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WAR REPORT NUMBER ONE THE STORY OF D DAY

HOME SERVICE. Tuesday, 6th June 1944. 0 9.19 P.M.

SNAGGE:

Throughout the day the British Broadcasting Corporation has been telling the world that allied forces have crossed the Channel into France.

With every arm of the liberating forces went a B.B.C. correspondent and soon after the assault was launched, their reports began to come in.

We have arranged these reports to present a picture of what has happened in Britain, and - across the Channel - on the beaches, inland and in the air over France.

B.B.C. constant flow of news from the front
You all know how the news of D day broke. At 9.45 o'clock this morning a statement by General Eisenhower, Supreme Commander of the Allied Expeditionary Force, was broadcast on all transmitters. It began:

SNAGGE:
EISENHOWER:

People of Western Europe: a landing was made this morning on the coast of France by troops of the Allied Expeditionary Force. This landing is part of the concerted United Nations plan for the liberation of Europe, made in conjunction with our great Russian allies.

The General went on to ask all members of resistance movements to follow the instructions they had already received. To the others he said, "Continue your passive resistance but do not needlessly endanger your lives; wait until I give you the signal to rise and strike the enemy." His message ended:

Par. B.
EISENHOWER:

This landing is but the opening phase of the campaign in Western Europe. Great battles lie ahead. I call upon all who love freedom to stand with us. Keep your faith staunch - our arms are resolute - together we shall achieve victory.

SNAGGE:

General Eisenhower spoke particularly to the people of France, on whose soil the first battles for the liberation of Europe are now being fought. Since then they have heard the voice of their own leader, General de Gaulle, who has just come to London from Algiers. This is what he said . . .

DISC:

DE GAULLE:

(Begins "The great battle has begun "Fade under

Crossfade to Translation

SPEAKER: (Comes in at end of 3rd Sentence)

A vast machinery of attack, for us the means of liberation, has been set in motion from the shores of England. Not long ago, it was on this last bastion of Western Europe that the tide of German oppression spent itself. Today it is the base from which liberty's offensive is being launched. France, overwhelmed for four years, but never conquered, is on her feet to take part in the fight.

In the French nation, in our Empire, in the Armies there is one will, one hope. Behind the clouds laden with our blood and our tears, we see again the sunrise of our national greatness.

SNAGGE: This was the stand-by for action. Now - action itself. First, I have to take you back into the darkness of the night before D day

On a British airfield paratroops are literally putting on their war paint.

Robert Barr recorded this description on the spot

DSC WRU 263:

BARR: Their faces were darkened with cocoa; sheathed knives were strapped to their ankles; Tommy guns strapped to their waists; bandoliers and hand grenades, coils of rope, pick handles, spades, rubber dinghies hung around them, and a few personal oddments, like the lad who was taking a newspaper to read on the plane.

I watched them march in a long, snaking, double line, almost a mile long to draw their parachutes. Later I saw them gathered around their aircraft C.47's and making final adjustments to their kit, before they started. There was an easy familiarity about the way they were getting ready, as though they had done it often before. Well, yes, they had kitted up and climbed aboard often just like this - twenty, thirty, forty times some of them, but it had never been quite like this before. This was the first combat jump for everyone of them.

SNAGGE: Richard Dimbleby saw some of the paratroops taking off

DISC WRU 260:

DIMBLEBY: This is Richard Dimbleby speaking from an aerodrome in England on the night of June 5th, and reporting the fact that the first aircraft carrying the first parachutists who are going to land on the fortress of Europe in the beginning of our great attack tomorrow morning, are taking off from this air station at this moment quite fast.

NOISE OF PLANES

Eight machines have gone - a ninth - the tenth - the eleventh - the twelfth - and up to something like a score are coming round the aerodrome, one after the other.

NOISE OF PLANES

Each machine with its load of paratroops - one machine with a colleague of mine of the B.B.C. flying with them and jumping with them - and each machine following the other showing its green wing-tip light as it comes down the perimeter track and then turns into the wind at the end of the perimeter past the flares, past the group of senior officers standing there watching every machine go -

NOISE OF PLANES

- dead on time, departing almost to a split second on the right time on a plan which they'd been working and sweating and slaving at for months.

NOISE OF PLANES

SNAGGE: You heard Dimpleby refer to a B.B.C. Colleague who jumped with the parachutists.

The name of that man is Guy Byam and before he stepped into his plane he wrote this message - about his colleagues and his own intentions

DRAG. CORSTIENS: WRU 8007

BYAM: These men pack a terrific punch, and they know it. They all heard their general tell them he had a real surprise up their sleeve. Soon they will drop over, taking into enemy occupied territory their weapons and an indomitable spirit. I'm going with them, because their story will be one that belongs to us all, and I shall be proud to be able to tell it to you.

SNAGGE: Well, we're hoping to hear from Byam soon.

And now here's a first-hand story from a man who flew over to France in one of the planes which towed the gliders.

John Macadam, on his return, recorded this description of how the gliders cast off and dived on France.

DISC DLO 57565
MACADAM:

The big test came on the run-in. We had to skirt belt after belt of this flaming stuff to bring the glider exactly over the zone it was to land on. It was a trying time for any aircraft, but for a tug and a glider linked by a strand of rope it looked to me like suicide. But I was glad to be there if only to see the pitch of mutual trust and regard these R.A.F. air crews and the glider boys of the army have reached. There was no question of casting off and getting out of it. The skipper said: "Glider pilot, are you all right? Okay? Great! Well, hold on son, " there's a lot of stuff around here but we'll get through it " Then the tough little glider sergeant pilot's voice: "We're all right carry on." We dived into the cloud. We could see nothing. The glider pilot could see nothing. All he could do was hang on to his controls and follow us about in the murk. The skipper kept on talking to him and always the gruff little voice came back: "Okay skipper." The rear-gunner yelled suddenly: "The glider's hit." The skipper said: "Glider pilot, glider pilot, are you all right?" There was a short pause and then the voice came again: "All right, we're with you." The navigator all this time had been working with his maps and his rulers. He was shouting to the skipper and when we came out of the cloud and away from the flak, why there was the landing zone just as we had been studying it on maps for days and days. "Casting off" said the little gruff voice and we could just hear a faint "Thanks skipper, and good luck" as the tug lunged forward, free of the glider's weight. I looked down as we went into a turn to come home. There was nothing but blankness. But there were a lot of gliders swooshing down in that

SNAGGE:

Now I've put the airborne people first because they were the first to move from the soil of this country towards France.

But we must remember that the act of invasion is primarily the business of the Navy. They take the main body of troops across, the munitions and supplies. It is largely their big guns which hammer the enemy until bridgeheads are established. So now for the role of the Royal Navy. You've heard about the 4,000 ships and the thousands of smaller craft which set sail from the shores of England under cover of night.

About half of the smaller types of British landing craft were manned and commanded by the Royal Marines. And the Merchant Navy is there, too helping to carry the infantry to the shore of France.

Of normal types of warship the proportion is about three British to one American and the overall proportions - including landing craft - is roughly three British to two American.

The Royal Canadian Navy has made a big contribution and the Norwegian, Polish, Dutch, French and Greek Navies are all taking part.

Now Captain G. Thistleton-Smith R.N., holder of the George Medal, sums up the naval situation.

(Live)

THISTLETON-SMITH: The launching of this expedition under the weather conditions of last night clearly required a daring decision and first-rate seamanship - and I might add considerable endurance on the part of the soldier. The experience of Mediterranean landings and intensive study and training have stood the Navy in good stead.

The Navy's first and most responsible job is to get the soldier, together with his equipment and his means of support, across the sea in good fighting trim; then to land him ready for the battle on heavily defended beaches dead on time. This means a great many ships and craft of all sorts, nearly all of them specialised. To put a single division ashore with its immediate weapons requires about five hundred ships and craft varying from 100 to 15,000 tons. Just imagine the task of the Navy and the R.A.F. in protecting such convoys from air and submarine attack, and from attacks by surface craft which may range from pocket battleships to E-boats.

The ways of this Armada must be swept clear of mines up to the enemy's door-step. The Germans set great store by mines and we can depend on them to have used every sort of mine that human - or should I say, and this from personal experience - ingenuity can think out. Our mine-sweepers carry great responsibility but they're used to that, and are probably only too glad to be doing a really offensive job, as opposed to the defensive role they have so often had to play.

The initial assaults could not afford to fail. There is no way round, and only the sea is behind if the soldier fails to get a footing. And this is where ship bombardment comes in. For the Navy's job is to knock out the enemy's guns and defences and plaster the beaches ahead so that the opposition is laid low at the crucial moment when a multitude of ships and craft see the land loom ahead and steer for the touch down at low tide. The Commanding Officers of these ships range from Senior Officers to Leading Seamen or Royal Marine Corporals.

These are some of the reasons why the initial success of this enterprise depends tremendously on the Navy. We know it, and the news today means a lot to the sailor.

SNAGGE:

And now you want to know about the soldiers, the men whose feet now tread the soil of France. Howard Marshall, landed with the allied forces on the beaches.

I'm glad to say that his recorded description, which we have been anxiously awaiting, has just come in

The story of the landing, by Howard Marshall

[I've just come back from the beaches and as I've been in the sea twice, I'm sitting in my soaked through clothes with no notes at all, all my notes are sodden - they're at the bottom of the sea, so as it's only a matter of minutes since I stepped off a craft, I'm just going to try to tell you very briefly the story of what our boys had to do on the beaches today as I saw it myself.] I won't go into the build-up which was taking place as you know for a very long time but I'll start with first light of this morning. When the great invasion fleet had arrived off the coast of northern France, and we were having breakfast, we had breakfast just before first light at 4 o'clock as a matter of fact, in the particular landing-craft for barges in which I was with certain regiments, we had breakfast early and we were at first light assembling into our landing craft.

Still, the landing crafts were lowered, and as the light broke and we really could see around us, we began to become aware of the formidable character of this invasion fleet which we were a part. All over the blue-green water, water which was extremely choppy and wind flecked, we saw the various types of craft which go to make up an invasion fleet, and before very long we were among them. I was in a barge which was due to pick up the Brigadier of an assault group, and we were going in with the first assault wave. So we circled round with the various types of vessels opening fire on the beach which we could see quite plainly in the dim morning light, opening fire on the beach in their own manners and at the appointed time.

First of all the cruisers started with a rather loudly bang, and soon the air grew heavy with the smell of cordite and loud with the sound of explosions and looking about the beach we could see the explosions of our artillery creating a great cloud and fog of smoke. Well we in my particular craft picked up our Brigadier - not easily because as I say the sea was very rough - and we headed straight for our appointed portion of the beach. We could see as we went in that that particular portion of the beach wasn't altogether healthy and as we drove towards it with our planes overhead giving us the sort of cover we'd been hoping for, and which we'd been expecting. As we drove in we could see shell bursts in the water along the beach, and just behind the beach, and we could see craft in a certain amount of difficulty because the wind was driving the sea in with long rollers and the enemy had prepared anti-invasion, anti-barge obstacles sticking out from the water - formidable prongs, many of them tipped with mines, so that as your landing barge swung and swayed in the rollers, and they're not particularly manageable craft, it would come into contact with one of these mines and be sunk. That was the prospect which faced us on this very lowering and difficult morning as we drove into the beach. I tell you this, as I say, because it was the experience of so many other men at just this same time.

We drove into the beach, as rather broadside on in the wind and the waves, seeing the jets of smoke from bursting shells near us in the water and slightly further away on the beach itself. And suddenly as we tried to get between two of these tripart defence systems of the Germans, our craft swung, we touched a mine, there was a very loud explosion, a thundering shudder of the whole craft and water began pouring in.

Well, we were some way out from the beach at that point, the ramp was lowered at once, and out of the barge drove the Bren gun carrier into about five feet of water, with the barge settling heavily in the meanwhile. Well the Bren gun carrier somehow managed to get through it, and we followed wading, ashore. That was one quite typical instance of how people got ashore, and when they got ashore, seemed to be in perfectly good order because the troops out of that barge immediately assembled and went to

their appointed places and there was no semblance of any kind of confusion. But the scene on the beach until one had sorted it out was at first rather depressing because we did see a great many barges in difficulties with these anti-tank screens, and we noticed that a number of them had struck mines, as ours had struck mines. But then we began to see that in fact the proportion that had got through was very much greater, and that troops were moving all along the roads, and that tanks were out already and going up the hills, that in fact we were dominating the situation; and that our main enemy was the weather and that we were beating the weather; that we had our troops and our tanks ashore and that the Germans weren't really putting up a great deal of resistance.

Well after spending some time on the beach talking to troops, finding them in tremendous fettle, very, very delighted at having this crack at the Germans, the next problem came - to get away and come back and do this news bulletin. Well very quickly I'll tell you what happened. It was again a question of wading out, picking up a barge which was leaving the beach, finding that that had been holed by the enemy, the port engine had been shot up and the barge was sinking, and therefore transferring to another craft, getting on to a headquarters ship, finally getting into an M.L. and finally getting back just in time to tell you that all is going well, and that there is reason - if one may judge from the individual spirits of the men on the beaches, not from the military picture alone, which obviously I haven't been able to see - there is every reason for the highest confidence.

SNAGGE Further than the bridgeheads, deeper into France
The Allied air forces are attacking enemy communications and other targets.

We were able, earlier today, to broadcast a flash from the first eye witness report to reach us from the air over France. Here is the complete report, recorded by Air Commodore Helmore of the R.A.F.

HELMORE WRU 268 - 2

Now we're just trying to pick up our markers. Now the have been opened now. I can see flashes where the Bomber Command stuff is falling down. They're just outside the area. A lot of the Bomber Command are pounding this invasion spot like hell. They're tearing it to pieces, but our job's the invasion. There's a bomber this way just now do you stuff. (Right?) Ah yes I hear him telling the pilot to go straight and steady, straight and steady. Oh, there they go. My God, what a lift, what a good lift up into the air. We feel much lighter now. There's a colossal flash over there. We're backing round to see what's happened. There's a colossal lot of planes . . . these bombs. It's a remarkable thing I've ever seen. Anyway, we've dropped the stuff and I think we're going to make a break for it. The best thing is to get out of here. Anyway pretty good show, I think the bomb aimer's satisfied. Hello the rear gunner's reported - or the bloke at the back, rather, has reported night fighter after us, so we've done one or two rather quick turns forward and starboard and pilot says . . . I hope we make this cloud ahead of us. I don't feel very belligerent
Every now and then I can hear the directions of the navigator, but we're heading for the coast now. I don't know how far away it is, but we're climbing because we're getting away from the place we dropped that stuff.

SNAGGE And now let us give you our latest report from Richard Dimbleby - a picture of the situation in one part of France some hours after the landings.

DIMBLEBY WRU 275

The British, Canadian and American troops who landed on the coast of France north of the lovely town of Caen in broad daylight this morning, are already several miles inland, on a front sufficiently broad to be more than a bridge-head. They're pushing steadily on backed by the tremendous fire-power of heavy British and United States warships, and covered by an ever-changing - but ever present - umbrella of fighters. The first phase of the great operation began about midnight last night, when a force of parachutists and glider troops, some of which I saw taking off in the dying light of yesterday, landed on the eastern side of the chosen area to secure that flank. Today, the gliders and some of the discarded parachutes lie like crumpled flowers in the wet, wooded countryside north-east of Caen. Evidence enough that our air-borne troops have successfully completed this, the first of their operations in the new battle of Europe.

The first parties ashore this morning worked at splendid speed. By half-past-ten, quite apart from the Sappers, the Infantry and the tanks already pushing into France, there were two sizable bulldozers ashore, working on a stretch of road that may well become the Royal Air Force's first landing strip in France, and it's going to be ready very soon for the fighters to use.

It's too early yet, much too early, to start giving any reasons for the comparative lack of resistance put up by the Germans to our initial landing, but most certainly the first foothold was attained easier than anyone had dared to hope. This time we have 'cashied-in' on our success, and wave after wave of landing craft have been crossing the Channel unloading reinforcements and stores and armour. Our tanks can be seen moving inland not far from the burning ruin of a small town that suffered the naval barrage.

Of enemy troop movements, there was until noon today, little or no sign from the air, even close to the immediate battle area. Long stretches of empty roads shining with rain, deserted, dripping woods, and damp fields - static, quiet - perhaps uncannily quiet - and possibly not to remain quiet. But here and there a movement catches the eye; a pathetic little procession of civilian refugees, carts loaded high with furniture and bundles, and all the domestic animals around them, making away from Caen. But here let it be noted that unless they departed long ago, the majority of our friends in France are obeying the order to stand fast. And then, as our aircraft or reconnaissance roared over a large and suspicious wood, three German soldiers running like mad across the main road to fling themselves into cover. And, nearer the battle area, much nearer the battle area than they a solitary peasant harrowing his field, up and down behind the horses, looking nowhere but before him and at the soil.

SNAGGE That is our picture - but it isn't quite complete. Right in the foreground the figure of General Sir Bernard Montgomery who is leading our forces in the field. He can round off for you this picture of D Day much better than I can. So listen now to the voice of "Monty".
Listen to his message to his men as they set out today to deal their great blow for the liberation of Europe....

MONJ

SECRET (DTSC:)

The time has come to deal the enemy a terrific blow in
tern Europe. The blow will be struck by the combined sea,
d and air forces of the Allies - together constituting one
at Allied team, under the Supreme Command of General Eisenhower.
the eve of this great adventure I send my best wishes to every
after in the Allied team. To us is given the honour of striking
low for freedom which will live in history; and in the better
s that lie ahead men will speak with pride of our doings.

We have a great and a righteous cause. Let us pray that the
rd, mighty in battle, will go forth with our armies and that
s special Providence will aid us in the struggle. I want
every soldier to know that I have complete confidence in the
successful outcome of the operations that we are now about to
begin. With stout hearts and with enthusiasm
bes the contest, let us go forward to victory; and, as we
enter the battle, let us recall the words of a famous soldier
spoken many years ago. These are the words he said:

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

Good luck to each one of you - and Good hunting on the
mainland of Europe.]

END OF BROADCAST