

Falaise, and had thus had ample opportunity for the development of strong, well sited defences.

Strenuous efforts continued to close the corridor between Falaise and Argentan. British and American forces pressed in from all sides of the pocket to annihilate the enemy which it contained. XV United States Corps was well established in the Argentan area on 13th August.

VIII United States Corps advanced north from Mayenne to positions on the western flank of XV United States Corps. Meanwhile V and XIX United States Corps pressed on in the extreme western and north-western sectors of the pocket.

The main Canadian thrust on Falaise from the north was resumed on 14th August, and the town fell to the Canadians on 16th August.

The battle of the pocket continued, but by 16 August the enemy lost almost all cohesion: divisions were hopelessly jumbled up and commanders were able to control no more than their own battle groups. The Allied Air Forces were presented with targets probably unparalleled in this war: aircraft formations were engaging endless columns of enemy transport, packed bumper to bumper and rendered immobile by the appalling congestion.

On 19 August the neck of the pocket was finally closed when American troops from the south linked up at Chambois with the Polish Armoured Division fighting with First Canadian Army.

The next day the enemy made his last co-ordinated attempt at forcing our cordon. After this attack, which was unsuccessful, the battle of the Mortain-Falaise pocket was virtually at an end, though the process of mopping up took some time.

Speedy regrouping on the Twelfth U.S. Army Group front, combined with outstanding administrative improvisation, enabled the advance eastwards of the Third U.S. Army to continue *while the battle of the Falaise pocket was still in progress*. By 20 August, troops of General Patton's army reached and crossed

the Seine in the area of Mantes and began to work westwards along the river towards Elbeuf.

The other armies of 21 Army Group then began the race to the Seine. The Allied Air Forces throughout the drive to the river had carried out relentless attacks against the ferries which provided the only means of escape to the enemy.

Second Army crossed the River Seine in the vicinity of Vernon, and the leading troops were across the river on 25 August. On First Canadian Army front, 2 Canadian Corps secured crossings about Port de l'Arche and Elbeuf, astride a sharp bend in the river about eight miles south of Rouen on 26 August. The crossings were made in most cases without serious opposition.

In the Twelfth United States Army Group sector, Third United States Army swept forward to Troyes, Châlons-sur-Marne and Rheims. First United States Army began crossing the Seine on 26 August between Melun and Mantes Gassicourt.

The break out was now complete and the drive across the Pas de Calais was about to commence.

The outstanding point about the Battle of Normandy is that it was fought exactly as planned before the invasion. The measure of our success was, in the event, far greater than could ever have been foreseen, because of the faulty strategy of the enemy.

The only sound military course open to the Germans at the end of July, would have involved staging a withdrawal to the Seine barrier and with it the sacrifice of north-western France. Instead he decided to fight it out between the Seine and the Loire.

In planning to break out from the bridgehead on the western flank, a prerequisite was the retention of the main enemy strength on the eastern flank. The extent to which this was achieved is well illustrated in the following table, which shows the estimated enemy strength opposing us in the eastern and western areas of our front during June and July.

	Estimated enemy strength opposite Caumont-Cotentin sectors			Estimated enemy strength opposite Caumont-Caen sectors		
	<i>Panzer Divisions</i>	<i>Tanks</i>	<i>Infantry Battalions</i>	<i>Panzer Divisions</i>	<i>Tanks</i>	<i>Infantry Battalions</i>
15 June ...	—	70	63	4	520	43
25 June ...	1	190	87	5	530	49
30 June ...	$\frac{1}{2}$	140	63	$7\frac{1}{2}$	725	64
5 July ...	$\frac{1}{2}$	215	63	$7\frac{1}{2}$	690	64
10 July ...	2	190	72	6	610	65
15 July ...	2	190	78	6	630	68
20 July ...	3	190	82	5	560	71
25 July ...	2	190	85	6	645	92

This result was achieved by the retention of the initiative and by very hard fighting, which enabled us to expand our territorial gains in the West and to engage and wear down the enemy strength along the whole of the Allied front.

The mounting of the break-out operation suffered considerable delays. One of the main reasons was the weather, which not only up-

set the schedule of our beach working, causing delay in the arrival of troops and stores, but also hampered the action of the air forces.

The development of the bridgehead to the South-East of Caen was a slow and difficult matter. The success of the plan involved pulling the enemy's reserves against our Eastern flank, and this was achieved to such a degree that in spite of all our efforts it was impossible