NOTES ON THE OPERATIONS OF 21 ARMY GROUP

6 June 1944 - 5 May 1945
**Title:** Notes on the Operations of 21 Army Group. 6 June 1944 - 5 May 1945

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THE OPERATIONS OF 21 ARMY GROUP
6 June 1944 — 5 May 1945

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6. 1/2,000,000 Normandy to Baltic.
These notes were compiled in answer to a specific questionnaire, and were not intended to provide a comprehensive record of the campaign.

Additional copies have been prepared as it is felt they may be of general interest and of assistance to those engaged in writing reports connected with the recent operations.

BAOR
1 September 1945

G (Ops)(Records),
HQ British Army of the Rhine.
THE OPERATIONS OF 21 ARMY GROUP

SECTION 1 THE INITIAL LANDING

A. THE OBJECTIVES AND THE BROAD OUTLINE PLAN

1. The object of the operation was to secure a lodgement on the Continent from which further offensive operations could be developed. The intention of the Command-in-Chief was to assault simultaneously immediately NORTH of the CARENTAN estuary, and between the CARENTAN estuary and the River ORNE, with the object of securing as a base for future operations a lodgement area which would include airfield sites and the port of CHERBOURG.

2. In broad outline the plan was as follows:-

(a) To carry out airborne landings during the night D minus 1/D with one Brit and two US divs in order to protect the flanks of the area in which the assault divs were to land.

(b) To assault on a five-div front with three Brit and two US divs in landing ships and craft.

(c) To land two follow-up divs, one Brit and one US, later on D day and on D plus 1.

(d) Thereafter to build up our forces, in divs.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>British</th>
<th>United States</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>By D plus 4</td>
<td>6½</td>
<td>8½</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>By D plus 12</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>By D plus 20</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>By D plus 35</td>
<td>15</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

NAVAL

3. Prior to the operation, anti E-boat and anti U-boat activities in the Channel and the Bay of Biscay were to be intensified, and certain protective minelaying was to be carried out.

The Assault and Follow-up Forces were to complete their concentration in their assembly stations, which extended from the THAMES to FALMOUTH, by D minus 7. For the sea passage, these forces, accompanied by naval escorts and minesweepers, were to sail from their assembly stations towards a general area SE of the ISLE OF WIGHT. On reaching the enemy mine barrier, minesweepers were to sweep ten passages for the leading groups. Subsequent groups were to follow the same channels which would be marked. About seven miles off shore craft were to deploy for the assault, subsequently adjusting their movements so that the first wave would beach at H hour.

4. The naval fire support plan was based on the neutralisation of selected strong points by all available weapons rather than the weight of fire being spread evenly over the whole length of beaches to be assaulted.

AIR

5. In general, the Air Forces were required to provide:-

(a) Air defence of the bases in the UK and protection of coastal convoys and warships, and of shipping and troop concentrations in the assembly areas.

.../(b)
Strategical bombing, which began some months prior to the operation, and included the treatment of certain specified targets such as coastal defences and batteries, oil installations, etc. These were carefully co-ordinated with other methods of deception in order to mislead the enemy as to the real point of attack.

Protection and support to the actual assault and to the assault forces.

It was regarded as an essential prerequisite of the operation that the fighter forces should attain and maintain an air situation which would ensure freedom of action for our troops without effective interference by the German air force.

TIMING OF THE ASSAULT

6. To ensure that the assault forces arrived on the right beaches, it was decided that the landings would be made in daylight. In order to allow a minimum period of 30 minutes daylight for observed bombardment before H hour, and to enable the maximum number of vehicles to be landed on the first tide, H hour was fixed at about 1½ hours after nautical twilight.

As H hour was related both to nautical twilight and high water, D day was dependent on the phase of the moon. It was decided that D day should be during the full moon period in view of the airborne drop and 5 June was the day selected as affording the desired conditions. Owing to bad weather, it was postponed to 6 June.

MAINTENANCE

7. The port of CHERBOURG was to be used exclusively for the maintenance of the US forces. Maintenance of the Brit forces was to be done through the beaches, and minor ports such as RAIT EN BESSIN T78. An essential part of the maintenance project was the construction of two prefabricated ports (code word MULBERRY). Five small havens (GOOSEBERRY) were also to be formed prior to the development of the MULBERRIES to give sheltered water for the discharge of ferry craft. These GOOSEBERIES were to be formed by sinking ships off the coast.

On shore, maintenance was to be effected by Beach Groups being placed under assault brigades for landing, and being co-ordinated by Beach Sub Area HQs as early as possible. Each Beach Sub area was to establish on D day a Beach Maintenance Area and it was from these BMAs that all the forces ashore were to be maintained for the first few days. Later, the BMAs were to be merged into army Roadheads.

B. ENEMY FORCES AVAILABLE

8. Enemy dispositions in the bridgehead area were five inf divs on the coast, with two inf divs in the CHERBOURG peninsula behind the coast defences. Immediate reserves were 12 SS Pz Div at LISIEUX Q 58 and 21 Pz Div at CAEN U 06.

In BRITAIN there were three para and five inf divs, with another inf div in the CHANNEL ISLANDS.

With the exception of the two divs on the RIGHT, all the above inf divs were controlled by Seventh Army.
Altogether, the two Army Groups controlled by C-in-C WEST comprised a total of fifty-nine divs, (ten Pz type and forty-nine inf type), of which the main strength lay in the Pas De CALAIS area.

COAST BATTERIES

9. The greatest weight of fire covered the approaches to CHERBOURG and the entrances to the SEINE. Of the 32 battery positions capable of firing on the assault beaches, 50% were in casemates of reinforced concrete six feet thick.

The approximate distribution of fire power was as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Long Range Artillery</th>
<th>Medium Artillery</th>
<th>Field Howitzers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(a) Capable of firing on the beaches WEST of the CARENTAN estuary</td>
<td>30 guns</td>
<td>22 guns</td>
<td>28 guns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(b) Capable of firing on the beaches EAST of the CARENTAN estuary</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(c) Capable of firing on the beaches between ARRANÇOES T88 and OUISTREHAM U17</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>12 guns</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

|                   | 48 | 34 | 52 |

COAST DEFENCES

10. All beaches were obstructed with underwater obstacles. In February 1944, the enemy began his policy of obstructing beaches with underwater obstacles, starting at high water mark and working towards low water mark, thickening up the obstacles in depth as the months went by. Many obstacles were mined with Teller mines or had shells fixed on to them, whilst there were Teller mines attached to floating rafts. Many of these obstacles were totally submerged at high tide.

11. The enemy defensive system along the Channel Coast, popularly known as the Atlantic Wall, consisted of a strong crust of concrete and field defence works designed to bring the maximum fire power to bear upon beaches suitable for landing operations, and at the same time, to offer to the defender the maximum protection from aerial and sea bombardment. No great defence in depth was developed, the enemy appreciating that any attacking force would so be weakened by the fire power of the coastal defences that it would be ably dealt with by mobile naval forces located in rear of the beaches.

12. All ports, even minor ones such as PORT EN BESSIN, T 78 and OUISTREHAM U 17 were heavily defended. Elsewhere there was a chain of strong points along the coast at approximately 1000 yards intervals and extending inland to a depth of some 200 yards. These were roughly of platoon strength, the largest concentrated at likely exits from suitable beaches which were blocked by anti-tank walls, road blocks, minefields and ditches. They were well supplied with support weapons, medium machine guns, mortars and anti-tank guns, and sometimes included a French 75 mm gun or a German light howitzer.
Gaps between strongpoints were mined, wired and covered by fire, and where the gaps were too wide, they were flooded if the ground permitted. Wire was used profusely to protect all defensive positions. Use was also made of static flame throwers and demolition vehicles such as Goliaths.

13. Two further enemy defensive measures had to be considered:

(a) Infiltrations in rear of suitable beaches. These were most prominent in rear of the beaches in the CARANTAN T.48 area, and in rear of COURBESVILLE T.98 in the Brit sector.

(b) The extensive obstructions by the use of stakes, many of which were mined, of all areas suitable for air landing operations.

C. FORMATIONS UNDER COMMAND OF 21 ARMY GROUP AND THEIR ALLOCATION TO TASKS

14. C-in-C 21 Army Group worked in co-operation with Allied Naval Commander Expeditionary Force and Air Commander-in-Chief Allied Expeditionary Force at a Combined HQ established at PORTSMOUTH.

The military forces under C-in-C 21 Army Group were

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assault Armies</th>
<th>Follow-up</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>First US Army</td>
<td>Third US Army</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second Brit. Army</td>
<td>First Can. Army</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

15. For the assault the Allied Naval Forces were allotted as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Western Task Force</th>
<th>To First US Army</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Eastern Task Force</td>
<td>To Second Brit. Army</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

16. The Tactical Air Forces were allotted as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ninth Tactical Air Force (US)</th>
<th>To First US Army</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Second &quot;&quot; (Brit)</td>
<td>To Second Brit. Army</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In addition, the assaulting forces had the assistance of powerful allied air forces based in the UK. The following table gives approximate figures of the total air forces available:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Aircraft</th>
<th>First US Army</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Heavy Day Bombers</td>
<td>1400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heavy Night Bombers</td>
<td>150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medium and Light Bombers</td>
<td>300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Day Fighters</td>
<td>230</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Night Fighters</td>
<td>170</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fighter Bombers</td>
<td>500</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

FIRST US ARMY

17. First US Army was to assault between VARREVILLE T.4299 and the CARANTAN estuary 4590 (UTAH area), and between VIREVILLE-SUR-MER 6594 and COULLEVILLE-SUR-MER 6888 (Omaha area). The tasks in order of priority were:

.../(a)
18. VII US Corps was to assault on the RIGHT. Objectives of its formations were as follows:

(a) Airborne landings, night D minus 1/D.

(i) 82 Airborne Div to land in the area NE of ST MERE EGLISE T 39 to secure the Northern and Western flanks of 101 Airborne Div, to seize ST MERE EGLISE if possible and to destroy bridges over R DOURYS.

(ii) 101 Airborne Div to land in the area of ST MERE EGLISE, to protect the LEFT flank of 4 Inf Div landing from the sea, and to seize CARREGAN. Later it was to join up with V Corps.

(b) Seaborne landings.

4 US Inf Div to land and seize a bridgehead between QUINIVILLE O 30 and ST MERE DU MONT T49 and to join up with and, if necessary, reinforce the two airborne divs.

19. V US Corps was to assault on the LEFT. The objective for D day was a line from the coast NORTH of SIGNY T58 to inclusive TREVIGNES T68 and VAUCOLES T78. The assault was to be carried out by 1 US Inf Div (less one regimental combat team) with one combat team of 29 US Inf Div under command. 29 US Inf Div (less one regimental combat team) with the remaining combat team of 1 US Inf Div under command, was to land behind 1 US Div and come up on the RIGHT where its own combat team would be found. In addition, two bns of RANGERS under command V US Corps were to land and destroy the coastal defences of POINT DU HOB T59.

20. Armoured forces to be landed in the assault were two Tank Bns (one DDs) with VII US Corps, and three Tank Bns (two DDs) with V Corps.

SECOND BRIT ARMY

21. Second Brit Army was to assault between PORT EN BESSIN T78 and R ORNE U17. It was to secure and develop a bridgehead SOUTH of the line QUIMONT T76 - CALM T06 and SE of CALM in order to secure airfield sites and to protect the flank of First US Army while the latter captured CHERBOURG and the BRITTANY ports.

22. 30 Corps was to assault on the RIGHT. The objective for D day was the town of BAYEUX T77 and the road BAYEUX - CAEN to the inters-corps boundary with 1 Corps. The RIGHT flank of 30 Corps was to be echeloned back NORTH towards the beach at PORT EN BESSIN.

The assault was to be carried out by 50 Inf Div which had an additional inf bde under command. The task of the div was to penetrate the beach defences between LE HABEL T88 and LA RIVIERE T98 and secure a covering position which would include BAYEUX and the area of ST LEGER T87. The assault was to be made on a two bde front.

PORT EN BESSIN was to be captured by L7 (RN) Commando, who were to land at LE HABEL.

23. 1 Corps was to assault on the LEFT. Objectives of the formations were as follows:

.../(a)
(a) Airborne landings, night D minus 1/D.

6 Airborne Div (less one bde) to land EAST of CAEN with the

6 Airborne Div (less one bde) to land EAST of CAEN with the
task of seizing the bridges over the ORNE at BENOUILLE U07

and RAWVILLE U17. In conjunction with 1 SS Bde, who were

landing WEST of the ORNE at H hour, this Div was then to seize

the coast defences in the FRANCEVILLE U17 - CABOURG U27 area

from the rear. They were to dominate the area QUIBERON -

QUIBERON - CABOURG - TRGUN U16 - CAEN in order to protect the LEFT

flank and prevent interference with the beaches WEST of the

ORNE.

(b) Seaborne landings.

(i) 3 Cdn Div to assault on a two bde front at the mouth

of the SEULLES T98 river. Task to secure the general

line of the BAYEUX - CAEN railway between PUTOT-EN-

BESSIN T9172 and the Western outskirts of CAEN.

(ii) 3 Brit Div to assault on a one bde front between

LION SUR MER U0691 and QUIBERON. Task to secure

the high ground NORTH of CAEN and, if possible, CAEN

itself; to relieve 6 Airborne Div on the bridges over

the CANAL DE CAEN and the R ORNE at BENOUILLE and

RAYVILLE.

(iii) 4 SS Bde, with two Commandos, had the tasks of

clearing up the area between 3 Cdn and 3 Brit Divs

and of moving inland and seizing bridges over the

R SEULLES.

One Commando of 1 SS Bde was to clear the coast on the

LEFT of 3 Brit Div up to and including QUIBERON, while

the rest of the Bde crossed the ORNE to operate with 6

Airborne Div.

Armoured forces to be landed in the assault were:

8 Arm Bde (including two DD Regts) with 50 Div
2 Cdn Arm Bde (including one DD Regt) with 3 Cdn Div
27 Arm Bde (including two DD Regts) with 3 Brit Div

In addition, each Corps had approximately one regt of

FLAILs, and one regt of AVREs, with a proportion of CROCODILES.

ASSAULT FIRE PLAN

25. The joint fire plan falls into the following phases:

Phase 1 Preliminary "softening up" bombardment prior to D day.

This was entirely an air commitment. Some 30 bomber

attacks were made on coastal batteries in the assault

area before D day.

Phase 2 Silencing of hostile batteries during the seaborne

approach.

This was a joint naval and air responsibility. The

plan included:

(i) Night D minus 1/D attack on 10 battery positions

each by 100 Brit night bombers. 5,300 tons of

\text{.../(ii)}
(ii) Prior to H hour. Heavv day bombers of US Air Forces on battery positions and defended localities. Over 5,900 tons of bombs were dropped.

(iii) Prior to H hour. Pre-arranged silencing of hostile batteries by 6 battleships, 2 monitors and 22 cruisers.

Phase 3 Close support of the assault troops during the run-in to the beaches and the assault across them. This was a "free-for-all" period when destroyers, close support naval craft, the Royal Marine Arm Support Group in LCMs, and the self propelled div artillery all engaged pre-arranged or opportunity targets while medium and fighter bombers engaged areas farther inland. 93 destroyers were available for the operation; there was a total of 147 close support craft of various types equipped with guns, mortars, spigot bombs etc.

Phase 4 Support of inf as they worked inland, until their own artillery could come into action ashore. After completion of primary task of silencing batteries, the battleships, monitors and cruisers were available to bombard opportunity targets as necessary. The more intimate support was to be provided by the Royal Marine Arm Support Group. Equipped with 75mm CENTAUR tanks, there were available 5 batteries, each of 4 troops.

D. OTHER RESOURCES AVAILABLE TO 21 ARMY GROUP

26. The following naval craft were employed in the operation:

(a) Western and Eastern Task Forces, including Bombardment Squadrons:

| 6 Battleships | 93 Destroyers |
| 2 Monitors | 574 Other Warships |
| 22 Cruisers | 312 Minesweepers |

(b) Close Support Squadrons:

147 craft of various types

(c) Landing craft, 4,266.

(a) Merchant ships employed on cross channel service included 400 coasters, 225 liberty ships with a gross registered tonnage of 24 million tons.

E. SUCCESS ACHIEVED

27. The operations up to the capture of CHERBOURG may be divided into two phases:

Phase 1 6 to 15 June. The "Break-In". The initial landing and establishment of a firm bridgehead with a continuous front.

Phase 2 16 to 30 June. Development. The cutting of the CHERBOURG Peninsula, capture of CHERBOURG and enlargement of bridgehead SOUTH of BAYEU.
28. The airborne landings were successful. 52 US Airborne Div landed in approximately the area planned and captured and held ST MERE EYRE. The roads leading into the beach area were blocked and the Div carried out its task. 101 US Airborne Div was spread over a large area, generally in the planned zone, but captured ST MARTIN DE VARAVILLE T4496 and FOUR-BEUVILLE T4355, and held this ground throughout the day.

6 Airborne Div made a successful landing with comparatively small casualties. The bridges at BERNOVILLE and DOUVILLE were seized intact by a coup de main; three bridges over the R DIVES were effectively destroyed. A limited bridgehead was established across the ORNE, and although it was heavily counter-attacked by troops of 21 Panzer Div, it was safely held.

29. The weather was far from ideal for seaborne landings, but in spite of the discomfort and dislocation caused thereby, all the assault divs got ashore, and the coastal defences were broken through in the face of stubborn resistance.

On UTAH beach, 2 US Inf Div made a successful landing aided by 50 DD tanks which were launched about 5,000 yards offshore. By nightfall, it had secured an initial holding some 4,000 yards long, and at one point had penetrated to a depth of nearly 10,000 yards. Contact was established with 101 Airborne Div.

On OMMA beach a high sea was running, the enemy was in greater strength than was anticipated and casualties were severe. Nevertheless a foothold was gained and a beachhead little more than a mile deep was secured.

30. In the Second Brit Army sector, 50 Inf Div quickly established a beachhead although the village of LE HAMIL was strongly held and was not captured until 1700 hours. Although the final objectives for the day were not taken, by nightfall the forward troops were on the high ground EAST of BAYEUX from VAUX SUR AURE T7603 to BRIEC B878 and contact was made with 3 Can Div on the LEFT, though not with the Americans.

31. On the front of 1 Corps the assault went very much according to plan. Although there was much mortaring and shelling of the beaches, on the RIGHT 3 Can Div reached its first objective by 1030 hours. The advance continued during the day against heavy opposition from 716 Inf Div. By nightfall, however, the Div had reached a line ORBULLY T9080 - HENRY-SUR-SEUR T9680.

To the LEFT, 5 Brit Div captured OUESTREHAM and advanced inland, coming in contact with Inf of 21 Panzer Div. It was counter-attacked in the area of MONTVIEUX 10074 but by dark was established on the line FERRERS-SUR-LE-DAN 10076 - BERNOVILLE where it was in contact with 6 Airborne Div.

Between 3 Can and 3 Brit Divs the enemy were still in possession of DOURDES T6180, and on the extreme LEFT, CABOURG remained in enemy hands.

32. While all the planned objectives had not been captured, and the losses sustained by 1 US Corps had been heavy, the beachheads generally were secure and unloading was proceeding in spite of a choppy sea. No serious counter-attacks were received, and the coastal defences were effectively neutralised by the bombing and shelling. The Allied Air Force flew some 11,000 sorties during the first 24 hours of the operation.

7/15 June

33. In the First US Army sector, VII and V US Corps joined up on 10 June. CARPIN was captured on 12 June and progress was made further NORTH towards LINTERSBURG 0630. On 10 June VII Corps began a ...successful
successful advance SOUTH across the road CARENTAN - BAYEUX. They made contact with 30 Corps on the 11th, quickly cleared the FORET DE GERSEY T67 and pressing on through BAILLEBOUY T66, secured CAumont T75 on 14 June.

34. On Second Army front enemy tanks were in contact all along the line, but appreciable progress was made everywhere except NE of CAEN. On the RIGHT, BAYEUX was captured on 7 June, and in conformity with the advance of V US Corps, 30 Corps thrust SOUTH on the axis TILLY-SUR-SEULLES 86 - VILLERS BOCAGE 85. Heavy enemy resistance was encountered in the close "bocage" country and TILLY-SUR-SEULLES held out. It was outflanked from the WEST by 7 Arm Div who pushed on to VILLERS BOCAGE but were compelled to withdraw to the high ground NW of the town. 30 Inf Div held a firm base NORTH of TILLY.

35. By the end of this phase the enemy had committed three panzer, one para and two Inf Divs in attempts to seal off Allied penetrations.

36. The First US Army now had six Inf, one Arm and two airborne divs ashore. In the Brit sector five Inf, one Arm and one airborne divs had landed.

**PHASE 2. 16/30 June**

**FIRST US ARMY**

36. The primary task of First US Army was to capture CHERBOURG, while developing operations SOUTH and SW through the front between ST LO and CAumont.

The first step was to cut the CHERBOURG Peninsula and to this end the drive WEST started on 16 June. On this day, ST SULIVAR LE VICOMTE T99 was captured and by the evening of 17 June, 9 US Inf Div had troops astride the NORTH - SOUTH coastal road in the vicinity of BARNEVILLE SUR MER TO9.

On 19 June, VII US Corps advanced on CHERBOURG on a three div front. Moving on a broad front through MOUREBOURG 030, VAJOLLES 020 and BRIQUEBEC 010, the Corps closed on the defences of the port. On 26 June the reduction of the fortress started, helped by systematic bombing. The principal remnant - PORT DE ROUZE - was captured on 25th, and two days later the town surrendered. By 30 June, mopping up was completed and the Peninsula WEST of CHERBOURG was cleared.

On 16 June, V US Corps attacked to capture BORRETON T6065 and the high ground WEST and SOUTH of it. The town was taken, but in spite of renewed attacks the high ground remained in enemy hands. The remainder of the month was spent in reorganisation and improving the positions won, while the main effort was concentrated up in the NORTH.

**SECOND BRIT ARMY**

37. Operations were directed to the capture of CAEN whereby a strong LEFT flank would be provided for the bridgehead.

Initially it was hoped that CAEN would be captured by a pincer movement. 30 Corps driving SE from TILLY-SUR-SEULLES was to cross the ORNE NORTH of TILLY-HARCOURT T34, while the newly arrived S...
Corps crossed the ORNE NORTH of CAIN and drove SW to meet 30 Corps. Owing to lack of room to deploy EAST of the ORNE it was finally decided that 8 Corps should form part of the RIGHT pincer, while l Corps carried out a limited operation to secure the LEFT flank of the Army.

38. In pursuance of this general intention, 30 Corps continued its operations around TILLY which was finally captured with HOTTOM on 19 June after some fierce fighting.

Regrouping now took place, and 8 Corps was interposed between 30 and 1 Corps.

39. The plan in outline was:

- **30 Corps (49 and 50 Inf Divs, 7 Armd Div)**: Secure the area NOYERS 86, protect RIGHT flank of 8 Corps and exploit towards AUNAY SUR ODON T85.

- **8 Corps (15 and 43 Inf Divs, 1l Armd Div)**: Break out on front of 3 CDN Div, force crossings of R ODON and R ORNE and secure high ground NE of BRETTEVILLE SUR LAIZE US5.

- **1 Corps**: Hold a firm bridgehead EAST of the ORNE near CAIN. Prepare to attack CAIN from the NORTH if opportunity offered. Minor operations to start 23 June.

40. On 25 June, 30 Corps attacked SOUTH across the road CAUMONT-CAIN. 49 Div captured FONTEVAY-LE-PESNEL T8767 by nightfall and pushed on along the high ground SE. Attempts to hold BRETTEVILLE US86L were unsuccessful in the face of repeated counter-attacks, but a firm hold was secured on the RAURY feature about 2 mile NORTH of the village on 27 June.

On 8 Corps front, 15 Div attacked between LE KERNIL PAFRY T8970 and NORMBY-EN-BESSIN T9270 on 26 June. There was some very fierce opposition in the close country, but by the following day the Div had secured a bridgehead over the ODON NORTH of GAVRUS T9262.

The 11 Armd Div was brought up to secure the high ground BVRELY T9259-ESQUIAY T9361 and to seize the R ORNE crossing. On 26 June, it captured the high ground around Pt 112 9562, while the inf divs were engaged in mopping up and widening the corridor across the ODON.

By 29 June, enemy reactions to the 8 Corps thrust had become most violent. Along the front from JUVICHE T8666 to CAIN, eight panzer divs were concentrated. It was decided that the Corps would concentrate on holding the ground won while further regrouping took place.

On 1 Corps front, 51 Inf Div improved the ORNE bridgehead by securing ST HONORINE U0971 after a stiff fight, while a limited attack by 3 Brit Div NORTH of CAIN on 27 June, met very fierce resistance.

41. By the end of June, both Allied armies were facing SOUTH and the stage was being set for the defeat of the German forces in NORMANDY. He had committed a Panzer Corps brought from RUSSIA, and to compensate for shortage of inf was bringing battle groups from the inf divs in BRITTANY and SOUTH of the LOIRE.

...The Tactical
The Tactical Air Forces had provided continuous close support to the ground troops when weather conditions permitted, and little was seen of the German Air Force by day. At night, Luftwaffe attempts to bomb the beachhead were generally ineffective.

42. From D Day to 30 June, 276,000 tons of stores and 9,920 'A' vehicles were landed for Second Brit Army.

For 21 Army Group requirements, 570 Liberty ships, 788 Coasters, and 2,899 other vessels arrived in France between D plus 1 and 30 June.

F. LOSSES INFlicted ON THE ENEMY UP TO THE CAPTURE OF CHERBOURG

43. In CHERBOURG itself, the enemy lost 39,000 prisoners. In all, on 21 Army Group front it was estimated that his losses in prisoners, killed and long-term wounded amounted to about 90,000 men.

G. CASUALTIES SUSTAINED BY US

44. Brit and Cdn casualties from D Day to 30 June:

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<th>Wounded</th>
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<td>Cdn</td>
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SECTION 2. THE BATTLES LEADING UP TO PALAISE AND THE BREAK-OUT

A. GENERAL PLAN OF THE BATTLE

45. The enemy had been strongly reinforced, but his counter attacks up to date, though fierce, had been spasmodic and uncoordinated. The Allies had gained the initiative from the beginning and there had been no setbacks.

46. The build-up for the break-through was to take place on the RIGHT while the enemy was to batter himself against a strongly held pivot in the CANE area on the LEFT. In the plan for July, therefore, Second Army was to continue to contain the main enemy force between VILLERS BUCAGE and CANE and draw to itself its main strength. On the RIGHT, First US Army was to advance SOUTH in the first stage of a move which, it was hoped, would eventually clear BRITTANY and bring it in a position to cut off any withdrawal EAST which was to be forced upon the enemy.

A strong force positioned in the area LE MANS - ALÉNOIS would, it was appreciated, seriously threaten the enemy's concentration in the CANE area or his retreat should events turn against him.

All the bridges over the SEINE between PARIS and the sea had been destroyed by the Allied Air Forces.

47. Tasks were accordingly allotted to Armies as follows:—

(a) Second Brit Army

(i) To hold the main enemy forces in the area between VILLERS BUCAGE and CANE.

(ii) To develop operations for the capture of CANE as soon as possible.

(iii) To be certain of repulsing the expected counter attack with its own resources to enable the operations of First US Army in the WEST to proceed undisturbed. To this end Second Army was to hold 7 Arm Div in Army reserve.

(b) First US Army

To develop an offensive Southwards starting on 3 July. The initial object of this offensive was to open a gap pivoting on CALVADOS. Through this gap was to pass the remainder of the US forces which would, on the RIGHT, enter and clear the BRITTANY peninsula, and on the LEFT, sweep SOUTH of the "bocage" country to the area LEVAL - MÉZÈNE - ALÉNOIS - LE MANS.

B. THE ENEMY BUILD-UP

48. By 30 June, the enemy had committed eight Panzer, one FG, one Para plus elements of a second, and nine Infantry Divs, with elements of five more — altogether some twenty-five Divs.

The month's fighting had cost him the equivalent of six inf divs. 709 Inf Div was completely written off on the capture of CHERBOURG, while 77, 91, 243, 352 and 716 Inf Divs had suffered crippling losses.
G. 21 ARM! GROUP: BUILD-UP DOWN TO 25 JULY

49. American First US Army - Four Corps
Four Arm'd Divs
Thirteen Inf Divs

Brit and Cdn Armies

Five Corps
Four Arm'd Divs
Ten Inf Divs
One Airborne Div
Seven Arm'd Bns
79 Arm'd Div

D. SUCCESS ACHIEVED

OPERATIONS UP TO THE BREAK-OUT ON 25 JULY

50. On 3 July, VIII US Corps attacked with three divs directed on LA HAYE DU PUIITES T 48. The following day VII US Corps launched an attack with the object of gaining more elbow room in the area SW of CARENTAN. Opposition was very stiff and air support was considerably curtailed through bad weather. Progress was made by both corps, and XX US Corps extended the front of attack on 7 July by capturing ST JEAN DE LAJE T 47 on road CARENTAN - ST LO. On 8 July LA HAYE DU PUIITES was secured by VIII US Corps, and VII US Corps advanced to within 1000 yards of ST BART T 37. In continuous fighting further limited advances continued along the front in the next few days and by 14 July the attack had reached a general line from the coast 3 miles NW of LESSAY T 17 to the high ground dominating ST LO, 2 miles NE and EAST of the town.

51. Meanwhile, on 7 July, after an attack by 450 heavy bombers of Bomber Command, 1 Corps attacked NORTH of CARN with RIGHT 3 Cdn Div, CENTRE 59 Div and LEFT 3 Brit Divs. CARN and CHERQUET T 96 were captured on 9 July.

On 10 July, 8 Corps attacked SE from the ODON bridgehead with 43 Div. Pt 112 was taken that day and changed hands again frequently in the next two days, but after violent fighting the high ground remained in our hands.

On 30 Corps front limited advances were made in the area SOUTH of TILLY where again the fighting was hard.

52. During this fortnight the enemy was forced to commit his reinforcements piecemeal as they arrived. He moved 2 SS Panz Div to the WEST to hold the Americans but had to split it into small battle groups. Pz Leib and 1 Panz Div, whom he hoped to resist, had to be thrown in again after two days' respite to plug holes in the CARN and ST LO sectors.

53. During the ten days ending 24 July, the advance of First US Army continued gradually and reached the general line of the road LESSAY - FERRIERS T 27 - ST LO, the last named being captured on 18 July.

54. In the Brit sector, 30 Corps attacked SOUTH on 15 July and made some progress towards NOURES in the face of stiff counter attacks. On the LEFT of 30 Corps, 12 Corps also attacked on 15 July with 15 and 53 Divs, across the CHER and towards EVRIGNY. The enemy made several counter attacks but these were repulsed with heavy casualties.

55. On the LEFT of the Brit front Second Army launched a powerful arm and inf attack on 18 July, EAST of CARN. The assault was preceded by an attack by over two thousand heavy and medium bombers of Bomber Command and the US Air Forces, who dropped some 6000 tons on enemy positions. Second Tactical Air Force flew nearly 1400 sorties on the first day of the attack.
3 Corps, consisting of Guards, 7 and 11 Arm Divs, passed through the town bridgehead to attack SOUTH astride the high ground traversed by the main road CAGN - MALAISSE U 15. 2 Cdn Corps was to clear the built-up area of CALVADOS U 06 and make a firm base, while 1 Corps protected the LEFT flank of 3 Corps.

Some very stiff fighting followed throughout the area. The armour made good progress at the outset, but after three days' fighting was finally brought to a halt by a strong anti-tank screen. The CAGN suburbs EAST of the ORNE were cleared and the advance reached the general line ST MARTIN DE FOI TENAY U 0260 - BOURGUES U 06 - CAGNY U 1164.

55. On 18 July, the advance of our armour brought 12 SS Pz Div back into the line and drew 1 SS Pz Div in from WEST of the ORNE. Although he had held the arm breakthrough, the enemy suffered considerably in the process. In order to ensure against a further breakthrough SOUTH of CAGN he then brought 9 SS Pz Div, 2 Pz Div and elements of 10 SS Pz Div Eastwards across the ORNE.

This was to have a decisive effect. As a result of three weeks' hard fighting Second Brit army had achieved its aim. Conditions were now favourable for the "break-out".

OPERATIONS UP TO THE CLOSING OF THE FALLAISE POCKET. 25 JULY - 19 AUGUST

56. On 25 July, an American attack preceded by very heavy bombing broke through between FERRIERES and ST LO, and on the same day 2 Cdn Corps attacked simultaneously astride the road CAGN - MALAISSE. In the meantime, in the CENTRE, 12 Corps had captured MILLOT T 9862 and made limited progress SOUTH.

These two Brit attacks, strongly contested, undoubtedly helped to pin down German forces which might have been moved to meet the American thrust. This developed with great speed and power, and after OUTANCES T 25 had been captured on 27 July, AVRANCHES T 21 was taken on the 30th and the advance into BRITTANY began.

57. On 23 July, First Cdn Army took over command of 1 Corps, and assumed responsibility for the sector EAST of CAGN. On 31 July, it also took over 2 Cdn Corps.

On 1 August, Twelfth US Army Group became operational and the fifteen divs of First US Army were divided up to make two armies, First and Third.

58. The operations at this juncture had three objects: to capture the BRITTANY ports, to block the line of the LOIRE and the PARIS - ORLEANS gap, and to destroy the retreating German forces WEST of the SEINE. When it became clear that the enemy did not intend immediately to withdraw Eastwards, a further aim was added which was the envelopment of the Seventh Army and Panzer Group WEST in the area SOUTH and EAST of FALLAISE.

59. During the first week of August, VIII US Corps moved SOUTH and drove WEST into BRITTANY where the enemy was reduced to withdrawing his forces into the three main ports, BRISTE, LOIRENT and DINARD - ST MALO.

The remaining available divs in the vicinity of AVRANCHES were turned EAST in order to turn the enemy LEFT flank.

60. On 30 July, Second Brit Army began a drive from the CAUMONT area directed first SOUTH, and then EAST to the River ORNE. The reason for changing the axis of advance from the line VILLAGES BOUGAIS - CAGN was that in the latter area the enemy had concentrated his main power of resistance. LE BRY BOUGAIS T 64 and JURQUES 65 were captured on 1 August. The advance continued steadily towards the ORNE between ARGENTAN and THURY HARCOURT, with RIGHT 8 Corps (switched from the Cdn Army sector) on the general line AILERS - ARGENTAN, and 30 Corps CENTRE via the MONT PICON feature T 24 to THURY HARCOURT. 12 Corps LEFT served as a pivot in the EVRECY area.
In the face of heavy enemy resistance, Second Army had reached the line of the road PUTANGES U 12 - FALAISE by 19 August.

61. First Cdn Army supported these operations with a heavy attack directed on FALAISE astride the main CABLE road. It was launched on 7 August and preceded by a bombing attack by 1,000 heavies of Bomber Command. The advance reached a point some 4 - 5 miles NORTH of FALAISE where it was halted by an extensive anti-tank screen. The area between the River LAIZE and the ORM was cleared by a junction on 12 August between the Cdns and 12 Corps who had meanwhile forced a crossing over the latter river.

... On 14 August, the attack on FALAISE was resumed and the town was entered on the 16th. The gap between the Brit and Cdn Armies was now only 12 miles wide; further EAST the armed divs of the Cdn Army were closing on CHAMBOIS 32 and TRUM.

62. In the meantime, on 7 August, while the American turning movement on the RIGHT was getting under way, the Germans launched a very heavy counter-attack with five ps and two heavy dive against the First US Army, in the vicinity of MORTAIN. This was directed on AVRANCHES with the object of cutting the COTENTIN peninsula.

The attack was held by First US Army, who were supported by every available aircraft of the Tactical Air Forces, 2 TAF alone used 472 Typhoons and claimed 79 tanks destroyed and 51 damaged on the first day.

As soon as it was seen that First US Army could cope with the counter-attack, the Third Army was directed to continue its advance SE on LAVAL and LE MANS. On reaching LE MANS, it was ordered to turn NORTH to capture ARGENTAN and help Second Brit Army to trap the German forces.

On reaching ARGENTAN, the divisions engaged were taken over by V US Corps of First US Army, and Third US Army were released to continue their drive Eastwards to the SEINE VII US Corps now come in on the LEFT of V Corps, and they advanced to the general line CHAMBOIS - TRUM - PUTANGES. On 19 August they met the Cdns and the "pocket" was closed.

As the Second Brit Army advanced into the "pocket" from the WEST, the American formations were gradually pinched out, and First US Army was ordered to attack NE to the SEINE at ELBEUF, about 10 miles SOUTH of ROUEN. Thus, before the "pocket" had been finally cleared up, a second enveloping move was in progress.

In the extreme SOUTH, XII and XX US Corps maintained their sweep towards ORLEANS and CHARTRES.

E. LOSSES INFlicted ON THE ENEMY

63. With the closing of the FALAISE gap, the number of divs destroyed since D Day amounted to fifteen with another four and a half cut off in BRITANNY. Very heavy losses were suffered by another seven divs. In the same period prisoners and killed counted were approximately 240,000, with long torn wounded making an estimated total of 400,000.

In the "pocket" itself the following equipment was subsequently checked -

Guns 571
Tanks and SP guns 358
Tracked vehicles, lorries and cars 4,715

.../E. CASUALTIES
### F. CASUALTIES SUSTAINED BY US

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SECTION 3. THE ADVANCE ACROSS THE SEINE, THE ADVANCE TO BRUSSELS
AND ANTWERP AND THE CLEARING OF THE CHANNEL PORTS

A. GENERAL PLAN OF THE BATTLE

65. Although large German forces were trapped in the PALAISE pocket on 15 August, they were fighting desperately to break out and had to be mopped up. At the same time, those who managed to avoid encirclement had to be pursued and cut off if they were to be destroyed WEST of the SEINE as was the Commander-in-Chief's intention. Accordingly US XV and XIX Corps were directed to the SEINE at MANTIES-GASSICOURT R6060 and ELBEUF R19 respectively. While First Cdn Army blocked the EAST side of the pocket, Second Army were to drive through it to the SEINE.

The American operations took them NE and NORTH across the front of Second Army. It was therefore arranged that as Second Army closed up to the SEINE the Americans would give passage and then withdraw within their original boundary which ran VERNEUIL R03 - DREUX R33 - MANTIES-GASSICOURT and was inclusive to Second Army.

66. Starting from the area of DREUX R33 on 18 August, the two US Corps thrust rapidly NORTH. EVREUX R16 was reached on 22 August and ELBEUF on 25 August.

Meanwhile, on 21 August, the British Armies from ARGEVANT to the sea pushed on EAST. By 25 August, they were closing to the SEINE on the RIGHT, while further NORTH they were across the R RISLE Q99. The German forces were being harried to a state of disorganisation while the Second Tactical Air Force did great execution among the improvised ferries and congested bottle necks along the lower SEINE. By 25 August also, the mopping up of the enemy in the "pocket" was virtually completed.

67. From 20 August, the Americans began establishing a bridgehead over the SEINE near MANTIES-GASSICOURT. SOUTH of PARIS, which Allied troops entered on 26 August, the SEINE was crossed at ARGENTIERS S20 and the TONNE at SEINS X66, and the Americans were sweeping on towards TROYES and the R MAIRS.

B. FORMATIONS UNDER COMMAND 21 ARMY GROUP AND THEIR ALLOCATION TO TASKS

68. Twelfth Army Group was to revert to direct command of SILEF on 1 September and was to operate on the RIGHT flank of 21 Army Group directed on the ARDENNES. For the time being, the boundary between the two Army Groups would be ELUVIERS H00 - DOUAI H60 - ATH J23 - HASELT K36.

On 26 August orders were issued for 21 Army Group's advance NORTH. The intention was to destroy all enemy in the PAS DE CALAIS and FLANDERS and to capture ANTWERP.

SECOND BRIT ARMY

69. (a) To cross the SEINE on the RIGHT, in the vicinity of VERNON R47 with 30 Corps, and on the LEFT, between LES ANDELYS R39 and LUVTRES R28 with 12 Corps.

The advance of 30 Corps to the SEINE was led by 11 Arm Div, followed by 50 Div, while 43 Div in reserve was to force the crossing.

The advance of 12 Corps was led by 15 Div who were to make the crossing, followed by 53 Div.
(b) To advance NORTH and establish itself in the area ARRAS H40 - AMIENS N15 - ST Eloi H14 with all speed and quite irrespective of the progress of the armies on the flanks. AMIENS and the crossings over the SOMME to be captured as quickly as possible.

For this phase, 30 Corps regrouped and the advance was led by RIGHT, Guards Arm Div, and LEFT 11 Arm Div, directed on the SOMME crossings about AMIENS N15. 50 Div followed up and 43 Div held the SEINE bridgehead.

12 Corps, with 4 Arm Bde and later 7 Arm Div in the lead, was directed on an area NW of AMIENS. 53 Div, echeloned back, protected the LEFT Flank.

FIRST CDN ARMY

70. (a) To cross the SEINE between PONT DE L'ARCHER E29 and the sea, advance NORTH on the general line ST CHER M15 - BRUGES C60 and capture DIEPPE. 53.

(b) To secure LE HAVRE L12.

71. 2 Cdn Corps RIGHT with 4 Cdn Arm Div, 3 Cdn Div and later Polish Arm Div to cross the SEINE in the vicinity of ROUEN M21, capture the town and advance NNE to the SOMME between EAST of ARBEVILLE and the sea. 2 Cdn Div to capture DIEPPE.

1 Brit Corps LEFT, to cross the SEINE WEST of ROUEN. 51 Div on the RIGHT to capture ST VALERY-EN-CAUX L96 and then sweep SW along the coast. 49 Div on the LEFT to seize LE HAVRE. If this was not possible, to contain the port while the necessary build-up was made.

72. When it was evident the enemy were in full retreat on Second Army's front, and withdrawing on the LEFT into the Channel Ports to deny us their use, Second Army were ordered to capture BRUSSELS and ANTWERP and to secure a bridgehead over the ALBERT CANAL. The task of clearing the coastal belt was the responsibility of First Cdn Army.

SUCCESS ACHIEVED

SECOND BRIT ARMY

73. In Second Army sector, bridgeheads over the SEINE were quickly established at VERNON and EAST of LOUVIERS, the enemy opposition being light as a result of the American sweep through the country along the WEST bank. On the other hand, the concentration of the rest of Second Army for the drive NORTH was inevitably delayed by having to pass across this American thrust.

74. The advance from the 30 Corps bridgehead started on 29 August. Bad weather and some opposition delayed matters this day, but on 31 August, after an all-night advance, 11 Arm Div crossed the SOMME at AMIENS. By nightfall Guards Arm Div further EAST had elements astride the road ALBERT N36 - AMIENS. One bde of 50 Div also reached AMIENS. The Corps had advanced 80 miles.

The advance of 12 Corps started from the 15 Div bridgehead on 30 August and by the evening, 4 Arm Bde had advanced over 30 miles to reach GOURNAY M61, and 53 Div were on their LEFT in the LYONS 14 FOREST area H40. On 31 August, 7 Arm Div had come up and reached POIX 534, followed by 53 Div who were mapping up enemy pockets by-passed by the armour.

.../75.
On 1 September, Guards Arm Div by-passed ARRAS and elements reached DOUTAI and ZEEBRUGGE. On their LEFT, 11 Arm Div reached the road ARRAS - ST POL. 7 Arm Div by-passed enemy resistance at ARRAS and then crossed the SOMME.

In the next three days, the advance continued rapidly. Guards Arm Div, now with the Belgian Bde under command, captured TOURNAI H93 and crossed the ESCAUT on 2 September. The div entered BRUSSELS on the afternoon of 3 September and by last light had control of all main exits. 11 Arm Div by-passed LILLE H63 and after an advance of 60 miles on 3 September, were in the area of ALOST by last light. On 4 September, 11 Arm Div were in ANTWERP and 50 Div reached ALOST.

The city of ANTWERP was firmly in our hands but the Northern suburbs adjoining the dock area remained to be cleared.

30 Corps spent the next few days improving their positions in the ANTWERP - MALINES J77 - LOUVAIN J85 - BRUSSELS area.

Meanwhile, 12 Corps had moved on and cleared the ST POL - BEHURNE H32 - LILLE area, and 7 Arm Div captured GHENT J18 on 6 September.

FIRST CDN ARMY

2 Cdn Corps concentrated SOUTH of BLEVIEF on 25 August, and the inf bde of 4 Cdn Arm Div gained a bridgehead over the SEINE in the vicinity of the town on 26 August. In the next few days, the rest of the arm div and 3 Cdn Inf Div expanded the bridgehead, while 2 Cdn Inf Div cleared the thickly wooded areas in the loops of the river SOUTH of ROUEN.

On 30 August, the advance from the bridgehead started. ROUEN was found clear of enemy and FLEURY M30 was captured. Progress was rapid. On 31 August, 4 Cdn Arm Div reached the area FOREST H53 - BUCY H32 and 3 Cdn Inf Div passed through to NEUFCHATEL H44 and BURES H35. By 2 September, 4 Cdn Arm Div were across the SOMME and concentrated EAST of ABBEVILLE H78 and, two days later, 3 Cdn Div were in the BOULOGNE - CALais area.

2 Cdn Inf Div liberated DIEPPE on 1 September and the port was quickly put into operation to a limited degree. The div then moved NORTH around 3 Div. The strongly held defenses of DUNKIRK were reached on 8 September. Those were broken while elements of the div pushed up on the coast. By 10 September, OSTEBOG C60 and NIEUFORT H59 had been occupied and patrols were in ZEEBRUGGE C81.

Meanwhile, the Polish Arm Div had crossed the SOMME, and pushed on to the GHENT - BRUGES Canal, which was held in some strength. 4 Cdn Arm Div came up on their LEFT, cleared BRUGES by 11 September and effected a crossing of the Canal. The two arm divs then closed up to the LEOPOLD Canal over which the enemy blew all the bridges and showed he was determined to deny us a crossing. While the Cdn Arm Div contained the enemy on the LEOPOLD Canal, the Polish Arm Div swung EAST and then NORTH. They took over GHENT from 12 Corps, and then proceeded to clear the area up to the SCHIEDT estuary between ANTWERP and the small port of TERNEUZEN D51.

In 1 Corps sector, 51 and 49 Divs cleared the loops of the SEINE WEST of ROUEN, and got some elements across the river at DUCLAIR M20, GHENDEBEC L32 and GUILLEMIEU L72, but the bulk of the Corps crossed at ELEPH. On 1 September, the advance started. 51 Div thrust up to ST VALERY - EL-CHIX which was liberated on 3 September. They then turned down the coast to come in on the RIGHT of 49 Div
who in the meantime had been engaged with the enemy outpost positions covering LE HAVRE. By 6 September, the Corps had driven forward up to the main defences of this port, which were formidable.

79. Thus in about ten days the Brit and Can Armies had advanced from the SEINE to the Dutch frontier. The coast line was cleared, except for LE HAVRE, BOULOGNE and CALAIS which were about to be dealt with, and DUNKIRK which was to be sealed off.

LE HAVRE

80. The garrison of this fortress was about 12,000 men. The defences ran in a semi-circle from a point on the SEINE about 6000 yds EAST of the port, to the Channel coast about 10,000 yds NORTH of the port. There was a flooded valley on the EAST side dominated by high ground, and an extensive anti-tank ditch along the Northern perimeter sited in conjunction with much wire and very extensive minefields. The anti-tank ditch covered a series of strong points which were of reinforced concrete and contained a large number of 76 and 88 mm guns. In the town there were two forts, numerous pill-boxes and fortified buildings and anti-tank guns sited to cover all approaches.

Of guns capable of being used in a ground role there were 108 of 88 mm calibre or over.

81. The defences were softened up by the 15 inch guns of a Naval Bombardment Sqn and by Bomber Command who dropped 1000 tons during the four days preceding the attack in spite of bad weather. In the 90 minutes before 11 hour, another 4600 tons were dropped.

At 1745 hours 10 September, supported by some 350 guns, one bar of 49 Div breached the minefields and broke into the enemy position in the NE corner of the defences. At midnight, 51 Div on their RIGHT broke in also. Good progress was made. Enemy strong points were taken from the rear, the break through was widened and by dawn on 11 September both divs with mobile columns supported by tanks were getting into the town itself and had reached the high ground overlooking the harbour.

The drive continued during the night and at 1145 hours on 12 September the garrison commander surrendered. Mopping up continued in the port area and by nightfall some 12,000 prisoners were taken including 500 wounded found in hospitals.

One of the strongest fortresses of the "Atlantic Wall" was assaulted from the landward side and reduced in 48 hours fighting.

BOULOGNE

82. The garrison consisted of about 9,000 men. The defences ran along an irregular semi-circle of high ground, with a number of features organised as fortresses. In addition to earthworks, the positions contained a considerable number of concrete emplacements, dug-outs etc. All were wired and covered by extensive minefields. Coast defence batteries contained guns up to 305 mm. It is now estimated that there were approximately 90 guns at BOULOGNE of 75 mm calibre or greater.

83. Owing to lack of air support due to bad weather the assault was postponed for two days. It started at 1025 hours on 17 September when two bars of 5 Can Inf Div attacked after the RAF had dropped over 3000 tons of bombs. Artillery support was provided by about 340 guns. Progress was slowed by obstacles and incidents of the ground and the determined efforts of the heavy batteries, including the guns at CAF GRIE 1922.

.../The Forts
The forts were gradually reduced and all resistance in the town was finally crushed by 22 September.

**CALAIS**

34. This assault was the task of 3 Can Inf Div and was delayed by the operations at Boulogne. It included the capture of CAP GRIS NEZ and the three-gun cross-channel battery at Sangatte.

In addition to the fixed defences which were of the same pattern as those encountered at Le Havre and Boulogne, the GIs were here confronted with extensive flooding caused by the Germans in the area East, South and SW of Calais. As a result, the Div was forced to attack from the West of the town.

The attack was launched with two bdes at 0815 hours 25 September supported by a heavy air bombardment. Good progress was made and on 26 September, the high ground SW of the town of Escalles G77 was secured. Mines and inundations hampered operations but the Citadel fell and the town was entered on 26 September. An armistice was allowed for the evacuation of civilians from Calais and the attack resumed at midday on 30 September. By the same evening all organized resistance had ceased, and mopping up was completed early on the morning of 1 October. CAP GRIS NEZ was captured on 29 September.

85. The British L of S was now well over 350 miles long. Both 8 Corps and 1 Corps were grounded for some days in order to release their vehicles to help maintain the momentum of the drive North. An air lift of approximately 9900 tons had to be made to forward areas between 5 and 30 September, exclusive of air supply on the Armee operation.

Although the LE HAVRE dock installations had been thoroughly wrecked by the enemy, the Brit and US Navies immediately started the task of opening the port, 30 Brit mineweepers being employed. The smaller ports, Dieppe, Boulogne, Calais and Ostend, soon started to operate on a reduced scale, and materially assisted in the maintenance of the Force.

As the coastal belt was cleared, bases for the enemy V weapons in Northern France and Belgium were eliminated or pushed back into Holland and the Dutch islands.

**D. LOSSES INCURRED ON THE IJNEMY**

86. Although heavy casualties were inflicted on all enemy formations engaged on 21 Army Group front, no specific formation can be said to have been destroyed. Some 67,000 prisoners were taken during the period under review, mostly from the ports of LE HAVRE, CALAIS and BOULOGNE. The fortress of Dunkirk, with its garrison of 15,000 men, mostly from 226 Inf Div, was isolated.

Approximately 140 tanks and 50 SP guns were destroyed making the total since D Day 390 and 320 respectively.

**E. LOSSES SUSTAINED BY US**

87. From 25 August to 30 September

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SECTION A. THE ADVANCE OF SECOND BRITISH ARMY ACROSS EASTERN HOLLAND TO NIJMEGEN AND ARDENNES INCLUDING THE AIRBORNE OPERATIONS.

4. GENERAL SITUATION AND OUTLINE PLAN

88. On 4 September, 30 Corps were in the area ANTWERP - LOUVAIN - BRUSSELS; 12 Corps were clearing the area LILLE - ARRAS - SI POL and 6 Corps were grounded a few miles NORTH of the ZUYDSE.

Twelfth US Army Group were advancing astride the ARDENNES. First Cdn Army were clearing the Channel coast.

89. The intention of 21 Army Group was:

(a) To advance Eastwards and destroy all enemy forces encountered.

(b) To occupy the RUHR and get astride the communications leading from it into GERMANY and to the sea ports.

The RUHR was to be by-passed round its Northern face and cut off by a Southward thrust through HAM.

First US Army would assist in cutting off the RUHR by operations against its South-Eastern face if this became necessary.

Until the maintenance situation allowed the employment of First Cdn Army further forward, the main portion of 21 Army Group's task would devolve on Second Brit Army.

90. The first stage of Second Army's operation was to be an advance from the general line of the ALBERT and ESCAUT Canals in BELGIUM to the ZUIDER ZEE. The main body of the Army would then swing EAST while one Div, or if necessary a corps, would turn Westwards towards ROTTERDAM and AMSTERDAM.

On 10 September, it was decided that Second Army would be assisted by an Airborne Corps which would come under command on landing.

PRELIMINARY OPERATIONS

91. On 7 September, Guards Arm Div occupied DIEST K 16 and the following day secured a bridgehead over the ALBERT Canal at BERINGEN K 27 and pushed on to HELCHEREN K 37 and BOURO-LEOPOLD K 28. In conjunction with 11 Arm Div who had come up on their RIGHT, they advanced to the area EIJSER K 48 - OVEREEM K 39, and a bridgehead over the AMSTER - ESCAUT Canal was established NORTH of OVEREEM on 11 September. Patrols also reached the canal at FREE K 56 and LINKLIDER K 57.

Further WEST, 50 Div established a small bridgehead over the ALBERT Canal SOUTH of HELLE K 08 on 8 September, and gradually expanded it until relieved by 15 Div. The latter secured a bridgehead over the AMSTER - ESCAUT Canal at AMST K 09 on 14 September.

Meanwhile regrouping was taking place. 8 Corps, (11 Arm Div and 3 Div) came up on the RIGHT, 30 Corps (Guard Arm Div, 43 and 50 Divs) was in the CENTRE and 12 Corps (7 Arm Div, 15 Div and 53 Divs) was on the LEFT.

B. ENEMY SITUATION

92. The enemy reaction to the establishment of bridgeheads over the canals had been sharp and there had been a number of counter attacks. The enemy was withdrawing his forces across the ESCAUT Batary while holding both banks of it, and was bringing troops round NORTH of the ./ESCUT Canal
ESCAUT Canal to positions further E/N. He had about twenty-two dive on 21 Army Group Front, including three pz. plus a large assortment of improvised battle groups and static formations.

C. FORMATIONS UNDER ORDERED SECOND ARMY AND THEIR ALLOCATION TO TASKS.

The object of Second Army was to position itself astride the rivers MAAS, Waal and NIEUW KIJN in the general area GRAVE E 65 – NIEUWEN E 75 – ARNHEM E 77 and to dominate the country to the NORTH as far as the ZUIDER ZEE, thereby cutting off communications between GERMANY and the LOW COUNTRIES.

The advance was to be on a very narrow front, with only one road most of the way, through HINDHOVEN E 41 – ST GEDEMOND E 43 – VEGHEL E 45 – UDELEN E 51 – GRAVE – NIEUWEN – ARNHEM – NIELDORF E 70 – ZUIDER ZEE at HUMPHREY E 62. From the start line to HUMPHREY was 99 miles.

The advance was to be led by 30 Corps in the CENTRE, while 8 Corps on the RIGHT and 12 Corps on the LEFT advanced more slowly on the flanks.

BRITISH AIRBORNE CORPS

Tasks of formations were as follows:

(a) 1 Brit Airborne Div with Polish Para Bde To capture intact bridges over the NIEUW KIJN at ARNHEM with sufficient bridgeheads to pass the formations of Second Army through.

(b) 82 US Airborne Div To seize and hold the bridges at NIEUWEN and GRAVE with the same object in view. The capture and retention of the high ground between NIEUWEN and CROESBEEK E 75 was considered imperative in order to accomplish the Div's task.

(c) 101 US Airborne Div To seize bridges over the MAAS River and WILLIAMS V....ET Canal near VEGHEL, over the DOMEL River at ST GEOREMONDE, over the WILLIAMS Canal near SON E 42, and to capture the town of HINDHOVEN.

These tasks were to meet the requirements of 30 Corps.

(d) 52 (L) Div (Airportable) Was to be flown in NORTH of ARNHEM as soon as airstrips were available and were to concentrate in reserve nearby in accordance with orders to be issued on landing.

The complete fly-in programme called for five lifts from D Day to D plus 3.

It was decided that the airborne operation would be carried out for the first time, in daylight. It was expected that the German night fighter force, which was relatively intact, would be more effective than their day fighters, though flak would be much more accurate by day. It was believed however, that a proper employment of the supporting air forces...
could knock out flak positions in advance and beat them down during the
airborne operations themselves.

30 CORPS

95. 30 Corps was to advance, when ordered, at maximum speed and
to secure the area ARNHEM - HUNSHELT both inclusive. The advance was to
be made in the following general order:

Guards Arm Div
HQ Main 30 Corps
43 Div
50 Div

One main axis (as given in paragraph 93 above) was to be used,
with a subsidiary axis for part of the way which was confined to fighting
troops only.

96. The tasks given to 30 Corps formations were:

(a) Guards Arm Div / To advance when ordered by Corps HQ, at max-
imum speed to area ARNHEM, and by-passing
HELDORNE, to dominate the area from inclusive
HUNSHELT to exclusive APPELDOORN.

If bridges at GRAVE, HUNSHELT or ARNHEM
were destroyed, the Div was to take all
appropriate action in conjunction with the
airborne troops, to effect a crossing and
facilitate construction of bridges by 43 Div.

(b) 43 Div
(i) To secure area from inclusive APPELDOORN due
SOUTH along high ground to 1 Airborne Div's
bridgehead at ARNHEM.

(ii) To send detachments to secure crossings over
R. LISSEL at EMMERIK Z 90 and ZUIDER Z 99.

(iii) If bridges over the MAAS, MEUSE or MEIJER
rug have been destroyed, be prepared to carry
out an assault crossing and bridging opera-
tion.

(c) 50 Div
(i) Continue to hold the existing bridgehead over
the MAAS - BROUDEL Canal.

(ii) Thereafter, send detachments to secure a
crossing over R. LISSEL at DIERBURG Z 90.

(iii) Advance when ordered and secure high ground
NORTH of ARNHEM, keeping contact with 1
Airborne Div and relieving 43 Div of part of
their responsibility.

(iv) Be available as Corps reserve.

(d) Three groups, each one arm. sect., one sqn ROYLIS and one pl-
bty, with tasks as follows, to assist the airborne forces in
keeping clear the Corps axis.

(i) 15/19H Group To keep clear the HELDORNE area under
operational command 506 RGS of 101 US
Airborne Div.

.../(ii) 44 REM
(ii) 44 RR Group  To keep clear the VEGHEL area under operational command 501 RCT of 101 US Airborne Div.

(iii) SRY Group To keep clear the GRAVE area in support of 82 US Airborne Div.

8 CORPS

77. Its task was to protect the RIGHT and rear of 30 Corps and as 30 Corps advanced, progressively to relieve that Corps of RIGHT flank protection.

This was to be accomplished by capturing WERK K 59 and SOERENDONK E 40, and subsequently extending as far NORTH as HELMOND E 52.

12 CORPS

88. Its role was to continue to operate on the LEFT flank of 30 Corps with the following tasks.

(i) Progressively to relieve 30 Corps of LEFT flank protection by capturing initially REYTH K 19, ARENDONCK E 10 and TUBINGT E 00.

(ii) Subsequently to advance to R MAA S and possibly beyond.

AIR SUPPORT

99. For the airborne operations fighters provided escorts and withdrawal cover, umbrella cover over the Drop and Landing Zones, and undertook anti-flak patrol. Bombers attacked flak positions.

As soon as the drop was over 83 Group (Second Tactical Air Force) were free to support the breakout of the ground troops. This support was based on a pre-arranged requirement of one sqn HP Typhoons every 5 minutes for 35 minutes, briefed to strafe the road NORTH of the forward troops, to be followed by a cab-rank of HP Typhoons flying over the leading arm elements. In addition, the normal fighter effort was available to keep the sky clear.

100. Two aspects of the operation in particular provided complicated problems.

Firstly, the tactical move of approximately 20,000 vehicles across HOLLAND on one route, supplemented by a subsidiary route. This involved a comprehensive organisation of Regulating HQs and Traffic Control Posts, all equipped with wireless sets, and control in the greatest detail by HQ 30 Corps.

Secondly, the bridging problem. Apart from the major water obstacles, there were several sizeable ones to be negotiated before the MAAS was reached. In all there were about 9,000 RE and Pioneer personnel engaged on 30 Corps Front. Nearly the whole resources of 21 Army Group Bridge column were assembled at BOURG LEOPOLD. In addition to this equipment on wheels, some 2,000 lorry loads were also dumped at BOURG LEOPOLD.

D. PROGRESS OF THE OPERATION, SUCCESS ACHIEVED AND LOSSES SUSTAINED

17 SEPTEMBER

101. D day for the operation had been fixed for 17 September, subject to the weather being suitable for airborne operations. On the
evening 16 September, the weather forecast was favourable and at 1900 hours the word was given to lay on the operation.

102. The first blow at enemy defences was struck by Bomber Command on night 16/17 September, when they dropped about 1,200 tons on enemy airfields, and on flak positions along the fly-in route. On the morning of 17 September a further 535 tons were dropped by the RAF and just prior to the arrival of the troop carriers, Eighth US Air Force dropped 3139 bns with 330 artillery weapons, 511 vehicles and over 500 tons of equipment and supplies.

Between 1025 and 1155 hours on 17 September, the force took off, with a strength of 1544 planes and 478 gliders. Of these, 1181 planes and 425 gliders reached their destination. 20,000 troops were landed, together with 330 artillery weapons, 511 vehicles and over 500 tons of equipment and supplies.

103. 101 US Airborne Div were conveyed accurately and with light losses to their Dropping Zones and Landing Zones. Surprise was complete, ground opposition was light and the Div occupied OEN, ST OENDERDE and VENDEL. All bridges were held and were intact except that over the WILKELMA Canal which was blown.

82 US Airborne Div landed successfully and seized intact the WILS bridge at GRUVE and the bridge at HUIJZEN over the WILS - WIL Canal. One Para Regt pushed on into HUIJZEN but was halted about 400 yards short of the WIL bridge by very strong opposition.

Dropping Zones and Landing Zones for 1 Airborne Div were 5 to 3 miles WEST of HUIJZEN. The landing was generally successful and the area of the Dropping Zones and Landing Zones was secured. 1 Para Bde moved on to the bridges. The railway bridge was found blown, but the main road bridge was intact and 2 Para Bn, with some elements of 3 Bn established themselves at the Northern end. Enemy opposition was stiff.

104. At 1310 hours Commander 30 Corps saw that the airborne drop was proceeding according to plan and Guards Armid Div was ordered to attack at 1430 hours.

By 1500 hours the Dutch frontier was crossed by the leading elements and contact was made with enemy dug in on both sides of the road and supported by a number of SP guns. With close support from RP Typhoons and the artillery, the opposition was overcome and the Div advanced some 7 - 8 miles by nightfall to VALKENWALD, about 6 miles short of EINDHOVEN.

Opposition had been a good deal stronger than was expected. Identifications showed that two bns of 6 Para Regt and two bns of 9 SS Div were fighting on the Corps front.

105. On the RIGHT 8 Corps were preparing to bridge the canal with 3 Div AALT of the inter-corps boundary. On the LEFT 12 Corps ordered a night attack, which was successful, and another bridgehead was established across the canal with the object of building a class 9 bridge by morning 18 September.

Both Corps reported that enemy reaction on their fronts had been considerable.

18 SEPTEMBER

106. 30 Corps, led by Guards Armid Div, resumed their advance from VALKENWALD at 0600 hours against considerable opposition. Fighting for most of the day centered about AALT E 41 and EINDHOVEN. Attempts...were made
were made to operate off the road and to broaden the front, but the ground was unsuitable for tanks and the enemy resistance was strong. The capture of 
BRUSSELS from the NORTH by 101 US Airborne Div eventually ended the situation. Contact was established between the two divs about 1700 hours, and the Guards Arm pushed through to the Southern 
bank of the WILHELMIJA Canal near SON, where they proceeded to construct a 
class 40 bridge.

50 Div continued their mopping up operations further SOUTH and maintained their hold on the BRUSSELS – ESCHOLT Canal bridgehead in 
spite of repeated enemy counter attacks from the NE. In order to relive 30 Corps of the responsibility for this bridgehead, 50 Div came 
under operational command of 8 Corps.

107. 101 US Airborne Div consolidated its hold on all the nodal 
points along the axis up to and excluding the OELVIS bridge.

82 US Airborne Div continued to drive for the NIJMEGEN 
bridges but an increase in the enemy build-up prevented their capture. 
The first of a series of counter attacks from the NIJMEGEN Forest 
was made in the morning. It achieved some temporary success and reached the Landing Zone nearest to the Forest, but was eventually repulsed and 
the area was cleared.

110. On the flanks of 30 Corps, 8 Corps established a small 
bridgehead over the ESENDEN Canal in the LILLE ST HUBERT area K 49. 
On the LEFT 12 Corps had two Bdes across in their newly-established 
crossing of the Canal.

19 SEPTEMBER

109. On this day the weather was bad for flying and H hour was 
postponed to 1500 hours. The aircraft which took off had great 
difficulty in reaching their objectives and many turned back. Nearly 
al the resupply for 1 Airborne Div fell into enemy hands, and most of 
the Polish Para Bde could not take off from the UK. The balance of 
82 Airborne Div’s glider lift (258 gliders) did not go in at all, and 
only about 25 per cent of their resupply could reach them. Of 364 
gliders for 101 Airborne Div only 212 arrived. Severe flak was also 
being encountered between the point where the air columns dispersed 
SOUTH of HERMGENHOEK 34, and the landing and dropping zones.

110. At 0615 hours Guards Arm Div started to cross the bridge at 
SON, and by 0830 hours their leading elements had passed over 30/29 
bridge and by 1400 hours the armid bde was concentrated just SOUTH of 
NIJMEGEN. Here 82 US Airborne Div was having a stiff fight with 
troops of 9 SS Div. At 1500 hours a combed attack by 82 US Air- 
borne and the Guards was put in to secure the bridges which were re- 
ported to be still intact. The enemy had a number of 3P guns and 
concrete pill-boxes around the Southern end of the bridge, and our 
troops
troops could make little headway. At last light the enemy were still in possession of the bridge.

111. At ARNHEM the situation was obscure and deteriorating. The Div was trying to concentrate all available forces some 3 miles WEST of the road bridge, while at the same time guarding the Landing and Dropping Zones for Polish Para Bde. HQ and one bn of 1 Para Bde still held an area at the Northern end of the bridge but casualties had been heavy, opposition considerable, and ammunition and supplies were running short. The two other bns of the Bde, together with one bn from each of 4 Para Bde and 1 Airlanding Bde, made another attempt to establish a corridor through to the bridge, but they failed to break through and very few survivors returned.

112. The rest of 30 Corps and 101 US Airborne Div were still mopping up pockets of enemy resistance in the ZUIDER ZEVEN area. The enemy were in fair strength at HELNEN to the EAST of the axis, and at SCHIJNDEN E 43 to the WEST.

On 8 and 12 Corps fronts progress was slow in difficult country which was being stubbornly defended. 11 Arm Div reached LEENEN E 40 and had patrols 3 miles further on at HESSE. In 12 Corps sector 55 Div attacking NORTH and WEST made slow progress.

20 SEPTEMBER

113. The weather was again bad and only resupply missions could be carried out. These were about 60 per cent successful.

The main considerations affecting operations on this day were to secure the HELGEMEN bridge, to ward off attacks from the REICHSWALD Forest where the enemy was building-up, and the overriding necessity of relieving 1 Airborne Div.

114. At first light Guards Armoured Div started to clear HELGEMEN as a step towards securing the bridge, while 50th US Para Regt prepared to make an assault crossing of the R W AL WEST of the town.

At 1500 hours the assault crossing began. In the face of heavy and close fire, and suffering severe casualties, the US Regt made a small bridgehead and gradually expanded it. They then turned EAST. When the American flag could be seen on the far bank at 1750 hours a small force, including tanks and INF of the 82nd Airborne who by then were fighting on the approaches to the road bridge, supported by SP anti-tank guns and REs, rushed the bridge and crossed the 600 yards gap to join up with the US para troops. By 2030 hours the position was strengthened and a firm bridgehead established.

115. At ARNHEM the position of the troops at the bridge was now critical. Ammunition had run out and 300 wounded had to be surrendered. The houses from which they were fighting were gradually burnt out by incendiaries. Finally, at 0500 hours on 21 September, they were formed up into small groups and ordered to make their way back if possible to the main body. The remainder of 1 Airborne Div was defending its perimeter, but this had to be gradually contracted as enemy infiltration increased. The hoped-for drop of the Polish Para Bde was again postponed owing to the weather.

116. 82 US Airborne Div successfully withstood several enemy attacks, fighting in the NELK area about 3 miles SE of HELGEMEN bridge being particularly violent.

To the SOUTH 101 US Airborne Div maintained their positions and repulsed an enemy attack at SON. From the HELNEN area the enemy made another attack at 0800 hours with tanks SP guns and infantry,
to cut the L of C. An organised attack by 501 RCT, assisted by 15/19H, 44 R Tks, GRV and Main Hq 30 Corps, restored the situation at 1100 hours, and the flow of traffic was able to continue.

On the RIGHT flank 8 Corps secured ACHSEL X 49 and HAMONT 49 both of which were short of the Dutch frontier. On the LEFT 12 Corps made some progress and reached the road EINDHOVEN - TURNHOUT, but reported stiff opposition from the WEST.

21 to 26 SEPTEMBER

During this period the main items were the expansion of the NIJVEGEN bridgehead; enemy activities against the L of C but nevertheless a gradual widening of the corridor; and the unsuccessful attempts to relieve 1 Airborne Div and its eventual withdrawal.

Except on 23 September bad weather severely restricted air, operations, and on 22 September no troop carrier operations were possible at all.

On 21 September the Guards Arm Div attempted to reach ARNHEM and carry out their original task, while 43 Div came up into the NIJVEGEN bridgehead. Progress however was slow, and the advance was finally halted by a strong anti-tank screen some 600 yards SOUTH of the railway station at BESSEM E 76. The armour was forced to keep to the road which was about 6 feet above the surrounding country and had deep ditches on both sides. Artillery support was strictly limited and air support was reduced owing to the bad flying weather.

ARNHEM itself was now completely controlled by the enemy, and at 1700 hours he captured the ferry at NEVENDOORP B 67, thus cutting the last possible link to the SOUTH side of the NEER Rijn.

At 1700 hours about two-thirds of the Polish Para Bde were dropped in the area NW and NORTH of ELST E 77. Owing to flak, this drop was made a good deal nearer ELST than had been intended and the Bde suffered heavy casualties. There was some delay in concentrating the Bde in the area from which they were to cross to reinforce 1 Airborne Div.

On 22 September the attack was renewed by 43 Div, while Guards Arm Div rested and made reconnaissances further to the WEST and to the NIJVEGENBOSCH area.

The 43 Div attack was eventually held up outside ELST after some stiff fighting. A mobile column of one bn inf and one sqn tanks made a detour WEST and succeeded in joining up with the Poles at DRIEL 67 and in reaching the NEER Rijn. As, however, the river bank was under close range fire, and the DUKWS (carrying ammunition, medical supplies etc) could not negotiate the steep banks, only a very small amount of stores could be got over by improvised means.

At 1500 hours the 30 Corps axis was cut between UDEN and VERSCHIL with inf and tanks, and at the same time the enemy started shelling ST OENDERODE. The inf bde of Guards Arm Div was despatched to deal with this threat, and at 1530 hours on 23 September the axis was cleared, though it still remained under shell and small arms fire.

On the 23rd, 43 Div slightly strengthened the corridor to the NEER Rijn but by nightfall had not completely cleared ELST. In the afternoon 533 Glider Inf Regt (82 US Airborne Div) and the balance of Polish Para Bde were landed near GRAVE. During the night 23/24 September about 250 Poles were ferried across the NEER Rijn and a number succeeded in linking up with 1 Airborne Div. On the following night 4 DORSETS (43 Div) were able to ferry some 350 men across, but the intense...
Orders were issued on 23 September that the fly-in of 52 (L) Div was postponed indefinitely.

Fighting continued to be violent in the area of BEST and VESENL E 79, the enemy SOUTH of ARNHEM having been reinforced with inf. and tanks, and it was not until the late afternoon of 25 September that these localities were completely clear.

Meanwhile the main axis was again cut SOUTH of VESENL at 1630 hours on 24 September. In spite of strenuous efforts by 101 US Airborne Div, the enemy built up a considerable force during the night — inf., tanks and SP guns. On 25 September 101 US Airborne Div from the NORTH supported by 44 RTR, in concert with 50 Div from the SOUTH, endeavoured to restore the situation. By dark the enemy had been cleared from all but a small area SOUTH of the road, which was, however, still closed. It was not until 26 September that the area was sufficiently clear for traffic to use the axis.

122. During this period, 8 and 12 Corps had been making progress on the flanks, but they too were up against a stubborn enemy in difficult country. While advances were made on both sides of EINDHOVEN, WEERT was captured on 22 September, and LAURENCE E 62 on 24th. By the evening of 25 September, EILMHOVEN and GELDEN were in our hands, and 8 Corps made contact with 30 Corps in the area of ST AVINUS 73.

On the LEFT flank, 12 Corps slowly cleared the area between the road EINDHOVEN — TURNOUT and the road EINDHOVEN — IJZERGEBROEKEN, and made progress towards SCHIJNDEL, but the enemy was still holding out in BEST 36 and BOEDEL 33.

122. On the morning of 25 September it was decided to withdraw 1 Airborne Div from their positions NORTH of the NIEDEKER Rijn that night. Their bridgehead was no longer tenable owing to casualties and shortage of ammunition and supplies. The necessary reinforcements and supplies could only be provided on a limited scale by night with assault boats etc., and each effort would mean a major operation since the enemy dominated the crossing places from the high ground NE and NW. Moreover, the area in which the Airborne Div was located was not suitable for expansion into a Corps bridgehead.

123. During the night 25/26 September 43 Div carried out the withdrawal operation with assault boats. This was done with the greatest gallantry and skill by all concerned, and by 0600 hours on 26 September, when intense fire made further crossings impossible, 2163 men of the airborne Div, 160 of Polish Para Bde and 75 of 1, DORSET were safely evacuated. 180 men of the latter Regt were left on the NORTH bank of the river, still fighting to cover the withdrawal. A few of them managed to return the following night.

RESULT

124. There is every reason to suppose that the operation would have been completely successful if the weather been more favourable. The arrival of the Polish Para Bde and 325 Glider Inf RCT (82 US Airborne Div) on D plus 2 as planned might have provided in time the essential extra inf for the tasks at ARNHEM and NIJMEGEN. Moreover, better weather would have permitted adequate air supply, and the normal scale of air support to the ground troops.

Nevertheless, a deep thrust of some 60 miles was made into country occupied and held by a stubborn enemy, five major water obstacles were successfully negotiated in the face of strong opposition...
and the plan as originally conceived was 90 per cent successful.

The possession of the bridge at Grave and of the Nijmegen area was to be of considerable importance in the later operations, which were to result in driving the enemy from the west bank of the Rhine.

LOSSES

The enemy lost 16,000 prisoners and 30 tanks and SP guns destroyed; 159 of his aircraft were also destroyed.

Total casualties of the Airborne Corps were 9,600, of which the British element was 6986 including 322 killed.
SECTION 5. THE OPERATIONS TO OPEN ANTWERP AND CLEAR THE LOWER RHINE

A. GENERAL PLAN OF THE BATTLE

126. Towards the end of September in general terms the boundary between Second Brit Army and First Cdn Army was MALINES J 77 - TURNHOUT E 00 - TILBURG E 13 - HERTOGENBOSCH E 24 - VREDEHE E 29. In First Cdn Army a regrouping was taking place. 1 Corps from LE HAVRE crossed over to the RIGHT of the Army sector to SE of ANTWERP, relieving those of 12 Corps. The Polish Arm Div, which had been relieved of its responsibilities in the area WEST of ANTWERP on 24 September, joined 1 Corps. In 2 Cdn Corps sector, 2 Cdn Inf Div handed over the investment of DUNKIRK to 4 SS Bde.

127. It can be said that the operations to open ANTWERP started on 1 October. On this date 2 Cdn Inf Div were in process of crossing the ANTWERP - TURNHOUT Canal through the 1 Corps brigades about 5 miles WEST of TURNHOUT. The area between the SCHELDT Estuary and TURNHOUT had been completely cleared. All enemy forces SOUTH of the WEST SCHELDT had been confined in the "island" formed by the SAVOYARDS PLAZA D 2008, the LEOPOLD Canal and the sea. Here they were being contained by 4 Cdn Arm Div. GALAIS was being finally mopped up by 3 Cdn Inf Div.

128. The plan to open ANTWERP fell into three parts:-

First: To seal off the isthmus leading to SOUTH BEVELAND D 42 and to clear the "island" SOUTH of the SCHELDT.

Second: To clear SOUTH BEVELAND by an advance along the isthmus in conjunction with an assault across the estuary from the SOUTH.

Third: To clear WALCHEREN D 13 by concentric attacks from the EAST, SOUTH and WEST. This involved a second crossing of the estuary and a seaborne expedition from one of the Channel Ports. The fixed and heavy defences of WALCHEREN were to be neutralized by bombing the sea dykes and flooding the island.

While these operations were in progress the RIGHT wing of First Cdn Army would be advancing from the ANTWERP - TURNHOUT Canal across the general line of the road TILBURG - BREDA D 73 - ROOSendaal D 73 - BERGEN-OE-ZOOM D 62 to the MAAS.

B. THE ENEMY STRENGTH AND GENERAL LAYOUT IN THE AREA

129. At the beginning of October about nine enemy Inf divs were SOUTH of the MAAS, WEST of ARNHEM. Of these, there were four main divisional groups who would have to be dealt with in clearing the SCHELDT Estuary. Two were in the area BREDA - ANTWERP - BERGEN-OE-ZOOM - HOLLAND, SOUTH of the Estuary, was held by 64 Inf Div, which contained a large proportion of experienced troops from the Russian front. SOUTH BEVELAND and WALCHEREN were garrisoned by 70 Inf Div.

Defences around the SCHELDT Estuary.

130. The enemy coastal defence system analogous in nearly all respects to that found along the Channel Coast was designed to prevent access to the mouth of the SCHELDT. Large coastal batteries located on WALCHEREN ISLAND covered the entrances to the SCHELDT, their fire being crossed by heavy and medium batteries situated in the "island" formed by the LEOPOLD Canal.

THE "ISLAND"
The area was completely flat with a network of minor canals and ditches and numerous areas were flooded. It was criss-crossed by dykes mostly carrying roads and tracks. The fields or polders were open and afforded little cover and the bearing capacity of the soil was poor.

The enemy positions on the far side of the canal were known to be dug in on the reverse side of the canal dykes, difficult to neutralise with HE and St. fire.

In his defensive battle the enemy was materially assisted by the fixed coast defences of BRESKENS D 01, CADZAND C 91 and KNOCKE C 84, and the blys on WALCHEREN Island.

(i) SOUTH BEVELAND

The greater part of SOUTH BEVELAND is reclaimed land held in position by dykes. Movement is restricted to one main road and the minor approach roads along the dykes SOUTH of the main road. Large areas had already been flooded while the remainder was saturated ground.

There were few fixed defences on SOUTH BEVELAND and the enemy relied largely on inundations, extensive use of mines and cratering to hamper attacking forces.

(ii) WALCHEREN Island

The defences were sited primarily to prevent a seaborne landing from the WEST and to cover the entrance to the WEST SCHELDT. The WEST and SOUTH sides of the island were protected by underwater obstacles, wire and inf positions on the dykes and dunes with gun blys in support behind. FLUSHING had a perimeter defence system including two anti-tank ditches. The strongpoints on the SW coast, similar in design and function to those of the NORGANDY beaches were fairly heavily fortified as far NORTH as WESPORKAPELLE, though less heavily fortified than those at FLUSHING. Beaches and dunes and their exits were thoroughly mined. On the island there were 25 active coast blys mounting four or six guns. Calibres ranged from 94 mm to 220 mm, the majority being 150 mm and 105 mm. In addition there were numerous 88 mms and smaller guns sited in strongpoints. The AI defences were heavy.

131. The SCHELDT and its approaches had been extensively mined; the Germans operated a number of explosive motor boats etc, and midget submarines in the area.

2. FORCES EMPLOYED TO CARRY OUT THE TASK

1 CORPS

132. The task of clearing the area between the ANTWERP - TURNHOUT Canal and the Walr was given to 1 Corps. Initially 1 Corps had 49 and 51 Divs and the Polish Arm Div. 51 Div was transferred to 12 Corps on 17 October when Second Army were developing their operations against HERTOGENSCHIJN and TILBURG. 4 Cdn Arm Div and 104 US Div then came into 1 Corps.
2 CDN CORPS

135. Clearing the SCHELDT was the responsibility of 2 CDN Corps. 2 CDN Inf Div had the task of sealing off the isthmus and clearing SOUTH BEVELAND. With the assistance of 4 CDN Arm Div who were to contain the enemy, 3 CDN Inf Div were to destroy the enemy on the "island" SOUTH of the SCHELDT. 58 Bde was to make the seaborne attack on WALCHEREN.

In the course of the operations, certain modifications were made to these plans. 52 Div from the UK joined in the operations SOUTH of the SCHELDT about the middle of October, and 4 CDN Arm Div then moved round EAST of ANтверP to operate on the RIGHT of 2 CDN Inf Div.

AMPHIBIANS

136. In order to cope with the inundations and the saturated ground, and to make crossings of the WEST SCHELDT, a number of amphibians were made available, including some 200 LVTs ("Buffaloes") and 29 Cs ("Wesels"), DUKWs and Terrapins.

ROYAL NAVY

137. The seaborne assault was to be made by Force "T", which consisted of approximately 200 landing and close support craft, supported by a Bombardment Squadron of HMS Warspite and monitors.

D. SUCCESS ACHIEVED

OPERATIONS TO OPEN ANTWERP - CLEARING-SOFF SOUTH BEVELAND

136. On 1 October the LEFT bde of 2 CDN Inf Div occupied BERKEN J 79 without opposition, and the RIGHT bde was in BRECHT D 81. The Northern outskirts of ANTWERP up to the Dutch frontier were cleared quickly, but further EAST the enemy made use of the wooded country to delay the advance. By 7 October, however, the area of WENSCHRECHT D 62 was reached; opposition stiffened considerably as the isthmus was approached.

Some days were spent in dealing with paratroops who were dug in among the dykes and railway embankments in the WENSCHRECHT area, while attempts were made to push up along the main road to NORTHEM D 62. Enemy counter-attacks with inf and tanks were frequent, but the positions generally were held and the enemy was gradually worn down; the isthmus was virtually sealed.

By 20 October, 4 CDN Arm Div had arrived NE of ANтверP and began to exert pressure around KALPETRAUT D 71 and LICHTERBERK D 71. They pushed on with vigour and on the evening of 23 October crossed the Dutch frontier at ESSCHEN D 72. 2 CDN Inf Div had meanwhile improved their positions and were ready to advance WEST along the isthmus.

CLEARING THE SOUTH BANK OF THE SCHELDT

137. The plan of 3 CDN Inf Div was briefly as follows. 7 Bde to establish a bridgehead across the LEERUOLD Canal NORTH of MALBEMEN J 09 through which 8 Bde was to pass. 8 Bde then to seize crossings over the canals at SLUJS C 90 and RETRANCHEMENT C 01 and clear the KNOCKE area. 9 Bde was to assault across the SAVUARDS PLAT D 2313 on D plus 2 and establish a bridgehead on the EAST of the island from which they were to clear the coast up to BRESKENS D 01.

138. The assault across the LEERUOLD Canal was launched at 0530 hrs on 6 October with two hrs after the enemy positions on the far bank had
been flamed by WASPs. Small shallow bridgeheads were made in the face of fanatical opposition and enfilade fire down the canal from the west. It was four days before the bridgehead could be sufficiently expanded to enable the bridges to be built. The enemy reinforced, and counter-attacked repeatedly, but it turned out later that in these efforts he had spent a considerable portion of his best troops.

135. 9 Cdn Inf Bde on release from the CALMIS operations, was moved to GHENT to "hurry-up" with the LVTs of 5 assault Regt RE (79 Arm Div). The Assault Group (two bn's and 2 Cdn Bde HQ) sailed up the GHENT - TERNEUZEN Canal on the evening of 7 October. There was 24 hour's delay at TERNEUZEN owing to trouble at the locks, and the column harrowed in the area without being seen by the enemy guns and OPs across the SCHELDT. At 0020 hrs on 9 October, the expedition emerged into the SCHELDT and sailed some 4 or 5 miles to land two hours later, on beaches at the Eastern tip of the 'island'. Surprise was complete and a bridgehead was established without much opposition.

During the day, however, the guns from FLUSHING and BRESKENS opened on the bridgehead and the craft plying across the SAVOYARDS HU.T. Enemy reinforcements arrived and counter-attacked, but the hold on the island was slowly extended.

In view of the tough opposition on the LEOPOLD Canal, 8 Cdn Bde were brought round and passed across the SAVOYARDS HU.T. 9 Cdn Bde captured the small harbour of HOUDERUDEL D 11, and BIERVLEET D 11 while 8 Cdn Bde pushed SOUTH and SW to open up a land route at the Southern end of SAVOYARDS HU.T in conjunction with 4 Cdn Arm Div. This was affected after some fierce fighting, on 14 October. The two bdes now fought on from one dyke to another, and on 19th, junction was made with troops from the LEOPOLD Canal bridgehead near ST ELIS D 00. The enemy was slowly pushed back to the line BRESKENS - SCHUJISDIEKE D 01 - OOSTBURG - SLUIS, BRESKENS being finally cleared on 22 October.

It is now necessary to revert to the operations across SOUTH BEVELAND.

SOUTH BEVELAND

140. While 4 Cdn Arm Div attacked towards BERGEN OP ZOOM to secure the RIGHT flank, two bdes of 2 Cdn Inf Div were to attack along the isthmus, secure a crossing over the BEVELAND Canal D 42, and drive WEST to seize the causeway between SOUTH BEVELAND and NCHEMEN. The third bde was to cross the SCHELDT from TERNEUZEN to the vicinity of BALKLAND D 31, and join up with the rest of the Div in the area of GRIVENRULDER D 32.

52 Div had now arrived from the UK and in view of the stiff fighting which had already taken place at the isthmus, 156 Bde of this Div was given the task of making the SCHELDT crossing.

141. At 0630 hrs on 24 October 2 Cdn Inf Div started the advance into SOUTH BEVELAND. SOUTH of the main road progress was fairly good, but along the road and NORTH of it opposition was very stiff and the advance was further delayed by the wholesale obstructing of the road. It is difficult to imagine a more unsuitable place to campaign in which to fight a battle. Nevertheless, the Canadians were able to clear the isthmus and on 27 October they reached the BEVELAND Canal, which is about 300 feet wide, and proceeded to bridge it.

142. Meanwhile, 156 Bde of 52 Div had sailed in LVTs from TERNEUZEN at 0245 hrs on 26 October and about 2 hrs later, landed...
on the selected beaches near BAARLAND after a journey of 8 or 9 miles. There was no opposition on one beach, but the more Northerly one was soon shelled and the craft sustained casualties. Counter-attacks were driven off and the bridgehead expanded, a second bde being ferried across on 26 October. On 29 October a link up was made with 2 Cdn Inf Div who had pushed on from the BEVERLAND Canal, and progress was general on the front of both Divs. The Canadians took the Northern route through GOES D 32 and drove for the causeway, while 52 Div moved up on their LEFT through HERBENHEUJ D 22. On 30 October, the advance was halted at the EAST end of the causeway by stiff opposition and mines. The next day 4 Cdn Bde cleared this and troops of 5 Cdn Bde then passed through. They were finally held up about 100 yards from the far end of the causeway by heavy mortar fire and a profusion of machine guns sited in the WALCHEREN dykes. The causeway is just wide enough to take the road and the railway; there is no cover.

COMPLETION OF THE OPERATIONS SOUTH OF THE SCHELDT

143. To return to 3 Cdn Inf Div. After the fall of BRESKENS, the enemy opposition began to crack. With two bdes up, the Div swung SW towards the canal at RETRANCHMENT CAADZAND and its heavy guns were captured without opposition, but parties of enemy fought stubbornly along the coast. A crossing of the canal was quickly effected during the night 30/31 October, and by the following evening the reserve bde had pushed on to KNUNKE. During the next three days, mopping up operations continued in the canal areas between ZEEBRUGGE, SLUIS and BRUGES and the operation closed at 0930 hours 3 November having yielded 12,500 prisoners. Ground conditions had been extremely difficult; for four weeks it had been a hard infantry fight against opposition which the Canadians described as being as stubborn as anything they had met since D Day.

THE CAPTURE OF WALCHEREN

144. Three assaults were to be made on the island -

(a) From SOUTH BEVERLAND. The task of 2 Cdn Inf Div was to make a bridgehead WEST of the causeway. They were then to be relieved by the two bdes of 52 Div whose responsibility would be to clear the SE corner of the island and advance firstly on FLUSHING D 12 and secondly, or alternatively, on MIDDELBURG D 13.

(b) An attack on FLUSHING by No. 4 Commando (4 SS Bde) proceeding direct from BRESKENS in LCA. H hour 0545 hours 1 November. 155 Bde (52 Div) was to be held in reserve at BRESKENS. If the initial assault on FLUSHING was successful, the Bde would immediately follow through. If it failed, the Bde was to move overland to OSTEND and be landed at WESTKAPELLE D 03 to pass through 4 SS Bde.

(c) An attack near WESTKAPELLE by Nos 41, 47 and 48 Commandos of 4 SS Bde, and No 10 (Lt) Commando. The primary task of the SS Bde was to secure the dune area from WESTKAPELLE to FLUSHING and destroy all batteries therein. The secondary task was a similar one in the area WESTKAPELLE - DOMBURG D 03.

As it was essential from a Naval point of view to touch down as soon after low water as possible H hour was 0945 hours 1 November.

145. The main preliminary operation was the bombing by the RNF of the WESTKAPELLE and other sea dykes, whereby the island would be.../flooded.
flooded. The WESTKAPELLE dyke was 330 feet wide at its base and 30 feet high above low water level. If a breach of 300 yards could be made in it, the enemy positions could be taken in rear by waterborne forces.

During October the R.I.F breached the dykes at four points, NE of VEERE 13, both WEST and WEST of FLUSHING and at the Southern end of the WESTKAPELLE dyke. This last breach was 350 yards wide.

As a result, by 1 November, the greater part of the island was below water except for FLUSHING and MIDDELBURG, a narrow belt of dunes along the Northern, Western and Southern sides, and a larger area in the SE corner. About half the batteries were made untenable.

WESTKAPELLE, 1 NOVEMBER

146. At the causeway, a 6in m.m. made 400 - 500 yards progress but was forced back to the WEST and after some fierce fighting.

At FLUSHING, 4 Commando made a successful landing and reached the water front without heavy casualties. They were quickly followed by the leading troops of 155 Base, and together they pushed on into the town. The chief opposition came from strong points and pill boxes on the flanks of their beachhead. The build-up proceeded satisfactorily during the day, though 11 LCAs and LVTs were sunk or damaged by gun fire and mines.

147. The force to attack WESTKAPELLE left OOSTEND on 31 October. The passage was uneventful. The close support squadron of 25 vessels was in the lead, and was timed to arrive one mile off shore at H minus 20 minutes, with the leading groups of landing craft close astern.

Firing from the shore was first observed at 0715 hours when the OOSTEND batteries opened on the FLUSHING assault. At 0812 hours, the bombardment squadron - H.BS WARSPIT and the monitors ROBERTS and ERIBUS - opened fire. Shortly before 0900 hours, the close support squadron deployed, and at 0900 hours battle was joined. By this time, the squadron was being engaged by practically all the hostile batteries (about 9) from NORTH of WESTKAPELLE to FLUSHING.

148. The weather in UK severely restricted flying operations and the pre-H hour fighter/bomber and heavy bomber attacks could not take place. The "cabrank" RP Typhoons of Second Tactical Air Force Ench. the Continent appeared on time and pressed home a determined attack just as the assault troops were about to land. This undoubtedly had a profound effect on the operation at a time when the support squadron was suffering severe casualties from the still active batteries.

The shooting of the Bombardment Squadron was also handicapped as their spotting planes could not take off from the UK. Air observation posts from the Continent eventually took their place.

149. The leading troops touched down at 0957 hours at the gap in the dyke and the remaining landing craft were successfully beached and unloaded by 1200 hours. 48 Commando on the RIGHT captured a strong point SOUTH of the gap, and by evening had made about 2 miles progress towards SOUTHEND D 03 eliminating battery W 13 on the way after a stiff fight.

On the LEFT, 41 Commando negotiated the gap in their LVTs, dismounted and captured WESTKAPELLE village and, after being ordered to halt for a while to await results further SOUTH, were given permission at 1500 hours to push on to MIDDELBURG. Having established a firm base at WESTKAPELLE they advanced to MIDDELBURG by dark, capturing two batteries on route.

.../47 Commando
47 Commando landed about midday, and after some delay in negotiating the gap in the face of very heavy fire, they were assembled for the night about half a mile to the SOUTH.

150. The landing had been successful. It was due in no small measure to the determination of the Close Support Squadron to ensure that the Commandos should arrive safely on the beach and receive the maximum support. The Squadron engaged, and drew to themselves the fire of the enemy batteries; in some cases at point blank range. In the first four hours, the Squadron lost 11 of its 25 craft by gunfire, and another 3 on mines.

**WALCHEREN. 2 – 8 NOVEMBER**

151. At the causeway, 52 Div took over from 2 Cdn Inf Div who were withdrawn into reserve. Further progress here was severely limited by well-sited strongpoints and to ease the situation another assault was made across the SLAAR Channel about 2 miles to the SOUTH. This took place on the night 2/3 November and was successful. The first 400 yards was made in assault boats, after which the troops struggled across the salt marsh for about three-quarters of a mile, well over their waists in liquid mud. More troops crossed in the same way the next night, and by the evening of 4 November, in spite of fairly heavy opposition, a link-up was made with the troops at the causeway. Progress was then made NORTH towards VEERE and SOUTH towards PT RABEN D 12.

152. At FLUSHING, 4 Commando and 155 Bde steadily mopped up the town against concrete strong points and suicide squads who established themselves in the cranes and gantries of the dock area. With the assistance of some mountain guns which were assembled in the upper floors of houses and mortar barrages from the roofs of buildings the town was cleared by the evening of 3 November.

153. On 2 November, 4 SS Bde pushed on past ZOUTELINDE and after some fierce fighting for the enemy battery W 11, a junction was made the next day with the force at FLUSHING.

In the NUTCH, the enemy fought back strongly in the dunes and woods NE of MIDDLEBURG where mines and wire were widespread. With the assistance of two gun tanks and two AVREs, the sole survivors of about twenty which had attempted to land at WESTKIPELLE on D Day, the Commandos gradually mopped up towards VROUWENALDER D 1438.

154. Resistance was now almost at an end. On the afternoon of 6 November, a "left-flanking" attack in LVTs from FLUSHING across the inundations, was made on MIDDLEBURG, and the German Commander was captured. With the aid of the amphibians, the rest of the island was cleared and on the 8 November the operation ceased, some 8,000 prisoners having been collected on WALCHEREN.

**ANTWERP**

155. On 4 November the first minesweepers reached ANTWERP. One of the most intricate sweeping operations of the war now had to be carried out. 100 minesweepers were employed clearing the 70 mile long channel, which had to be swept 16 times. 406 mines were accounted for. On 26 November a convoy of 18 ships reached ANTWERP safely.

**OPERATIONS TO CLEAR THE LOWER RHINE**

156. When the withdrawal of 1 Airborne Div from ARNHEM had been effected on 26 September 30 Corps was concerned with expelling the MIDDEN bridgehead and keeping open the corridor, while 8 Corps on the RIGHT and 12 Corps on the LEFT came up on the flanks.
30 Corps gradually expanded WEST between the NEDER-RIJN and the MAAS, and SW across the MAAS towards HERTGEBOOGCH to link up with 12 Corps which was directed on SCHIJNDEL.

Further WEST, 1 Corps of First Cdn Army was moving towards the line TILBURG - BERGEN UP ZUM.

157. WEST of ARNHEM, the position was gradually improved and the enemy, despite repeated counter attacks, was pushed across the NEDER RIJN to just short of WAGENINGEN E 57 whence the line ran generally SW to a point about 4 miles EAST of HERTGEBOOGCH.

Meanwhile, the boundary between Second British and First Cdn Armies was temporarily moved further West and 12 Corps was directed on the MAAS through the general area HERTGEBOOGCH - TILBURG - WESTERHOUT E O6.

158. On 22 October, 12 Corps launched an attack EAST of HERTGEBOOGCH with RIGHT-53 Div and LEFT 7 Armd Div, while at midnight 51 Div attacked EAST of SCHIJNDEL. Although conditions were difficult owing to extensive flooding in some areas, progress was good. HERTGEBOOGCH was cleared by 53 Div on 27 October, and the following day 15 Div on the extreme LEFT of the Corps, secured TILBURG. 51 Div and 7 Armd Div then continued the sweep towards the MAAS and cleared the country as far WEST as WESTERHOUT and GEERTHULDENBURG O6, the latter remaining in enemy hands for the time being.

159. In the Cdn Army sector, early in October 49 Div and Polish Armd Div of 1 Corps, made progress NORTH of TURNHOUT to within 4 miles of TILBURG on the RIGHT and to ARNHEM 02 on the LEFT. A pause was then occurred while 4 Cdn Armd Div arrived from WEST of ANTWERP. On 20 October, 1 Corps launched an attack to clear the RIGHT flank of 2 Cdn Inf Div (attacking towards SOUTH BEVERLAND isthmus). Progress was steady through the thickly wooded country. GEERTRUIDENBURG was captured by the Poles on 29 October, and 4 Cdn Armd Div secured BERGEN OF ZAAL on the same day. RHEINZentral and JUDES'TEL D 73 were cleared by 49 Div on 30 October. Meanwhile, 10th US Inf Div came under 1 Corps, and positioned between Polish Armd Div and 49 Div, joined in the sweep up to the MAAS. On 8 November NOORDLIJN 46 where the enemy had blown the bridge, was finally cleared by the Polish Armd Div, and the SOUTH of the MAAS, including the island of TRIJLEN and the ST PHILIPSLAND Peninsula D54, was completely in our hands.

E. LOSSES INCURRED ON THE ENEMY

160. The German Gt Inf Div was destroyed SOUTH of the SCHELDT and 70 Inf Div on WAGENINGEN. The scattered remnants of nine divs were driven across the MAAS and the WALLY, yielding 54,000 prisoners.

F. CASUALTIES SUSTAINED BY US

161.

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Cumulative from D Day

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SECTION 6 · OPERATIONS FOR THE DESTRUCTION OF THE ENEMY WEST OF THE RHINE

A. GENERAL PLAN OF THE BATTLE

162. The destruction of the enemy WEST of the RHINE on the front of 21 Army Group had two phases:

First. Preliminary operations to clear up to the R MAAS and the R ROER and activity along the river line in HOLLAND.

Second. Operations to clear the area between the MAAS and the RHINE.

FIRST PHASE · OCTOBER 1944 · JANUARY 1945.

163. This followed on from the ARNHEM operation at the end of September when, in the NORTH, a bridgehead had been established in the area GRAVE - NLMEGEN and, in the SOUTH, First US Army were across the MEUSE in the area MAASTRICHT - AACHEN.

Subsequent operations may be summarized as follows:

(a) During October, 8 Corps, with 7 US Armd Div under command, captured ZWOLLE 272 and reached the MAAS Northwards from BINNENBERG 74. They repulsed a counter attack by three enemy divs in the MEIJEL area 70.

(b) In November, 12 Corps handed over their sector on the Lower MAAS to 1 Corps and came across to come in on the RIGHT of 8 Corps, followed shortly afterwards by 30 Corps who had been relieved at NLMEGEN by 2 Cdn Corps. 30 Corps moved further SOUTH to the area of SITTARD K66, near the 21 Army Group/Twelfth US Army Group boundary.

(c) HQ Airborne Corps had returned to the UK on 9 October, but 82 and 101 US Airborne Divs remained under Second Army in the NLMEGEN area, taking part in some very stiff fighting. They were eventually relieved when 2 Cdn Corps took over. 82 Div were released to Twelfth US Army Group on 12 November; 101 Div on 27 November.

(d) While 8 Corps steadily pushed the enemy across the DEURNE Canal towards VENLO, 12 Corps attacked on 14 November from EAST of WEERT towards ROERMOND K79. On 19 November, 30 Corps with 84 US Inf Div under command, attacked towards GEILENKIRCHEN K86. By early December, the enemy had been cleared from the whole WEST bank of the MAAS as far SOUTH as MASSEYCK K67. From this point our line crossed the river and ran just NORTH of SITTARD to inclusive GEILENKIRCHEN.

(e) On 13 December regrouping started for the second phase. This operation was to be carried out initially by 30 Corps who were to attack EU from the NLMEGEN area.

12 Corps took over in the SOUTH and HQ 30 Corps moved to BOXTEL E33.

164. (a) The German offensive in the ARDENNES

On 16 December, Von RUNDSTEDT launched his ARDENNES offensive against First US Army. On 20 December, the US First and Ninth Armies came under operational control of 21 Army Group.

30 Corps, consisting of 43, 51 and 53 Inf Divs and Guards Armd Div, was concentrated in the general area LOUAIN - HASSELT. Later, 43 Div was replaced by 6 Airborne Div and transferred to 12 Corps.

.../On the RIGHT
On the RIGHT of First US Army, 30 Corps operated on the Northern and Western flanks of the ARDENNES salient. When the Allied counteroffensive started on 3 January, the Corps advanced from the line of the road MARCHE - MOTTON on LAROCHE capturing some 700 prisoners. As the salient was gradually eliminated, 30 Corps was pinched out, and on 14 January Corps HQ proceeded to BOXTEL to resume its preparation for its original operations.

On 16 January, First US Army reverted to command Twelfth US Army Group, having taken 20,000 prisoners in the operation up to date.

(b) During the first week of December, the enemy blew a flood bank SW of ARNHEM. Large areas were flooded and this finally decided the issue that the main effort of 21 Army Group would be made Eastwards across the RHINE rather than Northwards across the R LEK.

Meanwhile, on 16 January, 12 Corps with 7 Arm Div, 43 and 52 Divs, attacked NORTH from the road GEILenkIRCHEN - SITTARD. The object was to clear the area between the R ROER and the MAAS so that it would serve as a base from which to develop further operations in conjunction with the attack from NIMIJERGEN.

The operation was carried out under conditions of hard frosts, sudden thaws and thick fog. In ten days the area SOUTH of the ROER was cleared except for a small bridgehead SW of ROERMOND. Altogether this offensive cost the enemy some 3000 Prisoners of War and about the same number killed and long-term wounded.

43 Div then moved to Cdn Army sector. On 6 February, XVI US Corps of Ninth US Army became operational and took over the whole of 12 Corps area.

SECOND PHASE. FEBRUARY - MARCH 1945

166. The plan was as follows :-

(a) Operation VERITABLE
First Cdn Army, reinforced by 30 Corps, was to attack from the general line NOOK B75 - NIMIJERGEN to destroy the enemy between the MAAS and the RHINE, and to break through in a Southwesterly direction between these two rivers.

(b) Operation GRENADE
At the outset, Ninth US Army was to hold its front on the R ROER from JUlich F05 NW to ROERMOND. At a date to be fixed by Commander-in-Chief 21 Army Group, it would develop an offensive across the ROER in conjunction with the Cdn Army operation.

(c) Second Brit Army in the CENTRE was to hold the WEST bank of the MAAS from ROERMOND Northwards to CUIJK 74, and be prepared to operate on the RIGHT of First Cdn Army at a later date.

When these operations were completed, 21 Army Group would be poised ready for the next phase, with a front formed along a length of the RHINE.

E. FORCES EMPLOYED AND TASKS ALLOTTED.

167. (a) Initially, First Cdn Army was to attack on a one Corps front with 30 Corps. Subsequently, 2 Cdn Corps, while still holding NIMIJERGEN and the MAAS bridgehead, would take over the LEFT sector and the attack would proceed on a two-corps front. 1 Corps, to the WEST would continue to hold its 125 mile front along the MAAS.

(b) 30 Corps was to attack with five inf divs up, as under:-
RESERVE and FOLLOW UP - 43 Div

Guards Armd Div.

In addition, the Corps included three independent arm’d bdes, eleven regts of 79 Armd Div grouped under one Bde HQ and five AGsRA. The total guns to be employed for the attack was over 1000.

All the resources of Second Tactical Air Force were made available to support the operation, in addition to heavies of IX US Bombardment Division and Bomber Command.

168. The respective attacks by the Divs on D Day were as follows:-

- 51 Div - To capture the high ground near the SW corner of the REICHSWALD FOREST.
- 53 Div - To seize the high ground on the Northern edge of the REICHSWALD.
- 15 Div - To attack straight through to KRANEHURST BB5 and then to the high ground overlooking CLEVE B85.
- 2 Cdn Div - To capture WIENER E75.
- 3 Cdn Div - Late afternoon D Day to drive EAST across the marshy ground to the CLEVE - ALTE Rhein Canal.

D Day was 8 February; H hour 1030 hours except for

3 Cdn Div.

169. Exploitation. When 15 Div had captured CLEVE, its task was to send mobile columns to capture UDEN 94 and CALCAR A05 and to clear the road CLEVE - EMERICH E96 as far as the RHINE.

43 Div was to pass through 15 Div on D plus 1 to attack SOUTH to GOCH E94. 53 Div was to clear the REICHSWALD. 51 Div, using the good road SOUTH of the forest, was to converge on GOCH with 43 Div. The Guards Armd Div was to follow 43 Div to seize and hold the high ground NORTH of SCHWECK A05 and push forward a strong mobile column to capture WESSEL bridge if it was still intact.

C. ENEMY DIVISIONS AND STRENGTH IN THE AREA

170. The enemy forward positions at the REICHSWALD were held by 84 Inf Div reinforced by a three-battalion battle group, a para regt and some police battalions. Further back in the area were 180 and 190 Inf Divs. Reinforcements finally engaged were 1, 6, 7 and 8 Para Divs, Pz LEHR and 116 Pz Divs and 15 PG Div.

When United States Army attacked from the SOUTH, they were opposed by five other inf divs which were reinforced by one inf div and 11 Pz Div.

171. In the NORTH, the defences were roughly in three main zones; the forward positions covering the REICHSWALD; the SIEGFRIED Line about 3 kilometres further EAST at its nearest point and the "lay-back" position running in front of the HOCHWALD Forest which continued down to the RHINE.

.../There were
There were innumerable trench systems, switch lines and loops with anti-tank ditches linking the large wooded areas and the natural drainage systems. All towns and villages were transformed into strong points.

Along the line of the RHINE itself, an extensive trench system was developed, the chief concentrations being at suitable crossing places and ferry sites. The towns of VENLO and ROERMOND were heavily defended.

172. An estimate compiled from order of battle sources showed that against the First Can Army the enemy eventually had available 7178 to 30 cm mortars, and 105 guns of various calibres.

D. SUCCESS ACHIEVED

173. The attack went in at 1030 hours on 8 February. Artillery support was excellent, but the weather interfered considerably with the bombing programme and close air support. Surprise was gained and by midnight all objectives ordered for the day had been attained; opposition was stiffest on the RIGHT, in front of 51 Div where local reserves were readily available.

On 9 February, progress was steady, though somewhat less on the RIGHT. 15 Div on the LEFT pierced the SIEGFRIED defences at MUTTERDEN E85 and by nightfall were in the outskirts of CLEVE. Late in the evening 43 Div started to pass through. NORTH of the main road CLEVE - NIJMEGEN, 3 Can Div were carrying out successful amphibious operations.

174. Flooding, however, was rapidly becoming a serious handicap to the operation. The RHINE, MAAS and WaAL had risen above the recognised danger mark and the water was approaching the main road near KRANENBURG. As a result of the past experiences of the Dutch, it was decided to blow certain dykes NE of NIJMEGEN. This was done and about two million gallons an hour poured away through the breaches. The Germans, however, countered by blowing the dykes on the ALTIER RHINE some 9 miles to the EAST, and let in about the same quantity of water.

In the SOUTH, the valley of the ROER was also flooded, and it was apparent the American attack would have to be postponed.

On 12 February, there were two feet of water across the main road for a length of about 5 miles near KRANENBURG. Alternative routes had to be found; these were mostly across saturated ground, and considerable traffic congestion occurred.

175. Enemy opposition increased as reinforcements arrived, and a total of nine divs were identified on the front in the first five days. Due, however, to the interdiction programme, these were committed piecemeal.

By 13 February, the SIEGFRIED Line had been breached and the REICHSWALD completely cleared. The RIGHT flank of 30 Corps was on the MAAS about 3 miles SOUTH of GENNEP E74 where the construction of a bridge was started. On the LEFT, the waterborne activities of the Cans had brought them opposite EMMERICH.

During the next nine days, the front was extended SOUTH and EAST of the REICHSWALD. GOCH was captured and operations developed against CALCAR.

176. On 23 February, Ninth US Army launched their operation across the ROER, with XIX US Corps on the RIGHT and XIII US Corps on the LEFT. The attack was directed NE and NORTH towards ...

/DUSSELDORF
DUSSELDORF and MUNCHEN GLADBACH F08 and aimed to link up with First Cdn Army.

Twelve hours after the assault crossing, there were sixteen bns across the ROER and in spite of difficulties with the swollen river, by early morning 26 February, six class L0 trestle bridges and several inf bridges had been erected. In three days a bridgehead about 16 miles wide and 6 - 8 miles deep had been established, and XVI US Corps came in on the LEFT.

Meanwhile in the NORTH, regrouping had been going on for an operation to be carried out by 2 Cdn Corps who had become responsible for the LEFT sector from 15 February. The intention of this operation (BLOCKBUSTER) was to break through the enemy defences between UDEM and CALCAR, smash the HOCHWALD Line and exploit to XANTEN.

30 Corps was to swing round on the RIGHT of 2 Cdn Corps.

The regrouping resulted in 30 Corps having one arm div, five inf divs and three independent arm bdcs, while 2 Cdn Corps had two arm divs, three inf divs and one independent arm bde. A corresponding redistribution of the regts of 79 Arm Div also took place.

Further SOUTH, Ninth US Army extended its front along the WEST bank of the MAAS up to VENLO and the following US formations came under command Second Brit Army.

95 US Inf Div from 14 to 22 February.
75 US Inf Div from 21 February to 2 March.

The operations started at 04.30 hours on 26 February against a number of para divs who fought desperately. A large number of tanks were bogged down in the heavy grounds, but the two arm divs pushed on through the night 26/27 February and the HOCHWALD was penetrated on 27 February. That night again the advance continued and a gap was made between the HOCHWALD Forest and the BALBERGER Forest near the railway line, A 0441.

As soon as this attack got under way, opposition on 30 Corps front showed signs of loosening. On the RIGHT, 52 Div who now had 1 Commando Bde from Second Brit Army under command, pushed on along the MAAS for about 8 miles and reached WELL E82. In the CENTRE, 53 Div captured WEIZE E93 and with 3 Brit Div on their LEFT, pushed along the road through KEVELLER B93 to GELDERN A 02, where they linked up with Ninth US Army on 3 March.

The advance of the Americans had been rapid. On 27 February, the three Corps advance had broken through the enemy main line of defences. XIX Corps on the RIGHT, were in MUNCHEN GLADBACH on 1 March and captured NEUSS F08 the next day. At the same time, ROERMOND and VENLO were secured.
The operation now entered its last phase. Although his Paratroops fought on stubbornly, the enemy bridgehead was gradually eliminated. The Americans advanced along the WEST bank of the RHINE through KREFELD A10 and OBESOY A22. When the XANTEN area had been cleared by 2 Cdn Corps on 9 March, the enemy’s last main centre of resistance had fallen. On 10 March, the Allied troops finally completed the mopping up in the bend SW of WESSEL A24. At 1040 hours, an air observation post reported both WESSEL bridges blown.

These two operations by the Cdn and Ninth US Armies had direct bearings on one another. The delay in mounting the American assault, due to the excessive flooding, caused First Cdn Army to bear the brunt longer than was intended; by so doing, they attracted to themselves several enemy formations from further SOUTH. On the other hand, the rapid success of the Ninth US Army attack in turn reduced the resistance in the NORTH, as the enemy found himself threatened with encirclement.

The operations achieved their object. 21 Army Group was now ranged along the WEST bank of the RHINE from DUSSELDORF to ARNHEM.

**E. ENEMY DIVISIONS DESTROYED AND CASUALTIES INFlicted**

Although all the enemy divs engaged continued to exist in name at least, seven inf divs were virtually written off, while three para divs and 15 FC Div suffered very heavy casualties.

The Cdn Army took 22000 Prisoners of War with an estimated 22,000 killed and seriously wounded. The American Army took 29,000 Prisoners of War with another 16,000 estimated killed and long-term wounded.

Since 26 September, after the withdrawal from ARNHEM, the British and American Armies in 21 Army Group had taken 196,600 prisoners and destroyed 530 tanks and SP guns.

**F. CASUALTIES SUSTAINED BY US**

(a) Brit and Cdn casualties from 8 February to 10 March were killed 2336, wounded 11,104, missing 1464. Total 15,100.

Ninth US Army casualties from 23 February to 10 March were killed 1340, wounded 5839, missing 299. Total 7,478.

(b) Cumulative from D-Day

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SECTION 7  THE CROSSING OF THE RHINE AND THE ADVANCE TO THE BALTIC

A. THE GENERAL PLAN OF THE BATTLE

The intention of 21 Army Group was to establish a bridgehead over the RHINE, isolate the RUHR from the rest of GERMANY in conjunction with First US Army, and break into the NORTH German Plain.

The Army Group operation was given two code names:

HANDBER to denote the RHINE assault by the ground troops.

VARSITY to denote the airborne drop across the RHINE.

In general, the plans of Armies in HANDBER were as follows:

(a) Ninth US Army. Assault across the RHINE near HUSENBERG A 22. Protect the RIGHT flank of Second Brit Army and the bridging sites at WESSEL A 26. Secure a bridgehead from the junction of the RUHR and RHINE rivers in A 21 - Bottrop 42 - Dorsten 44. Be prepared to advance to general line inclusive Ham B 04 - inclusive Munster A 97.

(b) Second Brit Army. Assault across the RHINE in the area of Xanten A 14 and Rees A 05. Establish a bridgehead from exclusive Dorsten - all inclusive Burken A 36 - Alten A 27 - Drentichem 07 - Much Xanten feature E 96. Subsequently advance on a three corps front.

(c) First Cdn Army. Carry out feints along the RHINE on LEFT flank of Second Brit Army. Be prepared subsequently to advance into Eastern Holland and protect LEFT flank of Second Brit Army.

(d) First Allied airborne army Operation VARSITY was to be carried out by XVIII US Airborne Corps, of two divs. The intention was to seize the high ground and certain bridges about 5 miles NORTH of WESSEL to speed up the capture of WESSEL and assist the RHINE crossings.

D Day 24 March. A postponement of up to five days would be accepted if weather delayed the airborne operation.

The Air Plan covered long term interdiction to isolate the battle field and pre D Day bombing by heavies of jet airfields and enemy communications etc. On D Day the air forces were to provide escort and protection for the airborne operation and close support for the ground troops, with bombing of specific targets and neutralisation of troop movements.

B. THE FORCES EMPLOYED BY 21 AMY GROUP AND THEIR ALLOCATION TO TASKS

NINTH US ARMY

189. (a) XVI US Corps (one arm and four inf divs)

To assault across the RHINE in vicinity of HUSENBERG, with RIGHT 79 US Inf Div and LEFT 30 US Inf Div. To secure the army bridgehead and prevent enemy ground action from interfering with use of WESSEL bridge. To establish and maintain 

.../contact with
contact with Second Brit. Army on the LEFT.

The artillery support for the assault of XVI Corps was provided by 624 guns from 25 pr upwards.

H Hour 0200 hours D Day.

(b) XIII US Corps. (One armd and two inf divs).

To hold firm base on WEST bank of the RHINE from the bridgehead as far SOUTH as WURINGEN F 37.

(c) XIX US Corps. (One armd and three inf divs).

To be prepared to pass through the RIGHT of Second Brit. Army to secure the line HAAR - MUNSTER. To assume command of 17 US Airborne Div when released by Second Army.

SECOND BRIT. ARMY

190. (a) 12 Corps. (One armd and three inf divs; one armd bde, one bde 79 armd Div, one cdo bde).

(i) Capture river plain inclusive WESEL to inclusive HALDEN A 14 as follows:

RIGHT : 1 Cdo Bde cross RHINE NW of WESEL. To capture WESEL and bridges over R LIPPE and SEITEN Canal A 23.

LEFT : 15 Div cross RHINE on two bde front about SAXEN and establish bridgehead.

H Hour fr. Cdo Bde assault 2200 hours D - 1; for 15 Div assault 0200 hours D Day.

(ii) 52 Div to deny line of WEST bank of the RHINE to the enemy throughout the Corps front. Hold one inf bde group ready to cross river and operate under command 15 Div.

(iii) Extend bridgehead to line of R ISSEL. 15 Div to relieve 6 Brit Airborne Div in area HAIDINKELN A 24 and the bridges there over the R ISSEL. 53 Div and 7 armd Div to build up across the RHINE.

(iv) 53 Div with under command 1 armd Bde to cross the R ISSEL and capture BOCHOLT A 26. 7 armd Div to cross R ISSEL once 53 Div was clear, and capture BURKH. Thereafter be prepared to operate towards RHEIDE A 26 and SALTILLO A 47.

(b) 30 Corps. (One armd div and four inf divs; one armd bde, and one bde 79 armd Div).

(i) 51 Div to assault near HEES A 05, capture HEES and HALDERN A 15 and establish bridgehead.

H Hour 2100 hours D - 1.

(ii) 3 Brit Div to hold line of WEST bank of the RHINE along the Corps front. Later be prepared to operate under 8 Corps to develop Second Army bridgehead.

(iii) Develop bridgehead on a two div. and later a three div. front by a build up with 43 Div. and 3 Can Div respectively. 3 Can Div to be prepared, under command 2 Can Corps, to capture EMMERICH at a later stage.

.../(iv)
Guards Arm Div to be prepared to pass through the bridgehead on the axis Aalten - Groenlo 28 - Haaksbergen 39, or on the axis Socholt - Vreden 38.

XVIII US Airborne Corps (Two airborne divs).

(i) 6 Brit Airborne Div to clear and secure in general the NW portion of the Dietersfort Wood A 1746 and Hamminkeln, and to seize the bridges over the Rh charcoal East and NE of the village.

17 US Airborne Div to clear and secure, in general, the SE portion of the Dietersfort Wood and to seize the bridges over the Rh charcoal about 2 miles NE of Hamminkeln.

Both Divs to start dropping at P hour, which was 1000 hours D Day.

(ii) The airborne divs were to establish contact with 12 Corps and 1 Oso Bde, and 6 Brit Airborne Div was to be relieved by 15 Div. XVIII US Corps would then push on East, extending South of the Rh Lippe, and assume command of 1 Oso Bde. It also had a call on 6 Guards Arm Bde.

(iii) 17 US Airborne Div to pass to Ninth US Army when convenient.

2 Cdn Corps (One arm and two inf divs. one arm bde).

(i) To cross Rhine at Rees, take 3 Cdn Div under command, and capture Emmerich and the Hoch Elen feature.

(ii) To establish a bridgehead and bridge the Rhine at Emmerich.

(iii) To revert to First Cdn Army when Emmerich bridges were built.

8 Corps

This Corps held 11 Arm Div (Army reserve) and 6 Guards Arm Bde which was required for XVIII US Airborne Corps as early as possible. HQ 8 Corps was to relieve HQ XVIII US Airborne Corps (earmarked for a possible operation elsewhere) on D + 7, taking command of both airborne divs.

The Corps task would be to pass through the right of Second Army bridgehead, extend to the line Dorssten to the north, and be prepared to advance NE.

In Second Army reserve were:

11 Arm Div, administered by 8 Corps, 34 Arm Bde

Army Troops - 115 Inf Bde: 33 Belgian Fus Bn: 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6 Dutch Indep Coys.

Rail

The artillery support for the assault by Second Army was provided by 1338 guns from 25 pr upwards.

Engineers

The following engineers were employed in the army group operation:

- Re and Pioneers 37,000
- US Engineers 22,000

NAVAL FORCES

Force 'U' of the Royal Navy, consisting of 45 LCM(3) and 45 LCVP, supported Second Army's crossing. These craft were brought overland on transporters. Parties were provided for the erection of booms and nets on the Rhine, and for dealing with saboteurs, midget submarines, explosive motor boats etc.

...On Ninth
On Ninth US Army's front, similar forces from the US Navy were provided.

FIRST CDN ARMY

192. (a) 2 Cdn Corps

(i) On passing from command Second Brit Army to be prepared to advance with:

4 Cdn Arm Div on RUERLO A 18 and DELDOORN Z 2907
2 Cdn Div on ZUTPHEN B 99
3 Cdn Div on DEVENTER Z 90
2 Cdn Arm Div

and protect LEFT flank of Second Army.

(ii) If enemy should resist strongly at ARNHEM against 1 Cdn Corps, 2 Cdn Corps would attack across the RHINE against APELDOORN Z 70, probably with 1 Cdn Div.

(b) 1 Cdn Corps. (5 Cdn Arm Div, 1 Cdn Div and 49 Div)

(i) To assault from the NLNUGEN bridgehead and capture ARNHEM.

(ii) To advance to the ZUIDER ZEE and cut German communications with Western HOLLAND.

C. ENEMY DIVISIONS STRENGTHS AND LAYOUT IN THE AREA

193. The enemy divs opposing 21 Army Group from EMMERICH down to the RUHR were:-

Four para divs (in the line
Three inf divs
One panzer div
One panzer grenadier div (in immediate reserve
One inf div

with another estimated 58,000 men from local depots and training units etc. Further SOUTH opposite Ninth US Army were four more inf divs. These forces nearly all came from First Par Army of Army Group 'H'. From EMMERICH WEST to the sea, Twenty-Fifth Army, consisting nominally of 30 and 88 Corps, was located.

On Ninth US Army's front it was estimated the enemy had about 220 guns, and that between WESEL and EMMERICH the crossings would be opposed by about 400. In addition, something like 1,500 HAA guns were known to be deployed in and around the RUHR.

194. On 21 Army Group front the RHINE was kept within its normal channel by a complicated system of dykes. If these were breached, a rise in the water table would result in widespread flooding of the low-lying areas on either side of the river. The normal width of 400-500 yards might increase to as much as 3 miles; on an average the velocity was about 3.5 knots.

195. There were no normal defence lines along the EAST bank of the RHINE similar to those found on the WEST bank, except at such places as WESEL, REES and EMMERICH, which had perimeter defences.

.../D. SUCCESS
SUCCESS ACHIEVED

THE RHINE CROSSING AND ESTABLISHMENT OF THE BRIDGEHEAD

196. The weather had generally favoured the pre-D Day air programme. In addition to the fighter effort, by D Day Bomber Command had flown 5243 sorties and dropped 24,983 tons while VIII and IX Bomber fleets flew 11,067 sorties and delivered 24,500 tons of bombs. This heavy programme culminated in an attack by 220 Lancasters on WESSEL at 2230 hours just before 1 Cdo Bde attacked the town.

197. After an intense artillery preparation, the assault waves of four bns of 51 Div entered the river in their LVTs ("Buffaloes") at 2100 hours 23 March, and seven minutes later a report was received that the first wave was across. All crossings were successful; the enemy was thin on the ground in the area of the crossing sites and our counter-battery programme had effectively neutralised his artillery. During the night general progress was made and the outskirts of WESSEL were reached.

At 2200 hours the Commandos started to cross (about 2 miles WEST of WESSEL) and half an hour later were formed up outside WESSEL waiting for the last bomb of the Lancasters to fall before attacking the town. By 0300 hours all units were in the town, 26th HQ being established in a cellar about 50 yards from the HQ of the WESSEL garrison. This led to some fierce fighting in that area and to the death of the German Commander.

At 0200 hours the four leading bns of 15 Div were waterborne and in the face of light opposition successful crossings were made and initial objectives seized during the night. As enemy opposition developed it was strongest on the front of the LEFT Bde.

198. In Ninth US Army sector 30 US Div on the LEFT assaulted NORTH of UESCHENBURG at 0200 hours, with three regts abreast. At 0300 hours, 79 US Div on the RIGHT crossed with two regts up. Resistance on the LEFT was strong, but bridging operations were soon under way.

199. At 0952 hours the first parachute serial arrived over the target and until 1300 hours the drop proceeded accurately. Over 1700 aircraft and 1300 gliders were employed, and some 14,000 troops were delivered. About 56 aircraft and under 4% of the gliders were destroyed.

Immediately following the glider landings a resupply mission of 540 tons was delivered in 240 aircraft which flew as low as 200 feet; 16 of these aircraft were lost. Over 90% of the supplies were recovered.

200. The airborne assault was successful. All objectives were taken by nightfall except that 513 Para Inf of 17 US Airborne Div had to deliver a night assault, which succeeded in capturing the high ground in the heavily wooded area NORTH of DIESBRODT. Five bridges over the R ISSEL were seized intact, and HAULINKEN was in the hands of 6 Brit Airborne Div.

The Airborne Corps took 3,500 prisoners during the day.

201. The ground troops continued to capture their objectives during the day, progress being quicker after the airborne drop. In the American sector DINSBACH A 33 was captured and in general the line of the road DINSBACH - WESSEL was reached. Elements crossed the LIFFE - SETTEN Canal near LIFFENDORF A 2338. Class 40 bridges were open. WESSEL was cleared by the Cdo Bde and junction made with 17 US Airborne Div. 15 Div captured HAPKEN and KEMR A 1288 and made contact with 6 Brit Airborne Div. One Class 9 bridge was working, in addition to numerous ferries.

... On the LEFT
On the LEFT 51 Div made progress, but opposition at REES from Paratroops was very stubborn. The bridging and raft sites near REES were under heavy and accurate mortar and artillery fire.

202. The expansion of the bridgehead and the build-up proceeded well, though progress was slower in 30 Corps sector where REES held out until early on 26 March.

The US XVI Corps cleared the area EAST and SE of DINSLaken and by 28 March were in GLADBACK on the RIGHT, and in GAUSEN A 34 and DORSTEN A 44 on the LEFT. 17 US Airborne Div with 6 Guards Arm Div and 1 Cdo Bde pushed up against students of various Officers' Cadet Schools. On the RIGHT, who dealt with passed resistance elements of Ninth Corps had captured HALTERN A 64.

12 Corps advanced NE and reached BREKEN A 36 and RHEDE A 26; with 7 Arm Div and 53 Div respectively on 28 March. 30 Corps were stubbornly resisted by German Paratroops but by 28 March they had secured the line HALTERN A 15 - DINSLaken A 16 - ANHOLT. On the LEFT, where 2 Can Corps had taken command of the sector, EDWARD had almost been cleared by 28 March.

THE ADVANCE TO THE ELBE

203. (a) While Ninth US Army continued to drive EAST along the autobahn towards HANOVER and the ELBE, Second Brit Army was directed to the ELBE between WITTENBERG and HAMBURG.

(b) XVIII US Airborne Corps was directed to MUNSTER, with 6 Guards Arm Bde under command. When MUNSTER was secured the Guards would revert to 8 Corps, and the Airborne Corps to Ninth US Army.

6 Corps, (11 Arm Div, 6 Brit Airborne Div and 1 Cdo Bde) was directed on OSNABRUCK, CELLE and UELZEN.

12 Corps (7 Arm Div, 4 Arm Bde and 15, 52 and 53 Div) was directed on RHEINE, NIENBURG and LUNEBURG.

30 Corps (Guards Arm Div, 8 Arm Bde and 3, 43 and 51 Div) was directed on ENSCHEDE, BREMEN and HAMBURG.

204. On 3 April, when they reverted to Twelfth US Army Group, elements of Ninth US Army had reached the R WESER SE of MINDEN, while other formations had begun to expand SOUTH beyond HAMB.

On Second Brit Army's front the break-out can be said to have started on 28 March, on the RIGHT of the sector where the bridgehead had developed more quickly. XVIII US Airborne Corps, 8 Corps and 12 Corps forged ahead rapidly, with armoured spearheads followed by inf who dealt with by-passed resistance and thickly wooded areas.

The first organised resistance was met on the line of the DORTMUND - EMS Canal. 8 Corps obtained a bridgehead but 12 Corps found themselves up against students of various Officers' Cadet Schools who fought desperately around RHEINE and its airfields. Fighting went on from 31 March to 6 April.


Further to the LEFT, 30 Corps, who had broken out on 30 March, encountered stiff opposition from SS units and Para Regts who held them up at LINGEN until 6 April. 8 Corps were across the WESER on 7 April, and by 11 April were attacking CELLE on the R ALLER. It was cleared the following day and the advance continued to UELZEN where opposition again hardened and four days' fighting was necessary to reduce the place; tanks, inf, demolitions and booby traps were again the main source of trouble. LUNEBURG was cleared on 18 April, and by 26 April the Corps had cleared the WEST bank of the ELBE in its sector.

.../After
After clearing the RHEINE area, 12 Corps moved on to the WESER and made an opposed crossing in the HOTA area. Pushing on EAST, the Corps made for SOLTAU. At REUEN, 53 Div had a fierce fight against SS troops supported by 88 mm guns on railway mountings, but they captured the place on 12 April, inflicting heavy losses on the enemy. SOLTAU was cleared on 24 April, and turning NORTH towards HAMBURG the Corps reached its sector of the ELBE on 26 April.

Continuing its advance from LINGEN, 30 Corps pushed on towards BREMEN not without encountering patches of desperate resistance from SS troops. On 16 April regrouping was effected for the assault on BREMEN. The town was attacked from the SOUTH by 3 Brit Div and from NORTH of the WESER by 43 and 52 Divs. Progress was considerably hampered by inundations and bad going, the port being finally captured on 28 April. 30 Corps operations then continued NORTH and NW to clear the peninsula to OUDHAVEN.

OPERATIONS OF FIRST CDN ARMY

205. After the capture of JOBURG and the HOCH EISTEN feature, 2 Cdn Corps passed to command First Cdn Army. The Corps made a rapid advance NORTH through ALMELO and to the outskirts of DOESBURG and ZUTPHEN. On 2 April 1 Cdn Corps attacked from the NIJMEGEN bridgehead and by 5 April had cleared the area up to the NEDER Rijn. Meanwhile, 1 Brit Corps sector was taken over by HQ NETHERLANDS District under Army Group command.

2 Cdn Corps advanced towards OLDENBURG securing bridgeheads across the EMS; ZUTPHEN and DEVENTER were captured and 1 Cdn Div turned WEST on 11 April to assault across the R IJssel towards APELDOORN. In conjunction with this attack, 49 Div (1 Cdn Corps) attacked and cleared ARNEM on 15 April, and 5 Cdn Arm Div drove across the road APELDOORN - AMERSFOORT and reached the ZUIDERzee on 18 April.

2 Cdn Corps' advance continued on a wide front from OLDENBURG to GRONINGEN and LIJNWARDEN. Progress on the RIGHT was slowed down, but in the CENTRE the SOUTH bank of the EMS estuary opposite EDMEN was reached and by 26 April the whole of NE HOLLAND had been cleared except for a small strip of coast on the EMS estuary.

THE LAST STAGE

206. Second Army plan for the advance to the BALTIK was as follows:

(a) 8 Corps (11 Arm Div, 6 Guards Arm Bde, 1 Cdo Bde, 5 and 15 Inf Divs, and 6 Airborne Div earmarked for XVIII US Corps later). To establish bridgehead over R ELBE near LAUENBURG and advance NORTH to capture LIJNEG and clear SCHLESWIG-HOLSTEIN.

(b) XVIII US Corps (7 US Arm Div, 8 US Inf Div 52 US Airborne (from Twelfth Div and later 6 Brit Airborne Div). To cross US Army Group) the ELBE about 8 miles EAST of 8 Corps, advance NN and protect RIGHT flank of Second Army.

(c) 12 Corps To cross ELBE in 8 Corps bridgehead, swing NW, protect LEFT flank of 8 Corps by masking HAMBURG and later to capture HAMBURG.

207. On Second Army front there were elements of about 15 German divs plus miscellaneous collection of units drawn from local depots and DENMARK.

The R-ELBE was about 300 yards wide on an average.

.../208.
### E. CASUALTIES SUSTAINED BY US FROM 23 MARCH TO 5 MAY

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Killed</th>
<th>Wounded</th>
<th>Missing</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Allied Contingents</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>508</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>715</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>British</td>
<td>4,339</td>
<td>1,3052</td>
<td>539</td>
<td>17,930</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canadian</td>
<td>1,503</td>
<td>4,743</td>
<td>244</td>
<td>6,490</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>6,042</td>
<td>18,303</td>
<td>790</td>
<td>25,135</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
SECTION 8. FINAL SUMMARY AND SOME POINTS OF INTEREST

A. STRENGTH OF THE FORCE ON 5 MAY 1945 (excluding US Forces).

213. (a) Formations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Formation</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Armored Divs</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Infantry Divs</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Airborne Divs</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent Arm Divs</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(b) Personnel

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Contingent</th>
<th>Officers</th>
<th>Other Ranks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Canadian</td>
<td>12,166</td>
<td>172,498</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>British</td>
<td>42,216</td>
<td>799,183</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total: 56,185 964,396

(c) Tanks 9248

Guns 6524

214. Second Tactical Air Force

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aircraft Type</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fighters and fighter bombers</td>
<td>1,044</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medium bombers</td>
<td>216</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reconnaissance aircraft etc</td>
<td>340</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total: 1,600

Total sorties flown during the campaign 260,000.

B. ENEMY LOSSES

215. (a) Prisoners taken before capitulation 417,000

Capitulated troops 1,590,000

(b) A very rough estimate of enemy losses in guns is 15,000 - 16,000, but accurate figures of those captured and destroyed are not yet available.

Some 1,400 tanks and SP guns were destroyed.

(c) Total number of enemy divisions destroyed or written off was:

- Panzer 1
- Para 3
- Infantry 18

In addition, about 32 divisions in all capitulated on 5 May 1945.

216. Total number of different enemy divisions engaged:

- Panzer and panzer type 13
- Para 9
- Infantry and infantry type 60

.../C. TOTAL OF
C. TOTAL 21 ARMY GROUP CASUALTIES SINCE D DAY

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nationality</th>
<th>Killed</th>
<th>Wounded</th>
<th>Missing</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Belgian</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>253</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>361</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Czech</td>
<td>165</td>
<td>436</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>612</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dutch</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>133</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>165</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poles</td>
<td>1163</td>
<td>3840</td>
<td>371</td>
<td>5574</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>British</td>
<td>30379</td>
<td>98125</td>
<td>15480</td>
<td>143984</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canadian</td>
<td>10307</td>
<td>31120</td>
<td>2531</td>
<td>43958</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

TOTAL 62118 133907 18429 194454

D. ROYAL NAVY AND MERCHANT NAVY IN SUPPORT OF 21 ARMY GROUP OPERATIONS

218. Approximate total strength of RN personnel was - 125,000
Casualties sustained by RN - 7,564

219. Casualties to craft from D Day to D + 30

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Damaged</th>
<th>Total Loss</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Warships</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>110</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Merchant vessels</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other craft</td>
<td>514</td>
<td>217</td>
<td>731</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>650</td>
<td>267</td>
<td>917</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

220. Enemy vessels destroyed -

- Destroyers - 2
- R Boats - 1
- E Boats - 27
- Midget submarines - 38

221. Sweeping operations -

- Ports swept - 30 (including CHERBOURG, BORDEAUX, HAMBURG, ROTTERDAM and the whole length of the KIEL Canal).
- Ships mined - 182
- Minesweeper casualties - 16 sunk, 33 damaged.

222. Personnel, stores and equipment landed on the Continent (excluding US).
Personnel - 1,715,967
Stores - 6,915,175 tons
Vehicles of all types - 338,282

E. THE MULBERIES

223. These were designed to have an eventual capacity of 12,000 tons of stores and 2,500 vehicles per day.

The floating piers and pierheads were of concrete and steel, some 50,000 tons of steel being used in their construction. Concrete caissons, each some 200 ft long and varying in weight from 2,000 to 6,000 tons were sunk with a number of coasters to provide the deep water anchorages.

The equipment weighed over one and a half million tons and was towed across the Channel by 132 British and American tugs.

F. ANTWERP

224. Between 12 October 1944 and 30 March 1945, 5,960 V bombs fell in the ANTWERP area, killing 731 soldiers and 3,515 civilians.

A barrage of Heavy AA guns (192 US and 130 British) with 72 searchlights (British) was deployed for the defence of the port. The efficacy of these measures so increased that during the last seven days of the attacks, they were shooting down 97% of the bombs.

Meanwhile 25,000 tons of stores per day were being discharged at the port.

G. AMMUNITION

225. Total tons expended - 722,546.

Artillery ammunition expended -

25 pr - 13,082,005 rounds

Other ammunition up to 210 mm - 4,498,159 rounds

H. ENGINEER STATISTICS

226. (a) Over 1000 bridges were built of British "Bailey" equipment. Total length over 30 miles. The longest were three multi-span fixed bridges over the RHINE each some 1,600 yards in length and a floating "Bailey" over the NAFF of 1,440 yards.

(b) Stone quarried - 2,000,000 tons

Oil pipe line laid - 1,200 miles

(c) Airfields constructed or repaired - 125, representing an equivalent of 2,020 miles of roadway 20 feet wide.