

This Crowded Hour

Freedom's hour has struck and the moat defensive becomes the moat offensive. The Nazi beast is being tackled at last in his lair as British, American and Canadian forces are led by General Sir Bernard Montgomery and pour into France between Cherbourg and Le Havre.

Air-borne troops have been landed behind the enemy lines; two beach-heads have been won and tanks landed at one point; penetrations are being made inland into the Fortress of Europe. Allied casualties are reported to have been light in the first crucial stages, and a favourable circumstance is that the heavy German shore batteries, with which Hitler was going to achieve so much, were largely quelled by the hundreds of naval guns which bombarded the coast. Equally surprising was the feeble air resistance offered by the enemy; the invaders were supported by thousands of aircraft which control the skies.

Thus has the "impregnable Atlantic Wall" been breached at what was conceded to have been one of its strongest areas. No vaunting comes from Berlin this day. Four years after the last chapter of Dunkirk was written in a courage born of despair, the hosts of liberty cross those same waters and storm the beaches. They are armed with every weapon that military science can give them; their spirit is steeled with high purpose, and their goal, in the words of General Eisenhower, is: "We will accept nothing less than full victory."

Prime Minister Churchill, in announcing the invasion to the British House of Commons to-day, stated that four thousand ships and several thousand smaller craft formed the vast armada which attacked the foe's citadel. Air support comes from eleven thousand first-line aircraft, and the naval units mustered 640 guns ranging from four-inch to sixteen-inch. Everything has gone off according to plan, Mr. Churchill stated. There were many factors involved, not the least of them being wind, waves and visibility. The British Prime Minister assured his hearers that a succession of

surprises is in store for the foe. The battle will rise in scale, and he stresses that complete unity prevails throughout the Allied armies. A genuine brotherhood of arms links the British and American troops. Prime Minister King also reminds the Canadian people that hard battles lie ahead; but the war has now entered upon its decisive phase, and there will be no pause until Nazidom is crushed.

Landings have been made on the Channel Islands, and Jersey and Guernsey occupied. General Eisenhower calls upon the underground patriots of Europe, "and all who love freedom, to stand with us now." But he warns them to do nothing premature, only to hold themselves in readiness for the word that will be given at the right hour. Cherbourg and Le Havre are evidently to be the chief invasion ports at this stage of the battle, for it is at those points that Allied ships are unloading weapons and supplies.

The great hope that rises from this successful attack is found in the absence of heavy casualties among the forces striving for beach-heads. Berlin does report that one regiment of parachute troops was wiped out, but London denies

it. The Fuehrer and his henchmen have been boasting for months that the first attempt at an invasion would end swiftly in another Dieppe. But that, happily, has not occurred as yet. Nor does the foe appear to have been able to muster his mobile forces and overwhelm the liberators as they set foot on his fortress, bristling with guns and troops. The Allied air raids have evidently brought the results planned for, and the Nazi system of rail communications is so demoralized that counter-blows lacked the punch expected of them.

What is happening to-day is only the first round, and heavier Allied blows are certain. The main thing is that landings have been made and beach-heads won. Those sectors will be widened, and further incursions can be looked for elsewhere. With Russia on the East, probably waiting until this event gathers momentum, Hitler will soon be faced with a two-front war which may bring shattering results.

Those on the home fronts should pray for the good fortune of their valiant manhood in this ordeal of battle. "When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee; when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee. For I am the Lord thy God, the Holy One of Israel, thy Saviour."

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