The invasion of normandy history essay

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The research question for this study is: To what extent did America's new and improvised technologies, such as the MULBERRY Harbor, Operation PLUTO, and the LCVP contribute to the American's success in the Invasion of Normandy? The study will be split up into five different sections. The first section will cover United States' preparation for the invasion. This will be from 1941 to 1944. The next section will cover the technologies that the U. S. used in the invasion. Then, the actual invasion will be covered. After that, the focus will be on the Normandy Breakout, and the Liberation of Paris. Most importantly, the role that technology played to the rest of the battle and the remainder of WWII will be evaluated.

For research on the topic, I will use books such as D-Day: The Greatest Invasion, A People's History by Dan van der Vat, and Steel Inferno by Michael Reynolds. I also will utilize Stephen E. Ambrose's D-Day June 6, 1944: The Climactic Battle of World War II. I also plan to use Adrian R. Lewis' Omaha Beach: A Flawed Victory. This will give me another perspective on the events of D-Day, other than the Allied successes.

B. Summary of Evidence:

As World War II ravaged Europe, the Soviet Union was being pushed to the brink of defeat. Joseph Stalin called on the rest of the Allied Powers to open another front in the West, one that would relieve pressure on the Soviets. The other Allies saw the extreme urgency and importance of this matter. They answered with the Invasion of Normandy.[1]

Much needed to be prepared in order to execute such a huge undertaking. Allies leaders (Eisenhower, Montgomery, Ramsay) soon decided that the

Invasion would be an amphibious operation, combined with airborne for support.[2]Before long, hundreds of thousands of troops were being trained in airborne or amphibious operations. The U. S., with support from Britain began producing massive amounts of equipment to be stored in Britain until the invasion.[3]To deceive the Germans, inflatable and wooden armies were made and put in large British fields. German recon planes reported thousands of tanks and trucks. Few were real. The Allies also fed information to the Germans to make them think that the Invasion would be in Calais.[4]

This was a new kind of invasion. Never had this been attempted on such a large scale. Because of this, the Allies needed to develop new technology to aid the invading soldiers. This technology addressed certain problems that Allied leaders predicted they would encounter. One problem was getting armor onto the beach. To solve this, military leaders contacted Percy Hobart, a war expert. “ His answer was the DD (duplex-drive) tank, nicknamed “ Donald Duck” by the troops – powered propellers in water, where it was kept afloat by an inflatable buoyancy collar, but driven by its tracks on land. He quickly formed and trained the 79th Armoured Division in 1943, equipping it with not only DDs but also with outlandish that carried portable bridges, rolls of matting for “ roadways” across sand or mud, flails against mines or other specialized attachments.”[5]These DDs were created from M4 Sherman tanks, which were produced in part by the American companies Caterpillar and Lima Locomotive Works. The Allies also faced the problem of not having a harbor to unload from large ships. Their answer was the MULBERRY, an artificial harbor. These would be built in Britain, and floated over to Normandy where they would be assembled. Two of these were built. Their

construction was mostly of concrete and steel. These harbors allowed the Allies to unload large amounts of equipment. It also allowed the war to continue without the quick capture of a port city.

Another problem that the entire Allied effort faced was getting fuel to Normandy. To solve this, Operation PLUTO (PipeLines Under The Ocean) was created. This was the placement of a fuel pipe under the English Channel to Normandy. The actual pipeline was not placed until August of 1944, but it was this technology that allowed the entire Western-front to operate until the end of the war. At one point, nearly 1, 000, 000 imperial gallons flowed through the PLUTO lines in one day.[6]

The day of invasion was to be called D-Day, the time of invasion, H-Hour. D-Day was originally planned for June 5, 1944, but bad weather and excessive fog meant that 24 hours later, the invasion was to be executed. On the night of June 5, three airborne divisions took flight. The American 101 and 82stnd Airborne Divisions, and the British 6th Airbourne Division. Airbourne units were relatively new during the time period. Their job in this situation was to secure the flanks to the east and west of Normandy. What at first seemed like an easy task became problematic when units became scattered all across Normandy. Few had reached their proper drop zones, and small units were forced to act on their own, rather than larger organized efforts.[7]

At daybreak, June 6, 1944, the first wave landing craft dropped their ramps to the beaches of Normandy. The Americans were on Utah Beach and Omaha Beach. The British on Gold and Sword Beaches, and the Canadians on Juno Beach. Although every beach experienced heavy fighting, none compared to

the Americans at Omaha. Here, inefficient bombing missed many of their targets, leaving most of the German bunkers and soldiers still intact. The Americans suffered over 2, 400 casualties at Omaha alone. While the troops on the other beaches were advancing past the coast, the Americans on Omaha were occupied much of the day. The landing crafts used in the invasion were a crucial part of the operation. The first waves of infantry were aboard the flat-bottom LCVP, of the Higgins Boat. Later reinforcements of infantry, tanks, trucks and other items were brought to shore by the LST's.[8]

C. Evaluation of Sources:

D-Day June 6, 1944: The Climactic Battle of World War II written by Stephen E. Ambrose is a secondary source with information compiled largely from interviews, as well as individual analysis. The purpose of this source is to inform the reader of D-Day's events, and to analyze each individual event of the Normandy invasion (planning, execution, and result) and its significance. Stephen E. Ambrose is well known among historians and non-historians alike for creating some of the most informative and accurate non-fiction books. Ambrose was, before his death in 2002, was the Director of the Eisenhower Center and the President of the National D-Day Museum. A great value of this source is that there are countless direct quotes from interviews in the text; this enhances the reliability of information. This source does have its limitations. Ambrose, however prestigious has been accused of both plagiarism and false information in the later part of his career. Most of these were dismissed, but cannot be ignored. There are several cases where entire paragraphs were taken from other books, then cited incorrectly. This source was also written in 1994, it is a secondary source, based on interviews from

1964 to 1993. Some of these interviews were countless years after the events of D-Day occurred, making it very possible that some information was confused, or forgotten.

The Invasion of France and Germany 1944-1945 by Samuel Eliot Morison is part of a series of fifteen volumes. This particular source was written to analyze the significance of the United States Navy in the D-Day operations. Morison was a very prestigious author and historian and Professor Emeritus of American History at Harvard. Morison was a member of the U. S. Navy Reserves from 1942 to 1946, and as a Captain saw action in several combat areas in both the European Theatre and the Pacific Theatre. Morison is possibly most famous for his Pulitzer Prize for Admiral of the Ocean Sea. The source analyzes U. S. Naval involvement in the WWII. Morison was present at D-Day as well as many other battles in the Pacific and European theatres. Regardless of the mainly primary status, the book was written many years after the events took place, possibly “ changing” the memories.

D. Analysis:

The Normandy Invasion was perhaps the single most important event of 1944 in WWII. As part of a desperate attempt to halt the continued Nazi expansion, the invasion of Normandy came to rely on unconventional styles of warfare. The German’s “ Atlantic Wall” made nearly any amphibious invasion one of considerable risk; thousands of troops would need to charge a blazing machinegun head on. Steps had to be taken to try and even the playing field for the Allied troops. The answer to nearly all the Allied problems was superior technology. This, as most allied leaders knew would be very difficult to accomplish. The German weapon technology was far

ahead of its time, and allied weapon technology was somewhat lacking. The solutions to so many issues ended up being all fairly simple. The concept was to create weapons that turned bunkers into enclosed traps, and to help eliminate some of the strategic value of trenches. An example is a Bangalore; these were poled explosives which were pressed against concrete bunkers, destroying the wall as well as a majority of the people inside. This meant that as long as an Allied soldier is near a bunker wall, the bunker is not safe. In addition to the new explosives, new guns and rifles made the soldier’s job much easier. New weapons such as the submachine gun, portable flamethrower, and the semi-automatic M1 Garand provided increased mobility and firepower. This meant that German soldiers in trenches or bunkers had a significantly less amount of time to shoot before overrun. With smaller, more versatile weapons, people can not only run faster, but could use the bunkers to an advantage, entering the trenches, and traveling and fighting through them. Perhaps the most important feature that the Allies used was the adaption to combat situations. When Allied soldiers found it necessary to break hedgerows, tanks were outfitted with welded tank trap pieces to cut through the hedgerows.

The most important piece in fighting a war is a supply line. This is where the significance of the MULBERRY harbor and PLUTO came into play. These two creations were invaluable, and allowed the Allies to deceive the Germans into a false landing location.

Despite the successes of the invasion, Lewis argues in Omaha Beach: A Flawed Victory that the Invasion of Normandy was not a success given what was lost to achieve it. Thousands of lives were lost in a matter of days. Lewis

believes that by better planning the invasion, through more bombing and possibly attacking a small port city, many lives could have been saved. Although this revisionist theory is very prevalent, it is not widely accepted.

E. Conclusion:

The Invasion of Normandy, according to its goals, was a massive success. The Allies had achieved nearly every goal that was set out do to, and had some help along the way. Technology was the basis of the driving force of what allowed the soldiers to do their job to the best of their ability. Thanks to creations such as bangalores, MULBERRY harbors, PLUTO, and new and greatly improved weapons, the war was significantly tilted toward the Allied side.

F. Bibliography

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