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THE ATLANTIC WALL:

GERMAN DEFENSES IN THE WEST, 1941-1944

by

Alan Freese Wilt

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment
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ABSTRACT

THE ATLANTIC WALL:
GERMAN DEFENSES IN THE WEST, 1941-1944

by
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This study of the Atlantic Wall deals with German defensive preparations in western Europe between 1941 and the middle of 1944. The successful piercing of Germany's western defenses by the Allies in 1944, first in Normandy and then in Provence, has led a number of writers since World War II to conceive of the Wall as little more than a propaganda device designed to deceive the Western Powers as to its relative weakness. However, if one examines this defensive complex during the entire time that Germany occupied the western theater, one finds that the Wall was more formidable than its detractors have been willing to admit.

To be certain, Germany's western barrier was not as effective as the Wehrmacht would have liked, and in this respect there were a number of complicating factors. There was, first of all, the problem of coping with the situations that developed in the other, more pressing theaters of war, and the critical conditions in these combat areas often relegated western Europe to a position of secondary impor-

tance. In addition, the Germans in the West faced the problem of having constantly to readjust their defensive posture, partly in response to probable enemy intentions, and partly because of the changes that were occurring within Fortress Europe itself. Finally, there existed in the western theater the problem of interservice frictions and conflicts in command authority. These conflicts, though not decisive, still had an adverse effect to some degree on the effectiveness of Germany's defenses in the West.

Nevertheless, in spite of these problems and the overriding problem of nearly five years of war, the Atlantic Wall defenses by the middle of 1944 were about as formidable in terms of fortifications, manpower, and firepower as one could expect. In this regard the Channel area and the major coastal harbors were especially well defended. In fact, the Germans held on to certain ports even after U.S. forces had broken out of the Normandy beachhead toward the end of July, 1944, thus causing a severe logistics crisis for the Allies during the autumn and helping to prolong the war for another six months.

The author has drawn these conclusions primarily from the captured and microfilmed German World War II records and from the Foreign Military Studies that were compiled by the historical section of the United States Forces in the European Theater after the war from interviews and written questionnaires submitted to German military officers and administrative personnel.

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Finally, I would like to express my gratitude to my wife, Maureen. Without her encouragement and help this project would probably never have been completed.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	ii
TABLE OF CONTENTS	iii
LIST OF MAPS	iv
INTRODUCTION	1
CHAPTER 1. The East Solution	11
CHAPTER II. The Atlantic Wall Takes Shape	60
CHAPTER III. The Wall Extends	120
CHAPTER IV. Interservice Frictions and a Warning	165
CHAPTER V. Command Conflicts	197
CHAPTER VI. Strengthening the Wall	223
CHAPTER VII. Anticipation and the Invasions	256
CONCLUSION	293
BIBLIOGRAPHY	306

LIST OF MAPS

Figure		Page
1.	Operation "Sea Lion"	12
2.	Operation "Haifisch"	29
3.	Operations "Felix" and "Isabella"	35
4.	Operation "Attila"	43
5.	Channel and Atlantic Coast, 1942	83
6.	St. Nazaire Harbor in 1942	101
7.	Dieppe Raid in August, 1942	110
8.	Original "Anton"	125
9.	Revised "Anton"	127
10.	Operation "Ilona"	141
11.	Operation "Gisela"	144
12.	Portion of "Achse" Conducted in France	152
13.	Festungen	234
14.	German Troop Dispositions in the West on June 6, 1944	271
15.	German Troop Dispositions in Southeastern France on August 15, 1944	289

INTRODUCTION

Hitler often discussed the developments of the war during mealtime. In many instances the conversation was rambling and pointless, but occasionally his tabletalk does give us insights into the man and his views toward the war. One spring evening in 1942 the Fuehrer was describing a recent inspection trip of the defenses in the western theater:

> I was accosted by one of the workmen. 'Mein Fuehrer,' he said, 'I hope we're never going away from here. After all this tremendous work, that would be a pity.' There is a wealth of wisdom in the man's remark, for it shows that a man hates to abandon such safe positions as those on the Channel coast, captured during the campaign in France and consolidated by the Organization Todt, and retire into the narrow confines of the North Sea.[1]

What Hitler is discussing is the Atlantic Wall. It was not a new idea in May of 1942; in fact, Hitler had formally decreed an Atlantic Wall late in 1941,[2] and defensive measures for western Europe had begun even earlier. It was

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[1]Hugh R. Trevor-Roper (ed.), Hitler's Secret Conversations, 1941-1944, trans. Norman Camison and R. H. Stevens (New York: Farrar, Strauss and Young, 1953), 451. The date of the conversation is May 13, 1942.

[2]Percy E. Schramm et alii (eds.), Kriegstagebuch des Oberkommandos der Wehrmacht, 1940-1945 (4 vols. in 7 parts; Frankfurt/Main: Bernard & Graefe, 1965) (hereafter cited as KTB/OKW), I, 1262-1264.

this Wall which was to repel any invasion by the Western Allies. And it was this Wall which was pierced so successfully by the United States, Great Britain, and their associates in 1944. The overwhelming Allied success on D-Day and during the subsequent months has led writers on both sides of the Atlantic to disparage the Wall as a mere propaganda term, as an enormous bluff, as an illusion "to deceive the German people as well as the Allies."[3] Many writers recognize, of course, that Germany's western defenses were much more than a series of deceptions, and that they constituted a number of quite formidable fortifications.[4] Still little formal work has been done to assess the relative effectiveness of what Hitler called

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[3]Basil H. Liddell Hart, The German Generals Talk (New York: W. Morrow, 1948), 236. See among others Bodo Zimmerman, "France 1944," The Fatal Decisions. Eds. Seymour Freiden and William Richardson, trans. Constantine Fitzgibbon (New York: W. Sloan Associates, 1956), 195-196, 202; Friedrich Ruge, Sea Warfare, 1939-1945: A German Viewpoint, trans. M. G. Saunders (London: Cassell, 1957), 361; John E. Fagg, "Pre-Invasion Operations," in Europe: Argument to V-E Day, January 1944 to May 1945, Vol. III of The Army Air Forces in World War II, eds. Wesley F. Craven and James L. Cate (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1949), 166-167; and Feldmarschall Gerd von Rundstedt, "OB West, Command Relationships, Commentary on MS# B-308," Foreign Military Studies, 1945-1954 (hereafter cited as FMS), MS# B-633, 24-25.

[4]See, for example, Charles P. Stacey, The Victory Campaign, The Operations in North-West Europe, 1944-1945, Vol. III of the Official History of the Canadian Army in the Second World War (Ottawa: The Queen's Printer, 1960), 48; Samuel Eliot Morison, The Invasion of France and Germany, 1944-1945, Vol. XI of the History of United States Naval Operations in World War II (Boston: Little, Brown, 1957), 48; and Bertil Stjernfelt, Alerte sur le Mur de l'Atlantique, trans. Rolf Gauffin (Paris: Presses de la Cité, 1961), 21.

"the greatest line of fortifications in history."[5] This brings us to the heart of our study, which consists mainly of two questions: How effective actually was the Atlantic Wall? And secondly, what factors affected its effectiveness? Putting it another way, what factors determined the strengths of the Wall as well as its weaknesses? What did the large losses in men and material do to Germany's military posture as the war became more prolonged? To what degree, if any, did the Wehrmachts estimate of Allied intentions for western Europe change? The answers to these questions may not emerge in black and white terms, but an analysis of them should help to deepen our understanding of World War II.

The scope of our study is limited--as in any historical problem--by considerations of space and time. The space limitation comes about in defining the area actually encompassed by the Atlantic Wall. It comprised certainly much more than the Atlantic coast of France, which extends only from Brittany to the Spanish border. The German High Command itself never looked at the western defenses in such narrow terms. Rather, the Wall came to include the Dutch, Belgian, and French coasts and after 1942 the Mediterranean beaches of southern France as well, and it was this area that came to make up Theater Command West (Oberbefehlshaber West).

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[5]As cited in ibid.

In addition, German planners also considered the Iberian Peninsula as part of the Atlantic Wall complex, for the Wehrmacht designed several operational plans to meet any possible invasion of Spain or Portugal by the Western Powers. One might even include the coasts of Norway and Denmark within the western defensive framework, but German officials always thought of Norway as being more closely linked to the Northern theater and of Denmark as more related to the German homeland. The geographical limit of our study, then, will be confined to western Europe, and in particular the coastal region from the Netherlands to the French Riviera.

The question the Germans had to solve was how to get the necessary men and material to defend this vast coastal stretch of some twenty-four hundred miles. There was simply too much area to defend, especially as the western theater related to the overall conduct of the war. Even given the productive mechanisms of the German Reich, it was impossible for the Wehrmacht to pursue a major land war in the East, a major sea war on the Atlantic, a secondary campaign in northern Africa, and later on an additional front in Italy all at the same time, and still to establish sufficient forces and fortifications in the West.

The second limitation, that of time or chronology, confines the subject to the period between Germany's failure to defeat Great Britain in the late summer and early fall

of 1940 and the Allied invasion of western Europe nearly four years later. The focus then is on the period prior to the Normandy invasion except in the south of France, where the American, British, and French forces did not attack until August 15, 1944. But it was generally from late 1940 to the middle of 1944 that National Socialist Germany and her Axis collaborators built up the Atlantic Wall. In other words, the interest is more upon building up the Wall than it is upon breaching the actual Wall defenses.

A further limitation, which plagues in particular the student of contemporary history, is that the amount of source material is almost boundless on a large number of twentieth century topics, and the Atlantic Wall is no exception. Where does one start, when, with the available documentary evidence alone, one could devote a lifetime of study to the German occupation of western Europe during World War II?[6]

Therefore, this study, as one might expect, will con-

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[6]Sections of the American Historical Association, Committee for the Study of War Documents, Guides to German Records Microfilmed at Alexandria, Va. (59 vols. to date; Washington: National Archives, 1956--) (hereafter cited as Guides); and George O. Kent (ed.), A Catalog of Files and Microfilms of the German Foreign Ministry Archives, 1920-1945 (3 vols. to date; Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1962--), will give the reader an idea of the magnitude and infinite variety of materials available on the subject. See also Gerhard L. Weinberg, "Mining in a Mountain of Papers: Nazi Party and Military Records," Michigan Alumnus Quarterly (December 3, 1960), 55-58.

centrate on one aspect--the military aspect--of the Atlantic Wall and will treat only tangentially the role of the security and non-military institutions and the civilian populace that either sided or attempted to undermine the making of the Wall. This is not to say that such institutions as the German military and civilian governors of western Europe,[7] France's own Vichy regime, and the various resistance movements are not worthy of attention, for a number of excellent works have already been published that deal with these topics.[8] These books and articles bring out numerous important features of German-occupied Europe. For instance, most of the authors make clear the makeshift

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[7] Militaerbefehlshaber in Belgien und Nordfrankreich, Militaerbefehlshaber in Frankreich, and Reichskommissar fuer die besetzten niederlaendischen Gebiete.

[8] A partial list would include the following: Henri Amouroux, La vie des Français sous l'occupation (1940-1944) (Paris: Fayard, 1961); Robert Aron, Histoire de Vichy, 1940-1944 (Paris: Fayard, 1959); Walter Herdeg, Grundzuege der deutschen Besatzungsverwaltung in den west- und nord-europaeische Laendern waehrend des zweiten Weltkrieges, Nr. 1 (Studien des Instituts fuer Besatzungsfragen im Tuebingen zu den deutschen Besatzungen im 2. Weltkrieg) (Tuebingen: Institut fuer Besatzungsfragen, 1953); Henri Michel, Bibliographie critique de la resistance (Paris: Institut pédagogique national, 1964); Arnold J. and Veronica M. Toynbee (eds.), Hitler's Europe, Vol. IV of the Survey of International Affairs, 1939-1946 (London: Oxford University Press for the Royal Institute of International Affairs, 1956); Werner Warmbrunn, The Dutch under German Occupation 1940-1945 (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1963); and Walter Lipgens, "European Federation in the Political Thought of Resistance Movements during World War II, "Central European History, I (March 1968), 5-19.

and exploitative nature of Hitler's New Order and show that it was not based on any logically conceived blueprint. More recently, several writers have shown that the resistance movements, at one time depicted as merely anti-German or anti-National Socialist in outlook, also exhibited regenerative features that carried over into the European countries following the war.

But the stress of this study is on the military side of the Atlantic Wall, for it is primarily a military problem determined by the flow of military events. The format this writer will follow is simple and straightforward: first to look at German priorities and planning annually for the western theater from 1941 to 1944, and then to see how and if these plans were carried out. Thus the main theme is to analyze the Atlantic Wall per se. But in examining the Wall on a year-by-year basis, it is still hoped that one will not lose sight of a number of supporting themes that help to explain the nature of Germany's western defenses. One theme is to notice how other fronts, especially the Russian front, often relegated the less critical western theater to a secondary status. Since Germany, as productive as her society might be, did not have an infinite amount of resources, both manpower and goods were allocated first to those areas considered most endangered. German defenses in the West suffered as a result.

A second theme is to realize how the Wehrmacht had

the almost insoluble problem, on the one hand, of trying to adjust its defensive posture in relation to the Western Allies, and, on the other hand, of attempting to meet the constantly changing internal situation on the continent, whether it was in Spain or southern France or Italy or even Hungary. At times Germany might be able to readjust her defenses in the West according to the probable intentions of the Allies, and to have these changes correlate with the changes that were occurring inside each of the countries of Occupied and Neutral Europe. But most of the time there was no correlation, and the German military found itself taking on more and more tasks with fewer and fewer resources.

A final secondary theme is to observe how the Atlantic Wall exemplifies several perennial military problems. First of all, there is the question, which hinders every large military establishment, of interservice frictions. Just how well did the German Army, the Navy, and the Air Force cooperate, and to what degree did the different priorities of the three services affect the western defenses? In the parlance of an old cliché, what is best for one of the services might not be best for the overall war effort, when in particular, as was the case with Germany, the Wehrmacht moved from a primarily offensive to a defensive stance in western Europe.

The second military problem, that of conflict in command

authority, also existed in the West. It has become best known from the controversy between Field Marshal Erwin Rommel and Field Marshal Gerd von Rundstedt early in 1944, but it took other forms as well. The lack of clear lines of command authority fits in well with Hitler's dictum of "divide and rule," by which the Fuehrer himself ultimately settled all major disputes.

By connecting an assessment of the Atlantic Wall with the supporting themes--the relationship of the western theater to probable enemy intentions, the alterations within each of the European nations, the pressing conditions on Germany's other combat fronts, and the interservice and command conflicts, a clearer picture of Germany's defensive posture in the West from 1941 to the summer of 1944 will emerge. General Guenther Blumentritt, Chief of Staff to von Rundstedt when the latter was Commander-in-Chief West, contends that "the reader would find it wearisome to read long descriptions of the day-to-day happenings during this period [in the West]."[9] One might get the impression from Blumentritt's statement that western Europe was a static and dull place at this time. Actually it was far from static. It was a period of preparation, of movement, of privation and heroism on both sides, a time during which the making of the Atlantic Wall played a significant role. In a sense

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[9]Guenther Blumentritt, Von Rundstedt, The Soldier and the Man, trans. Cuthbert Reavely (London: Odhams, 1952), 131.

its role shows how military factors tend to overshadow ultimately more important non-military trends during wartime. In another sense, however, the Atlantic Wall demonstrates again that even military history is much more than battlefield history.[10]

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[10]For a penetrating analysis of the need to study and interpret World War II in all of its ramifications, see Hans-Adolf Jacobsen, "The Second World War as a Problem in Historical Research," World Politics, XVI (July 1964), 620-641.

CHAPTER I

The East Solution

Hitler was not thinking defensively in 1940. To all appearances Germany seemed invincible. The German military had disposed of Poland and then Norway and Denmark before rapidly and convincingly defeating the Dutch, Belgian, French, and British forces in the Battle of France. England was to come next. The Fuehrer hoped initially to come to a "compromise peace" with Great Britain rather than having to subdue the Englaender by force.[1] Hitler's terms were, if Britain would acknowledge Germany's pre-eminent position on the continent and give back her former African colonies, then the Reich, for its part, would recognize England's right to maintain its Empire and to participate in the division of France's colonial possessions. When Britain refused, Hitler moved, albeit reluctantly at first, to the position that an invasion of England was necessary.[2]

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[1]Andreas Hillgruber, Hitlers Strategie; Politik und Kriegsfuehrung, 1940-1941 (Frankfurt/Main: Bernard & Graefe, 1965), 144ff.

[2]The following résumé of the Battle of Britain is drawn from Peter Fleming, Operation Sea Lion (New York: Ace Books, 1957; Asher Lee, The German Air Force (New York: Harper, 1946); and especially Ronald Wheatley, Operation Sea Lion; German Plans for the Invasion of England, 1939-1942 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1958). See the map on page 12.

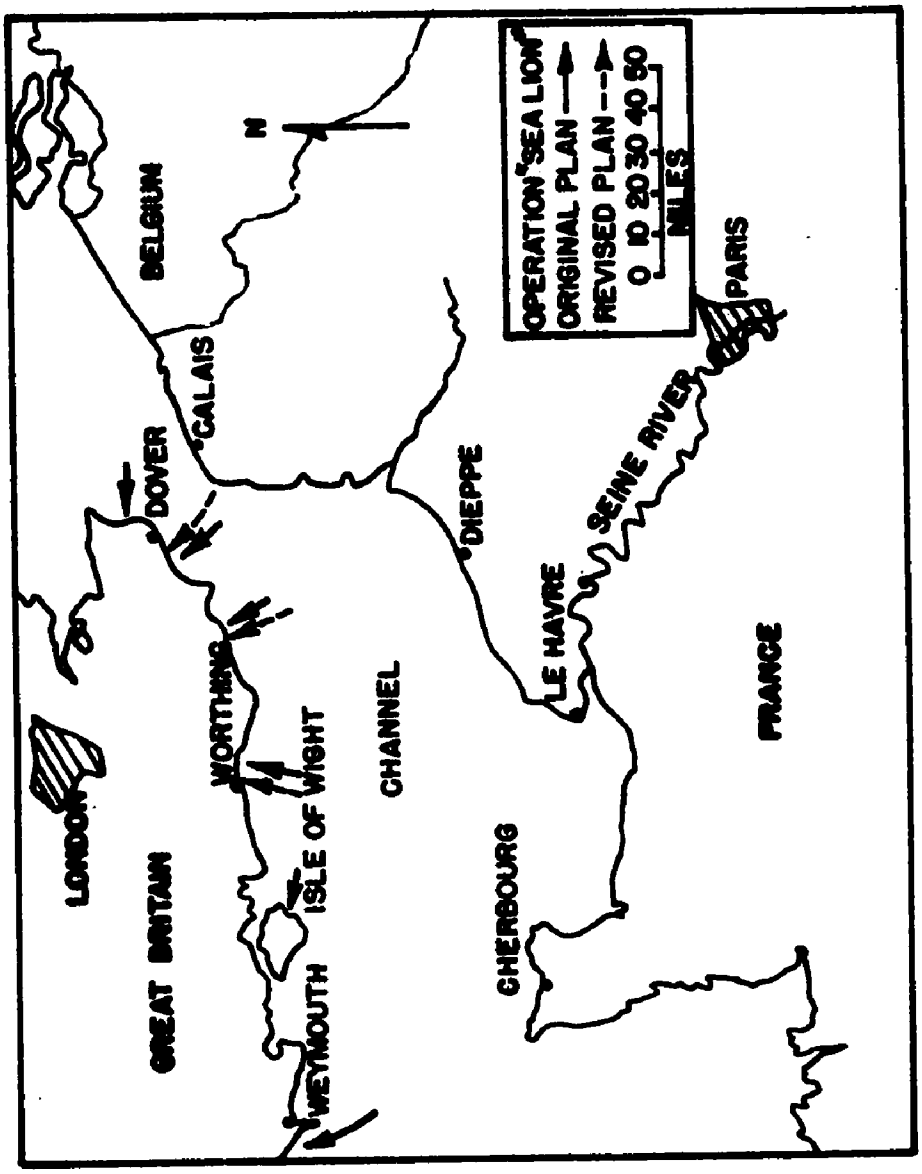

OPERATION "SEA LION"
ORIGINAL PLAN
REVISED PLAN
0 10 20 30 40 50
MILES
N
BELGIUM
CALAIS
DOVER
LONDON
GREAT BRITAIN
WORTHING
ISLE OF WIGHT
WEYMOUTH
CHANNEL
DIEPPE
LE HAVRE
SEINE RIVER
PARIS
CHERBOURG
FRANCE

Figure 1.

By the time Hitler issued Directive No. 16, "Preparations for a Landing Operation Against England," on July 16, 1940, plans for Operation "Sea Lion (Fall Seeloewe)" were already well underway.[3] Eventually the Germans considered two plans, a "broad plan" at the end of July, and a revised or "narrow plan" in September. The main differences in the two "Sea Lion" proposals were that in the "revised" scheme, Wehrmacht units were to land along a smaller, "narrower" front, fewer divisions were to take part in the initial assault of the English beaches, and the rate of reinforcement was to be slower than in the original plan. In both proposals German troops were to attack the coast in several places, thrust inland after reinforcements had come ashore, and then connect the beachheads as a basis for future operations.

In both the July and the September plans the duties of the Air Force (Luftwaffe) and the Navy (Kriegsmarine) remained similar. The Luftwaffe was to gain air superiority and to damage decisively the British economy and British morale as well. In the meantime the Navy was to secure the sea lanes for the invasion and then to insure that German lines of transportation across the Channel were protected at all times from British naval attacks. The success of the

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[3]The complete text of the Directive is contained in Walter Hubatsch (ed.), Hitlers Weisungen fuer die Kriegsfuehrung, 1939-1945 (Frankfurt/Main: Bernard & Graefe, 1962), 61-65.

operation depended on the Luftwaffe defeating the Royal Air Force, and on the Kriegsmarine holding the Royal Navy at bay. In effect, the accomplishment of these missions was a prerequisite for any invasion attempt. It is well known that the prerequisites were never met. The British Navy and Air Force remained supreme, and the Fuehrer postponed the invasion attempt. Hitler left open the possibility that he might consider a resurrectioned "Sea Lion" in 1941, but the operation, for the time being, was not to be executed.[4] The Fuehrer did not realize that its temporary abandonment would be final.

While Hitler was preoccupied with an invasion of the British Isles, France and the rest of western Europe faded at least temporarily into the background. For this reason the Wehrmacht wanted a minimum of trouble after the Battle of France and during the initial period of adjustment. Although the Germans had placed the Netherlands and Belgium under occupation governments, numerous Dutch and Belgian officials continued to function in an administrative capacity.[5] France in particular was treated with care, for the French, though beaten, still held a number of excellent

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[4]Wheatley, Operation Sea Lion, 96. "Sea Lion" was not cancelled officially until February 13, 1942.

[5]See Warmbrunn, The Dutch; and Viscount Chilston, "Belgium," in Hitler's Europe, eds. Toynbee and Toynbee, 479-480.

cards.[6] France retained extensive unconquered colonies. The French fleet was still in existence. Her civil servants could administer the country with only nominal German control, while the German military disposed of Britain. It is little wonder that Germany occupied only a portion of Metropolitan France, or that part of France which lay closest to England and the endangered Atlantic coast. The southeastern two-fifths of the country was placed under the control of a new French government established at the resort sea of Vichy. The Germans even allowed the Vichy government to retain an armed force of 100,000 men (shades of the Versailles settlement) to help maintain order in its zone. Robert Aron relates that there was little brutality at first on the part of the German occupiers. "On the contrary, numerous anecdotes gave witness to nazi 'courtesies.'"[7]

There was an additional reason why Germany was moderate in its dealings with the West European nations. The German war machine was primed for a series of short, one-front wars. This permitted the German economy to function on a wartime footing, without neglecting altogether the civilian sector of the economy at the same time. Thus not only did the German military employ Blitzkrieg tactics, the German state

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[6]Alfred Cobban, "Vichy France," ibid., 365; and Robert O. Paxton, Parades and Politics at Vichy: The French Officer Corps under Marshal Pétain (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1966), 7-9.

[7]Aron, Histoire de Vichy, 185.

was attuned to a Blitzkrieg economy as well.[8] The Battle of France fits into this pattern. Why prolong the campaign by imposing harsh terms on the French? The French can be used, the Germans reasoned, to bolster the German war effort, for the French economy, though damaged, might someday proved to be a tremendous asset. There is no sense stirring up resentment and even open resistance on the part of the French populace. Several approaches that the Germans might have used to exploit the situation in France are brought out in a letter from General Carl Heinrich von Stuelpnagel, Chairman of the German Armistice Commission, to General Alfred Jodl, head of the Armed Forces planning staff, and a person who enjoyed close liaison with Hitler as his main briefing officer.[9] Von Stuelpnagel, whose Commission was to work

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[8]For a description of the nature of the Blitzkrieg economy, see the excellent works of Berenice Carroll, Design for Total War: Arms and Economics in the Third Reich (The Hague: Mouton, 1968); Alan S. Milward, The German Economy at War (London: Athlone Press, 1965); and Burton H. Klein, Germany's Economic Preparations for War (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1959). Professor Carroll's book provides some important correctives to the earlier, but still useful, works by Milward and Klein. Carroll does agree with Milward, however, that Germany did not shift from a Blitzkrieg economy to what would quality as a total war economy until 1942, or more than two years after the Second World War had begun.

[9]Deutsche Waffenstillstands Kommission, DWStK Nr. 207/40 g.K.Chefs., "Der Vorsitzende der deutschen Waffenstillstands-Kommission," 14 Sep 1940, National Archives Microcopy T-77 (Records of Headquarters, German Armed Forces High Command) (hereafter cited as T-77), Roll 851, Frames 5596202-5596212. Von Stuelpnagel became Military Commander of France in February, 1942, and was active in the military opposition to Hitler. When the July 20 plot failed in 1944, von Stuelpnagel attempted suicide, but failed, losing only his sight. He was condemned to death on July 30. Jodl was condemned to death, too, but from the bench at Nuremburg for his role as one of Hitler's lackeys.

out the relations between Germany and the new Vichy government, warned that the French economy was "weakened to the quick (bis ins Mark geachwaecht)" in September, 1940. With two million French skilled workers serving as German war prisoners, with millions more of displaced refugees wandering far from their places of work, with the losses in production from the destruction during the war and from the demobilization after the war, and with the British blockade, "the French have already had enough."[10] Von Stuelpnagel then recommended that the German government stop removing machines and foodstuffs from France and concentrate instead on repairing the French economy so that it could be integrated more closely and more rationally into German military planning. In short, Germany should take advantage of France's economic potential rather than reducing it to a subsistence level. Von Stuelpnagel's view, of course, did not prevail. Germany's New Order, as Milward puts it, "was an extension of the Blitzkrieg economy to occupied territories. It was the economics of 'smash and grab' performed less efficiently on a much larger scale. The occupied areas were merely regarded as areas to be plundered in the simplest way."[11] Milward continues,

> Failure to exploit these territories systematically drove her [Germany] into the administratively simpler habit of merely living off the country. Con-

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[10]"Die Loesung 'geordenete Schwaechung Frankreichs' ist durch die Wirklichkeit bereits weit uebertroffen."

[11]Milward, The German Economy, 49.

> sequently the German occupations came to resemble gigantic looting operations. There was little that was new and less that was orderly in the 'New Order.'[12]

Hitler simply found himself too involved with other matters--notably the invasion of England--to become concerned unduly with western Europe. The Wehrmacht machine must be kept moving.

Even before Hitler became engaged in a direct confrontation with Great Britain in August of 1940, the German dictator began to consider other alternatives that would aid in perpetuating Germany's drive for "world power." The main targets besides Britain were the United States and the Soviet Union, for these two powers stood most in the way of Hitler's ambitions.

When it became apparent in August and September that the British would not give up easily, the Fuehrer did not abandon his notions of striking either at Anglo-American power in the West or at Soviet power in the East. For him there were only two questions: Which side should Germany attack first? And how could the German armed forces best use its military might to accomplish its goals?

In the West, Hitler wanted a West European-North African "empire" that would rival the combined strength of the United States and Great Britain. (It was a foregone

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[12] Ibid., 52.

conclusion to the Fuehrer that if the United States came into the war, it would be on the side of the British. Hitler also envisioned a war with the United States as unavoidable sooner or later.)[13] To erect such an "empire," Hitler greatly desired the help of Spain, Vichy France, and possibly even Portugal.[14]

The Fuehrer thought that Spain should be especially grateful for help Germany had rendered to the Spanish dictator, Francisco Franco, in his successful attempt to gain power during the Spanish Civil War. Franco, Hitler reasoned, should therefore feel obligated to come in on the side of the Axis. Spain, of course, also controlled a number of areas to which Germany wanted access, including the Spanish enclaves in northern Africa and the strategically important Canary Islands. In addition, with Spanish assistance, Germany could capture Gibraltar and thereby keep Britain out of the western Mediterranean and simultaneously help her Axis partner, Italy, which was engaged against British forces in Africa.

Vichy France, for its part, still held Tunisia, Algeria, Morocco, and other African territories, and Germany wanted Vichy support so that the French possessions remained in friendly hands. Spain complicated matters to some degree

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[13]Francis H. Hinsley, Hitler's Strategy (Cambridge: University Press, 1951), 112; and Hillgruber, Hitlers Strategie, 273-277.

[14]Ibid., 323-325.

because she too coveted portions of France's African colonies, but Franco would not and could not move without extensive German military assistance.

Hitler's position toward Portugal was different.[15] Portugal had been protected traditionally by English sea power, and Hitler directed that German units should occupy Portugal only if the British landed troops there, or if the Portuguese government showed any sign of supporting the British. Hitler, however, never lost sight of Portugal's positive features: the Azores and the Madeira and Cape Verde Islands. For this reason Portugal was accorded more respect than might have been the case under normal circumstances.

What Hitler wanted, in brief, was a German bastion in Northwest Africa, including several bases on the Canary Islands, to offset combined Anglo-American power in the Atlantic.[16] The Fuehrer desired either Spanish or Vichy French forces to help in occupying this "western empire," and then to assist in holding it. But Hitler's scheme ran

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[15]Ibid., and Katharine Duff, "Portugal," The War and the Neutrals, eds. Arnold J. and Veronica M. Toynbee, Vol. IV of the Survey of International Affairs, 1939-1946 (London: Oxford University Press for Royal Institute of International Affairs, 1954), 328.

[16]Hillgruber, Hitlers Strategie, 325; and Gerhard L. Weinberg, "German Colonial Plans and Policies, 1938-1942," in Waldemar Besson and Friedrich Freiherr Hiller von Gaertringen (eds.), Geschichte und Gegenwartsbewusstsein; Historische Betrachtungen und Untersuchungen: Festschrift fuer Hans Rothfels zum 70. Geburtstag (Goettingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1963), 473-474, 479-483.

into a number of problems by the fall of 1940. First of all, the areas which the Germans wanted conflicted with large Spanish and Vichy French claims in this section of Africa. Furthermore, even if a settlement could be worked out, both Franco and Marshal Pétain, the octogenarian French military hero and head of the Vichy regime, were disinclined to help. Their equivocation, no doubt, irked the National Socialist dictator, and Hitler could have sent Wehrmacht troops to take over Spain and the remainder of France, but an operation of this nature would tie down a great deal of German striking power (deutschen Streitkraefte) in southwestern Europe. In addition, by late autumn of 1940, Italy was in trouble in the Balkans and East Africa, and the Fuehrer had begun preparations to bail out Mussolini (Operation "Marita"). Such a move opened up the danger of a two-front war, and the Wehrmacht did not have the material, especially aircraft, to pursue operations both in southwestern and southeastern Europe at the same time. And by now Hitler had further designs for the East--namely, the invasion of Russia (Operation "Barbarossa"). Hitler never forgot about eventually bringing Southwest Europe and Northwest Africa into his scheme, but for the moment, it would have to wait.

Hitler had resolved to strike at his supposed Soviet ally at the end of July, 1940, mainly because, failing to bring the war against Britain to a speedy conclusion, the Fuehrer decided to defeat the Russians first before disposing

of England. In this way Hitler felt that the British would also be cut off from the possibility of eventually being able to secure an alliance with the Russians.[17] It had been an agreement of convenience for both sides anyway. Germany had benefited by receiving vital war materials from the U.S.S.R., and German shipping was allowed to use the Murmansk-Archangel area as a sanctuary from the British fleet. The agreement had also secured Germany's "back door" so that she could concentrate her forces in the western theater.[18] Now Hitler decided to open the door himself. This decision was not reached on the "spur of the moment." The winning of "living space (Lebensraum)" had been a cardinal feature of National Socialist ideology almost from its inception, and the vast lands of Soviet Russia had long been considered a prime target. More recently, while the Battle of Britain was still raging, Hitler offered the additional reason, as noted earlier, that the British held out only in the expectation of gaining Soviet support. In other words, the Wehrmacht should go East as a prelude to securing ultimate victory in the West. As early as July 31, 1940, the Fuehrer had "told his generals

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[17]The following paragraph is based on John L. Snell, Illusion and Necessity: The Diplomacy of Global War, 1939-1945 (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1963), 62-69; and Gerhard L. Weinberg, Germany and the Soviet Union, 1939-1941 (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1954), 103, 114-117.

[18]The Soviets, to be sure, achieved territorial gains from the agreement, but they also lost the "second front" they were to clamor for later.

to prepare for a possible invasion of the U.S.S.R. in May, 1941."[19] And the German dictator never deviated from this course during the remainder of 1940 and on into 1941. As Hillgruber asserts,

> There remained then for Hitler only the last great possibility: a military solution in the East (militaerische Ostloesung) in 1940 as the decisive prerequisite for maintaining its [German] power position in Europe and for erecting a 'world power' position in opposition to united Anglo-Saxon sea power.[20]

It turned out that Hitler's alternatives for the last half of 1940 also dictated German military planning for western Europe during the following year. Since the main consideration was victory over the Soviet Union, and since most of the German striking power was located in the West, the first problem was to move German troops and weaponry from West to East without alarming unduly the Soviets. Therefore, the Wehrmacht devised several operations for the Western theater to mask or "cover" actual German intentions. A second problem for German planners related to the West during 1941 came about when evasive Spanish and Vichy officials continued to avoid committing their governments to the National Socialist cause. This turn of events forced Hitler to leave behind certain mobile forces in order to occupy, if necessary, Unoccupied France (Operation "Attila"), or to conduct operations into the Iberian Peninsula (Opera-

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[19]Snell, Illusion and Necessity, 67.

[20]Hillgruber, Hitlers Strategie, 277.

tions "Felix" and "Isabella"), particularly if British troops should land there or in Northwest Africa.

A final aspect of German planning for the Western theater also involved Great Britain, for British forces could conceivably attack anywhere in western Europe during 1941. Germany thus felt she must take appropriate defensive steps in the West to preclude any possible English landing. The situation was now reversed from the previous year. Germany wanted her western door secure so that she could focus her attention in the East.

Therefore German plans and priorities in the West for 1941 were set: (1) to provide cover for Operation "Barbarossa," (2) to take over, if necessary, Vichy France or the Iberian Peninsula, and (3) to prevent any British landing on the continent.

As one might expect, Germany's projected invasion of the Soviet Union necessitated transferring the bulk of the Wehrmacht from the Western theater to the East. The "eastern movement" began in the fall of 1940 and continued even after "Barbarossa" had started on June 22, 1941. Army Group C (Heeresgruppe C), which had kept part of the French forces occupied in their Maginot Line defenses during the Battle of France, was removed to Germany as early as July, 1940. General (later Field Marshal) Fedor von Bock's Army Group B followed several months later in September.

The other army group instrumental in defeating the French, Army Group A, stayed in the West until March, 1941, in case an invasion attempt against England was revived.[21] After March only one army group, Heeresgruppe D, remained for operations in western Europe. Formed in October, 1940, it consisted at that time of three armies--the First, Seventh, and Sixth (later replaced by the Fifteenth)--and exercised operational control over the interior of Occupied France and France's Atlantic coast south of St. Malo. When Army Group A moved away from the Channel sector on March 15, 1941, Army Group D extended its command authority to include all of France, Belgium, and also, if threatened, the Netherlands. At the same time Army Group D assumed the additional title of Theater Command West (Oberbefehlshaber West.)[22]

One should not presume that Army Group D was made up of battle-hardened troops. Of the thirty-nine divisions listed in Heeresgruppe D on January 10, 1941, only four

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[21]The Guides to German Records Microfilmed at Alexandria, Va., No. 40, Records of German Field Commands, Army Groups (Part I), prefaces its records of various Army Groups with a summary of their deployment. The summaries as to the whereabouts of Army Groups A, B, and C are located on pages 1, 11, and 16 respectively. In preparation for the Russian campaign, Army Group C was redesignated Army Group North, Army Group B renamed Army Group Center, and Army Group A became Army Group South on April 1, 1941. See also the outstanding official history, Gordon Harrison, Cross-Channel Attack (U.S. Army in World War II. European Theater of Operations) (Washington: Office of the Chief of Military History), 130-131.

[22]Ibid., 130.

remained in the West by the middle of May.[23] The western theater did retain three more divisions--the 208th, 225th, and 227th--that were left behind by Army Group A and given to the Fifteenth Army which was designated to guard the Channel coast.[24] But with a total of seven divisions left for duty in the West, one can see that Theater Command West was to consist of inexperienced, if not totally new, troops.

Almost all of the original units in Army Group A and Army Group D at the beginning of 1941 were utilized, of course, on the Russian front. Twenty-nine of the thirty-nine divisions in Army Group D were shipped East by rail, while five saw action in the Balkans and one in Norway. In addition, twenty-two of the twenty-five divisions in Army Group A as of December 21, 1940, were also shuttled East.

The Air Force, moreover, moved most of its units to the Eastern front, and only Air Fleet 3 (Luftflotte 3) was

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[23]The 211th, 215th, 216th, and 223rd Infantry Divisions remained behind. Oberbefehlshaber West, Heeresgruppenkommando A, Abt. T, Ia Nr. 540/41 g.Kdos., "Gliederung der Heeresgruppe A, Abt. T, Stand vom 16.4.41," National Archives Microcopy T-311 (Records of German Field Commands, Army Groups) (hereafter cited as T-311), Roll 13, Frames 7012655-7012658; Heeresgruppenkommando D, Ia Nr. 12/41 g.Kdos., "Gliederung der Heeresgruppe D, Stand vom 10.1. 1941," 10.1.41, ibid., Frames 7012451-7012453; and Heeresgruppenkommando A, Abt. T, Ia Nr. 717/41 g.Kdos., "Gliederung der Heeresgruppe A, Abt. T, Stand vom 9.5.41," 9.5.1941, ibid., Frames 7012692-7012694.

[24]GenStdH, Op. Abt. III, Pruef.-Nr. 10918, "Schematische Kriegsgliederung vom 21.12.40," as cited in KTB/OKW, I, 1127-1130; and GenStdH, Op. Abt. III, Pruef-Nr. 16272, "Schematische Kriegsgliederung vom 27.6.1941 abends," as cited in KTB/OKW, I, 1135-1138.

left for operations in the West. The Navy, for its part, naturally had little to do in a direct way with the invasion of Russia, although several Marine-type units were named for special assignments.[25] The Navy continued to concentrate its efforts in the West. As pointed out in a naval directive of March 6, 1941: "The main target for the Navy, as during the eastern campaign, remains Britain."[26]

Like the Navy, all of the German military formations which remained stationed in the West did not settle back to await the results of the attack on Russia. They had a number of important tasks of their own. One of these was to cover the movement East.

The operations took the form of a series of interrelated deceptions during the spring and summer of 1941 directed primarily against England. One of the operations, "Shark (Haifisch)," was an elaborate scheme for a surprise assault on British soil. Another operation, "Harpoon (Harpune)," was designed as a cover plan for "Shark" and was to simulate an attack on the east coast of England from Norway and Denmark and on the British southwest coast from

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[25]Heeresgruppenkommando A, Abt. T, Ia Nr. 217/41 g.Kdos. Ch., "'Attila' Marine-Stosstruppenabteilung," 6.5.1941, National Archives Microcopy T-312 (Records of German Field Commands: Armies) (hereafter cited as T-312), Roll 25, Frames 7531363-7531364.

[26]Naval High Command, Chief, Naval Staff B. Nr. 1, Skl. I op 262/41 g.Kdos.Chefs., "Directive No. 1 for Operation 'Barbarossa,'" 6 Mar 41, as contained in Fuehrer Directives and Other Top-Level Directives of the German Armed Forces, 1939-1945 (2 vols.; Washington: U.S. Navy Department, 1947), I, 149.

Brittany.[27] The apparent preparations for "Haifisch" were divided into two time periods with appropriate deceptive measures for each.[28] During the first phase from March 12 to April 12, 1941, German appearances were to make it seem that an invasion of Britain was being prepared. During the second phase, which began on April 12, and which had no set termination date, the German High Command acknowledged that it could no longer mask the movement from West to East. Therefore, the objectives and details of the eastern deployment were to appear, so far as possible, as a deception, while preparations in the West were to look like an actual attack against England. Planning for Operation "Shark" was based on the revised orders issued for "Sea Lion" in September, 1940, and "Shark" was to be ready for implementation by the first of August, 1941.[29] The major difference from "Sea Lion" was that the new operation involved different Army Groups. Whereas Army Group A was scheduled to carry out "Sea Lion," Army Group D (designated Army Group A,

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[27]Oberbefehlshaber des Heeres, GenStdH, O.Qu I/Op. Abt. IIa/V Nr. 718/41 G.Kdos.(Chefsache), "Anweisung fuer die Verbereitung des Unternehmens 'Haifisch,'" 24.4.1941, T-312, Roll 498, Frame 8092639, and Wheatley, Operation Sea Lion, 97-98.

[28]Oberkommando der Wehrmacht, WFSt/Abt. L(I Op.) Nr. 44277/41 g.K.Ch., "Richtlinien fuer die Feindtauschung," 12 Mar 41, T-77, Roll 777, Frames 5503711-5503716.

[29]Oberbefehlshaber des Heeres, GenStdH, O.Qu I/Op. Abt. IIa/V Nr. 718/41 g.Kdos.(Chefsache), "Anweisung fuer die Vorbereitung des Unternehmens 'Haifisch,'" 24.4.1941, T-312, Roll 498, Frames 8092638-8092661; and Wheatley, Operation Sea Lion, 98, 155-159. See map on page 29.

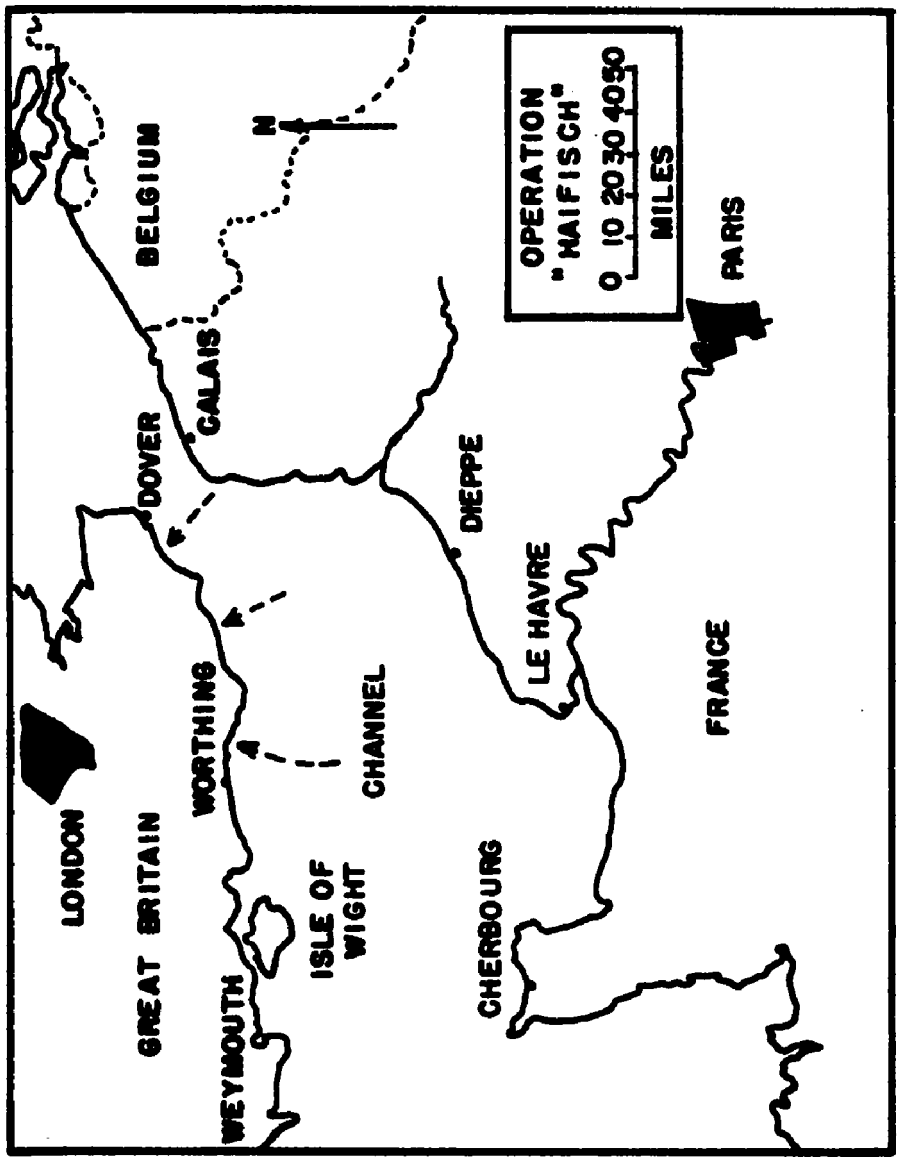

OPERATION
"HAIFISCH"
0 10 20 30 40 50
MILES
N
LONDON
GREAT BRITAIN
BELGIUM
DOVER
CALAIS
WORTHING
CHANNEL
ISLE OF
WIGHT
WEYMOUTH
DIEPPE
LE HAVRE
CHERBOURG
FRANCE
PARIS

Figure 2.

Section T during this period for deception purposes) was to prepare "Haifisch" for supposed operational status.[30]

The projected operation called for Luftwaffe parachute and air landing units to establish bridgeheads in a surprise attack and then for a first wave of eight infantry divisions (called only x. Armee and y. Armee) to move across the Channel and invade the English coast between Folkestone and Worthing. The German divisions were to embark from the major Channel ports that extended from Rotterdam to Cherbourg. The Navy was to participate by laying mines, defending the transport fleet, and giving fire support. A second wave of six panzer and motorized units and a third wave of six infantry divisions were to follow later. The initial goal was to connect the bridgeheads and then to reach a line from the mouth of the Thames to the heights south of London and from there to Portsmouth on the southern coast. An inescapable prerequisite for the entire operation was air superiority, at least over the landing area, and protection of the flanks of the transport fleet by the Luftwaffe and the Kriegsmarine.

To lend an atmosphere of authenticity, commanders were instructed that "troops are to be led to believe that at present all preparations and measures are being con-

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[30]Heeresgruppenkommando A, Abt. T, Ia Nr. 502/41 geh. Kdos., 14.4.1941, T-311, Roll 13, Frame 7012645.

ducted in connection with 'Sea Lion.'"[31] In addition, the Germans assembled ships and barges during the summer, especially near Le Havre for Wehrmacht units to conduct loading and landing exercises.[32] A memorandum from the Chief of Staff of Army Group D as early as May 20 indicated that, in general, the Germans felt they were "confusing the English as to our future intentions."[33] The British, as we know, were not deceived. In fact they were reporting to Stalin the German troop movements East, but the Soviet dictator chose to ignore the warnings. On August 7, 1941, the Armed Forces High Command (Oberkommando der Wehrmacht) ordered that deception measures "Haifisch" and "Harpune" cease since they had completely fulfilled their purposes.[34] Theater Command West in conjunction with the Navy planned yet another operation, "Haifisch II," in which the plans for Operation "Shark" would actually be implemented, with

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[31]Oberbefehlshaber West (Heeresgruppenkommando A), Ia Nr. 146/41 geh.Kdos.Ch., "Einheitliche Befehlsfuehrung bei Abwehrkampfhandlungen im Kuestengebiet im Westen," 3.4. 1941, National Archives Microcopy T-78 (Records of Headquarters, German Army High Command) (hereafter cited as T-78), Roll 317, Frame 6270989.

[32]82. Infanterie Division, Kommandeur der Truppen des Heeres, Abt. Ia Nr. 1365/41, "2. Befehle fuer die Ausbildung fuer die Zeit Mai-Juni 1941," 1.5.41, T-312, Roll 498, Frame 8092273, and AOK 16, Abt. T [AOK 15], IaF Nr. 2252/41 g.Kdos., "Uebungsverband," 24 Juni 1941, ibid., Frame 8092215.

[33]Ia [Heeresgruppe D], geh.Kdos., "Besprechungs-Notiz," 20.5.1941, T-311, Roll 13, Frame 7012744.

[34]Sammelmappe "Barbarossa": Militaergeschichtliches Forschungsamt Freiburg i.Br., Signatur III W59/2, as cited in Hillgruber, Hitlers Strategie, 460.

only three divisions participating, if there were a political or morale breakdown on the part of the English people.[35] The Navy reported on May 28, however, that "Haifisch II" was impossible unless the present German shipping capacity in the West were greatly augmented.

The Wehrmacht was also involved with other duties in the Western theater in 1941. One was to prepare for a possible take over of Vichy France or the Iberian Peninsula. The other was to guard against any incursion that the British might attempt on the continent.

The Germans based the planning for operations against Unoccupied France and against Spain and Portugal on quite distinct premises. Hitler's attitude toward Spain and Portugal depended on his relationship with Franco. Relations between the two dictators had cooled noticeably by the end of 1940, and with the not-too-distant invasion of the Soviet Union, National Socialist planning as it related to the Iberian Peninsula changed considerably during the course of 1941. The Fuehrer did not share the same outlook toward France. The Vichy regime had been created as a convenience, albeit an important one. Hopefully, it would

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[35]Der Oberbefehlshaber West, Heeresgruppe A, Abt. T, Ia/IaF Nr. 2/41 g.Kdos.Chefs., "Unternehmen 'Haifisch II,'" 26.5.1941, T-312, Roll 498, Frames 8092433-8092434; and Abt. IaF [Heeresgruppe D], G.Kdos., "Aktennotiz ueber die Besprechung am 28.5.1941," 28.5.41, T-311, Roll 13, Frames 7012764-7012765.

cooperate with German aspirations. But if the French citizenry showed signs of revolt, or if military contingencies so required, German forces would not hesitate to occupy the rest of France. From this policy Hilter never deviated.

Looking first at German planning as related to the Iberian Peninsula, German staff officers proposed two different types of operation. The first operation, codenamed "Felix," was an ambitious plan designed during the last months of 1940 to occupy Gibraltar, Spanish Morocco, and possibly the Atlantic Islands as well as parts of Spain and Portugal. In May of 1941 the Germans formulated a second operation, "Isabella," in case Great Britain should decide to land troops on the Peninsula.

Operation "Felix," like "Isabella," was predicated on Spanish assistance. It was designed to accomplish three purposes: to bring in Spain on the side of the Axis, to cut off British shipping through the western Mediterranean and thus to aid Italy, and to help satisfy Hitler's quest for "world power" status. The Germans held out Gibraltar to Franco as bait. "Felix" as finally set forth envisaged a German army corps, with Franco's concurrence, crossing over the Pyrenees border on January 10, 1941, and then taking up positions to assault Gibraltar from

the land side by February 4 or 5.[36] After taking Gibraltar, German motorized units were to move into Spanish Morocco to "assist" the Spaniards in closing the Straits. Another small German force was to take over Portugal if that proved necessary. This ambitious plan also held open the possibility of occupying parts of the Canary and Cape Verde Islands. The problems were, first of all, that Franco remained obdurate, and secondly, that time was running out. "Felix" had to take place before German military power--the lack of aircraft was especially critical--was shifted East. On December 10, 1940, Field Marshal Wilhelm Keitel, Chief of the Armed Forces High Command (OKW), "issued a brief order stating that Operation 'Felix' would not now be carried out 'as the necessary political situation no longer exists.'"[37] One month later, on the exact day when "Felix" had originally been scheduled to begin, the Germans called it off officially.[38]

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[36]See the map on page 34. The discussion of "Felix" is drawn from Fuehrer Directive No. 18 of November 12, 1940, in Hubatsch (ed.), Hitlers Weisungen, 67-68. An English translation is located in Hugh R. Trevor-Roper (ed.), Hitler's War Directives 1939-1945 (London: Sidwick & Jackson, 1964), 40ff. Supplementary information on "Felix" is taken from Hillgruber, Hitlers Strategie, 325-331; Charles B. Burdick, Germany's Military Strategy and Spain in World War II (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1968), 63-105; KTB/OKW, I(6 Dez 1940), 205-206; and James R. M. Butler, Grand Strategy, Vol. II, September 1939-June 1941 (History of the Second World War: United Kingdom Military Series) (London: Her Majesty's Stationary Office, 1957), 431.

[37]Trevor-Roper (ed.), Hitler's War Directives, 44.

[38]Armed Forces High Command, WFSt/Abt. L(I) Nr. 44011/41 g.K.Chefs., 10 Jan 41, as contained in Fuehrer Directives, I, 131.

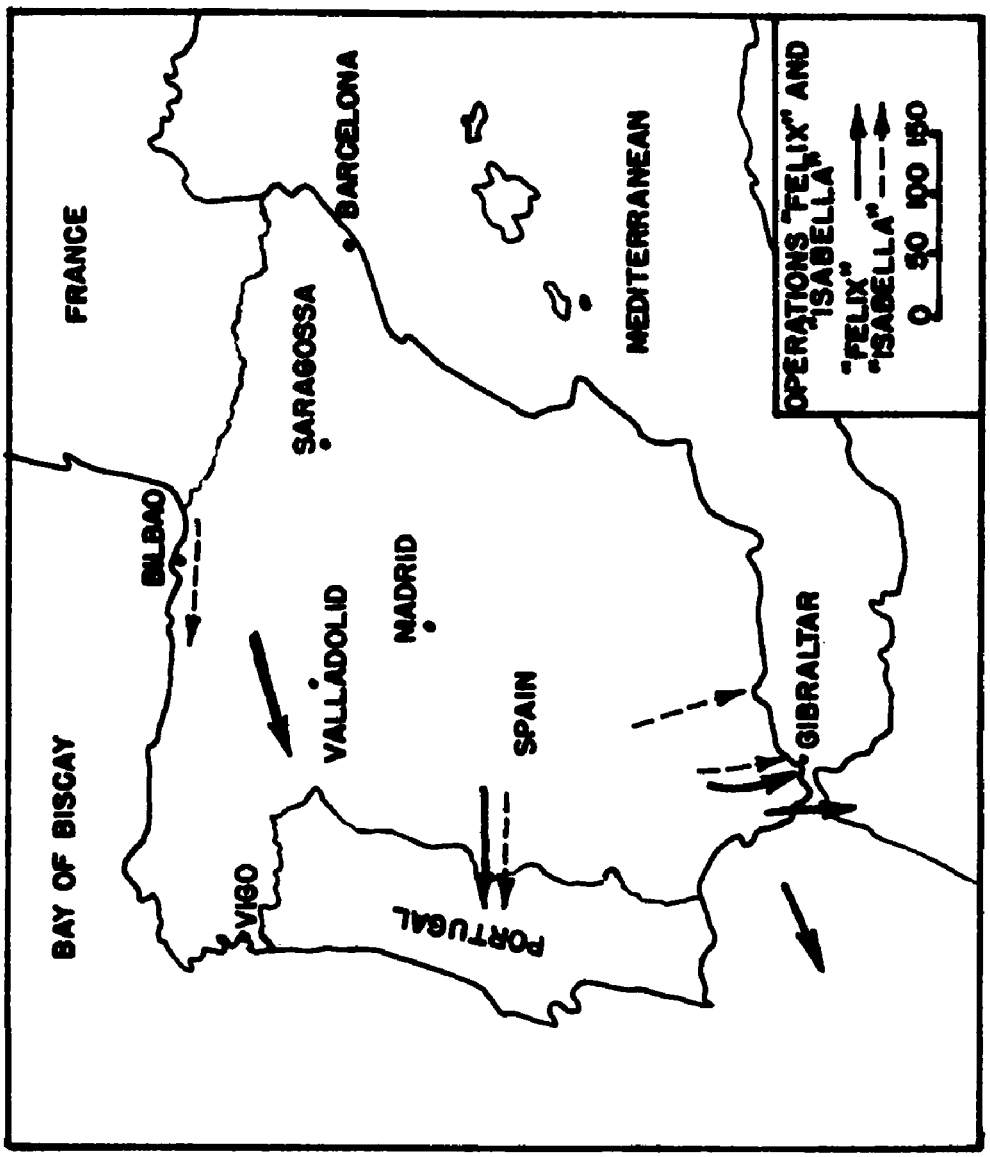

FRANCE
BILBAO
SARAGOSSA
BARCELONA
MEDITERRANEAN
VALLADOLID
MADRID
SPAIN
GIBRALTAR
BAY OF BISCAY
VIGO
PORTUGAL
OPERATIONS "FELIX" AND "ISABELLA"
"FELIX"
"ISABELLA"
0 50 100 150

Figure 3.

As stated previously, there is little doubt that the Wehrmacht could have taken over Spain at this time if Hitler had wanted to. And it is understandable if the Fuehrer considered Spain, and Franco in particular, as being ungrateful. Should not the Spanish dictator show his appreciation for German aid given during the Spanish Civil War? Why, then, did Spain refuse to join the Axis now? It certainly cannot be said that Franco felt any ideological affinity for the West. Nor can it be asserted that associating with Germany would ultimately prevent Spain from gaining Gibraltar and some additional territory in Africa, although in the latter case, Franco would probably not get as much land as he desired.[39] But there were a number of other reasons why the Spanish leader, or Caudillo as he is called, stalled for time and eventually succeeded in keeping Spain neutral. One reason was that Franco wanted to consolidate his hold over that war-torn country rather than sending his troops into battle again. Furthermore, Spain's dictator desparately needed credit, with which to pay back debts contracted to Germany and Italy during the Civil War, and goods, particularly oil, from the Western nations.[40] Finally, and most importantly, the Caudillo probably did not want German troops on Spanish

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[39]Weinberg, "German Colonial Plans," in Besson and Gaertingen (eds.), Geschichte und Gegenwartsbewusstsein, 479-483.

[40]Herbert Feis, The Spanish Story: Franco and the Nations at War (New York: Knopf, 1948), 129ff.

soil. Even though Nazi units had served in Franco's Army during the Civil War, the possibility of Spain become part of a vast German empire had seemed remote at the time. Now the situation had altered. German presence in southwestern Europe could easily become very real. To receive assistance from Germany was one thing; to risk becoming one of Hitler's satellite states was quite another.

Hitler, of course, did not lose sight of Spain, and during the course of 1941 his plans for the Iberian Peninsula altered to take into account both offensive and defensive strategy. If Gibraltar could be taken, so much the better, but German staff officials began placing more emphasis on defending Spain and Portugal from possible British encroachments. The National Socialist dictator still issued directives, such as Fuehrer Directive No. 32 on June 11, 1941, which asserted that "preparations for 'Undertaking Felix,' already planned, will be resumed to the fullest extent even during the course of operations in the East."[41] Nevertheless, he was more concerned during this period with protecting German interests in the West than in controlling southwestern Europe. It is for this reason that the successor to "Felix," Operation "Isabella," was more defensive than offensive in nature.

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[41]Trevor-Roper (ed.), Hitler's War Directives, 81. See also the succinct discussion in Butler, Grand Strategy, II, 434.

Hitler considered an English attack against Spain and Portugal as possible at the end of April and directed the Army to prepare appropriate countermeasures. He felt that eight to ten divisions would be sufficient to expel any British landing operation.[42] Accordingly, the Army produced Operation "Isabella" early in May.[43]

The plan began by pointing out that a British attempt to establish herself on the Iberian Peninsula was not inconceivable if the mass of the German forces were committed to another war front. From a German viewpoint such a move by Great Britain could accomplish a number of objectives. It would, first of all, prevent Spain from joining the Axis. Secondly, it would compensate for "prestige losses" and create a more favorable climate to entice the United States into the war. Thirdly, it would provide additional harbors for the English fleet and assist them in guarding the sea lanes. Fourthly, it would extend the range of the Royal Air Force against German air and sea strongpoints on the Atlantic coast. And lastly, it would protect the approaches to the British fortress at Gibraltar.

The German planners then estimated that the Portuguese

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[42] KTB/OKW, I (30 Apr 1941), 380.

[43] The following discussion is based on Oberbefehlshaber West, Heeresgruppenkommando A, Abt. T, Ia Nr. I5/41 geh. Kdos. Ch., "Isabella," 10.5.1941, T-312, Roll 24, Frames 7531026-7531031; and Burdick's detailed account in Germany's Military Strategy, 133-154. A summary of "Isabella" is contained in Hillgruber, Hitlers Strategie, 459-460.

harbors were the most likely place for a British landing attempt, and the ports of northern Spain were next in priority. They did not expect a simultaneous landing in France, since the enemy did not have enough men and transport craft available for both operations at the same time.

The directive continued: "In case of a British landing or a British advance from Gibraltar, the [German] Army intends to attack the English on the Iberian Peninsula with the objective of destroying the English forces or at least bringing about their expulsion."[44] To achieve this goal German units were to occupy the most important harbors along Spain and Portugal's Atlantic coast and would create at that time conditions favorable for a subsequent attack against Gibraltar. The entire operation was to be prepared and executed under the guidance of Theater Command West.

The success of "Isabella," according to Ob West, depended on the ability of the Seventh Army to move its strong forces rapidly out of southwestern France with the eventual objective of occupying either the major harbors on the Portuguese coast or else pushing forward to Spain's southern coast. Concurrently, other fast units were to take over the northern coast of Spain along the Bay of Biscay. The extensive use of Spain's railways was to be

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[44]Oberbefehlshaber West, Heeresgruppenkommando A, Abt. T, Ia Nr. 15/41 geh.Kdos.Ch., "Isabella," 10.5.1941, T-312, Roll 24, Frame 7531027. See the map on page 35.

striven for, even though they had other gauges!

The Luftwaffe was to attack the ports and strongpoints held by the enemy and to provide air cover for the advancing Wehrmacht Army units. The directive visualized, in addition, the probable transfer of German flying groups to Spanish airfields. Navy personnel were to take over the harbor areas after they had been occupied.[45] There was no mention in the plan of German withdrawal once the British had been expelled.

It is hardly surprising that Theater Command West in May alloted two army corps, seven infantry divisions, one panzer brigade, and one motorized battalion to carry out "Isabella," for it accorded closely with Hitler's estimate of April 30. The personnel were to come from the forty-six divisions serving under Oberbefehlshaber West.[46] Three divisions, an army corps, and a motorized battalion were drawn from Seventh Army, that had been designated to direct the thrust into Spain, and which was presently protecting France's Atlantic coast. The Fifteenth Army, located in the Channel area, was to contribute four

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[45]Der Chef des Generalstabes, Ob West, Heeresgruppenkommando D, Ia Nr. 55/44 geh.Kdos.Ch., "Entwicklungsmoeglichkeiten der Lage im Westen," 18.4.42, T-78, Roll 317, Frame 6271199.

[46]Oberbefehlshaber West, Heeresgruppenkommando A(T), Ia Nr. I21/41 g.Kdos.Chef., "'Isabella' Gliederung Ob. West," 23.5.4., T-312, Roll 24, Frames 7531013-7531015; Oberbefehlshaber West, Heeresgruppenkommando A(T), Geheime Kommandosache, "Gliederung Ob West, Stand vom 10.6.41 [Karte]," 10.6.1941, T-311, Roll 13, Frames 7012775-7012781; and Burdick, Germany's Military Strategy, 136.

divisions, and the First Army was to send a panzer brigade and a corps group from the interior of France. The directive indicated finally that the First Army would extend its control to take in part, or perhaps all, of the Seventh Army's zone on the Atlantic coast should "Isabella" be executed.

One might question if "Isabella" could have been carried out rapidly with the troops at hand, but an in the War Diary of the Armed Forces High Command early in June asserted that "Isabella" might take place any time after June 20.[47] As is well known, this plan as well as later ones ("Ilona" and "Gisela") directed toward the Iberian Peninsula were never used. Still they might have been put into operation, and Hitler continued to keep the Spanish option open.

Hitler also kept open the possibility of taking over Unoccupied France. Like the operations planned for Spain and Portugal, plans for occupying southeastern France arose at the end of 1940. Fuehrer Directive No. 19, dated December 10, 1940, entitled the undertaking as Operation "Attila."[48] The reasoning behind "Attila" was set forth in the first paragraph.

> In case those parts of the French Colonial Empire now controlled by General Weygand [the Vichy representative in North Africa] should show signs of revolt, preparations will be made for the rapid

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[47] KTB/OKW, I (6 Jun 1941), 413.

[48] Trevor-Roper (ed.), Hitler's War Directives, 44-46.

> occupation of the still unoccupied portion of continental France (Operation Attila). At the same time it will be necessary to capture the French home fleet and those parts of the Air Force in home bases, or at least to prevent their going over to the enemy.
>
> For military as well as political reasons, preparations for the operation will be kept under cover so as to avoid alarming the French.[49]

The directive went on to indicate that the occupation, if necessary, would be directed by Theater Command West and executed in two phases. The first phase would consist of strong motorized units with adequate air cover moving rapidly through the valleys of the Garonne and the Rhône to the Mediterranean, taking over the ports as quickly as possible (especially the important naval base at Toulon), and sealing off southeastern France from the sea. The second, or follow up, phase would employ German formations stationed on the demarcation line moving forward along the entire front.

The German planners did not expect any organized resistance on the part of the Vichy French forces, but if it appeared, it was to be suppressed ruthlessly. Luftwaffe bomber groups were to be made available for this purpose as well as helping against any possible center of disturbance. Detailed planning was to assure that the French fleet and aircraft would be prevented from leaving French territory. Finally, Hitler directed that the Italians were to be given no information about German preparations and intentions for "Attila."

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[49] Ibid., 44. See map on page 43.

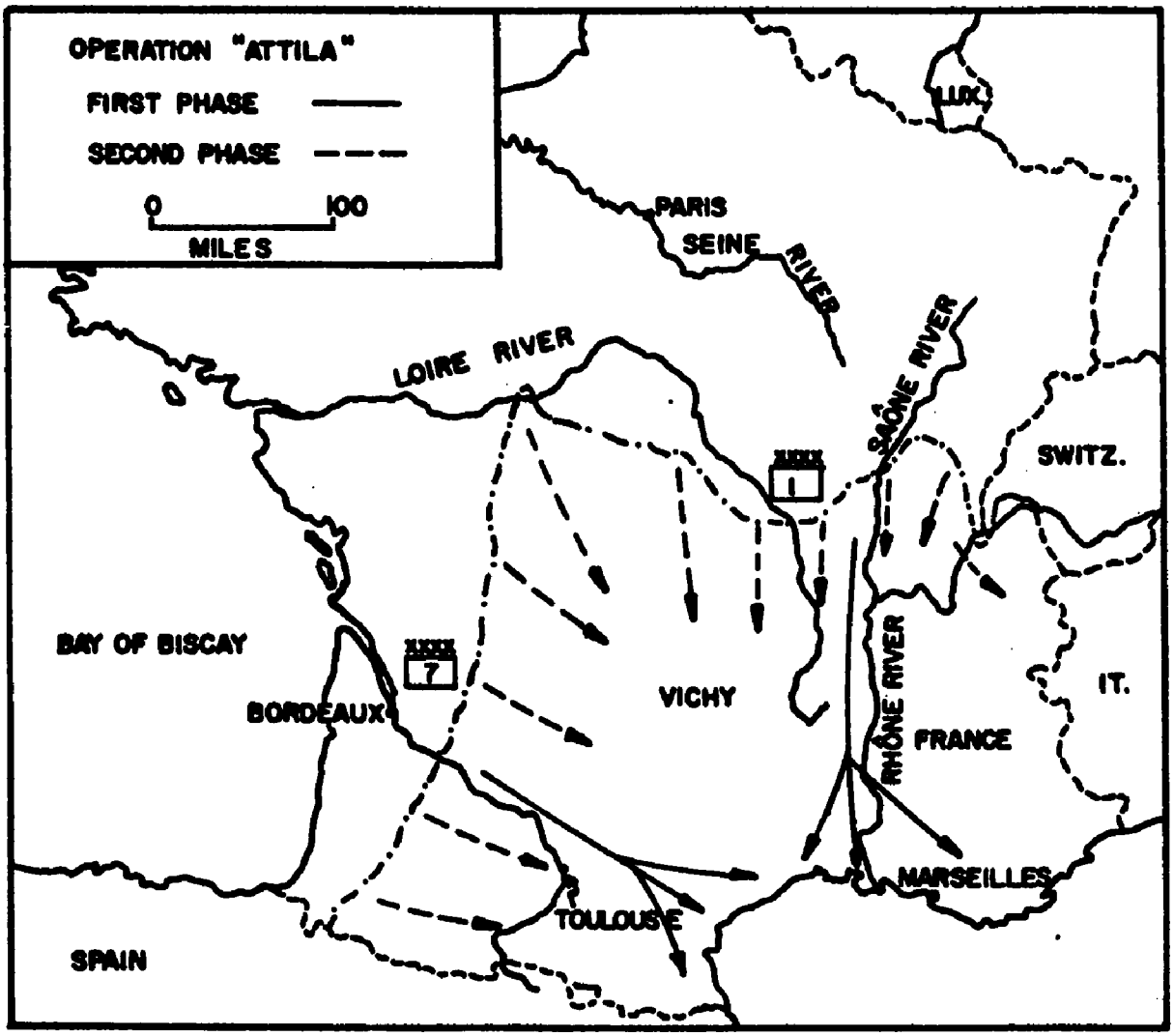

OPERATION "ATTILA"
FIRST PHASE
SECOND PHASE
0
100
MILES
PARIS
SEINE RIVER
LUX.
LOIRE RIVER
SAÔNE RIVER
SWITZ.
XXXX
1
BAY OF BISCAY
XXXX
7
BORDEAUX
VICHY
RHÔNE RIVER
IT.
FRANCE
MARSEILLES
TOULOUSE
SPAIN

Figure 4.

Early in 1941, twenty-one German formations from the First and Seventh Armies were selected to participate in occupying the Vichy zone of France, but on February 3 the High Command reported that "Attila" could be undertaken only with great difficulty after the exodus of troops to the East.[50] For this same reason preparations for Operations "Felix" and "Sea Lion" had already been discontinued a month earlier. In the case of "Attila," however, German officials ordered that the operations must be carried through even with less personnel. By June 10, "Attila" was pared to fourteen Army units, which included the advanced headquarters staffs of the Seventh and First Armies that were directing the operation.[51]

It is interesting to note that of the original twenty-one Army units involved, only one division was listed to take part in "Attila" both on February 3 and June 10.[52] In addition, panzer and motorized divisions

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[50] KTB/OKW, I (3 Feb 1941), 299-300.

[51] Oberbefehlshaber West, Heeresgruppenkommando A(T), Ia Nr. I21/41 g.Kdos.Chef., "'Isabella' Gliederung Ob. West," 23.5.41, T-312, Roll 24, Frames 7531013-7531015; and Oberbefehlshaber West, Heeresgruppenkommando A(T), Geheime Kommandosache, "Gliederung Ob. West, Stand vom 10.6.41 [Karte]," 10.6.41, T-311, Roll 13, Frames 7012775-7012781.

[52] The sole division was the 215th Infantry Division. Heeresgruppenkommando D, Ia Nr. 41/41 g.Kdos.Ch., "Gliederung im Falle 'Attila,'" 3.2.4., ibid., Frames 7012506-7012507; and Oberbefehlshaber West, Heeresgruppenkommando A(T), Ia Nr. I21/41 g.Kdos.Ch., "'Isabella' Gliederung Ob. West," 23.5.41, T-312, Roll 24, Frames 7531013-7531015.

were conspicuously absent from the new "Attila" plan, although it was possible that a panzer brigade located near Paris would participate. Furthermore, orders from Oberbefehlshaber West made it clear that "Attila" and "Isabella," the thrust into Spain, would not take place at the same time. There were simply not enough troops for both operations.[53] A frank discussion between Army Quartermaster officials and staff members of Theater Command West pointed up the skeptical outlook: "It must be conceded in all honesty that even though the fast units involved in 'Operation Attila' were replaced by weak and improvised ones, advance units should be able to reach the Mediterranean coast in three days. Still many factors remain uncertain."[54]

One section of the plan that did receive special attention was the occupation of the French Mediterranean ports. The major portion of the operation, as one might assume, was assigned to the Navy.[55] Three naval units were to take part. One group of naval storm troops was to occupy and defend Marseilles and Toulon, and this specially-

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[53]Oberbefehlshaber West, Heeresgruppenkommando A, Abt. T, Ia Nr. I10/41 G.Kdos.Chefs., "Isabella," 13.5.41, ibid., Frame 7531018.

[54]Oberbefehlshaber West, Ia Nr. HH30/41 geh.Kdos. Ch., "Besprechung mit O.Qu. 1," 19.5.1941, T-311, Roll 13, Frame 7012737.

[55]The following is taken from Armeeoberkommando 1, Abt. Ia. Nr. 0121/41 geh.Kdos.(Chefsache), "Besondere Anordnungen fuer den Einsatz unterstellter Teile der Kriegsmarine," 12.4.41, T-312, Roll 25, Frames 7531365-7531368.

trained unit was also to make sure that no ships left the harbor area. A second group was to assume port watch over six harbors along the Mediterranean (including portions of Marseilles and Toulon). The small third unit was to look after the ships themselves. The three groups were to set out from Dijon in the forward motor columns and move directly to their destinations. Although these special teams did not comprise enough Navy personnel to man the entire coastal defense system, every effort was to be made to place the coastal batteries in German hands undamaged.

"Attila" continued in existence throughout 1941 and into 1942, even in its weakened form. Toward the end of 1942, when the Allied Powers invaded Northwest Africa, it was implemented, though under the condename of "Anton." This occupation of Unoccupied France will be discussed later.

There is one further major task that the Wehrmacht performed in the West during 1941, and that was to protect western Europe from a British landing. It was in this context that Germany's western defenses began to take form.

At first the German military viewed any defensive measures purely as a precautionary move. This fact is made clear in a directive from Army Group A on November 10, 1940.

> Even though attacks by England can scarecely be expected to any great extent, still partial attacks against the Belgian-French coast must be reckoned with. Even a temporary success against a single important strongpoint can cause difficulties for the entire course of the war that follows against England.[56]

In short, German forces must prevent any English success on the continent no matter how small. This attitude prevailed for several months into 1941.

The main focus, however, was on offensive rather than defensive strategy, on constructing submarine bases at Brest, Lorient, St. Nazaire, and later on at LaPallice and Bordeaux to pursue the U-boat war against Britain, and on utilizing the coastal batteries that the Germans erected between Calais and Boulogne to assist in the invasion of England.[57] These long rang artillery batteries were positioned to hit targets along the English shore and eventually during the course of the war killed or injured scores of British civilians living near the Straits of Dover.[58]

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[56]Der Oberbefehlshaber West (Heeresgruppe A), Ia Nr. 1400/40 geh., "Einheitliche Befehlsfuehrung im Westen," 10.11.1940, T-78, Roll 317, Frame 6271062.

[57]Genlt. Max Pemsel, "Preparations for Invasion," FMS, MS# B-234, 2. Four offensive naval batteries were eventually built: the Great Elector Battery located near Cap Gris Nez with four guns of 280 mm. each; Todt Battery at Haringzelles consisting of four-385 mm. guns; Friedrich August Battery north of Boulogne at Trésorerie with three-305 mm. guns; and during the last half of 1942, Lindemann Battery at Sangatte with three-406 mm. guns.

[58]Stjernfelt, Alerte, 26-27; Hans Speidel, We Defended Normandy, Trans. Ian Colvin (London: Herbert Jenkins, 1951), 67; Basil Collier, The Battle of the V-Weapons, 1944-45 (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1964), 74; and Dipl. Ing. Xaver Dorsch, "Organization Todt--France," FMS, MS# B-670, 32-35.

But the German outlook toward the West began to change by the middle of February, 1941. A memorandum from Field Marshal Walter von Brauchitsch, Commander-in-Chief of the Army, to Armed Forces High Command (OKW) Headquarters on February 15 continued to acknowledge the possibility of a British attack on the Dutch, Belgian or French coasts, but this time it might be large or small, especially as German strength in the area had diminished and no longer posed an immediate threat to England.[59] Von Brauchitsch went on to say that German forces would have to do the best they could with the meager strength of the formations on hand in order to repel such an attack. One might construe the memorandum as merely a "scare tactic" by Army officials to obtain more troops, but it also points up an awareness on the part of the Army of its expanding defensive responsibilities and additional problems they would entail.

One of the defensive problems was to make sure that any British action was met by a coordinated German effort, and such an effort required unified command in the West. In keeping with traditional German practice, the land commander, in this case Theater Command West, was in ultimate control. Directives during the first half of 1941 attest

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[59]Oberkommando des Heeres, GenStdH., Op. Abt. (IIa), Nr. 178/41 g.Kdos., "Einheitliche Befehlsfuehrung bei Abwehrkampfhundlangen im Kuestengebiet im Westen," 15 Feb 1941, T-78, Roll 317, Frame 6271029.

to the working out of command relationships.[60]

Among the various armed services, the Navy and the Air Force were to continue their own offensive missions, but when an enemy landing was imminent or being executed, Oberbefehlshaber West was to take command.[61] The directive defined a landing as imminent "if it can be observed by reconnaissance at sea or from the air, or can be ascertained from land."[62] In addition, all preparations and training for defense against a landing was under Oberbefehlshaber West (Ob West), and reconnaissance was to comply with the wishes of the Army. Luftwaffe antiaircraft artillery was also to come under Army jurisdiction in case of an invasion, insofar as the air situation permitted. Nevertheless, the stress at this time was on cooperation among the Services. The Navy, for example, foresaw no problems in coordinating naval artillery against landing attempts with army artillery units.[63]

The Army, then, was in command in the West in 1941 with

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[60]The problem of unified command is examined in Der Oberbefehlshaber West (Heeresgruppe A), Ia Nr. 1400/40 geh., "Einheitliche Befehlsfuehrung im Westen," 10.11.1940, ibid., Frames 6271062-6271064.

[61]Oberkommando der Wehrmacht, WFSt/Abt. L(I Op), Nr. 44166/41 g.K.Chefs., "Einheitliche Befehlsfuehrung bei Abwehrkampfhandlungen im Kuestengebiet im Westen," 1 Maerz 1941, as cited in KTB/OKW, I, 1005-1006.

[62]Ibid.

[63]Heeresgruppenkommando D, Ia Nr. 103/41 geh.Kdes.Ch., "Notizen zu der Besprechung H.Gru.D (Ia) bei H.Gru.A mit Mar.Gru. Kdo. West," 8.3.1941, T-311, Roll 13, Frame 7012579.

Ob West as its representative, even though the Armed Forces High Command (OKW) directed the overall war effort. There was one exception: the Armed Forces Commander in the Netherlands (Wehrmachtbefehlshaber in den Niederlanden) was responsible for the Dutch area. But even in this instance Ob West was to issue directives to the Netherlands commander in cases of immediate danger. And as the war continued, the Netherlands became integrated more and more into the western defense complex.[64] Army control also extended to the lower levels, as local Army commanders were put in charge of their own sectors. Furthermore, other German units in western Europe, such as customs officials, police, labor service, and Organization Todt personnel, were to take orders from Commander-in-Chief West during periods of danger. Additional directives in April and May elaborated the Army's pre-eminent position in the West.[65] The concept of unity of command seemed

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[64]Armed Forces High Command, WFSt/Abt. L(I Op), Nr. 44166/41 g.K.Chefs., "Unified Command of Defensive Operations in the Western Coastal Area," 1 Mar 1941, as contained in Fuehrer Directives, I, 146-147.

[65]Oberbefehlshaber West (Heeresgruppenkommando A), Ia Nr. 146/41 geh.Kdos.Ch., "Einheitliche Befehlsfuehrung bei Abwehrkampfhandlungen im Kuestengebiet im Westen," 3.4.1941, T-78, Roll 317, Frames 6270980-6270986; Oberkommando der Wehrmacht, WFSt/Abt. L (I Op), Nr. 00590/41 g.K. "Niederlande," 17.April.1941, ibid., Frame 6271008; Oberkommando des Heeres GenStdH (Op. Abt. IIa), Nr. 37288/41 g.Kdos., "Weisungsrecht des Ob. West gegenueber dem Militaerbefehlshaber in den Niederlanden," 24 April 1941, ibid., Frame 6271021; and Oberkommando der Wehrmacht, WFSt/Abt. L (I Op/II Org), Nr. 627/41 g.Kdos., "Zusammenfassende Richtlinien fuer die Kampffuehrung an den Kuesten," 3 Mai 1941, ibid., Frames 6270945-6270949.

secure, but the question continued to arise in 1942 and 1943 mainly because each of the armed forces would not accept the defensive thinking being advocated by the other services. Although the Army again eventually retained control, it was not settled without some misgivings on the part of the other branches.

The second defensive problem was where and how to meet any invasion the British might attempt. Obviously, certain areas were more endangered than others, and the Germans set about deciding where a landing might take place. German staff officials in March, 1941, determined that a large landing was probable in the area extending from the Dutch to the French coast south of Boulogne, but such an operation would prove extremely difficult for British forces at this time.[66] They considered that the strong coastal artillery, especially around the harbor areas, and the extreme variations in the tides would probably preclude a big assault. Coastal "raids" by the British were much more likely to occur. British units could initiate this type of small operation anywhere along the coast, but it was expected only at night with the object of destroying installations, taking prisoners, or landing agents and then withdrawing quickly. The Germans estimated further that an attack on the submarine bases with the

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[66]The following paragraph is taken from Heeresgruppenkommando D, Ia Nr. 103/41 geh.Kdos.Ch., "Notizen zu der Besprechung H.Gru. D(Ia) bei H.Gru.A mit Mar.Gru.Kdo.West," 8.3.1941, T-311, Roll 13, Frames 7012572-7012581.

purpose of blocking or putting them out of commission was inconceivable unless it were conducted as part of a large operation.

The basic defensive plan as it evolved for 1941 was to concentrate German artillery in or near the most threatened sectors and to back them up with infantry troops placed in the area as well as with a number of divisions in reserve. The large harbors were particularly important in this respect and for two reasons. German planners anticipated that the British could sustain a large landing only by capturing a major port to unload the necessary heavy equipment.[67] In addition, large portions of the German fleet were stationed in the Atlantic and Channel harbors, and artillery protection was essential if these formations were to carry out their missions. The less threatened coastal stretches were to be defended by smaller contingents of troops, but panzer and infantry (including artillery) units were held in reserve to "destroy the enemy on land or throw him back into the sea if that proved necessary."[68]

The manpower and material situation, which became critical for the Germans during the preparations for Barbarossa, eased to some degree in the summer and early fall of 1941. The German military found that it did have

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[67] Ibid., Frame 7012574.

[68] Oberkommando der Wehrmacht, WFSt/Abt. L(I Op/IIOrg), Nr. 627/21 g.Kdos., "Zusammenfassende Richtlinien fuer die Kampffuehrung an den Kuesten," 3 Mai 1941, T-78, Roll 317, Frame 6270945.

sufficient troops in the West as long as the situation remained quiet. Theater Command West might not have the quantity or the quality of personnel to man the coastal areas properly, but there were a number of reserve divisions that could be moved by rail or truck into any threatened area. On June 10, the German forces in the Netherlands and the Seventh and Fifteenth Armies that covered the Channel and Atlantic coasts consisted of thirty-two divisions. Although nineteen of these divisions were deployed along the coast, thirteen were held back in reserve.[69] Thirteen more divisons of the First Army that occupied the interior of France were also considered additional reserve power. Even though the total number of German Army divisions in the West decreased to thirty-eight by June 27, the same units with one exception and the exact number of division, thirty-eight, were listed in the order of battle for Ob West on September 3.[70] In fact, one might contend there were more than enough German troops in the western theater at this time, troops that might well have been used on the

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[69]Oberbefehlshaber West, Heeresgruppenkommando A(T), Ia Nr. 121/41 g.Kdos.Chef., "'Isabella' Gliederung Ob. West." 23.5.41, T-312, Roll 24, Frames 7531014-7531015; and Oberbefehlshaber West, Heeresgruppenkommando A(T), Geheime Kommandosache, "Gliederung Ob. West, Stand vem 10.6.41 [Karte]," 10.6.41, T-311, Roll 13, Frames 7012775-7012781.

[70]GenStdH, Op. Abt. III, Pruef.-Nr. 16272, "Schematische Kriegsgliederung vom 27.6.1941 abends," as cited in KTB/OKW, I, 1138; and GenStdH, Op. Abt. III, Pruef.-Nr. 16284, "Schematische Kriegsgliederung vom 3.9.1941," as cited in KTB/OKW, I, 1143.

Eastern front. The manpower situation in the West thus remained too stable throughout the summer of 1941, and Wehrmacht officials even found time to conduct courses to train athletic officers at Fountainbleau and to teach horseback riding and driver's training at Melun instead of being engaged in strictly military tasks.[71]

In terms of artillery, steady progress was made in 1941 by adding captured pieces and artillery emplacements to the German military inventory. By October 9, Oberbefehlschaber West listed in its area 1,215 pieces of artillery ranging from 75 mm. to 406 mm. guns.[72] To be sure, over one-third, or 455, of these were of French, Belgian, or Czech vintage. Nevertheless, a portion of all of the coastal artillery had been placed in batteries, for a report of August 30 listed ninety-two batteries (with three or four guns per battery) ready for use along the western coast.[73] Certainly the emplacements were not as permanent as the German offensive batteries that had been constructed in 1940 to shell the English coastal towns, but there was little need to protect artillery batteries

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[71]Armeeoberkommando 1, "Taetigkeitsbericht [Juni 1941]," T-312, Roll 19, Frame 7524307.

[72]Oberkommando des Heeres, GenStdH, Op. Abt.(IIa), Nr. 38031/41 g.Kdos., "Stand vom 9.10.1941," 9.10.1941, T-78, Roll 317, Frames 6270905-6270906.

[73]Oberkommando des Heeres, GenStdH Op. Abt(III), Nr. 1469/41 g.Kdos., "Kuestenartillerie," 30 Aug 41, T-78, Roll 317, Frame 6270912. The three long-range batteries in the Pas de Calais area were not included in the list.

so elaborately in 1941. To an observer in 1944, German artillery in the West in 1941 might seem woefully inadequate, but the artillery measures taken by the German High Command in 1941 were sufficient to ward off any possible British landing attempt, while the Soviet Union was being disposed of in the East.

In summary, one might characterize German plans and programs on western Europe for 1941 as follows: Even though the German military did not have enough troops to pursue a large-scale operation against Spain or possibly even against Unoccupied France, they probably possessed more than enough forces to meet any British threat in the West.

One other feature of German policy in western Europe briefly deserves mention at this time--the relationship of the various German and local officials in France, Belgium, and the Netherlands to the operational German military forces stationed in the area. The complex German administration and its civilian counterpart in each of the countries was organized in 1940 and 1941, and there is no doubt that the functions of these occupation governments did affect the Wehrmachts defensive posture in the West throughout the period of German control.

The occupation of western Europe reflected the state structures that had existed there for a century or more,

and the governing apparatus proved to be unique in each country. In the Netherlands, two offices--the High Commissioner for the Occupied Dutch Territories (Reichskommissar fuer die besetzten niederlandischen Gebiete) and the Commander of the Armed Forces in the Netherlands (Wehrmachtsbefehlshaber in den Niederlanden)--exercised power.[74] The civil administration was turned over to the High Commissioner and his representatives, while the Commander of the Armed Forces coordinated the activities of the three branches of the German military. In Belgium and northern France, the Military Commander in Belgium and Northern France (Militaerbefehlshaber in Belgien und Nordfrankreich) was in control of both the military and the civilian administrations.[75]

France's situation was more complex. Basically, the Military Commander in France (Militaerbefehlshaber in Frankreich) ran Occupied France, and the Vichy government administered Unoccupied France, but each government exercised at least some authority in the other's territory. In between, there was the German ambassador to France, Otto Abetz, a Francophile who was responsible for all political

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[74]Warmbrunn, The Dutch, 27-34.

[75]Viscount Chilsten, "Belgium," Hitler's Europe, eds. Toynbee and Toynbee, 479-480. The regions of northern France under the Military Commander were the département of Nord and Pas de Calais. Luxembourg, Alsace, and Lorraine became a part of the Reich administratively.

matters in both zones.[76]

In spite of the organizational differences, each country's administration exhibited marked similarities. First of all, one of the main functions of each government was to maintain internal security within its area of responsibility.[77] The problem of civilian resistance to Nazi control was to grow enormously during the next three years, but it was relatively slight in 1941. Cases of sabotage and arson were few in number, and several incidents were confined to scribbling "Vive deGaulle!" in chalk on the side of a wall or hissing at the Fuehrer's picture in a movie house.[78] Secondly, the day-to-day administration was handled by Dutch, Belgian, and French civil servants. In this way the Germans needed to use their own personnel only for supervisory duties, and knowledgeable local

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[76]Summarized in Lucien Steinberg (ed.), Les autorités allemandes in France Occupeé. Inventaire commenté de la collection de documents conservés au C.D.J.C. (Paris: Centre de Documentation Juive Contemporaine, 1966), 12-18.

[77]The following discussion is drawn from a number of sources, including Generalmajor Manfred Mueller, "Military Commander France," FMS, MS# B-094, 2-5; Generalmajor Alfred Toppe et alii, "German Military Government," FMS MS# P-033, 45-50; Generalleutnant Dr. Hans Speidel, "Military Commander France," FMS, MS# B-815, 1-5; Steinberg (ed.), Les autorités allemandes, 18-31; Blumentritt, Von Rundstedt, 127; and the sections in Toynbee and Toynbee (eds.), Hitler's Europe, written by Patricia Harvey, Alfred Cobban, and Viscount Chilston, especially pages 183-233, 345-346, 407, and 479-480.

[78]AOK 1, Ia, "Tagesmeldungen," 17.3.1941, T-312, Roll 19, Frame 7524387; and Armeeoberkommando 1, Ia Nr. 768/41 geh., "Tagesmeldungen," 26.3.41, ibid., Frame 7524397.

officials could conduct their own local affairs. Thirdly, a number of German agencies in each country existed independently from the governments that supposedly exercised control. For example, the Reich Foreign Ministry and the Propaganda Ministry had their own representatives in western Europe. Especially critical in this respect was the expanding role of the SS (Sturmstaffeln), the SD (Sicherheitsdienst), and the Gestapo in each nation. In the case of France, the SS even came to exert dominant executive power.[79] Fourthly, the government officials were to exploit their regions economically to pay for the German occupation and to support the German war effort. In short, these areas were to provide labor, goods, machinery, and money for the Nazi cause.

Finally, and more directly related to Germany's western defenses, the various administrations were subordinate to Oberbefehlshaber West in tactical questions and in cases of imminent danger. Thus Ob West was solely responsible for preparing the defenses against an invasion, including direct control over the coastal area to a depth of thirty kilometers, and for quelling any enemy landing attempt. Theater Command West's control over the governing officials of western Europe went no further, but the notion that this restriction severely handicapped the operations

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[79]Generalleutnant Dr. Hans Speidel, "Military Commander France," FMS, MS# B-815, 1; and Steinberg, Les autorités allemandes, 28-31.

of Ob West is doubtful. It was the overall administrative structure described above that was to prevail in western Europe until the Normandy landing.

CHAPTER II

The Atlantic Wall Takes Shape

The "East Solution" failed to materialize during the last quarter of 1941, and Hitler therefore decided that the main German war effort would have to continue against the Soviet Union in 1942. This policy meant, in part, that the German military would have to deploy more and more combat units to meet the Russian situation. As related to the West, it meant the transfer of large numbers of Wehrmacht troops to the East. As early as August 14, 1941, the German Army, though winning great victories on the Russian front, began to consider sending additional forces from the western theater to help out against the Red Army. When the Soviets instituted their winter counteroffensive in December, and the situation reached crisis proportions, these troop movements became a common occurrence.[1] The Russian front finally stabilized itself in February, 1942,

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[1]Oberkommando des Heeres, Generalstab des Heeres, Op. Abt. IIa, "Notiz ueber Verlegung einer Division aus dem Bereich des Oberbefehlshaber West nach dem Osten," 14.8. 1941, T-78, Roll 310, Frame 6261941; Oberbefehlshaber West, Heeresgruppenkommando D, Ia Nr. 319/41 geh.Kdos.Ch., "Umgliederung, weitere Abgaben nach dem Osten und Aufgaben im Westen," 18.12.41, ibid., Frames 6261850-6261851; and AOK 1, "Taetigskeitsbericht fuer Nov. 1941," T-312, Roll 20, Frame 7525601.

but by this time fifteen of the best infantry divisions in the West had been moved out.[2] In terms of total figures this meant that the number of divisions in western Europe had dropped, despite some replacements, from thirty-eight in September, 1941, to a nadir of twenty-four the following April.[3]

This loss of German units in the western theater was occurring at the same time that the possibility was growing for a British landing attempt to help her Soviet partner.[4] And by the end of 1941 the Germans might well fear such an operation. With more and more of their combat troops being siphoned off to the East, the Wehrmacht was seeking another solution for its Western problem. It was in this context that the German military came up with the concept of the Atlantic Wall.

The idea of an impregnable wall or defensive bastion was not new to Hitler, for he had had the West Wall built

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[2]Oberkommando des Heeres, GenStdH, Op. Abt. IIa Nr. 1552/41 g.K., "Schematische Darstellung der Kampfkraft der West-Divisionen," 20.9.41, T-78, Roll 310, Frame 6261930; Oberkommando des Heeres, GenStdH, Op. Abt. IIa, Geh.Kdos., "Notiz," 22.12.41, ibid., Frames 6261840-6261842; Oberkommando des Heeres, GenStdH, Op. Abt. IIa Nr. 420025/42 g.Kdos., 21.Januar 42, ibid., "Abgabe von Personaleinheiten," 12.1.1942, T-312, Roll 502, Frame 8097502; and "Die Gliederung des deutschen Heeres," 22.4.1942, as cited in KTB/OKW, II, 1365.

[3]"Die Gliederung des deutschen Heeres," 22.4.1942, as cited in KTB/OKW, II, 1365; and GenStdH, Op. Abt. III, Pruef.-Nr. 16284, "Schematische Kriegsgliederung vom 3.9.1941," as cited in KTB/OKW, I, 1143.

[4]Oberkommando der Wehrmacht, WFSt/Abt.L (I Op) Nr. 003022/41 g.Kdos.Chefs., "Kuestenverteidigung," 14.Dez 1941, as cited in KTB/OKW, I, 1262-1264.

near the Reich's western frontier in 1938 to serve as a screen while he concentrated on developments in central and eastern Europe. This system of fortifications, which, in effect, consisted of several thousand smaller installations rather than large, elaborate structures, proved their worth during the Munich crisis when the West Wall contributed to the Fuehrer's success in bluffing France and England.[5] Nor is there anything novel about the Atlantic Wall in the history of warfare. Walls from the Great Wall of China to Hadrian's Wall generally had one purpose: to keep out potential invaders, and the Atlantic Wall was no exception.

As discussed previously, the Germans had already made a start in 1941 to erect a defensive framework for the West. Now in 1942 the Wehrmacht was to intensify this emphasis on defending Europe's western coast. Although there is no indication why Hitler acted exactly when he

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[5]Charles B. MacDonald, The Siegfried Line Campaign (U.S. Army in World War II. European Theater of Operations) (Washington, OCMH, 1963), 30-31.

[6]Oberkommando der Wehrmacht, WFSt/Abt. L(I Op) Nr. 003022/41 g.Kdos.Chefs., "Kuestenverteidigung," 14.Dez. 1941, as cited in KTB/OKW, I, 1262-1264. An English translation is located in Fuehrer Directives, I, 234-236. Charles P. Stacey, Six Years of War; The Army in Canada, Britain, and the Pacific, (Official History of the Canadian Army in the Second World War. Vol. I) (Ottawa: Queen's Printer, 1957), contains a concise summary of the Directive on page 349.

did, on December 14, 1941, Field Marshal Keitel issued a directive setting forth the "Wall" concept.[6]

> The coastal regions of the Arctic Ocean, North Sea and Atlantic Ocean controlled by us are ultimately to be built into a 'new Westwall,' in order that we can repel with certainty any landing attempts, even of the strongest enemy forces, with the smallest possible number of permanently assigned field troops.[7]

The last clause is especially indicative of the German Dilemma. She simply did not have enough forces to handle her increasing commitments. Even now Germany was beginning to feel the pinch in personnel. As the Directive points out, "For the time being..., the great strain on our troops and material in other quarters compels us to restrict our construction...."[8] In practical terms the restrictions limited construction to building field fortifications and to strengthening only the most endangered strongpoints with permanent installations. For example, artillery emplacements were to protect areas where German ships harbored along the coast or places where the enemy might establish a bridgehead. In addition, air defense units were to help guard the regions and coastal batteries threatened by air attack, but the Germans felt they could do little more at this time.

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[7]Armed Forces High Command, WFSt/Abt. L(I Op) Nr. 003022/41 g.K.Ch., "Coastal Defense," 14 Dec 41, as contained in Fuehrer Directives, I, 234.

[8]Ibid.

The Directive went on to caution that the situation in the West was not likely to improve in the near future. "The coastal defense forces assigned at present will, on the whole, have to suffice. In fact their numbers are to be reduced as far as possible, as the defenses are gradually strengthened."[9]

The Armed Forces High Command then assigned priorities for construction by area. Norway was given top priority because it was difficult to utilize mobile reserves there and because it was necessary to increase the number of harbors that could be used to protect coastal shipping. Belgium and France's western coasts were second in priority with the open coasts of the Netherlands and Jutland third.

The planning and build up of the coastal defenses were to be under the direction of the Army, with the Navy responsible for the Norwegian coast and for all measures pertaining to sea warfare. Air defense, quite naturally, was placed in the hands of the Luftwaffe. Although the Army was in charge of allocating material for construction purposes, the actual construction was to be handled by Organization Todt.

This Directive as well as later ones dealing with the Atlantic Wall were posited on the basic assumption that there was too long a coastline to defend--2,400 miles

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[9]Ibid., I, 235.

(later extending to three thousand with the addition of the French Mediterranean coast)--with too few available military personnel. Thus fortifications were to serve as a substitute for manpower. Not only was there a lack of German troops in general, there was also a lack of certain kinds of Wehrmacht units, and in particular of mobile forces. Still the Atlantic Wall defenses could make up for the deficiency in mobile formations only to a certain degree, since "behind these installations was to stand a mobile army, limited in size, but equipped with up-to-date material, ready to intervene at the critical points."[10] Hitler realized that building the Wall would be a long-range program and that it would probably never be completely satisfactory--hence the need for motorized units.

Another critical problem for the Fuehrer besides the matter of fortifications was to get the necessary personnel to defend the coast properly. There were simply not enough well-trained, well-equipped, capable individuals to get the job accomplished. The Germans tried various expedients to overcome the manpower shortage, but in the long run they were unsuccessful.[11] One of the lessons of modern warfare

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[10]Generalmajor Horst von Buttlar-Brandfels, "OB West: Command Relationships. Commentary on MS# B-308," FMS, MS# B-672, as contained in "OB West, A Study in Command," FMS, MS# T-121, 22-24, 107. See also Harrison's Cross-Channel Attack, 137-138.

[11]Generalmajor Burkhart Mueller-Hillebrand, "The Organizational Problems of the Army High Command and Their Solution," FMS, MS# P041f, 72, 79-80.

is that no matter how strong the defenses might be, no matter how elaborate or sophisticated the weaponry might be, it still takes competent, able persons for military forces to be effective. The human factor cannot be eliminated. For this reason the effectiveness of the Atlantic Wall depended on more than the number and the nature of the defensive positions themselves; it depended equally, if not more, on the quality of the individuals who manned and supported them.

Nevertheless, Hitler had little alternative but to erect a defensive wall in the West. When reports persisted into 1942 that the British might attempt to establish a second front, the Nazi dictator set forth in some detail his instructions for the defensive system to be adopted in western Europe. It is necessary to examine this directive, Fuehrer Directive No. 40, dated March 23, 1942, in some detail, because it forms the basis for all further German planning in the Western theater.[12]

The Directive is divided into four main sections: general considerations, tactical instructions for coastal defense, competence or responsibilities of commanders, and

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[12]The following discussion is based on the Fuehrer Directive as given in Hubatsch (ed.), Hitlers Weisungen, 176-181; and the English translations in Harrison, Cross-Channel Attack, 459-463; and Trevor-Roper (ed.), Hitler's War Directives, 111-116.

special missions for the Navy and the Air Force within the framework of coastal defense. The general considerations dealt with the possible intentions of the Western Powers. There was no doubt, the Directive began, that the coastline of Europe was exposed to the danger of an enemy attack in force during the coming months. The time and the place of such a landing operation was not dependent on operational considerations alone. Failures in other theaters of war, obligations toward the Soviet ally, and internal political matters might persuade Britain and the United States to risk a landing on the continent which would otherwise be considered unlikely from a purely military point of view.

In an oft-repeated theme during the early years of the German occupation of western Europe, the Fuehrer Directive pointed out that "even enemy landings with limited objectives can interfere seriously with our plans if they result in the enemy gaining a foothold on our coast,"[13] for an enemy bridgehead could interrupt German coastal shipping and pin down strong forces of the Army and the Air Force, which would have to be withdrawn from more crucial areas. "It would be particularly dangerous," the Directive continued, "should the enemy succeed in capturing our airfields or in establishing his own in areas which he has occupied."[14]

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[13] Ibid., 112. The underlined portions are underlined in the text.

[14] Ibid.

The Directive also warned that defenders should be wary of surprise raids of a local nature against important military and industrial installations lying on or near the coast and even against less endangered open beaches. This kind of attack might come from the sea or from the air, since the Western Allies had at their disposal numerous amphibious landing craft (with some built to carry tanks and heavy weapons) as well as large numbers of airborne troops.

In essence, the initial section of Fuehrer Directive No. 40 ordered German forces in the West to expect and to prepare for every conceivable type of operation from a large-scale landing to a small, hit-and-run attack. The Wehrmacht High Command was at least partially correct in its assessment, for the Allies did carry out a number of raids which varied in size and scope before eventually invading the mainland in force. However, the German fear that American and British forces might establish a beachhead on the continent for a period of time to tie down German troops was never realized, even though the Western Powers considered the possibility.[15]

The second part of the Directive, tactical instructions for coastal defense, stressed, in the first place, that

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[15]J.M.A. Gwyer and James R.M. Butler, Grand Strategy, Vol. III. June 1941-August 1942 (History of the Second World War: United Kingdom Military Series) (London: HMSO, 1964), 621ff; Harrison, Cross-Channel Attack, 16-18; and Stacey, Six Years of War, 322.

"coastal defense is a task for all Armed Forces, calling for particularly close and complete cooperation by all units."[16] Secondly, the Navy and the Air Force were to provide timely reconnaissance and intelligence data on any possible enemy preparations for an attack. Hitler recognized, nevertheless, that the Allies, by deceptive measures and with the aid of the weather, might be able to achieve a surprise assault. Therefore, "all troops who might be exposed to such attacks must be in a state of permanent readiness."[17] The idea of a permanent state of readiness evoked at least one additional problem for the Germans. Was it possible to keep the German defenders in a condition of constant alert over an extended period of time? What if the Allied enemy failed to appear for a year or even two years? In this situation might one not expect the headquarters staffs or the individual soldier to become less vigilant?

Thirdly, the second section of the Fuehrer Directive pointed out that

> in defending the coast--and this includes coastal waters within the range of medium coastal artillery--responsibility for the planning and implementation of defensive operations must, as recent battle experience dictates, lie unequivocably and unreservedly in the hands of a single Commander.[18]

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[16]Trevor-Roper (ed.), Hitler's War Directives, 112.

[17]Ibid. The underlined portions are underlined in the text.

[18]Ibid. The underlined portions are underlined in the text.

In other words, each coastal sector was to be under a single area commander, and presumably this would be an Army divisional commander. The one exception was in the case of long-range artillery designed for use against sea targets. In this instance the Navy was to be in control. The major duty of each area commander was straightforward. He was to see that any enemy invasion force was destroyed "if possible before it can reach the coast, at the latest, on the coast itself. Enemy forces which have landed must be destroyed or thrown back into the sea by immediate counterattack."[19] The Directive then specified that the protection of the naval shore and Air Force ground units within each region was to be guaranteed by the area commander.

Fourth, the coast was to be divided into sectors by mutual agreement among the services, but if agreement were impossible, by Commander-in-Chief West (Oberbefehlshaber West), whose decisions was to be final. Fifth, the sectors, as one might expect, were to be manned and fortified on a priority basis. Those regions deemed most likely as targets for enemy landings were to be most strongly defended and called fortified areas. Next in priority were the coastal sectors threatened by small-scale surprise attacks. They were to be protected by a series of strong-points, supported, if possible, by coastal batteries. All

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[19]Ibid. The underlined portions are underlined in the text.

military and industrial plants of significance for the war effort were to be included within these strongpoints. Less threatened areas were to be kept under observation.

Sixth, the fortified areas and strongpoints, even if surrounded, were to be defended to the last man.[20] Henceforth, each fortified area and strongpoint was to have on hand adequate reserves of ammunition, food, and water.

Seventh, the second portion of the Directive concluded by asserting that "there can be no question of peacetime niceties for any headquarters or formation of the Armed Forces in coastal areas, or for non-military organizations and units."[21] Military necessity was to form the basis for defensive planning along the coast. If the military situation required that houses had to be razed or that civilians had to be evacuated, then the measures had to be carried out, no matter what hardships they might cause.

The seven points listed above proved to be the foundations upon which the Atlantic Wall was established. In fact, a large proportion of the orders that emanated from Oberbefehlshaber West merely spelled out in greater detail the instructions outlined in part two of Fuehrer Directive No. 40.

The third section of the Directive officially designated

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[20] Ibid., 113.

[21] Ibid., 114.

responsible commanders for all of the coastal regions under German control, which included areas from Lapland to southeastern Europe. Western Europe, incorporating also the Netherlands, was to be under Commander-in-Chief West, who was, in turn, subordinate to the Armed Forces High Command (OKW). The Directive then set forth Ob Wests responsibilities, giving him absolute authority in his area to oversee the preparations for coastal defense, and, if necessary, to see that any enemy invasion attempt was repelled. Each local commander, who was to be selected by Ob West, was also to have full authority over his specific sector. As stated previously, the commanders of the Army divisions deployed along the coast were generally delegated the responsibility for their regions; but in some instances, especially in places specified as air and naval strong-points (airfields, submarine bases, etc.), the local Luftwaffe or Kriegsmarine commander was to be put in charge.[22]

It was the question of command that lay at the heart of the conflict between Navy and Army officials. The Army in particular contended that unity of command was being violated by the Navy and pointed to a naval order dated March 27, which was issued only four days after Directive

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[22]Ibid., 115.

No. 40 had appeared, as proof.[23] The portion of the order which must have upset the Army leaders was the section which states:

> Even if the fight for the coast extends to the coastal areas within the reach of the medium coastal artillery (range of the Army coastal artillery), command over the bombardment of targets at sea remains in the hands of naval shore commanders, who have command over coastal artillery (inclusive of Army coastal artillery) in the sector for this purpose. The naval shore commanders are under the operational command of the respective [Army] divisional commanders only in the command for the coast....[24]

Thus unity of command would be undermined by assigning responsibility for sea targets to naval commanders and the responsibility for the battle of the coast--or land defense--to Army commanders within the same sector. And this assertion made by the Army had a great deal of validity, as experience was to demonstrate.[25]

The third section of the Directive then added the following statement:

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[23]See the retrospective writing of Blumentritt, Von Rundstedt, 125-129; and the important recollections of the number two man in the operations staff at OKW headquarters, Walter Warlimont, Im Hauptquartier der deutschen Wehrmacht, 1939-1945 (Frankfurt/Main: Bernard und Graefe, 1962), 247.

[24]Commander-in-Chief Navy, Skl. Qu. A II 771/42 GKdos., "Command Organization on the Coast," 27 Mar 42, as contained in Fuehrer Directives, II, 15.

[25]Oberbefehlshaber West, (Oberkommando Heeresgruppe D), Ia Nr. 2550/42 g.Kdos., "Gefechtsbericht ueber Feindlandung bei und beiderseits Dieppe am 19.8.1942," 3.9.1942, T-312, Roll 504, Frame 8099465.

> All naval and air units employed in strategic warfare are subordinate to the Navy or Air Force. In the event of enemy attacks on the coast, however, they are required to comply, insofar as tactical considerations allow, with the orders of the Commanders for defense.[26]

Or stating it another way, the Air Force and the Navy were to pursue their own offensive missions from western Europe, but if there were an Allied landing, they were to assist the local commanders.

The final significant portion of Directive No. 40 proceeded to specify special missions for the Navy and the Air Force as they related to coastal defense. The Kriegsmarine was to organize and protect coastal shipping, to supervise the use of coastal artillery against sea targets, and to employ its personnel for any other naval duties. The Luftwaffe, for its part, was to provide air defense, although antiaircraft units might be placed under the Army commanders in certain areas. Moreover, Air Force ground forces were to protect themselves from surprise attacks on airfields that lay outside the coastal defense. Lastly, strategic air forces, if necessary, could be employed for area defensive tasks.

The ideas set forth in Fuehrer Directive No. 40 were going to be referred to time and again by German officials as the basis of defensive planning in the West. The relationship between Directive No. 40 and the western defenses,

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[26]Trevor-Roper (ed.), Hitler's War Directives, 115.

and hence the Atlantic Wall, became readily apparent during the course of 1942.

The Fuehrer entrusted the implementation of Directive No. 40 to the new Commander-in-Chief West, Field Marshal Gerd von Rundstedt. Von Rundstedt, the distinguished senior officer, who was the epitome of the Prussian military tradition, had most recently served as military commander of Army Group South in the Russian campaign until he was relieved by Hitler after a disagreement over strategy toward the end of 1941. It was only a few months later in March of 1942, however, that the Fuehrer asked von Rundstedt to take over as Oberbefehlshaber West for the ailing Field Marshal Erwin von Witzleben.[27]

Von Rundstedt and his staff set about putting the western theater on an organized basis in order to regularize German control over the area. His specialized staff, in addition to the usual Chief of Staff and operations and intelligence officers, consisted of Transportation, Land Defense, Artillery, Quartermaster, and Personnel sections.[28]

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[27]Harrison, Cross-Channel Attack, 132; and Oberkommando des Heeres, GenStdH, Op. Abt. (II), 19.Februar 1942, T-78, Roll 310, Frame 6262029. Von Witzleben later became an important figure in the German resistance movement against Hitler.

[28]Generalleutnant Bodo Zimmermann, "OB West. Command Relationships (1943-45)," FMS, MS# B-308, as contained in "OB West, A Study in Command," FMS, MS# T-121, 16-19.

Eventually two more additions were made to the staff. A German liaison officer (Deutscher General in Vichy) was sent to Vichy after its zone was occupied by the Wehrmacht in November, 1942, and Ob West created Panzer Group West in 1943 to oversee the training of German tank units stationed in the area.

Theater Command West also regularized procedures for transmitting its orders and instructions to the lower echelons. Three types of commands were to be issued.[29] Basic orders (Grundlegende Befehle) dealt with the general, overall situation in the West. Special instructions (Sonderanordnungen) applied to concerns within the area, such as communications, reporting and supply procedures, cooperation with flying units, and so on. Specific orders (Einzelbefehle) were issued from time to time for limited matters. More informal explanations, rather than orders sent out by Ob West, were called basic remarks (Grundlegende Bemerkungen).

Basic Order No. 1 of Ob West, entitled "Raising Combat Strength and Combat Preparedness," brought out what was considered the critical manpower situation in the West.[30]

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[29]Oberbefehlshaber West, (Heeresgruppenkommando D), Ia Nr. 1002/42 g.Kdos., "Kuestenverteidigung," 28.4.1942, T-312, Roll 502, Frame 8096973.

[30]"Erhoehung der Kampfkraft und Kampfbereitschaft." Der Oberbefehlshaber West, (Heeresgruppenkommando D), Ia Nr. 1001/42 geh.Kdos., "Grundlegender Befehl der Oberbefehlshaber West Nr. 1," 28.4.1942, T-78, Roll 317, Frames 6270704-6270709.

The gist of the order is set forth in the initial paragraph:

> The small number of Army, Navy, and Air Force units remaining at our disposal in the West and their lack of equipment requires that absolutely every means possible be used in order to raise their combat strength and preparedness.[31]

The order went on to offer suggestions for raising the number of combat troops and also for improving combat proficiency in the area. Suggestions included using every German soldier and worker available to form improvised units (Alarmeinheiten), scheduling numerous war game exercises, and obtaining volunteer workers from the nearby areas to free Wehrmacht troops from construction duties. Other orders from Ob West several weeks later also stressed raising the combat efficiency of the formations by spelling out special training measures to be used in coastal defense and by designating operational duties for German divisions returning from the East, even though they were being rehabilitated in the West.[32]

Procedures were further regulated by additional orders from Ob West. For example, alert regulations were established by which German forces were to be warned of an impending

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[31] Ibid., Frame 6270704.

[32] Der Oberbefehlshaber West, (Heeresgruppenkommando D), Ia Nr. 1150/42 g.Kdos., "Grundlegender Befehl des Oberbefehlshabers West Nr. 2," 6.5.1942, ibid., Frames 6270713-6270715; and Oberbefehlshaber West, (Oberkommando Heeresgruppe D), Ia Nr. 1208/42 geh.Kdos., "Grundlegender Befehl des Oberbefehlshaber West Nr. 3," 10.5.1942, T-311, Roll 15, Frames 7016156-7016158.

enemy attack.[33] Ob West would transmit to subordinate units the alert signal "Extreme Danger (Drohende Gefahr)" or "Alarm Stage I (Alarmstufe I)" if an Allied attack were possible. But if the situation were more critical, "Alarm Stage II (Alarmstufe II)," which instructed all formations in the entire area to assume a defense-ready posture, would be declared. Other examples of the development of "standing operating procedures" included regulations for handling internal disorders on the part of indigenous nationals, for dealing with espionage activities, and for taking over full control of rail lines in case of an emergency.[34]

Ob West did not cease its activities, of course, with the standardizing of procedures. Other more significant matters were also regularized during the spring and summer months of 1942. First of all, a definite system of priorities for defense construction was established. Secondly, the Atlantic and Channel coastal sector was divided on a different basis to compensate for the loss of

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[33]Oberbefehlshaber West, (Oberkommando Heeresgruppe D), Ia Nr. 1234/42 geh.Kdos., "Grundlegender Befehl des Oberbefehlshabers West Nr. 4," 13.5.1942, ibid., Frame 7016151.

[34]Oberbefehlshaber West, (Oberkommando Heeresgruppe D), Ia Nr. 1662/42 geh.Kdos., "Grundlegender Befehl des Oberbefehlshabers West Nr. 8," 19.6.1942, ibid., Frame 7016131; Oberbefehlshaber West, (Oberkommando Heeresgruppe D), Gen. d. Trspw. West, Ia Nr. 1201/43 g.Kdos., "Grundlegender Befehl des Oberbefehlshabers West Nr. 5," 6.3.1943, T-78, Roll 317, Frame 6270716; and Oberbefehlshaber West, (Oberkommando Heeresgruppe D), Ia Nr. 2067/42 g.Kdos., "Grundlegender Befehl des Oberbefehlshabers West Nr. 13," 21.7.1942, T-311, Roll 15, Frame 7016076.

troops to the East. And, thirdly, plans for the movement of reserve forces into areas under attack were established. With these measures the Atlantic Wall began to take shape.

First, turning to priorities for defense construction, it was expressed in Fuehrer Directive No. 40 that those sectors most in danger of enemy attack were to have first priority. German planners later decided that those areas most threatened were the important harbors, the U-boat bases, and the mouths of the large rivers.[35] Here was where the enemy was most likely to strike, and here was where the areas were to be prepared for all-around defense from both the sea and the landward sides. Each of these regions was to have its own commander, its own reserves, and its own provisions. In brief, these places, called defense areas (Verteidigungsbereichen) or fortress area (Festungsbereichen) were to be self-contained units, dependent on mobile reserves in extreme cases, but designed, on the whole, to take care of themselves. Between the fortress areas were to be located, in order of priority, strongpoint groups (Stuetzpunktgruppen), which were to contain a company or a battalion of troops; individual strongpoints (Stuetzpunkten) with up to a company in strength and having heavy weapons; and resistance points

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[35]Oberbefehlshaber West, (Oberkommando Heeresgruppe D), Ia Nr. 1441/42 geh.Kdos., "Grundlegender Befehl des Oberbefehlshabers West Nr. 7," T-78, Roll 317, Frames 6270726-6270727.

(Widerstandsnestern) having a platoon or more for the less endangered regions.

This type of defensive thinking was to prevail in the West until 1944; that is, keep the enemy out of the major ports and away from the submarine bases in particular, but also, when possible, to try to fill in the rest of the Atlantic Wall.[36] Ob West went further in designating the exact defense or fortress areas (the terms were used interchangeably) on July 8, 1942.[37] In the Netherlands the defense areas were Den Helder; Ijmuiden, a North Sea port west of Amsterdam; the Hook of Holland at the mouth of the Rhine; and Vlissingen, located at the entrance to the Scheldt River. No defense areas were specified for the forty-mile Belgian coastal region, but the Directive named eleven along the much more extensive French coast, including the harbors at Dunkirk, Calais, Boulogne, Le Havre, Cherbourg, St. Malo, Royan at the mouth of the Gironde, and the submarine bases at Brest, Lorient, St. Nazaire, and LaRochelle (in the latter instance the actual U-boat pens were at nearby

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[36][Oberkommando des Heeres], Operationsabteilung (V) Nr. 50103/42 g.Kdos., "Ausbau der Kuestenverteidigung im West," 20 Juni 1942, ibid., Frames 6271601-6271602; and Bodo Zimmermann, "OB West, Command Relationships (1943-45)," FMS, MS# B-308, as contained in "OB West, A Study in Command," FMS, MS# T-121, 21-22.

[37]Oberbefehlshaber West, (Oberkommando Heeresgruppe D), Ia General der Pioniere, Pi. 1 Nr. 526/42 g.Kdos., "Grundlegender Befehl Nr. 12," 8.7.1942, T-78, Rool 317, Frame 6270730.

LaPallice).

These defense areas as well as the strongpoints were to be erected by concentrating first on the area inside the strongpoint and then on the region outside. As a first step local officials were to ascertain the most advantageous places for artillery and other gun emplacements. Then engineers were to construct the positions and surround them with trenches, earthworks, and other field-type hindrances, then build quarters for the troops, and finally complete the outer defenses and make sure that the adjacent areas which could not be occupied by troops were at least kept under surveillance with searchlights and protected by the use of land mines.[38]

A second measure instituted by Theater Command West in 1942 to compensate for the lack of manpower was a reorganization of the coastal defense system. Previously the Wehrmacht had had two armies--the Fifteenth and the Seventh--plus two more German divisions in the Netherlands that were assigned to guarding the Channel and Atlantic coasts. In addition to the German troops that protected the Dutch coast, the Fifteenth Army, for its part, covered the area from the Dutch-Belgian border to a line just east of St. Malo, and the Seventh Army watched over the remainder of France's western coast all the way to the Spanish border.

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[38]Ibid., Frame 6270720.

Now in May, 1942, the Germans changed the coastal defense set-up by adding a third army--the First--along the coast.[39] First Army, which had previously maintained security in the interior of France, did not have far to move as it took over the southern portion of the Seventh Army sector from the Pyrenees boundary to the mouth of the Loire River. (Replacing First Army in the interior of France was the LXXXIII Army Corps, which was renamed Army Task Force Felber [Armeegruppe Felber].[40]) The region from the mouth of the Loire to the Dives River northeast of Caen was placed under Seventh Army. The Fifteenth Army area was therefore decreased in size so that it included mainly the French and Belgian coast north of the Seine, while the formations of the Commander of German troops in the Netherlands continued to defend that country.

In effect, the addition of the First Army along the coast changed little. It did reduce in size the area which each Army had to control, but it was designed more to deceive the Western Allies as to the relative weakness

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[39]Oberbefehlshaber West, Ia Nr. 1138/42 g.Kdos., [Fern schreiben], 5.5.42, T-78, Roll 310, Frame 6272112; and Oberbefehlshaber West, (Oberkommando Heeresgruppe D), Ia Nr. 741/42 geh.Kdos.Ch., "Abschnittsgliederung in der Kuestenverteidigung," 11.5.1942, T-312, Roll 25, Frame 7531459. See the map on page 83.

[40]Commanding the Army Task Force was General of the Infantry Hans Felber, who later served in the Balkans and on the Western front after the invasion. An Armeegruppe was positioned in the chain of command between an Armee and a Heeresgruppe, though in this instance it corresponded more closely to an Army.

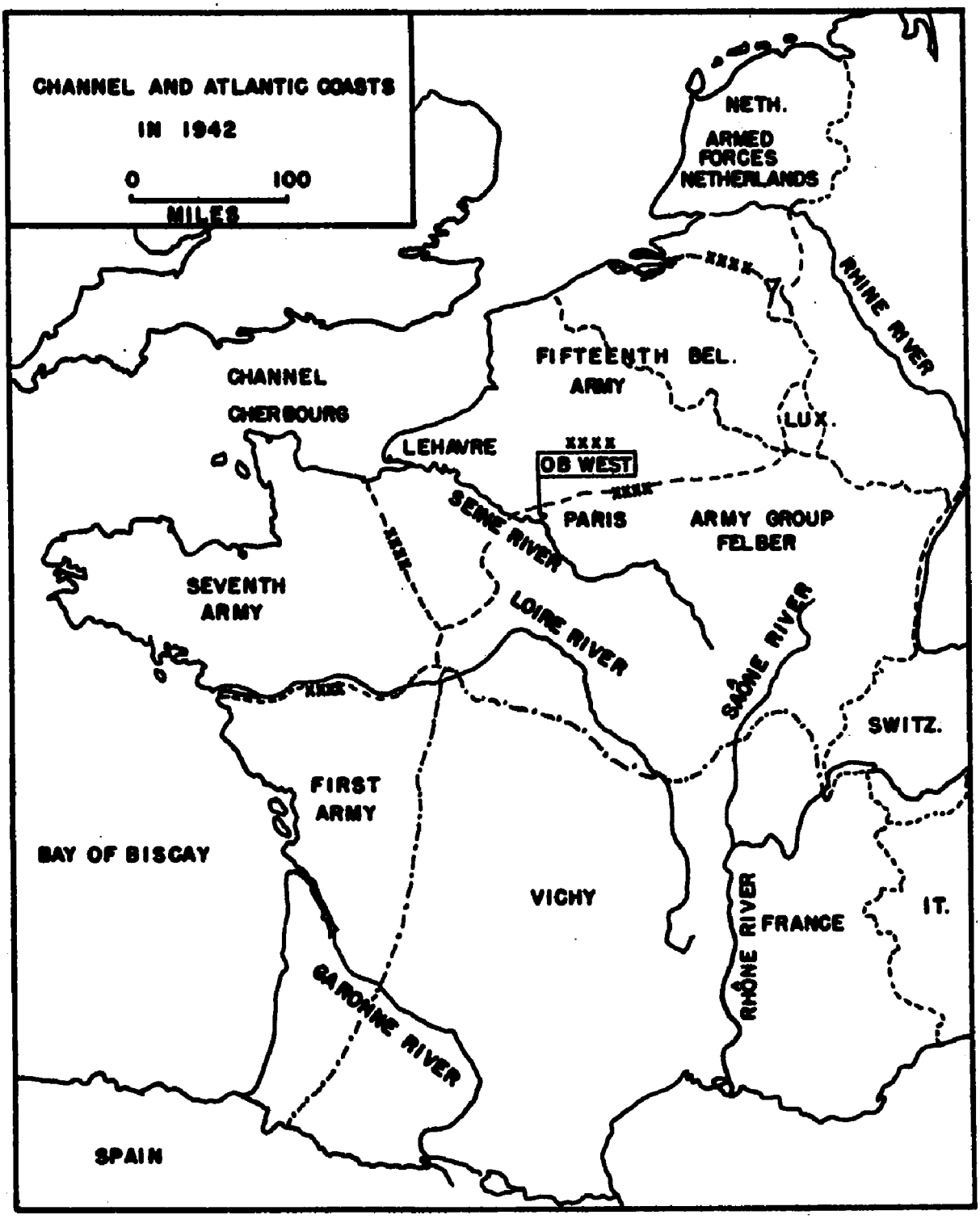

CHANNEL AND ATLANTIC COASTS
IN 1942
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100
MILES
NETH.
ARMED FORCES NETHERLANDS
RHINE RIVER
XXXX
FIFTEENTH BEL. ARMY
LUX.
CHANNEL
CHERBOURG
LEHAVRE
XXXX
OB WEST
XXXX
SEINE RIVER
PARIS
ARMY GROUP FELBER
XXXX
SEVENTH ARMY
LOIRE RIVER
SAÔNE RIVER
XXXX
SWITZ.
FIRST ARMY
BAY OF BISCAY
VICHY
RHÔNE RIVER
FRANCE
IT.
GARONNE RIVER
SPAIN

Figure 5.

of the German forces than it was to signify a substantial increase in the number of Wehrmacht units.[41] What had actually happened was that the First Army assumed command over an Army corps that had previously been under Seventh Army. Seventh Army, for its part, took over an Army corps area that had been under the Fifteenth Army.[42] The two Corps continued to control the same coastal sectors as before--the LXXX Corps the Bay of Biscay area, the LXXXIV Corps the Cotentin Peninsula and the Bay of the Seine region. The only difference was that these Corps were now under different Armies. The headquarters of the various Armies and their staffs had moved, not the troops themselves.

In other words, in spite of the alterations in command, the number of divisions in the West did not rise appreciably in the spring of 1942. What is significant is that the defensive arrangement instituted during this period for the Channel and Atlantic coasts as a deception measure

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[41] Ibid. Ob West also proposed at this time that the Armed Forces Command in the Netherlands be redesignated as an Army, such as the Twentieth Army, again as a deception measure. The Army High Command turned down the request. Oberbefehlshaber West, (Oberkommando Heeresgruppe D), Ia Nr. 1463/42 geh.Kdos., "Umbennung des W.B.Ndl.," 30.5.1942, T-78, Roll 310, Frame 6262159; and Oberkommando des Heeres, GenStdH/Org. Abt. (II) Nr. 2694/42 g.Kdos., "Umbennung des W.B.Ndl.," 9 Juni 1942, ibid., Frame 6262160.

[42] Oberbefehlshaber West, (Oberkommando Heeresgruppe D), Ia Nr. 84/42 g.K.Chef., "Kriegsgliederung Ob West [Karte]," 21.5.42, ibid., Frame 6262131.

continued to function until the D-Day invasion.

The main area of concentration was naturally that of the Fifteenth Army. Here was the region closest to England, and here was the most logical place for an Anglo-American attack. As the Germans realized, the Fifteenth Army's 440 miles of Channel coastline were all within range of Allied fighter aircraft based in the British Isles.[43] The area contained numerous significant harbors, including Dunkirk, Calais, Boulogne, and Le Havre, and also secondary ports, such as Ostend and Dieppe, all of which could serve as supply entrepôts if the Allies were able to establish a bridgehead on the continent. In addition, the Fifteenth Army sector was the shortest way for Allied forces to reach the German homeland and the industrially strategic Ruhr area. Thus, Wehrmacht staff officers, like their counterparts among the Western Powers, quickly perceived the importance of the Channel area as a possible invasion route and made their plans accordingly.

No coastal sector in the West received as much attention as did that of Fifteenth Army. For example, both in May and again in August more than one-third of the total number of combat divisions in the West were stationed in the area of

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[43]The Fuehrer and Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces WFST 551213/42 g.Kdos.Chefs.,[Telegram]9 Jul 42, as contained in Fuehrer Directives, II, 35.

Fifteenth Army.[44] In terms of artillery emplacements, Fifteenth Army also did quite well in relation to the other coastal sectors. On July 6, 1942, ninety-two out of 208 permanent coastal batteries in the West were under the control of Fifteenth Army.[45] Furthermore, the large offensive guns that were constructed to strike the English coast at the time of "Sea Lion" were located in this region. In brief, the Fifteenth Army area contained proportionately more and better troops, more artillery pieces, and more defensive strongpoints than any other in the Western theater.

Fifteenth Army also had the added responsibility of taking over the Dutch coastal region from the Commander of the Armed Forces in the Netherlands if that area were in danger of attack. There were at least four reasons why the Dutch coast might appeal to the Western Allies as a suitable landing place.[46] It was lightly defended by two and at the most three divisions in 1942. It had several important harbors like Ijmuiden and Rotterdam. It controlled the

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[44]Oberbefehlshaber West, (Oberkommando Heeresgruppe D), Ia Nr. 84/42 g.K.Chef., "Kriegsgliederung Ob West [Karte]," 21.5.42, T-78, Roll 310, Frame 6262131; and "Die Gliederung des deutschen Heeres," 12.8.1942, as cited in KTB/OKW, II, 1383.

[45]Oberbefehlshaber West, Abteilung Ib Nr. 700/42 g. Kdos., "MAA, HKA und Stell. Bttr. Kueste (ohne zugeteilte Flak)," 6 Juli 1942, T-78, Roll 309, Frame 6260997.

[46]Generalleutnant Karl Sievers, "16th Luftwaffe Field Division (Invasion Possibilities in Holland)," FMS, MS# B-011, 1.

estuary of the Scheldt River in front of Antwerp. And it, too, provided a short route to the Ruhr area. Still there were a number of factors that militated against an Anglo-American operation aimed at the Netherlands with its many large cities, its numerous dikes and canals that served as natural barriers to any rapid advance, and its distance from the English coast, which could impair any Allied attempt to sustain an attack logistically. This does not mean that the Germans were altogether unconcerned about the Dutch coastal region. On the contrary, German officials evacuated thousands of residents who lived along the North Sea and frequently demolished their homes to make way for fortifications just like in other coastal sectors.[47] In general, however, the Netherlands, except for its major cities and ports, never received the attention that was accorded to the area of Fifteenth Army or, to a lesser degree, that of Seventh Army.

The coastal reorganization of May had decreased the area under Seventh Army control by at least one-fifth, but it still was responsible for over one thousand miles of coastline. The sector extended along the French coast from the Bay of the Seine in Normandy around the vulnerable Cotentin and Brittany Peninsulas and then down to and including the mouth of the Loire River. The most threatened

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[47]Warmbrunn, The Dutch, 53.

regions, besides the major harbor at Cherbourg, were the submarine bases at Brest, Lorient, and St. Nazaire. These bases and those at LaPallice and Bordeaux in the First Army sector had to be protected if Germany's U-boat war against Allied shipping in the Atlantic were to continue. Therefore, the Germans concentrated the bulk of the heavy construction (under the direction of Organization Todt) as well as combat troops at these points.

The other coastal zones in the Seventh Army sector were only lightly defended. Albert Benary's unit history of the 257th Infantry Division makes this point clear.[48] The 257th was being rested and refitted in the Champagne area of France in August, 1942, after suffering heavy casualties on the Russian front. Following the Dieppe Raid on August 19, the Division was ordered to Brittany, and several months later it took over a coastal defense sector that included northwest Brittany and the area around Brest. The harbor at Brest itself was protected mainly by naval personnel.[49] Since the sector had too long a coast-line to defend properly with the troops at hand, the

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[48]Albert Benary, Die Berliner Baeren-Division; Geschichte der 257th Infanterie-Division 1939-1945 (Bad Nauheim: H.-H. Podzun, 1955), 107-110.

[49]The German troops considered Brittany as the "end of the world" with its bleak shoreline and its unfriendly, primitive inhabitants. On the other hand, it was still a welcome change after fourteen months on the Eastern front, and many of the soldiers had lobster for the first time. Ibid., 109.

Division commander tried to deploy combat groups (Kampf-gruppen) in key places, which meant that some areas could not be observed for hours at a time. In addition, the 257th had only one battalion of mobile reserves, who were to be transported if necessary in French buses by French drivers. The defenses were mostly field-type fortifications with a few coastal batteries and some antiaircraft guns that could also be used for land defense purposes.

One should not conclude, however, that the German planners neglected the Seventh Army area altogether, for the Wehrmacht continued to be concerned about protecting the major ports and submarine bases. But because the sector was a considerable distance from the main Allied source of supply in England, it was deemed more susceptive to raids or surprise attacks than it was to a big operation, a theory confirmed by the St. Nazaire raid at the end of March.

There was one additional place under Seventh Army, though, where the German High Command anticipated a possible Anglo-American landing: the Channel Islands of Guernsey, Jersey, Alderney, and Sark.[50] The area was only

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[50]The discussion of the Channel Islands is drawn from Generalleutnant Rudolf Graf von Schmettow, "319th Infantry Division (1941-1945)," FMS, MS# B-833; Generalleutnant Rudolf Schmetzer, "Atlantic Wall-Invasion Sector (Jun 1942-Jan 1944)," FMS, MS# B-668, 10; and the Fuehrer and Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces, OKW/WFSt/Abt. L (I Op) Nr. 441760/41 g.K.Chefs., "Consolidation and Defense of the English Channel Islands," 20 Oct 41, as contained in Fuehrer Directives, I, 224. See also Alan and Mary Wood, Islands in Danger; The Story of the German Occupation of the Channel Islands, 1940-1945 (London: Evans Bros., 1955); and Ralph A. Durand. Guernsey under German Rule (London: Guernsey Society, 1946).

nominally under Seventh Army control, for it was, in effect, Hitler's "pet project" in the West. This area, which was the only portion of British soil occupied by the Germans during the war, is located just west of the Cotentin Peninsula, and it held a special fascination for the Nazi dictator, who was convinced that the British would attempt to get the Islands back either for prestige purposes or as a base from which to launch an assault against the continent.

On October 20, 1941, the Fuehrer ordered that "the Channel Islands are to be consolidated into an unassailable fortress through various and unremitting efforts."[51] As a result, not only did the Islands become the most heavily defended area in the West, but they also received attention vastly out of proportion to their true worth. They were defended by thirty to thirty-five thousand well-trained troops of the 319th Division. The thirty-one artillery batteries were protected by extensive flak units, search-lights, and other up-to-date equipment. The guns themselves, most of which could fire at a rapid rate and which had a 360° turning capability, ranged in size from the deadly 88's up to 305 millimeter cannons. The actual defensive positions were well planned to cover the most vulnerable

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[51]The Fuehrer and Supremem Commander of the Armed Forces, OKW/WFSt/Abt. L (I Op) Nr. 441760/41 g.K.Chefs., "Consolidation and Defense of the English Channel Islands," 20 Oct 41, as contained in Fuehrer Directives, I, 224.

sectors. Almost all of the reinforced concrete construction was handled by Organization Todt personnel; the laying of land mines and the erection of antitank and other hindrances was turned over to Army engineers; and the clearly field-type fortifications were built by the combat troops. The infantry and artillery strongpoints were constructed for all-around defense.

It is understandable in these circumstances that the German commanders in western Europe eyed the Channel Islands as a source for possible reinforcements during critical periods, but most of their requests were denied.[52] It is also understandable that the Allied never risked an attack in force against the Island fortress, which held out until the end of the war.[53]

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[52]Oberbefehlshaber West, Heeresgruppenkommando D, Ia Nr. 319/41 geh.Kdos.Ch., "Umgliederung, weitere Abgaben nach Osten und Aufgaben im Westen," 18.12.41, T-312, Roll 24, Frame 9530980; and Oberkommando der Wehrmacht, OKW/WFSt Op (H) 1893/43 g.K., [Fernschreiben], 19 April 43, T-78, Roll 317, Frame 6271513.

[53]Generalleutnant Rudolf Graf von Schmettow, "319th Infantry Division (1941-1945)," FMS, MS# B-833, 57. After the Normandy invasion the German forces planted potatoes and other vegetables during the summer of 1944. When supplies from the mainland were cut off after August, the soldiers lived off the vegetables and some milk products and fish. In December they received Christmas packets from the Red Cross, but by this time all their provisions were running low. To conserve their energy, the troops no longer engaged in construction or training exercises, doing only the most necessary work. They did get a few supplies from incoming aircraft and attempted several raids on the French mainland for the same purpose. The number of sick and wounded continued to mount, however, until the armistice at which time the garrison capitulated. See also Morison, The Invasion, 303-309.

The final 650 mile stretch of the French Atlantic coast from the Loire to the Spanish border was, after May, 1942, turned over to the First German Army. The sector was lightly held by five divisions, and defense construction centered on both sides of the Gironde estuary that leads to Bordeaux and around La Rochelle.[54] The Wehrmacht expected that the Western Powers could do little more than carry out raids along this coast as it was a long way from England and marked by extreme tidal variations. And there was also the further question as to what the Allies would gain from a landing attempt in the area. It might arouse some support from the French populace. It might tie down some German forces that could be used elsewhere. But an operation into southern France would not move the Allied Powers any closer to striking at the German homeland. And what if the operation, as was highly possible, turned out to be a failure? The Western nations proved unwilling to take such a gamble. The First Army continued to guard against an Allied attack, and the building of defensive fortifications proceeded, but never on the same scale as in the more endangered sectors.[55]

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[54]AOK 1, Ia Nr. 622/42 g.Kdos., "Gliederung der 1. Armee," 25.5.1942, T-312, Roll 22, Frames 7527295-7527298; AOK 1, Ia Nr. 1528/42 g.Kdos., "Gliederung der 1. Armee," 20.9.42, T-312, Roll 24, Frame 7529897; and [AOK 1], Ia Nr. 0081/42 g.Kdos.Ch., "Feindbeurteilung nach dem Stande von Mitte Juli 1942," 20.7.42, T-312, Roll 25, Frames 7531774-7531777.

[55]Oberbefehlshaber West, Abteilung Ib Nr. 700/42 g. Kdos,, "MAA, HKA, und Stell. Bttr. Kueste (Ohne Zugeteilte Flak)," 6 Juli 1942, T-78, Roll 309, Frame 6260997.

In addition to establishing priorities for defense construction and setting up the coastal defense zones on a new basis, Ob West took further steps to insure that mobile reserves could be utilized as a deterrent to any possible Allied invasion of western Europe. This use of motorized reinforcements to bolster the admittedly weaker coastal units proved to be a cardinal feature of Theater Command West's defensive strategy throughout the German occupation.

Even before 1942, near the end of October, 1941, German officials had outlined five contingency plans for possible implementation in the West.[56] Three of the plans were designed to counter any large British undertaking against the Channel coast, Brittany, or the Bordeaux area. The fourth and fifth plans were the previously discussed operations into Spain ("Isabella") and the occupation of Vichy France ("Attila"). They merely stipulated that certain units, most of which were mobile infantry and panzer formations held in reserve some distance from the coast, were to be sent into areas under attack.[57]

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[56]Oberbefehlshaber West, Heeresgruppenkommando D, Ia Nr. 296/41 geh.Kdos.Ch., "Geplanter Einsatz von Kdo.-Behoerden und grossen Verbaenden in den Faellen von 'Isabella,' 'Attila,' 'Kuestenverteidigung Bretagne,' und 'Kuestenverteidigung AOK 15,'" 23.10.41, T-312, Roll 24, Frames 7530970-7530974; and Oberbefehlshaber West, Heeresgruppenkommando D, Ia Nr. 285/42 geh.Kdos.Ch., "Kuestenverteidigung," 29.9.1941, ibid., Frames 7530984-7530986.

[57]Ibid.

By December planning had to be altered to take into account the "situation in the East."[58] Operation "Isabella" was reduced in scope to entail only the occupation of the northern Spanish harbors and the defense of the passes over the Pyrenees.[59] In this respect, the revised plan contrasted markedly with the original "Isabella" scheme, which had envisaged a possible take over of the entire Iberian peninsula.[60]

The Ob West directive further pointed out that another operation, Operation "Attila," which was designed to occupy the Vichy zone, cannot be carried out "with the existing forces."[61] The Army High Command quickly countermanded this order on December 22. "'Attila' can no longer be carried out!" the directive began. So long as an army corps and two panzer divisions, as is now the case, remain in the West, "Attila" was to be maintained in a state of

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[58]Oberbefehlshaber West, Heeresgruppenkommando D, Ia Nr. 296/41 geh.Kdos.Ch., "Geplanter Einsatz von Kdo.-Behoerden und grossen Verbaenden in den Faellen von 'Isabella,' 'Attila,' 'Kuestenverteidigung Bretagne,' und 'Kuestenverteidigung AOK 15,'" 23.10.41, ibid., Frame 7530974.

[59]Ibid., Frame 7530978.

[60]Oberbefehlshaber West, Heeresgruppenkommando A(T), Ia Nr. I5/41 g.Kdos.Chef., "'Isabella' Gliederung Ob. West," 10.5.41, ibid., Frames 7531013-7531015.

[61]Oberbefehlshaber West, Heeresgruppenkommando D, Ia Nr. 296/41 geh.Kdos.Ch., "Geplanter Einsatz von Kdo.-Behoerden und grossen Verbaenden in den Faellen von 'Isabella,' 'Attila,' 'Kuestenverteidigung Bretagne,' und 'Kuestenverteidigung AOK 15,'" 23.10.41, ibid., Frame 7530978.

readiness, even if only on a limited basis.[62] Still the attempt by Ob West to reduce its commitments (or to put pressure on the Army to furnish additional troops) shows how tenuous German officials in the West felt the manpower situation had become.

By this time another contingency, that of supporting German troops in the Netherlands with mobile reserves, had also been added.[63] With the inclusion of the Netherlands the various options for the rapid use of reserve units in the West were complete. There were now contingency plans basically for six areas: the Netherlands, Channel coast, Brittany, French Atlantic coast, Iberian Peninsula, and Vichy France. During 1942 these existing plans were elaborated and refined even further.

The contingency operations were changed in one way by splitting them into more than six options. As early as January, 1942, Operation "Channel Coast" became three separate plans. Operation "Channel Coast A" directed mobile units to rush into the Pas de Calais area, "B" into the region between Dieppe and Boulogne, and "C" into the

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[62]Oberkommando des Heeres, GenStdH Op Abt (IIa) Nr. 1753/41 G.Kdos., 22.12.41, T-78, Roll 310, Frames 6261840-6261842.

[63]Oberbefehlshaber West, Heeresgruppenkommando K, Ia Nr. 310/41 geh.Kdos.Ch., "Umgliederung, weitere Abgaben nach Osten und Aufgaben im Westen," 18.12.41, T-312, Roll 24, Frame 9530980.

area near Caen.[64]

A further change came about after the realignment of the coastal sectors in May when Ob West designated two contingencies for each Army zone. In Holland there were Operations "Netherlands A" and "Netherlands B." Fifteenth Army was responsible for "Channel Coast A" and "B," while the Seventh Army was to direct "Channel Coast C" in the Normandy area plus Operation "Brittany."[65]

The First Army area was an exception, however, in that German orders eventually called for only one operation, Operation "Gironde." The order explained that the object of the operation was to destroy immediately any enemy landing north or on both sides of the Gironde River estuary with all of the troops and reserves available. If the enemy attacked south of the River, the situation could still be dealt with if Wehrmacht units implemented Operation "Gironde" promptly and properly. The German movements into Spain and Unoccupied France were relegated to "special

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[64]Armeeberkommando 15, Ia Nr. 015/42 geh.Kdos.Ch., "Fall 'I,' Fall 'A,' Fall 'Bretagne,' Fall 'Kanalkueste,'" 24.1.1942, T-312, Roll 504, Frame 8099750.

[65]Armeeoberkommando 15, Ia Nr. 058/43 g.Kdos.Ch., "Zufuehrung von Verbaenden beim Angriff gegen die besetzte Kueste und Sonderfaelle," 29.6.1942, ibid., Frame 8099653; Oberbefehlshaber West, (Oberkommando Heeresgruppe D), Ia Nr. 182/42 geh.Kdos.Ch., "Zufuehrung grosser Verbaende in den verschiedenen 'Faellen,'" 25.8.42, T-78, Roll 310, Frame 6262226; and Armeeoberkommando 1, Ia Nr. 0086/42 g.K.Chefs., "Fall 'Girondemuendung,'" 19.7.1942, T-312, Roll 22, Frame 7527763.

cases (Sonderfaelle)."

The changes were not over. On September 1 the various operations were renamed "troop movements (Aufmarschbewegung)" and were given a number code instead of being specified by area.[66] A final change occurred after the German troops occupied the Vichy zone late in 1942, when Troop Movement "5" was added to cover the newly occupied French Mediterranean sector, thus extending the number of contingency plans to eight.[67]

Not only did the number of options by which to meet an enemy invasion expand during 1942, but each contingency was also analyzed and spelled out in great detail.[68] Prepa-

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[66]Oberbefehlshaber West, (Oberkommando Heeresgruppe D), Ia Nr. 182/42 geh.Kdos.Ch., "Zurfuehrung grosser Verbaende in den verschiedenen 'Faellen,'" 25.8.42, T-78, Roll 310, Frame 6262226.

[67]The other troop movements were designated as follows:
Opn. "Netherlands A" became Troop Movement "1A";
Opn. "Netherlands B" became Troop Movement "1B";
Opn. "Channel Coast A" became Troop Movement "2A";
Opn. "Channel Coast B" became Troop Movement "2B";
Opn. "Channel Coast C" became Troop Movement "3A";
Opn. "Brittany" became Troop Movement "3B"; and
Opn. "Gironde" became Troop Movement "4."

[68]For examples of specific planning, see Armeeoberkommando 1, Ia Nr. 976/42 g.Kdos., "Zufuehrung von Verbaenden beim Angriff gegen die besetzte Kueste," 12.7.1942, T-312, Roll 22, Frames 7527406-7527407; and Armeeoberkommando 1, Ia Nr. 0081/42 g.K.Chefs., "Aufmarschanweisung 'Fall Girondemuendung,'" 20.7.1942, T-312, Roll 25, Frames 7531756-7531767. For a general discussion, see Bodo Zimmermann, "OB West. Command Relationships (1943-45)," FMS, MS# B-308, as contained in "OB West, A Study in Command," FMS, MS# T-121, 25-26.

rations were made to move the units by road or rail, depending on the distance and the type of equipment, to areas under attack. In this connection loading priorities and timetables were worked out for the effective use of the railway network. German officials also selected the routes and mapped out rest and refueling stations for the panzer formations. These officials further drew up plans to provide road commanders and traffic control units for all major roads near the coast and charted by-passes around larger towns to avoid possible highway bottlenecks. In short, German reserve forces were to counter any Allied assault as quickly and decisively as possible.

In spite of all the "regularizing" that was accomplished in the western theater through the summer of 1942, one still has the feeling that overall, detailed planning was only beginning. To be sure, in each of the Army sectors, engineering staffs were developing plans; and some construction, particularly field-type defenses, was taking place.[69] But the Germans realized that the Atlantic Wall was going to take a long time to build. In the meantime the Wehrmacht still wanted to get by with the fewest troops possible. The

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[69]Armeepionierfuehrer beim AOK 1, "Beitrag zum Kriegstagebuch AOK 1 (Juli 1942)," T-312, Roll 22, Frames 7527725-7527726.

key word in the West remained "improvise."

The possibility of improvising depended, of course, on the Western Allies. There was no doubt in the minds of the Germans that the Allied Powers could conduct an operation against western Europe in 1942. The question was, where and to what extent? The guessing game had started.

The Allies, as is well known, did proceed to launch a series of small operations, or raids, during 1942 against the western shores of Hitler's Europe. But with the exception that almost all of the raids were of the hit-and-run variety, they bore little resemblance to each other and did not conform to any recognizable pattern. The first British foray in 1942 was undertaken against a German Air Force radar station on Cap d'Antifer north of Le Havre. In this operation sixty English airborne troops during the night of February 27-28 parachuted on the landward side of the radar complex, overran it, destroying or capturing the equipment, and then withdrew at 4 a.m. to English ships lying offshore.[70]

The British directed a more extensive raid against the

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[70]AOK 15, Ia Nr. 1037/42 geh., [Fernschreiben], 28.2.42, T-312, Roll 502, Frame 8097478; Armeeoberkommando 15, Ia Nr. 1099/42 geheim, "Engl. Fallschirmunternehmen in der Nacht 27./28.2.42," 3.3.1942, ibid., Frames 8097991-8097993; Ruge, Sea Warfare, 267; and Gwyer and Butler, Grand Strategy, III, 516. Both sides sustained light losses.

German naval base at St. Nazaire on March 28.[71] The Germans realized that the port of St. Nazaire, which is located at the mouth of the Loire River, was a high priority target for the British with its seven submarine pens and its one large dock, called Normandie Dock, which was the only berth along the Atlantic capable of holding a battleship. (The sole regular battleship still in the German inventory was the Tirpitz, which had recently escaped up the French coast to Norway.) The Wehrmacht made sure that St. Nazaire, like all U-boat bases, was well defended. The Germans had stationed approximately six thousand troops in the area. A number of artillery batteries covered the approaches. Large antiaircraft guns plus numerous smaller caliber flak weapons that could be trained against sea targets were positioned closer to the port. Searchlights also dotted the area. Further strengthening the defenses were several harbor defense boats and a guardship that was anchored near the entrance to the harbor for alert purposes and was well armed with close-range weapons. It was late at night--between two and four o'clock--when over six hundred British commandos and naval personnel frontually attacked this

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[71]The following summary is taken from the book by Capt. Robert E. D. Ryder, The Attack on St. Nazaire; 28th March 1942 (London: John Murray, 1947). Capt. Ryder commanded the British expedition. See also Cecil E. L. Phillips, The Greatest Raid of All (Boston: Little, Brown, 1960); and Sir Stephen W. Roskill, The War at Sea, 1939-1945; Vol. II: The Period of Balance (History of the Second World War; United Kingdom Military Series) (London: HMSO, 1956), 168-173. See map on page 101.

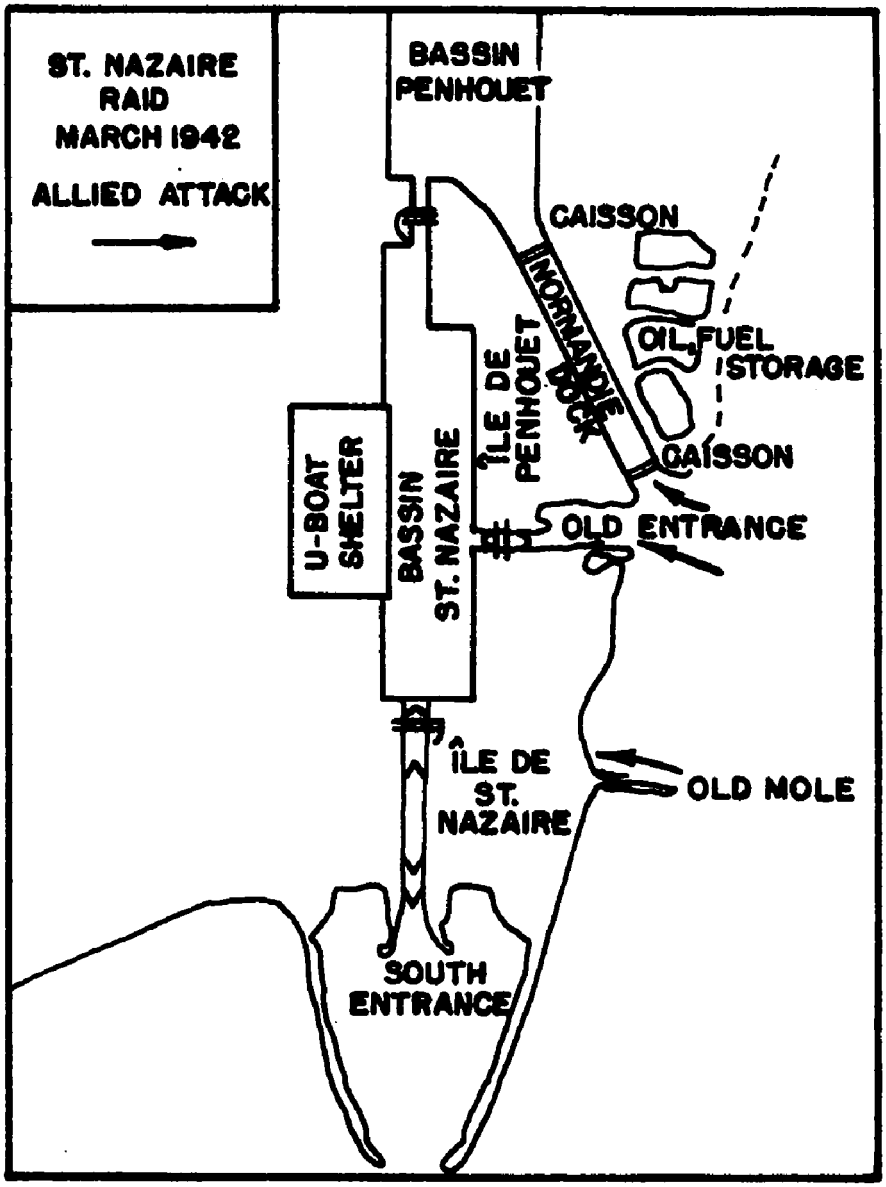

ST. NAZAIRE
RAID
MARCH 1942
ALLIED ATTACK
BASSIN
PENHOUET
CAISSON
NORMANDIE DOCK
OIL FUEL
STORAGE
ÎLE DE
PENHOUET
CAISSON
U-BOAT
SHELTER
BASSIN
ST. NAZAIRE
OLD ENTRANCE
ÎLE DE
ST.
NAZAIRE
OLD MOLE
SOUTH
ENTRANCE

Figure 6.

important submarine strongpoint.

The results were mixed. The British failed to reach the submarine pens, and they were likewise unable to blow up the lock gates through which the U-boats had to pass to reach the open sea. The Normandie Dock was a different matter. The raiders rammed an expendable destroyer, H.M.S. Campbeltown, into the maingate of the Dock where it remained lodged until the next morning at 11:35 when twenty-four, four hundred pound depth charges armed with delay fuses went off destroying the entire Dock facility.[72] The Germans were never able to effect satisfactory repair, and it remained inoperative throughout the war.

Losses in personnel were high for both sides. Capt. Ryder lists the total British force at 630 men. Of these 144 were killed or missing, 215 became prisoners of war, and 271 returned to England.[73] German military casualities were sixty-seven dead and 136 wounded.[74]

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[72]The Campbeltown was one of the fifty obsolete United States destroyers transferred to Britain in the bases-for-destroyers deal. It had been called the Buchanan in the U.S. Navy, but was more commonly referred to as "Old Buck."

[73]Phillips counts only 611 taking part with 169 dead or unaccounted for (p. 261). Roskill says 621 British were involved with 144 killed (pp. 170-173).

[74]Oberbefehlshaber West, Heeresgruppenkommando D, Ia Nr. 671/42 g.Kdos., "Englisches Unternehman gegen Kriegshafen und U-Boot-Stuetzpunkt St. Nazaire in der Nacht vom 27./28.3.42," 5.4.1942, T-312, Roll 502, Frame 8097925.

Both the British and the Germans were thus able to claim some degree of success. The English had sabotaged the Normandie Dock so completely that it was unusable; and hence any attempt by the Tirpitz to break out into the Atlantic, to attack Allied shipping, and then to return to St. Nazaire was now out of the question. For the Germans, the entrances and exits to the U-boat area as well as the submarine bunkers themselves were still intact. In addition, the British had suffered heavy losses and no German reinforcements had been necessary.

Nevertheless, the Wehrmacht should have been more disconcerted about the St. Nazaire Raid because the German forces in the area at the time of the raid were already in a state of alert for a possible Allied attack. An order from Hitler himself on March 23, citing numerous reports from undercover agents, stressed that this portion of the coast was in special danger.[75] The Fuehrer therefore commanded that available reserves, in this case a panzer division and part of an airborne unit, were to move immediately into areas west of a line between Caen and St. Nazaire. Although the units did not arrive until after the raid, they would have been available for any large-scale British operation. Moreover, all command staffs, whose headquarters were located in places subject to a surprise

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[75]Armeeoberkommando 15, Ia Nr. 1563/42 g.Kdos., "Fuehrerbefehl von 23.3.42," 24.3.1942, ibid., Frames 8097457-8097458.

attack, were to set up other command posts in areas not prone to attack so that proper guidance and control could be guaranteed in every situation.

Furthermore, two days before, on March 21, Navy officials, as the result of a recent inspection trip, pointed out that the defenses for the submarine bases against sneak attacks were not sufficient. The report continued: "Destruction of the U-boat strongpoints, even their occupation for a short time, is truly unbearable. Above all, strongpoints Brest, Lorient, St. Nazaire, and LaPallice must remain closed off from any enemy surprise attack."[76] Therefore, in spite of the increased state of readiness, in spite of the stress placed upon protecting the U-boat harbors, the British had been able to penetrate the German defenses and cause considerable damage.

Yet the German military, though irritated, did not seem unduly concerned. Theater Command West's detailed analysis of the St. Nazaire enterprise concluded overall that "the enemy, ... had suffered a heavy defeat (schwere Niederlage)."[77] The only notation in the Armed Forces High Command's War Diary was Army Chief of Staff Halder's comment,

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[76]Seekriegsleitung, 1. Abteilung 6318/42 gKdos., "Schutz der U-Boot-Stuetzpunkte an Atlantik-Kueste gegen ueberraschende Feindangriffe," 21 Maerz 1942, T-78, Roll 317, Frame 6271296.

[77]Oberbefehlshaber West, Heeresgruppenkommando D, Ia Nr. 671/42 g.Kdos., "Englisches Unternehmen gegen Kriegshafen und U-Boot-Stuetzpunkt St. Nazaire in der Nacht vom 27./28.3.42," 5.4.1942, T-312, Roll 502, Frame 8097925.

"English attack against St. Nazaire repulsed."[78]

Nothing that occurred throughout the spring and summer of 1942 shook the confidence of the Wehrmacht that it could deal with any landing maneuver the Western Allies might try. An attempted British raid south of Boulogne during the night of April 21-22 was intercepted by German naval craft and forced to turn back without ever landing.[79] Another small British operation did land in the same area on June 4, but was driven off by German defenders with little effect.[80]

What was significant from the German point of view was that the Wehrmacht was able to pursue its objectives against the Soviet Union on the Eastern Front without diverting any appreciable number of troops to the West.[81] This meant, in effect, that three-fourths of all German combat troops were engaged against the U.S.S.R. in 1942. To be sure, the High Command sent four additional panzer divisions and one armored brigade to the western theater during the critical summer months, when an Anglo-American operation was most probable, but one should also keep in mind that these forma-

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[78]"Abgewiesener englischer Angriff gegen St. Nazaire." KTB/OKW, II, 310 (28 Maerz 1942).

[79]Armeeoberkommando 15, Ia Nr. 2254/42 geheim, "Landungsunternehmungen der Englaender in der Nacht vom 21./22.4 suedl. Boulogne," 29.4.1942, T-312, Roll 502, Frames 8097879-8097885.

[80]Armeeoberkommando 15, Ia Nr. 3211/42 geheim, "Engl. Landungsunternehmen in der Nacht von 3/4.6," 5.6.1942, ibid., Frames 8097818-8097836.

[81]Gwyer and Butler, Grand Strategy, III, 645-646.

tions were in need of rest and refitting after suffering heavy losses in the Russian campaign.[82] In other words, the movement of armored forces to the West was designed to refurbish the German units as much as it was to help protect the coast.

While it is true, then, that the Western Powers failed to achieve their primary objective of reducing the pressure on the Russians, the Allied raids did accomplish one thing in 1942: they kept German officials guessing. The Germans knew that the West had the capability of mounting at least a partially effective, if limited, enterprise against western Europe. The raid against St. Nazaire had proved that. The lesser forays and Allied air activity also assisted in keeping the German forces along the coast on edge. As a result, local commanders and their troops after a while must have developed what might be called an "invasion syndrome." It is a malady common to inexperienced military personnel who spend long periods of time on alert, anticipating, but never experiencing a full-scale attack. Obviously, defensive fortifications were being built and training and coastal exercises were being conducted for

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[82]The only armored units listed under Ob West in the Army High Command's order of battle on April 22 were the 24th Panzer Division and the 100th Panzer Brigade (KTB/OKW, II, 1365). By August 12 the number of armored units in the West included the following: 6th, 7th, and 10th Panzer Divisions, SS Divisions "Reich" and "Adolf Hitler," Panzer Brigade "Hermann Goering," and still the 100th Panzer Brigade (KTB/OKW, II, 1383).

one reason--to repel an enemy invasion. But the invasion did not come. Surely it will come soon, the soldiers reasoned, and the tensions thus mounted throughout the summer.

Directives and orders from higher headquarters helped reinforce this feeling of expectancy. Periodic naval and Army reports point out the most favorable times during the year for enemy amphibious landings.[83] Other orders in April stressed that "the British are determined and able to attack our extensive coastline more frequently and on a larger scale than heretofore," that "England has the capability for a large-scale operation against Europe--25-30 divisions...," and that "public opinion in England is exerting pressure" for a landing of some type.[84] Moreover, during the summer German intelligence sources noted a considerable number of landing craft being assembled along the southern shores of England.

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[83]Marine Verb. Offiz. zum O.K.H., B. Nr. 2054/42 geh., "Guenstigste Landungszeiten in Raum Ostende-Brest," 13 Maerz 1942, T-78, Roll 317, Frame 6271298; and Der Oberbefehlshaber der Armee [15], Ia Nr. 5150/42 geheim, "Armeebefehl," 3.9.1942, T-312, Roll 502, Frame 8097634.

[84]Naval High Command, B. Nr. 1. Skl. I Op. 8329/42 GKdos., "Coastal Defenses," 11 Apr 1942, as contained in Fuehrer Directives, II, 21; Der Chef des Generalstabes Ob. West, Heeresgruppenkommando D, Ia Nr. 55/42 geh.Kdos.Ch., "Entwicklungsmoerglichkeiten der Lage im Westen," 18.4.1942, T-78, Roll 317, Frame 6271192; and Der Chef des Oberkommandos der Wehrmacht, WFSt/Op Nr. 55663/42 g.K.Chefs., 16.4.1942, ibid., Frame 6271206.

Hitler on July 9 indicated that "Great Britain, under pressure from Russia, will stage a large-scale invasion, probably in the area of Ob West."[85] The Nazi leader went on to name those regions especially threatened--the Channel coast and Normandy--followed by the southern part of the Netherlands and Brittany, and then designated that additional units be sent to the West and that local precautions should be instituted. He concluded, "In the event of an enemy landing I personally will proceed to the West and assume charge of the operations from there."[86] About a month later, however, the Fuehrer felt there would not be a major attack now.[87]

Still it was within a general atmosphere of anticipation that the Dieppe Raid, the most extensive Allied raid in 1942, took place. Summarized briefly, over six thousand Allied troops, most of them Canadians, attacked the French coast in five places near and in front of the seaside town of Dieppe in the pre-dawn hours of August 19.[88] The German

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[85]The Fuehrer and Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces, WFST/Op. Nr. 551213/42 g.Kdos.Chefs., [Telegram], 9 Jul 42, as contained in Fuehrer Directives, II, 34.

[86]Ibid.

[87]General der Pioniere und Festungen bei ObdH, L III, Geheime Kommandosache, "Aktennotiz ueber Fuehrerbesprechung am 2.8.42 (21.30-23.30) im Fuehrerhauptquartier," 3.8.42, T-78, Roll 317, Frame 6271595.

[88]Little can be added to the masterful research and description in Col. Charles P. Stacey's Six Years of War, pp. 326-406, and Stacey's subsequent findings published in his work, The Victory Campaign, from which this summary is taken. Portions of Stacey's evidence dealing with the

forces in the area, part of the 302nd Infantry Division, were on alert and met the attackers with a large degree of success. The Allies were forced to begin withdrawing from 11 a.m. on, and by 4 o'clock it was clear that the landing attempt had been repulsed. The Western Powers listed 3,610 out of 6,100 men as dead, missing, wounded, or prisoners of war. The Germans suffered 591 casulaties.[89]

From these bare details alone it is difficult to discern the actual nature of the operation, and this was the problem the Germans faced. Was it a raid or a diversionary attack or an attempt to establish a small, permanent bridgehead? Or was it rather the first step in an extensive, large-scale invasion? German officials analyzed the Dieppe experience in painstaking detail to find the answer. There were a number of imponderables. Why would the Allies use six thousand troops and thirty modern tanks for a mere raid?

German side of the operation are corroborated in Generalkommando LXXXI A.K., Ia Nr. 1118/42 geh., "Engl. Angriff auf Dieppe am 19.8.1942," 29.8.1942, T-312, Roll 504, Frames 8099329-8099366; and Oberbefehlshaber West, (Oberkommando Heeresgruppe D), Ia Nr. 2550/42 g.Kdos., "Gefechtsbericht ueber Feindlandung bei und beiderseits Dieppe am 19.8.1942," 3.9.1942, ibid., Frames 8099436-8099477. For a view that differs from that of Stacey, see Eric McGuire, Dieppe, August 19 (London: Jonathan Cape, 1963). McGuire feels that the Dieppe Raid was not worth the cost and effort. Other helpful assessments of the Raid are available in Roskill, The War at Sea, II, 240-250; and Gwyer and Butler, Grand Strategy, III, 638-642. See the map on page 110.

[89]Oberbefehlshaber West, (Oberkommando Heeresgruppe D), Ia Nr. 2550/42 g.Kdos., "Gefechtsbericht ueber Feindlandung bei und beiderseits Dieppe am 19.8.1942," 3.9.1942, T-312, Roll 504, Frames 8099470-8099471.

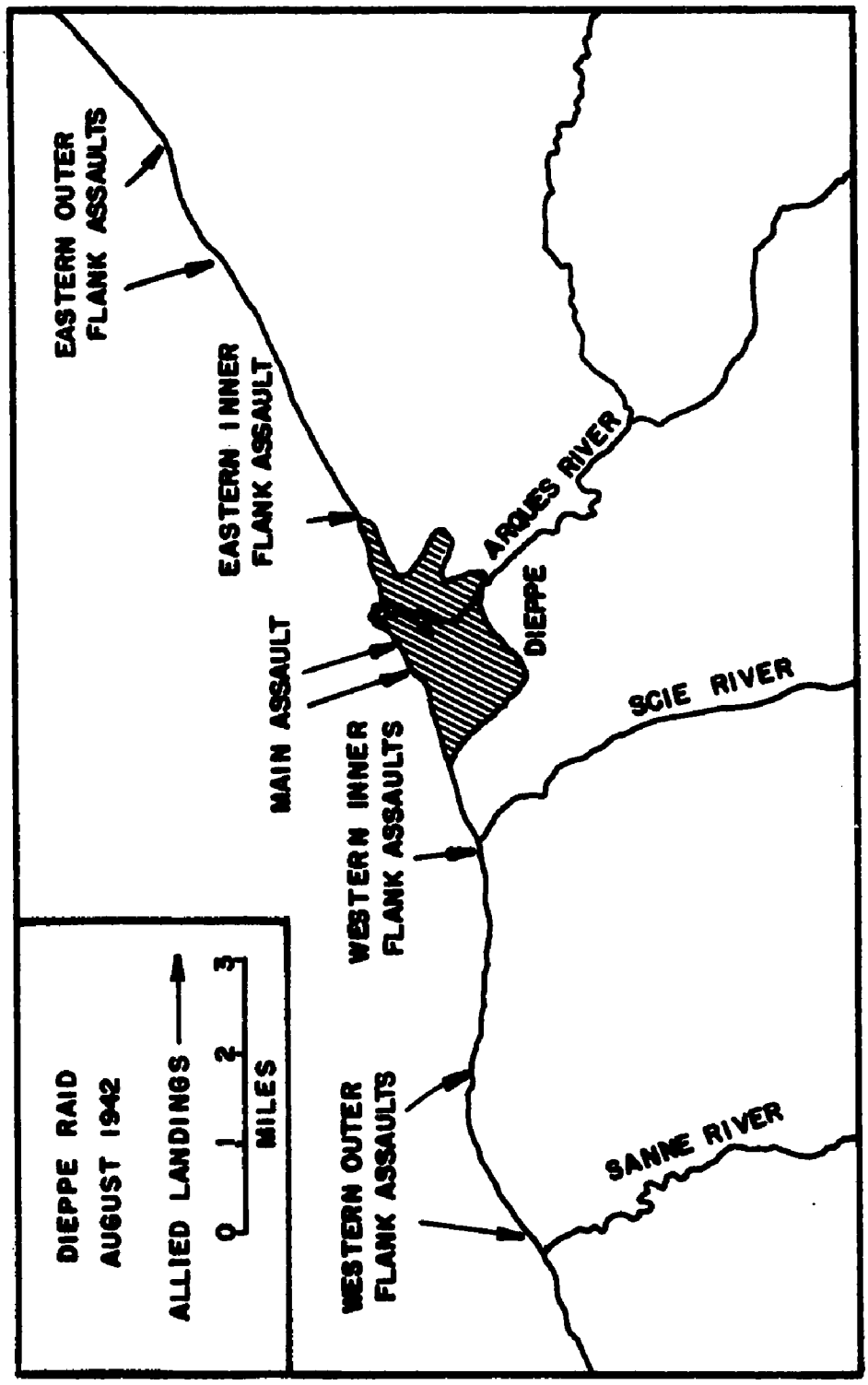

DIEPPE RAID
AUGUST 1942
ALLIED LANDINGS
0 1 2 3
MILES
EASTERN OUTER FLANK ASSAULTS
EASTERN INNER FLANK ASSAULT
MAIN ASSAULT
WESTERN INNER FLANK ASSAULTS
WESTERN OUTER FLANK ASSAULTS
ARQUES RIVER
DIEPPE
SCIE RIVER
SANME RIVER

Figure 7.

Why attack a harbor in force, even a secondary harbor like Dieppe, unless one intended to stay for a while? Why were additional British troop transports being loaded in Portsmouth on the English south coast that same morning?[90] On the other hand, the Germans found an Allied battle plan on the body of a dead major on the Dieppe beach. The plan indicated that the operation was a raid in force designed to occupy and destroy military objectives in and around Dieppe, to capture prisoners and important equipment, and then to leave around 3:30 in the afternoon. Still a majority of the German investigators, including von Rundstedt and his Chief of Staff at the time, General Kurt Zeitzler, were of the opinion that Dieppe was more than a raid, that it was the beginning of a possible invasion.[91]

In the end the Germans accepted the evidence which pointed toward a major attack rather than taking Allied intentions at face value. One might also contend, as was stressed earlier, that the state of anticipation which had permeated the West for some months influenced the German conclusions about Dieppe as much as the evidence at hand. Since the Wehrmacht expected an invasion attempt, that was what the Dieppe Raid became, in spite of the evidence to the contrary.

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[90] Ibid., Frames 8099447, 8099457.

[91] Stacey, Six Years of War, 390-391. Zeitzler soon became Army Chief of Staff, replacing Halder on September 24, 1942.

Two further points surrounding the Dieppe Raid should be brought out. One is that since the operation was aimed at the port city of Dieppe, Hitler and other German military leaders felt confirmed in their previous belief that any future Allied landing would be directed at seizing an important harbor. Accordingly, defensive fortifications around major ports were always accorded a high priority in building plans.

The second point is that while the Germans pointed to Dieppe as a victory, which it was, and while the coastal defense procedures, including the movement of reserves toward the area under attack, worked adequately, German staff officers were more convinced than ever that the Western Powers were determined to establish a second front in western Europe, and that it would be most probably along the Channel coast.

The Allies did not abandon their raiding activities with the Dieppe operation. British military personnel conducted at least two more operations before the end of the year. In one of them, British commandos on October 4 captured several German engineering troops on the Channel island of Sark.[92] In the other, English sabotage teams damaged fifteen German naval vessels with magnetic mines

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[92]Armeeberkommando 1, Ia Nr. 1743/42 g.Kdos., "Englisches stoermunternehmen gegen Sark," 16.10.1942, T-312, Roll 23, Frames 7529771-7529772.

in the Bordeaux harbor on December 8.[93] These raids were no doubt irritating but of little significance. By this time the Germans were preoccupied with other matters in the West, and one of their major concerns was an ambitious building program.

Even prior to the Dieppe Raid, plans to develop a more comprehensive defensive network had been underway. During the first construction period in 1942 from February to August 1, the stress had been placed on erecting reinforced field and field-type defenses; more permanent installations were to be built in the future.[94] Some progress in construction did materialize during the first seven months of 1942. In terms of artillery, for instance, 208 batteries were ready for firing in the western theater on July 6, 1942, as compared with ninety-two batteries one year before.[95] But the problem was that most of these artillery emplacements as well as other endangered areas were not adequately

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[93]AOK 1, Abt Ic/Ia Nr. 2356/42 g.Kdos., 21.12.42, T-312, Roll 24, Frame 7530837.

[94]Armeeberkommando 15, A,Pi.Fue./Stoart/A.N.F./Ia Nr. 512/42 g.Kdos., "Ausbau der Kuestenbefestigung," 1.2.1942, T-312, Roll 502, Frames 8097483-8097486.

[95]Oberbefehlshaber West, Abteilung Ib Nr. 700/42 g.Kdos., "MAA, HKA und Stell. Bttr. Kueste (ohne zugeteilte Flak)," 6 Juli 1942, T-78, Roll 309, Frame 6260997; and Oberkommando des Heeres, GenStdH Op. Abt (III), Nr. 1469/41 g.Kdos., "Kuestenartillerie," 30 Aug 41, T-78, Toll 317, Frame 6270912.

protected.

Now the time had come to make the West into a truly defensive bastion, and Hitler's influence at this point became decisive. The Fuehrer had generally been absorbed in affairs on the Eastern front, but from this period on he began to direct more of his attentions westward. On at least two occasions during the first half of August he talked about the western situation at some length. On August 2, he discussed chiefly what type of large operation the Western Allies would someday conduct against the coast (most of what he said proved to be erroneous), but he did emphasize the need for strong defenses, especially in light of the difficulty of moving mobile reserves fast enough into areas under attack.[96]

Hitler's discussion of matters in the West on August 13 was more instructive.[97] He started by expressing his desire to avoid under all circumstances the establishment of a second front. "There is only one battle front," he noted. "The other front can be defended only with slight strength (geringen Kraeften)."[98] Therefore, the Fuehrer said he had

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[96]General der Pioniere und Festungen bei ObdH, L III, Geheime Kommandosache, "Aktennotiz ueber Fuehrerbesprechung am 2.8.42 (21.30-23.30) im Fuehrerhauptquartier," 3.8.42, ibid., Frames 6271594-6271596.

[97]General der Pioniere und Festungen beim ObdH, L III, Geheime Kommandosache, "Besprechung beim Fuehrer ueber den Atlantik-Wall. am 13. August 1942 (21.40-0.50 Uhr)," 14.8. 42, ibid., Frames 6271090-6271098.

[98]Ibid., Frame 6271090.

come to the conclusion of constructing on the Atlantic and Channel coast an impenetrable fortress.[99] Those areas which were to receive special attention were first of all, U-boat bases; secondly, large ports; thirdly, secondary harbors, and fourthly, heavy artillery batteries.

The Nazi leader went on to discuss a number of specific points dealing mainly with the types of weaponry to be utilized along the coast. The most significant point was his desire to have fifteen thousand defensive positions constructed by the end of the spring in 1943. He figured that around twenty positions per kilometer were needed along the entire length of the coast, although he regarded ten per kilometer as tolerable. The fifteen thousand fortifications were to be permanent installations and should be manned by 300,000 combat troops, backed up by 150,000 reserves. With 450,000 to 500,000 men, the Fuehrer considered that the Wall could be held.

Several weeks later the head of the engineers in the West distributed the fifteen thousand projected strong-points among the various areas.[100] Ten to eleven thousand positions were to be divided evenly between the Fifteenth and Seventh Armies along the Belgian and the French coasts

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[99] Ibid.

[100] Oberbefehlshaber West, (Oberkommando Heeresgruppe D), Gen./Pi./ Ia Nr. 2519/42 g.Kdos., "Grundlegender Befehl des Oberbefehlshaber West Nr. 14," 25.8.1942, ibid., Frame 6270743.

north of the Loire. Fifteen hundred to two thousand fortifications each were to be erected along the Dutch coast and in the less endangered First Army sector in southwestern France. Planning, as always, was to be accomplished by the engineering staffs in conjunction with the local tactical commanders, while the actual construction was to be handled by Organization Todt. Organization Todt officials felt they could complete only about forty percent, or six thousand, of the required installations by May 1, 1943, but German officials hoped that this number would still give the Atlantic Wall the appearance of a formidable defensive barrier.[101]

The importance that Hitler placed in these Western defenses is well brought out in a high level meeting which he held toward the end of September, 1942. At the conclusion of the three hour session, the Nazi leader remarked, "At this time the Atlantic Wall is the most decisive factor that there is. If nothing happens during the next year in the West, the war is won."[102]

Hitler had more in mind, however, than merely protecting

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[101] [Oberkommando des Heeres], Op. Abt. (IIa), "Grundsaetze des 'staendigen Ausbaues' beim Bau des Atlantik-Walles (Vortrag des Gen. Lt. Schmetzer, Inspekteur fuer die Landesbefestigung West am 30.9.42, in der Pi.-Schule Karlshorst)," 3.10.42, ibid., Frame 6271578. See also Harrison, Cross-Channel Attack, 137.

[102] [Oberkommando der Heeres], Op. Abt. (IIa), "Fuehrerrede zum Ausbau des Atlantik-Walles am 29.9," 3.10.42, T-312, Roll 23, Frame 7529710.

the western shores of Europe. By the fall of 1942 he felt it would not be long until the Soviet military were crippled severely. He therefore envisioned another grandiose scheme--that of driving across the Caucasus into the oil-rich Middle East. The build up for this new "Drang nach Osten" was to take place in the West.[103]

German planners estimated that by January, 1943, there should be ten mobile divisions, many of them being refitted, in western Europe. Hitler ordered that eight of these mobile units be readied to spearhead the new Eastern offensive. At the same time four fast divisions were to be transferred West from the Russian front for rehabilitation purposes, so that six mobile formations would still remain under Ob West.

The proposed Middle Eastern offensive, as we are well aware, never developed past the preliminary stages. The Germans needed additional divisions for eastern deployment during the winter of 1942-43, but they were used to avert a German collapse in Russia rather than to open the way for an eventual German colony in Asia.

In this context the Wehrmacht troop situation as it affected the West was quite deceptive. To be sure, the number of German Army units in the Western theater rose from thirty-five to forty-three during the last quarter of

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[103]The following paragraph is based on KTB/OKW, II, 704 (9 Sep 42).

1942, but a number of these formations were only stationed in the West long enough to prepare for further eastern duty.[104] In addition, many of the best divisions that still remained deployed along the coast were also shuttled East when the situation on the Soviet front became critical. In other words, the western theater served two main functions--to guard against a possible second front in the West, and to train and rest units for the East.

A situation report from von Rundstedt to the Army Chief of Staff in October makes clear this correlation between East and West.[105] The report stresses that, while Commander-in-Chief West was responsible for defending the Western flank and for building up the Atlantic Wall defenses, he also had other duties. One of these duties was to replenish the worn-out eastern divisions so that they could be sent again to the Russian front. Another duty was to exchange western divisions for depleted eastern formations. A third function was to give away specific German personnel from the West in order to form up new units. And a final function for the western theater commander was to conduct training courses of all types for officers and non-commissioned soldiers.

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[104]"Die Gliederung der deutschen Heeres," 22.4.1942, as cited in ibid., 1365; and "Die Gliederung des deutschen Heeres," 12.8.1942, ibid., 1383.

[105]Der Oberbefehlshaber West, Ia Nr. 235/42 geh.Kdos. Ch., "Die Lage im Bereich des Oberbefehlshaber West," 14.10.1942, T-311, Roll 27, Frames 7032366-7032374.

Even though other portions of von Rundstedt's report emphasized that the enemy could, under certain circumstances, effect a successful landing on the continent, taken as a whole, Ob West recognized that the Eastern front continued to cast a large shadow on developments in the West. The situation was to change, however, when the Western Allies invaded North Africa in November of 1942.

CHAPTER III

The Wall Extends

The Anglo-American landing in Northwest Africa on November 8, 1942, affected both sides. It altered Allied strategy in the West, for the commitment of men and material to the Mediterranean area made a full-scale invasion of western Europe impossible in 1943.[1] But the African landing also influenced German thinking about the western theater. With the British Eighth Army pushing west from El Alamein, with the Italian Army in the process of deteriorating, and with American, British, and other Allied troops moving east toward Tunisia, Germany's southern flank no longer lay unexposed. The Wehrmacht did not expect, for the moment, to stop the Allies from taking over most of French-controlled Africa, which was sparsely held by Vichy forces, but it could strengthen its defensive position in southwestern Europe. Ob West was therefore forced to devote part of its attention in 1943 to the French Mediterranean coast as well as taking renewed interest in the Iberian Peninsula, rather than concerning itself exclusively with building up

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[1]Sir Frederick E. Morgan, Overture to Overlord (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1950), 83-84.

the Atlantic Wall. Even though the construction of fortifications continued along the Channel and Atlantic coasts, a great deal of the activity in the West became concentrated in the heretofore neglected southern portion of the theater.

The first step for the Germans was to occupy, with Italian help, the area controlled by the Vichy French government. The second step was to make this region into a defensive bulwark to ward off any possible British or American encroachments from the south. The third step was for the Wehrmacht in southwestern Europe to consider how one ought to deal with the revived Allied threat to neutral Spain. And the fourth step, forced reluctantly upon the Germans, was to take over the Italian zone in France east of the Rhône when the Italians surrendered in September of 1943. The Atlantic Wall, once thought to stretch from the Frisian Islands to the Pyrenees, had now been extended to the French-Italian border.

The German occupation of Unoccupied France was not a spur-of-the-moment decision. As discussed previously, Hitler had considered taking over the rest of France as early as the end of 1940.[2] Plans had been formalized and

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[2]Eberhard Jaeckel, Frankreich in Hitlers Europa: Die deutsche Frankreichpolitik im zweiten Weltkrieg (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 1966), 234.

Wehrmacht formations selected for the operation, christened "Attila," throughout the course of 1941. By 1942, however, Theater Command West felt it lacked sufficient forces to occupy the rest of France.[3] The Fuehrer himself acknowledged this situation in a directive issued on May 29.[4] The Directive, numbered forty-two, and entitled "Instructions for Operations Against Unoccupied France and the Iberian Peninsula (previously known as 'Attila' and 'Isabella')," brought out several points regarding the changes that had occurred inside France.

In the first place, "because of the continual shifting of our forces in the West, and the consequent changes in the readiness for battle of our formations there," the operation to occupy the Vichy sector, renamed "Anton," could only be carried out on an improvised basis.[5] "Improvised" in this context meant that manpower and equipment simply were not available for the sole purpose of implementing the take-over of Unoccupied France. The German units had other tasks to perform and would need some lead time before they could be in position to execute "Anton." With the shortage of

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[3]Der Chef des Generalstabes Ob. West, Heeresgruppenkommando D, Ia Nr. 55/42 geh.Kdos.Ch., "Entwicklungsmoeglichkeiten der Lage im Westen," 18.4.1942, T-78, Roll 317, Frames 6271199-6271200.

[4]Hubatsch (ed.), Hitlers Weisungen, 189-191. The English translation is available in Trevor-Roper (ed.), Hitler's War Directives, 121-123.

[5]Ibid., 121-122. The underlined portions are underlined in the text.

German troops, Italian officials and formations were included in the planning and implementation stages of the operation for the first time. Thus the reciprocal German and Italian policies of formulating a common strategy only when one of the Axis partners felt it was in his best interest to do so continued in the case of "Anton."

In the second place, whereas the nature of the plan had changed, the conditions and the objectives for "Anton" remained the same as under "Attila." The conditions were set forth in the initial paragraph of the Directive as follows: "The development of the situation in unoccupied France, or in the French possessions in North Africa, may render it necessary in the future to occupy all of France."[6] The objective of the operation was "to break the power of resistance in unoccupied France and to occupy the country."[7]

The Directive concluded that the high commands of the various services were to report by June 10 on (1) the proposed strength of military forces, (2) a proposal along general lines for carrying out "Anton," (3) the time required before the operation could begin, and (4) the demands and requests to the Italians and possible ways of supporting them.

It was not until the middle of July, however, that a

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[6]Ibid. The underlined portions are underlined in the text.

[7]Ibid., 122.

detailed plan for "Anton" appeared.[8] According to this plan Wehrmacht staff officials figured it would take at least ten days of preparation time before "Anton" could be implemented. The planners envisaged that the actual operation would be a limited one in which four German mobile divisions would cross over the Vichy boundary from the north and west and move rapidly toward a line running from Geneva through Lyons to Toulouse. The German forces coming into the unoccupied zone from the west were to be under the First Army, those from the north under Army Group Felber. Four additional armored formations were to remain in reserve, and the Military Commander in France was to detach small, temporarily-mobile units of reserve troops (Landeschuetzen-Einheiten) to occupy the important points, such as military posts, depot areas, munitions dumps, and airfields. Furthermore, a special Army combat team was to make a sudden attack on the town of Vichy and take over the governmental apparatus. In addition, the Luftwaffe was to support the Army formations and to overpower the French air forces that the Germans had allowed to exist after the Franco-German Armistice agreement of 1940.

It takes only a brief look at a map to realize that the key element in the entire operation was the Italian

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[8]Oberbefehlshaber West, (Oberkommando Herresgruppe D), Ia Nr. 127/42 geh.Kdos.Ch., "Grundlegende Weisung fuer 'Anton' Nr. 1," 15.7.1942, T-312, Roll 25, Frames 7531391-7531394. See the map on page 125.

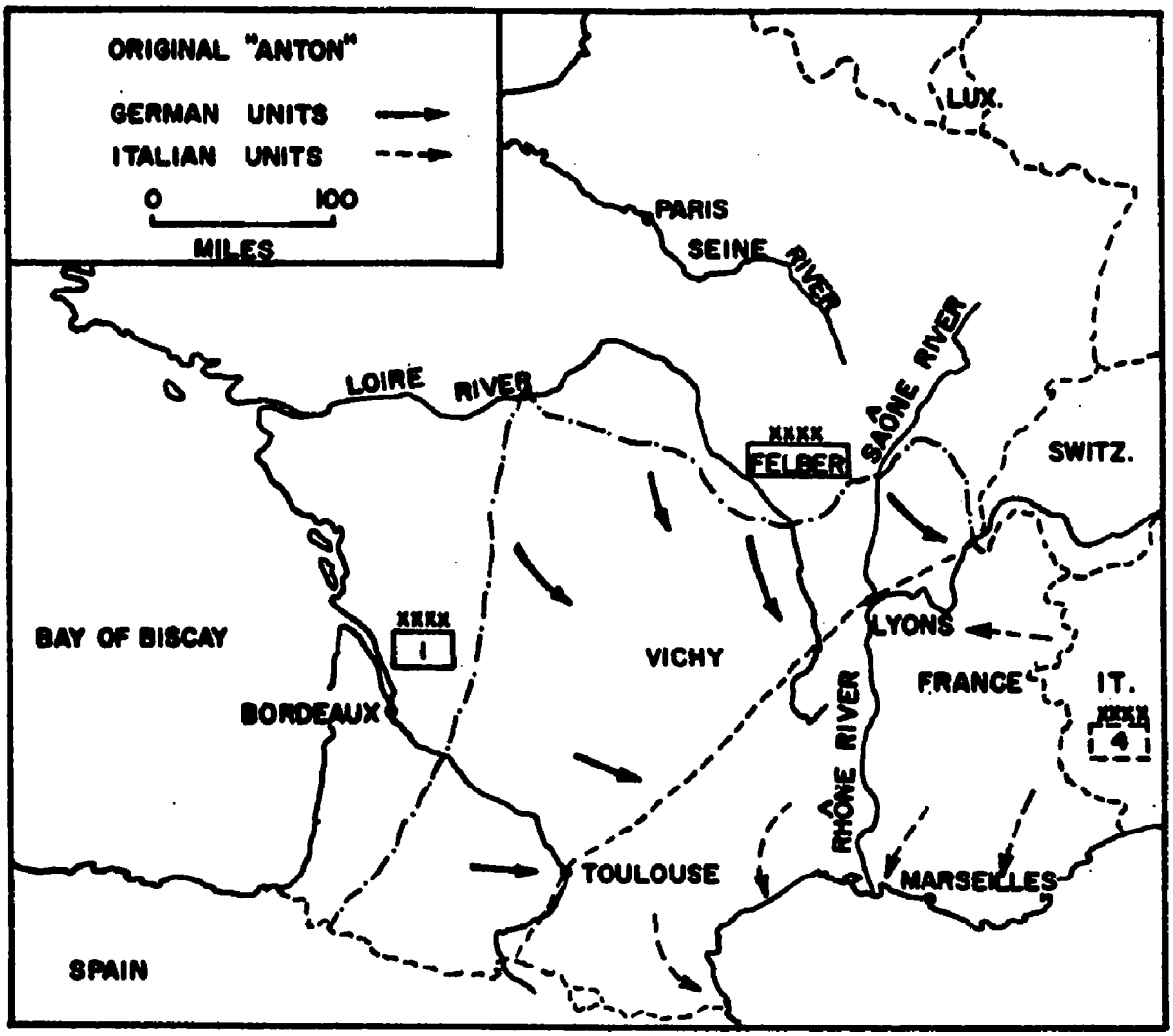

ORIGINAL "ANTON"
GERMAN UNITS
ITALIAN UNITS
0
100
MILES
LUX.
PARIS
SEINE RIVER
LOIRE RIVER
SAÔNE RIVER
XXXX
FELBER
SWITZ.
BAY OF BISCAY
XXXX
1
VICHY
LYONS
FRANCE
IT.
XXXX
4
BORDEAUX
RHÔNE RIVER
TOULOUSE
MARSEILLES
SPAIN

Figure 8.

Army. The Italians were to occupy the southeastern half of Vichy France, while the Germans took over the northwestern part. The Italian zone would thus include the entire French Mediterranean coast as well as the island of Corsica. Another task for Italian military forces, besides occupation duties, was for the Italian Navy to prevent the French home fleet and any commercial ships from leaving port.

By the end of October the plans for "Anton" had changed considerably.[9] The warning time necessary to implement the operation remained the same--ten days, but in other respects the plans for taking over Unoccupied France were quite different. The main difference was in the diminished role of the Italian military. It is not clear if the Italians insisted that their participation in "Anton" be less ambitious, or if it resulted from German insistence that they should control part of the strategically significant Mediterranean coast. In any event, German forces were now to take over all of Vichy France west of and including the Rhône River. This meant that the French Mediterranean coastline from the Spanish border to east of Marseilles would be in German hands. The Italians, for their part, would occupy the area east of the Rhône. In other words, instead of dividing Vichy along a line running

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[9]Oberbefehlshaber West, Ia Nr. 245/42 geh.Kdos.Ch., "Anton I," 27.10.1942, ibid., Frames 7531411-7531412, 7531417-7531419. See the map on page 127.

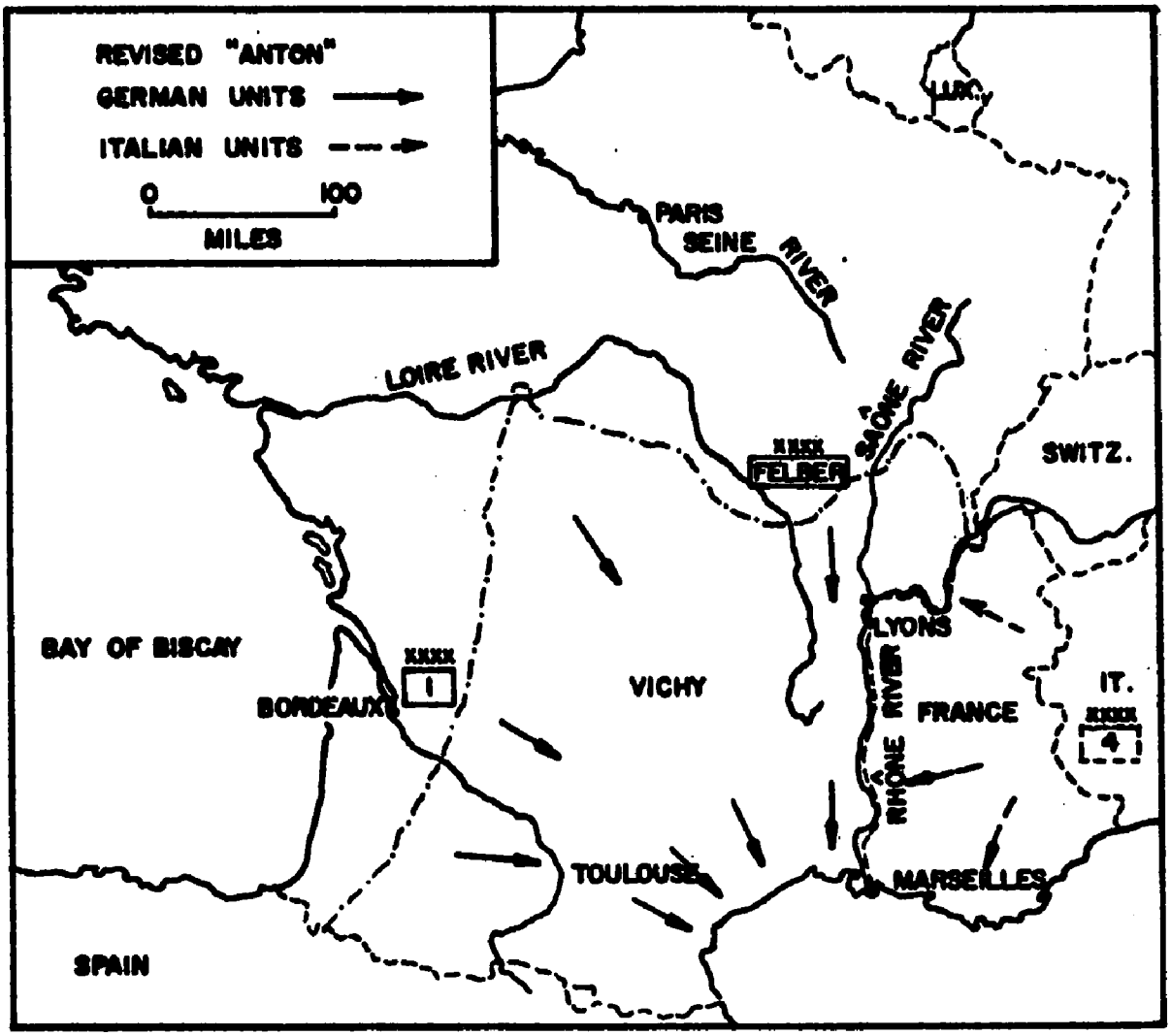

REVISED "ANTON"
GERMAN UNITS
ITALIAN UNITS
0
100
MILES
PARIS
SEINE RIVER
LUX.
LOIRE RIVER
SAONE RIVER
XXXX
FELBER
SWITZ.
BAY OF BISCAY
XXXX
1
BORDEAUX
VICHY
LYONS
RHONE RIVER
FRANCE
IT.
XXXX
4
TOULOUSE
MARSEILLES
SPAIN

Figure 9.

northeast by southwest, the Axis powers decided to partition Unoccupied France on a more logical east-west basis.

The revised scheme for "Anton" took into account at least a portion of the original plan. Motorized formations would still push rapidly into the Vichy zone followed by reserve forces to occupy the key places in the rear. But instead of stopping at Toulouse and Lyons, the fast units would press on to the Mediterranean coast. In the meantime the Italians would move into the Vichy sector from the east. Therefore, the initial phase of the operation, now named "Anton I," was similar to the first plan except that German forces would no longer occupy the area northeast of Lyons. The second phase, called "Anton II," was to extend German control to the coast.

It seems that by this time Hitler was determined to take over Vichy France at the first opportunity. The Allied landing in Northwest Africa, though a surprise to the Germans, merely gave Hitler a pretext to eliminate the distinction between Occupied and Unoccupied France once and for all.[10] A message from Ob West to the Armed Forces High Command (OKW) on October 31, indicated that the forces for "Anton" were ready and could begin the operation after a

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[10]General der Artillerie Walter Warlimont, "Norway; North Africa; French Resistance; German-U.S. Relations; Dieppe; Sitzkrieg," FMS, MS# ETHINT-2, 3; and Generalfeldmarschall Wilhelm Keitel, "German Attitudes Toward the U.S. (1939-43)," FMS, MS# A-912, 2.

warning of ten to fifteen days.[11] More conclusive is an order from the First Army on November 7, one day before Allied troops disembarked in Africa. This order demonstrates clearly the Fuehrer's desire to have all of France occupied.

> The Fuehrer has determined, in order to prevent any enemy agitation and putsch attempts in the unoccupied zone, to take over...by blitz-type tactics the seat of government in Vichy and the depot areas near the border. [Anton I]
>
> An occupation of the entire unoccupied area (Operation 'Anton II') can be joined to this undertaking ['Anton I'] according to the situation and in conformity with the existing 'Anton' directive.[12]

On the same day, the OKW War Diary noted that a British naval attack force with four or five divisions had left Gibraltar, probably headed for Tripoli or Benghazi on the Libyan coast.[13] The War Diary continued: "On command from the Fuehrer, orders have been given by Ob West for the eventual entrance of predetermined units into Unoccupied France (Undertaking 'Anton')."[14]

The operation was readied for implementation. Hitler heard of the North African invasion while traveling in his

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[11]Oberbefehlshaber West, (Oberkommando Herresgruppe D), Ia Nr. 250/42 geh.Kdos.Ch., "Anton," 31.10.1942, T-312, Roll 25, Frame 7531433.

[12]Armeeoberkommando 1, Ia Nr. 0187/42 g.Kdos.Chefs., "Befehl zur Besetzung der grenznahen Stockierungslager im unbetzten Gebiet (Fall 'Anton')," 7.11.42, T-312, Roll 24, Frame 7531254.

[13]KTB/OKW, II, 916 (7 Nov 1942).

[14]Ibid.

private train from Berlin to Munich, but he waited a few days to see what the reaction of the French Armistice Army in Africa would be before ordering the execution of "Anton."[15] By November 10, French military resistance in Morocco and Algeria was collapsing and the Nazi leader ordered "Anton I and II" to begin the next morning at 7 o'clock.[16]

The actual operation went smoothly.[17] The main brunt of the German advance was borne by six mobile divisions. Three divisions under First Army pushed forward from the west, and three under Army Group Felber from the north. By late in the afternoon of November 11, all units reported good progress. Toulouse and Lyons were in German hands. Important supply points near the demarcation line and the border passes into Spain were being occupied by German reserves or border guards. The Air Force was taking over the major airfields, and the Navy was covering the main Mediterranean harbors.[18] A possible reaction on the part

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[15]Jaeckel, Frankreich in Hitlers Europa, 240-244. It is doubtful if the attempts by Pierre Laval, Vichy's collaborationist Prime Minister, on November 9 and 10 to dissuade Hitler from occupying the area had any effect. For a thorough discussion of the French Armistice Army, see Paxton's Parades and Politics at Vichy.

[16][Armeeoberkommando 1], "Kriegstagebuch," 10.11.42, T-312, Roll 24, Frame 7530871.

[17]Armeeoberkommando 1, Ia Nr. 4496/42 geh., "Operationsbefehl Nr. 2," 11.11.1942, ibid., Frames 7530613-7530616. See the map on page 127.

[18]KTB/OKW, II, 940-941 (11 Nov 1942).

of the French Armistice Army, or even by French civilians, had not materialized. Von Rundstedt himself delivered a note to Marshal Pétain at Vichy informing him that Unoccupied France was being occupied.[19] The first stage of the operation, or "Anton I," had been fulfilled.

Amidst fears of a possible Anglo-American landing attempt along the Mediterranean coast, the German units proceeded to carry out "Anton II."[20] Of the three motorized formations under First Army, two of them, the 7th Panzer Division and the 327th Infantry, pressed on to reach the coast just before dawn on November 12. The third, SS "Totenkopf" Division, instead of advancing toward the Mediterranean, moved across the northwest part of the Vichy sector to link up with Army Group Felber. Army Group Felber, like First Army, sent two divisions--in this case the 328th Infantry and the 10th Panzer--to occupy portions of the coast, while the 335th Division followed behind the lead units. By mid-morning of the 12th, the Mediterranean coast from the Spanish to east of Marseilles was under nominal German control.

Meanwhile, four divisions of Italian troops had crossed over the French border and occupied without resistance the eastern sector of Vichy so that the entire area was now in

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[19]Jaeckel, Frankreich in Hitlers Europa, 250.

[20]Armeeoberkommando 1, Ia Nr. 4521/42 geh., "Operations Befehl Nr. 3," 12.11.42, T-312, Roll 24, Frame 7530644-7530645, and KTB/OKW, II, 947-948 (12 Nov 1942).

Axis hands.[21] Italian forces also occupied the northern portion of Corsica on November 11, but because of rough seas, they had to wait until the next day to take over the southern half of the island.

Even though German and Italian units had reached the coast, it soon became apparent that Axis control over Vichy France was not complete. In the first place, the Germans, because they lacked sufficient troops, had allowed French units, though under German supervision, to continue to man their artillery batteries near Montpellier and at Marseilles.[22] It was not until November 19 that Hitler ordered these French forces relieved of their duties, withdrawn into the interior, and later disarmed.[23]

More importantly, the French still held the naval base at Toulon. What remained of the French fleet in Metropolitan France, including, according to German estimates, three battleships, an aircraft carrier, and numerous submarines and destroyers, was stationed in the harbor area.[24] The French naval commanders were not pro-British, and therefore made no move after November 11 to reach a neutral or Allied

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[21] Ibid., 940-941 (11 Nov 1942); and Blumentritt, Von Rundstedt, 139.

[22] KTB/OKW, II, 947-948 (12 Nov 1942); and Armeeoberkommando 1, Ia Nr. 4522/42 geh., "Operations Befehl Nr. 4," 13.11.1942, T-312, Roll 24, Frames 7530667-7530668.

[23] Paxton, Parades and Politics, 374.

[24] KTB/OKW, II, 1031-1032 (27 Nov 1942).

port.[25] But they were not pro-German either. They were in fact neutral. The German military, as one might expect, greatly desired to take over this "unoccupied zone in miniature" with the ships intact, and Operation "Lila" was designed to accomplish this task. On November 27 at approximately 5 o'clock in the morning Wehrmacht armored units began to advance quickly into Toulon and its environs. However, the commanding French admiral, on hearing by telephone of the German surprise attack, ordered the fleet scuttled.[26] French crews proceeded to sink their ships with the exception of three submarines, which escaped to neutral ports. Thus, although German officers could report by 8:50 a.m. that the last vestige of Unoccupied France was now under Axis domination, there was no longer any possibility that the French fleet might someday have to sail the flag of the Third Reich.

Given the conditions in northern Africa and the developing situation in the East, it was obvious that the newly-occupied area could only be lightly held. After Operation "Lila" had been carried out, German officials

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[25]Paxton, Parades and Politics, 383-385.

[26]Ibid., 390; and KTB/OKW, II, 1031-1032 (27 Nov 1942). See also the description of Robert Aron in Histoire de Vichy, 578ff.

during December, 1942, and in January succeeded in reducing the number of personnel in the former Vichy zone and to establish a semblance of permanence west of and including the valley of the Rhône. First Army, which had set up a command post at Toulouse to help direct "Anton," transferred its headquarters back to Bordeaux, leaving Army Group Felber in control of the German-occupied French Mediterranean Coast.[27] The Army Group, in conjunction with First Army, was also to oversee the French-Spanish boundary that had previously been under Vichy supervision. German troops for the border region were provided by the Military Commander in France, whose personnel had the additional duty of preserving order inland from the coast.[28] Air Force and naval units took over the airfields and port facilities, and the Italians were to look after their sector, although the Germans stationed personnel in the area in a liaison capacity.

In addition, as soon as Hitler felt that the danger of an Allied attack on southeastern France had passed, a number of Wehrmacht divisions, and especially panzer formations, began returning to their pre-"Anton" positions or were sent

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[27]Armeeoberkommando 1, Ia Nr. 5252/42 geh., "Armeebefehl fuer Befehlsuebergabe an Armeegruppe Felber," 14.12.1942, T-312, Roll 24, Frame 7530802.

[28]Armeeoberkommando 1, Ia Nr. 4575/42 geh., "Einsatz von Zollgrenzschutz an der franzoesisch-spanischen Grenze des neu besetzten Gebietes," 17.11.1942, ibid., Frame 7530723.

to the Russian front.[29] By the first of February a fairly constant arrangement for positioning forces in the area had evolved. Three divisions, usually understrength and immobile, defended the coast with one or two divisions in reserve.[30] The latter units would have been of little help in case of an invasion, since they were generally units temporarily stationed in the area for rehabilitation after suffering heavy losses in the East. The specific units might change, but, nonetheless, the pattern of three divisions on the coast with one or two others in reserve continued into the summer of 1943.[31]

With the Vichy area being occupied so sparsely, fortifications once again would have to compensate for a lack of manpower, in this instance along the Mediterranean. The Germans felt their major task in the old unoccupied zone was to improve and add to the relatively weak French defenses. German engineers and planners followed a course of action similar to that employed earlier on the Atlantic and Channel coasts.[32] Local tactical commanders decided

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[29]Armeeoberkommando 1, "Kriegstagebuch," 29.12.42, ibid., Frame 7530888; and KTB/OKW, II, 1165 (18 Dec 1942).

[30]"Kriegsgliederung 1.1.1943, as cited in KTB/OKW, III, 8; "Kriegsgliederung 9.4.1943" as cited in ibid., 261; and Armeegruppe Felber, Ia Nr. 049/43 g.Kdos., 24.4.43, T-312, Roll 977, Frames 9168470-9168471.

[31]"Kriegsgliederung 7.7.1943" as cited in KTB/OKW, III, 735.

[32]Generalmajor Wilhelm Ullersperger, "Nineteenth Army--Fortress Engineer (1943-Aug 1944)," FMS, MS# B-449, 13-14.

where the fortress-type defenses ought to be positioned in their sectors; Army fortress engineers then drew up building plans for the fortifications; and Organization Todt carried out the actual construction with its own material and personnel, though under Army engineer supervision. At the same time engineering troops and labor service battalions were to erect the field-type installations, but regular troops might be called on to assist as well.

Thus, the commanding German general in the Mediterranean area, Hans Felber, could point to some improvement in actual construction by the summer of 1943, but his report of an inspection conducted in July indicated that progress was far from sufficient.[33] General Felber, who was replaced in August to become head of German forces in Southeast Europe[34] not only decried the lack of troops and construction workers, but he also pointed to numerous other inadequacies. They needed more cement and steel for

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[33]Armeegruppe Felber, Ia Nr. 4251/43 g.K., "Bericht ueber Ueberpruefung der Verteidigugnsfaehigskeit der Mittelmeerkueste vom 13 Juli-21. Juli 1943, "11.7.43, T-312, Roll 978, Frames 9170035-9170045. See also KTB/OKW, III, 751 (5 Juli 1943).

[34]The new commander was General of the Infantry Georg von Sodenstern. On August 14, the Army Group was renamed "Oberkommando von Sodenstern," and ten days later it became Nineteenth Army ([Armeegruppe Felber], "Kriegstagebuch," 6.8.43, T-312, Roll 977, Frame 9167846; and [Oberkommando der Wehrmacht], Adjutant des Chefs des Generalstabes Nr. 2882/43 g.Kdos., [Fernschreiben], 24.8.1943, T-78, Roll 310, Frame 6262604).

building purposes, more barbed wire and land mines for defensive hindrances, and more artillery pieces, especially heavy artillery.[35] The coastal batteries remained emplaced almost exclusively along the rim of the coast and in the open. They must be moved rearward or put under cover. The naval artillery could only be used to defend the harbor entrances and not for land warfare. Antiaircraft defenses were much too weak; in and around Marseilles they were pitiful (kuemmerlich)! Almost all of the German telephones were dependent on the French system--hence the need to develop an independent telephone network. Defenses ought to be strengthened in the larger cities and ports with commanders stationed there on the spot. In brief, the coast was not defense-ready. In his concluding remarks, Felber estimated that the strength of the sector was such that a weak attack might be beaten off, but a strong assault at a single place could successfully establish itself.[36]

Undoubtedly, part of the reason why the defensive posture along the French Mediterranean was so deficient was that Wehrmacht officials did not think an Allied landing in the area was likely during 1943. If an attack ever did come in southeastern France, the Germans at this

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[35]Armeegruppe Felber, Ia Nr. 4251/43 g.K., "Bericht ueber Ueberpruefung der Verteidigungsfaehigskeit der Mittelmeerkueste vom 13 Juli-21. Juli 1943," 21.7.32, T-312, Roll 978, Frames 9170037-9170045.

[36]Ibid., Frame 9170057.

time calculated it would occur in one of two places.[37] One possibility would be an Allied invasion in the Narbonne area designed to link up with a similar U.S.-British landing on the French Atlantic coast. This type of operation was considered unlikely, since, even though German communications with Spain would be cut off, it would not strike at the "Lebensnerv" of Germany.

The other possibility was an attack on the Rhône delta followed by an Allied push up the Rhone toward Lyons. In this instance the Germans expected a simultaneous landing attempt by the Western Powers on the French or Belgian Channel coast. Nevertheless, an estimate sent out on July 6, 1943, by General Blumentritt, von Rundstedt's Chief of Staff, reflected the general consensus that at present a large Anglo-American landing in the area of Ob West was improbable.[38] German officials reckoned that the Allied build-up in the Mediterranean region could mean an enemy assault against Sardinia, Corsica, Sicily, or southern Italy--or even a thrust into the Balkans, but not an invasion of the south of France.

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[37]Armeegruppe Felber, "Kriegstagebuch," 19.7.43, T-312, Roll 977, Frames 9167801-9167802; and General der Infanterie Erich Petersen, "Southern France (Jul 1943-Sep 1944)," FMS, MS# A-890, 3-4.

[38]Der Chef des Generalstabes der Heeresgruppe D, Ia Nr. 288/43 geh.Kdos.Ch., "Beurteilung der Lage," 6.7.43, T-312, Roll 977, Frames 9168453-9168454.

One area in southwestern Europe that was deemed more plausible for an Allied attack was the Iberian Peninsula. German concern about Spain, and to a lesser degree; Portugal, reflected a continuing National Socialist interest in the region. As pointed out previously, Spain had proved an enigma, a frustrating experience for Hitler and the Reich since early in the war. Plans to take over Gibraltar with German troops and firepower (Operation "Felix") had never materialized, mainly because of Spanish intransigence. Franco had also been cool to a German military scheme for meeting a possible British invasion of the Peninsula during 1941 (Operation "Isabella"). By the end of the year the once ambitious "Isabella" plan had been so weakened by exigencies on the Eastern Front that it was now limited to an occupation of the Spanish ports along the Bay of Biscay and the protection of the Pyrenees passes.[39] And by the spring of 1942 "Isabella" remained little more than a paper operation.

Still Hitler did not feel obliged to write off Spain

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[39]Oberbefehlshaber West, Heeresgruppenkommando I, Ia Nr. 319/41 geh.Kdos.Ch., "Umgliederung, weitere Abgaben nach Osten und Aufgaben im Westen," 18.12.41, T-312, Roll 24, Frames 7530974-7530978. "Isabella" is discussed thoroughly in Burdick, Germany's Military Strategy, 131-154.

altogether. On May 29, 1942, he issued Directive No. 42, calling for a new Spanish operation, codenamed "Ilona."[40] The Directive pointed up a renewed German interest in the Iberian Peninsula, but "Ilona" was not nearly as ambitious an undertaking as the Wehrmacht plans of 1940 and 1941. It was, in essence, more like a "reflex" action than an offensive operation. "Ilona" was based on the notion that if the Allies attacked Spain or Portugal or even the French Atlantic coast, German forces would have to react to the Anglo-American landing. The immediate reaction, according to the Fuehrer Directive, would be for German formations "to occupy the southern passes of the Pyrenees and thus establish the conditions for future operations."[41]

With these general principles in mind, staff planners for Theater Command West proceeded to work out the details. Von Rundstedt's headquarters issued the basic operational directive for "Ilona" on July 15, 1942.[42] With the First

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[40]Hubatsch (ed.), Hitlers Weisungen, 179-181. See Trevor-Roper (ed.), Hitler's War Directives, 121-123, for the English translation. The following discussion of "Ilona" and its successor, "Gisela," is based on Burdick, Germany's Military Strategy, 155-188. There is a map depicting "Ilona" on page 141.

[41]Trevor-Roper (ed.), Hitler's War Directives, 122.

[42]Burdick, Germany's Military Strategy, 158-160. For a copy of the actual directive, see Oberbefehlshaber West, (Oberkommando Heeresgruppe D), Ia Nr. 128/42 geh.Kdos.Ch., "Grundlegende Weisung fuer 'Ilona' Nr. 1," 15.7.1942, T-312, Roll 24, Frames 7530896-7530899.

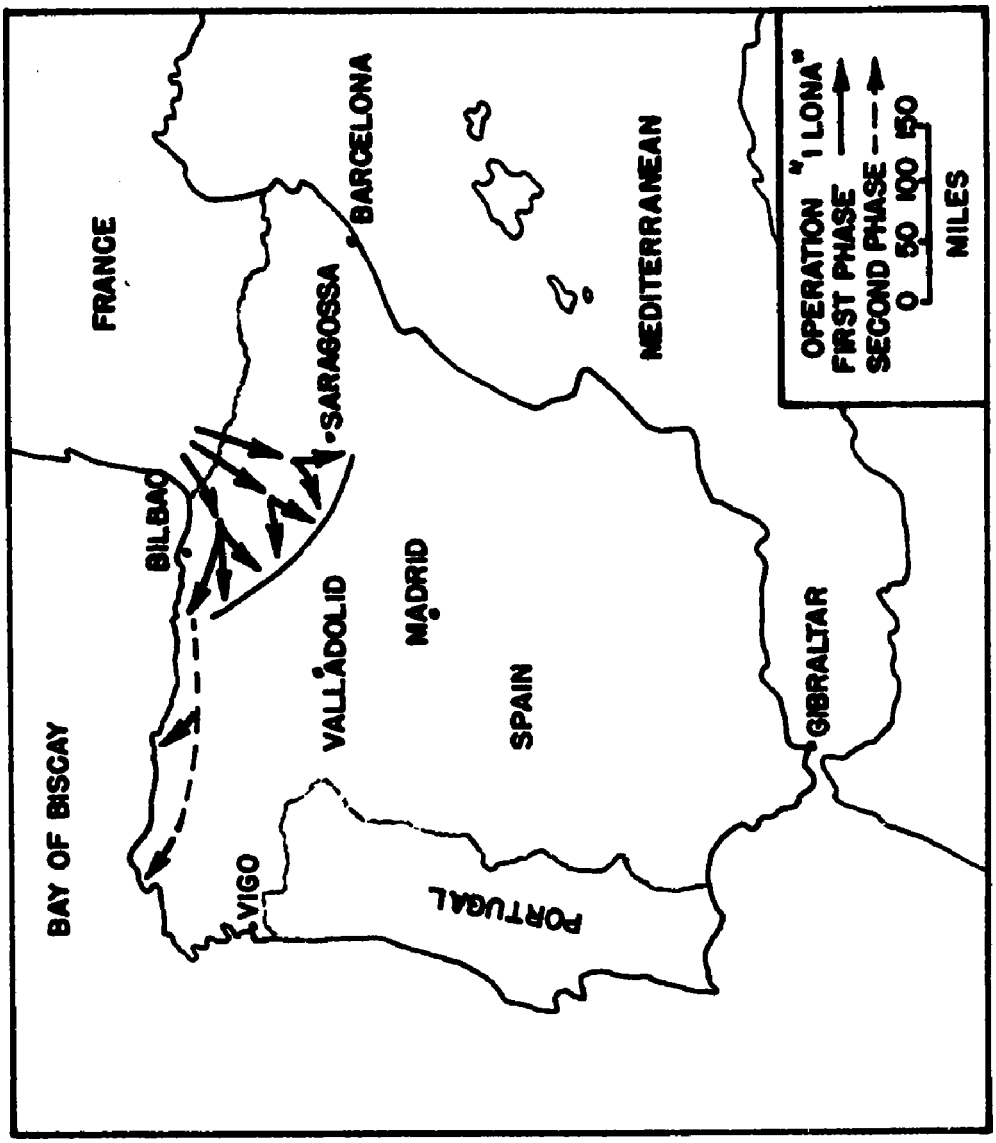

FRANCE
BARCELONA
SARAGOSSA
BILBAO
MEDITERRANEAN
VALLADOLID
MADRID
SPAIN
GIBRALTAR
BAY OF BISCAY
VIGO
PORTUGAL
OPERATION "I LONA"
FIRST PHASE
SECOND PHASE
0 50 100 150
MILES

Figure 10.

Army placed in tactical command, the order stipulated that four divisions, two of them motorized, were to push forward rapidly across the Pyrenees and set up a defensive line running approximately from Santander on the Biscay coast southeast along the Ebro River to Saragossa. A further occupation of all the north Spanish harbors was contemplated when four additional armored units arrived in the area. Naval forces were to control the sea lanes and take over harbor defense duties once the ports had been secured, and Luftwaffe units were to provide the air support and reconnaissance functions. In addition, labor service battalions were to be readied for eventual maintenance and construction tasks in the newly-occupied area. The operation could start after a ten-day warning time, although it might begin on shorter notice.

What strikes one about "Ilona," besides its limited, defensive nature, is how closely it resembled "Isabella" in the latter's weakened form at the end of 1941. To be sure, the new operation envisaged stronger German forces to execute the plan, but the ultimate "Ilona" objective of occupying the north Spanish harbors continued the same as before.

Even though there were several changes in detail, "Ilona" was not altered appreciably during the remainder of 1942. In September the operations was renamed "Gisela," but that change came about because a junior officer reported

losing his briefcase which contained the "Ilona" plan, rather than because German officials had instituted a new operation.[43]

The Allied invasion of Northwest Africa, of course, heightened German apprehension regarding Spain and southern Europe. The first German move, the take-over of Vichy France, has already been described. Nevertheless, the growing Allied presence in the Mediterranean area signified a continuing threat. It was in this context that Hitler on January 7, 1943, ordered "Gisela" reactivated.[44]

The new "Gisela" plan revived by Ob West was more ambitious than the 1942 German project for Spain. First Army was again to be in command, but this time with two corps, seven divisions, and one motorized regiment taking part in the initial thrust. Four more divisions, a mobile artillery regiment, and certain artillery school personnel and equipment were to make up the reserve forces. Naval and Air Force units were to support the operation and fulfill their special tasks as before. In general, the Army formations were to move into Spain and occupy the northern coast from San Sebastian to Vigo.

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[43]Burdick, Germany's Military Strategy, 164.

[44]The resume of "Gisela" is taken from ibid., 171-180. One of the "Gisela" directives is located in Armeeoberkommando 1, Ia Nr. 0024/43 geh.Kdos.Chefs., "Aufmarschanweisung Fall 'Gisela,'" 14.2.1943, T-312, Roll 28, Frames 7535887-7536001. See the map on page 144.

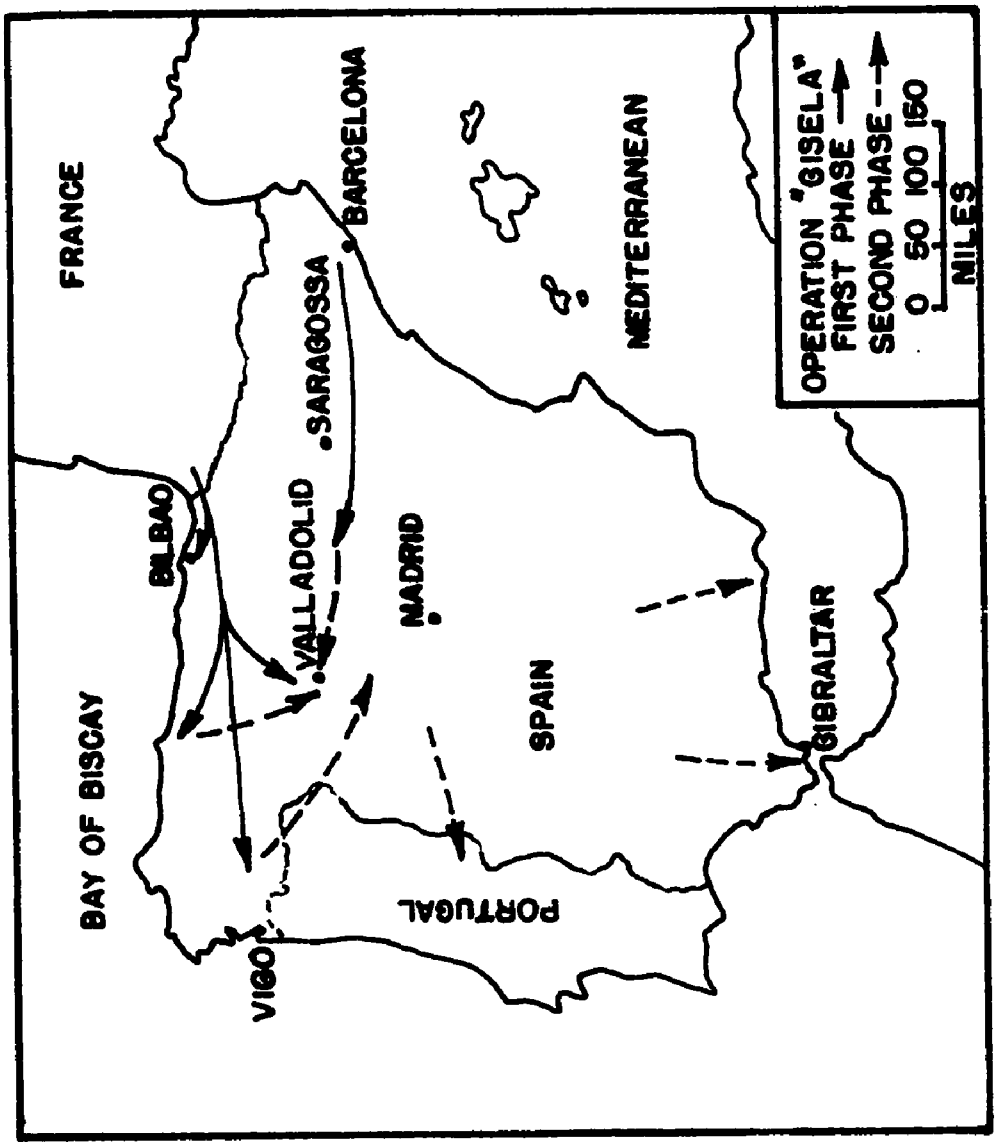

FRANCE
BAY OF BISCAY
BILBAO
VALLADOLID
SARAGOSSA
BARCELONA
MADRID
SPAIN
PORTUGAL
VIGO
MEDITERRANEAN
GIBRALTAR
OPERATION "GISELA"
FIRST PHASE
SECOND PHASE
0 50 100 150
MILES

Figure 11.

> The mobile forces involved in this rapid advance would then be quickly relieved by the following units and move southward to form an assault group in the Valladolid-Madrid region. This sizable assembly would then be reinforced and redeployed in such fashion as to permit further operations in any direction.[45]

German planners figured that eighteen days after the start of "Gisela," the motorized units assembled in north-central Spain should be ready to meet the Anglo-American invaders.

It is again noteworthy, this time in the case of "Gisela," how similar this 1943 operation was in relation to "Isabella" as it was initially set forth in May of 1941. In fact, one might assert that "Ilona" and "Gisela" were not new operations at all. They were merely two distinct phases of "Isabella," brought out and dressed up with different units, but in reality closely resembling earlier plans for the Iberian Peninsula. The main difference was that in 1941, Germany conceivably could have implemented a Spanish operation. By 1943 such a movement into Spain was extremely doubtful. In 1941 sufficient Wehrmacht troops were close at hand near the Pyrenees border; in 1943 they were not.

The main similarity in the various German military schemes for Spain and Portugal, and this point cannot be repeated often enough, was that all the plans, from "Felix" to "Gisela" were posited on open cooperation, if not out-

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[45]Burdick, Germany's Military Strategy, 174-175.

right assistance, from the Spanish government. This type of cooperation Franco refused to give. Therefore, even if Germany had had adequate manpower and material to execute an Iberian operation in 1943, it is questionable if by then Hitler would have been willing to risk an encroachment on neutral Spain.

German anxieties over a possible Anglo-American landing attempt on the Peninsula in January and February of 1943 faded away during the spring with Allied troops concentrating their efforts on driving out the Axis forces from Tunisia. Admiral Karl Doenitz, head of the German Navy, tried to revive a Spanish operation in May so that his U-boats would have better access to the Atlantic, but Hitler recognized that the time was past for any Iberian project.[46]

On June 14, the High Command replaced "Gisela" with a strictly defensive plan, "Nuernberg," which was designed to reinforce the German border guards in protecting the Pyrenees passes.[47] If "Nuernberg" had to be implemented, the LXVI Reserve Corps was to send one, and possibly two, regiments from the interior of France to strengthen the border defenses as well as taking over tactical control of the area.[48] The Army directives also promised additional

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[46] Ibid., 185-187.

[47] Ibid., 187.

[48] Armeeoberkommando 19, A.Pi.Fue./Ia Nr. 6064/43 g. Kdos., "Sicherung der Pyrenaeengrenze," 8.9.1943, T-312, Roll 978, Frames 9169210-9169212.

forces if needed.

Eventually the LXVI Reserve Corps was ordered to exercise more direct control over the border passes, especially as regarded defense construction, but, on the whole, the Germans hereafter considered the Pyrenees front as relatively unimportant.[49] Early in 1944, when Hitler anticipated an Allied landing almost everywhere in western Europe, First Army devised another Iberian plan (2. Fall aa) to meet the Western invaders in Spain.[50] Little came of the plan, however, since by this time most of the German forces in the West were concentrating their defensive effort along the Channel coast.

With the Axis occupation of Vichy and the subsequent construction tasks in the Mediterranean area, and with the various German plans for Spain, Ob West had been forced, albeit reluctantly, to devote a greatl deal of attention to its exposed southern flank during the first half of 1943. And to Theater Command West's displeasure, Wehrmacht activity along the French Mediterranean did not abate in the second half of the year.

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[49]Burdick., Germany's Military Strategy, 192-194.

[50]Armeeoberkommando 1, Ia Nr. 014/44 g.Kdos.Chefs., "2. Fall aa," 3. Februar 1944, T-312, Roll 28, Frames 7535029-7535033.

Part of the reason why Germany's southern exposure persisted during this period was because of increasing British and American pressure, but an equally important factor was the defection of Hitler's chief European partner, Italy. The double danger of an advancing enemy and a dubious ally presented a none too pleasant prospect for the Germans.[51]

National Socialist officials were not unaware of Mussolini's deteriorating position. The depleted Italian forces had been suffering ruinous defeats for some months, and therefore Hitler had had the OKW staff draw up plans for German troops to occupy the Italian Peninsula if that proved necessary (Operation "Alarich"). Events in Italy began to move rapidly after the Anglo-American invasion of Sicily on July 10, and two weeks later leading Italian officials and generals conspired together to overthrow the Fascist dictator.

What followed in the Italian situation was a period during which the new government under Marshal Pietro Badoglio was still formally aligned with Germany, but informally negotiating with the Allies to seek a way out of the war. The secret negotiations finally led to an Italian surrender on September 3, the same day that the

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[51]Albert N. Garland and Howard M. Smyth, Sicily and the Surrender of Italy (United States Army in World War II. Mediterranean Theater of Operations) (Washington: Office of Chief of Military History, 1965), 469-474.

British landed troops in the southern tip of the Italian mainland. It was not until September 8, however, that Italy's capitulation was made public.

During these six weeks of protracted talks the Germans were able to move a substantial number of troops into Italy. Nevertheless, German forces had to occupy more than Italy itself. They also had to take over other areas of Europe which were under Italian control, namely portions of the Balkans and France east of the Rhône River. The region in extreme southeastern France, it will be remembered, had come under Italian military occupation during the take-over of the Vichy zone in November, 1942. In the ensuing months four or five divisions under the command of the Fourth Italian Army controlled the area, which, although predominantly mountaineous, included the significant Toulon naval base as well as the beaches of the French Riviera.

The Allied landing in Sicily coupled with Mussolini's downfall on July 25 affected Italian-held France in two ways: it led to increased German troop movements through the area into Italy, and it also brought additional Wehrmacht units specifically into the region. These movements were often indistinguishable, and there was little the commander of the Italian Fourth Army could do but to acquiesce to the situation as long as Germany and Italy were still nominally allied. In this way German units

supposedly bound for Italy at times lingered in the Italian zone of France before moving on. In other instances Wehrmacht formations designated by Ob West to help accelerate the troop movements into Italy stayed on in southeastern France. On yet another occasion naval personnel were sent to shore up the Italian defenses at Toulon.[52]

On August 29, after a previous agreement between top-level German and Italian officials, four German divisions under the command of Nineteenth Army began to replace the Italian formations stationed on the Mediterranean coast and in the interior.[53]

Thus, by the time the Italian surrender was announced on September 8, German occupation of Italian-held France was nearly complete.[54] The next day, when German troops started taking over the Italian Peninsula by force, German units in extreme southeastern France began to extend effective control over that area. German control of all Italian-held territory was given a new code-word, "Achse."

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[52][Armeeoberkommando 19], "Kriegstagebuch," 1.8.43, T-312, Roll 977, Frames 9167833-9167834.

[53]Ibid., 29.8.43, Frame 9167902. German occupation of the southern coast of France in the sector of the Fourth Italian Army during the "Alarich" period was known as Operation "Siegfried." The seizure of the Mont Cenis pass in the mountains between France and Italy was called "Kopenhagen" (Garland and Smyth, Sicily and the Surrender, 284).

[54][Armeeoberkommando 19], "Kriegstagebuch," 8.9.43, T-312, Roll 977, Frames 9167928-9167936.

The actual disarming of Italian forces and the establishment of absolute German demination east of the Rhône took the form of two separate operations that were tied into the "Achse" plan. One operation consisted of three German divisions securing 185 miles of Mediterranean shoreline, including the Italian coastal artillery batteries, from west of Toulon to Menton on the French-Italian border. At the same time other German troops cordoned off the border to prevent the Italians from leaving the area.[55] While the disarming of Italian formations proceeded with little difficulty, Luftwaffe and Kriegsmarine units took over the airfields and the harbor areas.[56] By the evening of September 9 the French Riviera was securely in Wehrmacht hands.

The second operation, German control of the Mont Cenis railway tunnel that linked Lyons and Turin across the Alps, proved more formidable to carry out. The small German unit entrusted with the task ran into difficulties when elements of the Italian 5th Alpini (Pusteria) Division

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[55]AOK 19, Ia Nr. 6132/43 g.Kdos, [Fernschreiben], 9.9.43, T-312, Roll 978, Frame 9169202; and Armeeoberkommando 19, Ia Nr. 6042/43 g.Kdos., [Fernschreiben], 9.9.43, T-312, Roll 978, Frame 9169197. The three German divisions engaged along the coast were the 356th Division in the Toulon area, the 715th Infantry Division near St. Raphael and Cannes, and Panzer Grenadier Division "Feldherrnhalle" at Nice and the border region. A concise summary of the French portion of "Achse" is contained in Garland and Smyth, Sicily and the Surrender, 533. See the map on page 152.

[56][Armeeoberkommando 19], "Kriegstagebuch," 8.9.43, T-312, Roll 977, Frames 9167930-9167933.

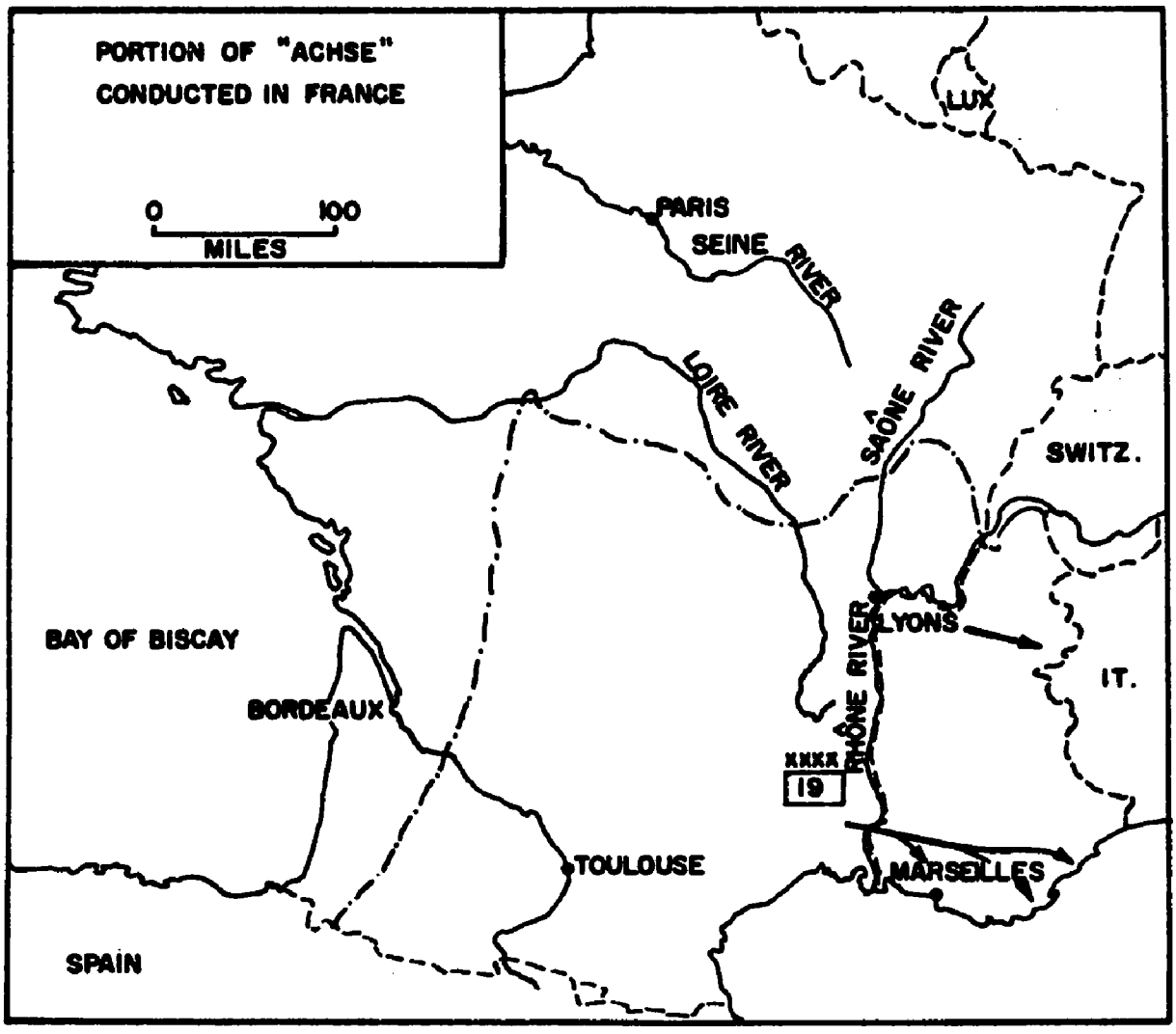

PORTION OF "ACHSE"
CONDUCTED IN FRANCE
0
100
MILES
LUX
PARIS
SEINE RIVER
LOIRE RIVER
SAÔNE RIVER
SWITZ.
BAY OF BISCAY
LYONS
RHÔNE RIVER
IT.
BORDEAUX
XXXX
19
TOULOUSE
MARSEILLES
SPAIN

Figure 12.

refused to give up the tunnel exit on the Italian side.[57] The German High Command ordered portions of two divisions, one from Grenoble and one from Turin, to converge on the Mont Cenis area.[58] The special force from Grenoble reached Mont Cenis first on September 11, and after a discussion with the Italian commanders, took over the tunnel exit without a fight.[59] During the next two weeks the Germans used Italian prisoners to repair those places in the tunnel wrecked by explosives during the brief period of Italian resistance.[60]

German officials separated the 41,057 soldiers of the Fourth Italian Army that had been forced to remain on French soil into three groups: those volunteering for service in the German military (Kampfwillige or Arbeitswillige), those volunteering for supply or construction

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[57]AOK 19, Ia Nr. 7073/43 g.Kdos, [Fernschreiben], 9.9.43, T-312, Roll 978, Frame 9169193. The German unit, Kampfgruppe Muench, was detached from the 715th Infantry Division.

[58]AOK 19, Ia Nr. 6179/43 g.Kdos., [Fernschreiben], 9.9.43, T-312, Roll 978, Frame 9169190; and [Armeeoberkommando 19], "Kriegstagebuch," 10.9.43, T-312, Roll 977, Frame 9167948. The mobile formation from Grenoble was part of the 157th Reserve Division, the one from Turin part of SS Panzer Division "Leibstandarte Adolf Hitler."

[59]AOK 19, Ia Nr. 6743/43 g.Kdos,[Fernschreiben], 11.9.43, T-312, Roll 978, Frame 9169176. The German troops disarmed 1250 Italians without incident, although some Italian troops did flee into a nearby woods leaving behind their weapons.

[60]AOK 19, Ia Nr. 6227/43 g.Kdos, [Fernschreiben], 12.9.43, T-312, Roll 978, Frame 9169168.

work, but not as military personnel (Hilfswillige), and those who did not want to fight or work on the German side (Militserinternierte). The latter group was treated as war prisoners, and 10,225 of them were sent to Germany for use in the armament factories.[61]

Immediate German defensive measures in the region east of the Rhône followed a pattern similar to that employed previously by Wehrmacht in the West: reconnoiter the area to ascertain where defensive positions were needed (the Italians had constructed some fortifications, but not enough); have plans drawn up for building permanent installations; and in the meantime have work battalions begin to erect new anti-tank ditches and other field-type defenses and to improve the existing ones.[62] In terms of personnel,

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[61] [Armeeoberkommando 19], "Kriegstagebuch," 30.9.43, T-312, Roll 977, Frame 9168000; Armeeoberkommando 19, Abt. O Qu/Ia Nr. 6857/43 geh., "Behandlung der Soldaten der ital. Wehrmacht und Miliz," 30.9.1943, T-312, Roll 978, Frame 9168997; Armeeoberkommando 19, Abt O Qu/Ia Nr. 6859/43 geh., "Behandlung der Soldaten der ital. Wehrmacht und Miliz Buendnistreuen italienischen Soldaten," 30.9.43, ibid., Frames 9168998-9169002; Armeeoberkommando 19, Ia Nr. 7743 geh., "Tagesmeldungen vom 22.10.43," 22.10.43, ibid., Frame 9169723; and [Armeeoberkommando 19], "Tatigkeitsbericht der Abteilung IIa/b des AOK 19 fuer die Zeit vom 1.7-31.12. 1943," n.d., T-312, Roll 979, Frames 9170877-9170888. Besides the more than ten thousand Italians shipped to the Reich, the Germans distributed 20,012 of the total number to the four Armies in the West, 5,000 to Organization Todt, 3,900 to the Luftwaffe, and 1,920 to the Military Commander in France.

[62] Armeeoberkommando 19, Ia Nr. 6253/43 g.Kdos., "Sicherung der Eisenbahnstrecken durch R.A.D.-Abteilungen," 23.9.43, T-312, Roll 978, Frame 9169162; and AOK 19, Ia Nr. 6820/43 g.Kdos., "Besichtigungsreise zur Ueberpruefung der

Nineteenth Army extended its control to encompass the entire French Mediterranean coast and had five divisions plus a division in reserve to defend the region. After the situation stabilized, German officials had the mobile units that had participated in "Achse" and the better infantry divisions transported out of the area.[63] The divisions that remained were under-strength and had in their ranks a number of older and foreign troops.[64] At the end of 1943, it was obvious that the High Command, at least for the time being, considered the French Mediterranean to be an area of secondary importance.

The fact that most of the German activity in the West during 1943 centered on the southern portion of the theater

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Verteidigungsfaehigkeit von den Italienen uebernommenen Abschnittes der franz. Mittelmeerkueste," 28.9.43, ibid., Frames 9170089-9170104.

[63]Armeeoberkommando 19, Ia Nr. 7200/43 geh.Kdos., "Verteidigungsfaehigheit der 19. Armee nach dem Stande vom 1.10.43," 8.10.43, ibid., Frames 9168924-9168946; Armeeoberkommando 19, Ia Nr. 8002/43 g.Kdos., "Zusammenfassung der Veraenderungen im Bereich der 19. Armee," ibid., Frames 9169475-9169476; and AOK 19, roem. 1a Nr. 914/43 g.Kdos.Chef., [Fernschreiben], 31.12.43, T-312, Roll 977, Frame 9168133.

[64][Armeeoberkommando 19], "Kriegstagebuch," 20.11.43, ibid., Frame 9168070, and AOK 19, Ia/Id Nr. 10249/43 geh., "Aufstellung 6. Kp. Fest.-Stamm-Abt.," 18.10.43, T-312, Roll 978, Frames 9169543-9169544.

should not lead one to conclude that little happened in the rest of the western area. In fact, the Channel and Atlantic coasts experienced a great deal of troop and construction activity.

Two main features dominated German manpower developments in the West. One was the constant exchange of units and individuals between East and West. The second feature was the large-scale infusion of older and less able German troops as well as foreign forces into the depleting German ranks.

In relation to the East-West troop movements, one might contend after examining the pertinent documents that the chief task of Ob West in 1943 was to train new soldiers and to rehabilitate worn-out formations for deployment on the Russian and other fronts. A detailed report from von Rundstedt on October 28, 1943, stated that fifty-three divisions were "given away" to other theaters during the past year.[65] This number of divisions was greater than the total number of divisions in the West at any one time

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[65]Der Oberbefehlshaber West, Ia Nr. 352/43 g.Kdos. Ch., "Beurteilung der Lage Ob. West am 25.10.1943," 28.10. 1943, T-311, Roll 27, Frame 7032467. Included in the total figure were thirty-six infantry, twelve panzer, and five panzer grenadier divisions. Portions of von Rundstedt's important and detailed report to the Armed Forces High Command are summarized in Lionel F. Ellis, Victory in the West. Vol. I. The Battle of Normandy (History of the Second World War: United Kingdom Military Series) (London: HMSO, 1962), 54-55; and Harrison, Cross-Channel Attack, 140-142.

during 1943. Moreover, of the formations that stayed, many of them lost a portion of their personnel for other assignments, and the new divisions that were formed were often understrength.[66] In some instances replacements did take the place of departing personnel, but on other occcasions none were forthcoming.

The problem of adequate replacements was related to the second feature of Ob Wests manpower situation in 1943--the large influx of less qualified military personnel into the Wehrmacht formations. These individuals might be foreign volunteers from Eastern Europe or ethnic Germans who lived outside the boundaries of the Reich but who were given conditional German citizenship (Volksdeutsche). Or they might be older (over thirty-six) or very young recruits from the homeland. The necessity of utilizing such personnel in combat formations quite naturally affected adversely the proficiency of the German units.[67]

The foreign troops, in the main, were from Russia and called Osttruppen.[68] They consisted of various ethnic

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[66]Der Oberbefehlshaber West, Ia Nr. 352/43 g.Kdos.Ch., "Beurteilung der Lage Ob. West am 25.10.1943," 28.10.1943, T-311, Roll 27, Frames 7032465-7032466.

[67]See the perceptive comments in Harrison, Cross-Channel Attack, 145-146.

[68]The following two paragraphs are taken from Der Oberbefehlshaber West, Ia Nr. 352/43 g.Kdos.Ch., "Beurteilung der Lage Ob. West am 25.10.1943," 28.10.1943, T-311, Roll 27, Frame 7032458; Armeeoberkommando 1, Ia Nr. 2338/43 g.Kdos, "Kreigsgliederungsmaessige Eingliederung

groups, such as Cossacks, Armenians, Georgians, Azerbaijanis, and Turkomans, all of whom had suffered some injustices at the hands of the Soviet regime. They often opposed the Soviet Union, but more on practical than on purely ideological grounds. Many of them joined the German cause because as prisoners of war or as deserters from the Russian Army, they had no place to go, and service in the German military offered them better conditions than they could expect as POW's. In addition, some opportunists saw a possibility of using their National Socialist affiliation to lead liberation movements in their own local areas. Whatever their motive for helping the Nazis, it was seldom an idealistic one.

These ethnic groups were formed into separate battalions under German commanders, and for religious and national reasons the groups were not to be mixed under any circumstances. The Germans, many of whom tragically believed their racist propaganda, treated the Ostruppen as second-class combatants and doubted whether these units, which began to be shifted west in the fall of 1943, would fight even if given the chance. Nonetheless, at the end of the

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von Ost-Btlen. in boedenstandige Div," 9.10.1943, T-312, Roll 27, Frame 7533775; Armeeoberkommando 1, Ia Nr. 2421/43 g.Kdos, "Ost-Btl.," 20.10.43, ibid., Frames 7533820-7533823; and Generalmajor Ralph von Heygendorff, General der Kavallerie Ernst Koestring, and Dr. Hans-Guenther Seraphim, "Eastern Nationals as Volunteers in the German Army," FMS, MS# C-043, 20-37. See also Alexander Dallin, German Rule in Russia 1941-1945; A Study of Occupation Politics (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1957), 539-540, 551-552, and 582-583.

year there were one or two Ost battalions in almost every German coastal unit.

Another curious foreign group that became deployed in the area of Ob West was an Indian Legion.[69] This group, which eventually numbered 2500 troops, was composed of Indian prisoners captured in the North African campaigns and followers of the militant Indian nationalist, Subhas Chandra Bose, who was in Berlin for awhile during the war. The unit was stationed in the First Army sector along the Atlantic coast and was never considered battleworthy.[70] In fact, it never engaged in combat.

The Germans also questioned the combat value of the Volksdeutsche personnel. Wehrmacht officials integrated these German-speaking East Europeans into reserve formations, some of which helped defend the coasts, but still the Volksdeutsch soldier was not allowed to rise above the rank of private first-class.[71]

This type of restriction, of course, did not apply to the older Reich Germans and the eighteen-year-old recruits that began to arrive in the western theater in

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[69]George H. Stein, The Waffen SS; Hitler's Elite Guard at War, 1939-1945 (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1966), 189-195.

[70]Armeeoberkommando 1, Ia Nr. 4420/43 geh., "Armeebefehl Nr. 38," 13.9.1943, T-312, Roll 26, Frame 7533510.

[71]Der Oberbefehlshaber der 1. Armee, Ia Nr. 1690/43 g.Kdos., "Bewertung der Divisionen im Bereich der 1. Armee," 29.7.43, T-312, Roll 26, Frames 7533421-7533427; and Harrison, Cross-Channel Attack, 145.

increasing numbers. Even though they lacked military experience, they served in various capacities to alleviate the manpower shortage. Some became members of regular units. Some became border guards or protected important areas from sabotage. Many of the older personnel became attached to fortress cadre units (Festungs-Stamm-Abteilungen).[72] These units were set up in 1943 out of reserve divisions inside the Reich, and their primary function was to maintain and service the stationary artillery pieces that were located within the defensive strongpoints. Each Abteilung had its own commander, who was responsible to the division commander of that sector. By July, 1943, fortress cadre units had been established in the main coastal harbors from Ijmuiden to Marseilles.

The addition of more personnel into the defense areas (Verteidigungsbereiche) reflected the continuing German concern with the major ports. All during 1943 the Germans focused a great deal of attention on building up these areas. A basic order from Ob West stipulated that Verteidigungsbereiche ought to have munitions reserves that could last for three to six weeks, a food supply for over a month, and a source of drinking water that could not

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[72]Oberbefehlshaber West, (Oberkommando Heeresgruppe D), Ia Nr. 2065/43 g.Kdos., "Befehl fuer Aufstellung und Organization der Festungsstamm-Abteilungen im Bereich Ob. West." 22.4.1943, T-312, Roll 507, Frames 8103464-8103466.

be cut off.[73] Furthermore, the Germans continued to strengthen the fortifications in and around the defense areas. Field-type hindrances were being erected on the landward side to defend against airborne or any other type of surprise attack from the rear.[74] At the same time the construction of permanent installations facing the sea proceeded apace. Therefore, while the German manpower situation in the West worsened, the condition of the Atlantic Wall fortifications improved considerably at least during the first half of 1943, a situation that reflected, to a degree, the influence of the Dieppe experience.[75]

The accelerated rate of construction was in accordance with the extensive building program set forth the previous autumn. Several examples will help to make clear the degree to which the Western defenses improved. For instance, in December, 1942, Ob West listed 5,120 permanent installations (staendigen Ausbau) as having been built. By June, 1942,

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[73]Oberbefehlshaber West, (Oberkommando Heeresgruppe D), Ia/O. Qu. West 12623/42 g.Kdos., "Grundlegender Befehl des Oberbefehlshaber West Nr. 19," 1.12.42, T-78, Roll 317, Frames 6270769-6270770.

[74]Armeeoberkommando 1, Ia Nr. 1067/43 g.Kdos., "Verbesserung der Landfront LaRochelle und Riegelstellung zwischen Seudre und Landfront Royan," 4.5.43, T-312, Roll 26, Frame 7532923; and Armeeoberkommando 1, Ia/Armeepionierfuehrer Nr. 349/42 g.Kdos., "Ausbau Atlantikwall," 15.10.1942, T-312, Roll 23, Frames 7529758-7529761.

[75]General der Artillerie Walter Warlimont, "Norway; North Africa; French Resistance; German-U.S. Relations; Dieppe; Sitzkrieg," FMS, MS# ETHINT-2, 15.

the number had risen to more than eight thousand, or an increase of about three thousand constructed fortifications over a six-month period.[76] If one adds the fact that Organization Todt in April, 1943, poured more cement and had more workers employed on the coasts of western Europe than in any other month during the war, it becomes obvious that the Germans made substantial progress in defense construction during this period.[77]

Furthermore, if one counts the number of artillery pieces emplaced along the coasts in 1943, it is also clear that Germany's western defenses had become more formidable. In this context the Fifteenth Army Channel sector alone in August, 1943, had nearly as many artillery guns as the whole area of Ob West had had in 1941.[78]

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[76]Oberbefehlshaber West, (Oberkommando Heeresgruppe D), Ia Nr. 1659/43 g.Kdos., "Lagebeurteilung durch Ob. West," 29.3.1943, T-78, Roll 311, Frame 6263121; and Oberbefehlshaber West, (Oberkommando Heeresgruppe D), Ia Nr. 3324/43 geh.Kdos., "Lagebeurteilung durch Ob. West," 30.6.43, ibid., Frame 6263160.

[77]Diplomingenieur Xaver Dorsch, "Organization Todt--Operations in West," FMS, MS# B-671, 11-16. Dorsch, an important Organization Todt official in the West, estimates that during April, O.T. employed 260,000 laborers, 15,600 of whom were Germans, and that these workers poured 870,000 cubic meters of cement.

[78]Stoart AOK 15, Nr. 376/43 g.Kdos., "Stand von 8.8.43," 8.8.1943, T-312, Roll 510, Frame 8107225; and Oberkommando des Heeres, GenStdH Op. Abt. (IIa), Nr. 38031/41 g.Kdos., "Stand vom 9.10.1941," 9.10.1943, T-78, Roll 317, Frames 6270905-6270906. Fifteenth Army had 1174 artillery pieces in the middle of 1943 as compared with Theater Command West's total inventory of 1215 guns in mid-1941.

The German defensive building program did not keep pace, however, in the second half of 1943. Part of the reason was because National Socialist officials began to shift Organization Todt labor to other projects, including the repair of dams in the Ruhr area, the construction of a bauxite mine in southern France, and even the actual mining of wolfram at a site in the west of France.[79] As a result, current high priority items in the erection of the Atlantic Wall, such as the covering and camouflaging of permanent fortifications, barely advanced beyond their initial stages at this time.

Another reason why Theater Command West's building plans suffered during this period was because certain Reich business firms involved in the construction effort failed to live up to their contract.[80] On those occasions when extremely poor workmanship was found, a work stoppage ensued until a new German firm could be engaged to send construction experts to oversee the completion of the project.

It was within the framework of the slow-down in construction and the progressively worsening troops situation

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[79]Diplomingenieur Xaver Dorsch, "Organization Todt--Operations in the West," FMS, MS# B-671, 12.

[80]This paragraph is drawn from Armeeoberkommando 1, Ia Nr. 2340/43 g.Kdos., "Fragebogen ueber die Verteidigungsfaehigkeit der 1. Armee nach dem Stand vom 1.10.43," 9.10. 1943, T-312, Roll 27, Frames 7533779-7533780.

plus the growing prospect of a large-scale Allied invasion from the West that von Rundstedt in October, 1943, issued a warning to higher headquarters that these conditions must change. But before going into his lengthy report in more detail, one other problem that beset Ob West should be examined. That problem was interservice frictions among the Army, Navy, and Air Force.

CHAPTER IV

Interservice Frictions and a Warning

Friction among the various branches of the armed services is not, of course, something unique to the Wehrmacht. It exists to some degree in all sizable military establishments, and it may produce beneficial as well as detrimental results. One would not argue, for example, that interservice rivalries may help foster pride in one's service, and such rivalries can stimulate a sense of competition and thereby raise a nation's overall military effectiveness. It is when this spirit becomes inimical and infringes upon the basic decisions necessary to win the war that an armed forces' strategic and tractical capabilities are seriously impaired. Serious interservice controversies of this nature were present in varying degrees throughout the German military structure, but they took the specific form that they did because of their association with National Socialism.

The fundamental Nazi concept of the Fuehrerprinzip, or leadership principle as personified in Hitler, lay at the heart of the problem. According to this notion the focus was on the leader. The leader was the key element, and the supreme leader was Hitler. The National Socialist ruler

had under him a group of secondary leaders, and they had, in turn, a number of subordinates under them, and so on down the leadership ladder. As one might expect, there was a great deal of "empire building" among the ambitious lesser leaders as to areas of competence within National Socialist society. When a controversy arose among the lesser leaders, as often happened, they turned to Hitler for the ultimate decision, and because of their belief in the Fuehrer and their utter dependence upon him, they accepted his judgment as final.

Still in many instances Hitler perpetuated the centuries-old principle of divide and rule among his underlings by issuing imprecise rulings or by not making any decision at all, thus heightening his own control in the process. Examples of this infighting among Hitler's functionaires were evident in all spheres of National Socialist life from the production of war materials to hunting and fishing privileges, from espionage and intelligence activities to school textbook selections. The Army, Navy, and the Air Force too became caught up in various types of conflicts such as those that abounded in the civilian sector.

In the West, as in every German land theater, the Luftwaffe and the Kriegsmarine were tactically subordinate to the Army, and in this case to Ob West. Nevertheless, there were complicating factors. The complications as

applied to western Europe steemed from developments following the projected German invasion of the British Isles in 1940. In order to carry out this amphibious operation across the Channel, the Navy and the Air Force were naturally to play a significant role. After the Luftwaffe failed to destroy the RAF and gain air superiority, the bulk of the front-line Army and Air Force units moved East in preparation for the Russian campaign, and the West became a secondary theater of war.

However, a substantial portion of the Navy stayed behind, and their tasks could certainly not be termed unimportant.[1] First and foremost, the Kriegsmarine was to sink any ships that might be of assistance to the British cause. And now with the occupation of numerous harbors along France's western coast, the German submarine war against Allied and neutral shipping in the Atlantic could be intensified. Moreover, the Navy was to keep the sea lanes open, especially near the coasts so that both naval and commercial ships might be free from enemy harassment.

To accomplish these tasks necessitated a number of land-based naval forces as well as ship personnel. The naval bases had to be maintained and protected, and naval troops for artillery batteries that could fire at sea targets were to help protect friendly shipping that used

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[1]The following paragraph is based on Admiral Theodor Krancke, "Marine Gruppen-Kommando West (1943-14 Jun 1944)," FMS, MS# B-169, 1-3.

the coastal waters. Therefore, as long as the Battle of the Atlantic still raged, and as long as Axis ships continued to utilize the sea routes along the coast, the Navy, even though tactically under Commander-in-Chief West, was going to insist on having a say in running this less important theater.

The problem was that the West might not long remain a secondary theater. From 1942 on it was highly probable that western Europe would be invaded--perhaps not at that exact moment, but sooner or later an Allied attack was bound to come. In certain instances the measures necessary to defend the coast against an invading enemy coincided with those employed for safeguarding coastal shipping, but sometimes they were not the same. The Germans thus faced the question, which requirement should receive priority?[2] Was it more important to protect coastal traffic and keep away enemy raiders as advocated by the Navy, or was it more important to accept the Army's stand that the primary emphasis should be to prepare for the eventual Allied assault? More specifically, should coastal artillery be placed in the open near the shore and directed primarily against naval targets? Or should it be positioned further inland and under cover so that the guns could fire only indirectly at Allied ships, but still be of use against an

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[2] Ibid., 6-7; Vizeadmiral Friedrich Frisius, "Marine Gruppen-Kommando West," FMS, MS# B-341, 8; Blumentritt, Von Rundstedt, 122-126; and Stjernfelt, Alerte, 30-31, 51.

enemy landing force? Should one sacrifice a large field of fire for battle-hardened, bombproof, gun emplacements? Could non-visual sighting be effective against fast-moving targets? It was around these issues that the Army-Navy controversy in the West revolved.

In 1941 and early 1942 the main issue was, who was going to control the coastal artillery--the Navy or the Army? In short, it was a question of competence of command. Hitler's Directive No. 40 in March, 1942, clarified this point: Ob West was to select one commander for each coastal sector.[3] In most instances this meant that a local Army divisional commander was put in charge, but in certain areas, especially at naval strongpoints, Kriegsmarine officers assumed control.

Even though the Fuehrer had settled the question of command responsibility, the problem of target priorities for coastal artillery persisted. The Navy wanted artillery batteries emplaced primarily to fire at sea targets; the Army desired them for use against an invading enemy. Even if the differences could be reconciled and artillery positions erected to satisfy both the requirements for naval and for land warfare, yet another issue would have to be resolved. What would an artillery commander do if he had to fire at Allied ships and against an enemy landing

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[3]Trevor-Roper (ed.), Hitler's War Directives, 115.

force at the same time? Which alternative should he choose?

The German military leaders again looked to Hitler for an answer. The Fuehrer at first equivocated, and his final decision in 1943 provided little help.[4] The Navy was to be in control when firing at sea targets. If the enemy succeeded in its landing attempt, an Army artillery officer was to assume command. In theory Hitler's solution might appear to be an acceptable compromise, but in practice it simply would not work. There were still several unanswered questions.[5] If the Western Powers gained a foothold at one place, but failed in another area covered by the same battery, was the Navy or the Army in control? Or, at what moment did one decide, in essence, that an enemy assault was successful?

The coastal artillery problem resolved itself not so much from the Fuehrer's ruling as from the turn of events in the West. By mid-1943 the Navy had generally lost the Battle of the Atlantic. German U-boats, under their own

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[4]The Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces High Command, WFSt/Op. Nr. 004688/42 g.Kdos., "Problem of Utilization and Command of the Coastal Artillery, 25 Dec 42, as contained in Fuehrer Directives, II, 55; Armeeoberkommando 1, Ia/Stoart Nr. 100/43 g.Kdos., "Taktische Gliederung der Artillerie im Abschnitt der 1. Armee," 30.11.1943, T-312, Roll 27, Frame 7534118; and Stacey, The Victory Campaign, 58.

[5]Generalkommando LXXXI A.K., Ia Nr. 1118/42 geh., "Engl. Angriff auf Dieppe am 19.8.1942," 29.8.1942, T-312, Roll 504, Frame 8099327; and Stjernfelt, Alerte, 68-69.

separate command, were no longer capable of destroying Allied shipping on a large scale. With the role of the Navy's chief offensive striking threat greatly diminished, all of the functions that remained for the Navy in the West were defensive in nature and connected with the anti-invasion effort.

The defensive naval tasks were not under submarine commanders but under Naval Command Group West (Marine Gruppen-Kommando West).[6] Naval Group West counted among its missions escort service for the Axis merchant vessels that still used the shipping lanes along the French coast, patrol duties, naval reconnaissance, laying and sweeping mines and in general guarding the area near the coast. To perform these tasks the elaborately-organized Naval Group had to rely mainly upon smaller craft, such as torpedo boats, minesweepers, and patrol boats, although its commander, Admiral Theodor Krancke, did have five destroyers at his disposal in Atlantic ports and could also call upon some small submarines in case of an emergency.[7] In addition, the Kriegsmarine continued to have its personnel manning the naval coastal artillery and some antiaircraft

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[6]Naval High Command, [Telegram], 11 Apr 1942, as contained in Fuehrer Directives, II, 21; Vizeadmiral Friedrich Frisius, "Marine Gruppen-Kommando West," FMS, MS# B-341, 4; and Ruge, Sea Warfare, 258-262.

[7]Marine Gruppenkdo. West, "Gliederung der Marine im Westen, Stand 12.43," n.d., T-312, Roll 1566, Frame 000059; and Sir Stephen W. Roskill, The War at Sea, 1939-1945; Vol. III, The Offensive (History of the Second World War: United Kingdom Military Series) (London: HMSO, 1960), Pt. 2, 16.

batteries.

The significant point, however, is that all of these duties were not associated with offensive operations, but with Hitler's attempt to retain Germany hegemony in western Europe. This defensive effort, as with all questions pertaining to Fortress Europe, was normally under Army auspices. The ration strength of Oberbefehlshaber West on February 1, 1944, listed 1,400,000 servicemen. Over 800,000 of these were Army troops as compared with only 96,000 naval personnel.[8] In brief, the German Navy, which was never intended originally to be a balanced force, lost its chief raison d'être in the submarine war. By 1944 Army and naval commanders might continue to fulminate occasionally about the inordinate demands of the other service, but, in fact, the Navy retained little voice in the defensive planning for western Europe.[9]

It is rather surprising that the Luftwaffe did not become involved in a controversy similar to the one that

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[8]Der Oberbefehlshaber West, (Oberkommando Heeresgruppe D), Der Oberquartiermeister West, Qu 1 Br. B Nr. 0700/44 g.Kdos., "Versorgungslagebericht Januar 1944," 12.2.44, T-311, Roll 14, Frame 7014595. See also General der Panzertruppen Freiherr Geyr von Schweppenburg, "Marine Gruppen-Kommando West (Critique of MS# B-169)," FMS, MS# B-342, 2-5.

[9]Der Oberbefehlshaber der 15. Armee, Ia Nr. 0176/43 g.Kdos.Chefs., 26.10.1943, T-312, Roll 514, Frame 8112924.

embroiled the Army and the Navy. The Air Force, after all, owed its existence to the National Socialist movement. Furthermore, it was not tainted in Hitler's eyes with the defects of the "traditional services." Here was an organization that was thoroughly National Socialist in outlook, an organization that might well come into conflict with the older branches.

Yet in spite of the serious frictions that existed among Air Force, Army, and naval officials at higher command levels, they did not exist to any large degree in the West.[10] To be sure, the Air Force with its own supply channels and administrative apparatus was organized as elaborately as either of the other two branches in France and the Low Countries, but the Third Air Fleet (Luftwaffe 3), which oversaw air force matters in western Europe, accepted its subordinate position much more readily than did the Navy. Part of the reason, of course, was that after the Battle of Britain subsided, the Luftwaffe no longer played a primary role in the West and had shifted its attention elsewhere.

The other reason was that the proficiency and the

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[10]General der Flieger Alfred Buelowius, "II Air Force Corps (Jan-28 Jun 1944)," FMS, MS# B-620, 3-4; General der Flakartillerie Eugen Weissmann, "Flak in Coastal and Air Defense: The Atlantic Wall," FMS, MS# D-179, 13; and Luftflottenkommando 3, Fuehr. Abt./Ia op Nr. 4173/42 g.Kdos., "Befehl des Luftflotten-Kommandos 3 fuer die Kampffuehrung in der Kuestenverteidigung," 3.5.1942, T-312, Roll 502, Frames 8096944-8096950.

performance of the German Air Force on all fronts had steadily declined.[11] Even though aircraft production within the Reich continued to mount until the end of 1944, fuel shortages and the high casualty-rate among flying personnel eventually put severe limitations on Germany's air capabilities. These restrictions, combined with Hitler's decision early in the war not to concentrate on building up a strategic bomber force, relegated the Luftwaffe to a secondary position in western Europe. The German Air Force did manage to institute what was called a "Baby Blitz" against England in the first months of 1944, but it was quickly abandoned because of heavy losses.[12]

The Third Air Fleet, therefore, concentrated most of its effort on supporting the defensive posture being promulgated and guided by Theater Command West. By 1944 the Germans were employing almost all of the approximately five hundred operational airplanes in the West in a variety of anti-invasion activities, such as air defense, logistical support, aerial minelaying, and reconnaissance missions.[13] And even though future Luftwaffe plans called for transferring large numbers of aircraft, especially fighter planes, to air bases in France, as soon as the Allies began

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[11]Asher Lee, The German Air Force, 35, 44.

[12]Hilary St. George Saunders, The Fight is Won. Royal Air Force 1939-1945 (Vol. III, London: HMSO, 1954), 98.

[13]Ellis, Victory in the West, I, 567.

an amphibious assault, the major function of the newly-arrived aircraft would still be defensive.

The other significant aerial activity that involved Air Force units in the West was also defensive in nature--manning the antiaircraft batteries that dotted the entire area of western Europe.[14] Over 100,000 of the 337,000 Luftwaffe personnel in the theater served as members of the antiaircraft formations, and all of these groups, when threatened by an invasion, were to come under the jurisdiction of the local Army or Navy commander. The Air Force flak units were well aware of the fact that their chief mission was to support the land forces in the sector against enemy aerial and ground attacks, and the Air Force commanders further realized that to accomplish this task required close cooperation with the other services.

Thus, the Luftwaffe accepted its subordination to the Army in the western theater with more alacrity than was the case with the Navy. Nevertheless, by 1944 neither the Navy nor the Air Force was in a position to challenge the dominant authority of the Army.

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[14]This paragraph is based on General der Flakartillerie Wolfgang Pickert, "III Flak Corps (May-14 Sep 1944)," FMS, MS# B-597, 4-6; Generalleutnant Werner Prellberg, "Employment of Flak in an Army Defense Zone," FMS, MS# D-050, 5-6; General der Flakartillerie Eugen Weissmann, "Flak in Coastal and Air Defense: The Atlantic Wall," FMS, MS# D-179; and Ellis, Victory in the West, I, 58.

One further problem, the problem of allocating laborers and material for construction purposes, also caused some interservice friction in the West. This area of conflict, like the issue revolving around the control of coastal artillery, resolved itself more by the turn of events than by a resolute command decision. In this area of concern each branch felt that the other services were undermining its specific building priorities.[15] The Army was especially adamant. The Luftwaffe, according to Army officials, was receiving too many workers for air field construction. The Navy was getting more cement than it deserved for submarine base installations. One Army divisional commander records that naval latrines were being made bombproof, even though at the same time numerous coastal artillery batteries remained uncovered and in the open. In other words, the Army was complaining that higher headquarters was neglecting its con-

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[15]Admiral Theodor Krancke, "Marine Gruppen-Kommando West (1943-14 Jun 1944)," FMS, MS# B-169, 20; Oberst Rudolf Kogard, "Brest--343d Infantry Division (May-18 Sep 1944)," FMS, MS# B-427, 5; General Rudolf Schmetzer, "Atlantic Wall--Invasion Sector (Jun 1942-Jun 1944)," FMS, MS# B-668, 17; Der Oberbefehlshaber der 15. Armee, Ia Nr. 0176/43 g.Kdos. Chefs., 26.10.1943, T-312, Roll 514, Frame 8112925; and Oberkommando der Wehrmacht, WFSt/Gen.d.Pi u Fest./Abt. L (IIa), Atl. Kue. Nr. 729/43 g.K., "Fortsetzung des Ausbaues des Atlantikwalles im Bereich Ob West bis 31.12.1943," 7 Mai 1943, T-78, Roll 317, Frame 6271638.

struction projects in western Europe in favor of the other services.

A great deal of the problem, the Army insisted, was Organization Todt. Organization Todt, it will be remembered, was responsible for carrying out large-scale building schemes in all parts of Hitler's Europe. In the West this large construction agency, which formed part of Speer's Ministry for Armaments and War Production, concentrated its efforts on erecting elaborate, permanent, fortress-type installations and on fortifying the major ports.

There were several reasons why the Todt organization preferred big projects. One reason was that O.T. had been set up originally to handle large construction undertakings.[16] Its first important project in western Europe, for instance, had been to build the formidable emplacements for long-range artillery pieces in the Pas de Calais sector. These guns, when positioned, could hit targets as far as the English shore twenty miles away. After completing this task, Organization Todt devoted a significant portion of its

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[16]Generalleutnant Max Pemsel, "Preparations for Invasion," FMS, MS# B-234, 11; Diplomingenieur Xaver Dorsch, "Organization Todt--France," FMS, MS# B-670, 29-31, 65; [Oberkommando der Wehrmacht], WFSt/Op. Abt. (IIa), "Grundsaetz des 'staendigen Ausbaues' beim Bau des Atlantik-Walles (Vortrag des Gen. Lt. Schmetzer, Inspekteur fuer die Landesbefestigung West am 30.9.42, in der Pi.-Schule Karlshorst)," 3.10.42, T-78, Roll 317, Frame 6271578; and Helmut Heiber (ed.), Hitlers Lagebesprechungen; Die Protokollfragmente seiner militaerischen Konferenzen, 1942-1945 (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 1962), 538.

energies to erecting submarine bunkers and improving the harbor defenses along the Channel and Atlantic coast. It was therefore understandable if the Todt agency wanted to continue doing the same kind of work with which its workmen, many of them foreign laborers, were familiar.

Another reason why Organization Todt favored building large permanent defenses was that it did not have enough motor vehicles to move often from place to place.[17] Thus, O.T. was reluctant to undertake projects away from major supply centers and railheads. The Army might descry this practice, but since they did not exercise direct control over the Todt organization, Army planners could only suggest projects--they could not dictate them. In addition, as long as the Navy and the Air Force, with their own building needs, retained some influence in the theater, they were going to demand some say in the allocation of Organization Todt material and personnel.[18]

But more significant than the Army's exasperation with Organization Todt was the fact that the Germans simply had insufficient workers and material at their disposal to

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[17]Generalmajor Horst von Buttlar-Brandenfels, "OB West: Command Relationships. Commentary on MS# B-308," FMS, MS# B-672, 6. Von Buttlar was Chief of Army Operations on the Armed Forces Operations Staff (OKW/WFSt).

[18]General Rudolf Schmetzer, "Atlantic Wall--Invasion Sector (Jun 1942-Jun 1944)," FMS, MS# B-668, 17; and Generalleutnant Dr. Hans Speidel, "Rommel's Views (1 Apr-May 1944)," FMS, MS# B-720, 10-11.

perform all of the many building tasks that they wished to complete. Time and again Wehrmacht officials reported only a portion of the projected construction undertakings could be finished within a given time period because they lacked sufficient laborers or building materials.[19] Construction in the West therefore suffered because there were many other projects that required immediate attention inside the Reich and in the more hard-pressed theaters. Toward the end of 1943, however, German officials realized that more of the construction effort had to be shifted to the West since an Allied invasion was in the offing. By this time, with the Navy and the Air Force moving rapidly toward a subordinate position in the western theater, the Army clearly became the dominant voice in preparing for the long-anticipated Anglo-American attack.[20]

Germany's building program in the West thus came more directly under the auspices of the theater commander, Field

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[19]Der Oberbefehlshaber der 15. Armee, Ia Nr. 0176/43 g.Kdos.Chefs., 26.10.1943, T-312, Roll 514, Frame 8112925; Armeeoberkommando 1, Ia Nr. 451/43 g.Kdos., "Besprechung ueber Atlantik-ausbau," 6.1.1943, T-312, Roll 26, Frame 7532260; Generalleutnant Max Pemsel, "Preparations for Invasion," FMS, MS# B-234, 8-9; and General Rudolf Schmetzer, "Atlantic Wall--Invasion Sector (Jun 1942-Jun 1944)," FMS, MS# B-668, 12.

[20]Ibid., 17; and Oberbefehlshaber West, (Oberkommando Heeresgruppe D), Ia/IaT/Gen.Ing. b. Ob West, Insp. d.L. West/Nr. 1150/43 g.K., "Grundlegender Befehl des Oberbefehlshabers West Nr. 33," 3.11.43, T-311, Roll 21, Frame 7024111.

Marshal Gerd von Rundstedt. Von Rundstedt, his staff, and his subordinate commanders had all become genuinely alarmed about military developments pertaining to western Europe by the fall of 1943. The autumn months had brought with them not only the normal chill in the air. They had also brought the sobering realization that a full-scale Allied invasion was not far off. There were a number of signs that led von Rundstedt to this conclusion.[21] More and more Allied aircraft were being deployed to air bases in the south of England. Increasing numbers of American and British troops were being placed in military posts near embarkation points along the southern and eastern English coasts. In this connection the theater commander estimated that there were as many Allied divisions stationed in England and poised to assault the continent as there were German forces, including non-combat units, in all of western Europe. As von Rundstedt pointed out, "The enemy can attack from England across the Channel at any time. His military preparations for the most part have been completed."[22] It was only a matter of time until the Allied invasion would assuredly take place.

It was in this atmosphere of anticipation, as well as in the previously mentioned slow-down of construction and

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[21]Der Oberbefehlshaber West, Ia Nr. 550/43 g.Kdos.Ch., "Beurteilung der Lage Ob. West am 25.10.1943," 28.10.1943, T-311, Roll 27, Frames 7032426-7032428.

[22]Ibid., Frame 7032465.

the continual exodus of the more able German troops from the West during the summer of 1943, that von Rundstedt forwarded his fifty-page situation report to the Armed Forces High Command (OKW) on October 28.[23] Each year at this time Commander-in-Chief West issued an overall estimate of the situation in his theater, but this particular estimate was more significant than the 1942 version, for the 1943 report was an attempt by the venerable Field Marshal to alter German military policy toward western Europe. In effect, von Rundstedt was using this opportunity to say that the West could no longer be treated as a secondary theater of war. No longer could it be stripped of its better personnel for use in other theaters. No longer could its needs be sacrificed for the exigencies on other fronts. Western Europe must be made battle-ready, for there could be no doubt that the Allies were going to launch an all-out attack in the West in 1944.

The actual report took the form of a thoroughly-prepared staff study and was based on facts and figures compiled after an extensive inspection of the area. The study can be divided most conveniently into four main sections with each section having some conclusions of its own. Taken

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[23] Ibid., Frames 7032424-7032475. Portions of von Rundstedt's report are summarized in Ellis, Victory in the West, I, 54-55; Harrison, Cross-Channel Attack, 128, 140-142; and Generalleutnant Bodo Zimmermann, "OB West, Command Relationships (1943-45)," FMS, MS# B-308, 26-32.

together, these conclusions mark the beginning of a definite turning point in German strategy for the West.

In the initial portion of the report von Rundstedt presented an estimate of the enemy's capabilities and his possible courses of action.[24] British and American striking power, he concluded, was quite formidable. With a powerful array of forces stationed in the United Kingdom, it was certain that the Allies were going to try to establish a second front during 1944. The only question was when and where the attempt would take place. The western theater commander figured that the attack would probably not began until early spring because of the weather factor, but one should not rule out a partial operation (Teilunternehmungen) during the winter months, for "the technical equipment of the Anglo-Americans even permits a landing at this time of year."[25]

As to where the Allies would invade, von Rundstedt, like most German military observers, continued to consider the Channel coast as the most likely possibility. To be sure, Germany's western defenses were strongest in this area, but von Rundstedt still felt that a determined Allied attack had a definite prospect of success. After

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[24]The following three paragraphs are based on Der Oberbefehlshaber West, Ia Nr. 550/43 g.Kdos.Ch., "Beurteilung der Lage Ob. West am 25.10.1943," 28.10.1943, T-311, Roll 27, Frames 7032424-7032433.

[25]Ibid., Frame 7032428.

all, the Western Powers had most to gain from a successful invasion of this sector that reached from Holland to Normandy. This region was the shortest distance from the English coast, the shortest supply link with Great Britain, and the shortest route to the German border. The close proximity of England, moreover, gave the Allies an excellent launching area for air attacks and air-borne operations against the continent. In brief, here was where the stakes were highest, and here was where a successful Allied landing must be prevented at all costs.

The Field Marshal also warned that the Western Allies might well attempt to couple the main assault with one or more small-scale operations. A limited attack of this nature could tie down a sizable number of German troops, and, as a result, make it easier for additional British and American combat units to invade across the Channel. Furthermore, these small operations might be devised with additional objectives in mind. By establishing a bridge-head on the Cotentin or Brittany peninsulas, for example, Allied forces would have the use of a major port, and, in the case of Brittany, eliminate two of the German U-boat bases at the same time. Or Allied units might institute simultaneous attacks on France's Atlantic and Mediterranean coasts designed eventually to link up around Toulouse and thus cut off German access to Spain. Another possibility was an Anglo-American landing near the mouth of the Rhône

River that could be used in conjunction with either a large-scale Channel or Mediterranean operation. Therefore, even though von Rundstedt anticipated an invasion in the Channel area, he fully realized that the United States and Great Britain had other alternatives at their disposal, and German forces must have the flexibility to meet any Allied course of action.

The second section of the report dealt with how in general Ob West proposed to counter the various Allied strengths and capabilities.[26] The enemy, von Rundstedt reiterated, possessed the advantage of being able to select the time and place of attack. This fact placed the German forces in a difficult postion, for the mere length of the West European coast precluded that it could be defended everywhere in depth. Hence, the Field Marshal stressed again that flexibility was the key principle if one expected to repel an Allied invasion. One should try at all costs to disrupt and defeat the enemy at the water's edge. In fact, if possible, one should attempt to destroy the invader before he ever reached shore. Nevertheless, if the enemy did succeed in gaining a foothold, local reserves ought to begin an immediate counterthrust (Gegenstoss) to confuse and weaken the Allied attackers. "Every hour lost is costly," von Rundstedt emphasized. If

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[26]This paragraph is taken from ibid., Frames 7032433-7032438.

the enemy gets the time to establish himself, it will be most difficult to bring about his expulsion."[27] The local counterthrust was to be followed by a strong German reserve force, which would launch a counterattack (Gegenangriff) against the most exposed positions of the enemy until he was annihilated. Von Rundstedt summarized his position as follows:

> In spite of all the fortifications, a 'rigid defense' of the entire length of the coast is not possible within the foreseeable future. We must bear this fact in mind at all times.
>
> Therefore, our defense depends primarily on strong reserves, above all on panzer and motorized units. Without them our continued retention of the coast is impossible. Not only should these reserves be on hand in sufficient numbers, but they must also be of sufficient quality, that is, be well-equipped. Otherwise, it will not be possible to carry through a successful counter-attack.[28]

Commander-in-Chief West went on to evaluate how the Wehrmacht might best make use of its defensive set-up when faced with an enemy possessing naval and air superiority.[29] Even though permanent fortifications built out of concrete and well-constructed, camouflaged, field-type installations were essential for the impending battle as well as for propagandistic purposes, one ought not to be deluded that these obstacles which made up the Atlantic

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[27] Ibid., Frame 7032437.

[28] Ibid., Frame 7032438.

[29] This paragraph is based on ibid., Frames 7032438-7032441.

Wall were impregnable. They could be overcome, and von Rundstedt once more declared that flexibility was the most logical means of surmounting Allied material predominance. Certainly, coastal artillery batteries ought to continue to be erected and existing ones improved, but German infantry troops and their heavy weapons ought not to disappear into thick bunkers. They, too, must be made mobile to meet any situation, even against British and American paratroop units that might attack from the rear. By making his forces more mobile, the theater commander felt he could minimize the probability of Allied success in the West and thus accomplish an objective of decisive importance in the overall conduct of the war.

To carry out this task, however, von Rundstedt emphasized that he would need more and better-equipped personnel. In the third section of his report he depicted how both the number and the quality of German military forces in the western theater were woefully inadequate to face the might of the Allied Powers.

In terms of numbers, the Field Marshal began by declaring that the strength of the Kriegsmarine and the Luftwaffe formations was clearly insufficient to counter Allied sea and air superiority.[30] Furthermore, the naval and Air Force artillery units, whose crews worked in close

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[30] Ibid., Frames 7032441-7032443.

conjunction with the Army, lacked the necessary ammunition and equipment to reach and maintain the desired level of effectiveness.

The Army, too, von Rundstedt asserted, was weak and needed to be revitalized. There had always been too much area in the West to cover with the forces available, and the situation had deteriorated even more during 1943.[31] In October, 1942, there had been twenty-two infantry divisions deployed along the coast. All of these units had been well-equipped, and most of them had three, full-trained regiments. In reserve had been seven tank and motorized divisions of excellent quality plus six more infantry divisions.

By contrast, in October, 1943, although there were twenty-seven divisions stationed along the coastal front, German troops had four hundred additional miles of Mediterranean shoreline to defend, and many of the formations were much too weak in artillery and consisted of only two, inexperienced largely immobile, infantry regiments. Of the reserve forces, all six armored and motorized divisions were still in the process of being formed initially or were being refitted after serving on the Eastern front. Among the seven infantry units were two reserve divisions considered only of marginal combat value, two divisions in the course of formation, and three reinforced regiments. This force was simply inadequate to meet a full-scale Anglo-

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[31]The comparison between 1942 and 1943 of German combat units in the West is taken from ibid., Frames 7032465-7032466.

American invasion.

Moreover, fifty-three divisions had been moved out of the West to other theaters during the course of 1943.[32] This transfer of troops must cease if western Europe were going to be defended successfully. In other words, von Rundstedt was saying that the number of German forces in the West had to be increased substantially during the early part of 1944 or Fortress Europe might well be overrun by British and American troops invading the continent from England.

Not only did the number of troops have to be increased, but Ob West also stressed the need for a considerable upgrading in the quality of personnel.[33] Von Rundstedt pointed out that all of the "static (bodenstaendig)" divisions which had been designed specifically to defend the coast had either one or two Ost batallions among their ranks. And even the German-born troops in the static divisions were of lesser quality. Twenty-five percent of the the German soldiers, for instance, consisted of younger or older individuals newly-recruited within the Reich or of personnel who could not be re-deployed in the East because of frost-bite (Erfrierungen 3. Grade). An additional 8% were Volksdeutsch troops. This situation had to be remedied if Wehrmacht forces were going to be able to repel

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[32] Ibid., Frame 7032467.

[33] Ibid., Frame 7032458.

a large Allied landing.

In terms of equipment, it, too, was in need of improvement.[34] The western theater, according to von Rundstedt, lacked artillery, heavy infantry weapons, and especially antitank guns. German divisions had at least ten different types of artillery pieces in their inventories plus numerous captured weapons of foreign-make being used for coastal defense. It was difficult enough to obtain sufficient ammunition for this large variety of guns, let alone to build up a stockpile in reserve. Furthermore, if German units expected to have any prospect of victory against the well-equipped British and American soldiers, any equipment shipped to the West had to be up-to-date and not of World War I vintage. This situation could be remedied only with a substantial increase in the number of modern weapons being allotted to the western theater.

What then could be done specifically to raise German defensive capabilities in the West? Von Rundstedt concluded in the final section of his report that basically two things were needed.[35] First of all, the divisions manning the coast had to be strengthened. In order to fulfill this requirement, every coastal division should be raised to the normal complement of three infantry

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[34] Ibid., Frames 7032458-7032459.

[35] Von Rundstedt's concluding remarks that follow are based on ibid., Frames 7032470-7032474.

regiments. In addition, these units should have three artillery regiments, including one with heavy guns; sufficient anti-tank weapons; and adequate supply personnel. Nonetheless, as important as it was to assume that each of the coastal units was properly manned and equipped, it was equally important to see that substantial portions of these divisions were made mobile. Mobility, in von Rundstedt's view, was the key concept, for by being mobile these formations would naturally be more flexible in coping with whatever invasion plan the Allies might select.

Flexibility through mobility was also the chief notion behind Commander-in-Chief West's second specific proposal. He advocated, in brief, a sizable number of combat-ready, fully-mobile, motorized reserve formations remaining poised behind the coastal fronts to deal a devastating blow to any large enemy attack that might arise.

> These units must not be dependent on the railway network and must be established as a strong, decisive shock force which would operate in a rapid, coordinated manner, be it to overrun a major airborne attack, or be it to destroy an enemy penetrating inland from the coast...[36]

The Field Marshal contended that nine, first-rate armored divisions would be required if this mobile reserve were going to be made into an effective fighting force. His plan was thus extremely simple: offset the Allied advantage of being able to strike the continent when and where they

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[36] Ibid., Frame 7032472.

wished by establishing a strong, well-drilled mobile army.

To be sure, the western theater commander's proposals contain nothing very novel, but they do clarify his position on several points. They show, in the first place, that von Rundstedt was not optimistic that the Atlantic Wall could effectively deter a large-scale Allied assault. It had to be backed up by a mobile striking force in reserve. The other point von Rundstedt wanted to get across was to warn Hitler that immediate steps must be taken if the Wehrmacht expected to counter the Allied threat from the West.

One additional aspect surrounding von Rundstedt's report is worth mentioning. It concerns the way in which Ob West submitted the report and supports the notion that the manner of presentation may be as important as the contents themselves. How the Field Marshal forwarded this report also demonstrated his grave apprehension about conditions in the West as well as his appreciation of the decision-making process within the German military hierarchy. He knew that Hitler made all of the basic decisions, and he wanted to make sure that the Fuehrer himself looked over this estimate of the western theater. Therefore, when von Rundstedt forwarded his report to Armed Forces High Command headquarters, he sent with it an accompanying cover letter

to Field Marshal Keitel.[37] In the letter von Rundstedt entreated Hitler's pliant Armed Forces head to have the National Socialist leader read the report in its entirety so that the Fuehrer was fully aware of the critical manpower and material situation.

Ob West went even further. He had his Chief of Staff, Blumentritt, submit another cover letter, in this instance to Blumentritt's Armed Forces (OKW) and Army High Command (OKH) counterparts, Generals Jodl and Zeitzler.[38] The missive to the OKW and OKH Chiefs of Staff was an extension of von Rundstedt's comments to Keitel. The attached estimate of the western situation, Blumentritt wrote, is extremely significant. It gives an "unadorned picture" of the true situation. Do not be mislead by Theater Command West's Basic Order No. 32, which also deals with the inspection of the western area, for it is intended for more general dissemination and for bolstering troop morale.[39] Von Rundstedt's more detailed report describes

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[37]Der Oberbefehlshaber der Heeresgruppe D, Ia Nr. 6228/43 geh.Kdos., 28.10.1943, T-311, Roll 27, Frame 7032418.

[38]Der Chef des Generalstabes der Heeresgruppe D und des Oberbefehlshabers West, Ia Nr. 550/43 geh.Kdos.Ch., 28.10.1943, T-311, Roll 27, Frame 7032420.

[39]The relatively short Basic Order No. 32 is much less critical of the weaknesses in Germany's western defenses than the comprehensive report of Ob West that we have been discussing. The Basic Order can be found in Der Oberbefehlshaber West, Ia Nr. 6260/43 g.Kdos., "Grundlegender Befehl des Oberbefahlshaber West Nr. 32," 28.10.1943, T-311, Roll 15, Frames 7016267-7016273.

conditions as they really exist, Blumentritt concluded, and it should be considered in this light. Thus, in essence, Ob West was making every effort to assure that his estimate of the western situation received a proper hearing at the highest command level.

Although German officials might have contended that von Rundstedt's report was in places unduly pessimistic, the fact remained that the West was about to become a major theater of war. Furthermore, the High Command now had at its disposal a relatively objective assessment of Germany's military posture in western Europe. The question was, what position would Hitler take toward the report? Would it prompt the Fuehrer to act?

Von Rundstedt and his staff did not have long to wait. Less than a week later, on November 3, 1943, Hitler issued Directive Nr. 51, which dealt exclusively with developments in the West.[40] This new Fuehrer Directive, for the most part, echoed the position taken by Commander-in-Chief West in his recently-submitted report and serves as one more example that Hitler accepted the advice of his field commanders more often than his military critics have been

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[40]Hubatsch (ed.), Hitlers Weisungen, 233-237. English translations of the Directive are located in Trevor-Roper (ed.), Hitler's War Directives, 149-153; and Harrison, Cross-Channel Attack, 464-467.

willing to admit.

The initial portion of Directive Nr. 51 set forth the reasoning behind Hitler's change of policy toward the western theater.[41] For the past two and a half years, the Directive began, German forces have concentrated their energies in the life-and-death struggle against the Bolshevik menace in the East. But the situation has changed. "The threat from the East remains, but an even greater danger now appears in the West: an Anglo-Saxon landing."[42] If necessary, as a last resort, the Directive continued, space can be sacrificed in eastern Europe and still not deal a mortal blow to Germany's chances for survival.

> Not so in the West! Here, if the enemy succeeds in breaching our defenses along a wide front, consequences of staggering proportions will follow within a short time. All signs point to an offensive against the Western Front of Europe, at the latest in the spring, perhaps even earlier.
>
> For that reason, I can no longer justify the further weakening of the West in favor of other theaters of war. I have therefore decided to strengthen the defenses in the West...[43]

Hitler had thus decreed a basic change in Germany's military strategy toward western Europe. The West no longer was to be considered of secondary importance, and the defensive effort was to be intensified for the impending

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[41] Ibid., 464.

[42] Ibid.

[43] Ibid.

Anglo-American assault. The alteration in German policy that Ob West had hoped for had become a reality.

The second section of the Directive also closely paralleled von Rundstedt's proposals and explained how in general the Allied invasion was to be met.[44] The Fuehrer, like von Rundstedt, expected the main attack to take place in the Channel sector, but one could anticipate additional enemy diversions or holding operations in other areas, even possibly in Denmark. Every resource, the Directive continued, ought to be strained to strengthen the coastal fortifications, especially in the most threatened regions, so that the invasion attempt could be repulsed before the Western Powers were able to establish a beachhead.

But what if the Allies succeeded in gaining a foothold? Once again, Hitler's solution was a carbon copy of the proposal advocated by von Rundstedt a few days earlier.

> Should the enemy nevertheless force a landing by concentrating his forces, he must be hit by a counterattack delivered with all our might. The problem is to make the large number of units available to us into a first-rate, offensively-oriented, and fully-mobile reserve through sufficient and rapid concentration of men and material and through intensive training. A counter-attack by these units will prevent the enlargement of the beachhead, and will throw the enemy back into the sea.
>
> In addition, carefully-worked out and detailed emergency plans must be drawn up so that everything we have at home and in the coastal areas

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[44]The following paragraph is based on ibid., 464-465.

> which have not been attacked can be thrown immediately against the invading enemy.[45]

Hitler in the third and final portion of the Directive issued more specific instructions to various components of the Armed Forces for upgrading the defensive posture of the Wehrmacht in the West.[46] The Army was to make maximum use of the modern weapons that were to be shipped to France and the Low Countries. Army divisions, particularly mobile forces, were rapidly to be brought up to full armed strength. Reserve formations within the Reich should be prepared to move West within forty-eight hours after being notified. Air Force units in the West were to be dispersed to a number of airfields in order to lessen the effect of enemy bomber attacks. Naval forces were to assemble as many vessels as possible to oppose the Allied landing fleet. Most important, however, was the Fuehrer's assertion that "no units or formations stationed in the West and in Denmark..., are to be withdrawn to other fronts without my approval."[47] Western Europe no longer was to be thought of as step-child in relation to the other theaters. In fact, Hitler felt that a victory in the West in 1944 might well be decisive in the outcome of the war.[48]

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[45] Ibid., 465.

[46] Ibid., 465-467.

[47] Ibid., 466.

[48] Heiber (ed.), Hitlers Lagebesprechungen, 450-452. See also Harrison, Cross-Channel Attack, 231.

CHAPTER V

Command Conflicts

Fuehrer Directive No. 51 led to a great deal of staff planning by German officials in the western theater during the last two months of 1943. Ob West, for example, laid out plans for making his coastal divisions mobile as well as for upgrading the effectiveness of the panzer formations in the area.[1] In addition, the Theater Commander set forth an ambitious building program for 1944 that included the erection and improvement of numerous permanent and field-type installations.[2] Furthermore, the Navy took steps to add more ships, mines, and artillery pieces to its defensive arsenal in the West.[3]

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[1]Der Oberbefehlshaber West, (Oberkommando Heeresgruppe D), Ia Nr. 673/43 geh.Kdos.Ch., "Vorbereitung fuer den Kampf," 18.11.1943, T-78, Roll 317, Frames 6271440-6271444.

[2]Oberbefehlshaber West, Oberkommando Heeresgruppe D), Ia/IaT/Gen.Ing.b.Ob West/Insp.d.L. West/Nr. 1150 g.K., "Grundlegender Befehl des Oberbefehlshabers West Nr. 33," 3.11.43, T-311, Roll 21, Frame 7024111-7024114; and Der Chef des Generalstabes, Armeeoberkommando 1, Ia Nr. 239/43 g.Kdos.Ch., "Aktennotiz ueber die Besprechung beim Chef des Generalstabes Ob. West am 11.12.1943," 11.Dez.1943, T-312, Roll 27, Frame 7533954.

[3]The Naval Staff, B Nr. 1/Skl. I Op 340/43 g.K.Chefs., 13 Nov 1943, as contained in Fuehrer Directives, II, 106.

Although these plans brought few tangible results before the end of the year, von Rundstedt was still satisfied that progress was being made and was confident that the tempo of change would accelerate early in the new year.[4] Part of von Rundstedt's optimism undoubtedly stemmed from Hitler's demonstrated concern about the gravity of the situation in the West. In fact, the Fuehrer had sent his famous Afrika Korps commander, Erwin Rommel, in November, 1943, to inspect the defenses in the western theater.

The young Field Marshal had served in several different capacities since the conclusion of the African campaign. In July, 1943, Rommel was named head of Army Group B (Heeresgruppe B), which had been reconstituted in Germany after its staff had been withdrawn from the Russian front. At the end of the month, Rommel's group was put in charge of German defensive preparations in northern Italy, a task which took on added significance when large numbers of Wehrmacht troops began moving into Italy after the overthrow of Mussolini. This timely influx of German personnel paid dividends, for when the Western Powers invaded the Italian mainland in September, the German formations,

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[4]Der Oberbefehlshaber West, Ia Nr. 818/43 geh.Kdos. Ch., [Letter from von Rundstedt to Hans von Salmuth, head of Fifteenth Army], 27.12.1943, T-312, Roll 514, Frame 8112911; and Der Oberbefehlshaber West, (Oberkommando Heeresgruppe D), Ia Nr. 832/43 geh.Kdos.Ch., 28.12.1943, T-78, Roll 310, Frames 6262677-6262683.

which were under the command of Field Marshal Albert Kesselring in the south of Italy, were ready and were able to confine Allied operations during the autumn months to the southern portion of the Peninsula. The Fuehrer rewarded Kesselring in October for his work by naming him commander over all German forces in Italy. Rommel thus became expendable.

On November 5, 1943, only two days after Hitler had issued Fuehrer Directive No. 51, Rommel received orders to begin inspecting "the defensive readiness of the German-occupied coasts" in the West.[5] The order stated that Rommel and part of his Army Group B staff were to reconnoiter first Denmark; then the Channel area, including the Cotentin Peninsula, the Netherlands, and Brittany; and finally any other sector which the Fuehrer might later designate. During the inspection Rommel's group was to offer suggestions and to draw up plans for the best way to meet an Allied invasion from the West.

The unexpected assignment undoubtedly pleased the young Field Marshal, for it meant that he could once again return to the active type of life he had enjoyed as a field commander.[6] Rommel left Italy on November 21 and began

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[5]OKW/WFSt/Op. 662642/43 g.Kdos.Chefs., [Telegram to the Naval Staff], 6 Nov 1943, as contained in Fuehrer Directives, II, 105.

[6]Desmond Young, Rommel, The Desert Fox (New York: Harper & Row, 1951), 149-151.

checking the defenses in Denmark early in December, finishing his work there in about ten days.[7] He and his staff then moved to northern France to start their inspection of the Channel sector.

By this time, the middle of December, several problems had emerged regarding Rommel and his position in and toward the western theater. First of all, what exactly was his position in the West? Clearly, he was responsible to the Fuehrer and not subordinate to Ob West. How long, therefore, was Rommel to have privileged access to Hitler without having to go through von Rundstedt as theater commander? Would this situation continue as long as Rommel remained in the area? Both Rommel and von Rundstedt agreed that Rommel's status ought to be clarified.[8]

The National Socialist dictator solved the issue on January 1, 1944, when he placed Rommel and his entire Army Group B staff under Theater Command West.[9] Hitler's order did single out two exceptions, however. The young Field Marshal and his headquarters personnel were to be available in case of a large-scale enemy attack on Denmark or if the

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[7]Vizadmiral Friedrich Ruge, "Rommel and the Atlantic Wall (Dec 1943-Jul 1944)," FMS, MS# A-982, 3-4. Admiral Ruge at this time was the Naval Liaison Officer on Rommel's staff. Since World War II, Ruge has held a number of important positions in the West German Navy.

[8]Harrison, Cross-Channel Attack, 246-247.

[9]OKW/WFSt/Op (N)/West Nr. 663174/43 g.K.Chefs., [Telegram], 1 Jan 1944, as contained in Fuehrer Directives, II, 118.

Fuehrer found it necessary to occupy Hungary (Operation "Margarete"). Nevertheless, in all other circumstances the head of Army Group B was to be subordinate to von Rundstedt.

Rommel's position in the West was further clarified on January 15 when the famous field commander was officially given control over the coastal region that stretched from the tip of Holland to the Loire River, or that area defended by Seventh Army, Fifteenth Army, and the Netherlands command.[10] In other words, while von Rundstedt remained overall theater commander, Rommel had been entrusted with overseeing the defensive effort in that sector where an Allied assault was considered most likely.

Even though the problem of fitting Rommel into the western command system had finally been solved, a second problem still persisted. The problem revolved around the basic defensive strategy to be employed in the West. More specifically, the issue has been depicted as a conflict in strategy between Rommel's idea of defeating the enemy on the beaches by positioning strong armored forces near the coast, and von Rundstedt's notion of placing the mobile reserves further inland but still capable of dealing a

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[10]Der Chef des Generalstabes der Heeresgruppe D des Oberbefehlshaber West, Ia Nr. 43/44 geh.Kdos.Ch., [Letter from Blumentritt to Jodl], T-311, Roll 27, Frames 7032403-7032404.

crushing blow against the Allies once they had landed.[11] It has therefore become known as the Rommel-von Rundstedt controvery. The significance of the controversy has been expanded by many writers to show that it was more than a disagreement over strategy. They see it, in addition, as an excellent illustration of Hitler's divide-and-rule concept by which the Fuehrer managed to perpetuate his dominant hold over the various elements of National Socialist society. Furthermore, these writers feel that the conflict between the two Field Marshals exemplifies the tensions that existed between the old and the new in

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[11]See, for example, Blumentritt, Von Rundstedt, 200-213; Ellis, Victory in the West, I, 118; Ronald Lewin, Rommel as Military Commander (Princeton: Van Nostrand, 1968), 211-218; Viscount Bernard Montgomery of Alamein, The Memoirs of Viscount Montgomery of Alamein (Cleveland: World Publishing Co., 1958), 19; Hans Speidel, We Defended Normandy, passim; Stacey, The Victory Campaign, 58; Stjernfelt, Alerte, 168-180; Chester Wilmot, The Struggle for Europe (New York: Harper, 1952), 190-193; Harvey A. DeWeerd, "The Reputation of Rommel," Yale Review, XXXVIII (1948/49), 67-81; Gerhard Loose, "The German High Command and the Invasion of France," Military Affairs, XI (Fall 1947), 159-160; and Leo Geyr von Schweppenburg, "Reflections on the Invasion," Military Review, XLI (February 1961), 2-11, and (March 1961), 12-21.

The controversy has also been discussed in a number of Foreign Military Studies interviews, including Oberst i.G. Anton Staubwasser, "Army Group B--Intelligence Estimate (1 Jun 1944)," MS# B-675, 2-3.13; Generalleutnant Max Pemsel, "Preparations for Invasion," MS# B-234, 28; Vizeadmiral Friedrich Ruge, "Rommel and the Atlantic Wall (Dec 1943-Jul 1944)," MS# A-982, 6-10; and Generalleutnant Bodo Zimmermann, "Ob West. Command Relationships (1943-45)," MS# B-308, 49-51. The most perceptive analysis remains Harrison, Cross-Channel Attack, 151-156, 246-258.

Germany, or in this instance, between the traditional, Prussian military caste as epitomized by von Rundstedt and the new, brash, aggressive National Socialist officer as typified by Rommel. And there is some truth in all of these allegations. Nevertheless, by examining these assertions in greater detail, a more accurate picture of the entire command controversy as well as the actual command situation in the West will emerge.

No doubt, areas of tension did exist between von Rundstedt and Rommel. The conflict over strategy, however, was more bitter and prolonged between Rommel and General Baron Geyr von Schweppenburg, the head of German Panzer Forces in the West, than it ever was between the two Field Marshals. To be sure, von Rundstedt both in October, 1942, and October, 1943, had proposed a strong mobile reserve.[12] Yet Commander-in-Chief West made other pronouncements on the subject which indicate that his preference for a strategic mobile force was not the only approach he advocated, nor was it an unalterable decision. On several occasions during these years Ob West exhorted German forces to destroy the enemy if possible in the water, or "at the

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[12]Der Oberbefehlshaber West, Ia Nr. 235/42 geh.Kdos. Ch., "Die Lage im Bereich des Oberbefehlshabers West," 14.10.1942, T-311, Roll 27, Frames 7032368; and Der Oberbefehlshaber West, Ia Nr. 550/43 g.Kdos.Ch., "Beurteilung der Lage Ob. West am 25.10.1943," 28.10.1943, ibid., Frame 7032438.

latest to smash him after reaching the coast."[13] "The goal," von Rundstedt emphasized, "must be to meet the enemy on the same day that he lands and throw him again into the sea."[14] Even in his October 28 report von Rundstedt did not opt solely for the mobile reserve alternative.[15] He stressed that every effort ought to be made with the existing coastal defenses to throw back the invading enemy before he ever reached shore. If, however, the Allies succeeded in breaching the German defenses, local reserves were to begin a counterthrust as soon as possible. Then a strong mobile striking force was to destroy what remained of the enemy. In brief, von Rundstedt did not tie himself to any one solution. He was attempting to strengthen the coastal defenses, increase the number of local reserves, and build up the mobile armored formations all at the same time and thus to retain operational flexibility.

Rommel's position was more straight forward and never deviated during the entire period prior to the Normandy

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[13]Oberbefehlshaber West, (Oberkommando Heeresgruppe D), Ia Nr. 1788/42 geh.Kdos., "Grundlegender Befehl des Oberbefehlshabers West Nr. 10," 2.7.1942, T-311, Roll 15, Frames 7026117-7026118.

[14]Oberbefehlshaber West, (Oberkommando Heeresgruppe D), Ia Nr. 997/43 geh.Kdos., "Grundlegender Befehl des Oberbefehlshabers West Nr. 21," 26.2.1943, T-78, Roll 317, Frames 6270792-6270793.

[15]Der Oberbefehlshaber West, Ia Nr. 550/43 g.Kdos.Ch., "Beurteilung der Lage am 25.10.1943," 28.10.1943, T-311, Roll 27, Frames 7032437-7032438.

landing. To Rommel, the main line of resistance (Haupt-Kampf-Linie) was the coast. The invading enemy should be engaged in force on or near the coastline and prevented at all coasts from establishing a bridgehead.[16] To accomplish this task strong German panzer divisions should be placed as far forward as possible so that they could launch an immediate counterattack against any major Allied assault. "The battle for the coast will probably be over in a few hours and, if experience is any judge, the rapid intervention of forces coming up from the rear will be decisive."[17] One should not conclude that the young Field Marshal was opposed to a strategic mobile reserve, for he was not, but he felt strongly that large armored forces positioned near the coast should be given first priority.[18] In fact, Rommel doubted if the Allies could be beaten--at least in open battle--once they had established themselves

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[16]Oberkommando der Heeresgruppe B, Ia Nr. 138/43 g.Kdos.Chefs., "Bericht zur Verteidigungsbereitschaft in Artois," 31/12.1943, ibid., Frames 7032494-7032495; [AOK 15], "Besprechung mit Feldmarschall Rommel an 20.12.43," 20.12.1943, T-312, Roll 509, Frame 7106019; Generalmajor Rudolf von Gersdorff, "Critique of the Defense against Invasion," FMS, MS# A-895, 4-5; and Erwin Rommel, The Rommel Papers, Ed. by Basil H. Liddell Hart, Trans. by Paul Finlay (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1953), 454-455.

[17]Ibid., 455.

[18]Generalleutnant Dr. Hans Speidel, "Rommel's Views (1 Apr-May 1944)," FMS, MS# B-720, 12.

on the continent.[19]

General Geyr von Schweppenburg disagreed.[20] The head of Panzer Group West, who was directly subordinate to von Rundstedt, was convinced that placing mobile reserves near endangered sectors along the coast would merely have a splintering effect. It would be much more effective, according to Geyr, to concentrate strong German panzer forces further to the rear, but ready to strike decisively once the main Allied landing had been identified. After all, where the Anglo-Americans might be expected to attack was an open question. One could expect, in this regard, a series of small enemy operations and deceptions before it was possible to pinpoint the exact location of his major effort.

Furthermore, it was recognized that a large Allied assault in certain coastal regions could not be prevented.

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[19]Oberkommando der Heeresgruppe B, Ia Nr. 138/43 g.Kdos. Chefs., "Bericht zur Verteidigungsbereitschaft in Artois," 31.12.1943, T-311, Roll 27, Frame 7032494; and General der Flakartillerie Wolfgang Pickert, "III Flak Corps (May-14 Sep 1944)," FMS, MS# B-597, 9.

[20]The following two paragraphs are taken from Rommel, The Rommel Papers, 469; Leo Geyr von Schweppenburg, "Reflections on the Invasion," Military Review, XLI (February 1961), 2; and especially Panzer-Gruppen-Kommando West, Der Chef des Generalstabes, Ia Nr. 17/44 g.Kdos.Chef., "Gedankliche Beschaeftigung mit der Frage des Einsatzes der operativen Reserven," 30.1.44, T-311, Roll 27, Frames 7032392-7032393. The author has concluded in this instance that the views of Geyr's Chief of Staff, Generalmajor Edler von Davans, reflect those of his commander.

Would it not therefore be better, Geyr asked, to have strategic motorized formations prepared to counterattack in force at a critical moment than to have the mobile reserve dispersed behind several different coastal fronts? Geyr conceded that some armored divisions might have to be deployed during the "battle for the coast" to prevent an Allied breakthrough, but as soon as German officials designated the area of the main enemy attack, "all fast units--even those engaged on near-by fronts--would be led together into battle" to deal the Western Powers a devastating defeat.[21]

The Rommel-Geyr dispute did not abate throughout the spring of 1944. Both commanders held fast to their original positions regarding the use of mobile reserves, even though both of them should have been more amenable to compromise since they were well aware that the British and the Americans possessed vast naval and air superiority, and that the Allies would, in all likelihood, use airborne troops in conjunction with the main landing attempt.[22]

Logically the quarreling commanders expected von Rundstedt to settle the controversy, and Ob West at this juncture tended to favor, though not exclusively, Geyr's solution. On February 24, 1944, von Rundstedt insisted

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[21] Ibid., Frame 7032393.

[22] Ibid., Frame 7032392; and Rommel, The Rommel Papers, 469.

that Wehrmacht formations defending the coast were to be backed up by three separate echelons of reserve units.[23] The first echelon was to be made up of tactical reserves under the local divisional commanders, and these troops were to begin an immediate counterthrust if the Allies succeeded in gaining a foothold.

If the Western Powers were still able to get a portion of their forces past the coastal zone, they were to be met by additional reserves under the direction of the specific Army or Corps commander responsible for the area. This intermediate reserve force was to be positioned initially as close to the coast as possible, depending on the terrain and the range of the enemy's ship artillery. The placement of these reserve units coincided more with Rommel's thinking with one important exception--they were not armored divisions. The panzer formations were to be placed behind the Army or Corps reserve as part of Theater Command West's reserve group, which was led by General Geyr. Von Rundstedt stressed, however, that these armored divisions were to be ultimately under his control and were to be deployed "so that they can attack the coast within the shortest possible time, [but] without being committed

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[23]Oberbefehlshaber West, (Oberkommando Heeresgruppe D), Ia Nr. 1656/44 geh.Kdos., "Grundlegende Befehl des Oberbefehlshabers West Nr. 37," 24.2.1944, T-311, Roll 15, Frames 7016379-7016381.

prematurely into combat against my instructions."[24] Thus, Commander-in-Chief West's position regarding the use of panzer units accorded with Geyr's view with one difference. Whereas Geyr preferred placing the mobile forces further inland in order to meet the enemy in open battle, von Rundstedt wanted them positioned nearer the coast.

Nonetheless, neither Geyr nor Rommel was completely satisfied with von Rundstedt's solution, although the Western Theater Commander's decision was clearly an attempt on his part not to upset unduly either of his subordinate commanders.[25] After all, although Rommel and Geyr had different goals in mind, both were competent commanders, and both were pursuing objectives with which von Rundstedt concurred. With Rommel devoting his tireless energy to strengthening the coastal defenses, and with Geyr busy training the panzer forces for strategic employment, especially in order to execute such maneuvers as night-time combat and anti-airborne tactics, Ob West undoubtedly hoped that his decision would signal an end of the dispute.

But Rommel and Geyr remained dissatisfied, and both attempted to enlist other influential Wehrmacht leaders to side with them. Geyr, for example, received support from

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[24] Ibid., Frame 7016381.

[25] [AOK 15], "Besprechungspunkte Feldm. Rommel mit A.O.K. 15," 17.1.44, T-312, Roll 515, Frames 8113777-8113778; and Leo Geyr von Schweppenburg, "Reflections on the Invasion," Military Review, XLI (February 1961), 9.

General Heinz Guderian, at this time over-all Inspector of German Armored Forces, who agreed with Geyr that German mobile formations ought to be positioned in the interior.[26] Rommel, on the other hand, at a meeting on March 20, 1944, went so far as to request the Armed Forces High Command (OKW) that all mobile forces in the West be placed under his command and that he be allowed tactical control over all military units in the theater, including those formations south of the Loire River.[27]

Von Rundstedt proceeded after the conference to meet Rommel half-way in his requests. On March 24, the older Field Marshal gave Rommel some of the control that the latter desired over a portion of the reserve mobile units.[28] All motorized divisions located in the region commanded by Rommel were to participate in training exercises conducted by Army Group B, and he could also move these divisions

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[26] [AOK 15], "Besuch von Gen. Oberst Guderian beim AOK am 7.2.44," 7.2.44, T-312, Roll 515, Frame 8113762; and Heinz Guderian, Panzer Leader, Translated by Contantine Fitzgibbon (New York: Ballatine Books, 1957), 261-266.

[27] Rommel, The Rommel Papers, 469; and KTB/OKW, IV, 277, 300.

[28] Der Oberbefehlshaber West, Ia Nr. 2434/44 g.Kdos., [Directive from von Rundstedt to Rommel], 24.3.1944, T-311, Roll 23, Frames 7027172-7027174. Von Rundstedt had already intimated on December 27 that he was going to utilize armored divisions near the coast as soon as he had more of them at his disposal (Der Oberbefehlshaber West, Ia Nr. 818/43 geh.Kdos.Ch., [Letter from von Rundstedt to von Salmuth], 27.12.1943, T-312, Roll 514, Frame 9112912.

within his area of responsibility upon approval from both Ob West and OKW. Most importantly, the young Field Marshal was to receive tactical control over part of Ob Wests armored reserve, although the exact number was to be determined by von Rundstedt. In addition, "in order to do justice in preparing Army Group B for other possible command duties," von Rundstedt empowered Rommel to inspect the defenses south of the Loire and along the French Mediterranean coast and to report back to him any suggestions Rommel might have for strengthening the area.[29] In other words, von Rundstedt was asking Rommel, who had already been in the south for a few days in February, to acquaint himself further with this other portion of the western theater so that, if necessary, he could assume additional responsibilities in southern France.

Commander-in-Chief's action, of course, left him in ultimate control of the panzer forces while dividing tactical responsibility for these units between Geyr and Rommel. The theater commander's directive also allowed him to strengthen his intermediate reserve force, or those formations deployed between the coast and the strategic reserve further to the rear, by giving his tactical com-

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[29]Der Oberbefehlshaber West, Ia Nr. 2434/44 g.Kdos., [Directive from von Rundstedt to Rommel], 24.3.1944, T-311, Roll 23, Frame 7027174; and Armeeoberkommando 1, Ia Nr. 017/44 g.K.Chefs., "Vortragsnotiz anlaesslich des Besuch des Generalfeldmarschalls Rommel," 9.2.1944, T-312, Roll 28, Frames 7535090-7535091.

mander, in this case Rommel, control over some of these units. Furthermore, this writer is convinced that, even though tensions did exist between von Rundstedt and the head of Army Group B, Ob West was greatly impressed by Rommel's leadership ability and felt that he deserved more authority.[30]

Therefore, von Rundstedt was hopeful at the end of March that the compromise worked out over the command controversy would prove to be permanent. According to the compromise, Ob West still retained final supervision over all of the armored units in the theater. Rommel would be given a mobile reserve force for use near the coast, and Geyr, though his command authority had been decreased, would continue to direct those armored formations positioned further inland.

The problem was that Rommel wanted even more authority.[31] It was at this stage of the controversy that the

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[30]Oberbefehlshaber West, (Oberkommando Heeresgruppe D), Ia Nr. 1656/44 geh.Kdos., "Grundlegender Befehl des Oberbefehlshabers West, Nr. 37," T-311, Roll 15, Frame 7016385; [Ob West], Geh.Kdos., "Besprechungs-Notizen zur Besprechungs des Heeren Oberbefehlshabers West am 8.5.," 8.5.44, T-311, Roll 24, Frame 7028384. Von Rundstedt had even said as early as November 18, 1943, that Rommel's group might be entrusted with leading the strategic counterattack (Der Oberbefehlshaber West, [Oberkommando Heeresgruppe D], Ia Nr. 673/43 geh.Kdos.Ch., "Vorbereitung fuer den Kampf," 18.11.1943, T-78, Roll 317, Frames 6271440-6271441).

[31]Generalmajor Horst von Buttlar-Brandenfels, "OB West: Command Relationships. (Commentary on MS# B-308)," FMS, MS# B-672, 15; Rommel, The Rommel Papers, 469; and Wilmot, The Struggle for Europe, 193.

Fuehrer at Rommel's urging became directly involved, and on this occasion, as in so many other instances during the war, Hitler's intervention was decisive. On April 9, the National Socialist leader declared that he was in general agreement with von Rundstedt's solution regarding command relationships in the West. But in the next sentence Hitler revived the controversy again by asking if "all or only part of the fast units should be made subordinate to Army Group B in all respects?"[32] On this issue the Fuehrer said he himself would render a decision.

Hitler's final ruling nearly three weeks later on April 27 closely resembled von Rundstedt's earlier solution with one crucial exception.[33] This exception concerned the strategic reserve. Of the ten armored divisions stationed in the western theater, three would be placed under the tactical control of Army Group B; three would be given to the soon-to-be formed Army Group G, which was eventually to direct Germany's defensive effort in the south of France; and four would continue to function as a

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[32]Oberbefehlshaber West, Ia Nr. 2893/44 geh.Kdos., 9.4.44, T-311, Roll 23, Frame 7027607.

[33]This paragraph is based on [Ob West], G.Kdos., "Tagesmeldung," 27.4.44, T-311, Roll 23, Frame 7027425.

strategic reserve.[34] These four armored units, however, instead of remaining under Theater Command West's supervision, were to be subject to Hitler's personal command. They could not be moved or sent into battle except by direct order from the Fuehrer. What Hitler had done, in essence, was to eliminate Ob Wests control over the strategic reserve that the latter had worked so hard to create. Even its name was changed to the more appropriate OKW-Reserve.

It was this decision which probably promoted an embittered von Rundstedt to tell a Canadian interrogator after the war, "As Commander-in-Chief West my only authority was to change the guard in front of my gate."[35] The decision did not please Rommel either, and the head of Army Group B continued to agitate for more control over the armored units. His last attempt came in May. In this instance, von Rundstedt, after receiving a telephone call from a member of the OKW staff, notified Rommel to strengthen the defenses in the Normandy and Brittany sectors.[36] The

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[34]German officials divided the specific motorized units in the West as follows: The Panzer Lehr Division, which was just returning to the West, and the 1st SS Panzer, 12th SS Panzer, and 17th Panzer Grenadier divisions made up the strategic reserve; Army Group B was to be responsible for 2nd Panzer, 21st Panzer, and 116th Panzer divisions; and Army Group G for 2nd SS Panzer, 9th Panzer, and 11th Panzer divisions (Ob West, Ia Nr. 3565/44 g.Kdos., "Stand der Neuaufstellungen," 4.5.44, T-311, Roll 24, Frame 7028278).

[35]As cited in Stacey, The Victory Campaign, 58-59.

[36][Oberbefehlshaber West], G.Kdos., "Tagesmeldung," 2.5.44, T-311, Roll 24, Frames 7028080-7028081.

great field captain responded by advocating that the OKW-Reserve be placed near the Normandy and Brittany coasts, and that the reserve force be put under his command.[37] Ob West turned down the proposal as a "premature commitment" of these mobile units, and Hitler quite naturally backed von Rundstedt, for Rommel's request would have had the effect of doing away with the Fuehrer's control over the strategic reserve in the West.[38]

Was Hitler's final decision, then, a classic example of the Fuehrer's divide-and-rule technique? And did his earlier inaction during the first four months of 1944 serve the same purpose? The answer to these questions is a qualified yes. To be sure, Hitler's failure to step in at first tended to heighten the frictions between von Rundstedt and Rommel, or more properly between Rommel and General Geyr, and Rommel in particular eventually looked to the National Socialist dictator for a ruling. Moreover, the German commanders in the West grudgingly agreed to Hitler's solution, and the Fuehrer thereby strengthened his decision-making power over military developments in the theater.

Nevertheless, Hitler's success has to be qualified to the extent that he was unable to consolidate his personal

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[37] [Oberbefehlshaber West], G.Kdos., "Tagesmeldung," 4.5.44. ibid., Frame 7028086.

[38] Ibid.

hold over the Wehrmacht leaders in western Europe. In fact, the Fuehrer's decision to take over control of the strategic reserve tended to alienate Germany's military commanders in the West from the National Socialist dictator and to substantiate the notion, already widespread in military circles, that Hitler's egomania was leading Germany toward ultimate disaster. In the end, Geyr and especially Rommel were won over to the necessity of overthrowing the Fuehrer, and although von Rundstedt was unwilling to join actively in any plot against Hitler, the fact that Ob West allowed such talk and plans to go on in his vicinity would indicate that he was in sympathy at least with the immediate changes being sought by the conspirators.[39]

In light of the small but growing opposition to Hitler, one might ask further why the combat commanders in the West did not become more actively involved than they did in the plot against Hitler. At least part of the answer can be attributed to the pressing military situation in the western theater. The Germans had anticipated an Anglo-American invasion since the middle of February. By this time, in May, it could be expected at any moment. Von Rundstedt and his other military leaders in the West realized they had to

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[39]Hans Rothfels, The German Opposition to Hitler (Trans. by Lawrence Wilson, London: Wolff, 1961), 73-74; and Constantine FitzGibbon, 20 July (New York: Berkeley Publishing Corp., 1956), 150-158. It was perhaps not accidental that only in the West did the conspirators achieve temporary success in the July 20, 1944, assassination attempt on Hitler's life.

reconcile themselves to Hitler's decision regarding the strategic reserve as well as to subdue their own differences if they hoped to meet the Allied Powers with any hope of success.

On May 8, Theater Command West called together his most important subordinate commanders, including Rommel and Geyr, for a final meeting on strategy before the impending battle.[40] Von Rundstedt, in his brief remarks, stressed that the battle for the coast was now considered decisive and must be won at all costs. Everything must be in readiness to strike at the enemy while he was still in the water or on the beaches, and all remaining efforts should be made with that objective in mind. Ob West went on to conclude that he was confident of victory over the Allied invaders, especially with the recent bolstering of the coastal defenses. In this regard von Rundstedt said he wished especially to thank Field Marshal Rommel for his initiative and his energy in improving the defensive posture along the coast. With this conciliatory gesture toward the head of Army Group B, von Rundstedt doubtlessly hoped to unify his commanders for the imminent enemy attack.

The senior commander's praise of Rommel should not lead one to conclude, however, that no areas of tension existed between the two Field Marshals. As was pointed out

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[40][Oberbefehlshaber West], G.Kdos., "Besprechungs-Notizen zur Besprechungs der Herren Oberbefehlshaber West am 8.5.," 8.5.44, T-311, Roll 24, Frames 7028384-7028385.

earlier, von Rundstedt and Rommel disagreed in certain instances over strategy. In addition, there were also differences of outlook as well as in their style of command. Nevertheless, to depict these differences as leading to an irreconcilable conflict between the two men would be misleading.

In terms of outlook, there was the normal conflict between the younger and the older generation. Von Rundstedt had been a professional soldier for nearly fifty years.[41] Since he had been brought up in a Prussian family and had served in the Army since 1893, fellow German officers looked upon him as a symbol of a bygone age, as a figure out of the glorious Imperial past. Many of his associates viewed him further as the epitome of the Prussian military tradition--polite, taciturn, religious, outwardly cosmo-

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[41]The following sketch of von Rundstedt is taken from Heiber (ed.), Hitlers Lagebesprechungen, 335; Generalleutnant Bodo Zimmermann, "OB West. Command Relationships (1943-45)," FMS, MS# B-308, 13-14; General der Infanterie Guenther Blumentritt, "OB West," FMS, MS# B-344, 77-79, 82-84, and Generalleutnant Dr. Hans Speidel, "OB West; Command Relationships. Commentary on MS# B-308," FMS, MS# B-718, 13-14. Chester Wilmot's contention in The Struggle for Europe that von Rundstedt had "lost his grip" (p. 190) is difficult to uphold in view of his subsequent command activity on the Western front during late 1944 and early 1945.

politan--a personification of the last Teutonic knight.[42] Yet they respected him as a keen strategist and as a person who knew his trade well.[43]

Rommel, on the other hand, was thought of as the new breed of German officer. He, too, was a professional, but of a different type.[44] Rommel was the son of a Wuerttemberg schoolmaster and was not tied so strongly to the past. His contemporaries considered him brave, aggressive, willful, a brilliant tactician, a master of the technical aspects of modern warfare. He was most famous for his exploits in the North African campaign, and the German people thought of him even during the war as a

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[42]Von Rundstedt was actually not quite as chivalrous as his supporters would lead one to believe. In a report issued by Theater Command West toward the end of 1942, he suggested that Russian prisoners be transported West to work on the Atlantic Wall. One of the advantages, von Rundstedt pointed out, in using Russian labor was that they were "simple spirits," and if they did not obey, they could simply be shot (Oberbefehlshaber West, Ia Nr. 235/43 g.K.Ch., "Der Lage im Bereich des Oberbefehlshabers West," 14.10.1942, T-311, Roll 27, Frames 7032372-7032373).

[43]General Blumentritt, his Chief of Staff, remarked after the war, for instance, that von Rundstedt "had a photographic memory for 1:1,000,000 maps" (General der Infanterie Guenther Blumentritt, "OB West," FMS, MS# B-344, 79).

[44]Among the many evaluations of Rommel, see Vizeadmiral Friedrich Ruge, "Rommel and the Atlantic Wall (Dec 1943-Jul 1944)," FMS, MS# A-982, 6-7; Generalleutnant Bodo Zimmermann, "OB West. Command Relationships (1943-45)," FMS, MS# B-308, 55-56; Blumentritt, Von Rundstedt, 204-207; Warlimont, Im Hauptquartier, 435-437; Speidel, We Defended Normandy, 54-57, 54-57; Lewin, Rommel, passim; and Young, Rommel, passim.

superior field captain and as a soldier's general. In short, according to National Socialist propaganda, he was a man who exemplified everything an officer in the Wehrmacht ought to be.

There was also another basic distinction between Rommel and von Rundstedt, the difference in their command style. The older Field Marshal was a staff commander. He normally stayed near his headquarters and delegated a great deal of responsibility to his staff and his field commanders, giving them as much latitude as possible in carrying out his orders.[45] He was a stickler for conformity to general principles, but left the details to his subordinates.

Rommel was a more dynamic commander. He took the lead and inspired his men by his example.[46] He drove his troops hard and himself even more. He was interested in detailed instructions as well as in strategy and was more at home on the front lines than he was in a staff headquarters. Both methods of command, of course, can be effective, even though in this situation a preference for

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[45]Der Oberbefehlshaber West, Ia Nr. 3442/44 geh.Kdos., "Grundlegender Befehl des Oberbefehlshaber West Nr. 38," 7.5.1944, T-311, Roll 24, Frames 7028351-7028352; Generalleutnant Bodo Zimmermann, "OB West. Command Relationships (1943-45)," FMS, MS# B-308, 14-15; and Blumentritt, Von Rundstedt, 120.

[46]Warlimont, Im Hauptquartier, 435-437; Generalleutnant Bodo Zimmermann, "OB West. Command Relationships (1943-45)," FMS, MS# B-308, 55; and Speidel, We Defended Normandy, 54-55.

one technique or the other did lead at times to frictions between the two commanders and their respective staffs.[47]

Still the differences between von Rundstedt and the head of Army Group B can be overdone. Both individuals were above all soldiers and enjoyed the military life. Both were in general apolitical, but believed strongly in duty to the state. Though they saw limitations in the National Socialist system, they willingly served in its Army. Finally, they respected each other, although Rommel on occasion became impatient with the chief of German forces in the West.[48]

This respect between the two Field Marshals, especially of von Rundstedt toward Rommel, helped lead to an alternation in the commander structure in western Europe during the first five months of 1944. Ob West gave Rommel considerable command responsibility, but Rommel wanted more control over the strategic motorized units held in reserve. He appealed to Hitler to intervene, but the Fuehrer's decision--to take over the ultimate direction of the panzer formations himself--please neither of the two commanders. In effect, von Rundstedt had had his command authority in

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[47]Blumentritt, Von Rundstedt, 204.

[48]Generalfeldmarschall Gerd von Rundstedt, "OB West, Command Relationships. Commentary on MS# B-308," FMS, MS# B-633, as contained in Generalleutnant Bodo Zimmermann, "OB West, Command Relationships (1943-45)," FMS, MS# B-308, 52; and General der Infanterie Guenther Blumentritt, "OB West," FMS, MS# B-344, 79-81.

the West greatly diminished, and Rommel had not received any additional control over the armored divisions.

In the meantime, a new echelon of command--Army Group B under Rommel and another army group south of the Loire--had been created. These two new army groups brought about a new division of tactical command authority in the western theater.[49] Theater Command West was still in overall command, but subject to more control by OKW. One army group was now to look after the less endangered Atlantic and Mediterranean coasts of southern France. The other, Rommel's Army Group B, was responsible for the German defensive effort in the highly threatened sector along the Channel coast. Rommel, with the backing of von Rundstedt, was to become the driving force in this effort.

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[49]Der Oberbefehlshaber West, Ia Nr. 3442/44 geh.Kdos., "Grundlegender Befehl des Oberbefehlshabers West Nr. 38," 7.5.1944, T-311, Roll 24, Frames 7028346-7028347.

CHAPTER VI

Strengthening the Wall

By the end of 1943 both Rommel and von Rundstedt fully realized that an Allied invasion from the West was not far off. More precisely, they felt it was only a matter of months, perhaps six at the most, before British and American forces would launch a full-scale assault on the continent. The most pressing problem, of course, was how to stop a thoroughly-prepared and well-equipped enemy from gaining a foothold in western Europe.

The two Field Marshals as well as the other commanders in the theater were in agreement that they needed to accomplish at least two additional measures if the Wehrmacht were to cope effectively with the Western Allies.[1] One measure, which has already been described, was to establish a mobile reserve. The other was to strengthen the defensive set-up along the coast. To be certain, considerable progress had already been made on the Western defenses during

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[1]Der Oberbefehlshaber West, Ia Nr. 550/43 g.Kdos.Ch., "Beurteilung der Lage Ob. West am 25.10.1943," 28.10.1943, T-311, Roll 27, Frames 7032440-7032441, 7032471-7032472; and Oberkommando der Heeresgruppe B, Ia Nr. 138/43 g.Kdos. Chefs., "Bericht zur Verteidigungsbereitschaft im Artois," 31.12.1943, ibid., Frames 7032493-7032499.

the past two years, but German officials still felt that the Atlantic Wall fortifications were far from adequate. It was in this latter regard, in relation to the build-up of the coastal defenses, that Rommel made his greatest impact on developments in the West.

The 1944 building plans called for several different types of construction programs.[2] One of the programs consisted mainly of improving the existing permanent defenses, although the Germans were not opposed to erecting, if necessary, completely new installations. The second program, and the one with which Rommel became most closely associated, dealt with strengthening and increasing the number of field-type fortifications along the coast. In this way the Atlantic Wall would become more than a mere series of knotpoints interspersed along the coast. Instead, the Germans hoped to make the Wall into a truly comprehensive system of fortifications. In both instances, in terms of permanent and field-type defenses, the task was clear: to build them as fast as possible with every resource available.

Rommel readily accepted the challenge. Prior to 1944 the German building program in the West had stressed large,

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[2]Oberbefehlshaber West, (Oberkommando Heeresgruppe D), Ia Nr. 1656/44 geh.Kdos., "Grundlegender Befehl des Oberbefehlshabers West Nr. 27," 24.2.44, T-311, Roll 15, Frame 7016385; and Oberbefehlshaber West, (Oberkommando Heeresgruppe D), Ia/Ia T/Gen. Ing. b. Ob West Insp. d. L. West/ Nr. 1150 g.K., "Grundlegender Befehl des Oberbefehlshabers West Nr. 22," 3.11.43, T-311, Roll 21, Frames 7024111-7024114.

permanent-type installations, such as those specialized in by the Todt organization. Now, with Rommel's arrival, this emphasis was to change. Even though the Germans did not actually neglect heavy construction projects during the first part of 1944, they increasingly turned their attention to strengthening the smaller fortifications as well as to erecting other types of obstacles.[3]

Rommel's position was that the enemy must be engaged immediately on landing.[4] This meant, as discussed previously, that an armored reserve positioned near the coast would prove helpful, but it also meant that the coastline itself must be heavily fortified, and, in this connection, big, reinforced-concrete structures alone would simply not be sufficient. They had to be supplemented by other types of defenses.

The plan advocated by the former head of the Africa Corps had von Rundstedt's enthusiastic support, and it included a variety of measures by which to disrupt an Allied

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[3]Generalmajor Horst von Buttlar-Brandenfels, "OB West: Command Relationships. Commentary on MS# B-308," FMS, MS# B-672, 14.

[4]The following paragraph is based on Oberkommando der Heeresgruppe B, Ia Nr. 138/43 g.Kdos.Chefs., "Bericht zur Verteidigungsbereitschaft im Artois," 31.12.1943, T-311, Roll 27, Frames 7032491-7032499.

landing.[5] Army and Navy engineers in the West had already started utilizing a number of the techniques advocated by Rommel, such as providing added protection for coastal artillery emplacements, laying land mines, and flooding low-lying areas near the coast.[6] Some of the other hindrances, such as foreshore obstacles and anti-airborne stakes, had not been used previously in the theater. The significant point was that Rommel persistently pushed forward all of these measures, and by June considerable progress had been realized.

Regarding the specific types of projects undertaken, engineering troops started covering the heavy infantry weapon positions, the command posts, and even the machine-gun nests that lay in the coastal zone.[7] The same was true of the coastal artillery batteries, many of which were being

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[5] Ob West declared in a Basic Order on February 24, "There can be no doubt as to the value I place in field-type construction. Many things are possible: large minefields, earthworks, flooding, hindrances of all kinds. For the inventive spirit there are no limits. [For example,] the Commander of Army Group B has begun the erection of hindrances in the water for use against enemy landing craft, and this program is to be propelled forward." (Oberbefehlshaber West, [Oberkommando Heeresgruppe D], Ia Nr. 1656/44 geh.Kdos., "Grundlegender Befehl des Oberbefehlshabers West Nr. 37," 24.2.44, T-311, Roll 15, Frame 7016385).

[6] Vizeadm. Friedrich Ruge and Generalleutnant Friedrich Dihm, "Rommel and the Atlantic Wall (Dec 1943-Jul 1944)," FMS, MS# A-982, 9-10.

[7] The following paragraph is drawn from ibid.; and Generalmajor Horst von Buttlar-Brandenfels, "OB West: Command Relationships. Commentary on MS# B-308," FMS, MS# B-672, 19.

emplaced in concrete bunkers between the larger, fortress-like installations. The Germans also began moving other artillery pieces so that they would be more secure from Alied air and ship bombardments. In certain instances the engineers went so far as to construct dummy positions in order to deceive the enemy. Surrounding the strongpoints or resistance nets were numerous firing trenches, antitank walls, tank traps, and barbed wire entanglements as well as natural barriers of all kinds.

In between the strongpoints the Germans proceeded to flood stretches of low ground behind the coastal sector. Although the amount of flooding was considerable, especially in Holland and Belgium, it was not as extensive as it might have been.[8]

Wehrmacht officials seemed to prefer the use of land mines, and Rommel pushed this aspect of the program with particular energy.[9] In the two years prior to October 30, 1943, German engineering specialists had laid 1,882,895

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[8]Inspekteur der Landesbefestigung West, Der Chef des Stabes Nr. 1741/43 g.K.Ch., "Ueberschwemmung der rechten Flanke des Abschnittes Calais," 2.1.1944, T-311, Roll 27, Frame 7032526; Oberbefehlshaber West, (Oberkommando Heeresgruppe D), Ia Nr. 3900/44, "Bericht des Sonderstabes Oehmichen," 17.5.1944, T-312, Roll 1568, Frame 000698; and KTB/OKW, IV, 304-305.

[9][AOK 15], G.Kdos., "Besprechungspunkte Feldm. Rommel mit A.O.K. 15," 17.1.44, T-312, Roll 515, Frames 8113777-8113778. See also the excerpt from the Army Group B War Diary in Rommel, The Rommel Papers, 457-458.

antitank and antipersonnel mines in the West.[10] By Ma 30, 1944, within a space of seven months, the number had risen about three and a half times to 6,508,330 mines.[11] This figure may have falled far short of Rommel's own estimate that at least fifty million mines would be necessary to set up a continuous defensive belt around the western theater, but nevertheless, the Germans could still point to a great deal of progress since the beginning of the year.[12]

The most important new defensive technique introduced by Rommel was the use of foreshore obstacles.[13] These obstacles, placed along the beaches, were designed to serve a number of purposes. They would fill-in the defenses between the strongpoints. They would help protect the more

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[10]General der Pioniere, (Oberkommando Heeresgruppe D), (II)/Ia Nr. 971 g.K., "Minenverlegung," 30.10.1943, T-311, Roll 26, Frame 7031739.

[11]Stabs-Offz. d.Pion. b. Ob. West, Nr. 140/44 g.Kdos., "Minenmeldung-Stand 30.5.44," 2.6.44, T-311, Roll 28, Frame 7034017.

[12]Harrison, Cross-Channel Attack, 264.

[13]The following description of the various foreshore hindrances is taken from Ruge, Sea Warefare, 362; Stacey, The Victory Campaign, 69; Morison, The Invasion, 101, 113-115; Harrison, Cross-Channel Attack, 250-251; Stjernfelt, Alerte, 177-178; Young, Rommel, 158-159; Rommel, The Rommel Papers, 458-459; Armeooberkommando 1, Ia Nr. 461/44 g.Kdos., 10.2.1944, T-312, Roll 28, Frame 7535103; Oberbefehlshaber West, (Oberkommando Heeresgruppe D), Ia Nr. 3900/44 g.K., "Bericht des Sonderstabes Oehmichen," 17.5.1944, T-312, Roll 1568, Frame 000697; and Der Oberbefehlshaber der Heeresgruppe B, Ia Nr. 2050/44 geh., 22.5.44, T-311, Roll 3, Frames 7002123-7002126.

remote reaches along the coast. And they might even lead the Allies to postpone their landing for a short time in order to put their troops through additional training, thus allowing German units to gain precious time in the defensive build-up.[14]

The plan was to position the underwater obstructions in three or four rows along the beaches so that they could disrupt an amphibious operation, whether it came at high- or low-tide. The row located closest to land would be effective against an Allied assault at high-tide, while the rows lying further seaward would hinder an enemy invasion at low-tide. Fortunately for the Western Powers, who attacked on D-Day on a rising tide, only the obstructions in the upper half of the tidal range had been completed.

The actual obstacles consisted of a number of ingenious devices. The simplest device was an eight-to-ten foot wooden or concrete stake driven into the beach and angled toward the sea. Some of them had mines or grenades attached, and all of them, when submerged, could damage the bottom of a landing craft advancing rapidly toward shore. Along the same line were V-shaped, ramp-like structures that sloped seaward and were armed with mines or old artillery shells designed to explode on impact.

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[14]Oberst i.G. Anton Staubwasser, "Army Group B--Intelligence Estimate (1 Jun 1944)," FMS, MS# B-675, 4.

A third type of obstacle was the concrete tetrahedron. This pyramid-shaped object was six feet high, weighed nearly a ton, and it, too, could be mined or could tear a hole in the bottom of a landing craft. Another effective beach hindrance was an obsolete tank obstacle called the "hedgehog." It was made up of three, seven-foot steel girders, bent at right angles, and welded together in the middle so that it resembled a jackstone used in the game of jacks. The sharp points that extended in all directions from the center of the "hedgehog" acted like a "can opener" on incoming naval craft.

Lastly, there were "Belgian gates," which, as the name implies, looked like gates that would mark the entrance to a country estate. In reality, they were heavy, steel, antitank structures erected by the Belgians before the war and placed along their border with Germany. Standing about nine feet high and measuring nine feet across, a few of them had mines attached, and these mines were often coated with tar to make them impervious to water.

The number of hindrances that were placed along the coast may not have come up to Rommel's expectations, but by the middle of May over half a million foreshore obstacles had been positioned on the Channel beaches, and 31,000 of

them had been fitted with mines.[15] Laid further out to sea, but still complementing the beach obstructions, were a variety of sea mines, which exacted their toll on Allied shipping both during and after the invasion.[16]

To complete the system of smaller defenses, the young Field Marshal also had installed behind the coast another innovation called "Rommel Asparagus."[17] This anti-paratroop and anti-glider device consisted of tall, pointed stakes driven into the ground and spaced so that an area which had once been flat and in the open took on the appearance of a field of wooden spears. German engineers further planned to put captured shells at the top of some of the stakes, and all of the shells were then to be connected by a wire so that if an airborne troop or glider hit the wire, the shells would detonate. At the time of the invasion, however, the stakes had neither been wired together nor fitted with explosives.

Organization Todt and engineering personnel supervised the erection of these anti-landing stakes as well as other obstacles and field-type defenses, but the combat

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[15]May 13 entry in the War Diary of Army Group B as cited in Rommel, The Rommel Papers, 458.

[16]Harrison, Cross-Channel Attack, 250-252; and Morison, The Invasion, 46-47.

[17]Among the many descriptions of the anti-landing obstacles, see ibid., 89; Rommel, The Rommel Papers, 470-471; and Blumentritt, Von Rundstedt, 205-207.

troops themselves often undertook the actual work.[18] To be sure, O.T. laborers and the Navy and Army engineers played an active part in laying cement casements and in completing specialty jobs, such as minelaying and setting up communications equipment, but a large portion of the work crews in the West continued to engage in large building projects rather than concentrating on smaller works.

Considering the short amount of time that remained before the anticipated invasion, the Germans decided not to utilize their construction workers primarily to erect more big, permanent fortifications, but instead to improve the ones that had already been built. Von Rundstedt's report in October, 1943, had pointed the way in this direction by emphasizing that permanent defenses were essential and valuable, "but they are not impregnable, and they are not a panacea for everything."[19] It was better, he insisted, to have a few, well-constructed and well-protected fortifications that would prove effective against all kinds of enemy operations than it was to begin a number of new defense installations that would not be ready and

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[18]Generalleutnant Joseph Reichert, "711th Infantry Division (1 Apr 1943-24 Jul 1944)," FMS, MS# B-403, 4-6; and Generalmajor Wilhelm Ullersperger, "Nineteenth Army--Fortress Engineers (1943-Aug 1944)," FMS, MS# B-449, 1-11.

[19]Der Oberbefehlshaber West, Ia Nr. 550/43 g.Kdos.Ch., "Beurteilung der Lage Ob. West am 25.10.1943," 28.10.1943, T-311, Roll 27, Frames 7032440-7032441.

thus of little use.

A Fuehrer order sent out on January 19, 1944, confirmed von Rundstedt's view regarding the desirability of improving the existing large defenses.[20] The areas singled out by Hitler for special consideration would henceforth be designated as fortresses (Festungen). Included on the list were Ijmuiden and the Hook of Holland in the Netherlands; Dunkirk, Boulogne, and Le Havre in the Fifteenth Army sector along the Channel; Cherbourg, St. Malo, Brest, Lorient, and St. Nazaire in the Seventh Army zone; and the Gironde River estuary that led to Bordeaux in the First Army area. Wehrmacht officials then proceeded to add three more fortresses--the Channel Islands and the coastal harbors of Calais and LaPallice-LaRochelle--during February and March.[21]

While it is true that these fourteen Festungen received a great deal of attention during the first half of 1944, it is equally true that German planners probably would have improved the defenses within these areas whether they had been specially designated as "fortresses" or not.

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[20]OKW/WFSt/Op. Nr. 00606/44 GKdos., [Telegram], 19 Jan 44, as contained in Fuehrer Directives, II, 119. See the map on page 234.

[21]OKW/WFSt/Op. (H) West Nr. 001524/44 g.Kdos., [Telegram], 3 March 1944, as contained in Fuehrer Directives, II, 126; and KTB/OKW, IV, 266, 277-278. The OKW excluded the Mediterranean ports of Toulon and Marseilles from being named fortresses since their defenses were considered incomplete (unvollkommenen).

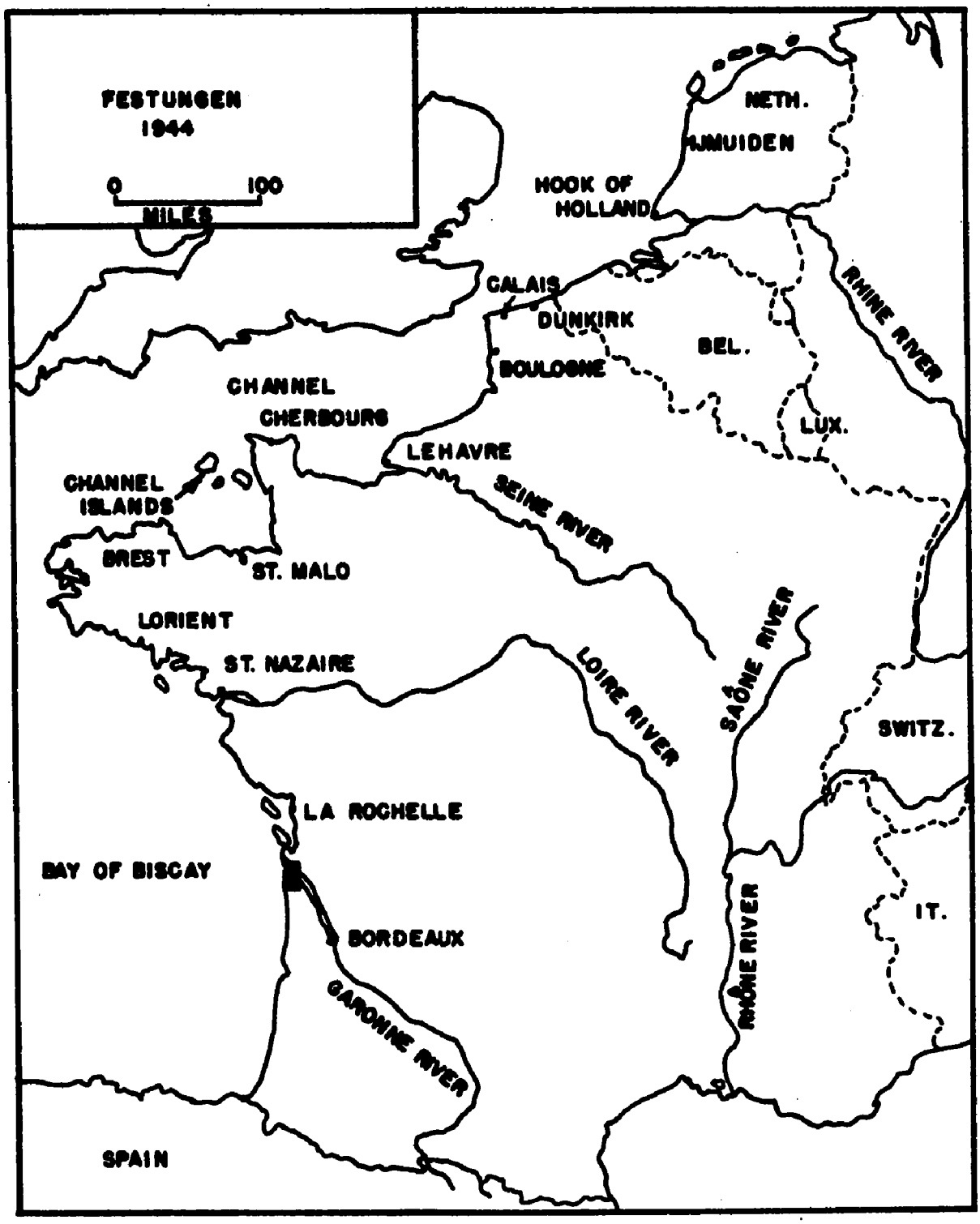

FESTUNGEN
1944
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HOOK OF
HOLLAND
CALAIS
DUNKIRK
BOULOGNE
BEL.
RHINE RIVER
LUX.
CHANNEL
CHERBOURG
LEHAVRE
SEINE RIVER
CHANNEL
ISLANDS
BREST
ST. MALO
LORIENT
ST. NAZAIRE
LOIRE RIVER
SAÔNE RIVER
SWITZ.
LA ROCHELLE
BAY OF BISCAY
BORDEAUX
GARONNE RIVER
RHÔNE RIVER
IT.
SPAIN

Figure 13.

After all, the Germans knew that all of these fortresses, with the exception of the Channel Islands, contained important harbor facilities of the type needed to sustain an Allied operation on the continent, and the High Command had long assumed that any Anglo-American invasion of western Europe would include as one of its primary objectives the capture of a major port. In fact, it was in response to probable Allied intentions regarding these harbors that Ob West had singled them out as defense areas (Verteidigungsbereiche) as early as July of 1942.[22] And the Dieppe Raid later that summer merely confirmed in the eyes of the Wehrmacht leadership the notion that the Western Powers, upon landing, would immediately attempt to secure an important harbor.

The Germans had therefore concentrated a substantial portion of their heavy construction work during the remainder of 1942 and in 1943 on building up the defenses around the coastal harbors.[23] Thus, by the time the Fuehrer declared these areas as "fortresses" in 1944, they had already become formidable fortifications.

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[22]Oberbefehlshaber West, (Oberkommando Heeresgruppe D), Ia/General der Pioniere Pi. 1, Nr. 525/43 g.Kdos., "Grundlegender Befehl Nr. 11," 8.7.1942, T-78, Roll 317, Frame 7020729.

[23]See, for example, Armeeoberkommando 1, Ia/Armee-pionierfuehrer Nr. 349/42 g.Kdos., "Ausbau Atlantikwall," 15.10.1942; and AOK 7/APiFue. Nr. 246/44 g.Kdos., 1.1.1944, T-312, Roll 1569, Frames 000711-000724.

This earlier building effort signified, in effect, that the German military felt it could now concern itself chiefly with improving the defensive capabilities of these harbor areas and to make them into defense-worthy installations in every respect.[24] Not only did engineers and Organization Todt workers start placing concrete cupolas over the artillery batteries that remained uncovered in and near the ports. They also began covering antitank gun

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[24]In addition to the fourteen fortresses, the Germans also expended a great deal of energy in building up the defenses at Den Helder in the Netherlands, the Mediterranean harbors of Marseilles and Toulon, and the Scheldt River approaches to Antwerp. The following general discussion of the improvements undertaken at the major ports during 1944 is set forth in a series of detailed reports, including Festung Ijmuiden, Der Kommandant, Nr. 53/44 geh.Kdos., "Befehl fuer die Verteidigung der Festung Ijmuiden," 19.2.44, T-311, Roll 27, Frames 7033107-7033122; Obkdo. H.Gr.B., Ia Nr. 3102/44 GKdos., "Kampfanweisung fuer die Festung Hoek von Holland," 25.2.1944, ibid., Frames 7033232-7033276; H. Gru. Kdo. D, Abt. Ia Nr. 3322/44 g.Kdos., "Kampfanweisung Vert. Bereich Den Helder, 23.2.1944," 20.4.44, ibid., Frames 7033468-7033517; Kommandant der Festung "Duenkirchen," Abt. Ia Nr. 1/44 g. Kdos., "Erklaerung des Inneren Verteidigungsbereiches Duenkirchen zur 'Festung Duenkirchen,'" 9.2.44, ibid., Frames 7033535-7033544; Der Kommandant der Festung Boulogne, Abt. Ia Nr. 3/44 geh.Kdos., "Kampfanweisung fuer die Festung Boulogne," 10.2.44, ibid., Frames 7033584-7033591; Der Festungskommandant, Abt. Ia Nr. 110/44 g.Kdos., "Kampfanweisung fuer die Festung Le Havre," 8.2.1944, T-311, Roll 28, Frames 7034057-7034087; [Der Kommandant Festung Brest], g.Kdos., "Kampfanweisung fuer die Festung Brest," 8.3.1944, T-311, Roll 27, Frames 7033698-7033809; Festung Lorient Nr. 52/44 g.Kdos., "Kampfanweisung fuer die Festung Lorient," 28.2.44, ibid., Frames 7033601-7033688; and Ob West, Ia Nr. 2177 g.Kdos., "Kampfanweisung St. Nazaire," 8.3.1944, T-311, Roll 28, Frames 7033820-7033896.

and heavy infantry weapon emplacements. In addition, German officials were of the opinion that the fortifications facing toward the sea were fairly adequate. Hence, they set about improving the land defenses so that the harbors could not be overrun by enemy airborne or infantry units attacking from the rear.[25]

Furthermore, local commanders lowered the number of hours that troops spent in combat training in order to have them assist in the construction effort. The soldiers used every available resource--sea walls, ship canals, old ramparts--to help build the harbors into truly impregnable defensive bulwarks. Interspersed among these hindrances the Germans placed minefields, bogus minefields, beach obstacles, barbed wire ensnarements, antitank ditches--in short, anything that might strengthen the perimeter or the interior defenses of the area.

Finally, since the major harbors were to be held to the last man, the Germans wanted to stockpile enough supplies so that these ports would be self-sufficient in the face of a prlonged enemy attack.[26] But if the Allied troops succeeded in penetrating the fortress defenses, Ob

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[25]Generalleutnant Karl Wilhelm von Schlieben, "709th Infantry Division (Dec 1943-30 Jun 1944)," FMS, MS# B-845, 3-4; and Generalleutnant Rudolf Schmetzer, "Atlantic Wall--Invasion Sector (Jan 1944-Jun 1944)," FMS, MS# B-668, 19.

[26]OKW/WFSt/Op. Nr. 00606/44 gKdos., [Telegram], 19 Jan 1944, as contained in Fuehrer Directives, II, 119.

West took the precaution of assuring that the port facilities and the surrounding transportation network would be destroyed or rendered unusable.[27]

Wehrmacht officials had designed all of the different coastal defenses, of course, with the purpose of stopping an Allied invasion of western Europe. The Germans also recognized, however, that their defensive system was still deficient in one vital respect: it lacked depth. If British and American troops went ashore in a virtually unprotected area, or if they landed airborne troops in the rear, how could German forces prevent the Allies from moving rapidly into the interior? To be certain, the Wehrmacht had military personnel stationed behind the coastal zone, but these troops, for the most part, performed guard duties and helped keep internal order, and they would be no match for enemy combat units. The armored reserve, on the other hand, would be of some assistance; nevertheless, it would probably not be in position to engage the enemy immediately.

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[27]Oberbefehlshaber West, (Oberkommando Heeresgruppe D), Ia/Gen d. Tra./Gen.d.Pi (III) Nr. 1070/43 g.K., "Auszug aus Einzelbefehl des Oberbefehlshabers West Nr. 37," 10.12. 1943, T-311, Roll 26, Frames 7031701-7031704. The Cherbourg Fortress Commander even went so far as to request that he be given permission to destroy Cherbourg's quays and harbor area several weeks before the actual invasion took place. He felt that if the Allies knew the port had been demolished, they would put off their landing attempt, and the German military would gain time in preparing its defenses. His request was denied (Generalleutnant Karl Wilhelm von Schlieben, "709th Infantry Division [Dec 1943-30 Jun 1944]," FMS, MS# B-845, 22-23).

Therefore, von Rundstedt ordered in October, 1943, that local commanders began to construct a number of secondary positions (2. Stellung) in the sector lying more than ten miles inland from the coast.[28] The venerable western theater commander stressed that these positions should not consist of a rigid, inflexible defense line, but that each divisional commander should take advantage of the already existing strongpoints, such as established airfields, ammuniation dumps, and military posts located in the rear areas. The commanders should then have artillery batteries, antiaircraft emplacements, and panzer hindrances integrated among the strongpoints in order to form a system of secondary defenses.

Although work started almost immediately on these positions, and foreign laborers did erect a number of field-type fortifications and obstacles behind the coastal zone, the Germans never released enough men and material from the primary effort along the coast to construct an effective

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[28] Oberbefehlshaber West, (Oberkommando Heeresgruppe D), Ia Nr. 6050/43 geh.Kdos., "Grundlegender Befehl des Oberbefehlshabers West Nr. 31," 21.10.1943, T-311, Roll 15, Frames 7016279-7016282. See also Stacey, The Victory Campaign, 61; and Harrison, Cross-Channel Attack, 156.

line of interior defenses.[29] In other words, although the idea of having a secondary defense line was sound, by 1944 the Germans did not have the necessary resources at their disposal to carry through such a project.

In spite of the fact that the German military leaders failed to have a line of secondary defenses erected in the West, they still accomplished a great deal in terms of building up the coastal defense system. From January

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[29]Armeeoberkommando 19, Ia Nr. 162/43 g.Kdos.Chefs., "Erste Planung des Verlaufes eine 2.Stellung," 31.1043, T-312, Roll 977, Frame 9168150; Hiltrop, Major i.G., "Notizen ueber die Besprechung am 8.11.43, 11.30 Uhr bei Ob. West," 9.11.43, T-312, Roll 978, Frames 9169438-9169439; Oberbefehlshaber West, (Oberkommando Heeresgruppe D), Ia/ Gen.d.Pi. (I) Nr. 372/44 g.Kdos., "Meldung ueber Ausbau der 2. Stellung," 24.2.1944, T-311, Roll 26, Frame 7032030; AOK 15, Ia Nr. 4295/44 g.Kdos., "Wochenmeldung fuer die Woche von 1.-7.5.1944," 8.5.44, T-312, Roll 515, Frame 8113689; and Armeeoberkommando 1, Abt. Ia [g.Kdos.], "Lagebeurteilung der 1. Armee, Woche 28.5-3.6.44, 4.6.44, T-312, Roll 28, Frame 7055715.

The High Command toward the end of 1943 considered building several secondary defense lines far to the rear. These lines of defense would have been based on the river systems that form almost a natural barrier in the Netherlands, Belgium, and northern and northeastern France. Ob West sent out several inspection teams to reconnoiter positions along the Somme-Oise-Aisne-Marne-Saône River line in France and along the Ijssel and Maas (Meuse) Rivers and the Scheldt River and Albert Canal in the Low Countries, but nothing came of the inspection until after the D-Day invasion, when the Germans once again started thinking about setting up a defense line east and north of Paris (Erkundungsstab General der Inf. Fischer von Weitersthal, General Kdo. LXVII Res. Korps, Ia Nr. 9/43 g.Kdos.Chefs., 9.Dez. 1943, T-311, Roll 27, Frames 7032685-7032686; Oberbefehlshaber West, Ia Nr. 77/43 geh.Kdos.Ch., 13.12.1943, ibid., Frames 7032689-7032690; Generalkommando LXVII Res. Korps, Erkundungsstab, General der Infanterie Fischer von Weitersthal, Ia Nr. 2/44 g.Kdos.Chefsache, 23.1.1944, ibid., Frame 7032695; and Martin Blumenson, Breakout and Pursuit [United States Army in World War II. European Theater of Operations] [Washington: OCMH, 1962], 419, 678).

through May of 1944, for instance, they had erected over four thousand permanent installations.[30] This figure is particularly impressive when one considers that from 1941 to the end of 1943 construction workers built 8,478 concrete structures along the Channel and Atlantic coasts, while during 1944, in a period of only five months, labor crews in the West erected over 4,600 permanent fortifications. or more than half of the total number constructed during the previous two and a half years. Furthermore, as discussed earlier, the Germans had added a vast number of field-type defenses and other hindrances to their coastal system. Thus, the Wehrmacht leadership could feel at least partially satisfied with the progress that had been made in construction during the first part of the year.

The amount of progress might have been even more extensive had it not been for the diversion of workers and material to other tasks besides building up the defenses along the coast. There were basically two additional tasks. One of them involved the construction of V-weapon, rocket-launching sites, and the other dealt with the reconstruction

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[30]Ob West, (Obkd. H.Gru.D), Ia Nr. 236/44 geh.Kdos., "Lagebeurteilung durch Ob. West," 10.1.44, T-311, Roll 22, Frames 7025370-7025371; Ob West, (Obkdo. H.Gru.D), Ia Nr. 4366/44 geh.Kdos., "Lagebeurteilung durch Ob. West vom 29.5. bis 4.6.1944," 5.6.44, T-311, Roll 24, Frames 7029167-7029168; and Der Kommandierende Admiral der franzoesichen Suedkueste B. Nr. g.Kdos 77/43 Chefs., "Lagebeurteilung der franzoesischen Suedkueste Dezember 1943," 23.12.1943, T-312, Roll 977, Frames 9168172-9168175.

of important installations that were being either bombed or sabotaged by the enemy at an ever-increasing rate.

The V-weapons, or vengeance weapons, were rockets designed by the Germans to strike at enemy targets several hundred miles behind the front lines.[31] The rockets were of two types, the V-1 and the V-2. The V-1 was essentially a pilotless monoplane developed by the Air Force that could reach speeds of up to four hundred miles per hour. It could, moreover, be launched from the ground or from an aircraft, and the British labelled them "buzz bombs" or "doodlebugs" because of the noise made by their jet engines while flying through the air.

The V-2, on the other hand, was a larger, faster, more sophisticated rocket developed by the Army to compete with the V-1. The Army version could reach a maximum speed of 3,600 miles per hour on the way to the target, and it was launched from an upright position. Both the Army and the Luftwaffe, quite naturally, tried to persuade Hitler to

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[31]The "V" designation originated from the term Versuchsmuster, of experimental type, but later, at the insistence of the National Socialist propaganda agencies, it became known as the Vergeltungswaffe, or vengeance weapon (Joseph W. Angell, "CROSSBOW," in Craven and Cate [eds.], Europe, III, 102). The following summary of the V-weapons is drawn from ibid., 84-106, 325-329; Basil Collier, The Battle of the V-Weapons, passim; Milward, The German Economy, 105-106; Saunders, The Fight is Won, 147-169; Heiber (ed.), Hitlers Lagebesprechungen, 403-404; Stacey, The Victory Campaign, 354-355; Wilmot, The Struggle for Europe, 153; and Oberst i.G. Eugen Walter, "V-Weapon Tactics (LXV Corps)," FMS, MS# B-689, 9-11.

select "its" particular rocket system for use against the Allies.

The Fuehrer decided that both the V-1 and the V-2 should be made operational and that these new "secret weapons" should be directed against targets in England from permanent launching pads positioned near the Channel coast. Although von Rundstedt and the tactical commanders in the area had little to do with the actual firing of the rockets, the job of erecting the V-weapon sites fell originally in 1943 on the Air Force administrative units (Luftgaukommandos) serving in the theater. The first sites were for the V-1 rockets and were called ski sites because they resembled a large ski. Work crews built them quickly, often with local labor and with little regard for security.[32] The Allies, who were well aware that the Germans were working on a jet-propelled rocket system, found in reconnaissance photos that new, odd-looking installations were being constructed near the coast in northern France and soon concluded that these installations were tied in with V-weapon developments. The Allied commanders proceeded to concentrate their bomber forces against the ski sites with the result

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[32] Collier, The Battle of the V-Weapons, 21.

that most of them were put out of commission.[33]

The High Command by the beginning of 1944 began to have built another type of rocket launching site, termed, appropriately enough, modified sites. They were less elaborate than the ski sites, but easily constructed, well-concealed, and difficult to detect. Once discovered by British and American flyers, they were still very poor targets because of their small size.[34] The Germans also tightened up security measures while building the modified installations, and at times the Wehrmacht supervisors intentionally misemployed French workers on the old ski sites.[35] It was from the modified sites that the Germans started dropping rockets on England on June 13.

No doubt, the V-1 and the V-2 rockets were important in Germany's attempt to change again the balance of the war in her favor. However, the significant point regarding the V-weapon launching areas as they pertain to the defense of the western Europe is that had not the Wehrmacht allocated a substantial number of laborers to work on the ski

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[33]Angell, "CROSSBOW," in Craven and Cate (eds.), Europe, III, 102. According to a British flying officer, the Germans made no effort to camouflage the ski sites and erected them in wooded areas where they were easily identifiable from the air. Had they set them instead in open fields, he pointed out, it would have been almost impossible to find them (Saunders, The Fight is Won, 150).

[34]Angell, "CROSSBOW," in Craven and Cate (eds.), Europe, III, 102.

[35]Collier, The Battle of the V-Weapons, 47.

and the modified sites, they might well have been utilized in building up the Atlantic Wall.

The same problem applied to the effort expended by the Germans in order to repair the damage inflicted by enemy bombing and sabotage activity. American and British bombing missions conducted against western Europe prior to 1944 had generally concentrated on purely military targets, such as submarine pens, ammunition dumps, personnel barracks, and the like. In 1944 the Allies increased not only the number of air strikes directed against France, Belgium, and the Netherlands, but they also expanded greatly the number of different types of targets they attacked.

Allied pilots, in a desire to isolate the invasion area and still not to tip off the Germans as to where the landing would take place, found the transportation network to be especially vulnerable.[36] As a result, British and American bombers and tactical fighters succeeded in disrupting rail lines, destroying bridges, and damaging roadways on a vast scale prior to the Allied assault. On June 3, just three days before the invasion, Army Group B reported that "rising enemy air activity has made the transporting of supplies by rail very difficult," and that "seventeen hundred railway cars destined for the West remain

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[36]Harrison, Cross-Channel Attack, 194, 230.

in rear area depots."[37] The report went on to relate that many bridges had been destroyed and that truck transport could be carried out only on a limited basis.

Supplementing the Allied bombing raids on the transportation system were an increasing number of acts of sabotage undertaken by the Résistance.[38] In addition to interfering with rail traffic, the Résistance movement by 1944 engaged in a variety of other terrorist activities, such as cutting telephone and telegraph lines and sabotaging war industries in the West. Factory laborers also aided the Résistance, and at the same time demonstrated their disdain for the German occupiers, by slowing down their work pace or by instituting work stoppages.[39]

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[37][Heeresgruppe B] Ib Geh.Kdos., "Vortragsnotiz," 3.6.44, T-311, Roll 1, Frame 7000664.

[38]Works on the Résistance are legion. The following is based on Henri Michel, Les courants de pensée de la résistance (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1962); Harrison, Cross-Channel Attack, 203-205; 224-225; Ellis, Victory in the West, I, 49-52, 121-122; Wilmot, The Struggle for Europe, 211; Robert Aron, France Reborn; The History of the Liberation, June 1944-May 1945, Trans. by Humphrey Hare (New York: Scribner, 1964), 144-145; Michael R. D. Foot, SOE in France (History of the Second World War: United Kingdom Military Series) (London: HMSO, 1966), 438-440; and KTB/OKW, IV, 261-262.

[39]A Canadian officer has given an excellent example as to how French railway employees effected a work "slow-down." The officer relates that he went to a roundhouse in the Dieppe railroad yards immediately after that port city had been captured in September, 1944, to see if an important supply line to a nearby town could be re-established. "Six engines were in the shed, all bearing placards stating their defects; the minimum repair period was stated to be three months. As the officer was expressing his disgust, the foreman came into the shed and took down the placard, saying 'Pour les Alliés demain soir (For the Allies tomorrow evening)'" (Ellis, Victory in the West, I, 122).

All of these activities, whether they be in the form of passive resistance or sabotage or aerial bombing, had several harmful effects on the effort being expended by the Germans to build up the Atlantic Wall. It meant, first of all, a reduction in the amount of construction materials that reached the coastal area. And secondly, it signified that more and more workers were being shifted to repair the damages being inflicted on the transportation and communications systems and the industrial plants. The Germans, in fact, started using every kind of labor available, from German technicians sent out from the Reich to Indochinese workers and Senegalese soldiers who had been caught up in the fall of France, in order to try to keep the rail, road, and communications lines open.[40] In terms of labor crews working specifically on the Atlantic Wall defenses, Ob West removed 18,000 Organization Todt workers in March, 1944, to perform railroad maintenance, and in May he requested 47,000 more O.T. laborers be withdrawn.[41] Although von Rundstedt received permission from OKW to take

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[40]Aron, France Reborn, 144; Kontrollinspektion der DWStK, Kontrollabteilung, "Monatsbericht Nr. 11, Feb. 1944, "8 Maerz 1944, T-77, Roll 848, Frames 5592002-5592013; and Kontrollinspektion der DWStK, Kontrollabteilung, "Monatsbericht Nr. 10 fuer Jan 1944," 8 Feb 1944, ibid., Frame 5591944.

[41]Der Chef des Generalstabes Ob. West Blumentritt, Ia Nr. 3640/44 egh.Kdos., [Fernschreiben], 6.5.44, T-311, Roll 24, Frame 7028328; KTB/OKW, IV, 306; and Harrison, Cross-Channel Attack, 228.

only 10,000 additional workers, it still showed how critical the repair-work problem had become.

In spite of the diversions that took away men and material from the main construction effort along the coast, the Germans did, as stressed previously, strengthen their defensive posture considerably in the West during the first half of 1944. A similar process of strengthening occurred with regard to military personnel and equipment.

The rise in available manpower, to be certain, was steady rather than spectacular. On October 4, 1943, Ob West listed thirty-eight divisions ready for combat and thirteen additional divisions in the process of formation.[42] The number of ready divisions in the West toward the end of December had increased to forty-one with seven more being formed or refitted.[43] By April, 1944, the total figures had climbed further to fifty-five divisions, almost all of which could be used at least on a limited basis, and the number of divisions reached fifty-eight just prior

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[42] KTB/OKW, III, 1159 (26.10.1943). See also Harrison, Cross-Channel Attack, 174-175, 235; and Stacey, The Victory Campaign, 51-52.

[43] KTB/OKW, III, 1401 (26.12.1943).

to the invasion.[44]

This increase in the number of divisions takes on added significance when one realizes that the capabilities of these units also improved appreciably. The new 1944 divisions, for instance, were better equipped and more fully manned than the "static" divisions that had formed the nucleus of the coastal defense force in 1943.[45] Furthermore, von Rundstedt now had an effective, ten-division armored reserve deployed in the western area, a situation which contrasted markedly with October, 1943, when he had at his disposal only two reserve panzer formations and six other tank units in the process of being rehabilitated.[46]

Even more impressive was the fact that the combined

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[44]Oberbefehlshaber West, (Oberkommando Heeresgruppe D), Der Oberquartiermeister West Qu 1 Br. B Nr. 01800 g.Kdos., "Versorgungslagebericht Maerz 1944," 8.4.1944, T-311, Roll 14, Frames 7014856-7014857; Generalleutnant Dr. Hans Speidel, "Rommel's Views (1 Apr-May 1944), [Comment by Geyr]," FMS, MS# B-720, 17; and Ellis, Victory in the West, I, 116-117. Ration strength in the West as of March 1 was 1,400,451 troops (KTB/OKW, IV, 273).

[45]Der Oberbefehlshaber West, (Oberkommando Heeresgruppe D), Ia Nr. 832/43 geh.Kdos.Ch., 28.12.1943, T-78, Roll 310, Frames 6262678-6262685; [AOK 7], G.Kdos., "Stand 18.5.44," 18.5.44, T-312, Roll 1566, Frame 000208; AOK 15, Ia Nr. 3115/44 g.Kdos., "Inf Div 44," n.d., T-312, Roll 516, Frame 8115042; Oberst i.G. Rudolf Kogard, "Brest--343d Infantry Division (May-18 Sep 1944)," 2-3; Generalleutnant Joachim Treskow, "18th Luftwaffe Field Division (6 Jun-24 Jul 1944)," FMS, MS# B-419, 16; and Harrison, Cross-Channel Attack, 236-237.

[46]Ob West (Obkdo.H.Gru.D), Ia Nr. 3565/44 g.Kdos. "Stand der Neuaufstellungen," 4.5.44, T-311, Roll 24, Frame 7028278; and KTB/OKW, III, 1159 (26.10.1943).

firepower of all the divisions in the West was much greater by June, 1944, than it had been in 1943. For example, the number of artillery weapons had continued to mount throughout the German occupation until by the time of the invasion there were well over three thousand pieces ranging in caliber from 75 to 406 millimeters.[47] Moreover, the Wehrmacht in 1944 had a large number of antitank guns transported into the western theater. A special group sent to inspect the Seventh Army sector in April came away with the impression that there were enough antitank weapons in the area to prevent even a strong enemy panzer force from effecting a successful landing.[48] Finally, whereas Ob West listed 752 tanks in his inventory at the beginning of January, 1944, by the end of April the number had jumped to 1,403, and it probably increased further by D-Day.[49]

Assuredly, these units, no matter how well equipped, were not of the fighting quality of the German formations in 1940 and 1941, but, then, nowhere in the European theater

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[47]Stoart AOK 15 Nr. 490/44 g.Kdos., "Artl. Gliederung der 15. Armee," 1.5.1944, T-312, Roll 516, Frames 8115256-8115258; AOK 1, Ia/Stoart Nr. 289/44 g.Kdos, "Artilleriegliederung der 1. Armee," 1.3.44, T-312, Roll 28, Frames 7535667-7535672; Sonderstab Oehmichen z.Zt. Armeeoberkommando 7, Ia/Stopak Nr. 67/22 g.Kdos., "Bericht ueber das Kommando des Sonderstabes zum AOK 7," 13.5.44, T-312, Roll 1568, Frame 000718; and Generalmajor Walter Vogel, "Nineteenth Army Artillery (4 Apr-18 Aug 1944)," FMS, MS# B-575, 47-48.

[48]Sonderstab Oehmichen z.At. Armeeoberkommando 7, Ia/Stopak Nr. 67/44 g.Kdos., "Bericht ueber das Kommando des Sonderstabes zum AOK 7," 13.5.44, T-312, Roll 1568, Frame 000707.

[49]Ellis, Victory in the West, I, 117.

by 1944 were the Wehrmacht divisions equal to their earlier counterparts. Included among their ranks were soldiers of every description--combat veterans and raw recruits, Germans and foreign nationals, Air Force and Navy as well as Army personnel. The Air Force and Navy troops actually proved to be quite effective, the Navy in manning some of the artillery positions and the harbor defenses, the Luftwaffe in providing paratroops and ground forces (Luftwaffen-felddivisionen) for infantry duties along the coast.[50] Nevertheless, their military background was not always of the type to endear them to the Army leadership.

What all of this personnel juggling signified, of course, was that after four years of war the German manpower situation was critical. There were simply not enough qualified individuals to perform the various tasks that the Wehrmacht needed to have fulfilled. The military had been aware of its worsening personnel position for some time and had already tried several expedients to try to get by

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[50]For a description of the airborne formations, see Oberst Frhr. von der Heydte, "6th Parachute Regiment (1 May-20 Aug 1944)," FMS, MS# B-839; and Generalleutnant Gustav Wilke, "5th Parachute Division (6 Jun-24 Jul 1944)," FMS, MS# B-820. The Germans had deployed four Air Force Field Divisions in the West by June 1944. A brief discussion of all twenty-two Field Divisions is contained in Egon Denzel, Die Luftwaffenfelddivisionen, 1942-1945, sowie die Sonderverbaende der Luftwaffe im Kriege, 1939/45 (Neckargemuend: Vowinckel, 1963).

with less troops.[51] In 1944, the High Command attempted to meet the problem to a large degree by altering the composition of its infantry units so that the new divisions would have fewer personnel and yet a maximum of firepower.[52]

Summarized briefly, the conventional German infantry division between 1939 and 1943 had at full strength 17,200 men with nine rifle battalions, an antitank and a reconnaissance battalion, and four artillery battalions. The new 1944 division, on the other hand, had only 12,769 troops and included the following changes from its predecessor: (1) the 1944-type division consisted of six rifle battalions instead of the previous nine; (2) it had a fusilier battalion substituted for the old reconnaissance battalion (in practice the fusilier formation became a seventh infantry battalion); and (3) the new units had an increase in the number of automatic weapons.

Contrary to what one might expect, this reduction in the number of troops per division did not particularly produce an adverse effect on the personnel situation in the western theater. In fact, some of the older divisions, that had become depleted during the last two years because

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[51]Generalmajor Horst von Buttlar-Brandenfels, "Ob West: Command Relationships, Commentary on MS# B-308," FMS, MS# B-672, 22-23.

[52]The summary of the 1944-type divisions that follows is based on Harrison, Cross-Channel Attack, 236-238; Ellis, Victory in the West, I, 554; and Liddell Hart, The German Generals Talk, 232.

of the repeated loss of personnel to other fronts, received additional manpower and better equipment.[53] Moreover, a number of the reserve divisions, now upgraded to regular units, also benefited from the influx of men and weapons.[54] And finally, the generally well-outfitted panzer and airborne formations further helped to brighten the personnel picture.[55]

Nevertheless, the overall improvement in the Western manpower situation has to be qualified in one additional respect, and that is, the increase in the number of combat units and in equipment never reached the proportions that the Germans had expected or that they had hoped.[56] The chief reason was that Allied pressure both from the east and the south never allowed the High Command to shut off completely the flow of personnel to other, more immediately

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[53]Der Oberbefehlshaber West, (Oberkommando Heeresgruppe D), Ia Nr. 832/43 geh.Kdos.Ch., 28.12.1943, T-78, Roll 310, Frames 6262677-6262685; [AOK 7], G.Kdos., "Stand 18.5.44," 18.5.44, T-312, Roll 1566, Frame 000208; [AOK 7], G.Kdos., OKW, WFSt/Abt. L (I Op), G.K., 17.4.44, T-77, Roll 775, Frame 5501176; and Oberst i.G. Rudolf Kogard, "Brest--343d Infantry Division (May-18 Sep 1944)," 2-3, 11.

[54]Armeeoberkommando 15, I Qu./Qu I Nr. 70/44 g.Kdos., "Bericht ueber der Versorgungslage der 15. Armee," 7.1.44, T-312, Roll 517, Frames 8115892-8115896; and Harrison, Cross-Channel Attack, 236.

[55]Ibid., 238.

[56]Der Chef des Generalstabes, Armeeoberkommando 1, Ia Nr. 239/43 g.Kdos.Ch., "Aktennotiz ueber die Besprechung beim Chef des Generalstabes Ob West am 11.12.1943," 11 Dez 1943, T-312, Roll 27, Frames 7533951-7533952.

critical war theaters. This continual relinquishing of troops took place in spite of Hitler's declarations that there would be no further withdrawal of forces from the West.[57] In the end, however, the Fuehrer had felt compelled to alter his position.[58]

Four specific occurrences in the winter of 1943 and the spring of 1944 had a restraining effect on German plans to send more forces to the West. All of these actions--the American landing at Anzio in January, the Wehrmacht occupation of Hungary in March, the critical situation on the southern flank of the Eastern front at the end of that month, and the renewed Allied offensive toward Rome in May--affected the western theater adversely in both a direct and an indirect way.[59]

The direct effect was that OKW removed three panzer and one infantry division plus a number of assault guns from western Europe during the course of the spring, although one of the armored formations--the Panzer Lehr Division--returned to France in May. What happened indirectly was that numerous German units stationed in other

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[57]Fuehrer Directive Nr. 51, November 3, 1943, was contained in Trevor-Roper (ed.), Hitler's War Directives, 149; and OKW/WFSt/Op. Org. Nr. 008330/43 g.Kdos., [Telegram], 28 Dec 1943, as contained in Fuehrer Directives, II, 117.

[58]Warlimont, Im Hauptquartier, 439, 447.

[59]The following paragraph is based on ibid.; KTB/OKW, IV, 273-275; and Harrison, Cross-Channel Attack, 234-235.

areas but scheduled for deployment in the West were rushed to meet the new emergencies on the Russian and the Italian fronts. These troop movements, therefore, along with the shifting of forces within the western theater itself, led to some disruptions in the preparations being instituted for the Allied invasion.

Nonetheless, given these disruptions and the fact that the number of Wehrmacht divisions in the western theater never reached the figure the military had hoped to attain, the Germans could still commit a fairly respectable force to meet any Allied invasion by the spring of 1944.[60] And by this time the coastal defenses had been strengthened to the degree that the German leaders could actually face the prospect of an Anglo-American landing not so much in a state of apprehension as from a sense of anticipation.

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[60] Ibid., 242; and Morison, The Invasion, 48.

CHAPTER VII

Anticipation and the Invasions

There was nothing novel about the mood of anticipation that permeated western Europe at the beginning of 1944, for German forces in the West had experienced that feeling on a number of occasions during the previous two years.[1] But the difference in 1944 was that the atmosphere of expectancy reached new heights because of the impending Allied invasion. The question the Wehrmacht leadership had on their minds was not if the Western Allies were coming, for that was certain, but rather where and when they would attack.

The German guessing game as to U.S.-British intentions had begun in 1942, and it continued even after the day of the landing, since German officials, who never had precise information regarding Allied plans, still continued to expect another landing in the Fifteenth Army area. Prior to June 6, however, Wehrmacht thinking about the invasion

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[1]Oberbefehlshaber West, (Oberkommando Heeresgruppe D), Ia Nr. 997/43 geh.Kdos., "Grundlegender Befehl des Oberbefehlshabers West Nr. 21," 26.2.1943, T-78, Roll 317, Frames 6270792-6270795; [Ob West], Ia Nr. 4249/43 geh.Kdos., [Fernschreiben], 16.8.43, T-78, Roll 310, Frames 6262600-6262601; and OKW/WFSt 551213/43 g.Kdos.Chefs., [Telegram], 9 Jul 42, as contained in Fuehrer Directives, II, 34.

can be divided into three phases.[2] During the first phase at the end of 1943, Hitler and the other military leaders generally confirmed in their own minds, as they had thought all along, that the landing would take place along the Channel coast somewhere between the mouth of the Scheldt and the tip of Brittany. But by January and February, they were not so sure and began to prepare for other possible Allied moves. In March the military once again returned to its original conviction that the Western Powers would attack across the Channel, and this opinion prevailed during the third phase until D-Day itself.

The new psychological build-up for the invasion started with von Rundstedt's report of October, 1943, and his views, in a sense, reflected the position taken by all of the tactical commanders in the West at this time.[3] Commander-in-Chief West warned that even though the Allies had not yet launched a full-scale assault against the continent, preparations for such an operation had been going on in

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[2]Harrison, Cross-Channel Attack, 235.

[3]Der Chef des Generalstabes der 7. Armee, Ia Nr. 6117/43 g.Kdos., "Operative Vorbereitungen," 30 Nov 1943, T-312, Roll 1566, Frame 000388; Generalkommando LXXXIV A.K., Abt. Ia Nr. 2033/43 g.Kdos., "Operative Vorbereitungen," 22.11.1943, ibid., Frame 000395; Armeeoberkommando 1, Ia Nr. 2951/43 g.Kdos., 17.12.1943, T-312, Roll 27, Frame 7533948; Der Kommandierende Admiral der franzoesischen Suedkueste, B Nr. g.Kdos., 77/43 Chefs., "Lagebeurteilung der franzoesischen Suedkueste Dezember 1943," 23.12.1943, T-312, Roll 977, Frames 9168172-9168175; Armeeoberkommando 15, G.Kdos., "Beurteilung der Lage am 1.1.1944," 1.1.1944, T-312, Roll 514, Frame 8113018; and Rommel, The Rommel Papers, 453.

England for weeks, and that the impending battle could not be far off.[4] He envisioned that Anglo-American forces might attack in a number of places.[5] Most likely was the Channel coast, probably in conjunction with an attack from the south in the French Mediterranean area. A second possibility was a limited operations against Normandy and Brittany in order to establish a bridgehead that would include good harbors and to eliminate the U-boat strongpoints. And thirdly, the Western Powers might decide to land simultaneously on the Mediterranean and Atlantic coasts in the south of France with the purpose of effecting a link-up around Toulouse. The main consideration, von Rundstedt emphasized, was to realize that an Allied assault was in the offing and to get ready for it.

Hitler was in full agreement with his western theater commander. Fuehrer Directive Nr. 51, dated November 3, stated:

> All signs point to an offensive against the Western Front of Europe, at the latest in the spring, perhaps even earlier...it is here that the enemy must and will attack, and it is here, unless all indications are misleading--that the decisive battle against the landing forces will be fought.[6]

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[4]Der Oberbefehlshaber West, Ia Nr. 550/43, g.Kdos. Ch., "Beurteilung der Lage Ob. West am 25.10.1943," 28.10. 1943, T-311, Roll 27, Frames 7032427-7032428.

[5]Ibid.

[6]Trevor-Roper (ed.), Hitler's War Directives, 149.

Hitler expressed his opinion even more forcibly to his generals after the Allied conferences at Teheran and Cairo in November and December.

> I have studied most of these documents [reports of the Teheran and Cairo meetings]. There is no doubt that the attack in the West will come in the spring. There's absolutely no doubt about it. I have the feeling that they want to operate on very broad fronts.[7]

The National Socialist dictator went on to declare that the Allies would "catch hell" when they invaded western Europe. There was a great deal of difference, he maintained, between landing in North Africa and being opposed by Vichy French units and "Italians who mostly sit in their holes and don't fire a shot, and landing in the West where there is really going to be shooting. As long as our batteries can fire, they will fire, that's certain."[8]

Even though Hitler and von Rundstedt continued to stress the Channel coast as the most likely place for the main Allied landing, they fully expected that the Western Powers would conduct several other types of operations at

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[7]Felix Gilbert (ed.), Hitler Directs His War; The Secret Records of His Daily Military Conferences (New York: Oxford University Press, 1950), 75. The German text of this military conference that took place on December 20, 1943, is located in Heiber (ed.), Hitlers Lagebesprechungen, 435-456.

[8]Gilbert (ed.), Hitler Directs His War, 80.

the same time.[9] In all probability these Allied actions would take the form of a series of small attacks designed to draw German forces away from the Channel area, but the military leaders were fearful that British and American forces might even attempt a major landing in the Balkans or in northern Italy.

The Germans therefore made plans to meet any alternative the Allies might select, whether it was an operation against Norway or Denmark or the Balkans or within the western theater itself.[10] In February, 1944, Ob West and the High Command as well became particularly apprehensive about a possible Allied attack in southern France or in Portugal and moved several additional divisions into the

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[9]Ob West (Obkdo.H.Gr.D), Ia Nr. 19/44 g.Kdos., "Herausloesung aus der Kuestenfront und Versammlung hinter der Front A.O.K. 15 und recht Fluegel A.O.K. 7," 1.1.44, T-311, Roll 22, Frame 7025227; Ob West (Obkdo.H.Gr.D), Ia Nr. 689/44 geh.Kdos., "Lagebeurteilung durch Ob. West," 24. 1.44, ibid., Frame 7025660; Der Oberbefehlshaber West, Ia Nr. 550/43 g.Kdos.Ch., "Beurteilung der Lage Ob. West am 25.10.1943," 28.10.1943, T-311, Roll 27, Frames 7032426-7032428; Trevor-Roper (ed.), Hitler's War Directives, 149; Gilbert (ed.), Hitler Directs His War, 75; and General der Infanterie Gunether Blumentritt, "OB West (6 Jun-24 Jul 1944)," FMS, MS# B-284, 5.

[10]Adjutant des Chefs der Generalstabes der Heeres, Nr. 576/43 g.Kdos.Chefs., [Fernschreiben], 23 Dezember 1943, T-78, Roll 310, Frames 6262659-6262660; [Ob West], G.Kdos., "Kriegstagebuch," 8.1.44, T-311, Roll 22, Frame 7025147; and Harrison, Cross-Channel Attack, 232. If the Western Powers landed in northern Italy, for example, specified Wehrmacht units, including several formations from the western theater, were to converge on that area upon receipt of the code word "Marder." The code word for an attack on Demark was "Hanna," and for the Balkans, "Gertrud" or "Forelle."

area south of the Loire.[11] Wehrmacht fears about its southern flank subsided after the Germans learned that a number of important Allied units had been transferred from the Mediterranean theater to Great Britain. Nevertheless, the idea that British and U.S. forces would initiate several diversionary attacks before the actual main assault had become deeply implanted in the minds of the German leaders.[12]

As German intelligence began to evaluate more and more information concerning Allied intentions in the West, it became clear to them that the main attack would be somewhere along the Channel; but the Germans, handicapped in particular by their inability to provide continuous reconnaissance coverage of the English coast, were still in a quandary as to its exact location.[13] The Channel coastline, after all, stretched nearly one thousand miles, and a sub-

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[11]Ibid., 232-233; Ob West (Obkdo.H.Gru.D), Ia Nr. 1409/44 geh.Kdos., "Lagebeurteilung durch Ob. West," 14.2.44, T-311, Roll 22, Frame 7026193; Ob West (Obkdo.H.Gru.D), Ia Nr. 1609/44 geh.Kdos., "Lagebeurteilung durch Ob. West," 21.2.44, ibid., Frame 7026336; OKW/WFSt/Op Nr. 00455/44 g.Kdos.Chefsache, "Verstaerkung der Kuestenverteidigung und Reserve im Bereich des AOK 7, AOK 1, und AOK 19," 18.2.44, T-78, Roll 317, Frames 6271383-6271384; and Armeeoberkommando 1, Ia Nr. 014/44 g.Kdos Chefs., "2. Fall aa," 3.Februar 1944, T-312, Roll 28, Frames 7035029-7035033.

[12]Generalmajor Rudolf von Gersdorff, "Critique of the Defense Against Invasion," FMS, MS# A-895, 5-6; and Loose, "The German High Command," 159-160.

[13]Oberbefehlshaber West (Oberkommando Heeresgruppe D), Ic--Nr. 1920/44 geh., "Feindlagebeurteilung vom 1.4.44," 1.4.44, T-311, Roll 26, Frame 7030793.

stantial portion of it was within range of American and British fighter aircraft, a factor which the High Command calculated would play a significant part in any choice the Allies would make for a landing.[14]

The German generals thus continued to speculate during the spring of 1944 where within this thousand-mile coastline the invasion would take place. The consensus among the commanders was that it would come between the mouth of the Seine and the Pas de Calais area, but they did not rule out at least small-scale operations on the Cotentin and Brittany peninsulas. And all of the military leaders, including Hitler, were in agreement that the coastal sector between the Scheldt River estuary and Brittany was critical.[15]

In this regard, the reports and orders that shuttled between the western theater and higher headquarters during the final forty days before the invasion give an excellent picture as to where Hitler, von Rundstedt, and Rommel figured the invasion would take place. The reports of these key figures are actually significant in several respects. Not only do they reveal the slight changes that

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[14]Warlimont, Generalleutnant, [Letter from Warlimont to Blumentritt], 8 Maerz 1944, T-311, Roll 27, Frame 7032409.

[15]Loose, "The German High Command," 159-160; Generalleutnant Fritz Bayerlein, "Panzer Lehr Division, Mission (Jan-28 Jul 1944)," FMS, MS# ETHINT-66.6; Generalleutnant Dr. Hans Speidel, "Rommel's Views (1 Apr-May 1944)," FMS, MS# B-270, 5; Harrison, Cross-Channel Attack, 259; and Morison, The Invasion, 49.

occurred from week to week in the German estimate concerning where American and British forces would land along the Channel, but they also bring out when Hitler and his western commanders expected the Allied assault to come about and how the atmosphere of tension in the West continued to mount in the days just prior to D-Day.

On April 26, von Rundstedt declared that he anticipated an attack in the next few weeks and that plainly the strong-point (eindeutigen Schwerpunkt) of the invasion would be the Channel front between the Scheldt and Brittany.[16] Later that day Ob West received an order from Hitler to move two parachute divisions, the 3rd and the 5th, into Brittany to guard against airborne attacks in the area.[17]

Commander-in-Chief West concurred with Hitler's decision, and his weekly estimate on April 29 for the first time in 1944 specifically mentioned Normandy (by which he meant the Cotentin Peninsula) and Brittany as possible primary Allied target areas.[18] The reason, von Rundstedt noted, was because the British and Americans were concentrating in southwestern England troops that could logically be used for an operation against these two vulnerable peninsulas.

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[16]Ia/Ob. West, "Notiz ueber Chefbesprechung bei Ob. West am 26.4.44," 26.4.44, T-311, Roll 23, Frame 7027959.

[17]KTB/OKW, IV, 302; and Ob West (Obkdo.H.Gru.D), Ia Nr. 3332/44 g.Kdos., 26.4.44, ibid., Frame 7027962.

[18]Der Oberbefehlshaber West, Ia Nr. 3428/44 g.Kdos., 29.4.44, ibid., Frames 7028028-7028030.

No one has been able to figure out whether the Fuehrer became so concerned about Normandy and Brittany as a result of some information he had received or whether it was on the basis of one of his famous "intuitive" flashes.[19] In any event, there was a flurry of activity during the first week in May to reinforce those areas that lay within the Seventh Army sector. On May 2, Hitler indicated that Brittany and Normandy were in extreme danger of attack and that the Channel Islands were also threatened.[20]

On the 4th, Rommel proposed that the four armored divisions in the OKW-Reserve be brought into the endangered sector and put under his command.[21] Although both von Rundstedt and Hitler turned down the young Marshal's request, they did move an airborne division (in effect, it functioned as an infantry division), a parachute regiment, and a number of artillery and assault gun battalions into the Cotentin Peninsula.[22] When one adds to this total the

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[19]Warlimont, Im Hauptquartier, 437-439.

[20][Ob West], G.Kdos., "Tagesmeldung," 2.5.44, T-311, Roll 24, Frames 7028080-7028081.

[21][Ob West], G.Kdos., "Tagesmeldung," 4.5.44, ibid., Frame 7028086.

[22]Der Chef des Generalstabes Ob. West, Ia Nr. 3641/44 g.Kdos., [Fernschreiben], 6.5.44, ibid., Frame 7028324; Generalleutnant Karl Wilhelm von Schlieben, "709th Infantry Division (Dec 1943-30 Jun 1944)," FMS, MS# B-845, 23; Oberst Frhr. von der Heydte, "6th Parachute Regiment (1 May-20 Aug 1944)," FMS, MS# B-839, 5, 9; Generalleutnant Max Pamsel, "Preparations for Invasion," FMS, MS# B-234, 23-30; and Harrison, Cross-Channel Attack, 259-260.

two parachute divisions that had been rushed into Brittany plus two panzer divisions newly stationed in the Seventh Army area, then the increase in manpower and firepower becomes quite substantial.

Ob West in his reports of May 8 and 9 pointed to a strengthening of the Normandy defensive posture, and he also reiterated that an Allied attack would probably come in the middle of May with the coastal zone between Boulogne and Cherbourg as the most likely place.[23] The most threatened ports within the Channel area, von Rundstedt emphasized, were first of all, Cherbourg and Le Havre, and secondly, Boulogne and Brest.

This view of probable Anglo-American intentions persisted with some slight variation until the end of the month. Ob West on the 15th stated that the probable strongpoint of the enemy invasion "remains as before the Channel front between the Scheldt and Normandy," but by this time he had relegated Brittany (Brest!) to a partial operation.[24] On the 22nd, using Allied air activity as the basis, Rommel and von Rundstedt once again felt Brittany was endangered, and one week later they continued to expect an enemy assault

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[23][Ob West], G.Kdos., "Wochenliche Lagebeurteilung," 8.5.44, T-311, Roll 24, Frame 7028102; and [Ob West], G. Kdos., 9.5.44, ibid., Frame 7028105.

[24]Ob. West, Ia Nr. 3889/44 geh.Kdos., "Lagebeurteilung durch Ob. West fuer die Zeit vom 8. bis 14.5.44," 15.5.44, ibid., Frame 7028533.

possibly around Brest as well as in the sector between Calais and Cherbourg.[25]

All during this period the western commanders talked a great deal about the time element, and how important time was in building up their defensive strength, a situation which was the reverse of the German war situation in general.[26] These commanders pointed out that every day the enemy waited would help turn the impending battle in their favor. If the Allies only give us time, they said, then we shall be ready for them. Nevertheless, one wonders if these same commanders were being completely honest with themselves. How long can one wait and still remain in a state of readiness? The Germans had first expected the invasion in March. When it did not come, they then believed it would assuredly take place in May. But at the end of that month, there still had been no Allied landing attempt. One might even contend that when the actual invasion did occur on June 6, the German military leaders greeted it

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[25]Okdo.d.H.Gr.B, Ia Nr. 2700/44 g.Kdos., "Wochenmeldung 15.-20.5," 21.5.1944, T-311, Roll 3, Frames 7002142-7002143; Ob. West, (Obkdo H.Gr. D), Ia Nr. 4050/44 geh.Kdos., "Lagebeurteilung durch Ob. West fuer die Zeit vom 15. bis 21.5.44," 22.5.44, T-311, Roll 24, Frame 7028774; and Oberkommando der Heeresgruppe B, Ia Nr. 2880/44 g.Kdos., "Wochenmeldung 21.-27.5," 29.5.44, T-311, Roll 3, Frames 7002149-7002150.

[26]Ob. West, (Obkdo.H.Gr.D), Ia Nr. 4050/44 geh.Kdos., "Lagebeurteilung durch Ob. West fuer die Zeit vom 15. bis 21.5.44," 22.5.44, T-311, Roll 24, Frame 7028774; Rommel, The Rommel Papers, 462-463; and Stjernfelt, Alerte, 41.

with a sense of relief rather than distress.[27]

The final ten days before D-Day, therefore, can be viewed generally as a period during which the Germans continued to anticipate an Allied assault, but it can also be seen, more precisely, as a time during which the Wehrmacht leadership hoped that the waiting and uncertainty would come to an end. On May 28, the western commanders noted with alarm that British and U.S. bombing raids had destroyed or rendered unusable all of the Seine River bridges between Paris and Rouen, thus eliminating rail traffic from crossing the Seine north of Paris.[28] The German leaders in the West concluded that these raids signaled the final preliminary phase before the invasion. Ob West immediately detailed work crews to try to repair several of the less damaged bridges, but without success, and neither he nor Rommel and their staffs were able to pinpoint the exact location where the Allies would land.

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[27]Von Rundstedt had included in one of his Basic Orders on February 24, for instance, this statement: "I hope that this will be the last 'Basic Order' before the beginning of the invasion (Ob. West, Ia Nr. 1656/44 geh.Kdos., "Grundlegender Befehl Nr. 37," 24.2.44, T-311, Roll 15, Frame 7016386). The Western Allies undoubtedly felt relieved, too, for they had already once postponed the Normandy operation, which was originally scheduled for June 5.

[28]The following paragraph is based on AOK 15, Ia Nr. 5115/44 g.K., "Lagebericht fuer die Zeit vom 21. bis 28.5. 44," 28.5.44, T-312, Roll 515, Frame 8113671; [Ob West], G.Kdos., 28.5.44, T-311, Roll 24, Frame 7028171; and Oberkommando der Heeresgruppe B, Ia Nr. 2880/44 g.Kdos., "Wochenmeldung 21.-27.5," 29.5.44, T-311, Roll 3, Frames 7002149-7002150.

They fully realized that the attacks on the Seine bridges had cut the Channel front in two, virtually isolating the Bay of the Seine and Normandy sector south of the Seine from the area north of the River, and von Rundstedt even stated that this situation could mean that the enemy intended to build a bridgehead in Normandy. The western commanders agreed, however, that counterbalancing this possibility was the fact that Allied air activity, including reconnaissance flights, along the Channel coast had not singled out any one place for special emphasis.

The weekly estimates submitted by Army Group B and Theater Command West on the 5th of June indicate the same sense of frustration.[29] It was obvious to them that Allied aircraft were pursuing a quite effective interdiction campaign against the transportation network in preparation for the invasion, but Rommel and von Rundstedt still had no firm information as to where the actual assault would take place. They would simply have to wait.

Nevertheless, when the invasion came the next day, the Germans were taken by surprise because they had not

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[29]Obkdo.d.H.Gr.B, Ia Nr. 3060/44 g.Kdos., "Wochenmeldung 28.5-3.6," 5.6.44, ibid., Frame 7002156; and Ob. West, Ia Nr. 4366/44 geh.Kdos., "Lagebeurteilung durch Ob. West vom 29.5. bis 4.6.1944," 5.6.44, T-311, Roll 24, Frame 7029166.

expected it on the particular day that it occurred.[30] Their feeling of surprise was understandable since the bad weather conditions that prevailed over the Channel had taken some of the psychological edge off the possibility of an attack. Furthermore, German officials believed that British and American bombing raids against the coastal fortifications were not at present of sufficient intensity to warrant taking extreme precautions. Some of the divisional and other commanders in the Seventh Army zone, where the landing occurred, had even departed for a war game exercise to be held in Rennes on the morning of the 6th, and Rommel himself was at home for several days of leave before going to see Hitler and then returning to the West. But now the Allied invasion had intervened. The waiting was over.

Even though the final days before the invasion had generally been filled with tension and anticipation for the western commanders, construction on the Atlantic Wall had not relaxed. In fact, the main reason von Rundstedt had not put the western theater on full alert (Alarmstufe II) was because such an action on his part would bring

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[30]The following paragraph is drawn from Harrison, Cross-Channel Attack, 275-276; and Liddell Hart, The German Generals Talk, 242.

about work stoppage on the coastal defenses.[31] As discussed earlier, the western defenses by June 6, while not as strong as the German military had hoped, were nonetheless strong enough to cause the enemy a great deal of concern. Wehrmacht leaders at this time could point to over 13,000 permanent installations supplemented by a much larger number of field-type defenses and other hindrances, such as antitank ditches, foreshore obstacles, land mines, and the like. Furthermore, many of the harbors were in particular well-defended, and German officials could thus feel that the Atlantic Wall presented a fairly formidable barrier.

Complementing the German defenses in the West were more than three thousand artillery pieces and a total of fifty-eight divisions plus other smaller combat units divided among four Armies in the theater.[32] The Fifteenth

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[31]The following paragraph is taken from [Ob West], G. Kdos., "Besprechungs-Notizen zur Besprechung des Heeren Oberbefehlshabers West am 8.5.," 8.5.44, T-311, Roll 24, Frane 7028385; Ob West (Obkdo.H.Gr.D), Ia Nr. 4050/44 geh. Kdos., "Lagebeurteilung durch Ob. West fuer die Zeit von 15. bis 21.5.44," 22.5.44, ibid., Frame 7028776; Ob West, (Obkdo.H.Gr.D), Ia Nr. 4185/44 geh.Kdos., "Lagebeurteilung durch Ob. West fuer die Zeit von 22. bis 28.5.44," 29.5.44, ibid., Frames 7028952-7028953; and Ob West, Ia Nr. 4366/44 geh.Kdos., "Lagebeurteilung durch Ob West von 29.5. bis 4.6.1944," 5.6.44, ibid., Frame 7029166.

[32]The following two paragraphs are based on Ellis, Victory in the West, I, 120, and Harrison, Cross-Channel Attack, 471. For the deployment of the various German divisions, see the map on page 271. The 2nd Parachute and 19th Panzer Divisions began moving into the area several days after June 6 (Ob. West, Ia Nr. 4414/44 g.K., [Fernschreiben], 8.6.44, T-311, Roll 25, Frame 7029373.

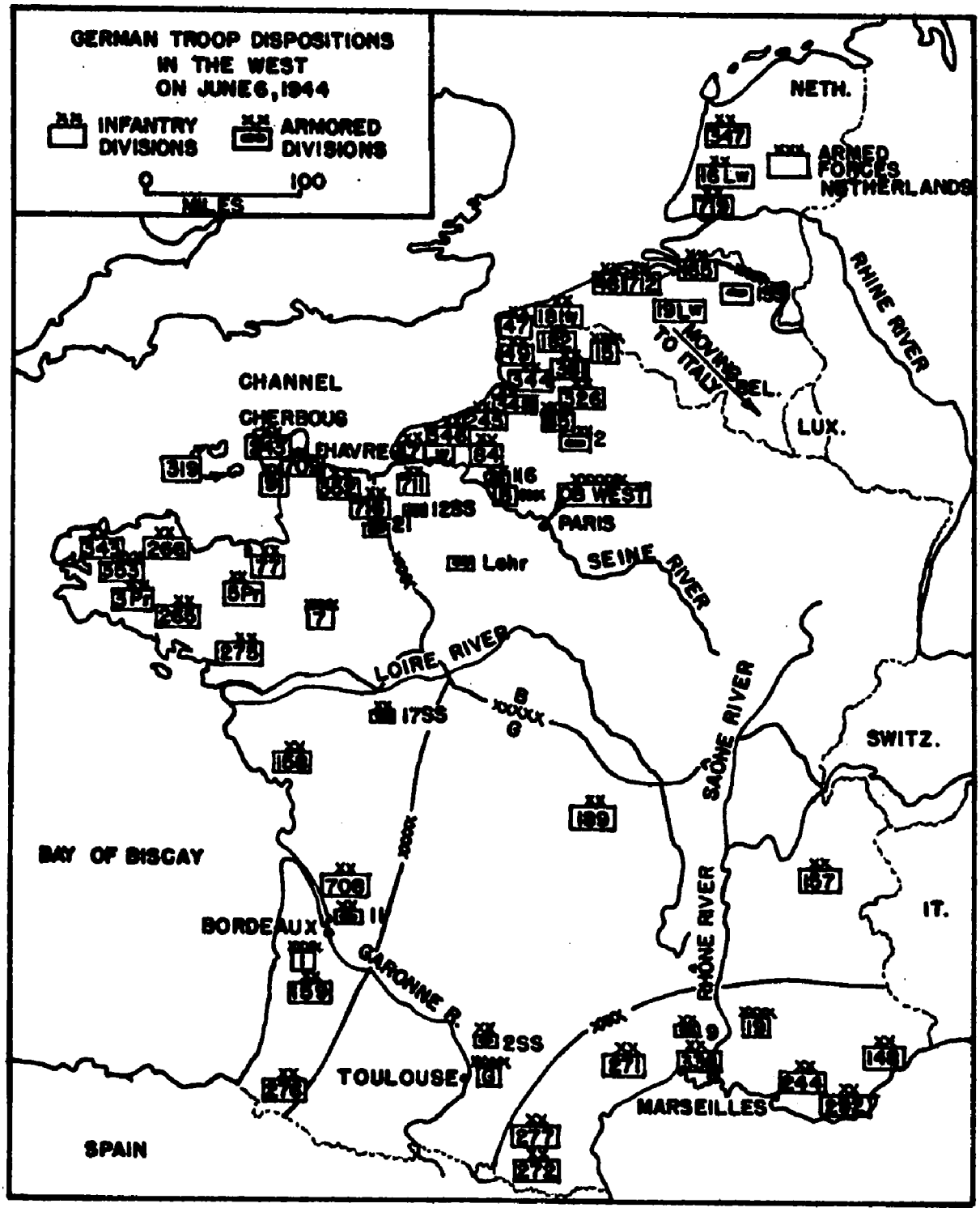

GERMAN TROOP DISPOSITIONS
IN THE WEST
ON JUNE 6, 1944
INFANTRY DIVISIONS
ARMORED DIVISIONS
0
100
MILES
NETH.
ARMED FORCES NETHERLANDS
RHINE RIVER
MOVING TO ITALY
BEL.
LUX.
CHANNEL
CHERBOURG
HAVRE
OB WEST
PARIS
SEINE RIVER
Lehr
LOIRE RIVER
SAONE RIVER
SWITZ.
BAY OF BISCAY
BORDEAUX
GARONNE R.
RHONE RIVER
IT.
TOULOUSE
MARSEILLES
SPAIN

Figure 14.

Army, which protected the most threatened coastal zone that stretched from the Dutch-Belgian border to a line just west of the Seine River, had eighteen of these divisions under its command. Seventh Army, whose sector included the highly vulnerable Cotentin and Brittany peninsulas, had fourteen divisions, while the less endangered Netherlands command in the north had three divisions stationed in its area. In the south, four divisions under the First Army provided a thin defensive line along the Atlantic coast, and seven divisions under Nineteenth Army guarded the French Mediterranean sector with two reserve divisions in the interior.

The remaining ten divisions were the armored formations, which had over 1,400 tanks at their disposal. Ob West had positioned three of the panzer units north of the Seine and three more between the Seine and the Loire River in and near the Seventh Army area. The other four armored divisions had been placed in the south of France in case of an Allied attack along the Atlantic or Mediterranean coasts.

The Germany Navy in the West had only five destroyers in the Bay of Biscay, six torpedo boats, thirty-four motor torpedo boats, and five hundred small patrol boats and minesweepers with which to oppose the enemy assault, although an additional thirty-five submarines located at Brest and the Atlantic harbors were ready for anti-invasion duty.[33] The

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[33]Ellis, Victory in the West, I, 121. Morison's figures (The Invasion, 46) are slightly less.

Third Air Fleet had also been depleted to the point that it listed 510 operational aircraft as of the last of May.[34] It would appear from the lack of German air activity on the day of the landing, however, that the actual number in commission was much smaller than the Luftwaffe cared to admit.[35]

Allied forces in England, on the other hand, consisted of thirty-seven divisions--twenty-three infantry, ten armored, and four airborne units.[36] The real discrepancy between Allied and German forces was in the realm of sea and air power. The Western Powers had 6,939 ships and craft for the opening phase of the invasion alone as compared with the total of 580 that the Kriegsmarine had at its disposal.[37] In terms of aircraft, although exact figures are not available, the Allies had approximately eight thousand operational planes of all types facing five hunred German aircraft, or a ratio of about sixteen to one.[38]

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[34]Ellis, Victory in the West, I, 121.

[35]Saunders, The Fight is Won, 112-113; and United States Strategic Bombing Survey: Over-all Report (European War) (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1945), 7.

[36]Stacey, The Victory Campaign, 60. German intelligence consistently overestimated the number of Allied formations in Great Britain, placing the figure at sixty-five divisions or more (Oberst i.G. Anton Staubwasser, "Armee Group B--Intelligence Estimate [1 Jun 1944]," FMS, MS# B-675, 9-10).

[37]Ellis, Victory in the West, I, 507.

[38]David G. Rempel, "Check at the Rhine," in Craven and Cate (eds.), Europe, III, 596.

These, then, in brief were the forces opposing each other when British and American airborne troops began landing directly behind the Normandy coast a little after midnight on June 6. Following at 6:30 came the main Allied task force which started assaulting the French beaches in five different places along a sixty-mile front between Cherbourg and Le Havre in the Bay of the Seine area. The long awaited invasion had finally arrived.[39]

German defenses in the invasion sector were inadequate, although Wehrmacht officials had always considered Normandy as a definite possibility for an Allied landing, and Hitler had even reinforced the Cotentin Peninsula and the Bay of the Seine region in April and May. Part of the reason for this lack of defenses, no doubt, stemmed from the fact that there was no major port in the area, but the Germans had built some permanent fortifications as well as field-type installations and other obstacles along this endangered coastal zone.[40]

The Wehrmacht troops stationed in the battle sector were also not of the quality the High Command would have

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[39]The various accounts and descriptions of the Normandy campaign are too numerous to mention. The summary that follows is based on the Kriegstagebuch des Oberkommandos der Wehrmacht, IV, 311-335; Harrison's Cross-Channel Attack; and Ellis's Victory in the West, I.

[40]An excellent, detailed description of the Normandy defenses is contained in Stjernfelt, Alerte, passim.

liked. In the immediate area under attack the Germans had five infantry divisions, the 716th, 711th, 352nd, 709th, and 91st Airborne and 21st Panzer Division, and the 6th Parachute Regiment. Of these seven units, the 21st Panzer and the 6th Parachute Regiment were considered excellent, but the infantry divisions, with the exception of the 352nd, were not first-rate formations. Nonetheless, the Germans had competent commanders to direct the fighting, because the British, American, and Allied forces landed, for the most part, in the LXXXIV Corps sector, which was commanded by the highly-respected General Erich Marcks.[41] The only part of the invasion zone not under Marcks' control was the extreme eastern portion, which was under LXXXI Corps. The LXXXI Corps was responsible, in turn, to Fifteenth Army, and LXXXIV Corps to Seventh Army, and Rommel, whose capabilities were well known, was the overall commander of the area.

In these circumstances, it was rather surprising that the German response was not more decisive. The various Allied diversions may have helped deceive the Germans to some extent, but it was more telling, in the long run, that the Wehrmacht commanders, having anticipated the invasion for so long, could not actually believe it had finally begun. Thus, many of them, including Rommel, who arrived

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[41] Marcks, who was the son of a German historian, had lost his leg on the Russian front and was subsequently killed in an Allied air attack on June 12.

back in the West on the night of the 6th from being on leave, thought that the Normandy assault would be followed by another invasion along the Channel coast.[42]

This misappraisal of U.S.-British intentions persisted throughout June and July because Wehrmacht officials continued to overestimate the number of Allied troops stationed in the United Kingdom. Hence, they believed that British and American forces would strike a second blow somewhere between the Somme and the Scheldt Rivers.[43] As a result, the vast majority of the Fifteenth Army, instead of being utilized against the Allies in Normandy, remained deployed along the Channel anticipating an invasion that never came. It was not until the end of July, after U.S. units had broken through the German defenses near St.-Lô, that Wehrmacht commanders admitted "a second large-scale enemy landing on Europe's western coast no longer appears likely."[44]

The Germans also misjudged Allied intentions in another

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[42]Oberkommando der Heeresgruppe B, Ia Nr. 4043/44 g. Kdos., "Lagebeurteilung im Grossen 19.-26.6.1944," 26.6. 1944, T-311, Roll 3, Frame 7002167; and Ob West, (Obkdo.H. Gru.D), Ia Nr. 4593/44 geheim, [Fernschreiben], 7.6.44, T-311, Roll 25, Frame 7029356.

[43][AOK 15], G.Kdos., 24.6.44, "Kriegstagebuch," T-312, Roll 514, Frame 8113203; Oberkommando der Heeresgruppe B, Ia Nr. 4043/44 g.Kdos., "Lagebeurteilung im Grossen 19.-26. 6.44," 26.6.1944, T-311, Roll 3, Frames 7002165-7002167; and Stacey, The Victory Campaign, 125.

[44]Oberkommando der Heeresgruppe B, Ia Nr. 5360/44 g.Kdos., "Lagebeurteilung im Grossen vom 24.7.-30.7.44," 31.7.44, ibid., Frame 7002214.

respect, since the German military felt that the Western Powers would immediately upon landing attempt to seize a major coastal harbor. Wehrmacht leaders failed to realize that the Allies, rather than relying on normal port facilities, would proceed to set up ingenious, artificial harbors, called "Mulberries," which would allow the British and the Americans to supply their forces "across the beaches" during the initial, critical invasion phase of the Normandy operation.[45]

In the meantime Allied units continued to land throughout the first day and made steady progress against relatively light opposition except in one of the American sectors (Omaha Beach), where U.S. forces had trouble securing their positions in the face of strong German artillery and smaller gun fire. But by nightfall, British, American, and Allied troops were firmly entrenched on the continent.[46]

The only major German counterattack on that first day was undertaken by elements of the 21st Panzer Division, but it had been driven back almost to its original starting point. More crucial for the Wehrmacht had been its failure

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[45]For a description of the "Mulberry" harbors, see Albert B. Stanford, Force MULBERRY: The Planning and Installation of the Artificial Harbor off U.S. Normandy Beaches in World War II (New York: Morrow, 1951).

[46]The Allied landed approximately 155,500 men on D-Day. Twenty-three thousand of these were airborne troops (Ellis, Victory in the West, I, 223).

to move two of the other armored formations, the 12th SS Panzer Division and the Panzer Lehr Division, toward the battle area. These two units were positioned close enough to the Normandy beaches that their presence might have been felt as early as the first afternoon of the invasion, and their prompt intervention might have proved extremely costly for the Western Allies.

Von Rundstedt and his staff, even though they were skeptical that this Allied assault was the main landing, had acted with dispatch in this matter; for they realized that the enemy would be quick to exploit any success he might achieve. Ob West had therefore ordered the two panzer divisions to begin moving toward the Normandy coast early on the morning of the 6th. The problem was that these divisions were not directly under his command, but were OKW-Reserve units. At 7:30 that morning, Jodl, who was at OKW headquarters, ordered the movement stopped until official authorization could be obtained from Hitler. Von Rundstedt did not argue and proceeded to carry out Jodl's order. When word finally came from Hitler to release the two armored formations, it was already 4 p.m. and by this time Allied air activity was so heavy that the panzer units had to delay until after dark. Because of Jodl's timidity in not disturbing Hitler, most of the combat elements of these divisions were not committed into battle until June 8.

Allied forces by this date had succeeded in securing

and enlarging the bridgehead area to the degree that British and American troops established direct contact for the first time. It was as obvious to the Germans as it was to the Allies that the latter's next goal would be to take the port of Cherbourg. Thus, the Wehrmacht started sending reinforcements into the combat zone, but the Western Powers were able to effect an even more rapid build-up. By the 17th, U.S. forces had managed to seal off the Cotentin Peninsula and began to close in on Cherbourg, which they captured on June 26-27. The Allies did not get the harbor intact, however, since German engineering crews had effectively destroyed the port facilities. It was several weeks before the harbor was of any use at all to the Americans, and only in September and October did it become a major supply depot for Allied goods arriving on the continent.

During June, Hitler met with Rommel and von Rundstedt on two different occasions. At both conferences--the one near Soissons in northern France on the 17th, and the other at Berchtesgaden on the 29th--the Fuehrer continued to advocate, against the advice of his two western commanders, no withdrawal and no retreat in the West. There was no need to retreat, Hitler explained, since it would not be long until the V-weapons would change the course of the war. The atmosphere at the Berchtesgaden meeting became especially heated, and both Field Marshals "expected to be relieved of

their posts," though only von Rundstedt was replaced on July 2.[47]

German forces kept Allied units fairly well in check throughout most of July, although British forces did take Caen after heavy fighting on July 8. Then, toward the end of the month American troops "broke out" near St.-Lô and started moving toward the Seine River and Paris. The battle for France was moving into another phase.

Nevertheless, in addition to the actual fighting, one other development in German activities, operations, and planning in the West during June and July deserves to be mentioned because it bears a direct relationship to the Atlantic Wall. This development was Hitler's decision to hold onto the major Channel and Atlantic ports at all costs.[48] In a discussion with Jodl on July 31 he was quite explicit on this point.

> We must be clear with each other, Jodl. Which places do we want to hold under all circumstances because they provide additional supply possibilities for the enemy? We cannot throw away the harbors that can keep the enemy from having unlimited manpower and material at his disposal. Thus, if the enemy is no longer able to get a number of the productive ports, then that is about the only brake we can put on his already almost limitless possi-

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[47]Rommel, The Rommel Papers, 478-480. The new western theater commander was Field Marshal Guenther von Kluge, who was later recalled by Hitler on August 16. The disillusioned von Kluge committed suicide on the way back to Germany.

[48]Blumenson, Breakout and Pursuit, 339-343.

> bilities for movement...we must therefore make up our minds that a certain number of troops are simply going to have to be sacrificed in order to save others.[49]

This was an extremely logical move on the Fuehrer's part, for the Germans had been building these areas into self-sufficient, well-defended "fortresses" since 1942. By 1944 they had become truly formidable defensive bastions. This policy meant, of course, that a number of troops would be left isolated from the bulk of the German forces as the Allies pushed across France and the Low Countries, and many of them eventually would be killed or forced to surrender, but it also meant that the Western Powers would be denied access to those ports which they considered so critical for maintaining adequate lines of supply.[50] In fact, German reluctance to part with the Atlantic and Channel harbors caused such an extreme logistics problem for British and American forces that they were unable to sustain an offensive into Germany in the fall of 1944,

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[50]After the fall of Cherbourg on June 27, no major Atlantic harbor fell into Allied hands until the 1st of September, when St. Malo and Dieppe were captured. Four ports--Dunkirk, Lorient, St. Nazaire, and LaPallice-LaRochelle--actually held out until the end of the war (Jacques Mordal, [pseud.], Die Letzten Bastionen; Das Schicksal der deutschen Atlantikfestungen 1944/45 [Oldenburg: Gerhard Stalling Verlag, 1966], 20-21; Roland G. Ruppenthal, Logistical Support of the Armies. Vol. II [United States Army in World War II. European Theater of Operations] [Washington: OCMH, 1959], 48,52, 104-106; Aron, France Reborn, 427; and Stacey, The Victory Campaign, 300-346).

thus possibly prolonging the war for another six months.[51] Therefore, at least in the case of these port areas, the Atlantic Wall had proved to be a quite difficult barrier to overcome.

The Allied had noticeably less trouble overcoming that portion of the Atlantic Wall which protected the Bay of Biscay and Mediterranean coasts in southern France. The Wehrmacht had never been primarily concerned with this region south of the Loire, even after Vichy France which included most of the area, had come under German and Italian domination in November, 1942. The Germans reluctantly began to devote more attention to the south of France during 1943 as the Allies built up their forces and took over large amounts of territory in North Africa and started to move toward Italy. This trend continued after the Italians capitulated in September, since the High Command had to send more military units into extreme southeastern France as well as into the entire Italian Peninsula. Nevertheless, the real alteration in National Socialist war strategy toward southern France came, as it did throughout western Europe, with von Rundstedt's report in October, 1943, and the Fuehrer's subsequent Directive No. 51 on

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[51] Ibid., 356; Mordal, Die letzten Bastionen, 10; and Ruppenthal, Logistical Support, II, 46-48, 96.

November 3. The essence of what they said was that the threat of an Allied invasion had become very real and that every effort must be expended to repulse any Anglo-American landing attempt in 1944.

Wehrmacht officials thus desired to bring about a strengthening of the southern portion of the Atlantic Wall similar to the one that was being undertaken in the north, but they lacked the necessary resources to be able to fulfill both tasks equally at the same time. Clearly, the Germans reasoned, the more endangered sector along the Channel coast should receive first priority. Even within southern France itself priorities had to be taken into account with the result that the Biscay coast, which by 1944 was thought to be too far from the main Allied base of operations to be in great danger, was generally neglected in favor of the Mediterranean front.[52]

What the Germans accomplished along the French Mediterranean coast during the first part of 1944, while not spectacular, was still more than one might expect, when one

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[52]Der Kommandierende Admiral der franzoesischen Suedkueste, B Nr. g.Kdos 77/43 Chefs., "Lagebeurteilung der franzoesischen Suedkueste Dezember 1943," 23.12.1943, T-312, Roll 977, Frame 9168212; Der Oberbefehlshaber der 1. Armee, Ia Nr. 056/44 g.Kdos.Chefs., "Lage im Bereich der 1. Armee," 8.4.1944, T-312, Roll 28, Frames 7535241-7535245; and Der Oberbefehlshaber der 1. Armee, Ia Nr. 069/44 geh. Kdos.Chefs., 24.4.1944, ibid., Frame 7535277. The chief Wehrmacht construction effort in southwestern France during early 1944 was generally confined to facilities at the mouth of the Gironde River, which leads to Bordeaux.

considers that they were devoting most of their energies to the Channel sector. At the time of the Normandy invasion, for instance, the Germans had had 942 permanent installations erected in the Mediterranean area as compared with only 181 the previous January.[53] In addition, a combination of combat troops and Organization Todt and engineering personnel had interspersed the usual antitank defenses, barbed wire, and land mines among the larger fortifications.[54]

The Wehrmacht also managed to some degree to build up the troops strength in southern France prior to June 6. At the end of 1943, Ob West listed five infantry divisions and one more in reserve along this four hundred-mile stretch of Mediterranean coastline.[55] By June the number had risen to seven infantry divisions with two panzer formations, the 9th Panzer and 2nd SS Panzer Divisions, forming a mobile reserve.[56]

A further improvement in the situation in southern

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[53]Ob West (Obkdo.H.Gru.D), Ia Nr. 1409/44 geh.Kdos., "Lagebeurteilung durch Ob. West," 14.2.44, T-311, Roll 22, Frame 7026195; and Ob West (Obdko.H.Gru.D), Ia Nr. 4366/44 geh.Kdos., "Lagebeurteilung durch Ob. West vom 29.5. bis 4.6.1944," 5.6.44, T-311, Roll 24, Frames 7029167-7029168.

[54]Morison, The Invasion, 240. The tidal variations along the French Mediterranean coast were not extreme enough to warrant the extensive use of foreshore obstacles.

[55]KTB/OKW, III, 1401 (26.12.1943).

[56]Ellis, Victory in the West, I, 120.

France was realized with the change in the command structure. What happened was that the First and Nineteenth Armies, the two Armies that had tactical control over the Atlantic and Mediterranean coastal sectors, were no longer placed directly under Ob West. Instead, OKW, at the instigation of von Rundstedt, established an intervening command, Army Task Force G (Armeegruppe G), to be responsible for developments south of the Loire.[57] This reorganization actually helped in two ways. Not only did it integrate German forces in southern France more fully under one command, but it also set up two Army Groups, Heeresgruppe B under Rommel in the north, and Armeegruppe G under General Johannes Blaskowitz in the south, thus allowing Commander-in-Chief West more freedom to oversee the entire theater.[58]

This general strengthening of the German defensive posture along the French Mediterranean coast prior to D-Day started to deteriorate once the Normandy invasion had

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[57][Ob West], G.Kdos., "Tagesmeldung," 5.4.44, T-311, Roll 23, Frame 7027355; [Ob West], G.Kdos., "Tagesmeldung, 3.5.44, T-311, Roll 24, Frame 7028084; and Der Oberbefehlshaber West, Ia Nr. 3442/44 geh.Kdos., "Grundlegender Befehl des Oberbefehlshabers West Nr. 38," 7.5.1944, T-311, Roll 24, Frames 7028346-7028352. Armeegruppe G functioned like a Heeresgruppe, but it did not have as large a staff as a normal Army Group.

[58]General Blaskowitz most recently had served for several years as the commander of the First Army in southwestern France. A highly-regarded officer, the new head of Army Task Force G had incurred Hitler's disfavor when Blaskowitz had violently criticized the tactics of SS personnel in Poland after the German take-over in 1939 (Heiber [ed.], Hitlers Lagebesprechungen, 335).

taken place. This deterioration took several forms. In the first place, there was a weakening in the number and quality of Wehrmacht units in the area. During June and July and the first part of August, the Germans moved out three infantry divisions and a panzer division plus a sizeable number of artillery and antitank gruns.[59] They replaced these formations with a division that had suffered heavy losses in Normandy, a rehabilitated division from the Russian front, and a reserve division that had been stationed in the French interior.[60] The panzer unit was never replaced. Furthermore, help that might have come from the four divisions deployed along the Atlantic coast was no longer available as only two units remained in that sector by August to defend six hundred miles of shoreline.[61]

Even more decisive than the losses in personnel and weapons was the phenomenal rise in sabotage activity that

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[59]Generaloberst Johannes Blaskowitz, "German Reaction to the Invasion of Southern France," FMS, MS# A-868, 1.

[60]Oberst Fritz Schulz, "Nineteenth Army (15 Aug-15 Sept 1944)," FMS, MS# B-514, 4-8; General der Infanterie Erich Peterson, "Southern France (Jul 1943-Sep 1944)," FMS, MS# A-890, 4-5; and Joerg Staiger, Rueckzug durchs Rhônetal; Abwehr- und Verzoegerungskampf der 19. Armee im Herbst 1944 (Die Wehrmacht im Kampf, Band 39) (Neckargemuend: Kurt Vowinckel Verlag, 1965), 13-14. The units transported north were the 271st, 272nd, and 277th Infantry Divisions, and the 9th Panzer Division. The replacement formations were the 716th Infantry, 198th Infantry, and 189th Reserve Divisions.

[61]Generalleutnant Heinz von Gyldenfeldt, "Army Group G (May-Jul 1944)," FMS, MS# B-440, 28.

occurred in southern France after June 6. The Résistance movement had always been strongest in this area, which at one time had been under Vichy control; and now with the Allied landing, the terrorist organizations redoubled their efforts. They stepped up their attacks against troop convoys, continued to derail trains, and in general disrupted the German communications and supply networks. By July, German officials reported that "traveling outside of cities and areas controlled by the Wehrmacht was impossible except under heavy escort."[62] Another German report in August indicated that "the resistance movements are becoming more and more like battle groups."[63] In effect, except for the coastal zones and a few key cities and transportation routes, open warfare was raging throughout southern France.

It was also evident by August that the Western Powers had plans underway to invade the French Mediterranean sector.[64] Reports from agents, enemy troop movements, and Allied air and naval activity, all pointed in this direction. This time there was little guesswork as to where the Allies

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[62]Kontrollinspektion der DWStK, Kontrollabteilung Nr. 890/44 geh., "Monatsbericht Nr. 15, 1-30 Juli 1944," 7 Juli 1944, T-77, Roll 848, Frames 5592321-5592322.

[63]Kontrollinspektion der DWStK, Kontrollabteilung Nr. 1126/44 g., "Lageberichт Nr. 7, 3-10 Aug 44," 11 Aug 44, ibid., Frame 5592414.

[64]Oberkommando Armeegruppe G, Der Chef des Generalstabes, Ia Nr. 1496/44 g.Kdos., "Lagebeurteilung der Armeegruppe," 31.7.44, T-311, Roll 140, Frame 7185770.

would land. The Germans knew it was going to be east of the Rhône River in the zone once occupied by Italian forces.[65] The data was also well known since the French populace discussed openly that the Allied assault would come on August 15.[66]

The German problem was that they were in no position to stop the invasion no matter when or where it took place. Other than recalling the 11th Panzer from Toulouse and stopping the movement of the 338th Infantry Division out of the area, there was little else they could do.[67] The other combat zones were also critical, and thus they could not render any assistance. German air and sea power by this time were of negligible value.[68] The Wehrmacht would simply have to face the Allies with the approximately 60,000 troops they had manning the coast plus the additional 200,000 personnel that were at hand in the entire Mediterranean area.[69]

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[65] [Armeegruppe G], "Lagebeurteilung," 7.8.44, ibid., Frame 7185871; Generaloberst Johannes Blaskowitz, "German Reaction to the Invasion of Southern France," FMS, MS# A-868, 2; and Generalleutnant Heinz von Gyldenfeldt, "Army Group G (May-Jul 1944)," FMS, MS# B-440, 22-23.

[66] Obkdo. Armeegruppe G, Ia Nr. 1800/44 g.Kdos., [Fernschreiben], 12.8.44, T-311, Roll 140, Frame 7185931.

[67] Oberst Horst Wilutzky, "Battles in Southern France," FMS, MS# A-282, 7; and Morison, The Invasion, 239-240.

[68] Ibid., 257-262.

[69] Ibid., 239-240; Aron, France Reborn, 320-321; and Staiger, Rueckzug, 13-14. See the map on page 289.

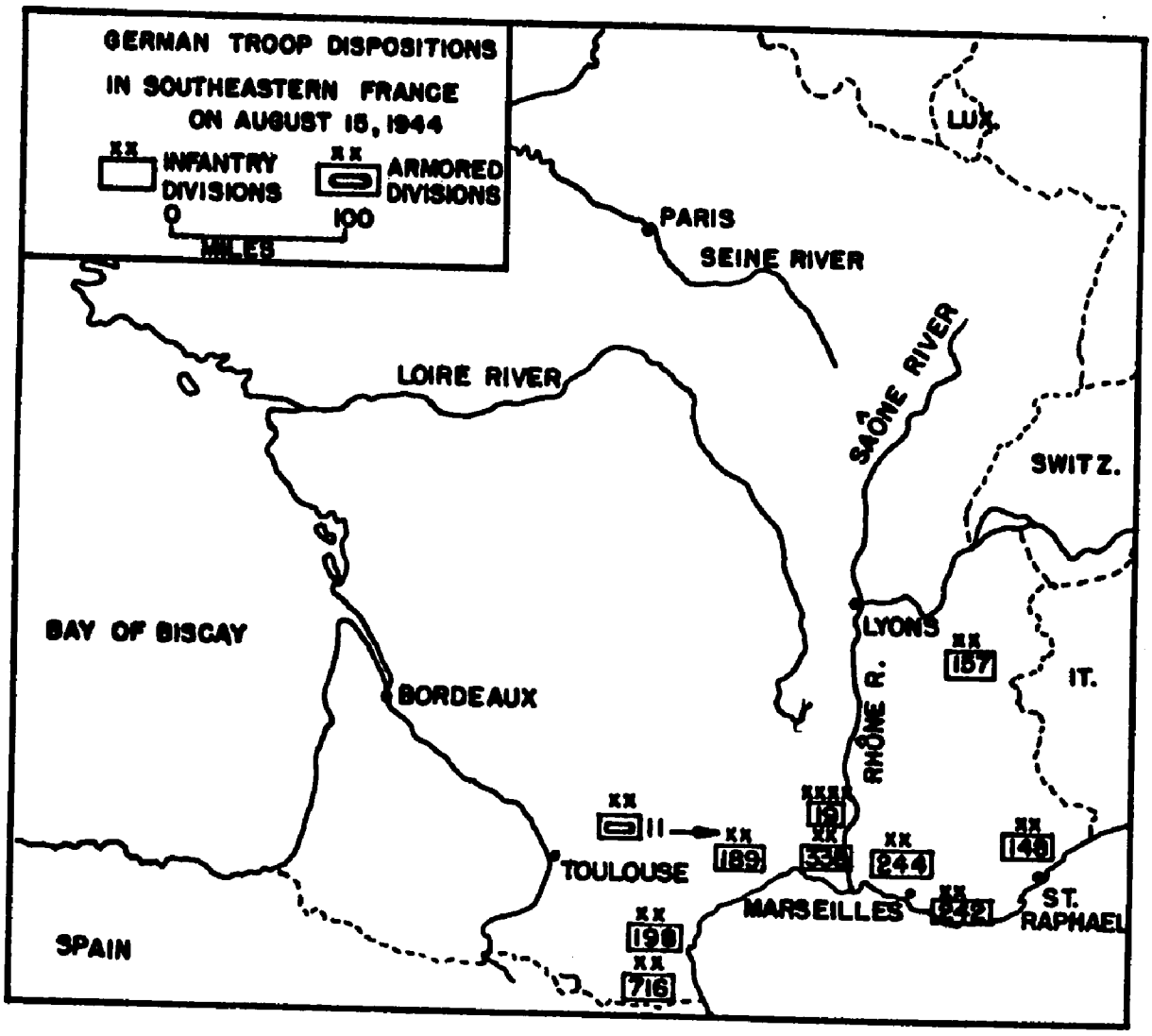

GERMAN TROOP DISPOSITIONS
IN SOUTHEASTERN FRANCE
ON AUGUST 15, 1944
INFANTRY DIVISIONS
ARMORED DIVISIONS
0
100
MILES
LUX.
PARIS
SEINE RIVER
LOIRE RIVER
SAÔNE RIVER
SWITZ.
BAY OF BISCAY
BORDEAUX
LYONS
RHÔNE R.
157
IT.
11
189
338
244
148
TOULOUSE
MARSEILLES
ST. RAPHAEL
198
716
SPAIN

Figure 15.

At 8 a.m. on the 15th of August, U.S. and French forces, supported by overwhelming air and naval superiority, attacked the French Riviera coast between Cavalaire and St. Raphael.[70] As in the Normandy operation, the Allied assault troops were assisted by British and American airborne units, that landed in this case near LeMuy. The French and U.S. units advanced against little opposition since the German formation defending the invasion area, the 148th Reserve Division, proved to be no match for the Allies.[71]

Army Task Force G found itself in a dilemma. To be sure, enemy forces were invading along the Mediterranean coast, but Allied units moving rapidly across northern France posed an equal threat, for they threatened to cut off the outmanned German forces south of the Loire. The High Command some weeks before the Provence landing had actually considered withdrawing German troops from the south of France, but had delayed making any decision. Now, with enemy pressure from both the north and the south, Wehrmacht units under Army Task Force G faced the definite possibility of being surrounded and forced to surrender.

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[70]The following summary of the Provence invasion is taken from Morison, The Invasion, 236-274.

[71]On the first day the Allies put ashore 86,000 men (Vincent Esposito [ed.], A Concise History of World War II [New York: Praeger, 1964], 98).

It was therefore with a sense of relief that Armeegruppe G received orders from OKW on August 17 and 18 to withdraw its forces from all of southern France.[72] The orders stipulated several exceptions in that troops were to be left behind to hold Marseilles, Toulon, LaRochelle, and the Gironde estuary to the last man, and several reserve units were put under the control of the German commander in Italy. But other than these exceptions, Wehrmacht forces along the Atlantic and Mediterranean coasts were to link-up with Army Group B in northeastern France.

A few days later German units began pulling out in the face of advancing Allied troops as well as Résistance groups in the rear. On August 28, French formations, after encountering stubborn resistance, took Toulon and Marseilles, but the Allies were unable to trap the other German columns that were executing a skillful retreat toward the Vosges Mountains. By September 11, the forces under Army Task Force G had stabilized a line that ran through Dijon on the southern flank of Army Group B.[73] Although the Germans stubbornly held out in a few isolated pockets and along the

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[72]Oberkommando Armeegruppe G, Ia Nr. 1926/44 g.Kdos., [Fernschreiben], 17.8.44, T-311, Roll 140, Frame 7185993; Oberkommando Armeegruppe G, Ia Nr. 1933/44 g.Kdos.Chefs., [Fernschreiben], 18.8.44, ibid., Frames 7185401-7185402; Oberst Horst Wilutzky, "Battles in Southern France," FMS, MS# A-882, 15-18; and Generaloberst Johannes Blaskowitz, "German Reaction to the Invasion of Southern France," FMS, MS# A-868, 2-4.

[73]Blumenson, Breakout and Pursuit, 535, 697.

Dutch coast, the Atlantic Wall had ceased to play the primary role in Germany's western strategy.

CONCLUSION

In examining the Atlantic Wall from the German point of view, one has observed that it was neither the impenetrable fortress that the National Socialist publicists claimed, nor the mere piece of propaganda that its detractors have contended. The truth, as with most objects of historical interest, lay between the two extremes.

The Wall consisted, in part, of large numbers of concrete fortifications as attested by the fact that 17,600,000 cubic meters of cement were poured along the Channel, Atlantic, and French Mediterranean coasts by the end of July, 1944.[1] But the Wall was more than permanent defenses and field-type obstructions and barbed wire entanglements. It was also made up of men and weapons with which to "protect" western Europe from Allied encroachment, and it was therefore the combination of these three elements--fortifications, firepower, and manpower--that constituted Germany's defensive set-up in the West.

The effectiveness of this defensive system was determined, to a large degree, by factors outside of the

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[1]Diplomingenieur Xaver Dorsch, "Organization Todt--Operations in the West," FMS, MS# B-671, 10.

control of the Wehrmacht, by such factors as the developments in other, more threatened war theaters and by the reaction to possible Allied moves toward western Europe. As a consequence, the Atlantic Wall was not what it might have been had the Germans been able to concentrate their energies solely on building up the defenses in the West. The German military machine became involved in a prolonged war on a number of fronts that eventually strained German resources to the breaking point. The result, as related to the western theater, was that the effectiveness of the Wall varied from period to period and from area to area according to the overall war situation.

As for periodization, Wehrmacht thinking about the West essentially went through three different phases. The first, or pre-Atlantic Wall, phase lasted from October, 1940, when the Fuehrer "temporarily" postponed the German assault of Great Britain, to December, 1941, when it became apparent that Wehrmacht reverses on the eastern front were going to force Hitler to alter his military strategy. At this time the National Socialist dictator made it clear that the main German effort would have to continue to be expended against the Red Army until the Soviet menace were disposed of once and for all. In the meantime, Wehrmacht forces would have to follow a defensive policy in the West.

Prior to Hitler's decision the German military in western Europe had primarily been concerned with actual or

potential offensive operations. Included among these operations and planned operations during the early phase had been a vigorous pursuance of the U-boat war; preparations, with Spanish assistance, to take over Gibraltar or portions of Northwest Africa; and a proposal for an occupation of the Iberian Peninsula to "help" Spain and Portugal ward off any British operation in the area. Plans had also been kept in readiness in case the Fuehrer decided to return to the idea of invading England. Defensive measures in the West had been confined, for the most part, to protecting the submarine bases and to guarding the coasts from possible British commando raids.

By the end of 1941 the situation had altered, and the High Command decided to switch from an essentially offensive to a defensive orientation in the western theater. This change of emphasis ushered in a new phase in German strategy toward the West. The second period lasted from December, 1941, to October 28, 1943, and it was marked by the formulation of the Atlantic Wall concept as well as by the building up of the Wall itself. The idea behind the Wall was to set up a system of fortifications that would make it possible for the Wehrmacht to free most of its troops for other tasks. In short, defensive installations and firepower were to serve as a substitute for manpower in the West.

This concept was only partially carried out because

the German military became so heavily engaged on other war fronts that it was unable to allocate a sufficient amount of resources to make the Atlantic Wall into the truly defensive bastion that the Germans wished. They were thus forced to follow a policy of expediency. If they thought the West were in danger of being attacked, they took steps to augment the defenses in the area. If, on the other hand, the Germans saw no reason to fear an immediate Allied landing during this two-year, middle period, they generally neglected the Atlantic Wall building program in favor of more pressing projects.

As a result, the construction of the Wall went through various vicissitudes between 1942 and the end of 1943 depending on how threatened the German military conceived the western area to be. At first, early in 1942, the impetus received from the Fuehrer in his Directive No. 40, which set forth the general guidelines for the western defensive system, had been sufficient to move the construction program ahead. During the summer the defensive posture improved even more after the Wehrmacht became concerned that western Europe was in imminent danger of being attacked. The High Command had proceeded to supplement the Atlantic Wall installations, many of which were in the process of being built, by deploying panzer units into the West to meet any large-scale operation the Americans and British might attempt. Although the German

Army did not have to use any of its armored divisions against the Western Allies on this occasion, the Germans still felt that their fears had been justified in the form of the Dieppe Raid, and they therefore expended more effort than ever before in building up the western defenses. By the middle of 1943, however, it became clear that the chief Anglo-American threat was in the Mediterranean area, and thus construction work on the Atlantic Wall did not keep pace.

Toward the end of October, 1943, the western theater commander, von Rundstedt, warned that this lag in the building program must cease if the Wehrmacht expected to cope with the anticipated Allied invasion in 1944. This warning started the third phase, which was to last until the time of the Normandy landing. Hitler and his staff concurred with von Rundstedt, and the Germans during this final period utilized every means they could find to strengthen their defensive set-up in the West. By June, 1944, the German military, in spite of its dwindling resources, found that it could assemble a fairly impressive combat force behind a substantially improved line of coastal defenses. In the end, the Atlantic Wall might not have been as strong a barrier as the Wehrmacht had originally hoped it would be, but, nevertheless, when contrasted with the paucity of defenses in the West in 1941, it

represented a considerable achievement.

Just as the effectiveness of the Atlantic Wall varied from period to period, its effectiveness also varied from area to area within the western theater. As one might expect, the region in the West that the Germans considered most in danger of Allied attack received the most attention. This area was the Fifteenth Army sector, which after mid-1942 ran from the Dutch-Belgian border to a line west of Le Havre. It was always well-defended, and by 1944, both in terms of manpower and of fortifications, the German military had achieved defense in depth in the area.

The Wehrmacht felt that the other sectors were less threatened, and they therefore gave them proportionately less consideration. The Netherlands area, which was tactically under Fifteenth Army, was not thought to be a likely choice for a major Allied assault especially because it possessed a built-in system of water and dike defenses. A more likely possibility was the Seventh Army zone, which stretched one thousand miles from Normandy to the mouth of the Loire River. This region was still within range of U.S. and British fighter aircraft, and it included the vulnerable Cotentin and Brittany peninsulas. Hence, the Germans considered the Seventh Army area to be the second most endangered sector in the West, and they made sure by

the time of the invasion that it possessed a fairly adequate system of beach defenses.

The Seventh Army area contrasted markedly with that of First Army, which was located further south along the French Atlantic coast, and which, because of its distance from the British Isles and from Allied objectives in the Reich, the Germans believed to be a very unlikely place for an Anglo-American attack. The Wehrmacht had thus accorded the region what might be termed at best a "paper" defense. Fortifications along the Pyrenees border with Spain had received an even lower priority and consisted almost solely of field-type defenses designed to prevent any possible enemy incursions through the mountain passes.

The situation in the Nineteenth Army zone that covered the French Mediterranean was somewhat different. To be sure, in the end, its defenses proved inadequate, but it was not so much from a lack of concern on the part of the Germans as it was from the fact that the former Vichy area was a liability militarily. A portion of it had only come under direct Wehrmacht control as late as November, 1942, and the remaining portion east of the Rhône had been taken over even later after the Italian surrender in September, 1943. By this time the German war machine was in no position to start building in this newly-occupied sector the type of defensive barrier that was necessary to repel a large-scale Allied landing.

The French Mediterranean area also exemplifies another problem that beset the German military in the West, and that was the problem of adjusting to the ever-changing war situation. No matter whether it was the occupation of Unoccupied France or rushing men and material to meet a crisis in Russia or North Africa or Italy, it affected the western theater in some way. German military leaders were therefore never able to develop a set program for erecting the Atlantic Wall for the simple reason that its construction was contingent upon so many other developments. In this light, it is perhaps remarkable that the Wall became as formidable a defensive system as it did.

Thus, the strength of the Western defenses differed from sector to sector, from a relatively strong defensive posture along the Channel coast to a much less formidable network of fortifications along the sea and land boundaries of southern France. Nevertheless, within each Army sector, whether it was strongly or weakly defended, the Germans accorded certain key places top building priority. These places were primarily the major ports. Almost from the inception of the Atlantic Wall at the end of 1941, the Wehrmacht regarded the Allied capture of an important harbor in the West as a necessary prerequisite for any Anglo-American attempt to sustain a second front. By June of 1944 the Germans had made the harbors into veritable fortresses that had been prepared not only to repulse a

large-scale assault from the sea, but also to hold out against any enemy siege from the landward side.

It was in relation to Germany's fortress strategy that the Atlantic Wall can be considered at least partially successful. The Wehrmachts policy of holding on to the ports at all costs did not prevent the Western Powers from establishing a beachhead, for the Allies had set up the artificial "Mulberry" harbors to serve the British and Americans as supply entrepôts during the initial critical period following the Normandy landing. But this German policy did cause the Allies to suffer a severe logistics crisis during the late summer and fall of 1944.

What happened was that even though the Allied break-out in the final days of July had forced the bulk of the Wehrmacht troops to begin retreating slowly across France, Hitler at this juncture ordered the retention of specified German units inside a number of the harbor fortresses. These valiant harbor defenders realized that they would be isolated from their sources of supply because Allied tactical airpower, which had proved so decisive before, during, and after the invasion, would make it virtually impossible for the Luftwaffe to fly in reinforcements from the outside. Cut off and dependent upon their own resources, many of these beleaguered German forces still held on tenaciously before finally surrendering to the Allies. Because of their actions the British and American forces

were unable to gain immediate access to western Europe's important port facilities. The resulting holdup of the Allies for lack of supplies in the autumn of 1944 enabled Germany to survive through the winter and even to launch the Ardennes counteroffensive in December.

Two other factors that affected the effectiveness of the Atlantic Wall were the interservice frictions and the conflicts in command authority that existed within the German military establishment in the West. With regard to the interservice frictions, the controversy between the German Army and the Air Force was only of minor significance as the Luftwaffe generally accepted its support role within the theater. The conflict between the Army and the Navy was of greater consequence, particularly in terms of defense building priorities and the positioning of coastal artillery weapons. The Navy, in brief, wanted to emplace the coastal batteries so that they could be concentrated against sea targets, while the Army preferred using the artillery pieces against beach and land targets. By 1944 the controversy had resolved itself in favor of the Army primarily because the depleted German Navy no longer possessed the capabilities and hence the relative power position to challenge the dominant influence of the Army in the West. Still, prior to 1944, the Army-Navy contro-

versy did impair the Atlantic Wall construction effort to some degree.

The conflict among the services was of longer duration than the command controversy, which was relatively short and lasted from November, 1943, to May, 1944. The two key figures in the dispute have been thought to be von Rundstedt and Rommel, who by 1944 was one of von Rundstedt's subordinate commanders in the western theater. The chief issue between the two commanders revolved around where to place the mobile reserve formations in relation to the coast. Rommel, for his part, advocated deploying the motorized armored units near the coast so that they could be called on for an immediate counterattack against the invading enemy. Von Rundstedt, in contrast, supposedly favored positioning these forces further inland where they could be utilized decisively in a coordinated manner once the main Allied attack had been identified.

This writer has found, however, that although there were differences of age and outlook and even in style of command between the two Field Marshals, the controversy over strategy was not so much between Rommel and von Rundstedt as it was between Rommel and General Geyr von Schweppenburg, the head of German panzer forces in the West. It was General Geyr who most enthusiastically endorsed the idea of a strong mobile force stationed in the rear, and on this point he and Rommel were in violent

disagreement. Von Rundstedt at first stood aside from the argument between his quarreling commanders, but, at their urging, he did make a decision. His decision was, in effect, a compromise by which he would remain overall commander of the armored formations in the western area while dividing tactical control between Rommel and Geyr.

The problem was that neither Rommel nor Geyr was satisfied with von Rundstedt's solution. Rommel, who had direct access to Hitler, was especially upset and began to press the Fuehrer to render a decision that was more in accordance with the young Field Marshal's views. Hitler during the previous three years had intervened on occasion in the West, but in general he had allowed Ob West a free hand in dealing with any problems that might arise within the theater. By April of 1944, however, the situation had changed. With the impending Allied invasion, the Fuehrer decided to strengthen his own personal control over the military decisions being made in western Europe by placing a portion of the mobile reserve units under his ultimate command. Hitler's final ruling did not please any of the German commanders in the West, but they had little choice, but to accept it. Hitler's intervention had once again proved to be decisive.

One final point needs to be made in evaluating the

effectiveness of the Atlantic Wall, and that is the feeling of the Allies toward the German defenses in the West. In general, the Western Powers had a good idea of the make-up of the Wall, and they believed it could be breached if they could direct a sufficient amount of force against it before the Germans were able to mount a major counter-attack.[2] But Allies planners realized that it would be a difficult operation in any event, partly because of the problems inherent in amphibious warfare, and partly because of the German defensive network along the coast.

The Allies therefore prepared with extreme care to make certain that the invasion was a success. If it were not successful, and a second front were not opened up, not only would all of the months of preparation and planning be lost, but, more importantly, the Allied drive to defeat Nazi Germany would have suffered a severe setback. When one looks at the Normandy operation in retrospect, the Western Powers may have been overly cautious and assumed that the Atlantic Wall was more substantial than it really was, but from their vantage point in 1944 a successful landing was not as inevitable as we have since presumed it to be.

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[2]The following two paragraphs are drawn from Harrison, Cross-Channel Attack, 176; Morison, The Invasion, 45; Stjernfelt, Alerte, 307-308; Liddell Hart, The German Generals Talk, 228; Aron, France Reborn, 4; and Albert Norman, Operation Overlord: Design and Reality (Harrisburg, Pa.: Military Service Publishing Co., 1952), 210.

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The voluminous captured German war documents are being microfilmed by the National Archives as part of a continuing project instituted in 1955-56 by a group of scholars who became known as the Committee for the Study of War Documents of the American Historical Association. These records, which form the basis of so many works dealing with contemporary history, are of crucial importance in the analysis of the German defensive system in the West, and no study of the Wall could even be contemplated without them. Since there are already literally hundreds of rolls of microfilm in this collection, one will find the Guides to German Records Microfilmed at Alexandria, Va. (59 vols. to date; Washington: National Archives, 1958ff.) an indispensible reference aid. The films are readily available from the National Archives in Washington, D.C.

It would be an almost impossible task to compile an exhaustive list from these microfilmed German records of

the particular documents that pertain to the Atlantic Wall and to western Europe in general during the wartime period. Nevertheless, it is possible to discuss the major "groups" of records within the collection which are of special significance and to point out other materials from this vast and rich source of information that are helpful in examining the German military's western defenses.

One extremely valuable source within these major records groups are those at the upper command level that are contained in the National Archives Microcopy T-77 series, Records of Headquarters, German Armed Forces High Command (Oberkommando der Wehrmacht/OKW). Especially pertinent for an overall view of the war are portions of the high-level military plans, directives, and orders located in the files of the Armed Forces Operations Staff (Wehrmachtfuehrungsstab/WFSt), Rolls 774-778, 786-788. Part of these materials have conveniently appeared in published form in several documentary collections, including the Fuehrer Directives and Other Top-Level Directives of the German Armed Forces, 1939-1945 (2 vols.; Washington: Naval History Division, U.S. Office of Chief of Naval Operations, 1948), and the less complete Walther Hubatsch (ed.), Hitlers Weisungen fuer die Kriegsfuehrung, 1939-1945 (Frankfurt/Main: Bernard & Graefe, 1962) (Abridged English edition, Hugh R. Trevor-Roper [ed.], Hitler's War Directives 1939-1945 [London: Sidwick and Jackson, 1964]). Also in the T-77 series,

certain records (Rolls 781-782) of the National Defense section (Abteilung Landesverteidigung) of the OKW are helpful in discussing several specific operations, such as "Sea Lion" and "Felix" planned by the Wehrmacht for implementation in western Europe.

In addition, the various German Army materials form a particularly important source for the study of the Atlantic Wall. The highest level Army records appear in the T-78 series, Records of Headquarters, German Army High Command (Oberkommando des Heeres/OKH). Within this series many significant documents relating to the western theater can be found in the operations branch (Operationsabteilung) materials (Rolls 309-319), and in the estimates prepared by one of the OKH intelligence sections, Enemy Armies West (Abteilung Fremde Heere West), Rolls 443-452. These estimates include German appraisals of U.S. and British forces, the French Armistice Army, developments in northern Africa and Spain, and so on, as the situation changed throughout the course of the war.

Another invaluable source are the records of the German Army commands deployed in the West. The highest echelon of command in the theater was the Army Group (Heeresgruppe), and the Heeresgruppe materials are located within the T-311 series, Records of German Field Commands: Army Groups. The pertinent records (Rolls 12-28) of the overall theater commander, Commander-in-Chief West (Oberbefehlshaber West),

who had the added title of head of Army Group D are, on the whole, of good quality, although some of the top secret files (Chefsachen) are missing. Even though Army Task Force G (Armeegruppe G, later Heeresgruppe G) was formed only in May, 1944, its files (Rolls 139-141) are also excellent and include important Chefsachen documents. The materials from Rommel's Heeresgruppe B, on the other hand, are spotty and deal mostly with the post-June 6 time period.

Documentary records from the four Armies that served in western Europe during most of the pre-invasion period are, for the most part, of exceptional quality and consist of the headquarters' war diaries (Kriegstagebuecher) and supporting papers (Anlagen), such as orders, reports, telegrams, conference minutes, and other types of evidence. Following is a list of these Armies and the relevant rolls that appear in the T-312 series, Records of German Field Commands: Armies:

First Army, Rolls 20-30;
Seventh Army, Rolls 1530-1571;
Fifteenth Army, Rolls 497-521;
Nineteenth Army, Rolls 976-979 (confined mostly to 1943).

It is regrettable that the important pre-invasion records of Panzer Group West (Panzergruppe West), which was headed by General Geyr von Schweppenburg and attached to Ob West, have disappeared. The activities of this Panzer Group just after the D-Day landing are located in the T-313 series,

Records of German Field Commands: Panzer Armies, under Panzer-Armeeoberkommando 5, Rolls 420-421.

Materials at the lower Army command level in the West are of assistance in answering specific questions that relate to particular areas and units. Among the significant microfilm series, which are still appearing in 1969, are the T-314 series, Records of German Field Commands: Corps; the T-315 series, Records of German Field Commands: Divisions; and the T-354 series, Miscellaneous SS Records: Einwandererzentralstelle, Waffen-SS, and SS-Oberabschnitte, the latter being especially important in assessing the role played by the SS panzer formations that shuttled between East and West.

The German Navy documents, particularly the bulk of the Navy High Command (Oberkommando der Kriegsmarine) and the Navy Theater Command West (Marinegruppenkommando West) records, are a further valuable source for the study of the Atlantic Wall. These groups of materials have been available at the U.S. Navy Department for some time, but they will soon become more accessible to scholars as part of the National Archives collection.

The German Air Force records are sketchy, although materials in the T-405 series, German Air Force Records: Luftgaukommandos, Flak, Deutsche Luftwaffenmission in Rumaenien, Rolls 43-46, are of some help in understanding the Luftwaffe administrative apparatus in the western theater.

Also of some assistance in examining the German military occupation of western Europe is the T-501 series, Records of German Field Commands: Rear Areas, Occupied Territories, and Others. Especially germane are the files of the Military Commander in Belgium and Northern France (Militaerbefehlshaber in Belgien und Nordfrankreich), Rolls 96-116, 355-356, and 361; and of the Military Commander in France (Militaerbefehlshaber in Frankreich), Rolls 149-191. In addition, the T-501 series includes some records of the Commander of Army Troops in the Netherlands (Kommandeur der Truppen des Heeres in den Niederlanden), Rolls 197-201, which contain reports on the construction of the Atlantic Wall along the Dutch coast between 1941 and 1943.

Scattered among all of the various rolls of microfilm cited above are documents that have appeared in published form as part of the Nuremberg Trials collection. This important collection includes the following series:

Nazi Conspiracy and Aggression. 8 vols. plus 2 supplements. Washington: Government Printing Office, 1946-1948 (Red Series).

Trial of Major War Criminals Before the International Military Tribunal. 42 vols. Nuremberg: International Military Tribunal, 1947-1949 (Blue Series).

Trials of the War Criminals Before the Nuremberg Military Tribunals under Control Council Law No. 10. 15 vols. Washington: Government Printing Office, 1949 (Green Series).

The other basic unpublished primary source used by

the author in his analysis of the Atlantic Wall has been the Foreign Military Studies. The historical section of U.S. Forces in the European Theater compiled these studies after the war from interviews and written questionnaires submitted to German military officers and administrative personnel. Many of these accounts were written from memory, and they are replete with a number of factual errors as well as apologetics, but all of them give details which are of immense value to the historian as can be seen from their skillful utilization in the United States World War II official histories.

The entire list of more than one thousand studies, which includes materials dealing with the Russian and Mediterranean fronts, is published in the Guide to Foreign Military Studies 1945-54, Catalogue and Index (Karlsruhe: Historical Division, Headquarters, United States Army, Europe, 1954). All of the documents are housed at the Office of the Chief of Military History in Washington, although a number of the individual manuscripts are available at other depositories. The various documents used in this study of Germany's defenses in the West are listed below.

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