

247. Since most of the fuel and ammunition dumps in the tactical area were attacked at one time or another by aircraft of A.E.A.F., on armed reconnaissance, the enemy quickly began to run out of immediate reserves and was forced to use dumps further afield. As early as the second week of the battle, he was committed to drawing supplies of fuel and ammunition from dumps in the Marne area. These supply columns also had to run the gauntlet of our air attacks.

248. During the third week in June, I again extended the tactical area, following the attacks I have described in para. 244. At this time the enemy was using two particular routes, one through Strasbourg and the other through Saarbrücken and Metz, to transfer reinforcements and supplies from Poland and Germany proper to the Western Front. How much the movement of traffic on these lines had already been embarrassed may be gauged from the move of the 9th and 10th S.S. Panzer Divisions. These divisions, which had been hurriedly

pulled out of Poland, were forced to detrain as far east as Nancy and then move approximately 300 miles by road to reach the battle zone. Others detrained as far east as Mulhouse. To complete the disorganisation on these routes, I laid on attacks, at the end of June, on Metz, Blainville, Strasbourg and Saarbrücken.

249. During July, the enemy was committed to move further formations both from the Pas de Calais and the Low Countries, and some of these he tried to bring to centres in the Paris area for detrainment. Heavy attacks were accordingly laid on these centres as well as on others in the Low Countries. I also extended the tactical area to include Northern France, so that A.E.A.F. aircraft could take in the areas north of the Seine in their operations. The fighters of the Eighth Air Force continued to sweep over the routes east and south-east of Paris.

250. The following statistics show the weight of the air attacks on rail centres in the period I have been reviewing:—

Attacks on Rail Centres, Tunnels and Embankments from 6th June—31st July, 1944

<i>Force</i>	<i>Sorties</i>	<i>Tons of Bombs</i>
A.E.A.F.	7,736	7,147
R.A.F. Bomber Command...	5,738	23,440
U.S. Eighth Air Force ...	1,615	3,842
	<u>15,089</u>	<u>34,429</u>

251. The above figures, however, do not cover the attacks by the fighters and fighter bombers against the enemy rail movements. Their work was made easier in that the general disorganisation resulted in the enemy having at best only one or two circuitous routes open at any one time. This canalisation of traffic presented some excellent fighter bomber targets, and the pilots of A.E.A.F. and the United States Eighth Fighter Command took full advantage of them.

252. As the period of static fighting ended and the Allied armies broke out from their bridgehead, I called off the attacks on rail targets, as they were then more likely to hamper than help the Allied advance.

253. *Attacks on Bridges—June and July.*—The destruction of the bridges leading into the battle zone was also continued after the assault was launched. These attacks, as I have already explained, formed part of the general plan of attack on the enemy's transport system. At D-Day, all the Seine bridges below Paris except two were cut. During June, these two were destroyed as well as the principal bridges, both road and rail, across the Loire. Several important bridges on the lines through the gap between Paris and Orleans were also rendered impassable. The map* facing page 18 indicates the ring thus drawn about the battle area.

254. Briefly, this ring ran along the Seine and Loire. A second line of interdiction further afield had been planned, and to this end a large number of the more important bridges in the rail systems of North-Western France and Belgium were also cut; in addition, a number of minor bridges within the tactical area were rendered impassable.

255. In fact, however, this second line of interdiction was never completed. There were

several reasons. Chief amongst them was the weather which curtailed operations. Next were the priority claims on the fighter bombers of the United States Eighth Fighter Command. Finally, there came a time when, because of the speed of our advance, further destruction of bridges was no longer necessary and indeed, would have been to our disadvantage. At this time I sought and secured your agreement, and that of the two Army Group Commanders-in-Chief, to stop these attacks.

256. The attacks on bridges had been mainly the work of A.E.A.F. and the United States Eighth Air Force and in the period D-Day to 31st July, the following effort was expended on these targets:—

<i>Force</i>	<i>Sorties</i>	<i>Tons of Bombs</i>
A.E.A.F....	12,823	14,271
U.S. Eighth A.F.	3,225	9,397
R.A.F. B.C. ...	260	975
	<u>16,308</u>	<u>24,643</u>

257. *Effect of Attacks on Communications.*—The enemy endeavoured to overcome the restrictions the air attacks placed on him by moving his stores and equipment both by road and by barges down the Seine from the unloading points near Paris to the ferries he had established at Elbeuf and in the neighbourhood of Rouen, as well as along the water-ways of Northern France. Both of these channels were dealt with by air attack, and there is a large amount of intelligence material to testify to the effectiveness of these fighter bomber attacks. Prisoners of war have confirmed pilots' stories of losses and have told of divisions moving very long distances by bicycle and being committed to the land battle piecemeal, without heavy equipment, as a result of Allied air attacks.

* Maps not reproduced.