

and eight medium divisions of the Ninth United States Air Force, swept over the target area. Meanwhile the heavy ships of the naval bombardment squadrons opened on the coast defence batteries, while gradually the destroyers and the great number and variety of supporting craft successively came into action as the assault craft ran into the beaches and the troops stormed ashore.

On Utah beach, VII United States Corps assaulted on a front of one regimental combat team. The progress of the assault was greatly assisted by thirty amphibious tanks, launched five thousand yards offshore, which arrived on the beach with the loss of only one. Casualties were not excessive, and movement ashore proceeded well; a second Regimental combat team was soon disembarked, and a beachhead was secured on a four thousand yard front. During the day in some places the troops made contact successfully with 101 Airborne Division.

On Omaha beach, H Hour for the assault had been fixed at 0645 hours. V United States Corps assaulted on a broad front with two regimental combat teams, with the initial objective of Vierville-sur-Mer, and Colleville-sur-Mer, some three miles to the east.

By nightfall V United States Corps had secured a beachhead about a mile in depth on the line Vierville—Colleville, and some forward elements were already pushing towards the high ground near Formigny, some two miles inland.

Second British Army assaulted on the right in the Gold sector with 50 Division of 30 Corps. In the centre sector, designated Juno, was 3 Canadian Division, and on the left 3 British Division (Sword sector): both of which were under 1 Corps.

50 Division assault was made on a two brigade front. The intention for D Day was to penetrate the beach defences between Le Hamel and La Rivière, and to secure a covering position which would include the town of Bayeux and the high ground in the area of St. Léger, astride the main road from Bayeux to Caen. The division had under command 8 Armoured Brigade, of which two regiments were amphibious, assault teams of 79 Armoured Division, and a Royal Marine Commando; which was to land immediately behind the leading right hand brigade and move west along the coast to seize Port-en-Bessin.

As on Omaha beach, the weather was extremely unfavourable; it was considered too rough to launch the amphibious tanks. The leading infantry touched down within a few minutes of H Hour—which was 0725 hours. The leading brigade moved quickly inland to its objective on the Bayeux—Caen road. Meanwhile reserve brigades were landed successfully and by last light the forward positions of 50 Division were roughly on the line Manvieux—St. Sulpice—Vaux—Brécy—Creully. At Creully contact was made with patrols of 3 Canadian Division, but touch had not been gained with V United States Corps on the right.

In 1 Corps sector, 3 Canadian Division assaulted with two brigades, and 3 British Division on a frontage of one brigade. The initial task of these formations was to secure a covering position on the general line Putot-en-Bessin—Caen—River Orne to the sea, joining up with 6 Airborne Division on the left. With 3 Canadian Division there was 2 Canadian Armoured Brigade (including one

amphibious regiment), while 27 Armoured Brigade (with two amphibious regiments) was under command 3 British Division; both formations were supported by appropriate detachments from 79 Armoured Division.

The two leading Canadian brigades assaulted astride Courseulles-sur-Mer about 0800 hours. Due to the rough sea the landing was behind schedule (H Hour was 0735—0745 hours).

The task of 3 British Division was to assault the beaches just east of Lion-sur-Mer and advance on Caen to secure a bridgehead there over the River Orne. The leading brigade was to secure a firm base on the Périers-sur-le-Dan feature, through which the following brigades were to advance on Caen. The division was to link up with 6 Airborne Division on the bridges over the canal and river at Bénouville. The plan provided for troops of 4 Commando Brigade clearing up the area between 3 Canadian and 3 British Divisions. 1 Commando Brigade was made responsible for capturing enemy posts on the left flank of the Corps sector and the port of Ouistreham.

H Hour for 3 British Division was fixed for 0725 hours and the assault waves reached the beaches well on time. The leading brigade was soon a mile inland attacking Hermanville, Colleville, and battery positions on the southern outskirts of Ouistreham. The follow-up brigade came ashore shortly after 1000 hours and reached its assembly positions near Hermanville quickly and pushed on southwards. The reserve brigade of 3 British Division landed soon after midday; it was moved to the left of the divisional area owing to the heavy opposition which had been encountered at Douvres-la-Délivrande.

By nightfall, the division was well established with forward elements on the line Bieville—Bénouville, where contact was made with 6 Airborne Division. Ouistreham had almost been cleared, but the Commandos had not succeeded in capturing the heavily fortified strong point at Douvres.

East of the River Orne, 6 Airborne Division withstood repeated attempts by enemy infantry and tanks to capture Ranville and to wipe out the Bénouville bridgehead. The division was joined during the afternoon by Commandos of 1 SS Brigade. At 2100 hours the gliders of 6 Air Landing Brigade arrived and served to strengthen our positions on the left flank.

As a result of our D Day operations a foothold had been gained on the Continent of Europe.

Surprise had been achieved, the troops had fought magnificently, and our losses had been much lower than had ever seemed possible.

#### *Linking up the Beachheads.*

At first light on 7th June the Omaha beaches were still under close fire from enemy weapons of all calibres, but the American troops fought steadily and gradually extended their initial holding. Patrols eastwards along the coast made contact with British troops, who captured Port-en-Bessin.

By 9th June American troops captured Isigny with a bridge over the River Vire about one mile to the south-west. Further east crossings were effected over the River Aure, and Colombières was reached. 2 United States Division came into action in the centre of the Corps bridgehead, reaching Rubercy on 9th