

HISTORY OF UNITED STATES NAVAL OPERATIONS  
IN WORLD WAR II | VOLUME 11

# The Invasion of France and Germany

1944–1945



SAMUEL ELIOT MORISON

HISTORY OF UNITED STATES NAVAL  
OPERATIONS IN WORLD WAR II

VOLUME XI

# The Invasion of France and Germany

1944-1945

BY SAMUEL ELIOT MORISON

WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY

David C. Isby



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*To*  
*The Memory of*  
DON PARDEE MOON  
1894-1944  
*Rear Admiral, United States Navy*

THIS EMBATTLED SHORE  
PORTAL OF FREEDOM  
IS FOREVER HALLOWED BY  
THE IDEALS, THE VALOR AND THE SACRIFICES  
OF OUR FELLOW COUNTRYMEN

— *Inscription on the Colonnade  
of the American Military Cemetery at Omaha Beach*

## Preface

THIS volume has been a long time in the making. During Operation NEPTUNE Lieutenant George M. Elsey USNR was detached from the staff of the Naval Aide at the White House and temporarily attached to that of Rear Admiral Kirk, commander of the American forces for the invasion; and during the "Omaha" assault, on board U.S.S. *Ancon*, wrote a vivid and careful account of his observations for this History, and collected copies of documents that would otherwise have disappeared. Lieutenant Commander Leonard Ware USNR, then a member of Admiral Stark's staff in London, performed a similar function as special historical observer on board Admiral Moon's flagship, U.S.S. *Bayfield*, in the "Utah" assault. These two officers were the historian's "eyes" for the invasion of Normandy. For Southern France, Lieutenant Henry D. Reck USNR of my staff was temporarily attached to that of Admiral Hewitt and viewed Operation DRAGOON from the deck of his flagship, U.S.S. *Catoclin*, subsequently transferring to *Augusta*. He, too, brought to this History valuable personal observations and documents, and after his return to Washington did intensive research on all Mediterranean operations. After participating in the Marianas operation I sailed to the Mediterranean in U.S.C.G.C. *Campbell*, and, in company with Lieutenant Commander F. Murray Forbes USNR, studied the landing beachheads of Provence not long after they had been secured; in January 1945 at Naples I profited by long discussions with Captain Robert English and other officers of Admiral Hewitt's staff.

Work on this volume was suspended in 1948 while others were being prepared. In the meantime many books on the Normandy operations had appeared. Rear Admiral Bern Anderson USN (Ret.) of my staff began intensive research on Parts I and II in 1954, when he was still helping me with Volumes IX and X, bringing to bear on problems of

OVERLORD his firsthand knowledge of amphibious operations in the Southwest Pacific. At the same time I began working over the materials collected by Lieutenant Reck and myself in 1944-1945, as well as those in the archives of the United States Navy at Washington. Mr. Roger Pineau was of constant assistance to me in this work, and did an outstanding job in elucidating the problems of Operation DRAGOON.

During the summer of 1956, after I had written the first draft of this volume, Admiral Anderson and Mr. Pineau accompanied me in making a fresh examination of the landing beaches in France, both from the sea and from the land. The French Navy, through the kind offices of Capitaine de Vaisseau Rostand, chief of the Service Historique de la Marine, placed at my disposal the coastal escort vessel *Le Vigilant* for examining the southern coast. Commandant Rostand accompanied us himself, to our great pleasure and profit. *Lansquenet*, a French warship of similar type, was assigned to me for the examination of the landing beaches in Normandy. Médecin en Chef Hervé Cras, well known to readers of French naval history by his pen name, Jacques Mordal, accompanied us on this second expedition, as well as on a motor tour through Calvados and the Cotentin Peninsula, and to Granville and Saint-Malo. In England we visited the principal centers of United States naval activities in 1943-1944. My beloved wife, Priscilla Barton Morison, who in the seven years of our marriage has been my constant companion and best critic, accompanied me on all those journeys by land and by sea.

The Service Historique de la Marine, the Historical Section, Admiralty, and the staff of Professor J. R. M. Butler, editor of the official British war history, placed their records and files at my disposal, and answered many questions. I wish particularly to thank Rear Admiral Roger Bellairs RN, the Librarian of the Admiralty (Commander Peter K. Kemp), Captain Stephen W. Roskill RN, Major L. F. Ellis, Commandant Rostand and Médecin en Chef Cras, for their many suggestions and other assistance. Admiral of the Fleet Lord Mountbatten of Burma, Admiral Walter F. Boone USN, Admiral Sir Charles Little RN, Admiral Sir George Creasy RN, The Right Reverend

Robert C. Mortimer, Bishop of Exeter; Lieutenant General Sir Frederick Morgan and Colonel George Thompson have helped me in many and various ways. Vizeadmiral Ruge and Dr. Jürgen Rohwer have furnished valuable information on German naval forces. In this country four leading flag officers, Admiral Hewitt, Admiral Kirk, Admiral Deyo and Admiral Hall, have patiently answered many queries, as have General of the Army George C. Marshall and General W. Bedell Smith. Over a hundred naval officers and many enlisted men who participated in these events have given me information to amplify or explain the records. The historians of other United States Armed Forces, Colonel Kent Roberts Greenfield, Chief Historian Department of the Army, and Dr. Albert F. Simpson, Chief of the Air Force Historical Division, have always been cooperative and helpful.

In addition to the outstanding assistance afforded by Rear Admiral Anderson and Mr. Pineau (now Lieutenant Commander USNR), Mr. Donald R. Martin, former Chief Yeoman USNR, who has been with me now for almost fourteen years, compiled the task organizations and did important bits of research. He also typed most of the final draft, in which he was assisted by Yeoman 3rd Class Edward Ledford, and by my civilian secretaries Miss Antha E. Card and Mrs. Christopher Laing. And I am deeply grateful to two old friends and former shipmates, Rear Admiral John B. Heffernan and Rear Admiral Ernest M. Eller, successive Directors of Naval History, as well as to Captain F. Kent Loomis, their exec., and to Miss Loretta MacCrindle, head of the Historical Records Branch of the Division of Naval History.

Two successive Presidents of the United States Naval War College at Newport, R.I., the late Vice Admiral Lynde D. McCormick and Rear Admiral Thomas H. Robbins, have given this work their countenance and support. The charts were prepared in the drafting room of the War College under the direction of Mr. John Lawton and drafted by Mr. Joseph A. Domingoes Jr. and Mr. Frederick J. Wagner. Captain E. S. L. Goodwin read the ms. intensively.

The problem of elimination and condensation has been difficult and perplexing. In other volumes of this series which cover amphibious



operations, I attempted to describe the movements of ground forces in some detail as long as they were within range of naval gunfire support; and in the Pacific this has meant that my account is a reasonably complete history of each operation. In Operations OVERLORD and DRAGOON, however, where the Navy transported and covered the invasion of a continent, it would have been presumptuous as well as impracticable for me to attempt to tell the story of ground and air operations in any detail. I have had to confine myself to the planning and the assault, leaving others to carry on the story from the point where troops were established ashore. And, as this is a history of United States Naval Operations, I have been unable to give the very formidable British part in Operation NEPTUNE-OVERLORD the space commensurate to its importance. That is why seven chapters are devoted to the American sectors (Utah and Omaha) and to Cherbourg, as against only one to the British sector of the landings.

In order to avoid excessive number and length of footnotes, I shall here give the full titles of the principal sources which have been drawn upon for this volume, indicating first the key words by which they are cited.

### 1. *Printed Books of Official Series*

Of volumes already published in the official *U.S. Army in World War II* series, with the imprint "Office of the Chief of Military History, Department of the Army, Washington, D.C.," the following have been most helpful: —

HARRISON. Gordon A. Harrison, *Cross-Channel Attack* (1951).

MATLOFF & SNELL. Maurice Matloff and Edwin M. Snell, *Strategic Planning for Coalition Warfare 1941-1942* (1953). The volume covering the period 1943-1944, by Dr. Matloff alone, I have used in ms.

POGUE. Forrest C. Pogue, *The Supreme Command* (1954).

RUPPENTHAL. Roland G. Ruppenthal, *Logistical Support of the Armies*, I, May 1941–Sept. 1944 (1953). Vol. II, which covers the rest of the war in Europe, I have used in ms.

In the earlier *American Forces in Action* series, the following volumes give additional details of the landings: —

*Omaha Beachhead* (1946), written by Lt. Col. Charles H. Taylor AUS.

*Utah Beach to Cherbourg* (1947), written by Dr. Ruppenthal.

CRAVEN & CATE III. *The Army Air Forces in World War II*, prepared under the editorship of Wesley Frank Craven and James Lee Cate. Vol. III, *Europe: Argument to V-E Day* (Jan. 1944 to May 1945), University of Chicago Press 1951.

Of the British *History of the Second World War, United Kingdom Military Series*, edited by Professor J. R. M. Butler, the following volume is the most thorough and detailed on this period: —

EHRMAN V. John Ehrman, *Grand Strategy*, Vol. V: *Aug. 1943–Sept. 1944*. London, H.M. Stationery Office, 1956.

## 2. Overall Action Reports (“Despatches” if British)

HEWITT. Commander U.S. Eighth Fleet (Vice Admiral H. Kent Hewitt) to Cominch, 29 Nov. 1944, “Invasion of Southern France. Report of Naval Commander Western Task Force.” A very full and comprehensive Report on Operation DRAGOON.

LEIGH-MALLORY. *Air Operations by the Allied Expeditionary Air Force in N.W. Europe from Nov. 15, 1943 to Sept. 30, 1944. Despatch by the late Air Chief Marshal Sir Trafford Leigh-Mallory*. Dated Nov. 1944. Printed as *Fourth Supplement to the London Gazette of 31 Dec. 1946*. London, H.M. Stationery Office, 1947.

RAMSAY. *The Assault Phase of the Normandy Landings. Despatch submitted by Admiral Sir Bertram H. Ramsay, Allied Naval Commander-in-Chief Expeditionary Force*. Printed as Supplement to the *London Gazette* of 7 Oct. 1947.<sup>1</sup> London, H.M. Stationery Office, 1947. This is the introductory part and summary of Admiral Ramsay's "Report by the Allied Naval C. in C. Expeditionary Force on Operation Neptune," dated Nov. 1944.

SACMED REPORT. *Report of the Supreme Allied Commander Mediterranean [Field Marshal Sir Henry Maitland Wilson] to the Combined Chiefs of Staff on the Operation in Southern France, August 1944*. Washington, Government Printing Office, 1946. The "Revised Draft of SAC Despatch," undated, given to the writer at Caserta in 1945, contains details not in the printed version.

SEVENTH ARMY REPORT. *Report of Operations. The Seventh United States Army in France and Germany 1944-1945*. Three vols. Heidelberg, 1946. Pending the publication of an account of DRAGOON in the U.S. Army series, this is the best overall printed book on that operation.

COMNAVEU ADMINISTRATIVE HISTORY. Commander U.S. Naval Forces in Europe (Admiral Harold R. Stark), typed volumes in the Naval Administrative Series, at Office of Naval History, Washington. Volume IV: "Supply and Logistical Activities" (including U.S. Naval Bases in England), Volume V: "The Invasion of Normandy"; Volume VII: "U.S. Naval Task Forces and Groups in Europe."

### 3. *Memoirs and Accounts by Participants*

BRADLEY. Omar N. Bradley, *A Soldier's Story*. New York 1951. The best single account of the Normandy operation.

*Closing the Ring*. Winston S. Churchill, *The Second World War*, Vol. V: *Closing the Ring* (Boston 1951). Vol. VI: *Triumph and Tragedy* (Boston 1953) also covers this period.

<sup>1</sup> Date corrected in copy furnished to me from 7 to 28 Oct. 1947.

*Crusade in Europe*. Dwight D. Eisenhower, *Crusade in Europe*. New York 1955. Also available in Permabooks, paper-covered.

KING & WHITEHILL. Ernest J. King and Walter Muir Whitehill, *Fleet Admiral King, A Naval Record*. New York 1952.

MORGAN. Lt.-Gen. Sir Frederick Morgan ("Cossac"), *Overture to Overlord*. London 1950. (The American edition is paged differently.) The indispensable account of planning OVERLORD.

STIMSON & BUNDY. Henry L. Stimson and McGeorge Bundy, *On Active Service in Peace and War*. Two Vols. New York 1948.

This volume is dedicated to the memory of Rear Admiral Don P. Moon. A native of Indiana, he graduated from the Naval Academy fourth in the large class of 1916, which has given the United States Navy at least a score of distinguished flag officers.<sup>2</sup> When serving on board *Arizona* in World War I, he invented various new devices for plotting, fire control and range tables, and, after that war was over, qualified as an expert in naval ordnance. The principles of his Master of Science dissertation, "Errors Inherent in Direction Fire" (1921) at the University of Chicago, were subsequently tested and found to be correct. Between wars he served on board several ships as gunnery or fire control officer, in the design section of the Bureau of Ordnance, and on the staff of the Naval War College. At the outbreak of World War II he was in command of Destroyer Squadron 8 of the Atlantic Fleet. As such, he played a notable part on the North Russia run (as I have described in Volume I), as well as in Operation TORCH. After the conclusion of that invasion of North Africa, Admiral King, who had a very high opinion of Captain Moon, made him a member of his staff in Washington. Subsequently, owing to his strong desire for sea duty, he was appointed by Admiral King to command an amphibious group in the Mediterranean. In January 1944, when it was decided to broaden

<sup>2</sup>Including Admirals Radford, Fechteler, Joy and Carney, and Rear Admirals Davidson, Rodgers, Wilkes and Durgin who figure largely in this volume.

the landings in NEPTUNE, he was promoted Rear Admiral to command Force "U" which effected the landings on Utah Beach.

Admiral Moon was a completely dedicated and conscientious officer who had to see personally that everything under his command was taut and shipshape; and his probably excessive efforts in that direction led to his tragic death on 5 August 1944 when he was about to command one of the assault groups in Operation DRAGOON.

It is a pleasure to conclude this volume on board one of the finest new ships of the United States Navy, the 2700-ton frigate *Mitscher*, in which I am sailing south as a guest of the captain, Commander Sheldon H. Kinney USN.

SAMUEL E. MORISON

OFF SAN SALVADOR

Lat.  $23^{\circ}59'20''$  N

Long.  $74^{\circ}09'30''$  W

*6 January 1957*

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*(All photographs not otherwise described are Official United States Navy.  
Frontispiece, American Embassy Brussels Press Section photo)*



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