

Overlord 2

NOTES FOR MY  
ADDRESS TO SENIOR OFFICERS  
BEFORE "OVERLORD".

TOP SECRET.

Copy No... 2 .....

1. Before I launch troops into battle I make a point of speaking personally to all senior officers down to the Lt-Col rank inclusive. In this way I can get my ideas across, and ensure a common line of approach to the problem that lies ahead of us; and at a final talk, like this one, I can emphasise certain essential features, and give you some points to pass on to your men. In fact I use these occasions in order to influence the Armies, to instil confidence, and thus to help win the battle.
2. I would like to talk to you to-day on the following subjects:
  - (a) The Past, - very briefly.
  - (b) The present state of the War.
  - (c) The future prospects.
  - (d) The task immediately confronting us.
  - (e) Basic essentials for success.

The Past.

3. We have been through some very bad times in this war. In our darkest days we stood alone against the combined might of the axis powers; we suffered some great shocks and some bad disasters. But we stood firm - on the defensive, but striking blows where we could.

Then America joined us; but that great Nation was not immediately ready to strike heavy blows, and required time to develop her strength.

Then the two of us - America and the British Empire - gradually began to fight back. Slowly, but surely and relentlessly, the lost ground was recovered and we began to pass from the defensive to the offensive.

4. Since that time we have been working throughout on the same major strategy. This has been:-
  - (a) To clear the enemy out of Africa.
  - (b) To knock Italy out of the War, and open the Mediterranean for our shipping.
  - (c) To bring Turkey in to the war.
  - (d) To defeat Germany, while containing Japan.

5. That has been the broad strategy of the Allies, and we have stuck to it and never wavered.

We are now about to reap the harvest.

/ Present State of the War.

Present State of the War.

6. How do we stand to-day?

Of the four basic points in our strategy (vide para 4), the first two are achieved,

(a) The Germans are out of Africa.

(b) Italy is out of the war, and the Mediterranean is open for our shipping.

These are great achievements, of which we may well be proud - and we are.

7. We failed in the third point.

Turkey has not reacted in the way we hoped. But the Allies have done so well in other directions that it has not mattered overmuch; and the day may well come when Turkey will regret her present attitude, and will wish she had come in with the Allies - who are now going to win.

8. We are now about to embark on the final phase of the fourth point.

To defeat Germany; that is the crux of the whole matter.

After 4½ years of war the Allies have, by hard fighting on sea, land, and in the air, worked themselves into a position where they cannot lose. That is a very good position to reach in any contest; but the good player is never content "to draw" - he wants to win. And so we must now win, and defeat Germany. And while doing that, we are doing more than contain Japan. That country is now definitely on the defensive and in the S.W. Pacific the American and Australian forces are gradually working their way towards the Phillipines and Formosa, and are killing great numbers of Japanese in the process.

Future Prospects.

9. Germany is now fighting on three fronts: in Russia, in Italy, and in the Balkans. Soon she will have a fourth front - in western Europe.

She cannot do this, successfully.

She has a large number of Divisions, but they are all weak and below strength. Everything is in the shop window; there is nothing "in the kitty".

Her cities and industries are being devastated by bombing; this will continue on an ever increasing tempo all this year; by next winter there will be little left of her more important cities.

/The Allies have



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The Allies have the initiative and Germany is ringed round; she is about to be attacked from Russia, from the Mediterranean front, and from England; and all the time the bombing will go on relentlessly.

10. A very great deal depends on the success of our operations. If they succeed, I consider that Germany will then begin to crack. They will succeed; and the Russians will succeed; and the bombing will go on, every day and all round the clock. Germany will not be able to stand it.

If we do our stuff properly and no mistakes are made, then I believe that Germany will be out of the war this year. And Japan will be finished with 6 months after we have put Germany out.

11. But the essential condition is that the Second Front should be a great success. And that brings me to my next point.

Our Immediate Task.

12. When the time comes for us to operate on the continent no one will claim that our task will be easy.

The enemy is in prepared positions; he has protected his beaches with obstacles; we cannot gain close contact and reconce his positions carefully, so as to examine the problem and ensure we have the right solution. There are, and there are bound to be, many unknown hazards. He has reserves positioned for counter-attack.

13. We have a long sea journey, and at the end of it we will have to land on an enemy coast in the face of determined opposition.

During all this there is bound to be a certain loss of cohesion in assaulting units; and even reserves coming ashore will require a little time to collect themselves.

The enemy will know every inch of the ground; we shall be operating in a strange country.

14. But we have certain very great assets, and they are the ones that matter.

We have the initiative; the enemy does not know where, or when, we shall land.

We have great fire-power to support our initial landing, from the sea and from the air.

We have a good and simple plan.

We have well trained troops, who are spoiling for a fight.

/15. We have available

15. We have available to see us on shore the whole of the allied air power in England, and this air power will continue to support our operations and to bomb Germany.

Its strength is terrific.

There are some 4,500 fighters and fighter-bombers; and about 6,000 bombers of all types.

Nothing has ever been seen like it before.

16. Unknown hazards must have no terrors for us. We have 1st class engineers, and every kind of mechanical and special equipment.

All we need is a very robust mentality; as difficulties appear, so they must be tackled and stamped on.

17. What we have to do is to blast our way on shore, and gain ground inland quickly so that we secure a good and firm lodgement area before the enemy has time to bring his reserves into action against us.

The violence, speed, and power of our initial assault must carry everything before it.

The enemy reserves will be closely watched from the air; once they sacrifice concealment and begin to move, they will be bombed and shot-up from the air without ceasing, and enemy reserve units will be in poor shape when they reach the battle area.

#### Basic Essentials for Success.

18. I would like now to give you a few points which I regard as terribly important. Obviously such points must be few in number, since everything cannot be important. I consider that compliance with the following points is essential for success.

19. Allied solidarity.

We are a great team of allies, British and American. There must be throughout this team a friendly spirit; we must have confidence in each other.

As a British general I regard it as an honour to serve under American command; General Eisenhower is captain of the team and I am proud to serve under him. And I regard it as a great honour to have American troops serving under my command.

When we visit each other there should be only one idea; and that is - how can I help the other chap. Let us have no suspicion, and no petty jealousy.

Let us have, throughout, complete mutual confidence and goodwill, all pulling together as one great team.

/20. Offensive eagerness.



20. Offensive eagerness.

This is vital.

Once on land and the battle starts we must be offensive, and more offensive, and ever more offensive as the hours go by. We must call on the soldiers for an all-out effort.

Every officer and man must have only one idea, and that is to peg out claims inland, and to penetrate quickly and deeply into enemy territory. After a long sea voyage, and a landing followed by fighting, a reaction sets in and officers and men are often inclined to let-up and relax. This is fatal; senior officers must prevent it at all costs on D day and on the following days. The first few days will be the vital ones; it is in those days that the battle will be won, and it is in those days that it could well be lost.

Great energy and "drive" will be required from all senior officers and commanders.

I consider that once the beaches are in our possession, success will depend largely on our ability to be able to concentrate our armour and push fairly strong armoured columns rapidly inland to secure important ground or communication centres. Such columns will form firm bases in enemy territory from which to develop offensive action in all directions. Such action will tend to throw the enemy off his balance, and will enable our build-up through the beaches to proceed undisturbed; it will cut the ground from under the armoured counter-attack.

Offensive eagerness is not only necessary in the soldier; it is essential in the officer, and especially in the senior officer and commander.

Inaction, and a defensive mentality, are criminal in any officer - however senior.

21. Enthusiasm.

Every officer and man must be enthusiastic for the fight, and have the light of battle in his eyes. We must send our soldiers into this encounter completely on their toes; they must be imbued with that infectious optimism that comes from physical well being and absolute conviction in a great and righteous cause.

22. Confidence.

I want you, and every soldier, to know that I have complete and absolute confidence in the successful outcome of the operations that will shortly begin.

With stout hearts, and with enthusiasm for the contest, let us go forward to victory.

/23. An all-out effort.

-6-

23. An all-out effort.

Everyone must go all-out.

And, as we enter battle, let us recall the words of a famous soldier, spoken many years ago:-

"He either fears his fate too much,  
Or his deserts are small,  
Who dare not put it to the touch  
To win or lose it all".

24.

Good-luck to each one of you.

And good hunting on the mainland of Europe.

B.L.M.

Telephone: WHITEHALL 4488.  
Telegraphic Address:—  
OPPOSITELY, LESQUARE, LONDON."



UNION OF SOUTH AFRICA

*m. b. f. l. e. n. 1978*

SOUTH AFRICA HOUSE,  
TRAFALGAR SQUARE,  
LONDON, W. C. 2

*Overland*

Returned with Field Marshal  
Smuts's compliments.

2nd May, 1944.

5.

and will inform me of their plans to carry out these tactics.



Personal and Most Secret.

April 30, 1944.

My dear Montgomery,

Thank you very much for your letter of  
April 17.

For what my opinion is worth, it seems to  
be exactly the spirit in which the execution should  
proceed, and I only wish that a similar course had been  
attempted when the forces landed at Anzio.

W.S.C.

General Sir Bernard Montgomery, K.C.B., D.S.O.

5. and will inform me of their plans to carry out these tactics.

HQ 21 Army Group,  
No. 1 APDC.,  
LONDON, W.1.

15 April 1944.

B. L. Montgomery

General.  
Commander-in-Chief.



Personal  
Not Secret



HEADQUARTERS:

21 ARMY GROUP.

17-4-44

My dear Prime Minister

You may like to see the enclosed copy of a note I have given to the commanders of the two assault armies.

Yrs. sincerely

(5)

B. L. Montgomery.

for strong offensive action. And as the main reason will be simplified by the fact that armoured forces are holding firm on areas in front.

5. Army Commanders will consider the problem in the light of the above and will inform me of their plans to carry out these tactics.

HQ 21 Army Group,  
No. 1 AFDC.,  
LONDON, W.1.

15 April 1944.

B. L. Montgomery

Commander-in-Chief

Comd First US Army  
Comd Second Br Army

B I G O T.  
TOP SECRET.

Copy No \_\_\_\_\_

21 A Gp/1001/C-in-C.

- Copy
1. In operation OVERLORD an uncertain factor is the speed at which the enemy will be able to concentrate his mobile and armoured Divisions against us for counter-attack.  
  
On our part we must watch the situation carefully, and must not get our main bodies so stretched that they would be unable to hold against determined counter-attack; on the other hand, having seized the initiative by our initial landing, we must ensure that we keep it.
  2. The best way to interfere with the enemy concentrations and counter-measures will be to push forward fairly powerful armoured-force thrusts on the afternoon of D Day.  
  
If two such forces, each consisting of an Armd Bde Group were pushed forward on each Army front to carefully chosen areas, it would be very difficult for the enemy to interfere with our build-up; from the areas so occupied, patrols and recces would be pushed further afield, and this would tend to delay enemy movement towards the lodgement area.  
  
The whole effect of such aggressive tactics would be to retain the initiative ourselves and to cause alarm in the minds of the enemy.
  3. To be successful, such tactics must be adopted on D Day; to wait till D plus 1 would be to lose the opportunity, and also to lose the initiative.  
  
Armoured units and Bdes must be concentrated quickly as soon as ever the situation allows after the initial landing on D day; this may not be too easy, but plans to effect such concentrations must be made, and every effort made to carry them out; speed and boldness are then required, and the armoured thrusts must force their way inland.
  4. The result of such tactics will be the establishment of firm bases well in advance of our own main bodies; if their location is carefully thought out, the enemy will be unable to by-pass them. I am prepared to accept almost any risk in order to carry out these tactics. I would risk even the total loss of the armoured brigade groups - which in any event is not really possible; the delay they would cause to the enemy before they could be destroyed would be quite enough to give us time to get our main bodies well ashore and re-organised for strong offensive action. And as the main bodies move forward their task will be simplified by the fact that armoured forces are holding firm on important areas in front.
  5. Army Commanders will consider the problem in the light of the above remarks, and will inform me of their plans to carry out these tactics.

HQ 21 Army Group,  
No. 1 APDC.,  
LONDON, W.1.

15 April 1944.

B. L. Montgomery  
General.  
Commander-in-Chief.



12 P  
HEADQUARTERS  
21 ARMY GROUP

Overlord

21-3-44

30 March, 1944.

Dear Prime Minister  
My dear Montgomery,

Thank you so much for sending me a copy  
of the interesting notes for Army Commanders which  
you have written.

Yours sincerely,

Winston S. Churchill

B. L. Montgomery

Deck 2  
Thank you  
Keep looking at  
the situation  
after Overlord  
100  
use of armour working with infantry.  
General Sir B.L. Montgomery, K.C.B., D.S.O.

5. Breaching parties, or forward bodies, consisting of:

Flails,  
A.V.R.E.  
Infantry,  
Div R.E.

The exact composition must vary with the problem. There  
may be a mass of under-water obstacles on the beach, above or

McWhirter



HEADQUARTERS,  
21 ARMY GROUP.

21 - 3 - 44

To see

inc  
13

My dear Prime Minister

You may like to see the enclosed notes which I have issued to my Army Commanders. I know you are interested in these matters.

Yrs. sincerely

B. L. Montgomery.

120

Ack 2

Thank

Keep

look up

& show me  
after Breakfast

(b) use of armour working with infantry.

(c) the value of high ground; a few tanks on the high ground with the infantry.

LAYOUT FOR ASSAULT.

5. Breaching parties, or forward bodies, consisting of:

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A.V.R.E.  
Infantry,  
Div R.E.

The exact composition must



TOP SECRET.Notes by C-in-C 21 Army Group.

1. I have made some notes for Army Commanders which I consider are important. These deal with Army problems, but they can be discussed with great advantage with naval commanders.

HQ 21 Army Group,  
No.1 A.P.D.C.,  
LONDON W.1.  
20 Mar 44.

B.L.M.

one tank.

3. The tank is initially the best supporting weapon. But the infantry must "marry up" with their own supporting weapons early, and release the tanks for offensive action.
4. Remember:
  - (a) the need to mop up; value of tanks for mopping up.
  - (b) use of armour working with infantry.
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The exact composition must vary with the problem. There may be a mass of under-water obstacles on the beach, above or below the waters edge, at any state of the tide.

/Close touch

TOP SECRET.

SOME ARMY PROBLEMS.

1. We must get ashore.

Fire support from the sea and air will all be concentrated on the problem of getting the Army ashore.

In some places we may get ashore easily; in other places with difficulty.

Those who do get ashore must work outwards and help those who are in trouble.

Once ashore we must stop the counter-attack while we get sorted out, and generally build up. Best way to stop counter-attacks is to be offensive ourselves; must not let initiative pass to the enemy; we must crack about and force the battle to swing our way.

2. GERMAN is good at the small local counter-attack. We want little firm bases from which infantry and tanks can be offensive without difficulty and can therefore take great risks.

Best firm base is A/Tk guns and tanks; vital to get these ashore early. The A/Tk gun is a better A/Tk weapon than the tank.

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/Close touch



-2-

Close touch must be kept with this, and the "menu" for forward bodies varied accordingly.

It is definitely becoming clear that infantry, and Div R.E., will be wanted in forward bodies.

No obstacles are going to stop good infantry.

6. Command and control for the assault.

Each breaching party, or forward body, must have its own commander.

There must be a commander for the whole forward body on any Bn front.

The Bn Comd must be in close touch with the O.C. Forward Body; he must therefore be well forward and in front of his battalion so that he can take charge of the battle on the beach at the earliest moment and fight his battalion to the best advantage from the beginning.

The Bn Comd himself should be in a tank.

7. Generally, Bn Comds must be on shore in a tank very early, - close behind the forward bodies and ahead of their rifle coys.
8. Command and control is vital. A definite, and distinct, commander is essential for every echelon; and all must know who that is. That commander must have good communications, both within his command and back to his next superior.

PENETRATION INLAND.

9. As we penetrate inland we may expect to find important areas, such as high ground or centres of communication, held by static and immobile Divisions.

These may not counter-attack, but are likely to hold doggedly in defensive action and thus form pivots for mobile Divisions brought in from other areas.

They may be well supplied with food, ammunition, etc., so as to hold out for some days.

10. We must not let these areas hold up our rapid penetration inland. We have to gain the tactical advantage quickly, and to push ahead and seize our own pivots - using armoured and mobile forces.

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11. The enemy static pivots must be by-passed, and dealt with by our reserves coming on behind.

AIRFIELDS.

12. As we secure airfields, and good areas for making airfields, so we get increased air support, and so everything becomes easier. It is very important that the area to the S.E. of CAEN should be secured as early as Second Army can manage.

DEPTH IN BRIDGEHEAD.

13. We are dependent on beaches for our administration, and then on artificial harbours.

We have no proper commercial ports, and will have to establish Army dumps on shore and live like this for some time.

Therefore depth to our initial bridgehead is very necessary; we must have space in which we can develop our administrative lay-out.

Hq 21 Army Group,  
No.1 A.P.D.C.,  
LONDON W.1.  
20 Mar 44.

B.L. Montgomery  
General  
C-in-C.