

Showdown In Normandy

By LT. COMDR. C. S. SEELY

OUR invasion is still going better than we had any reason to expect it would, but our foothold on France cannot yet be considered secure. The thing to realize now—and the very thought is appalling—is that the Nazis can, within the next 10 days, throw 2,000,000 men against our bridgehead without appreciably weakening any of their defenses, except those along the Channel coast north of Havre. Obviously it is almost a life or death (victory or defeat) matter with us to keep the Nazis guessing as to our next move, and to land, as quickly as possible, a force large enough to withstand the Nazi onslaught—if it comes.



Lt. Comdr. Seely

The Nazis still have time to attack us in force, and they certainly will do so if they become convinced that this is our principal invasion effort. So far they have not thrown any considerable force against us, but no doubt this is mainly because they have been unable to make up their minds whether or not we will soon strike hard somewhere north of Havre. They, of course, cannot risk being caught off balance so near one of their critical defense lines. Obviously it is of the utmost importance to us that we keep them guessing as long as possible—or at least until we land a great force in northern France.

It is still too early to determine whether or not the Nazis will try to destroy our invasion armies, but another week or so probably will tell the tale. The Nazis must wait until they can make a reasonably correct estimate of the situation before they take decisive action. They must, at the moment, guard their Havre-Calais-Ostend-Amsterdam line, no matter what happens elsewhere. If they decide we are to strike north of Havre they probably will be willing to let all of southwestern France go almost by default, as they recently let much of Italy go. For should they send a huge force southward, we may invade a vital northern area, and thereby throw them off balance. The Nazis simply cannot take this chance.

Hitler May Gamble

The Nazi forces allotted to the defense of France, Belgium, Holland, and western Germany must not be considered to contain less than 3,000,000 men. Without doubt most of these men are now deployed in a manner that will best protect the Paris-Havre-Calais-Ostend-Amsterdam line. It is hardly possible that the Nazis will be caught napping, or thrown off balance. And we should not base any of our plans or hopes on tricking them into disaster. We will have to beat them by over-

whelming force of men and machines. The United Nations have, of course, the force finally to do this.

The Cherbourg peninsula is not especially important to Hitler, and since it is so much closer to our great air bases than it is to his, he would not try hard to defend it, under ordinary circumstances, or risk any considerable part of his forces in a battle there. But the situation there is now not ordinary.

Our position has not yet been consolidated, and Hitler may decide to risk a great battle in an all-out attempt to crush us. Certainly if he soon attacks in force it will be an attempt to destroy our forces and our civilian morale, and not merely a defense of a land area. In no case will he weaken more important parts of his western defenses merely to defend the Cherbourg area.

A victory over us in northern France would, of course, be of inestimable value to Hitler, and he may be expected to take considerable risk to obtain such a victory. No doubt he is now considering the advisability of a great assault on our bridgehead. Because of this we must give him every possible reason for believing that we are about to invade in great force somewhere

It Couldn't Be Done



Fitzpatrick in the St. Louis Post-Dispatch

else (secondary attacks by us north of Havre are now in order). However, the Nazis are not at all likely to bother overmuch about any threat against Brest, Marseilles, or any other part of France south of the Havre-Paris-Belfort line.

Should we secure the Cherbourg peninsula, our war position will be much improved. We not only shall have an excellent base for operations, but will also have a bridgehead for landing supplies direct from the United States. This will save much time and effort. Of course there is yet no reason for enthusiasm, as we are still in grave danger, but this danger is decreasing as we continue landing men and materials.

The Strongest Frenchman'

So far we have been very fortunate, and obviously fate and chance have been on our side. We can hardly expect good luck to repeat often, if even once more. And certainly when the stakes are as high as they are in this war, fate and chance should not be tempted more often than is necessary, as, of course, was the case in this invasion.

The law of averages must be respected. And also the Nazis no doubt have profited by their recent experience against invasion strategy and tactics. Another great invasion attempt may meet with tragic failure. It would seem safer to follow up our advantage on the Cherbourg peninsula, and keep the Nazis guessing by the threat of another invasion. We have the initiative, and we must not lose it by committing ourselves too deeply elsewhere. We lost our initiative at Anzio. And of course we must expect much rougher going in Normandy than we ever had in Italy. We must not lose sight of the fact that Anzio was a very long way from any of Hitler's vital defense lines, while Cherbourg is very near one of them.

We should now give all possible encouragement to the French to rise in a great revolt. Whatever concessions we may have to make to Gen. de Gaulle to gain the confidence of the French masses should be made at almost any costs. De Gaulle, no matter what we think of him—and personally I do not see any reason why we object to him as a full ally—is now obviously the strongest Frenchman. And he not only is in an excellent position to aid us, but seems anxious to do so if we will only let him. We should take full advantage of the great potential, but now almost dormant, French aid. This is no time to quibble, as we now appear to be doing with the chief leader of rising France.

(The opinions and assertions expressed above are the private ones of the writer and are not to be construed as official or reflecting the views of the Navy Department or the naval service at large.)

The Inheritors

IN THE WOODS Sunday a fallen leaf took life, and walked away. It was a maple leaf, bleached to a pale gray-green, and it lay on a stump where it had dropped. Why it claimed my interest I do not know; perhaps because it betrayed a slight motion

when all the rest of the woods was frozen in calm. As I studied it, I was struck by the unusual thickness of the stem, and even as I reached to examine the oddity, the stem separated itself from the rest of the leaf and walked away on six long, hinged, ungainly legs.



Meyer

Nothing new, and yet forever fascinating—that curious insect, the "walking stick." For purposes of its own, it had chosen to roost on the stemless leaf, and had immediately endowed its refuge with the lost part. By protruding its long body and feelers over the leaf edge, it had created an exact replica of the missing stem. Moreover, so perfectly did the insect match the leaf in color that at a distance of a few feet it was invisible.

A good example of protective mimicry, a device used by insects or beasts to escape the attention of enemies or to hide in ambush for prey. And as I marveled at the walking stick and its power to simulate chlorophyll or to sit on a dead limb for motionless hours and take on the form of a knotty, brown twig, I again thought of a scientist's prediction that the insect, more versatile in adapting itself to changing environments, will eventually dominate and make men and mules vanish from the face of the earth.

Humans Know How

The theory is attractive, but offers loopholes. For one thing, these prophets, by standing amazed before a phenomenon like protective mimicry in the insect world, seem to imply that the human is incapable of such wizardry. This, of course, is not the case. Camouflage is a highly developed science in the art of war. Even in days of peace, people—notably the species known as politicians—can be many different things at many different places.

They can, for purposes of attack or self-preservation, belong to a dozen varied "sets," clubs, churches or lodges and in each take on the color and texture of their immediate surroundings. The chameleon has no copyright on its specialized magic.

Those who believe the insects will rout man cite other marvels.

"Anatomically and physically," one scientist writes, "the insect type has great advantage over the human type. In small size, in enormous fecundity and rapidity of multiplication, in power of speedy adaption to conditions, in rapidity of flight and locomotion, the insects are vastly superior."

The argument of insect superiority is year by year losing its force. Human ingenuity has devised machines that fly more swiftly than the locust, machines that can cover the ground more rapidly than tarantulas, machines that can dig deeper and faster than the digger wasp, machines that can carry men encased in armour more impenetrable than the armour of a stag beetle, machines that can flit over the sea more swiftly than a water spider, and poison gases so potent that if universally applied they could wipe out not only their human inventors but the hundred thousand species of insects that presumptuously challenge the benign overlordship of man.

Suicidal Use of Genius

In other words, humanity has initiated and excelled the tricks once peculiar to the lower forms, and if these tricks were employed always for humane ends we would have nothing to fear from our insect rivals in the race for dominance. We could control our destiny without fear that the ants, termites, grasshoppers, and beetles would inherit our fallen empire. More people are killed by people than are killed by insect parasites. More people are killed by people in a year of modern war than were killed by locusts in a year of the worst plagues of history. More people are killed by people each year in traffic accidents than are killed by the microscopic bugs of tuberculosis. And more people are periodically starved to death by a deranged man-made economic system than are starved to death by the fruit fly, the corn borer, the cutworm, and the bollweevil.

It is the insane urge toward self-destruction that we have to face and to fear, not the growth in the insect census. Save in the case of the warrior ants, no insect carries forward mass extermination of its own species. It is this unconscious wisdom, and not their "superior" outer skeleton or their fecundity or their speedy adaptation to changing environments, that has caused insects to multiply and flourish from the steaming jungles to the tundras of the Far North.

Homo sapiens has weapons more amazing than anything possessed by any other living form, but the blind-

ness and the tragedy lies in the suicidal uses to which they are put. If in ten thousand or a hundred thousand years the locusts drone in black clouds over the grave of human civilization, it will only be because mankind betrayed its heritage of intelligence and chose the darkness of oblivion though it had in its grasp the power to lift itself to the stars.

Who's Who

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