

than that in the American. However, the airfield engineers achieved very fine results in both sectors. The position in the British sector deteriorated because the good area to the east and south-east around Caen was not secured as rapidly as had been planned. Neither did the situation in the American sector greatly improve until the advance had progressed to Le Mans and beyond.

423. The minimum programme for airfields to accommodate the forces allocated was as follows:—

3 E.L.S. (2 American and 1 British) by D-Day.

4 R. and Rs. (2 American and 2 British) by the evening of D + 3 and not later than D + 4.

10 A.L.Gs. (5 American and 5 British) by D + 8 (these A.L.Gs. included 4 of the R. and Rs.).

18 Airfields (8 American and 10 British) by D + 14.

27 Airfields (12 American and 15 British) by D + 24.

43 Airfields (18 American and 25 British) by D + 40.

93 Airfields (48 American and 45 British) by D + 90.

424. Definitions of the terms used above and descriptions of the different types of airfields are given below:—

E.L.S.—Emergency Landing Strip.—A strip having sufficient length of level surface to enable pilots in distress to make a landing. These strips have a minimum length of 600 yards and are not fit for the operation of aircraft, but are of inestimable value when operations are conducted a long way from bases especially when a long sea crossing on the way home is involved.

R. & R.—Refuelling and Re-arming Strip.—A strip possessing sufficient length of level compact surface for landing and taking off, adequate marshalling areas for the rapid turn-round of aircraft and adequate tracking to ensure operation under all normal summer and autumn conditions. These strips have a minimum length of 1,200 yards with the marshalling areas of 100 × 50 yards at each end.

A.L.G.—Advanced Landing Ground.—A landing ground possessing the same facilities as an R. and R. to be brought up to A.L.G. standard by the addition of dispersal facilities and capable of use to capacity by adopting the "Roulement" system.

Airfield.—A field with the same facilities as an A.L.G. but with improved dispersal facilities and on which squadrons are established and not operated on the "Roulement" system, as on an A.L.G.

The minimum lengths for both A.L.Gs. and airfields are 1,200 yards for fighters, with dispersal facilities for 54 aircraft, and 1,650 yards for fighter bombers, with the same dispersal facilities.

All-Weather Airfield.—The same requirements as for an airfield but possessing hard-surfaced runways and fit for operation throughout all seasons and all conditions of weather for the appropriate type of aircraft. Within the limits of operational requirements, it was planned that all enemy airfields with

hard-surfaced runways would be reinstated, as and when they were captured, if in the opinion of the airfield engineers, reinstatement could be effected without excessive labour and/or material.

"Roulement" System.—A means of using landing ground facilities to the maximum capacity by flying in squadrons to replace others as they complete their scale of effort appropriate to the period.

425. The priorities fixed for the construction of these airfields were as follows:—

Priority I—E.L.Ss. for emergency landing of aircraft.

Priority II—R. and R. strips for re-fuelling and re-arming fighter aircraft.

Priority III—A.L.Gs. to become airfields later.

426. The following construction units were available for allocation as required in the beach-head:—

American—16 Aviation Engineering Battalions.

2 Airborne Aviation Engineering Battalions.

British—5 Airfield Construction Groups.

1 Field Force Basis Construction Wing.

427. Because we failed in the initial phases to gain the ground agreed in the optimum plan which was needed in the vicinity of Caen, the development of all of the pre-selected sites could not be started. This naturally caused some delay and made necessary a re-allotment of sites in the beach-head area. As a very high proportion of potential sites selected from air photographs proved to be suitable for rapid construction, the intensive preparation of the beach-head area permitted the leeway to be made up and the Air Staff requirements to be met.

428. Later, when the Allied advance became rapid, the problem of finding space to prepare airfields was eased. It became more a problem of getting the airfields constructed rapidly in the now adequate space available. The system adopted for constructing airfields near the front line was to prepare dirt strips 15-20 miles to the rear of the ground forces. These strips were then visited by transport aircraft, which dumped stores and tools there. As a general rule, fighter strips were 50-70 miles behind the front line, and bomber strips 100-120 miles behind. As the ground forces moved forward, so the dirt strips previously prepared were constructed as airfields and became bases for fighters and later for bombers.

429. The position at the end of June (D + 24) was as follows:—

(i) **In the British Sector.**—10 airfields completed at Bazenville, St. Croix sur Mer, Beny sur Mer, Camilly, Coulombs, Martragny, Sommervieu, Lantheuil, Plume-tot, Longues. 1 airfield was under construction at Ellon.

(ii) **In the American Sector.**—7 airfields completed at St. Pierre du Mont, Criqueville, Cordonville, Deux Jaux, Benzeville, Axeville and Carentan. 4 under construction and 75 per cent. completed at Chippelle, Picauville, Le Moly and Creteville.