

unselfishness of the Commanders whose divisions were already nearly trained, and to the initiative and drive of the Commanders of the new divisions who had to fit a six months' programme into three, all difficulties were overcome, and on the day Forces G and U* carried out their assaults with the precision of yet another rehearsal.

18. It had always been felt that the enemy might react when large scale exercises were carried out in the Channel. He did not do so until exercise "Tiger," which was the final rehearsal for Force U, when during the night of 27th/28th April three groups of E-Boats penetrated the patrols covering Lyme Bay and delivered a successful attack on the last convoy to sail to the exercise consisting of eight L.S.T.† Two L.S.T. were sunk and one was damaged, and there was a regrettably high loss of life. Naval defensive measures on this occasion were undoubtedly on the weak side and this incident underlined the need for every available warship and craft to take part in the opening phases of "Neptune" when the enemy must be expected to attack our convoys with everything at his disposal.

19. The final rehearsals for the other four assault forces took place on 4th May under the code name of "Fabius". Opportunity was taken to exercise the simultaneous sailing from the Isle of Wight area of the three forces based there and also to try out the arrangements whereby A.N.C.X.F.‡ would assume control of all operations in the Channel. So far as the naval assault forces were concerned the exercises were satisfactory, but a freshening south-westerly wind in the afternoon of the first day caused the full programme to be curtailed to avoid damage to landing craft. Enemy reaction to "Fabius" was negligible, being confined to an aircraft attack on a destroyer in one of the covering forces. That it was not greater, and indeed that our naval preparations proceeded with so little interruption, must be largely attributed to the very high degree of air superiority achieved in the months before D day. Enemy air reconnaissance was slight and infrequent.

Mining.

20. Sea mining is carried on continuously by the Admiralty and by Bomber Command, but for some months before "Neptune" the mining programme was planned to afford direct assistance to the operation both as regards location and timing of each lay. Considerable success is known to have been achieved by mines laid during this period under plan "Maple," which was really an integral part of operation "Neptune."

Meteorological.

21. Early in planning it was appreciated that the decision which you as Supreme Commander would have to make to launch the operation would be one of the most difficult and far-reaching of the whole war. Not only was good weather necessary for the assaults, but also for the period immediately following them, to ensure a good start for the build-up. The meteorologists were doubtful of their ability to forecast the weather more than 48 hours ahead for certain, which was barely sufficient to cover the hour of the assaults, as Force U from Devonshire had to sail 36 hours before H hour.* To assist the forecasts, two additional U.S. and two British warships were stationed in the Atlantic to transmit weather reports for some days before D day. For security this procedure was also adopted before exercise "Fabius" and this, in addition, served to practise the meteorological team concerned in making their deductions.

Availability of Landing Ships and Craft.

22. During planning there were frequent discussions as to what percentage availability of landing ships and craft should be taken for the operation. The original planning figures of 90 per cent. for L.S.T. and 85 per cent. for L.C.T. and L.C.I. (L)† were challenged by Washington who held that the U.S. Navy could achieve a higher standard of maintenance.

Admiralty footnotes:

* H hour—The hour at which the first flight of landing craft "touch down" on the beach in an assault. Formerly known as zero hour.

† L.C.I.(L)—Landing Craft, Infantry (Large).

Admiralty footnotes :

* The organisation of the Expeditionary Force was as follows :—

| Force | Assembly Ports | Assault Area |
|---------------------------------|---|---|
| | <i>Western Task Force (American)</i> | |
| Assault Force U † | Torbay, Brixham, Dartmouth and Salcombe | Western flank of U.S. area (UTAH beach) |
| „ „ O | Weymouth, Portland and Poole | Eastern flank of U.S. area (OMAHA beach) |
| Follow-up Force B | Plymouth, Falmouth, Helford River and Fowey | U.S. area |
| First Build-up Divisions | Bristol Channel ports | — |
| | <i>Eastern Task Force (British)</i> | |
| Assault Force G † | Southampton, Solent and Spithead | Western flank of British area (GOLD beach) |
| „ „ J | Southampton, Solent and Spithead | Centre of British area (JUNO beach) |
| „ „ S | Portsmouth, Spithead, Newhaven and Shoreham | Eastern flank of British area (SWORD beach) |
| Follow-up Force L | The Nore and Harwich | British area |
| First Build-up Divisions | Thames | — |

† These forces were additional to the original plan.

† L.S.T.—Landing Ship, Tanks.

‡ A.N.C.X.F.—Allied Naval Commander-in-Chief, Expeditionary Force.