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INITIAL LANDINGS IN FRANCE SUCCEED

LODGMENTS OVER BROAD FRONT

Berlin Says Bridgehead Established North of Caen

OUR NAVAL LOSSES LIGHT

THE ALLIED LANDINGS IN FRANCE, WHICH BEGAN AT DAWN YESTERDAY, WERE STATED LAST NIGHT TO BE PROCEEDING IN A "THOROUGHLY SATISFACTORY MANNER," WITH NAVAL LOSSES LESS THAN HAD BEEN EXPECTED, ACCORDING TO MR CHURCHILL, LODGMENTS EXIST ON A BROAD FRONT, AND SOME PENETRATIONS WERE SEVERAL MILES DEEP.

The first communiqué issued from Supreme H.Q. Allied Expeditionary Force yesterday morning stated:—

"Under the command of General Eisenhower, Allied naval forces, supported by strong air forces, began landing Allied armies this morning on the northern coast of France."

The second communiqué issued late last night read:—

Shortly before midnight on 5th June 1944 Allied night bombers opened the assault. Their attacks in very great strength continued until dawn.

Between 06.30 and 07.30 hours this morning, two naval task forces commanded by Rear-Admiral Sir Philip Vian, K.B.E., D.S.O., flying his flag in H.M.S. Scylla (Capt. T. M. Brownrigg, C.B.E., R.N.), and Rear-Admiral Alan Goodrich Kirk, U.S.N., in U.S.S. Augusta (Capt. E. H. Jones, U.S.N.), launched their assault forces at enemy beaches.

The naval forces, which had previously assembled under the overall command of Admiral Sir Bertram Ramsay, made their departure in fresh weather, and were joined during the night by bombarding forces, which had previously left northern waters. Channels had to be swept through the large enemy minefields.

This operation was completed shortly before dawn, and while minesweeping flotillas continued to sweep towards the enemy coast, the entire naval force followed down swept channels behind them towards their objectives.

ENEMY TRAWLER SUNK

Shortly before the assault three enemy torpedo boats, with armed trawlers in company, attempted to interfere with the operation and were promptly driven off. One enemy trawler was sunk and another severely damaged.

The assault forces moved towards the beaches under cover of heavy bombardment from destroyers and other support craft, while heavier ships engaged enemy batteries which had already been subjected to bombardment from the air.

Some of these were silenced, Allied Forces continued to engage other batteries.

Landings were effected under cover of the air and naval bombardments, and airborne landings involving troop-carrying aircraft and gliders, carrying large forces of troops, were also made successfully at a number of points.

Reports of operations so far show that our forces succeeded in their initial landings. Fighting continues.

Allied heavy, medium, and light and fighter bombers continued the air bombardment in very great strength throughout the day, with attacks on gun emplacements, defensive works, and communications.

Continuous fighter cover was maintained over the beaches, and for some distance inland, and over naval operations in the Channel. Our night fighters played an equally important rôle in protecting shipping and troop-carrier forces and intruder operations.

Allied reconnaissance aircraft maintained continuous watch by day and night over shipping and ground forces. Our aircraft met with little enemy fighter opposition or anti-aircraft fire. Naval casualties were regarded as being very light, especially when the magnitude of the operation is taken into account.

GENERAL VIEW OF SITUATION

Beyond the fact that the landings were made in Normandy, Allied H.Q. are naturally giving few details. German reports say, however, that we have established a bridgehead 12½ miles wide and several kilometres in depth around the mouth of the Orne, the river on which the town of Caen stands. Caen was penetrated by Allied airborne troops. Berlin also says landings are proceeding with "particular strength and intensity" at Arromanches, farther west. The "smashing" of a landing bid at St Vaast de la Hougue, on the north-east coast of the Cherbourg peninsula, was claimed, but it was admitted that Allied airborne troops were fighting for the Carentan-Valognes road, which runs through the peninsula from south-east to north-west.

From the news available—much of it from enemy sources—operations would appear to be proceeding on the stretch of coast between Le Havre and Cherbourg, while powerful forces of paratroops have been landed inland.

MONTGOMERY LEADS

General Sir Bernard Montgomery is in command of the Allied armies.

It was announced recently that Field-Marshal von Rundstedt is in command of the German forces, but Reuter reports that Hitler is taking personal command of all anti-invasion operations.

OVER THE FIRST HURDLES

The feeling at S.H.A.E.F. (Supreme Headquarters, Allied Expeditionary Force) last night was that it was still far too early to assess the position in Normandy, but the opposition to the expedition, as far as the beaches, was less than expected, and there was no cause for pessimism. The *Luftwaffe* had not come up in any strength, nor given battle, and the coast defence guns have

also given less trouble than expected. The convoys also had fewer attacks on the passage than anticipated.

It could reasonably be felt that we had got over the first four or five hurdles of this historic operation.

First of all, our concentration in the home ports was not bombed or interfered with. Secondly, our convoys in passage were not seriously attacked. Thirdly, we have swept passages through the minefields without such opposition as we might have expected. Fourthly, we have managed to get ashore without the coast defence guns being nearly as effective as they might have been.

The Germans had not disclosed themselves in strength, and it was far too early to say what was actually happening.

As far as the underwater obstacles were concerned, we landed our forces as far as possible at low tide, or just after low tide, so that engineers and naval parties could deal with them dryshod, and not have to make the hazardous attempt to destroy them in deep water.

Obstacles further inland will be dealt with by explosives engineers and so on.

THE WEATHER

It can now be disclosed that the operation had to be postponed for 24 hours because of weather. At the time when it was originally planned to start the operation, experts said that bad weather was coming, and the postponement decision was taken.

Twenty-four hours later it was blowing pretty hard from the west and north-west and clouds were coming over, but the experts said that better weather was coming, and on the strength of that forecast the authorities decided to go forward with the expedition. If the weather had failed us and remained as bad as it was at the time, the difficulties of the passage would have been very great, and it might have been disastrous.

As it was, the weather forecast was to some extent fulfilled, but the passage across must have been very uncomfortable. It was blowing pretty freshly from the west and north-west, and was, in fact, blowing so hard that a few of the tank landing craft had their engines swamped and could not go on. The rest battled on with the difficulties of the weather and got to the other side on time.

A SUMMARY OF THE SITUATION

Here is a summary of the situation from the naval and air sides, as far as the picture was available at S.H.A.E.F. last night:—

The Navy—So far, the vast minesweeping operations have gone according to plan, though perhaps their hardest task lies ahead. Hundreds of sweepers led our forces, swept their way through the mined areas, established clear water and marked the channels for mile after mile. The difficulties were very great. There is mineable water from our coast to the French coast, and the suspected area was large. If surprise was to be achieved, the sweepers could not do any preliminary investigation. The sweeping and marking of the channels had to be carried out through the night. A cross-tide of two knots that turned and increased to two knots in the opposite direction had to be allowed for and, at the turn of the tide, ships had to change sweeps from one side to the other. Navigation had to be absolutely accurate. As the enemy coast was approached, different types of minesweepers had to take up the lead in order to work in the shallower water and to deal with the varying types of mines that might be encountered. Sweepers were also detailed to proceed ahead to clear the way for the bombarding forces. A mistake by one ship might have thrown a whole flotilla into confusion. No matter what was happening around them, the sweepers could not be distracted for an instant. There could be no zig-zagging, no quick turns or avoiding action.

All reports to date show that the losses of the U.S. naval task forces were surprisingly low—President Roosevelt stated in Washington last night that up to noon they consisted of two destroyers and one landing ship for tanks.

ABSENCE OF LUFTWAFFE

The most surprising factor, perhaps, of the invasion to date has been the absence of the German Air Force. The *Luftwaffe*, in fact, has scarcely shown up, and up to some time yesterday morning only 50 enemy aircraft had been reported.

This does not mean that the *Luftwaffe* will not show up in very large numbers. It is believed that the Germans have between 1500 and 2000 fighters in Germany and the west, and, taking into account reserves and German production, the Allied Air Forces must reckon having to deal with a force of that strength for some time. Göring has told the *Luftwaffe* that "invasion must be beaten off at all costs, even if the *Luftwaffe* perishes in the process."