

DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY

HISTORICAL DIVISION

O B WEST

(ATLANTIC WALL TO SIEGFRIED LINE)

A STUDY IN COMMAND

MS#B-308 GENLT ZIMMERMANN

MS#B-672 GENMAJ VON BUTTLAR

MS#B-718 GENLT SPEIDEL

MS#B-633 GENFLDM VON RUNDSTEDT

MS#B-344 GEN INF BLUMENTRITT

Volume I, II, & III

GERMAN REPORT SERIES

OB WEST

(Atlantic Wall to Siegfried Line)

A STUDY IN COMMAND

MS # B-308: GENLT ZIMMERMANN
 MS # B-672: GENMAJ von BUTTLAR
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Volume I

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O B W E S T

(Atlantic Wall to Siegfried Line)

A S T U D Y I N C O M M A N D

Institut für Zeitgeschichte - Archiv

C-in-C West

Chief of Staff

Ia (Operations Officer)

Institut für Zeitgeschichte – Archiv



Herrn v. Rundstedt
 von RUNDSTEDT



Blumentritt
 BLUMENTRITT



Zimmermann

ZIMMERMANN

MS # B-308

Title : OB WEST, Atlantic Wall to Siegfried Line, A Study
in Command

Author : Genlt zV Zimmermann, Bodo

Position : Ia, OB WEST, 26 Oct 40 - 11 May 45

Date of MS : Oct 46

Place : HDIE, Allendorf, Germany

Prepared for : Mr F. Monroe Ludden

Translator : Mrs Elisabeth S. Hartsook

MS # B-672

Title : Commentary on MS # B-308

Author : Genmaj Frhr Treusch von Buttlar-Brandenfels, Horst
(commonly known as Von Buttlar)

Position : Chief of Army Operations, Armed Forces Operations
Staff (WFSt), 12 Jan 42 - 15 Nov 44

Date of MS : 20 Oct 47

Place : HDIE, Neustadt, Germany

Prepared for : Capt Frank C. Mahin &
Capt James F. Scoggin, Jr

Translator : Miss Dawn E. Thompson

MS # B-718

Title : Commentary on MS # B-308
Author : Genlt Dr Speidel, Hans
Position : C of S, A Gp B, 15 Apr - 1 Sep 44
Date of MS : 5 Dec 47
Place : Freudenstadt, Germany
Prepared for : Capt Frank C. Mahin &
Capt James F. Scoggin, Jr
Translator : Miss Dawn E. Thompson

MS # B-633

Title : Commentary on MS # B-308
Author : Genfldm von Rundstedt, Gerd
Position : C-in-C West, 1 Mar 42 - 3 Jul 44 & 5 Sep 44 - 9 Mar 45
Date of MS : 5 Aug 47
Place : PoW Camp 11, United Kingdom
Prepared for : Capt Frank C. Mahin &
Capt James F. Scoggin, Jr
Translator : Miss Dawn E. Thompson

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APPROVED BY [signature]

INSTITUTE FOR

MS # B-344

Title : Three Marshals, National Character, and the 20 July Complex

Author : Gen Inf Blumentritt, Guenther

Position : C of S, OB WEST, 25 Sep 42 - 8 Sep 44

Date of MS : 15 Feb 47

Place : HDIE, Allendorf, Germany

Prepared for : Prof Dr Kurt Hesse

Translator : Herr E. R. Mysing

O B W E S T

(Atlantic Wall to Siegfried Line)

A STUDY IN COMMAND

Preface

As long as the campaigns of World War II are discussed, there will be disagreement and controversy between the adherents of Eisenhower, of Montgomery, of Bradley, of Patton; Allied strategy will be studied and reappraised and the reputations of the leading Allied commanders will fluctuate accordingly. Yet how much more intricate is the problem of evaluation in the German camp, where strategic possibilities were drastically limited by Allied superiority, where the chain of command had become a net, where politics and machinations overrode military considerations, and where even tactical decisions were reserved to Hitler. A definitive study of the German command relationships and strategy in the West, therefore, could be made only after thorough consideration of the views of several hundred German officers and careful investigation of a high percentage of the German military records still extant.

The following study is less ambitious. It is a composite of the opinions, ideas, and memories of five German officers who helped shape the course of the War in the West—three from OB WEST, one from OKW, and one from A Gp B. This study is not a comprehensive disk, but a three-spoked wheel which, when laid upon the discussion table, covers a part completely, a part inadequately, and a part not at all.

The hub of the wheel is MS # B-308, fashioned from memory by Genlt Bodo Zimmermann, Ia (Operations Officer) of OB WEST, in the Historical Division Interrogation Enclosure, during a four-month period in mid-1946. The three spokes are the three commentaries on Genlt Zimmermann's MS # B-308: one (MS # B-672) by Von Buttlar, Chief of Army Operations in the Armed Forces Operations Staff (WFSt); one (MS # B-718) by Speidel, Chief of Staff of A Gp B; and one (MS # B-633) by Von Rundstedt, C-in-C West. Each commentator worked independently from a typed copy of MS # B-308 which did not include the appendices. The commentaries were prepared in widely separated locations at approximately the same time, with no opportunity for consultation or collusion among their three authors. Each commentary was prepared in a brief period of time—one month, on the average—and each was largely a product of the author's memory, with the significant exception of MS # B-672, whose author had available a copy of the semi-official war diary of the WFSt (MS # B-034 or OUSCC Document 1793-PS). The rim of this historical

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wheel was not really prepared as a manuscript at all, for it (MS # B-344) consists of an exchange of personal correspondence between the OB WEST Chief of Staff and an indigenous employee of the Historical Division. Nevertheless, it caps the spokes by providing an analysis of the core of the problem, by one well-qualified observer.

In assembling the five manuscripts which make up this study, the editor has treated Genlt Zimmermann's MS # B-308 as the basic account and, after subdividing the three commentaries according to their content, has inserted the remarks of the three commentators at the appropriate places in MS # B-308. The reader of Volume I, therefore, will find Gen Zimmermann's treatment of each controversial aspect either amplified, endorsed, or contested by one or more of the commentators. In Volume II, the editor has placed ten brief discussions by Von Buttlar, which were too detailed and too independent to be merged with MS # B-308 without impairing the continuity of that account; Volume II is concluded by Gen Inf Blumentritt's MS # B-344--a debatable, but interesting discussion of why things were as they were. Volume III comprises the 18 maps and charts prepared by Gen Zimmermann as appendices to MS # B-308. Volumes IV and V contain the German texts of the five manuscripts.

It has been possible to resolve, with a fair degree of satisfaction, all the translation problems encountered in the editing of this report. Only one of them need be discussed at this point: the German term, "Oberbefehlshaber West," which may mean either the C-in-C West or his headquarters, has been rendered as "C-in-C West" when it seemed to refer to the person, and as "OB WEST" when it seemed to refer to the headquarters.

In these five volumes, then, the editor presents an interim study in command, an attempt to fix truth through the controversies of those who shaped history.

James F. Scoggin, Jr.

JAMES F. SCOGGIN, JR
 Capt Sig C
 Historical Editor

JUL 20 1948

O B W E S T

(Atlantic Wall to Siegfried Line)

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V o l u m e I V

(Included only in DA and Cam sets)

MS # B-308 (German Text)

V o l u m e V

(Included only in DA and Cam sets)

MS # B-672 (German Text)

MS # B-718 (German Text)

MS # B-633 (German Text)

MS # B-344 (German Text)

Volume I

Institut für Zeitgeschichte – Archiv

MS # B-308

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INTRODUCTION

1. In conformity to the mission of OB WEST, this presentation is confined to strategic matters within the Western Theater of War. Details of the execution of military operations were the concern of subordinate commands and are not treated here.

2. The period during which Genfldm von Kluge (and, later, Genfldm Model) was C-in-C West I have been able to discuss only in broad outline because each of these men also commanded A Gp B, remained at Army Group, and used its staff to direct operations. Thus, the real staff of OB WEST, practically excluded from the control of operations, had to limit its activities to the transmission of orders, the maintenance of communications, and the direction--in so far as possible--of A Gp G. The constantly increasing physical separation of the headquarters of OB WEST and A Gp B made it more and more nearly impossible for the staff of the former to exert advisory influence on the decisions of Von Kluge and Model. Why OKW made an arrangement so definitely unusual and so prejudicial to the conduct of battle is unknown to me.

3. It is uncertain what Genfldm von Rundstedt or his Chief of Staff would say to this treatise and whether or not their views would agree in all particulars with this personal delineation of mine, especially since Genfldm von Rundstedt accepted reports from and conferred

with no one but his Chief of Staff. My information, therefore, is often third-hand.

Mistakes and inaccuracies, especially in dates, are possible, because none of my own documents and records have been available to me.

4. I was Ia on the staff of OB WEST, subordinate to the C of S, and had no command authority. I am not a professional officer, nor even a reserve officer; I was "drafted" in Dec 39.

5. This work--as originating with me--may be published only in a literal and unabridged form. I reserve all rights in this respect.

Pt 1 of 31 pts of MS # B-672, Genmaj von Buttlar:

In general, my personal knowledge permits me to comment only on those sections of Genlt Zimmermann's report which deal with the views of OKW, or with the contrasting views of OB WEST and OKW. It should be mentioned at the outset that OKW did not, in itself, have any command authority, but was really only the working staff of the Supreme Commander of the Wehrmacht, Hitler. In decisive and important questions, therefore, it would be clearer and more appropriate to speak of views, and divergencies from the views, of Hitler. On the other hand, my lack of adequate documentary material makes it impossible for me to give a considered opinion on the actual course of the operations described, and on the situation within the staff and area of command of OB WEST.

As a whole, the report gives a clear, easily grasped, and vividly drawn picture of the course of operations in the West, together with the evolution of the ideas of the responsible operations staff which influenced this course of events, as they appear in the memory of the Ia of OB WEST. It is understandable that the writer--seeing only the difficulties and needs in his own sphere--does not always do justice to the fact that the battle in the West was only one part, though indeed an important one, of the over-all struggle of the German people. Without sufficient reference material at my disposal, I cannot judge how far the descriptions of operations correspond with the actual facts, thus giving the report value as a historical document. The descriptions of OB WEST's ideas, however, do give the definite and constant impression that the writer has presented, as views of OB WEST, many realizations which later, in the course of events, became evident,

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and which may even at the time have been the subject of internal consideration at OB WEST Headquarters, but which never came to the knowledge of the Supreme Command at the time stated and with the clarity emphasized in the report.

I have the impression that the writer has tried, by citing numerous good intentions and well considered proposals which were all, ostensibly, frustrated by the Supreme Command, to draw attention away from the fact that--especially in the preparation for, and the first weeks of, the Invasion battles--OB WEST did not know how to assert itself successfully either on lower or on higher levels, and that it did not make any serious attempts to do so. I shall deal with this question in more detail later in my commentary.

Pt 5 of 31 pts of MS # B-672, Genmaj von Buttlar:

It has not been possible for me to prepare a detailed exposition of the many problems encountered in preparing for the Invasion and in the Invasion battles, as presented by the author, nor--without absolutely reliable and complete reference material--to refute conclusively and convincingly his accusations against the Supreme Command and OKW. In my commentary, therefore, I have limited myself to the selection of a few problems, in order to demonstrate from these that--according to my knowledge of the facts, which is of course largely based on memory--the writer has been laboring under false impressions with regard to several matters he describes, perhaps due to the fact that he was not in a position to have the perspective necessary for a just evaluation of the measures taken by the Supreme Command or OKW.

Pt 1 of 24 pts of MS # B-718, Genlt Speidel:

My short commentary is not intended to shift or to fix responsibility. The multitude of questions, the proximity of the events, and the lack of source material, preclude, as yet, a valid judgment of the period. Only the historian, observing things clearly from a greater distance, will be justified in making such an attempt, after interpreting and evaluating all the historical data.

Genlt Zimmermann's report gives a comprehensive but often one-sided survey of events and personalities in France in 1944. It presents a justification and a defense of OB WEST, and is perhaps also intended as such for Genfldm von Rundstedt. The distribution of praise and blame, not always historically tenable, may unintentionally encourage a new German legend: that the Invasion succeeded through the work of traitors. As Genfldm Rommel and others had informed Hitler, the enemy superiority in all three dimensions--especially in the air--made it quite impossible for the available German forces and operational resources to check the Invasion for long.

The author has composed his presentation of events without knowledge of what occurred at A Gp B, and without appreciating the important political and military factors. Thus his descriptions and estimates of the leading personalities and events do not always correspond to the facts and the historical background.

The political aspect of this "apology" appears particularly unreliable. (Among other things, the behavior of Genfldm von Rundstedt!) The shifting of responsibility to A Gp B, in certain events, and especially to Genfldm Rommel, whose death was brought about by Hitler, is not in accordance with the facts of the case, nor with the usual procedure. It is doubtless intended to exonerate OB WEST, but may just as well have the opposite effect.

The very careful but extremely theoretical report demonstrates, in many instances, the lack of familiarity with the front of the staff of OB WEST.

The author was not present at the frequent exhaustive discussions between the field marshals, so that his presentation cannot take full account of the considerations weighed at the time.

Pt 1 of 14 pts of MS # B-633, Genfldm von Rundstedt:

Genlt Zimmermann's work gives an excellent survey of the tremendously difficult situation which confronted OB WEST from 1942 onward, and will promote understanding of the factors which facilitated so greatly the Allied Invasion and the final, total victory. As far as my memory goes, in the complete absence of any reference material and with my mind in poor condition because of illness, old age, and my long captivity, I can agree with the writer on almost every point. Any differences of opinion, or any additions which I have felt it necessary to make, are to be attributed to the fact that the Ia of OB WEST was not informed of certain things at all, and of others only partially and at third hand.

I esteem the author as a soldier, as a man, and as a general staff officer. I can assure the reader that his treatise deserves the most serious consideration and has great historical value.

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Chapter One

CHAIN OF COMMAND AND ORGANIZATION IN THE WEST
DURING AND AFTER THE SUMMER OF 1943

6. C-in-C West : Genfldm von Rundstedt

C of S : Genlt Blumentritt (Ed: promoted to gen
inf 1 Apr 44)Headquarters: St Germain (near Paris), both before and
immediately after the Invasion.

OB WEST--a supreme headquarters in name only--did not have complete authority of command within its area, although it had tactical control over Holland, Belgium, France, and the Channel Islands, and although its mission was the defense of this area against any attack whatever. OB WEST was subordinate to OKW; however, in the fields of personnel, materiel, organization, and supply, OKH was also a superior headquarters. Strategically and tactically the area of OB WEST was an OKW Theater of War.* In the early summer of 1943, OB WEST was

*Ed: As the war with Russia developed, Hitler made OKH directly responsible for operations on the Eastern Front, while OKW remained responsible for operations in all other theaters.

in command of Fifteenth Army, Seventh Army, First Army, and Army Felber (provisional)--later redesignated Nineteenth Army. (See App 1.)

I. Major Elements Incompletely Controlled by OB WEST

7. The Wehrmachtbefehlshaber in den Niederlanden (Wehrmacht District Netherlands) was subordinate to OB WEST only as far as the preparation of coastal defense was concerned. It was to come under the operational control of OB WEST in case of an enemy attack, but otherwise it was directly subordinate to OKW. Because of this situation, a corps headquarters of the German Army (LXXXVIII Inf Corps), designated Befehlshaber der Truppen des Heeres in den Niederlanden (Commander of Army Troops in Holland), was made responsible for training, equipment, and general administration of army staffs and troops. It discharged these responsibilities in accordance with directives from OB WEST and Fifteenth Army.

8. OB WEST had a similar relationship with the Militaerbefehlshaber in Belgien und Nordfrankreich (Military District Belgium & N France) and with the Militaerbefehlshaber in Frankreich (Military District France). As territorial commands, these two were under the direct control of OKW*; in many respects they were also subordinate to

*Pt 20 of 31 pts of MS # B-672, Genmaj von Buttlar:

I did not know this. To the best of my recollection, the military districts were under the tactical control of the theater commanders; in all other matters they were subordinate to the Supreme Commander of the German Army, and they received their directives through the Generalquartiermeister of OKH.

the Generalquartiermeister of OKH (Ed: general staff officer in charge

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of all matters relating to the supply and administration of the armies in the field). OB WEST had tactical control over these commands only under "threat of danger"—for example, in the event of an enemy landing, in the execution of anti-invasion preparations, and in case of threats to order and security in the occupied countries. In general, OB WEST could merely submit requests to these commands, which, in turn, often had to wait for a decision from OKW.

9. At this time, forces of the Fifth Italian Army* (Generale

*Ed: Actually, Fourth Italian Army.

d'Armata Vercellino) were stationed along the coast of the French Riviera, adjacent to the left flank of Army Felber (prov). In matters of coastal defense in the sector west of the Franco-Italian border, these forces were under the tactical control of OB WEST; in all other matters they were naturally subject to the Italian military authorities. A frontier area east of the Rhone, including the Alpine passes, constituted an Italian sphere of influence and was occupied by the Italians. Neither OB WEST nor Military District France had any prerogatives or influence there.

It was obvious that such an arrangement would work smoothly only so long as there was no fighting, for it was difficult for OB WEST even to impart a clear understanding of its tactical views concerning coastal defense. Liaison staffs were exchanged in order to facilitate cooperation. Nevertheless, OB WEST had no real influence on the Italian forces in France, especially because the Italian commander

had his command post on Italian soil. It was a foregone conclusion that, regardless of the situation, he would always act in accordance with the orders of his Italian superiors and with the interests of Italy. Outwardly, however, relations were good.

10. All Waffen-SS units located in the OB WEST area were assigned to OB WEST for operations and supply, only; for discipline, administration, etc, they remained under the control of RF-SS Himmler.*

*Pt 18 of 31 pts of MS # B-672, Genmaj von Buttlar:

The regulations for the subordination of the Waffen-SS were not issued especially for the OB WEST area, but were consistent with the general system governing the subordination of troops of other arms of the Wehrmacht.

11. Ersatzheer (Replacement Training Army) staffs and troops, such as reserve divisions and reserve corps, located in the OB WEST area were under the Commander of the Ersatzheer. The desires of OB WEST as to the tactical subordination and employment of these organizations had to be forwarded to the Ersatzheer through OKW. Only in case of threatening danger were they at the tactical disposal of OB WEST.*

*Pt 19 of 31 pts of MS # B-672, Genmaj von Buttlar:

In considering the position of the staffs and troops of the Ersatzheer, one must remember that these units, regardless of their transfer to France, had to continue to fulfil their training missions for the Ersatzheer. They were stationed in France, not as combat troops, but only to improve internal security by augmenting the occupation forces. During quiet periods, they had to be withheld from employment by OB WEST, in order that they might perform their primary mission--the training of replacements.

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12. The Luftwaffe (Third Air Force: Comdr, Genfldm Sperrle; C of S, Gen Koller, succeeded by Gen Plocher) was not under the command of OB WEST! In its role as an arm of the Wehrmacht, it was subordinate to OKL, both operationally and administratively. OB WEST and Third Air Force were to "cooperate" with each other: The former could request combat missions, reconnaissance, etc, of the latter, which then weighed the requests and performed those which it could reconcile with its own over-all mission. Ground elements of the Luftwaffe employed in the coastal defense (strongpoints, flak detachments, intercept and direction-finding stations) were under the operational control of OB WEST or of an appropriate coastal sector commander.

13. The German Navy (Navy Gp West: Comdr, Adm Krancke; C of S, Adm Hoffmann) was in no way subordinate to OB WEST as far as nautical matters were concerned (naval movements, convoys, naval security and reconnaissance, operations at sea, naval mine-laying, submarine warfare, etc). All such matters were arranged by direct contact between Navy Gp West and the Seekriegsleitung (Directorate of Naval Operations, OKM) in secrecy which was sometimes very strict and often complete, even from OB WEST. Only those naval elements employed in coastal defense on land—chiefly in harbor areas or in naval signal installations—were under the operational control of OB WEST or of an appropriate coastal sector commander. In the case of land-based naval artillery, however, the Navy retained control of fire on water-borne targets. This control was not to be transferred to the German Army until there was a definite landing.

This arrangement gave rise to continuous disagreements between the tactical conceptions of the Navy and the Army (Heer), which were evident even in the choice of firing positions.*

*Pt 17 of 31 pts of MS # B-672, Genmaj von Buttlar:

The regulations for the subordination of the coast artillery, and the directive for its conduct of fire missions, were disapproved by the Army commanders-in-chief in almost all theaters. The Navy, however, cited its combat experiences against naval targets and rejected all compromise. In the face of the very firm stand and bitter opposition of the Navy, it proved impossible to modify the arrangements.

14. Continual attempts by OB WEST to modify, through OKW, its command framework (which had been imposed from above and which was clearly faulty) were to no avail. Although it was obvious that OB WEST could never achieve, under existing arrangements, a strict and unified control of operations in the West, all such proposals, as well as numerous oral discussions with representatives of OKW, were fruitless.*

*Pt 16 of 31 pts of MS # B-672, Genmaj von Buttlar:

It must be admitted that the chain of command in the West was not an ideal one; it was further complicated by very involved conditions (authority to issue directives, instructions to cooperate, authority to give orders in special fields) in the relationships of numerous other agencies and organizations which are not even mentioned. It corresponded, however, to our high-level organization and to the internal influences and interplay of forces within this system of command. The chain of command in the West was thus no special handicap for the western command, but rather a burden to which the commanders-in-chief in all theaters of war had to resign themselves--in some cases, as in the Balkans, in far more difficult conditions.

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II. The "Strategic Directorate" Proposal

15. One last attempt at modification, made by OB WEST in the summer or autumn of 1943, proposed to OKW that OB WEST, with a reduced staff, should become the strategic brain and nerve center of the Wehrmacht in the West. Relieved of all other responsibilities, OB WEST could have concerned itself solely with preparing and ensuring a unified operational command in the event of an invasion. The proposed organization of the staff was approximately as follows:

- a. Commander-in-Chief, Chief of Staff, IIa (Chief Personnel Officer), and Rechtsberater (Chief Legal Adviser).
- b. Fuehrungsabteilung (tactical group of general staff sections) comprising the Ia (Operations Officer), Ia/F (Assistant Ia), Id (Training Officer), Flieger-Verbindungsoffizier (Air Liaison Officer), and the Marine-Verbindungsoffizier (Naval Liaison Officer). The foregoing were to be responsible for all tactical matters. The Ic (Intelligence Officer) was also included in the Fuehrungsabteilung.
- c. Nachrichtenfuehrer (Chief Signal Officer), in charge of signal communications and signal troops.
- d. General der Pioniere und Inspekteur der Landesbefestigung, Organisation Todt (Chief Engineer Officer and Inspector of Fortifications and OT), in charge of all engineer matters and permanent fortifications.

e. Oberquartiermeister (general staff officer in charge of supply and administration).

f. General der Artillerie (Chief Artillery Officer), also responsible for artillery training.

g. General der Panzertruppen (Chief Armored Officer), in charge of employment and training of all panzer units.

h. General des Transportwesens (Chief Transportation Officer), responsible for all railway matters, including railway operating troops.

i. Miscellaneous deputies and representatives concerned with special missions and with administrative problems important to the conduct of war: Deutscher General in Vichy (German General in Vichy), Vertreter der Militaerbefehlshaber des Wehrmachtbefehlshaber in den Niederlanden (Representative of the Military Commander of Wehrmacht District Netherlands), and others.

j. Kommandant des Hauptquartier (Headquarters Commandant).

For reasons unknown to me, this proposal was not approved by OKW, and the authority of OB WEST remained inadequate, as previously described.

III. The C-in-C West

16. Both as a soldier and as a man, Von Rundstedt was a superior personality. He was unpretentious and personally above reproach, uncompromisingly just, deeply religious. In his integrity of character he was the arch-type of the imperial officer. Respected by

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officer and private soldier alike, he was often called the "last knight." He had a splendid military training and was truly a great captain (Feldherr), with all-encompassing prescience, outstanding strategic judgment, and bold concepts.

17. Since he saw completely clearly in all matters, he always judged correctly what lay within the realm of possibility. If, despite advanced age and many vexing experiences during the War and despite his own misgivings and inner reluctance, he returned to duty when called, he did it not from loyalty to the regime, but from deep love for his people and his country and from a soldier's sense of duty. He made no secret of his antipathy toward the representatives of the system in power. He was sharply opposed to OKW and to "Bonzentum" (undue influence of party favorites), showing openly—often too openly—his aversion. Those closest to him anxiously tried, therefore, to protect him from spies and informers. His name influenced the morale and behavior of the troops as did no other. Taken all in all, as a man and as a great soldier and expert he was the phenomenon among the field marshals of the Army.* **

*Pt 2 of 24 pts of MS # B-718, Genlt Speidel:

Genfldm von Rundstedt was not only a disappointment for the soldiers, he was embittered and exhausted by what he had lived through and experienced in the Third Reich. He had a definite head for strategy and enjoyed full command of the tools of his profession. He appeared to lack creative drive, as well as mental clarity in his attitude toward the people. Many of our best generals continually pressed for a positive political stand against Hitler, to whom Genfldm von Rundstedt referred in all confidential discussions as the "Bohemian lance corporal." Yet the power of decision was lacking. Thus he failed

not only as a great captain (Feldherr), but also as a personality, at a moment which required the last, utmost effort.

In par 270, below, the writer himself admits that "ending the War would long ago have been the most logical thing to do." If this was also the opinion of the C-in-C West, then why was the battle prolonged, with the sacrifice of Germany's last resources (in the Ardennes Offensive, for example)? Was it really the duty of the highest military leaders to use every means to delay the end of a war which was known to be lost? A detailed appraisal of all these problems should not be neglected.

**Pt 3 of 31 pts of MS # B-672, Genmaj von Buttlar:

My estimate of the leading personalities in the West corresponds, on the whole, to that of the author. I must mention here, however, that my personal acquaintance with the commanders described was limited to a few official occasions. In this part of his report too, it seems to me that the writer's definite bias against OKW has led to a few exaggerations. It was, for instance, known to Hitler as well as to OKW that Genfldm von Rundstedt often expressed himself in very drastic terms concerning the measures of the Supreme Command and the person of Hitler. In spite of this, Hitler was convinced of Von Rundstedt's loyalty, which had indeed been demonstrated in various emergencies, and accordingly kept on using him in important positions. In this connection, Hitler once said, "As long as the Field Marshal grumbles, everything is all right."

18. OB WEST staff work followed the usual pattern of work on such higher staffs, with the exception that some staff sections were almost continuously overworked, whereas others, less important, had very little to do. (The proposal of OB WEST to convert its staff into a strategic directorate would have remedied this condition and drastically reduced the size of the staff.) Genfldm von Rundstedt himself usually worked only with his Chief of Staff and dealt directly only with the IIa, in personnel matters; the Rechtsberater, in legal matters; and the five generals named under section IV, below.

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19. In his private life, Von Rundstedt lived within the narrowest circle. Except on special occasions, he dined only with his Chief of Staff, the IIA, his personal aide, and often the Headquarters Commandant. Occasionally, senior officers reporting in stayed for a meal, which was extremely simple—usually only one course. He made it his personal concern to see that the civilian population received all surplus food. He moved among them completely alone and unarmed. Von Rundstedt can be termed a Francophile; in conversations he emphasized again and again that he considered it a great mistake not to live in peace and amity with the French, that is, not to make peace with France.

20. Von Rundstedt's Day

He received his first report from his Chief of Staff about 1000 each day, the second report about 1300, the third about 1630, and the fourth about 1930. When anything important arose he received reports during the night as well. Prior to the Invasion, Von Rundstedt made a trip to the front approximately every two weeks. Depending on the itinerary and the distance involved, these trips lasted from one to eight days.*

*pt 3 of 24 pts of MS # B-718, Genlt Speidel:

Trips to the front should have been made during combat; in the periods of quiet in the West these journeys were not so essential. Neither the C-in-C West nor the members of his staff, with the occasional exception of the Chief of Staff, were at the front during combat in order to establish personal contact with the front-line commanders and see conditions with their own eyes. On the whole, therefore, Genfldm von Rundstedt remained unknown at the front. Genfldm Rommel, with his pronounced gift of leadership, made his personal influence felt at the front almost every day, exposed himself unsparingly, and lived with his soldiers.

IV. Dual Subordination of Certain Staff Sections

The staff of OB WEST had the normal organization of an army group staff, but the scope and importance of its mission necessitated the addition of a number of specialized staff sections, which were, for the most part, dually subordinate.

21. General des Transportwesens (Genlt Kohl, succeeded by Obst Hoefner on 1 Feb 44). On the one hand he was dependent on the Chef des Transportwesens (Chief Transportation Officer, OKH) and on his directives, an arrangement which was essential because of the centralized direction of all transportation for all theaters of war; on the other hand he was the adviser of OB WEST on transportation and on railway techniques, and the agent of OB WEST in the employment of rail transportation in Belgium and France. As a troop commander, he was subordinate to OB WEST. His directives, moreover, required that he cooperate with the French and German civil rail systems.

22. Inspekteur der Landesbefestigung West (Genlt Schmetzer, succeeded by Genlt Eberle--killed in action at the Rhine). From the General der Pioniere (Chief Engineer) of OKH, he received--through technical channels--instructions concerning techniques and materiel employed in the construction of coastal fortifications and concerning the supply of fortification materiel (armor plate, barbed wire, interior fittings for the fortress installations, etc). In order to make it possible for him to accomplish his mission of fortifying the coast, he

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controlled a number of fortress engineer commanders and staffs. Tactically, he was subordinate to OB WEST, whose subordinate commands made tactical recommendations concerning construction sites to him. Though in the construction phase he was to cooperate with Organisation Todt and the Reichsarbeitsdienst, to the extent that the latter was available, he had no command authority over these forces because they were subordinate to Reichsminister Speer or to Reichsarbeitsfuehrer (Chief, Reich Labor Service) Hierl. From planning to execution there were thus many stages of appeal'

23. General der Panzertruppen West (Gen Pz Frhr Geyr von Schweppenburg). On the one hand he was subordinate to the General Inspekteur der Panzer Truppen (Inspector General, Armored Forces), Genobst Guderian, in all matters of training, organization, and equipment of the panzer forces. On the other hand he was the adviser of OB WEST on the use of panzer-type units, and the officer responsible for determining the status of their training and equipment, as well as the soundness of their employment by the commands exercising tactical and logistical control over them. His mission was particularly difficult.

24. General der Artillerie bei OB WEST (Gen Art Meyer-Buerdorf). The artillery adviser of OB WEST was responsible for inspecting artillery coastal defenses and artillery training (tactical employment, selection and construction of gun positions, organizational questions, etc). Under his direct control were only those artillery units which, as OB WEST reserves, were not attached to some

other command; it very rarely happened that there were any such unattached artillery units. One of his primary missions was cooperation with the German Navy concerning the naval artillery employed along the coast. Because of the Navy's different conceptions of the employment and fire tactics of coastal artillery, this was a very difficult job, and in spite of all efforts no satisfactory solution was reached.

25. Deutscher General des OB WEST in Vichy (Genlt Frhr von Neubronn). After the German occupation of southern France, OKW created this post at the suggestion of OB WEST in order to secure liaison with the French Government in Vichy. In general, this officer received his instructions directly from OKW, for OB WEST was forbidden to participate in any political activities. Accordingly, this officer usually transmitted requests of the French Government to Military District France. Now and then Genlt von Neubronn briefed the C-in-C West personally. This position completely lacked any inherent political significance; it was simply a mouthpiece.

26. Mention is also to be made of the dual function of the Oberquartiermeisterabteilung (supply and administrative group of general staff sections) of OB WEST. Even its designation (O Qu West) indicated that it worked not for OB WEST alone, but also served Military District France. Hence it was simultaneously an agency of the Generalquartiermeister of OKH, whence it received instructions directly.

To complete the picture it should also be mentioned that even the IIs, Adjutantur (personnel group of general staff sections), was dually subordinate from 1943 on. It was simultaneously an agency

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of the Heerespersonalamt (Army Personnel Office) and therefore directly subordinate to it.

27. Seen as a whole, then, the same thing may be said of the staff work of OB WEST as of the command framework in the West: No full and adequate command authority, no independence in any important decisions. Nevertheless, OB WEST was responsible for the success or the failure of the coming decisive battles in the West!

Chapter Two

PREPARATION OF COASTAL DEFENSES AGAINST INVASION

28. As early as 1943, OB WEST was entirely aware that, in conformity with the development of World War II, the Western Allies would soon also seek a decision in the West, perhaps even during 1943, but more likely in 1944. A decision could be brought about only by means of an invasion. Two factors, lacking on the German side, more and more clearly enhanced the possibility of an invasion: Mastery of the Air and Mastery of the Sea. To these were added the fact that we were surrounded, and the resulting continuous expenditure of forces and materiel in the East and in Italy. It was all the more urgent, then, that we make the best use of the time remaining—that we bring the coastal defense to the very highest possible level of effectiveness, by increasing still more the rate of all types of construction and by improving the training, equipment, supply, and combat efficiency of the field forces. OB WEST was aware that many of our deficiencies were due to the fact that thus far the "West" had been constantly neglected in favor of the "East."

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I. Organization of Coastal Defense

29. All beaches were occupied. The degree of concentration and the strength of the defending troops and fortifications depended upon the forces available, the seriousness of the threat, and the nature of the coast. Since the forces available were insufficient for a uniform cordon defense of the entire coast, we had to organize a system of points of main defensive effort. Vulnerable coastal sectors, particularly those near the southern coast of England, were occupied as densely as possible. Sectors not suitable for a landing were thinly occupied and, depending on the nature of the coast (cliffs, surf), were generally watched only by security detachments. Naval experts were consulted as to landing possibilities, although the German Navy, of course, could judge only by its own methods and equipment because it lacked practical knowledge of enemy tactics and technique.

30. On the basis of the foregoing evaluation, organization of the coastal defense began as early as 1941, when Genflda von Witzleben was still C-in-C West. In the course of time, the coastal defenses were augmented in accordance with the following considerations:

a. Within the individual army sectors, harbors at river mouths and in bays were singled out for especial defensive emphasis, which varied with their importance and their size. Harbors

were classified as large harbors (Grosshaefen); military harbors (Kriegshaefen), most of which were U-boat bases; or smaller harbors (kleinere Haefen).

b. Within the framework of the whole coastal defense problem, OB WEST began in 1942 to designate important large harbors and military harbors as "Fortified Areas" (Festungsbereichen) and to prepare them for all-around defense. Their fortifications, mostly field works at first, were later reinforced by Organisation Todt construction.

c. In 1943, OKW furthered these measures by designating as "Fortresses" (Festungen) all important harbors whose construction as fortified areas had progressed sufficiently. These fortresses were assigned specially tried and tested commandants, each of whom took a solemn oath to defend his fortress to the death. As I remember, the fortresses were:

- Hook of Holland
- Dunkirk
- Calais
- Boulogne
- Havre
- Cherbourg
- St Malo
- Brest
- Lorient
- St Nazaire
- Gironde Estuary, north and south
- Channel Islands

The following retained the designation of "fortified areas," inasmuch as their fortifications and their troop strength were still inadequate for their defense:

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Texel
la Rochelle
Bayonne
Marseilles
Toulon

d. Between these fortresses and fortified areas, there lay a system of strongpoint groups (Stuetzpunktgruppen), individual strongpoints, and resistance-points (Widerstandsnestern).

e. As a result of various orders and of the lessons learned from Dieppe, it was directed that battery positions, as a matter of principle, could not be left half-isolated, but had to be protected by infantry strongpoints or else had to be built up as strongpoints themselves, with an all-around, close-in defense.

f. Most of the strongpoints—and all the resistance-points—consisted of field fortifications; they were reinforced by a skeleton of Organisation Todt construction. As a matter of principle, coast artillery was, in the course of time, to be protected by concrete fortifications. On orders from OKW, in 1943 Organisation Todt intensified its construction activities along the Fifteenth Army front and in the fortresses. Antitank ditches were prepared along the landward sides of the fortresses by excavating wherever natural obstacles were inadequate. Time, manpower, and materiel, however, were all insufficient to fortify the entire front.

g. Thus, of the total construction program, only the most urgent parts could be undertaken or completed. The French

Mediterranean coast, not occupied until late in the summer of 1942*,

*Ed: Unoccupied France was invaded by Germany and Italy on 11 Nov 42.

fared the worst. There the field forces could do little with the rocky ground, and Organisation Todt did not complete its work. (Of the thousand permanent installations planned, only about 85 were finished at the beginning of the Invasion and an additional 200 were in the early stages of completion.)

Pt 2 of 14 pts of MS # B-633, Genfldm von Rundstedt:

The Atlantic Wall was an enormous bluff, less for the enemy, who of course knew all about it through his agents and many other circumstances, than for the German people. Hitler never saw the Atlantic Wall, not even one part of it! After the summer of 1940 he was in the West only once (Jun 44), and then he did not go as far as the coast. He was satisfied if Organisation Todt, or any other agency employed in the construction, reported that as many tons of steel and as many cubic meters of concrete as possible had been employed. Of these quantities, the lion's share went to the Navy, then came the Luftwaffe, and what was left over was given to the German Army for its coastal defenses.

Altogether, the needs of the Army were always considered last, although Hitler himself was Supreme Commander of the Army. We once said, "He usually decides against himself!"

Because of the increasing air raids on Germany, units of Organisation Todt often had to be sent home suddenly for pressing emergency work. The structures which had been begun then usually remained unfinished.

In conclusion it may be said that in the opinion of reasonable experts an "Atlantic Wall," as it was represented by propaganda, could not have been built to cover such an enormous extent of coast in less than ten years.

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II. Enemy Capabilities and German Countermeasures

31. The different invasion possibilities had been analyzed and considered in progressively greater detail from 1942 on. Each individual possibility had received a numerical designation and appropriate mobilization countermeasures had been planned. The invasion possibilities were:

Case 1 - Holland

Case 2a - Fifteenth Army, northern sector

Case 2b - Fifteenth Army, southern sector

Case 3a - Normandy

Case 3b - Brittany

Case 4 - First Army

Case 5 - Army Felber (prov), later Nineteenth Army

32. For each of the seven cases, preparations were made to facilitate the transfer--by road or by rail, depending upon the distance--of units from less endangered coastal sectors. In addition, it was planned to move First Army Headquarters forward for possible emergency use. For the mobile panzer-type units, routes were selected and rest and refueling stations were mapped out. Road priorities (for flak, etc) were established in writing and the necessary signs and markings were prepared. Road commanders and traffic control units were provided for all major roads near the coast. Bypasses around larger towns were reconnoitered and charted. The various signs and route markings, which

were to be posted only after the beginning of active combat, were gotten ready. Important towns in and behind the coastal areas received combat commanders.

33. Map exercises, terrain studies, training maneuvers, and frequent alerts were used in an effort to achieve smooth functioning in the event of an invasion. The entire garrison of a strong-point or resistance-point were required to live within their installation. Officers up to regimental commanders were allowed to wear only enlisted men's uniforms while in position, and all visible means of identification such as decorations and map cases had to be dispensed with.

34. Since 1943, OB WEST had placed especial emphasis upon a warning system against airborne attacks and upon rapid counter-action against air-landed forces. There were several exercises against airborne operations, in which Third Air Force actually landed both glider troops and parachutists. The results of these exercises were evaluated in a special pamphlet. Protection of railroads and railway installations was provided as far as the available security forces of the military districts permitted. The warning system was tested in several communication exercises.

III. Inspection of the Coastal Defenses (1943)

35. OB WEST was gravely concerned because it felt that neither the combat efficiency of the field forces nor the fortification

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of the coast was adequate. Furthermore, from all appearances, the Luftwaffe was in a state of utter inferiority. In the early summer of 1943, therefore, OB WEST decided to ascertain precisely the defects and weaknesses of the entire coast and its defenses by carrying out a complete and detailed inspection. The results of this inspection were to permit the resubmission to OKW of a concise estimate of the state of defense and of the defensive possibilities within the OB WEST area.

36. The cardinal points of this inspection were:

a. Field forces: their condition, actual strength compared with required strength, age distribution, physical condition, nationality, weapons and equipment, level of training, and mobility. From these factors it was to be determined whether the field forces were completely ready for offensive action, completely ready only for defensive action, only conditionally ready for action, or not ready for action.

b. The tactical and technical soundness of both permanent and field-type coastal defenses.

c. Coastal sectors, including changes needed in the following: coastal garrisons; organization of defense, including reserves; fire distribution; and cooperation of all weapons against a landing.

d. Emergency food stocks. The norm was about one week for resistance-points, two weeks for strongpoints, four weeks

for strongpoint groups, and at least three months for fortresses.

The Channel Islands were to be able to hold out indefinitely.

e. Signal communications net, as well as all types and channels of message transmission, particularly alarm systems and airborne warning systems.

f. Preparations for counteraction against air landings.

37. For this inspection, which began about the end of May 43, the armies had to set up special teams including experts on all types of military matters. The German Navy and the Luftwaffe furnished representatives. OB WEST sent its general staff corps officers and the chiefs of its special staff sections (Waffengenerale) to all the investigations. The inspection was made in meticulous detail and required a great deal of time, as it lasted from the end of May until about the beginning of Oct 43. Each detailed report was immediately examined for deficiencies which OB WEST itself could remedy. Then, from all these reports, OB WEST in the autumn of 1943 completed a very detailed memorandum for OKW.

IV. Deficiencies of the Coastal Defenses

38. The coast was so garrisoned and so spotted with fortifications that one could speak of a limited defensive readiness only in the Fifteenth Army sector, chiefly along the narrowest parts of the Channel--along both sides of Cap Gris Nez. Except for local

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fortresses, all the other coastal sectors were only weakly garrisoned and were extremely deficient in fortifications. The deficiency was greatest along the French Mediterranean front.

39. The divisional sectors were never narrow enough or arranged in sufficient depth for defense in a major battle--as had often been reported to OKW. In Fifteenth Army, the sectors averaged 30 - 40 km in width; in Brittany, for example, they were sometimes as wide as 200 km or more. On the average, each division employed on the entire 4,000 km front of OB WEST had a sector almost 100 km wide. As a result the forces of OB WEST, almost without exception, were deployed for a cordon defense; all tactical disposition in depth was lacking, not to mention a strategic disposition in depth!

40. Improvement of coastal fortifications suffered from the width of the sectors, the resulting expenditure of forces, and the lack of mobility.

41. The field forces were, it is true, close to their authorized strength, but most of the soldiers belonged to older age classes and were not physically fit. On some three separate occasions the units and staffs in the West had been "combed out" for the sake of the Eastern Front. In return the West received Volkdeutsche (Ed: racial Germans, citizens of a country other than Germany), soldiers with second and third degree frostbite, and in some cases even men suffering from malaria and stomach ailments; a whole division of the

latter, 70 Div*, was formed. Soldiers with heart trouble or other

*Ed: Throughout MS # B-308, Genlt Zimmermann habitually omits the type designations of those German corps and divisions which were basically infantry units. The editor has been unable to remedy this deficiency because of the lack of pertinent official German documents in the European Command. The reader, however, may confidently assume that no unit whose type is omitted differed significantly from an infantry unit.

physical defects, and even officers with artificial limbs, were not infrequent. By contrast, the Waffen-SS replacements were young and in strikingly good physical condition. (OB WEST had in previous reports clearly pointed out this disparity, which weakened the fighting power of the infantry.) In the light of these conditions--to which the panzer units were the only exception--the subsequent achievements of these soldiers must be given special credit.

Furthermore, the requirements of the Eastern Front caused OKW in 1943 to order OB WEST to release 20 more German battalions in exchange for 60 "Osttruppen" battalions. (Ed: "Osttruppen" consisted of non-German "volunteers" and prisoners of war from Eastern Europe.) On orders from OKW, or rather OKH, most of the latter became organic to some division.

On paper, then, the field forces approximated their authorized strength. OB WEST, however, had no delusions as to its combat strength (particularly that of its Eastern troops) as compared with that of the Western Allies, and had often expressed its sharpest concern to OKW.

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42. There was grave anxiety over the lack of self-propelled assault guns (Sturmgeschuetze), the entirely inadequate supply of antitank guns, and over the artillery because of the enormous variety of weapons and ammunition used. Along with German guns of all kinds, there were also used along the coast French, Danish, Belgian, Polish, Dutch, Russian, Yugoslavian, and Italian guns of miscellaneous calibers. In some cases these guns had only half an issue of ammunition (Munitionsausstattung) and there was no prospect of more. It should also be mentioned that the caliber and range were inferior to those of the enemy naval artillery. Furthermore, OB WEST did not think command missions had been properly assigned in the choice of gun positions and in fire direction. (OB WEST had often brought this highly important question to the attention of OKW, but had always received Hitler's unequivocal decision to leave the German Navy in control of artillery firing as long as the enemy was on the water.) Finally, the divisional artillery was only partially mobile. A number of divisions had only horse-drawn artillery, and in some cases the fourth battalion (Ed: 150 mm howitzer bn) was entirely lacking.

43. The field forces were not mobile enough. A whole series of "static" divisions were assigned only enough motor vehicles to transport their supplies. Unit trains and artillery were horse-drawn. Everything else used in the coastal defense in the service of the so-called fixed weapons ("anti-landing" guns, fortress machine guns, etc) was completely immobile and remained so.

44. The POL supply was inadequate. For a long time the Western Front's fuel allotment had been drastically curtailed. Fuel restrictions were carried to the point where severe punishments for unauthorized use of motor vehicles and frequent controls (patrols) were established. The fuel allotment was cut so low that regimental commanders could leave their positions via motor vehicle only a few times each month. They and their subordinate officers were forced to resort to horses and bicycles; their work suffered as a result. These measures were adopted because of the belief that enough fuel reserves must always be available to insure the necessary movement and operations of units during the first days of an invasion. As far as possible, the storage of the fuel reserve was decentralized.

45. Our complete inferiority in the air was a particular source of worry to OB WEST. This inferiority, apparent at the beginning of 1943, became steadily more marked during the course of the year. Wholeheartedly supported by Third Air Force, we stressed this point and begged OKW to send adequate reinforcements in time. Precisely during the first phase of an invasion was the strongest possible commitment of our own air forces imperative. If the enemy fleet and landing craft could not be attacked from the air just as soon as an invasion definitely began, the enemy would have a decisive advantage by the time he reached the shore.

46. OB WEST's lack of a fully mobile strategic reserve was, however, the cardinal weakness. This preeminent need was given very special emphasis in the report of OB WEST. OB WEST had

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contemplated assembling its strategic reserve in the area directly east and south of Paris (astride the Seine). From such a position of readiness, the reserves would be able to join in fighting either north or south of the Seine, as the situation demanded. The report of OB WEST concluded that, on the average, the units in the West were only "conditionally ready for action," but that with the elimination of the deficiencies listed it was hoped we could cope with an invasion.

V. Results of the Inspection

47. This report which was presented, or at least submitted, to Hitler got results. True, at this point OKW could not do anything about changing the personnel of the field forces, but it did improve the supply of weapons and equipment. In addition, in the autumn of 1943 OKW began sending OB WEST a number of units which were to be either rehabilitated or reorganized. Since OKW had already expressly designated the Channel Coast (Fifteenth Army) as the defensive center of gravity*, most of these units were sent to Fifteenth

*Author's Note: Fuehrer Directive 51, issued by OKW in the autumn of 1943, informed OB WEST that the German Supreme Command expected an invasion in the West in 1944 at the latest. Inasmuch as the Invasion would probably be launched at the Channel Coast (Fifteenth Army), the point of main defensive effort should be unequivocally located in that sector. Upon the success of the defense against this invasion would depend not only the fate of the occupied territory in the West, but also the outcome of the War as a whole.

Army.

48. Reinforcement of the Luftwaffe on the first day of the Invasion was definitely promised to OB WEST and Third Air Force. (Unfortunately, this reinforcement was not effected until about three or four days after the Invasion--too late to be decisive.)

49. OKW also promised to create a strategic reserve for OB WEST and ordered headquarters and troops of the Ersatzheer (Replacement Training Army) quickly and systematically brought up in the event of an invasion. (Of course, these never arrived, since they were used in the East; in any event, with their organization, equipment, and mobility--as well as their level of training--they would never have been able to fulfil the mission of a strategic reserve.)

50. Italy's defection in the autumn of 1943 weakened OB WEST anew, for three divisions had to be stationed between Marseilles and the Franco-Italian border. Furthermore, it was always possible that developments in the East would make it necessary for OB WEST to release divisions which were ready for action. Thus new problems arose again and again to aggravate the difficulties of overcoming an invasion.

51. Genfldm von Rundstedt was convinced that

- a. the western Allies would attack with tremendous technical and materiel superiority,
- b. their preparations for the attack would be made very meticulously and their training would be thorough, and
- c. the impending invasion would be decided on the first day.

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Thus, everything depended on destroying the enemy on the day they landed--if it could possibly be done. Genfldm von Rundstedt remained very skeptical on this point because of the ratio between our resources and those of the enemy. He had, however, to take the proper measures to do as much as possible with what was available.

VI. Counter-Invasion Preparations Continued

52. OB WEST next proposed to OKW that it authorize a zone along the coast in which the combat troops would have full command authority. The expression "Kuestengefechtsgebiet" (Coastal Combat Zone) was selected and approved as the designation for this area. In general, the Coastal Combat Zone was to be only as deep as the expected range of enemy naval artillery. Its depth would vary with the terrain and the nature of the coast; its precise boundaries would be determined as a result of reconnaissance and proposals made by the armies. OB WEST planned to displace the rear boundaries of this Zone into the interior, 50 km at a time, in case of progressive engagements. Headquarters and agencies of the military districts and of Wehrmacht District Netherlands already located in the Zone were to remain in order to perform their territorial functions, but the tactical requirements of the field forces had priority in this Zone. The Coastal Combat Zone approved by OKW averaged about 20 - 30 km deep along the coast. In Holland and along the Atlantic coast it was considerably less deep, while along the French Mediterranean front it

was sometimes much deeper because the mountains behind the coast blocked observation and made this necessary for security reasons. OB WEST insisted that all higher headquarters, convalescent homes, and hospitals be evacuated from the coast. This was not always accomplished without friction.

53. During the autumn and winter of 43/44, every possible effort was made to improve the coastal fortifications and to further the training of the field forces. To be sure, the one objective was in conflict with the other! For the demands of construction work required the energies and the transportation of the field forces, and training always suffered accordingly. The concentration of troops along the Channel Coast permitted Fifteenth Army to accomplish most in the construction line by virtue of its relative great labor supply.

54. The stronger the defenses of the Channel Coast, the greater the possibility of Normandy as an invasion target. OB WEST, however, was in no position to reinforce Normandy to a strength comparable to that of the Channel Coast. And to deplete the Channel front in favor of Normandy was contrary to OKW's repeated instructions to concentrate, unconditionally, on the former. Because of this situation, it would have been all the more important for OB WEST to have a large strategic reserve available in the area south of Paris.

55. About the beginning of 1944, OB WEST decided to give OKW another thorough estimate of the situation. This estimate contained approximately the following ideas:

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a. The year 1944 will bring the Invasion in the West, and with it the decision of the War.

b. The Invasion may take place in winter, but it is more likely to come after the middle of March, and it is most likely to come in June.

c. Where will the Invasion take place? The most likely possibilities are:

- (1) Along the English Channel (Fifteenth Army).*

*Pt 4 of 14 pts of MS # B-633, Genfldm von Rundstedt:

In my opinion, the Allies would give first consideration to a landing on the Channel Coast, although in that sector the fortifications were the strongest and they might expect the stiffest resistance. My opinion was based on several reasons:

Since the Channel Coast was the nearest to them, the landing could be executed with the greatest element of surprise. Supply would be easiest. Uninterrupted aerial support was possible. The launching sites for V-weapons could be destroyed (we set completely vain hopes on the effect of these weapons on England). Above all, however, the Channel Coast was the beginning of the shortest way to the Rhine and the Ruhr! Success there, even if won at great sacrifice, would have very early results and a decisive effect on the War, for no German forces were available between the Channel Coast and the Rhine.

- (2) Astride the Seine estuary (Fifteenth Army).

(3) Along the east coast of Normandy (Seventh Army).

(4) Less likely possibilities are Brittany and Holland; still less likely, the Atlantic coast.

d. A landing on the French Mediterranean coast must be considered possible; such a landing can take place before or after

the Invasion from the West. Deceptive maneuvers are always possible and likely.

e. The primary objective of any invasion from the West will be Paris. He who has Paris, has France!

f. OB WEST lacks a strong, mobile strategic reserve with which to meet any situations that may arise!

g. Since it is impossible to judge whether or not OKW is in a position to furnish such a reserve, OB WEST submits the following points for consideration:

(1) OB WEST cannot in any event defend the entire coast in the West and South with the men and materiel at hand. With the exception of the fortresses and certain sectors of concentration, the coast is for the most part so thinly occupied that its defending forces can be termed mere "security detachments." These, however, will be of no avail against a major attack.

(2) Only the large harbors will have any strategic importance for the enemy in the event of an invasion. This fact should be given more attention.

h. Therefore, OB WEST proposes that the field forces be withdrawn from all sectors not in danger of major landings (Atlantic and Mediterranean coasts), so that the more important fortresses and fortified areas can be reinforced. On the French Mediterranean coast the only points left to be considered are Marseilles and Toulon. The other stretches of the coast need only be watched. All forces made

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available by these measures will be used to form a central strategic reserve for OB WEST.

In connection with its repeatedly disapproved proposals, OB WEST requests reconsideration of the possibility of reducing the Channel Islands garrison, at least in men and materiel. In the event of an invasion, this garrison will become a "dead post," by-passed by the enemy.

56. In brief, OB WEST believed, on the basis of practical military knowledge, that the enemy aerial supremacy, naval supremacy, and technical and material resources would make the first attempt to get ashore a success. Thus everything depended on attacking and destroying the enemy during the weak moments when he was getting his first foothold on land. This could be done only if OB WEST had an adequate, mobile, strategic reserve available for rapid commitment. Measures taken after a successful landing had been effected, would come too late.

OKW rejected this proposal.

57. A second OB WEST proposal--a major deceptive maneuver to simulate, at least, the presence of a strong reserve--was, on the other hand, approved by OKW. The Ersatzheer had to furnish reconnaissance detachments and advance parties for a number of fictitious divisions, including three panzer divisions. These groups were accordingly fitted out with uniforms in Germany, sent to OB WEST, provided with orders, and sent on to the armies. As far as I remember, these advance parties were assigned to the Seventh, First, and Nineteenth Armies; they received billeting areas there, reconnoitered, signed papers,

negotiated with the agencies of Military District France and the French authorities, and, in general, made preparations for the accommodation of their units. The advance party personnel themselves, as well as the civilian population, expected the units to follow. Obviously, this deception would be effective only for a limited period; it was actually intended only as a means to gain time.

58. Meanwhile, each army, as ordered by OB WEST, had made arrangements to release a number of divisions in the event of an invasion in another sector (Cases 1 - 5). These divisions were trained, and, in a makeshift way, rendered mobile at the expense of the forces remaining in the coastal defense. In some cases--265 Div and 266 Div, for example--nothing more than kampfgруппes (combat teams) were formed.

Ed: At this point in his commentary, Genlt Speidel, apparently not in full accord with pars 51 through 58, refers the reader to the complete text of MS # B-720, his discussion of the ideas and views of Genfldm Rommel on defense and operations in the West in 1944. A summary of MS # B-720 follows:

The mission assigned to OB WEST and A Gp B was unyielding defense of the coast. They were to prevent the enemy from making any landing, or to annihilate immediately any elements which might land. Freedom of operation in the West was prohibited.

Genfldm Rommel was convinced that the enemy would invade with markedly superior ground, air, and naval forces, and that the critical point would occur within the first three days. Probable invasion areas were the Somme estuary, the Seine estuary, the Calvados coast, and the Cotentin Peninsula; less probable were the Channel Coast and Brittany. After a successful Invasion, attainment of the Paris area seemed to Genfldm Rommel to be decisive for the Allies.

The organization and the chain of command of the major commands in the West was somewhere between confusion and chaos; it corresponded to neither the timeless laws of warfare nor the demands of the hour. Rommel, therefore, proposed that, within his sector, Organisation Todt

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and all three arms of the Wehrmacht be subordinated to him for his decisive defensive mission. The proposal was sharply rejected by Hitler.

Since Hitler and OKW were completely uncompromising in their insistence that the fighting be done at the Atlantic Wall, Genfldm Rommel decided that the disposition of the few available reserves had to be based upon his assigned mission. He was convinced that landings of fairly great local significance could not be eliminated without the use of panzer reserves--at least five panzer divisions. In addition, he feared that concentration of these reserves near Paris would result in their arriving at their area of commitment too late, principally because of enemy mastery of the air. As they became available, the panzer divisions were concentrated behind the threatened stretches of coast. Nevertheless, Rommel felt it highly important that there be a strategic reserve of panzer and motorized units in the Paris area; although this strategic reserve was approved by Hitler, OKW, and Genobst Guderian, it never came into being.

VII. Gen Pz Frhr Geyr von Schweppenburg

59. The General der Panzertruppen West (Chief Armored Officer, Gen Pz Frhr Geyr von Schweppenburg) rendered OB WEST valuable service in supervising and training the panzer units. His job was by no means easy because not all the commands accepted the concept for which he strove--a mobile, basically strategic employment of panzer units. Like Genfldm von Rundstedt, Gen von Geyr recognized that the cardinal weakness in the West was the absence of a strategic reserve for OB WEST. At the risk of being considered a nuisance, he repeatedly expressed his apprehensions in this decisive matter, pointing out the possibility of strong enemy air landings to the rear of the invasion sectors. As a panzer specialist he represented the fundamental point of view of fluid employment of all panzer units. When, as a result of

the many tactical requirements of A Gp B, he could not make his point, he tried at least to assemble a number of panzer units and other motorized forces as a mobile strategic reserve for OB WEST in the area south of Paris. Genfldm von Rundstedt was entirely in sympathy with the idea. Unfortunately, this sound idea was never carried out; the last panzer-type units available were requisitioned by OKW and placed in OKW reserve (Pz Lehr Div, 12 SS Pz Div, and 17 SS Pz Gren Div), an occurrence which was due to Genfldm Rommel's persistent attempts to encroach on the theater organization as conceived by OB WEST.

60. Nothing remained for Gen von Geyr but to refer again and again to his own proficiency, and above all to his impressions gained from foreign political reports. However, in order to have a suitable staff ready for concentrating and directing a number of panzer units, OB WEST had Gen von Geyr assemble an improvised panzer operations staff (designated "Pz Gp West"), which became the ancestor of the later Fifth Pz Army staff. Genmaj von Dawans (killed in Normandy) was selected as Gen von Geyr's Chief of Staff.

61. As a person, Von Geyr was one of the "intellectual" generals, and different from most of the others in his versatility, cosmopolitanism, and sophistication. From the impressions and knowledge he gained during his tour of duty as military attache in England before World War II, he derived new ideas and a wider outlook. To the best of my knowledge he had, specifically on the basis of this knowledge, warned against a second world war and had relayed a completely accurate picture of the true English position in his reports. Whether,

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and if so to what extent, this was held against him in authoritative circles, I am unable to judge. In any case, Gen von Geyr knew that his reports were always carried to the highest authorities. In his position with OB WEST, besides being a champion of the correct use of panzer units, he was a keen analyst of foreign political news. Because of this and because of his stubborn fight over the correct employment of panzer units, he often got into serious, pointed controversies and conflicts with other commands, especially with A Gp B. Later events proved Gen von Geyr to have been right.*

 *Pt 4 of 24 pts of MS # B-718, Genlt Speidel:

I know nothing of "serious, pointed controversies and conflicts" between A Gp B and Gen von Geyr. Genfldm Rommel and Gen von Geyr had practical and objective discussions on the use of tanks and the organization of the reserves. (I refer the reader to the reports prepared by Gen von Geyr.*)

 *Ed: Genlt Speidel probably refers to MS # B-466, Gen Pz von Geyr's account of the activities and operations of Pz Gp West in Normandy, for a copy of MS # B-466 was in Gen Speidel's possession when he prepared MS # B-718. Throughout MS # B-466 and all the other writing that Gen von Geyr has done for the Historical Division, Von Geyr has emphasized the magnitude and the seriousness of his disagreements with Genfldm Rommel; he has often described his professional relationship with Rommel as a "cock-fight controversy." In particular, Von Geyr's commentary on MS # B-720 (summarized in an editor's note at the end of par 58, above) characterizes Rommel as the strongest personality in the West and the man who most courageously supported his views at higher headquarters, but as a pure tactician and the strongest motive force behind an inept use of the panzer arm.

If there had really been any serious personal differences of opinion between Genfldm Rommel and Gen von Geyr, Rommel would not have chosen Von Geyr for a special appointment which he was to receive in the event of the measures taken to save the Reich being successful. (I refer the reader to MS # B-721, my account of the events leading up to 20 Jul 44.)*

*Ed: According to MS # B-721, Rommel, as a popular hero, was selected by the anti-Hitler forces to be the commander of the Army, or perhaps the Wehrmacht, after the elimination of Hitler. Rommel, though strongly opposed to any assassination attempt, was convinced of the advisability of negotiating a separate peace with the Western Allies and had tentatively selected Gen Pz von Geyr as one of the principal negotiators. He planned, however, to institute such negotiations only after exhausting every possibility to convince Hitler of the utter hopelessness of the military situation in the West.

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Hr. Gev. von Schweppenburg

GEYR von SCHWEPPENBURG

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Chapter Three
INSERTION OF A GP B

I. Rommel Ordered to Inspect Invasion Defenses

62. Near the end of 1943 or the beginning of 1944, OB WEST received a directive from OKW in which Genfldm Rommel and his staff were commissioned by Hitler to examine the coasts of Denmark, Flanders, the English Channel, Normandy, and Brittany, as to their defensive capabilities. The results of the inspection were to be reported directly to Hitler. Genfldm Rommel was to furnish OB WEST pertinent sections of this report. Naturally this directive seemed a trifle strange, for in the review of the essentially older officer, Genfldm von Rundstedt, by the significantly younger Rommel, there actually lay a certain lack of confidence--or at least it could be so construed. However, the generous and chivalrous Genfldm von Rundstedt, with his wealth of experience and wisdom, overcame all inner reluctance in the interest of the project at hand.

63. During the winter of 1943-44 the headquarters of A Gp B was transferred by OKW to the Munich area after its usefulness in upper Italy had passed. At the beginning of Jan 44, Genfldm Rommel suggested that he be transferred to France to carry out his mission in order to save travel and to be able to devote himself more intensively

to his job. OKW agreed, and OB WEST had Fontainebleau assigned to A Gp B as its headquarters.* Genlt Gause was Rommel's Chief of Staff.

*Pt 5 of 14 pts of MS # B-633, Genfldm von Rundstedt:

When Rommel came to France, Keitel told me on behalf of Hitler that I should not draw any false conclusions from his arrival. Rommel would never be considered as my successor. With all his capabilities, he was not up to that job. Should a replacement for me become necessary, it could only be Genfldm von Kluge.

64. Genfldm Rommel made his initial visit to OB WEST from Fontainebleau sometime during the first half of Jan 44. On this occasion Genfldm von Rundstedt personally oriented him as to the general situation and, referring to the map, pointed out emphatically that only the tactical front along the Channel Coast (Fifteenth Army) was to some extent able to defend itself; for all the rest of the coast, such was not the case! Genfldm Rommel would, of course, find out for himself, but with the men and equipment provided by OKW there was simply no more that could be done. The field forces, moreover, were bound to be more labor troops than combat troops because their training would be inadequate.

65. Genfldm von Rundstedt further emphasized his apprehension over the lack of a strategic reserve of our own, and over the failure to construct strategic rearward defensive positions in France. For, although on orders from OKW one rearward position had been reconnoitered in 1943 and two layouts for it had been mapped and even the construction materials had been allotted to the corps sectors, specific

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orders from OKW forbade any progress beyond the reconnaissance stage, including construction of any sort.* The position reconnoitered

*Pt 21 of 31 pts of MS # B-672, Genmaj von Buttlar:

Hitler's prohibition of the construction of rearward positions, against which all responsible commanders constantly struggled, arose from his belief that such positions exerted a magical attraction on troops and their commanders, drawing them back to the rear. Even the arming of the West Wall, after the breakthrough at Avranches, was ordered without Hitler's approval, by the Chief of the WFSt, on about 28 Jul 44.

extended somewhat as follows: from the Somme (anchored there with Fifteenth Army) to the Marne, along the Marne to the Saone, and from there to the Swiss border. See App 3. In addition, OB WEST, on its own initiative, made a supplementary reconnaissance: Albert Kanal--Meuse--west of the Argonne, with the junction along the Marne in the vicinity of Chalons-s-Marne. Later, during the withdrawal actions through France, the field forces referred to this position as the "Kitzinger Line" because Gen Fl Kitzinger, having become surplus as the Militaerbefehlshaber in France, became responsible for preparing this defense line.

Rommel made his first inspection trips to the coast from Fontainebleau in approximately the following order: Flanders, the Channel Coast, Normandy, and Brittany.

II. Command Status of A Gp B

66. Very soon--about Feb 44--Genfldm Rommel proposed to OB WEST (apparently also to OKW) that Seventh and Fifteenth Armies be placed under his command. Soon afterward, he asked to have his command extended to include Wehrmacht District Netherlands. His justification for these requests was that he could not implement quickly his observations and suggestions for improvement unless he had powers of command. Again, Wehrmacht District Netherlands belonged tactically under the same command as Fifteenth Army because of the Schelde estuary.

67. This proposal was in itself quite plausible and might also have worked out well in practice if it had resulted in a complete subordination of A Gp B to OB WEST. In the event, however, this was not the case! A draft of such an OB WEST directive, providing for strict and complete subordination of Rommel to OB WEST, was turned down by both Genfldm Rommel and OKW as being inordinate in its demands. Since it had to be moderated to the extent that Rommel retained freedom of action within his area, actually a "Gummibefehl" (elastic directive) resulted, which in subsequent combat engagements proved a decided handicap to OB WEST's conduct of operations.

Sometime in Mar or Apr 44 the new A Gp B installed its headquarters in la Roche Guyon (Lower Seine) and moved there.

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III. Differences of Opinion between Von Rundstedt and Rommel

68. Thereafter, a burden was imposed on the very much older Von Rundstedt which only his greatness enabled him to bear, for very soon it became evident that there was considerable divergence between the tactical and strategic views of the two field marshals, but that those of Genfldm Rommel were closer to the views of OKW. This divergence became especially apparent in the tactical disposition of forces for the coastal defense. Genfldm Rommel represented the tactical view that as many forces as possible should be concentrated in the coastal defense itself. Even advance detachments of panzer divisions and most of the reserves, especially panzer units, were to be brought up just as close as possible, in order to defeat an enemy landing force while it was still afloat and prevent the gaining of a foothold on land. In pursuance of this idea A Gp B almost daily sent OB WEST one proposal or another which, on the basis of Rommel's tactical views, advocated change in the measures already taken by OB WEST--particularly in the Fifteenth Army sector and on the right wing of Seventh Army. Thus the reserves in the A Gp B area were systematically pushed right up to the coast. In many instances even the divisional artillery of divisions having no sector responsibilities was brought up to the coast. The same thing was done with the army (Heer) artillery in so far as it was available and, in the end, OB WEST was not able to carry out a project which it had fervently advocated--the formation of a mobile artillery

corps (two artillery divisions) as an OB WEST reserve. Genfldm Rommel claimed even this artillery for employment near the coast, and he secured the concurrence of OKW.

69. In this way the coastal defenses in the Fifteenth Army area and on the right wing of Seventh Army (eastern coast of Normandy) were indeed strengthened numerically in the forward area, but the disposition in depth of the reserves and the possibility of shifting forces were both materially weakened. Rommel may have reasoned this way: The enemy will employ such a mass of fire power when he lands that it will not be possible to bring up any reserves at all from the rear through the fire curtain. Everything will be smashed except that which stands ready at the front.

70. Genfldm von Rundstedt was, and remained, of another conviction. Having studied every major landing that had occurred, he had come to the conclusion that:

- a. The enemy would succeed in making the landing under any circumstances.
- b. There was absolutely no way to keep the enemy from making an air landing.

On the basis of these two facts he reviewed the counter-measures and concluded that the success or failure of a landing would be decided within the first 24 hours (in the event of particularly favorable circumstances, within 48 hours). For he considered the success of the initial landing a foregone conclusion--though heavy enemy losses might be incurred--in view of the enemy's overpowering use of all technical

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means, in view of the heavy fire from long-range naval artillery, of incessant air attacks, and of anticipated enemy air landings in the rear. He felt, however, that the enemy's weak moment would come directly after this when he was clinging to still weak, isolated beachheads and suffering losses, and when his supply was still not assured. This, Von Rundstedt believed, would be the moment to strike. The reserves should be readied accordingly. And, of course, at that time he still had the assurances that our air force would be reinforced in time.

71. In any case the concept of OB WEST, as contrasted with that of Genfldm Rommel, implied that the reserves were to be brought only so close to the coast as to enable them to take part in the first day's combat, while at the same time they would, prior to their commitment, remain out of reach of the long-range artillery and the first heavy firing and bombing. Disposing the reserves in this way constituted, at the same time, an effective measure against air landings. But, above all, the possibility of shifting or withdrawing reserves, particularly panzer units, was always to be kept open.

72. The basic difference between the views of the two field marshals was:

Genfldm Rommel prematurely tied up the bulk of the forces in the coastal defense in a linear tactical disposition.

Genfldm von Rundstedt approached the matter from the strategic angle and wanted to do everything possible to preserve freedom of action.

73. Since there was no complete subordination of A Gp B to OB WEST, it often became necessary to call on OKW to resolve conflicts in tactical views. For the most part--though not unequivocally--OKW at that time inclined to Genfldm Rommel's theory.*

*Pt 6 of 14 pts of MS # B-633, Genfldm von Rundstedt:

The difficulties in the building up of reserves in the rear were less the fault of Rommel than of OKW. Even before Rommel came, when divisions or even smaller units arrived OKW indicated exactly the localities to which they should proceed, regardless of protests from OB WEST. Nor were we allowed to undertake, without permission, the displacement of divisions already present.

IV. Lessons from African and Italian Campaigns Applied by A Gp B

74. One of the techniques that soon found practical application in the western defense system was the construction of tree-trunk palisades, partially mined, along sectors of the coast in danger of sea or air landings. They were placed in front of the MIR (the shore line at high tide) and were visible at low tide, under water at high tide. There was, of course, no guarantee that the posts would stand up under a rough sea, and trials with heavy, flat barges proved that the posts could be pushed aside. Nevertheless they had a deterring and--seen as a whole--perhaps terrifying effect. Behind the coastal front, areas particularly susceptible to air landings were likewise thickly interlaced with posts. This could, of course, be done only in certain limited areas because the required lumber and transportation were both

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exceedingly scarce and also because labor forces were inadequate. Evidence of the practical value of this technique is not available, but it can be assumed that the enemy determined the location and extent of these obstacles by aerial reconnaissance and modified his tactics accordingly.

75. Another A Gp B technique was to increase tremendously the laying of mines in front of, behind, and around the strongpoints and especially the unoccupied areas. A Gp B's request for the delivery of at least ten million mines a month could not be even remotely complied with. Still, the mine-laying program was stepped up feverishly and much was achieved. In this program also, the sector of main effort (Channel Coast) received primary consideration. In conjunction with the increase in mine laying, the construction and camouflage of defense installations was furthered. There is no doubt that A Gp B accomplished a very great deal in these matters, but the troops were completely exhausted by the terrific amount of labor they had to do and they consequently received very little or no training.

76. A third technique was the flooding or soaking of extensive areas in order to conserve forces, render terrain impassable, and bring about a frightening effect. Out of consideration for the civil population and its food problem, OB WEST did not want to adopt these measures, particularly that of flooding the land with sea water. OKW heard of these proposals of Rommel, liked them, and ordered that they be presented directly. As far as I remember, OKW ordered that fresh water be dammed up in the region southeast of Dunkirk--Calais,

while additional fresh-water floodings of a more or less local nature were undertaken in the Somme lowland just behind the coast, utilizing some lagoon-like depressions there. The same thing was done in Normandy, where the swamp areas were utilized, and the landward fronts of fortresses were flooded as a reinforcement of the antitank obstacles. In Holland, careful preparations for flooding the low islands as well as the so-called Polder area around the IJssel Meer were begun. OB WEST also opposed this measure because it felt that the harm to the food supply outweighed the tactical advantages. Here again, however, OKW later gave the order indicated. Whether and to what extent this technique of flooding actually handicapped the enemy, is uncertain. In this case, too, air reconnaissance must have furnished definite information to enable the enemy to draw his own conclusions and take the necessary countermeasures.*

*Pt 6 of 24 pts of MS # B-718, Genlt Speidel:

Genfldm Rommel was the first to encourage practical training by personally conducting field exercises. His untiring activity disturbed the quiet which had hitherto prevailed in the West. The technical side of the defense preparations and of the ideas of Genfldm Rommel are discussed in Adm Ruge's report, MS # A-982. (Ed: The report of Vz Adm Friedrich Ruge, Naval Liaison Officer to A Gp B, discusses in some detail the measures taken by Rommel to improve the coastal defenses. The report also states that Rommel was open to new ideas and very much interested in technical progress.)

77. In conclusion, the following may be said concerning these measures of A Gp B: The palisade construction, especially along the coast in front of the MIR, may have gained time for the defense; it is a fair assumption that after finding out about these obstacles the

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Western Allies selected new methods to use in their initial landing (landing in the period just after low tide, using advance engineer demolition parties to remove post obstacles and mines) and perfected their new techniques. In any case, however, Rommel's ideas received very ready approval from Hitler, whereas Genfldm von Rundstedt treated these ideas as being only secondarily important. His opinion was that the enemy's technical means and resources would make short work of these expedients, so secondary to the problem as a whole.

V. Rommel's Personality

78. Rommel was a very brave dare-devil of a man, heedless of danger. His private life was completely above reproach. He did not smoke, drank very little, and went to bed very early so he could get up early. He was not easy-going in his demands on his staff.

79. He commanded a panzer unit in this war with great success, and certainly he was just the man for the forays of the North Africa Campaign. But as soon as his missions expanded into the field of higher strategy, his limitations became evident. He seemed to lack the fundamental prerequisites, especially the strategic foresight, for directing higher strategy as required of a great captain.

80. On the other hand, the popularity he had won in Africa probably heightened his assurance and confidence in his own judgment and ability, especially since at the time of his assignment to the West he still had access directly to the Supreme Command. This led

to the well-known basic conflict with OB WEST and naturally affected the whole system of command relationships in the West. However, further experiences in the West soon caused even Rommel to reverse his views in regard to OKW and also to change his sentiments concerning Hitler--these altered feelings, of course, being at that time unknown except to a few intimates.*

*Pt 5 of 24 pts of MS # B-718, Genlt Speidel:

The writer was never in a position to be able to give, now, a well-rounded evaluation of Rommel's personality. I intend to publish later an estimate of Genfldm Rommel as a man and a soldier. The writer makes no mention of Rommel's preparations for ending the War in the West and terminating the dictatorship of Hitler. A report will also be prepared, in due time, on the political conversion of Rommel, which occurred much earlier.



ROMMEL

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Chapter Four
ACTIVATION OF A GP G

81. Very soon after A Gp B assumed command, Genfldm von Rundstedt recognized the danger that A Gp B would acquire a preeminent, excessively favored position. He therefore decided, about the end of Mar 44, to propose the creation of an army group for the southern part of his command (First Army and Nineteenth Army) as well. This would serve to "balance" the command relationships in the West and to take care of various practical matters in connection with Rommel's ambitions and personality. The Commander of A Gp G was to be the experienced and trustworthy Genobst Blaskowitz (until then, First Army Commander). OKW approved this proposal about the beginning of April, but with the restriction that for the time being the new headquarters was to be designated an Armeegruppe*. No reason was given for this pro-

*Ed: In the Wehrmacht, an Armeegruppe was normally a temporary, provisional organization, intermediate in status and responsibilities between a Corps and an Army. Armeegruppe G, however, was an exception to this general rule, for it corresponded very closely to a Heeresgruppe--the equivalent of an American or British Army Group.

viso, but it probably had a close connection with the individual proposed as commander.

82. As scheduled, A Gp G became operational on 10 May 44. Its staff was made up of officers furnished by OB WEST and subordinate

commands. Subordinate to A Gp G were First Army and Nineteenth Army. Its headquarters was at Rouffiac, near Toulouse. Genmaj von Gyldenfeldt (Ed: promoted to genlt 1 Nov 44) was named Chief of Staff.

OB WEST now had two headquarters functioning under its direction, instead of five as was the case before A Gp B became operational. At the time, this seemed to simplify the command problem.

83. In his concepts and his mode of life, Genobst Blaskowitz was similar to Genfldm von Rundstedt. Like the latter, he was a representative of the old imperial army, with a strong spiritual and religious turn of mind. Rigorously just and high-minded, at the very beginning of the War he could not reconcile himself to conditions as he found them in the Generalgouvernement (German administration of Central Poland, 1939) and submitted very pointed reports to the Supreme Command. On this account, RF-SS Himmler and the Supreme Command hated him. The consequences are well-known--he was relieved of his position and was in open disfavor. (Ed: Blaskowitz never became a genfldm, although he was promoted to genobst on 1 Oct 39.) Genfldm von Rundstedt, who esteemed him both as a soldier and a man, defended him at every opportunity and made efforts to get him into positions he could fill. Blaskowitz was constantly pursued by hatred, but he always remained the straightforward soldier who wanted to do his duty simply for the sake of his Fatherland and his people.*

*Pt 7 of 14 pts of MS # B-633, Genfldm von Rundstedt:

It was a great mistake that Hitler suddenly recalled Blaskowitz and his Chief of Staff, in Sep 44, and replaced them with

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men from the East. I believe that if Blaskowitz had remained, the loss of Lorraine and Alsace would not have followed so quickly. When he returned, at my instance, it was too late to repair the damage.

84. Blaskowitz gave renewed proof of his leadership ability in his successful withdrawal from the Mediterranean to the Vosges despite overwhelming difficulties. From the German point of view it is only a pity that in the critical days of the Invasion he was not in the position he could have filled: A Gp B!*

*Pt 7 of 24 pts of MS # B-718, Genlt Speidel:

The comparison of Rommel and Blaskowitz seems inappropriate. From the military standpoint, Blaskowitz had behind him only the brief experience of the very different campaign in Poland in 1939; politically, his difficulties in Poland required that he restrain his views. Gen Blaskowitz' traits of character are described correctly. Genfldm Rommel's person and prestige among the Army and the people, and abroad, were of decisive importance for the rescue of Germany--in the last analysis, the most important objective!

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BLASKOWITZ

Chapter Five

OB WEST ORDER OF BATTLE AT THE BEGINNING OF JUN 44

(See App 2 and App 2a.)

I. A Gp B

85. Wehrmacht District Netherlands

Hq, LXXXVIII Corps
347 Div
16 Lw Feld Div
709 Div
275 Div (in the rear, undergoing reorganization)

86. Fifteenth Army

Hq, LXXXIX Corps
Hq, LXXXII Corps
Hq, LXVII Corps
Hq, LXXXI Corps

a. The following nine divisions were committed along

the coast:

70 Div ("stomach" division)
136 Div (zbV), at the entrance to the Schelde estuary
18 Lw Feld Div
47 Div
49 Div
344 Div
348 Div
17 Lw Feld Div
711 Div

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b. The following 11 divisions were stationed directly behind the coast:

19 Lw Feld Div
64 Div
712 Div
182 Res Div
326 Div
331 Div
85 Div
89 Div
346 Div
2 Pz Div
116 Pz Div

c. The following were stationed within the Fifteenth Army area:

Hq, I SS Pz Corps, with corps troops
1 SS Pz Div

87. Seventh Army

Hq, LXXXIV Corps
Hq, LXXIV Corps
Hq, XXV Corps
Hq, II FS Corps (attached for operations only)

a. The following were committed along the coast:

716 Div
352 Div
709 Div
243 Div (elms)
30 Brig (headquarters, with Eastern battalions and bicycle-mounted replacement battalions)
319 Div (Channel Islands)
77 Div (less uncommitted elements)
266 Div
343 Div
265 Div

b. The following were stationed behind the coast:

91 LL Div
84 Div
353 Div
3 FS Div (attached for operations only)
2 FS Div (attached for operations only)
6 FS Regt
21 Pz Div

c. The following, stationed within the Seventh Army area or immediately to the rear thereof, were in OKW reserve:

12 SS Pz Div
Pz Lehr Div

II. A Gp G

88. First Army

Hq, LXXX Corps
Hq, LXXXVI Corps

a. The following were committed along the coast:

158 Res Div
708 Div
159 Res Div

b. The following were stationed behind the coast:

276 Div (elements committed on the southern wing
of First Army)
11 Pz Div (undergoing rehabilitation)

c. Stationed in the First Army area, but in OKW reserve:

17 SS Pz Gren Div

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89. Nineteenth Army

Hq, IV Lw Feld Corps
 Hq, Corps Kniess (subsequently designated LXXXV Corps)
 Hq, LXII Res Corps

a. The following were committed along the coast:

272 Div
 277 Div
 271 Div
 338 Div
 244 Div
 242 Div
 148 Res Div

b. The following were stationed behind the coast:

(1) Hq, LVIII Pz Corps, directly subordinate to A Gp G and controlling 11 Pz Div (at first located behind the First Army front) and 9 Pz Div.

(2) In addition, a Turkish division, comprising Eastern troops, was stationed on the southern slope of the Massif Central. The Division was engaged in training Eastern troops, was not subordinate to OB WEST, and was available only in a grave emergency and then only with the approval of OKW.

(3) In the A Gp G area and undergoing rehabilitation was 2 SS Pz Div.

III. Other German Army Troops in France

90. Security forces controlled by the military districts and by Wehrmacht District Netherlands.

91. The following Ersatzheer (Replacement Training Army) staffs and troops were at the tactical disposal of OB WEST in case danger threatened:

Hq, LXVI Res Corps, controlling 189 Res Div (elements deployed in the Pyrenees and the Garonne valley for "blocking" missions, other elements located in the vicinity of Clermont-Ferrand.

157 Res Div, located in the Franco-Italian Alps and tactically controlled by Military District France.

165 Res Div, in the vicinity of Nancy.

5 FS Div (organizing), in the vicinity of Nancy-Dijon, later near Paris.

In addition to the above, a number of training classes and service schools, controlled by OKH or the Ersatzheer, were situated in the OB WEST area. In case of impending danger, OB WEST could call on some of them--the artillery schools, for example. These schools, therefore, were to be rendered mobile in a systematic fashion. Though small in number and tactically unimportant, these reinforcements were particularly outstanding in quality.

IV. Troop Dispositions Unbalanced in Favor of Channel Coast

92. The strong and unbalanced concentration of force along the Channel (Fifteenth Army) was clearly discernible in the pre-Invasion disposition of forces. In accordance with numerous orders from the Supreme Command, Fifteenth Army--as compared with the other armies--had the bulk of the larger units (approximately twenty divisions, including two panzer divisions). This biased concentration of force, strongly supported and furthered by the measures of A Gp B, prevented an adequate or even a compensatory reinforcement of Normandy.

93. The OB WEST estimate--the stronger the Channel front, the more likely an invasion of Normandy--could not alter the conviction

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of OKW and A Gp B that the Invasion had to come along the Channel.* **

*Pt 8 of 24 pts of MS # B-718, Genlt Spidel:

As I have already stated in MS # B-720 (Ed: summarized in the editor's note at the end of par 58, above), Genfldm Rommel never considered that the Channel front would be the point of main effort, and therefore the measures ordered by OKW were not "strongly supported and furthered" by him. Had it been otherwise, he would certainly have placed his panzer divisions behind this front also.

Because of the chaos at the very top of our command organization, the data required by A Gp B for an estimate of the enemy situation and intentions were received only after "adaptation" and perhaps "retouching" by OB WEST, OKH (fremde Heere-West, agency for intelligence concerning foreign armies in the West), and OKW (Fuehrungs-abteilung, tactical staff group). Direct contact with the intelligence agencies was forbidden. Thus, for example, A Gp B had no data on the resistance movement in France and its cooperation with the Allies, especially in case of an invasion. All information was received second-hand. This was the reason that Rommel requested a unified, authoritative command in his sector. The proposal, as we know, was very sharply rejected by Hitler.

Genfldm Rommel expected landings on both sides of the mouths of the Somme and the Seine, and along the entire coast of Normandy. He disposed and organized his reserves accordingly and made preparations for their rapid displacement in any direction.

**Pt 8 of 14 pts of MS # B-633, Genfldm von Rundstedt:

I refer to my remark to par 55, and add the following. I absolutely agreed that the reinforcement of Fifteenth Army was urgently necessary. When, however, this had been accomplished on an adequate scale and, through our intelligence services, the possibility of a landing in Normandy came to the fore (about the end of 1943 and the beginning of 1944), we strove by every means--as did OKW, also--to strengthen the forces there. That they remained inadequate is another question.

But it would have been a mistake at that time, before the Invasion, one-sidedly to weaken Fifteenth Army for the benefit of Normandy. It was enough to take precautionary measures to regroup the reserves behind Fifteenth Army, so that in the event of a landing in Normandy they could immediately be transferred there. That this was not done afterwards was a decisive mistake.

94. Rigid adherence to a preconceived idea on the part of A Gp B, and above all on the part of OKW, together with our own complete air inferiority, OB WEST's inadequate command authority, and OB WEST's lack of a strategic reserve, are the basic factors which, from the beginning, made the defensive strength of Normandy a negative quantity and accounted for the quick success of the Invasion. When this miscalculation was finally recognized by everybody it was too late to take any effective countermeasures. Thus the Seine became an "iron curtain" and a strategic auxiliary of the Western Allies.

Pt 6 of 31 pts of MS # B-672, Genmaj von Buttlar:

The above conclusions concerning the preparations against the Invasion do not, according to my memory, correspond to the opinions held at the time.

The Channel Coast was indeed regarded by Hitler as well as by the WFSt, and without contradiction by OB WEST, as the most critical defensive area, especially on a strategic basis. Nevertheless, Hitler pressed for the reinforcement of Normandy, from the end of Apr 44 onward, because after that time he constantly expected the initial invasion attempt in Normandy, although he believed that this would be only a feint or a diversion. The doubling of the forces in the Cotentin and Normandy beginning at the end of April is to be attributed solely to the continual demands of Hitler, and OB WEST did not fulfil these with enthusiasm at the time, as the report would have us believe, but only with much delay.

According to the war diary of the WFSt, OB WEST reported on 4 May 44 that A Gp B could not carry out the ordered reinforcement of Normandy. At 1900 on 6 May 44, the Chief of the WFSt (Ed: Jodl) pointed out to the Chief of Staff of OB WEST, by telephone, that the Cotentin Peninsula would be the first enemy objective, and demanded--on Hitler's orders--that the required reinforcement be executed. The WFSt proposed that the following be used as reinforcements: 91 LL Div, 243 Inf Div, and 6 FS Regt of 2 FS Div. OB WEST requested, on the contrary, that 91 LL Div be transferred to the Nantes area and not into the Cotentin, but this request was refused and Hitler demanded even more forces for Normandy. It was only on this further demand that OB WEST made available 10 Werf (projector) Regt and 100 Pz Ers

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Bn. (Ed: The latter unit is shown as a panzer brigade on App 4. According to Genlt Zimmermann, 100 Pz Brig comprised captured French tanks and obsolescent German armor. It had been stationed near Paris since 1942, for the purpose of preventing riots. In the spring of 1944, all of the Brigade's tanks were reorganized into a task force and moved to the Cotentin Peninsula. Gen Zimmermann is not sure whether 100 Pz Brig operated as a unit in the Normandy battles, or whether LXXXIV Inf Corps split it up among various infantry units.)

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Chapter Six

INDICATIONS OF THE COMING INVASION

95. Since early spring of 1944, enemy air activity against the OB WEST area had increased greatly. Not only was the zone of the interior attacked by day (mostly American forces) and by night (mostly English forces) in countless flights of heavy bomber formations; but rail junctions, railroad repair shops, industrial installations, and military camps in the OB WEST area were systematically destroyed. At times the coastal fortifications were also attacked, either as a feint or to draw out the defense and test its strength. Fighter-bomber activity increased significantly, attacks on moving trains multiplied, and the number of disabled locomotives grew alarmingly. The number and type of flight missions and attacks and their effects were followed daily, and accurately plotted on maps. The general picture that developed was one of a fundamental destruction of the main supply lines, without any concentration point being clearly indicated, however. Up to this time the Paris ring of rail communications had not been effectively attacked, although it had a very special significance as the center, or "turntable," of the French rail system. The opinion of OB WEST was: If the Paris ring is destroyed, the Invasion is at hand.

96. The constant growth of the resistance movement in France was followed with special attention, as was the rising incidence

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of sabotage of all kinds. But here, too, conclusions could not yet be drawn as to the objective of the Invasion. Radio monitoring established hundreds of key words and expressions directed to agents and members of the resistance movement. In many cases we succeeded in analyzing these messages so that on the whole the defense could form a picture of their meaning. Parachuting of agents, weapons, ammunition, and explosives at night--as well as the exchange of signals between planes and the ground--were observed and charted. Here, too, no conclusions as to the invasion objective could be drawn because these activities usually occurred in thinly patrolled rear areas. Paris itself remained strikingly quiet.

97. Particularly significant was the transfer (ascertained by radio intelligence) of enemy combat units toward the southern English coast. We knew that enemy invasion forces, after completing great landing exercises, were standing ready. In North Africa, too, we knew that a great many more enemy units were in readiness than were needed to feed the battle in Italy. A particularly notable indication was the enemy radio silence. When this was ascertained, increased vigilance was ordered.

Thus, the decisive month of June approached.

98. In the first days of Jun 44, OKW brought up Hq, XLVII Pz Corps, which was placed under A Gp B. OB WEST planned to attach 2 Pz Div and 116 Pz Div to this Corps. The early days of Jun 44 were critical ones for Normandy and the bay of the Seine, not only because

of weather conditions but also because low tide occurred just before dawn.*

*Pt 9 of 14 pts of MS # B-633, Genfldm von Rundstedt:

The fact that in May I had arranged to begin, on 6 Jun 44, a trip of several days to what later became the Invasion front, may be taken as an indication that we expected the Normandy Invasion in the near future.

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Chapter Seven
THE INVASION ALERT

99. At 2115 on 5 Jun 44, the Ic of OB WEST reported the receipt of an urgent alarm message to the effect that the enemy radio had several times repeated a code word summoning the resistance movement to arise immediately throughout France. Practically, this signified the mobilization of the resistance movement for the following night; the report was therefore taken very seriously. OB WEST decided to transmit this fact, with a general warning, to all units and agencies concerned in its area.

100. A Gp B, which was already aware of the above report, was ordered by OB WEST to comply with all the requirements of Alarmstufe II (Alert II) throughout its entire coastal area (Wehrmacht District Netherlands, Fifteenth Army, and Seventh Army); all other agencies including the military districts received warning and orders for increased vigilance. The order was sent by officers via telephone to A Gp B, Third Air Force, Navy Gp West, and Military District France. A Gp G was informed by telephone and then the order was repeated by teletype, with officers checking on the high-precedence transmission (Blitz-Fernschreiben). The headquarters receiving the order last, acknowledged receipt of the teletype message on 6 Jun 44 at about 0120 hours.

101. At about 0215 on 6 Jun 44, A Gp B telephoned the report of strong parachute landings in several places in Normandy, and of continuing heavy flights including both towed and free gliders. Fighting was already in progress on the Cotentin Peninsula with enemy air-landed forces. In one place wooden dummies dropped from planes were also discovered, apparently booby-trapped. In the opinion of OB WEST this was definitely the opening phase of a landing to be expected at dawn. Since the fortress of Cherbourg and the western coast of Normandy would scarcely be involved, it was plain that the landing could be expected on the east coast of Normandy, probably near the Orne and Vire estuaries or perhaps farther east in the southern part of the bay of the Seine.

102. OKW, as well as Third Air Force and Navy Gp West, was informed; and OB WEST ascertained, by checking, that Alarmstufe II had been put into effect as ordered and that all headquarters concerned had a clear picture of the situation. About 0230, OB WEST, whose entire staff was alerted and ready for action, gave the following orders-- on its own initiative, without consulting OKW first--to A Gp B, 12 SS Pz Div, and Pz Lehr Div:

Air landings in Normandy; fighting in progress. Enemy landing on the east coast of Normandy is probable.

- a. 12 SS Pz Div will proceed immediately toward Lisieux, to be under command of A Gp B.
- b. Pz Lehr Div will get ready immediately at emergency assembly areas for movement, to be under command of A Gp B.

OKW was then informed by telephone of these measures and at that time made no objection to them!

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From then on, OB WEST had to rely upon the automatic execution of measures prescribed and the additional measures taken by A Gp B, with which OB WEST was in constant telephone communication.

Between 0615 and 0630 on 6 Jun 44, A Gp B reported that enemy landings were underway on the east coast of Normandy. (See App 4, OB WEST Dispositions in Normandy, 5 Jun 44.)

Chapter Eight

THE LANDING

I. Invasion Day

103. The landing report was relayed immediately, without additional details at first, to OKW and to all headquarters in the OB WEST area down to division level, with the additional order for the latter: "Continue increased vigilance!" To supplement Alarmstufe II, which had been ordered for A Gp B, the military districts' security area behind the front of A Gp B was put under Alarmstufe I up to a depth of 50 km (all of Normandy!).

104. Third Air Force was urged to commit all available forces against the landings, especially ships and landing craft, and to reconnoiter naval movements between England and the Continent. A Gp B was to transmit its requests for aerial support to Third Air Force. Unfortunately, the Third Air Force reinforcements promised by OKW and OKL had not yet arrived. (They did not arrive until the third or fourth invasion day, and were incomplete as well as too late.) Our own meager air forces--as far as I can remember, about 90 usable fighters and 70 bombers--could do nothing in the face of the uninterrupted, stunning enemy air superiority (air umbrella over beachheads and ships) and suffered severe losses.

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105. Between 0630 and 0700, OKW telephoned OB WEST and objected violently to OB WEST's arbitrary employment of OKW reserves, 12 SS Pz Div and Pz Lehr Div. Both were to be stopped immediately!* The

*Pt 10 of 24 pts of MS # B-718, Genlt Speidel:

It is correct that OKW stopped the reserves. Genobst Jodl himself gave me the order at the time. A Gp B had already, on its own initiative, alerted the panzer divisions in question and reported accordingly.

12 SS Pz Div could close in the vicinity of Lisieux, but Pz Lehr Div was not to move at all. Furthermore, we were to await Adolf Hitler's decision. When we objected that if this procedure were followed the Normandy landing would succeed and unforeseeable consequences would follow, we were told that we were in no position to judge, that the main landing was going to come at an entirely different place. OB WEST stood its ground and tried to explain that if such were the case it was all the more logical to first destroy one landing so as to be able to meet a possible second one with all available forces. Moreover, the enemy would certainly concentrate on the successful landing. If the Normandy landing were successful, it would become the main invasion effort. OKW stuck to its guns--the Fuehrer had to decide first. In spite of all OB WEST's urging, this decision was unobtainable during the morning of 6 Jun 44!*

*Author's Note: About two or three days after the beginning of the Invasion, OKW, acting in the name of the Supreme Commander of the Wehrmacht (Ed: Hitler), required of OB WEST a detailed report on the following points:

- a. Was OB WEST informed of the enemy radio summons to the resistance movement on 5 Jun 44?
- b. If so, when was OB WEST informed, and what measures were taken by OB WEST as a result? Exact times required for all details.

OB WEST, in a very exhaustive report, seized the opportunity to present as the decisive factor leading to the rapid success of the Invasion of Normandy the fact that OKW had halted the OKW reserves (Pz Lehr Div and 12 SS Pz Div), which OB WEST had alerted and set moving at the proper time. OB WEST never heard anything more from OKW about this report.

106. (Here it should be noted that misty, foggy weather prevailed on 6 Jun 44 until about 1100, eliminating any significant fighter-bomber activity during this time. This would in all probability have enabled the combat echelon of 12 SS Pz Div to reach the Caen area, while at least the combat echelon of Pz Lehr Div--which at that time, it is true, had only a few tanks ready for action--could have reached an area halfway between Chartres and Caen.) Thus the objective for which OB WEST was struggling, to attack the enemy during his moment of weakness and smash his landing attempt, was already unattainable. For even if the panzer units were released without further delay, they could not march until dusk because of the intensification of enemy air activity during the day. The first critical day was lost! The success of the Invasion was already decided!

107. A second circumstance that had fateful consequences was the absence of Genfldm Rommel, Commander of A Gp B! After a discussion with the Fuehrer he had, with OKW's permission, gone to his home town, Ulm! The Chief of Staff of A Gp B (at this time Genlt Dr Speidel, who

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had relieved Genlt Gause*) reported that Genfldm Rommel had been in-

 *Ed: Genlt Speidel replaced Genlt Gause on 15 Apr 44.

formed of the situation and was expected back on the evening of 6 Jun 44. In accordance with orders from Rommel, the Chief of Staff would not be able to issue an estimate of the situation until after Rommel's return and then only with his approval! Obviously this circumstance at the very least constituted an obstacle to the staff of A Gp B and its work.* **

 *Pt 22 of 31 pts of MS # B-672, Genmaj von Buttlar:

Rommel's absence from his command post when the Invasion began was known neither to the Chief nor to the operations division of the WFSt. He must have been given permission by Hitler in person, and the latter failed to so inform the Chief of the WFSt. It is even more difficult to understand the fact that, as the report would imply, OB WEST did not succeed in getting its own way with the staff of A Gp B, despite the absence of the Army Group Commander.

 **Pt 11 of 24 pts of MS # B-718, Genlt Speidel:

The first sentence of par 107 is incomprehensible. The actual situation was as follows:

In line with his preparations for independent action in the West, as described in MS # B-721 (Ed: briefly summarized in an editor's note following par 61, above), Genfldm Rommel wished once more to expound to Hitler the military and political facts of the situation and demand a change in the top-level organization and the bringing up of the reserves of all three arms of the Wehrmacht. Having obtained the approval of Genfldm von Rundstedt and having made arrangements by telephone with Gen Schmundt, Rommel drove by car to Obersalzberg on 5 June, intending to make his statement on the afternoon of 6 Jun 44.

On 6 June, between 0100 and 0200, the Chief of Staff of A Gp B received reports of strong enemy air formations flying in over the Normandy coast and the Cotentin Peninsula. As further news was received of the intensification of the enemy aerial activity and

of a possible landing, the units in reserve, particularly the panzer divisions, were ordered to get ready to move. The I SS Pz Corps was ordered to make contact at once with Gen Marcks' Corps (Ed: LXXXIV Inf Corps), which was in command on the Calvados coast and in the Cotentin Peninsula, and with the divisions committed there. The measures which had long been prepared went into effect automatically and the necessary orders were issued. OKW and OB WEST were kept constantly informed. At 0630 on 6 Jun 44, the Chief of Staff reported to Rommel by telephone at Herrlingen, near Ulm, where he was spending the night, informing him of the situation and the first steps which had been taken; the A Gp B Commander gave his full approval. Genfldm Rommel put off his further journey to Berchtesgaden and between 1600 and 1700 on 6 June he arrived at the Command Post in la Roche Guyon.

From 0630 until his return between 1600 and 1700, Rommel could no more have issued operational instructions than could OB WEST and OKW. One had to have the nerve to wait until the situation was clarified by reports and by the statements of those who had been sent out in all directions. Continual telephone calls from OKW and OB WEST revealed the nervousness reigning at high levels. I repeatedly informed Genobst Jodl and Gen Blumentritt of my estimate of the situation, but I refused to be disturbed by the many pointless telephone calls from other agencies.

The staff of A Gp B was not hampered in its work, but pursued it without friction or excitement. Genlt Zimmermann's remarks to the contrary are therefore not in accordance with the facts.

108. OB WEST's impression of the situation was clarified during the morning of 6 Jun 44 by numerous individual reports. In the interior of Normandy, one air-landing division had landed in the area south and southeast of Valognes and another in the area northwest of Carentan. According to front-line reports these were American forces: the northern group was 82 Abn Div, the other was 101 Abn Div. Some airborne troops had likewise parachuted near the mouth of the Orne, but their strength had not yet been established (combined English formation?). Water-borne landings, with strong naval support, had taken place just west of the Orne estuary, on both sides of St Aubin sur Mer,

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north of Bayeux, and east of the Vire estuary. The coastal sector northeast of the Vire was also attacked from the sea, but the battle for the coast did not seem to be going unfavorably there. The enemy suffered heavy losses there, and our artillery, especially the regular coastal artillery, seemed effective. Here, then, was still hope of holding the coast, if the airborne forces behind the coastal defenses could be destroyed and their attack from the rear toward the coast prevented. OB WEST expressed this conviction in several orders to A Gp B. At this moment, 82 Abn Div (US) seemed to be in a very tight spot, for it was the object of concentric attacks and was being squeezed into a very small area. From individual radio reports from fortification garrisons of 716 Div, we ascertained that English forces were fighting there. Accordingly, it seemed incontestable that we were dealing with a large-scale landing--probably the spearheads of an English army and an American army. At that time, we took the mouth of the Vire to be the dividing line between the two armies, but it later turned out that the dividing line lay west of Bayeux.

109. At any rate, strong elements of 352 Div still held the MIR along the coast, from the east bank of the Vire to about 12 km east of the Vire estuary. A number of bunkers and bunker groups in the 716 Div sector were also still holding, according to radio reports. Now would have been the moment, along toward evening, to attack the still narrow beachheads with strong mobile forces, roll over them, and crush them. For this operation, however, the two panzer units delayed by OKW were lacking. True enough, they were finally released about

1415 on 6 Jun 44, after Hitler's decision was obtained, but because of the air situation they could not proceed until after dusk had set in. The decisive day was lost.

110. Therefore, 21 Pz Div standing ready south of Caen had to initiate the counterattack alone. This it did during 6 Jun 44 in the direction of the coast (west of the Orne) via Caen. The thrust went as far as the coast, in some places between our bunkers that were still holding, when the enemy threw new airborne forces against the rearward elements of the division. The Division Commander (Gen Feuchtinger) thereupon decided to break off the attack in order to rescue the rear elements of the Division. It remains a question as to whether this decision was the right one. For the situation must doubtless also have been critical for the enemy—locally at least—otherwise he would not have committed airborne forces against a panzer unit.*

*Pt 12 of 24 pts of MS # B-718, Genlt Speidel:

I share the view expressed on the leadership of 21 Pz Div. It was, of course, impossible to intervene because the Division Commander's alteration of the decision became known too late.

If, as planned, 12 SS Pz Div had gone into battle along with 21 Pz Div, with Pz Lehr Div echeloned to the left rear, at least part of the beachhead could presumably have been destroyed. Whether or not the enemy would have repeated his landing attempt at this locality is a matter for speculation.

111. After the 21 Pz Div attack had failed, OB WEST realized that it would no longer be possible to smash the landing. For within

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a short time the individual landing areas would be extended and deepened and consolidated into one big beachhead. The enemy would continually bring up new forces. Tactical landing fields, at first for pursuit planes and later for close-support air units, would be set up as quickly as possible and our position would be greatly weakened.*

*Pt 13 of 24 pts of MS # B-718, Genlt Speidel:

The conclusion resembles a defensive brief for OB WEST and an attempt to identify the guilty. It gives too little attention to the wider implications of the situation. In par 119, an attempt is made to blame Rommel; my comments have been inserted at the end of that paragraph. It may be emphasized that superior headquarters reserved to themselves the decision to displace any division of Fifteenth Army toward the south. This insufferable type of command was, in fact, the cause of bitter disagreements between Rommel and the Hitler-Jodl combination.

II. OB WEST Estimate of the Situation

112. In the opinion of OB WEST, the enemy has gotten ashore successfully and the invasion of France is developing from the initial landings. OB WEST lacks the strength and resources to resist this invasion and its extension for any length of time. We doubt whether OKW will be in a position to guarantee us adequate assistance. Expedients will be too late to help the present situation. The only course possible for OB WEST under the existing circumstances is to attempt a delaying action in Normandy. The enemy will be hampered in his large-scale supply and hence in the tactical development of his forces as long as:

- a. he does not have Cherbourg, and
- b. his exit from the narrow Normandy peninsula for "Operation im Freien" ("operations in the open") is still blocked.

113. The next objectives of OB WEST are clearly the following:

- a. to prevent the fall of Cherbourg or to delay it as long as possible, and

- b. to defend every foot of the Normandy peninsula as stubbornly as possible--employing counterthrusts and mobile warfare--in order to deny to the enemy as long as possible the maneuver room necessary for large-scale operations. For, if the enemy once gains freedom of action outside of Normandy, the campaign in France is lost.

114. Since OB WEST has no strategic reserve, the only alternative is to extract from other coastal fronts all the forces that can possibly be released. Above all, A Gp B should immediately begin to free its available forces and throw them into Normandy, especially those massed behind the coastal front of Fifteenth Army. This should be done as quickly as possible, for we can still bring units by rail at least as far as the Paris area even though detours caused delays. Any day this situation may change.

115. For the time being, OB WEST no longer anticipates a landing from the west at another place. The enemy will in any case exploit his Normandy success with every means at his disposal. If he

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succeeds in this, he will shift the strong forces assembled in England (approximately one army group) into Normandy as he needs them.*

*Pt 10 of 31 pts of MS # B-672, Genmaj von Buttlar:

Considered in retrospect, this estimate of the situation by OB WEST seems entirely comprehensible, but in that form and at that time it was certainly not made known to OKW or to Hitler. It can also, in my opinion, hardly have existed in the mind of the C-in-C West at that time, because:

a. The writer observes, on the second day of Invasion, that: "OB WEST lacks the strength and resources to resist this invasion and its extension for any length of time." On the second day of Invasion, when about ten enemy formations had been confirmed, such a conclusion sounds quite as astonishing as the second observation, that the only possibility open to OB WEST was a delaying action in Normandy. According to the war diary of the WFSt, it was only on 11 Jun 44 that the C-in-C West reported for the first time that he had been temporarily forced to take the defensive, but intended, after regrouping, to attack the enemy between the Orne and the Vire.

b. The writer states, "For the time being, OB WEST no longer anticipates a landing from the west at another place." Even the OB WEST estimate of 13 Jun 44 reported that "a second landing must be considered possible; four airborne formations and 20 to 30 combined-arms units are available for such an operation, and the target may be either the Somme district or Belgium."

III. The Decisive Mistake

116. The OB WEST estimate was at this time, however, still in sharp conflict with the interpretation and estimate of A Gp B, while OKW was probably still uncertain in its estimate. OB WEST was convinced that there would be no landing on the French Mediterranean coast until the strategic moment for such an operation arrived:

- a. when the Mediterranean front was weakened still further by the withdrawal of forces, and
- b. when the Allies had won freedom of action outside of Normandy.

In essence, then, OB WEST wanted to act in accordance with a principle it had often discussed with OKW and which the latter had approved: Ruthless stripping of unattacked fronts in favor of the one attacked. Whole-hearted measures! This consideration made OB WEST decide to throw still more forces into Normandy than had been envisaged in the planning for the various "cases". For in this way not only could the battle be fed by the units released, but a strong reserve could also be built up behind the front and with its help a system of field fortifications in depth could be established.

117. There were various forces available for this course of action:

- a. The A Gp B forces in Holland, along the Channel Coast, and in Brittany could be considerably reduced. In particular, strong elements of Fifteenth Army should be released immediately. OB WEST estimated that the Army should give up at least six to seven infantry divisions and one, if not two, panzer divisions. The details would have to be left to the Commander of A Gp B.

- b. From A Gp G:

- (1) From First Army--276 Div and 708 Div, LXXXVI Corps Hq, and 17 SS Pz Gren Div (having been released meanwhile from

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OKW reserve). To be sure, the latter Division was not fully equipped with armored vehicles.

(2) From Nineteenth Army--271, 272, and 277 Divs to be made available by thinning the coastal defense forces and by substituting other troops; in addition, 9 Pz Div, but only if 11 Pz Div, not yet completely ready for action, were shifted behind Nineteenth Army. These releases were facilitated by the OKW transfer of 198 Div from Rumania to A Gp G in the first days of the Invasion. Furthermore, OB WEST also gave to A Gp G the elements of 189 Res Div not in the Pyrenees (those near Clermont-Ferrand), and some security forces of Military District France.

118. During later fighting in Normandy, 165 Res Div (Nancy area) was moved up to A Gp B for Fifteenth Army. In addition, OKW had 226 Div and 245 Div moved up to free combat divisions of Fifteenth Army for Normandy. For the same purpose, OB WEST made available a mobile kampfguppe (equipped with tanks, armored scout cars, and antitank weapons) and a security regiment from Paris, belonging to Military District France. (Paris was almost completely stripped of troops by this measure.)

119. Thus, as a result of the OB WEST estimate of the situation summarized above, an order was sent to A Gp B (apparently on the second Invasion day, if not earlier) to move seven of its divisions immediately to Seventh Army in Normandy. Genfldm Rommel, however, was convinced that the enemy main attack was still impending against the Channel Coast. He was vigorously supported in this belief by Fifteenth

Army, which likewise still feared attack along its coastal sector and therefore wanted to remain as strong as possible. OKW at this time also seemed to share the same opinion. In any case, Genfldm Rommel objected to the order to release the forces, and, as far as I remember, he was upheld by OKW. Thus, as a result of this objection, the only correct strategic measure was not taken. This was the decisive mistake, as was soon shown!* ** ***

*Pt 9 of 24 pts of MS # B-718, Genlt Speidel:

As early as 7 Jun 44, Genfldm Rommel wanted to transfer to the south the available forces of Fifteenth Army. See MS # B-122, Genmaj von Gersdorff. (Ed: Genmaj von Gersdorff was Chief of Staff of Fifteenth Army's LXXXII Inf Corps during the period 1 Feb - 29 Jul 44. MS # B-122 is in full accord with this statement by Genlt Speidel.)

Genfldm Rommel very soon advocated that Brittany and the Channel Islands be evacuated by the combined-arms units and that the forces left in these areas be limited to coastal security detachments. Brittany was strategically untenable anyway, and experience had shown that the U-boat base was operationally insignificant.

Genfldm Rommel also urged that the Mediterranean front be stripped, "as it was impossible to hold everything," and that LVIII Pz Corps be brought up from southern France. This Corps had four panzer-type divisions, whose rehabilitation, however, had only just begun.

The execution of the three proposals above was disapproved by both OB WEST and OKW. (Ed: This statement is also supported by MS # B-122, Genmaj von Gersdorff.) Not a single division of Fifteenth Army could be moved without OKW permission.

Strategic, tactical, and political considerations made Genfldm Rommel believe a second landing improbable, despite the fact that, for more than five weeks, the reports "dished out from above" continued to report the presence in England of an operational group of about 60 combined-arms units. As a result, the possibility of a second landing was taken into account in the estimates of the general situation. Genfldm Rommel did not consider such a landing as certain, but as possible though improbable. In weighing this possibility, the Somme--Seine area was involved in the deliberations, not the Channel

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Coast. Should it become necessary to strengthen the defense of the Channel Coast, this could be accomplished later by OKW reserves, but for the time being not a man should be left aside unnecessarily. Such was Rommel's attitude. He personally expressed these ideas to Hitler on 17 Jun 44 in Margival and at the end of June in Berchtesgaden. I was present at the first conference and Rommel informed me about the second.

**Pt 11 of 31 pts of MS # B-672, Genmaj von Buttlar:

It never came to my knowledge that the C-in-C West really seriously attempted, without compromise, to carry out the great regrouping movement against the Invasion front, which he had planned and scheduled before the Invasion.

According to the war diary of the WFSt, the operations division (Operationsabteilung) of the WFSt submitted to Hitler on 13 Jun 44 a brief estimate of the situation, expressing misgivings concerning the inactivity of the command in the West and urging the execution of the planned measures of concentration in the West and the bringing up of forces from other theaters. The WFSt would not have submitted such an estimate if corresponding proposals from OB WEST had already been disapproved or blocked. I am convinced that if the C-in-C West had taken a more active, personal stand, he could certainly have obtained what, according to the report, he desired.

The "decisive strategic mistake" therefore, taking all in all, really lay with the C-in-C West himself.

***Pt 10 of 14 pts of MS # B-633, Genfldm von Rundstedt:

I believe that OKW was responsible for not releasing these divisions in time, and not so much Rommel. I still remember exactly how, on one of the first days, a division which was already on the march toward Normandy was not only held up at the order of OKW, but even had to march back to where it came from!

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SPEIDEL

Dr. Hans Speidel

Chapter Nine

FORCES BROUGHT UP DURING THE NORMANDY BATTLE

120. At the command of A Gp B or Seventh Army, the following were moved up to Normandy from the A Gp B area:

77 Div, from the vicinity of St Malo;
12 SS Pz Div, from the vicinity of Lisieux (after release by OKW);
Pz Lehr Div, from the vicinity of Chartres (after release by OKW);
17 SS Pz Gren Div, of First Army (after release by OKW);
II FS Corps Hq and 3 FS Div (Seventh Army area, with OKW approval);
346 Div, of Fifteenth Army;
XLVII Pz Corps Hq, of A Gp B; and
LXXIV Corps, of Seventh Army.

Therefore, A Gp B at the critical moment gave up only one division (346 Div) of its main body, whereas according to OB WEST's estimate it could have released at least seven divisions.

121. The following were readied for an early transfer:

353 Div, of Seventh Army;
Kfgr 265 Div, of Seventh Army;
Kfgr 266 Div, of Seventh Army;
9 Pz Div, of Nineteenth Army; and
I SS Pz Corps Hq and 1 SS Pz Div, of A Gp B.

122. The following were alerted to anticipate transfer:

LXXXVI Corps Hq, of First Army;
LXXX Corps Hq, of First Army;
LVIII Pz Corps Hq, of A Gp G;
16 Lw Feld Div, of Wehrmacht District Netherlands;
276 Div, of First Army;

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708 Div, of First Army;
 271 Div, of Nineteenth Army;
 272 Div, of Nineteenth Army;
 277 Div, of Nineteenth Army;
 338 Div (in the gravest emergency), of Nineteenth Army; and
 2 SS Pz Div, of A Gp G.

123. In the further course of the Normandy battle, it also became necessary to move to Normandy 85 Div and 89 Div from Fifteenth Army, and 84 Div from Seventh Army, after they had been readied for combat. The same was done with 2 FS Div of Seventh Army (after it had been readied for combat) and the elements of 5 FS Div that were ready for action.

124. During the first days of the Invasion, Genfldm Rommel still thought he could not release 2 Pz Div and 116 Pz Div, which were standing by in the area between the lower Somme and the Seine. He was unwilling to release them because of his well-known opinion in regard to a second major landing along the Channel Coast with its main effort near the Somme estuary. Apparently at this time his belief was still supported by OKW and Fifteenth Army.*

*Pt 14 of 24 pts of MS # B-718, Genlt Speidel:

I have already discussed this matter.

125. During June, OKW brought up to OB WEST from the Eastern Front II SS Pz Corps Hq, with 9 and 10 SS Pz Divs, and later on, 363 Div, for the Normandy battle. Both of these panzer divisions had to be unloaded from their trains at about the Verdun--Nancy--Dijon line because of the transportation situation, and proceed to Normandy by road

march. (This was at the end of June.) It is easy to understand what that meant, in view of the difficult fuel situation, and what it did to the condition of the armored vehicles! Nevertheless, this large-scale movement went off comparatively smoothly, due to careful organization and planning as to the routes, halt areas, and antiaircraft defense. Rail transportation, on the other hand, was no longer dependable or predictable in any way. Only in the very first days of the Invasion might the forward displacement of units by rail still have been perhaps "conditionally" feasible—particularly of Fifteenth Army units to, or via, Paris. Due to the conflict of opinions already mentioned, this valuable time and opportunity was not utilized, and the enemy was given a unique strategic opportunity. In subsequent days and weeks, the condition of roads, railroads, and important bridges changed increasingly to our disadvantage.*

*Pt 15 of 24 pts of MS # B-718, Genlt Speidel:

The principal cause was the enemy superiority in the air.

Chapter Ten

DECISIVE INFLUENCE OF ENEMY AIR FORCE

126. As the Invasion began, a definite concentration pattern began to emerge in the attack objectives of the enemy air force. No direct conclusions as to the Invasion objective could be drawn from the numerous strong, but rather evenly distributed, pre-Invasion attacks upon the rail system and the war effort in general in the OB WEST area, and the serious consequences thereof. Now, however, these calculated deceptive measures by the enemy appeared to have been superfluous, for the crushing superiority of Allied pursuit and attack planes covered Normandy and its rail and road approaches like an umbrella.

127. The Paris "ring" was systematically destroyed by heavy bombing attacks--first the outer ring and then the inner one--and all repairs were closely observed. The wave of destruction swept ever deeper into France--strategic rail connections through the Rhone valley, rail junctions and bridges along the Loire, important junctions in Belgium and Northern France. In short, strategic trunk rail connections were no longer available. Airfields were likewise destroyed--first, all those near the front, and later most of those in the interior. The pulverizing large-scale air attack on about the third Invasion day against the lower Seine bridges between Paris and Rouen was particularly symptomatic. In this attack, all of the bridges were either destroyed

or so heavily damaged that they were of no use for tactical purposes. Thus, the previously mentioned "iron curtain" was lowered between the Normandy battlefield and the strong reserves available north of the Seine. OB WEST, it is true, immediately appointed a senior engineer officer (Hoehrer Pionier Offizier) and assembled a staff to attempt the repair of the damaged bridges and to establish a ferry service across the Seine below Paris at numerous appropriate sites. A Gp B was to express its tactical requirements in this respect. Obviously, however, in such a transfer of units across the Seine--constantly handicapped and delayed by enemy air attacks--there was an enormous amount of time lost, and, in addition, units had to be committed piecemeal.

128. We now had to pay for not promptly shifting to Normandy the forces OB WEST considered necessary. Units like 16 Lw Feld Div from Holland, for instance, now had to be moved in several echelons. Elements had to travel via Germany, be reloaded several times enroute with intervening road marches, and proceed the last part of the way (approximately from Paris onward) to Normandy by night marches. Panzer divisions wore out their valuable equipment on the highways before getting into battle. More and more vehicles broke down, and the continual fighter-bomber attacks multiplied the losses. The major highways to Normandy were soon strewn with wrecked vehicles, and traffic on these roads was still possible only at night and at a snail's pace.

129. The movement of all types of supplies came to a virtual standstill and could be effected only inadequately and with the greatest difficulties. This was true of strategic supply as well as tactical

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supply; the effect of this on combat power and the tactical situation is obvious. On major railway sections, particularly near the borders of the Reich, there was an enormous jam of rolling stock. After about three weeks of invasion the number of supply trains (POL, weapons, equipment, ammunition, etc) stalled there was sometimes as high as two thousand. Packets of replacement troops had to march on foot all the way across France and thus, regardless of how urgently they were needed by the fighting forces, arrived at their destinations far behind schedule and often after having suffered heavy losses enroute. Control over supply partially disintegrated because trains were separated or turned back because of rail traffic conditions and ended up by getting to the wrong destination. A large amount of rolling stock was jammed on French-Belgian railway sections and could go neither forward nor backward. Time-consuming shifts to truck transport had to be made; the supply of fuel, already scarce, was further diminished by using it for these purposes. In about the third or fourth week of the Invasion, only 30 - 40 trains got through daily in the whole OB WEST area, whereas the normal daily complement was about 210 trains. In this total freight capacity, the needs of the civilian population for coal, food (for urban populations), and other domestic necessities had to be considered. Though every effort was made to improve the situation and the rail jam on some days sank to only 1300 - 1400 trains, on the average, as far as I remember, the number of stalled trains remained at around 1800. Under these circumstances an orderly conduct of operations was no longer possible for any length of time.

130. Here I must note that about the end of Feb 44 OB WEST presented to the Generalquartiermeister (OKH) in Paris a map study presupposing a landing in Normandy and along the southern bay of the Seine as the initial phase of an invasion; further, the study assumed the employment of two enemy airborne units. The purpose of this map study was to prove that in the event of an invasion the Paris "ring" would immediately be eliminated as a main supply base and that the supply of the field forces, especially POL and ammunition, was not assured. OB WEST wanted to decentralize the supply set-up, move it forward and arrange it parallel to the coast, and increase the reserve supplies of the armies. To the best of my recollection, these ideas were disapproved by the officer who was then Generalquartiermeister--possibly from conviction, possibly from lack of means. In any case, the general impression at the time was that the highest command echelons in the zone of the interior were unable to realize how France was going to look when very powerful enemy air forces went into action.

131. The only possible expedient in the exceedingly critical rail situation described above, was the employment of a high-capacity motor-transport system, a measure already envisaged in the pre-Invasion preparations. Naturally this transport system had to be created at the expense of staffs and troops, and naturally it weakened the mobility of the units themselves. The short circumference of the combat zone (approximately a semicircle: lower Seine--Paris--Chartres--le Mans) was now scarcely passable during daylight or during good flying weather, on any of the roads leading to Normandy, particularly not on any of the

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main highways. The increasing disorganization of the supply service was counteracted by setting up a system of precisely classified supply roads and by increasing the number of road commanders, road-section commanders, road repair detachments, and vehicle recovery parties. Auxiliary roads and routes for the two-way flow of supplies, provisions, and troops were reconnoitered, selected, marked, and rigidly controlled. This was done for every corps sector in Normandy; detours and amount of time lost were considered in each case. During daylight hours, everything had to be concealed from aerial observation; there could be no visible movement. All the time lost as a result and the slow tempo of all movements had to be included in our calculations in order for us to be able to do any fighting at all. Nevertheless, it was clear that for this very reason the enemy enjoyed the initiative.

132. As it was in the rear, so it was at the front. The combat troops were completely powerless against the constant enemy air attacks, especially against large-scale bomber attacks, because of the absence of the Luftwaffe. In the initial phases of enemy attacks, our forces were pulverized by the bombings; we suffered tremendous losses in men and materiel without being able to do anything to defend ourselves. From a purely psychological point of view, the morale of German combat forces was severely strained by this feeling of utter helplessness in the face of a battle technique which the enemy completely monopolized and employed at will. Their behavior and achievements in these hard battles should be appraised all the higher because of it.

Chapter Eleven
ESTABLISHMENT OF THE BEACHHEAD

133. A Gp B's hope of being able to destroy the two American airborne divisions that had landed in the interior of Normandy (82 and 101 Abn Divs) was not realized. As early as the afternoon of 6 Jun 44, reports testified to the seriousness of the battles. (Whether fresh reinforcements via parachute or glider landings had anything to do with this, OB WEST was unable to say.) In any case, despite all our attempts to encircle and compress the enemy forces, they succeeded in gradually fighting their way toward the east coast of Normandy and establishing contact with sea-landed forces there. Thus the fall of the coastal defenses north of the Vire (approximately from the mouth of the Vire to a point south of St Vaast la Hougue) likewise became only a matter of time.

134. To OB WEST, however, this situation portended the cutting off and subsequent fall of Cherbourg. On about 8 or 9 Jun 44, OB WEST issued an order to A Gp B that went something like this: "Maintaining contact with the fortress of Cherbourg is of decisive importance for the further course of the battle in Normandy. Cherbourg must be held no matter what the circumstances." For, as long as we still held Cherbourg, the enemy's supply problem was not fully solved, regardless of how much he exploited his technical resources. This was

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especially true as far as conducting operations outward from Normandy was concerned. Thus, the enemy had to try to take Cherbourg as quickly as possible; OB WEST had to try to prevent this.*

*Pt 16 of 24 pts of MS # B-718, Genlt Speidel:

It was just as great a mistake to hold Cherbourg, which was inadequate in every type of strength, as to hold, later, the localities which were arbitrarily designated "fortresses." Genfldm Rommel did not want to put anything more into Cherbourg and he told Hitler this quite clearly on 17 Jun 44. Incidentally, he then ordered on his own initiative that the forces in the Cotentin Peninsula be brought down, at the very last moment, to rescue and close the front.

The extent to which OB WEST made independent decisions with regard to the conduct of operations in the Cotentin, is a matter for speculation.

135. Since OB WEST had no reserve, A Gp B had to draw on its reserves in order to bring up as quickly as possible the necessary forces for the battle for Cherbourg. In this situation, it was demonstrated that inserting A Gp B as an authoritative headquarters, with very extensive powers over the conduct of operations in Normandy, had not been a practical idea. A Gp B had its own opinions, for it still expected a second landing along the Channel Coast; furthermore, A Gp B, in turn, had to give its orders to Seventh Army, a time-consuming process because of the distance involved and the signal communications situation.

136. The Seventh Army Commander (Genobst Dollmann) had his command post deep in the interior of Brittany, near le Mans. From this location he could not direct operations, let alone act quickly, in Normandy, considering the uninterrupted pyramiding of events there.

Realizing this, on 7 Jun 44 he had set up an advance command post in Normandy in the area northeast of Granville and placed a small operations staff there. OB WEST even considered the desirability of transferring tactical responsibility for Normandy from Seventh Army to a provisional army (Armeegruppe) under Gen Art Marcks, Commander of LXXXIV Corps. (Gen Marcks, later killed in action in Normandy, was a very capable and, in spite of an artificial leg, very efficient officer.) This solution, however, was rejected because the battle was too far advanced and because it might have given rise to friction in several ways, particularly in the field of supply.

137. OB WEST had hoped that the order to A Gp B to maintain contact with Cherbourg at any cost would cause A Gp B to withdraw strong forces from the Channel Coast (Fifteenth Army) in favor of Normandy. OB WEST hoped in vain. Only 709 and 243 Divs, already engaged in Normandy, got orders to strip ruthlessly all unattacked coastal sectors, leave only one battalion in the fortress of Cherbourg, proceed from these defenses toward the east coast of Normandy, and attack the enemy in cooperation with 91 LL Div. Up to this time, by way of reinforcements, Seventh Army had sent only 77 Inf Div (from the St Malo area) and one flak regiment to northern Normandy. In addition, the following had begun moving: 17 SS Pz Gren Div (toward St Lo), 346 Div (from Fifteenth Army toward the mouth of the Orne), 12 SS Pz Div (toward Caen), and Pz Lehr Div (toward the area west of Caen).

138. The ever-increasing concentration of enemy pressure on the Orne estuary pointed threateningly at Paris and a possible rolling

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up of our coastal defenses along the southern bay of the Seine (the sector between the Seine estuary and the Orne). If the enemy succeeded in accomplishing the latter, the way to Paris would be open, for there were no forces worth mentioning south of the lower Seine and west of Paris. Added to this was OKW's insistence--apparently for considerations of political prestige--on the unconditional holding of Caen to the very last. Two missions, which were simply not feasible with the forces available, presented themselves automatically. They may be summed up in two words: Orne and Cherbourg!

139. Withdrawing the forces from the fortress of Cherbourg, together with all movable heavy weapons and their ammunition, in the long run resulted in these forces being destroyed out in the open and in Cherbourg being weakened too much for a prolonged defense. In any case, the fortress's land front was not yet completely built up and the terrain did not particularly favor the defender. The land front had been planned and constructed on the assumption that it would be manned by three full divisions. The enemy, however, kept landing additional forces and his air force made itself felt with increasing intensity. At this time, a number of isolated bunkers and strongpoints were still holding out between the Orne and the Vire in the midst of enemy-held beachheads. According to radio reports, some held out as long as eight days, always hoping for relief. But relief could not be brought to them. As it was, 716 Div collapsed first, and 352 Div was seriously battered. The panzer units, instead of being used properly as mobile task forces (Kampfgruppen), were sent into the line to serve as "fire

departments" for the infantry. Thus they got tied down in one spot, a situation which grew more and more pronounced as time went on.

140. Probably without taking these matters sufficiently into account, OKW on about 12 Jun 44, to relieve the pressure on Cherbourg, ordered preparations for a large-scale attack to free the coast north-east of the mouth of the Vire. The Carentan area was considered the key to this operation. Theoretically, the idea was doubtless sound. But—as was so often asked by OB WEST on receipt of orders from the Supreme Command—had time, space, and strength been calculated? Sober evaluation would have shown that this attack involved both the greatest time and the longest distance for assembling and moving up the necessary units; that the complexities and friction which would arise from the air situation and supply difficulties could only work out to the advantage of the enemy; and that it was impossible to withdraw the essential panzer forces from the rest of the Normandy front.

141. It would have been much more advisable at this juncture to consider a stiff local attack from the south, southeast, and east, against the enemy bridgehead on the east bank of the Orne; the success of such an attack would have relieved pressure on Caen and simultaneously lessened the threat to Paris. It would have been more nearly within our capabilities to carry out this undertaking in a shorter time and with the forces available. So far as I remember, OB WEST made this counter-suggestion to OKW, but it was turned down.

142. In the event, the major attack that OKW intended to make in the Cotentin Peninsula did not materialize, for reality quickly

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out-distanced planning. As the isolation of the Cotentin Peninsula became more and more imminent in the course of the following days and the penetration force of the units committed in the attack there proved to be insufficient, OKW ordered all available forces in the Peninsula (709, 243, and 77 Divs, and 91 LL Div) to defend a deep outpost area south of the Cherbourg fortress (approximately from St Vaast to the west) at any cost. The combat power of these units, which had already been weakened severely by the strong enemy superiority in the fighting on the Peninsula, corresponded on about 12 Jun 44 to that of one and a half full divisions, at most. Opposing them were at least five full divisions, with tanks. The German units thus found themselves hopelessly outnumbered.

143. The A Gp B Commander had also realized our disadvantage here, and was confronted with the problem as to whether the units should still fall back to the north (Cherbourg) or whether they should withdraw to the south and link up with Seventh Army. It can no longer be ascertained whether the OKW order for the units listed above to withdraw with all forces and defend the outposts of Cherbourg, was received by all addressees. Psychologically, it was only natural that these units leaned more toward a southward withdrawal than to letting themselves be bottled up in Cherbourg. Undoubtedly the early fall of Cherbourg can partly be explained by the fact that, during the battle for the Peninsula, 77 Div, 91 LL Div, and elements of 243 Div were pushed back, or fell back, toward the south. OB WEST at this point still sought--vainly, it is true--to turn back additional elements of

the divisions mentioned, to Cherbourg. It was too late, however, to carry this out practically.

144. From a tactical point of view, stripping the fortress of Cherbourg of the forces provided for its defense and the subsequent depletion of these units in battle, led inevitably to the loss of Cherbourg. If Cherbourg was to be held at all, its garrison could never be made too strong. From a strategic point of view, it remains an open question whether--considering the state of our own forces--any attempt to hold Cherbourg would have been of value. At the time, OB WEST estimated that an early fall of Cherbourg would:

- a. free enemy forces,
- b. make the Cherbourg harbor usable for the debarkation of troops and supplies in about three or four weeks,
- c. result in strong new enemy forces appearing on the northern part of the battle front within a few weeks, and
- d. permit these forces to be used in a breakout from Normandy and for further operations in the open.

145. At that time it was still uncertain where this breakthrough would be attempted, and as far as the general estimate of the situation was concerned it did not make much difference. For any strategic breakthrough would not only make the whole front waver, but would also threaten all the forces in Brittany and all of A Gp G with being cut off. Elimination of these forces would split the Western Front and lay the foundation for a strategic thrust to the Rhine, somewhere between Karlsruhe and the Swiss border. With that, the Allied

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Armies could wheel to the left in echelons and execute a strategic envelopment across the rear of the entire coast north of the Seine. See App 4a, OB WEST Estimate Of Enemy Intentions After Normandy Break-through.

146. What was there for OB WEST to do in the face of this situation? All forces south of the Loire, including all of A Gp G, should be promptly relieved of coastal defense duty, but the Loire and Gironde estuaries were to continue to be defended as important harbor entrances. Brest also was to be defended. Preparations for the defense of Marseilles and Toulon on the southern coast were so incomplete that it seemed pointless to sacrifice forces in their defense. Furthermore, any attempt to resist there could last only a few days because the overwhelming numerical superiority of the civilian population would preclude a fully prosecuted battle.

Thus, the answer was Retrenchment! A Gp G, unhampered by the enemy, would withdraw all its troops and as much materiel as possible in order to establish contact with the left wing of A Gp B on the Saone and the upper Loire. A Gp B, in turn, would build up a defense of the Seine (from its mouth to the Loire near Gien). If this were done promptly, two-thirds of the entire previous front would be maintained, adequate reserves would be gained, more rear positions could be built without hindrance from the enemy, and we would have a continuous front and freedom of action again. For, behind the first line of resistance mentioned above the enemy would have to make frontal attacks

on a system of positions increasingly strong in depth--the last of them the Rhine.*

*Author's Note: Compare Genlt Walter Wollmann's manuscript dealing with the preparation of rearward positions, including the West Wall and other permanent fortifications. (Ed: Gen Wollmann's manuscript is included as an annex to Genlt Zimmermann's comprehensive narrative history of OB WEST--not absolutely complete as of 1 May 48.)

See App 5, OB WEST Planned Rapid Countermeasures Against Normandy Breakthrough.

147. But permission from OKW was necessary for all this! In view of the disapproval of the OB WEST proposal at the beginning of 1944 (Ed: see par 55 above), it was to be expected that permission would not be granted. But OB WEST kept bringing up the subject, both in correspondence and in telephone conversations, because it represented the strategic solution. Granted, OKW had to think beyond this situation. It was worried about Italy! But why could it not have made a similar decision there? Withdrawing to new positions, first to the Po line and later to the Alpine front, would have gained time and conserved forces there, too, which could have been used strategically. For in this way a strategic central reserve would have been gained. In any case, we did not succeed in convincing OKW of the wisdom of this idea and in getting a favorable decision. As far as I remember, we were consoled via telephone with promises of a "later" decision.*

*Pt 8 of 31 pts of MS # B-672, Genmaj von Buttlar:

The necessity of creating a strategic reserve for OB WEST, as well as the matter of a central reserve for the Supreme

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Command, was always appreciated by Hitler, and he strove to achieve results in that direction.

In considering this question one must realize that since 1942 the heavily engaged Eastern Front, which was always short of combat forces, had looked with envy on the—as it believed—sleeping army in the West, and at every crisis the higher commanders in the East pointed to the reservoir of forces in the West, which to their eyes appeared to have no object, and demanded that the reservoir be tapped. In the moment of emergency, most of these demands were granted. Nevertheless, from the moment when the danger of Invasion became acute, the WFSt strove by every means to ensure that approximately 55 to 60 combined-arms units, including six to eight panzer divisions, which were regarded as necessary in the West, should be made available to OB WEST.

Both OB WEST and Hitler knew from the beginning that only a part of these formations could really be used in operations. Most of them could only be regarded as static troops, or at best as troops which were mobile through improvisation. This situation was neither the result of underestimating the mission assigned to OB WEST, nor of a lack of organization, but was decreed simply by the limitations of our armament production. These limitations were to be compensated by the installations of the Atlantic Wall.

OB WEST had to form its strategic reserve from these forces in the West, which could not, because of the over-all situation, be augmented in either strength or quality. If OB WEST held, at that time, the clear views on strategic reserves set forth in the report, then Genfldm von Rundstedt would certainly have fought for these reserves by addressing himself in person to A Gp B and, if necessary, also to Hitler. What really happened, however, as far as I remember, was that, under the influence of A Gp B, one panzer formation after the other was transferred into the area close behind the coast, and then, in certain cases, elements were even committed in the coastal defense. The Chief of the WFSt, who agreed entirely with OB WEST in advocating as strong a strategic reserve as possible, did not succeed in intervening directly with Hitler against these transfers desired by Genfldm Rommel, but he succeeded at least in having certain formations held back as OKW reserves. Left in the hands of the C-in-C West, these formations also—though, I admit, against his personal convictions—would have been local reserves for certain sectors at the beginning of Jun 44, but probably not strategic reserves for OB WEST.

The reasons for the refusal to release the OKW reserves on the morning of 6 Jun 44 are explained in Annex Five. Seen in retrospect, this withholding of the reserves was a mistake, but it was an even greater mistake for the C-in-C West—if he really, at the time, held the views on the scope and importance of the Normandy landing

which are stated in the report--not to address himself in person to Hitler on this decisive question.

In regard to the question, touched upon by Gen Zimmermann, of the formation of a central reserve for the Supreme Command, it must be observed that large-scale attempts were made in this direction at least two or three times during the years 1942 - 44. The situation then developed in such a way that the formations intended for this reserve had to be thrown in on crucial fronts shortly after the completion of their reorganization or reconditioning, and the reserve was thus very rapidly dissipated. There was never any doubt as to the absolute necessity of such a reserve for the Supreme Command. The fact that it never came into being is proof that the extension of the War, at least after 1941, surpassed our military potential.

The writer's opinion that it might have been possible to gain these reserves by withdrawing fronts, is perhaps theoretically correct. In practice, however, apart from exceptional cases, hardly one withdrawal of a front, even when it shortened the line, led to a real economy of force. In most cases, pressure by the pursuing enemy on the shortened front was so much greater than before that it necessitated a greater concentration of troops to hold the new line.

148. This unresolved decisive problem, together with OB WEST's inadequate command authority and the feeling of being constantly dangled on a string by OKW, were probably factors which led Genfldm von Rundstedt to think more and more intensively about his recall and to request it when the opportunity arose. He clearly foresaw the coming development of the situation and, if he had had freedom of decision and action, would doubtless have chosen the correct strategic solution. But strategic solutions were precisely what the Supreme Command did not seem to want. I still remember (though I no longer recall the date) how OKW, during the battle of Normandy, because of OB WEST's various deliberations and estimates, sent us an order in which Adolf Hitler said he did not want to read or hear expressions like "maneuver," "operations," etc, from OB WEST--everyone was to fight where he stood

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or where he was put. Thus OB WEST had to let the enemy have a monopoly on "operations."*

*Pt 7 of 31 pts of MS # B-672, Genmaj von Buttlar:

The question of conducting mobile warfare, or fluid operations, is one of the few basic problems in which OB WEST and the WFSt actually did hold opposite views. This problem is touched upon elsewhere in my commentary, but it is so important that its essential points should also be expounded here.

The WFSt entirely agreed with OB WEST that operations are generally preferable to a rigid defense. In order to be able to conduct operations, however, the following are required: (1) troops whose organization, arms, equipment, and training fit them for mobile combat, and (2) an air force capable of giving troop movements--which are, of course, the essential element of an operation--sufficient protection to ensure their successful execution even by daylight.

Both prerequisites existed on the enemy side, but not with us. Hitler had decided to build the Atlantic Wall because he realized clearly that Germany was unable, with respect to both men and materiel, to maintain an army capable of mobile operations, and protect it from the air, in the West and in the East. For the main body of the forces in the West, the Atlantic Wall installations were to be a substitute for the mobile equipment which could not be procured, the modern weapons which were frequently in short supply, and even a partial substitute for the physical freshness and agility which the men were losing. Behind these installations was to stand a mobile army, limited in size but equipped with up-to-date materiel, ready to intervene at the critical points. In a conference with the Chief of the WFSt at the end of Jan 44, Hitler had approved a maximum strength for this army of about eight panzer divisions and an unspecified number of completely mobile infantry divisions. This was not the desired solution, but an extremely unwelcome emergency solution imposed by the circumstances.

In the light of the unalterable composition of the forces in the West, the WFSt feared that any attempt to carry out operations with these forces, in the face of the enemy superiority in mobility and in the air, could only lead, at best, to an organized flight which the greatest efforts of the command would be able to stem only with difficulty. For this reason, the WFSt believed that everything should be done to prevent the development of an operation in the open for as long as possible. Here it must be admitted that, after the Avranches breakthrough, Hitler was unable to realize quickly

enough, and to readapt himself to the fact, that the last moment had come to begin the organized flight to the West Wall, in order to forestall the danger of its becoming a disorganized flight.

Chapter Twelve

FROM THE BEACHES TO THE BREAKTHROUGH

149. The battle of Normandy developed in a series of seven clear-cut operational phases, shown in Appendices 6 - 12, inclusive.

I. First Phase of Invasion (6 Jun 44)

150. The enemy came ashore between the Orne and Vire estuaries in separate landing groups and established small and insignificant beachheads, which were not yet consolidated. (Ed: See App 6.) Northwest of the Vire estuary the landings, as a whole, seemed to have failed for the moment. The air landings in the interior of Normandy were promptly identified and attacked.

This was the decisive phase for a counter-operation.

II. Second Phase of Invasion (about 7 - 12 Jun 44)

151. During this period, constant fighting, with local German counterattacks and losses on both sides, enabled the enemy to consolidate his separate beachheads into one great beachhead (Brueckenkopf).

(Ed: See App 7.) In so doing, he gained ground to the northwest (northwest of the Vire) and on the east bank of the Orne, and also advanced

southward. Thus, the major beachhead was established, new Allied units were thrown in, and the enemy air force had tactical air fields on French soil!

152. In this phase, a counterattack could have retained some prospect of success only if undertaken with very strong forces, principally tanks, and with very strong air support. It should have been directed against the boundary between the English and American forces (west of Bayeux) in order to separate them and defeat them in detail. OB WEST made plans and some map preparations for such an operation. It was impossible to carry them out, however, because the combat situation constantly forced us to throw all arriving units, especially panzer units, into the line. The enemy had the initiative!

III. Third Phase of Invasion (13 - 18 Jun 44)

153. The enemy strove to separate the fortress of Cherbourg from the main body of the German forces in Normandy. (Ed: See App 8.) Thanks to his superiority both on land and in the air, he crushed 77 Div, 243 Div, 709 Div, and also 91 LL Div, causing these units heavy losses in men and materiel. By 18 Jun 44, the enemy thrust reached the west coast of the Cotentin Peninsula and cut the Cherbourg area off from the rest of Normandy. The remnants of 77 Div and 91 LL Div and elements of 243 Div folded back on the left wing of LXXXIV Corps (approximately in the St Sauveur--Portbail area). The 709 Div and other elements of 243 Div withdrew, fighting delaying actions and suffering continual

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additional losses, to the southern outpost area of the fortress of Cherbourg. At the same time, during constant reinforcement of the enemy Invasion beachhead, there was continued stiff fighting for every meter of ground, with the Orne estuary and Caen, the Caumont area, the St Lo area, and the area south of Carentan the focal points of the action.

154. The sudden arrival of Hitler (sometime between 15 and 20 Jun 44), with selected elements of the WFSt (Wehrmachtfuehrungsstab, Armed Forces Operations Staff), at the command post prepared for him years before between Soissons and Laon, falls in this phase. He arrived by airplane and in greatest secrecy. Nevertheless, the rumor quickly spread that he was going to assume personal command in the West. As a matter of fact, however, his visit was probably only a matter of discussing the situation with Genfldm von Rundstedt and Genfldm Rommel, who were both summoned to him under strictest secrecy. I do not know the details of the discussion, but it may be assumed that, among other things, an attempt was made to resolve basic conflicts between the C-in-C West and Genfldm Rommel. I do not remember whether further operational instructions were given or not. An attempt is supposed to have been made in the course of the discussion to obtain a clarification of Hitler's position in regard to the general situation and inferences about the continuation of the War, but the attempt is supposed to have failed.

155. Genfldm von Rundstedt must have taken advantage of this opportunity to ask Genfldm Keitel to inform Adolf Hitler of his desire to be relieved of his post. Neither practically, nor from the stand-

point of his health, was he able to bear his responsibility any longer, let alone perform his mission with success. Keitel is supposed to have promised him to bring up the matter at a more opportune moment. After staying about two and a half days, Hitler flew off again as suddenly as he had come. (There were whispers of an attempt on his life, but we never discovered any tangible evidence of such an attempt.)* **

*Pt 17 of 24 pts of MS # B-718, Genlt Speidel:

The tenor of the conference with Hitler on 17 Jun 44 is not described correctly. I was present (in the bunker, as well) and took notes, which will be published at a later date. The C-in-C West scarcely spoke.

There was no attempt on Hitler's life on 17 Jun 44, but a V-1 ran off its course due to a defective guiding mechanism and came down on the Fuehrer's Headquarters in Margival, without causing any particular damage.

**Pt 11 of 14 pts of MS # B-633, Genfldm von Rundstedt:

On repeated pressure, Hitler appeared for an oral discussion with Rommel and myself early on the morning of 16 or 17 Jun 44, in a bunker near Soissons. We described to him exhaustively the dreadful gravity of the situation and demanded that he issue new directives for the conduct of operations in the West. The Invasion had succeeded and the enemy could no longer be driven from the Continent. Also, something must now happen politically. Rommel and I shared the same idea on the further conduct of operations: evacuation of southern France and operations as described in par 146.

Hitler insisted again and again that Cherbourg must be held with everything we had, for as long as possible. For the rest, he would not agree, was strikingly calm, and promised new directives. The next morning he left again by air, after he had experienced the landing of a V-1 near the bunker. The discussion had had no success.

156. At any rate, nothing was changed in principle in the mode of conducting the battle, except that the flow of reinforcements for Normandy from the Fifteenth Army area was now to be intensified.

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Effective implementation of this measure--by prompt, speedy, and mass introduction of large units into Normandy--was, however, no longer achievable due to the reasons already mentioned.

IV. Fourth Phase of Invasion (about 20 Jun - mid Jul 44)

157. (Ed: See App 9.) This phase includes the battle for the fortress of Cherbourg, which because of the inadequate manning of its defense was defensible only to a limited extent from the very start. The thin defensive front was broken through locally again and again and the defenders were gradually forced back into an increasingly constricted area. Heavy air attacks contributed additional difficulties. When the enemy entered the city on 26 Jun 44, the fall of the fortress was already certain, even though individual strongpoints and coastal batteries still resisted bravely for several days. Minor elements of 243 Div, along with detached Luftwaffe and German Navy battle groups (kampfgruppen), held out several days longer on the peninsula of la Hague, until there, too, the battle--with their backs against the sea--ended in defeat. Thus materialized the consequences so dreaded by OB WEST: Within a short time the port of Cherbourg would be usable for large-scale troop and supply landings, the enemy forces previously tied down by the battle for Cherbourg were freed, and in the near future (OB WEST calculated about three weeks) a dangerous new concentration would form on the northern Normandy front to ensure the loss of Normandy. If the

enemy broke through there, the whole Normandy front would be attacked from the rear and lost.

158. Since we were not permitted to mount any "operations," we had to try to defend the narrowest part of the Cotentin Peninsula as tenaciously as possible in several positions, echeloned in great depth. We needed, therefore, to select and construct the positions in accordance with the terrain; we needed sufficient forces and, above all, heavy weapons! Did we have these? No! For again the remnants of 77 Div and 91 LL Div, 6 FS Regt, the weak kampfguppe of 265 Div, and one other unit (elements of 353 Div) had to bear the brunt of this task, including the construction work as well as the defense. It was an astounding achievement for these weak forces, which had only inadequate antitank weapons, to defend the Marais de Gorges--la Haye du Puits--Lessay--Periers area in tough delaying resistance until beyond the middle of July. The only reinforcements that could be brought up were elements of 5 Lw Feld Div (Ed: probably 5 FS Div), still incomplete and without combat experience, and, for support against breakthroughs, elements of 2 SS Pz Div.

159. On the rest of the Normandy front, it is true, we could not prevent a continual step-by-step advance, in local attacks, of the enemy front; however, the important highway centers of Caen and St Lo still held. OB WEST was particularly concerned about the left wing of its Normandy front, where a threat was forming. According to all reports, the introduction of new American forces--taken from Allied

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strategic reserves in readiness along the southern English coast and apparently earmarked as reinforcements--was imminent there.

160. On 28 or 29 Jun 44 an OKW order arrived for Genfldm von Rundstedt and Genfldm Rommel to come via a special train to a conference with Hitler in his field headquarters (Fuehrerhauptquartier) on 30 Jun 44. The details of this discussion I do not know. Apparently, however, the main object of the discussion was to get an answer from Hitler to the question both commanders put to him as to how he envisaged the further prosecution of the War in view of the general situation. Hitler is supposed to have spoken at great length about the continuation of the War--as he visualized it--and about the impending introduction and effect of new inventions (the so-called miracle weapons!), from which he expected a change in the war situation. Thus the primary reason for the discussion must have been to inject new stamina and enthusiasm into the battle, regardless of whether the so-called miracle weapons really materialized or merely existed in the imagination. As far as I know, Genfldm von Rundstedt on this occasion repeated his request for release from his post.*

*Pt 12 of 14 pts of MS # B-633, Genfldm von Rundstedt:

I shall discuss this matter more thoroughly below. The conference, in which Genfldm Sperrle also took part, was restricted, at my request, to the smallest possible number of participants. After Rommel and I had given an exhaustive exposition of the complete untenability of the situation, no clear decision was reached. Always: Hold! Hold! New weapons are coming, new fighter planes, more troops--and the same old talk. Here again we said that now something political must happen. Icy silence.

I left the conference without any hope, arrived in St Germain after 18 hours journey by automobile, and found the situation there had become still more acute.

The next day I was dismissed!

161. The Seventh Army Commander, Genobst Dollmann, had been visiting the front almost daily since the beginning of the Invasion. This, along with his feeling of responsibility for the Invasion's success, was too much of a physical and nervous strain for the ordinarily tough and robust army commander; on 29 Jun 44 a heart attack ended the life of this extremely loyal, distinguished, and deeply religious officer. Genfldm von Rundstedt attended the solemn burial rites for him near Paris on 2 Jul 44. Genobst Dollmann's successor was Ogruf (later Obstgruf) Hausser.

162. On about 2 or 3 Jul 44 Genfldm von Rundstedt received word that his request for release had been granted. Genfldm von Kluge was named his successor. As far as I remember, he arrived on 5 Jul 44 and took over very speedily.*

*Pt 3 of 14 pts of MS # B-633, Genfldm von Rundstedt:

Among my closest collaborators I certainly often mentioned that in view of the constant tutelage exercised from "above," and of my age and state of health, I did not feel inclined to retain my position for long. I never made a request for retirement, in the West.

On the occasion of the Berchtesgaden conference with Hitler on 30 Jun 44, to which I went by automobile and not in a comfortable, special train (I travelled from 29 June to 1 July--a very great exertion), and after I had had to wait another six hours beyond the time appointed for the meeting, I let Keitel know--in my annoyance--that they need not be surprised up "above" if I too, an old and sick man, fell dead one day, like Genobst Dollmann. On the strength of

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that I received, the very day after my return to Headquarters, a handwritten letter from Hitler in unusually friendly terms, requesting, in consideration of my health and of the increased exertions to be expected in the near future, that I turn over my command to Genfldm von Kluge. The latter arrived at our headquarters as early as 3 Jul 44. I myself was just as surprised as my officers. In the prevailing situation I would never have asked to be relieved, of my own accord, just as during the tense situation in Mar 45 (Ed: after Remagen), but I would have continued to do my duty as a soldier until the end.

I believed that because of the unsatisfactory general situation this welcome excuse was taken to relieve me, in order to have a scapegoat, just as in Mar 45 after the failure of the Ardennes Offensive, with which, quite unjustly, my name is always linked. On the occasion of my reporting off duty in Berlin in Mar 45, Keitel mentioned of his own accord that my assumption was correct.

163. Genfldm von Kluge, like Von Rundstedt and Blaskowitz, was still a representative of the old army of the Kaiser. A man of lofty convictions, he was also very distinguished in bearing and appearance. He was somewhat sensitive personally because of a certain vanity, but with all his curtness and energy he was always proper. As a high-class military leader, exact, clear, and very definite in his judgments and his orders, he knew how to grasp every detail in a matter. He demanded the utmost of his co-workers and subordinates, day and night. Travelling most of the time, he exerted himself physically a great deal and was unmoved by any danger. He was reserved in his personal relationships, lived a very retiring private life, and gave the impression of being unapproachable and enigmatic. As a military leader, he stood far above Rommel, and, in a different way, also above Model. His experience on the Eastern Front had already placed him in basic disagreement with the opinions of OKW and the Supreme Command. His experience in

the West, especially in regard to the battle of Avranches and its consequences, greatly intensified this conflict.* **

*Pt 18 of 24 pts of MS # B-718, Genlt Speidel:

It may be observed that a "high-class military leader" cannot regard himself solely as a technical official of the Supreme Command, without any feeling of personal responsibility for the fate of all, particularly if his experience on the Eastern Front has already "placed him in basic disagreement with the opinions of OKW and the Supreme Command."

**Pt 4 of 31 pts of MS # B-672, Genmaj von Buttlar:

It is not clear to me on what Genlt Zimmermann bases his assumption that Genfldm von Kluge's "experience on the Eastern Front had already placed him in basic disagreement with the opinions of OKW." As early as the winter of 1941-42, OKW ceased to be concerned with the conduct of operations in the East and therefore could not maintain any opinions concerning that theater. Perhaps, in this case too, the author really means "Hitler" when he mentions "OKW," in which case the differences of opinion could be judged only by a member of the General Staff of the Army.

164. Shortly after Genfldm von Kluge assumed command, OKW issued an order very decisive for the subsequent conduct of operations in the West. On the basis of the rapid fall of Cherbourg, Hitler, through OKW, ordered that henceforth every fortress in the West must have an adequate and definitely specified garrison (which even in combat should never be allowed to be forced out of the fortress area), a garrison which would absolutely guarantee that the fortress, self-sufficient, would hold out as long as conceivably possible. For OB WEST this meant not only reexamining the strength of each fortress, but above all it also meant the commitment of additional forces for their local defense. These forces were thus lent to OB WEST and to any

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mobile, strategic conduct of operations, for OKW further ordered that, if the occasion arose, every fortress on the coast must let itself be encircled, even if the remainder of the front were forced back from the coast. Influencing this OKW order, along with the desire to gain time by delaying the freeing of the large harbors for operational purposes as long as possible, was Hitler's preconceived idea of thus tying down more and more enemy forces and withholding them from the main decision. Involuntarily one is inclined to feel that likewise OKW's command to defend to the last every sizable town, by combat commanders (Kampfkommandanten) with "alert" units (clerks, supply troops, etc), is a corollary of the Supreme Command's belief or hope of thus eventually absorbing enough enemy forces so that finally only the famous "one German battalion** would be left. This may sound

*Ed: This refers to a remark in one of Hitler's speeches to the effect that it did not matter so much how the war was fought or who won the battles, if at the end the one battalion left were German.

absurd, but it is difficult to find any other explanation for these tactics.

165. It is estimated that holding these fortresses and subsequently losing them cost OB WEST a total of 180,000 to 280,000 men, plus all their equipment. As it turned out, the enemy was perfectly free to simply encircle the fortresses loosely, keep watch on them, and starve them out. He did not need to hurry, the fortresses could not run away in any case. If these lost German forces had been used as intact units, as a covering force in the rearward defensive positions

or as replacements or to build up a strategic reserve, they could have played an important role in the further battle for France. Holding villages and localities with "half-soldiers," inadequately trained, without sufficient artillery and antitank support and helpless against air attack, was a definite psychological mistake. In obedience to OKW orders, it was repeated over and over again.

166. OB WEST again suggested that now, at least, the Channel Islands garrison (319 Inf Div) be decreased and an attempt be made to transfer forces from there to Brittany, but OKW turned the suggestion down. Three weeks later, during the battle of St Malo, OKW released the Channel Island troops--but it was impossible to evacuate them.

Originally intended by the Supreme Command as the "Helgoland of the Channel," the Channel Islands were important for the Western Front so long as they aided convoy traffic along the coast and served as the basis for small-scale naval missions. With the loss of Cherbourg, their significance vanished. The enemy had absolute sea and air supremacy, and the strong Channel Islands garrison was hopelessly "frozen" there, just waiting for the enemy to come for it. No enemy forces whatsoever were fixed by the garrison of the Islands; they simply kept out of range of their guns and went around them. The subsequent loss of this garrison (approximately 30,000 men with all their weapons, including heavy coastal guns, one battalion of 210 mm howitzers, about 80 medium antiaircraft guns, one tank battalion, etc) was also to be put on the debit side of the OB WEST strength account.

(OB WEST's battle against too strong a garrison for the Channel Islands

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began as early as the spring of 1942 under Genfldm von Witzleben. The question of decreasing the garrison was also brought up again and again by Genfldm von Rundstedt, but was always rejected completely by OKW.)

167. Ogruf Hausser had assumed command of Seventh Army at the beginning of Jul 44. After he was wounded (23 Aug 44), Gen Pz Eberbach, who had commanded Pz Gp West (which later became Fifth Pz Army) since 5 Jul 44, assumed command of Seventh Army. (Gen Eberbach was taken prisoner near Amiens at the beginning of Sep 44 and was replaced by Gen Pz Brandenberger.)

V. Fifth Phase of Invasion (mid Jul - end of Jul 44)

168. (Ed: See App 10.) The sequence of events became increasingly dramatic! During a visit to the front, Genfldm Rommel met with an accident on 17 Jul 44. As a result of a fighter-bomber attack on his car, he suffered a bad skull fracture and his chauffeur bled to death. Rommel was taken to a hospital near Paris, his condition serious. His recovery would take several months, at least. A Gp B would have to have a new commander.*

*Pt 19 of 24 pts of MS # B-718, Genlt Speidel:

For political reasons, the fact that Rommel had been wounded was not made public by the press or radio, and it was only after three weeks—and hence after the breakthrough at Avranches—that a false statement appeared concerning an automobile accident involving Genfldm Rommel, with no date mentioned. Then there was again silence, particularly about his convalescence. Genfldm Rommel vainly sought

correction of the false representation of the way in which he had been wounded, which had been published on superior instructions. The intention was that Rommel should not become still more popular at that moment, and in addition he was already singled out as a future scapegoat.

169. OKW came to the following conclusion: the C-in-C West (Von Kluge) will also assume command of A Gp B. At first glance, in view of the previous well-known essential differences of opinion between the C-in-C West and the A Gp B Commander, this might seem logical enough. For now C-in-C West as Commander of A Gp B could, if necessary, give orders in the latter's realm without any opposition. But—and here we have the phenomenon resulting from this dual position—it followed quite automatically that the C-in-C West as Commander of A Gp B would devote himself primarily to the latter organization and its mission, and that therefore his mental and his practical efforts would be concentrated in that direction. Other tasks and interests would naturally take second place. Genfldm von Kluge drew his own conclusions and moved immediately to A Gp B Headquarters at la Roche Guyon.* Thus he was separated not only physically, but also mentally,

*Pt 20 of 24 pts of MS # B-718, Genlt Speidel:

Genfldm von Kluge moved to a new location because, as he personally stated, the staff of OB WEST was too far behind the front.

from the real staff of OB WEST. As time went on, this separation was very injurious to the whole War in the West; for it was natural that the work of OB WEST, too, was now done mainly by the staff of A Gp B and that Genfldm von Kluge's thoughts and deliberations were no longer

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directly accessible to the Chief of Staff of OB WEST, as they would ordinarily have been. True, there was constant telephone communication and, now and then, personal conversations. It was clear, nevertheless, that here lay the germ of a "dissension in command," which later gave rise to the ever-increasing general desire on the part of staffs and troops to bring Genfldm von Rundstedt back. The regular staff of OB WEST was thus, for the most part, eliminated from operational activities from 18 Jul 44 until the beginning of Sep 44.

Psychological Effects of 20 Jul 44

170. What Genfldm von Kluge's thoughts and deliberations were when he heard about the assassination attempt upon the Fuehrer and his associates, no one on the staff of OB WEST knew. In any case, the radio report came as a complete surprise to the staff of OB WEST and was altogether puzzling, since it made no mention of the instigators. Only a very few individuals surmised any of the particulars, which were not released until afternoon. In general, it can be said that the first news came like a bomb-shell. As in the case of any sudden, unexpected event, a certain paralysis set in at first. Soon, however, groups formed everywhere in the area of OB WEST (behind the front) and discussed the event. One could see the impression it made on Paris. Certainly the first thought of all these people, whether soldiers or civilians, was: Is fate taking a new turn? Is this the end? And surely many thought: It is scarcely believable that this man is unharmed, even that he is still alive. Instinctively perhaps, the wish was father to the thought. Shrewd people who ever since the beginning of the War had followed events with anxiety and apprehension and who sensed the approach of destiny, as well as those who simply wished that the War would finally end--all would have breathed freely and hoped anew for a change. Opposed to these were the great majority who thought otherwise--whether from inner conviction or from caution or perhaps from opportunism.

171. Friend and foe alike, however, were at this moment primarily interested in the burning question: What are the men at the front saying and doing? For there, above all, the effect of this news must be noticeable. Would the front still hold? Would the men keep on

fighting as before? What would be the effect later in the day when further details were known? It could mean the collapse of the front. And now came the psychologically baffling aspect, understandable only on closer examination: The front kept right on fighting as though nothing had happened. How did this happen? Why did not thousands and tens of thousands lay down their arms and end the War? The answer is simple. It was because in the high emotional tension of battle, in this physical and moral over-exertion, this murderous struggle, the individual was so completely and intensely pitched to the moment of combat, to the "you or me" of fighting, that any convulsions outside the focus of this tension, no matter how strong they might be, only touched him on the fringe of his consciousness. Figuratively speaking, the combat soldier was in another world. With certain individual exceptions, troops in battle are scarcely touched by other events. They did not have the time nor were they in a mental state to concern themselves with matters beyond the perimeter of their struggle.

172. Behind the front, things were different. There was more time, quiet, and opportunity to deal with the matter. Everyone, especially the officers, felt or realized that something had occurred which affected every soldier very, very deeply, and which for a moment had illuminated a precipice. Everyone anxiously felt that this beacon had revealed to the world, and particularly to the enemy, the fragile structure of the System and other conflicts still greater than had been surmised. In addition, there were the instinctive apprehensions of the consequences, which would probably be frightful.

173. Thus, the first general psychological effect was definitely a feeling of moral oppression and worry. Then, as the details--distorted by propaganda, naturally--could be reviewed and shaped into a more or less accurate picture in individual minds, one could, by and large, ascertain two schools of thought on the subject. The far-seeing thought: This is the beginning of the end, a terrible signal! The die-hards thought: It is good that the treacherous reactionaries have been unmasked and that we can now make a clean sweep of them. For, we cannot win the War until we are rid of all "saboteurs."

This became the theme of the Party propaganda, which stepped in dexterously and depicted the assassination scheme as the attempt of the "reactionaries"--the Junkers and the General Staff--to seize power and put an end to Socialism. Since the bulk of the German Army came from the professional and working classes, this idea naturally met with response. It was precisely the worker who had a favorable position before the War; he had more rights than duties, he had an adequate and assured income, unemployment had disappeared, and he was constantly offered the prospect of a still higher standard of living as a reward for his war efforts. With bitterness in his heart, he now heard the propaganda that his rights were threatened by assassins, that these were the traitors who wanted Germany to lose the

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War which he was making so many sacrifices to win, not only at the front, but also at home where new towns and thousands and tens of thousands of men fell victim daily to the air raids everyone considered so criminal. All this should now be in vain? Now, when within a very short time, according to what everyone said, the new "miracle" weapons were to appear and change the whole outcome of the War. Now, just now, the assassins had planned a "stab in the back," with consequences much worse than those of 1918. This "stab in the back" story of 1918 had been hammered into people's heads too well by propaganda for it not to exert a definite influence upon the soldiers' determination to hold out. On top of this was the enemy intention--as our propaganda emphasized over and over again--of destroying this time not only the German leaders, but the whole German people.

174. Thus, it was natural and understandable that at that time at least part of the soldiers unconditionally disapproved of the deed. Certain groups in particular loudly expressed their hatred for the Army, the General Staff, and the nobility. They were supported by a wildly inflammatory speech of Dr Ley. A strong whispering campaign arose: "The generals and the General Staff are to blame if we don't win the War." For this reason, it is astounding, and indicative of the really good discipline and finer instincts of the soldiers at the front, that no attention was paid to this vicious report ("Spalt-pilz-Parole") and that the authority of the German officers over their men did not suffer. The only strange thing is that propaganda should be directed "officially" against a part of Germany's own Wehrmacht. What did they actually hope to gain? They were only cutting off the limb on which they were sitting.

175. The subsequent proceedings against the accomplices of 20 Jul 44, particularly the type of accompanying publicity, may have had the desired effect on the masses at home, but not on the troops--to the contrary, in fact. One heard at the front and read in the newspapers nothing but diatribes and invective about the proceedings. Naturally every thinking man asked himself: Why not get to the point? Why never any whole truth about the motive? After all, when such highly placed persons undertake a deed of this nature there must be deep-seated reasons for it. Without some such reasons no one would risk his life and assume the odium of high treason--least of all an officer, and particularly not a man like Genfldm von Witzleben, always considered in the West until now as a gallant, distinguished officer. What could really be at the bottom of it all? A purely factual explanation was never published; everything that was made known was obviously dictated by hate. Thus the honest soldier, deeply perplexed, could only turn away from this obvious "mock trial"; he could not and he would not believe that these men were criminals and scoundrels in the ordinary sense.

176. Of course, neither the officers nor, probably, most of the soldiers could reconcile themselves to the way in which the attempt was made. At that time a great many did not understand why officers, above all, had chosen such a treacherous form of assassination and why the chief culprit tried to save himself. One must know the traditional historical development of the officer corps of the German Army to understand this point of view. Never before in its history had such a thing occurred. Chivalry instinctively opposed the method used. One could have understood it much more easily if the assassin had approached the deed fearlessly with his pistol in his hand. (We will not discuss here the expediency of performing the deed.) Everyone agreed that the assassination attempt and putsch had not been sufficiently prepared and that, above all, immediate seizure of the communications net had been overlooked. To what extent Germany's ultimate fate might have been changed--had the attempt succeeded--is a matter for speculation.

177. A strong and increasing mistrust from "above" of the Army (generals and the General Staff) was perceivable during the period following. This mistrust was apparently encouraged vigorously by influential Party sources. It is not strange that under these circumstances spying and informing appeared more often than before; nor is it strange that attributes of leadership were evaluated by the Supreme Command, even more emphatically than before, according to one's "attitude" and that the practical suitability and the moral qualities of the individual receded into the background. It speaks well for the military spirit of the German Army that by far the great majority of all the soldiers remained free and clear of all this and disdained anything corrupt.

178. If one seeks an end result of 20 Jul 44, it can perhaps be summarized as follows: From this event the field forces learned the extreme gravity of Germany's position. At the same time, however, they also saw with their own eyes that conditions of power within Germany were still such that any further attempt at a change there would let loose another Saint Bartholomew's Massacre. Everyone, officer as well as soldier, was tightly bound by the threat of ruthless vengeance through attack on his family (Sippenhaftung). So the Army silently went on doing its duty, though with the bitter subconscious knowledge that an unavoidable catastrophe was impending.

Pt 21 of 24 pts of MS # B-718, Genlt Speidel:

Genlt Zimmermann's discussion of the 20 Jul 44 reveals ignorance of the circumstances, motives, objectives, and effects of this undertaking.

His statements in par 173 about the effects of propaganda on workers and soldiers, and the psychological attitude of these

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classes, seems inappropriate. The common man usually had clearer judgment and a stronger aversion to the Party and its organizations than, for instance, the half-educated man, among others. The worker and the soldier did not fight for the victory of the system, but followed orders because they could do nothing else. A part of par 174 seems inconsistent with certain preceding statements of the author.

The accusation against Graf Stauffenberg in par 176 seems unfounded.

Paris and 20 Jul 44

179. In Paris, the 20 Jul 44 brought with it a brief episode which, in spite of its unique character, was symptomatic. Gen Inf (Ed: Heinrich) von Stuelpnagel, Commander of Military District France, had somehow received information, apparently from the Commander of the Ersatzheer, that the official radio announcement saying Hitler was unharmed, was false. Hitler was dead. On the strength of this, Von Stuelpnagel ordered the immediate disarming of all SS and SD (Sicherheitsdienst, SS Security Service) agencies and units in Paris. This was done, without any opposition whatsoever. Unfortunately, Von Stuelpnagel had not informed the staff of OB WEST about this measure nor had he inquired first as to whether the news of Hitler's death was verified; the staff of OB WEST already knew that Adolf Hitler was actually unharmed. Because of this oversight, Gen von Stuelpnagel met his doom.

The staff of OB WEST (Genfldm von Kluge, of course, was not at OB WEST but at A Gp B!) did not learn anything of what transpired in Paris until about the evening of 20 Jul 44. As far as I know the measures taken in Paris were reversed by Genfldm von Kluge on the evening of 20 Jul 44. Gen von Stuelpnagel was suspended from duty. The further consequences are well known: Near Verdun, while en route to OKW where he had been summoned as a result of what had happened, Gen von Stuelpnagel tried to shoot himself. But he only shot both his eyes out, and was taken to a hospital in Verdun and from there, still wounded, to Berlin for trial, which ended in his death by hanging. A number of his officers were likewise jailed and tried. It is a deplorable coincidence of fate that the above-mentioned inquiry of the staff of OB WEST was overlooked—the lives of good officers could have been saved. (Von Stuelpnagel's successor was Gen Lw Kitzinger, who, however, held the position only five weeks.)

180. What happened in Paris had a further consequence: The civilian population had noticed that something was wrong and had doubtless drawn conclusions about the situation and about conditions in Germany. The event also probably gave considerable stimulus to the underground movement.

181. To return to the further development of the fifth phase of the battle of Normandy, the fighting raged without pause, forcing A Gp B to constantly expend forces at the front, so that there could never be any real formation of a large reserve, let alone any planned relief and rehabilitation of units behind the front or any extensive construction of positions for sealing off Normandy. The field forces suffered incredibly under the massed air attacks, which we were powerless to engage in the air. Supplies were stalled, delivery of fuel had become particularly difficult, and, in the last analysis, all tactical measures of the panzer units were dictated by the amount of fuel available. These were the factors at the end of Jul 44 which were to determine the outcome of the Normandy battle for the Western Allies.

182. In the course of the fighting in Normandy, the main effort shifted more and more definitely to the western Allied wing during the second half of July. Very gradually, through the steady endurance of the American units, particularly Third US Army, the whole front of the Western Allies was pivoted from the south to the southeast. The breakthrough to "operations in the clear" was beginning. Should the enemy gain entrance into Brittany near the Bay of Mont St

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Michel, the battle in Normandy would be hopeless for OB WEST, despite all sacrifices.

183. Strategic reserves of our own (the old weakness) for a counter-operation "in the open" were not available; hence, a large-scale encirclement of Seventh Army and Fifth Pz Army could develop from the left. Paris would then be directly threatened and its loss would impend. OKW had also recognized this danger, and pointed out several times that a breakthrough would give the enemy operational freedom. Therefore, such a breakthrough had to be prevented regardless of cost. The whole decision in the West hung in the balance! But how was OB WEST to prevent a breakthrough? True, 708 Div, released from First Army, tried in widely dispersed march groups to get across the Loire in the general direction of le Mans. But they were like a drop of water on a hot stove, and were literally pulverized in separate groups north of le Mans.

184. On 30/31 Jul 44, the enemy succeeded in a surprise thrust on Avranches--Pontaubault, where the bridge fell into his hands unharmed. German resistance seems to have been very weak there; apparently the local forces let themselves be pressed against the coast, leaving the way open to the south. Thus the first assault penetration, with its "view of the open," had succeeded and the danger of a strategic breakthrough had become enormous. This enemy success, which was a complete surprise, forced A Gp B to transfer hastily all mobile forces still available from the St Malo area toward Pontaubault, with the

mission of retaking the bridge and destroying it. They tried, but they were too weak.

185. OB WEST, now confronted with the question of what to do, did not believe it could conduct a powerful counterattack on the Avranches--Pontaubault line from the east and southeast, in order to plug the gap and cut off forces that had already gotten through. The forces for such a counterattack were simply not available. Withdrawing, by phases, to the Seine would have been a good operational move if a reception position had been prepared there (but this had been forbidden by OKW). Nevertheless, we had to attempt to build up a defense there, even though no reception position existed. But this plan, in turn, depended logically on reducing A Gp G's forces, and forced the latter to withdraw men from the Atlantic and Mediterranean coasts in order to bring them up to the left wing of A Gp B. How far Genfldm von Kluge went along with these ideas and whether he made another suggestion along these lines to OKW, I do not remember. But even without withdrawing the forces of A Gp G it would have been easier to avoid encirclement by fighting a delaying action and withdrawing, perpendicular to the front, to the Seine. Resulting losses might have been heavy, but they still would not have been comparable to those in the subsequent encirclement battle at Falaise. However, the OKW command, "hold at any price," opposed such a suggestion.



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Chapter Thirteen
SIXTH PHASE OF INVASION
(1 - 10 Aug 44)

186. (Ed: See App 11.) On 1 Aug 44, OKW sent Genfldm von Kluge an order that went approximately like this:

Under no circumstances is the enemy to be allowed to gain freedom of action "in the open." OB WEST will get ready immediately, with all available panzer units, for a large scale counterattack, in order to push past Avranches to the coast, cut off the enemy, and destroy the forces that have already broken through. All available panzer units, regardless of their present commitment, are to be taken from the other parts of the Normandy front, joined together under one specially qualified panzer operations staff, and sent into a concentrated attack as soon as possible. The outcome of the whole campaign in France depends on the success of this attack.

187. This order reached Genfldm von Kluge--as far as I remember--while he was on a visit to the front in Normandy, probably at the Seventh Army Command Post. He had just gotten a fresh view, with his own eyes, of the tensivity of the whole situation, of our inferiority, of our complete lack of air support, of our faulty supply service, and of the condition of our troops. This command struck him like a thunderbolt. He knew very well that carrying out this order meant the collapse of the Normandy front and probably catastrophe. After thinking

it over for a short time and after definitely confirming once more that the command came from Hitler, he answered something like this:

I report that, to the best of my knowledge and conscience, the execution of this order means the collapse of the whole Normandy front. Tanks are the backbone of our defense. Where they are withdrawn, our front will give way. Because of the air situation, tanks can cross behind the front only at night, complete confusion will arise, and, above all, the supply of motor fuel is completely inadequate for effective movements. If, as I foresee, this plan does not succeed, catastrophe is inevitable. You are urgently requested to re-examine the matter and bring it to the Fuehrer's attention.

Soon after this came OKW's reply that Hitler insisted on the execution of the order. Only in timing was some leeway allowed. Genfldm von Kluge had to submit to the situation, but, if I remember correctly, made one more very serious report pointing out the possible consequences.

188. By drawing on other units, Gen Pz Eberbach's staff was set up in an improvised fashion to direct the attack. Tactically, the following were subordinated to him for this purpose: 116 Pz Div, Pz Lehr Div, 2 Pz Div, 1 SS Pz Div, 2 SS Pz Div, and 17 SS Pz Gren Div. Movements and preparations were completed on 6 Aug 44, after tremendous difficulties had been overcome. The attack began on 7 Aug 44, shortly after midnight (this time was chosen on account of the enemy air superiority). The 2 Pz Div, generally speaking, had gained approximately eight km and overrun a number of enemy positions and tanks by early morning. Then visibility improved and enemy air activity began. Our attack was stopped, the tanks suffered heavy losses, and on the evening

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of 7 Aug 44 only a part of them returned to their jump-off positions. Another assault on 8 Aug 44 (chiefly 1 SS Pz Div) likewise failed.

189. Thus, despite surprising initial success, the big panzer attack had collapsed, but--and this is the decisive point--it could never have succeeded in drawing strong enemy forces to itself and in hindering the flow of additional enemy forces into Brittany. On the other hand, the resisting power of the rest of the Normandy front had been decisively weakened by the withdrawal of the tanks. With this action began the isolation of Brittany and envelopment, from the left, of Seventh Army and Fifth Pz Army. By 10 Aug 44, according to all reliable reports, about ten large enemy units, including at least three armored divisions, were pressing forward into Brittany. Their main objective was the wide envelopment of the left wing of the German battle front, approximately via le Mans. In the execution of this operation, the Loire line was merely blocked and patrolled by the enemy. Brittany, too, was already lost.

190. Neither OB WEST nor Seventh Army could still influence the conduct of operations in Brittany, so the Commander of XXV Inf Corps, stationed in Brittany, was designated commander in Brittany. He was to continue independently the battle for the resisting fortresses and their approaches, and was finally to withdraw to one of the fortresses (Lorient) and from there continue fighting as best he could. This was in conformity to the OKW order that all fortresses were to hold out and fight to the very last, even if the situation were hopeless. In Brittany these fortresses were: St Malo (which was already heavily

engaged), Brest, Lorient, and St Nazaire. In the course of fighting in these fortresses, the following were subsequently lost: elements of the 265, 266, and 343 Divs; strong elements of 2 FS Div; and security troops, elements of navy and air force units, "alert" units, and all materiel. For a defense of the Loire, at least from the coast to Tours, no forces were available. Therefore, A Gp G was ordered to block the Loire crossings, with forces from 158 Res Div and local security troops. This defensive mission was to be executed by the Commander of 158 Res Div (later redesignated 16 Inf Div). On about 9 Aug 44, A Gp G was ordered to send the headquarters of First Army, with army troops, immediately to A Gp B in the direction of Fontainebleau and to subordinate them to the latter in order to build up a Seine defense southeast of Paris. LXIV Res Corps Hq, with OKW approval, assumed command of the remaining forces of First Army (Command Post: Poitiers). At the moment, this was the only "operational" assistance OB WEST could possibly give the left wing of A Gp B and the deep left flank of the collapsing Normandy front.

191. As far as I remember OB WEST once more repeated its old suggestion of withdrawing A Gp G immediately to the approximate line: upper Seine southeast of Paris to the Loing River--along the Loing--along the Loire from Gien to Nevers--astride the Saone to the Swiss border in the vicinity of Bellegarde. If these forces could be released even at the last minute, without being harassed by the enemy, there was hope of building a new front along the suggested line. In this new front, a prolongation of the A Gp B front, we could again offer resistance. However, if the enemy should attack first on the French Mediterranean

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coast--and this had to be expected momentarily--disengaging the forces could take place only with severe losses and settling into the proposed line would probably no longer be possible. OKW, however, could not definitely make up its mind, and the decision was postponed.

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Chapter Fourteen
SEVENTH PHASE OF INVASION
(11 - 30 Aug 44)

192. (Ed: See App 12.) Grave worries concerning Paris now arose even at OKW, worries based not only on operational, but also on political considerations: The sensation of "Paris liberated" would make a powerful impression all over the world, would have strong repercussions on the French people, and it would publicize Germany's defeat. Thus OKW ordered Paris defended to the last no matter what happened; preparations were to be made accordingly. This matter will be referred to later. To prevent, or at least to delay, an enemy advance eastward in the area between Paris and the Loire, OKW ordered tank destruction detachments organized, given hurried training by a panzer officer specially sent out by OKW, equipped with suitable weapons and explosives, and assigned to areas suitable for armored operations which were occupied only thinly or not at all. This procedure was consistent with the judgment repeatedly expressed by OKW and its representatives, that the enemy advance was only a matter of armored spearheads which one could dispose of by employing the proper combat technique. That these spearheads were followed by large units which we could not dispose of because of our weakness, was something OKW did not want to admit or hear about.

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193. About 10 Aug 44, OB WEST ordered a gradual withdrawal, facilitated by delaying actions, of the Normandy battle front to the Touques sector, later to the Risle sector. It thus became necessary to maintain the southern flank of Seventh Army in approximately the Domfront--Alencon--Nogent le Rotrou line, and, if at all possible, to strengthen it. (The latter was effected only very imperfectly, but led to a separation of forces.)

194. OB WEST had realized that the encirclement of Fifth Pz Army and Seventh Army was imminent, with the objective of destroying these German forces south of the lower Seine. It was thus especially important to keep Paris open to traffic and not lose the lower Seine with its bridgeheads and crossings. The greatest danger lay in the Dreux--Chartres area which could not be bolstered adequately toward the south and southwest because of lack of forces. And so it happened that, while the battle front was daily pushed farther back and penetrated locally again and again because of the lack of panzer forces (which on the southern wing had had to attack Avranches, as ordered by OKW), the enemy's great encircling movement around the southern flank of A Gp B was completed with astounding speed. By 14 Aug 44 the enemy had gotten approximately as far as the Avre in the Verneuil area. His objective--pushing forward to the Seine between Dreux and Paris, crossing it wherever possible, and arranging another "Tannenberg" for the Normandy forces south of the lower Seine--became more and more apparent. Genfldm von Kluge saw all this very clearly. Now, since operations of any kind

were indeed no longer possible, his place was at the side of his struggling troops, holding out so valiantly in an apparently hopeless situation.

195. The combat troops--though squeezed into an increasingly narrow space; constantly under fire from artillery and fighter-bombers; and inadequately supplied with food, ammunition, and especially gasoline--fought sullenly and stubbornly; they would not yield. Supplies had been completely stalled for days. They could be brought forward only at night on roads just south of the Seine, and the roads were often hopelessly jammed. Whole columns were destroyed by fighter-bombers. True, the lower Seine was utilized as much as possible for moving supplies via water as far as Rouen, but this method, too, became more and more difficult. The evacuation of wounded was obstructed. Crossing the Seine by bridge was still feasible only at Paris; all other crossings had to be by ferry.

196. At this time Genfldm von Kluge was, for a while, missing in action. He took his own radio with him into the encirclement forming around Falaise, in order to remain in communication with the outside world. I no longer remember the exact date of his departure for the front, but it must have been around 11 or 12 Aug 44. For about 48 hours after this he was missing, and considered dead. As his command post he had designated a small chapel (I no longer remember the name) where radio communication with him was to be kept open, but all attempts to contact him were to no avail. The Armies knew nothing of his location. OKW became more and more perturbed and inquired almost hourly about his

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location. Finally, after about two days, he reported again. Both his automobile and his radio car had been destroyed by bombs, and he could move neither forward nor backward. Naturally he could not exercise any influence on the battle. Soon after receipt of this news OKW sent this order:

Genfldm von Kluge will leave the pocket immediately, go to the command post of Fifth Pz Army and conduct the battle from there.

The tone of this order attracted our attention. A certain lack of confidence on the part of OKW was unmistakable.

197. First Army (Command Post: Fontainebleau) had taken over command in conjunction with Seventh Army, and attempted to build up a front between Pontoise (right flank) via the western edge of Paris--Rambouillet--Etampes--Bellegarde, with a loose connection with the Loire somewhere between Orleans and Gien. The Seine and the Loing sector constituted a supporting line to the rear. Hardly any forces were available. The 48 Div (Fifteenth Army) was being brought up to the area south of Paris and advance elements of 18 Lw Feld Div were moving in the direction of Pontoise. Remnants of 352 Div and 17 SS Pz Gren Div, which like other elements of panzer divisions had been directed to the Paris bridges, were still in the area west of Paris. In the process of being brought up toward Chalons-s-Marne from Germany were two SS panzer brigades (replacement-training units), which were tactically subordinated to First Army in order that they might be used to rehabilitate 17 SS Pz Gren Div. First Army had brought along its assault (Sturm) battalion and committed it as a security force in the Etampes area. Farther south

(approximately between Malesherbes and Bellegarde), 1010 Sicherungs (Security) Regt (Military District France) served as a covering force. In addition, OB WEST ordered the transfer of 338 Div from A Gp G (Nineteenth Army), beginning about 13 Aug 44, to First Army in the area south of Paris, in order that it might be employed on the Loing River, south of Fontainebleau. It came from the Mediterranean coast through the Rhone valley via rail; the movement involved transfers and road marches that required a great deal of time. However, only seven trains with several infantry companies and antitank guns had arrived when this movement was halted by OKW on account of the situation on the Mediterranean. Along the Loire, the Sperricherung (security line reinforced with obstacles and field fortifications) of 158 Res Div (16 Inf Div) had to be extended to the east via Orleans because of the rapid enemy advance toward the east. Continuous and reliable communication between these forces and First Army no longer existed, but at times it was still possible to communicate, in a roundabout way, with Orleans.

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Chapter Fifteen

A GP G ALERTED

I. Invasion of Southern France Imminent

198. On 13 Aug 44, OB WEST was informed, by OKW if I remember correctly, that great troop embarkations had taken place in North Africa (principally at Algiers) and that large troop convoys with escort vessels lay under steam there and in other North African ports. A landing attempt on the French Mediterranean coast had to be expected. OB WEST immediately relayed this information to all agencies concerned, ordered Alarmstufe II (Alert II) for A Gp G along the French Mediterranean coast, and requested Third Air Force to execute continuous reconnaissance of the Mediterranean, especially in the direction of Corsica and Sardinia. It was obvious that during this critical phase in Normandy, the second invasion would certainly come from the south. According to reports received at OB WEST and according to aerial reconnaissance, strong naval units, including transports, had put to sea from the North African coast. Aerial reconnaissance gave the course of these units as north, toward the French Mediterranean coast, and reported the same course for them on 14 and 15 Aug 44. The landing was at hand.

199. Even as late as 13 Aug 44, ordering A Gp G to withdraw to the north would doubtless have been better and more apropos of the situation than further stubborn clinging, without any prospect of

success, to the Mediterranean coast. OKW, however, still could not bring itself to make the necessary decision to abandon southern France, particularly because such a step would have entailed incisive disadvantages for the Italian Front. OKW did not consider, or else consciously ignored, the fact that these results would shortly follow in any case, and under much more disagreeable circumstances.

200. The forces of A Gp G at the time of the Southern Invasion on 15 Aug 44 were:

a. Hq, LXIV Corps, with the following two divisions along the Atlantic coast and the Loire:

158 Res Div (redesignated 16 Inf Div)
159 Res Div

b. Nineteenth Army (Gen Inf Wiese)

Hq, IV Lw Feld Corps (subsequently redesignated
XC Corps)

Hq, LXXXV Corps (Corps Kniess)

Hq, LXII Res Corps

716 Div

189 Res Div (elms)

198 Div

338 Div (main body, since the transfer to First
Army had been halted by OKW on 13 Aug 44)

244 Div

242 Div

148 Res Div

II. Evacuation of Paris

201. On 14 or 15 Aug 44, Genfldm von Kluge briefly visited OB WEST Headquarters at St Germain, near Paris, in order to confer with

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the Commander of Military District France, the newly appointed Wehrmacht Commandant of Paris (Genlt von Choltitz*), as well as the commanders of

*Ed: Promoted to gen inf 1 Aug 44.

Third Air Force (Genfldm Sperrle) and Navy Gp West (Adm Krancke) or their chiefs of staff. A general staff officer of First Army was also supposed to be there, but due to signal communication difficulties he arrived too late.

202. The discussion concerned the defense of Paris. As was well known, OKW had given orders to hold Paris to the very last and to prepare the bridges within the city limits (about seventy of them) for demolition. Specifically it was ascertained that Paris could not be defended for any length of time at all with the forces at hand—for the most part, flak units, security battalions, and "alert" units. The idea of house-to-house fighting within the city, above all along the Seine, was deliberately abandoned in order to avoid destruction and loss of life. The plan to destroy the bridges was also turned down so as not to injure the city. (Genfldm von Rundstedt had already ordered that no demolition preparations be made inside Paris.) Only the great arterial roads could be blocked with obstacles and antitank weapons. The outer ring of Paris was ordered divided into sectors, defended in the main by flak artillery with flak combat elements. Gen von Choltitz, as Commandant of Paris, was to resist as long as possible and to remain in Paris until the end. Higher staffs were informed that they could not leave the city of Paris without the express authorization of Genfldm von

Kluge; this proviso derived from an OKW order that the highest command echelons of arms of the Wehrmacht in the West could move their command posts only with the specific permission of OKW. This OKW requirement often aggravated difficulties with the chain of command during critical situations, since rearward command posts were not improved as ordered and, even more important, were not provided with signal communication facilities soon enough.

203. The following were selected as new command-post locations and were submitted to OKW for approval:

OB WEST - Verzy, south of Reims

A Gp B - the Fuehrer's Command Post, between Laon and Soissons

Third Air Force - Reims

Navy Gp West - Reims (High-power radio station and rear elements, however, were near Saverne in the Vosges.)

204. Genfldm von Kluge further ordered the precautionary evacuation of German followers of the Wehrmacht (women's auxiliary forces, etc), as well as all transportable sick and wounded, from the Paris area. Those who could not be moved were to be left in Paris with attendants and, if necessary, turned over to the enemy.

205. The above measures were taken because it was certain that the enemy would stand before Paris in a few days and that Paris could not be held, because, in addition to the weakness of its defense, the supply problem for so great a city was insurmountable. Paris, thus, was bound to fall quickly.

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Genfldm von Kluge returned to A Gp B at la Roche Guyon after the conference. The staff of OB WEST never saw him again.

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Chapter Sixteen

CULMINATION OF THE CRISIS IN THE WEST

206. On 14 Aug 44, while aerial reconnaissance reported that fleets of enemy transports were heading for the French Mediterranean coast from North Africa, the ring around the main body of Seventh Army and a number of panzer divisions in the area of Falaise (southwest of it at first and, later, southeast of it) was squeezed ever tighter from east and west. At this time, the enemy front on the western side of the developing encirclement was somewhere between Conde and Domfront, and from the south--where, to be sure, the ring was not yet completely closed--it pressed toward the area south of Argentan via wooded sections east and west of Carrouges. Since the enemy on the northern sector of this front could proceed more slowly and await the results of the encirclement from the south, attacks in the north were of a more local nature; they were directed chiefly against 89 and 271 Divs in order to seize dominating positions. If several panzer divisions had not been withdrawn northeastward as reserves during the few days preceding 16 or 17 Aug 44, probably none of the units fighting in what subsequently became the Falaise Pocket (more accurately, the Trun--Necy--Argentan--Chambois pocket) would ever have escaped. (As far as I remember, it was II SS Pz Corps, with 2 and 9 SS Pz Divs, which later held open an escape route near St Lambert for the Falaise Pocket.)

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I. Southern France Invaded

207. Meanwhile, about 13 Aug 44, the 11 Pz Div, on orders from A Gp G assigning it to Nineteenth Army, had set out from the Toulouse--Carcassone area toward Nimes. Elements of it arrived in Nimes on 14/15 Aug 44. The situation that had arisen on the French Mediterranean coast was quickly clarified for OB WEST in spite of the deficiencies already apparent in the signal communications net. Parachute landings in force had taken place in the vicinity of Draguignan, involving Hq, LXII Res Corps, with which communications had been interrupted. It became clear that the enemy intended to eliminate this operations staff and that consequently the first sea landing would be made in this sector of the coast. This proved to be the case. At dawn on 15 Aug 44 the first landing attempts took place in the St Tropez--Cannes sector. They were repelled to some extent, especially near Cannes. On the other hand, the enemy succeeded in forming small, separate beachheads between St Tropez and St Raphael (battalions of Eastern troops were fighting on our side here). These beachheads were quickly reinforced and it became apparent that there was a tendency to push out from them toward the west (Toulon).

208. Since Hq, LXII Res Corps, had been eliminated (having been surrounded, it was then overcome by enemy parachute troops), there was no unified German leadership on the spot. In addition, this sector was only thinly occupied and had no strong reserves. The enemy had

chosen well in picking this weak point. Under the circumstances OB WEST was powerless to intervene, for it had no reserves, and communications with Avignon--the location of Nineteenth Army and the point to which the staff of A Gp G was hurrying--became progressively worse, so that telephone conversations were seldom feasible. Very soon we had to depend entirely on radio communication, which was completely unreliable because of the geographic and atmospheric conditions. Transmission of cryptographed orders via radio often took 24 hours and longer.

209. Under the circumstances, it became imperative for OB WEST and A Gp G to prevent an enemy advance to the west or the northwest in every way possible. An encircling lunge westward in the general direction of the Rhone valley near Orange, or even Valence, would threaten the only supply and withdrawal route still open to Nineteenth Army, the Rhone valley. Only the commitment of 11 Pz Div and some local forces could avert this danger or at least delay it. A Gp G had evaluated this situation correctly and disposed Nineteenth Army accordingly. The 11 Pz Div was ferried over to the left bank of the Rhone, for the Rhone bridges (almost all of which were suspension bridges) had become impassable due to air attacks. This was both a timely and a technically outstanding achievement. Yet, could these measures change the fate of Nineteenth Army? No! The forces were too weak. The old estimate of the situation and OB WEST proposals to OKW, to evacuate this coast and the Atlantic coast in time and concentrate the forces in the interior of France so as to maintain freedom of action, had been vindicated.

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There was also the question of whether Marseilles and Toulon could hold out for even a few days. Their garrisons were weak and not comparable to the extent of the area to be defended. Each place had a single division (242 and 244 Divs), which had already been weakened by the detachment of some of its elements. OB WEST brought this situation to the attention of OKW in several grave telephone conversations.

II. Limited Withdrawal of A Gp G Directed by OKW

210. Finally, on 17 Aug 44, a decision was wrung from OKW. To OB WEST, however, it was only half a decision. The order from OKW went something like this:

Southwestern France will be evacuated by A Gp G, with the exception of the Gironde fortresses (north and south) and the garrison of la Rochelle. These will be strengthened. A Gp G will withdraw its forces to the Orleans--Bourges--Montpellier line and hold there.

This meant that OKW was trying to effect a junction of the right wing of A Gp G with the left wing of A Gp B in the vicinity of Orleans, but, in addition, would try to continue holding the French Mediterranean coast from the mouth of the Rhone eastward. The execution of this order was impracticable:

- a. It was only a half-solution; in case the enemy landing succeeded, it would more certainly than ever assure the loss of this front with all its troops.

b. With the small number of troops available, it was quite impossible to establish, let alone hold, the chosen front, situated as it was in country rife with strong partisan activity and in the midst of the completely unurveyable Massif Central.

c. The problem of supplying this front was particularly difficult.

211. OB WEST radioed the OKW order to A Gp G, but it did so chiefly because it considered the troops ought to be quickly readied for a withdrawal. By telephone we immediately proposed to OKW to change this order to a complete withdrawal of A Gp G, particularly since joining the front with that of A Gp B in the vicinity of Orleans was no longer feasible.

212. Here a circumstance must be considered which constituted the severest handicap to the whole conduct of operations in the West: the tardy decisions of OKW. Apparently all the more important tactical and strategic proposals of OB WEST had to be decided by Adolf Hitler, who was usually inaccessible and was, above all, not to be disturbed while he was resting. Thus it was that in crucial situations when OB WEST and the field forces urgently needed an immediate decision, the decision usually arrived only after a time lapse which rendered it obsolete. A significant example of this tardiness was the case of the OKW reserves at the beginning of the Normandy landing.*

*Pt 9 of 31 pts of MS # B-672, Genmaj von Buttlar:

It is correct to say that many operational decisions in all theaters of war, particularly decisions to give up important areas

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or to withdraw, were given very late, sometimes even too late. This fault in the command was attributable solely to Hitler himself, because, though urged in the most pressing terms, he often took days to come around to such a decision, and in many cases still tried to save an operationally hopeless situation with inadequate expedients. In this connection, one must naturally take into account the complications which economic and political aspects threw into the scales in these moments of far-reaching decision.

In addition to this, Hitler's intervention at division level and even below, in the course of the War, had led to an ever growing divergence from the established German principles of command. The final result was that Hitler reserved for his own decision even many tactical details which were solely the business of local commanders, and could be effectively judged only by them. Only a very few operational staffs--in Italy, for example--maintained a certain tactical independence. The result of this system of command was that decisions of a tactical nature also had to be made by the Supreme Commander, although they required speed, and could not take time to mature, like strategic decisions. This type of command required at the very least that the Supreme Commander be permanently available. This, however, was naturally not the case, since the Supreme Commander was also Chief of State and therefore had other important business, as well as his military duties. It was thus impossible to obtain decisions at all times, and disadvantages inevitably arose from this. I would like to express the view here, that those commanders who--at the risk of later being held responsible--sought to preserve their tactical independence were the ones with whom Hitler interfered least.

Chapter Seventeen
VON KLUGE REPLACED BY MODEL

213. At this climactic point, Genfldm Model arrived entirely unexpectedly (17 Aug 44) at the command post of A Gp B and delivered to Genfldm von Kluge a handwritten message from Adolf Hitler. Its content was approximately as follows: Hitler was convinced Von Kluge had undertaken too much during the previous weeks and was in need of a rest. He had therefore decided to appoint Genfldm Model simultaneously C-in-C West and Cmdr, A Gp B. (What motives actually led to the removal of Von Kluge remains a matter for speculation, since at the time I lacked knowledge of the matter.)

214. The OB WEST Chief of Staff, Gen Blumentritt, drove once more to la Roche Guyon to take leave of Genfldm von Kluge and report to Genfldm Model. I do not know exactly the details of what was discussed there. In later conversations it was revealed that Von Kluge was very grievously affected by his unexpected relief and could not bear the thought of having to leave his struggling troops in the Falaise Pocket just at this critical moment. He is supposed to have intimated that as a German field marshal, who had warned and warned against the Avranches counterattack only to be made responsible before the whole world by Hitler for its failure, and who now must needs "go home" while his brave troops were dying in the Pocket, he could not go on living. (If other

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matters, such as knowledge of or participation in the 20 Jul 44 incident, played a role--as was rumored--and if so to what extent, I am unable to state.) To all accounts outwardly very calm and collected, he turned over all his affairs to Genfldm Model and drove off in a car (apparently on 18 Aug 44) in the direction of Metz. At the German border he ended his life by taking potassium cyanide. (It was subsequently learned that prior to his departure Von Kluge had written and dispatched a letter to Adolf Hitler in which he implored him, in view of the hopelessness of the military situation, to try to effect a compromise with the Western Allies, so as to at least save the German East.)

215. Genfldm Model was a thoroughly capable soldier, very independent, but often fitful and changeable in his decisions because of his mental and physical quickness and resilience. Often he demanded too much and that too quickly. Hence, he lost sight too easily of what was practically possible. He needed a calm and adaptable, but energetic chief of staff in order to assure a positive, smooth command. Travelling almost continuously--popping up first in one place and then in another--he was impervious to hardships and personal danger. The soldiers always liked to see him because he knew how to strike the right tone with them. Officers, especially the less vigorous ones, did not have an easy time of it with him. Staff work suffered under his too frequent absences and his erratic, often inconsistent commands. In his whole tone and manner no longer the old imperial army officer type, he was often very sarcastic and insulting. He put great stress on originality. Although there was no doubt about his strategic abilities, he had a tendency

toward exaggerated demands and dissipation of forces, and needed, as has already been mentioned, just the right chief of staff as a brake.*

*Pt 22 of 24 pts of MS # B-718, Genlt Speidel:

From 18 Aug 44 until my relief, for the purpose of arrest, on 5 Sep 44, I was Chief of Staff to Genfldm Model. I believe that I repeatedly acted as a brake, preventing or hindering the order to destroy Paris, orders issued too much on impulse, and judgments of the most varied nature.

The writer's appraisal of Genfldm Model appears to me too favorable.

216. On 17 and 18 Aug 44 the staff of OB WEST, with the approval of OKW, moved its command post to Verzy, south of Reims. The second echelon of the staff, with all elements not strictly necessary for the conduct of battle, was removed to Metz.

217. When he reported to the Fuehrer's Headquarters prior to his departure for the West, it is safe to assume--though I have no personal knowledge of this--that Genfldm Model received operational instructions to the following effect:

- a. Resistance south of the lower Seine is to be pushed to the limit.
- b. If the combat situation absolutely forces it, we are to withdraw, fighting a delaying action along the Seine and defending Paris, to the Somme--Marne--Saone position (later also called the "Kitzinger Line"). This position is to be held unconditionally.

As everyone knew, this position had not yet been constructed. Thus it was that the first thing Genfldm Model did was to

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order the continuation of resistance south of the lower Seine, an order which resulted in closing the Falaise encirclement almost completely and assuring the full measure of catastrophe. The Commander of Military District France, Gen Fl Kitzinger, was ordered to leave Paris and take over the technical construction of the Somme--Marne--Saone position. Several staffs not being used in combat were attached to him for this purpose. It was clear, however, that it would be impossible to prepare the position for an effective defense because of the lack of time, men, and materiel.

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MODEL

Chapter Eighteen
COMPLETE DISASTER AVOIDED

I. Complete Withdrawal of A Gp G Authorized

218. The OB WEST proposal of 17 Aug 44, to withdraw A Gp G completely and to evacuate the Atlantic and Mediterranean coasts, was accepted during the night of 17/18 Aug 44 after a delay of some 12 hours awaiting Hitler's decision. The reply, however, commanded that Marseilles and Toulon were to have their garrisons reinforced and were to be defended to the last. Nineteenth Army was to release 148 and 157 Res Divs to OB SW (for blocking the Alpine passes toward the west and protecting OB SW's exposed right flank) and withdraw through the Rhone valley toward the Plateau de Langres. There it was to receive the forces of LXIV Corps* withdrawing in several march groups from the

*Ed: The LXIV Corps is not included in Genlt Zimmermann's order of battle of OB WEST, given in Chapter Five above. According to MS # A-866, Obstlt Joachim Bahr, C of S of LXIV Corps, the command post of the Corps was located in Brussels on 6 Jun 44 and its mission was the training of replacements. The Corps Headquarters moved to southwestern France during the period 18 - 20 Jun 44. About 1 Aug 44 its designation was changed from LXIV Res Inf Corps to LXIV Inf Corps.

Atlantic coast. It was also to extend and close the A Gp B front along the Somme--Marne--Saone position to the Swiss border.

219. This command was relayed immediately to A Gp G by radio (the transmission took a great deal of time), and from A Gp G it was

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sent on further. Hq, LXIV Corps, did not receive the order until after considerable additional delay, and then only in a roundabout way via a Navy radio station. The Corps was to form three march groups that were to try to link up with Nineteenth Army by proceeding along the south bank of the Loire under cover of blocking units of 158 Res Div (16 Inf Div) in the general direction of Dijon.

220. The mission of A Gp G was extremely difficult. OB WEST expected that under the most favorable conditions the advance elements of A Gp G could reach the vicinity of Dijon by early September--provided it was still possible to disengage Nineteenth Army, and provided the Rhone valley was not blocked by enemy flanking movements through the hills east of the Rhone and by a violent resurgence of the resistance movement. OKW was informed that A Gp G was not to be expected in the Dijon area before the beginning of September, even under the most favorable circumstances. (The fact that this evasion and withdrawal was, in spite of the most difficult circumstances, accomplished at all is due to the sacrifices made by the field forces and to the extremely able and prudent leadership of Genobst Blaskowitz.)

II. OB WEST Situation (18 - 19 Aug 44)

221. The strategic situation in the West on 18 - 19 Aug 44 was more than critical. (See App 13.) South of the lower Seine, Fifth Pz Army and Seventh Army were fighting a hopeless battle and large elements of these armies faced complete encirclement. At their backs

flowed the Seine, now passable only by ferry. First Army was so weak that it could deploy mere "security detachments" south of Paris along the upper Seine and the Loing. Every armored thrust there ripped open the thin front. A Gp G's Nineteenth Army was attempting to disengage from an enemy in hot pursuit and LXIV Inf Corps was trying to force its way by road, in separate march groups, from Bordeaux, through the French resistance movement, to the Loire. Both the Army and the Corps were accompanied by non-combatants, Wehrmacht civilian personnel, and women. The enemy could split the front between A Gp B and A Gp G at will and then fan out and operate in the open. The situation foreseen by Genfldm von Rundstedt had now materialized; it may be noted on App 4a. Even if extreme sacrifices were made, the situation could be stabilized only if we could withdraw most of the A Gp B elements that were south of the Seine, including First Army troops, to the Somme--Marne--Saone position and reestablish, somewhere on the Plateau de Langres (Dijon), contact with A Gp G. The staff of OB WEST, and probably also Genfldm Model, was perfectly aware that this position was more a line on the map than an improved defensive position.

222. The staff of OB WEST had meanwhile been installed in the command post at Verzy, south of Reims. It was now completely separated geographically from A Gp B, which remained for the time being in la Roche Guyon, and from A Gp G, in Avignon. OB WEST was forced to depend on radio communications and, in part, on wire communications via Brussels to A Gp B. Connections via the Paris telephone central had already become completely unreliable.

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It is obvious that the staff of OB WEST no longer knew the details of operational matters at the two headquarters. It could only try to ascertain the over-all picture from day to day, and above all to withdraw A Gp G as quickly as possible. For the same reason, the writer is not familiar with individual deliberations and decisions of Genfldm Model and of Genobst Blaskowitz up to about the beginning of September, and can, therefore, describe events only in broad outline. In this very fact, however, may be seen the seriousness of OKW's failure to appoint a real C-in-C West. As a result, there were more and more among the field forces and especially among the higher staffs, who for practical reasons favored the return of Genfldm von Rundstedt. This fact was subsequently brought to the attention of OKW several times both orally and in writing.*

 *Pt 23 of 24 pts of MS # B-718, Genlt Speidel:

The "Call for Rundstedt" must have been limited to the staff of OB WEST, particularly since his character was disputed, to say the least, because of his participation in the so-called "Ehrenhof" (Ed: "Court of Honor," a tribunal set up to fix guilt for the 20 July affair.). Therefore, the psychological aspect again seems wrong in par 276.

III. Withdrawal Across the Seine

223. The great concern of those days was: Will the units in the Trun--Necy--north of Argentan--Chambois area, compressed ever more tightly on 19 - 20 Aug 44 and virtually under concentric attack, succeed

in breaking out to the northeast, toward the Seine? Large elements of Fifth Pz Army and most of the remnants of Seventh Army were involved. The encircled forces (five panzer divisions, ten infantry divisions, and four corps headquarters) pushed their way eastward under the continual pressure of fighter-bombers, of intense artillery fire, of enemy tactical thrusts--eastward without replacement of their losses, with a bare handful of heavy weapons, without supplies and without fuel. It is almost a miracle that they succeeded, even at tremendous cost, in breaking out to the northeast near St Lambert. The II SS Pz Corps (2 and 9 SS Pz Divs) supported them and covered their escape through what was little more than a back alley. Losses could not be computed even approximately, the confusion of units was complete, but the ring was broken. However, another more significant encirclement was already taking shape.

224. The enemy strategic envelopment had proceeded generally northward between Dreux and Paris and its spearheads had reached the Seine between Vernon and Mantes-Gassicourt. Between these two towns, weak enemy elements had even crossed the loops of the Seine and established small bridgeheads on the north bank, southeast of Vernon and north of Mantes-Gassicourt. Genfldm Model, with the staff of A Gp B, had to hastily abandon his command post at la Roche Guyon under enemy artillery fire and move to the location previously selected, the Fuehrer's Command Post, between Laon and Soissons.

225. If the enemy had immediately and ruthlessly exploited his Seine crossing to the utmost--with his main effort between Vernon

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and Mantes-Gassicourt, for Paris need only have been watched--and had then followed up with a strategic envelopment (echeloned to the right) along the north bank of the Seine as far as the approaches to the fortress of Havre, the fate of Fifth Pz Army and of the thoroughly battered Seventh Army would have been absolutely sealed. (See App 14.) The gap that would have been created between Fifteenth Army and the Loire (First Army with its weak security forces was operationally insignificant) could not have been closed. The enemy's path to the east and the north would have been completely clear. In such an event, further resistance in France would presumably have become futile and a fairly orderly withdrawal and the reestablishment of a continuous front (West Wall--western boundary of Lorraine--western boundary of Alsace) would no longer have been feasible. Why the enemy neglected this opportunity I do not know. One may assume that supply difficulties, particularly gasoline supply, were the chief drawback--just as they were later at the West Wall.

226. As it was, during the period 21 - 25 Aug 44 we succeeded in withdrawing in phases toward the lower Seine, with our main effort on both sides of Rouen, and in crossing the river by ferry and, to some extent, even with amphibious tanks and Volkswagens. It is true that this was accomplished at the expense of losing the bulk of our materiel, in an almost inextricable confusion of units, and with tremendous losses. The fighter-bombers attacked incessantly, Rouen itself underwent severe carpet bombings, and several enemy tanks advanced as far as the bends of the Seine and fired into the columns and the elements crossing the river. An enormous traffic jam resulted, especially near Elbeuf (south

of Rouen), where some 2,000 massed vehicles fell prey to the air attacks. Nevertheless, about 20 - 30% (on the average) of the units and materiel, including staffs, managed to get across the Seine. Fifth Pz Army directed the crossing from the vicinity of Rouen; east of Rouen the LXXV (Ed: probably LXXIV) Inf Corps, and west of it the LXVII Inf Corps, were in support. A reception force and river defense was improvised from any and all means (flak, naval units, "alert" companies, etc) and was immediately reinforced by elements that crossed the river. In view of the almost hopeless situation, this was an unheard-of physical and psychological achievement by the troops! To be sure, there was scarcely a thought of maintaining the Seine line, for the weak forces of First Army had long since been broken through and enemy tanks were along the Loing and just south of Paris as early as 22 Aug 44.

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Chapter Nineteen
THE FALL OF PARIS

227. On 24 Aug 44, the enemy entered Paris from the south. In so doing he had gained the fulcrum of a new strategic envelopment in the grand style. Within the city, the opposition of weak groups became futile and quickly ceased; the Commandant (Gen von Choltitz) was taken prisoner.

228. The only course of action left was to try to offer resistance in the Somme--Marne--Saone position and to keep additional elements of A Gp B from being encircled. OKW likewise had realized this and had ordered (about the end of August or the beginning of September) that units were no longer to stand and die, but were to withdraw from an encirclement in order to conserve fighting strength (with the exception of units in the coastal fortresses). Unfortunately, however, so many forces had already been lost in the preceding battles that this realization, this measure on the part of OKW, was generally looked upon as being "too late."

229. First Army, as has already been mentioned, had not been able to stand up to the pressure of enemy forces pushing east and northeast from south of Paris. It comprised, in the main, only 48 Div, negligible elements of 338 Div, the First Army Sturm (assault, shock) Bn, and the staff and supply troops of 17 SS Pz Gren Div. The latter

was to be rehabilitated by two SS panzer brigades (26 and 27 SS Pz Brigs) brought up from Germany. Immediately after their arrival, however, these troops were attacked so heavily that they disappeared as tactical units. Thus, practically speaking, the path to the east between Paris and the Loire lay completely open to the enemy.

230. Indeed, by 26 Aug 44, A Gp G, fighting heavily all the time, had gotten no farther than Montelimar in the Rhone valley. It seemed entirely possible that the enemy would cut off A Gp G from its route of withdrawal somewhere near the Chalon-s-Saone--Dole--Pontarlier area. Regardless of the amount of effort made, radio communication between OB WEST and A Gp G was effective only very irregularly and was extremely slow. We had no detailed information about the A Gp G situation. There was no report whatever from LXIV Corps; the location of its march groups could not be ascertained at all. In addition, the staff of OB WEST underwent an air attack in Verzy, which reduced a part of the place to ashes, thus curtailing the staff's efficiency considerably.

231. The expected enemy advance to the north and east took place very rapidly after the fall of Paris. We were too weak, particularly in the air, to execute careful observation and reconnaissance of the enemy forces advancing to the east. About 26 - 27 Aug 44, enemy motorized forces reached the area of Compiègne--Crepuy-en-Valois--Meaux and pressed on to the north and east. On both sides of the Marne his efforts to seize individual crossings were noticeable. Farther south, the movement of panzer forces seemed to point to Chalons-s-Marne as the point of main effort. In the area southwest of Compiègne and north of

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Paris the enemy advance was still checked by the resistance of strong forces of A Gp B north of Paris and in the area north of the lower Seine. In this sector, the enemy seemingly chose to await the execution of an envelopment to the left, via Compiègne and toward Amiens. Once that had well begun, he would strike northward, out of his bridgeheads, across the lower Seine between Paris and Rouen.

232. The tactic followed by the enemy was unmistakable:

"Wherever possible, conserve lives and gain objectives by operations."

Generally, the British forces played the waiting role, and the Americans the more active role on the broad enveloping wing.

Chapter Twenty
WITHDRAWAL TO THE WEST WALL

233. The situation of 26 - 27 Aug 44 initiated the withdrawal actions through France and Belgium which were of relatively short duration. They may be divided as follows (see App 15):

a. First Phase: German withdrawal to the Somme--Marne--Saone position. Fortress of Havre isolated. (About 26 - 29 Aug 44.)

b. Second Phase: Further withdrawal to the Schelde bridgehead--Albert Kanal and to the Meuse position. Boulogne, Calais, and Dunkirk isolated. A Gp G gains a loose junction with A Gp B near Dijon. (30 Aug - 7 Sep 44.)

c. Third Phase: The front becomes unified through the arrival of A Gp G and withdraws, fighting a delaying action, to the foreground of the West Wall--western borders of Lorraine and Alsace. (8 - 14 Sep 44.)

234. During the first phase, A Gp B and A Gp G fought independently of and completely separated from each other. The C-in-C West, located at A Gp B, could exercise no influence whatever on the conduct of operations by A Gp G. In addition, due to the continually changing situation of the Army Group under his immediate command, he was too busy to do anything else.

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I. A Gp B Withdrawal

235. Instructions from OKW had been that after the fall of Paris we were to hold the Somme--Marne--Saone position, but, in case of an unavoidable withdrawal, nevertheless to continue defending with adequate forces the fortresses along the coast (Havre, Boulogne, Calais, and Dunkirk), which might possibly be forced to rely entirely on themselves. Accordingly, Genflm Model tried, by means of delaying actions, to reach the Somme--Marne--Saone line with the strongest possible forces. This line (because of its lack of construction it could not be called a position) could be fairly strongly manned in the sector of Fifteenth Army, but not in the Fifth Pz and Seventh Army sectors, and still less in the First Army sector. Since it had not been built up and since its over-all organization was still rudimentary, it was not at all defendable against a serious attack. In places, the enemy would not even notice that he was overrunning a "position." In addition, as a result of the constantly changing situation which, because of our weakness, required perpetual improvising, there were apparently no definite lines of demarcation between the armies of A Gp B.

236. Genflm Model endeavored, by continual shifting of forces, particularly panzer units, to hold up the enemy advance at the points of main effort that developed. He did this always with a view to neutralizing the psychological attraction of the West Wall for the field forces. This tendency on the part of the troops was understandable, for they had

been told by propaganda that the West Wall was an impregnable bulwark.

237. Meanwhile, the staff of OB WEST in Verzy, south of Reims, provided itself with several armored scout cars for protection, because the front was approaching closer and closer. On the afternoon of 27 Aug 44, OB WEST had to evacuate Verzy and move to Habay, near Arlon. On the same day the enemy reached the Aisne in the vicinity of Soissons and was already fighting for the Chalons-s-Marne bridgehead. The next day (28 Aug 44) the command post of A Gp B (between Soissons and Laon) came under enemy artillery fire; the staff of A Gp B and Genfldm Model moved to the vicinity of Cambrai.

238. About this time the new OKW directive already mentioned must have arrived. This directive finally put an end to the tactic of "holding out to the last" and ordered that units were not to continue resisting until they were encircled, but were to withdraw in order to preserve their combat power. (Exception: the fortresses.) Regardless of the circumstances, however, the Schelde estuary near Antwerp was to be defended by the formation of a strong bridgehead on the southern bank, so as to prevent, at any cost, strategic enemy supply shipments (Gross-Nachschub) through the harbor of Antwerp. As a front to be held unconditionally, the following approximate line was designated: Bridgehead at Breskens--Antwerp--Albert Kanal--Hasselt--western Maastricht--Meuse--western edge of the Argonne--Plateau de Langres (junction there with A Gp B)--Chalons-s-Saone--Swiss border. The attempt to carry out this plan was made during the second phase of the withdrawal battles. Its execution was possible only if A Gp G succeeded in fighting its way

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through the Rhone valley very quickly and if elements, at least, of LXIV Inf Corps arrived in the Dijon area before the enemy. Even so, there was another prerequisite: closing the gap to the north and reestablishing contact with First Army. The danger that A Gp B would be defeated in detail--especially in Northern France and Belgium--and that A Gp G would be cut off, became greater than ever. If the enemy succeeded in doing this, then the penetration across the Rhine into southern Germany would be easy. For, aside from ersatz divisions of the various wehrkreis, there were no reserves in the Reich; and, in particular, no strategic reserves of the Supreme Command were available in Germany.

239. A Gp B Operations, Second Phase

Amiens fell on 30 or 31 Aug 44. Gen Pz Eberbach, who temporarily commanded Seventh Army after Obstgruf Hausser was wounded, was surprised by some tanks and captured near Amiens. His successor was Gen Pz Brandenberger. The latter arrived on 1 or 2 Sep 44, but found the Somme position already broken through and Seventh Army withdrawing farther to the northeast. It now became important to displace Fifteenth Army with its units (in so far as they were not thrown into the front toward the south) parallel to the Channel Coast behind the Schelde, and to cover this difficult maneuver--which was constantly threatened with encirclement--by delaying, fluid operations, especially by Fifth Pz Army and elements of Seventh Army. The main body of Seventh Army was to be withdrawn from the line as quickly as possible for rehabilitation. Thus, at this time the withdrawal action was conducted mainly by Fifth Pz Army. Later, about 3 or 4 Sep 44, the staff of Seventh Army temporarily

assumed control of Fifth Pz Army, also. In this manner, Fifteenth Army, leaving the defenders behind in the coastal fortresses, succeeded in getting most of its forces across the Schelde between Antwerp and the Schelde islands and thus escaping destruction. The extremely difficult crossing of the broad mouth of the Schelde and the group of islands in front of it, was carried out with the assistance of the German Navy. It was even possible to save about five to six hundred guns of all calibers, a considerable part of the artillery.

240. OKW had meanwhile ordered the formation of a Fallschirm ("parachute") Army under the command of Genobst Student. This Army was subsequently inserted on the left (east of Fifteenth Army) in the course of further fighting.

Hq, LXXXVIII Inf Corps, from Wehrmacht District Netherlands, was committed in the defense of the Albert Kanal.

241. A dangerous point of concentration formed in the area south and southeast of Brussels, approximately between Brussels and Maastricht, at the beginning of Sep 44. By various expedients, we were able to delay the enemy temporarily there, but it was not possible to hold him for any considerable length of time. Namur fell as early as 4 Sep 44; on 7 Sep 44 the enemy established his first small bridgehead across the Albert Kanal and captured Liege; and on 9 Sep 44 Maastricht had to be given up, too. Farther south the enemy had thrust across the Meuse in the Charleville--Fumay area at the beginning of September and, moreover, had crossed the Argonne via Ste Menehould toward Verdun. The latter fell into his hands astonishingly soon, and he then advanced from

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the west toward the approaches of the fortress of Metz.

The staff of A Gp B had been transferred via Liege to Venlo, and on 1 Sep 44 the staff of OB WEST moved to the vicinity of Coblenz.

II. A Gp G Withdrawal

242. On 19 Aug 44, A Gp G had made the Commander of Army Group Rear Area South France (Gen Inf Dehner, located in Lyons), along with his staff and his security troops, subordinate to it and had ordered him to keep the Lyons--Dijon road open and to secure and blockade all the Alpine roads leading eastward from the Lyons area. The 157 Res Div (in the Grenoble area), which, as noted above, had already been subordinated by OKW to OB SW to block the Alpine passes toward the west, had also been ordered by OKW to simultaneously prevent an enemy breakthrough toward Lyons, through the mountains. In so doing it was to support and to take some of the pressure off 11 Pz Div, which, as the eastern flank protection for Nineteenth Army, was daily proving itself magnificently in severely taxing fighting in the mountains parallel to the Rhone valley. As a result of its assignment to OB SW, 157 Res Div virtually failed to perform its second mission because it could not let itself be pushed out of its blocking position.

243. Corps Kniess (LXXXIV Inf Corps) was ordered by Nineteenth Army to cover the departure of the other elements of the Army, which were under the control of IV Lw Feld Corps--a difficult mission, but

carried out splendidly by Gen Inf Kniess and his troops. Nineteenth Army began its departure on 21 Aug 44 and Toulon fell on the same day. By 24 Aug 44 the rear guards of IV Lw Feld Corps and of LXV (Ed: probably LXXXV) Inf Corps had reached the Avignon area, but the difficulties were just beginning. From 26 to 28 Aug 44 heavy battles took place near Montelimar; then the crossing of the swollen Drome River, blocked by the enemy, had to be fought free. During the night of 28/29 Aug 44, we succeeded in making the breakthrough and crossing the Drome toward Valence. On 1 Sep 44 the units neared Lyons, in which area the route to the north was cleared in four days of fighting. At this juncture, Corps Kniess was pulled out and IV Lw Feld Corps took over the mission of covering the march to the north.

244. The Commander of A Gp G, Genobst Blaskowitz, had hurried ahead to Dijon on about 28 Aug 44 in order to regain communication with OB WEST and to direct the further withdrawal of his Army Group. He had also assumed tactical control of the Commander, Military Sub-District NE France* (Dijon), and his security troops on 23 Aug 44 and had had the

*Ed: A subordinate command of Military District France.

latter set up, somewhere in the Langres--Autun area, a thin obstacle line and reconnoiter beyond it, to the west and northwest. Hq, LXVI Corps, which for about two weeks had been employed in reconnoitering positions and organizing the construction of the Marne position of the Somme--Marne--Saone system, received orders to hold open the Nevers--Moulins area as a reception point for LXIV Inf Corps, from which nothing

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had yet been heard.

245. After communication had been reestablished between A Gp G and OB WEST, the latter (on about 28 Aug 44) ordered A Gp G to get to the Nancy--Plateau de Langres--Dijon--Swiss border area and to stop there because, at the command of OKW, a counterattack of strong panzer forces was planned from this sector toward the north-northwest. In addition, Nineteenth Army was to be pulled out and brought to this area as quickly as possible, regardless of what individual elements had to be left behind.

246. After the opposition in the Lyons sector had been broken (1 - 4 Sep 44) by the great exertions of 11 Pz Div and 198 Div, the withdrawal of Nineteenth Army went on apace. About 6 Sep 44 the units of this Army arrived in the Dijon--Besancon--Swiss border area. Corps Kniess (LXXXV Inf Corps) was assigned the sector east of the Saone as far as the Swiss border and IV Lw Feld Corps the Dijon--Chalon-s-Saone sector, with the mission of receiving LXIV Inf Corps, expected to arrive from the west in the Plateau de Langres--Dijon area. Finally, on 1 Sep 44, a liaison officer of LXIV Inf Corps had arrived at A Gp G in Dijon, with a report on the situation and the operations of the Corps.

247. LXIV Inf Corps Situation (1 Sep 44)

Group 1: Elements of 16 Div (158 Res Div) and Group Ottenbacher (security troops from the Clermont-Ferrand region), which progressively extended the Loire security forces to the vicinity of Chatillon sur Saone. Group 1 was approaching via Nevers and south of it.

Group 2: Further elements of 16 Div and elements of 159 Res Div. This group was marching via Bourges.

Group 3: Remnants of 159 Res Div and the majority of the non-combatants (OT, administrative personnel, Wehrmacht civilian personnel, and auxiliary workers, including women). This group was lagging behind, near Poitiers, and its loss had to be anticipated.

Groups 1 and 2 did, in fact, arrive in the Dijon area between 4 and 10 Sep 44. Group 3 (Genmaj Elster) was lost.

248. Thus, on the whole, the extremely difficult situation of A Gp G was mastered, contrary to expectations and thanks to the distinguished leadership of Genobst Blaskowitz and to the extraordinary accomplishments of the men, so that the dreaded strategic breakthrough to the Rhine did not materialize.

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Chapter Twenty-One
THE NEW OKW DIRECTIVE

249. The directive issued by OKW about the beginning of September (2 or 3 Sep 44) for the further conduct of operations in the West could now be carried out. According to this directive, OB WEST was to offer stubborn delaying resistance in front of the western borders of the Reich, in order to gain time and to enable us to rearm the West Wall. The following line was to be held under any conditions: Dutch coast, including the Schelde estuary and islands--West Wall--western boundary of Lorraine--western boundary of Alsace.

250. The following reasons probably led to the choice of this position:

- a. Further utilization of Holland for the conduct of operations (naval bases, air warning service, war production, and food production).
- b. Denial of the harbor of Antwerp to the Western Allies.
- c. Preservation of the territorial integrity of the Reich.
- d. Keeping enemy air bases as far as possible from the interior of the Reich.
- e. Protection of the Ruhr and the Saar.
- f. Utilization of the western fortifications.

Chapter Twenty-Two
VON RUNDSTEDT'S RETURN

251. On 5 Sep 44 Genfldm von Rundstedt surprised us by appearing at the command post of OB WEST (Arenberg, near Coblenz) and resuming command as C-in-C West. His previous chief of staff, Gen Inf Blumentritt, was replaced by Genlt Westphal. Influencing his acquiescence in returning was probably the fact that Genfldm Model had also expressed the desire to have Genfldm von Rundstedt resume supreme command in the West, reporting his inability, in view of the general situation, to take responsibility for A Gp G in addition to responsibility for his own Army Group. OKW probably figured that Genfldm Model would lock his Army Group into the position OKW had ordered and that Genfldm von Rundstedt would then direct the supreme command of the whole defense front. The psychological effect of Von Rundstedt's return on the troops was undoubtedly great. His return boosted their morale because they trusted him and appreciated his distinguished qualities.

(At this point the third phase (8 - 14 Sep 44) of the withdrawal begins.)

252. The first thing Genfldm von Rundstedt did was to set the units and the chain of command in order. First Army was returned to A Gp G. The over-all organization was then as follows:

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A Gp B

Wehrmacht District Netherlands (XXX Inf Corps)

Fifteenth Army

LXXXIX Inf Corps (later transferred to A Gp G)
LXXXVIII Inf Corps

FS Army

II FS Corps
XII SS Inf Corps
LXXXVI Inf Corps

Fifth Pz Army

XLVII Pz Corps (to be committed temporarily with
A Gp G)
LVIII Pz Corps
LXXXI Inf Corps

Seventh Army

A Gp G

First Army

LXXX Inf Corps
XIII SS Inf Corps
(LXXXIX Inf Corps, later transferred from A Gp B)

Nineteenth Army

IV Lw Feld Corps (redesignated XC Inf Corps)
LXXXV Inf Corps (later transferred to Seventh
Army)

LXIV Inf Corps

LXVI Inf Corps (later transferred to Seventh
Army)Corps Dehner (later employed as Staff "Boineburg"
for security and construction)Twenty-Fourth Army (a "shadow" army, used for
deception along the Swiss border; it com-
prised only a few battalions, which were not
suited for combat)

Panzer-type Units

In A Gp B:

2 Pz Div
9 Pz Div
116 Pz Div
Pz Lehr Div
3 Pz Gren Div
9 SS Pz Div
10 SS Pz Div

In A Gp G:

11 Pz Div
21 Pz Div
15 Pz Gren Div
17 SS Pz Gren Div

253. At the order of OKW, a strong panzer counterattack was to be launched between the second phase and the third phase, from the Plateau de Langres area west past the Argonne in a general north-northwest direction. It was to sever the rearward lines of communication of enemy forces that had pushed ahead through the Argonne toward Metz and Verdun, and was to regain freedom of action for us. This attack was to have been executed by Fifth Pz Army. In addition to the panzer forces of A Gp G, the 3 and 15 Pz Gren Divs were also to take part. The two latter units were at that time being brought up toward Stenay by OKW; even when they were unloading they suffered losses due to air attacks. As far as I remember, only XLVII Pz Corps Hq appeared; the big panzer attack did not materialize because the critical moment had long since passed; it was to be repeated later from the Epinal sector.

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I. OB WEST Estimate of the Situation (early Sep 44)

254. It was imperative that Genfldm von Rundstedt reexamine the current situation and carefully determine all the capabilities of our own forces and of the enemy. The West Wall was yet unready for defense; its condition at the beginning of Sep 44 will be discussed later. As a result of this situation, we had to try, wherever possible, to hold our ground in front (west) of the West Wall, or at least to defend the approaches to the West Wall until the latter should be armed and defensible. In this matter, OB WEST and OKW were agreed.

255. Farther south, the front was to diverge from the West Wall in the vicinity of the Moselle defile, west of Trier. There, following the Moselle, the Thionville--Metz--Nancy line had to be held in order to protect the coal region of the Saar and keep it in production. Still farther south, Vosges field fortifications in the initial stages of construction had to be covered to the west, roughly in the line Nancy--Epinal--Besancon--Swiss border. Two positions had been envisaged and ordered by OKW for the defense of the Vosges: one on the western edge of the Vosges, and one on the ridge of the Vosges. While the first position consisted of nothing but field fortifications, the Vosges ridge position (Vogesen-Kammstellung) was to be partially reinforced to fortress strength by the insertion of concrete installations, particularly at the Vosges passes. In the autumn of 1944 we did succeed in providing

some of these pass positions with concrete installations, particularly for antitank weapons.

256. Our forces were at this time still very weak. On paper, it is true, about 48 infantry divisions, 15 panzer-type divisions, and several panzer brigades were on the Western Front, while the Western Allies had put in against us about 54 combined-arms units (grosse Verbände), as far as we could ascertain. If, however, one thinks in terms of combat power, it must be noted that the enemy units were completely up to strength in both men and materiel. Thus, they were at full combat effectiveness; whereas our units were, at most, comparable to about 27 enemy units--making us thus about half as strong as they.

257. The question in the middle of Sep 44 was whether the enemy would proceed at once to assault the West Wall. The chances for the enemy to break through the West Wall, or to overrun the Vosges while fortifications there were still being built, were indisputably great. In the opinion of OB WEST, the Western Allies, with massed forces, could doubtless have overrun both the West Wall and the Vosges position, and have thrust to the Rhine. In this case the final decision would have come half a year earlier. However, from the subsequent, relatively hesitant, groping approach of the enemy toward the western fortifications, we could conclude that the Western Allies wanted to close up first and undertake a planned strategic concentration in front of the western fortifications. Since, as far as strength was concerned, they would have been in a position to pursue the attack forthwith, this halt would seem to have been dictated by supply problems.

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258. Nevertheless, there naturally was constant danger of a breakthrough to the Rhine. The C-in-C West, therefore, urged very strongly the securing of the Rhine crossings through advance preparation of bridgeheads and the assembly of sufficient crossing equipment. For, though externally the front seemed well fortified during the middle of Sep 44, Genfldm von Rundstedt remained skeptical in his evaluation of our total forces and of the actual strength of the western fortifications. His conclusions were fully vindicated by the course of later fighting, whereas OKW, especially the Supreme Command itself, attributed impregnable strength to the West Wall.

II. The West Wall Delusion

259. The C-in-C West understood perfectly the value and the significance of the West Wall during the year 1944/45. There was no doubt that it had a strong mystical importance, thanks to the work of propaganda. Because of this, its actual importance as a fortress was vastly exaggerated--by the German people, too--and gradually the belief developed that it was impregnable.

260. In the year 1939/40, the West Wall had certainly been a defensive position of considerable importance and strength, and thus of strategic influence; but at that time it had been fully armed, provided with built-in weapons, and strongly wired and mined. Its communication system was in order, and a trained and powerful special garrison of fortress troops defended it and maintained the entire system, watched

the ventilation, installed equipment, and so forth. Numerous fortress antitank companies were inserted to ward off tank attacks. The strength of the concrete in the installations corresponded to the knowledge and experience of that date--most having a concrete covering of 2.50 meters and a few having 3.50 meters. The garrison dugouts and intermediate installations had, for the most part, only 1.50 meters of cover. At that time this was adequate protection against artillery and bombs. There was a long deep outpost area, provided with completely finished field fortifications. The bunker lines themselves were reinforced with field fortifications in depth, in the intervals between lines.

261. If the West Wall at that time was technically impressive, it was also fully defensible from the standpoint of its occupying force, for there was an average of one complete infantry division to each 12 km of front and in defensive centers of gravity the sectors were still narrower. (Sector width naturally depended on the extent of the threat.) In case of defensive fighting in major attacks, an additional infantry division was to be inserted in each of the division sectors attacked, so that each division would have to defend a sector only about six km wide. To the rear, in addition to ample local reserves because of the narrowness of the sectors, there were other combined-arms units (grosse Verbaende) standing by as reserves. Adequate artillery, up to the heaviest calibers, was ready in the permanent fortifications, and observation posts had been prepared in advance. At that time the units had their full combat effectiveness and their full complement of good, trained soldiers. They were also provided with adequate modern weapons of every kind.

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262. In the autumn of 1944 neither the withdrawing Western Front nor Genfldm von Rundstedt knew anything about the actual condition of the West Wall. Previous to this time the West Wall had not lain within the jurisdiction of OB WEST, and thus its condition was completely unknown to the troops and the higher staffs. At any rate, the field forces expected to find a strong defensive position, in which reception forces would be standing by to give a necessary breathing spell to the frontline troops, which were weakened and tired by the preceding long period of fighting. But the picture which the oncoming troops found was without comfort: No mines, no barbed wire entanglements, installations without fortress weapons and--in part--completely neglected and useless, the communication net largely dismantled, technical furnishings lacking or useless, no security garrison, and trained technical personnel and fortress troops lacking. True, at the last minute, when the troops were approaching the West Wall, OKW had summoned the people ("Volks-Aufgebot"), under the direction of the local Gauleiters, to build field fortifications in the areas between permanent fortifications and in the rearward switch positions. However, this work took place without the necessary military supervision and without any broad tactical directive, so that on the whole each Gauleiter improved his sector according to his own ideas; for this reason, there was no unifying principle in the reconstruction of the West Wall. What these courageous people--mostly women, children, and old men--achieved under the worse possible personal conditions, deserves to be remembered. From both a military and tactical

viewpoint, however, the results were in no proportion to the effort expended or to later losses among the drafted workers themselves.

263. How is one to explain the condition of the West Wall? Since 1941/42 it had been cannibalized in favor of the Atlantic Wall! The general scarcity of equipment and raw material probably necessitated this, but the Supreme Command had robbed itself of a possible support in case of reverses. Now, divisions which had been worn down and decimated by months of fighting, whose current combat strength in fighting men often came to only 1,000 - 1,500 at the most (these units were not brought up to strength until after they got to the West Wall, and then with men inadequate from the standpoint of age and physical condition), had to defend the West Wall. Due to the prevailing deficiency in numbers, these divisions had to defend sectors many times as wide as the original defensive sector of a full-strength division. In addition, the efficiency of the enemy's weapons had risen incredibly during the war years. The construction in the West Wall was no longer any protection against the heavy bombings. The development of the West Wall ceased in 1939/40, but the enemy's technical development did not! Furthermore, we lacked an air force which could have intervened in the fighting for the outpost area and for the West Wall itself, and thus have relieved the pressure on the troops. Therefore, in the autumn of 1944 the West Wall was formidable only because of its old reputation and because of propaganda; actually it had no defensive strength.*

*Pt 13 of 14 pts of MS # B-633, Genfldm von Rundstedt:

As early as 1940 I found it wrong that the West Wall should be dismantled, for even in the quietest time of peace, formerly,

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we did not dismantle our fortifications in Germany. The West Wall's location with respect to terrain was not everywhere favorable in the battles of 1944 - 45; conditions were different after 1939 - 40, even apart from the fairly useless state of the bunkers against modern weapons, etc. It would in many cases have been better to select favorable defensive positions in the terrain before or behind the West Wall, and fortify them for tactical use in good time, especially between the Moselle and the lower Rhine.

to hold the old West Wall with the weak forces and man every bunker, merely for reasons of prestige, was madness and led to one disaster after another. It was the same when single troop units stubbornly held their positions during great strategic withdrawals. It was the same in the East after the failure of the Ardennes Offensive.

III. Proposals for Utilization of the West Wall

264. OB WEST, aware of this situation, in the autumn of 1944 gravely feared an enemy breakthrough to the Rhine, and all its consequences. In fact, OB WEST considered it miraculous that there was no breakthrough. In order at least to do what was humanly possible to reorganize the defensive capabilities of the West Wall, about the middle of September Genfldm von Rundstedt proposed to OKW the immediate organization of the staff of an "Oberkommando der Westbefestigungen" (Western Fortifications Command). This staff of specialists was to direct the over-all technical armament and the equipping of all fortified installations of the West Wall, as well as the construction of all western fortifications; it was to work in close tactical cooperation with A Gp B and A Gp G. OKW approved this proposal. At the beginning of Oct 44, Gen Fl Kitzinger was entrusted by the Supreme Command with this mission; Gen Pi Kuntze had been recommended by OB WEST.

265. The West Wall could have been used to the best advantage if it had been promptly--at the latest when the Normandy breakthrough began to take shape, but better still when the Invasion began--subordinated to OB WEST, and if the latter's authority had been augmented as follows:

a. Complete subordination of the adjacent wehrkreis (at least Wehrkreis IX, XI, XII, V, XIII, and VII) to OB WEST.

b. Jurisdiction over the Gauleitungen (county or provincial governments) within these wehrkreis.

c. Immediate formation of a special fortifications staff, to be charged with arming and construction, under the control of OB WEST.

d. Extension of the OB WEST theater of operations to the rear, as far as 30 km east of the Rhine.

266. If the above measures had been taken promptly, OB WEST would have been able to adjust the activities in the rear to the operational measures in the combat zone and could have developed a powerful rearward West Wall position--or preferably, strategic zone. The security garrison could have been procured from the various wehrkreis and trained in the West Wall. Armament and installation for defense would have been entrusted to responsible authorities. The strategically decisive Rhine line, behind which most of the forces should have been put at an early date, would have been prepared for defense as the main line of resistance. There the "drafted" workers (Volksaufgebots) should have been employed, under tactical direction, to improve the Rhine bridge-heads and positions and to prepare crossing sites, etc. Thus, a deep

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zone for delaying action would have been formed as the outpost area of the Rhine position.

267. The details of this plan would have included:

a. Preparations for the evacuation of the entire population and all equipment and supplies from this zone at a given order.

b. Transfer, in time, of all war industry east of the Rhine.

c. Construction of a deep system of intermediate and switch positions (field fortifications) as well as of additional rear positions in order to effect the very toughest delaying resistance between the West Wall and the Rhine.

d. Preparation of all West Wall fortress construction not only for defense but also for thorough demolition.

e. Preparations for damming or flooding, etc, by using available dams.

f. Preparations for the destruction of all bridges, public utilities, and strategic sections of road; the erection of tank obstacles on a vast scale, and extremely thorough mining.

g. Creation of fortified bridgeheads at all important Rhine crossings, and assembly of necessary crossing materiel as well as personnel trained to use it.

h. Preparation of the Rhine line for effective defense.

268. Had these tactics been adopted soon enough, we would probably have succeeded in moving forces eastward in time; and in concentrating, behind the Rhine, a strategic reserve which could have been

employed in the battle for the River. (See App 16.) Perhaps we might then have succeeded in damming the tidal wave in the East, in gaining more time, and in creating a situation which would certainly have been more favorable militarily than the one that existed in Mar 45.

269. It must be inserted here that on 8 Sep 44 Genfldm von Rundstedt reported to OKW on the combat strength of his units in comparison with those of the enemy:

Our forces comprise 48 infantry divisions and 15 panzer divisions; of these, only one-fourth are at full combat strength, so that their total effectiveness can be estimated as 27 infantry divisions and 6-7 panzer divisions, at most. To these are opposed some 60 enemy units at full battle strength.

270. Certainly, many arguments could have been expressed at OKW against such a solution: consideration for the population and for the planning of food production, the importance of holding enemy air bases as far distant as possible, loss of prestige, and many others. Yet the only solution was a sweeping solution, for half-measures ultimately lost us everything. In any case, these ideas--quite apart from the fact that ending the War would long ago have been the most logical thing to do--occupied Genfldm von Rundstedt and he often discussed them. However, even the proposal to subordinate a single wehrkreis promptly to OB WEST was disapproved by OKW, apparently because of organizational plans for the future which OB WEST did not know about. Perhaps the Supreme Command objected in principle to the delegation of a great amount of authority to any higher commander, under any circumstances; this is difficult to determine, and will therefore not be discussed. One

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thing is clear, however: The Supreme Command overrated the fighting power of the troops and the value of the western fortifications, despite reports and estimates by OB WEST, and, apparently on this account, arrived at completely inaccurate time calculations and consequently at invalid estimates of the German capabilities.*

*Pt 12 of 31 pts of MS # B-672, Genmaj von Buttlar:

The writer has proposed a solution which, to a soldier, certainly appears very tempting at first sight. On examining the proposal more closely, however, it becomes evident that it would have involved such tremendous difficulties, not only in the military but also in the economic and organizational fields, that it would scarcely have been practicable, even given the political prerequisites. Anyone who has the slightest knowledge of the actual conditions at the time, however, will confirm that the required political conditions could not have been produced under the system of government then prevailing in Germany.

The writer also says, "Certainly, many arguments could have been expressed at OKW against such a solution..." OKW might well have felt doubts, for where was the army in the East, for example, which was after all the largest part of the German Army, to find personnel replacements and equipment, if the wehrkreis which were richest in personnel and armament (apart from Wehrkreis VI) were to become OB WEST's operational area, and thus be excluded from all centralized planning? To find compensation for this single factor would have presented very great problems. What would have been decisive with this plan, however, was that the Party, industry, and probably also the Luftwaffe and traffic authorities would have opposed the proposal, and would doubtless have given good, concrete reasons for their disapproval. It is a gross over-estimation of the influence of the Wehrmacht to imagine that it could have imposed such all-embracing measures.

In addition, I consider it technically impossible for a staff, commanding and fighting in France, to discharge simultaneously responsibilities of such magnitude, without its primary military mission having to suffer. Inevitably, the staff of OB WEST would have become so involved in organizational and administrative tasks that it would have had neither time nor energy left for the conduct of operations.

In contrast to the writer, I consider the Rhine line, under modern conditions, suited for defense only to a very limited degree.

271. In any case, Von Rundstedt's estimate of the value of the western fortifications and of the combat power of his forces gradually led him to his later decision to solicit a clear-cut directive from the Supreme Command, as to the action to be taken if the western fortifications could not be held or became of illusory value due to a penetration in Holland. In particular, would it not be better to give up at least Holland and have the strategic solution of a unified coherent front, from the IJssel Meer to the Rhine and along the Rhine to the Swiss border. Such a front would permit the battle, if one still had to be fought, to be conducted with the prospect of at least gaining time. This proposal was disapproved by the Supreme Command. Indeed, the requested directive included an order from Hitler that Holland be defended as a fortress to the last, even if it were cut off from the rest of the front and attacked on all sides. This directive implied a new loss of forces and possibly sacrifice of the continuity of the Western Front.

272. The deliberations of OB WEST concerning the West Wall and strategic possibilities for the German command in the event the Rhine was selected as the main line of resistance, were to be fully justified later, in the spring of 1945. The West Wall no longer had any defensive strength in the face of the onslaught of the Western Allies.

About the end of Feb 45, if I remember correctly, Genfldm von Rundstedt again reported this situation in lucid detail to OKW, at

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a time when Adolf Hitler had renewed his command to hold every single West Wall bunker to the end. It was completely impracticable to carry out this order, for our forces were inadequate to man each bunker and, in places, the West Wall had been broken through or breeched, with the result that envelopments from the flank and the rear could eliminate one bunker group after another. Von Rundstedt's very detailed report, though based on data from A Gp B and completely factual, aroused nothing but the greatest displeasure when it reached the top. According to reports, Hitler called it "the most infamous document of the War" ("groesste Schanddokument dieses Krieges"). It doubtless contributed to the fourth dismissal of Genfldm von Rundstedt.

273. Command posts in the West in mid-Sep 44 were:

OB WEST: Hoehr-Grenzhausen

A Gp B : Krefeld

A Gp G : Molsheim (Alsace)

Chapter Twenty-Three

THE BALANCE-SHEET

I. The Debit Column

274. It may seem strange to provide a military report with a "final balance." In this case, however, we must compute a result which can only be called a balance--and a very sad one at that. The campaign in the West cost Germany about 500,000 men, from the beginning of the Invasion until the arrival of the units at the West Wall. Of these, approximately 200,000 men--in compliance with orders--remained in the coastal fortresses, on the Channel Islands, and in other "last-ditch" positions; the remaining 300,000 men comprise the killed, the wounded, and the missing. Even if one assumes that, of these, about 100,000 wounded remained in German hands, there remains a loss of some 400,000 men to be written off. (These figures are based on estimates, but probably come pretty close to the truth.) The number of higher commanders killed and wounded was unusually high, and the same was true of general staff corps officers. Among the very highest ranking officers in the West, the following losses alone are to be noted:

One army group commander (simultaneously C-in-C West)
dead (Von Kluge)

One army group commander badly wounded (Rommel)

One army commander dead (Dollmann)

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One army commander badly wounded (Hausser)

One army commander missing (Eberbach)

275. Losses in materiel and equipment cannot even be estimated. Everything in the coastal defenses that was permanently installed or lacked mobility, was absolutely lost, regardless of whether it was destroyed or not. To this must be added our materiel losses during the battles themselves, particularly in the Falaise Pocket and south of the lower Seine, as well as all equipment including vehicles and rolling stock, which had to be left behind.

276. And all these sacrifices were in vain! For not only the campaign in the West, but the whole war was definitely lost once the Invasion had succeeded. It should have been the concern of the Supreme Command to draw the necessary conclusions from this fact.

II. Reasons for the Invasion's Success and the Allied Victory

277. From the very beginning, the powers of direction and command were decentralized. While our liberal democratic opponents had a strict, unified command in operational matters, on our side--the side of "total dictatorship"--a unified military command was out of the question. Why this was the case one still cannot fully explain. As things were, Von Rundstedt (and his successors) could not successfully command, especially when his conclusions and judgments--though vindicated completely by later events--were disapproved, with almost monotonous

regularity, by OKW or the Supreme Command. In general, these disapprovals were never accompanied by reasons.

278. Approximately 4,000 km of foreign coast line and borders could not be uniformly garrisoned and defended in one continuous line by about 60 divisions--the approximate number at the time the Invasion began. Nor could a uniformly strong fortified wall be built along the entire western coastal area within about three and a half years.

279. It was therefore necessary, as proposed by OB WEST, to forego an inadequate defense of everything and to create a great central strategic reserve for OB WEST, which would in any event have been more effective than the forces lying idle on unattacked coastal fronts.

280. If there was to be a strategic reserve in the West (Pz Lehr Div, 12 SS Pz Div, and 17 SS Pz Gren Div), then it belonged under the control of OB WEST, not OKW. The first day of the Invasion showed this. Since the C-in-C West was supposed to command, he should have been given the necessary means.

281. Long before the Invasion, the air force in the West had become weak and ineffective, and, some time prior to the Invasion, it became impossible to secure a coherent picture of the southern coast of England by aerial reconnaissance. Enemy air force penetrations, by bombardment wings as well as by fighter planes, could no longer be engaged at all by the Luftwaffe. The OKW promise to OB WEST and Third Air Force, to reinforce the Luftwaffe in the West the first day of the Invasion, was not kept. On about the third or fourth day, reinforcements did

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arrive, but they were not of much use against the Invasion proper, because all airfields near the front had already been destroyed.* Thus,

*Pt 13 of 31 pts of MS # B-672, Genmaj von Buttlar:

Elsewhere in my commentary, I have already touched upon most of the theses presented by the author in this chapter. Only a few points remain to be examined.

The writer says that the OKW promise to OB WEST to adequately reinforce the Luftwaffe in the West the first day of the Invasion, was not kept. In the war diary of the WFSt, under 7 Jun 44, we find: "The reinforcement of our air forces, which was ordered on 6 June, was carried out on 7 June, and on this date we committed 400 aircraft." I admit that this was not adequate, but the Luftwaffe clearly realized the seriousness and importance of the mission and certainly made the greatest possible effort.

at the start of the Invasion, Third Air Force had to fight a completely hopeless battle with about 90 fighters and 70 bombers. Inasmuch as the importance of a strong air force increased during the War until its effects became decisive, it is not going too far to establish absolute mastery of the air as the primary reason for the success of the Western Allies.

282. The C-in-C West should have been spared constant interference "from above" and should have been permitted to conduct operations in his own way, especially since those "interfering" had no personal knowledge of the theater of operations and its demands. (Lack of familiarity with the front.)* **

*Author's Note: The C-in-C West continually urged that responsible representatives of OKW proceed to the West in order that they might see, with their own eyes, the situation, the condition of the field forces, and our complete inferiority in the air. So far as I can remember, representatives of OKW (Genobst Jodl, Genmaj von Buttlar, and Gen Art

Warlimont), as an exception, spent about a week in the West traveling through the coastal sectors and inspecting defensive installations, during the first half of May 44. Genobst Jodl inspected the Fifteenth Army sector along the Channel; Genmaj von Buttlar, Brittany and Normandy; and Gen Art Warlimont, the French Mediterranean coast. I cannot recall in detail the results of these inspections, but Genmaj von Buttlar, in agreement with OB WEST, characterized the defensive strength of Normandy, and especially that of Cherbourg, as inadequate.

During the Invasion, but exactly when I do not remember, in response to repeated urgings by OB WEST, Gen Art Warlimont of OKW came to Normandy so that, at the center of the battle, he might gain an understanding of the situation and the enemy superiority in the air and in materiel. So far as I know, however, he never reached the critical sector, but proceeded from OB WEST to A Gp B Headquarters and thence to the coast south of the lower Seine. Hence he was unable to get an accurate impression of the actual combat situation, and his reports after his return to OKW could not portray reality.

**Pt 14 of 31 pts of MS # B-672, Genmaj von Buttlar:

The writer reproaches OKW for its "lack of familiarity with the front." It is a fact that it was very difficult to obtain the approval of Hitler and of the Chief of the WFSt for trips to the front. As the WFSt was rather understaffed, the highest authorities tended to suspect that the work at hand was neglected in favor of the very popular and, to my mind, necessary and useful visits to the front. Nevertheless, I succeeded in so arranging matters in the operations division of the WFSt that, of my six general staff officers, one or two were constantly on such trips. I do not know whether, in the staff of OB WEST, the general staff officers had as much opportunity to travel to the front. In considering this question, one must take into account the fact that the WFSt did not have only the Western Theater to look after, and therefore it was natural that its officers could appear only less often in each individual theater of operations.

283. Our strength did not justify our tying down and sacrificing valuable manpower and materiel in "fortresses" which were virtually defenseless on the landward side and which lost their importance to the seaward as soon as the Invasion succeeded. At the decisive moment, they were impotent. This was especially true in the case of the Channel Islands.

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.284. The status of our forces and replacements meant that we could not afford to practice and order a "hold at any cost" policy; rather, we had to be particularly economical with the forces we had. The latter policy, however, would have demanded prompt "operations" by OB WEST, which were forbidden.

285. It was necessary to look not only to the front, but also to the rear; to formulate and execute preventive measures sufficiently in advance; and not to forbid every farsighted measure against possible reversals.

286. Had the preceding point of view been accepted, even the concentration of a Supreme Command reserve in Germany would have been possible, by shortening the fronts in the West and in Italy at the proper time.

287. A proven army commander (Heerfuehrer) should have been given the freedom of action which would enable him to enjoy his responsibility.

288. Quick decisions could never be obtained from OKW. When they finally did arrive, often 12 to 24 hours later, they had been rendered obsolete by reality.

289. The principal mistake, however, was that the War had long since been lost! It should have been the business of the Supreme Command to accept this truth and act accordingly, not to obscure the true

situation and cause new and useless sacrifices each day by continually renewing hopes for a change in the fortunes of war.* ** **

*Pt 24 of 24 pts of MS # B-718, Genlt Speidel:

I quite agree with this paragraph. Involuntarily, however, it becomes a reproach against the highest military authorities! In any case, not even a thought appears to have been given to the question of when the obligation of a great captain to obey reaches its limit, in the feeling of responsibility for the fate of his own country, and indeed of the whole of Europe. "Remonstrances" and "serious reports" were of no use, only saving action could bring about an improvement.

The highest leaders must be able to differentiate between obedience to God and their conscience, and obedience to men. In certain cases, when all other possibilities are exhausted, they must, for the sake of their people, act in an unorthodox way. Their duty to their country goes deeper than blind obedience to a tyrant's rule. Thus there may come a moment when their duty is to disobey. The former Chief of the German General Staff, Genobst Beck, staking his position and himself, undertook to put a stop to the fateful activities of a ruler determined to plumb the depths of crime.

This type of action and "metaphysical civil courage", in all spheres and in the widest sense, could and had to be the right--and within the capacity--of men at the highest levels of command, but not of every individual soldier and officer. In the case of the highest commanders, there had to be a "revolt of conscience," a personal responsibility to take decisions, which was in contradiction to the mere executive responsibility demanded by Hitler.

For the rest, a warning should be given here, as in every other case, against passing summary judgment after the events.

**Pt 15 of 31 pts of MS # B-672, Genmaj von Buttlar:

The writer's "final balance" would have been of more value if, in addition to relating the errors of the subordinate and of the superior headquarters, he had also mentioned the faults of his own headquarters. This would certainly have lessened the somewhat painful impression made on the unbiased reader by the constant implications of the report in a certain direction.

***Pt 14 of 14 pts of MS # B-633, Genfldm von Rundstedt:

I agree entirely with Genlt Zimmermann's "balance-sheet" and also add the following. I have often been asked, by Allied quarters,

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why I did not give in at the end of 1944 or the beginning of 1945, by agreement with the enemy command.

Quite apart from the fact that this action would have been common treason, it would have had incalculable consequences for Germany. Because of the propaganda and the prevailing mood of the country after 20 July, and the artificially stimulated hate against the generals, a civil war would have broken out, with all kinds of SS atrocities. Whether the troops at the front would have participated in a capitulation is more than doubtful, in view of their attitude which, thank Heaven, was still decent and soldierly. All troops in the East would certainly have been taken prisoner by the Russians. But most important, the "Big Three" had so often declared that it was not enough for Hitler to disappear, the whole people must suffer. The disappointed German people would therefore have had just the same burdens, occupation, etc, to bear as now, and at best would have had only a few less bombed towns to show for it.

And I would now be, in the eyes of the disappointed people, the greatest traitor of all time!

290. If, opposed to the unfortunately negative items, a clean and positive entry can be made, it is the honorable record of the German soldiers. Men and officers, they performed their duty in good faith--under spiritual and psychological handicaps unequalled in any other war! Despite all apprehension and restraint, they fought, they bled, they died, for their country, their people, their families. Bravely they endured, without hope, to the bitter end--precisely because they were German soldiers, and only soldiers. In the histories of the future may this never be forgotten!

OB WEST**(Atlantic Wall to Siegfried Line)*****A STUDY IN COMMAND***

MS # B-308: GENLT ZIMMERMANN
MS # B-672: GENMAJ von BUTTLAR
MS # B-718: GENLT SPEIDEL
MS # B-633: GENFLDM von RUNDSTEDT
MS # B-344: GEN INF BLUMENTRITT



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Annex One

(Pt 2 of 31 pts of MS # B-672, Genmaj von Buttlar)

THE RELATIONSHIP OF OB WEST TO THE SUPREME COMMAND

1. There were certainly contrasting views between Hitler and OB WEST: the strength of the Channel Islands garrison, the question of construction of rearward positions, etc. There were also differences of opinion between the WFSt (Armed Forces Operations Staff) and OB WEST: the question of mobile warfare in the West, the question of complete subordination of elements of the Ersatzheer (Replacement Training Army) located in the West, etc. There were even matters on which the WFSt and OB WEST agreed, but concerning which they did not succeed in persuading Hitler to accept their common views: the command authority of OB WEST, strategic reserves, the question of operational decisions to be made at the right time by Hitler (Avranches, evacuation of southern and southwestern France), etc. It was, however, certainly not the case that, during years of preparation and months of Invasion battles, the C-in-C West, in his considerations and proposals, always not only worked out the correct solution with his inner staff, but also reported it to Hitler and was then always met by disapproval of his recommendations

and requests, and then, against his express will and proposals, a less appropriate decision was taken.

2. The writer sees OB WEST as having played a much more active role in the sphere of operational ideas than, according to my memory, was actually the case or than appeared to OKW to be the case-- at least up to the moment when Gen Westphal took over the duties of Chief of Staff of OB WEST.

3. Reading Gen Zimmermann's report with an unprejudiced mind, one has the impression that the War in the West was conducted under the burden of acute tension and continuous opposition to OKW and A Gp B. As far as OKW is concerned, I can testify that, during the period 1 Jan 42 - 16 Nov 44. (the time during which I was a member of the WFSt), cooperation with OB WEST was altogether good. In addition to the official written correspondence, a constant exchange of ideas was kept up by lively and regular private correspondence between the Chief of Staff of OB WEST and the Chief of the WFSt. In these letters, as far as I know, matters were often discussed in confidence, among them operational problems as well, which were not yet ripe for official consideration.

4. Neither from this written correspondence nor from the numerous telephone conversations which I had with members of the OB WEST Staff, in particular with the writer of the report in question, did I gain the impression that there were seriously divergent views.

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On the contrary, as long as I was with the WFSt, I was convinced that, our views being in far-reaching agreement, the staff of OB WEST was confident that the WFSt did try to present OB WEST's opinions to Hitler, and both sides did their best, in loyal cooperation, to remove the difficulties which were an inevitable companion to the existing structure of our command.

5. If OB WEST had had the impression that the WFSt was not adequately representing its views to Hitler, or did not share them, then Genfldm von Rundstedt could always have intervened personally and made his opinion known to Hitler, to whom he was directly subordinate. This possibility was available to him at any time, either by a visit to Hitler's Headquarters or by telephone communication. If, therefore, OB WEST's conclusions and attitude toward the orders given were at the time as clear and definite as the writer indicates, Genfldm von Rundstedt would certainly and understandably have made use of these possibilities much more often than was, to my knowledge, the case.

6. I therefore cannot see any justification for the general tendency which the writer attributes to the relationship between OB WEST and OKW, judging by the actual conditions at the time, and may in this connection perhaps also point out that the relatively few changes in the personnel holding the more important posts in the OB WEST Staff may be regarded as proof that there was no question of

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continuous disagreement and constant opposition of OB WEST to the measures decreed by the Supreme Command.

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Annex Two

(Pt 23 of 31 pts of MS # B-672, Genmaj von Buttlar)

EVALUATION OF THE ATLANTIC WALL IN JANUARY 1944

1. In 1944 I was senior general staff officer of the German Army (Heer) in the WFSt, and chief of the operations division (Heer). As such, I accompanied the Chief of the WFSt on his journey to the northern coast of France in Jan 44. To carry out the inspection, I was given the mission of examining the Seventh Army sector, from the mouth of the Orne to St Malo, inclusive, while Genobst Jodl himself inspected principally the Channel Coast. Insofar as my remarks deal with observations made in the area of Fifteenth Army, and the conclusions to be drawn from them, I rely on information given me by Genobst Jodl, or on statements and suggestions which the latter made in his interview with Hitler, after discussing them with me.

I. Occasion for the Inspection

2. As early as the beginning of the second half of 1943, the WFSt had received reports and information, from the field forces as well as from Organisation Todt, which was entrusted with the con-

struction and improvement of the Atlantic Wall, indicating that the work was being executed in many different ways. In essence, the question involved was whether a few very limited, but especially vulnerable sectors should be fortified in the manner of strongpoints, and the bulk of available construction capacity be concentrated there, or whether a more uniform construction policy should be adopted along the entire coast, in the nature of reinforced field fortifications. In the latter case, the over-all plan would, of course, also allow for heavier fortification of especially vulnerable sectors of the coast. These would have been, according to the current WFSt estimate of enemy intentions, particularly the Channel Coast, Normandy, and Brittany.

3. Organisation Todt preferred the fortification of separate, strictly limited areas, to be built up like fortresses, as it could in this way better exploit its means (machinery, laborers, transportation, etc). On the other hand, most of the field forces preferred the construction of a virtually unbroken line of fortifications, disposed in depth, but less strongly set up and not concentrated in a few localities. As far as I remember, OB WEST shared this attitude of the majority of troop commanders, at least at the end of 1943.

4. As in the question of construction, so also in that of the strategic conduct of the planned defense were there diverse opinions. One group of commanders, which Genfldm Rommel later joined

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with especial determination, held the opinion that the enemy landing had to be wiped out right on the coast, and therefore all available forces should be permanently employed in such a way as to be effective on the coast, or else—located close behind it—be able to intervene in the battle for the coast within the shortest possible time. The other group, including the C-in-C West, believed that a successful defense of the entire coast, preventing the enemy from penetrating the main line of resistance, would never be possible with the forces which could be made available, and in view of the uncertainty as to where the enemy, who enjoyed complete freedom of action, would really land. This group therefore regarded the coastal battle as a means of gaining time, by the commitment of relatively weak forces, while the strong reserve groups were preparing concerted action against the enemy once he had landed.

5. At that time, the WFSt was of the opinion that it would probably be possible to create only a small force organized and equipped in such a way as to be equal to operational missions; the main body of the forces would, due to their organization and equipment, be restricted to combat in the fortifications. With this in mind, the Chief of the WFSt, considering also the ever-growing enemy air superiority, advocated that most of the less mobile units be employed on the coast, but that a small and fully mobile strategic reserve be kept in readiness for missions requiring rapid intervention.

6. The object of the trip, therefore, was to present to Hitler first-hand information concerning the actual state of construction of the Atlantic Wall, and to submit a proposal for the conduct of operations in France when the Invasion came, as well as for the way in which the defensive installations could be further built up.

II. Facts Established

At the order of the Chief of the WFSt, I visited the sector bounded on the right by the mouth of the Orne, inclusive, and on the left by St Malo, inclusive. I drew my conclusions from an inspection of the majority of the installations and strongpoints.

7. The Command, which for the larger part of the sector was in the hands of the especially energetic and outstandingly well-informed Commander of the LXXXIV Inf Corps (Gen Art Marcks), expected the main weight of the enemy landing in Normandy, and that--the Channel Islands being captured simultaneously by a combined airborne and naval landing--one enemy group would land in the district of the mouth of the Orne, and one around St Malo. The first enemy objective would be to cut off Normandy, including the Cotentin, from the rest of France and capture Cherbourg from the land, as a base for further operations. Construction in Marcks' sector had been carried on ac-

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cordingly up until then, and in Jan 44 had reached the following stage:

a. The mouth of the Orne was well fortified along the sea front, but there was as yet no land front constructed, which meant that particularly the northern flank of the installations located near the sea was almost entirely exposed.

b. In Cherbourg, construction had been initiated on a grand scale and driven forward energetically. The sea front was fit for defense and well anchored on the wings by the fortifications at the eastern and western corners. The fortification of the inland front was, with few exceptions, only in the initial stages. The main disadvantage was that the plan had been drawn up for fortifications on such an extensive scale that they would require three to four complete divisions for their defense, once completed.

c. St Malo construction, the most advanced in planning and execution, was fit for defense, over a limited period, against attack from the sea or from inland.

d. The wide expanse of terrain between these three locales was at this time guarded only by strongpoints which had been established by the troops with mere field expedients, and which were manned by about 1,500 - 2,000 men each. There was absolutely no disposition in depth. Should the enemy succeed in capturing a single one of these strongpoints, a gap of three to four km would be torn

open, through which the enemy could march in as he pleased. The strongpoints could not expect any artillery support worthy of mention, except in the areas of main effort (Orne, Cherbourg, and St Malo). In the other widely extended coastal sectors, the strongpoints were essentially dependent on their light, and few heavy, infantry weapons.

e. The artillery positions were, for the most part, established as demanded by the Navy, in such a way as to be mainly effective against naval targets. The batteries, though well camouflaged, were located in comparatively exposed positions along the beaches. They were not always in a location where they could give full support to the strongpoints engaged in combat. I was of the opinion at the time that the majority of these batteries, in their exposed positions, would never open fire at all, because I expected them to be put out of action beforehand by the enemy air force. This expectation, however, was not fulfilled.

8. In Jan 44, Gen Marcks estimated that, with the forces then at his disposal (about two and one-half divisions), he could conduct neither a decisive defense of the whole of his coastal sector, nor even a prolonged defense of the installations in the more strongly fortified areas. He pointed out that even if the forces on the coastal front were doubled, they would form only a thin crust which might break at any point and render all the other forces along the coast ineffectual within a short time. His proposal was:

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a. To shift the main effort in construction to the terrain between the points hitherto concentrated on, in order there to create small, fortified resistance groups (Widerstandgruppen) of great defensive power, and at least some disposition in depth. Intensified production of foreshore obstacles (Vorstrandhindernisse)

b. To maintain the coastal garrison in its existing strength, but firmly installed as fortress garrisons in the separate strongpoints. The coastal forces were to have the mission of engaging the enemy landing, splitting up the enemy forces once they had landed, and gaining time for bringing up reserves for the counterattack.

c. To create a reserve of tanks and mobile infantry divisions, which would be disposed in the rear of his sector in such a way as to be able to intervene, in mass as far as possible, at any threatened point within 24 hours.

d. Special requirements for the commitment of the Luftwaffe, particularly for the protection of movements of reserves, and attacks on the enemy landing fleet, which I will not go into in detail here.

9. After my investigation of conditions as they existed in Jan 44, I could only fully agree with Gen Marcks' estimate, although I expressed doubt as to whether it would prove possible to assemble mobile forces and the Luftwaffe in sufficient strength to conduct operations in that way at all sectors in danger.

10. Genobst Jodl had a more favorable impression of the Fifteenth Army sector, which he visited, with regard to the state of construction, especially of foreshore obstacles and of mine fields, as well as with regard to the defensive strength of the infantry and artillery. Compared with the Seventh Army area, greater progress had been made in the construction of inland fronts at the harbors destined for all-around defense.

III. Jodl's Estimate of the Situation to Hitler

11. The local commanders have based all their preparations on the expectation that the enemy will carry out a landing operation between May and July. The commanders at the front believe that the most probable objectives of the landing are the Channel Coast and Normandy.

12. The field forces desire that construction should be furthered particularly in the coastal sectors outside the defensive centers of gravity, but it will not be possible—even with the greatest of effort—to bring this, together with the improvement of the foreshore obstacles, to such a point by the date indicated, that the whole length of the threatened coast will be fit for defense. In addition to this, by the summer of 1944 we will scarcely have sufficient forces in the West to occupy the entire coast in the strength and depth

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necessary for an effective defense.

13. While fully appreciating the immense advantage naturally gained by destroying the enemy in front of the main (coastal) line of resistance, I still believe that an attempt to do this would, in view of the forces available and the state of construction, place the entirety of our forces in a kind of fortified, combat-outpost position, which would lack both a main line of resistance and reserves.

14. I therefore agree with the views of OB WEST, who intends, while continuing construction on the coast with all available means, to organize the tanks at his disposal and a number of fully mobile infantry divisions, in groups, to the rear of the most seriously endangered sectors so that, as an OB WEST Reserve, they can counter-attack at short notice in the battle for the coast and throw back into the sea any enemy elements which may have gotten ashore. The total number of forces available for this will always be small, for it will not be possible to equip a large number of infantry divisions with the personnel and materiel which would render them equal to this type of mission.

15. Moreover, I agree with the OB WEST intention to schedule the displacement of, if possible, all the elements committed for coastal defense--apart from the fortress infantry battalions--to the sectors under attack. There, being as mobile as possible expedients will allow, they can at least be used away from the defensive

centers of gravity, and for relief purposes.

16. In the event of an enemy landing, everything must be immediately thrown in at the one spot—at any risk—in order to retrieve the situation definitely. Should the enemy land elsewhere later, then all forces must be shifted there in the greatest concentration possible.

17. It is a prerequisite of this plan that the Luftwaffe be in a position to cover the necessary troop movements. (This had been guaranteed by the Luftwaffe and was at the time believed possible by Genobst Jodl.) A further prerequisite is that we succeed, by May, in considerably increasing the number of forces really capable of operational employment away from the fortifications.

IV. The Results

18. Hitler approved, in principle, the report of the Chief of the WFSt. The main effort of construction was devoted increasingly to the lighter works, in particular to separate, concrete-covered emplacements for the light and heavy infantry weapons, and to improvement of the foreshore obstacles. The only large works whose construction was still essential were the rocket launching sites, and some improvements in U-boat bunkers.

19. For the conduct of operations, Hitler still insisted on the determined defense of the coast, but approved the principle

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that all panzer divisions located in the West or transferred there for organization or rehabilitation be withdrawn from the coast and, as OKW or OB WEST reserves, be held in readiness for use as operational reserves of the command. He insisted, however, that as far as possible they should be committed only in a mass counterattack, and only at his express command. As the reserve became increasingly fit for action, some fully mobile infantry or fallschirm ("parachute") divisions were also to be assigned to it, but they were not necessarily to be located in its immediate vicinity.

20. OB WEST's basic idea of committing all available forces against an enemy landing, at the risk of very much exposing the rest of the coast, was approved.

21. During the course of the spring of 1944 a change appeared in the attitude which Hitler had taken after hearing the report on our trip. This was a definite result of the influence of Genfldm Rommel, and its tendency was contrary to the views of the Chief of the WFSt and of OB WEST.

Annex Three

(Pt 24 of 31 pts of MS # B-672, Genmaj von Buttlar)

ASSIGNMENT OF A GP B TO A MISSION IN THE WEST

1. In Italy the German command had been preparing for a long time against the defection of its Ally. The necessity of a higher German operations staff in northern Italy was recognized, and this was set up in the form of Hq, A Gp "Rommel." Apart from certain preparations for the event of an enemy landing in northern Italy, the chief mission of the Staff was to secure the lines of communication linking the German Army in Italy with Germany, and to disarm those elements of the strong Italian forces in northern Italy that should not continue voluntarily to fight with us, upon the betrayal of Germany by its Ally.

2. After the disarming of the Italian forces in the autumn of 1943 had been accomplished with comparatively little friction, it became apparent after a certain time that the Rommel Staff was superfluous to the further conduct of operations in the limited area of the Italian Theater. Therefore, in view of our difficult materiel situation, particularly in the field of signal units, it was suggested that the Staff be disbanded. Hitler, however, did not approve

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this suggestion, on the ground that the existing uncertainty as to the intentions of our Western opponents for the year 1944 made it important that an experienced, high-level operations staff be kept in reserve, so that it could at any time, without previous reorganization on other fronts, be assigned to the area in which investigation of the enemy's further intentions in Western Europe indicated that the decisive invasion attempt was to be expected.

In compliance with Hitler's decision, the Rommel Staff was maintained as a staff for special employment (Stab zbV). Certain organizational changes were made from time to time--reductions in its strength, and alterations in its composition.

3. In order to set this staff a task in keeping with its reduced strength and with its purpose as operations staff for the future center of operations in the expected invasion battles, it was first of all assigned to investigate the preparations for defense along the northern coast of France (Flanders to Brittany).

4. For this mission, as far as I remember, the following three points of view were to be kept in mind:

a. It was Hitler's intention that the Staff should be in charge of the German defense against the Western enemy on the future main invasion front. At the time, it was believed that the northern coast of France, particularly the Channel Coast, was the area most in danger of invasion. It was therefore in the interests of its future

mission that the Rommel Staff should obtain a clear picture of the terrain and combat conditions in the area which it was to command in a decisive hour, and also that it should be able to exert a certain influence beforehand on the construction of fortifications along that coast.

b. Hitler, as well as the Chief of the WFSt, had the impression that the staff of OB WEST was so occupied by the numerous and ever increasing number of tasks requiring its attention (training and organization of new units, military administration, construction of the Atlantic Wall, preparations for the use of long-range weapons) that it was not in a position to exert the necessary driving and stimulating influence on the construction of the coastal fortifications. This could really be achieved only by continual, personal visits, and these could not be made--or at any rate not often enough--by key members of the OB WEST Staff because of the pressure of their other work.

c. Hitler and the Chief of the WFSt both felt confident that Genfldm Rommel's personality, and the experience which he and many members of his staff had already had in combat against the British, would have a favorable influence on the troops and official agencies--particularly Organisation Todt--employed in the Atlantic Wall, on the rate of construction and on the suitability of the various

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construction measures adopted in preparation for the battle for the coast.

5. The Chief of the WFSt also nourished the hope, as he clearly expressed in an oral discussion with Genfldm Rommel, that the latter would succeed in bringing his influence to bear, right on the spot, to persuade Organisation Todt to abandon the type of construction which it favored (large structures such as U-boat bunkers, and fortifications combined to form centers of main defensive effort) and pay more attention to the smaller installations (battery positions, machine-gun and heavy-weapons emplacements, command posts), which were of greater importance for the coastal fighting.

6. In giving his personal directions to Genfldm Rommel, Hitler, as far as I know, kept to the lines summarized in par 4, above. It never came to my knowledge, and I believe it unlikely, that in this interview any questions were brought up concerning subordination, responsibility for giving orders, or relationship to OB WEST, or that any supplementary mission was assigned whose scope was beyond the purely technical aspect of preparations for defensive combat. On the other hand, it is probable that Genfldm Rommel, relying on the special confidence which Hitler showed in him, secured for himself at that time a direct channel of communication with Hitler. This laid the foundation of a direct influence on Hitler which appeared on several occasions

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during the later period of Rommel's command of A Gp B.

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Annex Four

(Pt 25 of 31 pts of MS # B-672, Genmaj von Buttlar)

PRE-INVASION ESTIMATE OF THE SITUATION IN THE WEST

I. An "East Wall" Rejected in Favor of the Atlantic Wall

1. In order to give an account of the views of the Supreme Command on the situation in the West in Jun 44, I must--without describing in greater detail the general strategic position of Germany at that time--refer briefly to the concept of the reciprocal influence of the situations in the East and in the West, which Hitler had often emphasized and expounded at length, ever since my appointment to the WFSt in Jan 42. From these ideas he formed his conclusions and made decisions which, being further developed, finally and logically led up to his estimate of the situation before and at the beginning of the Invasion, and the decisions he then took.

2. When, at the beginning of 1942, the Supreme Command realized that it was going to be impossible to overrun or rapidly conquer Russia, Hitler--presumably influenced by suggestions from the Chief of Staff of the German Army and the commanders on the Eastern Front--began to consider whether a permanent line of fortifications in the form of an "East Wall" should be built. This would

have to be undertaken either in addition to or at the expense of the newly begun fortifications along the French coast (Atlantic Wall).

For the following reasons, Hitler rejected the idea of an "East Wall," in favor of the ever expanding and more accelerated construction of the Atlantic Wall:

a. Germany's resources of manpower and material were sufficient for the fortification of only one front at a time. The same limitations compelled the Germans to avoid prolonged, major battles on several fronts simultaneously. This would, however, only be possible in the West if, supported by a strongly fortified coast, they could destroy the enemy at the time of his landing. The battle for the coast had to bring about a decision within a limited time.

b. The great depth of the operational area in the East allowed of mobile warfare, if necessary, even over a long period of time. Even in the event of serious reverses in the East, there was no fear that any vital centers of German resistance would soon become endangered. On the other hand, if an enemy landing in the West should succeed, the way to the centers of Germany's resistance potential were so short that these were bound very soon to be injured by enemy action. The protection afforded by strong fortifications was therefore of greater importance in the West.

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c. The road and rail net in the East was so undeveloped in comparison with that in the West, that it would be possible to bring up the necessary equipment and building materials into the construction zone only after spending much time and using considerable forces to expand the net. In the West, however, this problem presented no special difficulties, apart from the development of the situation in the air, which could not be foreseen at the time.

d. From the point of view of terrain, the western coast, which was in our undisputed possession, offered more favorable conditions for defense than were to be found in the East, particularly since any fortifications on land have a natural advantage against attacks from the sea. This applied even in view of the very much greater freedom of action of the enemy in the West, who was completely unrestricted and could hardly be affected by us at all in the launching of his operations.

3. The result of these deliberations and of the Fuehrer's decision in favor of the Atlantic Wall was, on the one hand, the ever increasing speed and scope of the construction of fortifications along the western coast, in which all our possibilities were fully exploited. (The following examples of the more important phases may be mentioned: fortification of key points in the defensive system and of islands, fortification of the intervening terrain, preparation of the key points for all-around defense, installing the artillery and antitank guns in casemates, and foreshore defenses.) On the other hand, it was decided

to exploit these fortifications, which were under construction, to the fullest, by conducting a static defense in them, with the coast as the main line of resistance. Existing ideas to the effect that the coast should only be lightly guarded and the main body of the forces kept back inland, ready for mobile warfare in France, had to be abandoned as a logical consequence of the decision to fortify the coast so strongly. Another factor which was also decisive was the agreement of all the experts that the German armament industry was not capable of producing the materiel which the forces in the West would need for mobile warfare, if it was going to supply, even incompletely, the requirements of the Eastern Theater.

4. In making this decision, Hitler realized that even with the utmost effort of the forces available it would not be possible to bring the entire coast up to its maximum defensive capacity for years, with respect to construction, and the strength of the defending force would probably never be completely satisfactory.

II. Estimate of Enemy Intentions (1942 - Apr 44)

5. So far as an invasion attempt in the 1942 was expected at all, Hitler thought, in view of the means believed to be at the enemy's disposal, that it would only be an operation with a limited objec-

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tive, for example, the isolation of Normandy or Brittany. One of the first areas in which construction was initiated seriously was therefore the Channel Islands, for the protection of the bay of St Malo, which was regarded as particularly endangered.

6. In 1943 it was considered that, although there were no definite signs of an immediately impending invasion, the enemy's strength had risen to the point where he would be in a position to execute an invasion not only as an operation with a limited objective, but as an operation aiming to achieve decisive results, in coordination with the Russians. The distribution of forces in England and the information reaching us gave no indications as to the intended direction of attack, so the WFSt concluded on the strength of general strategic considerations that the main assault would be directed against the Channel Coast. The main effort in the defensive preparations was accordingly devoted to that area. This view was not contradicted by the local headquarters.

7. After the Chief of the WFSt had, in Jan 44, inspected the coastal defenses in the sectors of Fifteenth and Seventh Armies, he returned with the conviction that even at that time the A Gp B Commander still, as before, expected the enemy main effort in the Fifteenth Army sector, and was purposely concentrating his defensive

preparations in that direction.

In this connection it must be mentioned that in Seventh Army, Gen Art Marcks, in command in Normandy, did not agree with the above opinion and on the occasion of the visit expressed anxiety over the inadequacy of his forces and the unsatisfactory progress of construction in his sector. I did not hear what opinion Seventh Army held at that time. The C-in-C West certainly did repeatedly express doubts concerning the excessively biased attitude adopted by A Gp B, but he exerted no decisive or apparent influence on the Army Group's measures, not did he, as far as I know, make any personal request to Hitler that these measures be altered. The OB WEST estimates of the situation emphasized, up to 5 Jun 44, that the landing would in all probability occur on the Channel Coast between the Schelde and Normandy, though it could not be said at which point in this sector the enemy would attempt to land.

8. Beginning in Mar 44, there was a considerable increase in the reports of the enemy invasion preparations. These were very carefully analyzed and evaluated by the intelligence section for foreign armies in the West (Abteilung fremde Heere West), but they still did not yield a clear picture of the details of the enemy intentions. There was not a sector from Holland to the French Riviera which, if at

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all suitable, was not referred to in numerous reports as a possible invasion front. In addition, reports were not lacking which pointed to Norway, Denmark, the Helgoland Bight, and the Balkans as landing areas. At the beginning of Apr 44, however, from the frequency of the various reports and evaluation of their sources the following over-all picture of the enemy situation emerged:

a. Preparations in England and in North Africa had advanced so far that the beginning of the Invasion could be expected at any time, given suitable weather conditions.

b. Judging from the frequency and estimated reliability of the reports, the most probable areas for invasion in force were:

(1) if launched from England, the Channel Coast, and Normandy and Brittany; and

(2) if launched from Africa, the mouth of the Rhone.

c. It was to be expected that the Invasion would include a large-scale air-landing operation, as well as feints and secondary operations.

9. This picture of the enemy underwent no essential change up to the beginning of the Invasion. Even the surprisingly complete

view obtained of the assembly of the invasion forces and resources in England did not give any further clue as to the probable location of the landing.

10. The Fuehrer himself evidently had information going still further, the tenor and origin of which I do not know. It is certain, however, that beginning about the end of April Hitler devoted especial attention to Normandy and the fortification of the coast there; he believed it necessary, and ordered, that the forces located there be doubled, although the special preparations in the Fifteenth Army sector were not to be weakened. At 1900 on 6 May 44, the Chief of the WFSt, in a telephone call concerning the reinforcement of the Normandy and Brittany forces, pointed out to the OB WEST Chief of Staff that Hitler regarded the Cotentin Peninsula as the first objective of the enemy attack, although the Fuehrer was not convinced that the main weight of the Invasion would necessarily fall there.

III. Pre-Invasion Opinion of the WFSt

At the end of April or beginning of May 44, the Chief of the WFSt summarized the opinion of the WFSt in a brief estimate of the situation. The Fuehrer, as far as I remember, expressed his general agreement, but again stressed the particular danger threatening Normandy, in the form

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of an operation with a limited objective.

11. The execution of the Invasion, with long-range objectives, was to be expected in the second half of Jun 44 at the latest. A later beginning was improbable, since it could be presumed that the enemy command would wish to reach its first, distant objective, most likely the German frontier, before the beginning of the unfavorable season.

The invasion preparations in England (70-80 combined-arms units) as well as in North Africa (15-20 combined-arms units) appeared complete, but it was still not clear whether the operation based on North Africa would be directed against southern France, or against the deep flank of OB SW, in Italy. It was probable, however, that both operations would be coordinated against France.

12. In the execution of the Invasion operation, the following factors were to be considered:

a. Location of landings:

(1) From bases in England: The strategic concentration of enemy forces and the distribution of landing craft, equipment, etc, still gave no definite indication of the intended landing sector.

A successful landing on the Channel Coast would have the greatest strategic effect, but would encounter our greatest defensive strength, and the enemy knew

this.

A landing in Normandy or Brittany would be tactically easier for the enemy, but more difficult to develop strategically, and it could more easily be sealed off by us. Here the enemy would run the danger of being confined in a bridge-head of limited area, which geographical factors would encourage, and from which it would be very difficult for him to fight through to the strategic freedom of movement necessary to decide the success of the whole Invasion.

Landings on any appreciable scale were considered unlikely on the west coast of France.

The greatest probability was that the enemy would carry out his main landing on the Channel Coast, while executing smaller or larger diversionary operations, with forces ranging from commando detachments up to an operationally effective force (an army), for missions with a limited objective.

(2) From bases in Africa: In this case, the enemy would probably make his main landing east of the mouth of the Rhone, perhaps with diversionary landings in the vicinity of Sete. He would push forward astride the Rhone Valley in order to tie down forces, to exert an influence on the main battles and achieve cooperation between his forces as soon as possible, and in order to cut off from Germany

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the German forces located in western France.

b. Timing:

The enemy would probably plan his diversions, in the north as well as in southern France, to be executed before the main landing, in order to split up our reserves, especially those of the Luftwaffe, and if possible force us to disperse some of the defensive forces which we had concentrated on the Channel Coast. The time intervals between the diversions would be so regulated that the destruction of the diversionary forces would be avoided if possible, and they would achieve their objective by provoking our countermeasures. (The Chief of the WFSt expected intervals of two to seven days, depending on the strength of the force employed in the diversion.)

13. Our best defense against the Invasion would be to fight a decisive battle for the coast, in accordance with the preparations we had made until then, in the field of construction (all available materiel and personnel employed to reinforce the Atlantic Wall and beach defenses) and in the organization, composition, and arming of our forces (which consisted of fortress infantry battalions, coastal artillery, and infantry divisions of limited mobility). In order that a defensive success might be achieved, the coast should be occupied, especially in those sectors where the most severe defensive fighting was likely to take place, in the greatest strength and depth possible

under the existing shortage of men.

In addition, the necessity of a central reserve for the Western Theater, as well as reserves for the local commands, was still evident. The Supreme Command would have to reserve to itself the right to withhold or release this central reserve, in order to avoid its being dissipated or committed prematurely against diversionary operations. The constant efforts of A Gp B to get control of these reserves and "anchor" them in accordance with its own idea, would have to be resisted.

14. The first step to be taken on recognizing the enemy's main landing was, together with the release of the central reserve, the uncompromising execution of the plan suggested by OB WEST, which was—according to his reports—prepared in exhaustive detail and based on the principle that "taking every risk, and at the expense of leaving sectors unguarded, all available forces in the West should be brought to bear on the one spot, in order to ensure success there."

(In this matter the Chief of the WFST relied on the conviction that the far-reaching measures reported by OB WEST for the mobilization of all personnel and material resources in France to reinforce, and to increase the mobility of, the defensive forces, had been prepared and precisely scheduled.)

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IV. Influence of Rommel on Hitler

15. Soon there arose differences of opinion concerning the employment of the local reserves of A Gp B and the proposed central reserve of OKW. The opponents were the C-in-C West—whose views were shared, on the whole, by the Chief of the WFSt—and the Commander of A Gp B. I know that the latter also addressed himself personally to the Fuehrer in this matter.

16. Genfldm Rommel was apparently completely convinced, in contrast to OB WEST and the WFSt, that the Invasion attempt would occur on the Channel Coast and nowhere else; he succeeded in persuading Hitler, if not so much about the coastal sector to be invaded, at least of the necessity of the following:

a. To place, immediately, the bulk of the available forces under the command of A Gp B, and thus undermine the idea of a strong reserve force, of real striking power, for the whole Western Theater.

b. To commit these forces in the main line of resistance straight away, intensifying and echeloning in greater depth the purely coastal defense. This, in its furthest extreme, led even to the employment of mobile forces in the coastal defense installations.

17. In spite of counterproposals by the C-in-C West and corresponding representations made by the Chief of the WFSt, by the

time the Invasion began Genfldm Rommel's influence with Hitler had gradually produced a disposition of forces in the West, which was based almost solely on the enemy course of action expected by Rommel himself. This situation was not a favorable background for the later command decisions. It can also not be denied that the decisions taken by Hitler in the first days of the Invasion were still somewhat colored by Rommel's views as to the location of the enemy main effort.

18. In view of the grave consequences which this divergence of opinion had on the course of the fighting during the first days of Invasion, it is necessary to point out that Rommel's ideas were founded on an estimate of probable enemy action which was indeed plausible, but in no way irrefutable or backed up by the available information, and which later proved erroneous. His opinion on the development of the situation in the air during the Invasion was correct. This was not expected, at any rate by the WFSt, to develop to the extent which was later realized. Genfldm Rommel quite justifiably used every means at his disposal, including his close and confidential relationship with Hitler, in order to impose his own view.

19. In transmitting Rommel's demands, the C-in-C West confined himself to reporting his divergent opinion, without, as far as I know, every asserting his authority before Hitler by making a personal

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visit to the Fuehrer's Headquarters, or a personal telephone call, in order to insist--after he had realized that the Chief of the WFSt could not obtain favorable action--on his legitimate demands for the complete subordination of Rommel and the elimination of the latter's parallel official channel of communication.

V. West Continually Weakened by Crises in the East

20. Finally it is necessary to investigate the question why, in spite of the relatively clear recognition of the situation with regard to the impending Invasion in the West, the forces there were continually weakened, even in 1944, by transfers to other fronts of complete units of high combat efficiency (at last, even 9 SS Pz and 10 SS Pz Divs). These measures can be understood only if one considers the over-all situation on the various fronts, and the structure of the highest level of our military command, with its rigidly divided spheres of responsibility.

21. Even before the middle of 1943, OB WEST and the WFSt (which in the Supreme Command was responsible for the defense preparations in the West) continually pointed out that, in view of the advancing invasion preparations, the number and fighting capacity of the formations located in the West should now be adapted to their intended mission. There should, therefore, be no more transfers to other theaters. These efforts did lead to a number of Fuehrer Orders which were

intended to satisfy the above requirements. These orders, however, were never completely effective, because they were frustrated by the ever recurring crises, especially in the East, but also, for instance, in Tunisia. It is comprehensible that the heavily engaged Eastern Front, and the Chief of Staff who was responsible for it, always pointed out the reservoir of fresh forces in the West and, in the many crises on the Eastern Front, again and again succeeded in persuading the Fuehrer and the Chief of the WFSt to bleed the West in favor of the East. The fact that in the eleventh hour before the Invasion, in spite of all objections, the surrender of two SS panzer divisions was demanded of the West, was the particularly tragic result of an organization of command authority and responsibility at the highest levels, which was at that time no longer a fortunate one. The two SS panzer divisions were still in the process of transfer when the hour of decision struck, so that they could exert no decisive influence either in the West or in the East.

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Annex Five

(Pt 26 of 31 pts of MS # B-672, Genmaj von Buttler)

OKW INTERPRETATION OF THE NORMANDY LANDING

AT NOON ON 6 JUNE 1944

1. The first reports of an enemy landing attempt began to flow in to the WEST during the night of 5/6 Jun 44, roughly between 0300 and 0500 hours. They came from various sources, from OB WEST as well as through the official Luftwaffe and German Navy channels. They soon gave a comparatively clear picture of a fairly strong enemy airborne landing in the area of the mouth of the Orne, but those concerning enemy naval activity and the attack on the coast still gave no reliable impression of the strength and extent of the landing, up to about 1000 on 6 June.
2. The general impression by noon on 6 Jun 44 was approximately as follows:
 - a. Despite unfavorable weather conditions, the enemy had attacked the German coastal fortifications at the mouth of the Orne and to the west of it, as well as between the Orne and the Vire, in coordination with an airborne landing. The landing of the airborne troops

was carried out in close tactical coordination with an attack from the sea; the area of attack was, for the moment, limited to a restricted area. There were, up to that time, no indications that a major strategic operation was impending. In the area of the Channel Islands, as in the bay of St Malo, no preparations for attack could yet be observed.

b. Fighting was in progress around the coastal fortifications and in the zone of resistance behind the coastal sector under attack; the local reserves disposed in Normandy had been committed promptly, especially 21 Pz Div.

c. No striking movements were to be observed in the Fifteenth Army Sector, nor, in particular, along the Channel Coast.

3. This picture of the situation corresponded entirely to the WFSt expectations with regard to the first phase of a large-scale invasion. It left the question open, in the WFSt as well as in OKL and OKM, as to whether this was a tactical diversion, a strategic landing with a limited objective, or the prelude to the decisive main effort.

4. A telephone conversation with the Ia of OB WEST revealed that the OB WEST picture of the situation on the morning of 6 Jun 44 was no clearer nor essentially more complete than that summarized above. The WFSt was not informed of any specific judgment by A Gp B, which was

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in command on the spot, and the WFST was unaware of the absence of the Army Group Commander, Rommel.

5. In the general obscurity of the situation, the OB WEST request that the only strategic reserves in the West which could rapidly be made available (Pz Lehr Div and 12 SS Pz Div) be given orders to march, and then the report that they were already on the march, came as a surprise. The request was refused by Genobst Jodl. I do not know whether the Chief of the WFST obtained a decision from Hitler before this refusal.

6. Genobst Jodl based his refusal on the following considerations:

a. The picture of the situation at the time did not justify the opinion that the enemy's main landing operation had already begun. The choice of location, extent evident up to that moment, and prevailing weather conditions--all indicated with much greater likelihood that this was a diversion or a holding attack, without any major strategic objective.

b. The plan of operations and the distribution of forces, which, by weakening the intended strategic reserve of OKW, placed most of the forces available in the West (including strong elements of the panzer units) at the disposal of A Gp B, justified the requirement that OB WEST or A Gp B deal with landings on a limited

scale, even without commitment of the weak OKW reserves.

c. Genobst Jodl did not consider that the development of the situation at the time was sufficiently far from our expectations to warrant his proposing to Hitler the expenditure of our only really strong reserves.

7. During the afternoon of 6 Jun 44 the situation was clarified, so that by the time the staff conference (Fuehrerlagebesprechung) began--which was not until the afternoon of that day because Hitler had a political conference--it was clear that the landing was at least an operation of fairly strong forces, and it was not certain that the German reserves already committed could achieve a definite, quick success. On the other hand, the limited area of invasion, the ineffectual operational direction, and the complete quiet on the Channel Coast, in the bay of St Malo, and on the coast of Brittany, indicated that the main landing had not yet been made. Although Hitler, therefore, was still convinced on the afternoon of 6 June that the main landing was yet to come (either on the Channel Coast, or--in close cooperation with the landing between the Orne and the Vire--on the west coast of Normandy, or in Brittany), he decided to release Pz Lehr Div, 12 SS Pz Div, and 17 SS Pz Gren Div to OB WEST for commitment in Normandy.

8. In making this decision, Hitler was particularly in-

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fluenced by the impression he had gained from the reports, that the local reserves committed—especially 21 Pz Div, which according to reports received was not being very effectively led—would not be sufficient to retrieve the situation on the landing front within a short time, even if the enemy committed only a limited force.

9. The course of 6 Jun 44 brought no change in the estimate of the over-all situation held by Hitler, or by the Chief of the WFSt. There was also no reason why it should have done so, for the plan of attack, extent of the sector chosen, and strength of the forces thus far ascertained, compared with the total strength of formations available in England, provided no adequate foundation at that time for considering the Normandy landing to be the main landing. On the contrary, the evaluation of the reports available up to the evening of 6 June indicated with much greater probability that, though the long-awaited Invasion had certainly begun, the combat actions around the mouth of the Orne were intended as a diversion and a holding attack, and would be followed in a few days—in the better weather which was forecast—by the major landing at another point.

Annex Six

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SITUATION IN THE WEST ON 9 JUNE 1944

I. Enemy Strength Largely Uncommitted

1. By 9 Jun 44, the enemy had not succeeded in linking up his bridgeheads to the west of the Orne estuary. The American and the British troops were still separated on the mainland. Heavy pressure by American forces toward the west and the north made it evident that Cherbourg was endangered.

2. Evaluation of the information about the enemy and reports in the possession of OKW showed on 9 Jun 44 that the enemy had not as yet committed in Normandy even 20 percent of the combat units which, according to evidence on hand, he was presumed to have in England.

3. Even if it were assumed that Montgomery's group of armies was more or less tied down for the continuation and reinforcement of the battle in Normandy, the enemy still had at his disposal for further landings from England the whole group of armies under Patton, and for further landings from North Africa another group of

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some 15 - 20 combined-arms units. There was no reliable evidence as to the planned commitment of Patton's group of armies, or of the North African group.

4. At that time the WFSt believed it fairly certain that the enemy would land his African group on the southern coast of France, since an attack against the deep flank of OB SW in Italy would mean excluding these Allied forces from the decisive battle in France, for the sake of a secondary operation. The question of where Patton's group of armies would attack still remained open.

II. WFSt Estimate of Situation in Northern France (evening of 9 Jun 44)

5. By committing strong elements of Montgomery's group of armies, the enemy has succeeded in establishing beachheads extensive enough to form a secure base for further operations. The next objective of this group of armies will be to combine its beachheads, and extend and consolidate this by capturing the Cotentin Peninsula and Cherbourg. Its forces are adequate to accomplish this objective.

For the further conduct of the over-all invasion operation, and the commitment of the bulk of the forces still available in England, there are two main possibilities:

a. Assembly and preparation of Montgomery's group of armies in Normandy, for a later combined attack, toward the east or southeast, with Patton's group of armies, landed at another point. In this plan, Montgomery's armies will have the additional task of using the interval before the beginning of the combined offensive to enlarge the beachhead and tie down as many German forces as possible by aggressive action.

Patton's armies will be committed in close operational cooperation with Montgomery's--either between the Seine and the Somme, in order to advance swiftly to Paris and cut off the forces located west of the Seine; or against Brittany, in order to gain possession of it so that both groups of armies can then drive eastward from Normandy and Brittany at the same time.

b. Continuation of the attack by Montgomery's group of armies in Normandy, as a purely diversionary and holding attack with a limited objective; landing of Patton's group of armies as the main-effort force, on the Channel or Belgian coast, with the mission of executing a swift advance toward the Ruhr, cutting off from Germany the German forces located west of the landing sector, and quickly destroying German resistance as a whole by action against its main armament center.

6. The German forces presently engaged in Normandy will not be sufficient to throw back into the sea the enemy forces which have landed, yet this is the foundation for our conduct of operations in the West and the further strategic conduct of the War. Because of the uncertainty as to where Patton's armies will attack, it is not yet possible to quickly reinforce the combat front in Normandy by appreciably weakening our forces in the Fifteenth Army sector (Channel Coast) or in Brittany. A rapid enemy success on the Channel or Belgian coast will bring about the collapse of the entire defense in the West. Nineteenth Army (coast of southern France) can also be weakened only temporarily and to a limited extent, because of the threatened landing from North Africa.

7. It is therefore necessary to determine at once, what other forces can be drawn from different fronts, and under what conditions, to replace those which will have to be temporarily transferred from Fifteenth and Nineteenth Armies, and to make it possible to provide Normandy with the forces necessary for the successful conclusion of the battle there.

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III. Appraisal and Results of the WFSt Estimate

8. At that time, neither Hitler nor the Chief of the WFSt considered it possible that the enemy might also bring Patton's group of armies into the Normandy beachhead. Nor was such an idea perceivable, as far as I remember, in the communications received from OKL, OKM, or OB WEST.

9. The possibility outlined in par 5b, above, was regarded by Hitler and by the Chief of the WFSt as rather unlikely--despite its obviously far-reaching strategic prospects--because of the operational risk involved and because of the inconsistency of such a plan with our concept, of the characteristic habits of the Anglo-American command. With regard to par 5a, Hitler, in view of the increased partisan activity in Brittany, counted rather on a second landing there, whereas the Chief of the WFSt thought that it would more probably come between the Seine and the Somme, because the direction of attack would be more effective there.

10. With respect to the disposition of our forces on the combat front, Hitler, when the Chief of the WFSt had submitted his estimate of the situation, ordered that the following be brought up: 2 Pz Div, 2 SS Pz Div, two infantry divisions from the A Gp B area which was not under attack, 8 Werf Brig, and a few Heeres ("GHQ")

troops. With these he hoped to make the German forces equal to those of the enemy, and enable the command on the combat front to hold out in the battle for the beachheads. Orders were also given that proposals be worked out for the procurement of additional forces for the West, if necessary by drawing on other theaters of war.

11. There was no evidence that this estimate of the situation and the resulting, and for the moment, limited decisions were particularly influenced by the ideas of the A Gp B Commander. The estimate and the formation of decisions were founded on the picture of the situation actually available to the WFSt, the disposition of forces at the time, and the opinions of OB WEST and of the supreme commands of the three arms of the Wehrmacht.

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Annex Seven

(Pt 28 of 31 pts of MS # B-672, Genmaj von Buttlar)

OKW OPINION OF THE SITUATION IN THE WEST IN MID-JUNE 1944

1. On 13 Jun 44, in a review of the development of the foregoing battles, OB WEST declared that the enemy had not achieved his objective, either in time or in space, but that our forces had been forced on the defensive. A second landing was still a factor to be considered, for which at least 30 - 35 combined-arms units remained available in England. It could not be predicted whether this landing would be made between the Seine and the Somme, or in Belgium. In addition, OB WEST pointed out that the reports from North Africa concerning the progress of invasion preparations meant that the situation on the southern coast of France was becoming considerably more serious.

2. The WFSt then submitted a brief estimate to Hitler, to the effect that one of the chief reasons for the unsatisfactory combat situation in Normandy was the conduct of operations in the West up until then, particularly the failure to stick to the prin-

principle established and approved before the Invasion: "Once the enemy has landed, concentrate all forces against that one spot--regardless of risk--and destroy him there." The WFSt suggested that, regardless of the obscurity surrounding the intentions of Patton's group of armies and of the North African group, the risks involved on other coasts be accepted, the combat front in Normandy be reinforced by all forces available in the West, and, in addition, forces be transferred to France from other theaters on as large a scale as possible, the combat missions of these other theaters being altered accordingly. This would have meant a definitive shifting of the main weight of our over-all effort to France.

The WFSt made this suggestion with the conviction that if the Invasion in France could be wiped out in its present, first phase, then time and forces would be available at a later date to make good the disadvantages and reverses now accepted on other fronts.

3. Hitler only partially approved this view. In particular, he could not bring himself--probably chiefly for political and economic reasons--to agree to a decisive weakening of other theaters of operations, together with the issuance of new directives which would then be necessary for fighting on these fronts.

The new directive for the conduct of operations in the West, which was then issued on 16 Jun 44, therefore reflected only to

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a very limited degree the opinion of the situation, and suggestions, of the WFSt.

4. Hitler, who in those days again inclined to the opinion that Patton's group of armies would make the second landing in the Fifteenth Army sector after all, ordered that the enemy's intention of preventing our commitment of strong forces in Normandy, by transmitting false radio announcements, was to be frustrated by concentrating our forces as much as possible and destroying the enemy beachhead little by little--the weakening of other fronts in the West must be accepted. But at the same time Hitler exempted the one really strong army in the West, Fifteenth Army, from giving up any appreciable number of troops.

From other theaters of war as well, he approved the withdrawal of only certain units: 363 Inf Div from Denmark, 198 Inf Div from the zone of the interior, and some troops from Norway. It was obvious that the transfer of troops from Norway to France would require a great deal of time. The Balkans, Italy, and the East were, for the reasons mentioned above, not required to give up any forces for the moment, apart from II SS Pz Corps, whose transfer from the East had already been ordered on 11 Jun 44.

5. On 16 Jun 44, when the scope of the landing in Normandy had been clearly recognized as the first phase of the would-be

decisive Invasion and OB WEST had reported that the German forces surrounding the beachhead had been forced on the defensive, the WFSt, feeling it obvious that the situation could not be retrieved by half-hearted measures, concluded that the last moment had come when Germany's conduct of the War should be adapted to and concentrated on the new front in Northern France. The idea which had been emphasized again and again in all deliberations before the Invasion should be brought to fruition: A western front was the crucial danger for Germany, and all disadvantages on other fronts should be accepted for the sake of eliminating this front.

6. This idea, however, could be realized only if all further expansion, even if merely tactical, of the enemy beachhead were prevented. Only if this were generally successful and the enemy deprived of the opportunity of exploiting his superior mobility in conducting fluid operations (which would also mean that his air forces could be used to still greater effect)—then only, considering the strength, organization, and fighting quality of our forces, could we expect to achieve success, after bringing up the necessary resources. The WFSt believed that withdrawals, though local in scope and perhaps tactically desirable, would for strategic reasons lead to a perpetuation of the second front in the West, and thus in the end to the loss of the War.

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7. This opinion was also acknowledged and approved by Hitler, but he still could not make up his mind to draw the necessary sweeping conclusions and make his decisions accordingly, for the strategic conduct of the entire war as well as for the local command in the West.

8. In its strategic views, OB WEST agreed in general with the WFSt, and this agreement was confirmed in many telephone conversations with the Chief of Staff and the Ia of OB WEST; but OB WEST never succeeded in asserting these views successfully, against either A Gp B or Hitler's leadership, which was intervening more and more in every detail. Although it must have been clear to the OB WEST Chief of Staff from his conversations with the Chief of the WFSt, that the latter could not prevail upon Hitler to take the far-reaching decision required by the actual conditions in the Normandy battle, yet never, to my knowledge, did the C-in-C West personally exert his influence on the Fuehrer's decisions, until Hitler's visit to the West on 17 Jun 44.

9. From the tactical point of view, OB WEST and the WFSt held contradictory opinions on the fighting of the Normandy battle, as the WFSt could not agree, for the reason mentioned above, with OB WEST's repeated requests for a tactically more flexible conduct of operations on the combat front, and thus could not support these requests.

Annex Eight

(Pt 29 of 31 pts of MS # B-672, Genmaj von Buttlar)

APPOINTMENT OF THE C-IN-C WEST
AS SIMULTANEOUS COMMANDER OF A GP B

1. The WEST was convinced that, during the period of preparation for the Invasion, the insertion of A Gp B had, because of the latter's proximity to the front and the initiative of its Commander, favorably influenced both technical improvements and the tactical defensive preparedness of the field forces. On the other hand, in strategic questions the difference in the opinions of OB WEST and A Gp B had produced an element of uncertainty in the most essential matters, which would--and did--when events became serious lead to difficulties in the conduct of operations.

2. Moreover, because of the special position which Genfldm Rommel enjoyed in his relations with Hitler, this divergence of opinion could not be ironed out in the sphere of OB WEST, and therefore different interpretations and opinions were submitted to the Supreme Command on the most fundamental questions. In consequence, the Supreme Command was often required to make decisions involving detailed

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knowledge of the local conditions.

3. As Hitler already had a tendency to bother with details and to procure for himself the necessary data from which to form an opinion, this characteristic of his leadership was encouraged by the way in which the various military headquarters commanding in the West sent in their reports. The effect was that, in addition to an already highly authoritative strategic command, there came to be more and more-- and not always fortunate--intervention in the tactical conduct of operations on the battlefield during the Invasion fighting.

4. Experience with the unsatisfactory duality of the command in the West was probably the principal consideration which led Hitler, when Rommel was gone, to entrust one person with over-all command in the West and with command of the combat front in Normandy, which was at that time still the only one. Thus the local commander on the combat front received all the resources available in the West, so that he could use them to the greatest effect.

5. This decision may have been influenced in part by an underestimation of the non-operational missions which fell to OB WEST, and for whose routine accomplishment Hitler believed that the OB WEST staff located in Paris was sufficient. I do not know whether, in addition to this, there were any personnel difficulties with respect to

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the release at that moment, for appointment in the West, of a commander whom Hitler considered suitable.

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Annex Nine

(Pt 30 of 31 pts of MS # B-672, Genmaj von Buttlar)

ESTIMATE OF THE SITUATION IN THE WEST ON 1 AUGUST 1944

1. The estimate of the situation in the West in the first days of Aug 44 was determined:

a. by the ever increasing number of reports, beginning on 20 Jul 44, of the appearance of Canadian and other formations which had hitherto been regarded as belonging to Patton's group of armies, and of the commitment of another corps of close-support airplanes, in the Normandy landing area; and

b. by the breakthrough threatening in the area of Avranches, from 29 Jul 44 onward, in which lay the danger that the enemy might succeed during the next few days in fighting his way through to complete freedom of action and operation in the West.

2. These facts revealed that a second large-scale strategic landing in Northern France was no longer to be expected, and that the enemy had succeeded in breaking out of his hitherto limited landing area in Normandy, and in going over to mobile warfare. This would be of the greatest advantage to him because of his superiority in person-

nel, materiel, and in the air. In this battle for freedom of action the enemy had won a decisive preliminary success on 1 Aug 44, a success which would lead to a very serious crisis in the West and thus in the whole conduct of the War, if we did not succeed in closing the gap which the enemy had created.

3. The WFSt, reviewing the situation, saw two possibilities for the further conduct of operations:

a. To break off the battle in Normandy and, in delaying action, withdraw our forces behind the Seine first of all, while A Gp G simultaneously evacuated southern and southwestern France.

(1) This solution would at the time probably have led to the main body of the forces being saved behind the Seine, though at the expense of heavy losses, especially in materiel. The WFSt believed, however, in view of the enemy superiority especially in mobility and in the air, that the decision to withdraw behind the Seine could only be the first step in a further retirement behind the expanded West Wall. The WFSt believed that if we were not successful in holding the relatively short front in Normandy, which did impose certain limits on the extent to which the enemy could exploit his mobility, then only the shortest West Wall position, and the one most strongly fortified in depth, could offer prospects of further decisive resistance.

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(2) The decision to break off the battle in Normandy would therefore imply--in addition to the surrender of France, with the political and economic consequences this would entail--the loss of our long-range projectile bases, which had been constructed at great sacrifice and at a time when they had only just gone into action; a considerable aggravation of the situation in Italy, which would lead in time to the withdrawal of OB SW into the Alpine position, and thus to the loss of upper Italy, which was valuable to our war economy; and a further intensified restriction of production in our industries in Western Germany. Moreover, a withdrawal of the OB SW forces in Italy would increase the enemy's freedom of action in the Mediterranean, and this might in certain circumstances even affect the area of OB SE.

(3) The WFSt believed at that time that if the German command had to decide to go over to mobile warfare in the West, this would necessarily involve the simultaneous transition to a general withdrawal of forces from the Southwest and Southeast to an inner defense line within "Fortress Germany."

(4) In adopting this solution one would also have to realize that the losses of space and production facilities would allow of continued resistance only over a limited period, which would

then have to be exploited politically. The decision, therefore, would mean that we were beginning to put an end to the War, under very unfavorable conditions—a decision which would only be justified when every other possibility had been exhausted.

b. To continue the battle in Normandy, the first objective being to close the breach which had been made, by attacking the flank of the enemy forces which had broken through near Avranches; then, disregarding the enemy forces which had broken through toward the south and into Brittany, to limit the enemy's combat zone by a further attack toward the north.

According to the WFST's picture of the existing situation, the latter solution still appeared tactically feasible at the beginning of August. It avoided the decisive disadvantages of the first solution, but involved the risk that if the attack should fail there would be an unavoidable crisis on the Normandy front; and it would then be questionable, in view of the prevailing situation in the air and the mobility of the enemy forces which could then press on unhindered through the gap at Avranches, whether it would be possible later to pull back our own forces behind the Seine, before the envelopment with which they would then certainly be threatened could become effective.

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4. The Fuehrer chose the second solution, and hence ordered on 2 Aug 44 that the breakthrough at Avranches be parried by a strong armored counterattack. The infantry units which were then approaching were to be committed between the Orne and the Vire, so that the panzer forces could be pulled out from the combat front on which they had been engaged. To facilitate this regrouping, Hitler approved a slight withdrawal of the front to the Thury--Harcourt--Vire line.

5. On 2 Aug 44 the Deputy Chief of the WFSt (Ed: Warlimont) was sent to OB WEST, in order to explain the Fuehrer's idea and insist on the decisive importance of holding the Normandy front.

6. Although no more strong formations fit for heavy action could be procured from First Army, Hitler refused to withdraw A Gp G at that moment, for the surrender of southern and southwestern France would have rendered possible the activation of French forces which would have been bound to aggravate further the situation in Northern France. Finally, the surrender of the coast of southern France would probably have had a rapid and unfavorable effect on the position of OB SW, as the group of armies in North Africa, which were ready to attack, would in that case--being thus deprived of their strategic objective--probably have gone into action against OB SW.

Annex Ten

(Pt 31 of 31 pts of MS # B-672, Genmaj von Buttlar)

STRATEGIC TIMING OF THE EVACUATION
OF SOUTHERN AND SOUTHWESTERN FRANCE

I. A Gp G Mission

1. In the event of the main effort of the Invasion striking Northern France, the defense of the southern coast of France should, in the opinion of the WFSt, accomplish a dual objective:

a. It would have to prevent the Anglo-American group of armies in North Africa from making a rapid advance up, say, the Rhone valley, toward the north, and thus taking our main forces in the rear as they strove for a decision in Northern France, and possibly affecting their rearward communications also.

b. It would be an extension of the OB SW deep western flank, whose ultimate loss would unavoidably have a considerable effect on OB SW's conduct of operations.

(1) It was unlikely that the enemy would land

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on the southern coast of France in order to thrust with strong forces across the operationally difficult Franco-Italian border country, toward upper Italy and into the deep western flank of OB SW; yet it was necessary in the event of the southern French coast being evacuated that this western flank be secured by the commitment of adequate forces along a line roughly following the Franco-Italian border, up to the Swiss frontier.

(2) Moreover, if we were to retire voluntarily to about the Saone—Jura position, it was not impossible that the enemy would then see no further strategic objectives in Southern France meriting commitment of the main body of his African forces, and would content himself with the employment of certain elements there, specifically to organize the French resources which would then become available to him. His main body in the Mediterranean area might then be thrown in against OB SW, or even against the Balkans.

Both objectives could be accomplished only by defending the very coast of southern France.

2. The forces occupying the coast of southwestern France (Biscay) were expected by the WFSt, in view of their quality and

strength, only to form a loose link between the fronts in the north and in the south of France, guard against relatively minor commando operations, and keep watch on the coast and the interior to prevent unrest from springing up among the population.

3. So long as the enemy beachhead at the beginning of the Invasion in Normandy was firmly contained on all sides, there was naturally no alteration in the missions of A Gp G. Army Group was fully supported, although the serious crises in Normandy necessitated the transfer of considerable forces, which could be replaced only very incompletely, and in part not at all.

II. Increasing Desirability of Evacuating Southern and Southwestern France

4. When in the second half of Jul 44, the situation in Northern France became ever more acute, the question of evacuating southern and southwestern France was one of the basic reasons leading to the order issued at the end of July for the construction of the Somme--Marne--Saone--Jura position. Hitler and the Chief of the WFSt agreed that should it become necessary to retire to this position, then the movement of the front should be coordinated in time and space

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with a withdrawal of the forces in southern and southwestern France. An investigation of the strength and number of forces under OB SW then revealed that if OB SW could not withdraw to the line along the foothills of the Alps, which Hitler still refused to allow, it could not undertake the additional mission of occupying the Franco-Italian border; additional forces would be required which could only be taken from among those defending the southern coast of France.

5. On 2 Aug 44, after the breakthrough at Avranches, the WFSt submitted an estimate showing how an enemy landing on the southern coast of France would affect the over-all situation in France. In the light of this estimate, Hitler was once again reminded that time was short and that it would be necessary to coordinate in time and space any measures of evacuation, with the conduct of operations in Northern France, should the situation there become still more acute. At the same time, the WFSt pointed out that the construction of the landward defenses of Marseilles and Toulon was still very incomplete, and requested Hitler to make a new decision whether the defense of that area could not be renounced in view of the strength of Nineteenth Army and the inadequate status of the fortifications, which made it questionable whether that defensive area could be held for long.

The Fuehrer was convinced that we would succeed in closing the gap at Avranches again, and decided that the order to defend the southern coast of France should, for the moment, remain in effect. He approved however, the issue of an order on 3 Aug 44 to the effect that the Franco-Italian border should be secured and the fortifications improved as a first preliminary measure against the eventuality that Nineteenth Army might later have to be withdrawn.

7. When signs of an imminent enemy landing increased after 12 Aug 44, the WFSt once again pressed Hitler for another decision on the conduct of operations on the southern coast. Despite the fact that OB WEST had already declared on 11 Aug 44 that an attack on Avranches no longer appeared practicable, Hitler still did not believe that the situation in the battle west of the Seine was serious enough to warrant the voluntary evacuation of southern and southwestern France, with the disadvantages that would entail for the West and for Italy. He therefore again decided on 13 Aug 44, on further-inquiry by OB WEST, that A Gp G should continue to have the mission of defending the southern coast of France against landings.

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III. Withdrawal of A Gp G Authorized by Hitler

8. On 16 Aug 44 the WFSt once again urged Hitler to withdraw A Gp G, in view of the rapidly worsening situation on the Invasion front in southern France, and the unfavorable development of the battle of Falaise. Hitler then agreed, after realizing the development of the situation, but gave the following special instructions:

a. The first phase should be a withdrawal to the Bourges—Clermont—Ferrand--Montpellier line.

b. Marseilles and Toulon should still be occupied by one division each.

c. If in the second phase of the evacuation the coast east of Montpellier were given up, then Hq, LXII Corps, with 148 and 157 Res Divs, was to retreat before the enemy pressure into the Franco-Italian border fortifications and be assigned to OB SW.

9. These restrictions with regard to the establishment of a definite intermediate line by the Supreme Command, as well as with respect to the defense of Marseilles and Toulon, were not in accordance with the views of the WFSt. The WFSt did indeed believe that a withdrawal in phases would be the obvious course, but considered that the determination of phase lines was the business of the local command, for they would have to vary with the local combat situation. With respect

to the areas to be defended, the WEST considered, for the reasons mentioned above, that the loss of two divisions would not be justified by their prospects of success.

10. Hitler insisted on his decision because he was of the opinion that it would serve no purpose for the forces employed west of Montpellier to go back over the Massif Central, and Nineteenth Army would have to concentrate its forces astride the Rhone. He also expected that the enemy would first of all assemble his forces in the beachheads he had gained, and would not exert very strong pressure toward the north during the following days.

With regard to the placing of two divisions in the defensive areas of Toulon and Marseilles, he overestimated the defensive capacity of these areas. He expected that by holding them we could fix an appreciable number of enemy forces, and the enemy advance in the decisive northern direction would be delayed.

11. The corresponding order was issued during the night of 16/17 Aug 44, and, as far as I know, the OB WEST Chief of Staff was informed of its salient points, by telephone, immediately after the routine conference with Hitler was finished.

12. On 18 Aug 44, the order was given that the coastal defense be abandoned because of the increased gravity of the situation

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at the front. The transfer of forces from Hq, LXII Corps, to OB SW, as required by this order, was in accordance with WFSt's suggestion. There was no other way in which, if its mission remained the same, OB SW could obtain the forces necessary to occupy the Franco-Italian border. OB SW was directed to hold down as strong enemy forces as it could, by the most persistent aggressive action possible west of the line of fortifications. It was also to prevent, or at any rate to harass and delay, any attempt by the enemy to dispatch formations over the mountains to pursue and envelop the main body of Nineteenth Army, while it withdrew astride the Rhone.

13. OB SW therefore reinforced the troops holding the Alpine passes, and tried to block the roads leading northward, west of the passes. For the moment, OB SW left a regiment of 157 Res Div in Grenoble as a security force, and at this important communications center it protected the eastern flank of Nineteenth Army.

Annex Eleven

THREE MARSHALS, NATIONAL CHARACTER, AND THE 20 JULY COMPLEX

I. Hesse's Letter of Interrogation

An der Heide 3
16 Oberursel/Taunus
10 Feb 47

Gen Inf Guenther Blumentritt
HDIE, Allendorf, Germany

My dear General:

I have now received copies of three of your works--the answers to my questions (Ed: concerning psychological warfare; MS # B-278), "My Military Career" (MS # B-254), and "The 20 July 1944" (MS # B-272). I want to emphasize that I read the last two with great interest. It is no cheap compliment if I tell you that I find your work excellent. Above all, I like your concise style. I do not see much of the "epic breadth" which you yourself mention in the introduction to "The 20 July 1944." Because I assume that objective inquiries are really welcome to you, as they are to every historian, even if criticism is involved, I take the liberty of asking you the following questions:

1. Did you really not know anything about Rommel's 15 Jul 44 telegram to the Fuehrer, about the former's peremptory demand for the immediate conclusion of an armistice with the Western Allies (based on his conviction that the Allied landing had succeeded), or

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have you, perhaps, just forgotten all about it?

2. Did your Ic really know nothing about the events preceding 20 Jul 44 (preparations by Stuelpnagel, instructions from Speidel)? Did he, perhaps, deliberately refrain from advising Genfldm von Rundstedt and you, or have you designated the information given you as "matters not formally brought to my attention (nicht zur Kenntniss genommen)"? Who was the Ic of OB WEST on 20 Jul 44?

3. Even if one could not speak openly of antagonism between Von Rundstedt and Rommel, it did exist; it was a difference of temperament and concepts, of which you are doubtless well aware. I still remember distinctly a judgment uttered by your Field Marshal (Ed: Von Rundstedt) in the privacy of a close circle of friends, and I have spoken more than once with Rommel, whom I had known very well since he was a hauptmann, about Genfldm von Rundstedt. Should not one take into consideration the masked antagonism between the two? As early as 7 Aug 44, on the occasion of a visit I paid to Le Vesinet, Rommel said to me in bitter tones that the ground had been cut out from under him and that the agreement made in the spring of 1944 between him and your Field Marshal had not been kept. Perhaps we may have an opportunity of talking this over together sometime.

4. Do you know about severe criticism of Genfldm von Rund-

stedt (whom I, like you, respect very much as a soldier and as a man), by numerous senior officers of the Wehrmacht on account of his acceptance of the presidency of the Court of Honor (Ehrenhof) and, likewise, on account of his return as C-in-C West in Oct 44? In my opinion, it would be very important, from the historical point of view, to have a detailed personal declaration from Genfldm von Rundstedt concerning both questions, in order that misinterpretations of his actions should no longer be disseminated.

5. Is not a reappraisal of the actions of Genfldm von Kluge possible or even necessary in view of the facts, namely, his initiation into the secret preparations and the sacrifice of the Militaerbefehlshaber (Military Commander in Occupied Territory) Gen von Stuelpnagel?

6. Above all, is it not essential to investigate and clarify the oft-repeated allegation that Von Kluge tried to establish contact with the American or British Commander-in-Chief, something which, however, could not be realized on account of unfortunate circumstances in the enemy camp?

Although these questions concern my own work (Ed: the preparation of a study of German Psychological Warfare in World War II) very little or not at all, I think them so important from the general point of view that it would not be right if I failed to put them to you. From your work concerning the 20 July affair, I have extracted an extraordinarily interesting estimate of the general Wehrmacht mood, of the effect of

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our propaganda within the Wehrmacht. You see things in the correct light. In addition, it must certainly be said that the men responsible for the insurrection have not given adequate consideration to the fact that they exercised no firm control of the groups at the front and in the zone of the interior.

Please thank your wife for having given me the address which I requested. I will very shortly give you my opinion about your other long work (MS # B-278) and I remain, with best regards,

Yours very truly,

/s/ Hesse

II. Blumentritt: Von Rundstedt, Rommel, and Von Kluge

HDLE, Allendorf, Germany
15 Feb 47

Dear Mr Hesse:

Many thanks for your letter of 10 Feb 47, which I received on 14 Feb 47. A verbal* discussion would be the best. Perhaps you can visit

*Ed: Underscoring here, and in the subsequent pages, is that of the author.

me sometime while I am here working for the Historical Division, which I naturally desire to continue to do as long as possible.

7. I will, however, give you briefly my point of view concerning your questions. You will have noticed that, without setting aside the rules of decency and propriety, I am as objective as possible in all matters. Frankness is obviously the best policy in the interests of a better future for our people and of a gradual understanding with our Western world of culture. A fear that I may be undiplomatic or even imprudent does not prevent me from expressing my personal opinion about political, psychological, historical, and military questions, and about those concerning my conception of the world. No man need adopt my opinion if it is inconsistent with his own or if he has better insight.

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8. I can imagine that many circles among the Western Allies would value more highly a few frank words than involved opinions expressed in an equivocal manner. I am even of the belief that purely opportunistic, flattering utterances must be disadvantageous to our common cause because they can easily give rise to false impressions, and thus to erroneous judgments, and finally to inept measures. There are certainly enough lies and enough biased judgments being written and spoken today in our Fatherland. Sometimes the occupying powers themselves do not know where they are, with everyone telling a different tale. We soldiers want to be the "better savages" and act and report in strict accordance with our own judgment. I suppose it has been generally said that we are bad "diplomats." But as a matter of fact we should not be diplomats at all! We are really "open books" which can easily be read! We are often pure fools in political and legal affairs. But we are what we are as a result of our upbringing and education and we shall do well not to try to be any different. Our judgment is often meant much more sincerely and more honestly than that of people with a reputation for cunning. We are living in an epoch of distrust, when honest words are rarely spoken; the confused follow at each others' heels because of the general

lack of clear perception. Consequently I have endeavored all the time in England (Ed: as a prisoner of war), and now here, to present the many problems as I see them. Much may be completely erroneous, but it is the duty of the persons concerned to examine my judgments on the basis of more exact information. I believe that one can be of more help by proceeding as I have, than by writing varicolored reports of a highly tendencious nature which have their origin principally in the egoism of the author. Such a man can very easily "report" differently to a third party, if it is believed that a modified "report" will please the latter more. In our day, we need clear paths, not tortuous ones which no one can trust. Now, a man has to ride one horse--not two, like a circus acrobat. Even German politics would not have suffered from such a point of view, particularly since Germany is situated in the center of Europe.

And now, after having expressed such philosophic considerations, I am going to answer your questions.

9. Question 1

I myself no longer recall anything about this matter. It may be that Speidel spoke once with me, but because of the tenseness of the atmosphere of that time I cannot recollect it. Nor can I

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remember any allusion to it by Von Kluge (who became C-in-C West on 7 Jul 44) or by any officer of the staffs (Ed: of OB WEST and A Gp B). It is evident, therefore, that even if such an allusion were made it must have been made in such a way that I do not recollect anything of it, although my memory is still good!

10. Question 2

Obstlt Meyer-Detring was my Ic for some years. He was a young, but prudent and critical officer, who saw things as they were. As far as I know he was in the USA and is said to have been brought back to Germany by airplane in autumn of 1946. (They told me so at the beginning of Dec 46 at Alaska House*, near Oberursel. He had left his

*Ed: At that time, Alaska House was a building under the control of USFET MISC, Oberursel, Germany. It was used to quarter prisoners who rated preferential treatment.

best regards for me with the people there.) He was already Ic when I came to the West in Sep 42 and remained in his post as long as I was C of S, until 8 Sep 44. We spoke with each other daily, for his field of activity was very extensive.

Daily conversations were a habit with the Staff, and we naturally talked often about the military and political situations,

about "Westgedanken" (Western ideas) and possibilities, just as always happens in the intimacy of serious-minded staffs. He had also to deal with French authorities and with the embassy, and he accompanied Von Rundstedt when the latter called on Marshal Petain. After the discussions with the Marshal, he also drafted the telegram to the Fuehrer and to OKW requesting, after so great a passage of time, a moderation of the terms imposed on France. In 1942 - 43 he dealt with French rearmament desires in collaboration with a department of the Army Peace Commission. Like all of us, he was extremely anxious to establish contact with the Western Powers via or through France. But we never got any further than mere ideas, opinions, and reports to higher headquarters without political results. It was not possible for soldiers to do any more, with the conditions as regards power and authority being what they were.

I know quite definitely, however, that he never once said a word to me about any preparations for a "20 July" or anything of that nature; of that I am quite sure. Any conversation that took place circled around the subject like a cat going around a saucer of hot milk. Neither on or after 20 Jul 44 did my Ic make any conspicuously pointed reference to any particular question in his conversations

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with me. Whether in his own capacity as Ic, with the knowledge he had of what was going on in other circles, he became conspicuous, I am unable to say; at any rate, if he did I never heard anything about it. Even in the period after 20 July, when I began gradually to learn from above that there was something in the wind, the Ic did nothing that I can recall to catch my eye. (I believe that about Aug or Sep 44 he was called to OKW as the successor of Jodl's Ia, or something of the sort.*

*Ed: On 15 Nov 44, Obst iG Meyer-Detring (promoted 1 Sep 44) succeeded Genmaj Frhr Treusch von Buttler-Brandenfels as Chief of Army Operations, Armed Forces Operations Staff (Wehrmachtfuehrungsstab).

I must really conclude therefore that nothing was known against him with regard to the 20 July.) I must say that I have no reason to assume that he ever knew anything.

11. Question 3

Naturally, Von Rundstedt and Rommel belonged to two different generations; they were so dissimilar in origin, education, and outlook that they seemed members of different worlds.

a. Von Rundstedt: For 50 years an old Prussian soldier, a member of an old Prussian military family, a former Prussian cadet, 68 years old, he lived in his memories of 1914 - 18 and before. Besides, he was excessively modest, too reserved, led a simple life, had no particular indulgences (with the exception of smoking and drinking), and was indifferent to money or possessions. He was taciturn, not fond of

writing or telephoning, and used to fulminate against the State as then constituted--frequently even in the presence of strangers, Italian officers for instance. He had a marvelous memory, a deep knowledge of human nature, a head for strategy, and a photographic memory for 1:1,000,000 maps. He had a strikingly good grasp of the French and English languages and had picked up enough Italian after a few weeks in the country to understand the language, without ever deigning to learn it properly. He was fond of uttering bitingly sarcastic historical and political judgments and had an intuitive presentiment of things to come. He was affable, even to inferiors, and a pronounced Francophile in all things, insofar as his military duties permitted him to be. He was completely immune to the influence of propaganda or to remarks about himself. He was extravagantly polite to women and French citizens, but also to all insignificant people.

His defects: It is true that he acted in the interests of persons intimate with him, but not passionately, not arbitrarily. If nothing could be done for Mr A, then the report or the written request was set aside so far as he was concerned. In such a case he might still do something, but he did not fight for the person, did not suggest alternative solutions.

I know my Field Marshal quite thoroughly. He does

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not know fear; his personal safety and comfort are matters of indifference to him. He still lives the customs of a bygone day: absolute and forthright execution of orders, and acceptance of decisions, such as was found so often in the old Prussian style. It is bred into the officer and into the official!

Since the Field Marshal was no longer quite so agile as formerly, he traveled to the fronts only if he had to do so. He did not like to leave his staff, even for a few days. Nor did he like my occasional trips out to an army; he always wanted me to be at his side. You know that even our private rooms were adjacent to each other? He was beyond doubt a lover of the static.

I was so intimate with the Field Marshal as a human being that my judgment may be biased. But I see him as described and having given my loyalty to a man I do not take it back.

b. Rommel: Speidel can judge Rommel much better than can I. I see him thus: youthful, active, agile, aggressive, and hot-tempered. Accustomed to an "independent" position, he was not inclined to submit to others. He had no strategic ability, but he was a good tactician and he recognized clearly the technical possibilities of modern warfare. He was an admirer of new technical engineering refinements and clever new gadgets. Courageous and personally ready for action,

he was a natural front-line commander (Fuehrer von Vorausteilungen)! He was not without ambition. In 1943 and 1944 he was conscious of having the confidence of the Fuehrer and he referred to the fact very often! He was the "Fuehrer's Marshal." His pride had been hurt on account of his having been deserted in Africa by OKW. Once during an all-night drive from Brest to Paris he talked to me for several hours about his defeat. On this occasion he expressed his discontent and bitterness. He left the Fuehrer out of the discussion, but he strongly censured OKW for the African debacle.

In the spring of 1944, he hoped to re-win great fame in the West. "Der Rundstedt"-- that was his South German expression--was esteemed by him, but Rommel executed his orders only if they harmonized with his own ideas. He could, if he wished, always fall back on Hitler, and used to say frequently: "The Fuehrer gave quite explicit orders to me." This statement was meant as pressure upon the C-in-C West. He never said so to Genfldm von Rundstedt himself, but he let him know it through me or my Ia!

c. Rommel liked to be mentioned in propaganda, whereas Von Rundstedt, with his time-honored conceptions, took any marked allusion to his person almost as an insult. Propaganda was alien to Von Rundstedt and he thought it "dirty" and "obtrusive." The Field

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Marshal was never known to have said one caustic word about Rommel. Sometimes he called him, good-humoredly, the "Marshal Laddie," and he told me more than once to let Rommel enjoy his propaganda. It may be that Rommel criticized Von Rundstedt somewhat freely from time to time. However, Genfldm von Rundstedt never did vice-versa. He was like an old, noble-minded father, who does not understand his lively different-natured son, but who allows him to sow his wild oats without paternal interference. Von Rundstedt used to say quite frequently: "When the Invasion comes, he will certainly become more at peace in his mind." Moreover, the two Field Marshals met very often, had tea together, entertained each other, and so on.

The quiet, the negative pole, was Von Rundstedt; the active and positive one was Rommel. I have described several times the contrast in their thinking as regards operations, but I have heard only once a violent utterance by Von Rundstedt (with regard to 2 Pz Div, near Amiens). Moreover, Von Rundstedt did not force his will upon Genfldm Rommel in this respect. But this whole question is not of such decisive importance because, in the last analysis, neither Von Rundstedt nor Rommel had freedom of action. The Fuehrer gave detailed orders for each division, and he had to be asked beforehand with regard to every single one.

I do not know anything about the bitter conversation which he had with you at Le Vesinet on 7 Aug 44. I visited Rommel there twice. He said to me "Such imbecility, this attempt on the Fuehrer's life." I know that on one occasion he spoke with Von Rundstedt alone in the bunker at St Germain in June. But I do not know what they talked about, for Von Rundstedt did not say anything to me afterwards.

d. After discussions, whether with the Fuehrer or with others, it was difficult to find out later what had been said. If I myself had not been present, I gleaned fragmentary details only occasionally and then generally after supper in the evening. The Field Marshal was not one who came with a slip of paper and enumerated the results of an entire conference, even one concerning purely tactical matters. The accompanying officer had to do that. Coming from the Fuehrer, he always expressed himself very sharply, said that the officers of the higher command were all idiots, but, even so, one did not learn much more concerning the matter. He did not like to talk at all and wrote and telephoned only when he had to. He never telephoned the Fuehrer and the Fuehrer never telephoned him. On the other hand, I know that Rommel, Von Kluge, and others spoke frequently on the phone with Hitler. In 1941, in the East, Von Kluge had frequent telephone conversations with Hitler lasting up to three-quarters of an hour!

Von Rundstedt was "taboo." Schmundt* told me that

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*Ed: Gen Inf Rudolf Schmundt, simultaneously Chief Adjutant to Hitler and Chief of the Army Personnel Office, fatally injured in the 20 Jul 44 attempt on Hitler's life.

once when Von Rundstedt was, as an exception, ordered to the Fuehrerhauptquartier (Hitler's headquarters in the field), Hitler was pacing up and down a quarter of an hour before Von Rundstedt's arrival, putting on and pulling off his gloves, and as soon as Von Rundstedt arrived he left everything just as it was and went to meet the car of the Field Marshal. Hitler had never done these things when any other marshal arrived. I always think it is just the same as with reserved, wilful children whom you want to assure of your love. The "higher-ups" did not dare reproach the Marshal!

The American psychologist in Nuremberg, Dr Goldensohn, gave the following judgment about Von Rundstedt: "The Marshal-- you need only look into his eyes." Dr Goldensohn was surprised at the rapidity and ease with which the Field Marshal went through the psycho-technical tests, lasting three-quarters of an hour. He solved them very easily indeed! He had brains!

He was liked very much in French circles; and many foreign visitors, such as Bulgarians, Hungarians, Spaniards, Turks, Italians, and Finns wanted to see him, just for five minutes! He was the perfect cavalier; he addressed visitors mostly in French, pro-

nouncing only three or four courteous sentences, and saying good-bye to them after ten minutes! Outside, everyone exclaimed: "He has a heart." "That is a Marshal!" and so on. These were the judgments I heard.

Genfldm von Rundstedt is no Talleyrand, no Von Seeckt!* He is completely uncomplicated, great but quite simple, an

*Ed: Hans von Seeckt, successively Chief of the General Staff in World War I, of the Third Brandenburg Army Corps, and of armies on the Russian, Balkan, and Turkish fronts. He crushed the Russians at Gorlice and conquered Serbia. As military dictator, 1919 - 20, he suppressed the Kapp revolt. He formed and led the Reichswehr until 1926. He was deputy of the people's party in the Reichstag (1930 - 32).

old-Prussian soldier of the nineteenth century. Perhaps it may interest you to know that he has spoken unfavorably of Bismarck who seems not to be his favorite. He has expressed himself in no uncertain terms about the great chancellor! However, he respects Von Moltke. He esteems Wilhelm I highly, Wilhelm II not at all. Again, he respects Severing*,

*Ed: Wilhelm Karl Severing, Social Democratic deputy in the Reichstag (1907 - 11). He was elected to the Weimar assembly in 1919, and served (1920 - 32) almost continuously as Prussian minister of the interior.

former minister of the Republic. He has criticized Frederick the Great, without failing to recognize his inherent greatness. I might almost say he is a Prussian who, like Wilhelm I at the beginning, would have been most happy if Prussia had remained alone, just as before 1866.

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His health is good (heart, etc). The doctors told me once that he belongs to the "vasomotor" group. Arteriosclerosis has a limiting effect on his activity, but not a very grave one. Nicotine does not do him any good.

He is a remarkable man, representing the past century, but having almost a visionary's gift of sensing the great developments. Besides, he has always looked only toward the West, and he also knows the East from two world wars. The Marshal belongs to that rare class of an older epoch when silence and obedience were bred into the man. So I do not know what Rommel meant by "the ground having been cut out from under him." But, I can imagine that Von Rundstedt perhaps listened to ideas of Rommel and perhaps consented generally to them, but then did not fight for them.

"Hier steh ich--ich kann nicht anders" is not his way.*

*Ed: "Here I stand. I can do no other. God help me. Amen." Martin Luther. End of his speech at the Diet of Worms, 18 Apr 1521. Inscribed on his monument at Worms.

12. Question 4. I have already partially answered this question in par 11.

a. Court of Honor: I know the opinions about it and I understand. These are old comrades and even former chiefs of staff (Hoepner*). We on the fighting front were relieved when this appointment

*Ed: Genobst Erich Hoepner, probably most famous as Cmdr, Fourth Pz Army, Russia, 1941. During the battle of Moscow, Hoepner was dismissed for making a tactical withdrawal without Hitler's permission. He was executed for his part in the 20 Jul 44 plot.

was made. But there must have been something, however, for on 13 Sep 44 when I made my ominous report to Headquarters, Keitel told me that Von Rundstedt would no longer be used for the purpose mentioned. But, even if it is difficult to understand, the old saying applies: "I come if I am called."

b. Return as C-in-C West: Beginning in Aug 44 we did everything in our power to secure the return of Von Rundstedt. He returned on 3 Sep 44. He was completely aware of the hopelessness of the situation! You ask why he returned? I can only repeat, "I come if I am called, no matter whether the situation is good or desperate."

I think that the questions to be put to the Field Marshal are perfectly justified. I will ask them if you do not do so. But it is not certain that my letters reach him in England. You will see that he will answer just as I have told you in this letter: "I come if I am called!" However, I want to put the following problem to you:

- (1). Genobst Frhr von Fritsch* was an old Prussian

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*Ed: Von Fritsch was relieved as C-in-C of the Army in early 1938 on the basis of a trumped-up charge of immorality (homosexuality), which has since been attributed, probably accurately, to the machinations of Goering. (PWB/SAIC/13, 4 Jun 45) Von Fritsch was tried and acquitted by a Court of Honor but was not reinstated. Von Fritsch was succeeded by Genobst Walter von Brauchitsch (promoted to genfldm 19 Jul 40).

soldier, a bitter adversary of the regime, but he served! In 1938 he was disgraced by Machiavellian methods before the whole world, the German People, and the Wehrmacht. He did not shoot "the man." He left--obediently, silently, bitterly, a ruined man. He retired to Achterberg. (In the spring of 1939 I was his only guest for two whole days, for we liked each other! There was no word of bitterness on that occasion, appearances were maintained, and there were reasons for it!) And in 1939? The same humiliated Commander-in-Chief volunteered and rejoined his regiment as its "chief of staff." He was not its commander. He was killed in front of the enemy, no matter whether intentionally or not. Why? For his tormentor? For a regime which was hateful to him? Or for his people? It does not matter! He went along and gave his life!

(2) Genobst von Leeb* was old-Bavarian of ancient

*Ed: Genfldm Wilhelm Ritter von Leeb (promoted 19 Jul 40). Cmdr, A Gp C, France, 1940. Cmdr, A Gp North, Russia, 1941.

peasant stock, a strict Catholic, and a bitter adversary of the regime.

(From 1930 to 1932 he was my division commander in Munich and I know of his severe criticism of the regime before other officers.) In 1938 he learned by radio of his peremptory dismissal! He felt very bitter about it. But he returned in the autumn of 1938 and again in 1939.

(3) Von Fritsch and Von Leeb had as little ambition as Von Rundstedt! They had everything to lose and nothing to gain. Three entirely different men--all blameless, all "aristocrats," all despisers of the lower-class types of the Nazi State--came, served, and sacrificed. (Von Rundstedt had also been dismissed, in 1939.) I believe that only he who has a very deep insight into that forgotten realm of military thought of half a century ago can understand these things. "I serve if the Fatherland is in danger, for, like an old cavalry horse, if I stayed at home I should feel ashamed." According to venerable Prussian tradition these men uncompromisingly pushed this principle to extremes.

Other reasons, which the modern world would better understand, are inapplicable. Money? That is immaterial to a true Prussian! Honor? It cannot be won anymore! Decorations? Everyone already has them! Rank? One cannot be more than a Field Marshall! Ambition? These three men had none!

Consequently, there remains only "I have to," the categorical imperative. And today it is nearly impossible for most men to understand it!

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13. Question 5. Von Kluge:

a. As a major, he was my instructor in the III. Lehrgang* in Berlin in 1924 - 25. We were cool to each other and I could

*Ed: Last year of the three-year general staff corps training course. At this particular session, held 1 Oct 24 - 31 May 25 in the Reichswehr Ministry in Berlin, there were 20 students.

never warm to him. As he was cold, playing at "cat and mouse" in Tactics, gazing steadily at one with his grey-blue eyes, I did not take to him too well! At that time, everything tactical was adjusted to Von Prager* who had the 4. Abteilung. Von Prager was a blunt, plain tac-

*Ed: Obst iG Ritter von Prager, at that time Chief, Training Branch (4. Abteilung), Army General Staff. Retired as Gen Inf Ritter von Prager in 1942.

tician and Von Kluge imitated him. I came from 5 Reichswehr Div, which was then known to be in disfavor with Von Prager, on account of Muff*. During the two years I was with it we had learned quite differ-

*Ed: Maj iG Wolfgang Muff, military history instructor for the second-year general staff corps training course held 1 Oct 21 - 31 May 22 in Stuttgart by 5 Reichswehr Div. Gen Inf Muff retired in 1943.

ent tactics. In Berlin everything was "wrong." Shortly before Christmas 1924 things got too stupid for me, and I asked Von Kluge to send me

back to my regiment (15 Inf Regt). He listened to me, smiled with a superior air, and told me in his determined manner to continue there. But in Mar 1925 Von Prager left and our C of S at Stuttgart, Von Blomberg*, took over the Training Branch. Naturally, he had known me well

*Ed: Obst iG von Blomberg, C of S, 5 Reichswehr Div (Stuttgart). Von Blomberg was relieved as Minister of War and C-in-C Wehrmacht in Feb 38, ostensibly because of a marriage "beneath his station."

since 1920 - 22. Now things took a different turn, the stock of 5 Reichswehr Div rose, and suddenly the three of us from the Division were the tacticians sought. Von Kluge adapted himself at once to the new situation! Do you understand?

b. There was a row during the farewell party in Jun 1925! The senior man present addressed Von Kluge very coolly, and he promptly disappeared into his hotel room. There were three groups: one for him, one against him, and one neutral. At midnight Von Kluge was asked to return. He came and made a short speech, the final words of which were: "Gentlemen, I am not one to win men's hearts." The psychological effect was that, our spirits having been raised by the wine, we declared Von Kluge decent and a gentleman. Nevertheless, between 1926 and 1940 I spoke to him unofficially only three or four times, and then briefly and noncommittally.

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c. In 1940, he was placed under A Gp A as commander of its right army (Ed: Fourth Army, in France). He was the driving force of his Army, was always at the front, liked to call himself "Marshal Ney," was energetic, expressed himself distinctly, and did not show any mercy, even to himself! On 1 Nov 40, I became his C of S at Warsaw. I was with him in the great days of 1941 and in the most difficult period of 1941 - 42, before Moscow. On 7 Jul 44 he became C-in-C West, and about 18 Aug 44 he started on his fatal journey to the rear. I believe that I knew the late Marshal as well as one can know a two-faced man.

d. Von Kluge was extremely self-possessed and, like Rommel, ambitious. Yet he was not without a touch of vanity. He spoke superbly and convincingly. He already knew that in 1924 - 25! He liked to impress people strongly and to have a crowd around him. Since he knew that he spoke well he liked to do so. There was nothing which he liked better than to hear: "The Field Marshal must remain as our guest after the discussion among the chiefs of staff. Everyone will be pleased and perhaps the Field Marshal, as Commander-in-Chief, will be good enough to pronounce the final words!" Then he stood on ceremony but one noticed how it worked upon him and how much he liked it. And he could do it well!

e. The one who feared him was done for; Von Kluge (like Model!) simply squashed him. But Von Kluge (like Model!) respected and accepted the one who did not fear him, the one who dared to say "No," perhaps even in an impertinently facetious manner. In 1941 - 42, in the East, he had frequent and lengthy telephone conversations with Hitler. Once he said: "Yes, my Fuehrer, such is the situation! You must come down from your Wolkenkuckucksheim (cloud cuckoo-land)!" He spoke in such a way without difficulty. He spoke without pause and was not to be interrupted--even Hitler could not get a word in edgewise. If Von Kluge did not like a remark of Hitler's he simply hung up! He liked to impress people with his energy. That was 1941 - 42! But if he went in person to see the Fuehrer, then it was the reverse! Hitler talked him to a standstill, and Von Kluge once said to me: "I came out in a daze and could remember only after the conference what I had intended to say."

f. Moreover, Von Kluge was a soldier who knew no fear and no personal indulgence. He threw himself triumphantly into the heat of battle, moved about near the outposts, flew in his Storch (Ed: liaison plane) over all partisan-held woods at an altitude of 200 meters, was fired on many times from below, and was often with the advance elements of regiments and battalions wherever anything was happening. Near Smolensk he accompanied the attack of a deployed battalion of 15 Mtz Inf Regt of 29 Mtz Div and was exalted by the machinegun fire

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around him. Napoleon was his especial inspiration, he knew 1812 minutely, and visited eagerly all historical places.

g. That was Von Kluge as a man and a soldier. Beginning in 1940 I had very cordial relations with him (contrary to 1924 - 25). He has often spoken laughingly with me about that time. He esteemed my family highly and he was a very good superior to me. For reasons of temperament, he was inconsistent as regards tactics and he often gave detailed orders to corps and divisions. His frequent interference at the front tended to make tactical control somewhat frantic. Then someone always had to smooth things over.

h. Von Kluge told me that the "20 July" conspirators applied to him twice in 1943, once at his estate and once at Smolensk. But on the second occasion he declined and "after" 1943 he had no more influence on events. He told me nothing more. Liddel Hart later told me in England that Von Kluge was a name to conjure with as early as 1942. I presume that this was due to the influence of Obst von Tresckow*,

*Ed: Henning von Tresckow, later gen maj and C of S, Second Army, East, 1944. Believed to have committed suicide in the East in Jul 44, before trial for complicity in the 20 Jul 44 plot.

whom I knew very well. He was, you see, Deputy Ia (Ia/F) in our staff in 1940. According to my judgment of his speeches and utterances, Von Kluge was not hostile to the Fuehrer, but he certainly was to the Party

and above all to Himmler. One of his relatives was a "non-Aryan" and when he wanted to make him Aryan Himmler raised objections and said "No."

As with so many, "his reputation changes with the passage of time!*" Von Kluge would have finished the War if Adolf

*Ed: Schiller - Wallenstein's Lager.

Hitler had been dead on 20 Jul 44. All of us in our small circle at la Roche Guyon were of the same opinion--Von Kluge, Speidel, and myself! But when it was clear that the Fuehrer was alive, all of us had simply two reasons against doing so:

- (1) The oath remained and did not cease to be in force.
- (2) We saw the machinery of the state working like lightning, with all the consequences. Let us admit that it was only natural for any human being to remain passive under these circumstances.

The Bible tells not only of the traitor Judas, not only of Peter (the pious man who, for fear of the Roman secret state police, thrice denied his Master), but even of Christ, who in His greatest distress was a human being for a short time and would not know His mother for a moment!

I think that I have answered the original question, al-

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though a great many interesting side issues, which I shall deal with briefly, have arisen. The two reasons stated above, however, were the decisive ones!

14. Question 6

I do not know anything about it! I know only that Von Kluge talked frequently at the front with higher commanders about the political situation, but I never learned that Von Kluge had such an intention (Ed: Surrender) after 20 Jul 44. On the contrary, in order to divert his mind from what menaced him from behind, he thrust himself more frequently than ever into the most advanced positions—small matter whether or not he sought a soldier's death. For he had courage, and his death proved it! He was a soldier, and as a "gentleman" he would not deliver himself to the Gestapo! I know from the East that he always carried poison; he said several times: "Let's not be captured by the Russians; promise me that you will shoot me if I am wounded and cannot be carried back—there is no need for me to know it." Those words were not cheap theatrics, they were Von Kluge! Although certain facts are perhaps unknown to me, I believe that this accusation was invented by the Gestapo in order that it might proceed further.

On 13 Sep 44 Keitel kept alluding to an intercepted radio message, supposedly to a high Allied general, with whom actual communication could not be established. Perhaps Speidel knows something,

but I do not and I strongly expressed my opinion also to Keitel. On account of the destruction of his radio vehicle, Von Kluge was once "lost" for some 24 hours, near Avranches. Previously he had assigned his only son to Hq, Fifth Pz Army. Some believed that Von Kluge, his son, and the Army had surrendered to the Allies. But history denies that, for Von Kluge returned. He had not been able to radio his position and he had done everything in his power to save what could be saved. I believe that he only wanted to narcotize himself and perhaps even to save "Avranches" in order to win some credit in this bad situation. During a period of such tension many a thing happens in the soul of a man and, in spite of all, Von Kluge was a personality. I will always say that for the late Marshal.

III. Blumentritt: An Oath is an Oath!

15. In 1944 Von Rundstedt got a look at the documents concerning the 20 July! He said to me very often in England: "The Kapp*

*Ed: Wolfgang Kapp, German politician who led a revolt against the government in 1920. He seized the Berlin government, but a general strike broke his power. The Kapp Putsch ended in failure. Its author fled to Sweden, returned to Germany in 1922, and died while awaiting trial for treason.

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Futsch was prepared badly by some irresponsible fools, but the 20 July was a Kapp insurrection prepared in a worse manner." Now, in a dictatorship, whether Nazi or Soviet, the power of the state is so absolute--for everyone is watched by block wardens and house wardens--that an insurrection or a revolution is sure to be nipped in the bud.

16. In 1914 - 18 the constitutional monarchy was not very strong. The Kaiser stood aloof; Von Bethmann*, Michaelis*, Hertling*, and Prince Max* were honorable old figures without energy. They were

*Ed: Theobald von Bethmann-Hollweg, 1856 - 1921, succeeded Von Buelow as chancellor in 1909. It was he who called the treaty guaranteeing Belgian neutrality "a scrap of paper." His efforts to restrict submarine warfare and to reach a conciliation in 1916 led to his overthrow by Ludendorff and Hindenburg in 1917.

Georg Michaelis, commissioner for the national food supply, Feb - Jul 1917, and chancellor, Jul - Oct 1917.

Georg Graf von Hertling, chancellor, 1 Nov 1917 - Oct (?) 1918.

Maximilian, Prince of Baden, chancellor, 3 Oct - 9 Nov 1918. In a vain attempt to stave off revolution, Prince Max forced the Kaiser to abdicate. The chancellor surrendered the government to Ebert.

not like Clemenceau, Lloyd George, or Churchill; they were not great, strong, or even uncompromising statesmen! The Reichstag was more than sovereign, there were political parties, relative freedom of the press, freedom of assembly, freedom of speech, and--after 1916--a decisive trend to the left. The organizational foundation for a revolution was

there for everyone! The society was stratified, and the monarchy had become a hollow shell--old dust in a national apotheosis! Since 1916, therefore, the army of the communications zone and of the zone of the interior had become gradually ripe in revolutionary tendencies. In 1918 - 19, the fact that both the army and the regime had reached an advanced age gave cause for serious consideration; venerable institutions were crumbling.

17. In 1939 - 45 the situation was different! Then the government was a dictatorship similar to the one in Moscow, only not so absolute, for Hitler still needed the despised bourgeoisie, the nobility, and the "soldier of the Army," and could not unobtrusively liquidate Western Europe in a Russian-like manner. (If the War had ended well for Germany all of us would have been removed, the dictatorship would have resolutely thrust us aside!)

a. In 1944, 50 percent of our people still believed in a reasonable peace, in new weapons, in political miracles, in the Fuehrer! Let us not forget that today!

b. But the people could not have revolted, even if they had wished to, for it was impossible!

c. Most of our workers were quite well off as regards money, food, uniforms, medals, and employment (in some cases the stand-

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ard was higher than that of "respectable citizens")! Hitler never neglected to say to the millions that they were the "first" and the "best" of the state.

d. The officer corps stood on a revolutionarily broad basis. Even the son of a working man could become an officer and win the Ritterkreuz (Ed: Knight's Cross, third lowest grade of the Iron Cross).

e. Since 1933 our youth had been regimented and our adults warped.

f. The people knew about the agreements of 1943 and they felt the continuous bombings. The people did not become less resolute as a result; the millions--even women and children--in the seas of burning houses have proved that.

g. The Wehrmacht mirrored the people: the officer corps of the Army was reserved or even hostile, while 100 percent of the Navy and 90 percent of the Air Force were for Hitler.

In 1945, did you see red banners, defamation of officers, revolution, etc, as in 1918? I did not see that anywhere, wherever we went.

18. There is a great difference between 1918 and 1945. Imagine the evening of 20 Jul 44 in the West. You know that the attempt

on Hitler's life has failed and that he is still alive. By 1800 hours Germany knows it, all the fronts know it, the whole world knows it. And now you must decide! I believe that, in such a situation, you and I--just as Von Kluge and others--would be unable to take a decisive step:

- a. The oath bulks large in your soldier's breast.
- b. You know that the machinery of the state is working at top speed.
- c. You do not learn by telephone of any insurrection in the Reich--everything is quiet.
- d. As C-in-C West you are asked again and again by your sorely pressed armies, by the formations not under attack, and by excited telephone calls from Germany: "What is the matter, who wanted to kill the Fuehrer?"
- e. You see on the situation map the armies defending themselves desperately in the East.
- f. You see the quiet fronts in Norway, in the Balkans, and elsewhere.

Let us decide!?!

19. If Hitler had been dead, the course of events would cer-

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tainly have been different. But the superstitious people were told in a moving way how "Providence" had shielded the Fuehrer. No, the prerequisites were completely absent, and the imponderables were unfavorable. All of us, Von Kluge, Rommel, Speidel, myself, and others--each one for a different reason--could not break the oath, because we were German soldiers. Books may be written about the problem; one can invoke morality, ethics, military tradition, and religion, but none of these count in such a situation.

An oath is an oath!

20. When questioned on the subject, Von Rundstedt said at Nuremberg: "I am a soldier and not a traitor!" Not even one British, American, or French newspaper made fun of that!

In August, Field Marshal Montgomery made the speech read by so many people, in which as supreme British soldier of His Majesty he left no doubt that, as a matter of course, the British Army must know unconditional obedience only. The American Army does not think otherwise.

In a lead article, a great Swiss newspaper declared enthusiastically that the Swiss have always kept their oath inviolate and that federal mercenaries have always served loyally their lords, the popes, and the French kings. Even in the most difficult situation! The confederates are especially proud of that!

Do you not believe, my dear Hesse, that in privacy, when duty and politics can be set aside, every British, American, and French officer thinks in the same way? Quite certainly!

21. Whoever once, with "qualms of conscience," in a war when the fate of the nation is at stake, breaks the soldier's oath, even with a "heavy heart," can break it again in another "difficult" situation with a "heavy heart!" One cannot rely on such a man in a severe crisis. History shows that for such an action there is almost never any moral or ethical excuse before the tribunal of the nation. In all the armed forces of World War II there were difficult moral or ethical decisions to be made in order to win the war. Were the corresponding orders executed or not? They were, and I do not reproach the men who issued them. Every nation demands of its soldiers obedience and no philosophising.

22. Read the very interesting memoirs of Gen Grant. A century ago all of these considerations were self-evident to this great soldier of the free United States of America. "Though one may gladly avail himself of treason, he does not respect the name of the traitor.*"

*Ed: "Kings may love treason, but the traitor hate." Thomas Dekker - The Honest Moore. Part I. Act IV. Scene 4.

"He (Caesar) loved the treason, but hated the traitor." Plutarch - Life of Romulus.

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Was the Russo-German "National Free German Committee" treason or not?

Yes! And the reward? Gen Grant said, "Oblivion is the least that awaits a traitor."

In 1903 patriotic Serbian officers killed their king, Alexander*, (whose reign was disastrous for their country) and his im-

*Ed: Alexander I Obrenovich, succeeded to the throne in 1889 on the abdication of his father, Milan Obrenovich IV. In 1894 he abolished the relatively liberal constitution of 1888, and restored the more conservative one of 1869. Alexander's marriage with Madam Draga Mashin in 1900 proved extremely unpopular, and discontent grew rapidly. In 1903, after Alexander had suspended and restored the constitution, he and his queen were assassinated, under peculiarly revolting circumstances, by a clique of officers.

possible "Draga" in the Konak at Belgrad. I know only that the West spoke of Serbian bandits and robbers. And the ringleader? Well, he was shot in 1917 or 1918 at Saloniki, because he had broken his oath again.

23. You know as well as I do what our history, lyrical poetry, epics, dramas, legends, etc, say about the oath and fidelity in every situation. Call it Tragedy--or let us consider the matter with a sober mind. We disliked the Nazi regime as not German and as not characteristic of us, but as soldiers we kept the oath to our people however difficult it was.

Imagine how it would have been in 1944 if Von Kluge

had broken his oath and had been arrested by the Gestapo, or had fled to Spain! Imagine the troops against him, everything miscarried, the Eastern Front incensed, our propaganda going at full blast, the people incensed, and then--Peace! Forever and ever the German people would have ascribed the blame for everything to this act of "treason!"

If I take an oath about something, I keep to it, in any situation; otherwise I demand a special clause! Only under these circumstances can one rely on a man and a friend.

24. I would like to make a remark at this point concerning the book by Herr von Schlabrendorff*. Generally it is objective, but I

*Ed: Fabian von Schlabrendorff - Offiziere gegen Hitler, Zurich, 1946.

have two criticisms which I cannot leave unmentioned:

a. Von Tresckow is said to have uttered the opinion that Hitler could be overthrown only after a great military defeat and that he (Von Tresckow), through his staff, might be able to exert a certain amount of "influence" to help bring about such a chain of events. I do not believe that of Von Tresckow, whom I know! But if it is true, then I, as a soldier, must strenuously deny such a conception. That is high treason and a cold-blooded crime against my soldiers and my people. I cannot believe, therefore, that Von Tresckow had any

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such intention.

b. The book says that, contingent upon the success of the attempt, the former German ambassador to Moscow, Graf Schulenburg, was to have departed immediately for that city. Other persons were to establish contact with the West. The book says further that leading Communists were also to be included in the group which was to make the preparations. If that be true (which I do not know), I think it would have been the first great folly of the new interregnum. It would have been both disloyal and unfair to seek contact with the West, at last, and then to have to admit in London that negotiations were simultaneously under way in Moscow! It would have been loyal to establish contact only with the Western Powers, and to ask them whether they wished Germany also to contact Moscow, or whether the Western Powers would do that themselves. As explained in the book (!) the old trouble--the two political horses--would have appeared again.

As "proof of sincerity" Moscow would have demanded the immediate entry of Communists into important ministries, which would probably have been granted promptly. No one can know whether or not the people, liberated from all shackles, would have made a decisive turn to the left, to Russia's benefit as in 1916 - 18. Then things would

have happened just as in Russia in 1917, first a Kerensky and then the Bolsheviki! So it would have been, in the nature of things, a dangerous move. The inevitable sequel to this preliminary political blunder would have been the slow conversion of Germany into a Soviet state.

I cannot imagine that the immediate establishment of relations with Moscow, without preliminary conversations with the Western Powers, would have been in accordance with the political ideas of the latter!

In addition, one can read between the lines that the men within this circle did not agree at all on many points, changed often, and redistributed the various ministries rather frequently! No, that was not an encouraging picture in the midst of a fight for life or death.

25. I really honor the dead of 20 July. Many of them were my comrades. Most of them had the best of motives, and therefore I fully appreciate their sincerity. I would never have betrayed any of them; on the contrary, I would have helped them as I offered to Speidel at the beginning of Sep 44. But in the last analysis, as a soldier, I must say that an oath is an oath and there are no "but's."

26. What would happen to any country's armed forces, in which

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there is the least doubt about the oath, in which a soldier of any rank may or must decide for himself? Such an army would collapse like a china shop as soon as the bull is let loose. On which ally, comrade, or friend could one then rely? Today, many people swear to a new world! Very fine, but have they always kept their oaths?

Experts will write much about this psychological complex. But considering the basic realities of the life of the nation and its soldiers, it is better to go along with Montgomery: "The British Army must know unconditional obedience only." Or with Gen Grant, who left no room for doubt about the matter, although he apparently thought quite differently from his government concerning political matters in the Mexican War. But as a general he carried out his orders!

The book about Turenne is also very enlightening!

These are international bases of the profession of arms, upon which all soldiers of the world agree, as they do on so many questions of common interest when they sit around the same table. You may be quite sure that there is no regime which does not make a similar demand of its soldiers, who are the hounds of the political hunter. In a war, the state would cut its own throat were it to educate its soldiers in these philosophical problems in such a complex manner that they became

irresolute and doubtful. This is the only conclusion that I, or anyone else, can reach.

In the autumn of 1946 a Swiss newspaper wrote that a German officer on a German staff in Paris had had the closest connections with the French resistance movement since 1942 - 43. Well, that was welcome to the French, who profited by it. But from our point of view he was guilty of high treason and responsible for the death of hundreds of German soldiers. The man was praised, but the average courageous, honorable French officer himself thought differently about the matter. Such an "officer" does the same thing again in another situation. He cannot be trusted.

This is a long letter. We have much left to talk about, but there are no more "secrets." All the secrets are contained in this letter.

Speidel made a surprise visit here once, and I was glad of it. In 1944 - 45 the poor man suffered a great deal, and I can quite sympathize with him.

With best regards, I remain

Yours truly,

/s/ Blumentritt

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IV. Blumentritt: German National Character

For the purpose of dealing again with the core of the problem I should like to communicate another idea to you.

27. Geographically, Germany is a land of the center. Our history and culture had their beginnings in the West and in the South, after the great eastward migrations of peoples had ceased. The West and the South are the fruit of the Western and Southern cultures. The Roman Empire and even Christianity penetrated first the western and southern parts of Germany which were Roman outer provinces. Only at a later date did colonization of the East take place, although there were earlier and contemporaneous struggles with the eastern peoples, the Huns, the Avars, and the Mongols. That which a thousand years ago became German, east of the Elbe, is a monument to generations of men from the West, the South, Thuringia, and Austria. Without doubt they had to compromise with, and become adapted to, the conditions of the East in order to build up this new and strange land.

28. Thus, the Germany of yesterday constituted a natural geographical and cultural bridge between the West and the East. Today we would still discern this transition if we could travel from Cologne or Munich across the Elbe--Saale, the Oder, and the lower Vistula. Perhaps

we soldiers, moving constantly from one place to another, notice it more than does the static population. Our "tribes," the German states, reflect this transition. Let us not forget that it was the German people who carried Western and Southern culture from their native lands to the East.

29. We are no "mass", we are "individualists" and often, as our internal political history shows, with too pronounced an inclination toward "I," party, confederation, dogma, and doctrine. We are, perhaps, such "super-democrats" that the logical democracy of "the greatest good for the greatest number" scarcely gets its just desserts. In the old Germanic life of the "free man" and the chosen leaders, we were conscious of this liberty. Under the best conditions, one found in old German towns an upright community of very proud citizens, the old burgomasters, the guilds, etc. But after the Thirty Years War these things were changed by the internal development of the state. The regime of bureaucrats and military men naturally created the civil servant and the "Yes-man." Thus the old German principles disappeared.

Today, we sense again and again the essence of our nature, the "rebellion" against a state, now disappeared, which had pushed the community to totalitarian extremes; the rebellion against too rigid a centralization, which had gradually developed from Berlin since

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1871 and which could also be found again in 1919.

30. Even our "tribes" and states are centrifugally individualistic and cannot easily be reconciled to centralized control. Therefore I was always the defender of a federation or even of a confederation of states. One may deplore or welcome the fact; we cannot help being that way.

National Socialism went to extremes of centralization. Now we see the reaction! Bismarck had time for his plan of centralizing very cautiously. So I mean that with us Germans the idea of liberty of the individual is very strongly developed.

Therefore, neither a centralized monarchy, nor a centralized republic, nor by any means a centralized Nazi state was in accordance with our feelings. There was always the inward "rebellion" of our individualism. Therefore we probably had strict outward discipline as a countermeasure.

31. The East, however, is "mass." The individual, a single man, is of no importance. Docility and submissiveness are Slavic and Asiatic. After all, it is immaterial to the people of the East whether the regime is Czarist or Bolshevik, for they are, in any case, accustomed to absolute obedience, which is perhaps a necessity for them. The Soviets logically adapted their regime to that characteristic feature. Their methods are not strange to the East. Since 1917 they have removed system-

atically and uncompromisingly the small Russian middle class, the nobility, and the proprietors. The remaining 90 percent--peasants, workers, and soldiers--have been converted into a new society. From the ultrarevolutionary political ideas of the International a nationalistic structure has gradually arisen.

Stalin has a corps of officers and bureaucrats which has been hand-picked and methodically trained in a one-sided Bolshevik manner. There are only 100 percent Bolsheviks. Although certain of them may privately have other opinions they will take great care that these are not suspected! Thus the machinery of the state is homogeneous, all moderate elements are harmless and all opposing elements are ruthlessly eliminated. I see a great danger in this sinister machine which always drives in the one direction willed by its engineer.

32. Halder* told me once that Hitler regretted that he did

*Ed: Genobst Franz Halder, C of S of the Army (1 Sep 38 - 24 Sep 42), arrested by the Gestapo 21 Jul 44.

not have at his disposal a body of attendants which was as completely regimented as that of Stalin. Hitler regretted that he had to work with other means. He was not able to force the construction of such a uniform Slavic-Asiatic machine in well-educated, Occidental, individualistic Germany. Sufficient attempts were made--the Gestapo and the

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OGPU are very much alike--but the substance of the nation was such that this Eastern system could not be modified to fit our people.

The "bourgeoisie" was despised, but could not be liquidated. The "nobility" was instinctively feared, but could not be sent to Siberia. Neither would our valuable classes of ancient peasantry, our craftsmen, nor even our skilled workers have borne these Eastern methods. We see that even today. A defeated nation readily tends towards radicalism (Germany - 1919, Russia - 1917, etc). But today no intelligent person, no worker, peasant, townsman, craftsman or other, takes to Bolshevism. That is a proof of the individuality of our people, who belong to the West.

33. If we compare these two worlds of great contrast we understand also the dilemma of 1939 - 45. Because of their origin, education, culture, and world concepts our classes were instinctively opposed to such new ideas. But again and again that opposition was doubted by many circles of our nation and by us because of two reasons:

- a. Since 1919 the facade of Nazism had been tempting even to good and reasonable Germans. Consider some of the Nazi programs: the improvement of conditions of the workers; agricultural refinancing; and the increased emphasis on tradition, on old German things, on customs, landscapes, nature, art, music, etc. It was just as on the stage in a theater where the entranced spectator does not see how profanely things

take their course in the wings and in the flies.

b. There were acquired convictions with respect to duty, fidelity, the oath, etc, toward the state, the people, and the nation.

Only thus can I explain the continuous vacillating from one doubt to another. Hence the conscientious scruples, the hesitation, the distrust, the duplicity! No official in Russia meets with these difficulties! I think that when dealing with the problem of the 20 July these ideas must be taken into consideration as a basis for judgment.

34. We Germans of the monarchy and the republic stood on different ground from the youth of the present day, the "youth of the state," in education, family, and thought. Our traditions, however, kept us from crossing the threshold of action; they forced us to uphold the venerable civic and soldierly virtues. Thus the tragedy lies in our uncertainty, in the fact that our world had been remolded into a new and alien form, from which we could not release ourselves because of our inordinate sense of duty!

With best regards, I remain

Yours truly,

/s/ Blumentritt

OB WEST

(Atlantic Wall to Siegfried Line)

A STUDY IN COMMAND

MS # B-308 : GENLT ZIMMERMANN
MS # B-672 : GENMAJ von BUTTLAR
MS # B-718 : GENLT SPEIDEL
MS # B-633 : GENFLDM von RUNDSTEDT
MS # B-344 : GEN INF BLUMENTRITT



Volume III

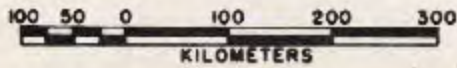
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Volume III

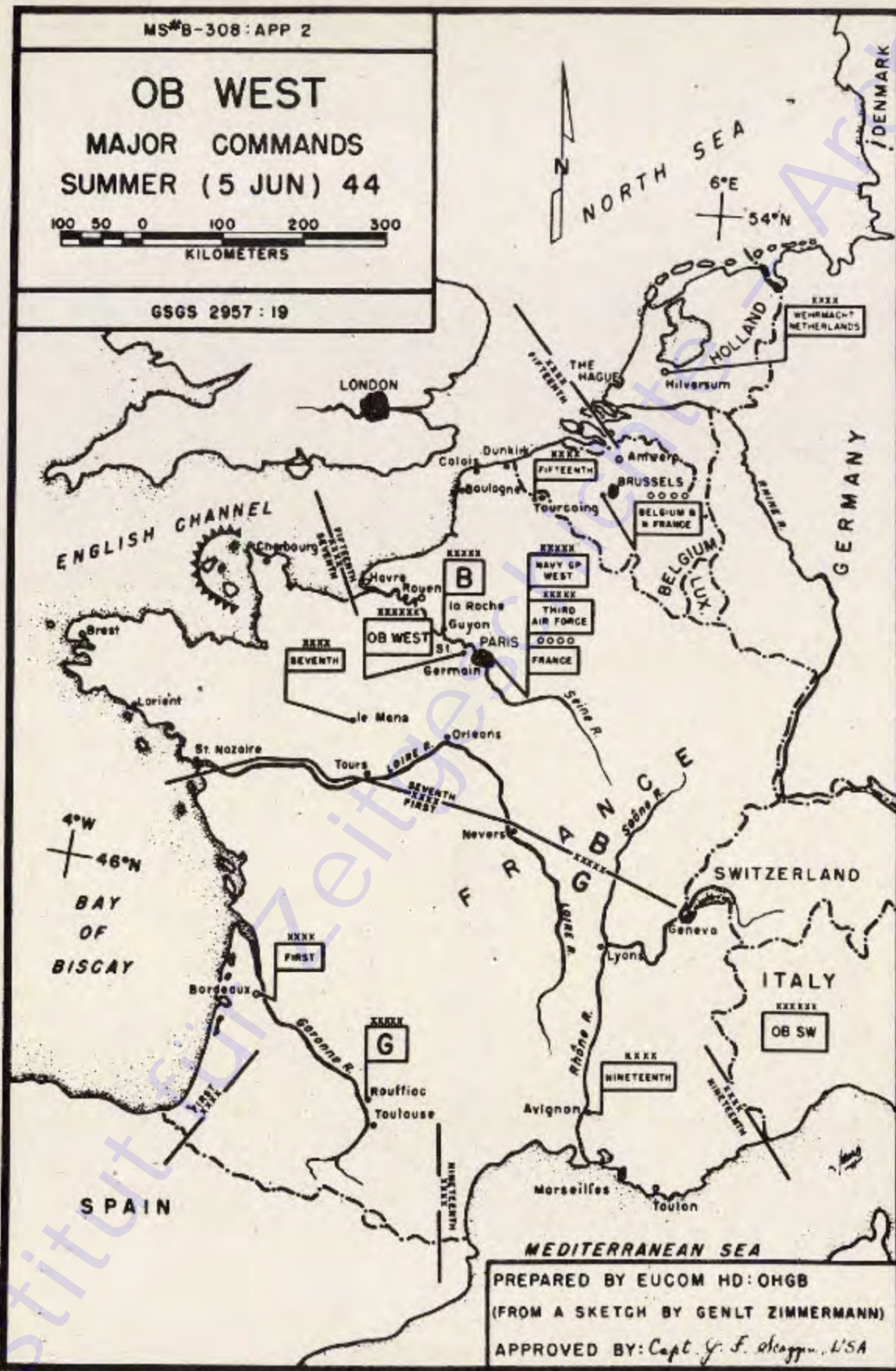
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MS#B-308: APP 2

OB WEST MAJOR COMMANDS SUMMER (5 JUN) 44



GSGS 2957 : 19



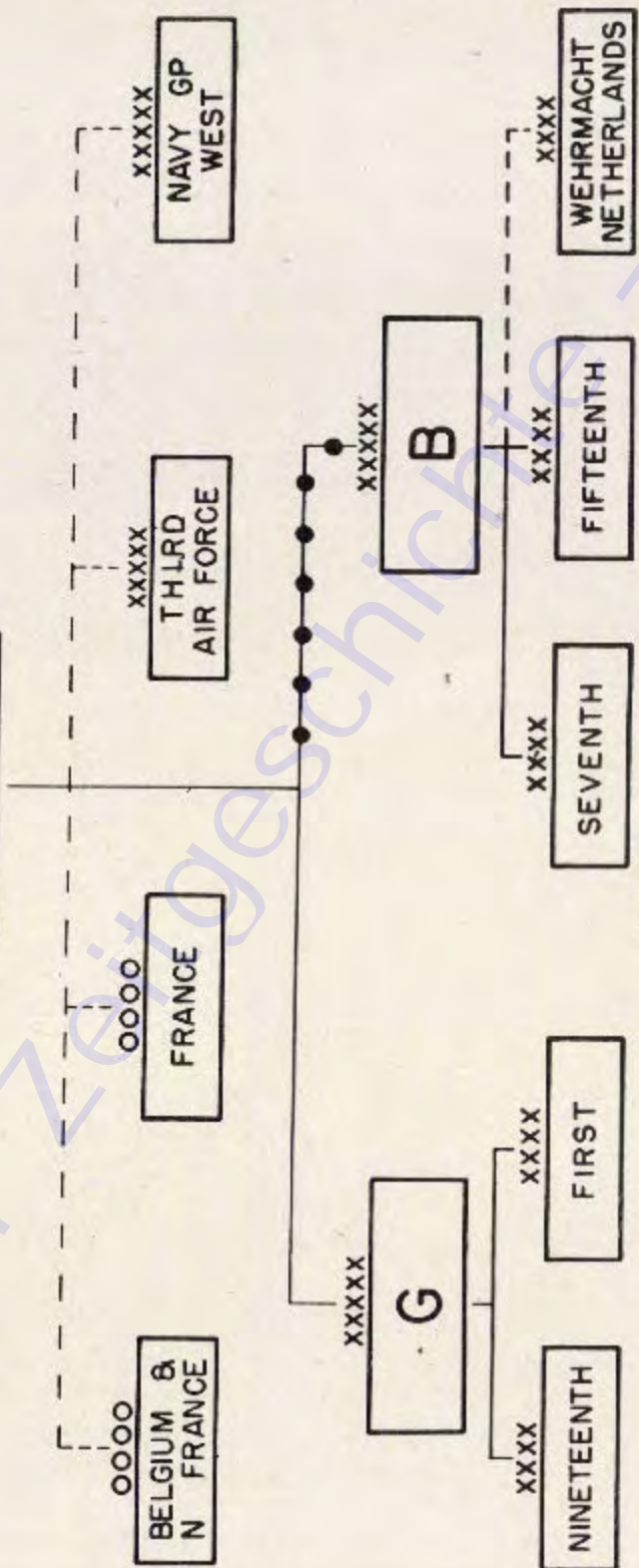
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 (FROM A SKETCH BY GENLT ZIMMERMANN)
 APPROVED BY: *Capt. G. F. Stagg, USA*

MS # B-308: APP 2 a

**OB WEST
COMMAND CHANNELS
BEGINNING OF INVASION**

XXXXXX

OB WEST



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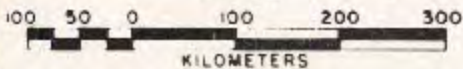
- DIRECTLY SUBORDINATE
- - - SUBORDINATE ONLY FOR TACTICAL PURPOSES
- - - THEORETICALLY SUBORDINATE; ACTUALLY UNDER
- DIRECT CONTROL OF OKW

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(FROM A DIAGRAM BY GENLT ZIMMERMANN)
APPROVED BY: *Capt. J. F. Scoggin, USA*

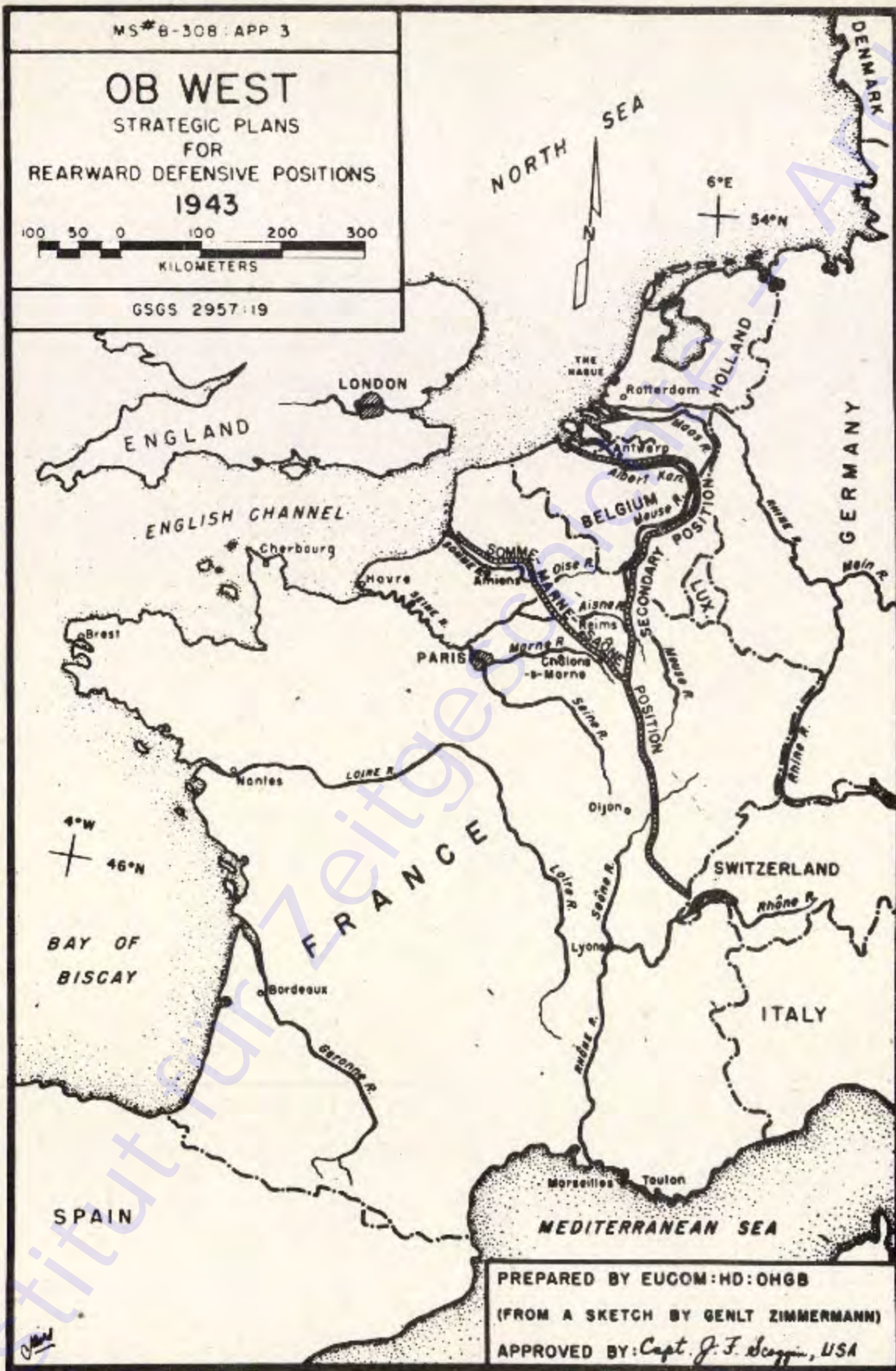
MS# B-308 APP 3

OB WEST

STRATEGIC PLANS
FOR
REARWARD DEFENSIVE POSITIONS
1943

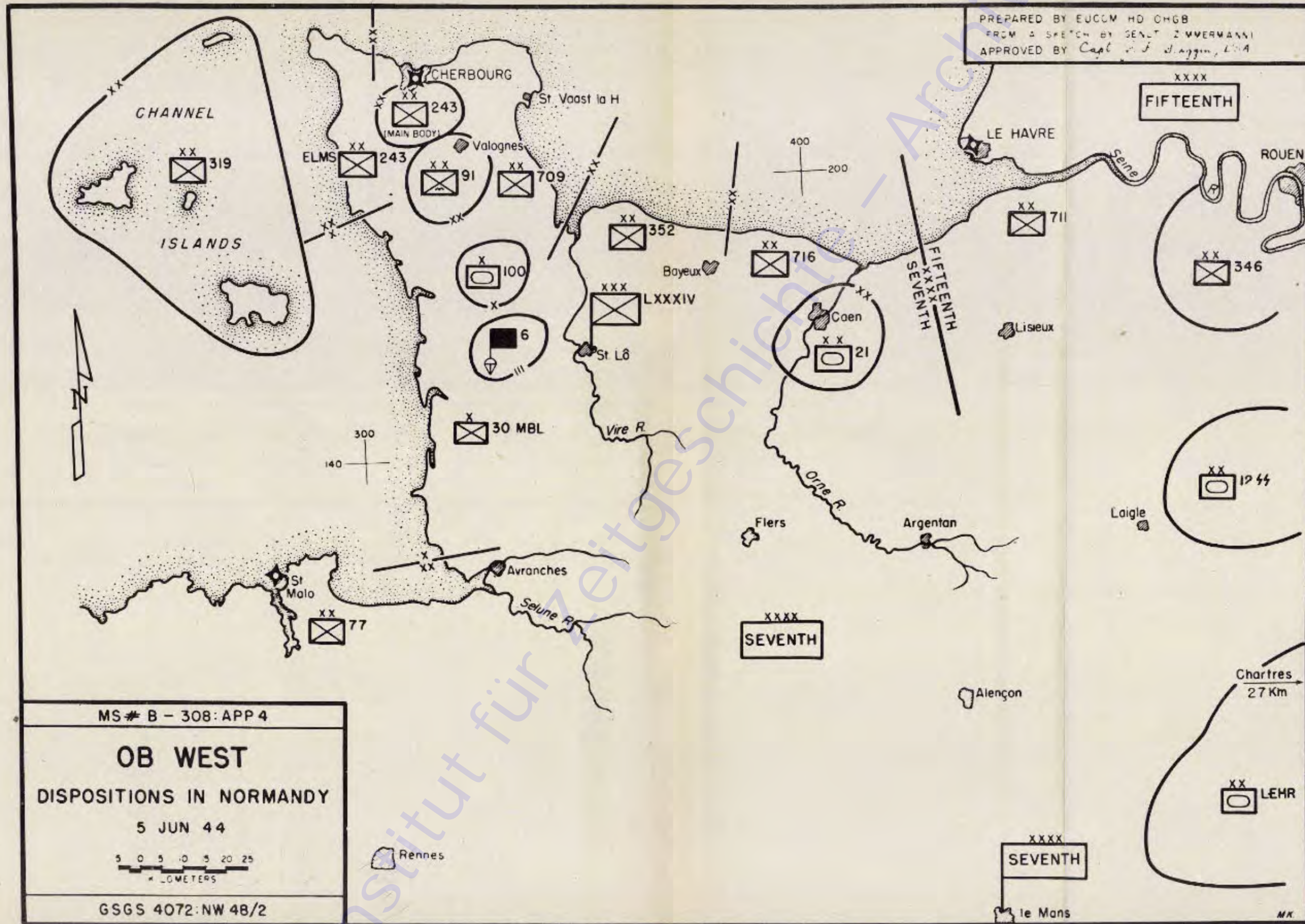


GSGS 2957:19



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(FROM A SKETCH BY GENLT ZIMMERMANN)
APPROVED BY: *Capt. J. F. Scoppa, USA*

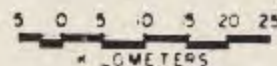
PREPARED BY EUCCM HD OHGB
FROM A SKETCH BY SENLT ZIMMERMANN
APPROVED BY Capt. J. J. Jaggan, LIA



MS# B - 308:APP 4

OB WEST DISPOSITIONS IN NORMANDY

5 JUN 44



GSGS 4072: NW 48/2

XXXX
SEVENTH

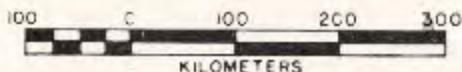
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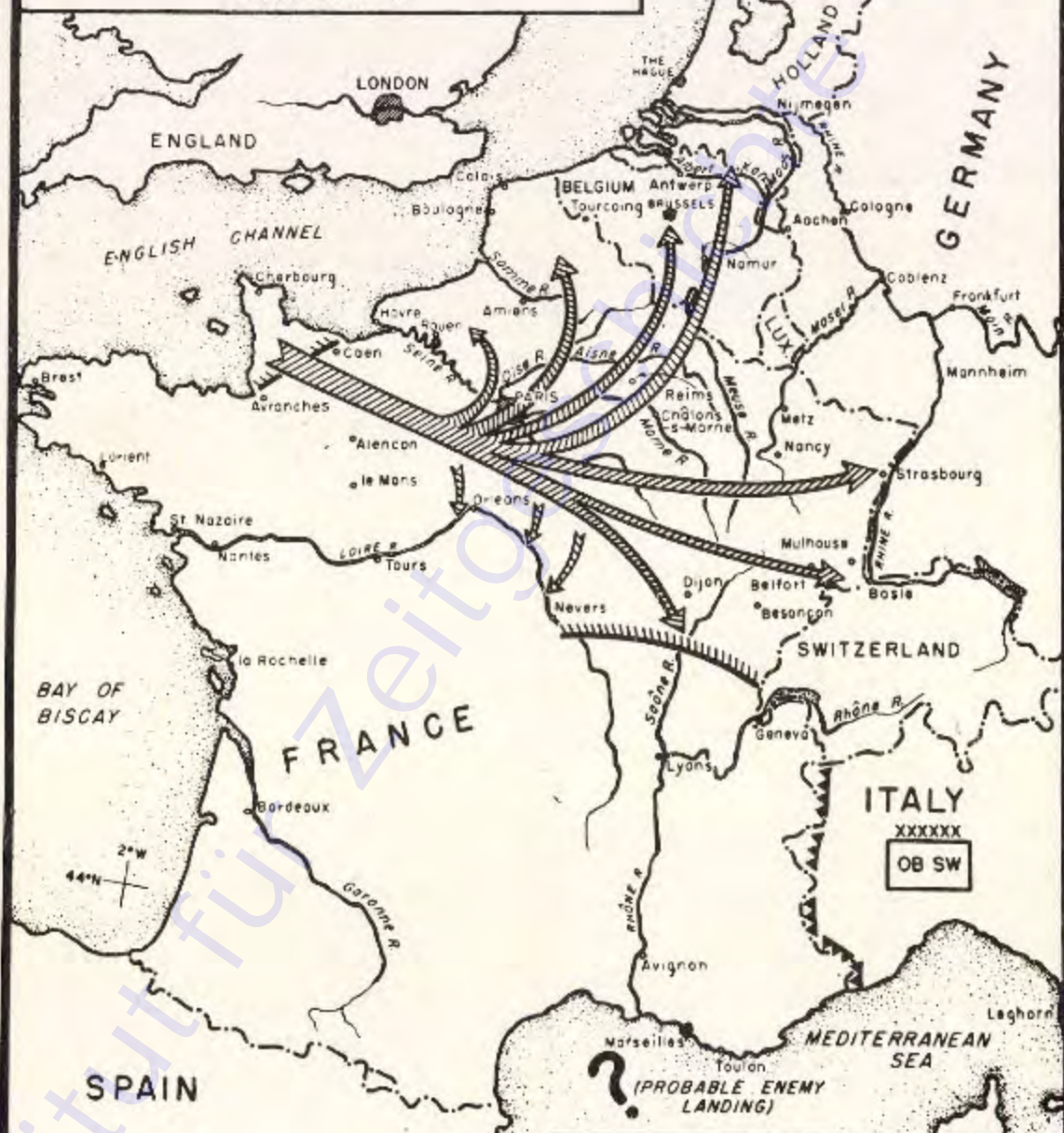
MS# B-308 APP 4a

OB WEST

ESTIMATE OF ENEMY INTENTIONS
AFTER NORMANDY BREAKTHROUGH



GSGS 2957:19



ITALLY
XXXXXX
OB SW

? (PROBABLE ENEMY LANDING)

PREPARED BY EUCOM:MD:OHGB
(FROM A SKETCH BY GENLT ZIMMERMANN)
APPROVED BY: Capt. G. F. Wagner, USA

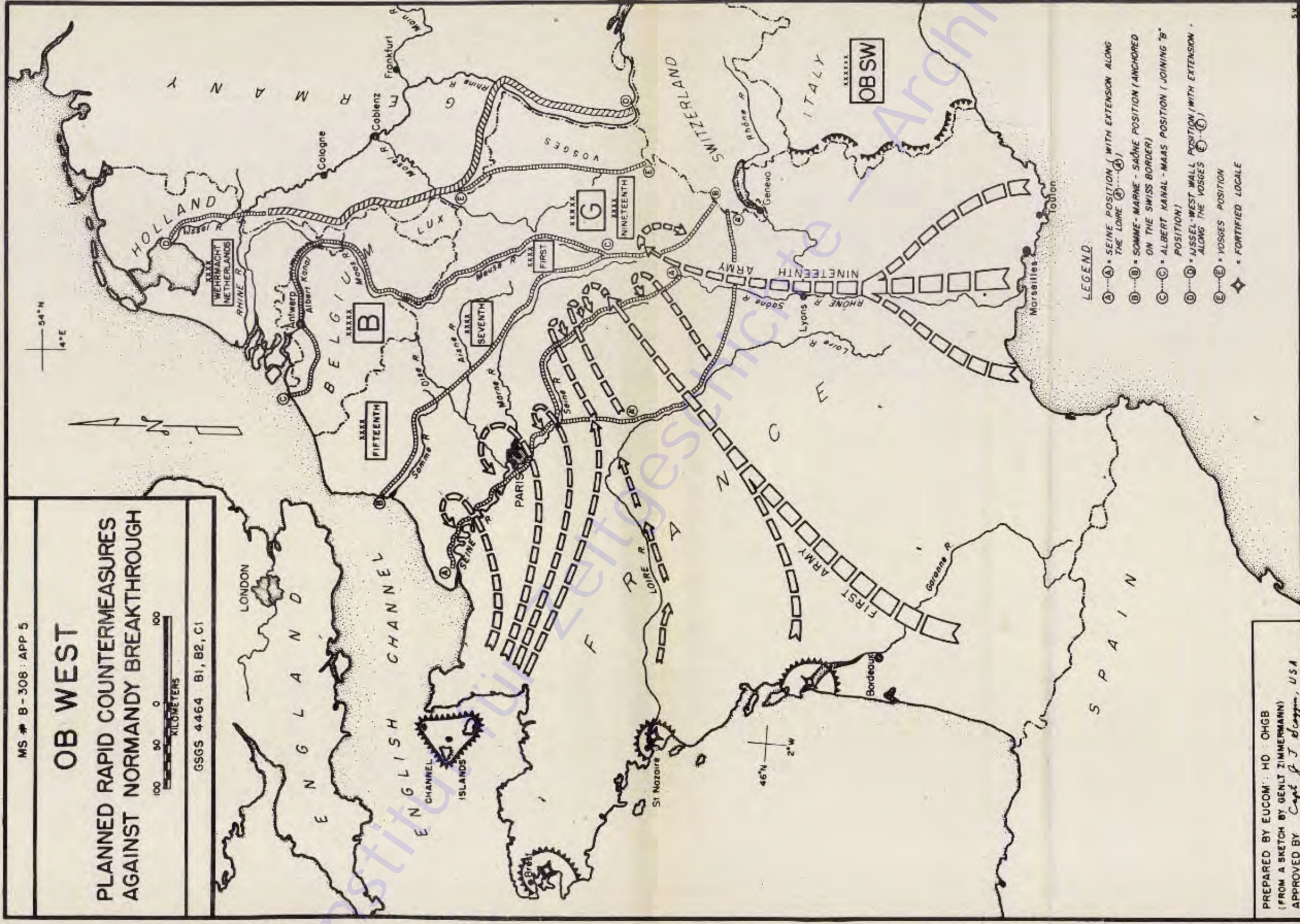
MS # B-308 APP 5

OB WEST

PLANNED RAPID COUNTERMEASURES AGAINST NORMANDY BREAKTHROUGH



GSGS 4464 B1, B2, C1



LEGEND

- (A) SEINE POSITION (WITH EXTENSION ALONG THE LOIRE)
- (B) SOMME-MARNE-SAONE POSITION (ANCHORED ON THE SWISS BORDER)
- (C) ALBERT-KANAL-MAAS POSITION (JOINING 'B' POSITION)
- (D) MUSSEL-WEST WALL POSITION (WITH EXTENSION ALONG THE VOSGES)
- (E) VOSGES POSITION
- ◆ FORTIFIED LOCALE

PREPARED BY EUCOM: HQ OHGB
 (FROM A SKETCH BY GENLT ZIMMERMANN)
 APPROVED BY *Capt. J. J. Duggan, USA*

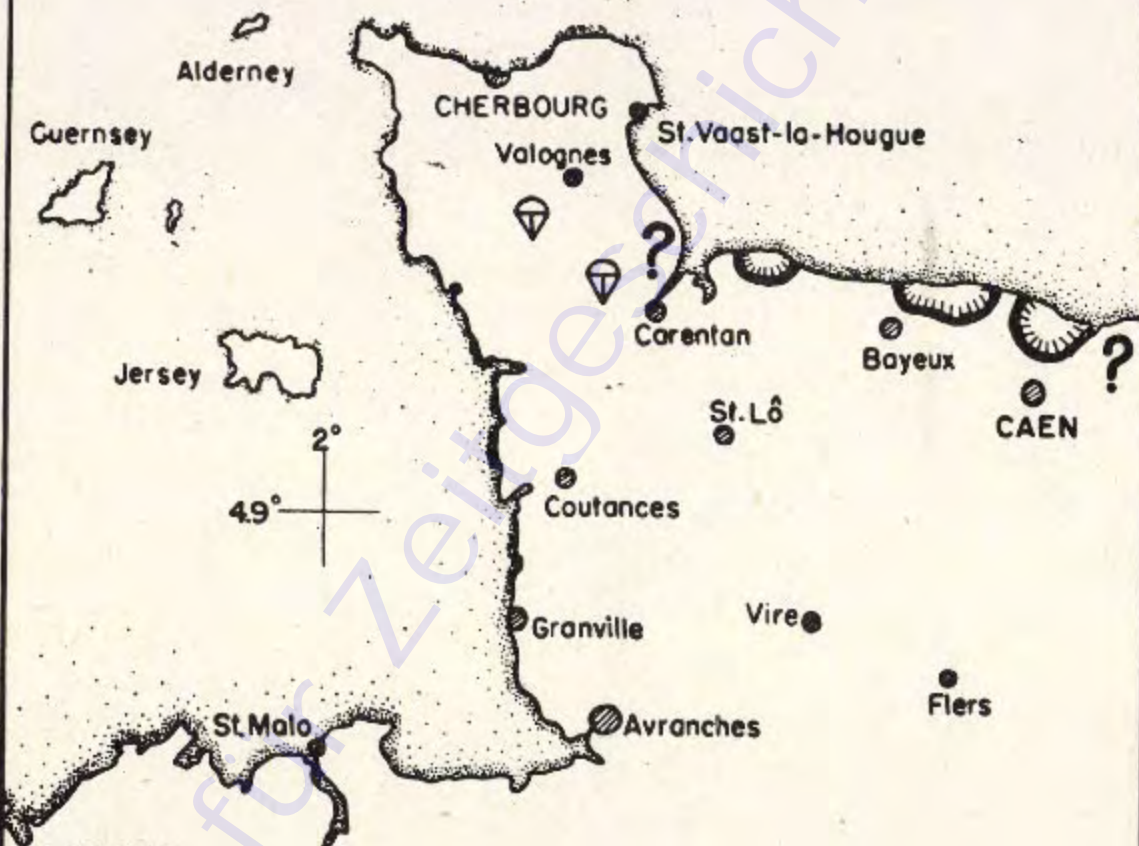
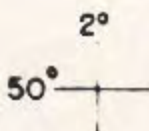
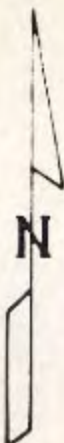
MS # B-308: APP 6

**OB WEST
FIRST PHASE
OF INVASION**

6 JUN 44



GSGS 2758: M 30, M 31



LEGEND:

- BEACHHEAD
- AIRBORNE LANDINGS
- SITUATION STILL UNCLEAR

Fougères

PREPARED BY EUCOM: HD: OHGB
(FROM A SKETCH BY GENLT ZIMMERMANN)
APPROVED BY: *Capt. J. F. Scoggin, USA*

244

MS # B-308: APP 7

OB WEST SECOND PHASE OF INVASION

ABOUT 7-12 JUN 44

20 0 20 40
KILOMETERS

GSGS 2758: M30, M31



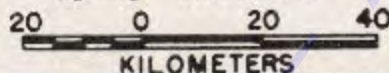
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APPROVED BY: *Capt. J. F. Scoggin, USA*

MHA.

MS # B-308: APP 8

**OB WEST
THIRD PHASE
OF INVASION**

13-18 JUN 44



G S G S 2758: M30, M31



NOTE:
FRONT LINES AS OF 19-20 JUN 44
CHERBOURG COMPLETELY CUT OFF

PREPARED BY EUCOM: HD: OHGB
(FROM A SKETCH BY GENLT ZIMMERMANN)
APPROVED BY: *Capt. J. F. Scoggin, USA*

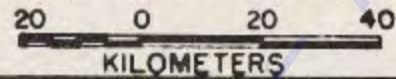
MBH

MS# B-308: APP 9

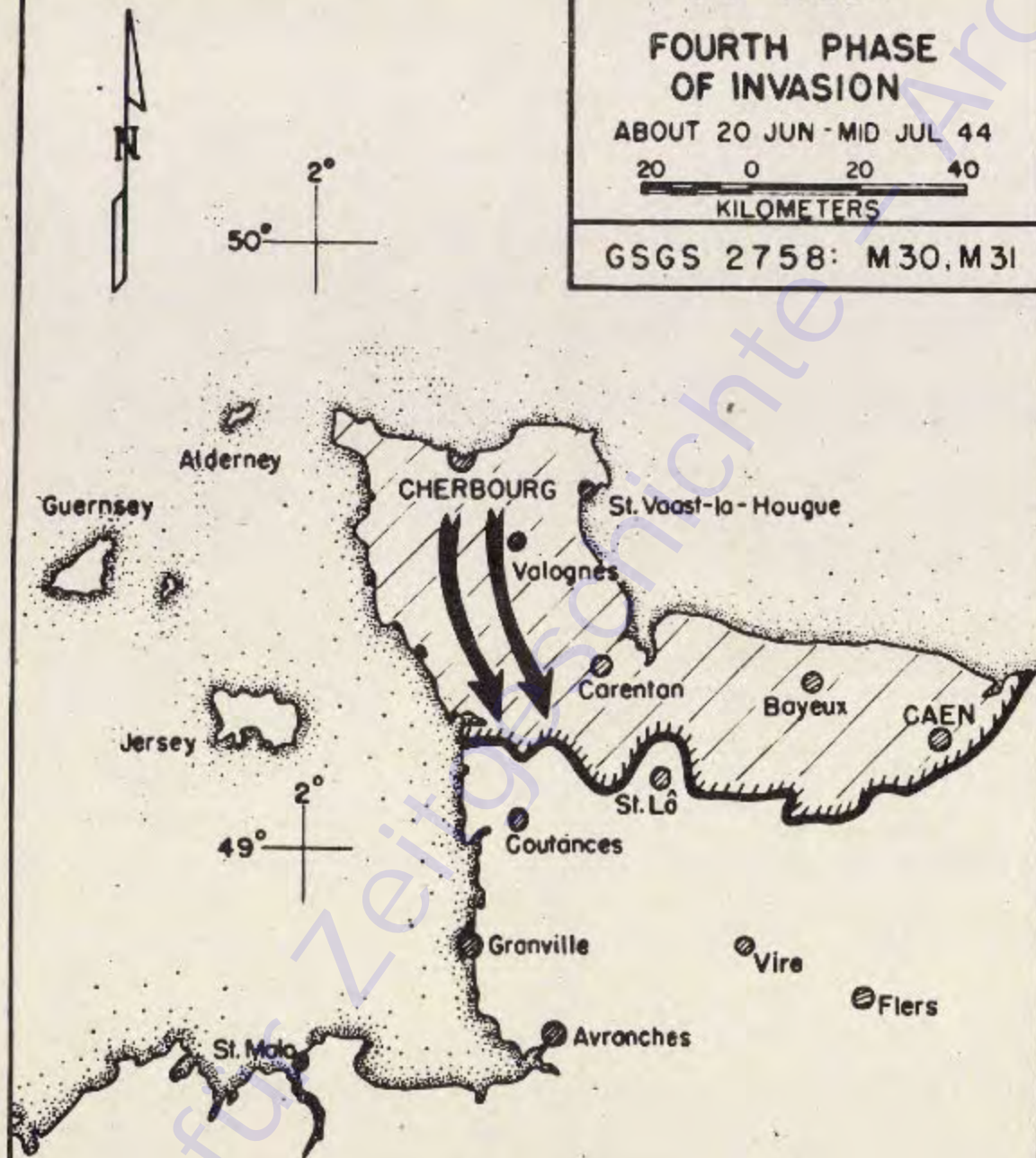
OB WEST

**FOURTH PHASE
OF INVASION**

ABOUT 20 JUN - MID JUL 44



GSGS 2758: M30, M31



NOTE:

CHERBOURG AND CAEN CAPTURED

⊗ Fougères



= SHIFTING OF THE MAIN EFFORT

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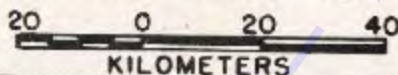
(FROM A SKETCH BY GENLT ZIMMERMANN)

APPROVED BY: *Capt. J. F. Scoggin, USA*

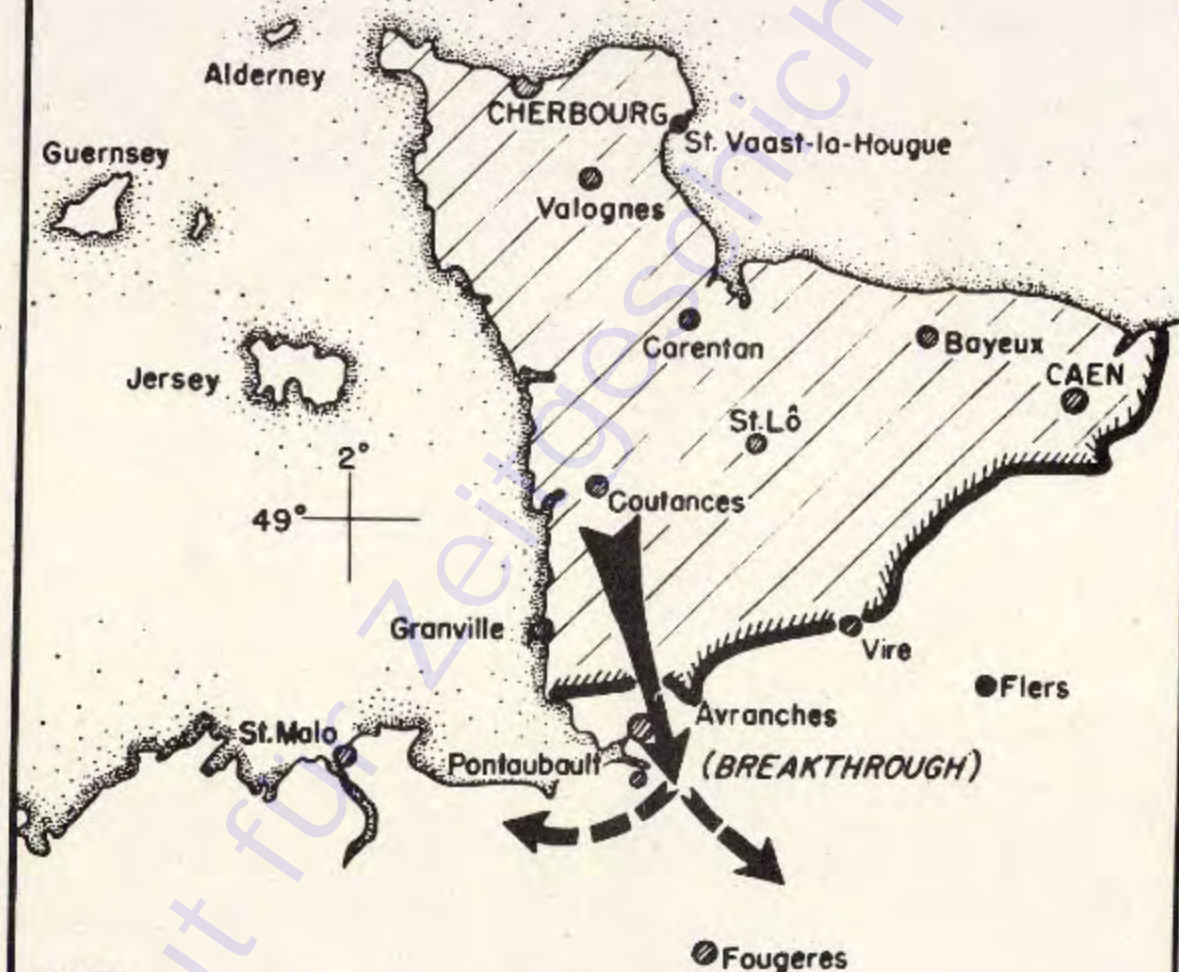
M&H

MS # B-308: APP 10

OB WEST
FIFTH PHASE
OF INVASION
 MID JUL - END OF JUL 44



GSGS 2758: M30, M31



NOTE:
 FRONT LINE AS OF END OF JUL 44

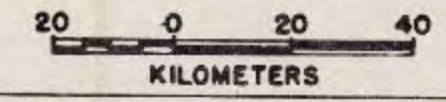
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M&M

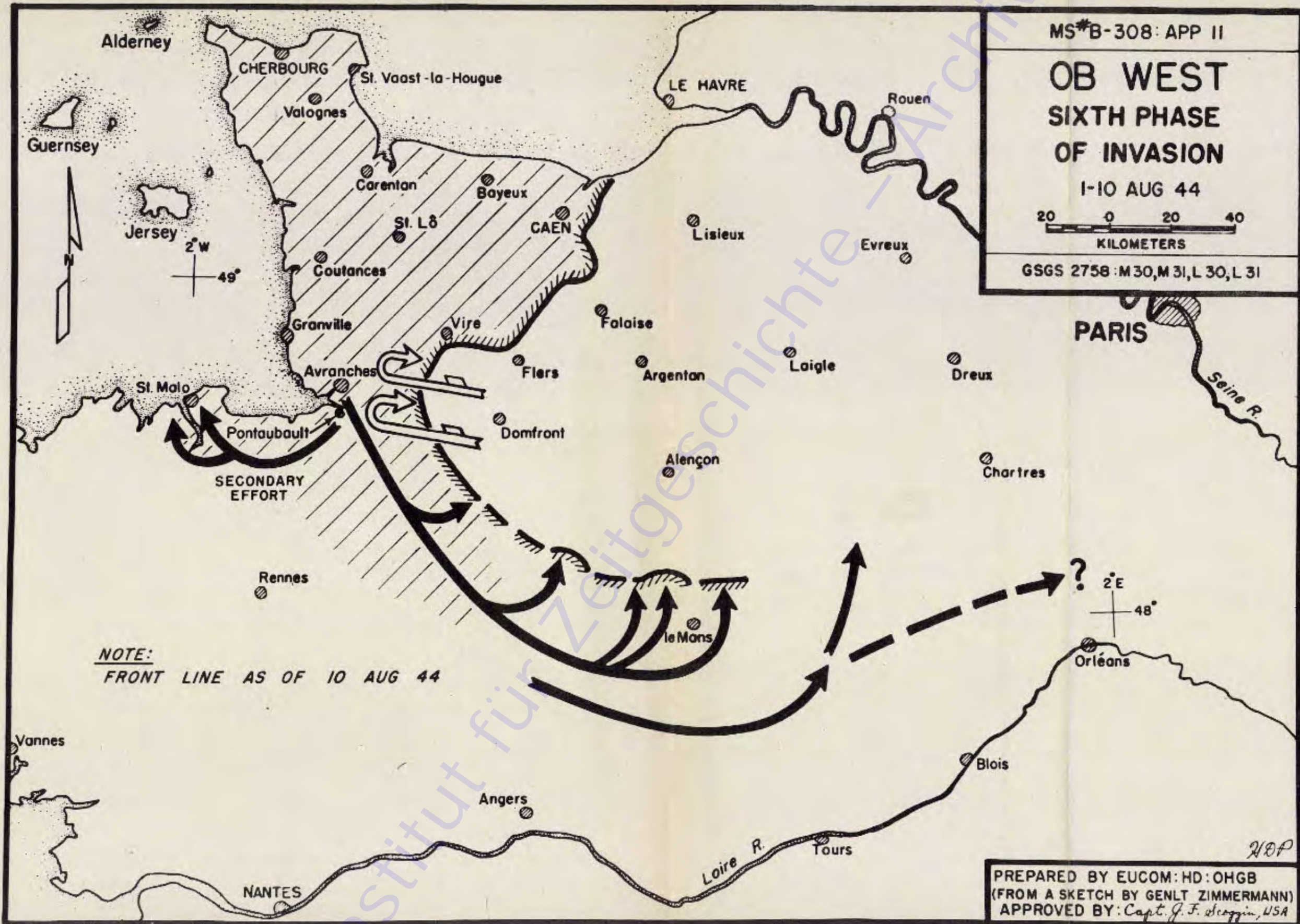
MS#B-308: APP II

OB WEST SIXTH PHASE OF INVASION

1-10 AUG 44



GSGS 2758 : M 30, M 31, L 30, L 31



NOTE:
FRONT LINE AS OF 10 AUG 44

PREPARED BY EUCOM:HD:OHGB
 (FROM A SKETCH BY GENLT ZIMMERMANN)
 APPROVED BY: *Capt. J. F. Scoggin, USA*

HOP

PREPARED BY EUCOM:HD:OHGB
(FROM A SKETCH BY GENLT. ZIMMERMANN)
APPROVED BY: *Capt. J. F. Scaggin, USA*



MS# B-308: APP 12

OB WEST

SEVENTH PHASE

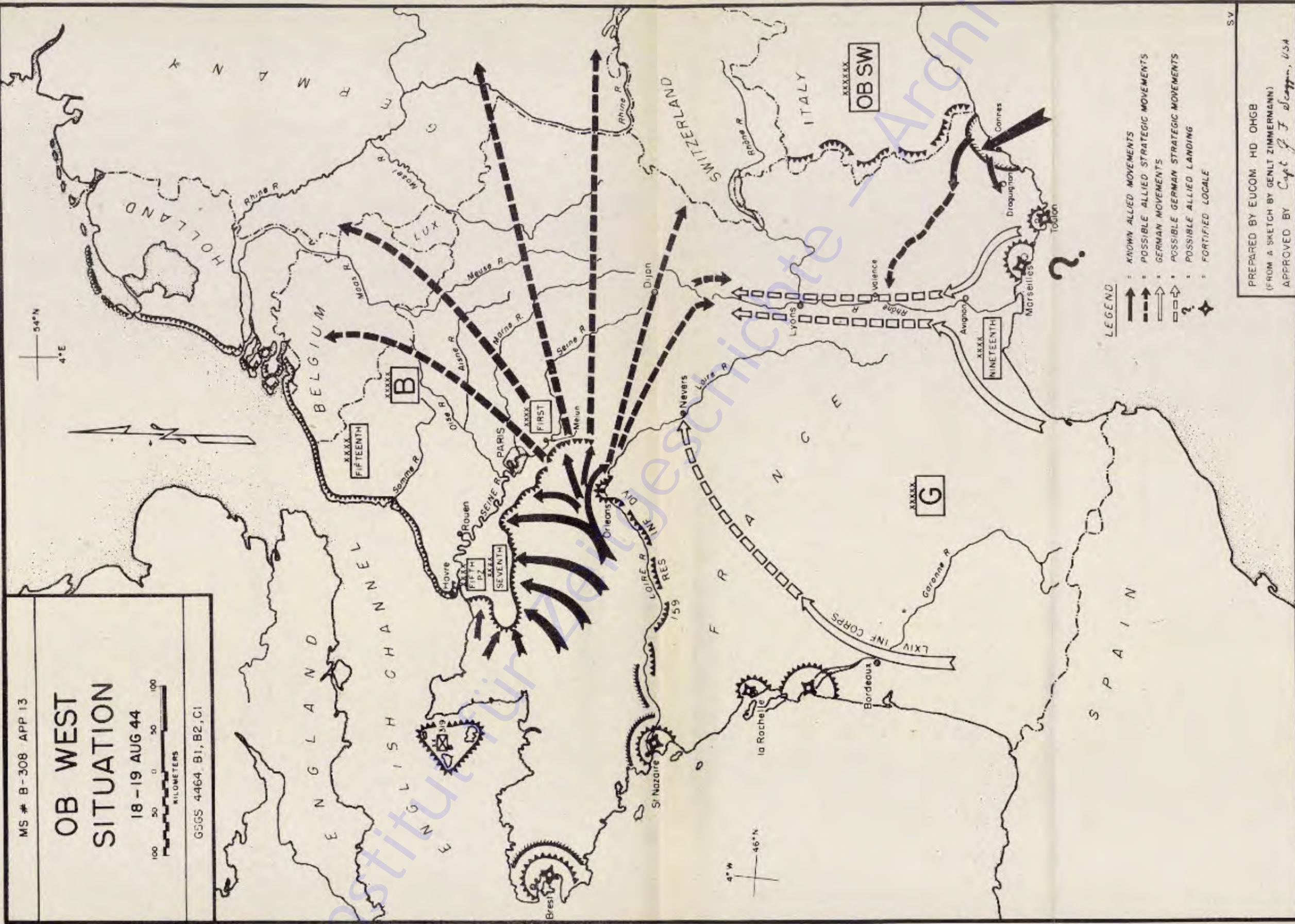
OF INVASION

ABOUT 11-30 AUG 44

20 0 20 40
KILOMETERS

GSGS 2758:M30,M31,M32,L30,L31

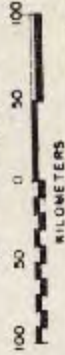
JDP



MS # B-308 APP 13

OB WEST SITUATION

18-19 AUG 44



GSGS 4464 B1, B2, C1

- LEGEND**
- : KNOWN ALLIED MOVEMENTS
 - - - : POSSIBLE ALLIED STRATEGIC MOVEMENTS
 - · · : GERMAN MOVEMENTS
 - · · : POSSIBLE GERMAN STRATEGIC MOVEMENTS
 - : POSSIBLE ALLIED LANDING
 - ⚙ : FORTIFIED LOCALE

PREPARED BY EUCOM, HD OHGB
 (FROM A SKETCH BY GENLT ZIMMERMANN)
 APPROVED BY Capt F. Stegmann, USA

SV

PREPARED BY EUCOM: HD: OHGB
(FROM A SKETCH BY GENLT ZIMMERMANN)
APPROVED BY: *Capt. J. F. Scaggin, USA*

MS # B-308: APP. 14

OB WEST POCKET SOUTH OF THE SEINE ABOUT 21 - 25 AUG 44

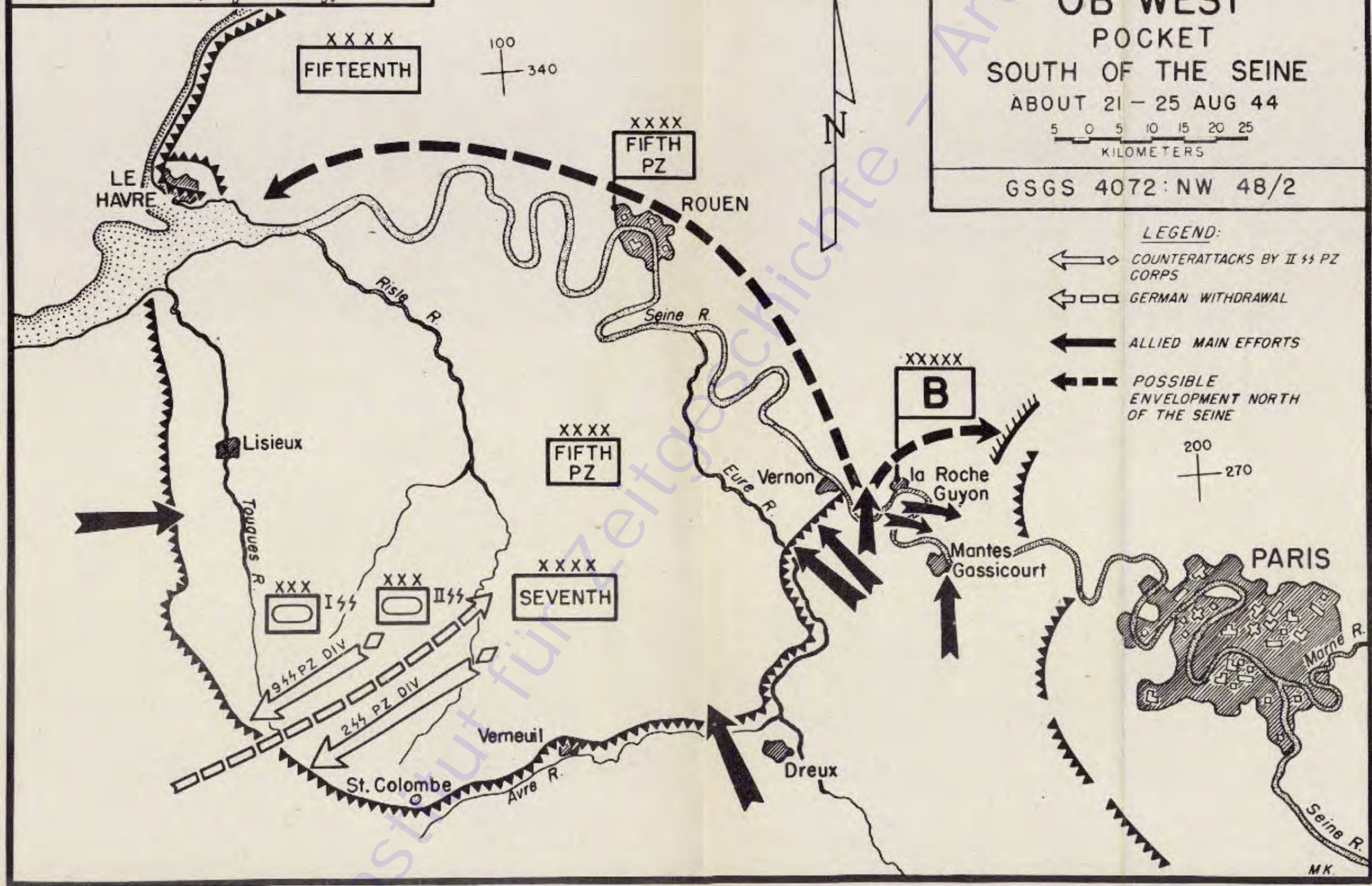
5 0 5 10 15 20 25
KILOMETERS

GSGS 4072: NW 48/2

LEGEND:

- COUNTERATTACKS BY II SS PZ CORPS
- GERMAN WITHDRAWAL
- ALLIED MAIN EFFORTS
- POSSIBLE ENVELOPMENT NORTH OF THE SEINE

200
270



MK

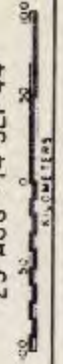
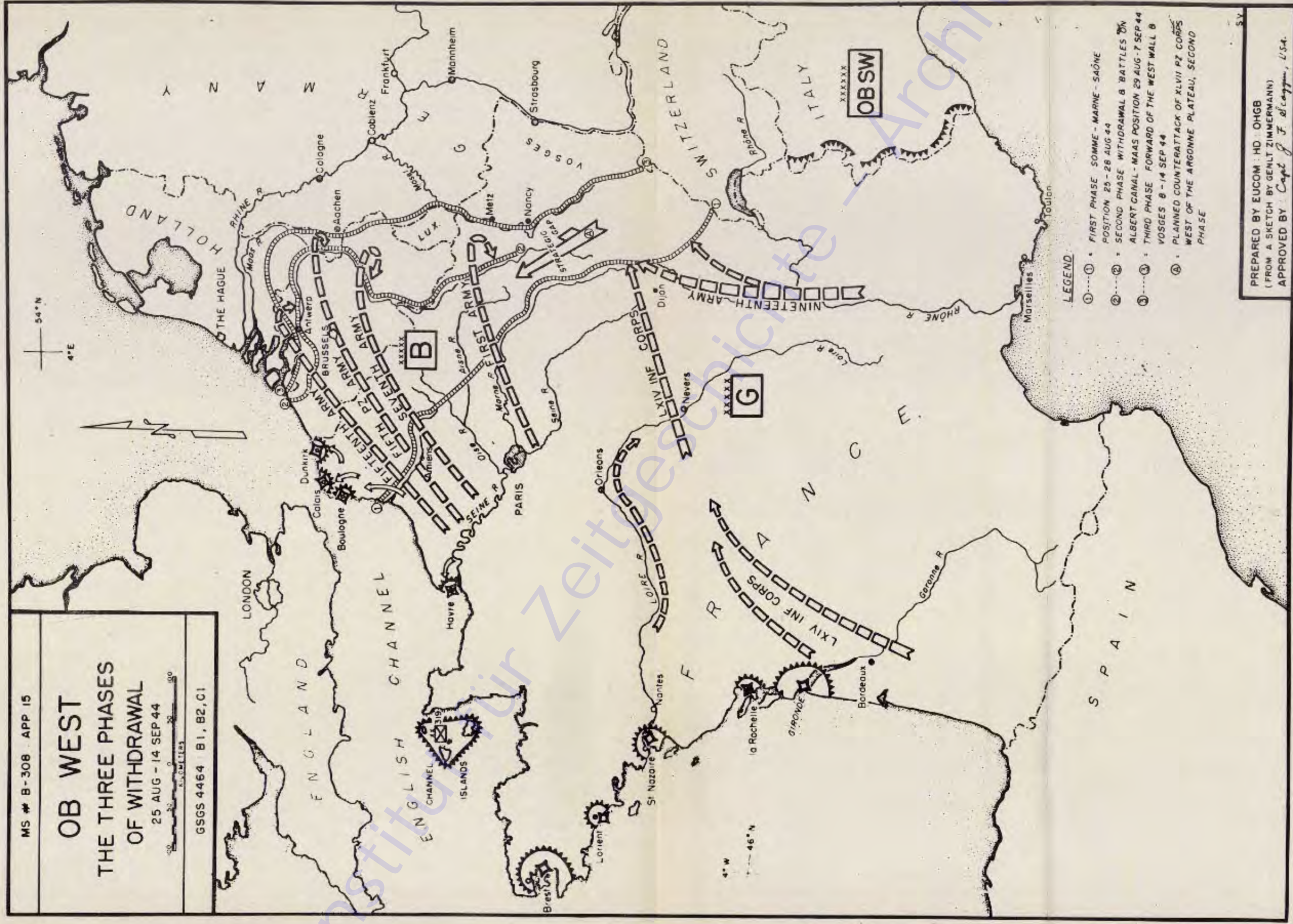
MS # B-308 APP 15

OB WEST

THE THREE PHASES OF WITHDRAWAL

25 AUG - 14 SEP 44

GSGS 4464 B1, B2, C1

LEGEND

① - FIRST PHASE SOMME - MARNE - SAÔNE POSITION 25 - 28 AUG 44

② - SECOND PHASE WITHDRAWAL & BATTLES ON ALBERT CANAL - MAAS POSITION 29 AUG - 7 SEP 44

③ - THIRD PHASE FORWARD OF THE WEST WALL & VOSGES 8 - 14 SEP 44

④ - PLANNED COUNTERATTACK OF LXIV PZ CORPS WEST OF THE ARGONNE PLATEAU, SECOND PHASE

PREPARED BY EUCOM : HD : OHGB
 (FROM A SKETCH BY GENLT ZIMMERMANN)
 APPROVED BY : Capt. J. F. McCoy, USA.