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To Whom It May Concern:

This dissertation is being expanded into a book length biography of General Simpson. Results of research conducted since submission of this dissertation will cause the material on pages 78-81 to be revised.

Thomas R. Stone

3 December 1974
RICE UNIVERSITY

HE HAD THE GUTS TO SAY NO:
A MILITARY BIOGRAPHY OF GENERAL WILLIAM HOOD SIMPSON

by

Thomas Richardson Stone

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Thesis Director's Signature

Houston, Texas

May, 1974
To General William H. Simpson
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

For permission to reprint maps from books copyrighted by them I wish to thank the Association of the United States Army for *Conquer: The Story of Ninth Army 1944-1945* and Ballantine Books for Peter Elstob, *Battle of the Reichswald*.

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TABLE OF CONTENTS</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Acknowledgements</td>
<td>iv</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table of Contents</td>
<td>vii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table of Maps</td>
<td>viii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 1 — &quot;Green But Ambitious and Eager to Learn&quot;</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 2 — King of Brittany</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 3 — An &quot;Uncommonly Normal&quot; Army</td>
<td>101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 4 — 1630 Comes Early on the Roer</td>
<td>134</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bibliography</td>
<td>170</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MAPS</td>
<td>Page</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Breakthrough</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ninth Army in Brittany and Western France</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Battle for Brest</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Situation on Brittany Peninsula When Ninth Army Took Command</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Situation in Southern Belgium and Luxembourg</td>
<td>105</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Situation North of Aachen When Ninth Army Took Command</td>
<td>121</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Initial Dispositions for the November Offensive</td>
<td>123</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The November Offensive</td>
<td>125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ninth Army Defensive Situation During the Ardennes Counteroffensive</td>
<td>127</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Operations GRENADÉ and VERITABLE</td>
<td>136</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Initial Dispositions for Operation GRENADÉ</td>
<td>145</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER 1

"GREEN BUT AMBITIOUS AND EAGER TO LEARN"¹

The officer, garbed in an impeccably tailored regulation uniform, who strode with determined step into the Supreme Commander's London office on the sixteenth day of May, 1944, was over six feet tall, lean, and had a bony angular profile reminiscent of a weathered Indian chief. He would stand out in any crowd not only because of his erect military bearing but also because of his stark baldness. Most of his hair had been lost naturally; the remnant was carefully shaved. A smile was on his face as he advanced across the room to report to his new boss, the Supreme Commander Allied Expeditionary Force.

These two, Lieutenant General William H. Simpson, Commanding General, Eighth US Army and General Dwight D. Eisenhower, were not strangers. They first met when they were classmates at the War College in 1927-1928. Later, when Simpson commanded the Infantry Replacement Training Center at Camp Wolters, Texas, he visited Louisiana to observe the 1941 maneuvers where he saw Eisenhower, who was the Chief of Staff of the Third Army. They had renewed their acquaintance once again in 1943 during a trip made by General Simpson, by this time the Commanding General of the XII Corps, to Africa, where General Eisenhower was in command.²

After they exchanged greetings, Eisenhower asked his visitor to be seated. "What army do you have?" the Supreme Commander asked. When Simpson responded that he commanded
the Eighth Army, Eisenhower said, "well, we can't duplicate the famous British Eighth Army. I'm going to send a wire to General Marshall and recommend that your number be changed." That technicality disposed of, the conversation soon turned to the selection of officers to command the three corps that were to be part of Simpson's as yet un-numbered army. Eisenhower asked if Simpson knew how many corps commanders were left in the United States. About nine, was the reply, and as each was named the Supreme Commander recorded the name, scratching off some as soon as they had been written. Finally Eisenhower said that he would accept four of those Simpson named and added that the army commander could pick three of those four. His business being completed, General Simpson withdrew. He and his army headquarters had as yet received no combat mission. For the next three months Simpson prepared to enter the fighting. His main headquarters group arrived near the end of June. From that time on, Simpson's Army was charged with receiving American troops as they arrived in England, overseeing their training and outfitting and finally getting them on their way to France.

As the selection process of corps commanders demonstrated, senior commanders did not come into Eisenhower's command without his personal approval. (He confirmed this after the war when he wrote, "commanders in the American Army were all of my own choosing," Eisenhower had a long-standing agreement with General George C. Marshall, the Chief of Staff, that he need take no commander unless he had full
confidence in him. Without enjoying Eisenhower's confidence, Simpson would never have appeared in the Supreme Commander's office that day in May.

Reporting as an army commander into a theater of war was for Simpson the culmination of a military career which spanned more than three decades. Born and raised in Weatherford, Texas, west of Fort Worth, Hood, as he was called in the early years, overcame the deficiencies of a poor education and graduated from West Point 101 of 103 in the Class of 1909. Following West Point he served with the 6th Infantry Regiment at Fort Lincoln, North Dakota, in the Philippines, and at the Presidio of San Francisco.

By the time that he participated in the Punitive Expedition into Mexico in 1916 and 1917 he was known to all as "Big Simp" so that he could be differentiated from another Simpson the regiment who was, appropriately enough, called "Little Simp." During the First World War Simpson served as aide de camp to the Commanding General of the 33rd Infantry Division. Later he became the division operations officer, and finally at the age of 30, following the armistice, he was named to be chief of staff of the division.

During the interwar years he saw duty in Washington in the Office of the Chief of Infantry, and later, after he had successfully commanded the 3d Battalion 12th Infantry, he worked as a member of the Military Intelligence Division of the War Department General Staff. Then, after a tour as Professor of Military Science and Tactics at Pomona College,
Claremont, California, he returned to the Army War College as an instructor. He commanded the 9th Infantry Regiment until his promotion to Brigadier General in 1940 when he became the Assistant Division Commander of the Second Infantry Division.

Simpson moved next to Camp Wolters, Texas, where he commanded the Infantry Replacement Training Center. Following these assignments, he commanded in succession the 35th Infantry Division, 30th Infantry Division, and XII Corps. As he progressed through ever more responsible positions, he also attended the various schools that made up the army professional education system. He completed the Infantry School Advanced Course in 1924, the Command and General Staff School in 1925, and the Army War College in 1928. Simpson can truly be called a product of the army system of graduated schools and assignments geared to prepare an officer for high command.

Thus when the call to army command came in late September, 1943, Simpson felt ready for the task. He led the Fourth Army first in California and then in Texas, where it assumed the training mission of Third Army, which was slated to move to Europe. More and more personnel joined the army staff in the early spring of 1944. This overstrength was allowed so that General Simpson could form a second army staff which would assume the Fourth Army's training mission while the original army staff, redesignated Eighth Army, prepared for its own assignment overseas. Finally on 6 May,
1944, General Simpson boarded a plane in San Antonio and began his journey to Europe.\(^9\)

After stops in Atlanta and in Washington, where he conferred with representatives of various War Department staff sections, Simpson, along with his Eighth Army advance party, boarded three C-54 transports and took off for London. After stops at Goose Bay, Labrador, and Prestwick, Scotland, they arrived at Croydon Airport, London.\(^{10}\)

Living and working quarters were soon occupied. Advance headquarters was established in several rooms at #33 Bryanston Square, and General Simpson was billeted in a five room flat on the top floor of the Grosvenor House, Park Lane. Shortly after arrival he called General Eisenhower's headquarters and was told that the Supreme Commander was very busy and thus would not be able to see him for a few days. This interlude gave Simpson and his staff an opportunity to get better oriented concerning the situation as it then existed in England.\(^{11}\)

But before Simpson could meet personally with Eisenhower, he was summoned, via a secret order, to report at 9 AM on 15 May to St. Paul's School. When he entered he found that he was attending the final Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Force (SHAEF) conference on the cross-channel attack. Both the king and the prime minister spoke to the high-ranking audience.\(^{12}\) With this briefing General Simpson was brought up to date on current and future operations. He had an advance army headquarters with the remainder of the
army staff soon to arrive, but as yet he had neither a combat mission to perform nor an army to command.

His promised meeting with General Eisenhower took place as discussed above on 16 May. Now, in addition to having neither a mission nor troops, his army was without a designation. But Simpson himself had a job to do. He moved about the countryside and visited various units, among them the 1st Infantry, the 101st Airborne, and the 2d Armored Divisions. His aim was not only to see what was going on and to learn from the experience of others, but also to be seen. He and several other senior officers were participating in a cover plan, the aim of which was to convince the enemy that as there were so many army commanders present in England there must be additional troops also. If the plan worked when the invasion forces arrived on the beaches, the Germans would think that enough forces remained in England to strike in other locations as well. With this threat in mind German commanders might hesitate before committing their reserves in Normandy.\(^{13}\)

Late in the month General Simpson met with the man who was to be his immediate commander when his army deployed to the continent, Lieutenant General Omar N. Bradley. Bradley at the time worked out of two headquarters, the larger being Headquarters First Army which was located in Bristol, the smaller, First Army Group Headquarters in London. It was to the First Army Group Headquarters, located near the offices being used by General Simpson and his staff, that Simpson came on 27 May. Though Bradley and Simpson had been in con-
tact from time to time during their careers, they had never served together. In the small prewar army, however, many officers, even if they had not personally worked together, knew one another by reputation. This was the case with Bradley and Simpson. After the war Bradley was to write of Simpson when reflecting on their meeting, "his reputation was that of one of our best senior officers." 14 Bradley, during their conversation, mentioned the fact that Simpson was the senior as far as date of rank was concerned, but Simpson assured him that he could count on complete loyalty. Difference in date of rank would cause no problem. 15

When he left Bradley's office, Simpson still did not have a mission for his army. No one seemed to know what the unnumbered force was to do. Rumors flew. Perhaps, some said, enough forces were already established for the campaign and the new army in due course would serve as an army of occupation. In the midst of this uncertainty General Simpson continued to make his visits to troop units. Tuesday, 30 May, found him enroute with his chief of staff and the chiefs of his four general staff sections to see the Third Army and its commander, Lieutenant General George S. Patton, Jr., a West Point classmate. 16

After spending Tuesday night at Patton's headquarters, Simpson journeyed the next day to the XII Corps where the Third Army Commander was to address an assembly of officers and noncommissioned officers of the top three grades. Simpson had commanded the XII Corps in the United States and its
current commander, Major General Gilbert R. Cook, asked him to introduce General Patton.

After an invocation in which God was asked to direct the Third Army so that Europe could be freed as soon as possible, General Simpson was introduced by General Cook. "We are here," said General Simpson, "to listen to the words of a great man. A man who has proven himself amid shot and shell. My greatest hope is that someday soon, I will have my own great army fighting with him, side by side."17 Patto then spoke dynamically, exhorting his men to greatness. After spending the night with the XII Corps, a unit which was soon to enter battle, General Simpson continued on his way.18

One of Simpson's problems was resolved on 3 June when he met once again with Eisenhower and was told that his army had been redesignated the Ninth United States Army. Within a short time a new shoulder patch had been designed and the code name "Conquer" was chosen. D Day came on 6 June, and with the rest of the world, General Simpson waited for news. At 11 AM he and his chief of staff attended a briefing at the headquarters European Theater of Operations, U.S. Army (ETOUSA) where they were brought up to date on the invasion.19

Simpson's deception duty became even more important now that Allied troops were on the continent. The next day he and 11 members of his army staff began a tour of the Western Base Section, the organization which helped to support the fighting forces. Not only did the visiting party
observe functions and learn procedures, but the army commander and his staff met men they would have to deal with in the future when Ninth Army had an operational mission. Among the places toured were Western Base Section Headquarters, a replacement depot, a general supply depot, some port and dock installations, an ordnance depot and a station hospital. Trip completed, the group returned to London late in the evening of 9 June. While Simpson was on the road, plans were being made for the reception of the main body of the Ninth Army Headquarters. Third Army, located at Bristol, was, on the same day that Simpson returned to London, charged with the responsibility of receiving the new headquarters when it arrived around 29 June. 20

During the time that Third Army, as well as the Ninth Army advance party, prepared for the reception of the main body of his headquarters, General Simpson continued to tour installations to make his presence known. He was doing a job and in addition was learning much which would serve him well in future operations.

Simpson continued to operate out of London. On 12 June the war was brought closer to that historic city when the first V-1 flying "buzz" bombs hit in the area. 21

Colonel James E. Moore, his chief of staff, was visiting General Simpson when the first explosions occurred. Neither he nor Simpson knew what these flying objects were. They could hear a putt-putt sound like an outboard motor while the flame from the bomb's engine could be seen against
the night sky. Soon they heard a loud crash as a V-1 hit within 100 yards of the hotel.

Buzz bomb attacks continued. Though General Simpson was concerned for his own safety, the prospect of spending night after night in a bomb shelter held no attraction for him. Instead, he chose to take his chances and either stayed in his room, went to the hotel lobby, or climbed to the roof during attacks.

From this rooftop vantage point he could observe the entire battle. Bombs could be seen on their approach paths while streams of antiaircraft fire rose to meet them. Across the street from the hotel was a rocket battery served by members of the Women's Royal Naval Service (WRENS). When the girls picked up a target they did not concern themselves with bestarred observers on hotel roofs and often their fire just barely cleared Simpson's head. As the rockets passed by, Simpson's aide who accompanied him to the roof later recalled, "it was very exciting, the things burned up all the oxygen, and you found yourself gasping because it was such a shock."22

Days of planning and preparing followed with regularity nights filled with buzz bombs. This period of routine activities was highlighted by a gathering on 19 June in Lieutenant General John C.H. Lee's Communications Zone Headquarters. Lee was a West Point classmate of Simpson's, and the party which gathered in his headquarters that day included other members of the class, among them General Patton.
This august group was summoned to do honor to their classmate, "Simp," who was awarded the Legion of Merit for the job he had done with the 30th and 35th Infantry Divisions and the XII Corps. After the ceremony and luncheon it was back to business as usual for all concerned. Finally on 28 June the main body of Headquarters Ninth Army disembarked from the liner Queen Elizabeth and moved by train to Bristol, where the Conquer command post had opened the day before. At long last army headquarters was together again and ready to go to work.

With his headquarters rapidly settling into the buildings of Clifton College, General Simpson personally moved to Bristol on the last day of June. First Army had used the same facilities before the invasion and its rear detachment was still there. Accommodations which had been used to plan the attack on the Nazi-held shores would now be utilized for designing operations calculated to lead to the destruction of the Thousand Year Reich. As preparations for the commitment of the Ninth Army continued, life went on in the surrounding civilian community. Little was seen of the English during the week for Clifton College was not in session, but on Sundays each of the school's cricket fields was put into use.

Simpson with his chief and several staff members, including aides, lived in "The Holmes", a three-story manor house with a greenhouse, large informal garden, and carriage house. He immediately set to work to establish good relations
with the people of Bristol. In the early days of July he
called formally upon the regional director of the Bristol
Area and the Lord Mayor of Bristol and received the American
Consul and also the commander of British troops in the area. 24

While the commanding general cemented British-American
relations, the army staff was hard at work on its first con-
crete mission, which was to receive, train and equip incoming
units and prepare them for 
em 
to France. Meanwhile in
London the army inspector general, Colonel Perry L. Baldwin,
was serving as liaison officer. In addition to attending
SHAOF conferences and passing along what he learned, Baldwin
forwarded supplies to the army headquarters. 25

Processing is a necessary job, but an army headquarters
is trained to direct men in combat, and the staff of this
army headquarters, while continuing its processing mission,
had no idea as to when the unit would be committed. Perhaps,
one current rumor went, the army would not go to France until
all the fighting was over. 26 No one seemed to know.

As Simpson and his army headquarters continued to
work, back in Washington, the Chief of Staff, General Marshall,
had a decision to make, a decision which could affect the
future of the Ninth Army's commander. In an effort to deceive
the enemy, General Patton had been given the fictional status
of commander of the First Army Group in the United Kingdom.
According to current intelligence this plan was working ad-
mirably, as the Germans were preparing for an attack by the
group in the Pas de Calais area. Now that Patton was soon
to lead his Third Army into battle in France, some changes in command arrangements had to be made. The mythical 1st Army Group would stay in England, while the actual 1st Army Group, to be commanded by General Bradley, would become operational in France under the new designation of 12th Army Group. Patton would be shifted to Third Army command publicly, with the cover story that he had been reduced to army level due to his indiscretions. Selection of his successor as group commander was the problem that brought General Marshall into the picture.

Eisenhower reminded his superior that the man chosen must have a name and reputation which would have meaning to the enemy; he added that he new commander's services would be needed for some time, probably for three or more months. Unknown to Simpson, he was one of the candidates for the job. Eisenhower believed, however, that Simpson's name was not well enough known to mean much to the Germans. He requested the designation of either Lieutenant General Lesley J. McNair or Lieutenant General John L. DeWitt or another officer of similar stature. Should his request be denied, Eisenhower added, he would do what he could to enhance Simpson's reputation. Marshall decided to send McNair, and Simpson continued his preparations without learning that he had been considered for the key role in the cover plan.\(^\text{27}\)

After several weeks of preparing others to fight and of receiving invasion information second or third hand, General Simpson was finally cleared to make a trip to France
to visit the First Army and see things for himself. He wanted to take some staff members so that they could gain experience by serving as understudies to their counterparts on the First Army Staff. But when Simpson asked permission of First Army authorities to bring certain individuals, he was told that he and his chief of staff would be welcome, but no others could come. Simpson then turned to his West Point classmate, George Patton, who was setting up his Third Army Headquarters on the continent, and made the same request. Patton said that Simpson could send as many officers as he desired, and the Ninth Army commander took him at his word. Thus many staff officers obtained valuable experience while working in Headquarters Third Army. 

Simpson planned his trip at an opportune time. He would be able to observe much action as Operation COBRA, an attempt to break through enemy defenses in the hedgerow country, was about to take place. On 18 July Simpson, once again an observer, took off from England enroute to France.

From their seats in a C-47 high over the English Channel Simpson and his aide saw countless ships, each with a barrage balloon, plying their way back and forth. Meanwhile destroyers were moving about rapidly, always on the lookout for enemy attempts to interfere with the vital flow of supplies. Once over the coast of France, bomb and shell craters were evident as well as lines of trenches and hedgerow after hedgerow. Busy beaches and airfields some still under construction were also observed. After landing, the visitors
found that their field had been operational only 30 hours. Planes seemed to stream in, before General Simpson's ship had cleared the runway five more had landed.  

General Bradley's aide, Chester B. Hansen, did not know the details of Simpson's arrival plans, thus he did not meet the incoming army commander, and Simpson and his party had to arrange their own jeep rides to First Army Headquarters. Hansen, in his diary, recorded his impressions of Simpson's arrival at the headquarters. "Finally they came to CP, Simpson, tall, thin, bald head, ascetic like a monk, genial, amiable and pleasant to be with."  

In the afternoon with Lieutenant General Courtney H. Hodges, then Deputy Commander of the First Army, Simpson went out to visit combat units. First stop was at the 30th Infantry Division which the Ninth Army commander had formerly led. After completing his visits and eating supper Simpson was shown a captured German Panther tank displayed near the army headquarters.  

Finally, though still without an army to command, Simpson was in France. Many things had changed since he last saw combat there during the First World War, but the enemy was once again German and the mission -- victory. An army commander with no army contributes little of immediate value to the war effort, but Simpson resolved that he would learn as much as he could about combat in this young man's war.  

Next morning, the 19th, found him attending a high-
level staff conference. Present in addition to First Army Commander Bradley and his deputy, Hodges, were: Major General J. Lawton Collins, whose VII Corps was to execute the COBRA breakthrough; Major General Elwood R. Quesada, Commanding General of the IX Tactical Air Command, which supported the First Army; and others including Major General Leonard T. Gerow, commanding V Corps, Major General Troy H. Middleton, Commanding General of the VIII Corps, and of course Lieutenant General Simpson, observer.\textsuperscript{33}

This group had been assembled to discuss Operation Plan COBRA. COBRA, should it be successful, would result in American forces breaking through the strong German resistance. Collins' VII Corps, beefed up to three infantry, one motorized infantry, and two armored divisions, had been selected for the job. Shock was to be the contribution of the infantry divisions as they penetrated German lines, which had been plastered by a carpet of bombs laid down by countless aircraft. Once through, the infantry would hold the shoulders of the penetration while their brothers in trucks and tanks, the motorized infantry and the two armored divisions, rushed through the gap. The First Infantry Division, the Big Red One, motorized for this operation, was to head 15 miles southwest to Coutances to try to catch the German forces which had been opposing Middleton's VIII Corps. Both armored divisions were generally to head southwest to Avranches. From there they could turn west and strike into Brittany.\textsuperscript{34}

Brittany was a peninsula which extended to the west,
with the waters of the English Channel to the north and those of the Bay of Biscay to the south. It was the site of the ports of Quiberon and Brest, which were deemed essential to the continued support of the ever-growing Allied forces. Brest was familiar to Simpson, for it was there that he, then a Captain in the 33rd Infantry Division, landed over 26 years before to "make the world safe for democracy." Once again the Allied forward progress had been drastically slowed by a determined foe; would the result be the horrors of trench warfare? A stalemate could not be accepted, the offensive must succeed.

Preparations continued as the hours of 19 July passed. During this day General Montgomery, army group commander, approved COBRA with a start date of 21 July. Bradley, meanwhile, in a fabric-covered, four-passenger C-78 airplane flew to England to discuss air support for the breakout. He returned secure in the knowledge that 2,246 aircraft had been committed to his scheme, targeted on an area of five square miles. As Bradley traveled, observer Simpson paid a call on the VII Corps. During his corps visits Simpson saw how different units organized their headquarters. He went to the corps command post and spoke with the commander and his deputy Major General Eugene W. Landrum.

Having heard about COBRA from both the army and breakthrough corps commanders, it now was time for Simpson to think about what he had learned. Someday he might have to plan and execute a major attack; he must be ready when that
day came. A period of reflection was in order, and who was better to share his thoughts than his old friend, General Hodges. After supper the two had a long talk. When they turned in, little more than 24 hours remained until COBRA was scheduled to commence.

Light filtered down through an overcast sky on D-1. As the massive air armada would need good weather to do its deadly task in the precise way required, attention of the decision makers shifted to their weather men. Weather conditions on D Day would be of vital importance. The prediction was for rain. There is always a possibility that the experts may be wrong, but as the rotten weather continued hour after hour, chances of an error declined. Around supper time the damp air was punctuated by the sound of an explosion. An enemy shell had hit at the entrance to the army command post; three were dead. A dismal note on which to end a somber day. By midnight when the weather still had not cleared, the decision was made to postpone COBRA.

Rain poured down during almost all of what had been scheduled to be D Day for COBRA. As a postponed operation is of little interest to an observer, General Simpson put the day to good use by visiting the port city of Cherbourg. En-route he stopped at a prisoner of war enclosure, and UTAH Beach, where little more than a month before troops of the 4th Infantry Division had struggled ashore and fought to link up with the airborne units which had been dropped inland. Simpson also visited the First Army Rear Headquarters. At
Cherbourg the general saw the port in action. He could observe forts perched on nearby hillsides as well as submarine pens, now destroyed, which once harbored the feared U-boats, scourges of Allied shipping. Following his visit, Simpson returned to Bradley's command post. Though the weather cleared somewhat, the attack was postponed for another day. Again troops who had psychologically prepared themselves for battle must be told to wait another 24 hours.

Sleep in Bradley's headquarters camp was disturbed when early Saturday morning all were awakened by the sound of the gas attack alarm. With offensive action stalled and the sound of the gas alarm filling their ears, old soldiers must have recalled earlier times when trench warfare was the order of the day. Soon the alarm was determined to a false one, and the headquarters personnel could settle back to sleep. The warning, like a spectre from the past, had been heard. It must be headed. The breakout had to succeed.

As there was no action in the offing at army headquarters, once again observer Simpson struck out to visit points of interest. This time he chose V Corps. After speaking with the corps commander, Major General Gerow, Simpson went to his old unit, the 2d Infantry Division, for lunch. Located about 500 yards from the front, the division command post was well dug in. Like moles the headquarters personnel had gone underground to escape the effects of intermittent enemy shelling. From division headquarters it was not far to the 9th Infantry Regiment, which had formerly
been commanded by then Colonel Simpson. The "tourist" then pushed on to another old unit, the 35th Infantry Division. Surely the day must have been an enjoyable one for the general with many old acquaintances renewed. In addition he had the opportunity to view the deployments of various combat units. That evening the news was the same, another 24-hour postponement of COBRA.42

Sunday the 23rd arrived, and still the sky was overcast. General Bradley, with each postponement, was getting more concerned about security. Before long the Germans would surely learn of the impending offensive. Bradley recalls, "'dammit,' I called to Kean (Brigadier General William B. Kean, Jr., chief of staff of First Army), 'I'm going to have to court-martial the chaplain if we have many more days like this.'"43 Still the sun did not break through.

That afternoon, after Simpson and Hodges had visited Major General Charles H. Corlett, whose XIX Corps was located to the east of the breakthrough corps, another high-ranking observer arrived at First Army Headquarters. Joining the VIP group was Lieutenant General Lesley J. McNair, still commander of the fictitious 1st Army Group in England. Perhaps McNair brought good weather with him, perhaps the chaplain was informed of Bradley's threatened court-martial, or perhaps it was simply time for the luck of the Americans to change. In any case, late in the evening Bradley heard that weather would permit bombing at noon the next day — COBRA was on!44
For the 24th, the forecast called for good bombing conditions later in the day, so the attack could be launched. As the minutes sped by and H Hour approached, a group of senior officers converged on an observation post located in the zone of one of the breakthrough divisions, the 30th Infantry. Thus it was that a small stone building already ravaged by war, with its roof ventilated by an artillery shell, its furniture strewn about, and curtains torn off its windows, for a fleeting moment housed many of the men who were to lead the American forces to victory in Europe. 45

Assembled were Lieutenant General Lewis H. Brereton, Commanding General of the 9th Air Force, Lieutenant Generals Hodges and Simpson, Major General Ralph Royce, Major General Matthew B. Ridgway, and others including General Salinas, Chief of the Mexican Air Force, and a flock of aides. Realizing that the observation post was located near the front, the aides looked for places such as foxholes or trenches to use to protect their bosses should any enemy fire be incoming. 46

At about twenty minutes to twelve, the attack began with flights of P-47's. Soon two flights turned toward the observation post. This was not in the plan; this was not supposed to happen. As the observers looked up, they noted with relief that one flight was heading to the flank of their position -- no danger from that quarter. But the other flight continued to close on the observation post, and before the observers knew it bombs were falling in nearby fields. One in fact detonated in the field adjacent to their house. By
this time no one was checking the exact distance to the bombs, for all had hit the dirt. Had any front-line GI been present it no doubt would have warmed the cockles of his heart to see three lieutenant generals, Brereton, Hodges and Simpson, trying to seek safety under one jeep. Though the observation post was not hit and all personnel weathered the attack safely, the bombs did destroy an ammunition truck within sight of the observers. Smoke from the burning truck served as a vivid visual reminder of the bombing error.\textsuperscript{47}

With the attack by friendly aircraft over, the members of the bestarred group arose, dusted themselves off, and prepared to dine. Generals, even under combat conditions, often eat in style. In this instance the fare was K Rations, \textsuperscript{48} the staple of the front-line trooper. Next, according to the COBRA plan, was the heavy bomber attack.

Soon they came. As the big bombers lumbered over, General Bradley's aide, who was with the party on the observation post heard one infantryman yell to another, "gosh, now I'm glad I bought war bonds."\textsuperscript{49} Comments of the GI after what happened next were not recorded. Major Horn, Simpson's aide wrote in his diary: "Hundreds of Heavy bombers followed, bombing on a flare & smoke marker. Tremendous noise and crunching of exploding bombs. The target area literally jumped up and turned inside out. All hit the dirt a second time when an entire flight of heavies 'cut loose' their bombs short."\textsuperscript{50} Both Hansen and William C. Sylvan, Hodges' aide, wrote that they heard the tell-tale whistle of an
approaching bomb. Hansen added, "we dove to the ground. I looked up and found myself face to face with Gen. Simpson, who looked at me with a grin on his face. One of the most friendly and companionable men in the army, easy going and soft spoken, never excited nor angry and horribly considerate of everyone."  

Simpson took stress in stride, and though bombs were falling nearby he still could shrug it off and grin at a junior officer. Hansen did not record his feelings, but Simpson’s confident, relaxed manner must have set a good example. Simpson was accurately described by Hansen’s words. He was friendly and easy going. He kept his temper well in check. In addition, he was skilled at his profession. But where these techniques had been adequate when he trained units in the States, the stress of combat presented quite a different challenge. Simpson sought a chance to show what he and his army could do; it was not to be much longer in coming.

Some of the misplaced bombs hit as close as 500 to 600 yards from the observation post, while others caused casualties in the 120th Infantry Regiment of the 30th Infantry Division located about a half mile away. Soon the observers could see ambulances moving forward, then in about ten minutes they returned laden with wounded. Later word was received that the attack had been called off but not in time to stop the bombing. Air Chief Marshal Leigh-Mallory then in Normandy had sent a message back to England to postpone the air bombardment. His decision was made too late to
notify all the bombers, and the bomb runs, some of which were so costly in terms of friendly casualties, had continued. 52

Losses in lives can be counted, but loss of morale, of faith in the support rendered by the air arm, is more difficult to quantify. After the sad display of supposedly friendly air power experienced by men of the 30th Infantry Division on 24 July, they and their leaders would surely think twice before they accepted the promises and calculations made by the men who controlled the big planes.

What must have been a thoroughly shaken group of senior officers quit[ted] the observation post and headed back to First Army Headquarters. 53 That evening in a blackout tent, a momentous decision was made. Ever since the landings, the 90th Infantry Division had had its problems. A change of commanding general had not been enough to shake it out of its lethargic performance. But something had to be done, and as the commander of a military unit is traditionally responsible for all that his unit does or fails to accomplish, Bradley had determined that another command change was in order. Present in addition to Bradley were Hodges, Patton, Simpson, and McNair.

Bradley asked for suggestions, and the names of six or eight brigadier generals were mentioned. After the qualities of each had been discussed and before the next name could be raised, Patton remarked that his choice was General McLain. McLain, Brigadier General Raymond S. McLain,
was a National Guardsman from Oklahoma City, where, when not attending to his guard duties, he was a widely known banker. He had served with distinction in Italy as the artillery commander of the 45th Infantry Division and subsequently was transferred to England as an extra brigadier for use should a change in generalship need to be made. After repeatedly suggesting McLain, Patton finally said to Bradley, "this division is going to be in my army. I'd like to have McLain, why can't you let me have him?" Patton's argument carried the day -- McLain would get the division. Later events proved the decision to be wise, for when McLain was elevated to corps command, the 90th was rated as one of the best combat divisions in the theater.  

Following the meeting, during which Simpson informed the others that he would be returning to England at 6 AM the next morning, he was asked by General McNair to stay for a few moments for a chat. These two lieutenant generals had met early in their careers in Mexico during the Punitive Expedition, and later their acquaintance ripened into friendship when both were involved in training troops for combat duty. McNair informed Simpson that he had visited the Ninth Army Headquarters in Bristol and while there he had stayed in the army commander's room. He urged Simpson to change his mind and stay an additional day so that the two of them could observe the attack. When Simpson would not budge, McNair tried again and said, "for goodness sakes stay over. I've got a fine place to witness this bombing." They would,
said McNair, get a jeep and take in the whole show. But Simpson, though he admitted he would like to stay, stuck to his plan to return, a decision that probably saved his life. As McNair was partially deaf, Simpson feared he would not hear a sentry's challenge, and so he escorted the general back to the trailer where he was to sleep. Next morning Simpson returned to England, and McNair true to his word went to his "fine place" to see the bombing. Once again some of the bombs fell short, once again Americans suffered from their own air arm. Among the dead was Lieutenant General Lesley J. McNair. 57

Much had been experienced by the Ninth Army commander during his stay on the continent. But though he had felt the stresses and strains of combat, his role had been that of an observer; he had had not responsibility and he was unable to contribute personally to the battle. Soon his own headquarters would cross the channel and assume an active mission. There still was much to do to prepare for that day.

Often senior commanders are so caught up in the day-to-day business of running a large organization that they tend to neglect the training of their own staffs. Such was not the case in Ninth Army. Certainly the immediacy of the need for such training helped to elevate its priority, but in addition both commander and chief of staff had made it a practice to monitor closely the training of the army staff. Now with the date of commitment still unsettled but surely
not far away, Chief of Staff Moore stepped up the staff training program.

Night schools were instituted wherein staff members learned from observers who had recently returned from France, details concerning procedures in use on the continent. Representatives of Theater Headquarters also addressed classes and briefed on their areas of interest. Combat staff operation was simulated during a map exercise in which major subordinate units then located in England played their parts. As training progressed, information gained from exercises as well as from staff visits to the actual combat area was used to update the army standing operating procedure which had been composed back in San Antonio. Still problems occasionally arose. When input from real-life operations was needed to resolve them, a staff member was packed off to France to see how the units in contact with the enemy handled similar situations. All these programs coupled with a staff eager to learn resulted in a well-trained organization. How the training would serve the Ninth Army in the future could only be discovered in the crucible of combat.

Concurrently with training, efforts were being expended on actual operations. Work on operational and intelligence appraisals which must be completed prior to commitment was taking place. Colonel Charles R. Bixel, the G-2, and his staff studied possible employment areas. When they considered the use of Major General Alvan C. Gillem, Jr.'s XIII Corps, then subordinate to Ninth Army, representatives
of both staffs worked together. Terrain of likely areas of operation, both in the lowlands of Belgium and Holland and the mountains to the east were examined. Gillem worked up a series of staff problems to continue the study. 59

But neither corps nor army commander could spend all his time readying his headquarters for combat. Troops continued to flow into England, and they had to be received and processed for shipment to France. While the newcomers were under army control, Simpson intended to insure that they received vigorous training. He did not want lives to be needlessly lost in combat due to poor preparation. Standards of the highest order were set; then the army commander followed up by checking to insure they were being met. As time was short, unit commanders, who knew best what training their units needed, were ordered to formulate training plans rapidly and then to execute them.

To assist in plan preparation, army indicated priorities for the first 30 days of training. Heading the list was physical training where the standard, for both officers and enlisted men, was the completion of a mile run in ten minutes while wearing a combat pack and the ability, while similarly attired, to make an eight-mile march in two hours. Other areas to be covered were leadership, small-unit training to include the use of infantry with tanks, coordination of infantry with its supporting artillery fires, marksmanship with individual and crew-served weapons, map reading, camouflage, and supply discipline among other subjects.
Simpson, in early August, summed up his training philosophy when he wrote in a letter to Gillem: "the battle is won by the trained and resourceful soldier who has complete confidence in his weapons and in the skill and ability of his leaders." Simpson concluded his letter: "with kindest personal regards and the hope that we shall soon be fighting together across the channel..."

Activity in the army area was not confined to combat troops honing their skills and operations and intelligence staffs studying and practicing their trade, for men possessing a wide variety of abilities were hard at work processing troops and preparing army headquarters and its personnel for combat. One of those doing his bit was Dr. Maurice J. D'Andrea, Surgeon of Ninth Army Special Troops. So immersed in his business of healing the sick was the good doctor, that he had not taken the time to learn the name of his army commander. His ignorance was destined to be corrected.

One morning about 9:30 AM while D'Andrea was handling sick call, he was summoned to the telephone. His caller told him that he was not feeling well and asked when would be a good time to come over to be seen. D'Andrea replied that by 1 PM he would be finished seeing patients in his office and that would be a convenient time. After the conversation ended, D'Andrea's first sergeant who had overheard the doctor's end of the discussion asked D'Andrea if he knew to whom he had been speaking. D'Andrea responded with the information that his caller had been a General Simpson.
Good first sergeants often take great pains to keep their bosses out of trouble. In this case, the proper course of action was obvious to the sergeant. He informed D'Andrea that his General Simpson was the army commander and advised him to get over to the general's office as soon as possible. The sergeant's "advice" must have done the trick, for the doctor, now fully cognizant of the name of his army commander, ran the two blocks to Simpson's office. He was ushered in and shortly found the general to be a friendly gentleman.

After discussing Simpson's problem the two agreed to meet again at 1 PM in D'Andrea's office. To insure that he was not surprised by the general's arrival, the doctor stationed one of his men every 50 feet on the route Simpson was to take between offices. Thus when the general began his stroll over to see the doctor, word of his impending arrival was flashed immediately to D'Andrea. All was in readiness for the general's arrival. As he walked into the office all present were shouted to attention -- the Commanding General Ninth US Army, William H. Simpson, had been properly welcomed.

Before long Simpson was well, and D'Andrea found himself with the additional duty of being the personal physician to the commanding general. Soon a close relationship developed between the two.

Simpson continued to do his job in England as August neared its end. He oversaw preparation in all areas but while his work was necessary, he and his army headquarters
had come to fight. It appeared that the summons to battle would never come. One day, approximately 21 August, he received a call from General Bradley. Simpson's presence, it seemed was desired in France as soon as possible. This hurry up visit could mean but one thing; the receiving and processing days were numbered for Ninth Army was about to receive a combat mission!
FOOTNOTES -- CHAPTER 1

1 General Omar N. Bradley, writing of Simpson’s Ninth Army in, Omar N. Bradley, A Soldier’s Story, 422.


4 Statements by William H. Simpson, PI, 22 April 1971, 26 January 1972, 28 April 1972. Simpson does not recall with certainty that the discussion of the selection of corps commanders took place at the 16 May meeting. He does know that the subject was raised at an early meeting and as the two next met on 3 June with the invasion but hours away, it appears that chances are better that corps commanders were discussed at the earlier meeting. General Simpson is not sure who the four were. At most, he recalls, the name of one of those who later commanded a corps in his army was on the list. Conquer: The Story of Ninth Army 1944-1945, 18-20. Conquer will be cited frequently in this paper. It is a comprehensive work and according to Charles B. MacDonald of the office of the Chief of Military History United States Army, "one of the most objective of the unofficial unit histories."

5 Dwight D. Eisenhower, Crusade in Europe, 317.

6 Ibid.


8 Biographical data is from "Biography," 317. Future work
planned by the author will deal in detail with the pre-
Second World War in Europe phase of General Simpson's life.

9 Statement by William H. Simpson, PI, 22 April 1971;
Conquer, 16-17; Charles S. MacDonald, "The Last Offensive"
(unpublished book manuscript loaned by the author, Washington,
D.C.), VIII-2; Horn, War Diary, entry of 6 May 1944. Before
his departure, Simpson and his chief of staff, Colonel James E.
Moore, and settled on the men who were to be the army general
staff section chiefs. These were: Colonel Daniel H. Hundley,
G-1; Colonel Charles P. Bixel, G-2; Colonel Armistead D.
Mead, Jr., G-3; and Colonel Roy V. Rickard, G-4. (Conquer,
15, 17). With but one exception, the G-2, this lineup re-
mained intact throughout the war.

10 Conquer, 17; Horn, War Diary, entries of 6-14 May 1944.

11 Horn, War Diary, entry of 14 May 1944; Theodore W. Parker,
"Ninth Army's Operations in the European Theater," talk
prepared for post war delivery by Lieutenant General William H.
Simpson, I; Statement by William H. Simpson, PI, 22 April 1971
and 28 April 1972; William H. Simpson, letter to author
(hereinafter referred to as LTA), 12 December 1972.

12 Statement by William H. Simpson, PI, 22 April 1971 and
28 April 1972; Eisenhower, Crusade (Dolphin Edition), 260-
261.

13 Horn, War Diary, entries of 22-24 May 1944; Statement by
James E. Moore, PI, 29 June 1971.

14 Omar N. Bradley, LTA, 8 May 1971.

15 William H. Simpson, LTA, 12 December 1972; William H.
Simpson, PI, 22 April 1971; Horn, War Diary, entry of 27 May
1944. Apparently the difference in class at West Point caused
no problem either. Simpson, a member of the Class of 1909,
graduated before Bradley of the Class of 1915 entered the
academy. Of this difference Bradley has written: "the fact
that General Simpson graduated six years before General
Eisenhower and myself made no difference in our relationships."
(Omar N. Bradley, LTA, 8 May 1971.).

16 Parker, "Ninth Army's Operations", 1; Horn, War Diary,
entry of 30 May 1944.

17 George S. Patton, Jr., Speech of General George S. Patton,
Jr. To His Third Army on the Eve of the Normandy Invasion, 1.

18 For a reconstructed text of what Patton said see the
work cited in fn 17; Patton's speech has received wide dis-
semination in recent years from the lips of George C. Scott
in the opening sequence of the moving picture -- "Patton."
Statement by William H. Simpson, PI, 17 March 1972; Horn, War Diary, entries of 30 May and 1 June 1944.

19 Horn, War Diary, entries of 3 and 6 June 1944; Conquer, 17-18.

20 Horn, War Diary, entries of 7-9 June 1944; Robert S. Allen, Lucky Forward: The History of Patton's Third U.S. Army, 74.

21 Eisenhower, Crusade (Dolphin Edition), 274.

22 Statement by John D. Horn, PI, 20 June 1971; Statement by James E. Moore, PI, 29 June 1971; William H. Simpson, LTA, 12 December 1972. Simpson chose to disregard his safety and go to the roof, not recorded is the feeling of his aide who accompanied him.

23 Horn, War Diary, entry of 19 June 1944; Conquer, 18; "After Action Report (hereinafter referred to as AAR) G-3 Section, Headquarters Ninth U.S. Army (hereinafter referred to as HQS 9 USA) 1-30 September 1944, Inclusive", n.d., file-109-3 Ninth Army-AAR, G-3 Section 5-30 Sep 44, Record Group (hereinafter referred to as RG) 407, National Archives, Suitland, Maryland (hereinafter referred to as NA).

24 Horn, War Diary, entries of 24/5, 30 June, 8, 10 July 1944; Conquer, 18; Statement by William H. Simpson, PI, 22 April 1971, 23 June 1972.

25 Conquer, 18, for details of the accomplishment of the processing and training task see pages 18-19; AAR-1-30 September 1944, n.d., file-109-0.3 Ninth Army-AAR, Sep 44, RG 407, NA; Statement by Perry L. Baldwin, PI, 26 June 1971.


27 Eisenhower to George Catlett Marshall, 6 July 1944, BP, III, No 1803, 1814, 1814 n.l; Statement by William H. Simpson, PI, 21 July 1972. The possibility that Simpson might succeed Patton in the fictitious command was never discussed with him during the war. Eisenhower to Walter Bedell Smith, 10 July 1944, BP No. 1814, details the efforts that were to be made to attempt to convince the enemy that Patton had been reduced to army command and that McNair had taken his place and was continuing to prepare for an attack. More on the deception plan can be found in Bradley, Soldier's Story, 344-345.

28 Conquer, 19-20; Statement by William H. Simpson, PI, 23 January 1972; Statement by Theodore W. Parker, PI, 18
June 1971, Parker was the G-3 Operations Officer of the Ninth Army.


30 Horn, War Diary, entry of 18 July 1944.

31 Chester B. Hansen, War Diary March 1943-August 1944, Chester B. Hansen Papers, United States Army Military History Research Collection, Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania (hereinafter referred to as MHRC).

32 Ibid.; Horn, War Diary, entry of 18 July 1944; William C. Sylvan, Personal Diary, entry of 18 July 1944, file Miscellaneous 314.81 Sylvan, William C., Office of the Chief of Military History, Department of the Army, Washington, D.C. (hereinafter referred to as OCMH).

33 Hansen, War Diary, entry of 19 July 1944.

34 Bradley, Soldier's Story, 330, 332.


36 Bradley later called this "the most decisive battle of our war in Western Europe." (Soldier's Story, 330.).

37 fn. 6, EP, III, No. 1844; Bradley, Soldier's Story, 339-341; Hansen, War Diary, entry of 19 July 1944; Horn, War Diary, entry of 19 July 1944.

38 Sylvan, Personal Diary, entry of 19 July 1944.

39 Bradley, Soldier's Story, 343; Hansen, War Diary, entry of 20 July 1944.

40 Esposito, West Point Atlas, II, Sec 2, Map 49 and Chart A; Horn, War Diary, entry of 21 July 1944; Sylvan, Personal Diary, entry of 21 July 1944.

41 Sylvan, Personal Diary, entry of 21 July 1944.

42 Horn, War Diary, entry of 22 July 1944; Sylvan, Personal Diary, entry of 22 July 1944.

43 Bradley, Soldier's Story, 346.

44 Sylvan, Personal Diary, entry of 23 July 1944; Bradley, Soldier's Story, 345.
Hansen, War Diary, entry of 24 July 1944.

Hansen, War Diary, entry of 24 July 1944; Sylvan, Personal Diary, entry of 24 July 1944; Horn, War Diary, entry of 24 July 1944; Statement by William H. Simpson, PI, 23 June 1972.

Hansen, War Diary, entry of 24 July 1944; Sylvan, Personal Diary, entry of 24 July 1944; Horn, War Diary, entry of 24 July 1944.

Sylvan, Personal Diary, entry of 24 July 1944.

Hansen, War Diary, entry of 24 July 1944.

Horn, War Diary, entry of 24 July 1944.

Hansen, War Diary, entry of 24 July 1944.

Hansen, War Diary, entry of 24 July 1944; Sylvan, Personal Diary, entry of 24 July 1944; Blumenson, Breakout and Pursuit, 228. For details concerning the decision to stop the air attack and a discussion of the errors that caused the casualties as well as a description of the actions taken by ground commanders when they learned that the attack had been postponed, see Breakout and Pursuit, 228-233 and Bradley, Soldier's Story, 346-347. The question of General Bradley's location during the bombing is worthy of consideration. In his book, A Soldier's Story (347) he says that he did not learn of the bombing error until he returned to his headquarters after visiting the headquarters of the VII Corps. His aide, however recorded in his diary that the general was with the party that went to the observation post. If the aide is correct, while Bradley probably could have done little to stop the faulty bombing, he certainly could have complained immediately and would have seen for himself what happened. Two other aides, Sylvan and Horn, recorded the happenings at the observation post. In each diary a list of the key personnel present appears. The lists are virtually identical and in neither list does Bradley's name appear. It would appear that if the aides took the time to record the presence of several major generals, they would have added the name of the army commander, had he been present. In addition to not appearing on either list, Bradley's name does not figure in either aide's discussion of what happened that day. From this evidence it can be concluded that Bradley was not on the scene.

Hansen, War Diary, entry of 24 July 1944.


Statement by William H. Simpson, PI, 23 January and 16 February 1972; Bradley, Soldier's Story, 296-298; fn 4, PP, III, No. 1810. On 19 August Eisenhower in a cable to Marshall stated: "you will be glad to know that the 90th Division has
been transformed into a very effective unit and is now reported by General Patton as one of his best organizations. This is unquestionably due to the outstanding leadership qualities of Brigadier General McLean (sic)..." (EP, IV, No. 1903). McLain was moved up to command of the XIX Corps and in this position served in Simpson's Ninth Army for most of the time that the army was in action. The dramatic turnaround of the 90th Division is still used as an example in leadership training at the United States Army Command and General Staff College.


59 Statement by Charles P. Bixel, PI, 28 June 1971; Alvan C. Gillem, Jr., LTA, 8 June 1971.

60 Simpson to Gillem, 11 August 1944, Alvan C. Gillem Papers, Box 1 WWII Correspondence, MHRC; Armistead D. Mead, Jr., PI, 2u June 1971; "Training Memorandum Number 1, Hqs 9USA, dated 1 August 1944, file - Training, Organization and Equipment, Troop Movements and Passive Air Defense", n.d., file - 109-3, Ninth Army - AAR, G-3 Sect 5-30 Sep 44, RG 407, NA.


62 Statement by William H. Simpson, PI, 23 June 1972. The date of Simpson's trip was not recorded by Horn neither does it appear in any source checked. General Simpson places the date at approximately 4-6 days prior to the movement of his headquarters. (William H. Simpson, PI (by telephone), 28 February 1974.) As the first column moved on 26 August (Horn, War Diary, entry of 26 August 1944.) 21 August or 5 days before the move has been selected as the approximate date of Simpson's trip.
CHAPTER 2

KING OF BRITTANY

Once more the army commander crossed the Channel. When he and Bradley met, Simpson was briefed on the rapid advance being made by Patton. As August drew to a close, each passing day found Patton’s spearhead farther away from Major General Troy H. Middleton’s VIII Corps, charged with the capture of the vital Brittany seaport of Brest. Due to the distance involved, Third Army was having more and more difficulty in maintaining adequate command and control over the Brittany operation. Bradley told Simpson that he planned to resolve the problem by putting Middleton under Ninth Army command. Bradley said, “I think I’ll give you a chance to be King of Brittany. How soon can you get your headquarters over here and take over the siege of Brest from Patton and two or three divisions along the Loire River?” Eager for a combat role, Simpson replied that he would call his chief of staff immediately and have him alert the headquarters for a cross-channel move. His standing request for a mission had been fulfilled.

When Simpson returned to England the next day, preparations for the move were already in progress. Ninth Army was to retain its responsibility for receiving and training US troops which arrived in England, so, in addition to the packing that had to be done, arrangements must be made for the transfer of this mission to Gillem’s XIII Corps. At the
time of the changeover, some 200 units were involved. XII Corps though still under Ninth Army command, would, due to the distance involved, operate almost independently. Also army headquarters must, before departing, break contact with the various organizations that had supported it. As First and Third Armies had taken to the continent with them most of the units such as quartermaster and ordnance that usually provide service support to a field army, Ninth Army had had to work out its own arrangements. In the ordnance area, for example, relations were established with Communications Zone (COMZ) units. After the initial problems were resolved, effective assistance was rendered. During the course of their stay in England, army staff members had ample opportunity to see how rear-area organizations operated. Close personal contacts were also made, contacts that were to prove valuable when these COMZ units moved to the continent. 4

UTAH Beach, where the 4th Infantry Division had fought its way ashore less than two months previously, was the landing point for Ninth Army Headquarters, which arrived in two echelons on 29 and 30 August. A temporary command post was established in and around an old chateau located in St-Sauveur-Lendelin seven miles west of the site of the heavy and sometime errant bombing which had preceded Operation COBRA. Simpson’s gear was moved into a room on the second floor, while a mess was opened in the kitchen of the chateau. The owner was still in residence, and the cooks who worked for him entered into good-natured competition with US Army cooks
for food, utensils, and open-hearth stoves. It was into this arrangement that General Simpson moved when he flew from England to join his headquarters on 30 August.\textsuperscript{5}

Ninth Army was still not operational, but at least it was finally in France. On his first full day in the country, the 31st, Simpson, with Mead, his G-3, was off to see his boss, General Bradley. Bradley's 12th Army Group, actively functioning since 1 August, was then headquartered near Chartres, southwest of Paris. Simpson's friend and classmate George Patton was also at group headquarters, and both army commanders decided to stay overnight. Bradley and Patton had just returned from a trip to Brittany, soon to come under Ninth Army command, where they had discussed the situation with the local commander, Major General Middleton. Middleton, it appeared, was not in a confident mood; the ammunition supply was not what he thought he needed and believed that his infantry was not aggressive enough and that his army had abandoned him. Simpson's first job would be to raise his morale. The two of them could work on inspiring the lethargic troops so that they could clear the Brittany Peninsula.\textsuperscript{6}

Simpson with but one corps and various smaller units under his command could take a more personal interest in Brest than could Patton. If the infantry problem could be resolved and an adequate stock of ammunition and other supplies acquired, Brest could be taken. Bradley, with this objective secure, would have a location that might be used as a port and in addition would be relieved of a threat to his supply
lines.

Simpson had been given a clearly stated mission, but rather than leaving the newcomer alone to cope with the myriad of logistical problems which needed to be solved, Bradley tried to help by marshaling the resources of army group and adding to them his personal efforts. Earlier, on 28 August, he had written to Lieutenant General Lee, the COMZ Commander, to express his concern that a lack of ammunition was holding back activities before Brest. Then on September 1st Bradley again wrote to Lee and this time Simpson's future need for support in the areas of supply, maintenance, and communications was mentioned. Ninth Army, Bradley indicated, was short, and to avoid depletion of the support of the First and Third Armies help would be needed from COMZ. Perhaps, the letter continued, if Simpson were to establish his headquarters at Rennes near Lee's section headquarters, he could tie into existing communications and thus minimize the additional communications aid that would be required. Under Bradley's proposal direct face-to-face meetings of logisticians would be facilitated by physical proximity, while those who had to visit the fighting front could travel back and forth.

Simpson returned to his headquarters on the 1st, and on that same day the army group commander received a letter from General Eisenhower in which he outlined his ideas for continuing the offensive. Elimination of German resistance in the Brittany Peninsula as well as army group flank
security, both soon to be the responsibility of Ninth Army, were mentioned in Eisenhower's letter.

Optimism was running high in Allied circles. Eisenhower told Bradley, "the enemy is being defeated in the East, in the South and in the North; he had experienced internal dissension and signs are not wanting that he is nearing collapse." Ike's confident mood was reflected in Bradley's headquarters, where Hansen observed, "everything we talk about now is qualified by the phrase 'if the war last for that long.'"

All seemed to be going well, Simpson had a mission, the Ninth Army was finishing its preparations for combat, and the war might soon be over and all could return to home and loved ones. As he supervised the men he had trained for this most difficult of tasks, the control of troops in combat, Simpson was unaware of certain events which were taking place at a high military level, events which could have resulted in his replacement as Commanding General Ninth US Army.

In a letter to General Marshall, Eisenhower had analyzed the army-level command arrangement in Europe. Originally, he said, he and Bradley had anticipated that their army commanders would be Hodges, Patton, Simpson, and probably Gerow, who then commanded the V Corps, and that these armies would enter Europe through ports controlled by United States forces. Now it appeared that Gerow's army would not be organized for some time. Eisenhower continued:

If we put off the formation of an additional Army, Bradley may want to step up one of our
Corps Commanders ahead of Simpson. Please understand that none of us has any objection to Simpson. We are merely getting to the point where we believe that some of our Corps Commanders (notably Gerow and Corlett), who have done so well and actually demonstrated capacity for leadership and for handling large formations, are better bets for taking over a new Army Command than is a man who has not actually demonstrated this capacity.

Simpson had come so close, he had touched all the bases in his military career, had had progressively more responsible command and staff assignments, had attended each level of army schooling, and throughout had maintained an outstanding level of performance. It seemed that the goal of so much hard work would be denied him at the last moment.

In blissful ignorance of Eisenhower's letter, Simpson continued to work on preparing his headquarters for combat. One area in which the army staff had had little experience was that of dealing with war correspondents. 12th Army Group staff members had recognized this problem, and one of the group experts in press relations, Barney Oldfield, was sent to set up a Ninth Army press camp which would handle the reporters that were sure to visit the headquarters once it got into action. Oldfield, who had been in France since the early days of the invasion, had seen many headquarters tent camps. His reaction to Simpson's was that "the Ninth Headquarters staff at first looked like an aggregation of National Guardsmen on their annual summer encampment."12

Experience would surely resolve organizational problems, but in the meantime Oldfield's task was to establish a press camp. He quickly penned a memorandum which would set
up such an organization and attached a list of the required equipment. Oldfield planned to have sufficient facilities to handle 50 correspondents. For communication he desired the capability for voice conversation with London and teletype to 12th Army Group. Staff officers, unaware of how much support the press would require, were shocked when they learned of the new organization and of the length of the shopping list composed by its head.

As Ninth Army would soon be in action, speed was essential if the press camp was to be ready to receive its first guests. After being stymied by the staff when he tried to get things moving, Oldfield approached the commanding general's aide, Major Horn, for advice. Horn suggested that Oldfield show his plan to Chief of Staff Moore. Horn said, "he has a grasp of these things. If he okays it, that'll stop the rest of the staff debating over it."¹³

Moore, after questioning Oldfield, decided to accept and support his recommendations. To insure quick action on all requests for the needed supply items, the chief of staff arranged for General Simpson to sign each requisition. With these documents in hand, Oldfield encountered a decidedly different reaction from the staff members whose help he needed.¹⁴ Another problem had been solved; Ninth Army would soon have a press camp.

Saturday, the 2nd of September, was marked both by the arrival of the rear echelon from England and the departure of an advance party from army main headquarters for a new
command post situated near the city of Rennes, which was centrally located at the base of the Brittany Peninsula. Much administrative work was being accomplished at the army level, but the actual taking of Brest would be done by the VIII Corps.

On Sunday, Simpson, accompanied by his intelligence, operations, logistics, and signal officers, flew out to see Middleton and his command. First stop was at the corps rear headquarters at Morlaix. After that installation had been visited, the party continued westward to the forward corps command post at Lesneven, about 14 air miles from the center of Brest. There the visitors met the corps commander and members of his staff.

Middleton's corps was in the 10th day of an operation aimed at taking Brest and its port which was noted for sheltering U-boats during the Nazi occupation. Prior to that time, the largest French naval base in northern France had been located there to take advantage of the large deepwater harbor with a 90-square-mile roadstead. A railroad which connected the port to Rennes was still in good condition. Should Brest be captured before the enemy did too much damage, the entire complex could be used to support the ever-growing Allied force. Supplies could be sent directly to Brest from the United States without entering the dangerous English Channel.

September had begun; before long, winter and the storms which accompanied it would arrive. Limited port capability
available at Cherbourg was not adequate to carry the entire load, so more permanent port facilities were needed before bad weather hindered efforts to move the vital supplies across open beaches. Preliminary plans called for American seizure of Brest and several other ports by the time OVERLORD, which included the cross-channel attack as well as the establishment of an adequate lodgment from which to attack Germany, was complete. Such an area was now virtually secure, yet the American logisticians were woefully short of port capacity. Brest must be taken -- and fast.

Avenues of approach abounded. Brest could be attacked from the east via a single main road, from the north by four, and from the west by another. Terrain outside the city was generally open and rolling but was cut by many streams, some of which ran in deep valeys. Low hedgerows enhanced the defensive potential of the area. Secondary roads were poor as was cross-country trafficability; so motorized or mechanized movements would often be restricted to primary roads. South of Brest two peninsulas jutted close to the built-up area. Daoulas Peninsula projected from the southeast to about opposite the city, while Crozon, from the southwest, pointed like a spear back at the mainland, its nearest point less than a mile from shore.

Defenses had been prepared in depth. Outside the city, hedgerows were improved, and strong points, some of them old French forts, were tied in with trenches, pill boxes, wire, and mines. Other defenses included barriers on access
roads and anti-tank ditches. Brest itself, in addition to being protected by the inert ramparts of a 17th-century Vauban-designed fortress as well as positions constructed to protect the naval installation, was guarded by a collection of large-caliber weapons of all types. Heavy cannon, field artillery, and guns from sunken ships and coastal batteries joined with antiaircraft guns capable of firing at ground or air targets to provide an all-round defense capability. 20

Neither the attacker nor the defender could consider Brest a single entity, for the city was split by the Penfeld River, which flowed from northwest to south. On the east bank was the main city and commercial port, while on the west was the naval base with its submarine pens, barracks, warehouses, drydocks, and shops. Cargo cranes were located in both ports and also along the river. 21

Defenses for Brest had been organized into two belts. The inner, utilizing the naval base defense and incorporating the old city fortifications, protected an area only 3,000 yards deep with but little room for maneuver. Four to six miles from the mouth of the Penfeld River a forward line of defense had been erected. This line included defenses on both Daoulas and Crozon Peninsulas. 22

Brest in normal times was home to 80,000 people, but these were not normal times, and now approximately 30,000 troops defended the city and its surrounding area. Safeguarding of the Crozon and Daoulas sectors was the responsibility of Generalmajor (Brigadier General) Joseph Rauch,
who commanded the 343d (Static) Division. Key to the defense of the city itself was the 2d Paratroop Division, commanded by a faithful Nazi, Generalleutnant (Major General) Herman Bernhard Ramcke, who had gained fame in the successful airborne invasion of Crete in 1941. In addition to his division, Ramcke commanded the fortress. He evacuated French civilians who might get in his way, then used all available troops including both combat and noncombat units. Even foreign labor battalions went into the lines.

Ramcke sprinkled his hardened paratroopers liberally among his inexperienced troops, not only to show them how to fight but also to keep the green infantrymen from giving up too quickly. That this scheme was effective was attested by prisoners of war who were later asked why they did not capitulate in response to surrender leaflets. One replied, "your propaganda leaflets may have accomplished a great deal, but the machine pistol of Oberleubnant Stortz is more powerful." Hitler had ordered Ramcke to keep Brest and the Nazi general meant to live up to the letter of his orders. Allied combat power he fixed here could not be employed against the fatherland.

Middleton's VIII Corps had been fixed. Though progress had been made, the siege was by no means over when Simpson visited on the 3rd. Lack of support of all kinds seemed to be a major difficulty. As he had told Bradley earlier, Middleton was short on ammunition. Since the group commander's visit, however, the situation had improved somewhat. Also
Middleton felt that troops to replace his losses were not arriving on time, and to top things off, his air support was not satisfactory. Bradley helped personally with the air difficulty by interceding with Major General Hoyt S. Vandenberg, Commanding General of the Ninth Air Force on the behalf of VII Corps.26

An army headquarters is not designed to fight the tactical battle, the assigned corps do that, but it is well staffed so that the army commander, in addition to issuing operational directives, can use his resources to assist his subordinate commanders in the resolution of their problems. In VIII Corps the problem areas were obvious; at last, Simpson and his Ninth Army could contribute directly to the war effort.

His business concluded, Simpson returned to Morlaix and flew to Rennes, where eight miles to the northeast in a dense forest he found his headquarters.27 A chateau had been his home in the morning, now he was to sleep in a trailer and work and eat under canvas.

By being at Rennes, Simpson was close to a COMZ section headquarters, and as Bradley had suggested, Ninth Army was able to benefit from this proximity. On the other hand the location of an army headquarters within the COMZ created an unorthodox situation. Armies normally operate within the combat zone while rear-area support units work in the COMZ. Responsibilities in the usual situation are clearly apportioned, but with an army in the COMZ, new
arrangements had to be made.  

Close cooperation between army and support staffs would be essential. Supply of ammunition, one of General Middleton's major difficulties, came to the forefront again on the 4th, when a major effort by VIII Corps troops had to be postponed, as the corps commander said, "due to a lack of certain ammunition."  

After spending the night in the woods, Simpson flew on 4 September to Versailles to confer with Bradley at the site of his army group rear headquarters. Bradley told the new commander to take Brest as soon as possible. Among those present at the conference was Lieutenant General Walter Bedell Smith, Eisenhower's chief of staff. High-level planners were considering recommending the termination of the Brest operation as the port would no longer be needed once Le Havre and Antwerp were clear. But Antwerp still continued a major dilemma, since no one knew when the port would be open. The enemy might well block its entrance by mines or other infernal devices.  

Bradley, responsible for a drive to the east, saw the problem in terms of the number of troops that would be required to contain the coastal garrisons until they surrendered or the war was over. These troops were needed elsewhere. Discussion was destined to continue, but in the meantime Simpson had been charged with the capture of Brest and he would do his best to accomplish his mission expeditiously. Late in the afternoon he flew back to his home in
the forest. Ninth Army would be operational tomorrow.\textsuperscript{31}

Upon his return Simpson directed that the orders detailing his assumption of an operational mission be dispatched. Bradley had said the change was to take place the following morning, but a specific time was needed for the official instructions. Due to communication problems, army group headquarters could not be contacted for precise guidance, so Simpson said that morning to him was 6 AM, and thus that time was inserted in the orders.\textsuperscript{32}

When that magic hour came on the 5th, General Simpson would assume command of a wide variety of units. In addition to the VIII Corps (Major General Troy H. Middleton) made up of the 2d (Major General Walter M. Robertson), 8th (Major General Donald A. Stroh), 29th (Major General Charles H. Gerhardt), and 83d (Major General Robert C. Macon) Infantry Divisions and the 6th (Major General Robert W. Grow) Armored Division, he would also lead the VIII Corps (Major General Alvan C. Gillem, Jr) which was still back in England and the III Corps (Major General John Millikin) then assembling in Normandy.\textsuperscript{33}

Gillem was to continue to receive and process troops in England, then forward them to Millikin, who would be responsible for these men plus any others who came directly from the US to France until they moved forward to assume their combat or support missions. Due to logistical considerations many troops might have to stay near the beaches for some time, and during this period Millikin would settle
them into bivouac areas chosen to facilitate unit training. All training would be conducted within the guidelines set forth in Simpson's published training instructions. In addition to training, III Corps would be responsible for support, supply and administration for the new units.\textsuperscript{34}

While III Corps supervised incoming troops, VIII Corps was locked in the struggle for Brest. At the time of the takeover three of its infantry divisions, the 29th, 8th, and 2d, were positioned in a semicircle about the city. Additionally, US forces were concerned with both the Crozon and Daoulas Peninsulas. Much of the Crozon Peninsula was still held by the enemy. The Daoulas Peninsula had already been cleared, and it was now occupied by a corps artillery group equipped with big guns, which could fire on the Crozon Peninsula as well as attack the defenses of Brest from the rear. Patrolling formed a part of the mission of the 83d Infantry Division, which operated along the Loire River eastward to Orléans and thus protected the south flank of the army, which was also the south flank of the 12th Army Group. A second part of the division contained the German garrisons at St Nazaire and Nantes. One other large unit, the 6th Armored Division, was also assigned to VIII Corps. This organization, located south of Brest, was using patrols to cover the area near Quiberon Bay, while other portions of the division contained the German garrison at Lorient.\textsuperscript{35}

Thus, the portion of the Ninth Army mission which called for protection of the group south flank and the re-
duction of the Brittany Peninsula seemed to be well in hand. Bradley had also ordered that the 6th Armored Division be released to the Third Army as soon as it could be relieved by the incoming 94th Infantry Division. This matter would require the attention of the army commander, but in other areas the operational chores of the VIII Corps seemed to pose few problems. Theodore W. Parker, Ninth Army G-3 Operations Officer, later recalled that because the operation was in progress with an experienced commander in charge when Ninth Army came in not much operational assistance was required of the army staff.36

One aspect of the army mission demanded much of General Simpson's time and thought. Ninth Army was to be prepared to be employed on the south flank of the Third Army at some as yet undetermined date.37 Once the Brittany affair was wound up it appeared that the army would be re-oriented to the east where it could at last take part in a concerted drive on the Reich.

Such a drive would undoubtedly be successful. General Eisenhower merely reflected the common Allied optimism when on 4 September he began a message to his major subordinate commanders with the words: "Every resistance on the entire front shows signs of collapse."38 Enemy forces were retreating in disorder. Eisenhower called for a two-pronged offensive, with the northern thrust aimed at the Ruhr and the southern at the Saar. He felt that the enemy saw the routes to these objectives as the best of the available Allied aven-
ues of approach and that the Germans would gather as many men
and as much equipment as possible to counter the Allied attacks.
As Eisenhower's goal was to defeat the German Armed Forces,
such a massing of enemy might was just what he wanted. 39
Events were moving fast. Simpson applied himself to completing
his task in Brittany in time to be in on the kill.

Next morning the Ninth Army became operational.
During the daily morning staff meeting held in the G-3 Op-
erations Tent, General Simpson formally announced the opera-
tional mission of the army. He also said that it appeared
that before long Ninth Army would be composed of three combat
corps, and he asked the staff to look into what must be done
to insure that army had the capability to support these three
large organizations. Simpson also spoke of the possibility
of detaching the 83d Infantry and 6th Armored Divisions from
VIII Corps and putting them directly under army control. 40

A detachment of these two divisions would deprive
Middleton of some of his strength, but it would also relieve
him of concern for operations in areas beyond the Brest siege.
With but one corps to worry about, army could easily assume
the task of directly commanding the two separate divisions.

Simpson, having given his guidance to the staff, drove
out to the VIII Corps headquarters to view his new command.
Accompanying him, in addition to Major Horn, was Colonel
Richard U. Nicholas, the army engineer. 41 Since much en-
gineering work is usually needed to support a major siege,
Nicholas could evaluate the situation and then try to supply
army resources and guidance to help accomplish the corps mission.

On the same day, 5 September, when Simpso... motored westward to view the situation at Brest, the Supreme Allied Commander in an office memorandum set forth his views concerning the war in Europe. Eisenhower wrote, "for some days it has been obvious that our military forces can advance almost at will, subject only to the requirement for maintenance." Unfortunately for Simpson and for Middleton too, General Ramcke in Brest did not share Eisenhower's opinion of the state of affairs:

Though lack of ammunition had seriously restricted US ground operations, General Ramcke's defenders had been mercilessly pounded from the air. These attacks from the skies reached a high point on the 5th as 12 groups of fighter bombers struck the city. They could range at will over Brest since the fire of surviving German antiaircraft guns was reserved for use against ground targets.

Following the heavy attack on the 5th, the amount of air support allocated for Brest rapidly declined. As the main fighting front continued to move away from Brittany, the fields for the planes which supported the attackers moved also. These were the same planes that were frequently ordered to attack Brest, and as their range was limited, a longer flight back to Brest meant that they could have a shorter time over the target. The target itself posed a problem, for the target area decreased in size as the VIII Corps advanced. Safe
bombing became much more difficult. Safety margins had to be wide, for all knew that the war was almost over and no one wanted a repeat of the COBRA mishap.

General Ramcke must have felt keenly the ever-increasing pressure. At 7:30 AM on the 5th his troops had begun to blow up the port installations. If Brest was to be of use to Allied logisticians, much rebuilding would have to be done. After spending the night at Middleton's headquarters, Simpson set out on the 6th to visit some of the units that were engaged in trying to capture the city. Major General Middleton escorted the army commander as he visited first the 2d Infantry Division and then the 8th. Both units were trying to penetrate a defense line studded with concrete pillboxes, and scarcity of artillery ammunition, especially of the larger calibers, had severely restricted offensive action. Major Horn observed, "our troops were literally sitting there waiting for ammunition." 

Artillery ammunition was in short supply for all American forces in Europe, and Simpson realized that those to the east on the cutting edge of the offensive toward Germany had requirements which must be met. They were opposing an enemy who, though his forces seemed to be crumbling, did retain some mobility and could give the attackers much trouble if he were allowed to consolidate his units. Simpson's troops, when they were required to wait for ammunition, were relatively safe as the enemy to their front had been contained. Thus, though he lacked much that he needed, Simpson decided
not to complain too vociferously to his superiors about his problems but rather to do what he could on his own to improve the situation. 47

Some of the precious ammunition did arrive on the 6th on LST's which reached the shallow-water ports of Korlaix and St Michel en Grève, both located on the Brittany Peninsula. 48 Now major attacks could resume.

Middleton had completed his planning for a coordinated offensive before Ninth Army took operational control. After reviewing these plans, Simpson gave his approval. An amphibious attack had been ruled out. Shipping was so short that it was difficult to get enough to move the needed ammunition, and the beaches had been well prepared by the enemy to meet any seaborne threat. Space for maneuver became more limited as the Americans closed to their goal, thus practically insuring that the proposed attack would have to be a head-to-head push. With the plans set and only the hour of attack remaining to be fixed, there was little more that Simpson could do at VIII Corps, and he returned to his headquarters in the forest. 49

Major General Harry J. Maloney, Commanding General of the 94th Infantry Division, was waiting for him when he arrived. Bradley had ordered that the 6th Armored Division be released to Third Army as soon as Maloney could relieve it. Maloney's division was enroute across the Channel, and the division commander had preceded it to receive his orders. Simpson, after telling Maloney to relieve Grow's 6th Armored,
cautioned him only to contain the German garrisons in his new sector and not to attack under any circumstances. It appeared that the 6th Armored Division would soon be enroute to Patton and that at least one facet of Simpson's mission would be accomplished.

On the 7th as ammunition continued to pour into the VIII Corps dumps, SHAEF planners received notice that a recommendation they had made four days previously had been accepted. Lorient, Quiberon Bay, Nantes, and St Nazaire were no longer to be used as ports. Brest, however, still figured in the port planning.

With greatly increased stocks of ammunition in hand, Middleton decided to renew the attack the next day. Both air and artillery pounded the objective. One target hit was the main German food supply point. From this point on the defenders were put on half rations.

While the VIII Corps Commander readied his forces, Simpson flew alone to visit one of the units not directly involved in the siege, Grow's 6th Armored Division, which was still patrolling near Quiberon Bay and containing the Germans in Lorient as it awaited relief by the 94th Infantry. Next morning, the 8th, the army commander again took off alone this time to see his other nonsiege unit, Macon's 83d Infantry, which was patrolling the south flank of the army in addition to enclosing German units at St Nazaire and Nantes.

Simpson believed in letting the corps commander do his job without undue interference, but he was interested in
the progress of Middleton's attack. Still traveling alone, that afternoon he flew out to VIII Corps to see for himself what had happened since the push began at 10 AM after a relatively short artillery preparation. The attack was launched simultaneously by the 2d Infantry Division, then located three miles to the east of Brest; the 8th, two miles to the north; and the 29th, two to four miles to the west. With the enemy vigorously contesting the advance, even employing radio-controlled, explosive miniature tanks for the first time during the battle, progress was not rapid. Little enemy air support was encountered, but Luftwaffe air-supply missions continued to try to get into the city. Two flights dropped their cargoes, which included ammunition, codes, and Iron Crosses, on US territory, providing both intelligence information as well as souvenirs for many GI's.  

Brest was described on the afternoon of the army commander's visit as, stretched out prostrate under the heavy punishment from air and artillery poundings. The entire area was engulfed in huge rolling banks of white smoke, and the dark fountains of black smoke rose ballooning into the air to heights of 500 feet. Flashes of red-orange flame leapt from the centers of these strikes. Over all, the constant thump, thump of the guns reported new assaults, and the fighter patrols, unchallenged by the Luftwaffe, circled and dove into the white and black cloud mass to register their strikes.

That night after Simpson had returned to his headquarters two trains and eight LST's laden with ammunition arrived at VIII Corps. Middleton for the first time during the operation was optimistic.
Fighting continued at close quarters in Brest on the 9th, with both the 2d and 8th Infantry Divisions reaching the built-up area. Since a murderous crossfire barred attack through the streets, both infantrymen and engineers blasted their way through the walls as they advanced from house to house. Major General Walter M. Robertson, commander of the 2d Division, christened this phase of fighting a "corporal's war," because of the small size of the units involved. For this day the total haul of prisoners was over 2,500 with Robertson's division leading the way with a bag of a thousand. 57

As the troops bled and died for each foot gained, two Americans were discussing the Brest situation. Patton, under whose leadership the operation had commenced, and Bradely, the army group commander, agreed that the capture of Brest would now do little good as it was too far from the rapidly advancing fighting front. In addition, Ramcke had done his port-destroying job well, and this extensive damage would argue against use of the area as a major port. But though Brest could not be utilized, both Bradley and Patton believed that the fight must continue, for, as Patton said, "when the American Army had once put its hand to the plow, it should not let go." 58

Simpson, ignorant of the discussion between his two friends, still had his mission; he had no intention of letting up. As things at Brest seemed to be going relatively well, he had time to turn his attention on the 9th to a pleasant possibility -- Ninth Army units might, if all went well, be
able to capture 20,000 Germans at one time without firing a shot. These troops belonged to a provisional unit, Foot March Group South, under the command of Generalmajor (Brigadier General) Botho Henning Elster.

Elster's men, most of whom were part of the LXIV Infantry Corps, had been stationed in southwestern France at the time of the Allied invasion. In mid August, to prevent being cut off by the impending juncture of the Third Army advancing to the east and the Seventh to the north, German forces were organized into three march units and ordered to pull back. To conceal their real intentions, a cover plan which proclaimed that the movement was aimed at clearing the area of the enemy, was implemented. Shortly before the end of the month, when it appeared that the escape gap might be closed before all troops could get through, the march units were reorganized. Up to this time they had operated on an area basis, but now they were arranged according to the relative mobility of their components. Three new units emerged, one composed of organizations equipped with fast-moving vehicles, a second of those with slow-moving conveyances, and a third made up of units which moved on foot.

To Elster fell the dubious honor of commanding the foot group, which moved its ammunition and food with horse carts and horse-drawn wagons. A few motor vehicles belonging to a naval unit rounded out the transportation resources.

By 5 September Elster's command was stretched out on the road between Poitiers and Châteauroux, had been hit twice by
damaging air attacks, and was out of communication with the other groups. Members of the French Forces of the Interior (FFI) as well as French civilians continually sniped at the slowly moving mass of Germans.

North of Elster's ragtag column, General Macon's 83d Infantry Division was operating along the Loire River, protecting the south flank of Ninth Army. The 83d routinely received a great deal of assistance from the FFI. Frequently, units of Macon's command dispatched reconnaissance patrols south of the river. Early in September Lieutenant Samuel W. Magill, commanding one of these patrols, was told to find out what had happened to the German troops who until recently had been shooting across the river at the Americans.

Once over the water barrier Magill met with an FFI member, who told him that the enemy had pulled back to the south and added that according to rumor the commander of a force of unknown size would probably accede to an American surrender proposal but not to any tendered by the French. Magill, after guiding an air strike on a withdrawing Panzer unit, put a white flag on his jeep and drove south, looking for the German commander who wanted to give up. Eventually he met Elster. The German said he did not want to surrender without at least a small battle for the sake of appearances. Elster's conscience demanded, as a minimum a two-battalion show of force. Producing such a group would have been quite a feat for Magill to accomplish, for within 70 miles, to the best of his knowledge, were but 18 American troops, all members
of his platoon.

Lieutenant Magill carried Elster's conditions back across the river to be relayed to his division commander. Magill was told that division could not spare the two battalions. It was after midnight when, without sleep, Magill again crossed the river to try once more to secure the German surrender.

Meanwhile, Ninth Army personnel, who had been informed of the situation by the 83d, started to work on their planning. The Army wanted to bag Elster's 20,000, but such a group would overtax the existing prisoner-of-war facilities. These prisoners must be instructed to bring their own kitchens as well as food and medical supplies. They would be ordered to put up their own barbed-wire enclosures, set up their own machine guns at guard posts, and then get inside.

At army level planners must project far into the future, but Magill had to face the unpleasant fact that Elster still had not agreed to a surrender plan. Since air attacks had already severely damaged the German column, it seemed likely that a demonstration of air power might convince the general. Magill set up an aerial show of force flown by elements of the 354th Fighter Bomber Group, which, though late in appearing over the target, did persuade Elster. He agreed to negotiate a surrender. Here matters stood on the 9th when Simpson with his G-3 and engineer met at the Rennes airfield with Bradley, who was accompanied by Major General Leven C. Allen, group chief of staff, and Brigadier General
Edwin L. Sibert, the G-2.  

Bradley approved the army proposal to take the prisoners, and he told Simpson to handle all details. General Simpson then moved to coordinate the operation. After stopping at SHAPE, he flew down to Chateauroux to confer with Major General Macon. To Macon was given the mission of actually negotiating the surrender.  

Ordinarily, an army commander does not give orders directly to a division but works through the corps which controls the division in question. This situation, as were so many related to the Brest operation, proved to be an exception to the rule. At his staff conference on the 5th, during which he had announced the mission of his organization, Simpson had mentioned that the 83d Infantry and the 6th Armored Divisions might be ordered to work directly under Ninth Army. At 12 noon on the 10th, the day following the assignment of the Elster mission to Macon, this possibility was realized. An order to that effect had already been written. Thus, Middleton could devote all his attention to the capture of Brest, while such other activities as the surrender of the Foot March Group South and the relief of the 6th Armored by the 94th Infantry Division could be overseen directly by Simpson. With the 83d having such a short time remaining under VIII Corps command, there was no need to involve Middleton and his staff.  

Macon wasted no time in contacting Elster; the two met at Issoudun on the 10th. During their conversation
American planes circles overhead. Macon's terms included instructions that Elster stop trying to evacuate the area and go to the site of the formal surrender. His troops were to move to the Loire in three columns. Due to concern over the possibility that revenge-minded Frenchmen might attack an unarmed German column, the troops were to be allowed to keep their weapons and equipment until they reached the north bank of the Loire. Lieutenant Colonel Jules K. French, Jr. was left by Macon as the American liaison officer.  

With Macon handling the German surrender, Simpson could once again visit Brest to see the progress of the fighting. Supplies and ammunition were no longer a problem from this point on, for Bradley, in a new letter of instructions, had placed Brest first on his supply priority list.  

Sunday the 10th was an eventful day in the siege, with the 29th Infantry Division reporting the clearing of all enemy resistance from the Conquet Peninsula, located west of Brest, and portions of the 2d and 8th Infantry Divisions reaching the old Brest city wall. So formidable a problem did this wall present that VIII Corps leaders decided to hold the enemy until they either became so decimated that an assault could succeed or until a point had been weakened so that a breaching operation could be conducted.  

A psychological as well as a physical challenge must have been posed by this wall. The fortification was based on 17th-Century work by the great French fortress builder Vauban. As was typical of his work, gun positions were in-
corporated in such a manner that the fire from one could be employed to protect its neighbors. Breaching before these positions had been neutralized would be difficult. After Vauban's time the wall had been improved by increasing its height. To make the barrier wider, a second wall was built parallel to the first, and the space between was filled with rock, masonry, and rubble.\textsuperscript{65}

Since 1940 the Germans had been working to strengthen the wall complex. What now faced the attackers was an obstacle which varied in height from 25 to 45 feet and boasted a moat 45 to 60 feet wide and 18 to 45 feet deep. While the air strikes and big guns, including 8-inch howitzers, 8-inch guns, and 240mm howitzers, pounded away, American commanders discussed possible means of penetrating the obstacle.\textsuperscript{66}

Meanwhile, on the other side of the hill, Ramcke, though he had ordered many of his troops back into the ancient fortifications, did not perceive his defensive position to be as strong as did the attackers. Bombing and artillery fire had already destroyed much that he had counted on using. So damaged was the city wall that Ramcke saw it as not being particularly valuable for defense.

His city was virtually destroyed. Fires blazed everywhere, even the asphalt of the streets burned after hits by phosphorous bombs. Poisonous phosphorous smoke drifted into bunkers and pillboxes and rendered them unusable. Phosphorous burn casualties abounded. Conditions in the filed hospital were bad. Damage done to the electrical installations as
well as to the water pipes boded ill for the future.

Even Ramcke, hard-bitten Nazi that he was, was concerned about continuing a defense which now seemed to be almost senseless. But he reasoned that he was doing some good; munitions used against Brest would not be available to hit German cities. In addition, his U-boat dock was still working, some boats remained sheltered at Brest, and he did have some ammunition with which to delay the attackers. Finally, he never forgot Hitler's order to defend the fortifications to the last, an order signed when he took command. 67

So Ramcke, who had impressed General Simpson as a "very able" opponent, continued to fight. He gathered every man he could for the last-ditch stand. Led by its 69-year-old postmaster, the local army postal unit entered the fighting. There it was joined by the paratrooper finance section and band. 68

While Ramcke tried every stratagem he could think of to keep the Americans out, Simpson, responsible to Bradley and Eisenhower for defeating the German commander's best efforts, personally observed the battering his forces were administering to Brest. By driving to a point on the Daoulas Peninsula, south of Brest Harbor, the army commander could view the proceeding from the enemy's rear. Major Horn commented, "we saw a colossal thing. A great city was being hammered to death by batteries of Long Toms (155-mm Guns) firing from positions over our heads and by endless streams of Fighter-Bombers." He further noted that Brest "was a maze of wreckage and
shattered buildings. The harbour was filled with sunken vessels, and the great 70-ton cranes on the docks of the city could be seen toppled crazily into the water by Nazi demolition charges.\textsuperscript{69}

Things seemed to be going well throughout Simpson's command. His VIII Corps troops were pressing hard on Brest, and Macon was negotiating a mass German surrender. However, since the 83d and the 6th Armored Divisions as well as the soon-to-arrive 94th Infantry, were to be under army control, Simpson's headquarters must issue orders for the replacement of the 6th Armored by the 94th Infantry.

Such directives, calling for the progressive relief of the 6th as elements of the 94th reached the sector, were dispatched during the afternoon of the 10th of September. With these loose ends tied up, General Simpson could watch the various operations unfold while devoting much of his energy to planning ahead for the future movement of Ninth Army to the front.

On the next day, Monday the 11th, Combat Command B (CCB) of the 6th Armored Division was released to Third Army. This extra strength plus the assumption by Ninth Army of responsibility for protecting 80 more miles of the 12th Army Group flank from Orleans to Auxerre, would enable Patton to put more muscle behind the Third Army's attack to the east.\textsuperscript{71}

Monday and Tuesday were generally days of regrouping before Brest. As the area of operations was continually diminishing in size, two divisions could no longer operate
effectively east of the Penfeld River. So during the night of 11–12 September the 8th Infantry Division was relieved and pulled back, and responsibility for its sector was transferred to the 2d Infantry Division. Next objective for the 8th would be the clearing of Crozon Peninsula, the only remaining enemy-held point of land in the Brest area and a possible route to escape from the city. German troops located on Crozon had been contained by an American task force which lacked the strength to carry the strong enemy defenses.72

While major troop changes were being made, and ways to get past the Brest city wall were being considered and discarded, the 'corporal's war' continued. In areas where the attackers had not reached the city wall some tenacious defenders remained. They had to be cleared not only from the ground floor of each building but from each higher level and the attic as well.73

On the 12th this clearing operation was viewed once again by the army commander. Pounding by high explosives had breached the upper parts of the city wall, but as the lower area was still intact, little had been accomplished which might aid an infantry attack.74 Progress was slow, but the end was surely in sight. It would not be long before Simpson's army, fleshed out to a multicorps force, would be re-oriented to the east.

Eisenhower's Chief of Staff, Lieutenant General Smith, called Simpson on Wednesday the 13th and relayed a message which was to upset previously held ideas of movement. Smith
told Simpson that supplies were sorely needed at the front and that the only way to move them was by truck, with the vehicles to come from those divisions earmarked for the Ninth Army which were still in the Normandy area. Simpson, who had been using these units in his planning for the move to the east, was shocked to hear the news. Smith said he would try to get the trucks back as soon as possible, but in the meantime Simpson must wait for his divisions. Brest, as far as the army commander was concerned, must temporarily take a back seat, for trucks and drivers had to be made ready. Ninth Army planning must be revised.

French railroads had been severely damaged by pre-invasion sabotage and Allied air attacks. As Allied forces had simply outrun the railroad repair crews, more carrying capacity was required, and an interim truck transport measure, the Red Ball Express, was instituted. Ninth Army's portion of the effort eventually included 42 provisional truck companies from the 26th, 95th, and 104th Infantry Divisions and from field artillery, tank destroyer, and antiaircraft units. Simpson's group was called out originally to deliver 500 tons of supplies per day to forces set to attack to the north under the command of Field Marshal Montgomery. His drive, a combined airborne-ground operations, code named MARKET-GARDEN, was designed to outflank the German Siegfried Line and cross the lower Rhine at Arnhem. Surely this was an important mission, but rather than immobilizing combat units, perhaps another way could be found to move the supplies.
As if to follow up Smith's call, Lieutenant General Lee, COMZ Commander, visited Ninth Army's forest headquarters on the 13th. He confirmed that 12th Army Group had approved the truck diversion. Though SHAPE and army group had agreed to the scheme, Simpson would not give up before all alternatives had been explored. With Lee he flew to Paris to "fight it out." 77

After spending the night in Paris, Simpson and Lee flew to the new 12th Army Group command post at Verdun to discuss the transport situation. Their C-47 landed in a bean patch outside of town, a less than auspicious way to begin a high-level conference. 78

No alternative solution was found. Simpson was told that the period of Red Ball diversion for Ninth Army units was to be 15 days. Most of the organizational tasks were to be accomplished by the division commanders concerned. Looking to future operations, Bradley asked Lee to consider whether a division could be moved, perhaps on LST's, to First Army from Brittany without damaging current supply activities. A possible candidate for this move said the group commander was the 29th Infantry Division. With the conference over and the final Red Ball decision made, Simpson returned to Mi Forêt. 79

On this same day Ninth Army issued Red Ball orders to Major General Millikin, the Commanding General of the III Corps, for transmittal to the affected units. The army commander's instructions took the form of a memorandum on the "Emergency Organization of Provisional Truck Companies."
Though surely disappointed that all decisions had gone against the maintenance of the combat integrity of Ninth Armý, Simpson in his memorandum stressed that the mission was "an emergency call and will be expedited. Division commanders will give this their personal attention."  

While Simpson was off vainly fighting the Red Ball battle, arrangements for the surrender of Elster's Foot March Group South had been progressing. Lieutenant Colonel French, Major General Macon's liaison officer, had met with the local FFI commander, who, though less than pleased to learn the news that armed German troops would be marching through his sector, set about notifying the members of his organization. As agreed, the three enemy columns began moving to the northwest during the morning hours of the 13th. By the next day the first Germans had crossed the Loire.  

Enemy soldiers crossing meekly into Allied territory indicated progress along the river, but on the Brest front little gain had been made. Early on the 13th Middleton had sent a small party to Ramcke to request the surrender of the city. After the blindfolded Americans had been brought through the rubble-strewn streets, a letter in German from Middleton was presented. In this communication the corps commander spelled out the military situation and urged Ramcke to end the spilling of blood.  

Ramcke's answer -- "I refuse your proposal."  

The battle continued, and both commanders penned communications to their troops. Ramcke entreated his soldiers to defend
“to the last grenade, committing our very lives.” 84
Middleton told his men to “enter the fray with renewed vigor; let us take them apart and get the job finished.” 85

A decision was not far away; even Ramcke realized the inevitable would soon be upon him. To protect his wounded he had moved several thousand into U-boat shelters which now became field hospitals. Though he spoke with determination, he was concerned about the great loss of life. Finally, he decided to capitulate when St Pierre-Ouilbignon was taken. From this spot his enemy could fire directly on the submarine pen hospitals, and this fire plus the use of flame throwers against the ventilation shafts would result in many casualties. Ramcke expected to surrender on the 17th or 18th. 86

With the end of the siege in sight, high-level policy concerning Brest seemed to be undergoing a change. In a message to his senior subordinates including army group commanders Eisenhower on 13 September discussed future operations. His general maneuver plan was: “to push hard over the Rhine on our northern flank with Northern Group of Armies, First US Army and the First Allied Airborne Army, with the Third US Army, except for limited advance...confined to holding and threatening action until initial objectives on the left are attained.” 87 After Montgomery and Hodges had their Rhine bridgeheads, Patton was to advance through the Saar and make his own crossing. If the supply situation permitted, the Third Army might be able to initiate its drive prior to the time that objectives had been secured in the
north. Eisenhower stressed the importance of seizing deep-water ports and specifically told Bradley to "quickly reduce Brest so that this place may be available to us for staging troops." 88

It appeared that Brest, contrary to what Bradley and Patton had said on 9 September, was still needed. On the 14th, the day after Eisenhower's broadly based message was written, SHAPE staff planners decided to recommend that Brest not be used as a port. 89

Whether its port facilities were to be used or not, no orders had been sent to Ninth Army to terminate the siege. Continuous air and artillery fire hit Brest on the 15th. Though it made no difference to Ramcke and his band of defenders, these air attacks were conducted by a new unit, the XXIX Tactical Air Command with four fighter-bomber groups, which had been activated on the 14th under the command of Brigadier General Richard E. Nugent. Close cooperation with Ninth Army was the mission of Nugent's organization. 90 No longer would Simpson have to rely on whatever air support he could get from units assigned to support other armies operating far to the east.

Though the city had been pounded day after day, its defenders continued to hold out. General Simpson and Colonel Mead, G-3, flew out on the 16th to look at the situation. Mead had recently visited the fighting to learn why so little progress was being made. He was disgusted with what he found. He spent most of a day observing, then decided that the
problem was the lack of a concerted effort to end the operation. He returned to the VIII Corps command post and discussed his conclusions with his counterpart, the corps operations officer.

After listening to Mead, the Corps G-3 asked him what difference it made when the city was taken; if the corps wound up the Brest operation, it would simply have to fight somewhere else. Mead, surprised at the reply, asked if this attitude was prevalent in corps headquarters and was told, yes. Armed with this information he went to see the Corps Chief of Staff, colonel Cyrus H. Searcy.

Mead repeated the comments of the G-3. Searcy said that he agreed, then he added that Major General Middleton felt the same way. Middleton was not in his headquarters at the time, so Mead was unable to talk with him personally. He returned to Ninth Army Headquarters and informed Simpson of what he had seen and heard. Simpson decided that he and Mead should pay a visit to Middleton's outfit.91

It had been the army commander's practice to let corps run the Brest show, and his general impression was that under the circumstances Middleton was doing a creditable job. Occasionally, however, Simpson had become impatient with the progress of the attack, and in these cases he had made what he termed, "indirect suggestions."92 Now was the time for such a suggestion. Middleton was about to receive some strong guidance.

A high-ranking leader whose perspective is geared to
the big picture to include number of miles advanced and hundreds of tons of ammunition expended sees the battle much differently than does the infantryman who loads and fires much of the ammunition. It is often dangerous for such a commander to descend from his lofty perch and criticize those who have been living in the dirt under fire, but it this case Mead had taken the temper of the corps at its headquarters and in the field as well. Some positive action by the army commander was needed to set things right.

During part of their stay in the corps area Simpson went to encourage the 2d Infantry Division while he sent Mead to encourage the 29th. Perhaps both did their work well, or perhaps they arrived at a propitious moment, for by the time they returned to army headquarters on the 17th both divisions had penetrated the wall, and the enemy situation was rapidly worsening. Ramcke had, on the previous day, personally departed Brest for the Crozon Peninsula after he turned his command over to Generalmajor Hans von der Mosel. Crozon, thought Ramcke, presented better defensive possibilities than did Brest. The city was being subjected to round-the-clock artillery fire. Though strong positions kept the casualty rate down, this continuous pounding confused the defenders and interrupted their sleep. One of the rain of incoming shells, a phosphorous round, hit in front of some U-boat shelters and ignited the oil that had spread on the surface of the water. The result was suffocation as well as burn casualties inside the shelters.93
While Simpson's motivational jaunt was taking place, Elster had formally surrendered his force. Capitulation ceremonies, which ran according to a detailed protocol, took place on Saturday, 16 September, at the Beaugency Bridge. Simpson had been kind enough to invite Major General Otto Weyland, Commanding General of XIX TAC, whose aircraft had been helpful during the entire affair, to witness the ceremony. By the next morning, when the group of prisoners finished filing into their enclosures, 754 officers, 18,850 enlisted men, and 10 women had been tallied. 94

Ninth Army's tremendous bag of prisoners received relatively little publicity. Perhaps if the army commander had been there more notice would have been taken, but the chances are slim since the story was released by the censor at the same time as was the account of the MARKET-GARDEN airborne drop in the Netherlands. 95

Simpson could have taken Elster's surrender personally, but he had chosen to miss the ceremony, for he felt that as representatives of the 83d Division had made contact with the Germans and had handled the entire operation, Macon was entitled to the limelight. Such an action would not make the army commander's name a household word, but it would help earn the loyalty of his subordinates. Thus, Simpson attended to Brest, while the newsreel cameras whirred at the Beaugency Bridge.

Elster's force, however, was not the only group to claim Simpson's attention. Word came that another 15,000
Germans located northeast of Bordeaux wanted to surrender, and the army commander sent an intelligence officer, Lieuten-
ant Colonel Arthur E. Sutherland, Jr., to negotiate the capitulation. Sutherland arranged to meet with the enemy commander on 24 September, but by that time the German leader who had indicated that he might surrender had been relieved by a Nazi who would not even consider giving up. Discussion was terminated, Sutherland returned, and the Germans stayed to keep the Allies out of Bordeaux until the end of the war. 97

Simpson was responsible for Lorient. By the 16th, the 94th Division relieved the 6th Armored Division of the job of controlling Lorient and Reden. Control of the armored unit passed to Patton at 2 PM. With this portion of his job completed, Major General Maloney and his 94th Division began to relieve the 83d Infantry. 98

One division had departed, another would leave shortly, and Bradley had requested that a possible move of the 29th Infantry Division be evaluated by the logisticians. Before too long Brest would fall and the entire Ninth Army would be switched to the east. Mid-September had passed and the icy blasts of winter would soon be cutting at the troops. Throughout history various commanders, including Napoleon and much more recently Hitler, had dispatched their troops to the east without adequate winter clothing. Simpson hoped not to repeat that mistake. This was the time to prepare for the coming cold weather. A supply-status check was made. Using approx-
imate figures, critical shortages included overcoats or
mackinaws, 100,000 required, 0 on hand; blanket, 200,000 required, 0 on hand; overshoes, 80,000 required, 0 on hand; gloves, 100,000 required, 0 on hand. Among other items not directly related to cold weather but in a shortage status were machine guns, mortars, acetate, and marking pencils.  

Supplies must be gathered rapidly. By 3 PM on the 18th all organized resistance in Brest had ceased. General-major von der Mosel had surrendered the western part of the city, while Oberst (Colonel) Erich Pietzonka handled the chores on the east. They had been besieged and their positions had been pounded mercilessly, but many of the almost 10,000 prisoners presented themselves for surrender looking as if they were about to go on furlough. They wore spotless uniforms, had clean shaves, and carried bags or suitcases. Those who had triumphed, the GI's, many of whom had fought for days from one house to the next were still attired in their combat gear. Their appearance was not as neat as was their foes', but they had won. 

Victory would not be complete until the entire sector was secure. Simpson had been concerned that Germans attempting to escape from Brest would try to reach offshore islands in the vicinity. If a defense were set up in such areas, any use the US might try to make of Brest would be impaired. To guard against this possibility, Simpson told Middleton to coordinate with the Navy and insure that these bits of land were not occupied. Apparently, this effort was successful, for the Crozon Peninsula remained the only major problem area
and rapid progress was being made even there.

On the 17th the enemy had abandoned his tough defensive line on the Crozon Peninsula. Over a thousand prisoners were taken, some of whom walked unintentionally into American hands. Prisoners captured by the 1st Battalion, 28th Infantry, some 150 in number, were put in the center of the unit bivouac position. With friendly interpreters listening, the Germans were allowed to converse with each other. As the night wore on these German conversations were heard by several groups of their countrymen who, believing the area to be a safe haven, walked into the bivouac and were captured.\textsuperscript{102}

Ramcke had located his headquarters on the Pte des Capucins. By the morning of the 19th the bulk of the German defenders had been pushed into the northern portion of the peninsula. Ramcke went out on foot to survey the situation, but he was chased back into his bunker by a plane. Things looked bleak; his enemies on three sides, a cliff on the fourth. Weapons available to his last-ditch defenders included only carbines and pistols. After he had destroyed his most important papers, he proclaimed himself ready to discuss capitulation -- with an officer of the proper rank, of course.\textsuperscript{103}

Brigadier General Cahrles D.W. Canham, Assistant Division Commander of the 8th Infantry Division, was soon on the scene prepared to enter the bunker and set the terms of surrender. Ramcke seemed displeased with Canham's low rank and requested to see the American's credentials. Such important
matters as a battlefield surrender must be accomplished in the well-established manner. Canham replied that his troops, then virtually on top of Ramcke's position, served as his credentials. Canham showed Ramcke a map depicting the dire battle situation and demanded immediate surrender. While the details were being agreed upon, Ramcke had champagne brought in and drank to the health of the Americans. This particular draught of the bubbly proffered by their defeated enemy tasted like ambrosia to Canham and Colonel Robert A. Griffin, Commander of the 13th Infantry Regiment, who had accompanied him. Before long Ramcke winner of the Pour le Merite award for service in the first war and the Oak Leaves with Swords and Diamonds during the second, was ready to go. With him he had eight large suitcases, a box of fishing tackle, a set of china, and a setter dog.¹⁰⁴

At 9:25 PM on the 19th responsibility for Brest was turned over by VIII Corps to Brittany Base Section, a COMZ organization. By the afternoon of the 20th the last German resistance had been eliminated from the Douarnenez area south of Crozon, and the combat phase of the Brest Operation ended. Simpson, designated "King of Brittany" by Bradley, had secured his realm.

Prisoners taken on Crozon swelled the VIII Corps total to 37,888, some of whom were captured before Ninth Army assumed command. Combat soldiers and sailors numbered about 20,000 of those taken; the rest being armed and uniformed civilians whose only fighting experience was gained when they
aided in Ramcke's defense. Almost 8,000 German wounded, many in underground hospitals without adequate medical personnel, fresh air, or light, had to be tended and evacuated. Staffs of Brittany Base Section and Ninth Army were busy resolving prisoner problems. In addition, combat troops must be rested and refitted for future fighting.

Now that his battle was concluded, General Simpson could, at his leisure, survey the gains that his army had made at Brest. A relatively powerful enemy force had been destroyed and a port city taken, but not before the enemy commander had been able to insure that the city, naval base, and port facilities would be denied to Allied use for some time to come. Ramcke's demolitions coupled with American air and artillery attacks as well as house-to-house fighting had turned Brest into a twisted wreck. Ships had been sunk in the harbor and approaches, the protective breakwater had been breached in several spots, dropped bridges blocked the use of the Penfeld River, port facilities were wrecked, buildings had suffered heavily; in short, destruction was everywhere. Ramcke, handed a difficult task, had performed to perfection; a major American force had been tied up and vast quantities of ammunition and supplies had been expended, all to take a port which proved to be useless.

But American lives and other resources had not been expended in vain. At the start of the operation the Brittany ports were considered essential to support the ever-growing Allied force. Also Bradley believed that the combat power
that would be required to contain Ramcke and his paratrooper-stiffened force, a group that certainly would not sit docilely in Brest screened by a token American presence, would be too great to spare for an extended period of time. Now Bradley need worry no more about this potential threat to his rear, and both Ninth Army and VIII Corps could direct their attention to the east. 107

Operations at Brest and along the Loire River had provided a good opportunity for army staff members to acclimate themselves to combat and to establish their working methods. Ways and means of headquarters operation were set forth in a slim, 34-page "Headquarters Procedure Guide." Tactical methods were taught in the various service schools, and they were set down in manuals and other documents. Their implementation, once a mission had been assigned, was generally left up to the commander charged with accomplishing the task. Logistical matters were, when possible, covered in the various standing operating procedures. One subject which apparently had not been adequately covered and which needed standardization was that of the uniform to be worn by the troopers. On 17 September, the day that General Simpson returned from his "inspirational" visit to Brest, his office published Memorandum Number 41, on uniforms: keep all uniform buttons buttoned in the field except during combat operations when, with the permission of the unit commander and if the entire unit did it, the top button of the shirt could be opened. Field jackets could, without additional authority, be opened
to a distance of six inches from the top.\textsuperscript{108} Such rules, which must have seemed overly restrictive to the troops, were surely promulgated to insure a more military appearance within the command. They were, no doubt, difficult to enforce, especially during active fighting.

Future combat and the preparation for it occupied the time of Simpson's planning staff. In addition to working on plans for operations once the army moved to its proposed position south of Third Army, plans were already being made for a crossing of the Rhine. Karlsruhe, Wiesbaden, and Mannheim were considered as possible locations.\textsuperscript{109}

While the late summer and early fall battles progressed, other headquarters, both Allied and German, worked on their plans. On September 16 at Hitler's Wolf's Lair Headquarters in East Prussia, after the daily Fuehrer Conference, a second meeting, attended by a select group, convened. Hitler broke into a briefing to reveal that he had decided on a counterattack to be launched from the Ardennes with Antwerp as the final objective. Though his announcement was abrupt, Hitler had been thinking about such an operation for several weeks. Now he presented his idea to the shocked group. His plan was destined to have a great effect upon the Allied leaders, Simpson among them.\textsuperscript{110}

Unaware of Hitler's scheme, Simpson was concerned about his own planning. On the 20th he gathered a group of officers and flew to Paris to discuss future operations with Bradley and his staff.\textsuperscript{111}
FOOTNOTES -- CHAPTER 2


2 Ibid.

3 Ibid.; Patton, War As I Knew It, 115.


6 Patton, War As I Knew It, 115; "Letter of Instructions (LOI) No. Seven," 5 September 1944, Report of Operations (Final After Action Report) 12th Army Group, V, 89-90; Hansen, War Diary, entry of 31 August; Horn, War Diary, entries of 31 August and 1 September 1944. Though Simpson's Brittany mission when assigned was all inclusive, Bradley (Soldier's Story, 366-367) later recalled that he had already considered the possibility of merely containing the Brittany ports of Lorient and St Nazaire. Brest must be taken as SHAER planners were counting on using it as a port. In fact as late as 13 September in a cable to his senior officers, Bradley among them, General Eisenhower discussed the urgency of the port situation and directed that among other tasks, "the Central Group of Armies must quickly reduce Brest so that this place may be available to us for staging troops." (Eisenhower to Omar Nelson Bradley, Trafford Leigh-Mallory, Lewis Hyde Brereton, Carl Spaatz, Arthur Tanners Harris, Bertram Home Ramsey, and Bernard Law Montgomery, 13 September 1944, EP, IV, No. 1946.) Ninth Army was not notified that Brest would not be used and that Lorient and St Nazaire would be contained until 16 September. (See Horn, War Diary, entry of 16 September for data on Brest and a paraphrase of a message from SHAER forward to CG Ninth Army received 16 1938 7:38 PM September and filed: 109-3; Ninth Army - G-3 Journal File 16-30 Sep 44, RG 338, NA, for information concerning Lorient and St Nazaire.) Even if the Brest port facilities were not used, the capture of the city was deemed necessary by Bradley (Soldier's Story, 367) to clear the sea approaches to Quiberon Bay, scheduled to become a supply base, as well as to eliminate the Brest garrison, a possible threat to US lines of communication.
7 Ruppenthal, Logistical Support of the Armies; September 1944-May 1945, I, 532; Bradley to Lee, 1 September 1944, Raymond G. Moses Papers, MHRC.

8 Eisenhower to Bradley, 29 August 1944, Omar Nelson Bradley Papers, Book No. 1 War Years 1943-1945 Correspondence Eisenhower-Bradley, MHRC.

9 Ibid.

10 Hansen, War Diary, entry of 1 September 1944. It appears that Simpson had made a real conquest in Hansen for the aide said of the army commander: "Simpson, fine fellow, ascetic looking with his narrowed bald head, clear blue eyes and light laugh; like him the best of all other generals, a fine fellow in every respect."

11 Eisenhower to Marshall, 31 August 1944 EP, IV, No. 1925. Simpson later confirmed that he was unaware at the time of the possibility that a corps commander who had commanded successfully in combat might replace him. (Statement by William H. Simpson, PI, 21 July 1972.)

12 Barney Oldfield, Never a Shot in Anger, 117.

13 Ibid., 118.


15 Horn, War Diary, entry of 2 September 1944.

16 Ibid., entry of 3 September 1944.

17 Ibid., entry of 3 September 1944; Kenneth Edwards, Operation Neptune, 264; Blumenson, Breakout and Pursuit, 633.

18 "AAR 1-30 September 1944 by the NINTH UNITED STATES ARMY," n.d., file - 109-0.3, Ninth Army - AAR, Sep 44, RG 407, NA; Blumenson, Breakout and Pursuit, 631; Conquer, 23.

19 Ninth United States Army Operations, I, Chap I, 4.

20 Joseph H Ewing, 29 let's go!, 121; Ninth Army Operations, I, Chap I, 5; Blumenson, Breakout and Pursuit, 638, Map XV.

21 Blumenson, Breakout and Pursuit, 638, Map XV; Ninth Army Operations, I, Chap I, 5. Details concerning Brest were taken from "Brest Plan of Port and Town" Scale 1:6670, Compiled and Drawn by the Inter-Service Topographical Department, Army Map Service, 1943.

22 Blumenson, Breakout and Pursuit, 642, Map XV.
23 Blumenson, Breakout and Pursuit, 633, 638, 639; Ninth Army Operations, I, Chap I, 5; Conquer, 27.

24 Ninth Army Operations, I, Chap III, 10-11.

25 Ibid., Chap I, 6; Blumenson, Breakout and Pursuit, 639.

26 Blumenson, Breakout and Pursuit, 644. Later, on 7 September General Eisenhower told General Vandenberg he could "utilize maximum number of aircraft which can be effectively employed in support of this operation." (Ibid.) With Brest always high on the priority list the availability of air support improved, but air-ground coordination problems remained. Communication between those in the air and the supported troops on the ground was poor. Often due to lack of knowledge of the capabilities of the various aircraft when contact was made, targets were assigned which could not be hit from the air. (Wesley F. Craven and James Lea Cate, The Army Air Force in World War II Volume Three, Europe: Argument to V-E Day January 1944 To May 1945, 263.)


29 Message of 4 September 1944 from Middleton extracted in Ninth Army Operations, I, Chap I, 12. For details concerning the ammunition situation in Ninth Army throughout its employment see a report - "Ammunition Problem" to be found in the Charles D.Y. Ostrom Papers, MHRC.

30 Horn, War Diary, entry of 4 September 1944; Conquer, 24; Ruppenthal, Logistical Support, I, 535-536.

31 Ruppenthal, Logistical Support, I, 535-536; Horn, War Diary, entry of 4 September 1944.

32 Conquer, 24. Later when 12th Army Group Letter of Instructions Number Seven, 5 September 1944, arrived, it was found to contain a switch time of 1200 thus all official records of Ninth Army had to be amended. (Report of Operations /Final After Action Report/ 12th Army Group, V, 89-90; Conquer, 24.)

33 Conquer, 25; "AAR 1-30 September 1944 by the NINTH UNITED STATES ARMY," n.d., file - 109-0.3, Ninth Army - AAR, Sep 44, RG 407, NA. For a list of the numerous units which
formed Simpson's command see: Annex No. 1 to 12th Army Group Letter of Instructions Number Seven.


35 Conquer, 25, 27.


37 "LOI No. Seven," 5 September 1944, 12th Army Group AAR, V, 89.


39 Ibid.

40 G-1 Section Diary 1-30 September 1944, n.d., file - 109-1, Ninth Army - AAR and Supporting Documents G-1 Section Sep 44, RG 338, NA; G-3 Diary 1-30 September 1944, n.d., file - 109-3, RG 338, NA. Blumenson, Breakout and Pursuit, 637, says that VIII Corps did not come under Ninth Army control until 10 September. LOI No. Seven, 12th Army Group specifies that the takeover will be on 5 September (12th Army Group AAR, V, 89). This date is confirmed by the Ninth Army AAR as well as by Conquer. Thus the 5 September date is used here. ("LOI No. Seven," 5 September 1944, 12th Army Group AAR, V, 89; "AAR 1-30 September 1944 by the NINTH UNITED ARMY," n.d., file - 109-0.3, Ninth Army - AAR, Sep 44, RG 407, NA.).

41 Horn, War Diary, entry of 5 September 1944.


43 Parker talk, "Ninth Army's Operations in the European Theater," 2; entry of 6 September in General Simpson's Personal Calendar, I (hereinafter referred to as PC - this calendar was prepared by General Simpson's aides - Simpson did not keep a diary), William H. Simpson Papers, San Antonio, Texas; "G-2 Report of Enemy Action 5-30 September 1944," 28 October 1944, file - 109-2 Ninth Army - AAR and Supporting Documents G-2 Section 5-30 Sep 44, RG 407, NA; Craven and Cate, Argument to V-E Day, 264. For a discussion of the use of tactical air support to reduce the Brest defenses see:

44 Conquer, 29.

45 Alix de Carbonnières and Antoine Coste, L'Assault de Brest, 117.


48 Statement by William H. Simpson, PI, 27 January 1972; Parker, talk, "Ninth Army's Operations in the European Theater," 2; "AAR 1-30 September 1944 by the NINTH UNITED STATES ARMY," n.d., file - 109-0.3, Ninth Army - AAR, Sep 44, RG 407, NA. Problems involved in the diversion of ammunition became especially acute when large ships were diverted. Receipt of ships which had been bulk loaded without one of the components of separate loading ammunition, is discussed in Conquer, 28-29.

49 Statement by William H. Simpson, PI, 16 February 1972; Conquer, 28, 30-31; Horn, War Diary, entry of 6 September 1944.

50 "IOI No. Seven," 5 September 1944, 12th Army Group AAR, V, 89-90; Horn, War Diary, entry of 6 September 1944; Bradley to Lee, 1 September 1944, Raymond G. Moses Papers, MHRC; Laurence Byrnes, History of the 94th Infantry Division in World War II, 18. For more on the role of the 94th in the Brest operation see Byrnes, 18-76. Byrnes gives the date of Maloney's visit as 5 September whereas Horn says it occurred on the following day. As Simpson, on the 5th after Ninth Army became operational, visited VIII Corps and spent the night there and as Horn specifically mentions that Maloney was waiting for Simpson when he returned on the 6th, that date is assumed to be correct.

51 Blumenson, Breakout and Pursuit, 655.

52 Ninth Army Operations, I, Chap I, 14.

53 Horn, War Diary, entries of 7 and 8 September 1944; Conquer, 26-27.

54 Conquer, 30-31; Horn, War Diary, entry of 8 September 1944; Ninth Army Operations, I Chap I, 14-15. The 2d Infantry Division used a 10 minute preparation while the 8th used 20 minutes. The length of the preparation of the 29th Infantry Division is not indicated in the above sources.

55 Ninth Army Operations, I, Chap I, 15.
56 Blumenson, Breakout and Pursuit, 646.

57 Blumenson, Breakout and Pursuit, 646; Ninth Army Operations, I, Chap I, 15-16; Conquer, 32.

58 Patton, War As I Knew It, 121.

59 Sources for the portion on Magill and Elster are: Ninth Army Operations, II, 1-5; Conquer, 27, 48-50; Craven and Cate, Argument to V-E Day, 226; statement by John D. Horn, PI, 20 June 1971; Horn, War Diary, entry of 9 September 1944; "AAR 1-30 September 1944 by the NINTH UNITED STATES ARMY," n.d., file - 109-0.3, Ninth Army - AAR, Sep 44, RG 407, NA; Oldfield, Never a Shot in Anger, 119-124. Oldfield who handled the press relations for Elster's surrender provides the most detailed account of Magill's feat.

60 Statement by Robert C. Macon, PI (by telephone), 22 February 1972; Horn, War Diary, entry of 9 September 1944.

61 "NINTH US ARMY Letter of Instructions" (no number), 9 September 1944, file - 300.4, Letters of Instructions 1944-1945, RG 338, NA.


63 "LOI No. Eight," 10 September 1944, 12th Army Group AAR, V, 92. Chester Wilmot views Bradley's elevation of the supply priority for Brest as strange after his 9 September discussion with Patton in which both agreed that the Brest harbor was in such poor shape and its location was so far from the fighting front as to render it of little value to the Allies. Wilmot says the garrison would have been contained with a small number of troops. He points out that the Brest operation consumed 3,000 tons of ammunition per day for the two weeks starting 5 September. This great expenditure was to capture a port which was farther back from the fighting than were the Normandy beaches. Trucks and trains could not handle the Normandy tonnage, what would be the effect when Brest, farther from the fighting front was opened? What was needed, says Wilmot, was a port north of the Seine River. Wilmot's analysis is correct. National pride, however, seems to have won the day for, as Patton said, he and Bradley "agreed that, when the American Army had once put its hand to the plow, it should not let go. Therefore it was necessary
to take Brest." (Patton, War As I Knew It, 121; Chester Wilmot, The Struggle for Europe, 492-493.).

64 Ninth Army Operations, I, Chap I, 16-17.
65 Ibid., Chap III, App III, 1.
66 Ibid., I, Chap III, App III, 1-2; Conquer, 32.
67 Source material for the siege as seen from Ramcke's point of view is from: Bernhard Ramcke, Fallschirmjäger, Damals und Danach, 63-64.
70 "Ninth US Army Letter of Instructions" (no number), 10 September 1944, file - 300.4, Letters of Instructions 1944-1945, RG 338, NA.
71 Conquer, 39.
74 Ninth Army Operations, I, Chap I, 17; Horn, War Diary, entry of 12 September 1944.
76 Blumenson, Breakout and Pursuit, 690; Ninth Army Operations, II, 6; Conquer, 47; Eisenhower to Montgomery, 13 September 1944, EP, IV, No. 1945; Bradley, Soldier's Story, 416. For more information concerning the Red Ball Express see: Ruppenthal, Logistical Support, II, 134-139. The contribution of the 95th Infantry Division is discussed in detail in Ninth Army Operations, II, Chap II. For the support rendered by the 26th Infantry Division see: The History of the 26th Yankee Division: 1917-1919, 1941-1945, 32-33. While trucks and their support were diverted to the Red Ball Express, the unaffected portions of the units concerned continued with their training. ("AAR, G-3 Training, Organization and Equipment, Troop Movements, and Passive Air Defense," n.d., file - 109-3, Ninth Army - AAR, G-3 Section 5-30 Sep 44, RG 407, NA.) Many incidents occurred during
these high priority runs. Blumenson, in Breakout and Pursuit, 690, discusses accidents, strain on personnel and equipment, sabotage and hijackings. Close calls with enemy forces resulted from lack of knowledge of the front line situation. For example, two of the 95th Infantry Division drivers with a load of camouflage nets and pontoons were within a mile of Metz with the goal of delivering their supplies to the city when a single military policeman stopped them and told them that Metz was still in enemy hands. (Ninth Army Operations, II, 14.) The entire Red Ball operation ended on 16 November after 81 days during which 412,193 tons of supplies had been transported. (Ruppenthal, Logistical Support, II, 137.)

77 Horn, War Diary, entry of 13 September 1944.

78 Horn, War Diary, entries of 13 and 14 September 1944; Hansen, War Diary, entry of 14 September 1944.

79 Raymond G. Moses. Memorandum for Record, 14 September 1944 (G-4 notes from informal conference held by Bradley with Iss and Simpson), Raymond G. Moses Papers, MHRC; Horn, War Diary, entry of 14 September 1944. Moses also attended the conference. (Raymond G. Moses, Diary, entry of 14 September 1944. Raymond G. Moses Papers, MHRC.)

80 Ninth Army Operations, III, 6. A small portion of Simpson's memorandum is quoted in this source.


82 Conquer, 33; Ramcke, Damals und Danach, 65-66; Ninth Army Operations, I, Chap I, 18.

83 Ramcke, Damals und Danach, 67.

84 Ewing, 29 let's go!, 135.

85 Conquer, 33.

86 Ramcke, Damals und Danach, 67-68.


88 Ibid.

89 Blumenson, Breakout and Pursuit, 655; Patton, War As I
Knew It, 121.

90 Ninth Army Operations, I, Chap I, 19-20; Conquer, 29-30.

91 Mead discussed his visit to the VIII Corps during two interviews. Statement by Armistead D. Mead, PI, 24 June 1971 and 9 June 1972. Information on the trip made by Simpson and Mead on 16-17 September can be found in Horn, War Diary, entries of 16 and 17 September 1944.


93 Ramcke, Damals und Danach, 60, 68; statement by Armistead D. Mead, PI, 24 June 1971 and 9 June 1972; Conquer, 34; Horn, War Diary, entry of 17 September 1944; Ninth Army Operations, I, Chap III, App III, 8-9. For a general discussion of the breaching of the wall see Ninth Army Operations, I, Chap I, 19-22. More detailed information concerning the actions of each division can be found in the same source. General Simpson (PI, 16 February 1972) said that he did not recall telling any staff member to get units moving at Brest. He is an extremely kind man and is ever careful to refrain from publicly criticizing anyone. Major Horn's diary places Simpson and Mead together at VIII Corps at this time. Mead's detailed description of what happened at the 29th during his visit, a description which he repeated without referring to notes after an interval of almost a year agrees with available documentation which relates the operational happenings of the division. Thus it can be concluded that the "inspirational" visit by Simpson and Mead did take place as Mead described it.

94 Craven and Catte, Argument to V-E Day, 266; French, "Liaison Report," Inclosure 4 to G-2 Report of Enemy Action 5-30 September 1944, 28 October 1944, file - 109-2 Ninth Army AAR and Supporting Documents, G-2 Section 5-30 September 1944, RG 407, NA. Inclosed with the report is a copy of the detailed protocol which was used. Conquer, 50. Oldfield in Never a Shot in Anger, 119-131, covers the entire Elster affair. On pages 129-130 Oldfield gives a first person account of the surrender ceremony. Lt. Magill was queried about his exploit in a "This is Your Life" type radio program entitled "One Thousand to One." The program which honors Magill and also includes excerpts from addresses made before the Ninth Army Press Club Reunion of 18 September 1964, is a production of the US Armed Forces Radio and Television Service, New York. A tape can be found in the Papers of William H. Simpson. Pictures of Elster, his command and his surrender can be found in "The Surrender of a German Army of 20,000 Men to 20 Allied Soldiers. An Astounding Story of a German General Who Invited a 'Token Battle'," The Illustrated London News 115 (1944), 368-369. There appears to be some confusion concerning the surrender. In an unsigned article, "Tactical Air Power in Europe," which appeared in the Cavalry Journal
54 (1945), 50, the author indicates that Elster surrendered to one of Patton's patrols. Robert S. Allen in *Lucky Forward: The History of Patton's Third U.S. Army*, 144-5, claims that Simpson was present at the ceremony. He adds that Elster spoke at the end of the activities. According to Allen, "he said he wanted it clearly understood that he was surrendering to the Third U.S. Army." This statement has not been confirmed in any other source. Allen, a Third Army partisan, seems to be jealous of Ninth Army's success in the Elster affair for he comments: "without having raised a finger to force the surrender, Ninth Army collected some 20,000 Krauts -- and their Lugers." While Third Army missed out on this bag of Lugers, according to Craven and Cate (266) Weyland and his XIX TAC were later given a ration of these valued souvenirs.


99 Raymond G. Moses, Memorandum for Record, 14 September 1944, Raymond G. Moses Papers, MHRC; "G-4 Periodic Report No 1 092400 to 162400 September," found in Inclosure 2 to AAR of G-4 Section 1-30 September 1944, n.d., file - 109-4 Ninth Army AAR and Supporting Documents, G-4 Section 5-30 September 1944, RG 407, NA.

100 Ninth Army Operations, I, Chap I, 24, and Chap III, 34; Blumenson, *Breakout and Pursuit*, 651. The capture of Brest was proudly announced in the Ninth Army Situation Report No. 33 for the period 181200 to 182200 September 1944. (File 109-3.3 Ninth Army G-3 Journal File, 16-30 Sep 44, RG 338, NA.).

101 G-3 Diary, 1-30 September 1944, file - 109-3 Ninth Army - AAR, G-3 Section 5-30 Sep 44, RG 338, NA.

102 Ninth Army Operations, I, Chap I, 25-26 and Chap VII, 27.

Ninth Army Operations, I, Chap VII, 51; Oldfield, Never a Shot in Anger, 132-133; Ramcke, Damals und Danach, 70; Milton Shulman, Defeat in the West, 189-190. Ramcke says he surrendered on the 20th, however, as the Ninth Army AAR, Ninth Army Operations, I, Chap I, 26 and Chap VII, 51 as well as Conquer, 35, give the date as the 19th, this date has been used. According to Oldfield (133), Ramcke’s aide, “beribboned, freshly pressed,” not the general himself, asked for Canham’s credentials. As the aide certainly was acting for Ramcke, the description given in Ninth Army Operations, I, Chap VII, 51 has been used. Ninth Army was still having publicity problems. The only member of the press at Crozon on the day of surrender was the commander of the 13th Regiment, Colonel Griffin, whose civilian job was publisher of the Monterey Peninsula-Herald in California. (Oldfield, Never a Shot in Anger, 133.).

Ninth Army Operations, I, Chap I, 26, 28; Conquer, 35-36; "G-2 Report of Enemy Action, 5-30 September 1944," 28 October 1944, file - 109-2 Ninth Army - AAR and Supporting Documents, G-2 Section, 5-30 September 1944, RG 407, NA; Blumenson, Breakout and Pursuit, 653. During the Ninth Army phase of the operation about 28,000 prisoners were taken while the enemy suffered 4,000 dead. Ninth Army casualties 5-30 September numbered 436 killed and 2,286 wounded. Virtually all casualties were taken in the Brest area. (Conquer, 35.) The total of the American casualties for the campaign was 9,831. ("AAR 1-30 September 1944 by the NINTH UNITED STATES ARMY," n.d., file - 109-0.3, Ninth Army - AAR, Sep 44, RG 407, NA.)

Conquer, 35; Ninth Army Operations, I, Chap I, 27; Blumenson, Breakout and Pursuit, 655; "AAR 1-30 September 1944 by the NINTH UNITED STATES ARMY," n.d., file - 109-0.3, Ninth Army - AAR, Sep 44, RG 407, NA.

Forest C. Pogue, United States Army in World War II: The European Theater of Operations The Supreme Command, 259; Bradley, Soldier’s Story, 367. Authors of two volumes of the US Official Histories disagree as to the extent the diversion of strength to Brest had on activities in the east. Pogue (Supreme Command, 259-260) says that troops and transportation, had they not been before Brest could have helped the Allies capitalize on the chance in late fall to wreck the German Army. Blumenson (Breakout and Pursuit, 656) counters by contending that the movement of the relatively small Brest forces to the east would have had little impact. Many of the sources dealing with the Brest Operation have been cited in previous notes. Especially valuable is Ninth Army Operations, I Brest-Crozon which includes a chapter on each participating division and task force as well as a chapter which looks at the operations from the corps level. Blumenson in Breakout and Pursuit devotes an entire chapter, Chapter XXX, "The Battle for Brest," 631-656, to the operation. The French
point of view can be sampled in Alix de Carbonnierises and Antoine Coste, L'Assault de Brest which features detailed information on conditions within the city with vivid descriptions of the bombing. For action pictures of the last stages of the siege see: "The Siege of Brest: An Advance Against Stubborn Resistance -- American Troops in Action -- British Flame-Throwing Tanks Moving Up for the Final Assault," The Illustrated London News, 115 (1944), 340-341. "The Capture of Brest: Scenes in the Harbour Area; Prisoners in a Train," The Illustrated London News 115 (1944), 371 contains pictures taken after the surrender. Other pictures can be found in "Battle for Brest," Life, 17 (16 Oct 44), 38-39.

108 "Headquarters Procedure Guide Ninth United States Army," 17 September 1944 and Headquarters Ninth United States Army Office of the Commanding General, Memorandum Number 41, 17 September 1944, both documents found in file - 109-1 Ninth Army AAR and Supporting Documents, G-1 Section September 1944, RG 407, NA.

109 Conquer, 52, 200.

110 Charles V.P. Luttichau, "The German Counteroffensive in the Ardennes," in Kent Roberts Greenfield, ed., Command Decisions, 444-445; Hugh M. Cole, The United States Army in World War II: The European Theater of Operations The Ardennes: Battle of the Bulge, 1-2, 10. Hitler's choice of the Ardennes is discussed by Cole on pages 1-18. During the early planning, Commander in Chief, West Generalfeldmarschall (General of the Army) Gerd von Rundstedt knew nothing of the proposed attack. (Cole, Bulge, 19-20.) For more on the plan as it progresses as well as details concerning the German cover and deception plan see: Walter Schaufelberger, Secrecy, Deception, Camouflage and Cover, as Used by the German Forces During the Ardennes Offensive (Battle of the Bulge), 1944.

111 Horn, War Diary, entry of 20 September 1944.
CHAPTER 3

AN "UNCOMMONLY NORMAL" ARMY

Paris was once more coming alive. Boards were being taken from windows and fresh paint was evident. Bicycles and cars seemed to be everywhere. Simpson was lodged in a suite in the Hotel George Cinq where he had been driven after he and his party landed at Le Bourget Field. Bradley, who had stayed in Paris to see him, talked with the army commander at the hotel. The next day, Simpson found time for a short visit to Napoleon's tomb. During this stop he gave a quick résumé of the exploits of Napoleon to the group of officers accompanying him. Then he met with COMZ and army group logistical officers. Following the meeting, he headed back to the airfield. Simpson and his party boarded their plane in a pouring rain, and soon they were winging their way to Rennes.

During his stay in Paris, Simpson received a new mission from his group commander. No longer will Ninth Army prepare for future employment to the south of Patton's army, Bradley told him. Instead it will be inserted between the First and Third Armies. Before moving to the east, Ninth Army will be restructured with two of its divisions going to other armies. First to leave, in approximately four days, will be the 83d Infantry. To support this move, Simpson had directed the initiation of a massive supply effort designed to issue winter clothing to the unit. Bradley further ordered that the 29th Infantry be sent to First Army.
Simpson, commanding the VIII Corps, composed of the 2d and 8th Infantry divisions would take over a quiet sector in the Ardennes which was then being held by Hodges' V Corps. Due to transportation limitations, only the minimum essential support troops were to go forward. Simpson, with but two divisions, must assume a defensive posture, though the future looked brighter as Ninth Army had been promised an additional corps, Gillem's XIII, three divisions strong, by 15 October.  

Simpson's new mission was confirmed by Bradley's "Letter of Instructions Number Nine," published on 25 September. Bradley now planned eventually to give Ninth Army about 100 miles of front between First and Third Armies. Simpson was to move XIII Corps up as soon as the necessary troops and supplies could be made available. Gillem's formations would then, as they arrived, relieve Third Army units located to the south of the original Ninth Army zone. This relief was planned to extend as far south as Metz. With Ninth Army on the defensive, Bradley would use his veteran First and Third Armies to launch a coordinated assault toward the Rhine. But the group commander's proposed attack might not take place for some time. At a high-level SHAEF conference held on 22 September at Versailles, Bradley had been told to extend his group boundary to the north about 40 miles. This extension would enable Field Marshal Montgomery to concentrate his 21st Army Group for a drive on the Ruhr. Hodges, on Simpson's left flank, and to the right of Montgomery, was to support Montgomery's main attack, to be made by the Second British
Army. Until British needs were met, Eisenhower had cautioned Bradley, his other armies must severely limit their activities.\textsuperscript{4} Montgomery needed more strength, a condition which Eisenhower had considered as far back as 3 June. British resources, wrote Eisenhower, in a memorandum on future organizations, would be fully committed soon after the initial landings. Help for the British must come from the Americans. While the minimum requirement would be a corps, perhaps as much as an army would have to be committed. Though he had received no official notification of a long-term requirement, Bradley was beginning to realize that Montgomery would probably continue to need assistance as the war progressed. Already Eisenhower had told him that Montgomery was to be allowed to give orders directly to Hodges when the tactical situation precluded his first informing the 12th Army Group Commander. Bradley concluded that if he were to provide long-term help, the formation to make available was certainly not the veteran First Army. He recalled, "because Simpson's Army was still our greenest, I reasoned that it could be the most easily spared."\textsuperscript{5} Thus as Bradley saw it, the 21st Army Group with the help of Ninth Army would attack to the north of the Ruhr while the remainder of the 12th Army Group would assault to the south.\textsuperscript{6} Simpson need not be told at this time but such a switch was worth considering.

While Bradley's high-level contemplation continued, Simpson devoted himself to the task at hand, the movement of
his army and its troops to their assigned destinations. His forward command post which must control operations over a thinly held front had to be situated in a spot where good air, ground, and radio communications could be established. Final approval of location rested with Simpson himself.

Bradley's letter of instructions had specified that Ninth Army Headquarters should go into the Luxembourg area and the army commander was inclined to agree. He recalled the enjoyable days he and Patton had spent in Luxembourg City while on occupation duty after the First World War. Simpson had regaled his staff with stories about those times, and they too hoped Luxembourg would be selected.

Looking forward to a pleasant stay, Chief of Staff Moore traveled up to the city to select a suitable site for the command post. While in Luxembourg he talked to Major General Robert C. Macon whose 83d Infantry was to operate from there. Macon spoke strongly against the army headquarters move. Such advice was not surprising from the leader of a subordinate unit, for if army headquarters came in, surely his division would be ranked out of the best facilities. But Macon supported his opinion.

Lateral communication looked good, Macon said, on the map but the key north-south road was fogged out half of the time and blocked by the enemy the other half. Only a large force could secure this vital communications link. Diversion of troops to security duty would not solve the air travel problem either. Often during their approach to the
local field, planes were shot at when they crossed enemy-held terrain. With this new information in hand, Moore returned to brief his chief.

Simpson considered Moore's findings. As a veteran of the Great War he recalled the trouble that high-level commanders had experienced because they put their headquarters too close to the front. He realized that due to lack of strength he would be holding his sector with small patrols and might be unable to secure the main lateral road. Though Luxembourg tempted him, he decided to put his command post on the next good north-south road, located some 15 miles to the west.

Arlon, Belgium, selected as the new location, was situated astride this road on a hill overlooking the source of the Semoise River. Arlon was formerly a station on the Roman road between Reims and Trier and later the site of a Vauban fortress. Certainly, Arlon was a safer place for army headquarters. Perhaps after the army staff members overcame their initial disappointment they could spend some of their off duty time viewing abounding historical relics in the old city.

Ninth Army Forward Command Post opened in Arlon on September 29th, the same day that other army headquarters personnel began their move to Belgium. Much of the headquarters remained in Rennes to handle army duties in the rear. Preceding the army displacement had been the shift of the 29th Infantry to First Army on the 24th, followed by VIII
Corps troops, with the VIII Corps headquarters departing on the 26th.\textsuperscript{8}

Supplies not consumed in the Brest Operation abounded in Brittany, and units which were to stay with Ninth Army had been ordered to carry all they could -- everything would probably be scarce at the front. Extra ammunition, tank tracks, gasoline, and other items were loaded. Field artillery units contributed trucks to form provisional companies to move this material. Ammunition alone weighed 1,500 tons.

Supervising the ammunition movement was Major Charles D. Y. Ostrom, Jr., the Army Ammunition Officer, who put additional ammunition on trains. Priority was given to items like white phosphorous rounds, which were always in short supply in the theater. In three days over 2,500 additional tons of ammunition were moved. Such vital cargoes were sure to draw the attention of other ammunition-hungry units, so Ostrom put two officers and four non-commissioned officers on each train to guard against hijack attempts by the First or Third Armies. Should the trains be split, the guard details were to split also. Though a railhead had not been designated when the trains set out, all started for the new Ninth Army zone, and all cargoes were safely delivered into Ninth Army hands. Perhaps the army with its defensive mission would not use the ammunition in the near future, but as Ostrom later recalled when he reflected upon the situation, "it always helps to have chips to throw in the pile."\textsuperscript{9}
No matter how well planned a move of a major headquarters is, confusion almost always results. Simpson's new headquarters was to be located in the Ecole Normale, a teacher's college lately used as a German hospital. Hurried evacuation had left the building a shambles. Much work must be done before it could be brought up to standard. Simpson decided to delay his arrival at Arlon. Neither the holding mission nor the headquarters rehabilitation work required his immediate presence. In fact, the refurbishing of the headquarters would probably proceed better if he stayed out of the way.

He traveled on the 29th to visit Major General John Millikin's III Corps at Cartaret on the Cherbourg Peninsula. Millikin, still under Ninth Army Command, continued to receive troops as they arrived from the US and England. On the 30th Simpson visited Bradley at Verdun, where the generals discussed the movement of troops from the port area to the line, and the other aides kidded Simpson's aide about a rumor that the Ninth was destined to become an army of occupation. Simpson stayed that night and the next at Patton's advance command post at Etain, France. On Monday morning, the 2nd, he and his aide bade farewell to Patton, and soon they arrived at Arlon to find the new command post in operation. All was in order and Major Horn recorded, "the master was once again on his throne."11

Ninth Army was in action on the western front, if only in a containing role. Now attention must be paid to planning
for future operations. First and Third Army units must be relieved as more Ninth Army troops came east and preparations were made for attacks to the Rhine.\footnote{12}

By this time Simpson's status as army commander was apparently secure. Eisenhower had written General Marshall on the last day of August that a corps commander with combat experience might replace Simpson, however, the Supreme Commander on 1 October told the Chief of Staff that he no longer planned to make such a change.\footnote{13}

Though a command switch was not in the cards, general change was evident in Ninth Army. From running a fiercely contested operation far behind the lines, members of Simpson's staff had been propelled to the front. There they had to adjust to a relatively calm situation. Germans opposing Ninth Army troops were apparently low in fighting quality, but they were positioned within the famed Siegfried Line, a carefully concealed system of fortifications. Throughout the army zone US troops worked hard on improving their defenses, while at the same time both sides conducted an active patrolling schedule and executed various small raids. German patrols were sometimes composed of soldiers dressed in civilian clothing, a tactic which was calculated to cause confusion among the small number of troops manning the US positions.\footnote{14} Certainly, alertness was heightened with news of these German activities.

To compound the scarcity of men, a severe restriction on the expenditure of artillery rounds was in effect. Bradley
later recalled that the supply throughout his army group was
so short that it "all but silenced out guns for a month."
Luckily for Ninth Army troops, enemy artillery fire was
equally light; limitation of counterbattery missions did not
risk American lives.

As the early days of October passed and the VIII
Corps, still composed of the 2d and 84th Infantry Divisions,
continued to relieve elements of Hodges V Corps on the front
line, Simpson spent much of his time visiting the various
units of his command. During one such visit on 4 October to
the VIII Corps command post located south of the city of
Bastogne, he discussed a dispute between Major General
Middleton and Colonel William E. Shambora, the Army Surgeon.

Shambora put a hospital in a kaserne in the city;
Middleton wanted to use the dry and comfortable kaserne as
headquarters. When Army Chief of Staff Moore had asked the
surgeon to vacate, he had been turned down, so the problem
was bumped up to Simpson. During his visit with Middleton
the army commander decided in favor of the corps commander,
but, as Shambora later put it, "Gen S. called me and I said
before he could relate his story that I would not move the
hospital." Simpson then suggested to the surgeon that he look
for another site. Soon a 400-room castle was found. Its
owners were happy to have it used as a hospital, and thus the
great hospital/headquarters dilemma was resolved. Though the
solution was a simple one, it appears that no one thought of
it before. With the situation clarified, the surgeon's res-

pect for his commander heightened. Later, when reminiscing about this incident, Shambora said of Simpson, "when it was necessary he acted with the wisdom of a Solomon." 17

Continuing his jaunts on 9 October Simpson, with Colonel Roy V. Rickard, Ninth Army G-4, traveled to Verdun for a 12th Army Group supply conference. Supplies at this point meant ammunition first and foremost. Ammunition was critically short in all US units, but Ninth Army seemed to be feeling the pinch a bit less than the others. This was due in part to the relatively inactive mission of the army as well as to the ammunition stock brought up from Brest. Some credit must go to the Ninth Army Ordnance Officer, Colonel Walter W. Warner, who seemed to get fine support from COMZ, at least partly because of the good feelings that existed between the two organizations. Unlike many others, Warner was not quick to blame COMZ for every problem. His positive attitude was reciprocated. Relations were so good in fact that it appeared to some -- Colonel Floyd A. Hanson, who worked in the First Army Ordnance Section, for example -- that Ninth Army was being favored. When Hanson called COMZ to complain, however, he was told that the Ordnance Officers of First and Third Armies had had enough experience to take care of themselves, while it was up to COMZ to look out for Warner. 18

Others were also looking out for Ninth Army, as its commander, still considered a newcomer, was to find out during his stay at Verdun. Some of those in attendance at
Bradley's meeting were: Smith of SHAEF, Patton, and Major General William B. Kean, First Army Chief of Staff, who was representing his commander, Hodges. Projection of ammunition expenditure revealed that a serious shortage would soon result. Even if ammunition were to be fired at the current restricted rate, within a month US armies would be out of 81mm mortar ammunition as well as 105mm or larger artillery shells. So, once again the amount of ammunition allotted to the armies was cut. With luck, careful management, and increased imports, a reserve could be amassed so that Bradley could support the attack he planned to launch in November.19

While at Verdun Simpson was surprised to learn that his army, newly arrived in Belgium, was to shift to a new sector. Ninth Army was to trade its VIII Corps to First Army and receive Hodges' XIX Corps in return. When the swap was completed, Simpson's unit would be the most northern of the US armies. Once in its new location it could be built up to a multicorps force. Such a possibility had not been considered by Simpson in previous planning or discussion.20

Though the 12th Army Group Commander had earlier considered the use of Ninth Army to help Montgomery, matters came to a head on the 8th when Eisenhower told Bradley that he wanted to use both the 12th and 21st Army Groups to close to the Rhine north of Bonn as soon as possible. Montgomery Eisenhower said, must be reinforced to accomplish this task, and the reinforcement would come from US divisions which were then on the beaches. Eisenhower suggested that Bradley shift
Simpson, his headquarters, and some support troops quickly to the north. 21

Ninth Army was the logical choice for this mission. It was the newest army and though its commander did not fully realize it at the time, its mission in Belgium was destined to continue to be one of holding while the armies on its flanks attacked. Now that an army was to help the British, Bradley's planned two-pronged assault must be modified anyway.

Simpson's army was still incomplete. As Eisenhower planned to increase the number of American troops north of the Ardennes, whatever senior headquarters controlled the area must be prepared to receive additional units. Ninth Army could easily do this chore. 22 A strong Ninth Army would form a stout bulwark on the international military boundary, a location favored by the Germans for attacks during the Great War.

After the Second World War, Bradley, when reflecting upon the decision to send the Ninth north said, "actually the 9th turned out to be a crackerjack army as we all know. Gen. Simpson was just as good as Patton or Hodges, either one." 23 Bradley thought the "uncommonly normal" Ninth could work easier with Montgomery than could the "temperamental" First Army. 24

Before he left for Arlon, Simpson had been fully briefed on the new group plan. VIII Corps was to be transferred to First Army in exchange for XIX Corps. By 1 No-
November Ninth Army was scheduled to have the XIX and XIII Corps, the 29th, 30th, 102d, and 104th Infantry Divisions, and the 2d and 7th Armored Divisions -- but the 104th and the 7th Armored would be temporarily under the operational control of the British.  

Reaction of Simpson's subordinates was summarized by aide Horn, when he recorded in his diary:

> The Army staff was sent into a tizzy; all the old plans had to be scrapped, and a new set gotten out immediately. All units scheduled to move from the Cherbourg area to our present sector had to be diverted to the new location, including several entire trains enroute.

Planning was rapidly accomplished and by 13 October, four days after the army commander returned from the Verdun conference, draft plans had been prepared. A swap of two entire corps with supplies and support had to be done smoothly, without imbalances or hitches. Major units which had been scheduled to join Ninth Army in Belgium were now directed to the new sector.

Though no formal army group tactical scheme had been received, Ninth Army planners devised two plans for attacks to be launched in the new zone. One included an attack to the Rhine near Cologne from the Aachen area, where the Siegfried Line had been breached. Then a river crossing was to be conducted north of the city so that Ninth Army forces could envelop the Ruhr on the south. An alternative called for an attack in a northeasterly direction from Aachen to the Rhine. After the river was crossed near Wesel, the Ruhr would be
enveloped from the north. 27

Before either plan could be executed, Ninth Army Headquarters and its satellites must move. Gillem of the XIII Corps was perhaps the first subordinate commander to feel the impact of the change, for on the day of the Verdun meeting, 9 October, he arrived at Arlon with his advance detachment. During his stay he was told of his new mission which would take him to the north where he was to set up and be prepared to receive the troops who would compose his corps. 28

Change, not related to the sudden switch of sectors, was also taking place back near the beaches, where the III Corps Headquarters under Ninth Army control continued to process troops as they arrived in France. One of the new units, the XVI Corps Headquarters, was gradually assuming the III Corps mission. On the 10th with the XVI Corps under Major General John B. Anderson in full charge of the reception mission, III Corps could be shifted from the Ninth to the Third Army. 29

Moves soon to take place would cause many men who had served with Ninth Army since its entry into combat to be assigned to the First Army. Prior to the switch date there was much to be done. Although plans and preparations took up much of Simpson's time, he also was called upon to reward some of the men who had fought so well during the Brest Campaign. On Tuesday afternoon, the 10th, he participated in an award ceremony during which men of a single
battalion, the 2d Ranger, received a total of 31 decorations — one Distinguished Service Cross, nine Silver Stars, and 21 Bronze Stars.  

After he returned from decorating the Rangers, Simpson performed another welcome chore. At 5:30 PM General George C. Marshall, Chief of Staff of the US Army, and his party came to call. Simpson took Marshall into his office and briefed the Chief of Staff on current activities. After a good steak dinner, Marshall relaxed into a discussion of forthcoming operations in the Pacific War. While this pleasant meeting was taking place some officers at Bradley's headquarters worried about Marshall's safety. Rumor had given the Germans the Chief of Staff's itinerary. If he went to Luxembourg, the Germans apparently were prepared to exert a maximum air effort to get him.  

No enemy force intruded upon Marshall's visit with Ninth Army, but neither did he visit Luxembourg while he was under Simpson's care. After calling on the VIII Corps Headquarters and the 8th and 2d Divisions on the 11th, he was picked up by a group from First Army and continued on his way north.  

Ninth Army took responsibility for an additional sector when, on the 12th, Macon's 83d Infantry, already in the line south of the army boundary, was transferred from the Third Army to Middleton's VIII Corps. Plans for operations in the new sector went to Simpson on the 13th. The next day found him traveling to First Army in response to
"a mysterious invitation." Once there he discovered that the mystery was due to the rank of the senior guest, King George VI of England. Then on a tour of the front, the King had expressed a desire to meet the American army commanders, and so gathered under once roof were the King, Eisenhower, Bradley, Hodges, Simpson, and various other general officers. While the group was together, the King presented Bradley with the Knight Commander of the Bath (KCB). Following the festivities Simpson drove up to Maastricht to view the proposed site for his new command post. This capital city of the Dutch province of Limburg is located astride the Maas River, some 19 miles north northeast of Liege, Belgium. While most of the city lies on the left bank of the river, a small part, Wijk, can be found on the right or east bank. The Maas, coupled with the Albert Canal, a short distance to the west, made Maastricht and its surrounding area virtually an island. Access was provided by two bridges over the Maas and one over the canal. Army would have to get busy and construct more. Throughout recorded history, Maastricht, a point of convergence of several trade routes, had figured in various conflicts. It had been besieged 19 times. Now with the city back in Dutch hands, its Tappen Kazerne, previously used by the Netherlands Army, and a nearby Catholic school building were to house Simpson's headquarters. Colonel Daniel H. Hundley, Army G-1, who was already operating in Maastricht with the advance party, met the army commander and showed him around.
Bridge problems brought a decision to place most of the army supply depots east of the canal and the river, so if the bridges went out, Ninth Army fighting men would not lack for supplies. Water could be found close to the surface throughout the area, so locations suitable for heavy storage were limited. When a needed spot could not be found off the road, the spacious road shoulders, constructed for use by the many Dutch bicycle riders and pedestrians, were employed.  

This placement of most of the army stores east of the river meant that army rear and its dumps would be forward of army main headquarters. Again, as when it was located within the COMZ, Ninth Army was situated in an abnormal posture but for good reasons.

After spending the night in Maastricht, Simpson saw more of the proposed command post facilities; then he headed for the XIX Corps, which was involved in a First Army attack on Aachen. Soon the XIX Corps would be a part of Ninth Army. With the Corps Commander, Major General Charles H. Corlett, he visited corps headquarters and also the 30th Infantry and 2d Armored Divisions. After a short talk with Lieutenant General Hodges at his command post in Verviers, Simpson returned to his headquarters at Arlon.

Between his return on the 15th and the Ninth Army move on the 22nd Simpson worked on readying his headquarters for its new mission. Bradley's TAC command post was, by this time, located in Luxembourg City, 12 miles behind the lines, and on the 16th Simpson drove over to discuss his move
with members of the group staff. On the 21st he returned to Luxembourg, this time with a new junior aide, Captain John H. Harden, late of the 8th Infantry Division. While in the city he visited some friends he had made during his First World War stay and also consulted with Bradley concerning his upcoming mission.  

Bradley and Simpson had much to talk about. On 18 October the group commander had attended a conference in Brussels with Eisenhower and Montgomery. Following the conference Bradley had gone to First Army Headquarters at Verviers, where he met with Hodges, as well as Simpson, who had come up from Arlon. His Brussels meeting had been, Bradley told the two army commanders, "a very satisfactory conference."  

Decisions made in Brussels were to have a far-reaching impact upon Ninth Army. Rather than pausing to build up for a massive offensive in the spring, Eisenhower had decided to continue to push the attack. Montgomery was to concentrate on clearing the Schelde Estuary. This mission had to be accomplished before the vital port of Antwerp could be opened. Once the Antwerp campaign was completed, the British Second Army would attack to the southeast from Nijmegen. While Montgomery was occupied with Antwerp, the US First and Ninth Armies were to drive for the Rhine, with Hodges attempting to cross south of Cologne and Simpson protecting his northern flank. Once First Army reached the river, Ninth Army was to turn to the north, in a movement similar to that planned
earlier by Simpson's staff, and continue the attack to clear the Rhine-Maas area, and link up with the Second British Army. Then Eisenhower's contemplated build-up on the Rhine could begin.  

Several days after the meeting with Eisenhower, Bradley formalized his orders in a group Letter of Instructions (Number Ten) which was published on 21 October. On the following day Ninth Army Headquarters moved to Maastricht. Simpson and his staff bid farewell to the relatively quiet, thinly held sector of the Ardennes. As he departed the army commander said to all within earshot, "thank God, we're getting out of this mess."  

After driving through Bastogne and Liege, Simpson reached Maastricht in time for a late lunch. He was quartered in a comfortable house which had been used as a home for female office workers during the German occupation. Ninth Army had assumed command of the XIX Corps at noon, and First Army received the VIII Corps at the same time.  

Simpson's arrival was noted by both friend and enemy. Major General Ernest N. Harmon, Commanding General of the 2d Armored recalled, "this was a switch to my liking. Simpson, though little known outside military circles, was one of the truly great leaders of the European theater, a real general's general."  

German forces also welcomed Simpson and his army by propaganda leaflets which could be seen throughout the Maastricht area. Obviously, there had been an intelligence
leak, but it was not too surprising as the Ninth Army advance party had been operating in Maastricht for some time and the move of an army headquarters is difficult to conceal. Still staff officers were concerned about Simpson's reaction when he saw the leaflets. Colonel James A. Warren, Jr., the Headquarters Commandant, remembered that "Simpson laughed the hardest about it and his pleasure took the embarrassment from all concerned with C.I. (counter intelligence)."\textsuperscript{44}

A German leaflet barrage could be laughed off by the army commander. Had he known of other activities of his enemy, he might not have been so jubilant. On that day, 22 October, representatives of Oberfehlshaber West (Commander in Chief West -- OB West) and Army Group B were briefed by Hitler himself on the counteroffensive planned to retake Antwerp.\textsuperscript{45}

American attack planning continued. After the US November Offensive began, Ninth Army would conform to First Army movements until it reached the Rhine; thus, key operational decisions concerning the initiation of the fight were to be made by others. It was up to Simpson to plan and prepare so that he could move when called upon.\textsuperscript{46}

And move he did on 16 November when at 12:45 PM, after an air and artillery preparation, the attack for the Rhine began. XIX Corps held the major portion of the army zone with the 30th Infantry on the south, 29th Infantry in the center and 2d Armored in the north. Adjacent to the 2d Armored was Gillem's XIII Corps composed of the 84th and 102d
Infantry. 47

A salient located on the US-British boundary and named for the town of Geilenkirchen posed a major problem for the army. If Geilenkirchen, located in the center of the salient, could be taken by Gillem, Simpson would be better able to deploy his forces. General Simpson and Lieutenant General Brian G. Horrocks, commander of the British 30 Corps agreed on a join operation. Horrocks would direct the assault. Troops for the attack, which began on 18 November, included a portion of the US 84th Infantry Division. 48

By the evening of the 22nd, the 84th was returned to Ninth Army control. Geilenkirchen had been taken, but strong enemy resistance had limited further gains by the combined force. Day after day of bitter fighting passed. Night after night of German counterattacks were endured. Fighting was reminiscent of the Brest struggle. During the period 24-26 November almost no advance was made, yet the battle continued. After this three-day deadlock, slow forward progress resumed. On the 29th, Gillem launched his XIII Corps to the east in an attack adjacent to the already committed XIX Corps. Gillem now had the 84th in the north, the 102d in the south, and the 7th Armored in reserve. 49

During such fighting as was taking place, where two forces were pushing against each other in a narrow zone, there is little that an army commander can do to influence the action. Simpson spent much of his time out of his head-
quarters visiting his troops. If he could do nothing on a grand scale to revise the method of fighting, at least his visits could help him to keep abreast of the situation, and they might buoy up the spirits of his men.

Finally on 14 December the last unit advanced to a water barrier which reached across the army front. But rather than reaching the Rhine as the army group plan had specified, the combined First and Ninth Army attack had been halted on the banks of the Roer River only 8-12 miles from the Ninth Army jump-off line. These miles had been costly ones; Simpson had lost 1,133 killed, 6,864 wounded, and 2,059 missing captured. His army had killed an estimated 6,250 of the enemy and taken 8,321 prisoners. The Rhine River still lay many long miles away. Preparations were made for a continuation of the attack.

Planning was soon disrupted by the German Bulge assault, which began two days later on the 16th. Ninth Army, not under heavy attack, participated in the defeat of the Germans by sending divisions south. These units, under First Army command, helped to stem the tide. Before the attack was seven days old, five divisions and their support troops had departed for the conflict.

Ninth Army went under the operational control of 21st Army Group on the 20th, when General Eisenhower redrew the army group boundary line to split the Bulge, with all forces on the north including both First and Ninth US Armies going to Montgomery. By the 26th three more divisions from Ninth
Army had been dispatched to Hodges.\textsuperscript{53}

For the remainder of the Bulge period, Simpson used his depleted forces to hold the Roer River line. He carefully planned for the contingencies that might arise, should the Germans launch an attack on his front or break through to the south. At the same time he continued his vigorous round of personal visits.\textsuperscript{54}
FOOTNOTES -- CHAPTER 3

1 Bradley, **Soldier's Story**, 422. Bradley called Ninth Army "uncommonly normal."

2 Horn, *War Diary*, entries of 20-21 September 1944; Moses, *War Diary*, entry of 21 September 1944, Raymond G. Moses Papers, MHRC; Bradley, *War Diary*, entry of 20 September 1944, Bradley Papers, MHRC; no author, "Big Simp of the Ninth," *Newsweek* XXIV (27 November 1944), 33. The date of Simpson's guided tour of Paris is not mentioned in any source but circumstances indicate that it probably took place during this visit.


4 "LOI No. Nine," 25 September 1944, 12th Army Group AAR, V, 93-95 and "LOI No. Seven," 5 September 1944, 12th Army Group AAR, V, 89-90; "Bradley's Comments on World War II," in the Chester B. Hansen Papers MHRC; Bradley, *Soldier's Story*, 422-423; Eisenhower to Omar Nelson Bradley, 23 September 1944, EP, IV, No. 1989. Switching Ninth Army to the north (into the Ardennes) must have been a recent decision for as late as 18 September Eisenhower told Marshall "the plan calls for pushing Patton toward the left to support Hodges while Simpson coming up on Patton's right, will be the connecting link between the main body of the 12th Army Group and the 5th Army Group whose left boundary will cross the Rhine just north of Mannheim." (Eisenhower to George Catlett Marshall, 18 September 1944, EP, IV, No. 1968.).

5 Bradley, *Soldier's Story*, 437.


7 "LOI No. Nine," 25 September 1944, 12th Army Group AAR, V, 93-95. Material dealing with the choice of Arlon is from: Statement by William H. Simpson, PI, 27 April 1972; Statement by James E. Moore, PI, 29 June 1971; Conquer, 55. Data on Arlon is from: *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 2, 374. It should be noted that though one of the reasons for shifting the proposed site of the army command post from Luxembourg to Arlon
was the danger often encountered when landing at the Luxembourg City airport two miles east of town, Simpson's C 47 had to be based there as the field at Arlon was found to be too short. (Horn, War Diary, entry of 1 October 1944.).


10 Conquer, 53.

11 Horn, War Diary, entry of 2 October 1944; Hansen, War Diary, entry of 30 September 1944; Conquer, 57. Simpson's trip is covered in Horn's Diary entries of 29 September 2 October 1944.


13 Eisenhower to George Catlett Marshall, 31 August 1944, EP, IV, No. 1925; Eisenhower to George Catlett Marshall, 1 October 1944, EP, IV, No. 2016. The complete text of Eisenhower's cable was:

Under present plans we have every intention of keeping Simpson in command of Ninth Army. While if I had been able to foresee two or three months ago the actual developments in command arrangements I would probably have advanced a corps commander to take over this army, arrangements have gone so far that I think it best to follow through. Therefore I suggest that you have Simpson's commission as lieutenant general regularized by nominating him to the Senate.


15 Bradley, Soldier's Story, 430.


17 Quotations are from William E. Shambora, LTC, 17 February 1972. Other sources: Horn, War Diary, entry of 4 October 1944; "AAR G-3 Section, Headquarters Ninth U.S. Army, 1-31 October 1944 inclusive," classification date 25 November 1944, file - 109-3, Ninth Army - AAR, G-3 Sec, 1-31 Oct 44, RG 407, NA. Shambora added that the hospital in its new location was later put to good use in handling Bulge casualties.

18 Lida Mayo, United States Army in World War Two: The Technical Services The Ordnance Department on Battlefield and Battlefront, 319; Horn, War Diary, entry of 9 October 1944.

19 Bradley, Soldier's Story, 431-432; 12th Army Group AAR, VI, 44. Details concerning the meeting to include a complete list of attendees can be found in a "MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD SUBJECT: Conference conducted by General Bradley this date," 9 October 1944, Raymond G. Moses Papers, MHRC.


21 Eisenhower to Omar Nelson Bradley, 8 October 1944, EP, IV, No. 2028.

22 MacDonald, Siegfried Line, 379.

23 "Bradley's Comments on World War II," in the Chester B. Hansen Papers, MHRC.

24 Bradley, Soldier's Story, 422, 437.

25 "MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD SUBJECT: Conference conducted by General Bradley this date," 9 October 1944, Raymond G. Moses Papers, MHRC.

26 Horn, War Diary, entry of 9 October 1944.

27 Conquer, 66, 68. The second plan was essentially the same as that which was executed early in 1945. Concerning the outcome of that later operation, it is noted in the Ninth Army history: "perhaps the success of the execution of these operations due in substantial part to the early conception of sound plans and to the education of the army and sub-
ordinate staffs in the over-all battle planning." (Conquer, 66.).


29 Conquer, 57.

30 Horn, War Diary, entry of 10 October 1944.

31 Horn, War Diary, entry of 10 October 1944; Hansen, War Diary, entry of 11 October 1944, MHRC.

32 Horn, War Diary, entry of 11 October 1944.

33 Horn, War Diary, entry of 14 October 1944.

34 Conquer, 57, 65; Horn, War Diary, entry of 14 October 1944; Bradley, Soldier's Story, 432; Statement by William H. Simpson, PI, 27 January 1972.

35 Eisenhower to George Catlett Marshall, 15 October 1944, EP, IV, No. 2041; Encyclopaedia Britannica, 14, 540; "Maastricht Netherlands," a leaflet published by the Maastricht Tourist Development Association (V.V.V.), no date; Conquer, 68, 75-76; Horn, War Diary, entry of 14 October 1944. Bridges were built or rehabilitated in the succeeding months and the situation was improved considerably. (Conquer, 76.).

36 Conquer, 76-77. Eventually ammunition depots stretched as long as 20 miles along the roads. (Conquer, 77.).

37 Horn, War Diary, entry of 15 October 1944.

38 Bradley, Soldier's Story, 432; Horn, War Diary, entries of 15, 17, 21 October 1944; Hansen, War Diary, entry of 21 October 1944.

39 Sylvan, Personal Diary, entry of 18 October 1944.

40 Pogue, Supreme Command, 310; MacDonald, Siegfried Line, 390-391. Eisenhower's plan was later modified in that rather than launching a delayed attack from Nijmegen, Montgomery secured his chief's approval to attack earlier to clear the Peel Marshes area located just north of the Netherlands-Belgium border. Later Second British Army was to operate along the North flank of Ninth Army. (MacDonald, Siegfried Line, 391-392.).

Horn, War Diary, entry of 22 October 1944; Conquer, 68.

Ernest N. Harmon, Combat Commander, 211-212.

James A. Warren, Jr., LTA, 17 March 1972; Conquer, 73.


Horn, War Diary, entry of 16 November 1944; Conquer 72.

Conquer, 83; MacDonald, Siegfried Line, 545-547. MacDonald discusses the Geilenkirchen operation in detail on pp 546-557.

Conquer, 94-96.

Horn, War Diary, entries of 16 November-14 December 1944.

Conquer, 112; "LOI No. Ten," 21 October 1944, 12th Army Group AAR, V, 97-99. Details of the November Offensive can be found in Conquer, 89-112; Bradley, Soldier's Story, 440-442; Harmon, Combat Commander, 215-226. Charles B. MacDonald makes frequent references to the November Offensive in his Siegfried Line.

Conquer, 117.

Conquer, 117; Cole, The Ardennes, 424.

Conquer, 119, 129; Horn, War Diary, entries of 26 December 1944-18 January 1945. Activities of the Ninth Army as it waited out the Bulge are covered in Conquer, 117-134.
CHAPTER 4

1630 COMES EARLY ON THE ROER

After being stalled at the Roer River for over a month, Simpson was eager to assume the offensive once again and continue his push into the heart of Germany. Planning for such an attack had continued to progress and on 18 January 1945 the general, his chief of staff, G-4, and aide drove from Maastricht to Zondhoven, near Brussels for a meeting with 21st Army Group Commander Field Marshal Montgomery.¹ Though the Bulge operation was over, Simpson's army remained under Montgomery's operational control.

Eisenhower had decided upon his future strategy. In a message to his army group commanders he outlined his plan to regain the initiative. Bradley was to utilize the momentum attained in the repulse of the German Bulge forces and continue the attack to the east. To prepare for the possibility that 12th Army Group might bog down, preparations must be made immediately to shift the attack to Montgomery's 21st Army Group in the north while Bradley would then go on the defensive. Montgomery would execute a double envelopment with Canadian forces moving southeastward from Nijmegen and the Reichswald Forest and the US Ninth Army, reinforced from its current five to twelve divisions, attacking to the northeast from the Roer River line. A link-up was to be made on the Rhine.² This, in general terms, was the plan that Simpson traveled to Zondhoven to discuss.
Eisenhower's message evoked rapid action, for following his return from Zondhoven, General Simpson was called by General Bradley. Bradley wanted to meet with the field marshal the next day at Ninth Army Headquarters and asked Simpson to arrange the meeting. Simpson telephoned Montgomery and a 10:30 AM conference was scheduled. During the meeting, plans for the build-up of the Ninth Army as well as the Canadian attack from the north, Operation VERITABLE, and the Ninth Army attack from the south, Operation GRENADE, were discussed. Later that day, Montgomery sent a message to Eisenhower in which he stated that he planned to launch Operation VERITABLE approximately 10 February with Operation GRENADE to follow later.  

With assurances in hand from both British and American commanders that his army would be fleshed out for an offensive, General Simpson met with his corps commanders to make final arrangements for the reception of the promised units. Snow, five inches was on the ground on the 20th, and icy roads would compound the problems encountered in any major troop move.  

On Sunday, the 21st, General Simpson received his orders from 21st Army Group. Allied forces would close to the Rhine to be in a position to launch a mobile campaign in the spring. While the Second British Army held in the center, Operations VERITABLE, under the First Canadian Army, and GRENADE would converge on the Rhine. Left flank units of Hodges' First US Army, south of Ninth Army, were to support
Operations GRENade and VERITABLE

page 53 Elstob, Battle of the Reichswald
Simpson's attack. Simpson was told to prepare plans and be ready to execute Operation GRENADE as soon as possible after 15 February.\(^5\) A directive had been issued and assurance of reinforcements been given by US commanders, but the field marshal was still concerned about the arrival of the new American units.\(^6\) Each day brought the target date for the grand offensive nearer. Would the troops arrive in time to be properly trained and positioned so that the plan could be executed?

While Montgomery was worrying about reinforcements, on the other side of the hill another commander, Field Marshal Gerd von Rundstedt, commander of OB West, had his own problems to confront. Not only were his troops being pushed back, but his prerogatives as a commander were being drastically reduced. On the 21st, the same day that General Simpson received his directive from Montgomery, von Rundstedt was forced to issue an order which required that commanders of divisions, corps, and armies forward certain desires and decisions through channels far enough in advance that they could reach the Fuhrer so that he could influence them, if he desired. Decisions which fell within the purview of this order included withdrawals from fortified positions and attacks of division size or larger, unless such attacks were executed under orders from Supreme Headquarters.\(^7\)

Meanwhile General Simpson, his staff, and subordinate commanders feverishly prepared to launch Operation GRENADE. Though much work remained to be done, an air of optimism
prevailed at Ninth Army Headquarters. Conquer, the history of the Ninth Army, reveals that, "the Army Commander and his staff were eagerly confident, convinced that the contemplated offensive held the promise of breaking the back of the German army on the Western Front."\(^8\)

As planning continued, a formal estimate of the situation was prepared. This attack would be similar in many ways to the one that had been executed the previous November. But whereas that effort had been stalled on the banks of the Roer, though plans called for it to continue to the Rhine, this one would push on to the final objective. The ground to be covered was the same, but the enemy situation had greatly altered. German defensive positions had been strengthened; however, the number of troops available to man them had declined. Enemy forces situated in threatening locations in the Heinsberg Pocket were being eradicated, and thus, thanks to the British Operation BLACKCOCK then in progress on the north flank of Ninth Army, a significantly lessened menace would exist on that flank. Farther to the north, the First Canadian Army would be in the midst of its VERITABLE attack when GRENADE was launched. The possibility was a real one that enemy attention and perhaps reserves would be drawn in that direction. Finally, in November, General Simpson's flexibility had been impaired, for he had been required to protect the flank of the First Army which was attacking to his south. This time it was the First Army, or at least the northern portion of the army, which must conform to General Simpson's
desires. With both friendly and enemy information in hand, the necessary decisions were made, and on 28 January a planning directive was issued to General Simpson's three corps commanders.

Though the target date for Operation GRENADEN had not been changed, the Ninth Army was to be ready to execute its plan as soon as possible after 15 February; the scheduled start of Operation VERITABLE had been pushed up to 8 February. According to the Ninth Army Planning Directive,

NINTH US ARMY will relieve elements of SECOND BRITISH ARMY along the ROER River southeast of ROERMOND as soon as forces are available. Subsequently NINTH US ARMY will attack northeast from the JULICH-LINNICH base to destroy the enemy in zone and to seize the west bank of the RHINE between NEUSS (inclusive) and MORS (exclusive). Further, the directive indicated that both heavy and medium bomber support would be available. But where the attack in November had been supported by heavy daylight raids immediately preceding its start, Operation GRENADEN would have no such preparation. Daylight close support would entail the movement of the assault forces some 3000 yards to the west of the river line to preclude losses from bombs which might fall short of the target. Since there were no good covered approaches to return after the pull back, available air power would not be used to soften up the front line defenses but instead would be directed to isolate the battlefield and to sever enemy communications links.

To run the operation, Ninth Army Chief of Staff Moore had his staff prepared two plans. Both were phased,
and both specified assault crossings over the Roer River and the securing of a bridgehead. Crossing the Roer River might be difficult. Average width was but 60 to 85 feet; however, during the winter months it could swell to 200 to 260 feet. Even the more serious winter obstacle could be spanned unless the enemy artificially increased further the width of the river by releasing water impounded by large dams upstream to the south. Should such a torrent of water be released, all crossing operations would have to be suspended.\textsuperscript{12}

After the bridgehead, to include the dominant (key) terrain, called the "Linnich-Harft Plateau," from which the slope was downhill to the Rhine, was secured, both flanks were to be tightly anchored on rivers for it was at this point that a counterattack, if one was to be delivered, was expected. The two plans varied greatly in the conduct of subsequent operations.\textsuperscript{13}

Planning was geared to the rapidity of advance. Should the going be slow, after the bridgehead was secured an area east of Roermond was to be cleared, so that supplies could be stockpiled and lines of communication extended in preparation for a prolonged slugging match as the army fought its way to the east. If, however, Simpson's Ninth was not significantly slowed by enemy, adverse weather, or possibly an open right flank, the fast plan was to be executed. Under this contingency, armor-heavy forces would penetrate to the northeast between München-Gladbach and the Erft River, thus, General Simpson believed, surprising the enemy, taking his
defenses in wither flank or rear, and driving rapidly into his support areas and on to the Rhine between Neuss and Morsche. While the attacking force would be subject to a possible counterattack on either flank, its success would surely shorten the entire battle. In addition to reaching the Rhine River, a pocket would be created, which the Ninth Army planners hoped would be filled with German men and material.14

General Simpson had the responsibility to determine, according to how the battle was progressing, which plan to execute. In addition, capture of the city of Muenchen-Gladbach weighed on his mind. To attack it from the west as required by the slow plan would force him to send troops through woods and built-up areas, which might be costly in both lives and time. If he could hit the city from the east, though maneuver room might be limited and supplying a force far forward of the bulk of the army a problem, the terrain would be much better for attack. Either way Muenchen-Gladbach must be taken, for as General Simpson put it, "it sat squarely in the middle of our zone like a well-placed pillbox."15

A third situation was also envisaged; that being the collapse of enemy resistance. Should this happen, phases were to be ignored and each corps "be prepared to conduct relentless pursuit in zone."16 To assist in the exploitation of success, General Simpson planned to keep a division in reserve. Corps plans were due back to army by 10 February.17

As the planning progressed, the army commander attended to his other duties. On the 23rd he participated in
a conference at Zondhoven, where Field Marshal Montgomery had assembled the commanders of the Second British Tactical Air Force, the First Canadian Army, and the Second British Army. Plans were discussed, and according to Lieutenant General Henry Duncan Graham Crerar of the First Canadian Army, the field marshal asked General Simpson to do everything he could to ready the Ninth Army offensive so that it could go by 15 February. Notification was received on Thursday, the 25th, that the 5th Armored Division would soon move into the army area. Thus reinforcement of the army had begun; however, the question of whether enough units would arrive in time still remained.

Forces already in the army zone were not idle as the day of the major attack neared. On the same day that news of the future move of the 5th Armored was received General Bradley called General Simpson and asked that he come to First Army Headquarters in Spa, Belgium, as soon as possible for a conference. Within two and a half hours of receipt of the call General Simpson arrived in Spa. Plans for use of the 78th Infantry Division, (see map, page 127, Chapter 3) the southernmost division in the Ninth Army, to support a First Army attack, which had as its objective, the capture of the Roer River Dams, were discussed. Agreement was reached, and soon Simpson and the others returned to their headquarters to put the plan into operation.

Early on the following day the division positioned on the north flank of the Ninth Army, the 102d Infantry,
attacked in support of the British Operation BLACKCOCK, the Heinsberg Pocket clearing operation, which was rapidly coming to a successful close. Resistance was light; before 9:30 AM all objectives were secured. By the end of the day, even the German High Command had to admit that Operation BLACKCOCK had been a success. The High Command War Diary entry of this date included: "Roer bridgehead no longer exists...the reinforcements moving up came too late." 21 With the attack concluded, General Simpson spent the remainder of the 26th visiting the Ninth Army military government center. 22

The army commander remained calm as the day of the attack moved ever closer. On Saturday, the 27th, only two of the twelve divisions which were to make up the Ninth Army were in proper position for the attack. Much had to be done. Major General Lunsford E. Oliver, commander of the 5th Armored Division called this day on General Simpson. Oliver's division was the first of the reinforcing units to arrive, and it was promptly assigned to the XIX Corps. 23

Sunday was not a day of rest in the Ninth Army Headquarters, for the Planning Directive for the offensive was published and sent out to the corps. Also 12th Army Group told the army that the 35th Infantry Division would be sent as soon as it could be made ready and moved from the sector of the Seventh US Army far to the south. 24

After a morning filled with meetings, General Simpson lunched on Monday, the 29th, with his three corps commanders; Major General Alvan C. Gillem, Jr. of the XIII Corps, Major
General John B. Anderson of the XVI Corps, and Major General Raymond S. McLain of the XIX Corps. Following the meal, they discussed the plans being made by each corps for the upcoming offensive.25

Detailed planning had been taking place at the corps and at lower levels. Selection of suitable crossing sites was a problem. In the opinion of the army commander there were no good crossing locations in the entire Ninth Army zone. Terrain was flat and swampy, and the various drainage channels and canals ran parallel to the river, making a series of obstacles in many places. General Simpson believed that as the enemy occupied good defensive positions and could command the level approaches to the river, the attack must be launched at night. Gillem's XIII Corps in its planning for either a fast or slow advance used a war-gaming technique, in which the staffs of subordinate units were called in and all presented their plans, much as the army commander required his corps commanders to do. Preparations were made to pass armor through either of the attacking infantry division. In the XIX Corps each staff officer tried to put himself in the shoes of the man who held a corresponding position in the German Army. Colonel Hubert S. Miller, the Corps Engineer, playing the German Engineer, determined that he could do the most damage to the American effort if he were to let water out of the Roer River Dams while the attackers were in the process of crossing. With careful control of the amount of water released, flood conditions could be maintained for ten
days. If it appeared that he would lose the dams, Colonel Miller said that he would destroy them at the last minute, and thus release the flood waters. At all levels the Roer River Dams and what the enemy could do with the water impounded behind them over-shadowed planning.

As had been agreed upon at the Spa meeting and as a prelude to another attempt to seize the dams, the 78th Infantry Division with Combat Command "A" of the 5th Armored Division attacked on the 30th in conjunction with a push by the adjacent First Army. Major General Edwin P. Parker, Jr., commander of the 78th, desired a thirty-minute artillery preparation before the attack. General Simpson, who was trying to build a reserve of the severely rationed artillery rounds, cut the preparation to five minutes. This slice in allocation proved to be of great benefit to the attacking troops, for while the Germans waited in their fortifications for the remainder of the customary US preparation American troops overran the enemy frontline positions.

While General Parker's division continued the attack, General Simpson, with his aide, Major Horn, drove to Namur, Belgium, to meet with General Bradley, who had recently taken over the governor's palace for his headquarters. During lunch, according to General Bradley's aide, Major Hansen, General Simpson expressed a desire to come once again under American command. Hansen added, "the General chuckling quietly said, 'I had a hell of a time getting rid of you, and it would be worse bringing you back.'" After an after-
noon during which General Bradley reviewed his plan with the
army commander and supply matters were discussed, General
Simpson headed out into a severe snow storm en route to his
headquarters. Trouble was encountered with drifting snow,
glare ice, and with the vehicles of a British armored divi-
sion which were also using the road. With a difficult
journey behind them, the party arrived home shortly before
8 PM. 30

Good news was passed to General Simpson the following
day, for the 35th Infantry Division opened its command post
in the Ninth Army area. Major General Paul W. Baade's
division was assigned to Major General Anderson's XVI Corps.

Though care had been taken in the execution of troop
movements, they were picked up by German intelligence. Ger-
man thinking was that the next big Allied attack would come
in the north with its goal the securing of Cologne. Attacks
on the Roer Dams were also to be expected. 31

American security efforts increased as the reinforce-
ment continued. In an attempt to prevent the enemy from
knowing the exact nature of the shifts taking place, an army
directive was published which spelled out precautions to be
taken. Major moves would be made during the hours of darkness
with strict radio silence observed. Distinctive unit markings
on vehicles and patches on the uniforms of the arriving
troops would be removed. New units were not to be mentioned
in situation reports, and any documents which did deal with
the reinforcements were to be highly classified. Concentra-
tion areas, where possible, were to be selected far behind the front, and once in these areas the new troops would be kept out of large towns so that their presence did not attract attention. To insure secrecy, Counter Intelligence men controlled the local German civilian population. When, in spite of all the precautions, radio traffic began to increase rapidly, many of the messages were diverted to telephone and to other means of communication. 32

An order issued by General Eisenhower on the 1st of February proved to be the final impetus needed to effect the complete reinforcement of the Ninth Army. Back in mid-January when plans for both General Bradley's Eifel offensive (south of Ninth Army) and for the twin offensives of the 12th Army Group were being discussed at high-levels Eisenhower had given Field Marshal Montgomery indications that by 1 February he would decide whether Bradley's offensive should continue or if it should halt and resource priority be shifted to the north. Though the attack had the momentum built up from pushing back the German forces in the Bulge, because of snow, cold, icy roads, and tired troops no breakthrough had been achieved by the end of the month. True to his word, on the 1st General Eisenhower ordered that the changes be made. He said that due to large Russian gains, the enemy had withdrawn forces from the West. Now was the time to strike for the Rhine north of Dusseldorf. Accordingly, Bradley was ordered to take over the southern part of the Ninth Army zone up to Julich exclusive and by 6 February
to bring the army up to a strength of three armored divisions and seven infantry divisions. Montgomery was told to advance the start of GRENADE to the 10th. In the south, with the exception of the attack on the Roer Dams, the 12th Army Group was to go on the "agressive defensive." Later by informal arrangement the southern offensive was allowed to continue until the 10th, but even if it were successful it would stop on that date. First Army would then protect the attacking Ninth Army's right while the remainder of the line defended.33

As planning at both corps and division level was progressing well, the advancement of the execution date of the Ninth Army offensive, GRENADE, presented no major problem. By the 6th army strength had increased to seven infantry divisions and four armored divisions, one of which was British. Even the field marshal was impressed with the rapid reinforcement, for he later wrote that this major troop movement "gave an excellent example of the truly extraordinary mobility of American units when regrouping."34

These early days of February found the Ninth Army still on the defensive except in the southern sector where the 78th Infantry Division continued its attack in conjunction with First Army elements. On the 2nd this division was passed to First Army so that the operation could be controlled by one commander. Though frontline activity was relatively quiet, the planners kept up their work. Air-support planning was accomplished by the US XXIX Tactical Air Command, under
Brigadier General Richard E. Nugent, which habitually worked with Ninth Army. Arrangements were made for the use of the medium bombers of the 9th Bombardment Division and for the fighter-bombers of the XXIX and IX Tactical Air Commands. A fighter-bomber group would be assigned to support each of the three corps, and an additional group would go to each of the two armored divisions which would exploit the success gained in the initial attack. Nugent's own forces were increased from three to five fighter-bomber groups by the assignment on 8 February of two additional groups. Ninth Air Force agreed to the shift of the two groups, but when General Nugent asked for two more, his request was denied. Nugent believed he was turned down because XXIX Tactical Air Command was under the operational control of the British Second Tactical Air Force and 21st Army Group and that US leaders were unwilling to provide more assets to the field marshal, because once he had anything, getting it back proved to be a major problem. If necessary, Nugent was told, he could ask for more help from XIX Tactical Air Command.35

General Nugent, and ultimately General Simpson, whose forces he would support, were not only faced with the normal problems of readying large masses of men and machines for a major offensive, but they had to cope with the additional difficulties inherent in fighting under the command of an officer from another country. In this case the situation was made more troublesome because the leader who was providing the men and logistical supplies, General Bradley, was not on
the best of terms with the attacking force commander, Field Marshal Montgomery.

Problems were not only man-made, however, for the weather during the first week in February was bad. Only armed reconnaissance flights could be flown. A sudden thaw coupled with the major troop movements was tearing up roads in the army area. All movements were carefully controlled, and road maintenance was carried on by prisoners of war, Dutch civilians, members of the Belgian Highway Department, and infantrymen as well as engineer crews. Rain, which accompanied the warm weather, caused a rise in the level of water in the rivers. Some bridges were put out of action, while travel across others was restricted.\textsuperscript{36}

Adverse weather conditions concerned commanders all along the front. In the north, however, General Crerar was told by a representative of the field marshal that Operation VERITABLE would start on time, 8 February, even if the weather was so bad that no air support could be provided.\textsuperscript{37} Bad weather did not dampen General Simpson's spirits. With the long-awaited attack close at hand the general was pleased with the progress of the Ninth Army planning effort. On the 2nd he had a chance to tell Generals Bradley, Hodges, and Patton as well as other high ranking officers of his plans at a meeting held at First Army Headquarters. Coordination concerning the cessation of the First Army offensive and the support which was to be given to the Ninth Army attack was effected. General Hodges and his staff were disappointed
that they would have to stop their offensive, as reports from the front contained good news, but General Eisenhower had made his decision to shift the main attack, and his wishes must be followed.\textsuperscript{38}

With but one week until the day of execution of Operation GRENADE, General Simpson met on the 3rd with his corps commanders at the XIII Corps command post. All commanders discussed their plans, and once again coordination was effected.\textsuperscript{39} It was General Simpson's custom to convene several of these meetings prior to an attack. At each the entire operation, to include detailed plans for changes in direction and other possible variations, was discussed. German capabilities were war-gamed against the American plan. General Simpson often asked for the opinions of the corps commanders; in fact, his chief of staff, who attended many of these meetings, has said, "they were consulted almost as much as they were ordered to do things."\textsuperscript{40} Once General Simpson had approved a final plan he tended to let the corps commander fight the tactical battle and would enter into the action only in rare instances.

As VERITABLE was to go in a few days, Field Marshal Montgomery summoned General Simpson on the 4th to Zondhoven where he met with other 21st Army Group commanders. Plans were coordinated, and last-minute questions answered. While there the field marshal told Simpson that during a recent trip home the King had told him that he planned to confer the "KB" on the Ninth Army Commander. General Simpson, who
had not the slightest idea what "KB" meant, continued to participate in the conference. Following its conclusion he stopped General Crerar in the hall and asked him. Crerar told him that he was to be decorated with the "KBE," Knight of the British Empire, and then he would henceforth be "Sir William" and his wife "Lady Simpson." Crerar added that "Sir William" would receive a ribbon at that time, but he would have to go to the palace to be dubbed to get the medal. General Simpson joked about it, but his aide observed that he was pleased to receive the award. 41

Though coordination had been effected both to the north and to the south and "Sir William" was in excellent spirits, his elation may have been premature, for always looming in the background of any planning discussion lay the question of what would happen to the water impounded behind the Roer Dams. As the days passed and the dams remained in enemy hands Ninth Army units began to prepare contingency plans for what would he done if the water were released while a crossing was taking place. In a letter of instructions, General Simpson asked his corps commanders to plan for various contingencies. He outlined steps that could be taken to maximize warning time and to minimize danger to the attacking forces. Perhaps the enemy really would take the actions predicted earlier by Colonel Miller of the XIX Corps, when he played the role of the German engineer. First Army forces, which were to accompany the Ninth Army in the attack, were positioned upstream closer to the dams. Several days earlier,
based on the possibility that for some reason Ninth Army elements could go while First Army might not be able to cross, General Simpson had asked General Hodges in that event to stage a feint with his VII Corps as a minimum contribution. Among other conferences General Simpson had on the 5th he met with General McLain of the XIX Corps. McLain told him of his coordination with the commanding general of the VII Corps.42

Before a major battle is joined and after their orders have been issued senior commanders often like to visit the frontline units to see and to be seen. General Eisenhower was no exception. General Simpson met Generals Eisenhower and Bradley at VII Corps Headquarters and escorted them on a tour of the Ninth Army front. Though they visited the XIII Corps, where Eisenhower was briefed on the corps plan, and stopped briefly at the XVI Corps, an incident on a muddy road took up much of the Supreme Commander's time. As it was negotiating a detour, the sedan which was carrying Eisenhower, Bradley, and Simpson became stuck. It was obvious that the car would not move without external help so the generals turned to. Photographers shot away as Generals Bradley and Simpson pushed while General Eisenhower directed the whole effort and the sedan was freed. At the conclusion of the tour Eisenhower dropped Simpson off at his headquarters and headed back to Namur. A military policeman tried to stop the sedan from going down a road the generals wanted to take. General Bradley's aide, Major Hansen, recorded that "Ike leaned casually out of the window and said, 'Tell your Command (SIC) Officer
that General Eisenhower went down this way. If he wants to report me, I shall equip myself when the matter comes up." \(^4\)

There is no record that the incident ever reached General Eisenhower's desk.

Other activities were reported to higher headquarters. For example, the fact that the XVI Corps was operational as of noon on the 6th and that it had taken control of some 16 miles of front, the old British 12th Corps zone, meant that the last corps headquarters which was to figure in Ninth Army's execution of Operation GRENADE was now in position and ready to go. \(^4\)

Also on the 6th Ninth Army issued its order for Operation GRENADE. In major aspects it differed but little from the earlier planning directive. As the enemy might still control the dams when the order was executed, a rapid build-up on the east bank was specified. Provisions had been made to have 500 C-47 aircraft loaded and ready to airdrop needed supplies should the attackers be cut off. One drop by these aircraft could support a division for a day. General Simpson stressed his desire for quick breakthrough and exploitation of any enemy weak areas which were discovered. \(^4\)

Though the enemy defense might be weak in some areas, it remained formidable overall. As of the 1st of the month Allied intelligence officers credited the Germans with having a force of 30,000 troops and 70 tanks defending from south of Duren to Heinsberg. A reserve force near Cologne was estimated at 23,500 men and 110 tanks, while other reserves
of 55 tanks and 17,000 men could be brought in to oppose an advance. But as attack day neared, General Simpson retained his confidence; "we will have some tough fighting," he said "but I think we are going right through."46

Early on the morning of the day following the issuance of the attack order, 7 February, General Simpson held a staff conference to go over detailed plans for the attack once again. The conference concluded, the general prepared to meet the man under whose command he would lead the Ninth Army into battle, Field Marshal Montgomery. The field marshal stopped for a cup of coffee in General Simpson's headquarters, then continued on to XIII Corps Headquarters where Simpson had assembled his corps and division commanders as well as various staff officers. After meeting all the commanders, the field marshal explained his plan. VERITABLE was to start at 6:30 AM the following morning with a two-hour artillery preparation fired by 1200 guns. At the end of the preparation, smoke rounds would be fired. Montgomery hoped that the enemy would believe the assault was on and would fire everything he had to disorganize the attack. Instead of advancing, however, the entire friendly force would remain silent for an hour while all sources attempted to pick up the location of the German guns. With these locations in hand, another hour of preparation would be fired by friendly artillery, and at 10:30 AM the attack would begin. This scheme, the field marshal hoped, would result in the neutralization of enemy batteries. Two days later, at a time yet to be determined, the
Ninth Army would launch its attack. Both efforts would converge on the Rhine River, and then the army group would refine its crossing plans in preparation for the next operation. 47

The success of GRENADE was vital to Montgomery's overall plan, but to succeed the attacking forces must cross the Roer River. The key dams still remained in enemy hands. Though plans had been made to deal with the situation if the enemy loosed his stored water while the attacking force was astride the river, the possibility of defeat in detail remained a very real threat. Also to be considered was a situation such as had been predicted by the XIX Corps engineer, wherein water was released in such a manner that a flood was created which might last for ten days. Could the cut-off force be supplied, could it survive enemy attacks for this period? A decision to cross or not to cross would have to be made, and General Simpson was the man who would make it. 48

Following the field marshal's departure, General Simpson spoke briefly to the group and then returned to his own headquarters, where he convened a final coordination conference attended by the corps commanders and the Ninth Army staff. Once again the operation was war-gamed, and contingency plans were discussed. If either the XIII or XIX Corps, which were to be involved in the initial assault, were stopped, they were to be prepared to use the bridgehead secured by the other corps. General Simpson stressed the need for retention of unit integrity. "Keep your battlefield orderly!"
he said, "keep units intact!" H-hour and D-day were established as 5:30 AM, 10 February. 49

VERITABLE went on the 8th. 50 With D-day and H-hour determined, a twenty-minute artillery preparation ordered, and the dams still in enemy hands, General Simpson decided to do as General Eisenhower had done earlier and get out of his headquarters and visit the troops.

After transferring to a jeep at the XIII Corps Headquarters, his party, which now included Major General Gillem, was off to the 84th Infantry, one of the assault divisions, where it was met by Brigadier General Alexander R. Bolling. Here, as at each division he visited, detailed plans were explained to the army commander. Departing the area of the 84th, the group traveled to the 102d Infantry Division, the other XIII Corps assault division, where Major General Frank A. Keating commanded. Intelligence estimated that the division's attack would be immediately opposed by three infantry companies, each about 60 men strong, and each positioned near the river line. Prisoners of war reported that a dense minefield had been laid behind these troops and that they could not withdraw even if they wished to do so. Major General McLain met Simpson at the 102d Division and escorted him on a visit to the two assaulting divisions in the XIX Corps, the 29th Infantry and the 30th Infantry. Even though the mud was deep, the water level in the river high due to melting snow, and the vital dams still in German hands, all commanders retained their optimism. At each stop the Army commander spoke
to the assembled regimental commanders and division staff officers and told them of the importance to both sides of the coming battle. He stressed the exploitation of enemy weakness and told all leaders to disregard the speed of units on their flanks and advance as rapidly as possible.51

Following his return to army headquarters, General Simpson briefed correspondents present in the Ninth Army Press Camp on Operation GRENADE. All were cautioned that news of the attack was not to be released for 24 hours after its start and unit designations must be held for five days.52 When General Simpson retired on the evening of the 8th the Roer Dams still had not been taken.

On the day before the attack a planned early visit to XVI Corps and its 35th Infantry and 7th (British) Armored Divisions was cancelled when General Simpson learned that Montgomery wanted to come for a visit. Major Horn recorded that at lunch the field marshal “was in grand form and humor.”53 When Montgomery departed, General Simpson had no doubt that he had full authority to decide whether the crossing should be made. Early that morning the army commander had been told that the river had risen two to three inches. A subsequent report put it another inch or two higher. Was the increase due to natural runoff, were the Germans who still held the dams manipulating the water level, or had the dams been blown and what was being observed was the start of a flood?54

As the minutes passed, General Simpson kept in constant touch with the army engineer, Colonel Richard U.
Nicholas, who had made a detailed study of the dams. Colonel Nicholas had been told by the army commander to watch the situation closely. Nicholas recommended that if the level reached a certain point and the speed a certain velocity, the attack be postponed. Simpson queried his staff: when was the latest time that the decision could be made so that word could be passed to all of the attacking troops -- the answer, 1630-1645 (4:30-4:45 PM). General Simpson recalled, "so here I sat, you see...it just seemed like 4:30 was just rolling at me rapidly." 55

While he pondered his decision, Simpson sought the advice of his corps commanders. First at 2:50 PM with less than two hours to go, he called Major General Gillem. After being asked his opinion, Gillem replied, "it is not too favorable, but we can make it." When General Simpson told Gillem that the army engineer believed the enemy was manipulating the flow of water, the corps commander reported that one of his company commanders located on the river had stated that the level varied at certain times. General Gillem expressed his agreement when the army commander said that if there was considerable doubt about being able to put in foot bridges and keep them in he would consider a 24-hour postponement. Gillem added that he thought the decision could be made as late as 6 PM. As Major General McLain was due shortly at Gillem's headquarters, General Simpson asked Gillem to talk with him and call back about 4 PM. Finished talking with one of the commanders of the assaulting corps, General Simpson
called the other, Major General McLain. General McLain was concerned that the enemy would discover the impending attack and he recommended that it go on schedule.56

If First Army forces could take the dams, the truth would rapidly be known, and the decision would be an easy one to make. General Simpson called First Army and spoke to the Chief of Staff, Brigadier General William B. Kean, Jr., who told him that while the attacking forces were close, "they have not made the touchdown." Kean added that he had spoken to Generals Hodges, Collins (commanding the attacking VII Corps), and Bradley, and all three felt it was best to postpone the Ninth Army attack. General Simpson told General Kean that he would inform him when the decision was made and thanked him for his help.57

It was now after 3:30 PM, and the decision had still not been made. One corps commander recommended attack; the other while ready to go, advised caution. Generals Hodges, Collins, and Bradley, friends all, counseled delay, while General Simpson's commander, Field Marshal Montgomery, left the decision up to him. There were many reasons to delay; the water was up, the terrain extremely muddy, and several trusted colleagues advised delay; however, as General McLain had observed, any postponement increased the chance that the enemy would discover what was to take place. And as General Simpson tried to decide, the troops on Operation VERITABLE were fighting to the north; they had been promised the support of an attack by Ninth Army from the south which would
help to relieve the pressure being brought to bear upon them. What to do?

"I was awfully anxious to go ahead," said General Simpson, "and the question was, well what the hell, let's take a chance or shall I call it off?" Just before 4 PM Colonel Nicholas, the army engineer, recommended delay. At 4 PM General Simpson spoke with both corps commanders. Gillem said that while he would like to go, his engineer thought that the water level was being manipulated. General McLain said, "I feel the balance is on the other side. I think we ought to go." To this General Simpson replied, "between 2 and 3 o'clock, the water was up 1 \frac{1}{2} feet south of Duren. It is going up. Hold the line a minute. .........................

Mac, we are going to postpone it 24 hours. Get the word around as fast as you can." The decision had been made, the attack would be postponed.
EPILOGUE

General Simpson had weighed the evidence and decided. He was later proven to be correct, for when the dams were taken in the early hours of the 10th, it was discovered that the enemy troops before abandoning them had exploded charges in such a way that water would flow into the river for a period of days. Colonel Miller in his role as the German engineer had predicted close to what actually happened. As water poured out, the river continued to rise. It was up five feet two inches between 8 AM 9 February and 8 AM 11 February. Both velocity and width also increased dramatically. 61

Further delays were required. The Ninth Army was not to cross the Roer until 23 February and even then the river had not returned to normal. Once launched, the offensive succeeded beyond expectations, a rapid exploitation was made, the Rhine River reached, and a link-up with the First Canadian Army effected. Once Ninth Army closed to the Rhine, Simpson prepared to cross this last major water barrier between his army and the heart of Germany. 62
1. Horn, War Diary, entry of 18 January 1945.


5. Conquer, 139-140; a detailed extract of the army group order can be found on these pages.

6. Field Marshal the Viscount Montgomery of Alamein, Normandy to the Baltic, 293.


8. Conquer, 140.

9. Ibid., 141-142; for more information on Operation BLACKCOCK see: (no author), Operation "BLACKCOCK": Clearing the Area Between the R. Maas and the R. Roer 15th-26th January 1945 and L.F. Ellis, Victory in the West, II, 247-249.


11. Ibid.; Conquer, 146.

12. Conquer, 146; "Military Geography Study No. 8," 25 October, 1944, file - G-3 Operational Plans and Directives, RG 338, NA. While beyond the scope of this paper, the frustrating attempts to either secure or breach the Roer Dams provide fascinating reading. An account of the lengthy struggle can be found in A Soldier's Story by General of the Army Omar N. Bradley.

13. Ibid.; Conquer, 147.


file - Letters of Instructions 1944-1945, RG 338, NA.

17 Ibid., more details concerning the plan and the planning sequence can be found in "IOI Number Ten" and in Conquer, 147-150.


20 Horn, War Diary, entry of 25 January 1945; the First Army commander's aide, Major William C. Sylvan, included in his diary entry for the 25th, "it was, General Hodges said, a most satisfying conference." Sylvan, Personal Diary, entry of 25 January 1945.

21 "AAR Against Enemy Ninth United States Army 1-31 January 1945," 9 February 1945, file - 109-0.3, Ninth Army - AAR, Jan 45, RG 407, NA; "G-3 Report #143 from 252400-262400 January," states that all objectives were taken by 0920 while "SITREP (Situation Report) Number: 292 from 26001 to 261200 January," includes information that all objectives were taken by 0850, both documents can be found in file - Ninth Army G-3 Journal and File 16-31 January 1945, RG 338, NA; the War Diary of the German High Command is quoted in Ellis, Victory, II, 246.

22 Horn, War Diary, entry of 26 January 1945.


25 Horn, War Diary, entry of 29 January 1945.


27 "G-3 Report Number: 147 from 292400-302400 1945," file - G-3 Journal and File 16-31 January 1945, RG 338, NA; Charles B. MacDonald, United States Army in World War II The European
Theater of Operations: The Last Offensive, Chapter IV, 3, 5. For more on the attack see pages 3-7 of The Last Offensive, IV, a manuscript loaned by the author.

28 Horn, War Diary, entry of 30 January 1945.

29 Hansen, War Diary, entry of 30 January 1945. Earlier General Bradley had implored General Eisenhower to return the Ninth Army to US command if only for a short time. The request was denied. (Bradley, Soldier's Story, 492.).

30 Hansen, War Diary, entry of 30 January 1945; Horn, War Diary, entry of 30 January 1945.

31 "SITREP Number: 303 from 311200 to 010001 February 1945," file - G-3 Journal and File 1-15 February 1945, RG 338, NA; The Last Offensive, III, 10-11; the XVI Corps though it had attached the 5th Armored Division less Combat Command "A" and the 35th Infantry Division, the main body of which had not closed as the month ended, was not officially operational as yet. "AAR for the Period 1-15 February 1945," file - Ninth Army AAR, G-3 Section, 1-15 February 1945, RG 407, NA.


33 Eisenhower to Bernard Law Montgomery and Omar Nelson Bradley, 1 February 1945, EP, IV, No. 2270; MacDonald, The Mighty Endeavor: American Armed Forces in the European Theater in World War II, 414-416; MacDonald, The Last Offensive, III, 22-24. MacDonald adds that General George S. Patton, Jr.'s Third Army was to be allowed to continue small attacks to fix the enemy and to attain a better position. He feels that Bradley realized that Eisenhower knew General Patton would make a liberal interpretation of this order. MacDonald, The Last Offensive, III, 25.

34 Montgomery, Normandy to the Baltic, 306; Conquer, 150; "AAR for the Period 1-15 February 1945," file - Ninth Army AAR, G-3 Section, 1-15 February 1945, RG 407, NA. During the early part of February many troop movements and boundary shifts to include the US XVI Corps taking over the zone of the British 12 Corps were made. Details can be found in SITREPS, G-3 Reports, and more conveniently in the above cited AAR. Per the AAR Ninth Army order of battle on the 6th was:

XIX Corps: 29th Infantry Division
30th Infantry Division
83d Infantry Division
2d Armored Division
XIII Corps: 84th Infantry Division
102d Infantry Division
5th Armored Division

XVI Corps: 35th Infantry Division
8th Armored Division
7th British Armored Division

Army Troops: 95th Infantry Division

35 "AAR for the Period 1-15 February 1945," file - Ninth Army AAR, G-3 Section, 1-15 February 1945, RG 407, NA; Craven and Cate, Argument to V-E Day, 760. For Nugent's feelings on why his request was denied Craven and Cate cite his diary entry of 2 February 1945.


37 Stacey, Victory Campaign, 457. Stacey cites General Crerar's notes on a telephone conversation with the acting chief of staff of 21st Army Group 1700 1 February 1945.

38 Horn, War Diary, entries of 1 and 2 February 1945; Sylvan, Personal Diary, entry of 2 February 1945.


41 Horn, War Diary, entry of 4 February 1945.


43 Hansen, War Diary, entry of 5 February 1945; Horn, War Diary, entry of 6 February 1945.


45 "LOI Number Thirteen," 6 February 1945, file - Letters

46 MacDonald, The Last Offensive, VIII, 10-11. MacDonald credits Simpson with making his optimistic statement about the 6th of February.

47 Horn, War Diary, entry of 7 February 1945.

48 When asked during an interview about this decision, General Simpson remarked that the field marshal left it up to him. Statement by William H. Simpson, PI, 22 April 1971. R.W. Thompson feels that Montgomery probably understood that if the waters were loosed, the Ninth Army could not attack for some time. He adds: "the Field-Marshal was prepared, and probably even glad, to go ahead alone with the greatest confidence." R.W. Thompson, Montgomery, the Field Marshal, 277. While Montgomery's confidence was amply demonstrated at the briefing he gave at XIII Corps headquarters on the eve of VERITABLE and while Thompson points out (277-278) his preparations had been meticulous, it is hard to believe that he would welcome a situation wherein the First Canadian Army would have to continue an attack across extremely difficult ground in the face not only of the enemy's resistance in place but of other enemy units which could be sent north as they would not be needed to oppose the stalled Ninth Army.

49 Conquer, 160.

50 VERITABLE is discussed in most standard sources. Particularly detailed coverage is given in Operation VERITABLE, Clearing the Area Between the Rhine and the R. Maas, 8 Feb-10 Mar 1945; Brian Gwynne Horrocks, A Full Life, 243-255 (Lieutenant General Horrocks commanded the British 30 Corps which participated in the action); and more recently, Peter Elstob, Battle of the Reichswald.

51 Horn, War Diary, entry of 8 February 1945; "Notes on the Commanding General's Visit to the 84th and 102d Division (SIC), XIII Corps and 29th and 30th Division of XIX Corps, Thursday, 8 February, 1945," undated in PC, IV.

52 Horn, War Diary, entry of 8 February 1945; Oldfield, Never a Shot in Anzer, 186-187. Oldfield, who ran the Ninth Army Press Camp, was present at the briefing and observed General Simpson to be "highly optimistic." The entire proceeding was filmed. This was the first time that a complete briefing by an army commander had been filmed.

53 Horn, War Diary, entry of 9 February 1945.

55 Ibid.


57 "Resume of Telephone Conversation Between General Simpson and General Keane (SIC), C/S First US Army. Time: 1530 9 Feb 45," in PC, IV.


59 Ibid.: "Resume of Telephone Conversation Between General Simpson and General Gillem, CG, XIII Corps...And General McLain, CG, XIX Corps. Time: 1600 9 Feb 45," PC IV. What happened during General Simpson's short pause on the telephone is unknown. It is possible that he received a verbal report from a reconnaissance aircraft. He, himself, does not recall such a report. He only remembers that whereas up to that point his course had not been firmly decided upon, "something came to me" and he postponed the attack. (Statement by William H. Simpson, PI, 22 April 1971).

60 Major Horn noted in his diary that that evening when General Simpson returned to his quarters he was, "exhausted from the strain." Horn, War Diary, entry of 9 February 1945.

61 MacDonald, The Mighty Endeavor, 419; Miller, Roer River Crossing, 3; "AAR Against Enemy Ninth United States Army 1-28 February, 1945," 6 April 1945, file - Ninth Army AAR, February, RG 407, NA.

62 An account of Operation GRENADE can be found in Conquer, 169-198. A slightly different version of this chapter was published in the October 1973 issue of Military Review.
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