

whilst the entire anchorage had been heavily mined. All types of mines were swept during the next few days in Cherbourg harbour,—moored contact, ground contact, fired on a snag line, moored magnetic, ground magnetic, and ground acoustic. A great number of ships had been sunk in the harbour, and full scope was given to the genius of Commodore Sullivan, U.S. Navy, in effecting the clearance of the port, which in the event took nearly 90 days.

Sound Army Administrative Position.

79. During the first few weeks of the operation frequent representations were made by your staff and those of your Army Group Commanders whenever the build-up appeared to fall any distance short of the plan. This was natural and their desire for the maximum rate of reinforcement and of landing stores was fully shared by me. Sometimes I felt, however, that their protests were not entirely related to facts as, so far as I know, the position of the Expeditionary Force was never in doubt from D+2 onwards. The naval view had always been that the build-up plan should be an optimum plan at which we should aim but that its attainment was most improbable, if only by reason of the naval difficulties inherent in the continuous turn round of such a large volume of shipping. In the event, not only naval difficulties were experienced during the first few weeks, but also a considerable number of military ones, especially with regard to loading in the port of Southampton, and the programme did fall behind as we had expected that it would. It was very satisfactory, therefore, to me that your Chief Administrative Officer was able to report at his meeting held on 1st July, that the "Commanders in the field had complete freedom of action so far as the administrative arrangements were concerned". This, it was considered, confirmed our view that the Navy had in fact met the Army's requirements for their reinforcement and maintenance.

Withdrawal of Task Force and Assault Force Commanders. Transfer of Naval Command ashore.

80. During the last few days of June the British and U.S. Assault Force Commanders were successively withdrawn from the assault area when conditions in their sector permitted. On 25th June, Rear-Admiral J. W. Rivett-Carnac established his Headquarters ashore as F.O.B.A.A.* and Rear-Admiral J. Wilkes similarly hoisted his flag as F.O. West on 27th June. Rear-Admiral Sir Philip Vian left the British Assault Area on 30th June when the Command was assumed by F.O.B.A.A. Rear-Admiral Alan Kirk withdrew from the U.S. Assault Area on 3rd July, when F.O. West assumed command. The withdrawal of all these officers and the transfer of the two naval commands to the shore marked the stabilisation of the naval position in the assault area and the conclusion of the first phase in the capture of the lodgment area by our armies. Both during the training and planning period, and during the operation, the Task Force and Assault Force Commanders and their subordinates rendered the very highest service to the operation and thus to the Allied cause. The

experience that the majority of them had gained in other theatres in previous amphibious operations proved invaluable. They afforded me the greatest possible measure of support and assistance and I could not have wished for more loyal or helpful commanders.

Comments and Recommendations of Task Force Commanders.

81. A large number of comments on the operation and recommendations arising therefrom are included in the reports of Naval Commanders Eastern and Western Task Forces. It is clear that Naval Commander Western Task Force and his staff had considerable difficulty both during the preparatory period and during the operation in working in a foreign country and with a command system which was unfamiliar to them. The fact that they overcame these difficulties so well reflects great credit on them all. It is obvious that the general organisation and procedure to be adopted for any joint operation must be that of the nation from whose country it is launched. Although British and American methods are by no means similar, we are now becoming accustomed to each other's working, and with the mutual trust and goodwill which has obtained in the past there should be no undue difficulties in this respect in the future.

My Relations with the Home Commands.

82. The introduction of a Flag Officer as Allied Naval Commander-in-Chief to conduct an operation of the nature and extent of "Neptune" naturally called for a careful consideration of the system of command and division of responsibilities as between myself and the respective Home Commanders-in-Chief in whose stations I was called upon to plan and to operate. It was clear that whilst I was charged with the preparation of the naval plan and with the formation and training of the naval assault forces, and later with the chief naval command of the operation, the executive implementation of the plan must very largely remain in the hands of the Home Commanders-in-Chief. From the very outset it was my policy to make them my agents for this operation and to employ existing organisations, where these existed, rather than to institute new ones. This policy worked admirably.

83. Some resentment might well have been felt by the Commanders-in-Chief, Home Commands in the Channel, at receiving directions from an authority other than the Admiralty, especially as all three were senior to me. I cannot speak too highly, however, of the unselfish manner in which they accepted the situation and I would particularly mention Admiral Sir Charles J. C. Little, Commander-in-Chief, Portsmouth, on whose Command fell the main burden of the operation on the naval side. Admiral of the Fleet Sir John C. Tovey (Commander-in-Chief, The Nore) and Admiral Sir Ralph Leatham (Commander-in-Chief, Plymouth) together with Admiral Sir Henry D. Pridham-Wippell (Admiral Commanding Dover) also threw themselves wholeheartedly and unselfishly into our preparations, quickly grasping the problems ahead of them and reorganising their Commands to deal admirably with the particular requirements of "Neptune". During the operation the co-ordination between the Commands was perfect.

* Admiralty footnote: F.O.B.A.A.—Flag Officer, British Assault Area.