

June. Meanwhile, on the left of the beach-head 1 United States Division made good progress and linked up with 50 British Division just west of Bayeux on 8th June.

By 10th June V United States Corps secured the Fôret-de-Cerisy and pushed patrols into Balleroy. Patrols of 29 United States Division were in contact with 101 United States Airborne Division and, two days later when Carentan was finally captured, the beachheads had been securely linked. With the joining of V and VII United States Corps, our bridge-head was made continuous throughout the assault frontage.

The operations for the capture of Caen were continued from the North by 3 British Division, and from the North-West and West by 3 Canadian Division; but it quickly became apparent that the enemy was concerned for the security of this nodal point, and to prevent the expansion of our bridgehead South of the Caen—Bayeux road.

While 1 Corps operations were developing round Caen, 30 Corps were engaged in heavy fighting in the Tilly-sur-Seulles sector. The intention was to thrust South through Tilly-sur-Seulles towards Villers Bocage, employing initially 8 Armoured Brigade, which was to be followed by 7 Armoured Division (then coming ashore).

In the morning of 12th June the 30 Corps advance had reached the general line La Belle Epine — Lingèvres — Tilly — Fontenay-le-Pesnel—Cristot—Brouay. In these villages the enemy had established strong points with a co-ordinated system of anti-tank defences, backed up by detachments of infantry and armour.

East of the River Orne our troops were concerned in maintaining the bridgehead in face of continuous counter attacks, and took heavy toll of the enemy.

By 12th June the beachheads had now been firmly linked into a continuous bridgehead on a front of over fifty miles, varying in depth eight to twelve miles.

Development of the Bridgehead.

My orders on 18th June, which were finalized the following day, instructed First United States Army to capture Cherbourg and clear the peninsula of enemy. Moreover, operations were to be developed against Le Haye du Puits and Coutances at the earliest possible moment without waiting for the fall of Cherbourg. As additional American troops were available, First United States Army was to break away to the South directed on Granville, Avranches and Vire. Second Army was to capture Caen and provide a strong Eastern flank for the Army Group: continuing the policy of absorbing the enemy reserve divisions in its sector.

Following the isolation of Cherbourg, VII United States Corps continued Northwards on a front of three divisions. On 20th and 21st June the Corps closed in on the defences of Cherbourg itself and began preparations for the final assault, which commenced in the afternoon of 22nd June. On 27th June the garrison of the arsenal surrendered. The task of opening the port was energetically tackled by the allied navies, but it was to be late August before Cherbourg was in a fit state to receive heavy lifts alongside berths.

To implement my instructions for the development of the pincer movement on Caen, Second Army regrouped in order to launch 30, 8 and 1 Corps into this operation. I was determined to develop this plan with the utmost intensity with the whole available weight of the British forces. I wanted Caen, but realised that in either event our thrusts would probably provoke increasing enemy resistance: which would fit in well with my plan of campaign.

In fact, enemy resistance increased and there were now elements of no fewer than eight Panzer divisions on the twenty mile stretch of the Second Army front between Caumont and Caen.

While VII United States Corps was completing the capture of Cherbourg during the last week in June, the rest of the American Army was building up and regrouping. The attack Southwards started on 3rd July with a thrust by VIII United States Corps employing 82 Airborne, 79 and 90 Divisions. The object was to converge on Le Haye du Puits, and on the first day 82 Airborne Division secured Hill 131 about two miles North of the town. Further progress was made on the following day against stubborn enemy resistance.

Meanwhile on 4th July, VII United States Corps attacked South-West of Carentan with 83 Division. Again progress was very difficult owing to the numerous water obstacles and bocage, but by 5th July the edge of the flooded area North of St. Emy was reached.

Further East, XIX United States Corps captured St. Jean-de-Daye on 7th July, and continued its advance to within four miles of St. Lô.

On 1st July the S.S. formations made their last and strongest attempts against the Second Army salient. All of these attacks were engaged by our massed artillery with devastating effect, and all but one were dispersed before reaching our forward infantry positions.

Second Army intention now was to continue the battle for Caen by a direct assault from the North. As a preliminary 3 Canadian Division attacked Carpiquet on 4th July with the object of securing the airfield and of freeing the Western exits from Caen.

For the direct assault on Caen, 1 Corps employed three divisions with two armoured brigades in immediate support, and a third readily available.

In order to help overcome the strong enemy positions I decided to seek the assistance of Bomber Command, R.A.F., in a close support role on the battlefields. The Supreme Commander supported my request for the assistance of Bomber Command, and the task was readily accepted by Air Chief Marshal Sir Arthur Harris.

The plan was for the three attacking divisions to converge on Caen, clear the main part of the town on the West bank of the Orne and seize the river crossings. The air bombardment was designed to destroy enemy defensive positions and artillery, and to cut off the enemy's forward troops from their lines of supply in rear.

It was planned that the bombing attack should immediately precede the ground assault but, owing to the weather forecast, it was decided to carry out the bombing on the evening before the attack; aircraft were therefore timed over the target between 2150 and