



SUPPLEMENT

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THE ASSAULT PHASE OF THE NORMANDY LANDINGS.

The following Despatch was submitted to the Supreme Commander, Allied Expeditionary Force on the 16th October, 1944, by Admiral Sir Bertram H. Ramsay, K.C.B., M.V.O., Allied Naval Commander-in-Chief, Expeditionary Force.

*Office of Allied Naval Commander-in-Chief,
Expeditionary Force,
London, S.W.1.
16th October, 1944.*

Sir,

I have the honour to forward my report of the opening phase of Operation "Neptune," the period covered being from my appointment as Allied Naval Commander, Expeditionary Force, on 25th October, 1943, to the withdrawal of the Naval Task Force Commanders on 3rd July, 1944. The report is lengthy owing to the need to cover, if only superficially, the very many different aspects of what is acknowledged to be the greatest amphibious operation in history. Because the report is so bulky, I have decided to write this covering letter in a form which will enable those who wish to do so to obtain a bird's eye view of the operation as a whole, including the preparatory period and the build-up, without going into detail.

2. Because, in the event, the movements of over 5,000 ships and craft proceeded smoothly, and to plan, and because, despite bad weather, the Allied armies and air forces were landed and reinforced, if not quite as quickly as the optimum planning figure, at least more quickly than the enemy reinforced his forces by land, it may now appear that the size and complexity of the naval problem was somewhat exaggerated. This was not the case. That

the operation proceeded smoothly and according to plan was the result of the hard work and foresight of the many thousands concerned in its preparation and of the determination and courage of the tens of thousands in the Allied navies and merchant fleets who carried out their orders in accordance with the very highest traditions of the sea.

Magnitude of the Operation and need for Close Control.

3. From the outset of detailed planning it was clear that success would be largely dependent upon the ability to exercise close and continuous control of the thousands of ships and craft taking part. This overall control would have to embrace control of loading of all types of shipping and craft, control of convoy sailing, control of tugs, and control of ship repairs. Without it time would inevitably be lost and the best use could not be made of the great resources given to the operation to establish our forces ashore and then to reinforce them as quickly as possible. As other services and authorities besides the navy were intimately concerned with many of the problems connected with the rapid reinforcement of the Expeditionary Force, it was found necessary during planning to set up new organisations to control various aspects of the operation during the vital first few weeks in which the tempo of the initial assaults had to be maintained at the highest pitch. TURCO, BUCO, COREP and COTUG* accordingly came into being and were instrumental in the success achieved.

4. Because the assaults were to be carried out on a narrow front and because British and

* Admiralty footnote:

T.U.R.C.O.—Turn Round Control Organisation;
B.U.C.O.—Build-Up Control Organisation;
C.O.R.E.P.—Control Repair Organisation;
C.O.T.U.G.—Control Tug Organisation.