

never failed in my operations to exert my utmost endeavour to meet the requirements of the Air Forces, in planning these operations the over-riding requirement was to gain territory in the west. For this reason, while accepting an estimate for seizing the open country beyond Caen at a relatively early date after the landing, I had to make it clear that progress in that sector would be dependent on the successful development of the main strategic plan.

#### *Administration.*

The administrative problem facing the British forces was essentially different from that of the Americans. The operational plan demanded the very rapid development of lines of communication behind the American forces, and the administrative requirements for opening up railways and roads from Cherbourg and the Brittany ports were very large. There was no parallel problem foreseen on the British flank.

The limiting factor in the build-up of operational forces appeared likely to be the rate at which maintenance resources could be landed. The problem therefore was to develop the capacity of the beaches to the maximum degree. Since there would be no port facilities at all until Cherbourg was captured and opened, and since in any case Cherbourg would not be able to do more than relieve some of the burden of beach maintenance, it was planned to erect two artificial harbours, together with a number of breakwaters, in the Baie de la Seine. The components which made up these artificial harbours were to be towed across the Channel in special lanes through the minefields, and although the estimated time required for their construction was from 14 to 42 days, it was provided that as far as possible use would be made of the shelter of the outer breakwaters once they had been completed. The subsidiary breakwaters were to be formed by sinking 60 block ships in groups of 12 at suitable sites along the coast.

The British forces were to be maintained over the beaches until such time as sufficient ports were captured and developed, and it was assumed that beach maintenance could cease on the opening of the Seine ports. In the United States sector it was planned to open Cherbourg and subsequently the main ports of the Brittany peninsula, and in this way to dispense gradually with the necessity for beach working.

Special establishments were created for operating the British beaches, comprising Beach Bricks, Beach Groups and Beach Sub-Areas. These special units and headquarters were formed on an inter-Service basis and included detachments of the various arms. In this way the individual beaches were worked by self-contained organisations.

It was planned to maintain Second British Army for the first few days from Beach Maintenance Areas and subsequently from two army roadheads, one of which was ultimately to be handed over to First Canadian Army; a Rear Maintenance Area was to be established as soon as conditions permitted. In view of the damage caused by our bombing, it was considered necessary to be independent of railways for the first three months of the operation; the lines of communication were therefore to be entirely road operated for this period.

The administrative planning for the operations was based on the expectancy of reasonable weather conditions during June, July and

August. Some allowance was made in planning the rate of administrative build-up for days when the beaches would be working at low capacity; but the risk had always to be faced that any serious or prolonged break in the weather, particularly during the first two weeks, might have a grave effect on the maintenance of the forces and therefore on their operational capabilities.

#### *Civil Affairs.*

Civil affairs planning initially aimed at ensuring that the civil population did not impede troop movements, at preparing for the organisation of local labour and transport, and at setting up the necessary machinery for the control and use of local resources and for the replacement of unacceptable local officials. It was anticipated that there would be a large number of refugees and civilian wounded, and special composite detachments of Civil Affairs personnel were organised in readiness to deal with the problem, while arrangements were made for food and medical supplies for the inhabitants of the bridgehead to be phased in from D+1 onwards.

### THE BATTLE OF NORMANDY.

#### *The Assault.*

At 0200 hours 6 June, a "coup de main" party of 6 Airborne Division was dropped near Bénouville, to seize the bridges over the Canal de Caen and the River Orne. Surprise was complete, both bridges were captured intact and a close bridgehead was established. Half an hour later, 3 and 5 Parachute Brigades began to drop east of the Orne.

On the whole, the drop of 6 Airborne Division was more scattered than had been planned, but one repercussion of this was that the enemy was misled about the area and extent of the landings. In spite of enemy counter action the division secured the left flank of the Allied beachheads.

101 United States Airborne Division began dropping south-east of Ste. Mère Église at about 0130 hours. The division quickly seized the two villages of Pouppeville and St. Martin-de-Varreville, behind the Utah beaches, 82 United States Airborne Division landed west of the Carentan-Cherbourg main road from 0230 hours onwards. The division seized the town of Ste. Mère Église and protected the inland flanks of 101 Airborne Division.

While the airborne landings were in progress, over 1,100 aircraft of Bomber Command commenced the air offensive as planned. Nearly 6,000 tons of bombs had been dropped on the coast batteries by dawn.

Meanwhile, the Allied sea armada drew in towards the coast of France, preceded by its flotillas of minesweepers. Not until the leading ships had reached their lowering positions, some seven to eleven miles offshore, and the naval bombardment squadrons had opened fire on the shore defences, was there any appreciable enemy activity.

During the sea passage heavy seas were running in the Channel, and it was an outstanding feat on the part of the naval forces that in spite of this every main essential of the plan was carried out as intended.

The cloud conditions were not very favourable for bombing when over 1,300 heavy bombers of the Eighth United States Air Force,