

Harbors on the Beach

FORCE MULBERRY. By Commander Alfred Stanford, U. S. N. R. Introduction by Samuel E. Morison. Illustrated with photographs. 240 pp. New York: William Morrow & Co. \$3.50.

By JOSEPH I. GREENE

"MULBERRY" should have had a more bloodthirsty name, says Commander Stanford. The whole invasion of Europe in World War II depended on this force, but the very mildness of its designation seemed to make it harder to obtain materials. "Mulberry" had to vie with such dramatically named projects as "Husky" and "Overlord."

The job was to build big artificial harbors on the open beaches of France. To seize by landings the existing ports — Cherbourg, Brest, Le Havre — would have cost whole divisions of men, and success was far from certain. But breakwaters, harbors and piers could be built in sections in England, and then, when D-Day came and we had a toehold on the beaches, the pieces could be towed to the coast of France and assembled. At least there was good reason to believe it could be done.

"Mulberry" was divided into two forces, one British, the other American. Picked to command the American force was Capt. A. Dayton Clark, U. S. N., known for his good sense, force and administrative ability. And with six hours' sleep a day,

Clark and his staff drove themselves through months of strain to get the harbors ready.

In largely nonengineering terms, Commander Stanford, who was Deputy Commander of the American "Mulberry A," tells how the huge structures were secretly built and put in place. They consisted largely of caissons hundreds of feet in length, and breakwaters out in front of the harbors made by sinking old ships, bow against stern. "Mulberry A" and "Mulberry B" were the means of daily pouring ashore from ships about 1,200 trucks and other vehicles, plus thousands of tons of bullets, shells, rations and other munitions.

Cooperation did it — international and interservice cooperation plus driving effort, as Commander Stanford makes dramatically clear. There were tenseness and tribulation in the long days of planning and construction, but the highest excitement came as tugs nosed in the caissons and created the harbors. Clark stood at a bullhorn directing operations in salty language, blistering those whose seamanship proved clumsy. On D-Day plus 10 the first ship could tie up and the first truck could drive from ship to shore. The rest rolled off at the rate of two per minute. Two weeks later the two harbors were handling 14,000 tons a day.

Commander Stanford tells his story well, and the book's appendices contain a wealth of statistics.

Colonel Greene is editor of Combat Forces Journal.

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