge toward the Rhine. Interest in the geographically remote ports of Brittany had begun to wane toward the end of August as unabashed Allied optimism raised hopes that the Channel ports, including even Rotterdam and Amsterdam, would soon come within reach.<sup>62</sup>

On 3 September SHAEF planners recommended the abandonment of plans to use the ports of Lorient, Quiberon Bay, St. Nazaire, and Nantes, a recommendation SHAEF accepted four days later. Had the battle of Brest not been in progress, the planners might well have withdrawn their approval of Brest also, a conclusion they finally reached on 14 September, even before capture of the city. Yet only a day before, General Eisenhower had said that since no one could predict with certainty when the Channel ports would be taken and opened, he still felt that he needed Brest to receive newly arriving troops and their organizational equipment that were scheduled to come directly from the

<sup>59</sup> Inside German-Occupied France, September 1944; 329th Inf AAR, Sep; 83d Div AAR, Sep; *Story of Ninth Army*, pp. 47-50.

<sup>60</sup> Ramcke, *Fallschirmjaeger, Damals und Danach*, p. 65.

<sup>61</sup> See Alix de Carbonnières and Antoine Coste, *L'Assaut de Brest* (Brest: P. le Bris, 1951), *passim*.

<sup>62</sup> See Remarks of Lt Col William Wihe, 26 Sep, CI 87 (29th Div).

United States.<sup>63</sup> Thus the continuing idea of taking Brest was like insurance that everyone hoped he would not have to collect.

Whatever the actual value of Brest in retrospect, it appeared with certainty at the end of August that Brest and the other ports were needed to supplement the far from adequate port capacity of Cherbourg and the minor harbors of Normandy. Yet soon afterwards, port plans for Lorient and St. Nazaire were scrapped, and the 15,000-man German force at Lorient and the 12,000-man force at St. Nazaire, together with a small pocket northwest of Bordeaux, were contained until the end of the war.<sup>64</sup>

Since the Breton ports, on which the Allies had counted so heavily, were not put to use, what had been accomplished by the siege of Brest? The immediate result was the elimination of a strong German garrison of aggressive, first-rate soldiers. Containment of the Brest garrison, according to General Bradley, would have required "more troops than we could spare on an inactive front." According to Patton, he and Bradley agreed that Brest was useless, but they felt that "when the American Army had once put its hand to the plow, it should not let go."<sup>65</sup> In any event, comple-

<sup>63</sup> Msg, Eisenhower to Bradley, FWD-14066, 7 Sep, SHAEF File Eisenhower's Ltrs and Dirs; Msg, Eisenhower to Bradley, FWD-14764, 13 Sep, 12th AGP Incoming Cables; see Msg, Eisenhower to CCS, FWD-14376, 9 Sep, SGS SHAEF File 381.

<sup>64</sup> *Story of Ninth Army*, pp. 39-49; MS # B-731 (Fahrmbacher).

<sup>65</sup> Bradley, *Soldier's Story*, p. 367; Patton, *War as I Knew It*, p. 128.

tion of the operation freed VIII Corps for action in the operations directed toward Germany. The charge was later made that the employment of three divisions and valuable transport and supplies at Brest adversely affected pursuit operations, for just at that time troops, vehicles, and supplies were desperately needed on the main Allied front. Yet the resources used at Brest, slender when compared to the total effort, could hardly have altered the pattern of a pursuit that was destined to run a limited course.<sup>66</sup>

The serious Allied problem of port capacity had prompted the Brest operation. The Allied commanders who had initiated the operation had not been able to foretell exactly when and to what extent the Channel ports would alleviate the situation. Thus they looked upon Brest as a port in reserve. The fact that capture of neither the destroyed harbor of Brest nor the Channel ports proved to be an immediate solution did not vitiate their wisdom and vision. For, as it turned out, the problem persisted. Not until November, when Antwerp was opened, was the problem of port capacity finally solved.

If it seemed in retrospect that the commanders erred in starting the siege of Brest, they did so on the side of caution, preferring to be safe rather than sorry. If they displayed any recklessness at all, it was in the pursuit beyond the Seine, where that kind of behavior was understandable.

<sup>66</sup> See Pogue, *Supreme Command*, pp. 259-60, and Ruppenthal, *Logistical Support*, I, 535-36.

## CHAPTER XXXI

# The Drive Beyond the Seine

### *The Framework of the Pursuit*

The implications of the essentially simple decision on 19 August to cross the Seine were far reaching. Once across the Seine, the Allies would be heading toward the Rhine River and Germany. Where they were to make their main effort and how far they were to go occasioned much debate.

The basic directive of the Combined Chiefs of Staff governing Allied operations in western Europe pointed the Allies merely to "the heart of Germany." The Combined Chiefs had very likely chosen such a vague objective in the expectation that changing circumstances would offer the Supreme Commander a variety of goals. The Allied strategic planners perceived Berlin as the most significant political objective, but they were also conscious of its great distance from Europe's western shore. Closer and within striking distance from France was the Ruhr, the heart that pumped industrial lifeblood to the German military forces, the goal selected by SHAEF planners as the most practical for post-OVERLORD operations. An Allied attack on the Ruhr would compel the Germans to commit a considerable number of forces in its defense, thus enabling the Allies to close with and destroy a sizable part of the hostile army.

There were four routes from northern

France to the Ruhr: by way of the flatlands of easily flooded Flanders; via Amiens, Maubeuge, and Liège along the northern edge of the Ardennes; through the hilly woodland of the Ardennes; and, less direct, south of the Ardennes through Metz, the Saar, and Frankfurt. Having eliminated Flanders and the Ardennes on the basis of terrain considerations, the planners recommended that the Allies advance north and south of the Ardennes with mutually supporting forces on a broad front oriented on Liège and on Metz. Initially, they had ruled out this dual concept because of the disadvantages of maintaining forces on two widely separated lines of communication, but they came to believe that success would force the Germans to withdraw in both areas, thus permitting adequate lateral communication.

Of the two recommended axes—northeast from the lower Seine through Liège, and east from the upper Seine through Metz—the planners indicated that the main effort should be made northeastward along the direct route to the Ruhr. Historically the most traveled invasion road between France and Germany, the route offered the most advantages: the best facilities for military traffic, a left flank protected by the sea, the Channel ports of Antwerp and Rotterdam, excellent airfield sites, a combat zone within range of light and medium bombers

based in England, liberation of Belgium and part of the Netherlands, and seizure of the V-weapon launching sites.

The route of a complementary thrust through Metz was less advantageous. More difficult for tank warfare and having fewer airfield sites, it did not lead directly to the Ruhr but to the Saar Basin, which had a much smaller industrial capacity than the Ruhr. Nevertheless, twin drives on a broad front would stretch the enemy and allow the Allies to shift the main weight of their attack if necessary.<sup>1</sup> Applied to the troop dispositions in August, the planners' recommendations meant that the 21 Army Group would strike northeast through Amiens, Maubeuge, and Liège in the main effort; the 12th Army Group would go east toward Metz in a subsidiary thrust.

When General Eisenhower decided on 19 August to cross the Seine, the Allied forces were destroying those enemy units still west of the river. The fact that the bulk of the enemy troops could escape only across the lower Seine emphasized the reasonableness of making the principal Allied effort in the coastal region. Pressing on the heels of the retreating *Fifth Panzer* and *Seventh Armies*, the Allied forces would also unhinge the *Fifteenth Army* from its positions along the Channel coast. To support the

drive, General Eisenhower proposed to reinforce the 21 Army Group with the First Allied Airborne Army (activated on 2 August under the command of Lt. Gen. Lewis H. Brereton) and perhaps also with a "minimum" of U.S. ground units. At the same time that the 21 Army Group thrust northeastward, the 12th Army Group would move eastward into the interior of France in order, among other aims, to sever lines of communication between *Army Group G* in southern France and *Army Group B*.<sup>2</sup>

A day before, on 18 August, General Montgomery had concluded that the 21 and 12th Army Groups should keep together in a solid mass of some forty divisions, a force so strong that it need fear nothing. This steamroller, in Montgomery's estimation, should move northeast from the Seine to clear the Channel coast, the Pas-de-Calais, and west Flanders, and also to secure Antwerp. The initial objectives would be the destruction of German forces on the coast, the establishment of air bases in Belgium, the seizure of the V-weapon sites, and the opening of ports. Montgomery had not yet discussed his conception with Eisenhower, but he did so with Bradley, who, according to Montgomery, seemed impressed with the cogency of Montgomery's thought.<sup>3</sup> Bradley and Patton about this time were talking informally of sending three U.S. corps toward the Rhine near Karlsruhe, Mannheim, and Wiesbaden.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> PS SHAEF (44) 11, Post-NEPTUNE Courses of Action After Capture of Lodgment Area, 3 and 30 May, SGS SHAEF File 381, Post-OVERLORD Plng; SHAEF Memo on V-1 and V-2, 12 Aug, SHAEF File 18008, G-3 Plans; Cole, *Lorraine Campaign*, pp. 8-10; Pogue, *Supreme Command*, pp. 249-50; Ruppenthal, *Logistical Support*, I, 485. An excellent discussion is found in T. Dodson Stamps and Vincent J. Esposito, *A Military History of World War II*, I, *Operations in the European Theaters* (West Point, N.Y.: U.S. Military Academy, Department of Military Art and Engineering, 1953), pp. 432-34.

<sup>2</sup> Ltr, Eisenhower to Montgomery, 12 Aug, SGS SHAEF File 381, Post-OVERLORD Plng.

<sup>3</sup> Telg, Montgomery to CIGS, M-99, 1830, 18 Aug, in Answers by Br Hist Sec to Questions by Pogue, OCMH Files.

<sup>4</sup> Interv by Harrison and Pogue with Bonesteel, 18 Jun 47, Pogue Files. See Pogue, *Supreme Command*, p. 250; Patton, *War As I Knew It*, p. 114; and Bradley, *Soldier's Story*, p. 398.

Montgomery had still not talked with Eisenhower when Bradley informed Montgomery two days later that the Supreme Commander inclined toward the idea of splitting the Allied force, sending half east toward Nancy. Since no firm decision had been reached, Montgomery resolved to try to change the Supreme Commander's mind. Meanwhile, he tentatively alerted the 21 Army Group for movement to the northeast, the 12th Army Group for two possible movements: either a dual thrust northeast toward Brussels and east to the Saar or a concentrated drive to the northeast on the 21 Army Group right flank.<sup>5</sup>

General Eisenhower, although still basically reflecting the planners' recommendations, made an alteration on 22 August. As before, the 21 Army Group (reinforced by the Allied airborne army and other units) was to go northeast from the Seine toward the Ruhr in the main effort north of the Ardennes, and the 12th Army Group was to go eastward in a subsidiary drive. But now, despite a general orientation eastward south of the Ardennes, the 12th Army Group, he thought, might shift its direction of advance from east to northeast toward the coastal region and Belgium and the Netherlands if it became necessary to bolster the main thrust.<sup>6</sup>

After General Montgomery saw the Supreme Commander on 23 August and presented his concept for a concentrated thrust north of the Ardennes, General

Eisenhower modified his plans again.<sup>7</sup> "For a very considerable time," he confided to General Marshall, "I was of the belief that we could carry out the operation to the northeast simultaneously with a thrust east, but later have concluded that due to the tremendous importance of the objectives in the northeast we must first concentrate on that movement."<sup>8</sup>

For his main effort, General Montgomery requested not only reinforcement by the airborne army but also by the First U.S. Army. Despite General Bradley's feeling that a corps would be sufficient and General Eisenhower's belief that Montgomery was being overly cautious, the Supreme Commander acceded. Instead of driving eastward to pass south of the Ardennes, General Hodges was to go northeast from the Seine—north of the Ardennes—in support of the 21 Army Group. General Eisenhower then allocated the bulk of the 12th Army Group stocks of gasoline to Hodges, thereby depriving Patton of adequate supplies for a long strike toward the Saar. Since the more important objectives lay to the northeast—the V-weapon sites, airfields, the Channel ports, and the Ruhr—the subsidiary effort was curtailed. Yet since Patton had about a week's supply of fuel on hand, he would be able to initiate an advance beyond the Seine. "I cannot tell you," Eisenhower wrote Marshall, "how anxious I am to get the forces accumulated for starting the thrust east from Paris. I have no slightest doubt that we can quickly get to the former French-Ger-

<sup>5</sup> Ltr, Montgomery to ACIGS, 20 Aug, in Answers by Br Hist Sec; 21 AGp Gen Operational Situation and Dir, M-519, 20 Aug.

<sup>6</sup> Msg, Eisenhower to Marshall, CPA-90235, 22 Aug, SHAEF G-3 Ops A 322/011.1, Comd and Contl of U.S./Br Forces.

<sup>7</sup> See Montgomery, *Normandy to the Baltic*, p. 192.

<sup>8</sup> Msg, Eisenhower to Marshall, 24 Aug, Pogue Files.

man boundary but there is no point in getting there until we are in a position to do something about it.”<sup>9</sup>

Thus three armies were to drive northeast from the lower Seine—the First Canadian, the Second British, and the First U.S.—in the Allied main effort north of the Ardennes and directly toward the Ruhr. The Third U.S. Army, alone, was to make the subsidiary thrust east from the upper Seine and pass south of the Ardennes. Although the First U.S. Army was to perform a supporting role, it had the most direct and best route to the Ruhr—the Maubeuge-Liège axis. The Second British Army, designated to make the main effort of the principal thrust, and the First Canadian Army on its left, were to move through the water-crossed flatlands of Flanders, passing over the old battlefields of World War I.

Specifically, according to Montgomery's instructions, Crerar's Canadian Army was to clear the Channel coast, including the Pas-de-Calais; Dempsey's British army was to drive into northwest Belgium, west of a boundary from Mantes-Gassicourt generally through Beauvais, Amiens, Lille, and Ghent to the southern bank of the Schelde estuary; Hodges' First Army was to move generally northeast along the Paris-Brussels axis to the Maastricht, Liège, Charleroi, and Namur areas east and south of Brussels. Simultaneously, Bradley would send Patton toward the Rhine River between Koblenz and Mannheim.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*; Ltr, Eisenhower to Montgomery, 24 Aug, SGS SHAEF File 381, Post-OVERLORD Plng, I; Pogue *Supreme Command*, pp. 251-52.

<sup>10</sup> 21 AGp Dir, M-520, 26 Aug, SGS SHAEF File 381, Post-OVERLORD Plng, I; 12th AGp Ltr of Instrs 6, 25 Aug, and Memo, Future Ops, 25 Aug (the latter in ML-205).

Montgomery had drawn the boundary between the army groups along a line from Mantes-Gassicourt to a point just east of Antwerp.<sup>11</sup> The 21 Army Group thus had a zone that ended at the Schelde—the Canadian and British armies at the conclusion of their advance would be facing the estuary. Looking all the way to the Rhine, Bradley suggested that Montgomery curve the boundary northeastward at Tournai to allow the British army to wheel through Antwerp toward the Rhine and the Ruhr, and thereby cover the First Army left flank.<sup>12</sup>

Though very much aware of the Ruhr as the goal, Montgomery had his eyes fixed on the immediate objectives assigned by Eisenhower—capture of the Channel ports, destruction of the *Fifteenth Army*, and seizure of the V-weapon sites. He foresaw that the Canadians would have to drop elements off to deal with the fortified port cities as they moved northward along the coast. He was also uncomfortably aware that British logistical deficiencies dictated a reduction in combat forces for the initial drive east of the Seine. With limited forces, Montgomery had limited his sights. His primary concern was to destroy the *Fifteenth Army*, the last uncommitted German force in France and Belgium, by pinning that army against the Schelde estuary. With this force eliminated, the V-bomb launching sites overrun, and airfields secured, the Allies, it appeared, would face virtually no opposition, and after taking Antwerp could

<sup>11</sup> Montgomery, *Normandy to the Baltic*, map, p. 210.

<sup>12</sup> Ltr, Bradley to Montgomery, 26 Aug, 12th AGp File 371.3, Mil Obj, I; Bradley, *Soldier's Story*, pp. 398ff.

go where they pleased.<sup>13</sup> Since changing the boundary at Tournai would have no effect on these initial goals, and since the change would facilitate an airborne operation near Tournai that was being planned for early September, Montgomery readily acquiesced in Bradley's suggestion.<sup>14</sup>

The objectives disclosed no basic difference between the two men insofar as they judged the future course of the campaign. Both were optimistic, and they accepted the prophesies that were common that the end of the war was "within sight, almost within reach." There was "no clue yet as to the enemy's final intentions," but it seemed that "events may move too fast for him."<sup>15</sup> The Germans were thought to have lost the equivalent of thirty divisions since D Day, and the Allies judged that only four or five divisions of the once-powerful *Fifteenth Army* still remained uncommitted east of the Seine. The forces that had fought in Normandy and that were rapidly retreating east of the river seemed to comprise two weak groups north and south of Paris. "The enemy forces are very stretched and disorganized," Montgomery observed; "they are in no fit condition to stand and fight us."

The time had come to "cripple his power to continue in the war."<sup>16</sup>

The German situation was every bit as bad as the Allies thought. Hitler and Jodl had been concerned with rearward lines of defense since the end of July, and at the beginning of August the military governor of France, Kitzinger, had been charged with responsibility, under OKW, for erecting field fortifications along the Somme, Marne, and Saône Rivers to the Jura Mountains of the Franco-Swiss border. With the Seine River forming a potential outpost line and the terrain around Amiens-Compiègne-Soissons sector forming the center of the Kitzinger line, the Germans hoped to stabilize a withdrawing front far west of Germany.<sup>17</sup>

Unequivocal German withdrawal in the west had begun on 16 August in three separate movements. *Army Group B* comprised the main body, with fourteen battered infantry divisions, nine fresh but incompletely trained divisions along the Channel coast in reserve, the remnants of fourteen divisions released from the Normandy front for rehabilitation, and nine mangled armored divisions providing a sort of cavalry screen. *Army Group G* was withdrawing five divisions of the *Nineteenth Army* northward up the Rhône River valley in a rapid but orderly movement. Its *LXIV Corps*, with two divisions encumbered by noncombatants, was retiring from southwest France through a hostile country infested with FFI guer-

<sup>13</sup> Montgomery, *Normandy to the Baltic*, pp. 196ff; Ltr, Eisenhower to Montgomery, 24 Aug. and 21 AGP Dir, M-520, 26 Aug, SGS SHAEF File 381, Post-OVERLORD Plng, I.

<sup>14</sup> Montgomery, *Normandy to the Baltic*, pp. 200, 208.

<sup>15</sup> Montgomery statement reported in TUSA Briefing of G-3 Liaison Sec and Liaison Officers, 22 Aug, and Second [British] Army Intel Summary 81, 2400, 24 Aug, XV Corps G-3 Jnl and File; SHAEF Weekly Intel Summaries, 23, 24, 26 Aug, SHAEF G-2 File; Pogue, *Supreme Command*, pp. 244-45; Montgomery, *Normandy to the Baltic*, p. 192; First U.S. Army Report of Operations, I, 31.

<sup>16</sup> TUSA G-2 Rpt, 26 Aug; Montgomery, *Normandy to the Baltic*, p. 171; 21 AGP Operational Situation and Dir, M-520, 26 Aug.

<sup>17</sup> *OB WEST, a Study in Command*, p. 155, Bauer, R-20; *OB WEST* Ltr Order 1000, 4 Aug, *OB WEST KTB, Anlage 1098*.