

HOW THE INVASION WAS ORGANIZED

IMMENSE PROBLEMS OVERCOME

From Our Special Correspondent

The invasion of western Europe was conceived and organized essentially as a combined operation involving naval, land, and air forces, whose plans had to be closely integrated at every stage. Furthermore, allied forces, as well as British, were involved. The needs of the American forces in terms of special training and concentration areas, railway facilities, and signal communications in this country had to be met by the British War Department, but on the administrative side our allies had their own organization.

The great design for the invasion as an essential part in strategy aiming at the destruction of Germany's military power may be said, in one sense, to have been conceived at Dunkirk. From that day onwards a direct offensive against the enemy from the nearest, and therefore most advantageous, allied base became the ultimate goal of all those whose responsibility it was to rebuild and re-equip the British Army and to plan the eventual course of military operations against Germany.

THE ASSAULT FORCES

For an operation dependent upon the effective use of assault craft, equally specialized training of the assault forces was essential. In consequence, and with the active cooperation of the civil authorities, a number of special training centres for the use of both British and American forces, were organized on the coasts of Great Britain, involving the clearance of many square miles of populated countryside, so that live ammunition could be used by Navy, Army, and Air forces in combined exercises. In these training centres Royal Engineers personnel found replicas of every known defensive device used by the enemy and practised their destruction, learning in their turn the use of equipment whose nature at this stage cannot be described. The plan elaborated by the Combined Staff was naturally subject to final revision and approval by General Eisenhower, who assumed in January, 1944, the appointment of Supreme Commander. A further examination was then carried out to check and revise the original forecast of resources made in 1943. It was during these last few months that the final intricate coordination of action by all three services was completed down to the last detail. It remained for the Supreme Commander to make the final decision as to the precise date of the assault and to give the word to set in motion the whole intricate machinery which had been built up during the preceding years.

The object which the administrative staff had to keep in mind was to place the assaulting force in a position to attack the enemy and to ensure the synchronization of its impact on the enemy with a smooth flow of supporting reinforcements of men and material. The attainment of this object—assuming that supplies of weapons, ammunition, vehicles, and food have been organized in advance—involved a task of planning and organizing which falls into four phases—

to draw, both for pre-loaded "build-up" craft and for the immediate needs of the assault brigades, those items from the Ordnance list which it was judged would be operationally essential for opposed landings.

MEDICAL PLANNING

For the assault and for the early stages of the campaign much special medical planning was required both to secure the arrival (by air or sea) of needed medical equipment, supplies, blood plasma, etc., and also to make the best possible use of returning transport. For some purposes arrangements were made to adapt modified landing ships as casualty carriers; and to cope with a situation in which the invading force might have advanced some way inland but no rail traffic could yet be organized, provision had to be made for specially fitted lorries to supplement normal ambulance convoys in casualty clearance.

The plan of attack was the assault of beaches, and this meant that many thousands of mechanical vehicles had to be waterproofed. Mechanical provision had to be made for the employment of numerous special weapons designed for the assault; and steps had to be taken to ensure, so far as humanly possible, that the progress of the mechanical equipment of the invading forces from concentration area to marshalling area, and from thence to embarkation point was not impeded either by the breakdown of vehicles or by road blocks caused through damage to vehicles by enemy air attacks. To be ready for the movement of troops from the concentration to the marshalling areas in which preparation for embarkation had to be done, an elaborate traffic control system had to be worked out by commands and districts.

TROOPS' FOOD

With regard to the food of the invasion troops, what is known as the 24-hour ration pack was designed specially for the day of the assault, and was issued separately to each man together with a Tommy cooker and its patent fuel. The food has a high calorific value (4,000 calories), though its gross weight, in a waxed cardboard container, is less than 2½ lb. It comprises pressed blocks of pre-cooked dehydrated meat and of rolled oats with sugar and fats, together with a compressed block of tea, sugar, and milk powder. Other ingredients were chocolate, boiled sweets, chewing gum, sugar tablets, and meat extract cubes.

Then there is the composite pack known as the Compo. This is made up in seven different types. The pack comprises different assortments of canned meat, fish, vegetables, and fruit, jam and margarine, sweets and chocolate, biscuits and cheese, tea-sugar-milk powder, salt, cigarettes, matches, and soap. Having a gross weight of 6½ lb. it provided one day's ration for 14 men. Somewhat similar in composition, but made up in two, three, or five men packs according to the size of the tank crews is the reserve ration pack carried in armoured fighting vehicles for emergencies.

THE GREAT CRUSADE

GEN. EISENHOWER'S CALL TO HIS MEN

GAMBLE ON THE WEATHER

INVASION POSTPONED FOR A DAY

DIFFICULT COAST

FROM OUR MILITARY CORRESPONDENT

The landing of British, United States, and Canadian forces on the Normandy coast has so far met with less opposition than was expected. The concentration was not interfered with; convoys were not heavily attacked; the sweeping appears to have been extremely successful; hostile "air" was not very active.

Above all, the coast-defence artillery has, it would seem, been put out of action or neutralized in the target area by the terrific attacks carried out during the night of Monday and early on Tuesday by the allied heavy bombers, later by the Tactical Air Force, and subsequently by naval bombardment.

But in other respects the absence of strong resistance at the first stage means little. It means only that the enemy held back his *Luftwaffe* and had not brought his main land forces into action. We know that they are both there and that they will fight.

Whatever be the enemy's policy, the allies have cleared a number of hurdles, any one of which might have brought about an accident. But one thing should be realized: there will be news coming in gradually from now onwards, but it will probably be some time before, on the foundation of that news, one will be able to form a close estimate of how affairs are really going.

The allies start with several powerful advantages. The first is their immense air superiority; the second their ability to choose their point of attack and concentrate upon it strength greater than that of the enemy; the third the quantity of shipping at their disposal, which will, it is hoped, enable them to build up their strength by sea more quickly than the enemy can build up his by land.

ENEMY RESERVES

The defence must initially be dispersed, and a proportion of it is tied to its fixed fortifications and weapons along the coast. Strong and highly mobile reserves are, of course, held inland, but it is believed that they will be largely confined to movement by road through the preliminary air attacks upon the railways. The roads will be under constant attack from the air, and this should greatly hamper and delay movements, though it will not prevent them.

These advantages, however, must not be allowed to hide the difficulties with which such an operation is fraught. Any landing in northern or western France comes into quite a different category from those undertaken in the Mediterranean. The tide alone makes a vast difference. The defences which have to be surmounted are enormously superior in strength. The defensive preparations have been much more thorough. The sea is less calm and the weather is more changeable.

The enemy has concentrated, on all beaches where landings are considered practicable, upon obstacles at high-water mark and below it. By landing at low tide it would in some instances