

He then returned to recommend to Doenitz the unconditional surrender of all German naval, land and air forces opposite 21 Army Group. On the evening of 4th May, von Friedeburg returned to my Headquarters and signed the instrument of unconditional surrender of those forces.

Cease Fire was ordered on 21 Army Group front as from 0800 hours 5th May.

#### REVIEW AND COMMENTS.

I have described the part played by 21 Army Group and the Armies under my command from 6th June, 1944, to the 5th May, 1945, and I should like to take this opportunity of expressing my appreciation of the tremendous tasks accomplished by the Navy, Army and Air Forces throughout the campaign.

Before the operation was launched it was the task of the Air Forces to create conditions favourable to a successful landing and to the subsequent development of operations inland. Both the Army and the Navy relied on this being done, and it was done; the heavy bombers of Bomber Command and of the American Air Force did magnificent work in weakening Germany generally, and in particular in destroying the enemy railway system, which enormously reduced the mobility of the enemy once operations began.

Until the Army stepped ashore it was completely in the hands of the Navy and Air Forces for its sea and airborne landings.

Once the Army was on shore all military operations became combined Army/Air operations; the mighty weapon of air power enabled the Army to conduct its operations successfully and with far fewer casualties than would otherwise have been the case. The Army relied on the Navy and on the Air Forces for secure communications across the sea from our island base in Britain.

I would like to say that the Army owes a great debt of gratitude to the Navy and the Air Force and realises fully its complete dependence on them in all military operations.

In addition I would like to add some remarks concerning the handling of the various arms within the Army, with particular reference to the campaign itself.

#### *Administration.*

In the early stages of the campaign much depended on the successful issue of the administrative planning. The task was a formidable one, and in plain terms meant the export overseas of a community the size of the population of Birmingham. Over 287,000 men and 37,000 vehicles were pre-loaded into ships and landing craft prior to the assault, and in the first thirty days 1,100,000 British and American troops were put ashore.

There was the necessity to foresee and provide all that is required for a major static battle quickly followed by a rapid advance of some 400 miles, which entailed the landing of some 200,000 vehicles and 750,000 tons of stores during the corresponding period. And I can say that, even in these exceptional conditions, planned operations were never held up even for a single day by any lack of administrative resources.

In the early stages the vast quantities of stores required were landed over open beaches, a task which was greatly assisted by the **MULBERRY**. The stores were directed into

a number of field depots, whence they were despatched to the troops. As soon as conditions permitted, these field depots were concentrated into a single organisation called the Rear Maintenance Area.

When the break out from Normandy occurred, considerable problems arose because the L. of C. became stretched in a short time from Bayeux to Antwerp—that is some 400 miles; all bridges over the Seine were demolished, and the railway facilities extensively damaged. In order to maintain the advance, shipping and the discharge of material were cut well below the figure necessary for the daily maintenance of the force, so as to release every lorry possible for ferrying stores forward to the troops. This meant eating into the reserves built up in the Rear Maintenance Area, and it became a matter of urgency to get bases further forward and shorten the Lines of Communication. We had both feet off the ground, relying on opening up the Channel ports, particularly Dieppe, before our accumulated stocks became exhausted. But administrative risks have to be taken in war as well as tactical ones; the point to realise is that a commander requires a nice judgment to know when risks are justifiable and when they are definitely not so.

Gradually the railway systems were re-established, and when eventually the port of Antwerp was opened to shipping, it was possible to base ourselves firmly on depots established between there and Brussels. Subsidiary tonnages were continued to be handled through the Channel ports.

I would mention one very important feature of administration which has been confirmed during the campaign. It is that there is a reasonably constant figure covering the combined ammunition and petrol tonnages required, though, of course, the split between these commodities depends on the type of battle that is being fought.

It is not possible in this dispatch to go into any detail concerning the vast and complicated machinery necessary for the support of a modern army in the field. I will, however, mention the tremendous importance of Movements and Transportation. Their problems in this campaign were immense. There were the numerous technical and engineer problems of repairing and operating the damaged or demolished ports, railways, and inland water transport systems, of four European countries. Bridges had to be built over such obstacles as the Seine and the Rhine. Possibly even more important was the problem of coordinating and allocating traffic over the various means of carriage, and of setting up organisations for operating through services over the different national systems.

The "A" services too, were confronted with special problems. The calculations of reinforcements required, together with a correct balance for every arm and trade, called for considerable foresight and experience, and had a very direct effect of the success of operations. I will also mention Welfare, which had reached a standard in the Army probably never previously approached.

Very great praise is due to the various Services and Departments which so successfully overcame their problems and difficulties, and carried out their functions in such an efficient manner.