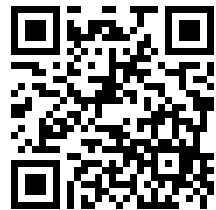


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**HISTORY OF  
THE SECOND WORLD WAR  
UNITED KINGDOM MILITARY SERIES**

**Edited by J. R. M. BUTLER**

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THE JOINT CHIEFS OF STAFF AT THE CASABLANCA CONFERENCE

January 1943

Left of conference table (foreground): Admiral E. J. King, General George C. Marshall, Lieut. General H. H. Arnold, Right of conference table (foreground): Field Marshal Sir John Dill, Air Chief Marshal Sir Charles Portal, General Sir Alan Brooke, Admiral Sir Dudley Pound, Vice-Admiral Lord Louis Mountbatten, General Sir Hastings Ismay.

GRAND  
STRATEGY

VOLUME IV

August 1942-  
September 1943

by

MICHAEL HOWARD

*Fellow of All Souls College, Oxford*

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Frontispiece: The Combined Chiefs of Staff at the Casablanca Conference  
*(Reproduced by Courtesy of the Imperial War Museum)*

# UNPUBLISHED SOURCES

## KEY TO REFERENCES

*Note:* Unless otherwise stated these documents are held by the Cabinet Office at the time of going to press.

|                  |   |
|------------------|---|
| A.F.H.B.         | R.A.F. Historical Branch Narratives; Held Ministry of Defence (Air).        |
| A.L.             | Archivist's and Librarian's General Series.                                 |
| A.S.E.           | Allied Supply Executive, Minutes and Memoranda.                             |
| A.U.             | Anti-U-boat Warfare Committee, Mins. and Memos.                             |
| Cab./Hist.       | Cabinet Office, Historical Section Narratives.                              |
| Cab./Reg.        | Cabinet Registry Files.   |
| C.C.S.           | Combined Chiefs of Staff, Mins. and Memos.                                  |
| C.O.S.           | Chiefs of Staff Committee, Mins. and Memos.                                 |
| C.O.S.(ME)       | C.O.S. telegrams to H.Q. Middle East.                                       |
| C.O.S.(O)        | Chiefs of Staff Committee (Operations), Mins. and Memos.                    |
| C.O.S.(Q)        | C.O.S. at First Quebec Conference, Mins. and Memos.                         |
| C.O.S.(S)        | C.O.S. at Casablanca Conference, Mins. and Memos.                           |
| C.O.S.(T)        | C.O.S. at Second Washington Conference, Mins. and Memos.                    |
| C.O.S.(W)        | C.O.S. telegrams to Joint Staff Mission, Washington.                        |
| C.P.             | Churchill Papers (Premier 3), also (Premier 4), held No. 10 Downing Street. |
| D.C.(S)          | Defence Committee (Supply), Mins. and Memos.                                |
| D.O.             | Defence Committee (Operations), Mins. and Memos.                            |
| E.D.S.           | Enemy Documents Section, Cabinet Office, Narratives and Translations.       |
| F.O.             | Foreign Office documents.   |
| F.S.L.           | First Sea Lord's Papers, held Ministry of Defence (Navy).                   |
| Hist. Series     | Selected printed telegrams.   |
| J.I.C.           | Joint Intelligence Sub-Committee, Memoranda.                                |
| J.P.             | Joint Planning Sub-Committee, Memoranda.                                    |
| J.S.M.           | Joint Staff Mission, Washington, Telegrams and Files.                       |
| J.S.(Q)          | Joint Planning Staff at Quebec Conference, Memoranda.                       |
| J.W.P.S.         | Joint War Production Staff, Mins. and Memos.                                |
| L.M.             | Lyttelton Mission Reports.  |
| M. and D. Series | P.M. Minutes and Directives.  |
| NAF/FAN          | Telegrams from and to H.Q., North Africa.                                   |
| P.M.             | P.M. Registered Files.  |
| S.I.C.           | Special Information Centre, Files.  |
| T. Series        | P.M. telegrams.   |
| W.M.             | War Cabinet Conclusions.  |
| W.P.             | War Cabinet Memoranda.  |

## EDITOR'S PREFACE

The present volume in the Grand Strategy series covers the interval of approximately a year between Volumes III and V which have already been published.

The Editor regrets the delay in its appearance. The delay is due to a succession of misfortunes requiring changes of authorship, the last having been occasioned by the untimely death in January 1959 of Mr. E. J. Passant, formerly Fellow of Sidney Sussex College, Cambridge, and afterwards Librarian of the Foreign Office. Mr. Passant, like his predecessors, had produced excellent drafts of several chapters, but Mr. Michael Howard, who kindly took over the work, found it more satisfactory to start afresh giving the whole book the continuity and stamp of a single mind.

Readers of previous volumes in this History will note a change in the system of references to sources. Hitherto, as has been explained in earlier prefaces, official policy has prevented the identification, in the published text, of documents not available to the public, relevant details appearing only in confidential editions. The recent relaxation of this policy has enabled the present author to refer to published and unpublished sources without distinction.

J.R.M.B.

## AUTHOR'S PREFACE

An author who requires some six hundred pages to deal with fourteen months in the war history of a single nation owes his readers an explanation and an apology. The cause for this prolixity lies partly in the subject matter of the book, but partly also in the circumstances in which it was written.

First, the subject matter. The period between July 1942 and October 1943 saw a rapid and total reversal in the fortunes of the United Nations during the Second World War. During the summer of 1942 the power of their opponents attained its greatest extent. Axis armies were approaching both the foothills of the Caucasus and the delta of the Nile. Japanese forces threatened northern Australia and dominated the Bay of Bengal. The rate of sinkings of Allied shipping was critical and threatened to become desperate. It was by no means certain that American military power could be deployed in time to save the Soviet Union from collapse, the entire Middle East from German conquest and the British Isles themselves from military impotence and near-starvation. Even if Britain, with the support of the United States, herself escaped conquest, she might yet face an adversary whose control over the Euro-Asian land-mass was so complete that his defeat would appear an utterly hopeless task.

By autumn 1943 the situation was transformed. The Soviet Union had taken the offensive on a scale, and with a momentum, that the Axis powers were quite unable to withstand. The Middle East was a peaceful backwater far behind the front which had been established on the soil of Hitler's principal ally, Italy. The Balkans were an active theatre of war. France had re-entered the lists by the side of her old ally. The Battle of the Atlantic was won; Allied bombers were inflicting appalling destruction on German cities; and in the United Kingdom—no longer a beleaguered fortress but a springboard for attack—forces were at last being mustered in sufficient strength to make a frontal attack across the Channel a feasible operation. In the Far East the Japanese still fought to defend every inch of their newly won Empire and in Burma they were to show they still had the capacity to extend it further. Yet the huge strength being accumulated by the United States in the Central and South-West Pacific made it clear that even against Japan victory for the United Nations was no longer in doubt. The only question both in Asia and Europe was: when?

This reversal of fortunes was accomplished only by hard fighting which it is not the function of this 'Grand Strategy' series to narrate in detail. Even the operations of British forces—the winning of the Battle of the Atlantic; the struggle for mastery of the air over Europe and the Mediterranean; the victorious campaign of the Eighth Army from El Alamein to the Wadi Akarit, the fighting in North Africa from Algiers to Tunis, the conquest of Sicily and the landings at Salerno—all this can be dealt with only briefly; while to the tremendous battles in South Russia and the bitter fighting in New Guinea and the Solomon Islands only the barest references can be made. But these battles could not have been fought at all if decisions had not been taken to deploy certain forces at certain points in order to achieve certain objectives. The process of reaching these decisions was complex and often bitter. Should aircraft be used to bomb German cities or to support Allied forces in the South-West Pacific? Should naval escorts be used to protect convoys of war material to the Soviet Union or to cover landings in North Africa? Should long-range aircraft be used to attack submarines in the Atlantic or to support guerrillas in the Balkans (and *where* in the Atlantic, and *which* guerrillas in the Balkans)? Should shipping be used to maintain imports into the United Kingdom or to build up an amphibious attack on Burma? Above all, should

Allied resources be used to extend the conflict in the Mediterranean, or concentrated in preparation for a cross-Channel attack?

None of these issues was straightforward. All involved technical and often political problems which could be resolved only by experts, or by statesmen with the ability to make themselves expert. Many were complicated by professional or national bias and all were closely interconnected. Arguments were shaped at many levels within the Planning Staffs. The Chiefs of Staff themselves were powerful personalities who were seldom content simply to speak to a brief. When agreement was at last reached within and between the Services, the case had to be argued with an imperious Prime Minister and with Allies who had, if anything, even greater difficulty in hammering out a unanimous view. The problems were not ones that lent themselves to rapid decision, and the process of reaching a decision does not lend itself to succinct analysis or description. To summarise would, only too often, be to distort.

Yet this book could have been shorter if it had not been planned, and to a large extent written, on the assumption that the documents on which it was based would not be available to historians until 1992-3. The assumption made it appear desirable to quote the most significant of these documents at length; not simply in order to validate the conclusions drawn from them, but to make their contents generally available for other historians. In fact the amendments made in 1966 to the Public Records Act have rendered this unnecessary. The documents should now become available in 1972, within a few months of this book appearing from the press. Those relating to the major Allied Conferences at Casablanca, Washington and Quebec have indeed already appeared in the United States. It is chastening for the author to know that his references can be checked so quickly, but he must none the less apologise for inflicting on his readers quotations and paraphrases of such unnecessary length.

Much of this volume is based on the work of my colleagues in the Cabinet Office Historical Section, and an increasing amount of this is now, fortunately, becoming available to the general public. References give the state of this material at the time that it was used, i.e. as an unpublished narrative, draft volume, or published volume. In consequence certain references may be out of date within a few years, if not months, of publication.

My colleagues did a great deal more than simply make available to me their own work. They read my own draft chapters and commented liberally on them, often saving me from appalling errors. At risk of appearing invidious I would like to single out for particular thanks Mrs. N. B. Taylor; the late Major General S. Woodburn Kirby; Brigadier C. J. C. Molony; Commander Peter Kemp; Commander Donald MacIntyre; and Mr. Louis Jackets. In addition I owe heavy debts to Dr. Maurice Matloff of the United States Army Historical Department; Marshal of the R.A.F. Sir John Slessor; Air Chief Marshal the Hon. Sir Ralph Cochrane; Lieut. General Sir Ian Jacob; Mrs. Margaret Gowing; Dr. A. N. Frankland; and Mr. F. W. Deakin. My particular gratitude is due to Sir James Butler for his inexhaustible patience, his persistent encouragement and his wise advice. But most of all I must thank my Research Associate Miss Patricia Mc Callum. Her encyclopaedic knowledge of the Whitehall files, her expert guidance, her patience in typing and retyping draft chapters and compiling the index, and the considerable contributions she has made through her own researches to the substance of this volume deserve more signal recognition than can be given here. Above all, through ten years in the catacombs of Whitehall, she kept me remarkably cheerful, and moderately sane.

August 1970.

Michael Howard

## Prologue: The Decision for 'torch'

**T**HIS VOLUME in the 'Grand Strategy' series of the United Kingdom Official History of the Second World War follows one which has already brought the account of the plans of the War Cabinet and its Committees, and of the operations which resulted from those plans, down to the end of July 1942. In that volume a full account will be found of the first plans made by the British Chiefs of Staff with their American opposite numbers in Washington in December 1941; of the American proposals for a concentration of effort against North West Europe and the acceptance of those proposals in principle by the British authorities in April 1942; and of the course of events which compelled the Combined Chiefs of Staff to modify their agreed plans and decide to launch an invasion of North Africa in the autumn of 1942. The following pages describe the consequences of that decision, both for the relations of the Allied High Command and for the future course of the war. In order to make certain aspects of this account quite explicit, it seems desirable in this Prologue to recapitulate the stages by which the decision was reached to launch Operation 'Torch', the Anglo-American invasion of French North Africa. Without such a summary many of the subsequent controversies and difficulties described in this volume may not be easy to understand.

At the 'Arcadia' Conference at Washington in December 1941, when Mr. Churchill, President Roosevelt, and the British and American Chiefs of Staff had first conferred as full allies, a Memorandum (WW1) was agreed which laid down the outlines of Allied Grand Strategy.\* This document reaffirmed the decision already reached earlier in the year, that, since Germany was the predominant member of the Axis Powers, in spite of the entry of Japan into the war, only the minimum of force necessary for the safeguarding of vital interests should be diverted from operations in the European theatre. It laid down that the first priority in 1942 should be the protection of the main areas of Allied war industry—the United Kingdom, the United States and the Soviet Union—and the protection of the sea and air routes linking them; which task would include doing 'everything possible to open up and secure the Mediterranean route'. Further, in 1942, it would be the object of the Allies to close a ring round Germany, along a line from Archangel, through the Black Sea and Anatolia, along the Northern seaboard of the Mediterranean to the Western seaboard of Europe. This would complete the blockade of Germany and Italy, safeguard the Persian Gulf and the Atlantic seaboard of North Africa against German irruptions, and by opening the Mediterranean to shipping, effect a substantial saving in tonnage employed on the long haul round the Cape. For the rest, operations in 1942 would consist in wearing down German resistance by air bombardment, blockade, subversion, and assistance to Russia. No large-scale land offensive, it was recognised, was likely to be possible in 1942; but

'in 1943 the way may be clear for a return to the Continent, across the Mediterranean, from Turkey into the Balkans, or by landings in Western Europe. Such operations must be the prelude to the final assault on Germany itself, and the scope of the victory programme should be such as to provide means by which they can be carried out.'

---

\* See Appendix I,

The Memorandum had been largely drafted by the British Chiefs of Staff Committee and was accepted with little amendment by the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff.\* But within a few weeks the U.S. Army Planning Staff were growing seriously worried by the rate at which U.S. forces were being swallowed up by the demands of fighting fronts all over the world. They believed that a more explicit directive would be necessary if Allied resources were effectively to be concentrated for an invasion of Europe in 1943. On 6th March 1942 the U.S. Joint Strategic Committee reported that 'the only means for quickly applying available force against the German war machine' was the 'use of the British Isles as a base area for an offensive to defeat the German armed forces'.<sup>(1)</sup> This idea was developed in a memorandum which General George C. Marshall, the U.S. Army Chief of Staff, wrote for the President setting out the advantages of a concentrated attack in France:

'It is the only place in which a powerful offensive can be prepared and executed by the United Powers in the near future. Moreover in other localities the enemy is protected against invasion by natural obstacles and poor communications leading towards the seat of hostile power or by elaborately organised and distant outposts. Time would be required to reduce these and to make the attack effective.

It is the only place where the vital air superiority over the hostile land areas preliminary to a major attack can be staged by the United Powers. This is due to the existence of the network of landing fields in England and the fact that at no other place could massed British airpower be employed for such an operation.

It is the only place in which the bulk of the British ground forces can be committed to a general offensive in co-operation with United States forces. It is impossible, in view of the shipping situation, to transfer the bulk of the British forces to any distant region, and the protection of the British Islands would hold the bulk of the divisions in England.

United States can concentrate and use larger forces in Western Europe than in any other place, due to sea distances and the existence in England of base facilities.

The bulk of the combat forces of the United States, United Kingdom and Russia can be applied simultaneously only against Germany, and then only if we attack in time. We cannot concentrate against Japan.

Success for attacking this area will afford the maximum of support to the Russian front.'<sup>(2)</sup>

To this memorandum was attached a plan for an invasion of France in April 1943 with a force of 5,800 aircraft and 48 divisions on a 6 divisional front between Le Havre and Boulogne.<sup>(3)</sup> All other operations, in accordance with the classic principles of war, were to be subordinate to this major stroke against the major enemy.

---

\* Readers of other volumes in this series will be familiar with the nomenclature of these bodies: the British Chiefs of Staff Committee; the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff; and the body formed by their combination, the Combined Chiefs of Staff. A full account of their operation, membership, and associated bodies will be found in John Ehrman: *Grand Strategy* Vol. VI [History of the Second World War, U.K. Military Series, Edited by J. R. M. Butler, H.M.S.O., London, 1956] Chapter X. Throughout this volume the term 'Chiefs of Staff' without further qualification is used to indicate the British Chiefs of Staff Committee.

At the beginning of April 1942 General Marshall and President Roosevelt's confidant, Mr. Harry Hopkins, flew to London to lay these proposals before the Defence Committee of the Cabinet. With the general principle which they expressed the British expressed wholehearted agreement. There were certain reservations as to the extent of concentration which would be feasible. The British had to retain enough forces—especially naval—to maintain their hold on India and the Indian Ocean in the face of the Japanese advance, and sufficient strength in all arms to safeguard their position in the Middle East.<sup>(4)</sup> But subject to these qualifications the principle was accepted, that both Powers would work towards an invasion in 1943—Operation 'Roundup'—and that the concentration of United States forces in the United Kingdom for this invasion—Operation 'Bolero'—should begin forthwith.

But what was to be done in 1942? The Soviet Union appeared to have survived only by the narrowest of margins the German onslaught of 1941, and no one doubted that that onslaught would be renewed as soon as climatic conditions made it feasible. The Russian need for help and relief seemed desperate. This was the burden of the message brought by the Soviet Foreign Minister, M. Molotov, when he visited Mr. Churchill and President Roosevelt in May. Neither leader was happy to see his armies stand idle. Mr. Churchill had hoped to use the remainder of the year in operations to clear the Mediterranean by an attack on French North Africa (Operation 'Gymnast'), and he had still not abandoned hope of this project. But to it he added a second recommendation—a landing in the north of Norway, perhaps in combination with the Russians, to secure a base from which the vulnerable North Cape convoy route to Archangel could be protected. But to this scheme, (Operation 'Jupiter'), the British Chiefs of Staff were lukewarm. The British Chiefs of Staff, indeed, preoccupied with the defence of India, with the situation in the Near East, with the defence of their sea-lanes against the intensifying submarine attack and with the mounting of a growing air offensive against Germany, hesitated to propose any alternative suggestions for the offensive operations to aid Russia in 1942 for which the Prime Minister, President Roosevelt, and a vociferous section of the British public were pressing. General Marshall, however, had brought to London in April, not only the proposal we have noted for a major invasion of North West Europe in 1943—(Operation 'Roundup')—but also one for an emergency attack (Operation 'Sledgehammer') in 1942. 'This limited operation' wrote General Marshall 'would be justified only in case (i) the situation on the Russian front became desperate . . . (ii) the German situation in Western Europe becomes critically weakened.' It was not an operation to be mounted against strong enemy defences with any hope of success. The Joint Planning Staff anticipated that there would be sufficient landing-craft to transport only five divisions, of which the Americans could provide about half, together with 700 combat aircraft.<sup>(5)</sup> The British Chiefs of Staff had their reservations about the feasibility of such an operation; but they set about examining it with an open mind.<sup>(6)</sup>

Operation 'Sledgehammer' was originally put forward by General Marshall only as an emergency operation, or at best one to be conducted against crumbling opposition. Nevertheless it *was* an official proposal for an operation in 1942; and for lack of any rival proposals it assumed, as pressure for an Allied attack in the west mounted, considerable importance. President Roosevelt's impatience was fed, both by his sense of the desire for action on the part of the American people, and by his belief in the urgent need to help the Russians. 'It must be constantly reiterated' he informed his Chiefs of Staff on 6th May 1942 'that Russian armies are killing more Germans and destroying more Axis material than all the twenty-five nations put together . . . the necessities of the case called for action in 1942—not 1943'.<sup>(7)</sup> And when M. Molotov visited him at the end of the month he



agreed to include in the communiqué announcing the results of their deliberations the sentence: 'in the course of conversations full understanding was reached with regard to the urgent task of creating a Second Front in Europe in 1942'.<sup>(9)</sup>

But as the President's enthusiasm for an operation in 1942 increased, that of the British military planners charged with examining the feasibility of Operation 'Sledgehammer' declined. Early in June the British Chief of Combined Operations, Vice Admiral Lord Louis Mountbatten, visited Washington to report their conclusion, that shortage of landing craft would so restrict the scale of any such operation that the Germans would be able to deal with it without withdrawing any forces from Russia.<sup>(9)</sup> The War Cabinet, meanwhile, had ruled that no substantial landings should be carried out in France in 1942 unless the Germans were thoroughly demoralised by failure on the Russian front, and unless the Allied forces were able to retain the foothold they gained.<sup>(10)</sup> There was to be no 'sacrifice' operation, they insisted, simply to save the Russians from collapse.

The President accepted this decision but did not abandon his determination to get American troops into action against Germany before the year was out. He discussed with Mountbatten the possibility of sending American troops to join the British in the Middle East; and he turned back to the consideration of the scheme of which Mr. Churchill had never lost sight—Operation 'Gymnast'; the landing in French North Africa, where American influence was being maintained and extended by consular officials and the U.S. espionage organisation, the Office of Strategic Services.

But in coming nearer to Churchill the President was drifting further away from his own Joint Chiefs of Staff. For them the main consideration was not an operation in 1942, but the principle of concentration against Germany and the elimination of 'side-shows'. General Marshall, with reason, saw 'Gymnast' as a distraction from 'Bolero'. The U.S. Chief of Naval Staff, Fleet Admiral Ernest J. King, with equal reason, suspected that it would make further demands on American shipping in the Pacific.<sup>(11)</sup> When, in June 1942, Mr. Churchill and the Chief of the Imperial General Staff, General Sir Alan Brooke, flew to Washington for further discussions, the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff found their British colleagues apparently in agreement with their own view. After a meeting on the 20th June the Combined Chiefs of Staff produced an agreed report which reaffirmed the need to concentrate on preparing an invasion of North West Europe in 1943 'since logistic factors preclude the mounting of a powerful attack in this theatre before that date'. Other operations in 1942, they agreed, were to be considered only if they did not in any way adversely affect preparations for the 1943 attack, and only if some unforeseen emergency arose. 'Gymnast', they pointed out, would curtail reinforcements to the Middle East; it would thin out naval concentrations in all theatres (and this applied not only to American concentrations in the Pacific but also, as the First Sea Lord's representative Admiral Sir Charles Little made clear, the deployment of the Royal Navy in the Atlantic); its success would depend on many uncertain political factors; it would slow up 'Bolero'; and it would disperse the entire Allied strategic effort. Attacks against such points as Brest, the Channel Islands, Cherbourg or Norway would be hazardous, but 'any of these plans' they concluded, . . . 'would be preferable to undertaking "Gymnast", especially from the standpoint of dispersing base organisation, lines of sea communication, and air strength'.

The Combined Chiefs of Staff stated their conclusions unequivocally, and in view of later events and controversies it is necessary to keep them in mind:

- (a) That United States and Great Britain should adhere firmly to the basic decision to push "Bolero" with all possible speed and energy.
- (b) That since any 1942 operation would inevitably have some deterring effect upon Continental operation in 1943, it should be under-

taken only in case of necessity or if an exceptionally favourable opportunity presented itself.

(c) That "Gymnast" should not be undertaken under the existing situation.

(d) That the locality, strength and availability of needs for any 1942 attack on Western Europe should be studied further. But when the most favourable of these had been decided upon, plans should be developed in anticipation of conditions compelling its initiation.'<sup>(13)</sup>

The U.S. Chiefs of Staff thus accepted the position that no operation should be launched in 1942 unless it was absolutely necessary; and General Brooke, on behalf of the British Chiefs of Staff Committee, agreed that whatever operation was launched, it should not be 'Gymnast'. Once that is understood, the mutual distrust which thereafter clouded the relations of the two Allies is easier to explain.

The unanimity of the Combined Chiefs was to be shattered almost immediately. While they were reaching agreement in Washington, at Mr. Roosevelt's residence at Hyde Park Mr. Churchill was urging very different arguments upon the President. 'Sledgehammer', he insisted, was impossible. No plan had been produced for it which gave the Allies any hope of establishing a firm foothold; it 'would not help the Russians whatever their plight, would compromise and expose to Nazi vengeance the French population involved and would gravely delay the main operation in 1943'. But like the President, Mr. Churchill understood the urgent need to launch some operation in 1942. 'Ought we not' he asked 'to be preparing within the general structure of "Bolero" some other operation by which we may gain position of advantage and also directly or indirectly to take some of the weight off Russia? It is in this setting and on this background that the operation "Gymnast" should be studied.'<sup>(14)</sup>

On 21st June therefore the military leaders who had resolved not to launch 'Gymnast' found themselves confronted by political superiors who could see no alternative. A meeting at the White House produced no decision. A skilfully drafted memorandum<sup>(15)</sup> satisfied everyone only by postponing matters; stating that:

'(1) Plans and preparations for the "Bolero"\* operation in 1943 on as large a scale as possible are to be pushed forward with all speed and energy. It is, however, essential that the United States and Great Britain should be prepared to act offensively in 1942.

(2) Operations in France or the Low Countries in 1942 would if successful, yield greater political and strategic gains than operations in any other theatre. Plans and preparations for the operations in this theatre are to be pushed forward with all possible speed, energy and ingenuity. The most resolute effort must be made to overcome the obvious dangers and difficulties of the enterprise. If a sound and sensible plan can be contrived, we should not hesitate to give effect to it. If on the other hand detailed examination shows that, despite all efforts, success is improbable, we must be ready with an alternative.

(3) The possibilities of Operation "Gymnast" will be explored carefully and conscientiously, and plans will be completed in all details as soon as possible. Force to be employed in "Gymnast" would in the main be found from "Bolero" units which had not yet left the United States . . .'

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\* *Sic*. 'Roundup' is evidently intended.

The planning and exploration promised by the memorandum could not help the Chiefs of Staff of either country to evade the necessity in which they were placed, of choosing between 'Sledgehammer' and 'Gymnast'; and under pressure of that necessity their unanimity dissolved. The British Chiefs of Staff, on examining the implications of 'Sledgehammer', came to the conclusion, not only that the conditions laid down by the War Cabinet for carrying out the operation were unlikely to be fulfilled, but the mounting of the operation would badly delay the mounting of 'Roundup';<sup>(16)</sup> and on 7th July they unanimously resolved 'that Operation "Sledgehammer" offered no hope of success and would merely ruin all the prospects of "Roundup" in 1943'.

This did not amount to a decision to carry out 'Gymnast'. Operation 'Jupiter', unwearingly urged by Mr. Churchill, was still under consideration; but the American Joint Chiefs of Staff, when they met to consider the British resolution on 10th July, nevertheless drew that conclusion. Mr. Churchill, in a telegram to the President of 8th July,<sup>(17)</sup> was quite explicit. 'I am sure myself', he wrote, 'that "Gymnast" is by far the best chance for effecting relief of the Russian front in 1942 . . . here is the true Second Front of 1942.' But to General Marshall a decision to open operations in North Africa seemed an overt breach of the agreement reached during his visit to London in April. Not only would it be an inconclusive distraction from the concentrated thrust against Germany which alone could win the war, but, he foresaw, its effect on 'Roundup' in 1943 would be quite as bad as that which the British claimed for 'Sledgehammer'. In a memorandum to the President the Joint Chiefs of Staff summed up their conclusions, that 'Gymnast'

'means definitely no "Bolero-Sledgehammer" in 1942 and that it will definitely curtail if not make impossible the execution of "Bolero-Roundup" in the Spring of 1943. We are strongly of the opinion that "Gymnast" would be both indecisive and a heavy drain on our resources, and that if we undertake it, we would nowhere be acting decisively against the enemy and would definitely jeopardise our naval position in the Pacific . . . If the United States is to engage in any other operation other than forceful, unswerving adherence to full "Bolero" plans, we are definitely of the opinion that we should turn to the Pacific and strike decisively against Japan.'<sup>(18)</sup>

General Marshall's irritation is understandable. He was not alone in his appreciation, that 'Gymnast' would ruin the agreed plans for 'Roundup' in 1943. The British Joint Planning Staff reported the same conclusion to the Chiefs of Staff on 14th July. 'If we undertake "Gymnast" ' they wrote, 'we must do so wholeheartedly. It is fairly certain that we cannot carry out "Gymnast" and "Roundup" within twelve months of each other. A properly executed "Gymnast" in fact must be regarded as an *alternative* and not *in addition* to "Roundup".'<sup>(19)</sup> But 'Gymnast' at least appeared a practical operation, and 'Sledgehammer', the landing of five divisions on the fortified coast of an unweakened enemy, did not. What nullified the April agreement was neither the weakening of the British over the principle of concentration nor the rashness of the Americans in urging an impossible and premature operation: it was the determination of the civilian leaders, both Mr. Churchill and President Roosevelt, that an attack must be launched somewhere in the West in 1942.

This determination led the President to dismiss the suggestion of his Joint Chiefs of Staff that the United States should re-order their priorities and concentrate on the Pacific. Instead, he sent them over to London, accompanied by his representative Mr. Harry Hopkins, to hammer out their differences with the British. He gave them the clearest possible directions. 'I do not believe' he

told Hopkins,<sup>(20)</sup> 'that we can wait until 1943 to strike at Germany. If we cannot strike at "Sledgehammer", then we must take the second best—and that is not the Pacific . . . if "Sledgehammer" cannot be launched, then I wish a determination made while you are in London as to a specific and definite theatre where our ground and sea forces can operate against the German ground forces in 1942.' The possibilities to be explored were the North African theatre, where American forces could attack direct, and the Middle East, where they could reinforce either the British in Egypt or the Russians through Iran.<sup>(21)</sup> In conclusion the President emphasised that

'It is of the utmost importance that we appreciate that defeat of Japan does not defeat Germany and that American concentration against Japan this year or in 1943 increases the chance of complete domination of Europe and Africa . . . defeat of Germany means defeat of Japan, probably without firing a shot or losing a life.'<sup>(22)</sup>

When General Marshall, Admiral King and Mr. Hopkins reached London on 18th July, they were thus in a weak position to bargain. Events had forced them into the position of urging an operation which they had themselves conceived in the first place only as a desperate emergency measure and one in which the British would anyhow have to play the major role. Alternative courses, whether an abandonment of the European theatre or a general delay until 1943, were precluded by a Presidential veto. Unless they could persuade the British to change their mind about the impracticability of 'Sledgehammer'—and that was a very remote possibility indeed—they would be compelled to accept North Africa as the only theatre where American land forces could be engaged against Germany in 1942, whatever repercussions this might have upon plans for 1943. And on the desirability of the North African front Mr. Churchill and his Chiefs of Staff were now in complete agreement.

The Chiefs of Staff, beset with the urgent problem of shipping losses and the defence of the Middle East, saw the immediate relief which an occupation of French North Africa would afford.<sup>(23)</sup> It would safeguard the precarious supply route to Malta and provide a secure air link to the Middle East and India. The rear of the Axis forces in North Africa would be threatened, their supply-lines could be harassed, and their armies ultimately destroyed, thus freeing British forces in the Middle East from the danger of a war on two fronts. The blockade of occupied Europe would be tightened; and the increased menace to the southern flank of the Axis would lock up enemy forces in the Mediterranean and might even force distractions from the Russian front. The circumstances seemed favourable. Information from American agents in North Africa and from the British Consulate in Tangier all suggested that a landing would be welcomed by the French authorities. Admiral Sir Andrew Cunningham, at the time a British member of the Combined Chiefs of Staff in Washington, brought all his influence to bear in favour of such a Mediterranean operation. 'It would go a long way towards relieving our shipping problem once the short route through the Mediterranean was gained', he pointed out to the Chiefs of Staff. 'It would jeopardise the whole of Rommel's forces and relieve anxiety about Malta. It would shake Italy to the core and rouse the occupied countries. . . .'<sup>(24)</sup> The arguments seemed overwhelming.

Before confronting their American colleagues, the British Chiefs of Staff held a preliminary meeting with Mr. Churchill at Chequers on the evening of Saturday 18th July. They decided,<sup>(25)</sup> first, that 'Sledgehammer' was not 'a feasible or sensible operation', though they declared themselves open to conviction if General Marshall could produce a plan which held out any prospect of success. Secondly, preparations for 'Roundup' were to go ahead at full steam. Thirdly,

'in respect of action in 1942, the only feasible proposition appeared to be "Gymnast" . . . (which) would, in effect, be the right wing of our "Second Front". An American occupation of Casablanca and district would not be sufficient. The operations would have to extend to Algiers, Oran, and possibly further east. If the Americans could not supply the forces for all these, we might undertake some more easterly operations with British troops accompanied by small American contingents. It was probable that the United States would be unable to supply all the naval forces necessary for "Gymnast" in addition to those necessary for their "Bolero" convoys. In the event we should have to help them out.'

When the American Joint Chiefs of Staff met their British colleagues on Monday 20th July, they found them both unanimous and stubborn. General Marshall did have a specific plan for 'Sledgehammer' proposed by the Commander of the U.S. troops in the European Theatre of Operations, General Dwight D. Eisenhower. This was not for a 'sacrifice' operation, but for landings to seize and hold the Cotentin Peninsula, and with it the port of Cherbourg, as a bridgehead from which a breakout might be made the following year.<sup>(27)</sup> But his arguments as to its feasibility did not convince the British. On 22nd July, when the War Cabinet considered the proposal, Sir Alan Brooke pointed out that whereas ten divisions would be needed to hold the base of the Cotentin Peninsula, it would be possible to land only six, against which the Germans could rapidly build up superior concentrations from among their forces already in France. Air Chief Marshal Sir Charles Portal, Chief of the Air Staff, drew attention to the vulnerability of Cherbourg to air attack. Within six months, he prophesied, 'the port would be a heap of ruins and would not provide us with more than sheltered water'. Moreover, General Marshall admitted that the operation could not be launched before October, and not only the British but the U.S. naval commanders had considerable doubt about the possibility of carrying out landings at that time of the year.<sup>(28)</sup> The War Cabinet decided that it did not favour 'Sledgehammer', and that it did favour a North African operation.<sup>(29)</sup> The news that there was no possibility of agreeing on 'Sledgehammer' was cabled back to President Roosevelt.

The President's reaction was prompt. The American military leaders, he cabled, were to forget 'Sledgehammer' and reach agreement with the British on a theatre where American troops might be brought into action against the Germans in 1942.<sup>(30)</sup> Of the alternatives, neither Norway nor the Middle East appealed to the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, and with reluctance they came round to the view of their British colleagues that if any operation was to be launched in 1942 it had better be 'Gymnast'.<sup>(31)</sup> But 'Gymnast', they fully realised, would make 'Roundup' in 1943 impossible. Therefore they proposed that it should be undertaken only if Russian resistance showed signs of collapse so complete that the Germans were likely to be able in 1943 to switch sufficient forces to the West to make 'Roundup' impossible anyhow.

For the Joint Chiefs, acceptance of 'Gymnast' signified the abandonment of the strategy agreed on in April, of concentrating forces against Germany and defeating her by direct continental invasion; and this view they made quite clear when they met their British colleagues again on 24th July.<sup>(32)</sup> General Marshall then stated that a commitment to 'Gymnast' implied the definite acceptance of a defensive encircling line of action for the Continental European theatre, except for air and blockade operations against Germany. Admiral King declared there must be no delusions: once 'Gymnast' was undertaken, there was no possibility of carrying out 'Roundup' as it had originally been visualised.

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The British Chiefs of Staff do not appear to have questioned this view. Air Chief Marshal Portal pointed out that 'Gymnast', so far from being a purely defensive line of action, would open up a second front, might commit Germany to the occupation of Italy and Spain, and so weaken her that 'Roundup' would be possible in 1943, and General Brooke said that the British Chiefs of Staff were fully determined to go ahead with preparations for the invasion of the Continent on a large scale; but in the memorandum which the Combined Chiefs put before the War Cabinet on operations in 1942-1943, the American view appears to have been clearly accepted.

This document, C.C.S. 94,<sup>(33)</sup> ran as follows:

'It having been decided that "Sledgehammer" is not to be undertaken as a scheduled operation, we propose the following general plans for 1942/1943:

(a) That no avoidable reduction in preparations for "Roundup" should be favourably considered so long as there remains any reasonable possibility of its successful execution before July 1943 . . .

(c) That, if the situation on the Russian front by September 15th indicates such a collapse or weakening of Russian resistance as to make "Roundup" appear impracticable of successful execution, the decision should be taken to launch a combined operation against the North and West coast of Africa at the earliest possible date before December 1942.

(i) That the combined plans for this African operation should immediately be developed and that the latest date be determined after which the necessary shipping, naval forces and troop units can be assembled in time to permit the initial landing operation before the limiting date—1st December, 1942.

(ii) That the U.S. commitment for the African operation will require British assistance and aircraft carriers, covering forces and escort vessels. Land and air forces for North Africa will be predominantly British and land and air forces for North West Africa will be predominantly American.

(iii) That a task force commander for the entire African operation should be appointed forthwith.

(iv) *That it be understood that a commitment to this operation renders "Roundup" in all probability impracticable of successful execution in 1943 and therefore that we have definitely accepted a defensive, encircling line of action for the continental European theatre, except as to air operations and blockade;\** but the organisation, planning and training, for eventual entry in the Continent should continue so that this operation can be staged should a marked deterioration in German military strength become apparent, and the resources of the United Nations, available after meeting other commitments, so permit.

(d) That it be understood that heavy and medium bomber units in the United Kingdom are available for transfer to the African theatre as required.

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\* Author's italics.

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(e) That over and above the U.S. forces required from "Bolero" for operation in North and North West Africa, the following readjustments of present U.S. commitments to "Bolero" will be made for the purpose of furthering offensive operations in the Pacific:

(i) Withdrawal of the following air forces:

- 3 groups heavy bombers
- 2 groups medium bombers
- 2 groups light bombers
- 2 groups fighter planes
- 2 groups observation planes
- 4 groups transport planes.

(ii) probable shipping to move one infantry division or Marine division from U.S. West coast to South West Pacific.

(f) That the security of the British Isles is a first charge upon the military resources of both the U.K. and the U.S.'

If the British Chiefs of Staff disagreed with the implications of this document, they kept their views to themselves. In appearance at least they acquiesced in the view that 'Gymnast' should be carried out only if a Russian collapse made 'Roundup' impossible, and that they should wait until 15th September to see whether this was likely; and they accepted the implication that 'Gymnast' committed the Allies to a defensive strategy in Europe—an implication which, taken in conjunction with the withdrawal of forces for the Pacific referred to in paragraph (e), suggested that not only had the decision of April been reversed, but also the original decision taken the previous December, that the defeat of Germany should be given priority over the defeat of Japan.

At the War Cabinet meeting the same evening, General Brooke had, as might be expected, a difficult time explaining the memorandum, but the British Chiefs of Staff declared their complete unanimity with the Americans. 'Both the British and the United States Chiefs of Staff' the Cabinet were informed,<sup>(34)</sup> 'believed that it would be unlikely that "Roundup" would be carried out in 1943, and that unless this expectation was falsified by the course of events later in this year, Operation "Torch" (as "Gymnast" had been renamed) therefore held the field. The British Chiefs of Staff, while confident that they were in complete agreement with the U.S. Chiefs of Staff, who had greatly modified their views during the course of their visit, nevertheless felt that it would be undesirable to press for further alterations in the terms of the memorandum, and that it would be far better to leave the matter as at present expressed.' As General Brooke phrased it more succinctly in his diary, 'any change would have been fatal. The Americans had gone a long way to meet us, and I should have hated to have had to ask them for more.'<sup>(35)</sup>

Mr. Churchill, however, did not for a moment accept the implications which the Combined Chiefs of Staff had seen in 'Gymnast'

'It should not be admitted [he informed the Chiefs of Staff Committee on 23rd July (36)] that "Gymnast", though it impinges temporarily on "Bolero", is at the expense of "Roundup". [So far from involving a defensive strategy in Europe, it opened up new possibilities of attack.] If, however, we move from "Gymnast" northward into Europe, a new situation must be surveyed. The flank attack may become the main attack, and the main attack a holding operation in the early stages. Our second front will in fact comprise both the Atlantic and Mediterranean coasts of Europe, and we can push either right-handed, left-handed or

both-handed, as our resources and circumstances permit. Meanwhile, we shall pin down the largest number possible of enemy troops opposite "Bolero". It is not wise to try now and look too far ahead. If however by June 1943 we have 15 United States divisions and 15 British ready to strike from Britain, and 10 United States divisions, say, and 4 British available on which to draw for offensive action northward from the "Gymnast" area, we shall be well placed. [Moreover preparations for "Jupiter", the landing in Norway, should be pushed ahead, and the southern flank of the Russian front strengthened by at least 40 air squadrons by the end of the year.] In so vast and complex a scene above all it is specially desirable to have options open which allow of strategic manoeuvres according as events unfold.'

Four days later, on 27th July, Mr. Churchill telegraphed his views to President Roosevelt in much the same terms.<sup>(37)</sup> He did not try to explain the terms of the Combined Chiefs of Staff's Memorandum, but there was no need for him to do so. The President seemed as blind to their implications as he was himself. Like Mr. Churchill he took the document as a definite decision to invade North Africa, and ignored the explicit recommendation that this invasion should be launched only if a collapse of Russian resistance made 'Roundup' impossible in 1943. If that condition was ignored, there was no point in postponing a decision until 15th September. Mr. Churchill himself saw none. In the memorandum of 23rd July cited above he had written 'It is of the utmost importance to carry out "Gymnast", with variants, at earliest possible': and on 25th July he enabled Harry Hopkins to cable the President through British channels urging him to make an immediate decision and to fix a date for an invasion not later than 30th October.<sup>(38)</sup>

President Roosevelt at once agreed. The U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, once more reiterating their conviction that this ruled out 'Roundup' in 1943 and turned the European into a defensive theatre, acquiesced. On 30th July, at a conference at the White House, the President declared 'that he, as Commander-in-Chief, had made the decision that "Torch" was to be undertaken at the earliest possible date. He considered that this operation was now our principal objective and the assembling of means to carry it out should take precedence over other operations as, for instance, "Bolero".'<sup>(39)</sup> The latent misunderstandings remained unsolved; but an agreed military operation was at last under way.



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- (4) D.O.(42)10th Mtg. of 14.4.42.
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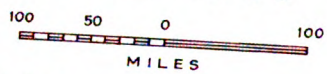
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- (38) Hopkins telegram to President: PRINSEC. F.O.-Washington No. 4482 of 25.7.42. The wording of the copy in C.P.439 differs slightly from that printed in Hopkins, Vol. II, p. 610.
- (39) Matloff & Snell, p. 283.



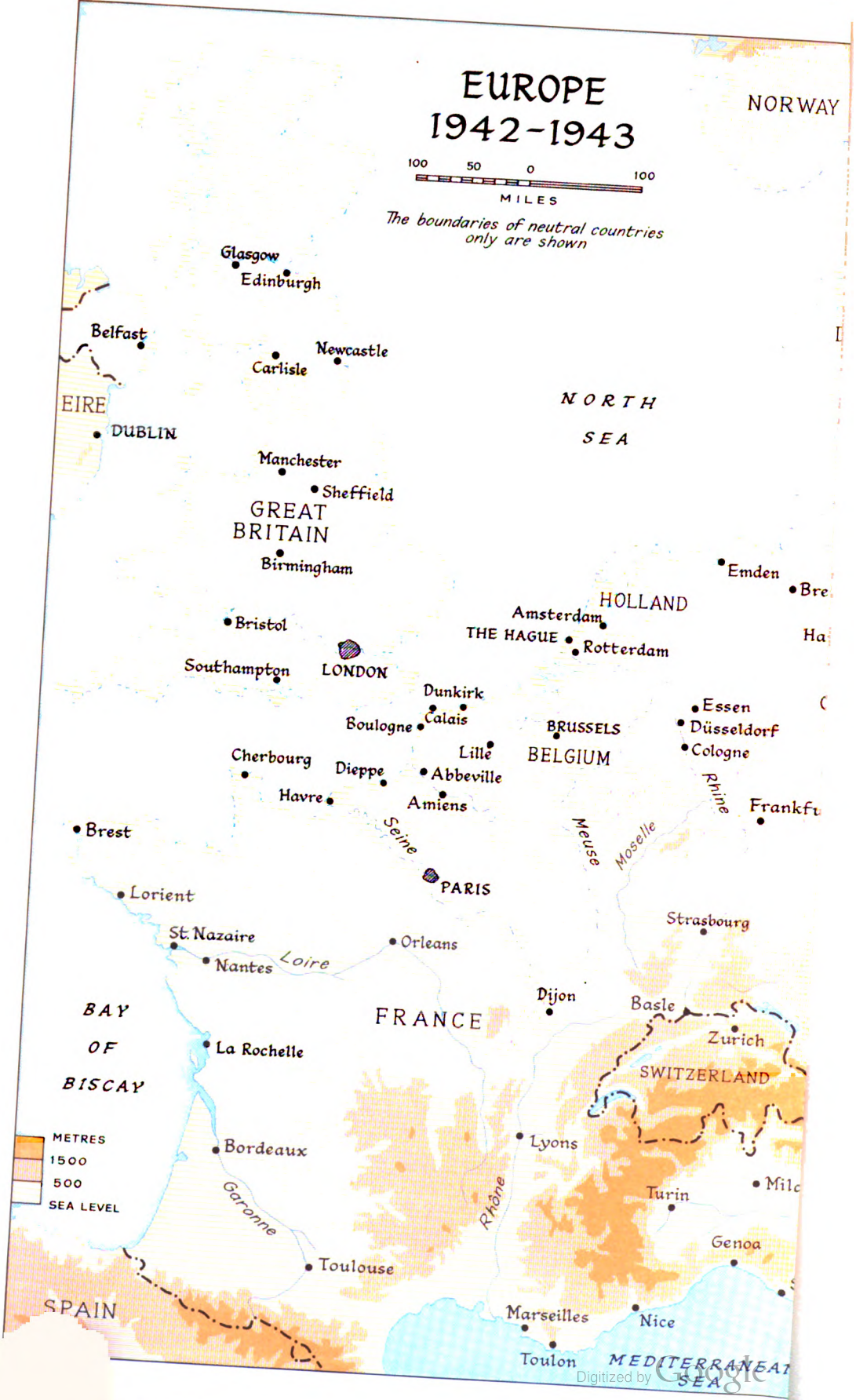


# EUROPE 1942-1943

NORWAY



The boundaries of neutral countries only are shown



BOOK ONE: THE STRATEGIC  
SITUATION IN AUTUMN 1942

CHAPTER I

THE SINEWS OF WAR

**G**RAND STRATEGY in the first half of the twentieth century consisted basically in the mobilisation and deployment of national resources of wealth, manpower and industrial capacity, together with the enlistment of those of allied and, when feasible, of neutral powers, for the purpose of achieving the goals of national policy in wartime.

For the United Kingdom in the Second World War there seemed little if any question about what those goals should be. Few contemporaries saw anything naïve or inadequate in the definition which Mr. Churchill had given in the House of Commons on 13th May, 1940:

‘ . . . You ask what is our policy? I will say: It is to wage war, by sea, land and air, with all our might and with all the strength that God can give us; to wage war against a monstrous tyranny, never surpassed in the dark, lamentable catalogue of human crime. That is our policy. You ask, what is our aim? I can answer in one word: Victory—victory at all costs, victory in spite of all terror, victory, however long and hard the road may be; for without victory, there is no survival. . . . ’

But in the summer of 1942, such victory could be only a distant aspiration. The plans not only of the United Kingdom but of her American, Russian and Chinese allies had to be devoted to the immediate task of avoiding defeat at the hands of adversaries whose strength still seemed, like that of an avalanche, to grow with the impetus of its advance. The Third German Reich with its satellites now embraced not only the whole mainland of Western Europe, with the exception only of Sweden, Switzerland, Portugal and Spain, but the greater part of European Russia, including the wheat belt of the Ukraine and the industrial complex of the Donetz basin. The *Grossdeutschland* of which Hitler had written in *Mein Kampf* in terms so fantastic that they had been generally ignored, was now a reality. Only the oil fields of the Caucasus lay beyond the German grasp, and the speed of the offensive which opened at the end of June 1942 made it appear doubtful whether they would lie beyond it for very

long. Meanwhile in the Pacific Japan had needed only six months to seize the resources of Malaya and the Netherlands East Indies and establish the defensive perimeter which she required to create her autarchic Greater East Asian Co-Prosperity Sphere.

The Allies thus confronted two massive fortresses, each well supplied with strategic raw materials, from which further dangerous sorties could be launched. These sorties might be directed against the Middle East, from which the British Empire drew so much of its oil; against India; against Australasia; or against the United Kingdom herself. Meanwhile the sea communications which bound the Allies together were under increasingly severe attack. Two major members of the Alliance, China and the Soviet Union, were virtually isolated from effective help and seemed to many eyes in London and Washington to be in imminent danger of collapse. The United States was still in an early stage of mobilising her great resources and solving administrative, economic and political difficulties of a kind quite unfamiliar to her libertarian people. As for the resources of the United Kingdom, these had still to be devoted primarily to the vital tasks of keeping open her sea communications against mounting submarine attack and defending her three main bases of operations. The Middle East was threatened by the enveloping arms of the German attack on the Caucasus and the Axis invasion of Egypt across the Western Desert. India was now directly menaced by Japanese land and naval power and shaken by profound internal unrest; while against the British Isles themselves, once Russia was crushed, Hitler might still return with the full force of the *Wehrmacht*. Only by air power could the British strike back effectively, and on 30th May the thousand-bomber raid on Cologne had demonstrated how harsh her strokes might be. But the bomber offensive could be sustained only by the use of resources urgently needed for defensive purposes, especially as the Battle of the Atlantic reached its height. It was the need to allocate limited resources between different tasks and different theatres that compelled the Chiefs of Staff and their American colleagues to devise and maintain clear strategic principles according to which the necessary priorities could be determined. The process by which these principles were agreed, and the manner in which they were applied, forms the subject-matter of this volume, as it has of its companions in this series.

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The fundamental requirement confronting all belligerents in the Second World War was the most primitive: manpower. Men and

women were needed not only for the Armed Forces but for the factories which supplied their needs in weapons. They were needed in agriculture; in the basic industries such as mining and metallurgy on which all else depended; in the industries providing for consumer needs; in the distributive trades; and in all the services which kept a complex industrial community functioning efficiently, whether in peace or war.

Since there are few better ways of measuring the effort of a nation at war than through its manpower budget, it is worth examining that of the United Kingdom. In June 1942 the population between the ages of 14 and 64 totalled 33,258 m., of which 22,056 m. could be counted as 'working population'. Of these, 21,969 m. were in work. 4,475 m. of them were in the Armed Forces, civil defence or auxiliary services, and 4,990 m. in munitions or essential industries. This represented an increase in the working population by nearly 3.5 m. over the figures for June 1939; over 10 per cent of the population. This increase had been achieved by absorbing not only unemployed men, but also women. Between 1939 and 1942 the number of women employed in industry had increased by nearly two million—from 4,837 m. to 6,582 m. The number of those in the Armed Forces had risen from none to 387,000. There was not room for much more expansion of these figures. As Mr. Ernest Bevin, the Minister of Labour, put it in a memorandum to the Prime Minister on 14th May 1942:

'The chief conclusion which I draw from these figures is that we have now deployed our main forces and drawn heavily upon our reserves. . . . Further demands for the Forces must in the main be met from production. To make this good and maintain essential services, as well as increase production, something can still be obtained from redistribution of labour within the field of industry and services, but our main reliance must be upon increased efficiency in management to secure the best use of the resources we have.'<sup>(1)</sup>

In the field of production, also, there was very little more slack to be taken in. 1942 had always been foreseen as the climactic year in which the programmes devised before and during the early years of the war by the Admiralty, the War Office, the Air Ministry and the Ministry of Supply would reach their peak. Thereafter there was bound to be an increasing dependence on the resources of the United States, whose production as planned by the 'Victory Programme' of 1941 was not due to be fully extended until 1943. It was in fact in the early summer of 1942, at the outset of the period with which this volume deals, that United States production as a whole overhauled the British. Thereafter it drew rapidly ahead.



By the end of the year American production of munitions and aircraft was double that of the United Kingdom, that of merchant shipping six times as great; and by the end of 1944 the entire British output was to total only one sixth of that of the United States.<sup>(2)</sup> If British production was to be fully effective, and able in consequence to release further manpower for the Armed Forces as Mr. Bevin demanded, careful combined planning with the United States was essential; and this in turn demanded agreement between the Allies on long-term strategic requirements.

The outlines of a combined strategy, and the machinery for implementing it, had been established by the 'Arcadia' Conference at Washington in December 1941. It had there been agreed by the British and American Chiefs of Staff that 'it should be a cardinal principle of American-British strategy that only the minimum of force necessary for the safeguarding of vital interests in other theatres should be diverted from operations against Germany'.<sup>(3)</sup> It had also been agreed in principle that 'the entire munition resources of Great Britain and the United States will be deemed to be in a common pool' and that Committees should be created to 'advise on all assignments, both in quantity and priority, whether to Great Britain and the United States or other of the United Nations in accordance with strategic needs'.<sup>(4)</sup>

As a result there was set up a Combined Raw Materials Board, an Anglo-American Shipping Adjustment Board and a Munitions Assignment Board, to name only a few of the bodies which flourished under the penumbra of the Combined Chiefs of Staff.<sup>(5)</sup> In February 1942 the British established a Ministry of Production, and the Minister, Captain Oliver Lyttelton,\* set up a Joint War Production Staff, consisting of the principal planning officers from the Supply and Service Ministries, to plan, to co-ordinate, and generally to advise him in his task.<sup>(6)</sup> But a further organisational link with the United States proved necessary; and in June 1942, in the course of a visit by Captain Lyttelton to Washington, a Combined Production and Resources Board was created, of which the only permanent members were the Minister of Production and the Chairman of the United States Production Board, Mr. Donald Nelson. The task given to this body was to:

'(a) Combine the production programmes of the United States, the United Kingdom and Canada into a single integrated programme, adjusted to the strategic requirements of the war, as indicated to the Board by the Combined Chiefs of Staff, and to all relevant production factors. . . .

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\* The first Minister, Lord Beaverbrook, held office only from 4th to 19th February 1942.

(b) In collaboration with the Combined Chiefs of Staff, to assure the continuous adjustments of the combined production programme to meet changing military requirements. . . .<sup>(7)</sup>

A clear statement of military requirements was thus a *sine qua non* and this the British Joint Planning Staff attempted to work out in the spring of 1942.<sup>(8)</sup>

The men responsible for allocating the resources of the United Kingdom had now to take into account not only the requirements of the Battle of the Atlantic, the bombing offensive and the defence of the three main British base areas, but a new and major factor. In April, as described in the Prologue, General Marshall and Mr. Harry Hopkins had visited London; and it had then been agreed by the Chiefs of Staff Committee that Allied logistic and strategic planning should be directed towards accumulating the maximum possible strength in the United Kingdom ('Bolero') during 1942, and launching a major invasion of North West Europe ('Roundup') in the spring of 1943. A date had thus been set by when the British would have to possess a force capable of taking the offensive on a major scale.

The Joint Planners therefore directed their planning towards April 1943, when that invasion was likely to be 'imminent'; and the Order of Battle which they drew up made clear the extent to which the British forces would by then depend on the United States for their armament. One third of all their aircraft and heavy and medium tanks; all their light tanks and self-propelled guns; half the destroyers of the Royal Navy and 40 per cent of its escort vessels; and a great preponderance of merchant vessels, all would have to come from the United States.<sup>(9)</sup> Even so, to meet its targets the Royal Navy announced that it would need another 34,000 men in the shipyards, and the Ministry of Aircraft Production demanded another 208,000 in the factories. Then there were the requirements of the Services themselves. During the summer of 1942 the Air Ministry demanded a further 120,000 men, the Admiralty 22,000: while as for the Army, the War Office had constantly to revise its estimates upwards as it examined the implications not only of operations in Europe, but of the offensive operations planned from the Middle East and India; theatres where the Army would have to provide for itself so many of the base and logistic facilities which in more highly industrialised areas could be taken for granted. By September successive reassessments had increased its total claims by a quarter of a million men.<sup>(10)</sup>

There was no prospect whatever of meeting these demands in full. In May the Joint War Production Staff (JWPS) had suggested cautiously that the manpower demands for 1942 could be 'just

## 6 STRATEGIC SITUATION IN AUTUMN 1942

about met',<sup>(11)</sup> but in September this opinion had to be revised. The continued high rate of sinkings, the Staff now considered,<sup>(12)</sup> would force the Admiralty to make heavier demands for labour in the shipyards; further demands from the Army and the R.A.F. were inevitable; and, as the JWPS memorandum put it.

'... finally, since Great Britain is to be the base for the offensive of the United Nations, its working efficiency must be maintained, the wear and tear of plant made good and the transportation system kept up to the mark, while the servicing of American troops will make a substantial call upon our manpower and upon our supplies of raw materials. . . . In sum, it would appear that the additional requirement of men and women necessary over the 21 months from April 1942 to December 1943 to carry out the present plans of the services and of the production departments and to meet "Bolero" obligations is in excess of 2 million and may be as much as 2½ million. . . . Whether we should count upon the United States to provide for growing British forces or alternatively whether we are near the limit of the numbers we can raise, equip and maintain in the Services—these are matters which depend in the long run upon American policy and can only be finally determined in discussion with the United States.'

A comprehensive survey of the manpower situation produced by the Ministry of Labour in November 1942<sup>(13)</sup> confirmed the fears of the Joint War Production Staff. Demands for manpower now exceeded all possible sources of supply. Even the lowering of the age of call-up by six months, from 18½ to 18, and a further withdrawal of men and women from the 'less essential' industries could only marginally reduce the gap, which was approaching the million mark. The situation was further summarised in a paper also circulated to the Cabinet by the Lord President of the Council on 20th November.<sup>(14)</sup> For the 18 months ending on 31st December 1943 the demands of the Forces would total 1,600,000, those of industry 1,085,000. At best 1,600,000 men and women might be found to meet them. Drastic measures to reduce civilian consumption—a further reduction in the clothing ration, closing food shops part-time and cutting down supplies of books and newsprint were among the measures mentioned—would produce only a further 100,000; while, as Sir John Anderson, the Lord President of the Council, commented on these figures, 'a gap of this magnitude cannot be closed by the familiar process of trimming the demands and stretching the supply'. The Government therefore, he wrote, would have to

'... face the fact that our manpower resources do not match our present programmes. We cannot at the same time, meet the

essential needs of the Navy, build up an Army of 100 Divisions and expand the Air Force to a total of over 600 operational squadrons. . . . Since America's entry into the war, we have now to face the necessity of supplying from our own resources a vast proportion of the equipment we had expected to be able to draw from the United States; and we are thus compelled to retain in our munitions industry the manpower on which we had counted. . . . It follows that substantial cuts must be made in the present programmes of the Forces. Strategical considerations must determine where the reductions should be made.'

The Prime Minister in a memorandum of 28th November<sup>(15)</sup> suggested what these strategical considerations should be. The winning of the Battle of the Atlantic was still to have overriding priority, but naval construction and munitions production not directly relating to this could be slowed down. In the air, the production of aircraft should have priority over increasing manpower for the Royal Air Force; while the ebbing of the threat posed to the United Kingdom by the *Luftwaffe* meant that reductions could be made in the forces devoted to Civil Defence and to the Air Defence of Great Britain.

These proposals were accepted by the Cabinet, which on 11th December approved the final allocations for an eighteen-month period up to the end of 1943.<sup>(16)</sup> The Army and the Royal Air Force were to receive little more than half their estimated requirements. The Ministry of Supply, the Army's source for munitions, had its strength reduced. The Admiralty received 434,000 of the 509,000 men it wanted, the Ministry of Aircraft Production 503,000 instead of 603,000—enough for the projected increase of 28 per cent on the 1942 aircraft production figures;<sup>(17)</sup> while Civil Defence lost 75,000 men. Given these sacrifices, it looked as if the manpower budget could be balanced for another year.

But as the Joint War Production Staff pointed out, the allocations made sense only in the context of a broader Anglo-American agreement over the strategy of production; and this was not easy to obtain. The United States Government found it even more difficult than did the British to foresee and formulate its precise requirements. It lacked the central administrative machinery necessary to co-ordinate the activities of various agencies concerned with production. Particularly it lacked any authority capable of bringing military requirements and industrial potential into clear focus. Between Army, Navy and the civilian agencies there did not even exist the measure of harmonious co-operation which had been established in London by the various committees of the War Cabinet and the Chiefs of Staff Committee. Mr. Donald Nelson, in short, could not negotiate

for his country with the authority that Captain Lyttelton wielded on behalf of the United Kingdom.

This lack of central administrative authority became evident when in October 1942 American production programmes began to run into serious difficulties. In the words of the U.S. Army official historians, 'Production plans and objectives during the first half of 1942 had reflected a widespread adherence to "incentive goals"';<sup>(17)</sup> that is to say, they had been based on hopes rather than precise calculations. The production of aircraft in particular had fallen far behind schedule, and, even more serious, the production of merchant shipping was held up by a shortage of steel. In October it was agreed that these programmes should be 'stretched out' until they conformed more closely with reality; but this involved a scrutiny of Service requirements, and no yardstick existed by which these could be measured. The Joint Chiefs of Staff found themselves unable to work out a draft Order of Battle, as had the British, as a guide for U.S. production. Instead they simply added up the total strength of the U.S. Forces which could, in their view, be raised, transported and maintained abroad, without distinction between theatres. As a result of these calculations, by September 1942 the U.S. Army authorities reached the figure of 'about 350 divisions necessary to win the war'—a total of more than thirteen million men.<sup>(18)</sup> The U.S. Joint Staff Planners did their best to reduce these figures to a more realistic total, but their task was made the more difficult for lack of any clear principles to guide them. As the Joint U.S. Strategic Committee frankly complained in November, 'Production and programs are now geared to the equipment and employment of forces for which no general strategic plan has been enunciated. The size and general composition of the forces which will result may not be adequate or suitable for successful conduct of the war.'<sup>(19)</sup>

The British watched these American reassessments with misgivings. They had two major fears. One was that the recalculation of production targets would impose major cuts in those areas—particularly merchant shipping—where Britain would be most affected. The second was that, for lack of proper calculation, an unnecessarily large proportion of American resources would be sucked into the apparently insatiable maw of the U.S. Armed Forces and not be used to the greatest advantage of the Alliance as a whole.<sup>(20)</sup> At Captain Lyttelton's request the Prime Minister wrote to the President about this on 4th October. He pointed out that the existing U.S. tank production programme for 1943 would provide for no less than 200 armoured divisions with 100 per cent reserves. The ammunition programme for the same period would turn out 22,000 million rounds: in the entire campaign in the Middle East since 1940, the

British forces had so far used only 200 million. These inflated demands were not only wasteful in themselves, but would endanger 'such vital requirements as escort vessels, ships and aircraft, of which it is impossible to have too many.'<sup>(21)</sup>

Britain's basic need was thus to obtain from the United States firm commitments on which she could plan her own manpower and production programme. As Captain Lyttelton told the Prime Minister:

'Without such an understanding, we cannot risk increasing the manpower in the Services on a scale involving substantial dependence on the United States for equipment. If we cannot reach it we must adjust the balance between our industrial effort and the intake into the Services. This would mean, in fact, that given the need for expansion both of the naval and air programmes, there must be a limitation on the size of the Army.'<sup>(22)</sup>

At the beginning of November Captain Lyttelton took a strong team of experts to Washington to try to reach the necessary understanding. Before his departure he defined his aims for his colleagues of the War Cabinet.<sup>(23)</sup> These were, he said, not so much to obtain an increase in allocations but to find out what would in fact be delivered. 'Increased supplies would have greatly eased our manpower difficulties' he admitted; but 'guaranteed supplies would at least provide a firm basis on which to determine the allocation of our last reserves of manpower between the forces and the factories.' But increased allocations of two items were vital—escort vessels and merchant shipping. For the former, Britain was now dependent on the United States for 77% of her needs; as Captain Lyttelton pointed out with some force, 'a diminution in the losses at sea is far more valuable even than the increased volume of new construction.' As for merchant shipping, the immediate need was to prevent the reduction by 11% in its steel allocation for the last four months of 1942 which was being urged by the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, and to press for an increase in the building target from 16 to 20 million deadweight tons—if necessary, wrote Captain Lyttelton, at the expense of the U.S. Army's steel allocation 'which is three times as large as, and far in excess of, what the American military effort outside the United States can employ in 1943.'

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Merchant shipping presented a special and urgent problem. Other volumes in this series\* have described the course taken by the Battle of the Atlantic immediately after the entry of the United States into the war. By the United States' declaration of war the Western Atlantic was at last thrown open to the U-boats. The resources of the U.S. Navy were over-stretched by the demands of a two-ocean war, and it took some little time for the American naval and shipping authorities to adopt the techniques of convoy protection which the Royal Navy had taken two bitter years to learn. Between January and March 1942 the total merchant shipping losses in all theatres from all causes doubled, rising from 419,907 tons to 834,164 tons; and although this total was slightly reduced in April and May, a further 834,196 tons were lost in June. By the early summer the situation appeared very serious. Shipping was the life-blood of allied strategy. Without it the military resources neither of the United Kingdom nor of the United States could be deployed overseas. On it depended the precarious economies both of the Middle East and India—and indeed the scarcely less precarious economy of the United Kingdom itself.

Before the war British imports had averaged about 54 million tons a year. In 1941 these had been reduced to just over 30 million tons; but by May 1942 it appeared that shipping was likely to be available to bring only 25 million tons of imports into the United Kingdom by the end of the year. A Special Committee of the War Cabinet, set up on 6th May to examine the position, confirmed that the total imports of food and raw materials between January 1942 and June 1943 were unlikely to exceed 33 million tons, whereas consumption over the same period would at existing rates total 41·4 million tons, and could certainly not be safely reduced below 40 million. Of the seven-million ton deficit, only 4 million could safely be drawn from stocks. 'By June 1943, in other words,' as Miss C. B. Behrens has written, 'the United Kingdom would, as far as could be seen, have nearly reached, or at the best be within a month or two of reaching, the point when factories would have to be closed down and when rations would fail.'<sup>(24)</sup>

Mr. Churchill's other commitments prevented the Cabinet considering this situation until the 28th July—at the precise moment, that is, when the decision was being taken to launch an expedition against North Africa in the autumn and impose another major burden on the resources of allied shipping. Various possible economies in consumption were considered and approved: it was agreed, for example, that bread should in future be diluted with up to 5% of oats and potato flour, and that a Cabinet Committee under Mr. Attlee should scrutinise the scales in manpower and equipment, and

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\* S. W. Roskill: *The War at Sea*, Vol. II [H.M.S.O. London, 1956].

hence the shipping demands, of the Services. But it was obvious that the deficit could be overcome only with the help of the United States; and the War Cabinet endorsed the Prime Minister's proposal that the United States Government should be asked for a definite undertaking that they would allocate sufficient tonnage to provide for a non-tanker import programme of 25 million tons for 1942 and 27 million tons for 1943. These requirements were to be regarded as irreducible; the movement of U.S. forces to the United Kingdom must be subordinate to them, and 'appropriate measures should be taken to bring home to U.S. authorities the need for reducing the volume of stores to be brought to this country in the "Bolero" movement'.<sup>(25)</sup>

Discussions were at once opened through the Combined Shipping Adjustment Board, but no formal guarantee of the kind required could be obtained, and throughout the autumn the U.K. authorities watched the situation with mounting disquiet. In its report of 1st September<sup>(26)</sup> the Joint War Production Staff pointed out that current consumption was still running at a rate of 30·2 million tons a year, and warned 'If sinkings are higher than expected, if imports of finished munitions are larger than the estimates, or if U.S. assistance in shipping to the full extent required does not materialise—there will be a deficit.' Two months later, on 31st October, the Shipping Committee reported that the situation was yet worse. Even if existing stocks were to be run down to the extent of 5·7 million tons, they calculated that there would still be a gap of 1·75 million tons to fill in the first half of 1943, 'to meet which American assistance is vitally and urgently needed if our war effort is not to be seriously crippled'. But since it was agreed that 4 million tons was the maximum that could safely be taken out of stock, the full demand from the United States must be for enough shipping to add 3·5 million tons to imports in the first half of 1943, and a further 4 million tons in the second half.<sup>(27)</sup>

Such was the position when Captain Lyttelton paid his visit to Washington at the beginning of November. Over shipping, as over other requirements, the difficulty was to know with whom to negotiate. In principle the War Shipping Administration controlled the acquisition and allocation of all United States shipping. In practice the Armed Forces went their own way and were reluctant to admit that the writ of the W.S.A. applied to their own needs.<sup>(28)</sup> The enormous requirements of the U.S. Navy for the campaign in the Pacific, in particular, were almost impossible to evaluate or control. But if the War Shipping Administration could not master the Armed Forces, the President could. Mr. Roosevelt was satisfied that the British had not overstated their requirements. He agreed to increase the shipbuilding target for 1943 to 18·8 million tons; and he gave the



Prime Minister the most solemn and specific assurances that the requirement of the United Kingdom import programme, for which he accepted the figure of 27 million tons a year, would be met in full.

'Our joint war effort requires that this pipeline of material and food to Britain be maintained. [the President wrote to Mr. Churchill on 30th November] . . . Accordingly I am instructing our Shipping Administration to allocate through the machinery of the Combined Shipping Adjustment Board enough dry-cargo tonnage out of the surplus ship-building to meet your imports, the supply and maintenance of your armed forces and other services essential to maintaining the war effort of the British Commonwealth, to the extent that they cannot be transported by the fleet under British control. . . . I want you to know that any important diversions of tonnage will be made only with my personal approval, because I am fully cognizant of the fact that your Government may feel that decisions might be made to divert tonnage in contravention of the policy which I am laying down in this letter.'<sup>(29)</sup>

On his return Captain Lyttelton laid stress on the significance of this last sentence. 'Up till now' he pointed out, 'both the United States War and Navy Departments have just demanded ships out of the pool and refused to be gainsaid.'<sup>(30)</sup> Unfortunately Mr. Roosevelt did not make clear to the U.S. Armed Forces themselves the full extent of his commitment. A further visit to Washington the following March, by Mr. Anthony Eden, was to prove necessary before it could be regarded as absolutely firm.<sup>(31)</sup>

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Captain Lyttelton's team were equally successful in the other aspects of their negotiations, which they carried on not only with the officials of the Combined Production and Resources Board but with the supply officers of the Armed Forces themselves; with whom, perhaps, power effectively lay. The British experts were fortunate in their moment of arrival. It coincided almost to the day with the Eighth Army's breakthrough at El Alamein, and the restoration of the prestige of British arms which had since the fall of Tobruk the previous June been at a low ebb in Washington. This, as Captain Lyttelton put it on his return, 'removed the fear that good equipment was being wasted on an incompetent army', and did much to smooth his path.<sup>(32)\*</sup> He was able to convince the American authori-

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\* See below p. 70.

ties that Britain's needs had not been overstated. With 30% of her adult population already mobilised, only 1½ million men and women remained available for redeployment. British productive resources had to provide not only for 4·1 million men in the Armed Forces of the United Kingdom but for 2·7 million in those of the Commonwealth and her allies. In addition to the President's guarantee over shipbuilding, the American authorities gave a firm assurance that they would provide 9,212 aircraft, of which 1,800 were to meet British obligations to the Soviet Union. Over general military supplies it was agreed that British and United States allocations should share a uniform cut of 25%. Shortly afterwards these arrangements were broadened and formalised by an Agreement concluded<sup>(33)</sup> between Lieut. General Brendan S. Somervell of the U.S. Army Services of Supply, Lieut. General Sir Ronald Weeks and Sir William Rootes on behalf of the Ministry of Production, which fixed the quantities of specific products with which the United States was to provide the United Kingdom, and laid it down that if these targets could not be met, then supplies should be made proportionately available. It was at last established, in the words of Mr. Duncan Hall, that 'the United Kingdom was not to be residual legatee and receive what was left over when the American forces had taken what they wanted.'<sup>(34)</sup> The British Government had established the basis for its own planning which it required.

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- (1) Churchill File 54/1: Manpower (Premier 4, held 10 Downing Street).  
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## BOOK ONE

### CHAPTER II

#### WAR BY SEA AND AIR

WE HAVE already noted the paradoxical advantage which America's entry into the war gave to the Germans in their war against Allied shipping. Between January and April 1942, when the U.S. Navy at last introduced convoys, U-boats ranged the Western Atlantic from Nova Scotia to Florida almost at will. In those four months 282 vessels, totalling 1,631,794 tons, were sunk in the North Atlantic theatre alone—nearly four times the tonnage lost in the same area in the last four months of 1941. Yet the danger might have been greater still if Hitler had not regarded these operations as secondary to the onslaught against Soviet Russia. In January 1942 his eyes were still fixed on the East, where his *blitzkrieg* had been halted at the gates of Moscow and Soviet forces were pressing forward in menacing counter-offensive. To provide for the needs of the army in its unexpectedly prolonged campaign he now reduced the allocation of steel to the navy from 170,000 to 150,000 tons a month, which cut the monthly output of submarines from 19 to 17. As yet, he did not appreciate the full significance of the war at sea; the main task of the navy, as he saw it, was to protect the northern flank of his long land front. Norway, he declared on 22nd January, was 'the zone of destiny' of the war, and it was there that every available vessel must be concentrated.<sup>(1)</sup> He was not as yet prepared to admit that American belligerency need involve any redeployment of his forces; there would be time to consider that after Russia's collapse.

Nevertheless Admiral Dönitz, the Flag Officer commanding German submarines, had every reason to be pleased with the way things were going, and on 14th May he presented the Führer with a cheerful prognosis. He had every hope, he said, of bringing about victory in the war at sea by sinking ships faster than the Allies could build them. The maximum tonnage that the Anglo-Saxons could construct he estimated at 8·2 million tons in 1942 and 10·4 in 1943—though even these figures he considered to have been inflated by propaganda. The rate of sinkings had therefore to be kept up to 700,000 tons a month, and this he considered quite feasible 'in view of the large number of submarines soon available and the variety of operations possible.' During this period Dönitz's



influence on Hitler rapidly grew and that of the more conservative Grand Admiral Raeder, Commander-in-Chief of the German Navy, waned. A month later Hitler was brought to agree that no workers engaged on submarine construction and repairs should be drafted into the Armed Forces, and somewhat belatedly, to recognise 'the fact that the submarine war will in the end decide the outcome of the war.'<sup>(2)</sup>

In fact, Dönitz grossly underrated the shipbuilding capacity of the Allies, and in particular of the United States. The total tonnage constructed in 1941 had been, to the nearest round figure, 2·3 million tons. In 1942, 10·7 million tons were built and launched; and in 1943 the rate of construction soared to 22 million tons.<sup>(3)</sup> In July 1943 the rate of construction was for the first time to exceed, and to continue to exceed, the rate of sinkings. But in the summer of 1942 the picture still looked bleak. In May the figures of sinkings reached the 700,000 ton mark at which Dönitz aimed. In June it topped 800,000 tons, with an increasing number of U-boats coming into service. In January only 91 U-boats had been operational; by July the figure had risen to 140, and by the end of the year to 212. From the beginning of the year 1942 to the end of July only 32 U-boats had been destroyed; and although during the remainder of the year the rate of their losses doubled, thanks very largely to the equipping of escort craft with new radar apparatus, high frequency direction finders and improved depth charges, the balance of losses still comfortably favoured the German side.<sup>(4)</sup>

Although Dönitz, as the summer wore on, observed the increase in U-boat losses with some alarm and hastened the introduction of improved technical devices to counter it, he had little cause to be worried so long as Allied forces in the Atlantic remained short of two vital weapons: escort vessels and long-range aircraft. On 19th November he observed that 'the struggle against the North Atlantic convoys is particularly successful at the moment thanks to the weakness of the enemy protective measures.'<sup>(5)</sup> Escort vessels were of little value if their numbers were too small or their speed too slow to allow them to leave their convoys and hunt down U-boats after a contact had been made. What were needed above all were fast frigates, and in adequate quantity. The Admiralty planned to increase the offensive capabilities of their escorts by the formation of Support Groups, the first of which began to operate in September 1942, but the necessary vessels were not available for this to be carried out on a sufficient scale. The Naval Staff estimated their requirements at 1,050 vessels; in fact they had at their disposal, in October, 445, of which about a hundred were destroyers dating from the early years of the First World War.<sup>(6)</sup> In the United States the construction of escorts received a lower priority than that of landing-craft called

for by the needs of the Pacific War and of the anticipated invasion of North West Europe in 1943, and not until October were these priorities reversed. At the same time the output of merchant shipping was reduced in favour of escorts.<sup>(7)</sup> But these measures could take effect only slowly, and meanwhile the protection available for convoys was still further weakened by the massive demands which the North African landings made on the naval resources, in particular the escort groups, of the Allies. In November shipping losses again rose above the 800,000 mark, 500,000 tons being sunk in the North Atlantic. The connection between these figures and the North African landings was shrewdly observed by the German Naval Staff.<sup>(8)</sup>

Dönitz also realised the danger that his U-boats would run if the Allies could improve their air cover for the convoy-routes, and in September he was beginning to urge that the *Luftwaffe* should put more aircraft at his disposal for the Battle of the Atlantic.<sup>(9)</sup> This demand was to find no favour with Marshal Göring, who exercised direct personal command over the *Luftwaffe*; but unfortunately the conflict between the German naval and air force commanders found a close parallel in the tension which existed in the United Kingdom between the Admiralty and the Air Ministry over the same question.

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The conflicting demands of sea and air power were well summarised in a memorandum which the Prime Minister circulated on 21st July 1942:<sup>(10)</sup> 'It might be true to say that the issue of the war depends on whether Hitler's U-boat attack on Allied tonnage, or the increase and application of Allied air power, reach their full fruition first.' Two years earlier the British Government had built their strongest, if not their only hopes of victory on the damage which Bomber Command would be able to inflict on the German homeland. It was this, combined with blockade and subversion leading to widespread uprisings of patriot forces, that would, it was hoped, destroy the Nazi war machine from within. The engagement of German armies by the Russians, and the promise of United States forces on a large scale, had now made it possible to plan for more direct attacks on the Continent:

'We look forward to mass invasion of the Continent by liberating armies, and general revolt of the populations against Hitler's tyranny. All the same, [the Prime Minister continued] it would be a mistake to cast aside our original thought which,

it may be mentioned, is also strong in American minds, namely, that the severe, ruthless bombing of Germany on an ever-increasing scale will not only cripple her war effort, including U-boat and aircraft production, but will also create conditions intolerable to the mass of the German population.

It is at this point that we must observe with sorrow and alarm the woeful shrinkage of our plans for Bomber Expansion. The needs of the Navy and of the Middle East and India, the short-fall of our British production programmes, the natural wish of the Americans to fly their own bombers against the enemy, and the inevitable delay in these machines coming into action, all these falling exclusively upon Bomber Command, have prevented so far the fruition of our hopes for the summer and autumn. We must regard the bomber offensive against Germany at least as a feature in breaking her war-will second only to the largest military operations which can be conducted on the Continent until that war-will is broken.'

The plans to which the Prime Minister referred had originated in a directive issued by the Air Staff on 14th February 1942, which the historians of the strategic bomber offensive have with good reason termed 'a pregnant date in air history'.<sup>(11)</sup> By this, the Air Staff reasserted the primacy of the bombing offensive in the face of the other demands, particularly for reinforcements for overseas theatres and support for the war at sea, which had been forcing an alarming dispersal of the strength of Bomber Command. The Commander-in-Chief of that Command was now authorised to employ his forces 'without restriction', directing them against 'the morale of the enemy civil population and, in particular, of the industrial workers.' A week later Air Chief Marshal Sir Arthur Harris was appointed Commander-in-Chief. It may be observed that the decision to initiate this programme had been taken neither by the War Cabinet nor by its Defence Committee but by the Chief of Air Staff in direct consultation with the Prime Minister; and that Air Chief Marshal Harris enjoyed at this stage of the war a right of personal access to the Prime Minister which gave him a remarkable degree of independence, not only from the Chiefs of Staff Committee, but from the Air Staff itself.<sup>(12)</sup> General Brooke suggested on 16th June that the Chiefs of Staff 'should periodically review and make recommendations as to the employment of our bomber effort; it should not be treated as a thing apart.'<sup>(13)</sup> But Mr. Churchill's tendency to treat it as a thing apart extended throughout the period covered by this volume.

Air Chief Marshal Harris at once began to build up both the morale and the prestige of his Command by a series of spectacular attacks concentrated on single targets; attacks facilitated by the introduction of a new radar aid to navigation, *GEE*. The attacks on

Lübeck in March and Rostock in April, heavy and destructive as they were, were only preliminaries to that on Cologne on 30th May by 1,046 aircraft, of which 40 failed to return. Considering that when Harris took over his Command only some 500 aircraft with crews were nightly available for operations, this was as remarkable as a feat of sheer organisation as it was for the destruction it caused, and it was Harris's hope that this might rapidly become the normal scale of attack. But it was not possible to maintain attacks either of comparable scale or of equal effectiveness. Only two further raids on this scale were launched in 1942, against Essen on 1st June and against Bremen on 25th June, and neither enjoyed comparable success.<sup>(14)</sup> Even an attack by 630 aircraft against Düsseldorf on 31st July was not to be equalled in scale until the following May.

By the early summer of 1942 it was evident that the bomber offensive against Germany could achieve all that its supporters hoped from it only if it received a far greater priority in the allocation of resources. The previous volume in this series<sup>(15)</sup> has summarised the controversy which developed over the claim advanced by Lord Cherwell in April, that concentrated bombing of the 58 largest German cities over fifteen months would break the spirit of the German people—a claim based on calculations which the Secretary of State for Air described as 'simple, clear and convincing'.<sup>(16)</sup> After the raid on Cologne Air Chief Marshal Harris reopened the question with a memorandum to Mr. Churchill of 17th June which declared it to be 'imperative if we hope to win the war to abandon the disastrous policy of military intervention in the land campaigns of Europe, and concentrate our air power against the enemy's weakest spots.'<sup>(17)</sup> He doggedly resisted the demands of the Navy for the allocation of more of his forces to anti-submarine warfare. In a note of 24th August he pointed out that, thanks to the diversion of half its efforts to naval and military purposes, the first line strength of Bomber Command was now only 11% of the Royal Air Force strength as a whole.

'The purely defensive use of air power [he wrote] is grossly wasteful. The Naval employment of aircraft consists of picking at the fringes of enemy power, of waiting for opportunities that may never occur, and indeed probably never will occur, of looking for needles in a haystack. They attempt to sever each capillary vein, one by one, when they could, with much less effort, cut the artery. Bomber Command attacks the source of all Naval Power rather than the fringes of one type of enemy Naval operations which obviously menace us—the submarine.'<sup>(18)</sup>

But by the summer of 1942 the needs of the Royal Navy appeared almost desperate. In March the First Sea Lord, Admiral Sir Dudley

Pound, had assessed his total requirement for maritime aircraft at 1,940, of which he had 947. The Air Ministry agreed to make these shortages good by the end of the year; four squadrons of Wellington and Whitley bombers were transferred from Bomber Command to Coastal Command, and further aircraft, without being transferred, were put on flying regular sorties against U-boats passing through the Bay of Biscay on their way to and from station in the Atlantic. But to the Admiralty the mounting toll of losses made these measures appear quite inadequate, and on 16th June the First Sea Lord had urged that the situation should at least be examined by the Joint Planning Staff.<sup>(19)</sup> To this the C.I.G.S. assented, but the Chief of the Air Staff did not. The J.P.S., he argued, were 'not constituted to handle such problems', and he refused to admit that the situation was so grave as Sir Dudley Pound feared. He demanded instead that the Navy should prove their case and furnish 'good reason for the diversion of aircraft from the offensive. . . . If their case can be proved' he stated in a note of 23rd June, 'I shall consider it my duty to propose to the Chiefs of Staff Committee . . . whatever changes in the present employment of our air forces may be necessary.'<sup>(20)</sup> The Royal Air Force, in short, must remain responsible for proposing how its limited resources of air power were to be used.

The Chiefs of Staff tried to resolve the deadlock by appointing, on 24th June, a Committee of their own consisting of the Assistant Chief of Naval Staff (Home) (Rear Admiral E. J. P. Brind) and the Assistant Chief of Air Staff (Plans) (Air Vice Marshal J. C. Slessor) with the task of advising them 'on the general policy for the employment of the air forces on the basis of the strategy contained in the memorandum WWI which was to be interpreted as requiring our commitments to be made in the following priority:

- '(i) Minimum necessary fighter defence of the U.K.
- (ii) Minimum necessary allocations for securing our vital communications and interrupting those of the enemy.
- (iii) Maximum possible provision for the offensive both direct and in support of land operations.'<sup>(21)</sup>

The Committee took only a week to produce their report. This supported the Navy's case.

'The plain fact is [they stated] that the submarine campaign against our shipping has reached a point beyond our capacity to control; this is not only having a very damaging effect upon our economy, but is a serious handicap to our strategy. Moreover, lack of air support is restricting the offensive action of the Fleet, and the proper exercise of the blockade.'

The measures which it recommended included the transfer of two squadrons of Lancasters from Bomber Command to Coastal Command, the equipment of long-range fighter aircraft as torpedo-bombers, and the intensive bombing of submarine yards.<sup>(22)</sup>

The Chief of Air Staff was still unconvinced. He denied that any 'case had been presented which, by relating the building programmes of our merchant shipping, escort craft and enemy submarines to the rate of sinking both of our ships and of enemy submarines, enabled a balanced judgement to be made as to whether the situation was so serious that "stop-gap" measures were essential.' He refused to sanction the transfer of the Lancasters. Instead, he authorised Bomber Command to fly up to 50 sorties a week in support of Coastal Command.<sup>(23)</sup> This satisfied nobody. Sir Arthur Harris complained to the Prime Minister in the note quoted above. He was reinforced by the father of the Royal Air Force, Lord Trenchard himself, who reasserted, in a memorandum to the Prime Minister, the faith in which he had worked so hard to bring up his successors:<sup>(24)</sup>

'For the country to get mixed up this year or next in land warfare on the Continent of Europe is to play Germany's game—it is to revert to 1914–1918 . . . if we are to win the war in a reasonable time we must avoid entanglement in land campaigns and instead put everything into air power (British and American) against the enemy's vital spots. If we can put such a force into attack from the air German morale and ability to continue the war will be broken. . . .'

These documents Mr. Churchill circulated to the War Cabinet on 9th September, commenting: 'I do not myself adopt or endorse the views expressed, which I think fall into the error of spoiling a good case by overstatement.'

Throughout the summer the controversy continued, and it became increasingly clear that the normal process of inter-service consultation was unlikely to resolve it. The proposal that a special Committee should be set up under a Cabinet Minister to deal with the matter had been considered in June by the Chiefs of Staff and rejected.<sup>(25)</sup> But by August the situation was so grave, and the Services had apparently made so little progress towards solving it, that this course was adopted. On 12th August a Cabinet Anti-U-Boat Warfare Committee was established. It consisted of the Prime Minister himself, the Ministers and Chiefs of Staff of the Services and representatives of the United States.

Somewhat surprisingly, the Committee did not meet until 4th November. By then the U-boats were concentrating their attacks on the 'gap' in the Mid-Atlantic beyond the range of land-based aircraft employed either by Coastal Command or by the United States and

Canadian air forces. It was also necessary to strengthen the air patrols in the Bay of Biscay, where the U-boats enjoyed the protection of the *Luftwaffe* operating from bases in France. This latter need, the Chiefs of Staff agreed to meet by transferring thirty Halifaxes to Coastal Command and replacing the Wellingtons already on patrol by aircraft more suitably equipped. Bomber Command was to be recompensed by the transfer of two squadrons of Liberators from the U.S. Army Air Force. But the mid-Atlantic gap could be patrolled only by escort-carriers, which had been diverted to the 'Torch' landings, or by very long-range aircraft of a kind only just beginning to come into service: the British Lancaster, a land bomber whose conversion to maritime employment would involve considerable delays, and the American Liberator, of which only small quantities were at present available to the British. The demand for these aircraft from all theatres, especially the Pacific, was very heavy indeed, and in spite of agreement in principle by the Combined Chiefs of Staff at Casablanca, and reiterated urgings by the British in Washington, the full requirements of the Battle of the Atlantic were never entirely met.

By the end of the year therefore the technical problems of the Battle of the Atlantic had still not been solved, and the necessary equipment was still not available in sufficient quantity. But an effective co-ordinating mechanism had at least been created which, together with the increasing supplies of aircraft becoming generally available was able to mitigate the sharp conflicts between the two Services which had so unhappily characterised the whole of 1942.

On the issue at stake the verdict of Sir James Butler seems altogether fair: 'It is difficult not to agree with those who believed that in the shipping emergency of that year increased assistance to the war at sea would have been worth a slight reduction in the strength of the strategic air offensive.'<sup>(26)</sup> But one might also suggest that the very intensity of this conflict betrayed a weakness in the machinery for inter-service co-operation. Where resources are scarce, disagreement over their allocation is inevitable; but resources of all kinds were scarce in 1942, and over no other question did the conflict over their use rise to comparable heights of inter-service bitterness. This feeling was only partially mitigated by the formal machinery of the Chiefs of Staff Committee and the informal friendly contacts of many of the senior officers concerned. Under such circumstances, it is a little surprising that the matter was not taken firmly in hand at an early stage by the Minister of Defence himself, and that Mr. Churchill should have waited for so long before bringing his Service Chiefs together and hammering out an agreed and consistent policy. Perhaps one need look no further for an explanation than to the Prime Minister's understandable reluctance to do anything to

weaken the most powerful offensive weapon that the United Kingdom had to hand; a reluctance which made him particularly susceptible to the arguments of Sir Arthur Harris and the Air Ministry and perhaps unduly sceptical of the views of the Admiralty. The fact that he considered it worth while, at the height of the controversy, to circulate to his colleagues the papers of Sir Arthur Harris and Lord Trenchard—albeit with a disclaimer—indicates the extent to which he was *parti pris*.

In any case, Mr. Churchill had no intention of allowing any detachment of air forces to defensive purposes to weaken the overall strength of Bomber Command. On 17th September he laid it down that the strength of Bomber Command at home should by the end of the year be increased from 32 fully operational squadrons to 50. This was to be found partly from increased production, but Coastal Command was to make a contribution and the remainder was to come from allocations to the Middle and Far East. The C.I.G.S. and the First Sea Lord naturally suggested, on 19th October, that the implications of this reallocation for their own services should be carefully examined, but the Chief of Air Staff was anxious to avoid any prolonged enquiry which might cause delay. He proposed instead that representatives of the War Office and Admiralty should be briefed by 'an officer of the Air Ministry who could explain how personnel requirements of the 50 squadron plan would affect Coastal and Army Co-operation Commands.'<sup>(27)</sup> The Prime Minister himself made it clear that this figure was one to be not discussed but accepted. 'To maintain a steady crescendo [of bombing] is an offensive measure of the highest consequence' he insisted in a paper circulated on 16th December. 'Arrangements have been set on foot for raising Bomber Command to 50 squadrons by the end of the year, and all necessary action has been taken to ensure that this target is in fact reached.'<sup>(28)</sup> The target was not reached. On 31st December there were still only 44 operational squadrons serving at home with Bomber Command.<sup>(29)</sup> But the dominant place of strategic bombing in British strategic policy was assured, and within a few weeks it was to be formally confirmed at the Casablanca Conference.

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It was not only in British policy that this priority was established. More perhaps than in any other field of military activity, the British officers concerned felt it essential to work in the closest possible contact with their American opposite numbers, whose outlook and interests coincided almost exactly with their own. The United States



Army Air Force, like the Royal Air Force, had long believed in the strategic bomber as a decisive weapon. Like the Royal Air Force it had had to contend with the scepticism and the rivalry of the other two Services; and even more than the Royal Air Force did it have to resist demands for diversion of bomber strength to other purposes and other theatres. The build-up of the Eighth U.S. Air Force in the United Kingdom under General Carl Spaatz, which had begun in May 1942, had formed part of the general 'Bolero'-'Roundup' pattern which was so drastically disrupted by the decision to launch the invasion of North Africa; and once that decision was taken the U.S. Air Force authorities came under heavy pressure from the U.S. Navy to limit their commitments in Europe to those required for supporting operations in the Mediterranean and to redeploy the rest of their resources to the Pacific.<sup>(30)</sup> The U.S.A.A.F. countered by insisting on the value of the strategic bomber offensive against Germany, not simply as an adjunct to an invasion of North West Europe, but as a weapon in itself. In doing so they deployed the same arguments, and held out the same hopes, as did their British colleagues in their conflict with the Royal Navy; and it was natural that, in preparing their cases, the two forces should have collaborated very closely indeed.

On 28th August Air Chief Marshal Portal advised the Prime Minister to send President Roosevelt a copy of the note by Sir Arthur Harris referred to above, since it might be 'very valuable in counteracting the present tendency of the U.S. Chiefs of Staff to turn away from the European theatre.'<sup>(31)</sup> This Mr. Churchill did, on 16th September with a covering note declaring himself 'sure we should be missing great opportunities if we did not concentrate every available Fortress and long-range escort fighter as quickly as possible for the attack on our primary enemy.'<sup>(32)</sup> A month later he came under further pressure. Sir Archibald Sinclair, the Secretary of State for Air, on 23rd October urged him to 'declare unequivocally for the heavy bomber as the main instrument of victory. . . . According to our information your pronouncement would be decisive in its influence upon American deliberations at this critical juncture'; while at the same time Sir Arthur Harris begged the Prime Minister to 'come down personally and most emphatically on the side of throwing every bomb against Germany, subject only to minimum essential diversions elsewhere.'<sup>(33)</sup>

But there was one matter on which the Royal Air Force and their American colleagues were in disagreement. The first combat mission by the U.S. Eighth Air Force was flown on 17th August 1942, when 12 B.17s (Flying Fortresses) attacked the railway yards at Rouen, by daylight and without loss. This and the five similar missions which followed, showed, according to the U.S. Air Force Planning

Staff 'that it is perfectly feasible to conduct accurate, high-level, bombing under combat conditions, in the face of enemy anti-aircraft and fighter opposition.'<sup>(34)</sup> On the strength of this belief they then went on to propose a programme for a Combined Bomber Offensive against Germany, closely paralleling that being worked out by the Royal Air Force, which should reach its climax in mid-1944. In this the U.S.A.A.F. would concentrate on the 'systematic destruction of selected vital elements of the German military and industrial machine through precision-bombing in daylight', while the Royal Air Force continued with mass attacks against industrial areas by night.

The British welcome for these proposals was diluted by a large measure of scepticism, based on their own unfortunate experiences of daylight bombing in the early days of the war. Mr. Churchill expressed this as tactfully as he could in a note to Mr. Harry Hopkins on 16th September: 'I must also say to you for your eyes alone and only to be used by you in your high discretion that the very accurate results so far achieved in the daylight bombing of France by your Fortresses under most numerous fighter escort, mainly British, does not give our experts the same confidence as yours in the power of the day bomber to operate far into Germany.'<sup>(35)</sup> To the Chiefs of Staff he expressed more bluntly his view that the U.S. bombers would probably 'experience a heavy disaster' once they ventured beyond fighter cover,<sup>(36)</sup> and this view the Chief of Air Staff shared. British attempts at daylight bombing beyond fighter range had not been encouraging. On 17th April, 12 Lancasters had attacked a marine engineering works at Augsburg and only 4, all damaged, had returned. The Operational Research Section of Bomber Command expressed the strongest doubts whether bomber operations without fighter cover could 'ever form a major part of any daylight bombing programme aimed at the heart of the enemy war effort'. The American belief that the Flying Fortress, flying at an altitude immune to anti-aircraft fire and capable of defending itself against fighter attack, would be able to overcome the difficulties which had defeated the Royal Air Force, was not widely shared in the United Kingdom.<sup>(37)</sup>

Nevertheless, as Air Vice Marshal Slessor pointed out to the Chief of the Air Staff, the Americans had 'hung their hats on the day bomber policy and are convinced they can do it'.<sup>(38)</sup> To discourage them, he urged, would be to weaken their enthusiasm for the Combined Bomber Offensive as a whole; and the Air Ministry was alarmed when the Prime Minister suggested on 22nd October that 'We must try to persuade them to divert their energies (a) to sea work, beginning with helping "Torch" (including bombing of the Biscay ports) and (b) night work.' Such a proposal, according to Sir Archibald Sinclair, would throw the American airmen into

'confusion and impotency'.<sup>(39)</sup> Air Chief Marshal Sir Charles Portal, though he shared the Prime Minister's doubts, also urged him not to press them; pointing out that, if it did nothing else, the daylight bombing policy would at least pin down and erode enemy fighter strength.<sup>(40)</sup> But Mr. Churchill remained unconvinced. It was, he wrote, necessary to decide

'First, what is the truth; secondly, what to say or do about it. The Air Ministry must be careful not to mix these processes. They must not allow purely technical and military judgements to be clouded or distorted by the fear that if the Americans were offended by our telling them what we feel to be the truth, Admiral King would get the power to send everything to the Pacific. Any mixture of the technical and political functions prevents the Cabinet from getting the best service in either. . . .

We should of course continue to give the Americans every encouragement and help in the experiment which they ardently and obstinately wish to make, but we ought to try to persuade them to give as much aid as possible (a) to sea work and (b) to night bombing, and to revise their production, including instruments, and training for the sake of these objects'.<sup>(41)</sup>

Thus although the Air Ministry was able to gain the Prime Minister's powerful support for the maintenance and expansion of Bomber Command itself, they could not persuade him to move into action as strongly as they would wish on behalf of the U.S.A.A.F. This issue had to be left in suspense until, at Casablanca, Mr. Churchill heard the Americans argue their own case.

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- (13) C.O.S.(42)178th Mtg.
- (14) Webster & Frankland, Vol. I, pp. 410-12.
- (15) J. M. A. Gwyer & J. R. M. Butler: *Grand Strategy*, Vol. III, p. 526.
- (16) Sinclair-W.S.C. of 6.4.42: C.P.11.
- (17) Webster & Frankland, Vol. I, p. 341.
- (18) W.P.(42)374.
- (19) C.O.S.(42)178th Mtg.
- (20) C.O.S.(42)183(O).
- (21) C.O.S.(42)188th Mtg.
- (22) C.O.S.(42)332.
- (23) C.O.S.(42)207th Mtg.
- (24) W.P.(42)399.
- (25) C.O.S.(42)188th Mtg.
- (26) Gwyer & Butler, Pt. II, p. 544.
- (27) C.O.S.(42)292nd Mtg. of 19.10.42.  
C.O.S.(42)295th Mtg. of 21.10.42.
- (28) W.P.(42)580 of 16.12.42.
- (29) Sinclair-W.S.C. of 1.1.43: C.P.11.

- (30) W. F. Craven & J. L. Cate: *The Army Air Forces in World War II*, Vol. II [The University of Chicago Press, 1949] pp. 209, 274-5.
- (31) C.A.S.-W.S.C. of 28.8.42: C.P.11.
- (32) P.M. telegram T.1229/2: W.S.C.-F.D.R. of 16.9.42.
- (33) Both documents in C.P.11.
- (34) A.W.P.D.-42: Craven & Cate, Vol. II, pp. 277-89.
- (35) P.M. telegram: T.1345/2: W.S.C.-Hopkins of 16.9.42: C.P.11.
- (36) Webster & Frankland, Vol. I, p. 360.
- (37) Webster & Frankland, Vol. I, pp. 439, 449, 451.
- (38) Webster & Frankland, Vol. I, p. 356.
- (39) Sinclair-W.S.C. of 23.10.42: C.P.11.
- (40) Portal-W.S.C. of 7.11.42 in Webster & Frankland, Vol. I, p. 362.
- (41) W.P.(42)580.



Map 2



## BOOK ONE

### CHAPTER III

## THE RUSSIAN ALLY

ON 12TH AUGUST Mr. Churchill paid his first visit to Moscow as Prime Minister, in order to break the news that the Western Allies did not after all intend to mount the invasion of North West Europe in 1942 which the Russians had been led to expect.<sup>(1)</sup>

He could hardly have arrived at a less timely moment. The long-awaited German summer offensive had been launched on 28th June. Its purpose had been defined in Hitler's Directive No. 41 of 5th April<sup>(2)</sup> as being 'to wipe out the entire defence potential remaining to the Soviets and to cut them off, as far as possible, from their most important centres of war industry'. Priority was given to operations in the southern sector of the front 'with the aim of destroying the enemy before the Don, in order to secure the Caucasian oilfields and the passes through the Caucasian mountains themselves'. In May the German armies had begun preliminary operations to clear their southern flank by seizing the Kerch peninsula and reducing the fortress of Sebastopol. The stubbornness of the Russian resistance, combined with continuing bad weather, forced the postponement of the main offensive until the end of June. Then Field Marshal von Bock's *Southern Army Group* struck with two attacks, eastward from Kursk and north-eastward from Kharkov. On 3rd July it reached the Don opposite Voronezh. Three weeks later German and satellite armies stood along the whole length of the Don from Voronezh to the mouth of the river below Rostov. Then they pressed on to the second stage of the operation.<sup>(3)</sup> Field-Marshal von Bock had already been dismissed for his cautious insistence on eliminating the strong Russian positions at Voronezh before advancing further to the south-east. His command had been divided between Field Marshal von List's *Army Group A*, which was to advance through the Caucasus towards Grozny and Baku, and *Army Group B* under General von Weichs, which was to drive due eastwards to the Volga at Stalingrad; a position from which it could both protect von List's left flank and sever the artery of communications along the Volga linking Central Russia with the Caspian Sea. On 7th August *Army Group B* opened its attack across the Don from Kalach. By the time Mr. Churchill's party arrived in Moscow it had already captured or destroyed a thousand Russian tanks and 750 guns, and taken 57,000 prisoners of war.<sup>(4)</sup>



There were in fact compensatory factors about the situation which were not at the time apparent to the Allies. In the first place, although the Russians were taken by surprise by the weight and direction of the German attacks, they had learned their lesson from 1941. Their armies had not allowed themselves to be surrounded by the German encircling thrusts but had withdrawn in good time, if not always in good order. Only about 160,000 prisoners, all told, fell into German hands.<sup>(5)</sup> Hitler had thus failed in his intention of destroying the Russian armies west of the Don. Secondly, the personal control which Hitler was now exercising over his armies since he had taken over the post of Commander-in-Chief in December was creating growing confusion and frustration in the ranks of the German High Command. General Halder, Chief of the Army Staff, watched his amateur and arbitrary conduct of operations with growing alarm. 'One can no longer talk about serious work' he noted in his diary on 23rd July, when German triumphs were apparently reaching their climax; 'Feverish reactions to momentary impressions and a complete failure to understand the command machinery and what can be done with it are the hallmark of this so-called "Leadership".'<sup>(6)</sup> By the end of August it was clear to everyone but Hitler himself that the task given to *Army Group A* was an impossible one. Von List's troops were stuck in the foothills of the Caucasus at the end of overstretched lines of communications, confronting Russian forces in excellent defensive positions, and List bluntly told Hitler that the objectives he had been set could not be reached. When even General Jodl, the normally acquiescent Chief of the Operations Staff of the *Oberkommando der Wehrmacht*, confirmed List's views, there was a violent crisis at Hitler's Headquarters. List was dismissed on 9th September and Hitler took over the command of *Army Group A* himself, later delegating this to General von Kleist. Halder was dismissed as well; ('Need to educate the General Staff in fanatical belief in an Idea—determination that his will should dominate the Army like everything else' he noted after his final interview with Hitler);<sup>(7)</sup> and Hitler himself withdrew into a grim solitude which close observers interpreted as a recognition that, with the failure of his last throw, he was now faced with a war on two fronts which he must inevitably lose.<sup>(5)</sup>

Only fragmentary reports of all this reached London, where the unleashing of the German offensive had been awaited with apprehension and its course observed with anxiety. The difficulty of obtaining any information from the Russians themselves did not ease matters. Telegrams from the British Military Mission in Moscow were fragmentary and impressionistic. The picture they gave after a visit to the Russian armies on the eve of the offensive was favourable: 'General impression was of an efficient, well-equipped, well-disci-

plined and cheerful Army making the best of extremely unpleasant conditions and confident of its ability to defeat the enemy' they cabled on 26th June. Three weeks later on 15th July they reported army morale still to be high and withdrawals to be orderly in spite of heavy casualties, adding 'Soviet Staff extremely preoccupied and difficult to press under existing circumstances'; but on 21st July they reported a briefing by a Russian spokesman which was gloomy in its implications and which concluded: 'We have the whole German army against us including twenty armoured divisions. Now is the time for you to intervene on the Continent and drive the enemy out of Africa.'<sup>(9)</sup> The British Embassy in Moscow expressed anxiety about the internal situation as a whole, where the general shortage of food and fuel was as depressing as any military reverses for public morale;<sup>(10)</sup> and concern for morale may have underlain the wide publicity which the Soviet Government gave to the assurances which Molotov was believed to have received in Washington and London about a Second Front in 1942.<sup>(11)\*</sup> In the eyes of the British Chiefs of Staff, the most serious feature of the German advance was the loss of the excellent agricultural land in the bend of the Don. In an appreciation drawn up for the Commanders-in-Chief, Middle East, on 3rd August, they admitted the possibility that the German advance on the Volga might cut off the Russians from their supplies of Caucasian oil, but considered that stocks would still keep them going until mid-1943. They did not consider that the Russians would be able to counter-attack in sufficient strength seriously to interfere with German plans. But there was 'no reason as yet to suppose the Germans will achieve their main aim of destruction of the Russian Armies before the winter. The most serious potential danger is food supply'.<sup>(12)</sup>

The course of Mr. Churchill's visit to Moscow in August 1942 has been described in Vol. III of this series. The news that no Second Front would be launched in 1942 was partly atoned for by the announcement of the Allied plans for 'Torch', and by the confidential relationship which Mr. Churchill was able, for the time being at least, to establish with Marshal Stalin. But the Prime Minister laid up trouble for the future by his emphatic assurances that 'Roundup' would be launched in 1943—assurances of a kind that his military advisers would have been quite unable to endorse.<sup>(13)</sup>

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\* See p. xviii for the assurance given in Washington. This was issued without consultation with the British, who presented to M. Molotov on 10th June a cautiously worded *aide-memoire* printed in full in Gwyer & Butler, Appendix IV(a). This stated explicitly: 'It is impossible to say in advance whether the situation will be such as to make this operation feasible when the time comes. We can therefore give no promise in the matter, but provided that it appears sound and sensible, we shall not hesitate to put our plans into effect.'

The Prime Minister also undertook that the United Kingdom would launch an attack on Northern Norway and Petsamo in combination with the Russians in November 1942, for which the British would provide two divisions and the Russians three;<sup>(14)</sup> an undertaking which the Chiefs of Staff would have found it equally impossible to underwrite. As we have seen, Mr. Churchill had been pressing for such an attack (Operation 'Jupiter') since the end of May, and not even the unanimous opposition of his Chiefs of Staff had been able to convince him that the operation was an unsound one which would absorb unacceptably large quantities of shipping, contribute little to the defence of the northern convoys, and run a risk of major military disaster.<sup>(15)</sup> He had invited Lieut. General A. G. L. McNaughton, commanding the Canadian forces in Great Britain which were likely to play a leading part in this operation, to undertake an independent inquiry, but his conclusions were no more hopeful. The Prime Minister saw General McNaughton's report only on 15th September, and although he judged it 'unduly pessimistic', he considered it an adequate basis for discussions. 'It may well be', he told the Chiefs of Staff, 'that "Jupiter", with all its costs and risk, will be found not only necessary but cheapest in the long run.'<sup>(16)</sup> He suggested that General McNaughton should go to Moscow to discuss the operation with Marshal Stalin, but to this the Canadian Government was not prepared to consent. Nor did Stalin show any enthusiasm for the plan. In his telegram to the Russian leader of 8th October Mr. Churchill stated 'It would of course greatly help you and us if the Germans could be denied the use of the airfields in Northern Norway. If your Staffs could make a good plan the President and I would at once examine the possibility of co-operating up to the limit of our ability.'<sup>(17)</sup> But he received no encouraging answer from Moscow. A month later came the North African landings, and once Operation 'Torch' was under way even the Prime Minister was prepared to allow the project, for the time being, to lapse.

Another proposal for Allied help to Russia was discussed during the Prime Minister's visit to Moscow and ultimately proved equally abortive. Since the story of this initiative illustrates very well some of the central problems of communication with the Russians, it is worth telling in some detail.

The possibility of sending troops and aircraft from the Middle East to help the Russians on their southern front had been carefully examined during the autumn of 1941, but the checks which General Auchinleck's forces had suffered in the Western Desert, together with the outbreak of war in the Far East, made it impossible to provide the necessary forces.<sup>(18)</sup> In May 1942 General Auchinleck had raised the matter again in connection with the protection of the

northern flank of the Middle Eastern theatre. His concern was to obtain facilities in the Russian-occupied areas of North Persia so that he could if necessary push troops forward to meet a possible German thrust through the Caucasus; in particular to reconnoitre railways and roads, prepare airfields, establish depots and prepare defences. The Russian commanders in the area were unco-operative, and the Foreign Office was not optimistic about the chances of bringing effective pressure to bear at a higher level. No facilities for reconnaissance were accorded; staff conversations, promised to General Wavell during his visit to Tiflis the previous October, had never been held; British military missions had spent the winter in Tiflis and Baghdad, attempting in vain to exchange information with their Soviet opposite numbers.<sup>(19)</sup> 'We know nothing of Russian intentions' Mr. Casey had reported from Cairo on 9th June;<sup>(20)</sup> 'We do not know whether they intend to fight for the Caucasus at all or whether if they are forced back they will turn north to the Volga. If they intend to defend the Caucasus we have no idea of the strength they intend to deploy.' Towards the end of June Lieut. General E. P. Quinan, commanding Tenth Army in Persia, was hospitably entertained by his Russian opposite number General Melnik, but all his requests for permission to send forward reconnaissance parties were refused.<sup>(21)</sup> When a month later German forces crossed the lower Don and began their advance on the Caucasus the British still found themselves excluded from the defence of an area almost as vital to their own interests as it was to those of their Allies.

At the end of July, however, the Chiefs of Staff again examined the possibility of bringing Anglo-American forces into action on Russia's southern front. The suspension of the northern convoys after the disaster to PQ.17\* had held up the despatch of six R.A.F. fighter squadrons which had been promised to Russia during M. Molotov's visit to London the previous May.<sup>(22)</sup> In their place, after consultation with the Air Officer Commanding-in-Chief, Middle East, Air Chief Marshal Sir Arthur Tedder, the Chiefs of Staff suggested that a larger and more direct contribution to the battle in South Russia might be made by directing twenty squadrons of aircraft from the Middle East to the protection of the Caucasus.<sup>(23)</sup> Tedder considered that these forces could be found immediately without seriously weakening his ability to force a decision against the Axis forces over the Western Desert<sup>(24)</sup> but the Chiefs of Staff considered that no risks should be run, and that Rommel should be defeated first. This made it impossible to fix a precise date for the transfer, but the War Cabinet agreed to make the offer 'to establish in Transcaucasia an Anglo-American Air Force to assist the Russian

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\* See p. 40 below.

land and air forces in holding the line of the Caucasus mountains and the Black Sea coast. The necessary air forces would be withdrawn from Egypt as soon as the situation in the Western Desert is such that they can be spared from the front and could be concentrated in the Baku-Batum area in about two months from that time.<sup>(25)</sup> At that time, it should be noticed, the Chiefs of Staff assumed that the decisive battle in the Western Desert would take place at the end of August.<sup>(26)</sup>

An offer in these terms was therefore made to the Russians during the Prime Minister's visit to Moscow, although General Brooke emphasised that the offer was conditional on a successful outcome to the battle with Rommel and that the precise number of squadrons which would be made available could not yet be fixed.<sup>(27)</sup> This lack of precision may have done something to reduce the value of the offer in the eyes of the Russians. Air Chief Marshal Tedder persuaded Marshal Voroshilov to accept in principle the need for both preliminary reconnaissance and for a liaison mission in Moscow; 'but we formed the very definite impression' he informed the Chief of the Air Staff on 30th August, 'that such a Mission would not be accepted unless and until we were able to make a firm offer as to the size and composition of the Air Forces we should send and the date they will arrive'. The latter, being dependent on Rommel's defeat, was impossible to forecast; and Tedder warned that the shortfall in aircraft deliveries made it possible that 'the force we may ultimately be able to offer the Russians this year will be so insignificant that it will have little more than moral value at most'.<sup>(28)</sup> The Russians certainly made it clear that they would grant no reconnaissance facilities in Transcaucasia until they had more precise information,<sup>(29)</sup> and General Sir Henry Maitland Wilson, on assuming command of British forces in Persia and Iraq, found himself faced with the same blank wall of non-co-operation that had baffled his predecessors.<sup>(30)</sup> A personal appeal to Stalin over the matter by the Prime Minister on 6th September was entirely without effect.<sup>(31)</sup>

There was also some delay in obtaining American co-operation for the venture. Mr. Churchill had on 30th August invited the President to join him in a formal proposal to establish an Anglo-American Air force in Transcaucasia on the lines proposed by the War Cabinet, but no positive reply was received, in spite of a reminder by the Prime Minister on 15th September, until 6th October.<sup>(32)</sup> Then Mr. Roosevelt, alarmed by reports of declining Russian morale,\* agreed that a firm offer should be made, and suggested further 'that operation should not be contingent on any other'. Mr. Harry Hopkins explained to Field Marshal Sir John Dill

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\* See page 43 below.

in Washington that the President recognised that nothing effective could be done immediately, and was 'concerned with the psychological value of a positive undertaking given now to encourage Russian resistance through this critical month'. The Chiefs of Staff refused to make so totally unconditional an offer on the eve of the battle at El Alamein,<sup>(33)</sup> but after a further exchange of telegrams an acceptable wording for the offer was found. This, despatched on 8th October, firmly promised to make available 'early in the New Year' 9 Fighter and 5 Bomber squadrons of the R.A.F., and one Heavy Bomber and one Transport Group of the U.S.A.A.F. 'Most of this Force will come from Egypt as soon as they can be disengaged from the battle there, which we believe will be successful on our part.'<sup>(34)</sup>

On the day that they despatched this offer, the Chiefs of Staff received a somewhat alarming message from the Commanders-in-Chief in Cairo.<sup>(35)</sup> Forces of the size specified, they pointed out, could certainly not be made available before the beginning of February, and even then their transfer to Russia would be a diversion from important tasks in the Mediterranean. 'Not only will a successful "Lightfoot\*" / "Torch" entail the maintenance of a considerable air effort in the Mediterranean theatre', they warned, 'but it will give almost unlimited scope for offensive air action, not only against Italy, whose morale is likely to be weak, but also against areas in South Europe, to which population and industry have been transferred from the north.' These advantages, they urged, should be balanced against those of operations in the Caucasus. But it was of course too late for the Chiefs of Staff to do anything of the kind. The offer had been made, they replied, and 'for overriding political reasons it was necessary to be somewhat definite. Moreover, a vague or conditional offer would certainly not have obtained agreement to reconnaissance of North Persia and the Caucasus which may result from the offer in its present form.'<sup>(36)</sup> Cairo must therefore be prepared to implement the offer and expect the order to do so on 1st December.

This forecast by the Chiefs of Staff did not seem unrealistic; but nothing more was heard from Moscow until a further message from Mr. Churchill to Marshal Stalin on 5th November, reporting the successful outcome of the battle at El Alamein and the imminence of 'Torch', pressed for permission to go ahead with the transfer of the squadrons.<sup>(37)</sup> This brought a genial message of congratulations, acceptance of the offer, and an admission that fighter aircraft were badly needed on the Caucasian front.<sup>(38)</sup> M. Maisky informed the Foreign Secretary that his Government was willing to open staff conversations wherever their Allies liked but suggested Moscow as

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\* 'Lightfoot' = the attack at El Alamein.

the place most convenient for them.<sup>(39)</sup> An Anglo-American Mission was organised in Cairo headed by Air Marshal R. M. Drummond and Brigadier General Elmer E. Adler of U.S.A.A.F. Service Command, and arrived in Moscow on 21st November. Air Marshal Drummond was instructed that the contingent should operate under Russian strategic control but remain a homogeneous force under command of a 'British officer who should have right of appeal to the British and United States Governments; and its role would be 'to assist the Russian forces operating in Caucasia and to form the advance shield of our military interests in Persia and Abadan'.<sup>(40)</sup>

On arriving in Moscow Air Marshal Drummond informed the Chief of Air Staff that he was 'starting conversations immediately'. In fact it took two days of hard work to arrange an interview with the Chief Air Staff Officer, General Falalae, who then professed to know nothing whatever of the purpose of the Mission. When it was explained to him, he expressed concern at the decrease in aid to Russia which would be involved in maintaining the force over Persian lines of communication, and suggested that an equivalent number of aircraft should be sent instead. This proposal appeared to Air Marshal Drummond to be reasonable. Aircraft deliveries to Russia were anyway lagging behind expectations, and the problems of inter-Allied command were likely to be considerable. 'We know from experience in the Middle East' he reminded the Chiefs of Staff, 'how much more welcome are aircraft reinforcements rather than foreign air forces.'<sup>(41)</sup> Moreover aircraft manned by the Russians themselves could be brought more rapidly into action than could Allied squadrons. But the Chiefs of Staff and the Prime Minister did not welcome a suggestion which would involve depriving British airmen of their aircraft. They had hoped, the Chief of Air Staff informed Drummond on 1st December, that by sending this force 'an example would be given of Allied forces working hand in hand with the Russians for the same military objectives and under unity of strategic control on a bigger scale than anything yet attempted. Not only would there have been practical co-operation on a considerable scale, but there might also have developed a genuine spirit of comradeship in arms which would have opened up considerable possibilities in the political and military fields.'<sup>(42)</sup> The U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff were also unfavourable. At a meeting of the Combined Chiefs of Staff on 3rd December it was proposed that the Russians be told that 'the proposal to send only aircraft or aircraft and crews which can only be found by disarming existing formations is bound to lead to a loss of effective air strength and serious complications in matters of maintenance, and is therefore most undesirable in Russian as well as Anglo-American interests'. With this 'strong,

clear view' the Prime Minister and the President agreed,<sup>(43)</sup> and Air Marshal Drummond was informed accordingly.<sup>(44)</sup>

By this time the march of events had put the whole operation in a different perspective. The Axis forces had been routed at El Alamein; British and American troops were in action in French North Africa; the Russians had surrounded Stalingrad and were applying pressure on the Don which was already having its effect on the German forces further south. As Mr. Churchill expressed it in a message to the President on 3rd December, the offer had originally been made 'largely to take the edge off various Russian disappointments about the Second Front in 1942, about the PQ convoys, etc. and to show we really wished to help'. Now that firmer evidence had been given of Anglo-American readiness and capacity to fight and such immense improvements had taken place on the Russian front, he went on, 'I do not wish to force upon them what it costs us so much to give'.<sup>(45)</sup>

The changed situation was also reflected in the Russian attitude. An interview with M. Molotov on 13th December confirmed in Air Marshal Drummond 'the impression he had already formed that the success of their operations recently has made the Russian Government feel able to walk back on their acceptance of the original scheme, while at the same time making use of the presence of the Mission to obtain an additional supply of aircraft if they could'.<sup>(46)</sup> Molotov suggested, indeed, that the proposed force would be of undoubted value to Russia if it was employed in North Africa; a proposal which commanded the emphatic assent of the Commander-in-Chief, Middle East.<sup>(47)</sup> Only the President now retained a lingering affection for the scheme, which still seemed to him 'to have great political and possible military advantages', and he asked Stalin whether an all-American force would be more acceptable.<sup>(48)</sup> In fact it was not; so both Air Marshal Drummond and Brigadier General Adler returned to Cairo before the end of the year.

Thus ended the best hope of getting British, American and Russian forces into action on a single front. The Western Allies had been wise to make the offer, for the front was as vital to them as it was to the Soviet Union; and they were probably equally wise to press it to a point which can have left the Russians in no doubt of their sincerity. But it was natural enough, once the situation had been stabilised, that the Russians should have refused it. Apart from a reluctance to share the credit for a victorious campaign with foreigners whose help could only arrive once the crisis was passed, they had every reason to expect that complications of administration, liaison and command would detract considerably from the access of strength which the Anglo-American air force would bring. 'The genuine spirit of comradeship in arms' to which Mr. Churchill and the Chiefs of Staff looked forward was only one possible outcome of the



arrangement. Mutual misunderstandings, recrimination and suspicion was another no less likely. It was perhaps as well that the Allies continued to fight the war on separate fronts.

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If there was no possibility of getting physical help to the Soviet Union, it remained none the less necessary to sustain her with material of war. In October 1941 Lord Beaverbrook, on behalf of the United Kingdom, and Mr. Averill Harriman, on behalf of the United States, had signed a Protocol by which certain items of military equipment and quantities of strategic raw materials were to be 'made available at British and U.S.A. centres of production, for the Soviet Union by Great Britain and the United States of America within the period beginning from October 1941 till the end of June 1942'. Britain and the United States were to 'give aid to the transportation of these materials to the Soviet Union and will help with the delivery'.<sup>(49)</sup> Lord Beaverbrook had further given a verbal undertaking that these supplies would be increased by 50% during each of the subsequent six monthly periods—an undertaking which the demands of the war in the Far East were to make impossible to fulfil. The organisation of these supplies was placed in the hands of an Allied Supplies Executive presided over by Lord Beaverbrook and, after his retirement, by Mr. Anthony Eden. In September 1942 Mr. Eden was able to report that during the six-month period promised by the Protocol, all the British supplies had been made available as promised. Not all had reached the Russians. The limited capacity of the route through Persia and the difficulties of using Vladivostok once Japan had entered the war meant that the great part of the supplies had to be shipped round the North Cape to the ports of Murmansk and Archangel. Shortage of escorts meant that the number of convoys had to be strictly limited. Altogether 17 convoys comprising 100 merchant ships had sailed. The first fourteen convoys, sailing under the protection of the winter darkness, had lost only three ships; but with the coming of spring the danger increased, and the Germans massed a powerful force in Norwegian ports, headed by the battleship *Tirpitz*, to take advantage of the prolonged daylight. Mounting casualties culminated in July in the disaster to convoy PQ.17 when only 11 vessels out of 36 reached their destination; and on 13th July, on the advice of the Admiralty, the Defence Committee of the Cabinet decided 'that in present circumstances the risks involved in sailing a convoy to North Russian ports was so great that to continue to do so was unjustifiable'.<sup>(50)</sup>

This decision, coming at so critical a moment, was received in the Soviet Union with understandable bitterness. In fact the Western

Allies had no call to reproach themselves. The relationship of promise to performance over the whole six months can be seen from the following table:<sup>(61)</sup>

|                        | <i>Promised</i> | <i>Made Available</i> | <i>Delivered</i> | <i>Sunk</i> |
|------------------------|-----------------|-----------------------|------------------|-------------|
| Fighter Aircraft . . . | 1,800           | 1,822                 | 1,323            | 211         |
| Tanks . . . . .        | 2,250           | 2,443                 | 1,442            | 531         |
| Trucks . . . . .       | 3,000           | 3,001                 | 2,636            | 106         |
| Aluminium . . . .      | 18,000 tons     | 17,817 tons           | 14,147 tons      | 1,864 tons  |
| Tin . . . . .          | 12,500 tons     | 12,510 tons           | 8,101 tons       | 2,950 tons  |
| Lead . . . . .         | 63,000 tons     | 63,000 tons           | 15,081 tons      | 14,998 tons |
| Copper . . . . .       | 27,000 tons     | 27,000 tons           | 13,939 tons      | 6,577 tons  |
| Rubber . . . . .       | 42,000 tons     | 39,341 tons           | 34,856 tons      | 4,062 tons  |

Considering the difficulties and dangers of the passage, these figures show a highly creditable achievement.

Discussion of the amount of supplies to be made available during the second half of 1942 had begun between the British and United States authorities in April, and the agreed figures had been communicated to M. Molotov during his visits to London and Washington in May and June. M. Molotov, in Mr. Eden's words, 'expressed surprise that we had not seen our way to implement the promise made at Moscow for an increase of 50% in our supplies from July-December 1942 and 100% from January-June 1943 . . . (but) was prepared to accept the situation'.<sup>(62)</sup> The new protocol was not signed until 6th October, and took a somewhat different form from the first.<sup>(63)</sup> The United States and Great Britain agreed to make available for despatch from their ports, between 1st July 1942 and 30th June 1943, 3.3 million short tons\* to go to Russia's northern ports and 1.1 million short tons to go to the Persian Gulf. Both countries further presented schedules of equipment from which, within the above limits, the Soviet Union could select her requirements. The U.S. schedule included 1.1 million tons of military equipment, 1.8 million tons of industrial equipment and 4.3 million tons of food products; comprising 212 aircraft a month, 10,000 trucks a month, 7,500 tanks, electrical and industrial plant and medical supplies.<sup>(64)</sup> The United Kingdom offered, inevitably more modestly, 200 fighter aircraft and 250 tanks a month until the end of 1942. Thereafter they could offer no guarantees but they expressed the hope that they might jointly with the United States provide a thousand tanks a month; anti-tank equipment and naval supplies; and a continued supply of such raw materials as aluminium, nickel, tin, copper and rubber. But the difficulties in the way of delivery were yet greater than they had been in the early part of the year.

\* Short ton (U.S.) = 2,000 lb. Long ton = 2,400 lb.

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If there was no possibility of getting physical help to the Soviet Union, it remained none the less necessary to sustain her with material of war. In October 1941 Lord Beaverbrook, on behalf of the United Kingdom, and Mr. Averill Harriman, on behalf of the United States, had signed a Protocol by which certain items of military equipment and quantities of strategic raw materials were to be 'made available at British and U.S.A. centres of production, for the Soviet Union by Great Britain and the United States of America within the period beginning from October 1941 till the end of June 1942'. Britain and the United States were to 'give aid to the transportation of these materials to the Soviet Union and will help with the delivery'.<sup>(49)</sup> Lord Beaverbrook had further given a verbal undertaking that these supplies would be increased by 50% during each of the subsequent six monthly periods—an undertaking which the demands of the war in the Far East were to make impossible to fulfil. The organisation of these supplies was placed in the hands of an Allied Supplies Executive presided over by Lord Beaverbrook and, after his retirement, by Mr. Anthony Eden. In September 1942 Mr. Eden was able to report that during the six-month period promised by the Protocol, all the British supplies had been made available as promised. Not all had reached the Russians. The limited capacity of the route through Persia and the difficulties of using Vladivostok once Japan had entered the war meant that the great part of the supplies had to be shipped round the North Cape to the ports of Murmansk and Archangel. Shortage of escorts meant that the number of convoys had to be strictly limited. Altogether 17 convoys comprising 100 merchant ships had sailed. The first fourteen convoys, sailing under the protection of the winter darkness, had lost only three ships; but with the coming of spring the danger increased, and the Germans massed a powerful force in Norwegian ports, headed by the battleship *Tirpitz*, to take advantage of the prolonged daylight. Mounting casualties culminated in July in the disaster to convoy PQ.17 when only 11 vessels out of 36 reached their destination; and on 13th July, on the advice of the Admiralty, the Defence Committee of the Cabinet decided 'that in present circumstances the risks involved in sailing a convoy to North Russian ports was so great that to continue to do so was unjustifiable'.<sup>(50)</sup>

This decision, coming at so critical a moment, was received in the Soviet Union with understandable bitterness. In fact the Western

Allies had no call to reproach themselves. The relationship of promise to performance over the whole six months can be seen from the following table:<sup>(51)</sup>

|                            | <i>Promised</i> | <i>Made Available</i> | <i>Delivered</i> | <i>Sunk</i> |
|----------------------------|-----------------|-----------------------|------------------|-------------|
| Fighter Aircraft . . . . . | 1,800           | 1,822                 | 1,323            | 211         |
| Tanks . . . . .            | 2,250           | 2,443                 | 1,442            | 531         |
| Trucks . . . . .           | 3,000           | 3,001                 | 2,636            | 106         |
| Aluminium . . . . .        | 18,000 tons     | 17,817 tons           | 14,147 tons      | 1,864 tons  |
| Tin . . . . .              | 12,500 tons     | 12,510 tons           | 8,101 tons       | 2,950 tons  |
| Lead . . . . .             | 63,000 tons     | 63,000 tons           | 15,081 tons      | 14,998 tons |
| Copper . . . . .           | 27,000 tons     | 27,000 tons           | 13,939 tons      | 6,577 tons  |
| Rubber . . . . .           | 42,000 tons     | 39,341 tons           | 34,856 tons      | 4,062 tons  |

Considering the difficulties and dangers of the passage, these figures show a highly creditable achievement.

Discussion of the amount of supplies to be made available during the second half of 1942 had begun between the British and United States authorities in April, and the agreed figures had been communicated to M. Molotov during his visits to London and Washington in May and June. M. Molotov, in Mr. Eden's words, 'expressed surprise that we had not seen our way to implement the promise made at Moscow for an increase of 50% in our supplies from July-December 1942 and 100% from January-June 1943 . . . (but) was prepared to accept the situation'.<sup>(52)</sup> The new protocol was not signed until 6th October, and took a somewhat different form from the first.<sup>(53)</sup> The United States and Great Britain agreed to make available for despatch from their ports, between 1st July 1942 and 30th June 1943, 3.3 million short tons\* to go to Russia's northern ports and 1.1 million short tons to go to the Persian Gulf. Both countries further presented schedules of equipment from which, within the above limits, the Soviet Union could select her requirements. The U.S. schedule included 1.1 million tons of military equipment, 1.8 million tons of industrial equipment and 4.3 million tons of food products; comprising 212 aircraft a month, 10,000 trucks a month, 7,500 tanks, electrical and industrial plant and medical supplies.<sup>(54)</sup> The United Kingdom offered, inevitably more modestly, 200 fighter aircraft and 250 tanks a month until the end of 1942. Thereafter they could offer no guarantees but they expressed the hope that they might jointly with the United States provide a thousand tanks a month; anti-tank equipment and naval supplies; and a continued supply of such raw materials as aluminium, nickel, tin, copper and rubber. But the difficulties in the way of delivery were yet greater than they had been in the early part of the year.

\* Short ton (U.S.) = 2,000 lb. Long ton = 2,400 lb.

On 13th November Mr. Eden painted a black picture of supplies piling up for lack of convoys to take them to the northern ports or facilities for clearing them from the Persian Gulf, and admitted that our 'present failure to maintain the flow of supplies has contributed to the difficulty of keeping on good terms with Russia'.<sup>(55)</sup> By the end of the year the United Kingdom was in arrears with deliveries to the extent of 949 fighter-aircraft, and 545 tanks, while the United States had sent only a quarter of her promised trucks.<sup>(56)</sup>

Two factors accounted for this shortfall in Allied deliveries: the shortage of escorts for convoys at a period when the landings in North Africa were being mounted and the Battle of the Atlantic was reaching its height, and the limited capacity of Russian docks, roads and railways. On 27th July, on learning that the losses of PQ.17 were less catastrophic than had at first been feared, Mr. Churchill ordered another convoy to be prepared for September.<sup>(57)</sup> This sailed on 2nd September escorted by 77 warships in all, came under heavy attack, and lost thirteen out of a total of forty merchant vessels—mainly to German torpedo-bombers. The losses to deliveries included 38 aircraft out of 309, 126 tanks out of 448 and 85 trucks out of 106.<sup>(58)</sup> Such a rate of losses, though heavy, was not considered prohibitive. Nevertheless on 21st September the Prime Minister and the Chiefs of Staff had again to make the grave decision to suspend the sailing of convoys; this time until January 1943. This was the consequence of accepting the date recommended by General Eisenhower for the launching of Operation 'Torch': 8th November. To meet this date it was necessary to start assembling and loading the necessary convoys almost at once. If another convoy were to run to Russia, 'Torch' would be delayed for another three weeks, during which time the weather would worsen and the danger of a breach of security increase. These were risks which the Chiefs of Staff found unacceptable, and the War Cabinet, at a meeting held at ten o'clock the same evening, endorsed their decision to suspend the convoys yet again.<sup>(59)</sup>

At the same time the War Cabinet approved the telegram in which the Prime Minister announced this decision to President Roosevelt.<sup>(60)</sup> 'This' he said, 'is a formidable moment in Anglo-American-Soviet relations.' Although the full details of the struggle at Stalingrad were obscure, the British Government knew, both from official Russian communications and from their own observers, that the Russian Government and people were under almost unendurable pressure.<sup>(61)</sup> Under the circumstances, the Prime Minister urged that Operation 'Jupiter' should be looked at again. He also urged a firm commitment to an invasion of Europe in 1943. 'To sum up' he concluded, 'my persistent anxiety is Russia, and I do not see how we can reconcile it with our consciences or with our interests to have no more PQs till

1943, no offers to make joint plans for "Jupiter", and no sign of a spring, summer or even autumn offensive in Europe.'

The anxiety of which the Prime Minister spoke was directed rather to the Russian capacity to survive their ordeal than to the possibility that they might take steps to end it by making peace. There is no indication that, even at this grave moment, he considered this in the least likely. But it was a possibility that was never far from the mind of the President. It had led him to give M. Molotov an embarrassingly unequivocal assurance that a Second Front would be opened in 1942, and this may well have been a factor in his decision to launch Operation 'Torch' in 1942, rather than delay operations in the European Theatre until the following year. His fears evidently returned in full force on hearing that his Ambassador in Moscow, Admiral Standley, had asked to come home in order to deliver in person a very important message; 'and I have some fears' he confessed to Churchill, 'as to what the message may be'.<sup>(62)</sup> He did not take up the Prime Minister's points about 'Jupiter' or about an invasion of Europe in 1943, but he urged, as we have seen, that an unconditional offer should be made to provide an air force in the Caucasus, and he suggested that the next convoy due to sail, PQ.19, should be despatched in small groups at intervals of one or two days. This idea had already been examined, and rejected, by the Admiralty,<sup>(63)</sup> but they were prepared to allow individual ships to run the gauntlet on their own. To this the President agreed.<sup>(64)</sup> As a result, in the remaining three months of 1942, thirteen vessels sailed independently to Russia. Five of them got through. Of the twenty-three which sailed from Russian ports, all but one reached their destination.<sup>(65)</sup>

Mr. Churchill broke the news to Marshal Stalin on 6th October. The same telegram conveyed the offer of an air force for Transcaucasia and the somewhat luke-warm reference to 'Jupiter' mentioned earlier in this chapter, and also gave news of the operations impending at each end of the Mediterranean. It evoked only the enigmatic response: 'Thank you'.<sup>(66)</sup> The President sent a message of his own, promising further supplies of fighter aircraft, industrial equipment, and improvement to the route through the Persian Gulf. But these assurances were doubtless less effective in impressing the Russians than was the solid evidence of full Allied participation in the war provided by the course of events in the Mediterranean during the first week in November. On 14th November Marshal Stalin broke his alarming silence to send to the Prime Minister his hearty congratulations and on 20th November he informed Mr. Churchill that offensive operations had opened on the Stalingrad front and were 'developing not badly'.<sup>(67)</sup>

Stalin's message proved to be a discreet understatement. Since the

middle of August the city of Stalingrad had been contested by the two sides with mounting ferocity. For the Germans it was not simply a strategic centre, controlling as it did traffic along the Volga between Central Russia and the Caspian. It was also a prestige objective to which had become attached a mystique comparable to that of Verdun during the First World War. To secure its capture the German *Sixth Army*, under General Paulus, had been forced to draw an increasing amount of strength from its flanks north-west and south along the Don, leaving their defence to inferior Hungarian, Italian and Rumanian forces. Against these vulnerable sectors the Russians had massed their strength. On 19th November three Soviet armies under General Rokossovsky attacked the Rumanian *Third Army* north-west of Stalingrad. The following day two armies under General Yeremenko attacked the Rumanian *Fourth Army* to the south of the city. Both achieved a complete breakthrough. By 22nd November the German *Sixth Army* was surrounded, and its long agony in Stalingrad began. The most confirmed pessimists could no longer regard the Russians as allies on the verge of collapse.

The year thus ended on a cordial and successful note, to which the British were able to make a further contribution. On 20th December a further convoy, over 30 ships strong, left Iceland, and arrived intact in spite of an attempt by major German naval units to break it up on New Year's Eve.<sup>(68)</sup> The cordiality, unfortunately, was not to be sustained for long into 1943.

\* \* \* \* \*

The attempt to supply the Soviet Union through the Persian Gulf proved, during 1942 at least, to be quite as frustrating as was the effort to keep open communications with the Northern ports, if happily attended with less loss of life. When Lord Beaverbrook had visited Moscow in October 1941 the capacity of the Persian Gulf ports had been assessed at 60,000 tons, as against the 300,000 tons of Archangel and the 140,000 tons of Vladivostok;<sup>(69)</sup> and the inland communications—a single-track railway via Teheran to the Caspian at Bandar Shah, roads incapable of carrying heavy or foul weather traffic and in some areas harassed by bandits—reduced the flow of supplies still further. These communications had also to serve the needs of the local population and those of the British forces in Persia and Iraq, which had, during the summer of 1942, to put themselves in a state of readiness to meet a German thrust through the Caucasus if Russian resistance collapsed. A supplementary route for supplies led from the Nokkundi railhead in India via Zahidan and Meshed to Ashkabad; but the difficulties of transporting them from Turkestan to the fighting line made this road unacceptable to the Soviet Union. The operation of the docks and the provision of motor transport was

in the hands of civilian contractors. During 1942 their activity was increasingly supplemented by that of the United States Missions established in the Middle East the previous autumn to administer Lend-Lease Aid to the British forces and, a little later, to the Russians. In view of the demands of the war in the Far East and elsewhere, these Missions enjoyed only a low priority for the skilled manpower and heavy equipment which was needed for developing the roads; but with their help the War Office, in April, had looked forward to developing the capacity of the ports to 148,000 tons, of which 72,000 could be cleared by rail.<sup>(70)</sup>

On 10th July, meeting under the immediate shadow of the disaster to PQ.17, the Chiefs of Staff had agreed that the apparent impossibility of passing further convoys round the North Cape would make it necessary to route further supplies through the Persian Gulf.<sup>(71)</sup> Three days later the Defence Committee bracketed its decision to suspend convoys with a request to the Allied Supplies Executive 'to examine and report on the amount of equipment and stores for Russia which could now and in the future be conveyed via the Persian Gulf routes'.<sup>(72)</sup> At the same time Mr. Averill Harriman, who worked in close collaboration with the Allied Supplies Executive, proposed to Mr. Harry Hopkins that the United States Army should take over the operation of the Iranian Railways—a suggestion transmitted via the President to Mr. Churchill on 16th July. During the next few days the further proposal was made and was approved by the A.S.E. on 27th July, that nothing should be shipped from the United Kingdom to the Persian Gulf that could be produced and shipped direct from the United States. Not only aircraft, trucks, bren-carriers, copper, zinc and ferrochrome would now go straight from America to the Persian Gulf, but such Australasian and Indian Ocean products as rubber, sisal, tea, shellac, graphite, wool and lead.<sup>(73)</sup> To accommodate this flow a major development programme for the port and inland transport facilities of Persia would have to be put in hand, and the United States officials, after a rapid study of local conditions, came forward with a scheme which would, they hoped, raise the delivery capacity of the Persian route to 252,000 tons a month.

These proposals, which involved not only operating the Iranian State Railways but taking over and developing the Persian ports of Khorramshahr, Bandar Shahpur and Bushire, and setting up a motor transport service to supplement that operated by British contractors, were put before the Prime Minister by Mr. Harriman in Cairo on 22nd August, and received his endorsement. On that day Mr. Churchill replied to the President's suggestion of 16th July, amplifying it with the proposal that the United States Army should operate, not only the Persian railways, but the ports as well.



He stipulated only that 'the allocation of traffic would have to be retained in the hands of the British military authorities for whom the railway is an essential channel of communications for operational purposes'; a reservation which was acceptable to the American authorities concerned.<sup>(74)</sup>

A directive setting out the position was promulgated by the Combined Chiefs of Staff on 22nd September.<sup>(75)</sup> The Commanding General U.S. Persian Gulf Services Command was to develop, operate and maintain the port facilities of Bandar Shahpur, Khorramshahr, Tanuma, Ahwaz and Bushire; assist in maintaining roads leading from the ports to the general vicinity of Teheran and operate and control U.S. motor transport on those roads; and develop, operate and maintain the railways leading from those ports to Teheran. The supply route through Iraq, from Basra via Khanaquin to Tabriz, remained a British responsibility. The British General Officer Commanding Persia and Iraq Command, General Sir Henry Maitland Wilson, was to decide priority of traffic and allocation of freight, but the United States Commander, Major General Donald H. Connolly, had the right to appeal against his decisions through the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff to the Combined Chiefs of Staff. And the directive stated with some emphasis:

'Inasmuch as the primary objective of the United States participation in the operation of lines of communication from the Persian Gulf to Teheran is to increase and insure the uninterrupted flow of supplies to Russia, it is definitely understood that British control of priorities and allocations must not be permitted to militate against the attainment of such objectives, subject always to the military requirements for preparing to meet a threat to the vital Persian Gulf oil areas.'<sup>(76)</sup>

So long as the German advance in the Caucasus posed a major military threat to the British position in the Middle East—and this it effectively did until early in October—the allocations of priorities as between the maintenance of British forces and the transmission of supplies to Russia created problems which will be further discussed in Chapter IV below. But even after this ceased to be a problem the rate of deliveries remained disappointing, largely because of the difficulty of improving communications fast enough to keep pace with the growing capacity of the ports. Roads collapsed or were flooded; the assembly of motor vehicles lagged; American locomotives and rolling stock proved initially unsuitable for the extremes of climate and the steep gradients of Iran. Throughout the autumn monthly deliveries to the Russians remained below 40,000 tons. Then in 1943 they began a spectacular increase, as the following table shows:<sup>(77)</sup>

|                 |         |                  |         |
|-----------------|---------|------------------|---------|
| January: . . .  | 51,285  | July: . . .      | 178,742 |
| February: . . . | 68,808  | August: . . .    | 164,422 |
| March: . . .    | 75,605  | September: . . . | 199,293 |
| April: . . .    | 101,155 | October: . . .   | 217,254 |
| May: . . .      | 127,572 | November: . . .  | 214,587 |
| June: . . .     | 147,193 | December: . . .  | 248,018 |

[deliveries in long tons]

Simultaneously a comparable increase was taking place in American shipments to the Soviet Far East. These totalled 78,616 tons in August 1942 and reached a peak of 313,479 tons in September 1943. Thanks to the development of these supply routes, the German capacity to sever communications round the North Cape was thus very largely counteracted, and the total of shipments to the Soviet Union in 1943 was to be virtually double that of 1942—4,794,545 tons as against 2,453,097 tons—and were to rise to 6,217,622 tons in 1944.<sup>(78)</sup>

Thus in spite of all frustrations, misunderstandings and losses, the Western Allies were able to furnish the Soviet Union with growing quantities of raw materials for her industry, food for her population, and tanks, aircraft and transport for her armies. It was to prove a substantial contribution to the victorious campaigns of the Red Army during the final years of the war.<sup>(79)</sup>

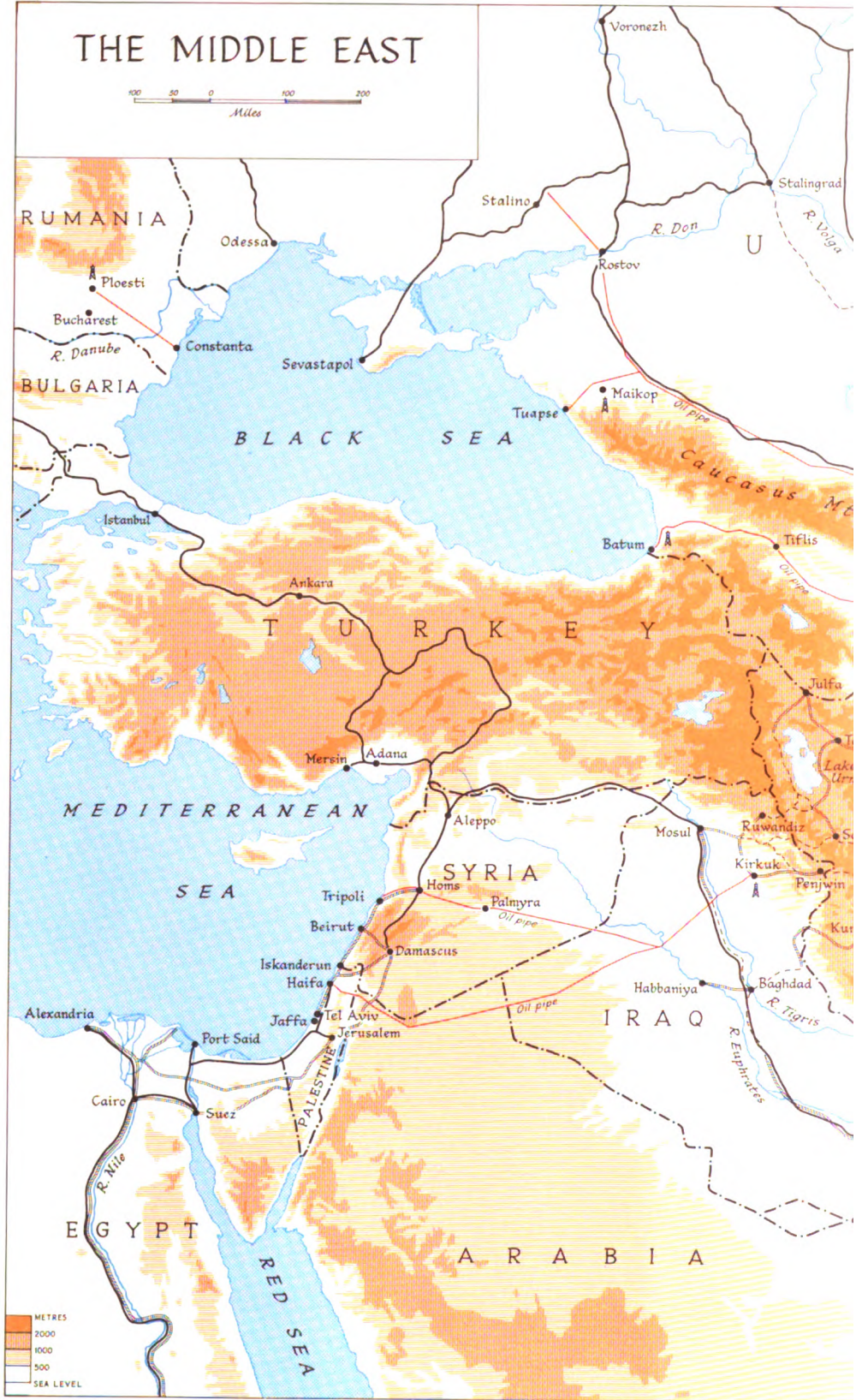
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## BOOK ONE

### CHAPTER IV

# THE MIDDLE EAST, AUGUST—DECEMBER 1942

**I**N AUGUST 1942 Mr. Churchill had visited not only Moscow but Cairo. His visit had resulted in a change in the commanders in the Middle East and a reorganisation of the structure of the entire Command.

Once in Cairo, the Prime Minister could appreciate, as perhaps he could not in London, the degree to which responsibilities for other parts of this vast area distracted any commander from concentrating on what, from London, appeared by far the most important of his tasks—the destruction of the Axis forces in the Western Desert. The Commander-in-Chief Middle East, General Sir Claud Auchinleck, was inclined to give at least as high a priority to the impending threat to Persia posed by German forces approaching the Caucasus. The Prime Minister solved the problem by dividing the whole theatre into two parts; initially designating them Near East Command, comprising Egypt, Palestine and Syria, and Middle East Command, comprising Persia and Iraq. General the Hon. Sir Harold Alexander, already designated to command the British task force in the ‘Torch’ expedition, was to take over the new Near East Command, while General Auchinleck, in Middle East Command, would be able to concentrate on meeting the threat to the Persian Gulf and India’s North-West Frontier.

‘At the head of an army with a single and direct purpose’, Mr. Churchill informed the Cabinet, ‘he [General Auchinleck] commands my entire confidence. If he had taken command of the Eighth Army when I urged him to I believe we should have won the Gazala battle, and many people here think the same. He has shown high-minded qualities of character and resolution. . . . Only the need of making an abrupt and decisive change in the command against Rommel and giving the Army the sense of a new start has induced me to propose the redistribution of Commands. . . . Nor can I advise that General Auchinleck should be ruined and cast aside as unfit to render any further service I am sure that if he accepts the directions which I seek Cabinet authority to give him, he will in no way have lost



confidence in himself but, on the contrary, will address himself to his new task with single-minded vigour.'<sup>(1)</sup>

These proposals met some opposition both in London and in Cairo. The War Cabinet questioned the wisdom, both of dividing the Command, and of offering a new post to General Auchinleck; fearing that 'it would give rise to criticism at home, where comment would be made that we were following the practice of creating new posts for those who had failed to make good in their existing appointments'. The existing Commanders-in-Chief Middle East transmitted their own doubts about the new arrangements through the Minister of State, Mr. Casey. The reorganisation might take up to two months, they pointed out, during which an enemy attack could be expected. Co-ordination between the two commands could be achieved only through deputies, committees and liaison officers, and 'such arrangements do not make for speed and efficiency'. If transfer of forces was required between the two commands reference would have to be made back to London, with consequent delay. They suggested instead that a Deputy Commander-in-Chief should be appointed to relieve the Commander-in-Chief of his most pressing responsibilities.<sup>(2)</sup>

The Prime Minister rejected this proposal. It would not fulfil his object, of freeing General Alexander to concentrate entirely on the Western Desert.<sup>(3)</sup> A further possibility considered in Cairo, at a meeting attended by General Wavell on 18th August, was for Persia and Iraq to come under his control as Commander-in-Chief, India; but since no satisfactory way could be devised of settling command of the air forces this proposal also was abandoned.<sup>(4)</sup> Mr. Churchill's plan was therefore accepted in its entirety, with one major and one minor modification. General Auchinleck declined the post offered to him; and the title Commander-in-Chief Middle East was retained for General Alexander, whose appointment, together with that of Lieut. General Sir Bernard Montgomery to the command of Eighth Army, was announced on 18th August.

General Alexander had already received his directive from the Prime Minister on 15th August. It ran:

- '1. Your prime and main duty will be to take or destroy at the earliest opportunity the German-Italian Army commanded by Field Marshal Rommel, together with all its supplies and establishments in Egypt and Libya.
2. You will discharge or cause to be discharged such other duties as pertain to your Command without prejudice to the task described in paragraph 1, which must be considered paramount in His Majesty's interests.'<sup>(5)</sup>

Six months later General Alexander was able to report that task fulfilled.

The post declined by General Auchinleck, with the new title of G.O.C.-in-C., Persia and Iraq Command, was given to the former commander of the Ninth Army in Syria, General Sir Henry Maitland Wilson, with the directive:

- '1. Your first duty will be to secure the safety in all circumstances of the oil-producing regions and installations in Iraq, Persia and the Persian Gulf.
2. Without prejudice to your tasks in paragraph 1, you will take all necessary steps to ensure that supplies for Russia pass forward without loss or hindrance to the maximum available capacity of the practical [? practicable] routes through your command.'

The boundary of his command with Middle East Command ran north and south through Syria and Iraq. The A.O.C.-in-C. Middle East, Air Chief Marshal Tedder, retained command of all aircraft in both theatres, but allotted forces as necessary to the A.O.C. Iraq, who was to act as General Wilson's air adviser. General Wilson was to have a seat on the Middle East War Council and the Commanders-in-Chief's Committee with the same status as that of the Commander-in-Chief Middle East.<sup>(5)</sup>

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Mr. Churchill had returned from Moscow reassured as to the Russian capacity to hold the Germans on their southern front and convinced that the main problem which now faced the Allies in Persia and Iraq was how best to improve the road and rail communications which must increasingly supplement, if not entirely replace, the hazardous northern convoy route as a conduit for supplies to Russia. British Intelligence estimates were also beginning to discount any serious threat from beyond the Caucasus, but in July the picture had looked black indeed. In a message to the Defence Committee of the Cabinet of 5th July<sup>(6)</sup> the Middle East Defence Committee reported that 'In the worst case for us we might have to meet a threat to North Persia by 15th October, or, if the enemy changed his plan and comes through Anatolia, we might have to be ready in Northern Syria and Iraq by 10th September.' Even if all went well in the Western Desert, they would need a further four infantry and one armoured divisions and 95 squadrons of aircraft in the theatre to meet this threat; but to build up a base in Persia for these forces the flow of aid to Russia would need to be reduced.

'If the campaign in Russia goes badly for the Russians [the survey concluded] and you find it impossible to send us necessary reinforcements in time, we shall be faced with a situation in which it will be necessary to decide

(a) Whether our forces or as much of our Base installations as possible should be deliberately transferred from Egypt to the Northern front to secure the Persian oilfields with the consequent loss of Egypt, or

(b) Whether we should continue our present policy and risk the loss of the Persian oilfields.

We have not got the forces to do both and if we try to do both we may fail to achieve either. We request your guidance, and instructions, on this issue.'

The Prime Minister had then replied<sup>(7)</sup> that further reinforcements could be found only by beating Rommel decisively in the Western Desert; and that even if the Russian front did break it was not likely that the Germans could operate in strength in Persia as early as October. 'Indeed' he told them, 'the General Staff's picture was that the advent of winter might prevent any serious threat before the spring of 1943, and even then it would be in terms of a maximum of seven divisions.' The Chiefs of Staff drafted a more detailed reply on 29th July,<sup>(8)</sup> which also insisted that:

'The capture of Cyrenaica and Tripolitania is best contribution to Middle East security, since it is doubtful if total requirements can otherwise be met, even at expense of trans-Atlantic movement of American forces. . . . Should the worst arise, i.e. if we were unable to send you adequate forces and the Russian southern front broke, you must hold on to the Abadan area in the last resort—even at the risk of losing the Egyptian Delta. At present, however, we do not consider that circumstances in any way justify a large-scale withdrawal of forces and installations from Egypt, involving abandonment of that country. . . .'

They attached a summary of an Oil Control Board Report which showed that if Abadan and Bahrein were lost, 270 additional tankers would have to be found to carry 13,416,000 additional tons of oil from America.

'The cuts required to free this amount of tanker tonnage are impracticable and the Oil Control Board conclude that the loss of Abadan and Bahrein *would be calamitous inasmuch as it would enforce a drastic reduction in our total war capacity and probably the abandonment of some of our present fields of action.*'

But even the sweeping German advances on the southern front during July did not lead the Chiefs of Staff to expect that such des-

perate measures would really be needed. They estimated, in a telegram to the Middle East Commanders-in-Chief of 5th August,<sup>(9)</sup> that even if Russian resistance collapsed entirely it would take the German spearheads 12 weeks to reach Baku after crossing the Don at Rostov; and they would then need about three months to refit, consolidate, and build up a base in the Northern Caucasus. It was conceivable that they might advance into Northern Persia with three or four divisions before early November; but it was far more likely that they would give priority to developing the oilfields which had, after all, been their primary objective. In any case, they believed, the Russians would put up a strong enough resistance to make any major threat in Persia unlikely before Spring 1943.

Events were to bear out this estimate. A month later, on 2nd September, the Joint Intelligence Committee reported that though the Germans were now only 40 miles from Grozny their advance was slowing down, and they were unlikely to reach Baku by the end of October or Tiflis before mid-November; a forecast which the Chiefs of Staff considered 'a little on the optimistic side' but which Mr. Churchill staunchly minuted 'I still think that Baku will be held by the Russians this year'.<sup>(10)</sup> On 2nd October the Committee reported not only that the Germans had made no further progress towards Grozny and the Black Sea, but that the Russians were holding the Caucasus—which became snowbound in October—in unexpected strength. 'We therefore confirm our opinion' they stated, 'that a threat in force against Persia and Iraq before the Spring of 1943 is most unlikely. The limit of the German advance during the winter is likely to be the Caucasus range.'<sup>(11)</sup> And by mid-November, after the Eighth Army's decisive victory at El Alamein had made the redeployment of substantial forces to the Northern front possible, it was quite clear that it would not now be necessary. 'We consider', the Joint Intelligence Committee reported on 14th November, 'that the Soviet forces can prevent the Germans from passing the main Caucasus range at least until April 1943, if not longer.' Thanks to the stubbornness of the Red Army and the miscalculations of the German High Command the German threat to the Allied oil supplies was banished for good. The centre of gravity of the war in the Middle East shifted decisively westward.

None of this could be foreseen, however, when General Maitland Wilson established his new headquarters in Baghdad on 15th September 1942.<sup>(12)</sup> The Ninth Army still stood ready in Syria to meet a thrust through Turkey; but General Wilson had at his disposal for the defences of Persia and Iraq only three infantry divisions, a motor brigade and a few regiments of light tanks and armoured cars. He could expect as reinforcements, before the end of the year, three more infantry divisions and one armoured brigade.<sup>(13)</sup> But his main

problem was not shortage of men, but shortage of mechanised transport to move them over the huge distances and appalling roads they would have to traverse to get into position to meet any German threat to north Persia.

Even more far-reaching in their implications were the demands which the movement of these forces made on the Persian railways, already overburdened by the demands of supplies to Russia and of the civilian economy. On 9th September General Wilson had sought permission to carry out the minimum preparations necessary to enable him to deploy a force in North Persia, which consisted mainly in constructing new railway sidings in the area of Teheran. But even this would involve not only consultation with the Russians, who operated the railways in that area, but a reduction in the amount of war material for Russia being transported on the Teheran line. Two weeks later on 26th September he outlined to the Chiefs of Staff his plans for defending North Persia during the winter against a German attack. Light armour (two motor-brigade groups and a light armoured regiment) would be needed to protect the forward airfields round Ardebil and Tabriz against a *coup de main* and three infantry divisions should be sited to block the approaches to Teheran and Lake Urmia; which involved the immediate establishment of the bulk of these units near Kazvin, north-west of Teheran, ready to move forward as soon as the Germans appeared at Baku. The establishment of these forces, with the redeployment of rail facilities which would be required, would take three weeks, demand close co-operation with local Russian commanders of a kind they had hitherto shown no inclination to accord, and of course cut still more deeply into the aid going to the Soviet Union.<sup>(15)</sup>

The military logic of these preparations was obvious, but their implications for Anglo-Russian relations disturbed Mr. Churchill and Mr. Eden profoundly.<sup>(16)</sup> 'The price to be paid in cutting down Russian supplies is heavy, and the moment when PQ.19 is cancelled is by no means the best for notifying the Russians' Mr. Churchill pointed out, on 25th September, to the Chiefs of Staff.<sup>(17)</sup> Mr. Eden reinforced the Prime Minister's doubts with some depressing statistics about the rate at which aid was reaching Russia by the southern route. Of the 34,500 tons planned to go to them in June, only 16,000 tons had actually been cleared. In July the figures were worse—15,000 out of 45,500 tons; in August little better—27,000 out of 52,500 tons; while the figures for September were unlikely to be any more impressive. Already there were likely to be 100,000 tons of supplies awaiting clearance at the Persian Gulf ports by the end of November, and General Wilson's proposals would increase this figure by a third.<sup>(18)</sup> In view of this situation the Chiefs of Staff agreed, on 29th September, to wait a further fortnight before giving

General Wilson the authorisation he required; instructing him in the meanwhile to make all necessary preparations for the move.<sup>(19)</sup>

From this predicament the Chiefs of Staff were rescued by the intelligence report of 2nd October, which, as we have seen, firmly opined that 'a threat in force against Persia and Iraq before the Spring of 1943 is most unlikely'. On 6th October they were therefore able to instruct General Wilson to recast his proposals in the light of this assessment.<sup>(20)</sup> This he did, and with a boldness which took the C.I.G.S. somewhat aback. In central Persia he established only one division and a corps headquarters at Qum, 75 miles south of Teheran, with a small force for the maintenance of installations at Kermanshah. The rest of his forces he held in South Persia and Iraq. His Polish units, now brought up to a strength of four divisions by troops evacuated from Russia, were organised in a separate army and made responsible for the defence of the Ruwandiz and Porjwin passes into Northern Iraq. Thanks to these dispositions no additional demands would be made on the Persian railways, and war material for Russia could flow undisturbed.<sup>(21)</sup> To the understandably anxious query of the C.I.G.S., whether these dispositions would enable him to deploy forward in time to meet any German threat, General Wilson replied that he would be able to do this in three weeks, provided that all aid to Russia ceased during this period and that he received the transport and other administrative facilities he had already indicated as being urgently necessary.<sup>(22)</sup> As Mr. Casey put it in a message to the Prime Minister on 20th October, 'Should operations become imminent there will be no alternative to a considerable and rapid transfer to Persia and Iraq Command of administrative reserves from outside sources, which really means the Middle East'.<sup>(23)</sup>

Three days later the Battle of El Alamein began with results which justified the calculated risk which the British High Command had taken with the Northern Flank. The classical strategic principle of 'concentration of force' had been followed, and the resources stripped from General Wilson's front were employed in gaining an overwhelming victory at the decisive point which relieved enemy pressure on the entire theatre. Even if the German threat to the Caucasus had been renewed the following spring, there would now have been the resources available to meet it, but since the Battle of Stalingrad disposed of that threat for good, the role of Persia and Iraq Command, which might have been one of the most decisive and spectacular in the whole war, dwindled in 1943 to providing reinforcements for more active theatres, keeping an uneasy peace in Persia, and speeding supplies to Russia in a steadily increasing flow.

In all the plans drawn up for the defence of the Middle East in 1941-2 it was recognised that danger threatened not only from two,

but from three directions. There was the Western Desert, through which the Suez Canal was menaced most directly. There was the 'Northern Flank' on the Caucasus, from which an offensive might be mounted against the oilfields of the Persian Gulf. And lying between, a corridor through which the Germans might attack either objective, was the plateau of Anatolia, which became, as the Germans thrust more deeply eastwards into South Russia, an increasingly probable theatre of war.

Since July 1941 the Ninth Army had been stationed in Syria with the defence of the frontier with Turkey as its main task. It was however of no less importance that the Turks should be able and willing to defend themselves; and to increase their readiness and ability to do so had been a major concern of British diplomacy and strategy since 1939. Not that the British intentions towards Turkey were purely defensive. The creation of a new 'Balkan League' with Turkey, Greece and Yugoslavia, to enable Britain to reopen a land front on the Continent of Europe, had been a principal object of British policy in the Mediterranean in 1941 until the German conquest of Yugoslavia, Greece and Crete laid these hopes in ruins; while the strategic advantages which Turkey could offer as an active ally, in getting help to the Russians, in providing bases for air attack against the Rumanian oilfields, and as a jumping-off ground for a possible invasion of the Balkans, were never lost to the sight of either Mr. Churchill or the Chiefs of Staff. At the 'Arcadia' Conference in December 1941 the Combined Chiefs of Staff had agreed that, if all went well in 1942, by 1943 the way might be clear for a return to the Continent 'either across the Mediterranean, from Turkey into the Balkans, or by simultaneous landings in several of the countries of North Western Europe'.<sup>(24)</sup> So the ebbing of the German threat to the Middle East after the Allied victories at El Alamein and Stalingrad was to increase rather than diminish the significance of Turkey for British strategic planners. Not until the 'Quadrant' Conference in August 1943, when the Allied commitment to Italy as the main Mediterranean front was finally determined, did Turkey lose her pre-eminence as a major British strategic concern.

Under these circumstances the task which confronted the Turkish Government, like that faced by General Franco and Dr. Salazar at the other end of the Mediterranean, was one of considerable delicacy. The main concern of Turkey's rulers was, quite properly, the maintenance of Turkish national independence, integrity and interests against all comers. The prospect of a German victory was unattractive; but the prospect of an Allied victory, with the enormous increase which it would bring in the power and influence of the Soviet Union, also awoke their most lively fears. British help in equipping Turkish armed forces was naturally welcomed, but not if

it involved activities which might be regarded by the Germans as a threat justifying a pre-emptive invasion. The Turkish Army clamoured for equipment sufficiently sophisticated, and in adequate quantity, to enable them to plan realistically for a conflict against German forces; but the economic weakness of the country, its lack of an adequate industrial base, above all the primitive nature of its communications, meant that even if such equipment were made available it could not be adequately maintained or deployed. Finally war itself, even a victorious war with powerful and generous allies, was likely to impose a strain on the government and economy of Turkey which might prove intolerable.<sup>(25)</sup> Given this situation it is not surprising that the Turkish Government, like those of other neutral powers, did their best to remain on friendly terms with both sides, solicited as much military aid and economic assistance as they could persuade the belligerents to disburse, and gave away to each as little as possible in terms either of facilities, co-operation, or control over Turkish destinies. This policy they pursued with considerable success.

Plans for military help to Turkey had been on foot since the autumn of 1940, and the British service attachés in Ankara were on close and friendly terms with the Turkish General Staff.<sup>(26)</sup> In the autumn of 1941, as German advances in Southern Russia increasingly alarmed the Turks, the British Government made substantial offers of help to repel a possible attack the following spring—always on the assumption that the threat in the Western Desert had been eliminated by a successful offensive later in the year. The force offered amounted eventually to four infantry divisions, two armoured divisions and an armoured brigade, together with 24 squadrons of the Royal Air Force.<sup>(27)</sup> But such large forces could be deployed only if facilities were given for the construction of bases and the improvement of communications by British specialists, which the Turkish Government was reluctant to grant; and by the spring of 1942, as has been pointed out in an earlier volume in this series, 'the course of events during the winter in Libya, in the Far East and on the confines of India had made our offers of the previous summer less and less realistic'.<sup>(28)</sup>

The Foreign Office, prompted by the British Ambassador in Ankara Sir Hugh Knatchbull-Hugesson, regarded the situation in the early summer of 1942 with considerable anxiety; especially when in May 1942 the Turkish Government signed an agreement with Germany for the delivery of war-material which the United Kingdom had been unable to provide. When the Prime Minister visited Washington in the following month, he intended to invite the President to associate the United States with an offer of a thousand tanks and a thousand guns to be delivered by the autumn. The



Chiefs of Staff were luke-warm to this suggestion, and the fall of Tobruk made Mr. Churchill decide that the moment was not 'propitious to press the matter'.<sup>(29)</sup> But two months later, after an anxious visit by the Turkish Ambassador, the Prime Minister returned to the charge, and on 28th August he instructed the Chiefs of Staff to prepare a new programme of aid to Turkey during the coming autumn on the assumption that a decisive success would be achieved in the Western Desert in mid-October. 'This' he wrote, 'might make all the difference to the Turkish will-power to resist in a situation where the Russians may have lost the naval command of the Black Sea and when Turkey may be subjected to very severe Axis pressure.'<sup>(30)</sup>

In carrying out this programme Mr. Churchill would tolerate neither opposition nor delay. On 24th September he promised the Ambassador that Turkey would receive by the end of the year military equipment including 210 Stuart tanks, 200 Valentines or Matildas, and 236 37 mm. anti-tank guns in addition to the 510 already in transit.<sup>(31)</sup> The Middle East Defence Committee expressed on 1st October, 'considerable misgivings about this much needed material from the Middle East being promised to Turkey while General Wilson in Persia and Iraq is grievously short of fighting equipment'.<sup>(32)</sup> The Military Attaché in Ankara reported that the Turks did not have the maintenance and repair facilities to 'digest' the tanks. Middle East Command doubted whether the tanks could be found before the end of the year.<sup>(33)</sup> But Mr. Churchill was obdurate. The British Ambassador warned on 29th October of Turkish fears that Britain was deliberately keeping them weak vis à vis Russia, and he stated flatly that any shutting down of tank deliveries 'would be *disastrous*. . . . Any failure to fulfil this undertaking would be regarded by the Turks as a breach of faith with very serious effect.'<sup>(34)</sup> Mr. Churchill minuted the Foreign Secretary on 5th November 'Don't let the military get out of giving the 200 tanks on the score that the Turks can't digest them. You know how my mind is working'.<sup>(35)</sup>

The workings of the Prime Minister's mind must have been accelerated a few days later when President Roosevelt suggested in a message of 12th November, 'the possibility of obtaining Turkey's support for an attack through the Black Sea on Germany's flank'.<sup>(36)</sup> Mr. Churchill replied immediately and enthusiastically, suggesting four stages for preparing such an operation: opening the Mediterranean, a guarantee to Turkey by the three great Allied Powers, the rapid stocking up of Turkey with arms, and the massing of air forces on Russia's southern flank and the gathering of 'a considerable army' in Syria.<sup>(37)</sup> 'All necessary political and military measures' to bring Turkey into the war figured prominently in the memorandum



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on the future conduct of the war which he presented to the Chiefs of Staff on 15th November;<sup>(38)</sup> and on 28th November he received approval of the project from Stalin: 'It would be desirable to do everything possible to have Turkey enter the war on our side in the Spring'.<sup>(39)</sup>

Neither the Foreign Office nor the Joint Planning Staff were very hopeful about the prospects of persuading Turkey to enter the war, save possibly at the last moment to gain a seat at the Peace Conference. Sir Hugh Knatchbull-Hugesson, summoned home for consultations, pointed out that the Turks felt they had been tricked into entering the First World War and were determined not to be caught that way again.<sup>(40)</sup> The Joint Planners recommended that 'we should make it quite clear that we are not prepared to pay a high price in troops and material for an article of which delivery is uncertain'.<sup>(41)</sup> Nevertheless on this matter the Chiefs of Staff did not see fit to oppose the Prime Minister's initiative. As General Brooke put it, however remote the chances might be of persuading Turkey to enter the war, her entry at the right time would be a sufficiently valuable prize to make it worth pushing ahead with preparations.<sup>(42)</sup> Middle East Command was therefore asked to study the problem of assembling a force in Syria, drawn from Persia and Iraq Command. It was recognised that the communications of Anatolia would not support in Western Turkey a force larger than  $4\frac{1}{2}$  divisions and 18 squadrons of aircraft; but if the port of Izmir were opened by the capture of the Dodecanese, the situation would be substantially changed.<sup>(43)</sup> For the time being, the Chiefs of Staff agreed on 30th December, they should confine their objectives to developing bases for further offensive action and helping the Turks defend their country. 'The steps by which this policy could be achieved include political action, infiltration of key men, provision of equipment, development of communications and assistance in distribution of coal and grain.'<sup>(44)</sup> There the situation rested until it was considered again by the Combined Chiefs of Staff, a month later at Casablanca.

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By the beginning of August the Eighth Army and the Italo-German forces confronting it had fought one another to exhaustion on the El Alamein line 80 miles west of Cairo. The ensuing lull made it possible for the new British commander, Lieut. General Montgomery, to make sweeping changes among his commanders and impress the whole of his new command with his vigorous and incisive personality. In Cairo General Alexander, freed of the nagging responsibility for the Northern Flank and wisely leaving operational details at the front to his capable subordinate, was able

to concentrate on the building up of his forces; a task in which he was vigorously assisted by the Prime Minister.

Mr. Churchill's papers during this period reveal the urgent interest which he took in the rate at which armour, in particular, was building up in the Middle East.<sup>(45)</sup> He followed the daily progress of the convoy bearing the 300 Sherman tanks which President Roosevelt had released to the Middle East on hearing of the fall of Tobruk; he extorted detailed information about their issue and proposed employment; and on 12th September he proudly informed the President '317 Shermans and 94 self-propelled guns which you so kindly gave me on that dark Tobruk day in Washington have now all safely arrived in Egypt. Eighty-two Shermans have already been issued to the troops'.<sup>(46)</sup> No less welcome was the almost simultaneous arrival of Crusader Mark IIIs with their 6-pounder gun, and the increasing flow of that other American medium tank which had already proven its worth in the desert, the Grant.

By the eve of the Battle of El Alamein the Eighth Army had built up a really formidable superiority in armoured strength: not only in quantity, though it mustered 1,029 battle-fit tanks to the *Panzerarmee's* 527, but in quality also. Its fighting strength was approximately 195,000 men to the German 50,000 and Italian 54,000. It was supported not only by the Desert Air Force under the command of Air Vice Marshal Coningham, which had some 530 serviceable aircraft at its disposal as against some 350 available to the Axis forces in North Africa, but by the strategic bomber forces under the control of Air Chief Marshal Tedder, the A.O.C. Middle East. While the Desert Air Force fought successfully for command of the air over the battlefield area, maritime aircraft hunted Axis shipping, and heavy bombers harassed the ports, vital to the Axis supply-lines, of Benghazi and Tobruk.

These raids on their communications, increasingly effective as the autumn progressed, were watched with the deepest apprehension by the Axis High Command. Like the British, they had achieved their concentration in the Western Desert only at the expense of other operations. In their case this concentration proved to be disastrous. When at the beginning of May the Italian *Comando Supremo* had issued its directive for the offensive which General Rommel's *Panzerarmee* unleashed on 26th May, the objective was limited to defeating the British forces west of Tobruk and driving them back to the Egyptian frontier, and the operation was not to be prolonged beyond 20th June. The Axis naval and air forces were then to be redeployed for the final destruction of Malta, whose survival continually menaced the supply lines on which Rommel's troops were dependent. But Hitler, in spite of the urging of his Naval Staff, was sceptical both of the feasibility of taking Malta and of the need

to do so. When on 22nd June the triumphant Rommel urged that he be allowed to pursue the beaten British to the Nile, Hitler supported his demand in a letter to Mussolini of 23rd June.<sup>(48)</sup>

As so often, beneath his bombast the Führer deployed some shrewd arguments. If the British were not uprooted from the Middle East, while the chance offered, he pointed out, they could, with help from the United States, establish a strong concentration there. This opportunity for destroying them might never recur. But the German Commander-in-Chief South, Marshal Kesselring, considered the risks too great. 'I must give categorical warning against advancing to the limit', he told a conference of senior officers at Derna on 25th June: 'If I am ordered to do so I shall obey, but in that case I do not know how the campaign will end.' His Italian superiors overruled him. On 26th June Mussolini ordered the main body of the *Panzer-armee* to advance to 'the pass between the Arab Gulf and the Qattara Depression'—better known as the El Alamein position—and next day he extended the objective to the Suez Canal. The attack on Malta, Operation 'Hercules', was laid aside.<sup>(49)</sup>

The decision was one of the most disastrous that Hitler ever made. Malta was relieved; and the success of the Royal Navy at the beginning of August with Operation 'Pedestal', in passing through five ships out of a convoy of fourteen, enabled the island to continue to function effectively as a base for air operations for the remainder of the year.<sup>(50)</sup> The further Rommel advanced the more vulnerable became his lines of supply to naval and air attack, and the stronger became the attacks he had to endure from British aircraft based on Egypt. The Italians were growing short of shipping, and their navy could not supply enough escorts. The Germans could not spare any transport aircraft from the overstretched Russian front. The facilities of the ports in Eastern Cyrenaica, Tobruk, Bardia and Derna, were inadequate, and transport was not available in sufficient quantities to lift supplies over the long tracks of the Western Desert, constantly harassed by the R.A.F.<sup>(51)</sup>

The situation was likely to get worse rather than better, and on August 15th Rommel informed *OKW* of his decision to attack again before it did. His troops had recovered from the exhausting battles of July, and retained a margin of superiority in artillery and armour over the British which might, he hoped, enable him to penetrate the unfortified southern flank of the British position at Alam El Halfa.<sup>(52)</sup> One last, bold stroke might yet redeem everything, and on the night of August 30th he launched his attack.

General Montgomery had good intelligence of both the time and the direction of Rommel's thrust, and sited his forces in strong positions from which he refused to be drawn. The Royal Air Force

commanded the battlefield. With his fuel supplies running low, Rommel halted his attack at midday on 1st September, and ordered a withdrawal the following day. In a memorandum reflecting on the lessons of the battle, he noted that 'the British had learned how to use the exceptional strength of their air force to the best advantage. . . . The ground forces in their defence made use mainly of the very numerous and versatile artillery'. He noted that the British did not commit their armour to counter-attack but remain cautiously on the defensive, but observed that 'the fighting value of the troops had improved considerably in comparison with earlier engagements'<sup>(53)</sup> But it was the desperate logistic situation, combined perhaps with his own poor health (he had been forced to apply for sick leave on 22nd August, and was to return home shortly afterwards for hospital treatment) that compelled this normally resourceful commander to accept a rebuff as a conclusive defeat.

The outcome of the Battle of Alam Halfa led the original advocates of Operation 'Hercules', the German Naval Staff and the Italian *Comando Supremo*, belatedly to renew their demands for the elimination of Malta. It was, wrote the Chief of the Italian General Staff Marshal Cavallero in his diary on 5th and 6th September, 'a problem of life and death . . . if Malta is not neutralised we shall lose everything'. But the German High Command remained uninterested in Italian plans for invading the island. Hitler informed Kesselring that he could not make available the additional fighters necessary to neutralise the R.A.F. until after the fall of Stalingrad; and the air offensive which Kesselring launched on 11th October had to be called off after a week because of the prohibitive casualties.<sup>(54)</sup> And the toll of sinkings continued. In August, of 24,498 tons of supplies carried by sea to North Africa, 6,467 were lost. In September, of 38,880 tons carried, 7,566 tons were lost; and in October, of 28,700 tons carried, 9,008 tons were lost.<sup>(55)</sup> On 19th October the *Panzerarmee's* supply report showed that it had fuel stocks only for eleven days, and four days later, after the sinking of a further tanker had worsened the situation, it stated bluntly, 'in consideration of the fact that the British offensive can be expected to start any day, the *Panzerarmee* did not possess the operational freedom of movement that was absolutely essential'.<sup>(56)</sup>

This tactical paralysis only reflected the more far-reaching strategic paralysis which was beginning to grip the junior partner in the Axis. On 29th September Count Ciano noted in his diary that Italian shipping had now been reduced to little over a million tons, and commented ironically but truthfully: 'At this rate the Africa problem will automatically end in six months, since we shall have no more ships with which to supply Libya.' Simultaneously a crippling fuel shortage was beginning to affect not only the Italian armed

forces but all sections of the Italian economy. The supplies from Rumania on which Italy was totally dependent were drying up not so much from lack of production as from lack of distribution facilities. Of 19,000 tons of petrol and 50,000 tons of fuel oil expected in September, only 10,000 tons and 38,000 tons had been delivered; and Hitler's hopes of making up any deficit from Caucasian supplies were fast vanishing.

As the Axis reserves dwindled, so the dangers which threatened it appeared to increase. It was clear that Rommel's *Panzerarmee* was in imminent danger of attack; the revival of British strength in the Eastern Mediterranean reawoke all German fear about their vulnerable flank in the Aegean; and it had been increasingly obvious to the Italians, for some months past, that a major Allied blow was also impending in the West. As early as July *Comando Supremo* had urged preventive occupation of Tunisia.<sup>(57)</sup> On October 1st Mussolini informed his military advisers 'It seems to be the Allied intention to launch an offensive against Libya simultaneously from Egypt and West Africa';<sup>(58)</sup> and on 10th October General von Rintelen, the representative in Rome of the *Oberkommando der Wehrmacht*, communicated the Italian fears to Hitler, together with a proposal from *Comando Supremo* that forces en route for Tripolitania or held ready for the invasion of Malta, and their transport, should be used against Tunisia.<sup>(59)</sup>

Hitler flatly rejected the idea. He still clung to the belief that the Vichy government could be trusted to defend its own territory and that its susceptibilities must be spared. A memorandum was therefore despatched by *OKW* to von Rintelen, agreeing that landings were probable at Dakar and possibly in Morocco, but unlikely in Algeria and even less so in Tunis. Hitler's Headquarters considered 'the defence of the French colonies in West and North Africa are a French problem and is of the opinion that the French will defend their colonial empire in their own interests'. Supply of the *Panzerarmee*, they laid down, should be given overriding priority; next in order came the occupation of unoccupied France, 'in order to safeguard absolutely the defence of the coast of Europe'. 'Insofar as Italian forces are available beyond this', went on the memorandum, '*OKW* considers it would be useful to hold them ready in Western Libya. *OKW* fears, however, that the immediate aggressive advance into Tunisia proposed by *Comando Supremo*, while it is not yet clear whether the French will resist or whether they will request support from the Axis, will drive the French into the arms of the British and Americans. This must be avoided'. Finally, the document concluded bleakly, 'in consideration of the situation in the other theatres of war any considerable reinforcement of German land, sea and air forces in the Mediterranean cannot be expected. Similarly it is not



possible to supply the Italian navy and air force at present owing to the raw material situation in Italy'.<sup>(60)</sup>

Von Rintelen transmitted the substance of this to Cavallero at a meeting in Taormina on 22nd October. Next to supplying the *Panzerarmee*, he said, the Germans gave priority to reinforcing Crete and the Aegean, and were moving naval vessels to those waters. Cavallero in his turn announced Mussolini's decision, in which the Germans acquiesced, to reinforce Tripolitania—a movement which made further demands on shipping and fuel reserves; and both Germans and Italians considered in some depression figures which showed that, of the 60,000 tons a month which these dispositions required, Rumanian resources might provide at most a third. The German naval representative agreed to try and find the rest; but when, two weeks later, on 5th November, it was reported that the large Allied convoy assembled in Gibraltar was about to sail, Cavallero could only confess his impotence. 'Our surface naval forces cannot take action for lack of fuel'.<sup>(61)\*</sup>

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Allied Intelligence in Cairo was not ignorant of the plight of the enemy, and the extent to which the balance of forces was tipping increasingly in the British favour with every week that passed. Tactically therefore General Alexander could choose his time for unleashing his rested and reinforced Eighth Army, and on 19th September he informed the Prime Minister that he had selected 24th October. His forces would then be fully equipped and trained, and a full moon would facilitate the frontal attack which General Montgomery had planned.<sup>(62)</sup> The Prime Minister ran true to form and urged an earlier date: to prevent the enemy from digging in; to bring earlier relief to Malta; and to provide the Allies with a really decisive victory on the eve of 'Torch' to impress not only French opinion in North Africa but the Spanish government on whose passivity during the North African landings so much depended.<sup>(63)</sup>

The Chiefs of Staff on 1st October sent a separate message to emphasise this point.<sup>(64)</sup> Twelve days before 'Torch', they pointed out, shipping and aircraft would begin to accumulate at Gibraltar in undisguisable quantity. 'From then onwards we must apprehend violent pressure being put by Germany on Spain to paralyse Gibraltar, or alternatively to give her facilities for air attack on Gibraltar from the Balearics or Malaga or Cadiz airfields. . . . The earlier that "Lightfoot" can start, the greater the progress that will be apparent to the Spaniards by the time the period of greatest danger of detection of "Torch" sets in, and the smaller the chance of their being stampeded by the Germans to intervene.' But they insisted that the

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\* See p. 171 below.

decision must be General Alexander's alone in the light of all available information; and General Alexander stuck to his guns. 'If I were to be obliged to carry this operation [*sic*] before my target date', he replied firmly to the Prime Minister, 'I should not only be not satisfied with the chance of success, but I should be definitely apprehensive as to the result'.<sup>(65)</sup> Mr. Churchill acquiesced with more readiness than he had shown to either of General Alexander's predecessors. 'We are in your hands', he replied, 'and of course a victorious battle makes amends for much delay. Whatever happens we shall back you up and see you through'.<sup>(66)</sup>

So Operation 'Lightfoot', better known to history as the Battle of El Alamein, began on the night of 23rd October.<sup>(67)</sup> General Montgomery's object, according to the plans he issued on 14th September, was 'to trap the enemy in his present area and destroy him there'. No outflanking movement was possible: the enemy flanks, like those of the Eighth Army, rested solidly on the Qattara Depression in the south, and in the north on the sea. Battle was to be brought about by a break-in, and during that battle the enemy forces, particularly their armoured forces, were to be destroyed. The main attack was to be launched in the northern part of the front by XXX Corps clearing the way for X Corps, the armoured *corps de chasse*, to pass through and bring the enemy armour to battle. Further south XIII Corps would launch a diversionary attack to fix and, it was hoped, divert the enemy. The Desert Air Force would provide close support both by day and night.

General Montgomery warned his officers to expect a 'dogfight' lasting about ten days, and he was right. After three days of fighting the Eighth Army, although it was inflicting heavy losses on its weaker opponents, had achieved no breakthrough, and its armour had not succeeded in deploying according to plan. On 26th October Montgomery therefore withdrew some of his forces from the battle, notably the New Zealand Division, so as to create a reserve with which to launch a further assault.

The course of events was followed in London with the utmost anxiety. Once his troops were committed to battle General Alexander warned the C.I.G.S.; 'It is clear that the enemy intends to fight in his forward positions and that the struggle for mastery will be fierce and probably prolonged over a considerable period, so that for about a week it will not be possible to give reliable appreciation of how events will develop'.<sup>(68)</sup> But Mr. Churchill was temperamentally incapable of heeding such a warning. When three days later the news came of the Eighth Army's redeployment, he complained to General Brooke that this was 'particularly disquieting. . . . It is most necessary that the attack should be resumed before "Torch". A stand-still now will be proclaimed as a defeat'.<sup>(69)</sup> Next day, 29th

October, at a meeting of the Chiefs of Staff Committee attended by Captain Lyttelton, Mr. Attlee and General Smuts, the Prime Minister urged that they should send a message to General Alexander 'emphasising the vital character of the struggle now in progress and the critical condition of the enemy, and assuring commanders on the spot that they would enjoy the fullest support of His Majesty's Government in any forward action they might decide to take, whatever the consequences'. General Brooke pointed out that this regrouping certainly presaged a renewed offensive and urged that if such a message was sent it should contain no phrase which could be interpreted as meaning that the commanders on the spot had forfeited the confidence of the Government; a caution with which Captain Lyttelton and General Smuts strongly associated themselves.<sup>(7)</sup>

A telegram was therefore despatched to General Alexander on 29th October which bears signs of General Ismay's emollient drafting. 'The Defence Committee', it ran

'congratulate you on the resolute and successful manner in which you and General Montgomery have opened the decisive battle which is now proceeding. They feel that the general situation justified all the risks and sacrifices involved in its relentless prosecution. We assure you that you will be supported, whatever the cost, in all the measures which you are taking to shake the life out of Rommel's army and make this a fight to the finish.'<sup>(71)</sup>

A more idiosyncratic draft, however, survives among the Churchill papers, which is not without interest:

'We are glad the battle started well and are sure that you intend to press it remorselessly to a finish. We have nothing to fear from a *bataille d'usure*. . . . The enemy is hard run for petrol and ammunition, and our air superiority weighs heavily upon him. . . . We do not of course know what you have in mind and therefore were somewhat concerned to see that on the 27th the attack on Kidney Ridge by two battalions was the only substantial thrust. And now by your latest Sitrep most units appear to be coming back into reserve. . . . We should be grateful if you could tell us if you have any large-scale attacks impending because we feel that the intensity and scale of the battle will be hard for the enemy to bear'.<sup>(72)</sup>

The Prime Minister had put his finger on the essential feature of the battle. The British had at last, after two years of fighting in the desert, assembled an overwhelming superiority of force at the vital point. Their forces were adequately trained, their armour was superior in number and equal in quality, their superiority in the air was absolute, and their army was commanded by a general who did

not hesitate to exploit these superior resources to the limit. On the night of 1st/2nd November Montgomery unleashed his second blow, Operation 'Supercharge'. Within twelve hours it was evident to Rommel that if he wanted to get any of his forces away he must fall back at once. Hitler refused him permission to do so, in terms with which his generals were to become very familiar during the next two and a half years. 'In your present situation', he told him, 'nothing else can be thought of but to hold on. . . . Despite his superiority the enemy must also have exhausted his strength. It would not be the first time in history that the stronger will has triumphed over the enemy's stronger battalions. You can show your troops no other road than to victory or death.'<sup>(73)</sup> But two days later Rommel took matters into his own hands, reporting to Hitler 'The enemy has almost wiped out the troops holding the front line. Our losses are so high that there is no longer a connected front'.<sup>(74)</sup>

The same day, 4th November, General Alexander informed the Prime Minister

'After twelve days of heavy and violent fighting Eighth Army has inflicted a severe defeat on the enemy's German and Italian forces under Rommel's command in Egypt. The enemy's front has broken and British armoured formations in strength have passed through and are operating in the enemy's rear areas. . . .'<sup>(75)</sup>

Two days later he sent his estimate of the trophies: 20,000 prisoners, 400 guns, and, most important for Rommel's prospects of escape, several thousand vehicles.<sup>(76)</sup> These figures were to prove an underestimate. The final count of prisoners was 7,802 Germans and 22,071 Italians. German armour was reduced from 249 vehicles to 36,<sup>(77)</sup> while such Italian tanks as had not been destroyed in battle had to be abandoned through lack of fuel. Not until he reached the Mareth line four months later, fourteen hundred miles further west, was Rommel capable of making a further stand.

The Eighth Army's own casualties were not light, losing as it did 2,350 killed, 8,950 wounded and 2,260 missing. The Desert Air Force lost 77 aircraft. But of the 500 tanks damaged in action the greater part could be quickly repaired,<sup>(78)</sup> and losses which might have seemed intolerable in defeat were justified by the magnitude of the victory. And the moral effect of that victory, not only on the Eighth Army and the Desert Air Force but on the British people, was inestimable. Overnight Generals Alexander and Montgomery became popular military heroes of a kind hardly known in Britain since the days of Kitchener and Roberts; and the Eighth Army itself and the airmen who fought with it acquired a nimbus of glory

which was not to be without its effect on the subsequent shaping of Allied strategy.

It was not only at home that the moral effect of the battle was to make itself felt. For the German High Command the Mediterranean was still a minor theatre in which setbacks were neither decisive nor irreversible. But the Italians could not take so philosophic a view of the rout of their main armies, presaging as it did the final loss of Italian possessions in Africa and perhaps the invasion of Italy itself; and tensions within the Axis High Command now began to mount towards breaking point. In the United States, on the other hand, the British ally was regarded with a new respect which eased the path of British negotiators at every level, civil and military. Finally, neutral powers throughout the world began to look towards Britain and her allies with greater respect, if not as yet greater hope; and of none was this more true than of the powers who controlled access to the Western Mediterranean, on whose forbearance so much was to depend during the next few weeks.\*

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\* See Chapters VIII & IX below.

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- (4) Minutes of Meetings held in British Embassy, Cairo, on 18 and 20.8.42: C.P.52.
- (5) B/Command/8, Vol. I, fol. 68.
- (6) Telegram CC/79 of 9.7.42: C.P.284.
- (7) Telegram OZ.710 of 12.7.42: C.P.284.
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- (9) C.O.S.(ME)285 of 5.8.42.
- (10) J.I.C.(42)332: F/Mideast/6, fol. 68.
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- (12) Wilson-W.O.: SD.51 of 15.9.42: Hist(B)10.
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- (25) See 'Memorandum on Some Economic Factors affecting Turkish Readiness for War'. Compiled by the British Embassy in Ankara: F/Turkey/5, fol. 137D.

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- (27) J.P.(41)772.  
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- (30) W.S.C.-C.O.S.: D.143/2 of 28.8.42: C.P.446.
- (31) F.O.-Ankara No. 1474 of 25.8.42: C.P.446.
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- (37) P.M. telegram T.1491/2: W.S.C.-F.D.R. of 13.11.42.
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- (41) J.P.(42)990 of 5.12.42.
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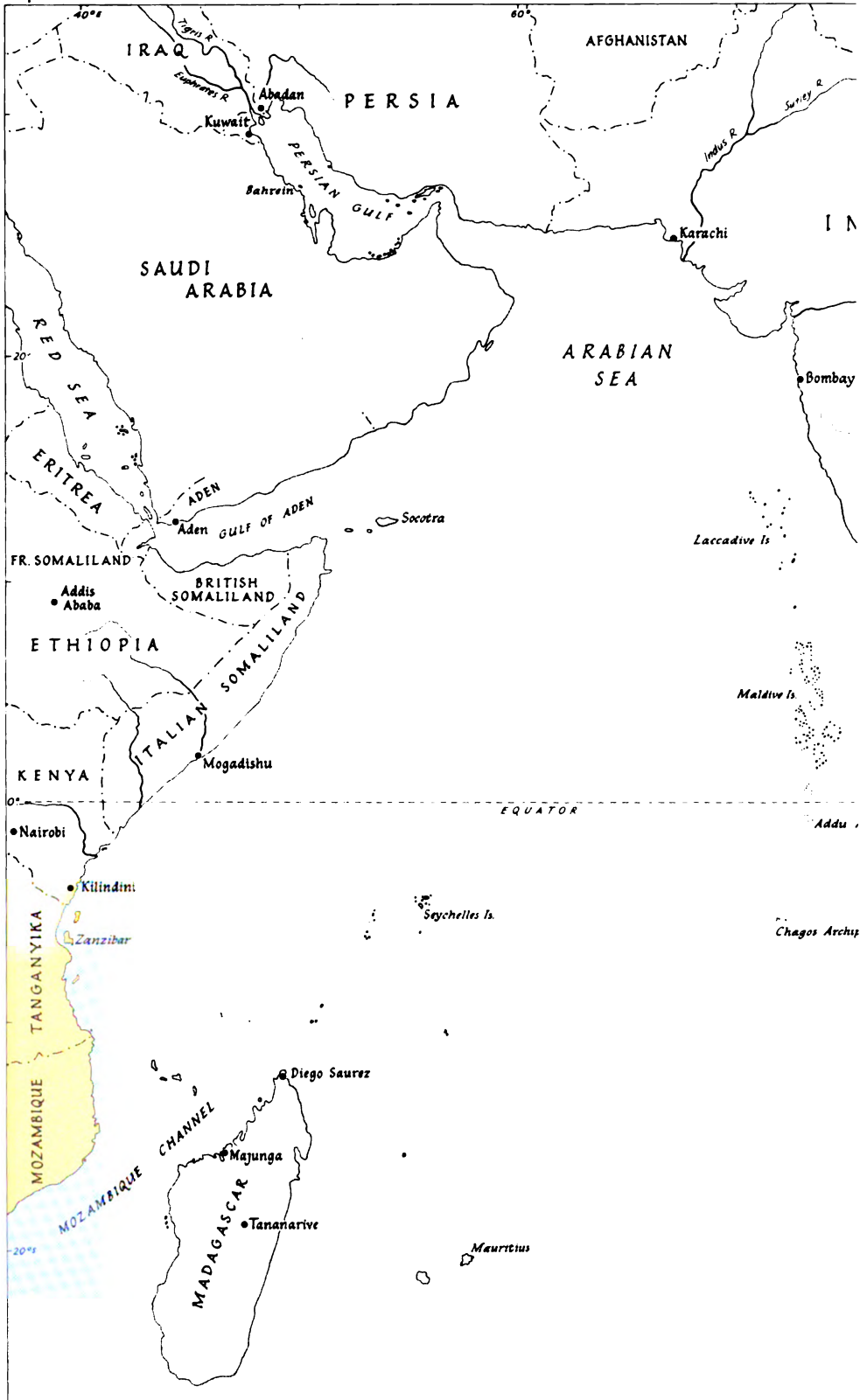
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Map 5



BOOK ONE  
CHAPTER V  
THE FAR EAST:  
JUNE-OCTOBER 1942

**T**HE LAST CHAPTER recorded the preparations for and successful initiation of military operations which transformed the entire aspect of the war against Germany. Now we turn to a very different scene. Between June 1942 and September 1943 the British commanders in India were trying, together with their allies, to regain the initiative which the Japanese seized in December 1941. Behind them was an implacable Prime Minister demanding spectacular results. These results were not forthcoming, for reasons which lay beyond the control of any Commander in the theatre. This volume therefore has little to record of the Far East except frustration. But frustration demands at least as much explanation as victory or defeat; and the absence of any large-scale operations in South East Asia was certainly not due to any neglect of that theatre by the Chiefs of Staff or the Prime Minister himself.

By the summer of 1942 the situation in the Far East was stabilised after the most disastrous six months the British Empire had ever known. Malaya had been lost after ten weeks' campaigning. Singapore had fallen on 15th February, in circumstances of discreditable confusion, and 130,000 prisoners of war had passed into Japanese hands.<sup>(1)</sup> The defence of Burma had been no more successful. Rangoon was captured on 8th March. Nearly half a million refugees made their way to India, by boat or struggling over the mountains separating Upper Burma from Assam, and on 20th May the last rearguards of General Alexander's forces had withdrawn into India. Simultaneously the Japanese had extended their mastery over the whole complex of islands which stretched from the mainland of South East Asia to the north coast of Australia, establishing a forward base at Rabaul in New Britain and thence penetrated south to the northern shores of New Guinea, and south east into the Solomon Islands. They had thus secured, with astonishing speed and economy of effort, the rich resources of the Netherland East Indies and the Malayan peninsula which had in their eyes warranted the risks of war.

The Japanese forces were now established in a classic position of strategic advantage in the centre of their adversaries. Each of the Allies felt its own position to be the most vulnerable. General Wavell,

who had resumed his post as C.-in-C. India, after the disintegration of his ill-fated ABDA Command, was alarmed for the fate of India itself, especially for the populous and vulnerable province of Bengal where so many of India's war industries were located. The Chiefs of Staff in London considered that greater dangers threatened Ceylon, possession of which would give Japan command of the Indian Ocean and enable her to destroy the communications of the United Kingdom, not only with India and Australasia, but with the Middle East—an area already seriously threatened by the German positions in Cyrenaica and Southern Russia. In April the Japanese fleet had irrupted into the India Ocean. Its aircraft attacked both the British naval bases at Colombo and Trincomalee and the east coast of the Indian mainland. Its carrier-borne aircraft destroyed two cruisers and an aircraft carrier of the Eastern Fleet. Its surface and submarine raiders sank shipping in the Bay of Bengal and off the west coast of India. Admiral Sir James Somerville had been forced to withdraw the major part of the Eastern Fleet to Kilindini on the east coast of Africa to preserve control over at least the western area of the Indian Ocean through which the Middle East convoys had to pass.

To complete that control the War Cabinet decided also to seize the Madagascar base of Diego Suarez, then in the hands of a French régime which might, it was considered, yield to Japanese demands for facilities there as they had already yielded in Indo-China. A British force attacked on May 5th, and the port surrendered three days later. The immediate danger neutralised, negotiations for the surrender of the rest of the island continued throughout the summer at a more leisurely pace. Not until September were further landings made, at Majinga and Tananarive, and the occupation of the whole island was completed on 6th November—a few days before the Allies landed in Morocco and Algeria and dramatically swung the rest of the French Empire in Africa into the Allied camp.

The course of these operations was watched with some impatience by responsible commanders further east. They absorbed resources which General Wavell required, first for the defence of India, then for his projected counter-attack into Burma. The Government of Australia, its territory threatened with physical invasion for the first time in its history, felt even more uneasy. Australia and New Zealand had been included, together with the Netherlands East Indies, the Bismarcks and the Solomon Islands, in the area of the South West Pacific Command. General Douglas MacArthur took command of this area on 4th April, reporting through the Joint Chiefs of Staff in Washington to the Allied Combined Chiefs of Staff. Australia had therefore to look to Washington for help. But American resources at this stage of the war were no more plentiful

than British, and priority in their allocation had to be given, in conformity with the decisions of the 'Arcadia' Conference, to the European Theatre—decisions which had been taken, as Dr. Evatt, Australian Minister for External Affairs, pointed out to the War Cabinet when he visited London in May, without any consultation with the Australian Government and which in his view were 'basically open to doubt'.<sup>(2)</sup>

Even within the Far East, the Australian Government feared that the British were chiefly interested in the fate of India and the Americans in their Pacific Fleet, and that neither took the threat to Australia as seriously as they should. 'I cannot believe' Dr. Evatt stated, in a memorandum he submitted to the Chief of Staff Committee in May 1942, 'that if this situation has been fully appreciated by the British Chiefs of Staff, they will be content to leave the matter in the hands of the U.S. Chiefs of Staff to deal with as they think fit'.<sup>(3)</sup> Two Australian divisions, less two brigades detained in Ceylon until July, had already been diverted to Australia while on their way from the Middle East to the Far East, but one, the 9th, still remained, as did the 2nd New Zealand Division; and the Australian Government only yielded to urgent pleas from London and Cairo to leave it there temporarily after agreement had been reached that MacArthur would be provided with American forces equivalent in number if not as yet in battle experience, and with the equipment needed for a major expansion of the Royal Australian Air Force.<sup>(4)</sup> To Mr. Curtin's pleas in late August, at a moment when the situation in Guadalcanal and Papua appeared critical, for a transfer of part of the Eastern Fleet to South Pacific waters to inflict a decisive defeat on the Japanese Navy, Mr. Churchill had to return a reasoned but emphatic refusal; to which Mr. Curtin replied that he had 'no alternative but to press for the land and air strength necessary for the local defence of the Commonwealth'.<sup>(5)</sup>

President Roosevelt could be no more forthcoming. He quoted to Mr. Curtin the estimate of the Combined Chiefs of Staff 'that your present armed forces, assuming that they are fully equipped and effectively trained, are sufficient to provide for the security of Australia against invasion on the scale that the Japanese are capable of launching at this time or in the immediate future'. The provision of the necessary equipment, he pointed out, was only temporarily delayed by shortage of shipping; and, he concluded, 'I am confident that you appreciate fully the necessity of rigidly pursuing our present overall strategy that envisages the early and decisive defeat of Germany in order that we can quickly undertake an "All-Out" effort in the Pacific'.<sup>(6)</sup>

New Zealand acquiesced more placidly in the priorities which had been laid down at the 'Arcadia' Conference. Of her 3 divisions,

4GS\*

one was still fighting in the critical battles in the Western Desert, and the losses which it was suffering made heavy demands on her limited manpower at a time when she was being urged by the Americans to find forces for operations nearer home. At no point did Mr. Fraser suggest that the division should be brought home; but he did, in a message to Mr. Churchill on 23rd July, point out that the impossibility of reinforcing General Freyberg's forces might compel him to reduce their size. This suggestion, with the Axis forces almost at the gates of Cairo, could hardly have come at a less opportune moment; yet it required courage of a high order for a small nation to go on sending the pick of its trained military manpower to fight at the other end of the world when its own security appeared to be so direly threatened. This courage the New Zealand Government displayed. On 5th August Mr. Fraser informed Mr. Churchill of the decision 'that despite our preoccupation as to the defence of New Zealand and as to possible operations in this part of the world in connection with which we have been asked to despatch New Zealand troops to Pacific areas and the really serious questions of manpower which are now confronting us we must nevertheless in the meantime at any rate reinforce the Division'.<sup>(7)</sup> So the 2nd New Zealand Division, like the 9th Australian, was kept in the Mediterranean in full strength.

In November, when Axis pressure on the Middle East was ebbing and the fighting in New Guinea became intensive, Mr. Curtin and Mr. Fraser were again to request the return of their divisions. This time Mr. Curtin was inexorable, and the 9th Australian Division, after playing a magnificent part at El Alamein, returned home. Mr. Fraser however once again acknowledged that it was in the Mediterranean that his forces could contribute most effectively to the Allied cause; so there they remained and continued to distinguish themselves until the end of the war.<sup>(8)</sup>

Events were to justify this decision. In fact the Japanese had already decided not to extend their conquests either southward into Australia or westward into the Indian Ocean. Instead they struck east and south-east. If they were to enjoy their conquests in peace they had to destroy the capacity of the United States to challenge them, and for this they judged two measures to be necessary. The work begun at Pearl Harbour had to be completed by a decisive naval battle in which the U.S. Pacific Fleet would be destroyed; and the line of communications which the Americans were building to Australia through the island chains of the South Pacific—the Society Islands, the Fiji Islands, the New Hebrides and New Caledonia—had to be severed. For this they had planned a dual thrust: through the Solomon Islands, and through Papua at the eastern extremity of New Guinea.

These last two expeditions set out at the beginning of May. The expedition against Tulagi and Guadalcanal in the Solomons succeeded; that against Port Moresby, on the southern coast of Papua, failed, the naval covering force being checked in the five-day Battle of the Coral Sea. A month later, off Midway Island in the Central Pacific, the Japanese Fleet fought the decisive engagement with the Americans which they had desired. They lost. In four days, between June 3rd and 6th, four of the six aircraft carriers which constituted the backbone of their fleet were sunk, and with them disappeared the command of the sea on which Japan depended for the preservation or the extension of her gains. With this transformation of the central balance of naval power the Japanese capacity to threaten other areas dwindled rapidly. The question was no longer where she would strike her next blow; it was whether she could now effectively protect her conquests against the counter-attacks of her victims, preparations for which were already in hand.

The Japanese situation at the end of the northern summer 1942 was well summarised in a remarkably accurate paper which the Joint Intelligence Committee in London circulated on 9th September,<sup>(9)</sup> and we cannot do better than quote the relevant passages:

‘ . . . 3. Japanese strategy is governed by the following main factors:

(a) The balance of naval power in the Pacific. So long as the relative strengths of the opposing fleets remains as at present, Japan is unlikely to attempt to extend her conquests in any direction which involves large-scale commitments distant from home.

(b) Limitation of air forces. Japanese air strength will prevent her from simultaneously embarking on operations against Russia, India, and Australia and New Zealand or even against any two of these.

(c) Need for developing war resources in the captured territories before Japan can face prolonged hostilities.

(d) Limitation of shipping.

4. Japan's immediate aims are:

(a) to establish strategic security for her East Asiatic Sphere.

(b) to develop the resources of the area now within her control so as to enable her to sustain prolonged hostilities.

So far there are no signs of co-ordinated strategy with Germany.

5. These aims involve the creation of a strategic barrier to the north of Australia and include occupying the Solomons, the Gilberts and possible other islands, completing the occupation of New Guinea and thereafter possibly occupying Darwin.



6. Japan will try to weaken the Allies' power of counter-offensive by striking at their naval and air forces, whenever favourable opportunity offers, and by denying them bases within operating distance of the East Asiatic Sphere. So long as the relative strength of the opposing fleets remains as at present, she is not likely to undertake any major seaborne operations beyond those indicated in paragraph 5 above.

7. In particular Japan is unlikely at present to attempt to occupy Australia (except possibly Darwin), New Zealand, India, Ceylon or the Hawaiian Islands or to push her conquests further in the Aleutians.

8. Her shipping limitations, though not sufficiently serious to hamper her present military operations, are preventing her from exploiting her conquests to the full and from expanding her own industrial productive capacity. The need to conserve shipping for these important purposes will act as a further deterrent against undertaking seaborne operations, not essential to her strategic security, in areas in which she cannot freely operate.

9. In India, Japan's principal aim is to neutralise it as a base for Allied counter-attack. For the reasons given above, her operations to this end are likely to be limited at present to fomenting internal unrest, to air raids and to submarine attacks in the Indian Ocean.

10. To establish peace in China remains a Japanese aim. She will pursue it by political and economic pressure and by limited military operations.

11. An attack on Russia is probably not an immediate aim of Japan though preparations in Manchuria are complete and extreme military elements might precipitate an attack at any time.

12. Japan cannot conclusively defeat the United States or Britain by any land operation. To win the war, therefore, she must hope to resist whatever counter-offensive the Allies can bring against her whilst they are pre-occupied in the West; to profit by their defeat there, if that should occur; and so to build up her strength in the meantime that, even if Germany were defeated, she could still defend her Sphere against the Allies and rely on their exhaustion, and war weariness to secure a negotiated peace'.

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The British Commonwealth, Australia, the Netherlands and the United States were not of course the only powers engaging Japan. When the Japanese attacked at Pearl Harbour their army had already been involved in fighting on the Chinese mainland for more than ten years, and more than half a million of their troops were still

pinned down in occupation duties or hostilities against the resistance directed by communist forces in the North and, in the South, by Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek from his mountain capital of Chungking. The maintenance of Chinese independence against Japan had long been the cardinal motive in the Far Eastern policy of the United States. Indeed it had inspired the economic pressure which she had imposed on Japan and which had precipitated the Japanese decision to go to war. But with the entire coastline in Japanese hands, American aid had to be confined to moral encouragement, loans, and a trickle of equipment over the Burma Road, which, running from Chungking to Rangoon, was Chiang Kai-shek's sole link with the outside world, until it was severed on 29th April 1942 by the Japanese capture of Lashio.

A volunteer group of United States airmen manning Curtis P.40 fighters under Colonel Clair L. Chennault was at Rangoon on its way to China when Burma was invaded, and an American Military Mission had been operating at Chungking since October 1941.<sup>(10)</sup> The Mission was not optimistic about the potential of the poorly-trained and lightly armed forces over whose quasi-autonomous commanders Chiang Kai-shek exercised only a tenuous control. They reported of him much as British agents were reporting simultaneously of General Mihailovic in Yugoslavia: 'The Chinese would shun offensive action, wait until their allies had won the war, and then use their jealously-husbanded supplies for the solution of the Communist problem.'<sup>(11)</sup> The appreciation of British observers in Chungking was still more pessimistic. An offer from the Japanese on the basis of eliminating the Communists, they suggested in a report to the Chiefs of Staff in June 1942,<sup>(12)</sup> would be 'extremely tempting to many members of the present government'. It warned of the danger 'that a psychological change, unfavourable to the Allies, may take place which will be too strong for Chiang to control. The best way of preventing such a change would be a display of Allied fighting power in the East. Failing such a demonstration, and in the absence of any resounding victories, Chinese morale may collapse within the next six months and organised resistance may cease'.

The need to bring help to China before it was too late presented the Western Allies with difficulties comparable to those raised by the simultaneous need to help Russia. The problem was very similar: a critical shortage of equipment and transport facilities, combined with almost impossible geographical hazards. With the closing of the Burma Road aid could reach China only by an air route from Assam over some of the worst flying country in the world, to establish which the United States, whose 10th Army Air Force had been operating in India since February under General Lewis H. Brereton, set up an

India-China Ferry Command in Assam. A network of logistic support services was also set up, administered from Karachi by Major General Raymond A. Wheeler.<sup>(13)</sup>

To supplement this aid the British Military Mission in Chungking, conscious not only of China's need but of the contempt in which Chiang Kai-shek held British military power after the catastrophes in Malaya and Burma, repeatedly urged that a detachment of the Royal Air Force should be sent to Chungking. This would, they suggested on 12th August, 'indicate to the Chinese that we regard this theatre as of some importance which at present they see no reason to believe'.<sup>(14)</sup> The War Cabinet agreed that such a force would have a political value out of all proportion to the sacrifice involved, and the Chiefs of Staff, on 26th August, urged the authorities in India to consider sending at least a squadron.<sup>(15)</sup> But Air Marshal Sir Richard Pierse, A.O.C.-in-C. India, explained that the difficulty would be not so much to provide the squadron as to maintain it. It had taken five DC.3s to maintain one squadron of Hurricanes during operations in Burma, and a squadron operating in China would inevitably need more. Transport aircraft were already short, and when the projected offensive began in Burma they would be shorter still. Would the political advantages warrant the strain on these slender resources, when no military advantage would really arise? The Chiefs of Staff, at their meeting on 3rd September, decided that they would not.<sup>(16)</sup> China would have to go on depending for assistance on the United States, and Britain would have to accept the political consequences.

Since January 1942 Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek had held the rank in Allied war councils of Supreme Allied Commander, China Theatre, and on his appointment he had asked for an American Chief of Staff. This delicate role had been allotted to an officer with considerable experience of China and fluency in the Chinese language, Lieut. General Joseph W. Stilwell, who was also put in charge of the existing Military Mission in Chungking and of all U.S. Army forces in China, Burma and India.

General Stilwell had arrived in Chungking in March barely in time to stitch together an allied command-structure for the defence of Burma and to join the Chinese forces there in their retreat. In his eyes, the reconquest of Burma appeared to be the only possible solution to the Chinese difficulties. Only by reopening the Burma Road, he considered, could enough aid be got through to China to keep her in the war. 'Unless positive action is taken to reopen Burma', he reported to Washington, 'the offer of U.S. help to China is meaningless'. The small quantity of supplies which was actually flown into China during the summer months of 1942 gave point to his demands. The planners in Washington, underrating the appalling

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logistic difficulties of operating the air lift from Assam, had hopefully aimed at 5,000 tons (3,500 for the Chinese Army and 1,500 tons for Chennault) a month. In fact 80 tons were transported in May, 106 tons in June, and 73 in July; the decrease being due to the transfer of American air forces from India to the Middle East in the anxious days which followed the fall of Tobruk.<sup>(17)</sup> The Generalissimo, in June, submitted a demand for aid on a scale which Stilwell found totally unrealistic: three American divisions to be sent to India to reopen the Burma Road, General Chennault's force to be kept at a strength of 500 first-line aircraft, the target-figure of 5,000 tons a month for the airlift to be reached by August. After stubborn negotiations he agreed not to press these requests, but to concentrate on preparations for the reconquest of Burma. But such a campaign, he pointed out on 1st August, would require 'that British should occupy the Andamans, give support to a landing at Rangoon and control the Bay of Bengal. It is therefore deemed necessary that the attitude of Great Britain in this case should first be ascertained and that she be urged to act'.<sup>(18)</sup>

Neither Mr. Churchill nor General Wavell required any urging. The Prime Minister had already on 4th April 1942 instructed the Chiefs of Staff 'to frame plans for a counter-offensive on the Eastern Front in the summer or autumn'.<sup>(19)</sup> General Wavell had on 16th April ordered his staff to start planning the recapture of Burma.<sup>(20)</sup> But both from Delhi and from London the problem appeared formidable. To reach Upper Burma from Assam it was necessary to cross a belt of jungle-covered mountains, a hundred miles at its widest and reaching 12,000 feet, which stretched continuously from the Himalayas to the Bay of Bengal. Since it had always been a simple matter to sail from Bengal to Lower Burma, no roads had ever been driven through this hinterland. From May to October the monsoon brought heavy rain which, it had always been supposed, made campaigning impossible; and it was one of the worst malarial areas in the world. Even with fully-trained and equipped forces operating from an adequate base the difficulties of operating in such country might have seemed insuperable.

General Wavell had neither the forces nor the base. The one British and six Indian divisions at his disposal he organised in an Eastern Army under Lieut. General N. M. S. Irwin, one Corps (IV), based on Assam and a second (XV) defending the Arakan coast. Separating all these forward troops from the Army's base in Bengal flowed the great Brahmaputra River, unbridged and unbridgeable, crossed only by two rail ferries of very limited capacity. No roads linked the western bank of the Brahmaputra in Assam with the rest of India, and the roads linking the eastern bank with the forward bases at Kohima and Imphal were discontinuous and liable to

collapse under heavy traffic. These appalling communications had to be transformed before any offensive could be launched into Upper Burma, or even before the air lift to China from Assam could begin to reach its target-figure for deliveries. But the facilities for transforming them barely existed. Indian railways were hardly adequate to handle even peacetime demands. Now they were loaded not only with military traffic but with civilian goods which could not be safely shipped along the coast, and with imports diverted to ports on the west coast. Finally, all this strain was to have an evil influence both on the political situation and on the internal economy of India, which was further to complicate the conduct of any campaign.<sup>(21)</sup>

The difficulties of an overland campaign made it natural that the reconquest of Burma should be conceived from the very beginning in amphibious terms. In the eyes of the planners in both London and Delhi operations in Assam and Arakan could only be secondary and preparatory, aimed at drawing in Japanese forces, particularly air forces, and at securing forward air bases. The main attack would have to be launched by sea against Lower Burma and Rangoon. This would not be feasible, reported the Chiefs of Staff to the Premier on 4th May,<sup>(22)</sup> until they had control of the Bay of Bengal, air superiority over South Burma, substantial land forces to advance up country and the necessary specialised landing-craft; and 'unless meanwhile new factors have reduced Japan's power to move her fleet into the Bay of Bengal and have caused some deterioration in the strength and mobility of her land and air forces in the area, the complete operation will not be possible in the autumn with the resources then available to us'.

The Prime Minister was not deterred. 'A general amphibious British air and land offensive from Moulmein to Assam must be the aim we set before ourselves for the autumn and winter of 1942' he informed the Chiefs of Staff on 18th May.<sup>(23)</sup> To this they replied on 30th May:<sup>(24)</sup>

'Apart from the opening of a limited air-supply route to China, the only step we are likely to be able to take in this area in 1942 is a local advance from the Assam border. By September, [they considered] our sea and air power should be sufficient to make any seaborne invasion of India a hazardous operation which the Japanese are unlikely to attempt. On the other hand, in order to carry out large-scale operations against Lower Burma, it would be necessary to dominate the considerable Japanese Air Force in that area, and this could only be done after a laborious step-by-step advance down the coast via Akyab, with long pauses for the development of aerodromes. [They therefore proposed that General Wavell be instructed] to include in his present plans the possibility of capturing Akyab, and of making good any deficiencies in landing-craft for this purpose

by the use of local resources, at least for the landing of personnel. Any more ambitious offensive cannot be undertaken without diverting naval forces, shipping, landing-craft, aircraft, etc. from our main strategic objective in Europe and elsewhere, to which we and the Americans are already firmly committed'.

Checked in London, Mr. Churchill turned to Delhi. 'I hope' he wired to Wavell on 31st May, 'we shall hear from you as soon as possible what you think you can do, when you can do it and what you want in order to do it. My personal hope was that you would try to take Rangoon by the end of September.'<sup>(25)</sup> General Wavell, in reply, explained what this would involve. To take Rangoon he needed either long-range aircraft, which he did not possess, or airfields in Upper Burma, for which he would have to fight. He was planning an offensive from Assam across the Chin Hills, into Upper Burma as soon as the monsoon ended in October, but bad weather, poor communications and lack of training might all cause further delays.<sup>(26)</sup> But the Prime Minister, who had meanwhile received fresh warnings about the dangerous position in China both from the Joint Intelligence Committee and from the Foreign Office<sup>(27)</sup>, was less inclined than ever to accept anything less than a full offensive.

'All these minor operations [he replied on 12th June] are very nice and useful nibbling. What I am interested in is the capture of Rangoon and Moulmein and thereafter striking at Bangkok. For this we should have to fight our way along the coast amphibiously from Chittagong to Akyab and at the right moment launch an overseas expedition of 40 or 50,000 of our best British troops with suitable armour across the northern part of the Bay of Bengal. . . . This would be seizing the initiative and making the enemy conform instead of being through no fault of your own like clay in the hands of the potter'.<sup>(28)</sup>

As a statement of long-term objectives this was inspiring: as a serious proposal for operations during the coming campaigning season it was, in view of the total lack of resources which the Prime Minister knew as well as anyone, pure cigar-butt strategy. But General Wavell responded gallantly to Mr. Churchill's enthusiasm. He had immediately realised the implications of Midway. The crippling of Japan's main fleet meant that neither India nor Ceylon was any longer in serious danger of attack, and control over the Bay of Bengal had passed out of Japanese hands. 'We can now begin definitely' he reported on 14th June, 'to plan recapture of Burma which has been in my mind ever since it became obvious that I was likely to lose it'; and he sent General Alexander back to London to describe the plans he had in mind.<sup>(29)</sup>

These were ambitious and imaginative. Instead of launching a conventional attack from Assam on the Japanese forces in Upper



Burma, General Wavell proposed to unleash a division of the Long-Range Penetration units which had been trained by Brigadier Orde Wingate,\* in order to pin down and divert the Japanese resources in the North. A division would then seize the airfields on the Arakan coast, at Akyab and Sandoway, whence cover could be provided for the two-divisional assault on Rangoon which would follow two days later.<sup>(30)</sup> But success depended on a number of important conditions. The troops must be properly trained. There must be an adequate supply of aircraft, landing-craft and assault-shipping, which could certainly not be found within the theatre itself; and Japanese air and sea strength must be diverted, perhaps by American or Australian operations in the Pacific. There was no possibility whatever that these conditions could be met by the autumn of 1942.

After a wearisome and at times acrimonious debate,<sup>(31)</sup> General Wavell and the Chiefs of Staff at last convinced the Prime Minister that this was so. In a minute of 12th July Mr. Churchill at once confessed defeat and laid down realistic guide lines for the future of what was now known as Operation 'Anakim'.<sup>(32)</sup>

'Unless [he wrote] . . . the Japanese Air Force available for the regions affected by "Anakim" is cut down to below present level and their military forces cannot be greatly reinforced, we need not commit ourselves to the enterprise. Nothing will have been risked or lost, and all the preparations will be helpful in the future.

In principle the Operation should comprise three parts. First, the engagement of the enemy front in Assam through our increasing pressure and also, if possible, by guerrilla diversions in the Chin Hills. Secondly, the seizure of Akyab at a moment convenient to the growth of our air power in the Bay of Bengal and the rest of the plan. Thirdly, the attack upon Rangoon and Moulmein with the ultimate object of an advance towards Bangkok by an overseas expedition from India'.

The Chiefs of Staff, perhaps somewhat gratefully, informed the Prime Minister that they would regard these instructions as the basis for future planning.<sup>(33)</sup>

By the end of July, developments in other theatres had made even clearer the impossibility of mounting 'Anakim' before 1943. First, there was the decision to invade North Africa. Mr. Churchill told the Chiefs of Staff at a meeting on 28th July that he hoped that 'Torch', although it must be given the highest priority over all other operations, would not prevent the carrying out of the offensives projected in Madagascar and Burma. But its impact was bound to be considerable. Operations in Madagascar had to be delayed and modi-

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\* See further p. 548 below.

fied, since assault shipping allotted for them had to be summoned home for 'Torch'. General Wavell had to be instructed to plan his offensive on the assumption that the assault shipping he needed could be made available only after 'Torch' was over, which meant that it would not reach him by the end of December 1942.<sup>(34)</sup> A week later came the conference which the Prime Minister summoned in Cairo to reorganise the defence of the Middle East, which transferred certain units from India to Iraq to meet the looming threat of the German offensive through South Russia.<sup>(35)</sup> And finally, there broke out during the month of August the great wave of riots and disturbances which the Congress Party unleashed throughout India and whose effect, reported Wavell, was 'to delay all military preparations by at least one month owing to interruption of communications, especially in North East, and to interfere with training and organisation of troops'.<sup>(36)</sup>

The cumulative effect of these diversions of strength, combined with the problems created by an exceptionally heavy monsoon,<sup>(37)</sup> forced General Wavell to reduce the scope of his plans for the forthcoming campaigning season. A visit to General Irwin showed him that the Eastern Army was not yet in a state to launch a major offensive. Inadequate and rain-sodden roads had taken their toll of vehicles which could neither be repaired nor replaced. Medical facilities were inadequate and malaria had still not been mastered. Not only did the casualties which it inflicted—as high as 40% in certain units—make effective training impossible, but its ravages in the workshops slowed down yet further the repair of vehicles, thus complicating further the problem of supply. On 15th September General Wavell informed the Chiefs of Staff that he had reluctantly decided to confine himself to developing his communications, so as to be in a better position to reconquer Burma later on; and to launch limited operations with the primary object of inflicting losses on Japanese forces, especially in the air. These would aim at the recapture of Akyab, of Upper Arakan, of the Chin Hills, and the occupation of Tiddim, Kalewa and Sittaung. Simultaneously he proposed to launch 'raids with flying columns as deep into enemy country as possible'.<sup>(38)</sup> Two days later he issued an operational order to the Eastern Army to this effect.<sup>(39)</sup>

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Meanwhile the Americans had opened their attack in the South West Pacific. There they faced logistic problems at least comparable to those of General Wavell. Their principal line of communications ran, as we have seen, from the Pacific coast of the United States through the Fiji Islands, New Caledonia, and the New Hebrides to

Australia. From San Francisco to Brisbane the distance was 7,200 nautical miles, and to Noumea in the New Caledonians it was 6,400. Once Brisbane was reached, it was a further 1,100 miles to New Guinea, where General MacArthur proposed to strike at the Japanese in Papua and from Noumea it was 900 miles to Guadalcanal in the Solomons.

This was the target of U.S. Naval and Marine forces from Admiral Ghormley's South Pacific Command, under the overall control of the Commander-in-Chief Pacific, Admiral Chester Nimitz. The choice of this area for their attack had been made by the Joint Chiefs of Staff early in July. With the capture of the Japanese base at Rabaul, the main threat to the Allied supply-line would be removed. It was an area where limited forces could be used to most decisive effect. And—a not unimportant point—it was an area where the forces under General MacArthur's command and those of Admiral Nimitz could effectively co-operate in a concentric operation. MacArthur was to advance along the north coast of New Guinea, Admiral Ghormley's Marines through the Solomons, both converging on New Britain, New Ireland and Rabaul. But before General MacArthur could begin his advance the Japanese renewed their thrust on Port Moresby, landing near Buna on 21st July and advancing southward over the Owen Stanley Mountains by the Kokoda trail. The Australian forces in Papua gradually withdrew before them throughout August and the early part of September, until the Japanese, their tenuous communications through the mountains over-extended, were checked 30 miles from Port Moresby. Meanwhile on 7th August United States forces landed successfully in the Solomons, at Tulagi and Guadalcanal, and opened a battle which was to rage by sea, land and air for six months, and absorb far more resources than anyone had foreseen.<sup>(40)</sup>

With their forces thus heavily engaged, it was natural that the Joint Chiefs of Staff should be interested in seeing the British bring pressure to bear on the Japanese as soon as they possibly could. Already in July Admiral King had asked that the Eastern Fleet should make a demonstration in the Indian Ocean, perhaps in the form of an attack on the Andaman Islands. The Admiralty and Admiral Somerville had done their best, but with some of his forces tied up on protecting the vital convoys to the Middle East and others detached for Operation 'Pedestal', the decisive convoy to Malta, Somerville could manage no more than a minor and ineffective demonstration at the beginning of August.<sup>(41)</sup> As the strain of the Guadalcanal fighting grew heavier, requests for help, either by diversionary attacks or by transference of naval forces to the South West Pacific, continued to arrive, not only from Washington but, as we have seen, from Canberra as well.<sup>(42)</sup> The British inability to

respond may have created hard feelings; but the difficulty which they faced arose not only from shortage of resources but, as Admiral Pound pointed out on 26th September to his representative in Washington, from 'the fact that we are ignorant of the current naval situation in the South West Pacific and cannot therefore weigh up the relative claims of the Indian Ocean and the South West Pacific for these ships'.<sup>(43)</sup>

This failure of communication was due as much to inadequate co-ordination between the United States Armed Forces themselves as to any lack of understanding between Washington and London. Nevertheless Allied co-ordination of plans for the theatre, at this stage of the war, left a great deal to be desired. Since the collapse of the ABDA Command General Wavell had not directly communicated his plans to his American allies, although increasing numbers of United States forces were accumulating in India under General Brereton's and General Wheeler's command. Nor had he thought it desirable to consult Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek. It does not appear that he sought any guidance on this vital question until 14th September, when he wrote to the Prime Minister:

'I should like your advice as to the extent to which I should take the Americans into my confidence as to future operations. Present situation most unsatisfactory since Americans here under Stilwell who is at Chungking and everything tends to be referred there with delay and damage to security. Would it be possible to get Americans to order Stilwell to Delhi with deputy to Chungking and instructions issued to him to take part in action from India. I have naturally said nothing to Chiang Kai-shek at present but feel he may before long ask what is being done from India towards re-occupying Burma. This will not be an easy one to answer'.<sup>(44)</sup>

Meanwhile the Americans had themselves been taking the initiative. At the beginning of August General Stilwell had transmitted to Washington Chiang Kai-shek's demand for a British amphibious operation against Rangoon and his own proposals for a combined Sino-British overland offensive. On 11th August Admiral Leahy, from the Chair of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, had suggested that the Allies should enter into a definite commitment to reopen the Burma Road;<sup>(45)</sup> and on 25th August Field Marshal Dill received from General Marshall a paper proposing that the Combined Chiefs of Staff should urgently consider undertaking the reconquest of Burma after the monsoon. Even though the Pacific was a secondary theatre, maintained Marshall, China was in serious danger of collapse, and her disintegration would release Japanese forces to fight on other fronts.<sup>(46)</sup>

In reply to his request for instructions the Chiefs of Staff in London told Dill of the limited operations which General Wavell had in mind, and pointed out the impossibility of achieving anything more ambitious 'before the monsoon again breaks in 1943'. In view of the demands of 'Torch' neither the shipping, nor the aircraft, nor the naval craft, nor the trained manpower was likely to be available. They viewed the collapse of organised Chinese resistance more philosophically than did General Marshall: 'If they cease to fight as a united nation it is unlikely to result in the release of any appreciable Japanese forces since a major internal security problem will always exist', and, they concluded, 'for reasons of security it is not intended to acquaint the Chinese of plans for future operations in Burma even though this may prejudice effective co-operation by the Chinese'.<sup>(47)</sup>

The Combined Chiefs of Staff considered the whole question at a meeting in Washington on 18th September.<sup>(48)</sup> After taking account of Field Marshal Dill's comments they decided only that the Combined Staff Planners should study the possible action to retake Burma and open the Burma Road, and that Chiang Kai-shek should be told that this was being done. This diplomatic conclusion, though it was the least that could have given any satisfaction to the Generalissimo, none the less caused concern in London. The Chiefs of Staff told Dill that they were 'at a loss to understand' it. 'Burma is a British sphere and any operation for its recapture and for reopening the Burma Road must be undertaken almost exclusively by British forces.' It was for the Chiefs of Staff and the Commander-in-Chief India alone to plan such operations. 'In the circumstances we cannot understand why the Joint U.S. Chiefs of Staff have taken up the running. . . . Obviously there must be some political background of which we are unaware'.<sup>(49)</sup>

The failure of the Chiefs of Staff to understand why the recapture of Burma played so central a part in the strategy of their allies in the Far East and the justifiable interest which their American colleagues displayed in the question is curious. The tone of this response perhaps owed something to the frustrations the British themselves were experiencing in gaining any information about events in American theatres in the Pacific, as well as the tensions which were beginning to develop in the discussions over long-range strategy which are described in Chapter XI below. In addition, the Chiefs of Staff feared with rather more reason that in order to placate Chiang Kai-shek their allies might commit them to a rescue operation which they would be quite incapable of carrying out. This point, indeed, was made explicit by General Brooke in a letter to Field Marshal Dill of 2nd October, as was the determination of the Chiefs of Staff not to abdicate responsibility for what was clearly agreed to be a British

theatre of operations. 'I am quite sure' he wrote, 'that if we were to trespass however mildly into an American sphere of responsibility we should be told very quickly and very clearly to quit. We are all in favour of give and take but cannot help feeling that it is we who are doing all the giving and our friends who are doing all the taking. . . . This is the sort of thing which will continue and get worse unless we take a firm stand'.<sup>(50)</sup>

Field Marshal Dill replied with messages of reassurance and correction. The Americans, he made it clear to the British Chiefs of Staff, were making the Chinese no promises of an early offensive. They did regard China as their sphere of interest but China and India could not be dealt with in mutual isolation.

'Apart from that we are convinced that it is a mistake of the first order for Allies to build walls round their areas of responsibility and prohibit co-operation or, if you prefer it, interference. We agree that this is, at present, the attitude of Admiral King towards the Pacific areas, an attitude that we and also I think the American Army deplore'.<sup>(51)</sup>

In a private letter to General Brooke he pointed out that the Americans, rightly or wrongly, considered that they did most of the giving and the British the taking.

'Apart from war equipment and supplies generally they consider for example that they "gave" us "Torch" against the better judgment of most of them. We "sold" them the importance of the Middle East after much difficulty and got their help. And one day we hope that we shall steer them back to a proper view of "Bolero". We have in fact imposed our strategy upon them and they are very conscious of it. It is only by building up the authority of the Combined Chiefs of Staff that we can do anything to curb the tendency of the U.S. Chiefs of Staff to take unilateral action without consultation'.<sup>(52)</sup>

Having placated his colleagues in London, Field Marshal Dill informed General Marshall of their fears, and added his reassurances to his own. Marshall, he cabled back on 7th October, 'denied all desire to butt in but explained how impossible it was to separate Indian and Chinese interests in Burma, and for good or ill he feels that Americans can handle China better than we can'.<sup>(53)</sup> This clearing of the air was obviously salutary. Thereafter no obstacle was placed either in Washington or London to General Stilwell's attempts to co-ordinate his own strategic intentions with those of General Wavell, and on 17th October he flew to Delhi to lay the foundations for what would, he hoped, be a combined and decisive attack.

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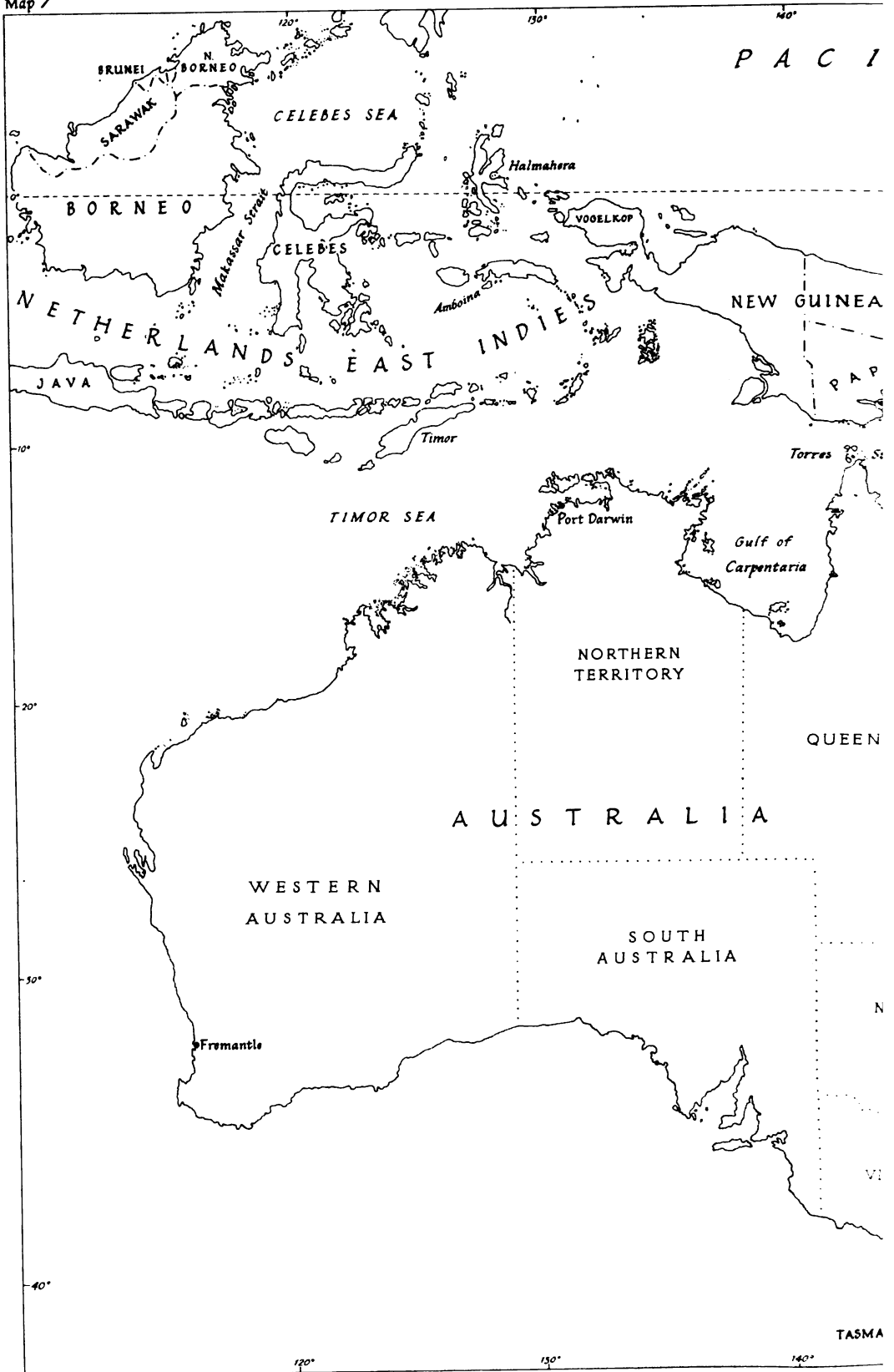
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Map 7



## BOOK ONE

### CHAPTER VI

# THE FAR EAST: OCTOBER 1942— JANUARY 1943

GENERAL STILWELL could count it as something of a triumph to have reached the point where joint planning could even begin. There had been, as we have seen, much reluctance on the part of the British Chiefs of Staff either to disclose their plans to Chiang Kai-shek or to grant that the Americans had any *locus standi* in South East Asia at all. It was not therefore until he met General Wavell that Stilwell learned of the plans which the British had been making for the reconquest of Burma since the previous April.<sup>(1)</sup> But his difficulties with Chiang Kai-shek had been even greater. Like his predecessors on the American Military Mission, General Stilwell had begun to suspect that the Generalissimo had no real intention of taking the offensive against the Japanese; that he was making impossible demands for supplies in order to justify his inactivity, and that he would hoard the supplies obtained in order to perpetuate his régime after the war.<sup>(2)</sup> On June 28th Chiang Kai-shek had made the 'Three Demands' referred to in the previous chapter. Three American divisions should be based on India to co-operate in an attack on Burma; General Chennault's China Air Force (as the American Volunteer Group was now renamed) should be brought, by August, up to a strength of 500 first-line aircraft (its total strength at the time was 64);<sup>(3)</sup> and the tonnage transported monthly over 'the Hump', which had barely reached 100 tons, should be increased, by August, to 5,000. Otherwise, he hinted, he could not be responsible for the consequences.

Stilwell could not prevail upon the Generalissimo formally to withdraw these demands, but he did persuade him to abandon the impossible deadline and to formulate his requirements for a campaign to reconquer Burma. These requirements Chiang Kai-shek presented on 1st August and they were considerable. The United States had to provide the necessary air support and logistic backing to enable 20 Chinese 'armies' (or, in Western terminology, divisions) to operate from Yunnan; and the British had to occupy the Andamans, to launch an amphibious assault on Rangoon, and dominate with their naval forces the Bay of Bengal. Stilwell himself had submitted to Washington in July a different set of proposals. These provided for a simultaneous drive into Upper Burma the following

March by 12 Chinese divisions from Yunnan and a mixed forces of two Chinese and three British divisions from Assam; while nine more Chinese divisions were to advance south-east from Yunnan into Indo-China to pin down the Japanese forces there.<sup>(4)</sup>

Chiang Kai-shek agreed to this plan on 14th October, but his conditions so far as British participation was concerned remained severe. They must attack Rangoon, and provide three to four battle-ships and six to eight carriers to dominate the China and Java Seas as well as the Bay of Bengal. With the assurance of President Roosevelt that the United States would provide 'almost 500 aircraft' for General Chennault and operate a hundred ferry aircraft over the Hump in early 1943 he was, for the time being, satisfied. The President had further assured him that, although no American ground troops could be provided to operate from India, the United States would equip and organise the Chinese forces in that theatre, as well as provide air support. Finally the War Department agreed to General Stilwell's urging to expand the allocation of equipment to the Chinese armies from sufficient for 30 to sufficient for 60 divisions within six months.<sup>(5)</sup> Stilwell thus seemed to have solid assets to offer when he met General Wavell in Delhi on October 17th.

The discussions went well. 'I don't think (the) Americans quite realise (the) administrative difficulties and transportation problems' General Wavell afterwards reported to the Prime Minister,<sup>(6)</sup> 'but we have taken American representatives on to our Planning Staff and we are working out details in close co-operation. Stilwell is pretty close and does not give away much but I like him and think him co-operative and genuine.' The American/Chinese proposals for operations in Burma and his own appeared, he told the Chiefs of Staff, 'in sufficient accord to continue planning on a common basis. Vital problems were date and how far we could go before the next monsoon. We could not risk getting into position where we could not maintain troops in rainy season and might have to make another withdrawal'.<sup>(7)</sup>

As for the Chinese demand for naval operations, Wavell made it clear, first that forces on the scale specified by the Generalissimo were 'not yet in sight and that (the) Fleet could not operate in Bay of Bengal till air superiority had been obtained;' and second, that 'there was no possibility of Fleet operating in China and Java Seas except submarines, till land air bases to cover them have been secured, and that order of operations of the Fleet must be reversed'—that is, Rangoon and the Andamans must be seized before enemy sea-communications further south could be attacked. But Stilwell's general proposals for land operations, a Chinese thrust from Yunnan into Upper Burma, a Sino-American-British force to cross the Chindwin and move on Shwebo and Mandalay, a British attack on

Akyab and a landing at Rangoon, accorded closely with what Wavell himself had in mind.<sup>(8)</sup>

The situation of the Chinese forces in India raised special problems. The nucleus of these forces was provided by the troops which had become separated from their main forces retreating into Yunnan during the retreat from Burma the previous spring. These were now based on Ramgarh in Bihar Province, and on General Stilwell's advice the Generalissimo had agreed that 8,000 more troops should be flown from China to bring them up to two full divisions which the Americans would equip with artillery, engineering services and where necessary instructors.<sup>(9)</sup> General Wavell was cautiously favourable to the proposal so long as he did not have to find any equipment from his own resources. 'Well-trained Chinese force might be possible asset in recapture of Burma' he pointed out on 27th September to the Chiefs of Staff.<sup>(10)</sup> But he pointed out also 'politically, the force might be an embarrassment in some respects';<sup>(11)</sup> and this was a point which the War Cabinet, which had spent many anxious hours during the summer considering the explosive political situation in India, took very seriously indeed.

On 28th September the War Cabinet 'expressed the view that, on political grounds, this proposal was likely to be disadvantageous and should be discouraged unless it would be in our interest on military grounds'. The Chiefs of Staff replied that the military advantage would be slight and the question should be settled on political grounds; but that these should include the repercussions on relations with China and the United States if the proposal were turned down. They suggested with quite unmilitary subtlety that 'our response to General Chiang Kai-shek should be a warm acceptance but that we should, at the same time, point out all the practical difficulties of executing the project and hope that, as a result of these difficulties, the project will die a natural death'.<sup>(12)</sup> This mildly Machiavellian proposal proved unworkable, and General Wavell was authorised to accept up to 20,000 Chinese troops 'so long as he is satisfied himself as to the logistic implications of this further burden on his lines of supply'.<sup>(13)</sup> On 15th October Wavell reported very favourably after a visit to Ramgarh. It was, he said, 'a good show: men are good material and training keenly under American staff. . . we must accept with good grace and welcome proposed increase of force, and I will deal with the practical difficulties and limitation of numbers when I meet Stilwell next week'.<sup>(14)</sup>

The practical difficulties in question absorbed a great deal of the time of the two commanders when they met, and almost all of it when General Stilwell returned ten days later on October 27th. To move the Chinese forces from Ramgarh to the forward base at Ledo, where they would operate on the left flank of General Irwin's Eastern

Army, would take up to eight weeks. From Ledo it was planned that they would advance south down the Hukawng Valley to seize Myitkyina and its airfields, American engineers constructing a road behind them as they went.<sup>(15)</sup> General Stilwell raised no difficulties about these forces coming under Wavell's command, but he did reject the further proposal that the American Air Forces in support should come under British control as well. General Wavell did not press the matter, foreseeing no major problems of co-operation, and after Stilwell's departure he cabled cheerfully back to London:

'I think we must accept with good grace and willingness this American/Chinese co-operation in recapture of Burma. It will introduce some complications and inevitable difficulties of inter-allied co-operation, but am sure we can manage to work with Americans as combined staff, and there is no doubt that from military point of view this aid will be very valuable, and will mean full scale American co-operation in India. I propose therefore to work on lines of combined effort with stipulation of single command over all land forces operating from Burma'.<sup>(16)</sup>

General Stilwell expressed the same emotions in his diary more idiosyncratically. 'We have now got both the Limies and the Chinese committed and working at it. If we can keep a fire lit under Wavell and horn in on command and training on this side, the job is in a fair way to get done'.<sup>(17)</sup>

Rarely can hopes have been more cruelly belied. From the very beginning arrangements began to collapse. On hearing Stilwell's report on arrangements reached in Delhi the Generalissimo reiterated his condition that the British Navy must dominate the Bay of Bengal and that full air superiority in the theatre should be obtained; otherwise, Stilwell informed Washington, he would not move.<sup>(18)</sup> Chiang Kai-shek also showed no enthusiasm for the British demand to control land operations. The British might, he agreed, command the Ramgarh Chinese initially; but once the converging forces met in Central Burma they must come under a single command, exercised by General Stilwell on behalf of Chiang Kai-shek himself. But the idea of having British and Indian forces commanded by an American general responsible to a Chinese superior was not one which either New Delhi or London was prepared to entertain. Field Marshal Dill warned General Marshall that the Chiefs of Staff were unlikely to accept any system which did not leave General Wavell in overall control of operations; explaining that 'for political reasons alone India must play the major role in reconquest of Burma, that India will have to serve as the main base for the campaign and that Wavell's staff must be responsible for the difficult logistic problems involved'.<sup>(19)</sup>

The problem was not insoluble. The Chiefs of Staff, though insisting in their instructions to General Wavell that all forces based on, or operating from, India, should remain under his command, did not extend this requirement to Chinese forces operating from Yunnan. General Stilwell on the other hand recommended to the Generalissimo that Wavell *should* assume overall command of all ground forces, and expressed to Washington the belief that Chiang Kai-shek would come round to it. The situation, he reported, was 'approaching the point where responsibility will be squarely on us to make good promises of supply and transport. . . . Situation growing much brighter'.<sup>(20)</sup>

Unfortunately neither the United States War Department nor the British in India proved able to fulfil the conditions on which Stilwell's planning had been based. Supplies for the Chinese armies could not be provided in the quantities promised by Washington in October. As for the British, the longer General Wavell's staff scrutinised the requirements of the proposed operations, the more impossible they appeared.

\* \* \* \* \*

The British part in the projected reconquest of Burma was to consist of three operations: 'Ravenous', the advance by IV Corps into Upper Burma across the Chindwin; 'Cannibal', the amphibious attack on Akyab; and 'Anakim'; the seaborne assault on Rangoon and Lower Burma. The first depended on surmounting the massive logistic difficulties which we have already considered; the second and third on the provision of equipment and forces whose availability depended on developments in other operational theatres. The damage done to IV Corps by malaria and the effect of the monsoon on communications took much longer to repair than General Wavell had hoped; and the slender available resources now had to be shared with the Ramgarh Chinese, for whom the Americans were still unable to provide medical, engineering and administrative equipment on the expected scale. On 15th November General Wavell had reported to the Chiefs of Staff that slowness of transport in North East Assam was his main difficulty.<sup>(21)</sup> Three weeks later he expressed his doubts 'whether we should be wise to attempt reoccupation of Upper Burma this spring. We might succeed in reaching Irrawaddy but I do not think we could maintain ourselves during the rainy season.'<sup>(22)</sup> It was increasingly probable that the furthest limit of any advance before the monsoon would have to be the Chindwin.

With the proposed amphibious operation matters went even worse. As early as September the Chiefs of Staff wondered whether General Wavell would have sufficient margin of air power to cover the landings at Akyab and protect the position once it had been



seized.<sup>(23)</sup> These were not set at rest by a report from the Air Officer Commanding Far East, Air Marshal Peirse, who described the technical shortcomings of the forces at his disposal and expressed the opinion that the operation was 'only feasible if enemy refrains from materially reinforcing his air forces and gives us opportunity for surprise capture of objective. . . . We are continuing our Akyab preparations' he explained, 'so as to leave us free to take decision in the light of the situation nearer the time, because we trust our air situation can be improved and that of the enemy may not be what it appears'.<sup>(24)</sup>

But the situation was no more satisfactory in other respects. A large proportion of the troops, landing-craft and naval crews on which General Wavell was counting for the operation were to come on from Madagascar, and had first to go to South Africa to rest and refit; and it remained uncertain whether the necessary shipping could be made available at all. On 31st October Wavell asked the Chiefs of Staff for a clear decision about this, only to receive three days later the message, unsatisfactory but inevitable in view of the imminence of 'Torch': 'You should plan on assumption that operation will take place, but decision [to] operate "Cannibal" will be given by us nearer the time in light [of] naval and air situations which cannot at present be adequately assessed.'<sup>(25)</sup> Wavell's staff continued to plan; but after another fortnight it was clear that the operation would stand no chance of success. The Royal Air Force was still considerably below the expected strength; the Japanese air forces had been significantly reinforced; and the possibility that the necessary naval escorts would be available in time before the monsoon broke in March seemed increasingly remote.

General Wavell therefore cancelled the operation.<sup>(26)</sup> In its place, on 19th November, he ordered an advance down the Arakan coast by Major General W. L. Lloyd's 14th Division, reinforced by 6th Infantry Brigade, to a point from which a short-range attack could be launched by night and largely with local craft:

'This plan [confessed Wavell in his subsequent dispatch] had the disadvantage that it made surprise most unlikely, and Arakan was a most unfavourable theatre, into which I should certainly not have made a deep land advance on any scale had sea transport been available. I also realised that the troops available had had little opportunity of training in jungle warfare. I hoped, however, if the advance in Arakan could proceed rapidly, it would be difficult for the Japanese to reinforce in time; and considered it was better to take the risks involved than to remain inactive on this front during the winter'<sup>(27)</sup>

If 'Cannibal' was impossible, there could be little hope for 'Anakim'. As early as 26th October, the day before his second

conference with Stilwell, General Wavell had told the Chiefs of Staff that there was little chance of being able to mount a full-scale sea-borne operation against Rangoon until after the next monsoon;<sup>(28)</sup> and almost simultaneously the Combined Staff Planners in Washington came to the same conclusion. Their studies, they told the Combined Chiefs,

'make it clear that it is not possible to collect the necessary forces, especially landing-craft and troops trained in amphibious operations, in time for the operation to be mounted prior to the next monsoon season. This means that the execution of this operation is impractical before the fall of 1943'.

This the Chiefs of Staff accepted with good grace. The Prime Minister did not. 'Surely this is much too late?' he had queried, when it was proposed that the target date for 'Anakim' should be November 1943. It was explained to him that the monsoon would make it impracticable to set a realistic target-date any earlier, but the proposal was diplomatically rephrased, 'Target date of readiness of all preparations for "Anakim" will be *not later than* 1st October 1943', and sent out as an instruction to General Wavell on 20th November.<sup>(29)</sup>

This postponement did not explicitly contradict the requirement from which Chiang Kai-shek had never moved, that the British Navy should command the Indian Ocean, but it was unlikely that the Generalissimo's plans would remain unaffected by it. The British planners, however, had always regarded the Chinese as a highly uncertain quantity, and their own calculations would not be thrown out by Chinese refusal to participate. A document which the War Office prepared on the Reconquest of Burma, dated 21st November, put this with brutal clarity.<sup>(30)</sup> There was, this stated, 'possibility that Chinese formations trained in Ramgarh may co-operate in "Ravenous".' As to 'Anakim', 'effective co-operation by Chinese troops from Yunnan is to be hoped for but should not be relied upon'. All the evidence went to show that 'although the Chinese soldier is brave and tough, the Chinese Army is quite incapable of undertaking offensive operations and is likely to remain so'. It had no supply services and inadequate supporting arms, no trained staff or commanders. 'American training and assistance', it observed drily, 'is not likely appreciably to change the situation for the better'.

This document went on, however, to express some fear that Chiang Kai-shek was working under a misapprehension which Stilwell, after his conference with Wavell, should have dissipated: first, that 'Anakim' was still projected for the current campaigning season, and second that the British operations from Assam were designed to link up with the Chinese from Yunnan and free Upper

Burma in the course of a single operation. It recommended therefore that Chiang Kai-shek should be informed 'unequivocally and at once that the recapture of the whole of Burma (i.e. the reopening of the Burma Road) will not be attempted this campaigning season. It will be attempted as soon as our resources permit.' He should be told also that if a unified command was established it must be under General Wavell; that Wavell must in any case command all British forces and operationally control all Chinese forces operating from India; and that all strategic planning for 'Anakim' must be centralised under his control.

At a meeting on 30th November<sup>(31)</sup> the Prime Minister with the Chiefs of Staff considered and approved General Wavell's revised plans, and the above proposals for a command structure. Mr. Churchill did not think that Chiang Kai-shek should yet be informed about the new plans for 'Anakim'; but the Chiefs of Staff evidently did not share this view, for five days later they sent a slightly worried message to Wavell together with the latest information from Washington about Chinese preparations. 'We think there is some misconception in the mind of Chiang Kai-shek as to your 1943 programme. Is he aware that "Anakim" does not take place until after the monsoon? If not, should he be told? Do you contemplate any considerable co-operation from Yunnan forces in "Ravenous"—"Cannibal"?'<sup>(32)</sup>

This query elicited from the overburdened and frustrated Wavell an uncharacteristic explosion.

'This shows the difficulties and dangers of present situation [he cabled on 7th December] in which Stilwell at Chungking plans direct with Washington for Burma operations without reference to me and I think without much reference to his staff here who seem to know little of his plans. His senior staff officer here gives me the impression of being overawed by Stilwell and afraid of representing true administrative position. . . .

I have always impressed on Stilwell and Americans complete dependence of operation against Upper Burma on administrative factors, they are apt to treat these somewhat lightheartedly. I have also made it clear that *no* seaborne expedition against Lower Burma was probable in the first half of 1943. I considered however, that we should still plan for operation to recapture Upper Burma in first half of 1943 though I warned Americans that administrative considerations might show that it was *not* possible'.<sup>(33)</sup>

Wavell went on to admit, however, that he had not yet informed General Stilwell of the decision taken by the Chiefs of Staff and communicated to him on 17th November, that a firm date had now been set for 'Anakim' in autumn 1943. He was waiting, he said, until

Stilwell visited Delhi again. But more than two weeks had passed, which was a long time to keep this important information to himself. He ended his message with gloomy accounts of the progress of preparations in Assam, especially those for the Ramgarh Chinese; concluding:

'It seems equally doubtful . . . whether we should be wise to attempt reoccupation of Upper Burma this spring. We might succeed in reaching Irrawaddy but I do not think we could maintain ourselves during rainy season.'

These conclusions were at once transmitted through Field Marshal Dill to General Marshall and by him to General Stilwell. Stilwell, Marshal reported, 'expressed chagrin about Wavell's strong doubts about feasibility of undertaking operation in Northern Burma this spring in no uncertain terms, but his language is mild compared to his strictures on the War Department for its failure to provide specialities and materials which he requires'.<sup>(34)</sup>

The Joint Chiefs of Staff in Washington had meanwhile produced their own proposals for a limited offensive in Upper Burma directed at seizing the airfields at Myitkyina and at getting space to build a new road to China via Ledo and Kunming. The President on 8th December authorised a substantial diversion of resources to Stilwell to make this possible,<sup>(35)</sup> including 63,000 tons of road-building and maintenance equipment; but all this had somehow to be got over the slender communications-network of India, and Dill told Marshall quite frankly 'there is really no hope of getting this stuff to the railroad in Assam in March'.<sup>(36)</sup>

This revision of the scope, and increase in the potential resources of his operations made it necessary for Stilwell to visit New Delhi again to examine the problems with Wavell, and, to use his own phrase, to rekindle the fire under the Limeys. Their talks opened on 17th December. All now turned on the possibility of supporting the Ramgarh Chinese in their advance from Ledo to Myitkyina. There was no point, in the British view, in such an advance taking place unless an all-weather road could be constructed behind it to maintain these forces in their forward positions during the monsoon. The pace of advance would have therefore to be dictated by the rate of road construction. The Americans were considerably more optimistic than the British, both as to the rate of road-construction possible and as to their capacity to improvise alternative means of supply. 'American attitude towards supply problem', Wavell reported, perhaps a shade unfairly, to the Chiefs of Staff, 'is inclined to be "if you will push the Chinese on we will feed them somehow"'.<sup>(37)</sup>

Between British caution and American confidence a balance might have been struck. But the conference brought to the surface a more

fundamental difference, not over method, but over objective. General Stilwell was concerned with one aim alone—the reopening of communications to China in time to save that country from economic, political and military collapse. The need was urgent: it seemed unthinkable that it could be postponed for another year without disaster. This view was shared in Washington and commanded some sympathy in London. It is not clear that in New Delhi the question was seen in the same light. For the British Commanders in India the object of all planning was the reconquest of Burma, both as an end in itself and as a first step to the reconquest of the rest of Britain's lost possessions in the Far East. For this the revival of Chinese power did not appear to be militarily necessary. For the Governments of India and Burma it might indeed be a positive embarrassment—though this was not a factor which General Wavell or his successors at any time allowed appreciably to affect their military plans. But it did mean that the British were little inclined to devote major resources to a project which concerned only the sparsely-populated hinterland of Upper Burma and left unshaken the Japanese grip on the rich lower Irrawaddy Valley. On the explicit instructions of the Chiefs of Staff General Wavell made this clear to General Stilwell. Great as were the advantages of the operations now proposed, he explained on 20th December, they must not be allowed to prejudice the chances of the full-scale attack on Burma which was being planned for the autumn of 1943.<sup>(38)</sup>

General Stilwell gloomily heard him out and ended the conference by saying 'that he would convey the substance of his discussions with General Wavell to the Generalissimo'. But Chiang Kai-shek had in store for him even more disagreeable surprises. In spite of his cheerful messages home, Stilwell had for some time doubted whether the Generalissimo really had his heart in the Yunnan offensive. Another way to victory, quicker and cheaper, seemed to be opened by the commander of the China Air Force, Major General Chennault.

Chennault was an enthusiastic member of that school of American airmen which maintained, after their great exemplar Colonel Billy Mitchell, that the advent of air power had rendered surface operations out of date and that only the vested interests of the traditional services prevented this evident truth from being accepted and acted upon. As early as July he had informed Stilwell that if his forces were brought up to a strength of one hundred fighters and thirty medium bombers, he could force the Japanese on to the defensive, destroy their aircraft on a large scale, disrupt their shipping and break up their production facilities on the Chinese mainland. Unfortunately, this programme called for 2,000 tons of supplies a month; so that even if the airlift ever reached this figure the strategies of Chennault and Stilwell would prove mutually exclusive. Stilwell suspected,

with good reason, that Chennault had gained the support of Chiang Kai-shek. In September he warned General Marshall that the Chinese would like to see the Air Task Force strengthened to the point where it could win the war on its own, leaving the Chinese 'resting on their oars'.<sup>(39)</sup> The following month General Chennault bid for yet more exalted support and addressed himself direct to the President, demanding 'full authority as the American military commander in China', asking for an increased bomber force and guaranteeing with it to 'accomplish the downfall of Japan'. It was a proposal which, powerfully urged in Washington by Mme. Chiang Kai-shek, gained the benevolent approval of the President and the support of the influential Mr. Harry Hopkins. Only the staunch backing of General Marshall effectively guarded General Stilwell's own rear.<sup>(40)</sup>

With this alternative and attractive possibility being so powerfully canvassed, it would have been surprising if the Chinese had at this stage committed themselves irrevocably to the Yunnan offensive. As it was, the Generalissimo had a perfectly good excuse for delaying it. From the very beginning, he reminded General Stilwell on the latter's return from New Delhi, he had insisted that the British should command the Bay of Bengal as a prerequisite for any land operations. The British, he further claimed, had promised to do so. All his own preparations were well in hand; it was now for the British to live up to their professions. The Generalissimo reiterated the point in two messages to the President, of 28th December and 8th January 1943;<sup>(41)</sup> the latter expressed in terms of impeccable military logic.<sup>(41)</sup>

'Unless the navy could prevent enemy reinforcements by sea, or enable a landing force to take the Japanese in the rear in South Burma, the enemy will be in a position to concentrate rapidly against our armies in the North. Owing to the weakness of our supply lines, we shall not be able to match the Japanese concentration, whatever strength we may have available in the rear. . . . For these reasons, I regretfully conclude that if the navy is unable to control the Burma seas, it will be better to wait a few months longer, or even until the monsoon season ends next autumn, than to run the risks involved in the suggested North Burma campaign. Keenly as China desires the reopening of her land communications, ready as I am to do anything in my power to bring the day nearer, I cannot forget that another failure in Burma would be a disaster so great that the results cannot now be predicted. . . .'

In conclusion he suggested that everything possible should be done to strengthen Chennault's forces. 'The return, I predict, will be out of all proportion to the investment.'

'Black Friday', wrote Stilwell in his diary, understandably if unjustly. 'What a break for the Limeys. Just what they wanted. Now they will quit, the Chinese will quit, and the god-damn Americans can go ahead and fight. Chennault's blating has put us in a spot; he's talked so much about what he can do that now we are going to let him do it'.<sup>(42)</sup>

It was certainly an ironic turn of fate that the two mistrustful allies whom Stilwell had been trying to bring together should have at the end combined to thwart him. The British could not fault the Chinese arguments; indeed the superior communications enjoyed by the Japanese had been heavily stressed in all their own staff appreciations, both in New Delhi and London. But the Chinese statement that they had promised a naval superiority in the Bay of Bengal baffled them. General Wavell vigorously denied it. Both he and Admiral Somerville, he told the Chiefs of Staff,<sup>(43)</sup> had made it quite clear to General Stilwell that no naval co-operation was to be expected; that they did not have enough submarines to interrupt Japanese sea communications with Rangoon; and that surface vessels without air support could not operate within reach of shore-based aircraft.

'We have thus made no promise [he concluded] and on the contrary have been most emphatic in our warnings. It seems probable that Stilwell has not been able to make the naval position clear to the Generalissimo, who is perhaps taking the opportunity to put on us the blame for not carrying out an operation the difficulties of which he is only now beginning to appreciate, and into which he has possibly been unwillingly pushed by the Americans'.

Pressed for an explanation, the Generalissimo told President Roosevelt<sup>(44)</sup> that the promise had been made by Mr. Churchill the previous May, when he had assured the Pacific War Council 'that before the end of the monsoon season eight battleships, three aircraft carriers and the usual complement of other vessels will be in the Indian Ocean to assist in the recapture of Burma'. He claimed also that General Wavell had promised to operate with seven divisions to recapture Burma; now he proposed to put in the field only three. This promise also had never been made; although considerations of maintenance had certainly forced General Wavell to reduce considerably the scope of the operations originally projected in Assam. A search of the minutes of the Pacific War Council revealed valiant statements of intention to build up British naval strength in the Indian Ocean but no precise promises. But it is not inconceivable that the Prime Minister, anxious to encourage friends in adversity, had spoken privately in more hopeful terms—as he did to Stalin in August about the prospect of a Second Front in 1943—than his

professional advisers would have wished. It is interesting to note that in a message to General Wavell of 15th May Mr. Churchill wrote of his hopes of concentrating the whole Eastern Fleet, 'comprising *Warspite*, *Valiant*, the two 16 inch battleships, the three carriers and the available R's, together with cruisers and flotillas' before the middle of July to give battle south and east of Ceylon. 'In outlining these objectives to you' he warned, 'I cannot be sure that events will render them possible. But it seems to me that it would be well worth while working our offensive schemes on the above assumption'.<sup>(45)</sup> The similarity of the figures mentioned in this telegram to those cited by Chiang Kai-shek is certainly remarkably close.

Very sensibly the President did not probe any further. What mattered was to see what, if anything, could be saved from the wreck of General Stilwell's plans. Stilwell himself, Dill reported, had suggested 'some sort of naval demonstration just before D-day', but the Chiefs of Staff considered that this 'would be as irrelevant as impracticable'.<sup>(46)</sup> Mr. Churchill explained to the President in a personal message of 10th January<sup>(47)</sup> the impossibility of sending into the Bay of Bengal naval forces without either carriers or sufficient destroyers as escorts, and advised that the whole question should be stood over until the Combined Chiefs of Staff met together, which they were due to do at Casablanca in three days time. There for the first time the Allied war leaders would be able to discuss their Pacific strategy in full. All decisions therefore were in principle suspended; but the Generalissimo had made up his mind, and it is doubtful whether a miraculous appearance of allied naval strength would now have persuaded him to alter it. Observers who visited Yunnan<sup>(48)</sup> reported that military preparations there were hopelessly behind schedule, and even General Stilwell was brought to accept that perhaps everything had, after all, turned out for the best. 'A damn good thing March 1st is off', he confided to his diary on 18th January: 'We'd have been hung'.<sup>(49)</sup>



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- (7) Telegram 25840/COS of 19.10.42: G/Burma/2, fol. 86.
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## BOOK TWO: OPERATION TORCH

### CHAPTER VII

#### PLANNING FOR 'TORCH'

UNTIL PRESIDENT ROOSEVELT settled the question by his orders of 30th July\* the decision to invade North Africa had remained in suspense. For the Combined Chiefs of Staff it was still formally contingent on developments in Russia rendering 'Roundup' impossible in 1943. As late as 19th August General Marshall could write 'The decision to mount the operation has been made but it is still subject to the vicissitudes of war'.<sup>(1)</sup> Yet neither the President nor the Prime Minister as yet admitted that the mounting of the operation need seriously affect the plans for 'Roundup' the landing in North West Europe in the Spring of 1943 which had been agreed the previous April; so, when the Combined Chiefs of Staff met in London on 25th July to initiate the preparations for 'Torch',<sup>(2)</sup> they had still to work formally on the assumption that preparations would continue for 'Roundup', either, as they themselves saw it, as a possible alternative, or, as their political leaders maintained, as a concurrent or immediately subsequent operation to 'Torch'.

So long as 'Torch' and 'Roundup' seemed equally possible as operations, the Combined Chiefs agreed that a single Supreme Commander should be responsible for the preparation of both. Once the final decision to undertake 'Torch' had been made, this officer would confine himself to that operation, and another would assume responsibility for 'Roundup'. There was little doubt as to which of the Allies should provide the Supreme Commander for 'Torch'. It seemed desirable on political grounds that the operation should be conducted largely by United States forces. The information which the President was receiving from his agents in North Africa indicated that French bitterness against the British, arising out of the unfortunate affairs at Mers-el-Kebir and Dakar, was unabated, but that good will towards the United States was considerable enough to give good prospects of an unopposed landing. It was agreed therefore that the Supreme Commander should be an American; but his headquarters were to be in London, and the operation was to be planned by a combined Anglo-American team.

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\* See p. xxv.

In principle the Combined Chiefs of Staff also agreed that there should be two landings, one on the Atlantic coast of North Africa and one on the Mediterranean; but the Supreme Commander was to make a detailed plan and submit it to them as soon as possible.

Once the planning team began to scrutinise the operation in detail they quickly realised it presented quite exceptional difficulties. It required, in the first place, a degree of co-operation between the two allies far closer than any for which previous wars provided precedent. The usual pattern of national forces operating independently, with liaison missions at each other's headquarters, under the loose strategic direction of a titular Commander-in-Chief was quite unsuited to an operation where precise planning was as vital as it was to 'Torch'. Supply services, transportation, naval co-operation, air support, all had to be exactly co-ordinated within a framework which had to take account not only of the threats from German submarines in the Atlantic, Axis intervention through the Iberian Peninsula, and Axis air and naval forces in the Mediterranean, but also of the pressing demands which would continue to be made on the still scarce Allied war material from other theatres of war. Secondly, this was to be an amphibious operation of a kind for which no example yet existed, save possibly the disastrous precedent of Gallipoli: an opposed landing on an enemy coast after a long sea voyage through dangerous waters. Even in the ill-fated expeditions to Norway and Greece the British had been able to assume that their initial landings would be unopposed. Thirdly, political considerations presented a factor which military planners could not evaluate. It would be more than foolish to work on the assumption that the French would not fight; but if they did fight, and Axis forces came rapidly to their assistance, the Allies might find themselves involved in a long campaign fought for very secondary objectives at the end of tenuous supply lines which ran across submarine-infested seas and within a few miles of the coast of Fascist Spain. How could the landing be planned so as to ensure the best chance of a rapid and if possible bloodless occupation, but provide at the same time sufficient forces to wage a sustained campaign?

The first step in solving these problems, the appointment of an able and acceptable Supreme Commander, was very much the easiest. Lieut. General Dwight D. Eisenhower had been in England commanding the United States Forces, European Theatre of Operations, since June. A year earlier he had been, with the temporary rank of colonel, Chief of Staff to the Third United States Army, after a military career devoted almost entirely to work with the General Staff. Four years of that career had been spent with General Douglas MacArthur in the Philippines, and shortly after Pearl

Harbor, General Marshall had summoned him to Washington to advise on, and plan, the conduct of the war in the Pacific theatre. In March 1942 he had been appointed first Chief of the Operations Division of the War Department General Staff; in May General Marshall had sent him to the United Kingdom to pave the way for the 'Bolero' build-up, and in June had made him responsible for carrying out the recommendations which arose out of that visit.<sup>(3)</sup>

Marshall's flair for appointing first-rate subordinates helped to make his expansion of the United States Army one of the most remarkable feats of military organisation the world has ever seen, and in this instance his instinct did not betray him. General Eisenhower not only possessed all the clarity of mind, energy and imaginativeness of a first-rate staff officer, but he had given evidence already of outstanding qualities of command—the qualities not so much of a great battle leader as of that far rarer and, in modern war, even more necessary type of commander: the man who can create, control and invigorate a vast organisation composed as much of technicians and of office workers as of fighting soldiers, eliminating its frictions and inspiring in every member of it, however indifferent or however cantankerous, a deep, almost numinous respect for his leadership, his ability, and his honourable good will.

During the month which he had already spent in the United Kingdom General Eisenhower had devoted himself with genuine passion to the elimination of the frictions which are bound to arise when two armies—and two peoples—are in daily and inescapable contact. Those officers and men under his command who failed to act in the presence of their hosts with the courtesy, the modesty and—in wartime Britain—the frugality on which he insisted, found him capable of a cold fury which contrasted sharply with his normal genial and sympathetic personality. As Commander-in-Chief of Allied troops for three years, between July 1942 and June 1945, he was to create out of the forces under his command, British, European, Commonwealth and American, an integrated team whose spirit of unity was long to outlive the war which it had been called into being to fight. It is by no means usual for wartime allies to emerge from a conflict with heightened mutual understanding and respect; and if the British and Americans did so, it is very largely to General Eisenhower that the credit must go.

General Eisenhower was unofficially informed on 26th July, that he was likely to command Operation 'Torch',<sup>(4)</sup> although Mr. Churchill only formally proposed his name to the President, on the prompting of Field Marshal Dill, on 31st July.<sup>(5)</sup> His appointment was not yet that of Supreme Commander: that title was initially reserved for General Marshall who should, suggested the Prime

Minister, have general responsibility for 'Round-Up' and 'Torch', while Eisenhower, with special responsibility for 'Torch', should act as his deputy. When the time came, General Marshall could either assume command of 'Torch' in person or, if his presence in Washington was still indispensable, appoint another subordinate commander. That Eisenhower was *not* Supreme Commander Mr. Churchill emphasised in a message which he sent to the Chiefs of Staff Committee on 2nd August, on his way to Cairo and Moscow.<sup>(6)</sup> 'Expression "Supreme Commander"', he insisted, 'should be used for full "Roundup" . . . There is no use in making a flourish of trumpets until something really big is on'. Within a few days however the idea of General Marshall's appointment had been quietly dropped, and Eisenhower became Supreme Commander in fact, though not in name. He was given instead the less grandiloquent and more specific title of 'Commander-in-Chief, Allied Expeditionary Force';<sup>(7)</sup> and in this capacity he attended a meeting of the Chiefs of Staff Committee on the afternoon of Sunday, 2nd August, when the foundations for the operation were laid.

Under General Eisenhower as Commander-in-Chief it was agreed that there should be a British Task Force Commander and an American Task Force Commander, corresponding to the two landings on the North African shore which were originally visualised. For the former post the Chiefs of Staff put forward the name of General Sir Harold Alexander, who was now available in the United Kingdom after his skilful evacuation of the British forces from Burma;<sup>(8)</sup> and it was suggested also that he should act as Deputy Commander-in-Chief. But on 6th August, as we have seen in Chapter IV, General Alexander was summoned to Cairo to become Commander-in-Chief, Middle East, and his appointed successor, Lieut.-General Sir B. L. Montgomery, was transferred two days later to assume command of the Eighth Army.<sup>(9)</sup> After further consideration it was agreed that the reasons which made it necessary to have an American Commander-in-Chief made it desirable that his deputy should be American as well; and for this post Eisenhower's proposal of Major General Mark Wayne Clark found general acceptance.<sup>(10)</sup> For the command of the British task force the choice fell on Major General K. A. N. Anderson, at that time commander of II Corps; and the terms of his appointment made it necessary for General Eisenhower to exercise some of the skilful tact which was to make his command so signal a success.

In drafting General Anderson's Directive, which the Chiefs of Staff approved on 7th October, the War Office based themselves on such precedents as the subordination of Sir Douglas Haig to Marshal Foch in 1918 and that of Lord Gort to General Gamelin in 1939. By the terms of this draft, General Anderson was directed

to carry out loyally any orders issued by General Eisenhower; but he was informed that 'if any order given by him appears to you to imperil any British troops in the Allied Force, even though they may not be under your direct command, it is agreed between the British and United States Government that you will be at liberty to appeal to the War Office before that order is executed. Whilst it is hoped that the need for such an appeal will seldom, if ever arise, you will not hesitate to avail yourself of the right to make it, if you think fit.' He was told also 'should it be necessary, at any time, to detach any force from the First Army, it should be understood that this is only a temporary measure'.<sup>(11)</sup>

General Eisenhower took exception both to the spirit and to the letter of these instructions; but very wisely he raised the matter not with the Chiefs of Staff direct but with that master of discretion and common-sense, Lieut. General Sir Hastings Ismay, Deputy Secretary of the War Cabinet and Mr. Churchill's personal Chief of Staff.<sup>(12)</sup> There would be, he pointed out, many occasions when the British, like all other forces under his command, were likely to be 'imperilled' as operations developed. He would also find it inevitably necessary to make detachments of one force to another or create *ad hoc* task-forces if the tactical situation demanded it. He suggested that the stress in the directive should be placed rather on the need for overall unity; and though the British commander should be given the right 'in what he may consider to be grave and exceptional circumstances' to appeal to his own government, he should be instructed before doing so first to notify the Commander-in-Chief. As it stood, Eisenhower considered that the wording of the directive was 'such as to weaken rather than to support the spirit that should be developed and sustained among all ranks participating in this great enterprise'.

Ismay transmitted these suggestions to the Chiefs of Staff, who accepted them at once. A new Directive was drafted which met all General Eisenhower's points.<sup>(13)</sup> General Anderson's command was declared to be 'an integral part of an Allied Force'. 'In the unlikely event' he was informed, 'of your receiving an order which, in your view, will give rise to a grave and exceptional situation, you have the right to appeal to the War Office, provided that by so doing an opportunity is not lost, nor any part of the Allied Force endangered. You will, however, first inform the Allied Commander-in-Chief that you intend so to appeal, and give him your reasons.' Finally, while the Commander-in-Chief would try to maintain the integrity of separate national forces, 'it may at any time become necessary to detach any part of the First Army for the furtherance of the common purpose, the period for which such detachment is made being subject to his discretion'. The difference between the



two drafts was the difference between two world wars—almost between two historical epochs. It was not made without growls of disapproval being heard from certain quarters in the War Office;<sup>(14)</sup> but General Eisenhower was delighted. The revised directive, he assured General Ismay, 'so definitely expresses the views I hold with respect to appropriate instructions to a National Commander, under the conditions prevailing in this case, that I am forwarding a copy to the United States War Department in the hope that it will serve as a model in future cases of this kind'.<sup>(15)</sup>

In the matter of the Naval Command General Eisenhower was also able to persuade the Chiefs of Staff to fall in with his wishes. His proposal for a single Allied Naval Commander directly responsible to himself met with some initial scepticism both in London and in Washington;<sup>(16)</sup> but the powerful support he received for this demand from Admiral Sir Andrew Cunningham, who spoke with the authority not only of a member of the Joint Staff Mission but also of a former Commander-in-Chief of the Mediterranean Fleet, was sufficient to appease the doubts expressed at the Chiefs of Staff Committee and, in Washington, by Admiral King.<sup>(17)</sup> General Eisenhower's own choice for the post was Admiral Sir Bertram Ramsey, who was at first appointed; but Admiral Cunningham made no attempt to conceal his distaste for the desk-job he had held in Washington since June 1942, and his colleagues, to his own and General Eisenhower's delight, released him to take up himself a command which he was uniquely qualified to hold.<sup>(18)</sup>

In the air, however, General Eisenhower did not get his way. His proposal for an Allied Air Commander received no such powerful backing, and he had to be content, until the landings were complete, with an air staff officer—Air Commodore A. P. M. Sanders, R.A.F.—at his headquarters and national commanders with each Task Force.<sup>(19)</sup> Nor could he persuade the British to adopt the American system whereby the Army commander had authority over 'his directly supporting air units'.<sup>(20)</sup> In making such a suggestion he was treading on more delicate ground than he knew, for the British Army and the R.A.F. were engaged in a long debate over precisely this question of Army-Air Co-operation which as yet showed no sign of being resolved.<sup>(21)</sup> General Eisenhower was thus persuaded to accept the working arrangement which had been developed in the Middle East between General Auchinleck and Air Chief Marshal Tedder whereby during a battle period, as defined by the military commander, the air commander devoted his resources to the targets which his army colleagues indicated, but had unfettered discretion in the manner in which he carried out his task.<sup>(22)</sup> This was the relationship which was to subsist between General Anderson and the British Air Officer Commanding, Air Marshal Sir W. Welsh.





Unfortunately in this instance it was not to prove a happy or a successful one.

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On 6th August, before the command arrangements were complete, the Chiefs of Staff in London submitted to their American colleagues a draft Directive for General Eisenhower.<sup>(23)</sup> This defined his direct responsibility for the projected operation to the Combined Chiefs of Staff, while authorising him to communicate severally either with the American Joint Chiefs or the British Chiefs of Staff Committee as the need arose; and it defined the object of the operation as being:—

'To capture North Africa from Casablanca to Tunisia both inclusive, as a first step towards:

- (i) Controlling sea communications with the Western Mediterranean.
- (ii) In co-operation with Allied forces in the Middle East, completing the capture of the whole southern shore of the Mediterranean.
- (iii) Cutting the Axis sea and air communications in the Mediterranean and securing our own.'

The Joint Chiefs of Staff found this in essence satisfactory although, to the American military mind, rather too bald. They embodied the same points in a much fuller form, adding to para. (iii) above the further words: 'to ensure communications through the Mediterranean and to facilitate operations against the Axis on the European continent'.<sup>(24)</sup> To this the British had no objection: it was indeed—though nobody seems to have pointed this out at the time—further reinforcement for their view that 'Torch' was a stage in the attack on Europe and did not signify, as CCS. 94 had stated, the mere acceptance of a defensive and encircling line.\* With two small amendments they therefore accepted the American version of the Directive, in the form which will be found at Appendix II.<sup>(25)</sup>

Meanwhile the Joint Planning Staff, in close conjunction with General Eisenhower's staff, were preparing an initial appreciation as a basis on which the Combined Planners could start work; and this they circulated on 5th August.<sup>(26)</sup> The definition which they gave of their objective was 'to capture the whole of French North Africa from Tunisia to Casablanca, both inclusive, as a first step towards further offensive operations'. French land forces were assessed at eight divisions, their air forces at 500 aircraft of all types, with strong squadrons of cruisers, destroyers and submarines

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\* See p. xxiii.

based on Toulon and the West African ports. French resistance to a weak attack, they reckoned, was likely to be stubborn, but would probably crumble before an attack in force. The employment of Fighting French forces was thought likely to increase the will to resist rather than diminish it. All possible advantage should be taken of the favourable sentiments of the French towards the Americans, in contrast to their anti-British feelings which were likely to be strong. Spain was thought unlikely either to intervene herself or to resist an Axis invasion.

Axis reactions would be, the Joint Planners considered, 'strong and immediate', but in the first place were likely to be confined to air and sea forces. 'No trained German air landing formations' they went on, 'are likely to be available. Some 8,000—10,000 infantry, together with the necessary air transport,\*<sup>(27)</sup> could, given favourable conditions, be collected in Sicily and transferred to Tunisia during the second week. Such troops could be lightly armed, of low category, and without motor transport. Provided that our operations are rapid, it is thought that the Axis would hesitate before undertaking such an operation'. Enemy seaborne forces would take four weeks to arrive, and then not be operationally effective for from two to four weeks. In order to forestall enemy reinforcements, it would therefore be necessary to gain control of the Tunisian ports at latest within a month—preferably within fourteen days; and the inadequate nature of land communications made it desirable that forces should be landed near their objectives, and that movements should be carried out largely by sea. The initial assaults would therefore include ports as near to Tunisia as possible, and a striking force of one largely armoured corps and 15 squadrons of aircraft would be needed to get Tunisia firmly under control. Algiers and Oran should also be among the earliest objectives; and Casablanca should be occupied as soon as possible 'subject to priority for assaults in the Mediterranean with a view to the early occupation of Tunisia'. The land forces needed for the operation were estimated at two armoured and ten infantry divisions, which included a reserve to occupy Spanish Morocco if the Germans occupied Spain. Air support would have to be initially carrier-based,

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\* This proved an accurate assessment. By 21st November, two weeks after the initial landings, Axis troops in Tunisia were to total 10,800 men, of which about 7,000 were Italians and the remainder members of the German Air Force or army reinforcements of low quality. Thereafter the build-up was as follows:

|              |          |   |   | <i>German<br/>Army</i> | <i>German<br/>Air<br/>Force</i> | <i>Italians</i> | <i>Total</i> |
|--------------|----------|---|---|------------------------|---------------------------------|-----------------|--------------|
| 1st December | (D + 23) | . | . | 10,000                 | 8,500                           | 7,850           | 26,350       |
| 11th "       | (D + 33) | . | . | 12,500                 | 11,000                          | 10,000          | 33,500       |
| 21st "       | (D + 43) | . | . | 15,200                 | 14,800                          | 12,500          | 42,500       |
| 3rd January  | (D + 56) | . | . | 20,000                 | 12,000                          | 15,412          | 47,412       |

and, given adequate bases and airfields, 20 fighter and 10 bomber squadrons were suggested as a force adequate to complete the operation.

The Joint Planners had put their finger on the essential requirement of the whole structure. 'Our primary consideration', they stated, 'must be to forestall the arrival of Axis forces in Tunisia. The defeat of the French is only a means to an end.' This emphasis came as something of a surprise to General Eisenhower. 'The concept of the entire plan', wrote Commander Harry Butcher, his *aide-de-camp*, when it was first adumbrated by the Director of Plans on 31st July, 'seems to be changed from that originally understood by Eisenhower from Marshall. It now appears to be a concentration in the Mediterranean rather than, as General Eisenhower put it, "a sock with the right to Casablanca and with the left through the north coast of Africa"'.<sup>(28)</sup> But the change was one which Eisenhower himself approved, and the Joint Planners' appreciation was embodied almost without alteration in the outline plan which he submitted to the Chiefs of Staff Committee on 10th August.<sup>(29)</sup> This provided for four landings, at Bône, Algiers, Oran and Casablanca, 'with a view to the earliest possible occupation of Tunisia, and the establishment in French Morocco of a striking force which can ensure control of the Straits of Gibraltar, by moving rapidly, if necessary, into Spanish Morocco'. A British force, with a strong American element, was to land at Bône and Algiers to occupy Tunisia and Western Algeria, ultimately with six divisions. The Americans were to land at Oran and Casablanca with a force building up to seven divisions, occupying French Morocco and concentrating a striking force on the frontiers of Spanish Morocco.

This Casablanca landing, however, presented two major difficulties. The Atlantic swell and surf conditions made the very possibility of effecting a landing at all so problematical that arrangements had to be made if necessary to switch the whole of the Western landing forces to Oran. Secondly, although the Mediterranean striking forces might be ready early in October, the two divisions for Casablanca, which had to come direct from the United States, would not be ready until the beginning of November; and since to land on the Mediterranean coast alone would involve a great risk of being cut off by a German stroke against the Straits of Gibraltar, the entire operation would have to wait until 5th November, when the Casablanca forces would be on hand.

This date displeased the Chiefs of Staff. They had provisionally settled for 7th October. Their Directors of Plans, while admitting that the force was unlikely to be ready before the first week in November, had agreed that 'acceptance of this target date instead of the beginning of October increases the probability of quick

Axis reaction and the likelihood of leakage. We therefore think it would be wrong to alter the target date from 7th October until it becomes certain that this earlier date is impossible to achieve.'<sup>(30)</sup> Their Directors of Intelligence had simultaneously stressed the dangers of leakage, adding two further reasons for landing as quickly as possible. The Germans were still heavily involved in Russia; and, as they obliquely put it, 'October may be a month of critical decision by the Russian Government. Allied military action, even although not on the continent of Europe, might influence these decisions.'<sup>(31)</sup>

The Chiefs of Staff had accepted this, although they warned Field Marshal Dill, in transmitting the date to Washington, that it could be achieved only 'by super-human efforts and by departing from normal methods.'<sup>(32)</sup> Washington proved to be less sanguine about the capacity of humanity to transcend its normal limitations. 7th November, replied Dill on 6th August, was the earliest provisional date which the Joint Chiefs of Staff considered practicable. 'Possibly they are beginning to realise' he added drily, 'that they are not very highly trained. They also feel that as this is the first big venture of the American troops there must be no question of failure. This mentality makes for delay to ensure that last gaiter button is secure'.<sup>(33)</sup>

Since the American appreciation coincided exactly with that of the British Joint Planning Staff, it is difficult to see any justification for Dill's comments, or for the consternation with which his message appears to have been greeted in London; where the Chiefs of Staff professed themselves unable to understand the delay proposed by the Americans 'as it was thought that they had forces earmarked for Operation "Gymnast"'.<sup>(34)</sup> So taken aback were they that they persuaded the Prime Minister to intervene directly with the President;<sup>(35)</sup> and Mr. Roosevelt replied obligingly on 8th August, 'I fully agree date for "Torch" should be advanced and I am asking three weeks' advance over our selected date'.<sup>(36)</sup> That General Eisenhower's Combined Planners should also consider the first week in November as the earliest practicable date for the operation came therefore as a disagreeable surprise.

The Chiefs of Staff in their comments on the outline plan<sup>(37)</sup> fastened on its assumption that the Mediterranean landings must occur simultaneously with those at Casablanca. They considered that the rapidity and even the likelihood of a German counter-stroke through Spain had been considerably over-rated. They pointed out that a shortage of naval forces and shipping might in any case compel a 'staggering' of the operations, at an interval of 10 or 12 days—a staggering which the difficulties of the Casablanca landing made additionally desirable. 'Indeed' they wrote, with admirable

foresight, 'it can be said that the whole conception of "Torch" may stand or fall on this question of early Allied occupation of Tunisia'.

With this final appreciation General Eisenhower, as he admitted in a message to General Marshall on 13th August, now entirely agreed.<sup>(38)</sup> But another succession of difficulties was now arising to complicate his plans. The success of the expedition, obviously, depended on the ability of the Allied Navies to provide assault craft for the landings and escorts to protect the convoys against air and sea attack. Most of the U.S. Navy's assault vessels were in the Pacific, and those available, even with the British contribution, would not suffice for landing a force on the scale so far visualised.<sup>(39)</sup> Other craft had to be adapted to the purpose, and the time needed for this adaptation was one of the factors which made it seem impossible for the attack to be launched before the first week in November. Escort craft were also needed for the Pacific, and the losses which the U.S. Navy were beginning to incur in their attack on Guadalcanal—one aircraft carrier and several cruisers before the end of August—made Admiral King increasingly uncertain how much he could spare. The Royal Navy could make resources available only by suspending its convoys to Russia and reducing all other convoys to a dangerously low level;<sup>(40)</sup> and the losses suffered on the August convoy to Malta, particularly the sinking of the carrier H.M.S. *Eagle* and the damage to the carrier H.M.S. *Indomitable*, reduced even those.

General Eisenhower therefore determined to cut his coat according to his shrunken supply of cloth. By eliminating one of his proposed landings he would not only reduce the number of escort vessels needed but also, by reducing the number of assault craft which would have to be prepared, make it feasible to launch the operation by an earlier date. On 22nd August he submitted a new plan to the Chiefs of Staff which eliminated the Casablanca landings altogether.<sup>(41)</sup> He proposed instead that two armoured and four infantry divisions should land at Algiers and Bône, to move east and seize Tunisia; and that two armoured and five infantry divisions should land at Oran and move west, 'open up communications through Morocco and seize Casablanca from the rear'. If French resistance ceased while the convoy bearing this second force was still at sea, then it might land at Casablanca direct. These landings might be made as early as 15th October; but General Eisenhower in a covering letter to the Chiefs of Staff admitted that every indication suggested a later date.

Yet even if an October landing was possible, and even if the Germans did not retaliate through Spain, the difficulty of seizing Tunisia before Axis reinforcements could arrive remained undiminished. General Eisenhower's planners pointed out that Tunis



was two hundred miles from Bône and four hundred from Algiers, over few and indifferent roads. The port facilities at Algiers would allow two brigades a week to be unloaded, those at Bône one: but the units so unloaded would hardly be at their full fighting efficiency by the time they were within striking distance of Tunis. If there was no French resistance, it was reasonable to suppose that two brigade-groups might reach the Bizerta-Tunis area by D + 11, with tanks arriving two days later and a further division following during the following week. But if the French did resist, it would take a division three weeks to fight its way forward from Algiers to link up with the assault force at Bône, even before the drive on Tunisia began; which left four days for the combined forces to get to Tunis by the target date of D + 24.

Even this gloomy prognosis seemed, to the Joint Planning Staff, over-optimistic.<sup>(42)</sup> In their view any serious resistance by the French forces to the Allied landings would render the occupation of Tunis within three weeks quite out of the question. To reach Bône from Algiers in twenty days meant advancing, against opposition, 27 miles a day; while to defend Tunis against the two weakened divisions which was all the Allies would then have available to attack, the French had about 1½ divisions, who might by then have been reinforced by anything up to 10,000 Axis airborne infantry. As for the western landings, at the estimated capacity of the port of Oran for the inflow of Allied forces—one division a month—it would take three or four months to capture Casablanca from the land even if the Casablanca-Oran railway could support the 12-13 divisions visualised—which it could not. 'To sum up,' wrote the Joint Planners, 'the success of this plan depends on either the early collapse of French resistance or the ability of the Royal Navy and R.A.F. to prevent the passage of Axis forces, particularly seaborne forces, to Tunisia'.

It was becoming clear that, whatever the date on which the operation was mounted, any considerable French resistance to the landings and to the subsequent Allied advance would give the Axis time to land reinforcements in sufficient numbers to involve the Allies in a tedious and expensive campaign for peripheral objectives, fought at the end of exceptionally vulnerable lines—exactly the outcome which General Marshall had feared. To General Eisenhower, as his planning staff uncovered one difficulty after another, this outcome seemed increasingly likely; so much so that on 23rd August, with the greatest reluctance, he wrote a memorandum to this effect to the Combined Chiefs of Staff.<sup>(43)</sup>

'It is my opinion [he stated] that this expedition . . . is not sufficiently powerful to accomplish, against the potential opposition in the general theatre, the purpose prescribed by the Combined

Chiefs of Staff. [Determined resistance by the French would ruin all hopes of reaching Tunisia before the Axis; Spanish intervention would place Allied communications in great jeopardy.] This means that the chances for the success of the expedition, at its present estimated strength, must depend more upon political attitudes and reactions in Northern Africa than upon strictly military factors. In this connection, the apparent inability of the combined navies to provide escorts for an attack at Casablanca along with those planned inside the Mediterranean, has distinctly decreased the opportunity for creating throughout North Africa the impression of overwhelming attack, so essential to producing a readiness to accept Allied occupation without resistance . . . As an expression of personal opinion I believe that if the two governments could find the naval, air and ground forces, with the shipping, to carry out, simultaneously with the attack planned inside the Mediterranean, a strong assault at Casablanca, the chances for success would be greatly increased . . . such simultaneous attacks could not be made before 7th November at earliest.'

The Chiefs of Staff Committee considered General Eisenhower's Memorandum, and on 24th August discussed its contents with him, General Clark, and the British commanders concerned.<sup>(44)</sup> His arguments were convincing enough, but over the shipping question the British felt themselves incapable of offering out of their overstretched resources any further allocation. The Chiefs of Staff contented themselves for the present by asking General Eisenhower to produce an estimate of the additional naval forces which he considered would be needed to cover both a full Mediterranean operation—including an additional landing at Philippeville, fifty miles west of Bône, to add to the show of strength—<sup>(45)</sup> and Casablanca landings as well; and minuted their belief that the problem of where these forces were to come from would have to be referred to the Prime Minister and the President for solution. Next day they received a communication from the Joint Chiefs of Staff which showed them to be, in this belief, absolutely right. General Eisenhower's difficulties were producing reactions in Washington which made it seem uncertain whether the Allied agreement over 'Torch' which had been reached in London a month earlier could be preserved at all.

\* \* \* \* \*

The decision to undertake 'Torch' had been received in Washington with something less than unanimous satisfaction. Staunchly loyal as General Marshall was to the decision, he did not conceal his regrets that it had been taken; and certain members of his staff appear to have opposed it not only on military but on political grounds. Marshall and his advisers feared, in the words of the

official U.S. Army historian, 'that to launch "Torch" would lead to adopting the British aim of acquiring and exploiting control of the Mediterranean basin. Some bitterness entered into their dissatisfaction, for it appeared that in urging the concentration of American forces in the British Isles they had merely facilitated the execution of the strategy they had hoped to supersede'.<sup>(46)</sup> As for the school of thought centred in the Department of the Navy, which had acceded only with reluctance to the whole principle of giving priority to the defeat of Germany over that of Japan, its influence was strongly and naturally increased by the impact on American public opinion of the Guadalcanal landings on 7th August and the desperate fighting which then followed. Under these circumstances neither General Marshall nor Admiral King could be expected to react with enthusiasm to the suggestion that further United States resources should be provided for the North African landings. Moreover in the eyes of General Marshall the Straits of Gibraltar seemed a far more precarious highway than in those of the British Admiralty, whose vessels had been passing through them unscathed for some 250 years; and his fears of Spanish intervention, or rather of the capacity of German forces to intervene promptly through an acquiescent Spain, were more acute than those felt by the British. Whereas the British feared above all else that the Axis would establish themselves in Tunisia, and were prepared to run considerable risks to prevent them from doing so, General Marshall's ruling fear was that the Germans might let the Allies into North Africa and then close the door behind them through Spain. All things considered, he told General Eisenhower, he thought that an all-Mediterranean operation of the type he was proposing had less than a 50-50 chance of success.<sup>(47)</sup>

Instead, the Joint Chiefs of Staff submitted to London on 25th August a proposal for an operation which ran exactly counter to that put up by General Eisenhower three days before.<sup>(48)</sup> Whereas he had proposed to eliminate the landings on the Atlantic coast altogether, they proposed to eliminate all landings east of Oran. In their plan, not only the landings at Bône and Philippeville, but those at Algiers itself were to be dropped. The ultimate aim remained unaltered: 'Complete control of North Africa from Rio de Oro to Tunisia, inclusive, and to facilitate air operations against the enemy's forces and installations in the Mediterranean area'; but the immediate objective was the more modest one of 'complete control of the Area including French Morocco and Western Algeria, to facilitate extension of effective air and ground operations to the Eastward'; and the first step to this should be the establishment of 'mutually-supporting lodgements' in the area of Agadir-Marrakesh Rabat-Fez and Oran-Mostaganem-Mascara. This was to be no

bold stroke relying on speed and surprise to reverse the strategic balance in the whole Mediterranean theatre, but the cautious and prudent establishment of a firm base, guarding the Atlantic narrows, from which further operations could be conducted as resources permitted and occasion required: an operation, in fact, entirely in accordance with the object of 'Torch' as indicated in CCS. 94—the establishment of a defensive, encircling line.

In a message of 26th August, the Joint Staff Mission gave some of the background to the American proposal.<sup>(49)</sup> The increasing influence in Washington of the Pacific school was only one factor. Another was a general doubt as to the capacity of the Russians, and of the British in the Middle East, to hold out against any further German attacks and a desire, in the event of a general collapse in the European theatre, to consolidate a hold on Western Africa to protect U.S. shipping lanes. And yet a third, as Field Marshal Dill had already indicated, was a natural enough desire that the first major operation of the United States Army in the European theatre should not be a catastrophe.

This proposal by the Joint Chiefs of Staff set off what has been irreverently termed a 'transatlantic essay contest' which continued for two weeks; during which period the uncertainty as to its ultimate objectives complicated still further the planning of an operation which was already quite difficult enough. The British found it impossible to accept the American proposal: the Joint Staff Mission indeed denounced it in tones of almost apocalyptic gloom.<sup>(50)</sup> It would enable the Germans, they said, to seize Tunisia, much of the Mediterranean coast of Algeria, and the entire French Mediterranean fleet. The Mediterranean would be closed; Malta and Egypt would fall; the Germans, overrunning the Middle East, would reach the Indian Ocean; and since they could pour troops into North Africa via the Mediterranean far more quickly than could the Allies over the Atlantic, West Africa would probably fall to them as well. 'In our view,' they concluded, 'it would be better to abandon [the] whole operation rather than undertake it on such [a] limited scale'.

The Chiefs of Staff in London were less positive. General Brooke, attending on 26th August his first meeting of the Chiefs of Staff Committee<sup>(51)</sup> since his return from the Middle East and Moscow, had himself thrown his weight against General Eisenhower's all-Mediterranean plan. Taking issue with his colleagues, he insisted that it was militarily unsound to by-pass Morocco and do without a simultaneous operation at Casablanca. The landings at Philippeville and Bône appeared to him too hazardous to undertake unless more air support was forthcoming; in general, indeed, he accepted the American proposal, so long as the landings were extended to

take in Algiers. Air Chief Marshal Portal continued to stress the need for the most rapid possible seizure of Tunisia; Admiral Pound emphasised that the uncertainty of surf-conditions at Casablanca meant that any expedition which was sent to land there might be entirely wasted; and the view was put forward that the Casablanca landings might be reduced to a 'masking or feinting operation' and postponed till a later date.<sup>(52)</sup>

Next morning second thoughts, the intervention of General Ismay and the need to present an agreed view to the Prime Minister, with whom they met at 11 a.m., enabled the Chiefs of Staff to agree on a formula, albeit not a very clear one.<sup>(53)</sup> This began by approving the proposals on which all the Chiefs of Staff were agreed—the landings at Algiers and Oran—and went on to express a qualified approval of the rest. The Philippeville and Bône landings were to be re-examined in the light of the aircraft and naval forces available. A 'diversionary' operation against Casablanca was agreed to be essential, and the United States were to be pressed to provide additional forces; while if surf conditions made landings impossible an expedition should nevertheless be held ready to sail in by invitation. General Brooke was unhappy about this final qualification: Casablanca must be secured, he insisted, whatever the attitude of the French, for without it the Allies could not build up their forces. Nevertheless the Chiefs of Staff were able to agree on a message to the Joint Chiefs of Staff which expressed their common view.<sup>(56)</sup>

In this they pointed out, first, that the proposed American strategy would, by permitting the Germans to establish themselves on the northern shore of North Africa, destroy all hope of opening the Mediterranean; and secondly, that since surf conditions at Casablanca made landings there impossible on four days out of five, it was hardly wise to stake half the Allied resources on such an uncertain runner. They insisted that Algiers must be seized in the first attack: it was the best port in the country, the administrative capital, and the centre *par excellence* of pro-Allied sentiment. Oran, as a naval base on the lines of communication to Algiers, must also be seized. It was worth running considerable risks to forestall the Germans in Tunis 'within four or five weeks of the first assault', and hence landings at Bône and Phillipeville were also desirable. So also were landings at Casablanca 'if it can be done without prejudice to the rest of the operations'. If possible the Casablanca landings should be simultaneous with the others; but if the Joint Chiefs of Staff insisted on their being on the scale originally intended, the fact must be faced that this could only be done if the United States provided additional naval forces, or if the landings were postponed until the forces escorting the Mediterranean landings were available to cover them as well.

The Combined Chiefs of Staff met in Washington the following day, 28th August, to consider the situation.<sup>(55)</sup> The Americans showed no signs of being impressed by the British arguments; Admiral Leahy, curiously enough, was under the impression that the British were trying to back out of the operation altogether.<sup>(56)</sup> Admiral Cunningham, in the absence of Field Marshal Dill, opened the British case by placing the operation in the context of Allied Grand Strategy. The prime needs, he insisted, were to relieve German pressure on Russia and to clear the Mediterranean, in order to provide a point of departure for the allied entry into Europe. With all his experience as a Mediterranean commander behind him he dismissed the American fears about the Straits of Gibraltar: so long as the southern shore was in friendly hands, he insisted, there would be no more difficulty about passing ships through than there was about passing them through the Straits of Dover. He concluded with a plea for concentration and for enthusiasm: if the operation was worth doing at all, he insisted, it should be done 'with all the available resources' of both nations.

His audience was unresponsive. Admiral King, burdened with the responsibilities of the Guadalcanal campaign, stated bluntly that he could not agree to diminish the United States naval forces in the Pacific unless directly ordered to do so. General Marshall also put the operation in its context of Grand Strategy, but the ruling factor in his eyes was the crippling shortage of shipping. The original object of the operation, he asserted, had not been to relieve pressure on Russia: it had been to clear shipping-routes to the Middle East and deny to the enemy bases in West Africa from which he could raid Atlantic convoys. Not only were the new British demands for shipping more than the United States could meet, but the losses of shipping which might be expected, not so much during the landings as during subsequent build-up operations, might have grave results for operations in other parts of the world. The heavy losses to the latest Malta convoy, when one torpedo had destroyed one-third of four weeks' production of guns and tanks, spoke for itself. The operation, he finally insisted, was one of such importance to the Allied cause that it must not be allowed to fail.

The position was now somewhat ironical. Only a month earlier it had been the Americans who had been urging that all risks should be taken in order to launch Operation 'Sledgehammer', and the British who had taken counsel of their fears. Now it was the British who, to secure a major objective, were prepared to run what seemed to their Allies to be inordinate risks. Neither side hesitated to point this out, to the other's detriment. It was clear that this deadlock, like that over 'Sledgehammer', would have to be resolved on a higher level; and Mr. Churchill, immediately after his return from

Moscow, had already sprung ardently into the fray with a telegram to the President on 26th August urging that in the 'Torch' preparations a note should be struck of 'irrevocable decision and superhuman energy'.<sup>(57)</sup> After his meeting with the Chiefs of Staff the following day he wired again, in more specific terms; and this message opened an exchange in which the two civilian leaders, guided by their military advisers, were amicably and intelligently to work out an agreed programme in a fashion which will long remain a model of how Allies should discuss and resolve their differences.

Mr. Churchill's telegram of 27th August ran as follows:<sup>(58)</sup>

'We are all profoundly disconcerted by the Memorandum sent us by the United States Joint Chiefs of Staff on 25th inst. about "Torch". It seems to me that the whole pith of the operation will be lost if we do not take Algiers as well as Oran on the first day. In Algiers we have the best chance of a friendly reception and even if we got nothing except Algeria a most important strategic success would have been gained. General Eisenhower, with our cordial support, was in fact planning landings at Philippeville and Bône for Day 3. We cannot of course be sure of getting to Tunis before the Germans, but neither is it certain that the Germans would be well received by the French in Tunis even if Vichy gave them permission.

2. Strongly established in Algeria, with Oran making good the communications, we could fight the Germans for Tunis even if they got there. But not to go east of Oran is making the enemy a present not only of Tunis but of Algiers. An operation limited to Oran and Casablanca would not give the impression of strength and wide-spread simultaneous attack on which we rely for the favourable effect on the French in North Africa. We are all convinced that Algiers is the key to the whole operation. General Anderson, to whom this task has been assigned by Eisenhower, is confident of his ability to occupy Algiers. The occupation of Algeria and the movement towards Tunis and Bizerta is an indispensable part of the attack on Italy which is the best chance of enlisting French co-operation and one of the main objects of our future campaign.

3. We are all agreed about Oran, and of course we should like to see Casablanca occupied as well, but if it came to choosing between Algiers and Casablanca it cannot be doubted that the former is incomparably the more hopeful and fruitful objective. Inside the Mediterranean landings can be made in October four days out of five. On the Atlantic shores of Morocco the proportion is exactly reversed, only one day in five being favourable.

4. Nevertheless, if the operations at Oran and Algiers yield good reaction and results, entry might easily be granted to a force

appearing off Casablanca, and a feint would certainly be justified. It is however by far the most difficult point of attack, and one most remote from the vital objectives in the Mediterranean. Casablanca might easily become an isolated failure and let loose upon us for a small reward all the perils which may have anyway to be faced in this great design. So far as Algiers is concerned, all we ask from you is an American combat team to show the [American] flag. We [ourselves] cannot do Algiers and Oran at the same time. If therefore you wish to do Casablanca on a large scale, with all its risks, it is indispensable that United States forces should continue to be directed on Oran as now planned by the Allied Commander-in-Chief.

5. A complete change in the plans such as the Memorandum suggests would of course be fatal to the date, and thus possibly to the whole plan. In October Hitler will not have the power to move into Spain or into Unoccupied France. In November and with every week that passes his power to bring pressure upon Vichy and Madrid Governments increases rapidly.

6. I hope, Mr. President, you will bear in mind the language I have held to Stalin, supported by Harriman with your full approval. If "Torch" collapses or is cut down as now proposed I should feel my position painfully affected. For all these reasons I most earnestly beg that the Memorandum may be reconsidered, and that the American Allied Commander-in-Chief may be permitted to go forward with the plans he has made, upon which we are all now working night and day. The Staffs are communicating similar views to their American colleagues'.

In general, as will be seen, this message recapitulated the arguments already used by the Chiefs of Staff, adding the consideration of the date and of the probable reaction of Russia. But it will also be seen that there is in it no mention of the Bône and Philippeville landings. British opinion was coming round to the view, staunchly upheld by General Brooke, that if Algiers could be saved the landings further eastward might be abandoned. The Chiefs of Staff at a meeting with General Eisenhower on 29th August<sup>(59)</sup> considered sympathetically the argument that an attack at many points, advantageous as it might be in providing a show of force, multiplied the risk of individual failure; and General Eisenhower agreed to recast his plans yet again, this time omitting the Bône and Philippeville landings. This concession would release only seven destroyers, but it was hoped that it might tempt the Americans, on their part, into making a similar concession.

Mr. Roosevelt's reply to the Prime Minister's telegram arrived on 31st August:<sup>(60)</sup>

'I have considered carefully your telegram in reference to the "Torch" operation. It is my earnest desire to start the attack at



the earliest possible moment. Time is of the essence and we are speeding up preparations vigorously.

I feel very strongly that the initial attack must be made by an exclusively American ground force, supported by your naval, transport and air units. The operation should be undertaken on the assumption that the French will offer less resistance to us than they will to the British. I would even go so far as to say that I am reasonably sure a simultaneous landing by British and Americans would result in full resistance by all French in Africa, whereas an initial American landing without British ground forces offers a real chance that there would be no French resistance or only a token resistance. I need a week, if possible, after we land to consolidate the position for both of us by securing the non-resistance of the French. I sincerely hope I can get this.

Then your force can come in to the eastward. I realise full well that your landing must be made before the enemy can get there. It is our belief that German air and parachute troops cannot get to Algiers or Tunis in any large force for at least two weeks after the initial attack. Meanwhile your troops would be ashore, we hope, without much opposition, and would be moving eastwards. As to the place of the landing it seems to me that we must have a sure and permanent base on the northwest coast of Africa, because a single line of communication through the Straits is far too hazardous in the light of our limited joint resources.

I propose therefore (a) that American troops land simultaneously near Casablanca and near Oran; (b) that they seek to establish road and rail communications with each other at the back of the mountains. The distance is little more than 300 miles. This gives to the enterprise a supply base in Morocco, which is outside the Straits, and can be used to reinforce and supply the operations in Algiers and Tunis. The real problem seems to be that there is not enough cover and combat loading for more than two landings. I realise that it would be far better to have three, with you handling the one to the eastward a week after we get it. To this end I think we should re-examine our resources and strip everything to the bone to make the third landing possible. We can give up the Russian convoy temporarily at that time and risk or hold up other merchant shipping.

It is essential of course that all ships now assigned to Eisenhower for his two landings remain intact. Hence the eastward landing must be made on ships not now available to "Torch". I will explore this at our end. Can we not get an answer on this within forty-eight hours or less?

I want to emphasise however that under any circumstances one of our landings must be on the Atlantic.

The Directive to the Commander-in-Chief of the operation should prescribe that the attack should be launched at the

earliest practicable date. The date should be consistent with the preparation necessary for an operation with a fair chance of success, accordingly it should be determined by the Commander-in-Chief; but in no event later than October 30th. I still hope for October 14th'.

This contained two new points. The first was the emphasis on the dividend to be reaped if the American element in the expedition was kept strongly in the foreground—an emphasis derived, as we shall see, largely from the sanguine reports which American agents had brought back from North Africa about the state of French opinion; and the second was the suggestion that the British should land in Algiers, but only do so a week after the main American landings had secured an overland line of communication and pacified the country; and that they should do so 'on ships not now available to "Torch"'. This last sentence was encouraging; but the British Chiefs of Staff, examining the proposal on 31st August<sup>(61)</sup> with Generals Eisenhower and Clark, could not accept the suggestion that the Algiers landing should be postponed. Algiers in their view was of cardinal importance: it had to be among the initial objectives; and there did now seem to be a possibility that shipping might be found for all three operations. As to the primacy of the American element, Mr. Eden and other members of the Cabinet, at a meeting later the same evening, expressed some scepticism as to whether this would affect French behaviour quite so favourably as the President hoped. The service chiefs pointed out that even if all landings were carried out by American troops, the presence of British ships and aircraft would make obvious the joint nature of the venture from the very beginning. This argument Mr. Churchill passed on to the President in his reply of 1st September:<sup>(62)</sup>

'We have carefully considered your last. The Chiefs of Staff have also talked things over with Eisenhower.

We could not contest your wish, if you so desire it, to take upon the United States the whole burden, political and military, of the landings. Like you I assign immense importance to the political aspect. I do not know what information you have of the mood and temper of Vichy and North Africa, but of course if you can get ashore at the necessary points without fighting or only token resistance that is the best of all. We cannot tell what are the chances of this.

I hope however that you have considered the following points:

(a) Will not British participation be disclosed by the assembly of British small craft and aircraft at Gibraltar for some time beforehand?

## OPERATION TORCH

(b) Would it not be disclosed at the time of landing whatever flag we wear?

(c) Would not initial fighting necessarily be between French and British aircraft and French batteries and British ships?

(d) If the approach and landing take place in the dark, as is indispensable to surprise, how will the Americans be distinguished from the British? In the night all cats are grey.

(e) What happens if, as I am assured is 4-1 probable, surf prevents disembarkation on Atlantic beaches?

Moreover, if, contrary to your hopes, the landings are stubbornly opposed and even held up, we shall not be able to give you the follow-up help for some considerable time, because all our assault vessels would have been used for your troops and our reinforcements would be embarked in vessels which can only enter by captured harbours. Thus, if the political bloodless victory, for which I agree with you there is a good chance, should go amiss, a military disaster of very great consequence will supervene. We could have stormed Dakar in September 1940 if we had not been cluttered up with preliminary conciliatory processes. It is that hard experience that makes our military experts rely so much upon the simplicity of force. Will you have enough American trained and equipped forces to do this all by yourselves, or at any rate impress the enemy by the appearance of ample strength?

This sudden abandonment of the plan on which we have hitherto been working will certainly cause grievous delay. General Eisenhower says that 30th October will be the very earliest date. I myself think it may well mean the middle of November. Orders were given to suspend loadings yesterday in order that, if necessary, all should be recast. I fear the substitution of November for October will open up a whole new set of dangers far greater than those which must anyhow be faced.

Finally, in spite of the difficulties it seems to us vital that Algiers should be occupied simultaneously with Casablanca and Oran. Here is the most friendly and hopeful spot where the political reactions would be most decisive throughout North Africa. To give up Algiers for the sake of the doubtfully practicable landing at Casablanca seems to us a very serious decision. If it led to the Germans forestalling us not only in Tunis but in Algeria results on balance would be lamentable throughout the Mediterranean.

Mr. President, to sum up, "Torch", like "Gymnast" before it, has always been viewed as primarily a United States enterprise. We have accepted an American command under your leadership, and we will do our utmost to make a success of any

plan which you decide. We must however say quite plainly that we are sure that the best course is to persevere along the general lines so clearly set out in the agreed directive handed to General Eisenhower on 14th August. I am sure that if we both strip ourselves to the bone, as you say, we could find sufficient naval cover and combat loadings for simultaneous attempts at Casablanca, Oran and Algiers.'

To this the President replied on 3rd September with a constructive proposal which went far to meet the British difficulties.<sup>(63)</sup>

'Your message of 1st September has been received and given careful consideration.

Your willingness to co-operate by agreeing that all initial landings will be made by United States ground forces is appreciated. It is true that British participation in the form of naval and air support will be disclosed to the defenders early in the operations. However I do not believe that this will have quite the same effect that British forces making the first beach landings would have.

Bad surf conditions on the Atlantic beaches is a calculated risk. The use of numerous small lightly defended ports may be necessary.

It will be necessary to use all available combat loaders in the first assault. The assaulting troops, regardless of whether they are British or American, must seize a port before follow-up forces can be landed. Regardless of what troops arrive subsequent to the initial landings, the situation will be the same.

In view of your urgent desire that Algiers should be occupied simultaneously with Casablanca and Oran, we offer the following solution:

(1) Simultaneous landings at Casablanca, Oran and Algiers, with assault and immediate follow-up troops generally as follows:

(a) Casablanca (United States troops): 34,000 in the assault and 24,000 in the immediate follow-up, to land at a port.

(b) Oran (United States troops): 25,000 in the assault and 20,000 in the immediate follow-up, to land at a port.

(c) Algiers (United States and British troops) in the beach landing 10,000 United States troops followed within the hour by British troops, to make the landing secure, the follow-up to be determined by the Commander-in-Chief. This follow-up to land at a port in non-combat loaded ships.

## OPERATION TORCH

(2) *Troops.* For the above landings United States can furnish:

- (a) From the United States, the Casablanca force, and
- (b) From the United Kingdom, the Oran force and 10,000 men for the Algiers force.

As immediate follow-up forces we have one armoured division in the United States and one armoured division in the United Kingdom (both less elements included in the assault echelons), with supporting and service troops including ground echelons of air units. Later additional infantry and armoured divisions can be furnished from the United States and the remaining United States troops in the United Kingdom can be made available.

(3) *Shipping.* The following shipping can be made available by the United States, to sail from United States ports 20th October:

- (a) Combat loaders with a lift of 34,000 men.
- (b) Transports, other than combat loaders, with a lift of 52,000 men, with sufficient cargo vessels to support this personnel. In addition to this shipping there will be available in the United States transports with personnel lift of 15,000 and nine cargo vessels which have previously been set aside by agreement to transport United States troops from the United Kingdom for this operation. In round numbers, the shipping shown as available in the United States is estimated to be sufficient to move first, second and third convoys of the Casablanca force.

(4) *Naval.* The United States cannot provide forces for escort and support in this operation in excess of those now available in the Atlantic, plus all ships which can be expedited in readiness for service, as now being done.

The above shows the total ground, naval and shipping effort which the United States can put into this operation. If the operation is to be executed along the lines indicated, namely, simultaneous landings at Casablanca, Oran and Algiers, all the remaining requirements must be furnished from British sources. As we see it this would mean, in general, that it would be necessary for you to furnish:

- (a) All shipping (including combat loaders) required for the Oran and Algiers forces, except the United States shipping now in the United Kingdom earmarked for "Torch";
- (b) The additional troops required for the Algiers assault and follow-up forces;

(c) The naval forces required for the entire operation, less the United States naval force indicated above.

In order that I may continue with vigorous preparations for the execution of "Torch" at the earliest practicable date, please confirm by cable that the United Kingdom will provide the trooplift, troops, naval forces and shipping noted herein as necessary.

I reiterate the belief expressed in my telegram of 30th August, that the Commander-in-Chief should be directed to execute the operation at the earliest practicable date, and that this date should be fixed by him. I am convinced of the absolute necessity for an early decision. I feel that the operation as outlined herein is as far as I can go towards meeting your views, and it seems to me to be a practical solution which retains the Algiers operation and is sufficiently strong to be a good risk throughout.

Our latest and best information from North Africa is as follows:

An American expedition led in all three phases by American officers will meet little resistance from the French Army in Africa. On the other hand, a British-commanded attack in any phase or with de Gaulist co-operation would meet with determined resistance . . .

Because of this information I consider it vital that some responsibility be placed [on] high Americans for relations with French military and civil authorities in Africa.

As you and I have decided long ago, *we* were to handle the French in North Africa, while you were to handle the situation in Spain'.

Unfortunately the requirements which the President specified in shipping and landing craft were in the opinion of the Chiefs of Staff more than the British could find without stripping convoys bare and despatching every landing-craft held in the United Kingdom.<sup>(64)</sup> But, they pointed out, if the landings at Casablanca were reduced by 10,000–12,000 men, the shipping thus released, together with that made available by the British abandonment of Bône and Philippeville would make the Algiers landing possible.

Mr. Churchill submitted this suggestion to the President on 3rd September; the President replied next day that he could make a reduction of 5,000 men at Casablanca;<sup>(65)</sup> and the Chiefs of Staff decided, on 5th September, that landing-craft for the remaining 5,000 could, after all, be found from British sources.<sup>(66)</sup> Meanwhile Admiral King reported what naval forces the U.S. Navy could make available: one modern and two older battleships, one aircraft carrier and two converted carriers which between them accommodated 78 fighters and 30 dive-bombers, five cruisers, 40 destroyers and six fast minesweepers.<sup>(67)</sup> Scrutinising these forces, the British

found them adequate; and on the night of 5th September the matter was settled. 'Hurrah', cabled the President; to which the Prime Minister replied cheerfully 'O.K. Full Blast'.<sup>(68)</sup>

\* \* \* \* \*

The main outlines of the operation were at last clear. Now that the dust had settled they were almost indistinguishable from those sketched out by the Combined Chiefs of Staff at the end of July—'a sock with the right to Casablanca and with the left through the north coast of Africa'.<sup>(69)</sup> The British attempt to change the nature of the expedition by shifting its emphasis to the Mediterranean had failed. In retrospect it is permissible to regret this failure. Given the speed with which French resistance did in fact collapse, it is probable that allied units landing at Philippeville and Bône could have forestalled the Axis forces in Tunis, and that the tedious Tunisian campaign need not have taken place at all. But none of this could have been foreseen. The French had to be considered as enemies who might fight; the position of Spain flanking allied communications had to be given full weight; and though the change in strategy which the British advocated involved no more than a reasonable risk, it was a risk which had not been considered and accepted when the operation was approved by the Combined Chiefs of Staff in July. The Joint Chiefs of Staff in Washington were acting quite reasonably in refusing to accept more than they had bargained for; even though it was a refusal which both they and their allies were later to have cause to regret.

Much remained to be settled; not least, the date on which the landings were to take place. On 6th September, when final agreement was reached between Mr. Churchill and the President, the probable date seemed to be 31st October. Mr. Churchill indeed urged the Chiefs of Staff to aim at the 29th to be on the safe side.<sup>(70)</sup> But within a few days General Eisenhower realised that even the 31st was improbable, and spoke of 8th November instead. The Prime Minister sent a blistering message to the Chiefs of Staff. 'This is a tragedy'<sup>(71)</sup> he declared. Had the timing of the convoys been revised? Could nothing be done to accelerate loading? If the Americans were held up for transport or supplies could anything be done to help them? The Chiefs of Staff replied that the main reasons for the delay lay in the United States and were beyond British aid or control.<sup>(72)</sup> The equipment for the American forces in Britain which were to land at Oran had not yet arrived. The U.S. combat team released from Casablanca to the Mediterranean landings would reach Britain only on 10th October and would then need to be briefed and trained; while the training of troops and the equipment of naval vessels in America was still taking longer than had been

hoped. At the same time the naval planners reported that, since the vessels allotted to 'Torch' from Russian convoy duty would require eight days to rest their crews and clean their boilers, they would not be ready before 2nd November, and in consequence the landings could not take place until the 15th.<sup>(73)</sup>

On receiving this depressing news the Prime Minister summoned to a meeting at Chequers, on Saturday, 12th September, the Chiefs of Staff, Lord Leathers the Minister for Shipping, and Generals Eisenhower, Mark Clark and Bedell Smith, the last of whom had recently arrived from the United States to act as General Eisenhower's Chief of Staff.<sup>(74)</sup> An exhaustive examination of the problem, and of the connected question of the Russian convoys, improved a little on the Navy's pessimistic forecast, and the date of 4th November was tentatively mentioned. But during the following week General Eisenhower came firmly to the decision that the 8th must be taken as definite; and on Monday, 21st September, at another meeting at Chequers, this was finally agreed.<sup>(75)</sup>

Freed of the infuriating uncertainty which had confused all their calculations, General Eisenhower and his commanders had at last been able to make progress with their detailed and complicated amphibious plans. By 8th October these had taken final form.<sup>(76)</sup> The Outline Plan which was issued on that date provided for a Western Task Force, a Centre Task Force and an Eastern Task Force, to secure the ports and airfields of Casablanca, Oran and Algiers respectively. The Western Task Force, 35,000 United States troops under Major General George S. Patton, Jr., was to sail direct from the United States, and once established at Casablanca was to build up a striking force which could if necessary occupy Spanish Morocco. The Centre Task Force, 39,000 United States troops under Major General L. R. Fredendall, was to sail from the United Kingdom and, once established at Oran, exploit eastward as far as Orleansville. These two forces were together to build up ultimately to some seven U.S. divisions. The Eastern Task Force, which was also to sail from the United Kingdom, was mixed in composition and had the most complicated mission of all. Its spearhead was to be the Eastern Assault Force, composed of two American Regimental Combat Teams, two British Brigade Groups and two mixed Commandos, all under American command; and its main body was to consist of the British First Army under Lieut. General K. A. N. Anderson, the ultimate strength of which was planned to reach between four and six divisions.

Naval support was to be given to the Western Task Force by an all-American Western Naval Task Force, under Rear Admiral H. Kent Hewitt, while the Royal Navy provided task forces to support both the Oran and Algiers landings. The Royal Navy was to provide



also a Mediterranean Covering Force which assumed responsibility for protection within the Mediterranean from D + 3. Air support was to be divided into two Commands: the Western, an American Command under Brig. General James H. Doolittle, responsible for defending the areas of Casablanca and Oran and sea routes west of Cap Tenes, and for ground support and strategic bombing as required; and the Eastern, a British command under Air Marshal Sir William Welsh, R.A.F., defending Algiers and ports eastward, protecting sea routes east of Cap Tenes, providing ground support for the Eastern Task Force and co-operating with naval forces within the Mediterranean.

The security of this vast convoy was of course a major problem. The preparation of the expedition could not be totally concealed—certainly not in the later stages, when some two hundred vessels and 270 aircraft would be concentrated in Gibraltar, under the eyes of Axis agents, immediately before the attack.<sup>(77)</sup> For security the Allies depended, not on concealment, but on elaborate and prolonged measures of deception.<sup>(78)</sup> The troops assembled in the United Kingdom were encouraged to believe that they were to embark for a long voyage round the Cape to take part in operations in some distant, possibly tropical, theatre of war. The Germans were led to suppose, by planted information and appropriate aerial reconnaissance, that the expedition was intended for operations against the coast of Norway. The build-up at Gibraltar was explained as preparation for a large-scale relief of Malta; and it was indicated, once the convoys had sailed, that their destination was Sicily or Southern Italy. The troops from the United States were given the impression that they were intended for the Middle East, where they would take over responsibility for Cyprus and Syria; and General Eisenhower's arrival in Gibraltar was explained as the first stage of a visit to Washington for consultation with the American Government.

All these measures were completely successful in distracting attention from the real object of the operation. The Germans were always sensitive about Norway; they strongly suspected a renewed attempt against Dakar; and the Allied landings in North Africa took them entirely by surprise. On at least two occasions security seemed gravely compromised; once when an officer working with the Joint Planning Staff dropped in the street a copy of one of the Prime Minister's minutes bearing on the operation, which was retrieved, thanks to the good sense and discretion of the members of the public who saw it, within a matter of hours; and once when a Catalina aircraft en route for Gibraltar crashed off the Spanish coast and the body of an officer, carrying letters bearing on the 'Torch' build-up, was handed over by the Spanish authorities.

the British with the contents of his pockets apparently intact.<sup>(79)</sup> Neither incident came to the notice of the German intelligence authorities, any more than did the remarkably well-informed guesses, which worried the security officials almost equally, of certain sections of the Press; and the operation began with every advantage which secrecy and surprise could give.

Even these advantages might not have saved Operation 'Torch' from being, if not a failure, then at best an incomplete, expensive and, in terms of Grand Strategy, unimportant success had equal good fortune not attended the political aspects of the expedition. To these our attention must now be turned.

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BOOK TWO  
CHAPTER VIII  
POLITICAL PREPARATIONS:  
FRENCH NORTH AFRICA

THE FRENCH armed forces with which the Allies might have had to fight in French North Africa were in no way negligible. In spite of the decision taken by the French Government in June 1940 to demand an Armistice and remain on the soil of Metropolitan France, a large number of armed and uniformed Frenchmen had found their way across the Mediterranean. About 10,000 officers and men from the Army of France joined the forces already stationed in North Africa, as did a major part of what remained of the French Air Force. The organisation of these confused and scattered units was taken in hand by General Weygand when he took up his appointment as Delegate General and Commander-in-Chief, French North Africa, in October 1940. General de Gaulle's attempt to seize Dakar in September of that year provided convenient evidence of the need to put the area in a state of defence, and the firmness with which that attempt had been repelled gave some reassurance to the Germans that administration in French North Africa could be regarded, from their point of view, as reliable. Hitler's policy of conciliation towards Vichy, and the natural reluctance of the German High Command to take over additional commitments, made the German government consent to the French in North Africa taking responsibility for their own defence. The enthusiasm with which General Weygand took advantage of this permission, combined with his ill-concealed anti-German sentiments and his professed determination to defend North Africa '*contre quiconque*'<sup>(1)</sup>, led to his recall in November 1941; but he left behind him an army nearing 120,000 men in strength, with 150 tanks, and an Air Force totalling some 400 aircraft. By 1942 the equipment of these units was obsolete, but the strength of such a force fighting on its own soil, combined with that of the naval units in North African ports whose loyalty to Admiral Darlan was unquestionable, made it a factor which had to be taken into very serious account in calculations both of the Germans and of the Allies; as General Weygand had intended that it should be.<sup>(2)</sup>

General Weygand's policy of watchful neutrality was shared by his successor as Commander-in-Chief General Alphonse Juin, by the Residents General in Morocco and Tunis General Noguès and

Admiral Estéva and by M. Pierre Boisson, the Resident General of French West Africa at Dakar. The tradition of unconditional obedience to the de facto government, whatever its political complexion, had preserved both the French civil administration and the armed services through a century and a half of revolution and counter-revolution. Even if the French authorities in North Africa had been inclined to independent action, the ease with which the Germans could retaliate against unoccupied France, and if need be cross the Mediterranean to deal with them, was deterrent enough. They did not show themselves so inclined. They had little affection for the Germans, but the attitude of many Frenchmen towards their former Allies had changed tragically after the British attack on the French fleet in port at Mers-el-Kebir on 3rd July 1940; and the events which followed between 23rd and 25th September at Dakar showed that the unpopularity of the British extended also to their protégé General de Gaulle. The official policy of neutrality thus met with little opposition among the civil population. The Arab majority was naturally indifferent to the outcome of a struggle in which their interests were not concerned; while the wartime prosperity enjoyed by the landowners and a section at least of the city merchants in North Africa did not provide the kind of atmosphere in which ideas of heroic resistance normally flourish.<sup>(3)</sup>

It had taken the British Government some time to gauge correctly the state of opinion in French North Africa. On 25th June 1940, while the Armistice was being signed, Field Marshal the Viscount Gort and Mr. Alfred Duff Cooper had been sent to Rabat to make contact with Frenchmen who might be inclined to continue resistance on African soil. The officials who met them did not conceal their '*surprise et mécontentement*', and sent them away empty-handed.<sup>(4)</sup> But throughout the remainder of the year Mr. Churchill remained hopeful of 'a very considerable hiving off of the French Empire to our side',<sup>(5)</sup> and sent friendly communications both to Marshal Pétain and to General Weygand.<sup>(6)</sup> It was only after the latter had gone unanswered—'this confirms my distrust of Churchill's judgment' commented Weygand sadly<sup>(7)</sup>—and after the notoriously anglophobe Admiral Darlan became Vice-President of the Council at Vichy in January 1941, that Churchill abandoned hope of entering into some secret understanding with these veteran warriors, for both of whom he had in the First World War acquired so high a respect. 'It is clear', he wrote of Weygand on 12th February 1941, 'that he will be activated only by forces set in motion by pressure of Nazis on Vichy'. 'One is just as likely' he minuted two months later, 'to get help out of him or out of Pétain by rough measures as by civilities and pandering. Our main relations are with General de Gaulle, who should be treated with high consideration'.<sup>(8)</sup>

The case for abandoning all hopes of Vichy, and for relying entirely on de Gaulle and the spirit of the Resistance which he embodied, grew stronger during the ensuing eighteen months, with the apparent failure of all Marshal Pétain's attempts to preserve some degree of independence in face of his conquerors. In November 1941 General Weygand was forced to resign by German pressure, and in April 1942 Pierre Laval, the very symbol of willing collaboration with Germany, assumed control of the Government of Vichy. This last event was so profound in its implications that there seemed for the moment a possibility that Marshal Pétain himself might be induced to fly to French North Africa and set himself at the head of a new pro-Allied Government there. In fact the consequences were to prove less spectacular but in the long run no less important. Allied intelligence throughout the summer of 1942 reported a marked increase in the strength and popularity of the resistance movements inside France, and a growth in the popular support for General de Gaulle.<sup>(9)</sup> These reports did not hold out any hope, however, that this increased resistance would reach fighting point, either in French North Africa or Metropolitan France. The Joint Planning Staff in an Aide Mémoire of 19th April 1942, assessed that the 'establishment' in French North Africa would remain loyal to Vichy;<sup>(10)</sup> and it was with that establishment, and indeed with Vichy itself, that the Allies still had to reckon. In a remarkable memorandum of 14th June 1942<sup>(11)</sup> the Prime Minister reproached the Foreign Secretary, General de Gaulle's warmest supporter within the Cabinet, for failing to appreciate this.

'It is very easy [he wrote] to make the kind of case you have set down out of all the shameful things the Vichy Government have said. But this does not make sufficient allowance for the unnatural conditions prevailing in a defeated country with a Government living on the sufferance of the enemy. It does not alter my wish or extinguish my hope to have the French Fleet sail to Africa and to get an invitation for British or American troops to enter French North Africa. Nor does it alter the fact that, at any rate for some time to come, Vichy is the only party that can offer these good gifts. At a certain stage it would not only be in their interests to offer them, but their lives may depend upon it. President Roosevelt has the same feeling as I have about all this, and so, I believe, have the Chiefs of Staff. The position is so anomalous and monstrous that very clear-cut views, such as you are developing, do not altogether cover it. There is much more in British policy towards France than abusing Pétain and backing de Gaulle . . .'

This generous and realistic appreciation did not give any grounds for supposing that the French forces in North Africa would not resist



an Allied landing, and intelligence reports at the beginning of August suggested very strongly that they would. But such resistance, suggested the Joint Intelligence Committee, would collapse quickly before a resolute Allied thrust with powerful forces; and thereafter the French, although unlikely to collaborate very enthusiastically with the Allies, were equally unlikely to put any great difficulties in their way.<sup>(12)</sup> Local reports did not indicate that dislike of the British had in any way abated, or that the recent disasters in the Western Desert had done anything except debase still further British military prestige. The British, it was clear, were neither popular nor respected. But it was not to the British that the French in North Africa looked—in so far as they did look—for rescue from the German Empire. It was to the huge and untried military might of the United States.<sup>(13)</sup>

The United States was in an entirely different position from her ally with regard to France. As a neutral Power in 1940 she had maintained diplomatic relations with the French Government at Vichy after the armistice, and she had contrived to do so even after her entry into the war in December 1941. The advent of Laval to power in April 1942 had evoked strong American protests, and the American Ambassador, Admiral Leahy, had diplomatically prolonged his leave of absence; but the State Department still maintained formal relations, with all the opportunities this gave for gathering information and sustaining French morale.<sup>(14)</sup>

It was precisely in French North Africa that these opportunities were most valuable. Here the United States had a direct strategic interest, for if the Germans once seized Dakar they would be in a position to dominate the Atlantic at its narrowest point and pose a direct threat to the Western Hemisphere. For the United States, the French possessions in North Africa were what the Low Countries had been for Great Britain during the days of her naval pre-eminence—an area on which she had no political designs herself, but one strategically too vital to be allowed to fall into hostile hands. It was primarily for this reason that President Roosevelt set about establishing American influence in French North Africa at the end of 1940. In December he sent as his personal representative Mr. Robert D. Murphy, a State Department official with long experience of French affairs, to make contact with General Weygand; and Mr. Murphy, after tortuous tripartite negotiations with the British and the French, concluded an agreement whereby the United States was to furnish French North Africa with products necessary for her economy—in particular petroleum and coal—which were no longer forthcoming from Europe, to be paid for out of French funds frozen in the United States. In return the French agreed that these products

should be neither stockpiled nor re-exported; and that American 'vice-consuls' should be admitted to control shipments at ports and railways, and satisfy themselves that this agreement was being observed. Mr. Murphy himself remained in Algiers as High Commissioner to supervise the working of the agreement, and to 'report on all matters of political, economic and military interest'. To these terms of reference he gave the most liberal interpretation.<sup>(15)</sup>

The British were at first hesitant about sanctioning so considerable a breach in their blockade, and the operation of the agreement involved recurrent and inevitable friction; not so much between the Allies themselves as between the officials in each capital responsible for economic warfare and those responsible for the broader aspects of strategic policy and foreign affairs.<sup>(16)</sup> But the President remained firm; and when the dismissal of Weygand in November 1941 made the State Department briefly consider changing its policy, the British begged them to do nothing of the kind.<sup>(17)</sup> The intelligence gathered by the American 'vice-consuls'—and nobody had any doubt that they *were* intelligence agents<sup>(18)</sup>—was far too valuable to be lightly cast away.

It was not long before Mr. Murphy and his colleagues made contact with a small and courageous group of Frenchmen in North Africa who not only wished to bring the forces of the French Empire back into the war on the Allied side, but who were in a position to do something about it. A Gaullist element existed, grouped round the clandestine newspaper *Combat*, and later events suggest that Mr. Murphy may have underrated its potential strength. But it was disliked and mistrusted by the group of officers, officials and men of affairs with whom Mr. Murphy established relations, and who held out hopes of bringing French North Africa and its armed forces into the Allied camp as a going concern—not one torn by internal conflicts which could do the Allied cause nothing but harm.

The group was an impressive one. Its leading spirits included officers of the staff of the French High Command, led by Captain Henri d'Astier de la Vigérie and Colonel Chrétien, the head of the counter-espionage services, and the wealthy industrialist Lemaigre-Dubreuil, whose business affairs took him constantly both to Occupied and Unoccupied France and who mixed easily in the society of the collaborationists in Paris and Vichy. In the view of these men, the prime need was for a leader sufficiently eminent to wean the French Army away from its instinctive obedience to the legitimate government.

Lemaigre-Dubreuil found such a figure. The dramatic escape from captivity in Königstein Castle by General Henri Giraud in April 1942 made many Frenchmen, not excepting de Gaulle

himself, regard him as a possible rallying-point against the odious régime of Pierre Laval. Giraud, a gallant and profoundly non-political soldier, at once signed a declaration of loyalty to the Marshal. Like many senior officers of the French Army he mistrusted the Resistance as revolutionary and the Gaullists as mutineers. But Lemaigre-Dubreuil found him quite prepared to set himself at the head of a movement in French North Africa which appeared both politically respectable and, given American support, militarily feasible. He made, however, one stipulation. He must be in effective command of the whole operation. This demand arose not from any sentiment of Gallic pride but from the shrewd realisation that the heavy task of swaying the loyalties of the French Army would be quite impossible if he appeared as a subordinate in the baggage-train of an American invading force. What was to happen about this stipulation we shall see later; but the assessment on which it was based was to prove absolutely correct.<sup>(19)</sup>

The operations of this group were watched and assisted by the Americans; not only by Murphy but by the new Office of Strategic Services which Colonel William Donovan had set up to parallel the British Special Operations Executive and which smuggled in supplies of arms and ammunition for the conspirators. Two American officers, Colonel William A. Eddy, the Naval Attaché in Tangier, and Colonel Robert S. Solborg, Assistant Military Attaché in Lisbon, were working closely both with Murphy and with O.S.S. in maintaining touch with the conspiracy. On 11th July 1942 Colonel Solborg reported the successful course of negotiations with Giraud to his superiors and recommended that 'Our Joint Chiefs of Staff consider the desirability of opening an American-British front in North Africa this fall'.<sup>(20)</sup> In July these officers visited Washington, and gave cheerful accounts of the progress of the conspiracy and the probability of its success in capturing the allegiance of the French Armed Forces; and in August they came to London and gave British officers a similar briefing.<sup>(21)</sup> American intelligence authorities expressed cautious reservations about the effectiveness of the Giraudist conspiracy of which Colonel Solborg in particular spoke in such enthusiastic terms. Neither General Juin in Algiers, nor General Noguès in Casablanca nor Admiral Michelier the Naval Commander in French North Africa would have anything to do with it; and in the face of the opposition of these high authorities the chances of diverting the loyalties of the French Armed Forces seemed slight. It was perhaps for this reason that the Allied military authorities made so little provision in their plans for 'Torch' for liaison with the men in North Africa whose work might have been expected to save them a good deal of trouble and bloodshed. The British in particular remembered Dakar, and 'that hard experience'

as we have seen the Prime Minister telling the President, 'makes our military experts rely so much on the simplicity of force.'<sup>(22)</sup>

In one respect however the Allied planners did follow the advice of the men on the spot. Both Colonel Eddy and Mr. Murphy insisted that the operation, at least to all outward appearances, should be an American one, for reasons which the British planners endorsed. When the President told Mr. Churchill that, because of that advice, he considered it vital 'that sole responsibility be placed with Americans for relations with French military and civil authorities in Africa' the Prime Minister made no difficulties. As we have seen, the British authorities were sceptical of the belief that the French forces would show any less reluctance to resist American invaders than they would British; especially since British ships and aircraft would be involved from the very beginning, British troops would be in action within a few hours, and the landings would anyway take place largely by night.<sup>(23)</sup> But they did not quarrel with the principle involved, any more than they contested the second condition laid down by Colonel Eddy and Mr. Murphy, that the invasion should not contain any French troops from the camp of General de Gaulle.

The American Government had no difficulty in accepting the assurance of its agents, that Gaullist troops would be highly unwelcome in French North Africa. Its own attitude of hostility and mistrust towards General de Gaulle had if anything deepened as the war progressed. Not only did his claims complicate the attempts by Washington to preserve relations with Vichy and to stiffen the Marshal's Government in its resistance to German demands, but his seizing of the Atlantic Islands of St. Pierre and Miquelon at Christmas 1941, shortly after the American Government had given Vichy an assurance that the United States would respect the *status quo* in that area, seemed an insult to the United States so grave that Mr. Cordell Hull for one never forgave it. Indeed the Secretary of State nearly resigned when the President refused to take strong action to restore the *status quo*.<sup>(24)</sup> The President was no more amiably inclined towards General de Gaulle than was his Secretary of State, and he insisted not only that the Fighting French should be excluded from the North African operation but that the General himself should be given no advance warning of it\*.<sup>(25)</sup> With this also the British Government agreed, for the discretion of the General's *entourage* had not been rated very highly since the humiliation of Dakar.<sup>(26)</sup> In any case relations between the British Government and General de Gaulle, never very easy, were during the summer of 1942 particularly bad, in spite of all the Foreign Secretary could do to improve them.

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\* The President would not even accept the British proposal that de Gaulle should be informed a few hours before the operation began.

The British Government had always recognised the General as the symbol of the French will to continue resistance and as the leader of those Frenchmen who had decided to fight on at the side of their Allies. It was aware of the steady growth of the General's prestige inside France itself, especially since the return of Pierre Laval to power in April 1942—a prestige to which the achievements of General Koenig in the Western Desert were notably to contribute;<sup>(27)</sup> and on 14th July 1942 it marked its increased respect for the movement of *La France Libre*—now suitably renamed *La France Combattante*—by recognising the National Committee at its head as 'the symbol of resistance to the Axis of all French nationals who do not accept capitulation'. More important, it persuaded the United States Government to do the same, which involved accrediting representatives to the Committee and furnishing to the Fighting French Forces direct military aid.<sup>(28)</sup> But this all fell short of recognising the Committee as the Government of France in exile, and of taking it into consultation as a full Ally on the military plans for the future conduct of the war. A proposal put forward by General de Gaulle on 28th July 1942, that the French High Command should be associated with all plans for a Second Front in North West Europe and should be given full independent facilities for the conduct of guerrilla war in France, was rejected by the Cabinet on 20th August, although the Foreign Office pleaded in its favour. The Cabinet recommended only that liaison between Special Operations Executive and the Gaullist-operated resistance network should be improved and that General de Gaulle should be consulted about administrative problems in liberated territories 'on a hypothetical basis.'<sup>(29)</sup>

To this rebuff were added others. The landings in Madagascar on 5th May 1942 were carried out without French foreknowledge, and although General de Gaulle at once appointed a Commissioner to take charge of the Administration of the liberated territory the British, still in negotiation with the French authorities on the island, refused to allow him to land. The Government had also consented only with some reluctance to General de Gaulle being permitted to undertake a tour of the French possessions in Africa and the Middle East, fearing that his presence would only exacerbate political tensions. It was easy for the General and his advisers to read into this reluctance the most sinister of British designs on French imperial possessions. British objections to the General's attempts to assert and extend his authority in Syria gave rise to particularly bitter suspicions and misunderstandings, and on his return to London he had, on 30th September, an interview with Mr. Churchill so disagreeable to both parties that thereafter relations were virtually broken off.<sup>(30)</sup>

Towards the end of October the British attempted a reconciliation. Major Desmond Morton was sent by the Prime Minister to congratulate the General on the exploits of the Fighting French submarine *Junon* in sinking two vessels off Norway, and on the achievements of the French forces in the Western Desert. A further concession was possible when on the conclusion of hostilities in Madagascar the British Government decided to entrust the administration of the island to the National Committee of Fighting France. On 8th November the Prime Minister was able to inform General de Gaulle that his Commissioner, General Legentilhomme, might now go to Madagascar. At the same time he explained to the General the reasons of his having been kept in ignorance of the landings in French North Africa which were taking place that very day. The interview passed off well. Not only did General de Gaulle show a professional soldier's understanding of the vital need for secrecy in planning the operation in order to achieve surprise, but he spoke with emphatic approval of the choice of General Giraud as the leader of the French forces involved.<sup>(31)</sup>

Within a few days the situation was transformed. General Giraud was not, after all, to be the effective leader of the French authorities collaborating with the Anglo-American armies. It was to be no less a figure than Admiral Darlan himself.

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The appearance of Admiral Darlan as the *deus ex machina* in French North Africa, which so astounded public opinion on both sides of the Atlantic, did not come as a complete surprise to the Allied authorities. Between December 1940 and April 1942 Darlan had been the dominating figure in the government at Vichy, holding the portfolios of Vice-President of the Council, Foreign Affairs, Internal Affairs and Information. An able and ambitious sailor who had brought the French Fleet to a high pitch of efficiency and who commanded the devotion of the entire Navy, it was natural enough that he should hate the British who had not only attacked the Fleet at Mers-el-Kebir but who in doing so had showed their mistrust of his word, solemnly and repeatedly given, that the French vessels would never be allowed to fall into the hands of the Germans. This dislike was amply reciprocated, especially after May 1941; for in that month he agreed to permit the transit of German war material across Syria to aid the anti-British rebels in Iraq, in return for a lightening of the burden of occupation costs, the rearmament of some French naval vessels and the release of some 80,000 French prisoners of war. 'A bad man', Mr. Churchill wrote about him, 'with a narrow outlook and a shifty eye. A naval crook

is usually a bad kind of crook'.<sup>(32)</sup> The British press echoed and amplified this view, and has continued to do so ever since. Admiral Leahy, however, during his sojourn as American Ambassador at Vichy had established easy relations with his fellow sailor. 'A well-informed, aggressive and courageous naval officer, incurably anti-British...' he reported him; 'While he does not believe a successful invasion of the British Isles can be accomplished, even under the existing conditions of British inefficiency, he is confident that the Germans will win the war and establish a new order in Europe.'<sup>(33)</sup>

Certainly Darlan was a 'collaborator'. Like many other eminent Frenchmen, he believed, in the dark days of 1940-41, that the best hope for his country lay in coming to terms with the conqueror, and he worked energetically to promote their friendly relations as the only practicable policy that seemed open to him. But friendly relations could not easily be established with the Nazi régime by anyone with a shred of feeling for the honour and independence of his country. As early as November 1941, during the crisis in Franco-German relations which led to the recall of Weygand from North Africa, Darlan began to put out feelers to the British Government, enquiring, through secret intelligence channels, whether the British would refuse to treat with a French Government of which he was a member if the war came to an end. The British authorities sent an encouraging reply, drafted by the Prime Minister and approved by the Chiefs of Staff. 'If the French fleet at Toulon were to sail for North and West African ports and be prepared to resist German attack', they suggested, 'that would be an event of the first order. Whoever commanded or effected such a great stroke of policy and strategy would have made a decisive contribution to the Allied cause . . . such a service would entitle the author to an honourable place in the Allied ranks and [the] terrible difficulties in which we were all placed in the previous period would appear in their true light or fade away'.<sup>(34)</sup>

No reply was received to this suggestion; and in April 1942 the Germans, increasingly impatient with Darlan's resistance to their demands, forced Marshal Pétain to replace him by the more pliable Pierre Laval. Darlan remained Commander-in-Chief of all French forces by land, sea and air, but his exclusion from political power was complete. Moreover, the change in Darlan's fortunes coincided with a change in German prospects. As a sailor, Darlan was better able than most to appreciate how far the American entry into the war had transformed the chances of that German victory which he had previously regarded as certain; and the following month, in May 1942, he made his first contacts with Mr. Murphy in North Africa through Admiral Fenard, his representative in Algiers. Thereafter both through Fenard and through his own son Alain,

resident in Algiers, Darlan maintained contact with Murphy; assuring him of his sympathies, but stressing the importance of avoiding any action which might precipitate overwhelming German retaliation.<sup>(36)</sup> In October, having received certain indications of what was in the wind, he came forward with a warning and a firm proposal.<sup>(36)</sup> The warning was that the French Government had been informed by German and Japanese sources that the United States was planning military operations against Dakar and Casablanca, and that the French General Staff suspected that this might be a pretext for an imminent Axis invasion of French North Africa, through Spain and Spanish Morocco. Such an attack, he warned, might well come before 1st November. The proposal was for Darlan himself to come to North Africa bringing with him the entire French fleet; which he was prepared to do if he could be assured of American military and economic help.

This was not an offer to be rejected out of hand. As Mr. Murphy pointed out when he forwarded this proposal to the Combined Chiefs of Staff, there was no doubt that the military and naval forces in North Africa would follow Admiral Darlan if he did set himself at their head; and he recommended that he should be encouraged in the hope that he might eventually be persuaded to work with General Giraud.<sup>(37)</sup> Mr. Murphy's own superiors made no difficulties. On 17th October, according to his own later account, he received from the President, through Admiral Leahy, full authorisation to enter into any arrangement with Admiral Darlan which would, in his opinion, assist military operations; while at General Eisenhower's headquarters considerable thought was given to devising a formula to enable Giraud and Darlan to work together. In short 'there was no thought in the minds of American war planners', as Mr. Murphy wrote later, 'that a "Darlan deal" would not be acceptable to Washington'.<sup>(38)</sup>

General Giraud's representative in Algiers, General Charles Mast, was less accommodating. He insisted that Darlan could not be trusted, and that his co-operation would anyhow not be necessary. Giraud would command the allegiance of the army, he assured Mr. Murphy, and the Navy would follow the Army's lead. But it was essential that General Giraud should be given supreme command, with General Eisenhower simply commanding the American element in the Allied operation. Further, General Giraud now demanded that the projected operation should be extended to the establishment of a bridgehead in France itself.<sup>(39)</sup>

This last demand, of course, appeared hopelessly unrealistic to the Allied planners who knew how difficult it had been to find shipping even for the landings in North Africa. But it was understandable enough. Giraud, in common with other senior officers in



unoccupied France, had been carefully preparing clandestine stocks of arms, camouflaged depots and secret mobilisation plans, so that the Army itself would be in a position to resist the Germans if the armistice arrangements ever came to an end. Since an Allied invasion of French North Africa would almost certainly be followed by a German invasion of Unoccupied France, these operations would be precipitated, and without direct Allied support they had very little chance of success. As it was, Giraud's fears proved well-founded: all these elaborate arrangements were to prove tragically wasted.

So far the liaison arrangements between the French and the Allies had been tenuous. Mr. Murphy had visited Washington and London in September in disguise as 'Colonel McGowan' and been briefed on the invasion plans, but for obvious reasons of security he could reveal little of them to his French friends. The directive which he received from President Roosevelt on 22nd September authorised him only to say in general terms that the United States was contemplating sending to North Africa an American force, which would include none of the forces of General de Gaulle, to forestall an Axis occupation and preserve French rights. No change in French civil administration was contemplated, but resistance would be put down by force. For those Frenchmen who were prepared to co-operate equipment and funds would be forthcoming.<sup>(40)</sup>

This provided little more than formal confirmation of what the French already knew. A month later, on 23rd October they learned a little more when, on the suggestion of General Mast, a group of American officers led by General Mark Clark was landed by a British submarine on the Algerian coast and held a dramatic and unusual staff conference with Mast and his colleagues in a farmhouse near Cherchel, 75 miles west of Algiers. But even at this conference much was necessarily left unsaid. On the question of command, General Clark could say only that it would be turned over to General Giraud 'as soon as possible'; an assurance which Giraud was to reject as inadequate. More important, the exact date of the landings was still withheld from the French. General Mast declared that with four days' notice he could neutralise Army and Air Force resistance in North Africa, and that General Giraud would need eight to ten days to complete his own preparations; but the Frenchmen left the conference in the belief that they still had several months before them.

When Mr. Murphy told them on 28th October that the landings would in fact be made early the following month, consternation reigned. Nothing, expostulated General Mast, would be ready in North Africa; while Giraud could not possibly disentangle himself from his commitments in France in time to play his part. So alarmed

was Mr. Murphy at the prospect of all his careful work going for nothing that he sent an urgent message to General Eisenhower, begging him to postpone the operation if he possibly could. 'The delay of two weeks' he urged, 'unpleasant as it may be, involving technical considerations of which I am ignorant, is insignificant compared with the result involving serious opposition of French Army to our landing'.<sup>(41)</sup>

It was of course far too late to alter the course of the juggernaut which had already been set in motion. Informed of this, General Mast and General Giraud gallantly agreed to do the best they could. Giraud made immediate preparations to leave, but he could reach Gibraltar only on 7th November. General Mast had to launch his *coup* on the night of 7th–8th November, in General Giraud's absence, in an atmosphere of wild improvisation. The confusion which it caused was not without effect in disturbing the initial resistance of the French forces to the Allied landings; but the rapid end to their resistance was to come through causes totally unforeseen by Murphy, Mast, Giraud, or anyone else.

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BOOK TWO  
CHAPTER IX  
POLITICAL PREPARATIONS:  
SPAIN

**T**HE BRITISH could do little to help their American allies in the negotiations with the French in North Africa on which so much depended. But there was another field of political activity quite as vital to the success of Operation 'Torch' as that being so industriously cultivated by Mr. Murphy. That was the easing of relations with that unfriendly and strategically vital neutral power, General Franco's Spain, with its territories bestriding the Straits of Gibraltar. In this field it was the British who were left, by common agreement, to play a lone hand.

The success of the forthcoming operation depended no less on the acquiescence of Spain than it did on that of the French authorities in North Africa. As Sir Samuel Hoare, the British Ambassador in Madrid, put it in a memorandum of 29th August 1942:<sup>(1)</sup>

'The temptation to cut our lines of communication will be very great. We shall appear to have put our neck between two Spanish knives. . . . The Germans will be on General Franco's back, dinning into his ears: "Now is your time. You can cut the Allied throat, destroy the naval and air bases at Gibraltar and win a dazzling reward for your country in North Africa." Let no one underestimate the power of this temptation, or think that because nine Spaniards out of ten do not want war, General Franco might not risk it for the big stakes that in these circumstances it might offer him'.

The Spanish power for mischief was certainly great. With their own resources they could render Gibraltar useless as an air and naval base. From Spanish Morocco they could threaten Allied communications from Casablanca. From Tangier, Ceuta and Algeciras they could harass the passage of the Straits. And they could provide the *Luftwaffe* with air bases in Andalucia and the Balearic Islands which would make the conduct both of naval and land operations in the Western Mediterranean Theatre incalculably more difficult.

But when Sir Samuel spoke of nine out of ten Spaniards not wanting war, he did not exaggerate. Spain had already had her war. In the three years of fighting between 1936 and 1939 nearly a million men, women and children had been killed or wounded, and the wounds were not only physical. The body politic of Spain had been

tormented almost beyond endurance. One hundred thousand Spaniards had been driven into exile. A further quarter of a million were in prison, most of them for 'political offences'. The economy of the country, always precarious, was in ruins, with famine and shortages habitual and disaster kept at bay only by such imports—especially of petroleum—as one or other of the belligerents cared to make available. In Madrid General Franco, with the help of the Army over which he had established unquestioned control, presided over an uneasy coalition of the traditional Right, the Fascist Falange Party, and the Church; a group united primarily by their fear of the revival of that 'left wing' activity which had been suppressed with so much bloodshed and which the Caudillo still exercised a ruthless dictatorship to quell.<sup>(2)</sup>

Neither politically nor economically was Spain in a position to take any further strain, and no one knew this better than General Franco himself. Nevertheless his ambitions were not limited to nursing his country to internal health. Spain had unsatisfied territorial claims, in Gibraltar and in North Africa where the existing frontiers of Spanish Morocco were accepted only as a *pis aller*; and in 1940 only the refusal of German support had restrained her from pressing these claims at the expense of a defeated France and an apparently impotent Britain.<sup>(3)</sup> As it was, she had limited herself to the occupation of the International Zone of Tangier; but there seemed every reason to suppose that she would return to the charge, as soon as a favourable turn to the war made it possible for her to do so without risk.

There was no doubt with which side the sympathies of the Spanish Government lay. It had no cause to love the democracies of the West whose sympathy for its opponents during the Civil War had been so evident, if so ineffective; and it regarded with fear and loathing the Soviet Union, embodiment of that international Communism to whose destruction in Spain and elsewhere General Franco felt himself dedicated, and against which a division of Spanish troops was fighting alongside the Germans. But towards Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy, his patrons in the Civil War, General Franco felt less sympathy and gratitude than might have been expected. Concerned exclusively with the protection of his own country's interests, General Franco had no illusions about the reliability and ambitions of these gangster régimes. In 1940 he had assumed their victory as a matter of course, slid deftly from neutrality to non-belligerency, and appointed to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs his Fascist brother-in-law Serrano Suñer.<sup>(4)</sup> In July 1941 he had publicly reaffirmed his belief in the inevitability of German victory, and as late as May 1942 the American Ambassador, Professor Carleton Hayes, found him still convinced that Germany would win the war.<sup>(5)</sup>

But it was not a victory to which the Caudillo looked forward with unmixed pleasure. The Catholic Spanish statesmen did not conceal their distaste for a creed quite as arrogant and atheistical as that of the Communists, and they watched the German economic penetration of their country with growing concern. Both Franco and Suñer were stubborn in all their negotiations with Berlin;<sup>(6)</sup> and as the prospect of a German victory grew more remote, and the latent dislike of the Germans in Spain became more openly expressed, Franco began to modify his position accordingly. On 3rd September 1942 he found a pretext to dismiss Suñer; and although he was careful to conciliate the Falange by other ministerial appointments, the disappearance of a man so closely associated in the public mind with a policy of collaboration with the Axis, and his replacement by the moderate conservative General Jordana, was greeted by the Allies as a very favourable sign indeed.<sup>(7)</sup>

In dealing with General Franco the Allies thus had two advantages: the Spanish desire to preserve some degree of independence from the Axis, and their dependence on imports controlled by the blockade. The position of Spain in fact was closely comparable to that of Vichy France; and in the same way as the Americans urged the British to permit enough economic concessions to enable Vichy to maintain its lines of communication to the West, so had the British urged their allies to keep open the Spanish lifeline in order that unfortunate people should not be dependent on the whim of the Germans for the bare necessities of life. Moreover if Spain needed the cereals and petroleum products which had to run the gauntlet of the British blockade, Britain relied on Spain to provide one third of her own iron ore consumption,<sup>(8)</sup> and drew on her increasingly for such other minerals as potash, mercury and pyrites. Finally, the elimination of wolfram supplies from the Far East by the Japanese conquests of winter 1941-42 made Spain increasingly important as a source of that mineral, which the Allies not only wanted for their own consumption but were anxious to deny to the Axis.<sup>(9)</sup> Economic, strategic and political motives all led the British to conclude that commercial links with Spain should be maintained and strengthened.

Unfortunately the United States took a less favourable view. 'Those who play with Herr Hitler must expect no assistance whatever from the United States', declared President Roosevelt after General Franco's meeting with Hitler at Hendaye in October 1940;<sup>(10)</sup> and though this attitude softened somewhat, the British continued to have major difficulty in persuading their ally to make the necessary provision, in cereals, oil and shipping, to enable Spain's minimal requirements to be met.<sup>(11)</sup> Administrative confusion in Washington increased this difficulty, even when the State Department had been brought to accept the general principle of aid to Spain;<sup>(12)</sup> and since



in Spain itself political and economic considerations tugged in opposite directions, Suñer frequently opposing on doctrinaire grounds the policies of the Ministry of Commerce, it will be understood how delicately the British Government found itself compelled to tread.<sup>(13)</sup>

How would this most subtle and divided of neutral States react to an operation which she might well see as a threat to her own possessions, conducted by nations with whose policy and way of life her leaders felt no affinity, and which it lay in her power to bring to total and ignominious ruin? The Joint Planning Staff defined, in a paper of 20th September, the risks that the Allies were running.<sup>(14)</sup> This pointed out that a Spanish decision to obstruct the operation could result in German air bases being established in the Iberian peninsula which would largely nullify the air operations being conducted against submarines in the Bay of Biscay. It would no longer be possible to supply Malta through the Straits of Gibraltar. It would be necessary to find forces to capture not only Spanish Morocco but also the Canary Islands and possibly—since Portuguese neutrality was unlikely to survive a German entry into Spain—the Azores as well. Under these circumstances, the likelihood of a swift and effective campaign in French North Africa was remote.

But the Joint Planners considered that this decision would involve such dire internal consequences for Spain that only under the heaviest German pressure was it likely to be made. The cutting off of overseas supplies, the Joint Intelligence Committee pointed out on 10th September,<sup>(15)</sup> 'will have a disastrous effect on Spain's already precarious economy'. The strain placed on her communications system by the interruption of coastal traffic at Gibraltar and by military demands on her railways would make matters worse. By the spring the situation 'would be appalling and would give rise to serious internal security problems. Apart from bread riots and looting, widespread guerrilla activity and sabotage would be likely to develop.' To mount an invasion threat of sufficient credibility to persuade General Franco to face this disagreeable prospect would require, estimated the J.I.C., from 6 to 8 German divisions and 200 aircraft. An actual invasion, establishing air fields in southern Spain, defending them and their lines of communication, liquidating Portuguese resistance and keeping on hand a reserve to deal with possible Allied landings, would require upwards of twelve divisions; and there was little possibility of these being released, assembled and despatched before February 1943. The Joint Intelligence Committee, in short, felt relatively cheerful about the situation, and considered the fears expressed by Sir Samuel Hoare on 29th August to be unnecessarily pessimistic. 'We remain of the opinion' they summed up on 6th October, 'that if Spanish territory is not infringed, the

Spanish Government will be unlikely to court an open breach with the Allies, even under pressure from Germany, unless they are satisfied that this pressure can be backed by force or are convinced of speedy German victory. Events during August and September have militated against the Germans in both these aspects'.<sup>(16)</sup>

Yet however slight the risk of hostile Spanish intervention, it was obviously sound policy to do everything practicable to reduce it. To a military staff meeting in London on 27th August Sir Samuel Hoare outlined what he considered the appropriate measures ought to be. First and foremost 'Torch' must succeed. 'Any hesitation or fumbling, or the creation of such an impression as was made at the outset of our Syrian operations would have a thoroughly bad effect on feeling in the Peninsula'; where Allied military effectiveness was not, so far, rated very highly. Secondly, the larger the Americans bulked in the operation the better.\* Like the French, the Iberians 'did not suspect the Americans, as they suspected us, of having Imperialistic designs on other peoples' territory'. Thirdly, Spanish good-will should be improved by eliminating the recurrent administrative confusion which impeded the flow of economic aid. Finally it should be made quite clear that no operation against any part of Spanish or Portuguese territory was intended, particularly against 'the last remnant of their great Empire', Spanish Morocco; a territory as sacred to the Spanish Army and their leaders as Algeria was later, in tragic circumstances, to become to the French.

The first of Sir Samuel's points was self-evident. The second was being dealt with. The Foreign Office was enlisted to bring pressure to bear on Washington in fulfilment of the third.<sup>(18)</sup> It was his last point which was to create the greatest problem for the Allied planners; not because they had any designs, military or political, on Spanish Morocco, but because its strategic position, separating the proposed landing points at Casablanca and Oran and dominating the Straits of Gibraltar, was one of unique importance. If Spain were to declare herself hostile, the occupation of this area would be a strategic necessity for the Allies; while its vulnerability to Allied attack made it a valuable hostage against any such course on the part of Spain. Sir Samuel Hoare in his note of August 29th had indeed urged that a striking force should be made available 'to make immediate retaliation against Spanish territory for any hostile Spanish act'.<sup>(19)</sup>

The first reaction of the Chiefs of Staff was negative, for they did not see where the forces for such an operation could be found.<sup>(20)</sup> A month later however, on 26th September, they accepted the proposals of the Joint Planning Staff for action in the event of

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\* Sir Samuel later urged that the Brazilians should also be associated with the expedition.<sup>(17)</sup>

Spanish hostility, which included, in addition to the capture of the Canary Islands, the establishment of a base in the Azores, raids on Spanish coastal batteries the encouragement of Spanish resistance movements, and an invasion of Spanish Morocco with four divisions.<sup>(21)</sup> General Eisenhower's staff was working on the same problem; but in their view the appropriate solution depended on the circumstances in which Spanish hostility declared itself. If Spain were to intervene before the landings took place, the entire expedition would have to be either re-routed to include Spanish Morocco in its objectives, or abandoned altogether. If she were to do so sixty days or more after the landings had occurred, Allied forces in North Africa would be strong enough to deal with the situation. But to deal with possible Spanish intervention during the first two months after the landings it would be desirable to prepare a Northern Task Force, of two British divisions and an armoured brigade, which should be ready to mount a seaborne assault on Tangier and Ceuta sixteen days after the landings in French North Africa.<sup>(22)</sup>

To all this—except the option of abandoning the operation altogether—the Chiefs of Staff agreed.<sup>(23)</sup> On 21st October they appointed Lieut. General F. E. Morgan to the command of the Northern Task Force, and allotted to him the 1st and 4th British Divisions.<sup>(24)</sup> But once the planners began to examine the requirements of this new operation 'Backbone' they quickly ran into a multitude of difficulties. The Navy could only provide the necessary specialists in assault landings by abandoning all plans for cross-Channel raids for two months. The Army could only provide the necessary anti-aircraft regiments by running their strength in the United Kingdom dangerously low.<sup>(25)</sup> The earliest date that General Eisenhower could give for the assault was forty days after the 'Torch' landings, and even that would be possible only if the necessary merchant shipping was nominated eight days before 'Torch' was launched. If this was not done until Spanish hostility became evident it would take seven weeks to mount the operation; by which time German and Italian aircraft would be operating freely from bases in southern Spain.<sup>(26)</sup>

Finally, where was this shipping to be found? The only available reserve was that allotted to the Indian Ocean, serving both the Middle East and India; but any more raids on this would further delay the arrival of much-needed reinforcements—especially for the Middle East, already 100,000 short and expecting heavy casualties once 'Lightfoot' got under way. One possible solution seemed to lie in certain ships originally intended to sail to Russia in the cancelled convoy PQ. 19, which still lay loaded in the docks at Kirkwall. Since some of them were American, a telegram was drafted to Washington asking for their release; but when this was submitted

to the Prime Minister for his approval he pointed out the serious implications of such a course of action. 'The unloading of these ships' he minuted, 'will be taken by the Russians as an abandonment of the attempt to supply them with munitions northabout.' General Eisenhower philosophically accepted these political considerations as paramount: 'I feel' he informed General Ismay on 1st November, 'there is no other course but to accept the delay in the despatch of the Northern Task Force which must result.' So yet another risk was added to an operation already quite hazardous enough.<sup>(27)</sup>

There was yet another complication which the Allies had to face in connection with Spanish Morocco. Spain had long-standing claims on French Moroccan territory, and had never concealed her ambition to push her frontiers southward as far as the valley of the river Sebou. Was it not highly probable that she would seize the opportunity presented by an Allied invasion of Morocco, and the disorganisation which it would cause to the French defences, to march in and occupy the disputed territory and present the world with a *fait accompli*? Sir Samuel Hoare reported his French colleagues in Madrid to be alarmed about this point, and their fears were shared by the usually well-informed British Consul, Mr. Alvary Gascoigne, in Tangier.<sup>(28)</sup> Although such a move would bring Spanish forces within easy striking distance of the road and railway linking Casablanca with Algeria, the Chiefs of Staff agreed that there was not much they could do to stop them. They gave it as their opinion that 'The need for avoiding hostile actions with possible repercussions at Gibraltar outweighed the danger to communications'.<sup>(29)</sup> General Eisenhower was even blunter in his appreciation. 'In the early days of the operation,' he told General Ismay on 20th October, 'the question of taking any precipitate action against Spain is largely settled by the fact that we are in no position to do so. The build-up of our forces is quite slow and I should say that, short of a definitely hostile move by Spain against our lines of communication, either land or sea, we will necessarily have to depend on diplomatic representations until the time arrives when we could back up our words with real force. Even then' he concluded, 'it would be a most unfortunate contingency to have to take on an additional enemy in the region. . . .'<sup>(30)</sup> It was therefore agreed in London that any Spanish advance to the Sebou should be overlooked, so long as it did not interrupt Allied communications; but naturally this must not be allowed to reach the ears of the Spaniards. Sir Samuel Hoare was instructed to dissuade the Spanish Government from any such course by pointing out that, although the Allies had no intention of compromising the position or prejudging the claims of either Spain or France in the area, if Spain were to attack French territory she would inevitably create for herself

serious complications with the United States and British Governments which all would wish to avoid.<sup>(31)</sup>

This decision precipitated a minor crisis between the Allies. The United States authorities did not feel quite so neutral between the Spaniards and the Frenchmen with whom they were already in fairly close contact. On 2nd November Field Marshal Dill telegraphed from Washington that the Joint Chiefs felt 'that American authorities should not direct their Commander to stand by and see French territory, which he has been sent ostensibly to defend, invaded by a third Power';<sup>(32)</sup> while the Joint Chiefs themselves informed General Eisenhower: 'If Spanish troops commence an invasion of French North African territory or give indications of doing so on or after D-day, it is the understanding of the Joint U.S. Chiefs of Staff that you will inform the Spanish military authorities of Spanish Morocco that American forces will resist such an invasion'.<sup>(33)</sup>

These unilateral instructions to the Supreme Allied Commander created some surprise in London; and since the Americans would not have any forces available anyway, the strong line which they laid down did not appear very realistic. Some support for the American attitude was forthcoming from the Foreign Office, which on 4th November presented a Memorandum to the Chiefs of Staff accepting the view that if Spanish forces did invade French Morocco the Spanish authorities should be told that the Americans would resist. This, they admitted, would virtually be bluff; but 'seeing that it would be in line with the warning which would be given in these circumstances to the Spanish Government by the British Ambassador in Madrid, it might be effective'. But the Chiefs of Staff preferred to be more circumspect; as General Bedell Smith emphasised, 'the Spaniards are a proud race and would almost certainly react adversely to any threat'. They ended by suggesting that in the event of invasion threatening or occurring the Spaniards should simply be informed that they were 'inevitably creating for themselves serious complications with the United States and British Governments, the grave consequences of which cannot be exaggerated'.<sup>(34)</sup> General Eisenhower himself telegraphed Washington to ask for a free hand.<sup>(35)</sup>

Finally, support for the London policy of caution came from an unexpected quarter. General Giraud himself, alarmed at the prospect of a winter campaign in the Riff Mountains, urged the Allies to go as far as possible in placating the Spaniards, even, if need be, by a cession of territory.<sup>(36)</sup> Under these pressures, the Joint Chiefs softened their attitude, and finally informed General Eisenhower that 'as the man on the ground you are authorised to make such decisions in this matter as may be unavoidably necessary to contribute to the success of your operations'.<sup>(37)</sup>

As is known, none of these dangers, to meet which the Allied planners spent so much time preparing, actually materialised. The chief Spanish worry was that the political disturbances which might, and indeed ultimately did, develop in French North Africa as a result of the Allied invasion would spread over the frontier and present them with problems of internal security. The Spanish Government accepted the emphatic assurances that Spanish territory would be held inviolate and Spanish interests respected which both the American and British Ambassadors gave, when, early on the morning of 8th November, they officially informed General Franco and General Jordana that the landings were taking place. But it is possible that the equanimity with which these highly competent professional soldiers received the news, and their passivity during the subsequent operations, were directly connected with the shattering reversal which the Axis troops in the Western Desert had just received at the hands of the Eighth Army. On 23rd October General Alexander had opened his offensive at El Alamein, and on 4th November G.H.Q. Middle East had been able to report that 'Axis forces [were] now in full retreat'. As Sir Samuel Hoare reported in a justifiably triumphant despatch from Madrid on 9th November, that sweeping British victory had demonstrated to Spain 'that not only have we achieved quantitative superiority in munitions, but also that we had taken to heart the lessons of war and that we knew how to use them'.<sup>(38)</sup> The Allied armies in French North Africa may have been dependent for their initial success on the skill of their diplomatists; but those diplomats were no less dependent on the skill of the Armed Forces at the far end of the Mediterranean, and all the planning which had made their victory possible.

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- (8) Woodward, Vol. II, p. 919.
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- (12) See Feis, especially p. 160.
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- (16) J.I.C.(42)386(O) (Final) of 6.10.42.
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- (18) F.O.-Washington No. 6231 of 14.10.42: C.P.438.
- (19) E/Spain/1, fol. 42.
- (20) Hollis-Mack of 2.9.42: E/North Africa/3(E), fol. 3C.
- (21) J.P.(42)828 of 20.9.42.  
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- (23) Ismay-Eisenhower of 19.10.42: E/North Africa/3(E), fol. 40.
- (24) C.O.S.(42)155th Mtg.(O) of 21.10.42.
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- (33) J.C.S.-Eisenhower: F.A.N. 15 of 2.11.42.
- (34) C.O.S.(42)171st Mtg.(O) of 4.11.42.
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- (37) J.C.S.-Eisenhower: R.2861 of 6.11.42: E/North Africa/3(E), fol. 119.
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BOOK TWO  
CHAPTER X  
EVENTS IN NORTH AFRICA  
NOVEMBER 1942—JANUARY 1943

ON THE NIGHT of 5th November the Allied convoys bound for Oran and Algiers passed through the Straits of Gibraltar. Their presence was at once reported to the Axis High Command. *OKW* decided that they were bound for the Italian ports in Libya, Tripoli and Benghazi, where they would land troops to cut off the *Panzerarmee* as it withdrew before the Eighth Army's attack. Hitler warned Mussolini to this effect and then dismissed the matter from his mind, leaving his headquarters on the Eastern Front to attend the annual party celebrations at Munich. The Italians did not accept this diagnosis. *Comando Supremo*, having for some weeks expected an Allied landing in French North Africa, had no doubt that this was it; but there were no Italian submarines in the area, and the heavy units of their fleet were immobilised by lack of fuel. The landings thus took place, during the early morning of 8th November, without interference from Axis forces by either sea or air.\*

They did not take place, however, without French resistance. General Mast and his colleagues had had no time to complete their plans to paralyse the defences, but they did their best. In Algiers they seized the key points of the city during the night of the 7th/8th and were able to prevent all but sporadic resistance to the landings on the beaches east and west. A direct assault on the harbour itself was able to get a small task force ashore. But the landings took much longer than was expected. There were mistakes caused by faulty navigation and inexperience. The forces landed were not ready to close in on the city until the following afternoon; and by that time the conspirators had been overwhelmed, regular forces were again in charge and the Allied forces landed in the harbour had been forced to surrender. At Casablanca, Mast's colleague General Béthouart commanding the army division stationed there had informed both the Resident-General, General Noguès, and the Naval Commander, Admiral Michelier, that landings in force were imminent, and urged them not to resist. Neither acquiesced. Noguès was put under a kind of house arrest from which he did not find it difficult to disentangle himself, and alerted the military defences as Michelier had alerted the naval. All the American landings on the Atlantic coast—at Safi 175 miles south of Casablanca, at Fedala

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\* See p. 66 above.

immediately to the north, and at Mehdiâ-Port Lyautey 150 miles up the coast towards Tangier—therefore met with resistance from French defences, as well as being hampered by the Atlantic swell and the inevitable shortcomings of inexperience. The French continued to fight even after the landings were made good, and for two days they continued the battle. At Oran also the fighting was protracted. A direct assault on the harbour was repelled, but the landings on either side of the town took place with little opposition. As they closed in on the 9th they met stiffer resistance, but the town fell to an armoured assault on the morning of November 10th.

At Algiers meanwhile fighting had ceased. At the moment that the landings were due to begin Mr. Murphy called on General Juin to warn him of what was happening and invite him to enrol under General Giraud's command. Juin was unimpressed. It was, as he later wrote in his memoirs, rather naïve of the Allies to assume that the well-disciplined Army of Africa would welcome Giraud 'like Napoleon on his return from Elba'.<sup>(1)</sup> His own loyalty to the legitimate government in Vichy remained unshaken. But by a coincidence as fortunate for the French authorities in North Africa as it was for the Allies, a member of the government who could command the loyalty of an overwhelming majority of officials both civil and military happened to be in Algiers that night. General Juin was able to send for no less an authority than Admiral Darlan himself, who was paying a private visit to the city to visit his sick son.

Darlan was furious when he heard the news. Like General Giraud he had been playing for higher stakes. With a little more preparation, and a little more time, he told Mr. Murphy, he might have brought not only North Africa but Unoccupied France itself over to the Allied cause. Now all the preparations in France would go for nothing. 'Apparently', he told Mr. Murphy, 'you have the same capacity as the British for making massive blunders'.<sup>(2)</sup> But he agreed to ask Marshal Pétain for instructions. Meanwhile General Juin had decided that his forces should not fight for Algiers, and he gave orders accordingly. In his view '*les jeux étaient faits*'.<sup>(3)</sup> It is likely that, even at this stage, Admiral Darlan thought the same. Forty-eight hours later 'in the name of the Marshal' he assumed full authority, civil and military, over French North Africa, and ordered a cease-fire.

Marshal Pétain as soon as he learned of the landings lodged a formal protest with President Roosevelt, albeit in somewhat lukewarm terms: 'We have been attacked, and we shall defend ourselves'.<sup>(4)</sup> If he wished to preserve Unoccupied France intact, he could have done no less. Some of his advisers, notably General Weygand and Admiral Auphan, urged him to give Darlan a free hand. Laval, summoned to meet Hitler in Munich and still hoping to

convince the Führer that the French could handle this on their own, insisted that the Marshal should disown Darlan; which Pétain did—sending simultaneously, by secret code, a message of good wishes and encouragement. Hitler did indeed, for a few hours, cling to the hope that the French could be trusted to defend their own territory. This had been a major factor in his policy in the Mediterranean since 1940. It had complicated his search for an accommodation with Spain and involved him in constant friction with his ally Italy.<sup>(5)</sup> But by 10th November the prevarications of the French military authorities and the rapid collapse of resistance in North Africa had disillusioned him. Laval on reaching Munich was informed, not only that the Axis would establish a bridgehead in Tunisia, but that Unoccupied France would be taken over the following day. He, and the Marshal, protested in vain. German forces crossed the demarcation-line on 11th November. Eight days later Hitler gave preparatory orders for the French army to be disarmed and the French fleet in Toulon seized. The orders were made definite on 25th November and put into effect two days later. The first operation, as Giraud and Darlan had feared, put an end to the preparation for a rising which French military leaders had been discretely making for so many months past. The second was frustrated. The French fleet scuttled itself, as Darlan had always promised that it would, rather than fall into enemy hands.<sup>(6)</sup>

The Allied High Command had already received two disagreeable shocks in their dealings with General Giraud. First, on arriving in Gibraltar on November 7th Giraud had flatly demanded supreme command of all the Allied forces, with General Eisenhower remaining responsible only for logistics and reinforcements; indicating that he would use this authority to effect an immediate landing in the South of France. With some difficulty General Eisenhower was able to dissuade him from pressing this demand, and to report early the following day, 'Giraud is recognised as the leader of the effort to prevent Axis aggression in North Africa, as the Commander-in-Chief of all French forces in the region and as Governor of the French North African Provinces. Eisenhower, as Commander-in-Chief of the Allied American-British forces, will co-operate with Giraud to the fullest possible extent, and will work in the closest collaboration with him'.<sup>(7)</sup> But this compromise proved useless when General Giraud reached Algiers, where the second shock awaited the Allies. They discovered that in French North Africa, as General Juin had warned, Giraud's authority was recognised by nobody. The French authorities refused even to negotiate with the Americans in his presence. Darlan alone carried the Marshal's mandate, and it was with him that the Allies, whether they liked it or not, now had to deal. But the evening of 11th November Darlan and Giraud met; and in

return for Giraud's recognising him as the supreme civil authority, Darlan confirmed the General in the position promised him by the Allies, of Commander-in-Chief of French forces in North Africa. This arrangement General Eisenhower was happy to accept as the only possible solution to an entirely unexpected dilemma.

The new distribution of authority was announced by the French on 15th November. Under Giraud, General Juin retained command of land and Admiral Michelier of naval forces. Under Darlan as High Commissioner for French North Africa M. Châtel took charge in Algeria, General Noguès resumed his position in Morocco, while at Dakar M. Boisson, who announced his loyalty to the new régime on 23rd November, remained Resident General in French West Africa. The whole of France's African territories were now aligned on the side of the Allies either through Admiral Darlan or through General de Gaulle, with the exception only of Tunisia; where the Resident General Admiral Estéva, summoned simultaneously to declare his loyalty both by Darlan and Laval, with Axis forces already flying into his territories, ignored Admiral Darlan's appeal and continued to obey the government in Vichy.

On 14th November General Eisenhower warned the Combined Chiefs of Staff of what was pending and explained why he had sanctioned it.

'Existing French sentiment in North Africa does not even remotely resemble prior calculations . . . the name of Marshal Pétain is something to conjure with . . . the military and naval leaders, as well as the civil governors, agree that only one man has the obvious right to assume the mantle of Pétain, and that man is Admiral Darlan. . . . The initial resistance to our landing was due to the fact that all concerned believed such action to be in keeping with the Marshal's desires. General Giraud, in fact, is deemed guilty of at least a touch of treachery in urging non-resistance to the Allied landing. However, all concerned now profess themselves ready to support the Allies provided Admiral Darlan tells them to do so. They are absolutely not willing to follow anyone else. . . . Complete military occupation, the cost of which in time and resources will be tremendous, will be necessary unless we can deal with a strong French government of some kind in North Africa. . . .'<sup>(8)</sup>

The British authorities had followed these negotiations, so far as they had been able, with some concern. On 11th November the Prime Minister reminded the President that the British were 'under quite definite and solemn obligations to de Gaulle and his movement' and warned against 'the creation of rival French *émigré* governments, each favoured by one of us'.<sup>(9)</sup> The following day he urged that Darlan's authority should be recognised only if he could bring over

the French fleet from Toulon; which the Admiral did indeed attempt to do. But on the evening of 13th November, after hearing a verbal account of the situation from General Bedell Smith, Mr. Churchill gave his reluctant agreement to the arrangements being made in Algiers. They were, he told the President, 'neither permanent nor healthy'; but they would have to be accepted 'for maintaining local and interim equilibrium and for securing the vital position in Tunis'.<sup>(10)</sup> To General Eisenhower he sent a personal message of qualified encouragement: 'anything for the battle, but the politics will have to be sorted out later'.<sup>(11)</sup>

The politics which had to be sorted out were not only those of French North Africa, but those of the United Kingdom and, to some extent, of the Alliance itself. To the Administration of the United States, which had always retained close links with the Vichy government and its supporters in French North Africa, the concordat with Admiral Darlan appeared a perfectly reasonable stroke of policy. Negotiations with him had been under way long before the operation began, and there had been, as we have already seen, 'no thought in the minds of American war planners that a "Darlan deal" would not be acceptable in Washington'.<sup>(12)</sup> The President's own general attitude can perhaps be judged from a message which he sent to Mr. Churchill on 2nd January 1943: 'The people of France will settle their own affairs after we have won the war. Until then we can deal with local Frenchmen on a local basis wherever our armies occupy local French territory. And if those local officials won't play ball we will have to replace them'.<sup>(13)</sup> This pragmatic attitude was shared by Stalin, who took the trouble to inform the President that, in his opinion, Eisenhower's policy was 'perfectly correct'.<sup>(14)</sup> As for Eisenhower himself and his advisers on the spot, both British and American, all that mattered was to establish a peaceful and co-operative régime so that military operations could be carried on with the least possible interruption.

But to a large section of British public opinion this was Machiavellianism of the worst kind. In the House of Commons, from 12th November onwards, critical questions multiplied, culminating in a motion, on 26th November 'That this House is of the opinion that our relations with Admiral Darlan and his kind are inconsistent with the ideals for which we entered and are fighting this war; furthermore, that these relations, if persisted in, will undermine the faith in us among our friends in the oppressed and invaded nations and impair the military, social, and political prospects of the final and complete triumph of the cause of the United Nations'.<sup>(15)</sup> Mr. Churchill was able to set these fears at rest in a frank and brilliant speech to the House in Secret Session on 10th December, and, in his own words, 'the fact that all further Parliamentary opposition stopped



after the Secret Session quenched the hostile Press and reassured the country'.<sup>(16)</sup>

But the Prime Minister had considerable sympathy with his critics. 'A permanent arrangement with a Darlan Government in French North Africa would not be understood by the great mass of ordinary people whose simple loyalties are our strength', he told the President on 17th November.<sup>(17)</sup> Mr. Eden and the Foreign Office strongly endorsed this view: 'We are fighting for international decency' they informed the British Ambassador in Washington, 'and Darlan is the antithesis of that'.<sup>(18)</sup> Possibly at no moment in the course of the entire war did the Foreign Office feel a keener sympathy for General de Gaulle. On hearing of the agreement, the General wrote Mr. Churchill a furious letter in which he declared that 'so far as the French nation is concerned this fact will surpass, in its eventual consequences, the capitulation of Bordeaux'.<sup>(19)</sup> Allied propaganda against collaborators would in future look 'a pretty loathsome farce'. On November 16th he issued a communiqué, delayed for 24 hours at Mr. Eden's request, dissociating the French National Committee from the events in Algiers; but his demand to broadcast to the French nation was referred to President Roosevelt, and received no reply.<sup>(20)</sup>

Mr. Roosevelt bent before the storm which was breaking over his head. On 17th November he issued a statement, that the political arrangement made in North Africa was a temporary expedient applying only to the local situation, and that public opinion in the United Nations would never understand the recognition or reconstruction of the Vichy government in any French territory. The Prime Minister gratefully told him that this 'settled the matter in the best possible way'.<sup>(21)</sup> He spoke too soon. The statement did little to appease opinion in London, and it created annoyance and alarm in Algiers. Admiral Cunningham, the senior British officer in General Eisenhower's entourage, confided to the First Sea Lord: 'I gravely fear repercussions of President's message. With our forces strung out as at present in the race for Tunisia we simply cannot afford a renewal of hostile feeling'.<sup>(22)</sup> General Smuts asked the Prime Minister 'to pass on to President Roosevelt my strong impression that further anti-Darlan statements might be harmful to our cause, and indeed are not called for'.<sup>(23)</sup> Admiral Darlan himself, with some reason, protested to the American authorities against the idea 'that I am only a lemon which the Americans will drop after they have drained me dry'. General Eisenhower had to exercise all his considerable diplomatic gifts in conciliating the men on whose active co-operation the success of his mission now depended, and in the course of doing so gave a broadcast in which he congratulated both Darlan and Giraud in rallying to the cause of the United Nations and urged

the French people to set aside 'small differences of ideas'.<sup>(24)</sup>

This well-meant action unleashed another storm in London. Mr. Eden reported to the Prime Minister that it had 'caused deep offence to the Fighting French, who regard it as a slight on their attitude. Of course Eisenhower intended nothing of the kind, but at the same time if he is going to make political statements it is surely necessary that he should have some guidance. At present he has none'.<sup>(25)</sup> It was also becoming increasingly clear that political tranquillity in French North Africa was being purchased at a heavy price. Complaints were reaching London from both British and American sources of the continued anti-Allied activities and attitudes of senior French officials and quasi-Fascist organisations; of their open persecution of the men who had shown themselves most active in the Allied cause; and of the total absence of any control over their activities.<sup>(26)</sup> 'To us here', one British official reported, 'the conduct of the Americans in French Morocco since 11th November has been one of the most, if not *the* most, pathetic failures of the war'.<sup>(27)</sup> On 5th December Lord Halifax was instructed to express British anxieties to the President and urge the appointment of some political authority who could take these responsibilities off General Eisenhower's shoulders; and four days later, after the War Cabinet had considered the more alarming of the reports, Mr. Churchill followed up this *démarche* with a personal message.<sup>(28)</sup> Apart from the anomalies and injustice involved in supporting this authoritarian régime, he pointed out, there were military risks as well. 'If we were to suffer serious setbacks in Tunisia the Axis may be relied upon to exploit the situation to the full, and there is no knowing what difficulties we may not then encounter even at the hands of these Frenchmen who now appear to be co-operating with us'. For all these reasons he urged that such known Allied sympathisers as General Béthouart and General Mast should be appointed to senior posts, and that General Eisenhower should be given more professional help in dealing with the political and administrative problems which confronted him.

The President acknowledged that the situation was unsatisfactory and would have to be remedied; but he was understandably unwilling to bring any pressure to bear on General Eisenhower to take hasty action against his better judgment. Eisenhower himself replied that the reports were exaggerated and came from disaffected elements, and that so far as security was concerned the situation was under control. 'Admittedly the political situation is confused and difficult', he confessed on 14th December. 'I think you shall continue to receive disturbing reports. Our main effort has been to maintain sufficient control of the situation to enable us to fight a battle'.<sup>(29)</sup> But the Foreign Office remained unsatisfied that all was being done

that should be done, and continued to urge the appointment of a senior political adviser who could take the matter in hand.<sup>(30)</sup>

What Mr. Eden apparently had in mind at this stage was an official of status comparable to that held by the Minister of State in Cairo; working in close co-operation with the military authorities but responsible not to them but to the War Cabinet. Such a proposal had been transmitted to Washington on 17th November<sup>(31)</sup> and had apparently recommended itself to the President; for three days later he had suggested to the Prime Minister 'I think that you and I might give some consideration to the idea of appointing one Britisher and one American to whom would be given the authority not to administer civil functions but to hold a veto power over French civil administrators, and to direct them in rare instances to follow out certain policies'.<sup>(32)</sup> When the question was raised at a meeting of the Combined Chiefs of Staff in Washington on 12th December, however, 'it was pointed out that General Eisenhower was already being advised by Mr. Robert Murphy, who now held the post of Civil Affairs Officer on his staff; and that, if the British wished to appoint a more senior representative of their own\*, they could do so unilaterally'.<sup>(33)</sup> It was clear that the United States authorities were not prepared to entertain the idea of such an official acting as more than an adviser to General Eisenhower, with whom supreme authority must continue to rest.

On 15th December Mr. Roosevelt pointed a way out of the difficulty by nominating Mr. Murphy, who retained his post as Civil Affairs Officer, as his personal representative with the rank of Minister. Mr. Churchill meanwhile had chosen as the British representative Mr. Harold Macmillan, who then occupied the post of Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for the Colonies. Mr. Macmillan, the Prime Minister assured the President, was 'animated by the friendliest feelings towards the United States and his mother hails from Kentucky'.<sup>(34)</sup> But his position could not be precisely analogous to that of Mr. Murphy. He would not be the personal representative of the Head of State; he would enjoy Ministerial status as a member of the British Government; and he would not be a member of General Eisenhower's staff. 'The best I can do', Mr. Churchill suggested, 'is to send Macmillan out as "H.M.G.'s political representative at General Eisenhower's headquarters" reporting to me direct, and enjoying exact equality of rank with Murphy'.<sup>(35)</sup> The President would still have preferred to see Mr. Macmillan, like Mr. Murphy, a full member of General Eisenhower's staff, but he accepted the position, with the slight amendment of Mr. Macmillan's title to that of 'Minister Resident at Allied Headquarters'.<sup>(36)</sup>

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\* They already had, in Mr. W. H. B. Mack of the Foreign Office, a Civil Liaison Officer on General Eisenhower's staff.

The appointment was therefore made, and Mr. Macmillan received the directive 'to report on the political situation and future plans for the territory and to represent to the Commander-in-Chief the views of H.M. Government on political questions'.<sup>(37)</sup>

General Eisenhower reacted to the appointment with polite bewilderment. 'I am delighted to work with anyone who can help in the present confused situation', he told the Combined Chiefs of Staff on 31st December, 'but I am uncertain as to the definition of my relationship with Mr. Macmillan and your instructions are requested'.<sup>(38)</sup> Mr. Churchill at once replied that Mr. Macmillan was to be regarded as being on precisely the same footing as Mr. Murphy. 'Although not formally a member of your staff he fully accepts your supreme authority throughout the theatre and has no thought but to be of service to you'.<sup>(39)</sup> The Prime Minister did not exaggerate. Mr. Macmillan was able almost immediately to establish with General Eisenhower a relationship of intimate confidence which not only lasted throughout their partnership in the Mediterranean during 1943 but, surviving the war, was to prove of continuing value to both nations for many years to come. And through his presence the British Government was now able to exercise a close influence on the course of events in Algiers; which had now been thrown into renewed confusion by the assassination of Admiral Darlan at the hands of a young monarchist fanatic on Christmas Eve. This mysterious affair, great as were its political repercussions, did not, fortunately, disturb the course of Allied co-operation with the French authorities. General Giraud was immediately appointed as the Admiral's successor, and he devoted all his energies to the cause which he had most at heart—the conduct of the battles which were now being waged in Tunisia.

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The complexity of the political situation had, as General Eisenhower constantly stressed, the very gravest implications for the conduct of operations. The difficulties of covering the 560 miles from Algiers to Tunis, over mountainous country through which ran only one railway and one good road, during a notoriously rainy season and without adequate base facilities, were considerable enough in themselves. The initial hostility of the French *fonctionnaires* on whom the Allies depended for the maintenance of railway and postal communications, to say nothing of the reserved attitude of the French armed forces, might, had it been prolonged, have made the conduct of operations in Tunisia impossible. The settling of political difficulties at the highest level thus inescapably had to be General Eisenhower's first task. Responsibility for the conduct of operations

devolved on the shoulders of the Eastern Task Force Commander, Lieut. General Anderson, who had to improvise a force and an inter-allied command structure as he fought. It is easy to write with the wisdom of hindsight. But it is hard to avoid the conclusion that, if General Eisenhower had been able to postpone or delegate his political responsibilities for the first few vital weeks, and devote his entire energies to supporting his armies in the field, the race for Tunis, lost only by the narrowest of margins, might conceivably have been won. With a command structure which imposed on him supreme political as well as military authority, it is not surprising that he found such delegation impossible. The fault lay, not so much in his handling of the situation, as in the underestimation on the part of the Combined Chiefs of Staff of the burden that he would be called upon to bear. Success in such a venture is impossible if risks are not taken; and it might have been better to take more risks in the political field and fewer in the military. Military failure nourished political opposition: nothing would have done more to reconcile the French authorities to the Allied occupation than rapid and total military success.

The Germans had quickly recovered from their initial surprise. The first *Luftwaffe* units flew into Tunis on 9th November. The next evening Hitler issued a formal directive that all other measures in the Mediterranean were to be subordinated to the establishment of a bridgehead in Tunisia 'on as short a front as possible, making the maximum use of defensible terrain'. German forces were to establish 'close and friendly' relations with the French High Command in Tunisia; but 'if the attitude of the Tunisian Division seems doubtful it is to be disarmed and its arms and equipment used for our own troops and for arming the Italian population in Tunisia'.<sup>(40)</sup> Indeed, the position of the handful of German troops and officials who flew into Tunis during these first few days seemed most precarious. The French Resident General, Admiral Estéva, punctiliously obeyed his directions from Vichy and placed no obstacle in the way of the invaders; but the *volte face* of his colleagues in Algeria and Morocco provided an alarming precedent, and the German authorities reported that 'the attitude of French military and administration is obscure, often hostile'. French ground forces under command of General Barré obeyed Estéva's orders and on 10th/11th November withdrew from Tunis and Bizerta into the mountains to the south-west. But it rapidly became clear that they were only awaiting the arrival of Allied forces before taking the offensive; and the Allies were coming up fast.

The nearest Allied forces were troops of the British 78th Division who landed at Bougie, 300 miles west of Tunis, on 11th November. Before air cover could be organised Axis aircraft attacked Bougie

harbour and sank several ships loaded with equipment, whose loss, according to General Anderson's report, was critically to affect operations during the next few days. Nevertheless British spearheads covered the 200 miles to the Tunisian border in four days and reached Tabarka on 15th November. While they were doing so German troops, mainly drawn from reinforcement pools and *Luftwaffe* ground units, had been pouring into Tunisia pell-mell, and were organised into a makeshift Corps by the desert veteran General Walther Nehring. Nehring was able to send forward an improvised battle-group, including 16 medium tanks, in time to check the British advance guard on 18th November as it advanced beyond Tabarka at Djebel Abiod. Meanwhile more units of 78th Division and elements of 6th Armoured Division reached the front. A British parachute battalion landed at Souk-el-Arba and an American one in Central Tunisia at Youks-les-Bains. American armoured and artillery units were rushed up and put under British command; and General Barré's forces, having made contact with the British, declared themselves for the Allies and on 19th November fought their first engagement with the Germans at Medjez-el-Bab.

By 25th November General Anderson felt strong enough to mount a sustained attack towards Tunis down the valley of the river Medjerda. His leading units—British infantry, U.S. armour—penetrated as far as Djedeida, 15 miles outside Tunis. There, on 28th November, they were checked by stubborn and well-sited opposition. This was the critical moment. The momentum of the Allied advance was exhausted. The Germans could reinforce more quickly—units of 10th *Panzer Division* were already arriving in Tunisia—and, more important, German aircraft, operating from airfields round Tunis and Bizerta, commanded a battlefield which was 100 miles distant from the nearest Allied airfields at Bône. After a week of heavy fighting around Tebourba General Anderson broke off operations to regroup his forces and accumulate supplies for a renewed and heavier attack.

By 22nd December, when General Anderson renewed his attack, Axis strength had also been built up. Colonel General von Arnim had arrived from the Russian front to take command of a force which, at the end of the year, totalled 60,000 troops and some 213 tanks and had been dignified with the name of 5th *Panzerarmee*.<sup>(41)</sup> But it was not so much this increase in enemy strength that brought the Allied drive to an almost immediate halt as the onset of heavy and continuous rain, which made movement difficult on the roads and impossible off them. Within forty-eight hours the heavily-equipped Allied forces had bogged down. At a melancholy conference on 24th December General Eisenhower, General Anderson and the commander of British V. Corps, Lieut. General Charles Allfrey, decided

that the attack must be called off and could not be mounted again until the weather improved—and that, General Eisenhower warned the Combined Chiefs of Staff, was likely to be in ‘not less than two months’. ‘The evidence is complete, in my opinion’ he reported, ‘that any attempt to make a major attack under current conditions in Northern Tunisia would be merely to court disaster’.<sup>(42)</sup> The Allies had lost the race for Tunis, and three months of gruelling fighting, absorbing resources on a quite unanticipated scale, was to be necessary before the prize was won.

This news, naturally enough, had a profoundly depressing effect in London. Not only would the entire programme of future operations have to be recast, but General Eisenhower’s dispositions looked alarmingly vulnerable.

‘His forces [the Chiefs of Staff pointed out to Field Marshal Dill in Washington, in a telegram they later advised him *not* to show to the Joint Chiefs of Staff] are extended over a very wide front, 1st Army (or rather, Allfrey’s Corps) covering some 60 miles. No adequate reserve exists nearer than Algiers, some 250 miles in the rear. Under these conditions he visualises having to wait for some two months before undertaking offensive operations against Tunis. . . . [Since the enemy’s rate of reinforcement was probably greater than the Allies] there therefore appears to be a grave danger during the next two months that he will be in a position to launch an offensive before Eisenhower’s proposed date. Owing to the thinness of our defences and lack of reserves the Allied forces may well be driven back well into Algeria. We feel that far more intensive measures are necessary if the Germans are to be driven out of Tunisia and if, indeed, we are to avoid defeat’.<sup>(43)</sup>

But General Eisenhower, as aware of his predicament as anybody, had no intention of allowing the enemy to seize the initiative. He informed the Combined Chiefs of Staff on 29th December that he was planning an ‘aggressive defensive’ in Northern Tunisia, where British forces would now be concentrated, while in Central Tunisia, where the going was easier, United States II Corps would launch an offensive towards Sfax. He proposed himself to take charge of the Tunisian Front, grouping French and American forces under the command of General Mark Clark and leaving General Anderson to concentrate on preparations for renewing the thrust towards Tunis as soon as circumstances permitted.<sup>(44)</sup> The Chiefs of Staff had reservations about these proposals as well. They would be bound, they confided to Dill, ‘not only to reduce the weight of his main attack in the North and delay that main attack, but also to expose the Northern forces to risk of defeat’. The directions of the proposed attack appeared to them eccentric and hazardous, vulnerable not

only to counter-thrust from the North but to a stroke by the retreating Rommel. 'Finally' they concluded, 'we are much alarmed at the idea of Eisenhower leaving the centre and summit where he alone can cope with Giraud and make sure the front is properly supplied. Would not a better arrangement be for Clark to be placed in command of the Tunisian front, with Anderson and Juin as subordinate Commanders?'<sup>(45)</sup>

Meanwhile Brigadier E. I. C. Jacob, of General Ismay's staff, had been visiting Algeria to ascertain the situation at first hand; and though he had melancholy tales to tell of political conditions in Algiers itself, his report on the military situation was sufficiently comforting to induce the Chiefs of Staff not to press their criticisms but to allow General Eisenhower to go ahead with his plans.<sup>(46)</sup> The Sfax attack was therefore scheduled for the last week in January, and preparations went forward both for that and for a supply force to be brought in from Malta once the Americans reached the coast. But the plan depended for its success on Rommel's *Panzerarmee* being closely engaged by the Eighth Army; and at the Casablanca Conference on 15th January General Alexander made it clear that, although Tripoli would probably be taken within the next eleven days, no advance beyond that point would be possible until the port was cleared—and that might take anything from a week to six months. Rommel would thus have a dangerous breathing space; if the Americans attacked he could, warned Alexander, 'react like lightning and his plan would be the best possible'.<sup>(47)</sup> Eisenhower therefore decided to postpone the operation until it would be co-ordinated with the renewed advance of the Eighth Army from the South.<sup>(48)</sup>

The problem of command was more complex, for it was not simply an Anglo-American concern. An increasing part of the front between the British First Army in Northern Tunisia and the American II Corps in the south was being taken over by French units, and General Giraud was determined that they should play a leading role in liberating French North Africa. These forces were gallant, familiar with the country and skilled in mountain warfare, but terribly under-equipped. Although the French troops were heavily dependent on the Allies for signal equipment and transport, and were fighting beside them in intimate liaison, General Giraud refused to allow them to come, as had the Americans, under British command. Only with considerable difficulty, indeed, could he be dissuaded from pressing his own claims to command the entire Tunis front. General Eisenhower's proposed solution to group the French with the American forces in a Fifth Army under Major General Mark Clark would still leave, as the Chiefs of Staff noted, no single commander responsible to Eisenhower for operations in the field.



They therefore urged upon Washington on 5th January that General Eisenhower should devote himself primarily to solving the political difficulties, give General Anderson command of all Allied forces fighting in Tunisia, and himself establish 'a small headquarters near the battlefield from which he could take important decisions of principle and generally provide drive and stimulus to operations'.<sup>(49)</sup>

This in fact was virtually what happened. General Eisenhower did establish an advance post at Constantine under his Deputy Chief of Staff Major General Lucian K. Truscott. At first national forces continued to retain their separate commands, the Americans under II Corps Commander General Lloyd R. Fredendall, the French under General Juin, the British First Army (still consisting only of V Corps) under General Anderson. But on 18th January a strong attack by German forces, equipped with Mark VI. ('Tiger') tanks against the ill-armed French caused such confusion that General Eisenhower, on 21st January, appointed General Anderson 'co-ordinator' of the front and shortly afterwards made him also 'responsible for the employment of American troops'. General Juin had already agreed to place his troops under Anderson's control, only to have his initiative vetoed by General Giraud. Now he did so again; this time Giraud, embroiled in the political problems which had descended on his shoulders with the assassination of Admiral Darlan, raised no objections. Yet without formal command General Anderson's position remained anomalous and unhappy.<sup>(50)</sup>

It was the advance of the Eighth Army across Tripolitania which provided the solution to the problem. The whole question of the Allied command structure in the Mediterranean was one of the matters which had to be settled by the Combined Chiefs of Staff and their political masters when they met at Casablanca. At a meeting there of the British Chiefs of Staff on 16th January 1943<sup>(51)</sup> the Prime Minister put forward the suggestion that, since British forces would be in a substantial majority once the Eighth Army had crossed the frontier, General Alexander should, under the overall directions of General Eisenhower, assume command of all Allied ground forces. The advantage of such a course was obvious. Not only would direct control of all ground operations pass to one of the most popular and experienced fighting soldiers in the Allied ranks, but General Eisenhower would be free to devote himself, not simply to political questions, but to all the problems of co-ordination and control which the extension of Mediterranean operations would inevitably increase. General Brooke suggested only that, rather than create a new intermediary headquarters, the Eighth Army should come under the command of General Eisenhower, to whom General Alexander should be appointed Deputy. To the proposal in this form the Americans made no objections. Indeed they suggested that the

appointment should be made immediately.<sup>(52)</sup> General Alexander made an excellent impression at Casablanca, not only for his achievements but by his confident, gay, courteous personality, and they had no more hesitation in placing American forces under his command than had the British in putting their First Army under General Eisenhower. But it was clearly impracticable for him to take up his new responsibilities until the two armies could be effectively controlled within a single theatre of operations, and it was only on 19th February that General Alexander could arrive in Algeria to establish his new command.

Almost equally unsatisfactory was the situation in relation to air command. The problem of reconciling the flexibility necessary to air operations with the local and urgent requirements of surface operations caused recurring difficulties in every theatre of war; and it quickly became clear that the command structure that had proved adequate for Operation 'Torch' itself would have to be radically modified for the operations which followed it. Liaison between ground commanders conducting operations in Tunisia and their supporting air forces commanded from Algiers was at best tenuous—particularly since the armies of three nations and the air forces of two were involved. After the Allied failure in the fighting around Tebourba, relations had become particularly bitter. 'Air out here is chaos', Admiral Cunningham bluntly wired London on 19th December. 'There is one solution and that is to put Tedder in here'.<sup>(53)</sup>

Air Chief Marshal Tedder, who had solved the same problem so satisfactorily in the Middle East, had in fact already visited Algiers to study the situation, and impressed General Eisenhower, as the latter informed the Chiefs of Staff on 30th November, as possessing 'exactly the kind of experience and leadership that would be of inestimable value to me during the next fortnight'.<sup>(54)</sup> Eisenhower indeed suggested that Tedder should stay with him for a while as his adviser: 'It would not', he thought, 'be necessary to change our general command arrangements since Tedder's plans and suggestion would be placed in effect by me'. But this somewhat irregular role of *éminence grise* recommended itself neither to Tedder nor the Chiefs of Staff. The situation seemed to them to demand a more sweeping solution—the establishment of Tedder in Algiers to co-ordinate the operations of all Allied Air Forces throughout North Africa, with responsibility to Eisenhower for all 'Torch' air forces and to the Chiefs of Staff for those in the Middle East.<sup>(55)</sup>

This seemed to General Eisenhower a possible long-term solution, but it did not help him in his immediate difficulties; and he was unwilling, he replied on 3rd December, to carry out so sweeping a change in command at so critical a moment in the conduct of

operations. (The battles round Tebourba were raging as he wrote.) So he took matters into his own hands and summoned Major General Carl Spaatz, the Commander of U.S. 8th Air Force in the United Kingdom, to be his deputy for all air operations.<sup>(56)</sup> In this temporary arrangement the Chiefs of Staff acquiesced, appointing Air Vice Marshal J. M. Robb as General Spaatz's Chief of Staff; but at Casablanca a solution was found along the lines of their original suggestion. Air Chief Marshal Tedder was appointed Air Commander-in-Chief of the whole Mediterranean Theatre, with his headquarters in Algiers. Under him, General Spaatz became Commander of the North-West Africa Air Forces and Air Chief Marshal Sir Sholto Douglas took Tedder's place in Cairo with the title of Air Officer Commanding-in-Chief, Middle East. Thereafter complaints about the inadequacies of air support for land operations died away; while air interdiction of Axis supply lines quickly reached a new level of ferocity.

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The last day of November, while Tunis was slipping out of the Allied grasp, brought disappointment at the other end of the Mediterranean as well. Decisive as its victory had been the Eighth Army had failed to achieve completely the object laid down by General Montgomery in his 'General Plan' of 14th September—'to "trap" the enemy in his present area and destroy him there'.<sup>(57)</sup> On 21st November, as his forces pursued the retreating Axis forces across Cyrenaica, General Alexander informed the Prime Minister, 'The adverse weather with heavy rain has delayed the 8th Army. On occasions it has completely stopped movement across the desert and therefore completely forced all transport to the one road available thus causing great congestion. . . . I have no doubt we shall have to fight again at Agheila'.<sup>(58)</sup> British armoured forces reaching El Agheila on 26th November did indeed find that the *Panzerarmee*, reinforced by Italian troops, had established itself across that convenient bottleneck. But Rommel did not want to stay there for a day longer than he could help. Indeed on November 24th he urged on his unsympathetic German and Italian superiors the desirability of evacuating Italian North Africa altogether. Getting no satisfaction from either Kesselring or Cavallero, he flew to East Prussia to argue with Hitler himself. Hitler, obsessed with the struggle in the East, was obdurate. He agreed only to press the Italians to improve the supply situation, which he sent Göring to Rome with Rommel to do at once.<sup>(59)</sup> In the meantime however *Comando Supremo* had come to the conclusion that Rommel was right at least in his argument that the supply situation made a

prolonged stand at El Agheila impossible. They therefore authorised a withdrawal to a position at Buerat el Hsun 200 miles further west. On 12th December Rommel withdrew the last of his forces, just in time to evade an enveloping Eighth Army attack.

By 17th December the *Panzerarmee* had established itself at Buerat, 200 miles from Tripoli, and there Mussolini ordered them to offer a really resolute defence. But the only advantage they possessed lay not in the strength of the position itself but in the time which the Eighth Army took to reach it. General Alexander's forces were now nine hundred miles from their base in the Nile Delta; they were dependent for their supplies on the sea; and the rate at which they could be supplied depended on the rate at which the Eighth Army maintenance services could clear and activate the ports—particularly the port of Benghazi.

On 24th December General Alexander reported that Benghazi was discharging 1,900 tons a day, but warned that this could not be relied on as an average figure; and the winter storms at the beginning of the New Year did indeed drastically cut the rate of discharge.<sup>(60)</sup> The Eighth Army was therefore immobilised before Buerat for four weeks, and could not attack until 15th January. But it had long been clear to *Comando Supremo* that their own shortage of supplies was so great that the position could not be held for long. On 31st December they ordered Rommel to conduct a fighting retreat into Southern Tunisia—though he was enjoined also to hold Buerat for long enough to enable the harbour installations at Tripoli to be thoroughly destroyed. This, estimated *Comando Supremo*, would take two months, and Rommel was to withdraw only when he received order to do so.<sup>(61)</sup> Rommel replied grimly that that would depend on the enemy; and so it did. The British enjoyed total command of the air. On 14th January the Axis, in face of some seven divisions, could assemble only three German divisions, six Italian battalions and a brigade of German parachute troops. Against some 700 British tanks Rommel could muster 91—only 34 of them German. After holding out for a day, on 15th January Rommel fell back; first to Homs, then, to the chagrin of his Italian allies, beyond Tripoli into Tunisia.<sup>(62)</sup> On 23rd January, three days before the deadline General Alexander had promised at Casablanca, the Eighth Army entered Tripoli in triumphant. The assault on the Tunisian fortress by the combined Allied armies could now begin.

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## BOOK THREE: PLANNING THE INVASION OF EUROPE

AUGUST 1942-JANUARY 1943

### CHAPTER XI

## THE AUTUMN DEBATES

A STUDY of the papers of the Chiefs of Staff Committee during the autumn of 1942 reveals that throughout this period Britain's war leaders were concerned simultaneously with three distinct but continually overlapping problems. The first consisted of the day to day issues arising out of the current strategic situation described in Book One of this volume. The second was preparation and launching of Operation 'Torch' dealt with in Book Two. The third was the development, in association with their American colleagues, of a long-term strategy for the further conduct of the war. The Chiefs of Staff, and the Prime Minister himself, did not and could not consider these in isolation. All three often found a place in the agenda of a single meeting, and inevitably they affected one another, perhaps to an extent which was not fully appreciated even at the time. Nevertheless, the development of argument and action in each category can be clearly understood only if they are considered separately; and it is now time for us to review the discussions which had been in progress since August 1942, and which were to reach a climax at the Casablanca Conference in 1943, over the future shape of Allied Grand Strategy itself.

We have already considered in the Prologue the way in which the American and British Chiefs of Staff had been brought to commit themselves to Operation 'Torch'. Relief at having reached a decision at all after such arduous debate, exhilaration at the prospect of action, increasing concern with the formidable complexities of the projected operation, these emotions, for several weeks, filled the minds of the British commanders and statesmen responsible for taking and implementing the decision; not least that of Mr. Churchill himself. Only gradually did it become clear that agreement to mount the operation had been secured with the Americans only by ignoring more profound disagreements, or by making commitments which it would be difficult or impossible, when the moment came, to fulfil. Like figures in some Faust legend, the Chiefs of Staff Committee had, to gain an immediate advantage, signed a contract which deferred, but did not abolish, the disagreeable need for payment.



The contract in question was C.C.S.94,\* with its explicit statement:

‘That it be understood that a commitment to this operation renders “Round-up” in all probability impracticable of successful execution in 1943 and therefore that we have definitely accepted a defensive, encircling line of action for the Continental European theatre, except as to Air operations and blockade. . . .’

a statement which acquired all the more force when taken in conjunction with the provision, also made in C.C.S.94, for the transfer of fifteen groups of U.S. aircraft from ‘Bolero’ ‘for the purpose of furthering offensive operations in the Pacific’.

In Washington, if not in London, the implication seemed clear. The original decision, taken at ‘Arcadia’ and embodied in WW1,† to stand on the defensive in the Pacific and concentrate first on the defeat of Germany, had been reversed. The decision to accept ‘a defensive, encircling line of action for the Continental European theatre’ was explicit. That this belief was generally held among the U.S. planning staffs was first explained to the British in a confidential report sent by the British Joint Staff Mission in Washington to their colleagues in London on 11th August:

‘The Army, who are disappointed at the virtual disappearance of both “Round-up” and “Sledgehammer”, reckon that they have been let down in their struggle to maintain the policy of winning the war in Europe first. The Air Staff also feel this and in addition see their wish to concentrate in one theatre overridden. The Navy read into C.C.S.94 a complete swing over to the Pacific. . . . There is little doubt that WW1 is, in the eyes of the American Planners and Joint Strategic Committee, superseded by C.C.S.94 and any attempt to interpret C.C.S.94 in the light of WW1 is looked upon as a British manoeuvre to modify an agreement only recently concluded. . . . Little real faith in “Torch” is at present apparent and none at all in any possibility of subsequently attacking Germany across the Mediterranean’.<sup>(1)</sup>

Field Marshal Dill also formally notified the Chiefs of Staff Committee of this situation in a cable of 8th August. C.C.S.94, he pointed out, ‘gives to American Naval Staff the extra emphasis on Pacific theatre they have always wanted and intend to maintain’, and was quoted ‘verbatim as the present “Bible”’.<sup>(2)</sup> To General Marshall, in a tactful letter of the same date, he used a similar analogy. ‘At present our Chiefs of Staff quote WW1 as *the Bible* whereas some of your people, I think, look upon C.C.S.94 as the Revised Version’.<sup>(3)</sup>

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\* See p. xxiii.

† See Appendix I.

But General Marshall would give him no comfort. In an unusually dour reply he pointed out that C.C.S.94 modified WWI in at least two important respects. It diverted air forces from the offensive against Germany to support operations in the Pacific and North Africa; and secondly:

'Paragraph 3 of WWI, under the subject "GRAND STRATEGY", states that it should be a cardinal principle of our strategy that only the minimum forces necessary for safeguarding of vital interests in other theatres should be diverted from operations against Germany. . . . The requirements for the effective implementation of "Torch" as now envisaged and agreed upon would, in my opinion, definitely preclude the offensive operations against Germany that were contemplated in WWI'.<sup>(4)</sup>

The British Chiefs of Staff, on the contrary, informed Dill that in their view C.C.S.94, far from reversing the previous decision, 'should be interpreted as laying a definite limitation on the calls for resources for the war in the Pacific. . . . In our view the reference in C.C.S.94 to "defensive, encircling action for the Continental European theatre" merely indicates that we now accept the necessity for a more prolonged "prelude to the final assault on Germany itself" across the Channel that we had in mind when we accepted the "Bolero" plan'.<sup>(5)</sup>

The difficulty of resolving this disagreement can be seen in the problems which arose when the Combined Chiefs of Staff had to agree over an important paper drafted by the Combined Planning Staff which would very largely determine the pattern of Allied war production over the next eighteen months: the Strategic Hypothesis for Deployment of Forces in April 1944. The influence of C.C.S.94 on American strategic thinking is evident in the difference between the first draft of this document, produced on 24th July, and the second draft of 1st August.

The first draft<sup>(6)</sup> assumed that by April 1944, so long as Russian resistance continued, the Allies would have secured a 'lodgement' on Continental Europe, and be engaged there in operations increasing in extent and intensity. In the Pacific, limited amphibious offensive operations would be in progress to seize advanced Japanese positions and prepare a strategic offensive. British Forces in Burma would be conducting a strategic defensive, the struggle for sea communications would be continuing, and the Middle East and Indian Ocean theatres would still need reinforcements. The draft of 1st August was significantly altered.<sup>(7)</sup> 'Large scale operations on continental Europe are improbable in 1943', it laid down, although advantage would be taken of any marked deterioration in German military strength and 'preparations will be continued for an early attack on continental

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Europe with forces available for purposes of deception and in order to be ready for any possible favourable opportunity or emergency'. Germany would be blockaded and heavily bombed. The Mediterranean would be opened or in the process of being opened. 'A lodgement in North Africa has been made and intensive operations are being conducted therefrom', and there would have been 'an augmentation of forces in the Pacific by a readjustment of present United States commitments to the European theatre in order to further offensive operations against Japan'.

This was a reasonable enough deduction to make from a literal interpretation of C.C.S.94; but the Chiefs of Staff in London disagreed with it profoundly.<sup>(8)</sup> They suggested two further amendments. For the European theatre, they recommended, it should be said that 'large-scale operations in Continental Europe with maximum forces available will be in prospect if not already in progress'; and for the Pacific, 'So far as operations against Germany allowed, augmentation of our forces in the Pacific has been carried out to secure our positions there and to further offensive operations'. Of these suggestions Admiral King, at a difficult meeting of the Combined Chiefs of Staff, remarked ominously that they did not appear, at first glance, to coincide with the agreement with which he and General Marshall had returned from England.

The Combined Planning Staff again revised the paper. Their final draft,<sup>(9)</sup> approved by the Combined Chiefs on 14th August, spoke more optimistically about developments in the Mediterranean. 'We have opened the Mediterranean to the extent that shipping can be moved between Gibraltar and Suez', they predicted, and 'North Africa is in our hands and intensified operations are being conducted therefrom'. But in this final document the amendments proposed by the British Chiefs of Staff found no place. The assumption remained intact, that no major operations would be taking place on the Continent of Europe by the spring of 1944, that the war against Germany would be waged primarily by bombing and blockade, and that offensive operations would be in progress against Japan; and these assumptions involved a reversal of the previously agreed order of priorities. The British Chiefs of Staff urged their representatives in Washington to press for a caveat to be inserted in the document 'to the effect that the document is of no standing and mostly represents an attempt to forecast, for production purposes, the course of events up to April 1944, and that it in no sense supplants the agreed strategy laid down in WW1'.<sup>(10)</sup> Field Marshal Dill, who returned to London to warn his colleagues of the extent of the growing misunderstanding between London and Washington, was instructed particularly to make it clear to General Marshall 'that the British Chiefs of Staff still regard WW1 as the agreed strategy and that

C.C.S.94 . . . was in essentials consistent with it and did not supersede it'. But they added that they did not 'think that this was the time to raise the question, but they wished their views to be put on record and their position to be reserved'.<sup>(11)</sup>

Dill carried out his instructions, but the *démarche* was not very successful. General Marshall and his colleagues may have been puzzled by the British technique of raising a question and declaring simultaneously that this was not the time to raise it.<sup>(12)</sup> Brigadier Vivian Dykes, of the Joint Staff Mission, warned Dill in London that this attempt to have things both ways was unlikely to succeed. 'If British Chiefs of Staff wished to raise the question at all now they must expect it to develop into a major argument on fundamental principles'. He went on to advise that the question should for the present be considered entirely pragmatically. The immediate question at issue was whether the pull to the Pacific was likely to cause such diversions from 'Torch' during the ensuing two months that either the success of 'Torch' would be prejudiced, or the United Kingdom would have to be stripped of troops. 'If this danger is not real', he pointed out, 'we may by raising issue cause so much friction that energies will be diverted from "Torch". . . . We have not enough evidence at present to assert that diversions to the Pacific would in fact prejudice "Torch".'<sup>(13)</sup> If this danger did become real, he concluded, the matter would be best hammered out on a political level, between Mr. Churchill and President Roosevelt. The Chiefs of Staff Committee seem to have accepted this view. Difficulties about 'Torch'—though not quite those to which Dykes referred—were in fact arising at this very moment, and were, as we have seen, resolved by direct negotiations between the political leaders. On the question of Grand Strategy the Chiefs of Staff did not, for the time being, attempt to press their views any further.

But this fundamental difference of opinion could not remain indefinitely unresolved. The Chiefs of Staff Committee, weighed down with the problems of reorganising the Middle East and preparing for the 'Torch' landings, was in no hurry to reopen the question. It was the Joint Staff Mission (whence the sage advice had arisen that the question should be allowed to sleep) who realised, as they noted the increase of Pacific-mindedness among their American colleagues, that its slumbers could not remain undisturbed for long.

It must always be borne in mind that, in terms of Allied Grand Strategy, 'Torch' had been agreed on only as a stop-gap. Once that operation was completed the decision would have to be taken as to the shape of the Grand Design of which 'Torch' formed part. Was the operation, as Mr. Churchill visualised it, a right-hand punch in a two-fisted assault which should be pressed on, relentlessly as to

objective but flexible as to method? Or was it, as the Americans believed and as C.C.S.94 had strongly suggested, part of a sealing-off process, closing a gap in the blockade and gaining new positions for the bomber offensive but in no way a prelude to further immediate surface operations against Germany? It looked almost certain, wrote the Joint Staff Mission on 3rd September,<sup>(14)</sup> that the question would have to be threshed out at a high level; and in order to be prepared for such discussions it was desirable to have 'a well-documented world-appreciation on which our case would be based'. They suggested moreover that in compiling such an appreciation 'it would be unwise to start with the assumption that our basic agreed strategy remains unchanged, and merely to produce reasons to support this. It would be better to show quite clearly that we are approaching the problem with a completely open mind'.

With the principle of compiling such an appreciation the British Chiefs of Staff agreed, and they entrusted the task to the Joint Planning Staff.<sup>(15)</sup> But the approach suggested by the Joint Staff Mission did not find favour with them.<sup>(16)</sup> Their objections were set out in a blunt telegram of 8th September, drafted by Air Chief Marshal Portal.<sup>(17)</sup>

'... you should know at once [it ran] that we have anything but an open mind on this subject. Indeed there has been a good deal too much open mind about our strategy in this war. We are completely convinced that to adopt the policy summarised . . . would be to court defeat and consider it most dangerous that such an idea should gain currency. The J.P.S. will examine how best we can implement our agreed strategy of defeating Germany first and will of course not exclude examination of subsidiary offensives in the Far East for such purposes as keeping China in the war, diverting Japan from an attack on Russia or protecting Australia. But it would be desirable for you to make it known informally but definitely that we should not for a moment consider agreeing to a complete reversal of our WWI strategy . . . because we frankly regard any such proposal as madness'.

To this forthright declaration the Joint Staff Mission replied no less bluntly.<sup>(18)</sup>

'If we wish the Americans to discuss strategy with us it is of no use to sail in with our colours nailed to the mast [they wrote]. We must re-emphasize the swing-over taking place in the highest quarters towards Pacific strategy which still does not appear to be fully appreciated in the United Kingdom . . . we have passed the point where it is "most dangerous that such an idea should gain currency". Not only has it gained currency, but we daily see its practical effect in the diversion of resources

to the Pacific Theatre. [In any case] as we are so sure that the American policy of concentrating first against Japan will court defeat, a sound appreciation will show why. The point is that the Americans have got to be convinced and the resultant policy authoritatively confirmed in a C.C.S. document which will replace, or bring up to date WWI'.

By the time the Joint Planners were ready with the first draft of their document at the beginning of October, the Chiefs of Staff Committee had reconciled themselves to the necessity of re-opening the arguments which they had hoped nine months earlier to be finally closed; and the first suggestion they made for the improvement of the Joint Planners' appreciation was that it should include a reasoned statement to convince the Americans of the need to continue to concentrate on Germany as the main enemy.<sup>(19)</sup> This was the more necessary in that the appreciation was by no means optimistic.<sup>(20)</sup> It emphasised the continuing need for ensuring the security of the United Kingdom, of the Middle East, and of communications across the Atlantic, and the strain all this imposed on British resources. 'The Russian Army', it stated sombrely, 'is today the only force capable of defeating the German Army, or, indeed, of containing it. Britain and America cannot hope to challenge the *bulk* of the Axis forces on land'. It was not hopeful about the chances of invading Europe in 1943, since even by the autumn of that year there would be only 24-25 Anglo-American divisions available for this task. Invasion would thus be practicable only when German morale began to deteriorate; 'we must, therefore, employ our resources meanwhile to wear down the German war machine. . . . We must pursue this policy steadily and relentlessly until German morale has definitely cracked'. They advocated four methods of implementing this policy. Strategic bombing should be intensified. The blockade should be tightened. A limited bridgehead should be seized in Europe and held for as long as possible; and 'Torch' should be exploited in such a way as to turn the whole Mediterranean into a heavy liability to Germany—by the occupation of Sardinia, Sicily or Crete and by 'forcing the Axis to lock up increased forces for the holding down of Italy as well as for the defence of all threatened points'.

Later developments were to make this appreciation one of particular significance, for in the last sentence quoted above we can see the emergence of the 'Mediterranean' policy which was to be taken up by the British Chiefs of Staff and accepted after Casablanca, with whatever doubts and qualifications, by their Allies. It is not clear however that the Chiefs of Staff at first appreciated its full offensive possibilities. In their discussion of the Joint Planners' memorandum on 5th October<sup>(21)</sup> they still showed themselves concerned primarily with the repercussions of 'Torch' on the situation in



the Near East. Clearing the North African coast, they pointed out, would open up the Mediterranean sea-route, make it possible to 'stabilize the front in the Caucasus', and, together with the capture of Crete and the Dodecanese, make it possible to offer further inducements to Turkey to enter the war. General Brooke indeed suggested that the Western Mediterranean, including any operations against Sicily or Sardinia, should become an exclusively American responsibility. The suggestion put forward by the Joint Planners that a foothold should be seized on the coast of France, was greeted with the unenthusiastic comment that such footholds might be liabilities rather than assets. In sum the Chiefs of Staff agreed that 'Our policy in 1943 would thus be to exert the maximum pressure against Germany on the circumference of Europe, while attacking the heart of the enemy by the heaviest practicable air bombardment'.

It will be seen that, in general, the strategic thinking of the Chiefs of Staff had changed little since the appreciation made two years earlier, on the morrow of the Battle of Britain. The enemy had to be contained, his economy strained and starved by blockade, his resources and population worn down by air bombardment, and only when his morale was on the point of collapse would a direct blow be struck at his armies. It was an offensive strategy of a kind, if not the offensive quite as the Americans understood it. But the offensive element was now strengthened and emphasised by the intervention of Air Chief Marshal Portal who tabled for consideration, at this same meeting of 5th October, a trenchant and well-timed statement of Air Force doctrine which was to have a considerable influence on the course of Allied strategic planning.

In this paper<sup>(22)</sup> Air Chief Marshal Portal laid it down that, given the need to provide security for the Allied bases and communications, to keep Russia in the war, to protect the oil of the Middle East, to keep Germany and Japan separated and protect Australia and New Zealand, and finally to keep sufficient land and air forces to restore order in an occupied and defeated Europe, there were three possible courses for the Allies to pursue:

'A. To build up sufficient land and supporting air forces, shipping, landing-craft, etc. to enable us to gain a decision by invasion and the defeat of the German Army on the Continent *before* German industry and economic power has been broken.

B. To build up a bomber force in the United Kingdom strong enough to shatter German industry and economic power in the face of the strongest defence of which Germany is capable. When this has been achieved [an] Army defined . . . above [sufficient to restore order in and occupy a defeated Europe] would be launched on the Continent.

C. A compromise under which we attempt to build up simultaneously strong land and air forces on a scale unrelated to any particular task, without any clear indication of attaining a definite object within a definite time. . . . To me its only merit is that it is largely non-controversial whereas its greatest defect is the absence of any clear objective. On that basis I believe we should never have either the shipping or the landing-craft to transport and maintain the necessary land forces to defeat an unbroken Germany on the Continent, or a bomber force strong enough to break German industry by bombing. Therefore we should be condemned to a weak and indecisive middle course relying mainly on the Russian effort, on partial blockade, on German war-weariness, on the cumulative effect of relatively light bombing and land operations in areas where the German army cannot operate in full strength and therefore cannot be decisively defeated. Under these conditions the war may drag on for years; Germany will be enabled to exploit Russian and other occupied territory, expand her U-boat production, shift some of her industry to safer areas and generally to consolidate for a long defensive war'.

As between courses A and B Portal suggested that for A to succeed the Western Allies would need to keep Russia in the war, to provide 35 armoured and 80-100 supporting divisions with a large air force to support them and an enormous fleet of landing-craft and transports. This might be forthcoming in 1944 if preparations began at once; but a decision must be taken immediately as to whether it was possible, whether shipping could be made available and 'whether the preliminary assault on the necessary scale is tactically possible against the forces of an unbroken Germany on the defensive'. Course B would equally involve an immediate decision 'to build up the largest possible force of heavy bombers to shatter the industrial and economic structure of Germany, and thus to wear down opposition to a point where an Anglo-American force of reasonable strength could effect an entry into the Continent from the West and, in conjunction with the Russian Armies advancing from the East, could enter Germany and enforce capitulation'. A force of heavy bombers, rising to a peak of between 4,000 and 6,000, might achieve this by 1944. Less shipping would be required; and 'the adoption of this course should not preclude land operations on the fringes of Europe or the seizure of such opportunities as may offer from the occupation of territory where we are not liable to have to engage the main strength of the German Army'. Having thus virtually stated his conclusions in his premises, Portal concluded by inviting his colleagues to select one of these courses and 'if they are not agreed on any of them, to define our programme for victory'.

Portal's statement was clear, challenging and positive. In that respect it resembled General Marshall's proposals of the previous April; it pointed an immediate way forward out of the piecemeal defensive preoccupations which had since 1940 dominated British planning; and it offered a prospect of victory more precise than the hopes of 'cracks in German morale' which was all that most of his colleagues were at that stage able to offer. But the document did not really present a thorough and dispassionate analysis of the problem. The mutually exclusive terms in which the first two courses were presented were so oversimplified as to be unrealistic. The colours in which the last was painted were unnecessarily dark. The political factor was wholly omitted; nothing was said of the implications for the alliance, or for American military policy, of British and American troops remaining idle for two years in the European theatre while the Soviet Union continued to engage the full weight of the German armies. And it must be borne in mind that the Air Staff was at that time working from faulty calculations based on misleading information which led them to overrate the destructive effect of Allied bombing and to underestimate the elasticity of the German economy, the resilience of German morale and the capabilities of German air defence.

As it turned out, the war was to take a course which did not correspond to any of the three categories set out in the Portal Memorandum. The Allies did build up simultaneously strong land and air forces. The Combined Bomber Offensive, though it did not for two years come within sight of inflicting the economic damage expected, kept the German Air Force on the defensive. Its pressure thus contributed to the command of the air which the Allies were able to exercise in the theatres where their surface forces were engaged; and these in turn contributed to the success of the Bomber Offensive. In 1943 operations by land and sea gained further bases in the Mediterranean from which bombers could operate. In 1944 they deprived the Germans of all air defence in depth in North West Europe. Thus in the last six months of 1944 the Allied Air Forces were able to develop a power of sustained attack by day and night which brought the German economic mechanism to a standstill. The war was in fact to be won by exactly the combination of forces which the Portal Memorandum condemned. It is not clear that any other course would have been more effective.

Portal's colleagues were understandably reluctant to accept his thesis as it stood. General Brooke expressed his doubts about the capacity of air bombardment to shatter German industrial and economic power on the scale that Portal claimed, and suggested that the Air Staff should draw up an appreciation and outline a plan to support their arguments.<sup>(23)</sup> A month later, on 3rd November, this

was produced. Its reasoning followed the lines which Lord Cherwell had sketched out the previous March and which had already produced so much controversy. A force of 4,000 to 6,000 bombers, argued the Air Staff, could deliver a monthly scale of attack amounting to 50,000 tons of bombs by the end of 1943, rising to 90,000 tons by December 1944, a total load of 1,250,000 tons of bombs on Germany. If the German attacks on the United Kingdom in 1940 and 1941, it suggested, were taken as a yardstick, the results would include: the destruction of 6 million dwellings, with proportionate destruction of industrial buildings, power resources and utilities; the rendering of 25 million people homeless; the killing of 900,000 civilians and the serious injury to a million more. This would mean the destruction of the homes of three-quarters of the inhabitants of all German towns with a population of 50,000 or over, and the destruction of one-third of German industries. 'As German economic structure is now stretched to the limit', the appreciation continued (following the erroneous appreciations on which Whitehall was basing all its calculations), 'this proportion cannot be further reduced. Consequently the loss of one-third of German industry would involve the sacrifice of almost the entire war potential of Germany in an effort to maintain the internal economy of the country, or else the collapse of the latter'. There was good reason to hope, moreover, that the degree of bombing efficiency would be considerably greater than anything the Germans had achieved; and it was considered 'that German defences will be incapable of stopping these attacks'.

Air Chief Marshal Portal's colleagues remained unconvinced, and each wrote a paper of his own on the subject. The First Sea Lord pointed out that<sup>(24)</sup> the bombing policy envisaged would demand an additional 5 million tons of aviation fuel over and above the one and a quarter million tons currently needed for the war effort; and this could be met only by a great increase in tanker construction. General Brooke, in a memorandum of 26th December, was more forthright.<sup>(25)</sup> He doubted, first of all, the capacity of Bomber Command to mount an offensive of the weight promised, even with all the improvements in navigational aids which had taken place since the disappointments of 1940-41. 'In the development of RDF\*', he pointed out, 'teething troubles, human errors, etc. have always combined to produce practical results which fall considerably short of theoretical forecasts'. He considered that the German capacity to build up air defences during the next two years had been underrated. And he denied the possibility of mounting an air attack on the scale planned without stripping other operations and other services to an entirely unacceptable degree.

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\* Radio Direction Finding = Radar.

'The Air Staff [wrote Brooke] appear to assume that the entire available force of bombers will always be employed against Germany. In my view, diversion of a portion of our bomber strength is inevitable and sound. We shall have, for example, to meet the claims of Italy, targets in occupied territory, sea-mining, shipping, the Battle of the Atlantic, air transport and airborne forces. Calculations which assume that the whole of the proposed force of 4,000 to 6,000 bombers would be available to attack Germany are therefore optimistic'.

General Brooke further insisted that the extra man-hours and material needed for the additional R.A.F. production could be provided only at the expense of other programmes which were anyhow unlikely to be fully met; and in view of the shortage of manpower which was already making itself felt he did not see how the extra requirements, both for production and for the R.A.F. itself, could possibly be provided. A classic debate between the Army and the Royal Air Force on Grand Strategy seemed about to open; but in view of the dependence of Bomber Command not only on the United States Air Force to make up its numbers but on American fuel and shipping, it was not a debate that could be conducted in Whitehall alone.<sup>(26)</sup>

General Brooke's opposition was slow to mature, and by the time the above paper was written, the debate had become largely academic and a compromise had been agreed. When the Joint Planners submitted a revised draft of their memorandum on 18th October,<sup>(27)</sup> it embodied much of the Portal Memorandum, including the specific recommendation that 'The Allied Bomber force, which is the most powerful weapon we have, should be expanded as rapidly as possible to a target figure of 4,000 to 6,000 heavy bombers. This should be achieved by April 1944'. The Chiefs of Staff allowed this for the moment to pass without comment. Brooke objected only to a passage which followed the Portal Memorandum in stating two courses as alternatives: '(a) to secure a decision by invasion and the defeat in the field of the German Army before German industrial and economic power have been broken' or '(b) to undermine German military power by the destruction of the German industrial and economic war machine before we attempt invasion'. These, insisted the CIGS,<sup>(28)</sup> were not mutually exclusive courses: they were complementary. It should, he suggested,

'be our object during the next eighteen months to exert pressure on the German military and economic machine from every quarter, backing up the Russians to the maximum extent with air support, specialised equipment and possibly with land forces. We should take full advantage of the sea and air bases in North Africa to exert a heavy pressure on Italy with a view

to turning her into a serious liability for Germany. We should endeavour to bring Turkey into the war so that we might use her bases in Anatolia to strike at the oil and other vital targets in South East Europe. At the same time we should intensify our bomber offensive from this country against Germany'.

But, countered Portal, this was exactly the policy of compromise which he had attacked. Certainly he agreed that the two courses should be phases rather than alternatives, but the bomber phases must be given priority, in effort as well as in time. He feared, he said, 'that the policy outlined by the Chief of the Imperial General Staff would result in operations in the Mediterranean theatre becoming more of a liability than an asset to us'; and he doubted whether it would give the Americans much incentive for the building up of a large bomber force.

In fact the British Joint Planners had very good reason to believe that the twist which the Portal Memorandum gave to their appreciation would gain it a better hearing in the United States. Their colleagues in Washington had advised them, on 13th October,<sup>(29)</sup> that they should 'develop the arguments which will convince the Army that they will have scope for the employment of their land forces against Germany after "Torch", and show that a successful "Torch" will in addition supply an additional platform for American Air Forces to assist us in intensifying the bomber offensive against Germany and German-occupied Europe. . . . We feel, therefore, that it will be valuable if your paper includes full arguments for keeping increasing bomber offensive as one of the main planks of basic strategy'. The U.S. Air Force Staff, no less than the British, were staunch upholders of the doctrine of Air Power, and believed that it was in Europe that it could best be displayed. The U.S. Army Staff were equally convinced, the Joint Staff Mission pointed out in a message of 18th October,<sup>(30)</sup> of the need for 100% air superiority in any land operations. 'The fact that air bombardment of Germany will include smashing German air power at source will have the strongest appeal'.

On 30th October the Joint Planners produced a final draft<sup>(31)</sup> of their Memorandum which at last won the assent of the Chiefs of Staff. Since this was to form the basis of their future discussions, both with the Prime Minister and with their American allies, it is worth considering in some detail.

In the first place, the Portal doctrine of the primacy of the air offensive still retained its pride of place, although the statement of alternatives to which Brooke had taken exception was abandoned. The project of seizing a foothold in France had also been abandoned; instead it stated that 'Small raids on the North-West coast of Europe must be undertaken with increasing frequency. Large raids to destroy

one or more U-boat bases should also be carried out'. And, on the advice of Admiral Cunningham, greater attention was devoted to the problem of the Pacific, without the conclusion being weakened, that the defeat of Germany must still enjoy priority over the defeat of Japan.<sup>(32)</sup>

The arguments in favour of this course were recapitulated in the first part of this sixteen-page document. An attack on Japan would involve a concentration of naval forces which would jeopardise the security of the United Kingdom and its communications. An attack on Germany helped Russia, as an attack on Japan did not; and though an attack on Japan would aid China there was no reason to fear a Chinese collapse if the Allies directed their main effort to the defeat of Germany. If Germany was given a year's breathing space she might become unbeatable, which would not be so with Japan however long she was left to herself. Finally, public opinion in the United Kingdom, not to mention Russia and the occupied countries, would not stand for a policy of prolonged inactivity against Germany. 'The fatal result of such a policy would be that the United Nations would, in effect, be no longer united but would be trying to fight two wars at the same time, and in trying to be strong everywhere would be strong enough nowhere'. 'Until Germany has been defeated' this part of the Report concluded, 'Japan must be firmly held. Limited offensive operations will be necessary for this purpose and to deter Japan from attacking Russia in the Far East. The diversion at this stage of too great a proportion of effort against Japan may lead to the collapse of Russia in the West, and hence allow Germany to recuperate and perhaps make herself eventually impregnable'.

The second part of the Report was divided into four sections. The first, dealing with the considerations which would govern strategy until the defeat of Germany, emphasised the need to secure sea and air communications and essential base areas; the need to take the offensive against Germany as soon as possible; the importance of keeping Russia and China in the war and holding Japan; and the overriding need for economy in shipping, which would make it necessary for most of the new burdens which might arise to be shouldered by America. Section B, dealing with Japan, spoke approvingly of the Solomon Islands campaign and recommended 'offensive action on a sufficient scale to prevent Japan from securing more new bases and to contain sufficient forces to prevent her liquidating China or attacking Russia, India, Australia or New Zealand provided always that the naval strength of the United Nations and their offensive power in the European theatre is not thereby unduly weakened'. In addition, offensive action should be taken in Burma to open the Burma Road and alleviate the pressure on China as soon as the necessary forces could be provided.

In Section C it was stated baldly that:

‘Despite the fact that a large-scale invasion of Europe would do more than anything to help Russia, we are forced to the conclusion that we have no option but to undermine Germany’s military power by the destruction of the German industrial and economic war machine before we attempt invasion. For this process, apart from the impact of the Russian land forces, the heavy bomber will be the main weapon, backed up by the most vigorous blockade and operations calculated to stretch the enemy forces to the greatest possible extent.

The creation in the shortest possible time of a great Anglo-American force of heavy bombers will require high priority, qualified only by the necessity of providing adequate air forces for the maintenance of sea communications and for such military operations as it is decided to undertake. Any decision to undertake offensive military operations during the period of air attack on the German industrial and economic war machine must be guided by the value of these operations compared with the consequent diversion of air effort from the principal objective—the German war machine.

Even when the foundations of German’s military power have been thoroughly shaken, it is probable that she will be able to maintain a crust of resistance in Western Europe. We must have the power to break through this crust when the time comes. We must therefore continue to build up Anglo-American forces in the European Theatre in order that we may be able to re-enter the Continent at the psychological moment’.

Section D dealt with the methods of taking the offensive against Germany: bombing, blockade, raids and subversive action. The paragraph on bombing expounded the Air Staff’s expectations of gaining greater results from larger forces, better equipment and improved techniques, and advocated the target of 4,000 to 6,000 heavy bombers by April 1944, with a monthly delivery capacity of 60,000–90,000 tons. That on blockade recommended the establishment of patrols across the South Atlantic narrows and in the Bay of Biscay. That on sabotage, recognising that ‘there is no prospect of setting alight the patriot organisation in Western Europe on a big scale in the absence of an Allied invasion’, recommended ‘a steady and gradually increasing programme of sabotage in this area’, but suggested a more concentrated programme in Poland and the Balkans to coincide with the opening of a German campaign in Russia in the spring of 1943. As to amphibious operations, the paper suggested, against France, the prosecution of ‘Dieppe’ type raids, of smaller Commando-raids, and of large raids, possibly of prolonged duration, against important objectives such as U-boat bases with the



object of forcing a major air battle. In the Mediterranean, it was pointed out, a successful 'Torch', in combination with 'Lightfoot', might make possible the occupation of Sardinia and Sicily, thus completing the opening up of the Western and Central Mediterranean. It would force the Axis to lock up increased forces for the stiffening of Italy, as for the defence of all threatened points; while the entry of Turkey into the war, by facilitating further operations in the Eastern Mediterranean, would add yet more to Germany's Balkan liabilities. No specific operations in the Mediterranean, however, were recommended.

Finally the Report in its last section, suggesting that 'Germany may be nearer collapse than outward signs indicate', recommended that 'preparations for a re-entry to the Continent from the United Kingdom should be brought to the highest pitch of readiness, provided there is no interference meanwhile with a relentless programme of bombing, blockade and general attrition, or with amphibious operations in the Mediterranean'.

This document, which gave satisfaction at once to Air Chief Marshal Portal's demands for an all-out concentration on the air offensive and to General Brooke's strategy of attrition by stretching enemy forces to the greatest possible extent, was certainly a masterpiece of diplomatic draftsmanship, though it cannot be said that it gave any clear indication as to how resources were to be allocated between these two ambitious programmes. Still, it represented the considered views of the Chiefs of Staff, and as such was communicated both to Field Marshal Dill and to the delegation which, as we have seen in Chapter 1, Captain Oliver Lyttelton took over to Washington at the beginning of November to discuss war production with the Americans.<sup>(33)</sup> The communication was confidential: the document did not yet represent the policy of the British Government, so there could be no question of officially communicating its contents to the American Joint Chiefs. The Prime Minister's approval had still to be obtained, and too much was happening in the first week of November for him to find time to examine the document.

When at length he did so, on Monday, 9th November, the moment was not opportune. It was the morning after the Allied landings in North Africa. Algiers had already surrendered. During the previous week the Eighth Army had broken through at El Alamein and inflicted the first clear and decisive defeat which German ground forces had suffered at British hands since the beginning of the war. Mr. Churchill was in a state of justifiable elation which made him an even worse audience than usual for the cautious prognostications of his Chiefs of Staff. His immediate reaction to their paper was one of ferocious dissatisfaction. He cabled to Captain Lyttelton to disregard it, since it was 'already out of date because of the success of "Light-

foot" and "Torch" '(34); and he demanded of the Chiefs of Staff, through General Iamay, 'Is it really to be supposed that the Russians will be content with our lying down like this while Hitler has a third crack at them? However alarming the prospect may seem, we must make an attempt to get on to the mainland and fight in the line against the enemy in 1943'. (35)

The Prime Minister was of course quite wrong in supposing that the successes of the past week in any way invalidated the reasoning of the Chiefs of Staff Committee. It was on the assumption that 'Torch' and 'Lightfoot' would succeed at least as well as they had that all the future planning in the Report was based. But ever since the summer Mr. Churchill's mind had been running on lines rather different from that of his military advisers. He had never accepted the explicit conclusion of the Combined Chiefs of Staff that the invasion of North Africa ruled out all hope of an invasion of North West Europe in 1943. His survey of strategy for the Washington Conference in December 1941 had laid down a definite time-table of events which so far was running to schedule. In 1942, the clearing of the entire North African coast and the opening of the Mediterranean; in 1943, the landing of United States and British armies 600,000 strong on the shores of Europe, to detonate a rising among the captive populations. On his journey to Moscow he had cabled back to the Chiefs of Staff from Gibraltar on 2nd August: 'On no account should we agree that "Round-up" is destroyed by "Torch". An impingement eventuating in delay in the date is what will really happen'. (36) The following month, on 22nd September, he reported to President Roosevelt with every appearance of surprise that, at a meeting with the Chiefs of Staff Committee, 'I gained the impression . . . that "Round-up" was not only delayed or impinged upon by "Torch" but was to be regarded as definitely off for 1943'. (37) It seems probable that Mr. Churchill, though aware of the reservations with which his military advisers regarded the possibility of a landing in North West Europe in 1943, was confident that circumstances would so develop that he would be able to persuade them to adopt his own point of view; it was in this confidence that he had given M. Stalin in Moscow a virtual assurance that such a landing would take place. He was over-sanguine; and his miscalculation was to have grave consequences for the fragile structure of inter-Allied unity and trust.

Mr. Churchill's own views on future strategy were set out in a Memorandum which he sent to the Chiefs of Staff on 24th October, 1942. (38) In this he wrote of preparations continuing for the launching of 'Roundup', 'though at a much later stage in 1943 than April'. But he saw 'Roundup' as the successor to considerable operations in the Mediterranean. Once 'Torch' and 'Lightfoot' had succeeded,

he wrote, 'Not only shall we open a route under air protection through the Mediterranean, but we shall also be in a position to attack the underbelly of the Axis at whatever may be the softest point, i.e. Sicily, Southern Italy or perhaps Sardinia; or again, if circumstances warrant, or, as they may do, compel, the French Riviera or perhaps even, with Turkish aid, the Balkans. However this may turn out, and it is silly to try to peer too far ahead, our war from now on till the summer of 1943 will be waged in the Mediterranean theatre'. Yet '“Bolero” must continue at full blast, and we must persuade the Americans not to discard “Round-up” albeit much retarded. Thus we shall have in Great Britain ample troops to defend the Island against a German invasion and to pin down large forces on the northern coast of France. We shall also be ready to take advantage of a German collapse. In any case we should have a mass of troops in Great Britain ready to move to the Mediterranean theatre, or even possible to the Arctic (“Jupiter”)’.

It will be seen that in principle there was little difference between the Prime Minister's views on future strategy and those of his Chiefs of Staff. The point at issue was the timing of the landing in North West Europe which all agreed to be ultimately necessary; and for the rest of 1942 Mr. Churchill urged and worried the Chiefs of Staff Committee to admit the possibility of carrying out 'Roundup' in 1943 with a pertinacity which gives the lie to the belief, so widespread in certain quarters after the war, that he consistently favoured a predominantly Mediterranean strategy. Paper after paper was put up by the Chiefs of Staff arguing the impossibility of 'Roundup' in 1943, which the Prime Minister analysed line by line, challenged in minutest detail and reluctantly accepted; only to question their conclusions again a few days later when some fresh victory spurred his unquenchable optimism, or a cold reminder from Stalin stung him into examining once more the alleged impossibility of fulfilling the assurance he had so rashly given.

On Sunday 15th November at Chequers<sup>(39)</sup> and on the following day in the Defence Committee of the Cabinet he hammered away at this point, supported, in his declaration as to the unfortunate consequences of the delay, by Mr. Eden and General Smuts. On 18th November he produced a paper on the subject which posed some penetrating questions:<sup>(40)</sup>

‘. . . Under the agreement made about “Round-up” and “Bolero” with General Marshall, we were to have by April 1st, 1943, 27 American and 21 British divisions ready for the Continent, together with all the necessary landing-craft, etc. This task was solemnly undertaken and an immense amount of work has been done. . . . “Torch” is only 13 divisions, whereas we had been prepared to move 48 divisions against the enemy in

1943. We have therefore reduced our striking intention against the enemy from the days of "Round-up" by 35 divisions. . . .

It is no use blinking at this or imagining that the discrepancy will not be perceived, I have no doubt myself that we and General Marshall overestimated our capacity as measured by shipping and also by the rate at which United States forces as well as special landing-craft etc. could be ready. But there is a frightful gap between what the Chiefs of Staff contemplated as reasonable in the summer of 1942 for the campaign of 1943 and what they now say we can do in that campaign. . . . We have in fact pulled in our horns to an almost extraordinary extent, and I cannot imagine what the Russians will say or do when they realise it. My own position is that I am still aiming at a "Round-up" retarded till August. I cannot give this up without a massive presentation of facts and figures which prove the physical impossibility. These figures will, however, if they prove the case, stultify our ambitions and judgment of the summer, and that of the Americans'.

The Prime Minister's fears about Russian reactions were made more acute by a telegram sent by Stalin on 28th November in reply to a message which Mr. Churchill had despatched four days earlier about the general implications of 'Torch' for Allied strategy. Having outlined the consequences of opening the Mediterranean Mr. Churchill had written, almost in the words of his Chiefs of Staff: 'At the same time by building up a strong Anglo-American army and air force in Great Britain and making continuous preparations along our south-eastern and southern coasts, we keep the Germans pinned in the Pas de Calais, etc. and are ready to take advantage of any favourable opportunity. And all the time our bombers will be blasting Germany with ever-increasing violence. Thus the halter will be tightened about the guilty doomed'.<sup>(41)</sup> Stalin's reply was not unfriendly; but in commenting on this passage he wrote: 'I hope that this does not mean that you changed your mind with regard to your promise given in Moscow to establish a second front in Western Europe in the spring of 1943'.<sup>(42)</sup>

This sharp reminder put the Prime Minister in an ill frame of mind to receive the revised and shortened draft of their Memorandum which the Chiefs of Staff had prepared on 24th November.<sup>(43)</sup> The phraseology of this was vigorous but the conclusions were unchanged. 'At the present time', ran the key passage, 'North West Europe must be likened to a powerful fortress, which can be assaulted only after adequate artillery preparation. To make the assault before the time is ripe would be suicide for ourselves and of no assistance to Russia. Our aim must be to intensify the preliminary bombardment for which purpose Anglo-American air forces will take the place of artillery'. The figure of 4,000-6,000 bombers was no longer

mentioned—Portal's original thesis was already, as we have seen, being eroded—but it was stated that 'the size of this bomber force should be fixed as a matter of urgency'; and it was laid down more explicitly than before that 'until such time as this force is assembled, the necessary priorities in shipping, man-power and munitions should be accorded to it, second only to the minimum needs of security. . . . In particular, American Air Forces should have priority of transportation over the American Army.' The Prime Minister expressed his dissatisfaction in a sharp minute,<sup>(44)</sup> questioning the wisdom of bringing over 'masses of American Air groundsmen' rather than extra American divisions, and complaining at what he considered the 'practical abandonment of any resolute effort to form a second front in 1943'. 'I certainly think,' he went on, 'we should make all plans to attack the French coasts either in the Channel or in the Bay of Biscay, and that July 1943 should be fixed as the target date. Judging from the conditions on the Russian front, it does not look as if Hitler will be able to bring back any large force from the East to the West. He has now to watch the southern coast of France as well. The battles on the Russian front have already modified and may fundamentally change the situation'.

In this last hope Mr. Churchill was of course correct. The offensives launched at Stalingrad on 22nd November were to transform the situation on the Eastern Front; and Mr. Churchill expanded on their significance in a further note which he circulated to the Chiefs of Staff in preparation for a full discussion of the whole matter on 3rd December.<sup>(45)</sup>

In this note Mr. Churchill admitted that during his visit to Moscow he had led the Russians to believe that the Western Allies were going to open 'a Second Front in 1943'. 'I feel that Premier Stalin would have grave reasons to complain if our land offensive against Germany and Italy in 1943 were reduced to the scale of about 13 divisions instead of nearly 50 which had been mentioned to him'. Moreover he considered that the arguments of C.C.S.94—to which, for the first time, he turned his attention—were no longer valid. One of the reasons, he wrote, why it was held in that document that 'Torch' made 'Roundup' impossible in 1943 'was the probability of Russia being so seriously weakened that Hitler could bring back very large armies from the East, thus making the forces available for "Roundup" in 1943 altogether insufficient'. As it was, Russia had not weakened but had imposed defeat on Germany and her allies. 'Before the end of 1942 it may be possible for us to draw with certainty at least the conclusion—*That no important transfers of German troops can be made in 1943 from the Eastern to the Western theatre.* This would be a new fact of the first magnitude'. Moreover the Germans had had to withdraw 11 divisions of the 40 they held in North West

Europe to defend southern France, might have to find 4-6 to protect Italy, and would have also to reinforce the Balkans 'on account of the general situation as well as of the possible entry of Turkey against them for which we are to work'.

None of these facts were present, pointed out the Prime Minister when 'Roundup' and 'Sledgehammer' had been discussed at the London conference of July. No more than 31 divisions should be needed for operations in the Mediterranean, including 5 French, the Australians and the New Zealanders. 'I am therefore of the opinion,' he concluded, 'that the whole position must be completely re-surveyed, with the object of finding means for engaging United States and British armies directly upon the Continent'. It should be assumed that all operations in the Mediterranean would be concluded by the beginning of June; that shipping for 'Roundup' would be back in England by the end of June; and that the invasion would be launched in August or September. For this operation 15 to 20 British and United States divisions should be ready in the United Kingdom by the beginning of July and 15 more American divisions be concentrated in the United States.

The Chiefs of Staff, however, had put in a paper of their own<sup>(46)</sup> which showed a different set of figures. They stated in the document:

'It is certain that our resources in manpower, shipping and landing-craft are wholly inadequate to build up "Torch", reopen the Mediterranean for military traffic, and carry out the operations which we contemplate in the Mediterranean next spring and summer, in addition to "Round-up" in July 1943.

If "Torch" and other operations in the Western Mediterranean absorb six divisions and the Royal Marine Division, the forces organised for overseas operations in July 1943 will only amount to eight divisions, including five Canadian divisions and the Airborne Division; while, with the shipping available, 5 American divisions at most could be assembled in the United Kingdom, perhaps 9 if the Air Force were to be excluded. Thus we should have only 13 divisions (or at most 17) to fight the 40 German Divisions now in France, apart from other divisions which they might be able to bring from elsewhere. It is indeed extremely doubtful whether we could stage an effective "Round-up" against an unbroken German Army by July 1943, even if we were to curtail the build-up of "Torch", give complete priority to the American land forces over their Air Force and abandon all idea of operations in the Mediterranean itself. But it is certain that we cannot pursue both these objectives simultaneously'.

From this appreciation the Chiefs of Staff would not move. At the meeting on 3rd December<sup>(47)</sup> Air Chief Marshal Portal explained to

the Prime Minister that the accumulation of American forces in Britain had not proceeded at the speed anticipated in April because the Americans, working on their interpretation of C.C.S.94, were transferring a far higher proportion of their resources to the Pacific. General Brooke disclaimed responsibility for the Prime Minister's promises to the Russians and again urged the value of action in the Mediterranean in forcing the Germans to over-extend their resources; declaring again that everything would be ruined if a premature attack was launched with insufficient strength. The deadlock was resolved only by turning to the Joint Planning Staff with a request for two forecasts; one of the strength of the largest force which could be built up in the United Kingdom by July 1943 if all projected operations in the Mediterranean were cancelled; and one of the strength of the largest force which could be similarly built up by the autumn if the main weight of the Allied offensive in 1943 was made in the Mediterranean.

The report of the Joint Planners decisively supported the views of the Chiefs of Staff. It was natural that it should. Neither General Brooke nor Air Chief Marshal Portal was theorising *in vacuo*: the views they put forward were the epitome of opinions sifted and shaped within their services in thousands of informal contacts between senior officers who had to live with the problems of organization and supply which limited all strategic thinking. All the Planners had to do was to present to the Prime Minister, in explicit form, the inexorable factors with which the Chiefs of Staff had to live. Their calculations appeared definitive.<sup>(48)</sup> They showed that if all operations in the Mediterranean were suspended, this would release only five extra divisions for an invasion of North West Europe; while it would release a far larger number of German divisions for service on the Eastern and Western fronts. 'Vigorous exploitation of "Torch" and increasing bombing will inevitably stretch Germany,' they wrote. 'This will relieve Russia at an earlier date, and possibly on a greater scale. It will, therefore, give a better chance of re-entering the Continent in the late summer of 1943 than if all our efforts were devoted now . . . to prepare for re-entry against full-scale German opposition'.

On the strength of this report the Chiefs of Staff prepared the strongest statement<sup>(49)</sup> that they had yet made about both the impracticability of 'Roundup' in 1943 and the advantages which would follow from a vigorous exploitation of 'Torch'. The strongest land force which could be assembled in the United Kingdom by August 1943, they reckoned, was 13 British and 12 American divisions, of which only 4 British and 2 American could be organised, owing to shortage of shipping, as assault divisions. The concentration even of this force would be possible only if a major increase in the bomber

offensive, any amphibious operations in the Mediterranean—with their hoped for effect on Turkey—and the projected amphibious operation 'Anakim' in Burma were all foregone. The force originally considered necessary for 'Round up', pointed out the Chiefs of Staff, was 48 divisions, and since then the German defences had been if anything strengthened rather than weakened. Even this emasculated attack could not be launched for some eight months, during which time the Russians would have to stand alone against an undistracted enemy. On the other hand a concentration in the Mediterranean would make possible amphibious operations against Sardinia, Corsica, Sicily or the toe of Italy; it would encourage Turkey and facilitate operations against Crete and the Dodecanese; it would enable a large bomber force to be built up in the United Kingdom and 'Anakim' to be launched in Burma; and the German forces in North West France would be none the less pinned down by the building-up of a reduced 'Bolero'. 21 divisions could still be concentrated in the United Kingdom by the late summer to exploit any emergency. Finally an intelligence estimate was quoted which showed that 'if we force Italy out of the war and the Germans try to maintain their line in Russia at its present length, they will be some 54 divisions and 2,200 aircraft short of what they need on all fronts'.

It fell to General Brooke to expound this paper to the Prime Minister at the Chiefs of Staff conference on the evening of 16th December.<sup>(50)</sup> First he spoke of 'Bolero', and explained that the speed of the build-up was limited not only by shipping but by the capacity of ports, railways and American installations in the United Kingdom to handle the influx of United States troops. Then he turned his attention to the Axis powers and developed the argument that he was to use so effectively the following month at Casablanca. The enemy's movement of troops, he pointed out, was also limited by the availability of railways. A magnificent lateral system made it possible for him to switch his divisions from East to West with ease; but only two vulnerable lines led into Italy and only one, through Nish, into Greece. The reinforcement of the Mediterranean front thus presented the Germans with special difficulties. If, he went on, 40 or so German divisions could be held down in North West Europe by fear of a cross-channel attack, and if simultaneously the Allies forced Italy out of the war and perhaps entered the Balkans, this would provide more relief for the Russians than a 'Round-up' which could not take place until August. The defection of Italy would leave the Germans with vastly increased commitments in the Balkans, even if it had no effect on the Hungarian, Bulgarian and Rumanian divisions on the Russian front.

The Prime Minister, like Mr. Eden who accompanied him, confessed himself to be at last convinced by these arguments. 'Unless



the Americans could vastly improve on the estimates given in the Memorandum,' he admitted 'he could see no alternative to the strategy recommended by the Chiefs of Staff'. 'Large-scale amphibious operations would have to be undertaken in the early part of the summer, aimed at Sicily or the southern part of Italy or both, with the object of knocking Italy out of the war, preparing the way for an entry into the Balkans, and bringing Turkey into the war on our side. This, together with 'Bolero' on the largest scale that the above operations would permit, could be offered to the Russians as our contribution to the war in 1943.' The long debate seemed to be over.

It was not. A few days later Mr. Churchill made one last attempt to revolt, as he realised the huge difficulties which still lay ahead in persuading his allies to accept these views. On 17th December Mr. Roosevelt forwarded a telegram from Stalin in which the Russian leader once more expressed his confidence 'that the time is not being lost and that the promise about the opening of a Second Front in Europe given by you, Mr. President, and by Mr. Churchill in regard of 1942 and in any case in regard of the Spring of 1943 will be fulfilled, and that a Second Front in Europe will be actually opened by the joint forces of Great Britain and the United States of America in the spring of the next year'.<sup>(51)</sup> Four days later, on 23rd December, there arrived from Washington a strategic appreciation by the Joint Chiefs of Staff which advocated, as we shall shortly see, the closing down of operations in the Mediterranean in favour of a land offensive against Western Europe to be conducted from the United Kingdom in 1943.<sup>(52)</sup> These reminders that the hopes and desires of his allies coincided with his own were probably behind the Prime Minister's last rebellious attempt to reopen the whole question in a minute to the Chiefs of Staff of 28th December:<sup>(53)</sup>

'... unless ... during the summer and autumn we also engage the enemy from the West, we shall not be able to bring the most important part of our forces into play. The British Metropolitan and American Overseas Air Forces in the United Kingdom will be limited to bombing only. Our resources in small shipping will not be utilised. The weight of the British Home Army and of the American forces to be gathered in Britain will not count. Thus we shall have failed to engage the enemy with our full strength, and may even fail to keep him pinned down in the West while we attack in the South. . . .

. . . The questions therefore arise whether combined and concurrent operations can be organised from the West and the South and, if the answer is affirmative, which theatres should be considered the major or the minor and how the emphasis and priorities must be cast. . . .'

This minute, which ignored all the patient arguments of the Chiefs of Staff, must have caused them considerable exasperation. In spite of it the proposals made by the Chiefs of Staff Committee on 16th December were substantially accepted by the Defence Committee of the Cabinet on 29th December,<sup>(54)</sup> which approved for transmission to the Joint Chiefs in Washington two papers embodying them almost intact. The first was a slightly revised version of the document considered on 16th December;<sup>(55)</sup> the second was a fuller Memorandum on Future Strategy, which contained the full fruit of the long dialectic which had been in progress for the past three months.<sup>(56)</sup> It will be found printed in full at Appendix III(A), and it concluded with the following proposals for the conduct of the war in 1943:

- (a) The defeat of the U-boat menace to remain a first charge on our resources.
- (b) The expansion of the Anglo-American bomber offensive against Germany and Italy.
- (c) The exploitation of our positions in the Mediterranean with a view to:
  - (i) knocking Italy out of the war;
  - (ii) bringing Turkey into the war; and
  - (iii) giving the Axis no respite for recuperation.
- (d) The maintenance of supplies to Russia.
- (e) Limited offensive operations in the Pacific on a scale sufficient only to contain the bulk of Japanese forces in that area.
- (f) Operations to re-open the Burma Road to be undertaken as soon as resources permit.
- (g) Subject to the claims of the above, the greatest possible concentration of forces in the United Kingdom with a view to re-entry on the Continent in August or September 1943, should conditions hold out a good prospect of success, or anyhow a "Sledgehammer" to wear down the enemy air forces'.

In the last sentence alone, which was inserted at the Defence Committee Meeting,<sup>(57)</sup> can we see any effect of Mr. Churchill's final counter-attack. Yet it would be wrong to suppose that his intervention and arguments had had no other effect on the proposals of the Chiefs of Staff. The substance of the plans they had put forward in October remained intact, but the spirit was very different. The emphasis on security, the reliance on attrition, the hopes of some undefined collapse of German morale based on memories of 1918 had all been recast in a positive programme of vigorous

attack. The vague references to amphibious operations in the Mediterranean had been crystallised into precise proposals for the elimination of Italy from the war. The forces in the United Kingdom were to be poised and watching for an opening; and until that opening appeared the allied air forces were to deliver mounting blows at the vitals of the enemy. For the first time the British were able to present their allies with a reasoned and realistic programme for the defeat of Germany. Its realism was due solely to the Chiefs of Staff; but the positive, offensive spirit which inspired it was largely the work of the unwearied and merciless interventions of the Prime Minister himself.

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While this protracted but necessary debate was going on in London, the Americans had not been standing still. For them, as we have seen, the significance of C.C.S.94 was perfectly clear. Europe henceforth was to be considered a theatre where the Allies were adopting a defensive, encircling posture. In the Pacific offensive operations might begin. They had begun, indeed, within a fortnight of the return of the Joint Chiefs from London, when on 7th August the United States Marines had landed on Guadalcanal in the Solomon Islands. The fanatical toughness of the defenders and the determination which the enemy showed in rushing naval and military reinforcements to counter-attack gave the Americans their first indication of the difficulties they were likely to encounter on the long road back to the Philippines and Japan. For the rest of 1942 the chart of the Solomon Islands hung on the walls of all the map-rooms in Washington, an eloquent background to the debates on grand strategy. The President warned his Chiefs of Staff before 'Torch' was launched: 'My anxiety about the South West Pacific is to make sure that every possible weapon gets into that area to hold Guadalcanal. . . . We will soon find ourselves engaged in two active fronts and we must have active air support in both places even though it means delay in our other commitments, particularly to England. Our long-range plans could be set back for months if we fail to throw our full strength in our immediate and impending conflicts'.<sup>(58)</sup>

The Joint Chiefs were not slow to follow the Presidential lead. As early as 15th September Sir John Dill had warned London that heavy cuts were being contemplated in landing-craft shipments for 'Bolero';<sup>(59)</sup> and on 27th September the Joint Staff Mission reported a feeling on the part of the Joint Chiefs of Staff 'that to send to the U.K. now men, in excess of those required for the security of the British Isles, or to send landing-craft would be unsound as they see no chance of their active employment in continental operations.

They think that mere possibility of a crack in German morale is too shadowy a basis on which to build'.<sup>(60)</sup>

The result of these sentiments and the demands of the Pacific Theatre on the distribution of U.S. forces is thus described by an official U.S. Army historian:

'For the Pacific Theater as a whole, the total of Army forces deployed a year after Pearl Harbor (about 346,000) was about equal to the total Army forces deployed in the United Kingdom and North Africa (about 347,000). The Pacific build-up exceeded by about 150,000 the total number projected for the area by the end of 1942 in the original "Bolero" planning. . . . The total U.S. Army forces deployed in the war against Japan exceeded by about 50,000 the total U.S. Army forces deployed in the war against Germany. . . . Barely one half of all the U.S. combat planes envisaged under the Marshall Memorandum of the spring of 1942 for the cross-channel invasion on 1st April 1943 (3,250) were on hand in Theaters across the Atlantic at the end of 1942. . . . In effect, as the Army planners emphasised, strength and resources originally earmarked for the main effort, "Bolero"—"Roundup", had served in 1942 as a pool from which aircraft, as well as air units, had been diverted to secondary efforts. . . . The trend . . . was towards the continued diversion of planes to the Pacific, the secondary theater, rather than towards a concentration of air forces against Germany, the main enemy'.<sup>(61)</sup>

The effect of this redeployment upon allied strategy was brought home to the British by a letter which the Chiefs of Staff received from Major General Russell P. Hartle, the Deputy Commander-in-Chief of the United States Army, European Theatre of Operations, on 19th November,<sup>(62)</sup> which ran as follows:

(i) This headquarters has endeavoured to ascertain from the War Department a statement of the modification of the "Bolero" plan necessitated by current "Torch" operations. In reply the War Department has advised that our construction program in the United Kingdom should not exceed present indicated needs.

(ii) It is the interpretation of this headquarters that "present indicated needs" refers to the program for 427,000 which has been tentatively approved by the War Department. The present program of construction for hospital and storage facilities is based upon requirements for approximately 1,100,000 men of the United States forces.

(iii) The War Department directive effects a material reduction in our indicated requirements. . . .

(iv) The War Department further directs you to be advised that any construction in excess of the requirements for a force

of 427,000 must be accomplished entirely by your own labour and with your own materials, and that Lend-Lease materials cannot be furnished in these instances’.

The form alone of this rather bleak message made a disagreeable impression after the genial communications of General Eisenhower. Its content was so disturbing that, on the advice of the Chiefs of Staff, the Prime Minister took up the matter directly with President Roosevelt. The British, he wired on 24th November,<sup>(63)</sup> had

‘. . . been preparing under “Bolero” for 1,100,000 men, and this is the first intimation we have had that this target is to be abandoned. We had no knowledge that you had decided to abandon forever “Round-up”, and all our preparations were proceeding on a broad front under “Bolero”’.

It seems to me that it would be a most grievous decision to abandon “Round-up”. “Torch” is no substitute for “Round-up” and only engages 13 divisions as against the 48 contemplated for “Round-up”. All my talks with Stalin, in Averill’s presence, were on the basis of a postponed “Round-up”. But never was it suggested that we should attempt no second front in Europe in 1943 or even 1944.

. . . It may well be that, try as we will, our strength will not reach the necessary levels in 1943. But if so it becomes all the more important that we do not miss 1944.

Even in 1943 a chance may come. Should Stalin’s offensive reach Rostov-on-Don, which is his aim, a first-class disaster may overtake the German southern armies. Our Mediterranean operations following on “Torch” may drive Italy out of the war. Widespread demoralisation may set in among the Germans, and we must be ready to profit by any opportunity which offers.

. . . It seems to me absolutely necessary either that General Marshall and Admiral King with Harry should come over here or that I should come with my people to you’.

Both the President and General Eisenhower’s Chief of Staff, Brigadier General Bedell Smith, who fortunately returned from North Africa on 26th November, reassured Mr. Churchill that the figures quoted by General Hartle referred to a phase in a continuing build-up rather than to any final target.<sup>(64)</sup> More than that they could not say; for the Joint Chiefs of Staff were only now beginning to turn their collective attention to the problem of what action should be taken in the European Theatre once the North African coast was cleared.

Shortly after the ‘Torch’ landings the President had showed himself to be at least as enthusiastic about the prospects of the Mediterranean campaign as were any of the British Chiefs of Staff;

in a message to the Prime Minister on 12th November he suggested a joint survey 'of the possibilities including forward movement directed against Sardinia, Sicily, Italy, Greece and other Balkan areas and including the possibility of obtaining Turkish support for an attack through the Black Sea against Germany's flank'. But the President's military advisers did not share his enthusiasms—least of all General Marshall. At a conference on 25th November Marshall was demanding that very careful consideration should be given to the cost of actually clearing the Mediterranean for sea traffic. To do so, he argued, would involve the occupation of Sicily, Sardinia and Crete; and he felt that 'a careful determination should be made of whether or not the large air and ground forces required for such a project could be justified, in view of the results to be expected'.<sup>(65)</sup>

Two weeks later his attitude had hardened from scepticism to hostility. Further operations in the Mediterranean, he declared at a conference on 10th December, would make prohibitive demands on shipping. He himself favoured closing down the North African campaign as quickly as possible, switching the forces involved back to the United Kingdom to swell the reduced 'Bolero' build-up, and mounting if possible an emergency operation against Brest or Boulogne in 1943.<sup>(66)</sup> He expressed his views frankly about this to Sir John Dill, who duly reported them back to the sympathetic Churchill. 'In regard to "Bolero",' Dill reported, 'Marshall is anxious to send to England all the forces, including Air Forces, that shipping will carry. With these forces in conjunction with ours he believes that successful blows could be struck at the Germans in France. . . . As regards the strength of these blows Marshall is thinking not only in terms of raids but of seizing and holding the Brest peninsula, and of taking any opportunity which a weakening Germany may disclose. . . . Such an operation would, he feels, be much more effective than either "Brimstone" (Sardinia) or "Husky" (Sicily), less costly in shipping, more satisfying to the Russians, engage many more German air forces and be the most effective answer to any German attack through Spain'.<sup>(67)</sup>

The U.S. Army planners, however, were by no means solidly behind General Marshall. Like their British colleagues, they had been forced to the conclusion that 'a decisive, large-scale cross-Channel operation would not be feasible, as a matter of logistics, before mid-1944'; they had been unpleasantly impressed by the heavy casualties of the Dieppe raid; and 'with considerable misgivings' they were turning towards a Mediterranean strategy for 1943.<sup>(68)</sup> But it was General Marshall's view which for the time being prevailed, both within the Army and on the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

On 23rd December the Joint Staff Mission forwarded to London a memorandum by the Joint Chiefs covering exactly the same ground

as the memorandum which the British sent to Washington a week later. This document\*<sup>(69)</sup> provides an interesting contrast to the British both in its form and in its content. It began by proposing a new definition for the basic strategic concept' of the United Nations, as follows:

'Conduct a strategic offensive in the Atlantic–Western European theater directly against Germany employing the maximum force consistent with maintaining the accepted strategic concept in other theaters. Continue offensive and defensive operations in the Pacific and in Burma to break the Japanese hold on positions which threaten the security of our communications and positions. Maintain the strategic defensive in other theaters. . . .'

The Joint Chiefs, like their British colleagues, went on to stress the need to support Russia and China and to defeat the submarine menace; to maintain the security and industrial capacity of the allied homelands; and to intensify the air offensive against Germany. But they further proposed that the Allies should:

'(b) Insure that the primary effort of the United Nations is directed against Germany rather than against her satellite states by:

- (i) Conducting from bases in United Kingdom, Northern Africa, and as practicable from the Middle East an integrated air-offensive on the largest practicable scale against German production and resources designed to achieve a progressive deterioration of her war effort.
  - (ii) Building up as rapidly as possible adequate forces in the United Kingdom in preparation for a land offensive against Germany in 1943.
- (c) Expel the Axis forces from North Africa and thereafter:
- (i) Consolidate and hold that area with the forces necessary to maintain our lines of communication through the Straits of Gibraltar against an Axis or Spanish effort.
  - (ii) Exploit the success of the North African operations by establishing large-scale air installations in North Africa and by conducting intensive air operations against Germany and against Italy with a view to destroying Italian resources and morale and eliminating her from the war.
  - (iii) Transfer any excess forces from North Africa to the U.K. for employment there as part of the build-up for the invasion of Western Europe in 1943.
- (d) Support Russia to the utmost by supplying munitions, by rendering all practicable air assistance from the Middle East,

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\* see Appendix III(B).

and by making the principal offensive effort of 1943 directly against Germany in Western Europe. . . .'

From the British point of view this document might have been very much worse. There was no sign of that exasperated indifference to the European theatre which Field Marshal Dill had observed with such concern four months before. It subordinated the Pacific to the European theatre; it endorsed the British views on a large number of vital points; and in general it loyally re-asserted, though with some qualifications, the original priorities of WWI. It was in fact an attempt to return to the agreed position of April 1942, from which Marshall had deviated only under protest and which still represented his belief as to the way in which the war should be won. But too much water had flowed under the bridge since that agreement. In particular, too many American resources, originally earmarked for 'Bolero', had flowed towards the Pacific, the Mediterranean and even the Middle East for the 1943 assault to be a practical proposition. Guadalcanal and 'Torch' had between them ruined the simplicity of Marshall's original grand design, and on its ruins a new strategy had now to be planned. This could be done only by a direct confrontation between the Allied Chiefs of Staff; and plans for such a confrontation were already under way.



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- (4) Marshall-Dill of 14.8.42: A/Strategy/2, fol. 73A.
- (5) C.O.S.(W)252 of 13.8.42.
- (6) C.C.S.97 of 24.7.42.
- (7) C.C.S.97/1 of 1.8.42.
- (8) C.O.S.(42)228th Mtg. of 5.8.42.
- (9) C.C.S.97/3 of 14.8.42.
- (10) C.O.S.(W)257 of 17.8.42.
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- (12) C.O.S.(W)261 of 21.8.42. (Dill-Dykes for Marshall).  
Dykes-Dill: 0041z/23 of 23.8.42: see J.S.M. file 27, Pt. 2.
- (13) Dykes-Dill: 0041z/23 of 23.8.42: J.S.M. file 27, Pt. 2.
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- (19) C.O.S.(42)137th Mtg.(O) of 5.9.42.
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- (25) Memorandum by C.I.G.S.: C.O.S.(42)478(O) of 26.12.42.
- (26) See C.O.S.(42)457(O) of 16.12.42: Principal Administrative Officers  
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- (56) C.O.S.(42)466(O) (Final) of 31.12.42.
- (57) See C.O.S.(43)6th Mtg. of 12.1.43.
- (58) Robert E. Sherwood; *The White House Papers of Harry L. Hopkins*, Vol. II, p. 622.
- (59) J.S.M.386 of 15.9.42.
- (60) J.S.M.403 of 27.9.42.  
See also Maurice Matloff & Edwin M. Snell: *Strategic Planning for Coalition Warfare, 1941-1942*, p. 325.
- (61) Matloff & Snell, pp. 359-61.
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- (65) Hopkins, Vol. II, p. 654.
- (66) Matloff & Snell, p. 363.
- (67) J.S.M.551 of 11.12.42.  
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BOOK THREE  
CHAPTER XII  
THE MEDITERRANEAN  
STRATEGY—AUTUMN 1942

WHILE THESE transatlantic discussions were being carried on, out of which was to emerge a revised Allied strategy for the prosecution of global war, the British planning staffs were examining the possible implications of the North African landings for further operations in the Mediterranean. They were urged to do so, it need hardly be said by a peremptory reminder from the Prime Minister.<sup>(1)</sup>

'Let me see [Mr. Churchill demanded on 28th September 1942] what studies have been made so far for the exploitation of "Torch", should it prove entirely successful. Sardinia, Sicily and Italy itself have no doubt been considered. If things go well we should not waste a day, but carry the war northwards with audacity'.

Such studies had certainly been made.<sup>(2)</sup> They dated back to the hopeful days of winter 1940 and autumn 1941, when the success of the campaigns in the Western Desert seemed likely to carry the war into the Central Mediterranean. The Joint Planning Staff replied to the Prime Minister on 9th October 1942 that the capture of either Sardinia or Sicily would contribute powerfully to the neutralisation of Rommel, the opening of the Mediterranean, and the initiation of operations against the southern flank of the Axis. 'Success in "Torch" or "Lightfoot" ', they reported, 'might well give fleeting opportunity for such an operation at comparatively little cost'; and they advised that General Eisenhower's directive should be amended to empower him to plan these operations.<sup>(3)</sup>

General Eisenhower showed himself no less alive than his British colleagues to the need for such planning, and for speed in execution, but he considered that his existing directive gave him all necessary powers; and he also suggested tactfully 'that any decision to launch operations which entailed leaving the North African mainland should be taken by the Combined Chiefs of Staff'.<sup>(4)</sup> There could be no dissent from this last suggestion; but the British were not yet in a position to bring forward any firm proposals for discussion with their allies. The possibilities which would lie open once the Axis forces had been cleared from the North coast of Africa had to be broadly examined before any such specific operations could be

recommended, and these possibilities had to be set in the wider context of a global war with all the demands it made upon limited Allied resources.

As we have seen in the previous chapter, such a global survey was already being undertaken by the Joint Planning Staff. Their examination of the war situation as a whole had led them to recommend to the Chiefs of Staff on 5th October that the German war machine should be worn down not only by strategic bombing and intensification of the blockade, but also by exploitation of 'Torch' in such a way as to turn the whole Mediterranean into a heavy liability to Germany. They had suggested as possible courses of action occupation of Sardinia, of Sicily or of Crete; with the object of thus 'forcing the Axis to lock up increasing forces for the holding down of Italy as well as of the defence of all threatened points'.<sup>(5)</sup>

Two weeks later, on 20th October, they submitted a paper showing in greater detail how this could be done.<sup>(6)</sup> This began by defining the two objects of operations in the Mediterranean: first the aggravation of Axis liabilities and the maximum contribution to the relief of Russia; and second the re-opening of the sea-routes to the Middle and Far East, to economise on the priceless strategic commodity of shipping. The Axis might react to a successful 'Torch' by striking through Spain or through Turkey and Persia towards the Persian Gulf; but the prospect of Spanish and Russian resistance made both movements highly improbable. The Axis, they considered, was likely to confine itself to a static defence of southern Europe.

This being so, where should the Allies strike? At this point in the paper the Chiefs of Staff were to insert the significant caveat: 'Our general strategy for the war against Germany does not envisage large-scale land operations against the Axis until German morale and powers of resistance have cracked. Our main effort in the Mediterranean must therefore be considered against this background'. In fact the Joint Planners did not recommend major land operations anywhere. It would be tactically impossible, they considered, to sustain a bridgehead in the South of France, and politically unwise to attempt a landing there while it remained unoccupied by the Germans. In the Balkans there was great scope for guerrilla activities and intensification of sabotage, but maintenance difficulties would probably rule out any large-scale land operations; while Turkish co-operation, necessary to develop effective attacks on Axis oil supplies and communications, was unlikely to be forthcoming until German defeat appeared certain. But Italy appeared a more promising field for operations. A direct threat to Italy would probably bring about the recall of Italian forces from Russia and the Balkans, and the diversion of German land and naval forces—including Atlantic U-boats—to counter it. Such a threat need not involve

mounting an invasion; 'Air, naval and limited land operations directed against Italian centres of industry and communications', considered the Planners, 'together with adequate supplies for sabotage, will probably prove sufficient to turn Italy into a serious liability to Germany'. 'Our main effort in the Mediterranean', they concluded, 'should therefore be directed against Italy. Threats against the South of France and the Balkans will also extend the enemy'.

If Italy was to be the *schwerpunkt* of Allied operations in the Mediterranean, then operations against Crete and the Dodecanese, valuable as they might be for stiffening Turkey and opening the way to the Balkans, sank back into second place, while Sardinia and Sicily contested for first. Sicily, the Planners considered, would without doubt be the greater political and military prize. Its possession would open the Narrows, divide the Italian fleet between the Adriatic and Ligurian seas, and open the way to attack either the South of Italy or Greece. The possession of Sardinia would open the Western Mediterranean, and provide a base for operations over a wide arc from the South of France to Sicily. But since the opportunity to capture either might be only fleeting, and the resources available would be small, they pointed out that 'the decision will have to be based on which Island is the easier to take and hold'. On the face of it this would probably be Sardinia. 'Clearly', they concluded, 'we should be prepared to act against the rear of Axis forces in North Africa with all available forces and seize what may be a fleeting opportunity of capturing Sardinia before the island has been reinforced'.

This appreciation by the Joint Planning Staff in London coincided remarkably closely, in spite of the difference in perspective, with a study which was being undertaken simultaneously by their opposite numbers, the Joint Planning Staff of Middle East Command in Cairo.<sup>(7)</sup> G.H.Q., Middle East, inevitably, was still concerned with the threat to its Northern Front; and should this be renewed, pointed out the Planning Staff in Cairo, it would tie up all the forces available in the Middle East, leaving none available for operations elsewhere. But such forces as were available they recommended should be used in conjunction with those advancing from the West against Italy. Diversions in the Eastern Mediterranean might be valuable, but only so long as they did not weaken the main effort in the Central Mediterranean. The Middle East planners also made the point, which was to be strongly taken up by their colleagues in London, that Italy would provide bases for an intensification of the bomber offensive; and they appear to have foreseen more clearly than the Joint Planning Staff that this strategy was likely to lead to a land campaign in Italy, where the Allies must expect to meet tough opposition 'from German forces in difficult country'.

The same thought appears to have occurred to General Brooke when the Chiefs of Staff considered these two papers on 23rd October;<sup>(8)</sup> for while approving in principle of securing advanced island bases, he warned categorically against venturing on to the mainland of Europe until Axis military power had been considerably weakened; and it seems likely that his intervention was responsible for the inserting of the very significant paragraph referred to on p. 226. He also warned against underrating the residual importance of the Middle East. A German attack through the Caucasus he still considered highly probable, though unlikely to come before the summer of 1943. He emphasised the need to bring Turkey into the war to obtain air bases for attacking South-East Europe. The Western and Central Mediterranean, indeed, he saw becoming a mainly American sphere of activity, with some British assistance in the assaults on Sardinia or Sicily.

With these reservations the Joint Planners paper was approved, and sent to the Joint Staff Mission in Washington. There it stayed. The Prime Minister's refusal to allow the Chiefs of Staff's broader strategic appreciation to go forward for discussion made the Chiefs of Staff Committee cautious about authorising communication of this one; while the launching of 'Torch' and its unexpected consequences gave further grounds for delay. Further moves in the Mediterranean, the Chiefs of Staff advised the Joint Staff Mission on 12th November, 'must be governed by outcome of situation which is, for the moment, confused and obscure.'<sup>(9)</sup> So until the end of the year forward planning for the Mediterranean continued in London without consultation with Washington.

Three days later, at a meeting held at Chequers on 15th November, the Prime Minister laid before his military advisers his own reflections on the course of the war in general and the Mediterranean in particular.<sup>(10)</sup> In this he deliberately disdained all attempts to establish any 'overall strategic concept'.

'In settling what to do in a vast war situation like this [he wrote] it may sometimes be found better to take a particular major operation to which one is committed and follow that through vigorously to the end, making other things subordinate to it, rather than assemble all the data from the world scene in a baffling array. After the needs of the major operation have been satisfied as far as possible, other aspects of the war will fall into their proper places. Moreover it is by the continued stressing of the major operation that our will may be imposed upon the enemy and the initiative regained.

The paramount task before us is, first, to conquer the African shores of the Mediterranean and open an effective passage through it for military traffic; and secondly, using the bases on

the African shore, to strike at the underbelly of the Axis in effective strength in the shortest time'.

This preamble, ignoring both the inevitable inter-dependence imposed on all allied military operations by shortage of shipping, and the close relationship between operations in the Mediterranean and the ultimate landing in North West Europe—which Mr. Churchill, it will be remembered, was pressing should take place in 1943—was not calculated to conciliate either the Chiefs of Staff or the Americans, for whom, in the form of a letter to President Roosevelt, the document was ultimately intended. But fortunately the Prime Minister's concrete proposals were in fact to differ very little from those of his military advisers. First, he laid down, the North African coast-line must be cleared. Then the full weight of the British bombing offensive should be brought to bear on Italy. 'Every endeavour', he wrote, 'should be made to make Italy feel the weight of the war. All the industrial centres should be attacked in an intense fashion, every effort being made to render them uninhabitable and to terrorise and paralyse the population'. Once Tunisia and Tripolitania were firmly in Allied hands 'the second immediate objective is obviously Sardinia, with Corsica to follow'. From the triangle Sardinia-Tunis-Malta the Allies would be able to secure complete air control of the Central Mediterranean, which would facilitate not only air attacks on the Italian mainland but 'future operations against Sicily'. Finally in the Eastern Mediterranean all necessary political and military measures should be taken to bring Turkey into the war, and a force some ten divisions strong should be built up in the Middle East to lend her support.

From the broad outlines of this paper the Chiefs of Staff did not dissent. They considered it premature to settle firmly for Sardinia as the next step, in the light of the recent German occupation of unoccupied France, so the question was left open whether the next step should be Sardinia or Sicily. They could not accept the Prime Minister's suggestion that the bombing of Italy should be intensified at the expense of the bombing of Germany. But with these and a few other minor amendments Mr. Churchill's telegram was approved and duly dispatched to the President on 17th November.<sup>(11)\*</sup> Britain's war leaders were in agreement that the next stage in the Mediterranean should be the concentration of all available resources on knocking Italy out of the war.

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The agreement on policy now confronted both the Government and its military advisers with a politico-military problem of a kind

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\* See Appendix III (C).



which they had never before had the occasion to examine. How exactly *did* one 'knock Italy out of the war'? Military operations by themselves were not enough: surrender is a political, not a military, act; and how could an Italian government be brought to take such a political decision—especially with a ruthless ally at her elbow who would certainly not approve and was most unlikely to consent to any such action on her part?

On this question, on 20th November, Mr. Eden circulated an important Memorandum to his colleagues of the War Cabinet.<sup>(12)</sup> In this he stated his belief that after the collapse in North Africa and the raids on the Italian cities Italian morale was in a critical state. But the Fascist régime was not likely to sign its own death warrant by suing for peace; and the Germans were equally unlikely to acquiesce in the régime being forcibly removed from within. 'Even in the unlikely event of the régime being overthrown by the Army', Mr. Eden wrote, 'the Germans would no doubt proceed to occupy Italy, thus effectively preventing the conclusion of any separate peace'. He saw little purpose in holding out any hopes to the Italian people of good treatment if they overthrew their leaders; there was no sign on the political horizon of any group able to take advantage of such an offer. The Italians, he recommended, should therefore simply be told that, having allowed the Fascist régime to link their destinies with Hitler, they would if they continued along the Fascist road 'undoubtedly suffer all the woes and penalties which fall to the vanquished'. Heavy bombing should be continued. It certainly increased hatred of the British; 'on the other hand, the demoralisation and panic produced by intensive heavy air bombardment no doubt outweigh any increase in anti-British feeling. On balance, therefore, there is everything to be said for keeping up and increasing our heavy indiscriminate raids on Italian cities'. Rome, however, should not be bombed 'until a moment when we had reason to believe that Italian morale had reached almost breaking point'. Then the capture of Sardinia, and even more of Sicily, 'would have tremendous and even possibly decisive effect'. The object of all this should be to provoke a complete internal collapse, which would compel the Germans to take over and defend both Italy herself and Italy's obligations in the Balkans; not a formal surrender by an organised Italian régime.

With this paper the Prime Minister disagreed. 'If we increase the severity of our pressure upon Italy,' he replied in a Note of 25th November, also circulated to the War Cabinet,<sup>(13)</sup> 'the desire and indeed the imperative need of getting out of the war will come home to all the Italians, including the rank and file of the Fascist party. Should Italy feel unable to endure the continued attacks which will be made upon her from the air and presently, I trust, by amphibious

operations, the Italian people will have to choose between, on the one hand, setting up a government under someone like Grandi to sue for a separate peace, or, on the other, submitting to a German occupation, which will merely aggravate the severity of the war'. As for a German occupation of Italy, he did not consider this to be particularly in the Allied interest. 'We may not be able to prevent it. It is still my hope that the Italians themselves will prevent it, and we shall certainly do what we can to further this move. If there were a revolution in Italy and an Armistice Government came into power, it is at least arguable that the German interests would be as well served by standing on the Brenner as by undertaking the detailed defence of Italy against the wishes of its people, and possibly of a provisional Government'.

'When a nation is thoroughly beaten in war', he continued, 'it does all sorts of things which no one can imagine beforehand'. The collapse of Bulgaria had come unexpectedly in 1918; so had that of France in 1940. 'Therefore I would not rule out the possibilities of a sudden peace demand being made by Italy, and I agree with the United States policy of trying to separate the Italian people from their Government. The fall of Mussolini, even though precaution may have been taken against it beforehand, might well have a decisive effect upon Italian opinion. The Fascist chapter will be closed. One tale will be finished and another would begin . . .'

Events were to show that the appreciations both of Mr. Eden and Mr. Churchill contained passages of remarkable insight. As the Prime Minister anticipated, the structure of the Fascist régime was to disintegrate with astounding suddenness. As the Foreign Secretary feared, the Germans were able to prevent the new régime from surrendering to the Allies any part of its territories except those where Allied forces were able to gain immediate possession. The War Cabinet discussed these views on 3rd December and decided that, although political warfare should continue along the lines suggested by the Foreign Secretary, the British attitude to any peace overtures should depend on the situation at the time those overtures were made.<sup>(14)</sup> And on 5th December the Joint Planning Staff produced a 'Report on Offensive Strategy in the Mediterranean'<sup>(15)</sup> which accepted as the basis for its study the views expressed by the Prime Minister: the Allies should aim, not simply at stretching Germany's resources by forcing her to occupy Italy so as to enable her to carry on the war, but at inducing the Italians themselves to lay down their arms.

In order to achieve this the Joint Planning Staff recommended six modes of action. First came political warfare. In this they accepted the view of the Foreign Secretary. There should be no appeals or promises to the Italian people; simply warnings of what lay ahead

for them, and concentration of blame for their sufferings upon the Fascist régime. Secondly bombing should be continued, with the deliberate object of inducing civilian panic. Third, there should be raids on coastal shipping and on the coasts themselves. Fourth, either Sicily or Sardinia should be seized: 'the capture of either might be the culminating blow leading to Italy's collapse'. Fifth, they listed diversions in the Eastern Mediterranean, in the form of large-scale feints against Crete and the Dodecanese; and finally they advocated the increase of subversive activities where resistance was already showing itself, in the Balkans and in Corsica, and the maximum exploitation of the unrest so caused.

Once Italy did collapse, the Report continued, Allied action should be concentrated against the Balkans. From there they could attack the Rumanian oil fields, cut Axis communications between the Mediterranean and the Black Sea, harass the Danube supply-route to Germany and German communications with South Russia, cut off Germany from her main sources of chrome and copper, and bring further pressure to bear on Turkey. Germany would then be presented with an insoluble problem. She could not garrison both Italy and the Balkans without 'devastating' results for her position on the Russian front. If she abandoned the Balkans, the British could at once seize Crete and the Dodecanese, provoke a full-scale rising throughout the peninsula, and send a force to Salonika. If she abandoned Italy, the Allies should seize Sicily so as to open the Narrows, and establish themselves in the South of Italy, as a base for further attacks on the Balkans. But, the Joint Planning Staff insisted, they should be wary of accepting any engagement fully to occupy Italy. Such a course would present problems of internal security; Italy would be an unsuitable base for the invasion of Germany; and it would 'raise insuperable difficulties in conducting operations against the enemy established in a strong natural defensive position in the Alps, to which his communications would be short and easy, as against our long lines of sea-communications'. Nothing that happened during the subsequent course of the war was to belie this sapient prophecy.

The Joint Planning Staff summed up their conclusions in a paragraph which defined neatly not only the objectives of what was to become known as 'the Mediterranean Strategy', but also the problems which this strategy was to raise for Allied planning.

'The prizes open to the Allies in the Mediterranean in 1943 are very great. They include the severe reduction of German air-power, the reopening of the short sea route, the denial to Germany of oil, chrome and other minerals, the elimination of one of the Axis partners and the opening of the Balkans.

If we decide to exploit the position which we have gained, our first object should be to induce the Italians to lay down their arms everywhere; our next should be directed against the Balkans.

Unless Italy collapses far more quickly than we expect, this exploitation must, however, be at the expense of "Round-up" in 1943.

We are therefore faced with the alternatives of:

(a) Concentrating resources in the United Kingdom for a "Round-up" which may, in any event, be impracticable for 1943; and this at the cost of abandoning the great prizes open to us in the Mediterranean and of remaining inactive for many months during which Germany would recuperate;

or

(b) Pursuing the offensive in the Mediterranean with the knowledge that we shall only be able to assault Northern France next year if there is a pronounced decline in German fighting power.

We cannot have it both ways. In our view (b) is the correct strategy and will give the Russians more certain, and possibly even greater relief.'

Thus, firmly, did the Joint Planning Staff set the future course of events in the Mediterranean against the broader background of Allied strategic planning. Their recommendations were accepted virtually *in toto* by the Chiefs of Staff and embodied in their Memorandum on Future Strategy of 31st December,<sup>(16)</sup> to which reference has already been made and which was to serve as the brief for the British in their consultations at Casablanca the following month. Political warfare, air bombardment and coastal raids on Italy were to be intensified. Either Sicily or Sardinia was to be seized. If Italy asked for an armistice it was to be accorded in return for 'the limited facilities which we shall require in Sardinia, Sicily, the Dodecanese and in certain areas of Italy, for the further prosecution of the offensive against Germany, particularly in the Balkans'. But no responsibility was to be assumed for the defence and occupation of Italy, for the reasons given by the Joint Planning Staff. The war should be carried into the Balkans where all the prizes listed by the Planners lay waiting to be won.

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It had proved easier to reach agreement about the ultimate objective than about the more immediate one. No decision had yet been reached between Sicily and Sardinia as objectives; Operation 'Husky' or Operation 'Brimstone'.

Of the two, Sardinia had started as hot favourite. We have seen that the Joint Planning Staff in their appreciation of 20th October had suggested that 'the decision will have to be based on which island is the easier to take and hold'; and by this criterion Sardinia seemed obviously preferable. On 9th November, immediately it was clear that the North African landings had succeeded and that there was no danger of intervention by Spain, the Joint Planning Staff urged that 'Sardinia should therefore be General Eisenhower's main objective after completing the occupation of French North Africa', and that he should be allotted for it the British forces standing by for Operation 'Backbone' (the operation against Spanish Morocco).<sup>(17)</sup> It quickly became clear that the occupation of French North Africa would take longer to complete than had at first been hoped; but on 13th November General Bedell Smith assured the Chiefs of Staff that General Eisenhower was 'fully determined on the capture of Sardinia as soon as it should become feasible'. On Sunday 15th November, as we have seen, the Chiefs of Staff suggested to Mr. Churchill that Sardinia was not quite such an obvious objective as he seemed to believe; and as a result the Prime Minister propounded a number of questions.<sup>(18)</sup> Was the occupation of Sardinia necessary for bringing about a struggle for mastery of the air, or for opening the Mediterranean? If not, should not Sicily have priority, as presenting the bigger political prize? And how soon could an attack on either be launched, considering that the longer it was delayed, the stronger would be the defences to overcome?

The Joint Planning Staff produced their answer on 24th November.<sup>(19)</sup> The Mediterranean could be open to cargo ships once naval and air installations were completed along the North African coast, though regular personnel convoys would not be safe until Sicily was in Allied hands. But the establishment of air bases in Sardinia would give the Allies great advantages in providing the necessary air cover. As a pawn to bring on an air battle, Sardinia had few advantages, and was on the whole inferior to Sicily. But whereas an attack on Sicily would require fourteen assault brigades and could not be mounted before July, an attack on Sardinia, requiring four divisions in all, could be mounted towards the end of February if the decision to launch it was taken by 8th December. The possibility of a rapid *coup de main* even before North Africa was completely clear, which had been often discussed, was reluctantly ruled out as too great a gamble. An attack *en regle* must be mounted, even though it gave the enemy time to reinforce.

The same day General Eisenhower produced his comments.<sup>(20)</sup> These naturally were dominated by the problems of the North African campaign, which were beginning to appear in their true

light, and the resolution of which had to receive overriding priority. At best he hoped to occupy Tunisia by mid-December, but he recognised that he might take much longer than that; while a further advance in Tripoli would not be possible until mid-February. After that he favoured Sardinia as the next objective. The best date he could give for the assault was early in March, but the shipping situation made the end of March seem rather more probable. If by then the Germans had put in substantial reinforcements, however, it was doubtful whether the assault would succeed at all.

On the basis of these reports the Chiefs of Staff, meeting on 25th November,<sup>(21)</sup> still did not feel capable of giving a clear recommendation. The Prime Minister accepted the postponement of the target date with unusual docility, for it would make possible the running of further convoys to Russia; but he voiced the opinion, which was to grow ever stronger, that if no operation was possible before the spring they should strike at Sicily and have done with it. Meanwhile planning for both operations went ahead, Allied Force Headquarters in Algiers taking charge of the planning for Sardinia, while 'Husky', involving as it did forces from the Middle East as well as from the United Kingdom and French North Africa, was handled by the Joint Planning Staff in London.<sup>(22)</sup>

As so frequently happened, the more closely the difficulties of both operations were examined the more formidable they appeared. The delay in the capture of Tunisia made matters worse, postponing still further the date when either operation could take place until early summer. On 12th December A.F.H.Q.\* produced a plan for the capture of Cagliari in Sardinia<sup>(23)</sup> at the end of March, using three infantry divisions, four armoured battalions, a parachute brigade and six commandos, with air cover provided by carriers; but they admitted that it was unlikely to succeed if the Germans had by then reinforced the island with two good quality divisions. The Chiefs of Staff were dissatisfied with this proposal, which took inadequate account of the capture of the rest of the island, the comparable rates of build-up on both sides, and the problem of maintaining air supremacy so close to the enemy mainland, and they sent it back for further study;<sup>(24)</sup> while the Prime Minister expressed his views in a forceful minute of 17th December.<sup>(25)</sup>

'It seems to me that you are overweighting "Brimstone" to such an extent as to kill it. It may be that this is right. Certainly if the sum of all American fears is to be multiplied by the sum of all British fears, faithfully contributed by each Service, the project is not worth the cost and trouble. The delay in taking the Tunis tip in any case throws out all previous calculations.

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\* Allied Force Headquarters: General Eisenhower's Headquarters in Algiers.

“Husky” alone gives a worthwhile prize, even if we have to wait till May. Moreover the PQ convoys can then run regularly at least till the end of March’.

But the prospects for ‘Husky’ appeared even worse than did those for ‘Brimstone’. In a memorandum of 9th January<sup>(26)</sup> produced on the eve of their departure for Casablanca, the Joint Planning Staff reported that no attack on Sicily now appeared possible until August, and that the demands which it would make on the limited Allied resources of escort vessels and landing-craft would probably be impossible to meet. Unless the United States provided sixty escorts for Atlantic convoys, neither operation would be possible at all. Even if they did, a further 16 escorts would be needed for ‘Brimstone’, while ‘Husky’ would require no less than 100\*. In any case, they considered that ‘if German land formations have reinforced Sicily before our assaults, we think that Operation “Husky” would fail. The same does not necessarily apply to Sardinia’. So they concluded:

‘Much as we should like to take Sicily, we feel that, against the odds for which we must at present allow, the operation is not practicable.

We therefore recommend the capture of Sardinia to be followed by the capture of Corsica as soon after as possible’.

On this recommendation the Chiefs of Staff found no opportunity to express an opinion until they unpacked their bags in the warm sun of Casablanca.

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\* These figures were modified after examination by the Chiefs of Staff, to 65 for the Atlantic, 17 for Sardinia and 86 for Sicily.<sup>(27)</sup>

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For Sicily see F/Italy/5, Vol. I.
- (3) J.P. (42) 867 of 9.10.42.
- (4) C.O.S.(42)147th Mtg.(O) of 14.10.42.  
C.O.S.(42)155th Mtg.(O) of 21.10.42.
- (5) J.P.(42) 849 (O).  
C.O.S.(42)137th Mtg.(O).
- (6) J.P.(42)886 of 20.10.42, reprinted with modifications as C.O.S.(42)  
354(O).
- (7) J.P.S.(M) Paper 111.  
C.O.S.(42)320(O) of 17.10.42.
- (8) C.O.S.(42)158th Mtg.(O) of 23.10.42.  
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- (9) Telegram LETOD 405 of 9.11.42.  
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C.O.S.(W)345 of 12.11.42.
- (10) C.O.S.(42)392(O).  
C.O.S.(42)397(O).  
C.O.S.(42)181st Mtg.(O).
- (11) P.M. telegram T.1525/2: W.S.C.-F.D.R. of 17.11.42.
- (12) W.P.(42)545 of 20.11.42.
- (13) W.P.(42)546 of 25.11.42.
- (14) W.M.(42)164th Conc. of 3.12.42: Confidential Annex.
- (15) J.P.(42)990 of 31.12.42.
- (16) C.O.S.(42)466(O) of 31.12.42.
- (17) J.P.(42)940.
- (18) C.O.S.(42)182nd Mtg.(O) of 15.11.42.
- (19) J.P.(42)972 of 24.11.42.
- (20) C.O.S.(42)413(O) Annex.
- (21) C.O.S.(42)189th Mtg.(O) of 25.11.42.
- (22) F/Italy/5(B), fol. 3.
- (23) C.O.S.(42)449(O) of 12.12.42.
- (24) C.O.S.(42)205th Mtg.(O).
- (25) P.M. directive D.228/2: F/Italy/4, Vol. I, fol. 57.
- (26) J.P.(43)18 of 9.1.43.
- (27) Ismay-W.S.C. of 12.1.43: C.P.228.





BOOK THREE  
CHAPTER XIII  
THE CASABLANCA CONFERENCE  
I: THE OUTLINES OF FUTURE  
STRATEGY

ONCE THE ALLIED forces had established themselves in North Africa, it became urgently necessary for the British and American leaders to raise their eyes from the immediate problems created by their landing and to take firm decisions about future strategy. We have followed the course of the domestic debates which had taken place on both sides of the Atlantic throughout November and December; but long before these were concluded President Roosevelt and Mr. Churchill were in correspondence about the need for a conference, preferably with the Russians present as well, to chart the course ahead.

Mr. Roosevelt at first visualised simply a meeting of military staffs. 'My information is' he cabled on 26th November, 'that this conference could be held in Cairo or in Moscow—that we could each be represented by a small group meeting in utmost secrecy—that any conclusions reached at this conference would of course be subject to approval by the three of us'.<sup>(1)</sup> Such a suggestion came naturally to the President, who always held himself more remote from the strategic discussions carried on by his Chiefs of Staff than did the British Premier; but it was equally natural for Mr. Churchill to show himself lukewarm towards any idea of entrusting matters of such weight to the independent decision of the Allied professional military advisers. His experiences in Moscow had anyhow convinced him that among the Russians decisions were taken by Stalin alone; and he foresaw that the Russians would raise matters which the Chiefs of Staff on their own might find it difficult to handle. 'They will say to us both,' he warned the President, '“How many German divisions will you be engaging in the summer of 1943? How many have you engaged in 1942?” They will certainly demand a strong Second Front in 1943 by the heavy invasion of the Continent either from the west or from the south or from both. This sort of argument, of which I had plenty in Moscow, requires to be met either by principals or by naval and shipping authorities, who would certainly have to be present'. He had, he told Mr. Roosevelt, mooted the possibility of such a meeting when he was in Moscow, and Stalin

had seemed agreeable to the idea. Stalin had mentioned Iceland as a possible rendezvous; and, climate apart, there was a lot to be said for it.<sup>(2)</sup>

The President in his reply on 3rd December<sup>(3)</sup> agreed to the idea of a meeting of principals, to take place perhaps in the middle of January when the North African campaign should have been successfully concluded; but the idea of Iceland did not appeal to him. 'I prefer a comfortable oasis to the raft at Tilsit', he quipped, and suggested instead 'a secure place south of Algiers or in or near Khartoum.' Preliminary Anglo-American conversations he did not consider advisable, 'because I do not want to give Stalin the impression that we are settling everything between ourselves before we meet him'. Mr. Churchill replied at once<sup>(4)</sup> agreeing to an African rendezvous but stressing the desirability of a preliminary Anglo-American meeting: 'otherwise Stalin will greet us with the question "Have you then no plan for the second front in Europe you promised me for 1943?"'. . . However everything depends upon whether "Barkis is willin"'. Barkis proved to be unwilling, so the problem did not arise. Stalin regretted, in a message of 6th December, that it was impossible for him to leave the Soviet Union—a decision which was perfectly understandable in view of the critical nature of the Stalingrad battles. He further reminded the Western leaders of their promises and expressed his confidence 'that a Second Front in Europe will be actually opened by the joint forces of Great Britain and the United States of America in the spring of next year'.<sup>(5)</sup>

The absence of the Russians at least made the choice of rendezvous easier. Mr. Churchill had happy peacetime memories of Marrakesh, and Mr. Roosevelt pointed out that the constitutional difficulties in the way of his leaving the United States would be eased if he could combine his voyage with a tour of inspection of American forces in North Africa. A 'comfortable oasis' somewhere in Morocco seemed the answer, and one was duly found at Anfa on the outskirts of Casablanca, where a comfortable 40-bedroomed hotel stood among a group of luxurious villas—of which two were particularly suitable for the illustrious principals—in a location which was easy both for couriers to reach and for security guards to isolate. Communications were facilitated by the loan from Combined Operations Headquarters of a 6,000-ton vessel, HMS *Bulolo*, which had been converted for use as a headquarters ship and which, lying in Casablanca harbour, accommodated the British cipher and radio staff. In addition to the Chiefs of Staff Committee there went also the principal members of the Joint Planning Staff, of the War Cabinet secretariat and of the Joint Staff Mission, headed by Field Marshal Dill himself. There was a delegation from the Ministry of War

Transport, headed by Lord Leathers, but no representative of the Foreign Office. Since the items discussed at the conference included relations with Turkey and, albeit in a very general manner, general war aims, the omission was, as we shall see, unfortunate, but it was at the request of President Roosevelt that it was made. Mr. Churchill had indicated his wish to bring Mr. Eden, but the President particularly did not wish to bring his Secretary of State, Mr. Cordell Hull; and in any case he considered that the refusal of the Russians to attend would make the presence of foreign affairs specialists unnecessary.<sup>(6)</sup>

Mr. Churchill summed up the situation in a laconic message to Mr. Attlee on his arrival on 13th January. 'Conditions most agreeable. I wish I could say the same of the problems'.<sup>(7)</sup> This was no understatement.

We have seen how the British Chiefs of Staff had reached agreement among themselves as to the shape of future strategy, and how this agreement, after many tribulations, had received the Prime Minister's blessing.<sup>(8)</sup> The Allies were to concentrate on the defeat of Germany, diverting only the minimum force necessary to contain Japan. The defeat of the U-boat remained the first priority; the Anglo-American bomber offensive against the Axis was to be expanded; supplies to Russia were to be maintained; and operations in the Mediterranean were to be continued in order to knock Italy out of the war, bring Turkey in, and maintain unrelenting pressure on the Axis. On the insistence of the Premier they did not exclude a possible invasion of North West Europe in August or September 1943 'should conditions hold out a good prospect of success, or anyhow a "Sledgehammer" to wear down the enemy forces'; but this they put at the bottom of their list of priorities, and about its possibility they were highly pessimistic. Mr. Churchill agreed that such an operation was a 'residual legatee'; but he continued to insist with all his force it that should be carried out. 'He made no secret of the fact', noted Brigadier Jacob of the War Cabinet Secretariat, 'that he was out to get agreement on a programme of operations for 1943 which the military people might well think beyond our powers, but which he felt was the least that could be thought worthy of two great powers'; and this programme included the cleansing of North Africa, the elimination of Italy from the war, the reconquest of Burma and the invasion of Northern France.<sup>(9)</sup>

About the need for operations in North West Europe in 1943 Mr. Churchill found of course a staunch ally in General Marshall, whose desire to close down surface operations in the Mediterranean and transfer all available forces to Britain had been made clear in the Joint Chiefs of Staff memorandum of 23rd December;<sup>(10)</sup> a document which also advocated the continuance of 'offensive and

defensive operations in the Pacific and in Burma to break the Japanese hold on positions which threaten the security of our communications and positions'. The U.S. army and navy planners had not succeeded in reconciling their differences in an integrated policy quite so successfully as had the British, but they appeared to support one another in rejecting the two fundamentals of the British proposals: the continuation of operations in the Mediterranean at the expense of an invasion of North West Europe; and the allocation only of minimal forces for the containment of Japan.

Before the conference formally opened, on 13th January, Sir John Dill, who had travelled from Washington with the Joint Chiefs of Staff, gave his British colleagues a valuable briefing on the factors underlying the American attitude.<sup>(11)</sup> First, he pointed out, there was a strong suspicion that the British had little interest in and no understanding of the war in the Pacific, and that once Germany was defeated they would be unlikely to co-operate in its conduct with much enthusiasm. Secondly, the American services had their own internal difficulties which impeded smooth and integrated planning. The United States Navy bore the major responsibility for Pacific operations; but they were also responsible for the allocation of landing-craft for all operations undertaken by the American forces. The first responsibility shaped their attitude towards the second; and so long as the situation in the Pacific seemed critical, they were reluctant to release large quantities of these vital vessels for operations—often, it seemed to them, rather hypothetical operations—elsewhere. Finally, in spite of the success of the landings in North Africa, General Marshall still had strong reservations about continuing operations in the Mediterranean when these could, it seemed, be so easily countered by a German thrust through Spain. About General Marshall's attitude towards an attack in North West Europe, Dill said only that he was anxious for an initial operation in 1943, to pave the way for something more considerable in 1944.

In fact the Americans came to Casablanca without any positive and agreed proposals. Even General Marshall's views were not so firm as the memorandum of 23rd December suggested. The investigations of the U.S. army planners, like those of their British colleagues, had produced pessimistic conclusions about the possibility of an invasion of North West Europe in 1943. On 7th January at a White House conference Marshall had admitted 'that there was not a united front on that subject, particularly among the planners';<sup>(12)</sup> and at Casablanca his doubts were to be increased by General Eisenhower's advice, on the basis of his North African experiences, that the invasion would require twice the number of landing-craft originally estimated.<sup>(13)</sup> None the less he felt obliged, in the words

of the American official historian, 'to fight a strong rearguard action' in defence of 'Round-up'. When eventually he was brought to accept the Mediterranean strategy, he did so 'only as an expedient action dictated by current circumstances. He was opposed as much as ever to interminable operations in the Mediterranean. He still wished to make the main effort against Germany across the Channel'.<sup>(14)</sup>

As for Admiral King, the impression was carried away by some British officers<sup>(15)</sup> that he had no interest in, and was indeed hostile to, all operations outside the Pacific. That impression was not entirely fair. That Pacific operations should occupy the principal place in his mind and heart was inevitable. On his shoulders rested the ultimate operational responsibility for the conduct of a war unprecedented in complexity and scope against an adversary whose skill and ferocity had astounded the world and who showed as yet no sign of having come to the end of his career of conquest; a war, moreover, to which America's allies could make only a marginal contribution. The British planners found somewhat to their consternation that while their American colleagues were quite prepared to expound their plans for the Pacific theatre, they resolutely refused to discuss them. They were settled and not open to debate: the British had no *locus standi* in the matter.<sup>(16)</sup>

But on wider issues of world strategy, so long as they did not entrench upon his own particular and huge responsibilities, Admiral King showed himself open-minded. His initial concern at Casablanca was so to clarify the strategic concepts of the Allies as to prevent the uncertainties of European strategic problems upsetting and diverting resources from those projects in the Pacific about which he had no uncertainty whatever, and which he regarded as indispensable for holding the line against Japan. On arrival at Casablanca he suggested to the Joint Chiefs of Staff that they should, when they met the British, insist on settling the overall strategic pattern before allowing themselves to be drawn into detailed discussions about the pros and cons of specific operations.<sup>(17)</sup> About the desirability or otherwise of further Mediterranean operations as against the invasion of North West Europe he had an open mind.

Admiral King's colleague from the Air Force, General Arnold, was also open to conviction. The studies undertaken by American Air Force planners had indicated that a combined bomber offensive against Germany could not reach its peak until 1944; a conclusion which was hard to reconcile with the official American advocacy of 'Roundup' in 1943.<sup>(18)</sup> In addition the American airmen, like the British, appreciated the great advantage which the acquisition of air bases in the Mediterranean would give in their offensive against German war production, particularly against the oilfields and

installations of Rumania. In view of these flexible attitudes on the part of all three of the American professional chiefs, it is hard to accept the view which gained such wide currency in certain quarters in the United States that they were in any way overcome or out-argued by the British, or that decisions were imposed on them which they were reluctant to accept. Nevertheless it took five days of hard and often heated discussion to reach agreement on fundamentals. Only then was it possible to begin the detailed planning on which the future conduct of the war was to rest.

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General Marshall opened the first meeting of the Combined Chiefs of Staff, on the morning of 14th January<sup>(19)</sup>, by putting forward a proposal by Admiral King, that before discussing any detailed operations they should agree on the general distribution of effort between the Pacific and the European theatres; suggesting a division of resources in the proportion of 70% to the European and 30% to the Pacific theatre. The present proportion going to the Pacific, pointed out King, was about 15%: quite inadequate to stop the Japanese from digging in and making their position impregnable. The British did not comment on the proposal immediately, and the Americans do not appear to have raised it again. Instead, during the afternoon, after listening to a review by Admiral King of the general situation in the Pacific, Air Chief Marshal Portal suggested 'that it should be possible to determine what it was that we had to prevent the Japanese from doing, and what forces we should require for the purpose. We should then see what forces remained for use elsewhere in the world'.<sup>(20)</sup> This proposal was accepted, and the Combined Staff Planners were directed to report, on the basis that Germany was the primary enemy, 'what situation do we wish to establish in the Eastern Theatre in 1943, and what forces will be necessary to establish that situation'. The planners were to find it impossible at first to produce an agreed report; but before considering their difficulties in this respect we must first consider further the positions taken up by both sides at the opening meeting on 14th January.

The morning was devoted largely to an exposition of the views which the British Chiefs of Staff had so laboriously hammered out during the past autumn, presented by General Brooke with all the skill he had developed during the weeks of argument with his tough and suspicious Prime Minister.<sup>(22)</sup> First he pointed out that the principal threat to the Allied war effort lay in the German attack on their sea communications. 'The shortage of shipping', he said unanswerably, 'was a stranglehold on all offensive operations, and

unless we could effectively combat the U-boat menace we might not be able to win the war'. Apart from this, the Germans were no longer attacking. They were on the defensive both in Russia and in North Africa; their allies were faltering, their manpower was failing, and they were growing short of oil. As a result, victory in Europe in 1943 was by no means impossible. The best way of achieving this was to give Russia the utmost support; to exploit air bombardment to the limit; and to launch amphibious operations. For these, the point of entry should be selected where the enemy would be least able to concentrate large forces (an opposite approach to that of General Marshall, who would choose the point where the Allies were *best* able to concentrate large forces). Good east-west rail communications enabled the Germans to move seven divisions simultaneously from Russia to the West in 12–14 days, whereas over the Alps she could move only one division at a time, over railways which in Italy ran close to the sea and in the Balkans passed through a single bottleneck at Nish. Thus in the Mediterranean the Germans would be fighting at a considerable disadvantage; and since they could not be sure where the blow would fall—the Dodecanese, the Balkan peninsula, Italy, Sicily, Corsica, Sardinia—they would have to fight with their forces dispersed.

Mediterranean operations, argued General Brooke, would thus alleviate pressure on the Russian front more effectively than would a definite commitment in North West France. They would maintain the pressure on the Axis unrelaxed. They might compel Italy to leave the war, and encourage the Turks to join in, who could then provide bases for attacks on the Balkans and free access to Russia through the Black Sea. In North West Europe, he agreed, 'we must be in a position to take advantage of a crack in Germany in the late summer', and this might become possible if the Germans withdrew enough of their forces from France. Thirteen British and nine U.S. divisions would be available in the United Kingdom by August, whether Mediterranean operations were continued or not. But whether landing-craft would be available to lift them was another matter. In conclusion General Brooke's colleagues amplified his remarks in so far as they applied to their own services. Admiral Pound emphasised that the critical shortages in the U-boat war were escort vessels and long-range aircraft, and Air Chief Marshal Portal urged that the Allies should use their growing superiority in air strength to engage the *Luftwaffe* as closely as possible and to wear it down.

It was a masterly survey, but it may have done something to confirm American suspicions that the British were indifferent to their difficulties in the Pacific. General Brooke's only reported reference to Pacific operations was in pointing out that shortage of



naval forces would seriously impede the reconquest of Burma. General Marshall, in his immediate comment on the British survey, confined himself to reminding his colleagues of American fears in the Pacific—that the Japanese were establishing themselves in positions from which they must be levered out before they became impregnable, and that Burma seemed to offer a vulnerable flank by which to attack them. That afternoon, however, Admiral King gave a survey of the Pacific theatre as complete as that which Sir Alan Brooke had given of the European theatre during the morning.

Admiral King began by explaining in some detail the disposition of American naval bases which enabled them to wage war at the end of supply-lines three thousand miles long. Then he discussed the operations in the Solomon Islands. These had been undertaken in order to safeguard the American lines of communication to North Australia; and the intensity of the Japanese reaction, combined with the reduction in American reserves due to the 'Torch' operations, made it impossible at present to press the attack beyond Tulagi and Guadalcanal. But once the position there had been consolidated, various possibilities opened up. One was to advance through the Netherlands East Indies. Another was to approach the Philippines via Truk and the Mariana Islands, a course which he personally favoured. Whichever course was adopted, the Japanese could not be allowed to consolidate the defensive perimeter which they had established around the Netherlands East Indies and the Philippines. Constant pressure had to be maintained; but to maintain such pressure, King insisted, the forces at present allotted to the Pacific were quite inadequate. General Marshall reinforced this view. The difficulties in supplying even such forces as they had in the Pacific, he pointed out, were immense, and it was these difficulties which made him favour so strongly an operation in Burma which would draw in Japanese strength and compel them to slacken their pressure in the South West Pacific.

In the discussion which followed this exposition mutual misunderstandings and suspicions about the place of Pacific operations in overall strategy revealed themselves very quickly. Both General Brooke and Air Chief Marshal Portal probed further into the American idea of 'maintaining pressure' and frankly expressed their fear—exactly analogous to General Marshall's anxiety over Mediterranean operations—that this might in fact lead to an all-out struggle in the Pacific theatre. On the other hand, Admiral King bluntly asked, who was going to bear the principal burden of defeating Japan once Germany was defeated? If the British were afraid that the Americans would become totally absorbed in the Pacific to the exclusion of Europe, the Americans could not shake off the suspicion that the British might run out on them altogether

once the war in Europe had been, largely by the use of American resources, brought to an end. Brooke and Portal tried to assuage Admiral King's fears, assuring him that the full weight of British resources would be turned to the Pacific as soon as the war with Germany was over; and during the course of the conference, as we shall see, Mr. Churchill was to offer still more binding assurances. The determination to satisfy the Americans on this point, indeed, was of major importance in the explicit British agreement to prosecute the war until the unconditional surrender of the Axis powers.

The British fears received no such solace. The British Chiefs of Staff, meeting privately on the evening of 14th January with their Directors of Plans,<sup>(23)</sup> had certainly been impressed by the American arguments. There could be no security for communications in the Pacific, they agreed, until the Japanese had been pressed further back from American supply-lines and the Allies had secured more airfields from which to defend them. But they had not been shaken in their view that the Americans must be tied down to a definite objective in the Pacific, and that the forces necessary to achieve that objective should then be allotted, as a minimum detachment from the main task of defeating Germany. As Air Chief Marshal Portal expressed it, 'We are in the position of a testator who wishes to leave the bulk of his fortune to his mistress. He must however leave something to his wife and the problem is how little he can in decency set apart for her'.<sup>(24)</sup>

This was an attitude which the Americans found it difficult to accept. Knowing the complexity and the uncertainties of the Pacific theatre, it seemed to them quite as unrealistic as General Marshall's hankering after an invasion of France in 1943 seemed to the British. On planning committees their naval representatives remained unco-operative<sup>(25)</sup> and among the Combined Chiefs of Staff the deadlock remained unresolved for four days.

Having failed to reach agreement on the combined report required of them, the American and British planners put up separate papers for consideration.<sup>(26)</sup> The Americans would not accept the simple view that the defeat of Germany should receive overriding priority on the allocation of resources. Their paper simply assumed 'that Germany is recognised as the primary, or most powerful and pressing enemy, and that the major part of the forces of the United Nations are to be directed against Germany in so far as it is consistent with the overall objective of bringing the war to an early conclusion at the earliest possible date'. It was necessary, they insisted in this document, to maintain the initiative by attacks 'directed against Japanese objectives of sufficient importance to the Japanese as to cause Japanese counter-action; they must be sufficient in power to combat successfully this Japanese counter-action. By

this process we intend to prevent the Japanese the opportunity (*sic*) for consolidating (digging in), thus strengthening their position, to an extent that would permit them to initiate offensive action at times and places of their choosing'.

The operations which the American planners proposed were as follows. The attacks in the Solomon Islands and Eastern New Guinea should be pressed as far as the Lae-Salamau peninsula, and the general area of New Britain and New Ireland (Rabaul). Kiska and Agattu in the Western Aleutians should be seized and occupied. In the Central Pacific the Gilberts, the Marshalls and the Caroline Islands should be captured up to and including Truk. New Guinea should be occupied up to the Dutch frontier; while communications along the lower Burma Road were to be reopened 'with a view to keeping China in the war, keeping pressure on the Japanese in this area, and the establishment and operation of air strength on Japanese shipping in Chinese and Indo-China ports as well as on the flank of Japanese sea communications along the China coast'. All this, they reckoned, would demand an eventual increase in the forces in the Burma-Pacific area by about 210,000 men, 500 aircraft, most of the anticipated additional strength of the U.S. Navy except for what would be needed in the Atlantic and 1,250,000 tons of shipping.

It was a formidable programme, and it is not surprising that the British Joint Planners had their reservations about it. Their document<sup>(27)</sup> stated that the quickest way of ending the war 'will be to concentrate on defeating Germany first and then to concentrate our combined resources against Japan. Meanwhile, such pressure must be maintained on Japan as will prevent her from damaging interests vital to the Allies and will hinder her from consolidating her conquests'. They accepted the American definition of the strategy required for this 'provided always that its applications does not prejudice the earliest possible defeat of Germany'. The operations projected by the Americans they divided into two. Those 'certainly required in 1943' included an offensive in the Solomons and New Guinea as far as Lae and Rabaul, and operations in Burma to recapture Akyab, establish bridgeheads in the Chindwin Valley, and construct a road from Ledo via Myitkyina to Lungling: Operation 'Ravenous' in short. Once these were complete, 'further operations would be necessary if we were to retain the initiative', and the remaining operations projected by the Americans should be planned, though the final decision to launch them should be deferred until later in the year. Plans for 'Anakim', the reconquest of Burma by seaborne invasion, should also be made for the winter of 1943-44; but 'it is not possible at this stage', they warned, 'to say by when the forces required for this operation could be provided without detracting seriously from the defeat of Germany'. In

conclusion they insisted: 'It is certain that the provision of the naval and amphibious forces required for simultaneous "Truk" and "Anakim" operations cannot but react adversely on the early defeat of Germany. It may be possible to carry out one of these operations without such a violation of our agreed strategy. The decision as to the right course of action should be taken later in the light of the development of the war'.

The difference of approach which underlay these two documents arose not from any disagreement about the importance of Pacific operations, or even—as the British reader may sometimes be tempted to think—from the greater experience and realism of the British planners. It was rooted in the attitude which each partner adopted towards the availability and distribution of resources. The melancholy experience not only of three war years but of the years preceding them had taught the British the hard lesson that resources of every kind would always be limited and usually quite inadequate; that the demands of one theatre could be met only at the expense of another; and that no operation could be considered out of the context of the war as a whole. The Americans, on the other hand, were conscious rather of the enormous potential, in manpower, weapons and equipment, which lay at their disposal. For them shortages were not a problem, as for the British, to be lived with indefinitely, but a passing embarrassment which need not affect long-term strategy. This view may have led them to underrate not only the problems of organising production but the difficulties of planning, logistics and tactics which still lay in the way of bringing their resources effectively to bear; but their British allies were no less prone to regard as insoluble difficulties which American energy and abundance now, for the first time, made it possible to overcome.

This difference was illustrated as soon as the Combined Chiefs of Staff met on 18th January to consider the two documents which their planning staffs had prepared.<sup>(28)</sup> The American naval planners opened the proceedings by saying that the United States could provide all the landing-craft necessary for 'Anakim'—the invasion of Burma from the sea—in the late autumn of 1943; and furthermore, since these resources would come from new production which would not be ready in time for any other operations that year, this would not inhibit other attacks in the Pacific. The British saw difficulties. The Chief of Combined Operations, Lord Louis Mountbatten, pointed out that he could not provide the trained crews to man these landing-craft, and Sir Alan Brooke said that although they could find the necessary land and air forces from resources already in the area, the British would still be unable to provide enough naval craft to cover the landing, Admiral King assured them that the United States would take care of that as well. In the face of this firm generosity

the British were happy to acquiesce, and it was agreed therefore that all preparations for 'Anakim' should go ahead and that the final decision to mount it should be taken by the Combined Chiefs of Staff during the summer, in the light of the situation which existed when they next met.

This agreement did not solve the main difference between the two papers, that the British gave the defeat of Germany marked priority over the defeat of Japan which the American paper did not; and the rest of the morning passed in a weary wrangle over this vital point. General Brooke reiterated all his arguments: Germany had to be defeated first, and the way to do it was by an all-out effort in the Mediterranean which would draw off the maximum forces from the Russian front. 'If we do not maintain constant pressure on the Germans', he insisted, consciously or unconsciously echoing the American arguments about the Japanese, 'they will be given an opportunity to recover and thus prolong the war'. General Marshall said that he agreed in principle; but he was most anxious, he repeated, not to become committed 'to interminable operations' in the Mediterranean; and—what was more to the point—he was even more concerned not to lock up large resources in the United Kingdom, waiting for a possible crack in German morale, when they could be used to better advantage in the Pacific. His primary concern in the Pacific he insisted, 'was to ensure that our operations would be so strengthened as to provide us with the means for necessary operations rather than to continue conducting them on a "shoe string"'. Moreover, he claimed shrewdly and with perfect justice, lack of resources in the Pacific had constantly threatened the concept of beating Germany first. 'He was anxious to get a secure position in the Pacific so that we knew where we were'.

General Marshall's anxieties about the Pacific were not entirely easy to reconcile with the assurances which Admiral King gave during the course of this meeting, that 'the operations contemplated in the Pacific . . . would have no effect on what could be done in the Mediterranean or from the United Kingdom', and in this connection the observations of the American official historian may be noted. General Marshall, he states,

' . . . in effect, notified the British that continued Mediterranean advances would have to be balanced with an enlargement of the scope of operations in the Pacific. His presentation implied that if there were to be no large-scale cross-Channel operations in 1943, the Americans would proceed further in the Pacific . . . In this modified form the "Pacific Alternative" emerged as a possible lever for balancing forces . . . and for paving the way for a return to the principle of concentration for the cross-Channel effort'.<sup>(29)</sup>

Such an interpretation attributes a degree of subtlety to General Marshall which is somewhat at variance with the assessment usually made of his character by American and British alike—more perhaps than is necessary to account for the position that he was here taking up. Whatever his underlying motives, however, his arguments and those of Admiral King were convincing enough to show that the British, in insisting on a rigid and overriding priority for the European theatre, were in an untenable position. Wisely they did not try to maintain it. During the lunch hour Air Vice Marshal Slessor, who had been a silent spectator of the morning's arguments, submitted a formula reconciling the two views, which General Brooke put forward at the meeting that afternoon. It was immediately accepted by the Americans,<sup>(30)</sup> and embodied in the Memorandum on the Conduct of the War in 1943 which the Combined Chiefs of Staff approved the following day and which then became the basis for detailed planning.<sup>(31)\*</sup>

This was to lay down (para. 3) that 'Operations in the European Theatre will be conducted with the object of defeating Germany in 1943 with the maximum forces which can be brought to bear on her by the United Nations'; but (para. 5) 'In order to ensure that these operations and preparations are not prejudiced by the necessity to divert forces to retrieve an adverse situation elsewhere, adequate forces shall be allocated to the Pacific and Far Eastern Theatres'. 'Operations in these theatres', it went on (para. 6a), 'shall continue with the forces allocated, with the object of maintaining pressure on Japan, retaining the initiative and attaining a position of readiness for the full scale offensive against Japan by the United Nations as soon as Germany is defeated'; but (para. 6b) 'These operations must be kept within such limits as will not, in the opinion of the Combined Chiefs of Staff, jeopardise the capacity of the United Nations to take advantage of any favourable opportunity that may present itself for the decisive defeat of Germany in 1943'. Finally, concessions were made to the British fear that the Americans in the Pacific were biting off more than they could chew. 'Subject to this', ran para. 6c of the Memorandum, 'plans and preparations to be made for (i) Recapture of Burma ("Anakim") beginning in 1943; (ii) Operations, after capture of Rabaul, against Marshalls and Carolines, if time and resources allow without prejudice to "Anakim".'

This satisfied the British, but it satisfied Admiral King no less. He had no objection to reaffirming the principle that the lion's share of the Allied war effort should be directed towards Europe, and he was prepared to co-operate in the European theatre to the best of his very considerable ability, so long as he was left to fight the war in the

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\* See Appendix III (D).

Pacific with the resources he had already earmarked for it, and in accordance with the plans he had already drawn up. Paragraph 6a, especially its reference to forces already allocated, met his views completely; and the reservations which followed were ones of form rather than substance. 'The document that is now in preparation', he stated that evening, with apparent gratification, 'goes a long way towards establishing a policy of how we are to win the war'.<sup>(32)</sup>

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The document in question also endorsed and clarified the Mediterranean strategy which the British Chiefs of Staff recommended. The discussions on this point had fairly quickly resulted in agreement. The American Chiefs of Staff showed themselves open to conviction, if only because they were unable to agree among themselves on a convincing alternative. But they remained doubtful whether any strategy other than one of concentrating on North West Europe and smashing the German armed forces in battle could effectively win the war. They were still far from convinced that the British proposals for undermining morale by bombing, blockade and subversion, assisted by peripheral amphibious operations, provided an answer. On 16th January therefore they subjected the British proposals to a penetrating but not unfriendly inquisition.<sup>(33)</sup> General Marshall began by stating that pressure on Russia must be alleviated and that 'any method of accomplishing this other than on the Continent is a deviation from the basic plan'; but his subsequent remarks suggest that he intended this as not so much a criticism as a plain statement of fact. With typical fairness he agreed that 'one of the strongest arguments for undertaking such an [Mediterranean] operation is that there will be an excess of troops in North Africa once Tunisia has been cleared of Axis forces'. But he wanted to know—and here his colleagues supported him—whether the operation was to be a means to an end or an end in itself. Was it simply opportunism, or was it part of an integrated plan to win the war?

The British were well briefed to deal with this question. General Brooke reiterated the arguments which he had used two days earlier. The Germans, with 44 divisions in France, could deal with any threat the Allies could bring against them from the United Kingdom without withdrawing any forces from Russia. Instead therefore the United Nations should force Italy out of the war, which would compel Germany not only to occupy the Italian peninsula but to replace the Italian forces in the Balkans as well. Preparations to attack Sicily would force the Germans to disperse their forces to defend not only Sicily but Sardinia, Greece and the Dodecanese, which, combined with the need to provide protection from the air

for their sea-lanes, would result in a far greater diversion of resources from the Russian front than any that could be provided by any cross-Channel operation that could be contemplated in 1943. But, he warned, they should be very careful about extending Allied operations into Italy itself. 'We should be very careful of accepting any invitation to support an anti-Fascist insurrection. To do so might only immobilise a considerable force to no useful purpose'. On this significant caveat no comment seems to have been made. The physical invasion of Italy was a project which as yet no one was prepared to espouse.

Air Chief Marshal Portal reinforced General Brooke's arguments. Mediterranean operations, he pointed out, would force far greater dispersion on German air forces than would an attack in North West Europe; and he combined with them the doctrine of the Air Staff as to how the war was to be won, duly modified to embrace American views. With Italy knocked out, he said, Germany's capacity to survive would depend on her morale and her resources in aircraft and oil; and the latter could be reduced by precision bombing by daylight of synthetic oil plants. The way to defeat Germany, therefore, seemed to be to take every chance of attacking her oil supplies, and to increase the air bombardment of Germany itself with its inevitable results on German morale and on industrial capacity. A point might come when 'Germany would thoroughly crack'. He did not claim that air bombardment alone would bring Germany to this point. 'In order to produce this crack', he said a little later in the discussion, 'we must keep up the maximum pressure on Germany by land operations; air bombardment alone was not sufficient'. The synthesis of Army and Royal Air Force doctrine hammered out in Whitehall over the last three months still held fast.

General Arnold was naturally sympathetic to the case as presented by Portal, and Admiral King summed up the British argument in his own terms. He said 'he understood the general concept of the British Chiefs of Staff was to make use of Russia's geographical position and her reserves of manpower to make the main effort on land against Germany, and to support Russia by diverting as many German forces as possible from the Eastern Front'. He agreed that since the Allies had troops in the Mediterranean they might as well be used there; of the possible operations, an invasion of Sicily seemed to offer the best dividends; and if it were decided on he would help find the necessary naval support somehow. The chief objection of the British planning staffs to Operation 'Husky' was thus amply met.

But if they did undertake further Mediterranean operations, pointed out Admiral King, two problems still remained. Would the Russians be content at this further postponement of the Second Front? And could the Allies themselves afford to delay taking



further direct action against Germany? It seems to have been generally recognised—indeed General Arnold explicitly stated—that the acceptance of further Mediterranean operations rendered any invasion of North West Europe out of the question for a further year, except to exploit a total German collapse. But even if Mediterranean operations were not undertaken, General Brooke reiterated, only some 21–24 divisions could be accumulated in the United Kingdom by September—a figure which the Mediterranean strategy would reduce only to 16–18; and unless Germany was actually crumbling, put in Air Chief Marshal Portal, forces of this size would get the Allies nowhere. It was better to accept the situation, ‘definitely count’, as Brooke put it, ‘on re-entering the Continent in 1944 on a large scale’, and go ahead with their Mediterranean plans. This was a course which recommended itself to President Roosevelt, who had shown in his conversations with Mr. Churchill an enthusiastic interest in the idea of a Sicilian invasion.<sup>(34)</sup> And so it was agreed.

When the Combined Chiefs of Staff met President Roosevelt and Mr. Churchill on the afternoon of 18th January<sup>(35)</sup> General Marshall himself summed up the reasons which had led him and his colleagues to abandon their original idea of launching ‘Round-up’ in 1943. They had agreed to undertake Operation ‘Husky’ (the invasion of Sicily), he explained, ‘because we will have in North Africa a large number of troops available and because it will effect an economy of tonnage which is the major consideration’. Connected with this ‘was the possibility of eliminating Italy from the war and thus necessitating Germany’s taking over the present commitments of the Italians’. Such a commitment, however, made ‘Roundup’ in 1943 impossible: the landing-craft used in ‘Husky’ could not possibly be got back to the United Kingdom in time. The forces assembling in Britain could be regarded only as an emergency force waiting for an opportunity target.

The relevant passages in the Memorandum on the Conduct of the War which the Combined Chiefs of Staff approved on 19th January therefore laid down the order of priorities as follows.<sup>(36)</sup> The main lines of offensive action in the Mediterranean were to be (a) the occupation of Sicily, with the object of (i) making the Mediterranean lines of communication more secure, (ii) diverting German pressure from the Russian front, and (iii) intensifying the pressure on Italy; and (b) to create a situation in which Turkey could be enlisted as an active ally. In the United Kingdom, the lines of offensive action were to be (c) the heaviest possible bomber offensive against the German war effort; (d) ‘such limited offensive operations as may be practicable with the amphibious forces available’; and (e) ‘the assembly of the strongest possible force (subject to (a) and (b) above

and paragraph 6 below) in constant readiness to re-enter the Continent as soon as German resistance is weakened to the required extent'. Paragraph 6 we have already considered: it was that dealing with the prosecution of operations in the Pacific. General Marshall may have had to yield over the question of 'Roundup' in 1943, but he had at least gained his point, that forces should not be accumulated in the United Kingdom, awaiting a hypothetical crack in German morale, if they were needed more urgently in the Pacific theatre. 'Bolero' sank to the bottom of the priority list once more.

Thus were the two major items of controversy resolved. On the other questions discussed in the first half of the conference there was already substantial measure of agreement. There could be, and was, no debate over the overriding necessity to win the war at sea, and the first paragraph of the Memorandum proclaimed: 'Defeat of U-boat remains first charge on resources'.<sup>(37)</sup> The Allies' difficulties, as Admiral Pound had reminded the Combined Chiefs of Staff, lay in the shortage of escort vessels and long-range aircraft to protect the convoys and to harass the U-boats, and the Combined Planners were consequently instructed to report on Allied requirements in these respects in 1943.<sup>(38)</sup> The problem of the Russian convoys remained gigantic, and of this Admiral Pound gave a frankly pessimistic survey. The United Kingdom, he pointed out, could run only one 30-ship convoy every 40-42 days. With the aid of twelve more destroyers from the United States they might reduce this to 27 days; but if the Germans really wanted they could still cut this convoy route completely.<sup>(39)</sup> The Americans showed themselves sympathetic. General Marshall, a few days later, expressed the belief that it was not 'necessary to take excessive punishment in running these convoys simply to keep Mr. Stalin placated'. The capacities of the alternative routes to Russia, via Persia and via Vladivostok, were also discussed, and here also shortage of shipping presented the major difficulty.<sup>(40)</sup> But there was no conflict of strategic principle involved. The Combined Chiefs of Staff were in firm agreement that their primary tasks were, first, to gain undisputed mastery of the oceans of the world, without which, for all their great resources, they would be impotent; and secondly to keep Russia in the war. These objectives were set out as the first paragraphs of the Memorandum whose subsequent contents we have already examined. 'Defeat of U-boat remains first charge on resources', the first paragraph ran, and the second, 'Russia must be sustained by greatest volume of supplies transportable to Russia without prohibitive cost in shipping'.<sup>(41)</sup> The outlines of Allied strategy, for 1943 at least, seemed clear.

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- (10) C.C.S. 135 of 23.12.42.
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- (39) C.C.S. 58th Mtg. of 16.1.43.
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## BOOK THREE

### CHAPTER XIV

# THE CASABLANCA CONFERENCE II: THE PLANS FOR FUTURE OPERATIONS

ON 19th JANUARY the Conference, in the words of Brigadier Jacob of the War Cabinet Secretariat, 'changed gear'. The broad outlines of the strategy for 1943 had been resolved. Now the details had to be filled in, and for the next five days the Chiefs of Staff worked over a succession of papers on every aspect of the war prepared for them by their planners—primarily, as was inevitable in view of their numerical superiority, by the British planners. Since the order in which these were produced and considered was determined rather by local exigencies than by their intrinsic importance, we shall be arbitrary and consider them, not in chronological sequence, but in a form which seems better to suit the convenience of the reader. We will take first the plans for war at sea and in the air; then deal with plans for operations in the Mediterranean, in North West Europe, and in the Pacific, in that order; then consider the political arrangements which were made for North Africa itself; and finally analyse the famous 'unconditional surrender' declaration with which the Conference concluded and which, of all the decisions taken at Casablanca, is perhaps the best known and certainly the most discussed.

The figures of shipping losses for the preceding year were so alarming that their improvement was clearly an essential condition for all the further plans discussed by the Combined Chiefs of Staff for the winning of the war. During 1942 a total of 7,790,697 tons of allied shipping had been sunk, all but one and a half million tons of it by U-boat attack; while allied shipyards had been able to construct only seven million tons to make those losses good. There was thus a shortfall of more than three-quarters of a million tons to add to the deficits of previous years. To make matters worse the number of U-boats operational had increased during the year from 91 to 212, and they were still coming from German construction yards faster than they could be destroyed.<sup>(1)</sup> The rate of their destruction depended on the degree of protection that could be given to

convoys and that in its turn depended on the rate at which escort craft could be produced and on the amount of air cover that could be provided from shore-based aircraft and from carriers. The British Joint Planners calculated that the minimum acceptable requirements in escort craft would be met by August or September; but, they warned, 'we will not be in a position . . . to give fully adequate protection to ocean-going convoys to the extent of sinking attacking submarines at a rate even comparable to their production before the end of the year'.<sup>(2)</sup>

To this forecast Admiral Pound added a warning of his own, that his colleagues might be trying to have it both ways. The decision to go ahead with amphibious operations in the Mediterranean and in the South West Pacific was not compatible with the principle that 'the defeat of U-boat remains first charge on resources'. Inevitably the former would absorb escort craft needed for the latter; and he suggested that a note be included in the conclusions of the Combined Chiefs, formally recognising this danger and accepting it as necessary.<sup>(3)</sup> This was agreed; and the American Joint Chiefs accepted also a draft resolution by the British setting out the methods by which the Battle of the Atlantic was to be waged.<sup>(4)</sup> This laid down, first, that intensive bombing raids should continue against U-boat operating bases and construction yards. Secondly, each nation was to aim at meeting half the existing deficiencies in escorts for the Atlantic convoys—65 in all—by scrutinising their existing dispositions of destroyers and escort craft, and by allocating as much new construction, or vessels released by new construction, as possible to convoy protection. Escorts needed for Operation 'Husky' would have to be largely found from non-ocean-going craft. Thirdly, auxiliary escort carriers were to be provided for Atlantic convoys at the earliest possible moment. Finally, measures were to be taken urgently to provide long-range shore-based aircraft to protect convoys in the Atlantic, including the development of suitable airfields in Greenland. The somewhat disappointing outcome of this last resolution is considered in Chapter XVI below.

The question of convoys to Russia was dealt with separately, in association with that of aid to Russia through other channels; about which General Somervell of the United States Services of Supply presented a paper<sup>(5)</sup> on the morning of 20th January.<sup>(6)</sup> General Somervell's calculations showed that if shipping losses were reckoned at 2.6% per month, a total of 722 sailings to Russia from the United States could be made by the end of the year—170 short of the number in the protocol agreed with the Soviet government. This could be made up only at the expense of United States troop movement overseas; and since requirements in all other theatres were now fixed, this would have to come from the existing assignment

to 'Bolero'. Only if the figure of losses could be reduced to 2·4% would it be possible to escape from this dilemma. Lord Leathers, who was present at this meeting, expressed the opinion that the estimated percentage of 2·6 was unnecessarily pessimistic; the working figure normally adopted by the Allied authorities in Washington, he pointed out, was 1·9%. The committee on the whole supported him, agreeing that the figure of 2·4% could be relied on with reasonable certainty as the maximum rate of loss; so there was in fact every expectation that the promised deliveries could all be made without reducing other allied commitments. There might be some difficulty in finding escorts for the Arctic convoys while Operation 'Husky' was being mounted, it was noted, but supplies through the Persian Gulf could be increased to meet this purely temporary loss. The Chiefs of Staff however made their approval of these shipping plans subject to the proviso 'that supplies to Russia shall not be continued at prohibitive cost to the United Nations effort'.

Three days later, in reviewing the general recommendations of the Chiefs of Staff, President Roosevelt endorsed this condition, but Mr. Churchill had his doubts.<sup>(7)</sup> Aid to Russia must be pushed, he insisted, 'no investment could pay a better military dividend'. It took the combined efforts of Admiral King and Admiral Pound to convince him that it was genuinely impossible to find more escorts, and he insisted on reassurances that everything possible would be done to keep the convoys running throughout the Sicily operation.<sup>(8)</sup> It was bad enough that Stalin was to be disappointed of his Second Front in 1943; he could not be permitted to run short of supplies as well.

Next to the war at sea came war in the air, and on this the two Air Forces over the last four months had developed a common policy. We have already considered the paper submitted to the Chiefs of Staff Committee on 5th October in which Air Chief Marshal Portal had outlined a programme for the defeat of Germany in which air bombardment would play a predominant role. This programme, with only minor modifications, had been embodied in successive memoranda by the Chiefs of Staff. 'The aim of the bomber offensive,' it had been stated, 'is the progressive destruction and dislocation of the enemy's war industrial and economic system and the undermining of his morale to a point where his capacity for armed resistance is fatally weakened'.<sup>(9)</sup> Simultaneously the United States Army Air Force Planners were urging, with the support of General Arnold, the building up of a bomber force which would achieve 'the systematic destruction of selected, vital elements of the German military and industrial machine through precision-bombing in daylight'.<sup>(10)</sup> The points of resemblance between these two policies



were not purely coincidental; the R.A.F. element in the Joint Staff Mission at Washington did sterling liaison work in the campaign which the airmen on both sides of the Atlantic were waging throughout the autumn against their sceptical colleagues of the surface forces. The British and American air force commanders at Casablanca were in agreement over every point except one: whether daylight bombing of Germany was in fact feasible.

At the Casablanca Conference, according to the official historians of the U.S. Air Force, 'apparently under the leadership of the Prime Minister, pressure was brought to bear to have the heavy bombers of the Eighth Air Force join the R.A.F. in its night bombing campaign'. Such pressure was less organised than the Americans supposed. Air Chief Marshal Portal in fact spoke strongly to his colleagues in favour of daylight precision attacks on synthetic oil plants in the Ruhr.<sup>(11)</sup> The U.S. Air Force commanders certainly found themselves exposed to a chill blast of scepticism whenever the question was raised, and perhaps the British were able, after their own catastrophic experiences, to argue the point more forcefully than could the equally numerous sceptics in the United States. The burden, after all, lay on the Americans to show that a policy which had been disastrous when practised by their allies, and which they had themselves tried out only in marginal areas and on a very small scale, was none the less a sound one on which to base all their future plans. General Arnold, assisted by General Spaatz and by General Eaker who flew from England for the purpose, laboured heroically to justify it before a Prime Minister for whom ferocious cross-examination of senior officers had become an indispensable and hugely enjoyable habit; and if General Arnold did not entirely succeed he was at least able to show that if the policy failed it would not be for lack of enthusiasm, forethought and self-confidence on the part of the men who had to undertake it. So long as British officers did not have to assume the responsibility for ordering daylight attacks by American bombers Mr. Churchill was prepared to leave it to the Eighth Air Force to carry out its tasks in whatever way it thought best.<sup>(12)</sup> The whole question was therefore disposed of in private conversations, and received no official recognition on the agenda of the Conference. In the documents produced by the planners during the second half of the conference American daylight bombing was accepted as a matter of course.

The only formal divergence of opinion which appeared among the Combined Chiefs of Staff over the bomber offensive, and that a comparatively minor one, was between Air Chief Marshal Portal and Admiral Pound; and this was a continuation of an old controversy, the arguments in which had been rehearsed in London many times. It revolved round the degree of priority to be allotted

to the bombing of U-boat bases within the general framework of the bomber offensive. The Chief of Air Staff was disturbed that the bombing of 'German submarine operational bases and construction yards' should be put first on the list of objectives for the allied bombers. 'If too literal an interpretation of the order of priority were taken,' he suggested, <sup>(13)</sup> 'and the entire weight of our bomber effort were placed on the German submarine bases, there would be very serious criticism indeed'. Admiral Pound had greeted the news of the heavy raids on Berlin on the nights of 16th and 18th January with the complaint 'that every time our heavy bomber offensive is concentrated on some new target, the anti-U-boat war suffered'; <sup>(14)</sup> now he pointed out also that, in view of the serious detractions from the anti-submarine effort which would result from the amphibious operations of the coming year, it would be more necessary than ever to concentrate the air offensive against U-boat targets, and that the hitherto sporadic efforts must now be replaced by a sustained attack. He found a supporter in Admiral King, and a critic in General Brooke who supported Portal on the grounds that, since the bombing of U-boat targets was basically a defensive measure, no more effort should be allotted to it than was absolutely essential. 'The bombing of Germany', he maintained, 'contributed directly to the destruction of German power, whereas the bombing of U-boat targets was only an indirect contribution'. <sup>(15)</sup>

It was in any case unrealistic to be too dogmatic in allocating priorities which were inevitably bound to be at the mercy of operational circumstances. The Combined Planners were able without great difficulty to find a formula acceptable to all views, and this was embodied in the Directive for the Bomber Offensive which was approved and duly became one of the major decisions for the future conduct of the war which resulted from the Conference. <sup>(16)</sup>\* This defined the objective in the words already used many times by the British Air Staff: 'the progressive destruction and dislocation of the German military, industrial and economic system, and the undermining of the morale of the German people, to a point where their capacity for armed resistance is fatally weakened'. The alteration of the phrase 'war industrial' to 'industrial' may be noted as a recognition, realistic if regrettable, that in the twentieth century all industries were war industries; while the introduction of the word 'military' perhaps implied more attention to the defensive mechanism for the resistance of Allied invasion than had been given in previous Air Staff drafts. 'Within that general concept,' continued the Directive, in a meticulously phrased paragraph,

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\* See Appendix III (E).

'Your primary objectives, subject to the exigencies of weather and of tactical feasibility, will for the present be in the following order of priority:

- (a) German submarine construction yards.
- (b) The German aircraft industry.
- (c) Transportation.
- (d) Oil Plants.
- (e) Other targets in enemy war industry.

The above order of priority may be varied from time to time according to developments in the strategic situation. Moreover, other objectives of great importance, either from the political or military point of view must be attacked. Examples of these are:

- (i) Submarine operating bases on the Biscay coast. If these can be put out of action, a great step forward will have been taken in the U-boat war which the C.C.S. has agreed to be a first charge on our resources. Day and night attacks on these bases have been inaugurated and should be continued so that an assessment of their effects can be made as soon as possible. If it is found that successful results can be achieved, these attacks should continue whenever conditions are favourable for as long and as often as is necessary. These objectives have not been included in the order of priority, which covers long-term operations, particularly as the bases are not situated in Germany.
- (ii) Berlin, which should be attacked when conditions are suitable for the attainment of specially valuable results unfavourable to the morale of the enemy or favourable to that of Russia'.

This apparently satisfied the First Sea Lord; while the fifth paragraph of the document ordered:

'You should take every opportunity to attack Germany by day, to destroy objectives that are unsuitable for night attack, to sustain continuous pressure on the German morale, to impose heavy losses on the German day fighter force and to contain German fighter strength away from the Russian and Mediterranean theatres of war'.

The final report of the Combined Chiefs of Staff was further to lay it down that U.S. heavy bombers in the United Kingdom were to operate under the strategic direction of the British Chief of Air Staff, but that the United States Commanding General was to decide the technique and the methods they were to employ.<sup>(17)</sup> General Arnold could go ahead with his daylight bombing programme.

But the United Kingdom was now only one of the bases from which Allied bomber forces could strike at Hitler's Europe. With the development of operations in the Mediterranean, the Allies could look forward to securing bases, not only in North Africa but in Sicily and, believed the British, in Turkey. From there they could strike both at Germany's tottering Italian ally and at the Rumanian oilfields, which still lay beyond the effective range of bombers operating from England, and which were estimated to furnish Germany with a third of her total oil supplies.<sup>(18)</sup> The destruction of the Ploesti refineries was laid down, as might be expected, as one of the objectives of the bomber offensive for North Africa. But it was given the lowest priority. Aid to surface operations came first: the clearing of North Africa, the preparations for the invasion of Sicily, and assistance in the invasion itself; while even 'objectives . . . chosen with a view to weakening the Italian will to continue the war' were given priority over this measure of strategic bombing.<sup>(19)</sup> If the necessary bases could be secured—especially in Turkey—the bombing of Rumania would present comparatively little difficulty. The main importance of the Mediterranean theatre, in the view of the Combined Chiefs of Staff, lay not in the additional bases it provided for the bomber offensive, but in the opportunities it afforded for bringing the Axis forces to battle. It may be noted that the leading air commander in the Mediterranean was Air Chief Marshal Sir Arthur Tedder, who had shown himself, in the Western Desert, an expert in combining air and surface operations; and under his overall command, as Air Commander-in-Chief of the Mediterranean theatre, the Allied air forces were to develop techniques of support and co-operation which were to prove invaluable when the time eventually came for the invasion of North West France.

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The Americans had accepted with very little argument the British thesis that further operations in the Mediterranean should take the form of an invasion of Sicily. Yet, as we have seen, the British had put forward the thesis only after much debate, and the discussions on the subject continued at Casablanca. The main protagonist of an alternative course of action, the landing in Sardinia, was the Army Director of Plans, Brigadier G. S. Stewart, who with Brigadier V. Dykes of the Joint Planning Staff was to be tragically killed shortly afterwards when his aircraft crashed on landing on the return journey to the United Kingdom. He was supported in his views on the Chiefs of Staff Committee by the member most familiar with the difficulties of amphibious operations, Lord Louis Mountbatten.

In the opinion of the Chief of Combined Operations, a landing in Sicily would absorb considerable resources and take a long time to

prepare. A landing in Sardinia ('Brimstone') would serve much the same strategic purpose at a very much lower cost. It could be mounted more rapidly, and would leave resources over, either for 'Anakim' or for the operation against the Dodecanese which G.H.Q. Middle East was pressing in order to encourage Turkey's entry into the war.<sup>(20)</sup> Though Sardinia would not provide quite the same protection for Mediterranean shipping as would Sicily, it would furnish good bases for air attacks against the industrial north of Italy; and so considerable might the effects of these attacks be on Italian morale that Sicily might then fall much more easily. In any case Admiral Cunningham, who attended a meeting of the Combined Chiefs of Staff on 18th January, stated that he did not consider that the possession of Sicily 'would add very greatly to the security of the sea-route through the Mediterranean. If we were in Sicily he would estimate this route as being 90% or more secure, without Sicily it would be about 85% secure once we held the whole of the North African coast'.<sup>(21)</sup>

These arguments did not convince the Chiefs of Staff. Air Chief Marshal Portal was quick to point out that 'from the air point of view it (the capture of Sicily) would make a very considerable difference, as without bases in Sicily the Germans would find it difficult to operate against the Straits at all'.<sup>(22)</sup> Admiral Pound agreed with him. And General Brooke, after carefully weighing the issues, had now come down against 'Brimstone'; mainly on the grounds that the Germans would be able to reinforce the Sardinia garrison quite as quickly as the Allies could put troops in, whereas in Sicily the bottleneck of the Messina ferries would put them in this respect at a major disadvantage.\* Most important of all, the Prime Minister had now also decided against the Sardinian operation. Whatever was done must be considered as a substitute for the Second Front he had so explicitly promised to the Russians, and it would be difficult to persuade the world that the capture of Sardinia was really the best that two mighty allies could achieve in the course of a year's campaign.<sup>(23)</sup> So 'Husky', it was decided during the first part of the Conference, it was to be.

But the first draft plan which the Joint Planners produced for the operation<sup>(24)</sup> gave rise to second thoughts. The earliest date on which they reckoned that the operation could be mounted was 30th August. The plan visualised an assault on the south-east corner of the island by a British Task Force, three divisions strong with a fourth division to seize Catania on D + 3; while an American Western Task Force landed one division on the south-west shore and followed it up by a two-division assault on Palermo on D + 2. One further division would follow up through Catania and one through

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\* This proved to be a misjudgment. See p. 363 below.

Palermo. The British assault, it was reckoned, would have to be mounted from the Middle East: the Americans would need all the ports of French North Africa for their own preparations. In any event, to mount the British assault from bases in the Western Mediterranean or the United Kingdom and then sail it through the Sicilian narrows before landing on the south-eastern part of the island would be to run an intolerable risk. One division, that landed at Catania on D + 3, might alone be so routed: for the rest, jumping-off places in the Eastern Mediterranean would be essential; and assuming that Tunisia would not be cleared until April, all the summer months would be needed to assemble the units in the Middle East and train them for the operation.

When these calculations were examined by the Combined Chiefs of Staff on the afternoon of 20th January, <sup>(25)</sup> the Americans were helpful and sympathetic. They hoped to have their own forces ready by 30th July, and discussed the possibility of so compressing their preparations as to leave the ports of Tunisia free for the British to train and embark at least part of their forces there. As for the Prime Minister, when the news was broken to him at a meeting at mid-day on the 21st, <sup>(26)</sup> he was appalled at the proposed delay. Even the prospect of saving a month by using the Tunisian ports did not make the prospect much better. Did every man taking part have to be so rigorously trained? The Chiefs of Staff were adamant: the only operation which could be mounted in May was 'Brimstone', and after that, insisted both General Brooke and Admiral Pound—in the face of some doubts on the part of Air Chief Marshal Portal and Field Marshal Dill—there would be no time to carry out 'Husky' as well. <sup>(27)</sup> Mr. Churchill brushed 'Brimstone' impatiently aside; nevertheless Brigadier Stewart did not at this time allow the project to disappear completely, and at a meeting with the British Chiefs of Staff that evening the Joint Planners argued for it so strongly that Sir Alan Brooke pessimistically noted in his diary, 'In my own mind there is not the least doubt that Sicily should be selected, but on the whole the majority of opinion is hardening against me.' <sup>(28)</sup> Another relevant factor was a report—a surprising one, in the light of American assurances the previous day—that the U.S. Navy might not be able to assemble their assault fleet by 30th August; so there was something to be said, General Brooke admitted, for going ahead with planning for 'Brimstone' so that if the Americans could not be ready in time for 'Husky' an operation could be mounted against Sardinia, predominantly British, with American air and naval support. <sup>(29)</sup>

This odd rumour was firmly quashed next morning, when General Marshall told the Combined Chiefs of Staff that U.S. forces would be ready to mount 'Husky' by 1st August if not sooner, even if the

British had the use of all ports from Bizerta eastwards. That being so 'Brimstone' had no real *raison d'être*. Nevertheless General Brooke loyally urged, against his own better judgment, that they should bear it in mind as a possible alternative to 'Husky' as 'there might be some unforeseen and insurmountable difficulties which would necessitate the postponing of the target-date too long'. The suggestion found no favour with the Americans. It must have reeked of the uncertainty and evasiveness which seemed to them, in their gloomier moments, to typify British strategic thinking, and General Marshall, staunchly backed up by his colleagues, attacked the proposal tooth and nail. To undertake 'Brimstone', he maintained, 'would be to seek the softest spot and in so doing would make the harder spot harder . . . There should be no looseness in our determination to undertake Operation "Husky"', he insisted; 'We must be determined to do the hard thing, and proceed to do it'. Both Air Chief Marshal Portal and General Brooke continued to reiterate the dangers of the unforeseen circumstances which might delay 'Husky' until it was too late to mount it, but their arguments made no impression; and Admiral King gave the lie to the rumoured delays on the part of the U.S. Navy by suggesting 25th July, a favourable moon period, as the target date. Sir Alan Brooke did not insist on a proposal with which he had so little personal sympathy, and in the final resolution of the Combined Chiefs of Staff plans for an attack on Sardinia found no place.

Instead the C.C.S. resolved to attack Sicily in 1943, with the favourable July moon as the target date. General Eisenhower was to be in Supreme Command of the operation, with General Alexander as his Deputy responsible for detailed planning, preparation and execution. Admiral Sir Andrew Cunningham was to be the naval Commander-in-Chief of the operation, and Air Chief Marshal Sir Arthur Tedder Air Commander-in-Chief; while General Eisenhower was in due course to recommend commanders for the Western and Eastern Task Forces. A special staff was to be set up at once to prepare the operation; and General Eisenhower was to report, not later than 1st March, 'whether any insurmountable difficulty as to resources and training will cause the date of the assault to be delayed beyond the favourable July moon'; and 'in that event, to confirm that the date will not be later than the favourable August moon'. No other room for uncertainty was left.<sup>(31)</sup>

Even this timing came under heavy Churchillian fire when the resolution was submitted to the Premier and the President the following evening.<sup>(32)</sup> The Chiefs of Staff were once more closely interrogated as to the need for a pause of nearly four months before the Allies resumed operations after the end in Africa. The military chiefs were convinced that, miracles apart, the operation could be

mounted no earlier; the requirements in time for the assembly and training of assault forces—especially after the near disasters of ‘Torch’—could be no further reduced. But to General Eisenhower’s directive a rider was added.

‘We have agreed [it ran] that, without prejudicing the July date for the operation, an intense effort will be made during the next three weeks to achieve by contrivance or ingenuity the favourable June moon period as the date for the operation. If at the end of the three weeks our efforts have proved successful, your instructions will be modified accordingly’.<sup>(33)</sup>

Nor was this all. When Mr. Churchill and the President came to consider the final report of the Combined Chiefs of Staff on the Conference they insisted yet again, in a note to their military advisers, on the importance of achieving the favourable June moon for ‘Husky’ ‘and the grave detriment to our interest which will be incurred by an apparent suspension of our activities during the summer months’.<sup>(34)</sup> In fact the landings took place on 10th July, nearly six weeks sooner than the Planners’ most optimistic assumptions: a tribute not only to the staffs concerned but to the driving will of a great war leader who knew how to compel his agents to achieve the apparently impossible.

About plans for the Eastern Mediterranean there was considerably less discussion. Here the British interest was as exclusive as was the American in the Central Pacific, and the United States Chiefs of Staff were quite content that it should remain so. President Roosevelt accepted the Prime Minister’s suggestion that all matters connected with Turkey should be left to the British to handle,<sup>(35)</sup> and an agreement to this effect was included in the final report of the Combined Chiefs of Staff.<sup>(36)</sup> The British already had a defensive agreement with Turkey, to provide her with air support in the event of a German attack. The question was whether this defensive agreement could now be transformed into an offensive one; what operations would need to be mounted to reassure the Turks against all fear of an Axis counterblow; and what degree of participation by the Turks could then be reasonably expected. British resources in the Middle East remained considerable, even after the Eighth Army had come under General Eisenhower’s command. There would still be the great base installations of the Nile Delta to sustain any operations and there would be the forces of the Tenth Army, no longer needed to guard against the danger of a German irruption through Southern Russia and available, as Mr. Churchill put it, ‘to encourage and support the Turks’.<sup>(37)</sup>

It was in this knowledge that G.H.Q. Middle East, on the eve of the Casablanca Conference, had put forward proposals to the



Chiefs of Staff for amphibious operations in the Eastern Mediterranean.<sup>(38)</sup> Crete they agreed was too formidable an objective to attack; but Rhodes and the Dodecanese offered better possibilities, and would provide a springboard, either to open the Aegean northwards as far as Smyrna, or to assault Crete under more favourable conditions, or even to get back into Greece. For these operations airfield facilities in Turkey would be a considerable help; but even if they were not available the attack might still be mounted so long as the German Air Force was pinned down by operations elsewhere in the Mediterranean and so long as 'certain additional' resources were provided—including, listed Middle East H.Q. hopefully, two auxiliary aircraft carriers, and eighty-eight landing-craft. It is conceivable that these demands could have been met if Operation 'Brimstone' had been chosen in preference to Operation 'Husky', and this, as we have seen, was a factor inclining some members of the Joint Planning Staff towards the former operation. The decision to invade Sicily meant that there would be no facilities in naval, air or landing-craft to spare for a Dodecanese operation on the scale projected, and nothing more was said about it. It seems tacitly to have been agreed that Allied activity in the Eastern Mediterranean should be confined to efforts to persuade Turkey to enter the war, and to the exploitation of the situation which would be created when she did.

Even in respect of these efforts the proposals drafted by the Joint Planning Staff and voiced by General Brooke were very modest.<sup>(39)</sup> After listing the various territorial inducements which might be offered to the Turks to persuade them to abandon their neutrality, the Joint Planning Staff very wisely advised against the policy of obtaining allies by bribery which had been in such widespread and disastrous use during the First World War. Turkey was remaining neutral, they pointed out, not out of greed but out of fear—fear of the dwindling threat of Axis invasion and the growing menace of Russian ambitions. The Joint Planners suggested therefore that 'we should make it clear to Turkey that our good offices at the Peace Conference will depend on her entry into the war without delay', and that adequate military equipment should be offered to bring her defensive forces up to strength. Once Turkey was in the war a strike against the Dodecanese might be reconsidered. The planners examined with little enthusiasm the prospect of extending military operations over Turkey's land frontier into the Balkans, and concluded that 'Turkey will be of value to the Allies as an offensive base for air rather than land operations'. For attacks against the Rumanian oilfields, or against the communications of the German armies fighting in South Russia, such a base would be ideal; while the opening of the Bosphorus would immensely simplify the

problem of getting supplies to the Russian armies. But these considerations were enough to make Mr. Churchill determine that no effort should be spared to bring Turkey into the war, and to plan his own future movements accordingly.

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The decision to make the Mediterranean the principal theatre of European operations in 1943 did not mean that North West Europe was forgotten. Neither General Marshall nor Mr. Churchill would have permitted any such neglect, and in any case decisions about shipping and the build-up of American forces in the United Kingdom had to be taken immediately which depended on hard thinking about the invasion of France: when the invasion would occur, and what form it would take when it did. The Combined Chiefs of Staff in fact devoted quite as much time to considering these questions as they did to planning for the Mediterranean, and the decisions which they reached were to be equally significant for the future conduct of the war.

Any plans for cross-Channel invasion depended on the rate at which United States forces could be transported to the United Kingdom. We have already seen how after the decision had been taken in July to invade French North Africa the rate of build-up under 'Bolero' had sharply declined. With the opening of the campaign in the Solomons the competing demands of the Pacific for shipping and men had been given a natural priority, and the North African theatre had received the lion's share of the resources which crossed the Atlantic. Out of slightly more than 250,000 men who reached the United Kingdom from America in 1942, 129,000 re-embarked for 'Torch'. A further 105,000 sailed directly for North Africa from the United States. The Eighth Air Force in the United Kingdom surrendered about half its aircraft and many of its best officers to the North African theatre. By the end of the year there were only 96,537 American troops in the United Kingdom,\* compared with the 539,000 which had been anticipated in July.<sup>(41)</sup> Somehow the machine had to be reactivated and the flow renewed; and the problem here was not only manpower but shipping, and priorities for shipping. In a general discussion about 'Bolero' on the afternoon of 21st January General Marshall suggested that the United States might be able to build up their forces in Britain to about 400,000 men by the beginning of July 1943, which would give between five and six divisions ready to take part in an attack on 1st August. A further three divisions could be sent if the British, by reducing

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\*This did not include those forces 'standing-by' for 'Torch'. The actual total by the end of the year is given as 121,862.<sup>(40)</sup>

their imports still further, could release shipping for 150 extra voyages; while four additional divisions could be sent over in time to take part in an attack in mid-September. It might be possible to make up for lost time.<sup>(42)</sup>

Two days later, on 23rd January, Lord Leathers and General Somervell between them produced a paper<sup>(43)</sup> which somewhat modified General Marshall's calculations. Events were to prove even this assessment wildly optimistic, but nobody at the Conference appears to have questioned its conclusions. Assessing the 'divisional slice' at 50,000 troops, the paper estimated that the United States Army might build up 4 divisions in the United Kingdom by 15th August, 7 by 15th September, and 15 by the end of the year. Since the later shipments would probably include fewer administrative troops, General Somervell pointed out, the number of divisions might be rather higher; perhaps as many as nineteen. The main build-up would then come in the second half of the year, when some 734,000 troops could be sent, bringing the grand total of U.S. forces in Britain to 1,118,000.

As it turned out, these calculations overestimated what could be done; but to Mr. Churchill they seemed depressingly cautious. At a meeting that evening<sup>(44)</sup> he sharply questioned the figure of four divisions by 15th August. Was it a minimum figure? Was the proposed scale of equipment necessary for the operations contemplated? Would all these administrative troops really be needed in a battle for the beaches? General Marshall, whose zest for a cross-Channel attack was certainly no less than Mr. Churchill's, supported General Somervell's figures, but the Prime Minister was irrepressible. In the rider which he and the President appended to the final report, together with the exhortations to mount 'Husky' in June and keep convoys to Russia running throughout the operation, he included a sentence emphasising the need for a quicker build-up, 'so as to be able to profit by favourable August weather for some form of "Sledgehammer"'. Seldom can there have been so lusty an appetite for action.

Meanwhile the Chiefs of Staff had been considering what form of 'Sledgehammer', if any, was possible, and they based their discussions on a paper put before them by the British Joint Planning Staff.<sup>(45)</sup> This, following a model suggested by General Brooke, had divided possible operations for 1943 into three categories: (a) raids, with the primary object of bringing the enemy air forces to battle and wearing down their strength; (b) operations to seize and hold a bridgehead and, if German strength and morale were sufficiently weakened, to exploit success; and (c) 'operations on a larger scale to take advantage of German disintegration'. It assumed 1st August as the target-date for the attack and reckoned that 12 British divisions

(less an airborne division later diverted to 'Husky') and 4 American divisions would be available to launch it. There would be sufficient landing-craft to lift an assault force two brigade-groups strong and a total force of two infantry divisions and one lightly-equipped armoured brigade; while air strength would be adequate to cover a limited operation, so long as too much fighter strength was not siphoned off into the Mediterranean. The Germans would have 41 divisions at most available to defend North West Europe, and possibly less; and between 1,000 and 1,500 first line aircraft of all types.

What could be done with these Allied resources, and where could they best be used? Raids might be launched in the Pas de Calais area, suggested the Joint Planners, which would bring on an air battle, but the cost to the assaulting forces would certainly be great. But if the purpose was to remain on the Continent, the only possible objective was the Cotentin Peninsula, which was 'the only area with a short and easily defensible line within reasonable distance of the beaches, and one which, at the same time, permits reasonable air support'. Earlier studies had shown that the Germans could bring up 15 divisions from reserve within two weeks, and that the minimum strength for the assault would therefore have to be five brigade-groups, supported by ten parachute battalions and an airborne division, with eight more divisions following up within forty-eight hours.

The difference between these figures and those which could be lifted by the existing force of assault craft was only too evident. 'It is clear, therefore,' concluded the Joint Planners, 'that no operation to seize and hold a footing in the Cotentin Peninsula has any prospect of success unless the German reserves have been greatly reduced'. They recommended that an examination should be carried out to see to what level they would have to be reduced to give the available assaulting force even a chance of success. Meanwhile, without further examination, certain things were clear. First a minimum of four brigade-groups would be needed in the assault. Secondly, any shortage in seaborne assault forces would have to be made up in airborne troops—airborne troops, indeed, commented Lord Louis Mountbatten in discussion, would be essential to force the beach-defences. Thirdly,—and here the lesson of the Dieppe raid had sunk in—the maximum allocation of support-craft would be needed, to swamp the fire-power of the defences and reduce casualties among the assaulting troops. Finally, when it came to the build-up after the landings, the limiting factor was likely to be the number of vehicle-carrying craft available. All this meant that the United States would have to find enough additional assault-shipping and landing-craft to carry at least two brigade-groups, together with some

additional parachute battalions and numerous transport aircraft; while special steps should be taken to provide support-craft for the assault and to convert ships as vehicle-carriers.

The conclusions of this paper appear to have been at this stage only very briefly discussed by the Chiefs of Staff. General Brooke said that all additional airborne forces would have to be found by the United States as all British resources would be needed for 'Husky'.<sup>(46)</sup> The U.S. Joint Chiefs in their turn issued a warning that any operation against the Cotentin Peninsula would have to be carried out with forces in the United Kingdom and that no detachment of forces from those already allotted to 'Husky' could be considered. With these comments, the recommendations of the Joint Planners were accepted as they stood. An examination was to be made, as they advocated, of the level to which German reserves in North West Europe would have to sink to give the operation any chance of success. Preparations were to be carried out for an operation to seize a bridgehead by 1st August, but no decision would be taken to mount it until the conclusions of this examination were known. Plans were to be made for more extended operations to exploit success in the event of a breakdown of German morale; and further plans were to be prepared for an emergency return to the Continent in the event of a sudden disintegration of the Nazi empire.<sup>(47)</sup>

In the event, none of these amounted to more than the most general directions to continue planning on lines along which it had anyhow been proceeding in London for the past two years. Very much more positive and prolific of consequences was the action taken as a result of the memorandum put forward by the Combined Planners on the afternoon of 22nd January with the clumsy but explicit title 'Proposed Organisation of Command, Control, Planning and Training for Operations for a Re-entry to the Continent across the Channel beginning in 1943'.<sup>(48)</sup>

This paper had the advantage of starting from a thoroughly realistic assumption, that any large-scale invasion of the Continent in 1943 against unbroken opposition was out of the question. Certain strictly limited operations might be practicable, such as an assault on the Channel Islands; but meanwhile, they advised, the strongest possible force should be assembled, in constant readiness to re-enter the Continent at short notice in the event of a sudden collapse of German resistance. In addition plans should be made to seize a bridgehead in 1943, and if possible to exploit it; and finally the Allies should prepare for 'an invasion in force' in 1944. All these plans and preparations, pointed out the Combined Planners, would have to be very flexible indeed. Small-scale operations could still be dealt with by Combined Operations Headquarters, but respon-

sibility for planning and training troops for larger operations should rest with the Commanders who would eventually have to carry them out, and who should therefore be designated as soon as possible. They also recommended that the Supreme Commander should be appointed at once. 'If this is not feasible,' they added, 'his Chief of Staff or Deputy and a nucleus of the combined staff should be appointed immediately to give the necessary impetus and cohesion to planning'. And one of the first tasks of this officer, they concluded feelingly, 'should be to simplify the existing system of inter-departmental administrative planning, which at present is unduly cumbersome'.

To all these proposals the Combined Chiefs agreed.<sup>(49)</sup> Both General Marshall and General Brooke felt that it was still too early to appoint a Supreme Commander; possibly because neither could think of an officer of sufficient qualities who could be spared from his present responsibilities in the interests of what were still, after all, somewhat hypothetical operations. But it was agreed at this meeting 'That a British Chief of Staff, together with an independent U.S./British staff, be appointed at once for the control, planning and training of cross-Channel operations in 1943'. So COSSAC was created, the Chief of Staff to the Supreme Allied Commander, a post shortly to be filled by Lieut. General F. E. Morgan; and with him was set on foot all the purposeful planning which went into the preparation of the eventual landings in North West France.

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So far as operations in the Pacific were concerned, there was little for the British planners to do once their needs for 'Anakim' had been agreed, beyond noting the proposals brought forward by the U.S. Navy on the assurance that the resources for them could be found without prejudice to the plans mutually agreed for the European theatre. These proposals were based on the view—which the later course of events did not belie—that Japan could be defeated by air and sea power alone. 'Assault on Japan is remote,' ran the paper tabled by the Joint Chiefs of Staff on the afternoon of 22nd January,<sup>(50)</sup> 'and may well not be necessary'. So in 1943 it was their intention 'to work towards positions from which Japan can be attacked by land-based air'; and their methods would comprise 'continued and intensified attack on enemy ships and shipping, in the cutting or threatening to cut enemy lines of communication between Japan and Japanese holdings, in attacks on enemy sea, air and ground forces by obliging them to fight to retain their holdings and to maintain their lines of communication'.

The American proposals went on to define Allied 'capabilities', which in addition to the maintenance of their existing defensive positions and lines of communication included the attainment of positions to menace enemy communications with the Netherlands East Indies, the Philippines and the South China Sea; the opening of communications with China through Burma, to gain a flanking position for attacking Japanese sea-lanes; preparations to support Russia in case of war with Japan; and action by land, sea and air to 'continue and intensify attrition of enemy strength'. The object of the operations to seize the New Caledonia-New Guinea line, at present in progress, they explained, was to protect the U.S.-Australian supply route; to block the Japanese approach to Eastern Australia; to gain *points d'appui* for further action; and to wear down the enemy forces. In addition the Americans proposed to consolidate their hold on the Aleutians; to advance, in the Central Pacific, from Midway → towards the Truk-Guam line in the Carolines—though to delay advancing on that line from Rabaul until adequate forces were available; to advance both along the Samoa-Jaluit line and in the Malay barrier—the latter only on a limited scale; and of course to participate in 'Anakim' 'as may be found indispensable to mounting it' ✓

On this matter of 'Anakim', the British Joint Planners submitted a paper on 21st January<sup>(51)</sup> in which they estimated the number of landing-craft they would need, proposed 15th November as the provisional date for the assault, and suggested that the final decision whether to go ahead with the operation should be taken in July. All this was agreed and, together with the proposals of the U.S. Planners outlined above, was embodied in the Final Report of the Combined Chiefs.<sup>(52)\*</sup>

The only voice raised in criticism of all these proposals was that of President Roosevelt; and the President's complaints about them were very similar to the criticisms persistently put forward by Mr. Churchill to his own Chiefs of Staff about the operations they planned in Europe. As the Prime Minister deplored the slowness and apparent inadequacy of the measures proposed by his military advisers to bring aid to their sorely-beset Russian ally on whose behalf he felt himself deeply and personally committed, so did the President regret that the plans laid before him contained so little provision for aid to China. At the full meeting on the evening of 23rd January, <sup>(53)</sup> when the Combined Chiefs presented their conclusions for comment, he gave voice to his dissatisfaction. The operations proposed in Burma, he declared, desirable though they were in themselves, would not provide the direct help which China

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\* See Appendix III. (F).

now so desperately needed. Moreover the 'island-hopping' tactics approved by the Combined Chiefs seemed a long and expensive way to wear down Japanese power, compared with the all-out offensive which could be launched against her life-lines from the Chinese mainland. Much more emphasis, he urged, reflecting the arguments used by General Chennault, should be given to reinforcing the U.S. air forces in China; they should aim at having 200 bombers in operation by April, attacking Japanese shipping and occasionally raiding Japan itself. And if China could not provide the necessary base organisation, he suggested, then they should be based on India, and flown up for each operation.

General Arnold pointed out that shortage of transport aircraft would hamper the full implementation of such a policy; nonetheless the emphasis of the Combined Chiefs' recommendations on operations in the Far East can be seen in their final report to have significantly shifted.<sup>(54)</sup> Pacific operations were first itemised as above—securing the Aleutians, advancing from Midway on the Truk-Guam line with a concurrent advance from Rabaul if forces were available, and advances via Samoa and the Malay barrier. But support of China was given a paragraph to itself, divided into three sub-headings. First came 'immediate operations' which comprised primarily Operation 'Ravenous'—the limited advance from Assam to gain jumping-off points, to improve the air-transport route to China and, if Chinese co-operation could be obtained, to gain ground for additional airfields and warning-system installations. The resolution already agreed concerning 'Anakim' was listed, subject to confirmation in July. Land and air forces could be provided, it was pointed out, but naval forces, assault and landing-craft and shipping could not be guaranteed so far ahead. Finally it was stated that 'in order to support the Chinese war effort, to provide means for intensifying attacks on Japanese shipping, and to strike at Japan herself when opportunity offered, it is intended to improve air transportation into China by supplying additional transport aircraft, and to build up the United States Air Forces now operating in China to the maximum extent that logistical limitations and other important claims will permit'.

Even this explicit statement of intentions did not entirely satisfy the President. Among the additional points urged by the Prime Minister and himself at the end of the Conference we find 'the urgency of sending reinforcements to Chennault's forces in China' standing second only to 'the desirability of finding means of running the Russian convoys even through the "Husky" period'.<sup>(55)</sup> The importance of preserving the fighting capacity of their partners in the alliance—partners who were containing the bulk of the enemy fighting forces—was something that the allied statesmen never



allowed their military advisers to forget. Mr. Churchill, indeed, surveying the plans which were emerging from the Conference, could not conceal his disappointment that with all the resources of the British Empire and of the United States so little apparently could be achieved in 1943.

'It must be admitted [he cabled home to his colleagues of the War Cabinet] that all our military operations taken together are on a very small scale compared with the mighty resources of Britain and the United States, and still more with the gigantic effort of Russia. I am inclined to think that the President shares this view, as Hopkins spoke to me on the subject yesterday, saying in effect. "It is all right, but it is not enough".<sup>(56)</sup> Making all allowances for our tremendous efforts on the sea and in the air, I still feel this most strongly, and during the remaining days of our conference we must bend ourselves to the task of weighting our blows more heavily'.<sup>(57)</sup>

Among General Marshall's advisers there was also some disappointment that the bold plans of April 1942 seemed finally to have evaporated into a misty and inadequate strategy of 'periphery-picking'; a transformation which they tended to attribute to the superior skill and cunning of British conference tactics. But the image of a British team imposing its will, thanks to superior expertise and more careful planning, on a naïve and reluctant American ally is one, as we have already suggested, that does not stand up to critical examination. The British Chiefs of Staff certainly had every reason to be satisfied with a conclusion which embodied so much of their own careful thinking. But so had Admiral King, a man not given to superfluous compliments, who expressed the view that 'this was the biggest step forward to the winning of the war'.<sup>(58)</sup> He had been able for the first time to give the British Chiefs of Staff a full explanation of the problems which confronted him in the Pacific, gain their support for the measures he had devised for dealing with them, and disabuse them of the belief that Pacific operations could somehow be frozen into convenient immobility until the war in Europe was over. General Arnold could congratulate himself no less on the underwriting of the offensive bombing policy of which he had been quite as enthusiastic an advocate as had Air Chief Marshal Portal. Only General Marshall himself had cause for disappointment. Yet even before he left Washington the practical impossibility of 'Round-up' in 1943 had become clear to a substantial section of his staff; and in so far as he was concerned to uphold the principle that the war must ultimately be won by a major, concentrated blow in the West, the appointment of COSSAC and the initiation of serious planning under that officer provided a reasonable guarantee that that blow would be struck as soon as circumstances made it possible.

But the decisions taken in London the previous July had had far reaching and irreversible consequences, and nothing decided at Casablanca could undo them.

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In the midst of all the discussions about long-term problems of strategy, there was one short-term problem of politics which gave Mr. Churchill and President Roosevelt, if not their military advisers, as much concern as everything else put together. This was the future government of French North Africa and, ultimately, of France.

We have already considered the political maelstrom into which General Eisenhower found himself plunged at Algiers, and the measures which had been taken, with the appointment of Mr. Harold Macmillan and Mr. Robert Murphy, to rescue him. The meeting of the two Allied leaders on French soil seemed to provide a singularly appropriate opportunity for them to work out a more statesmanlike solution to these difficulties than the hand-to-mouth measures on which the Allies had been forced to rely during the past two months. Mr. Macmillan and Mr. Murphy had put forward draft proposals for the government of French territories in Africa which Mr. Churchill and the President found broadly acceptable. The former Vichy territories in French North and West Africa and Togoland, over which General Giraud now presided in succession to Admiral Darlan as High Commissioner, were to be put under a reconstituted High Commission on which representatives of the Gaullist National Committee, as well as of the former Vichy administration, would sit. Similarly the National Committee would be reconstituted, with members drawn from both groups, and continue to administer Equatorial Africa, Djibouti, Madagascar, Reunion Island and the Cameroons. Eventually, it was hoped, a central organisation would develop, representing all Frenchmen waging war against the Axis; but this would have to be left to the initiative of the French themselves. British and American officials should sit in with each organisation, but purely in an advisory capacity. Their task would be tactfully to help, and not to direct.

Both General Giraud and General de Gaulle were invited to Casablanca to consider these proposals. General Giraud made no difficulties about coming from Algiers, but it quickly became evident that his interest lay almost exclusively in the reactivation of the French army and its rapid deployment against the Germans. With their existing cadres, he told the Chiefs of Staff,<sup>(59)</sup> the French Army in North Africa could form three armoured and ten infantry divisions, while the Air Force could man 50 fighter and 30 bomber squadrons if equipment were provided. The Chiefs of Staff, with President Roosevelt's support, were prepared to allocate to the

French army all the equipment they could spare; but they were a little alarmed at the General's optimistic logistical assumptions. Over political questions however no headway could at first be made at all, since General de Gaulle flatly refused the invitation to attend.

General de Gaulle had, as we have seen, viewed developments in North Africa with an understandable lack of enthusiasm. His careful exclusion from all plans for 'Torch'; the arrangements between General Eisenhower and Admiral Darlan; the subsequent appointment of General Giraud as head of the government in French North Africa; all this would have offended a pride much less sensitive than his. To his various offers of a rendezvous General Giraud had returned what he felt to be brief and unsatisfactory answers.<sup>(60)</sup> General de Gaulle and his collaborators in London shared the universal respect for General Giraud as a great national figure and believed his assurances that he had no higher wish than to lead the French army in North Africa against the Germans; but as to his professions of disinterest in politics they were less sanguine. In his case, as so often, lack of interest in politics appeared to imply an uncritical acceptance of the *status quo*—and, in the eyes of the Gaullists, a very undesirable *status quo* indeed. Not only did he retain in power and publicly honour with his confidence figures who in their eyes were associated with the most disagreeable aspects of the Vichy regime—sending indeed to South America for yet another, M. Marcel Peyrouton, a former Minister of the Interior, to become Governor General of Algeria. In addition he permitted a sustained persecution of Gaullist elements in Algeria which had culminated, on the night of the 29th December, in the arrest of fifteen Gaullist sympathisers, many of whom had been prominent in the events of 8th November.<sup>(61)</sup> An accommodation with such a regime, enjoying as it did the apparently uncritical backing of the United States, would not be easy; certainly a shotgun wedding under the eyes of the Anglo-Saxons did not seem the most honourable way to achieve it. General de Gaulle's refusal of the invitation transmitted to him by Mr. Anthony Eden on 17th January, infuriating as it seemed to the busy men dealing with problems whose importance dwarfed even the political settlement of France, might, in less hectic times, have been expected. As it was, there could be no time for the smoothing of ruffled sensibilities. In a peremptory message on 18th January Mr. Churchill renewed the invitation on his own and the President's behalf and made it clear that if it were refused 'the position of His Majesty's Government towards your Movement while you remain at its head will also require to be reviewed'.<sup>(62)</sup> With reluctance the General decided to accept.

His arrival, on 22nd January, did not ease matters. The plans worked out by Mr. Macmillan and Mr. Murphy, with their proposals

for a triumvirate of General Giraud, himself, and a third, possibly General Georges who would be fetched from France for the purpose, left him cold. It would, he told Giraud, be simply *le Consulat à la discretion de l'étranger*, without even the Consulate's basis of plebiscitary support. He suggested, rather, that he himself should form a Government in Algiers, which should eventually become the government of the Republic, and that General Giraud should receive at the hands of this government the command of the army of liberation.<sup>(83)</sup> Neither the charm of President Roosevelt nor the menaces of Mr. Churchill could shake him. The most he would agree to was to send a liaison mission to Algiers under General Catroux. He would not agree to the communiqué prepared by the Allies, stating that he and Giraud intended to form a committee jointly to administer French territory during the war. Instead he issued with General Giraud one of his own, classic in its brevity:<sup>(84)</sup>

'We have met. We have talked. We have registered our entire agreement.

The end to be achieved, which is the liberation of France and the triumph of human liberties by total defeat of the enemy.

This end will be attained by the union in war of all Frenchmen fighting side by side with all their Allies'.

All that the President could manage was a posed handshake of the two Generals, in the smiling presence of himself and Mr. Churchill, in front of the photographers and journalists who were summoned on Sunday, 24th January to hear the final communiqué of the Conference. Critics maintain that, as evidence of friendly allied accord, the resulting pictures do not carry entire conviction.

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At this Press Conference, the first intimation given to the outside world that the Casablanca consultations were taking place at all, President Roosevelt concluded his remarks with the following words:

'Another point, I think we had all had it in our hearts and heads before, but I don't think that it has ever been put down on paper by the Prime Minister and myself, and that is the determination that peace can come to the world only by the total elimination of German and Japanese war power.

Some of you Britishers know the old story—we had a General called U.S. Grant. His name was Ulysses Simpson Grant, but in my, and the Prime Minister's early days he was called "Unconditional Surrender" Grant. The elimination of German, Japanese and Italian war power means the unconditional surrender by Germany, Japan and Italy. This means a reasonable

assurance of future world peace. It does not mean the destruction of the population of Germany, Italy or Japan, but it does mean the destruction of the philosophies in those countries which are based on conquest and the subjugation of other peoples.

This meeting may be called the "unconditional surrender" meeting'.

Mr. Churchill added his own endorsement:

'Even when there is some delay there is design and purpose and, as the President has said, the unconquerable will to pursue this quality, until we have procured the unconditional surrender of the criminal forces who plunged the world into storm and ruin'.<sup>(65)</sup>

At a later date the President was to claim that his reference to Unconditional Surrender was entirely spontaneous, and the Prime Minister was to assert that its introduction into the business of the day took him by surprise.<sup>(66)</sup> The first statement was not entirely accurate: the notes from which Mr. Roosevelt spoke appear to have contained the phrase 'unconditional surrender' no less than three times.<sup>(67)</sup> The second may well be true as regards the occasion of the statement; but the substance of it was certainly familiar to Mr. Churchill, and at that time carried his entire agreement. The policy had been discussed in Washington before the conference ever began. At a meeting with the Joint Chiefs of Staff on 7th January the President had declared his intention of supporting 'Unconditional Surrender' as the basic Allied aim in the war. 'What the President appeared to be offering at the time', wrote the official historians of the U.S. Army, 'was a simple formula of common and resolute purpose—a slogan that would rally the Allies for victory and drive home to friend and foe alike that this time there would be no "negotiated peace" and no "escape clauses" offered by another Fourteen Points'. The U.S. military staff saw no reason to quarrel with the idea. To them it appeared simply as 'a definable goal that was to be attained as expeditiously as possible'.<sup>(68)</sup>

Unofficial sources, by no means reliable but on this point not perhaps entirely misleading, suggest that in private conversation at Casablanca Mr. Churchill cheerfully agreed to the idea when it was put to him.<sup>(69)</sup> There were politic reasons for him to do so. In the first place, the failure of the Western Allies to launch the attack in the West demanded by Stalin made it more vital than ever that the Russians should have no reason to fear that they might be left in the lurch by the conclusion of a compromise peace between Germany and the West. In the second place, the Darlan affair and the uproar which it had caused in liberal circles at home was fresh in the minds both of the Prime Minister and the President. It seemed desirable to

reassure their critics that the events in North Africa would not set the pattern for future relations between the Allies and the Axis: that neither Goering nor Himmler, nor any of the other devils in the Allied eschatology would be regarded as suitable partners to an agreement simply because they could ensure the allegiance of the bureaucratic machine which governed Germany.

Finally one other, more intimate, reassurance was necessary. As we have seen, at an early stage in the Conference Admiral King had posed the frank question: 'on whom would fall the principal burden of beating Japan once Germany was knocked out?'<sup>(70)</sup> The British Chiefs of Staff had assured him that as soon as Germany was defeated the full weight of British resources would be switched to the Pacific. Four days later on 18th January, at the next full meeting of the civilian leaders with the Combined Chiefs of Staff, Mr. Churchill took the occasion, first to issue the most solemn pledge, that 'if and when Hitler breaks down, all of the British resources and effort will be turned towards the defeat of Japan'; secondly to offer a treaty or convention to this effect if American public opinion needed it; and finally to suggest that a public statement be issued after the conference 'to the effect that the United Nations are resolved to pursue the war to the bitter end, neither party relaxing its efforts until the unconditional surrender of Germany and Japan has been achieved'.<sup>(71)</sup> Next day he referred this last proposal to his colleagues of the War Cabinet suggesting that the effect of 'the omission of Italy would be to encourage a break-up there'.<sup>(72)</sup> The only comment of his colleagues was to insist that Italy should be included as well: 'Knowledge of rough stuff coming to them is surely more likely to have desired effect on Italian morale', they replied.<sup>(73)</sup> President Roosevelt may have formulated the phrase 'unconditional surrender' but the first time it appears in the minutes of formal allied councils is from the lips of Mr. Churchill. Behind Mr. Churchill, taking full corporate responsibility, was the assembled War Cabinet; and behind the War Cabinet was an angry and resolute nation.

Mr. Churchill's post-war lapse of memory when he asserted in the House of Commons that 'the phrase "unconditional surrender" was not brought before me to agree to in any way before it was uttered by our great friend, our august and powerful ally President Roosevelt',<sup>(74)</sup> like that of Mr. Ernest Bevin, that 'neither the British Cabinet nor any other Cabinet had a chance to say a word',<sup>(75)</sup> is certainly a powerful argument, as he admits in his Memoirs, for the doctrine that 'memories of the war may be vivid and live, but should never be trusted without verification, especially where the sequence of events is concerned'.<sup>(76)</sup> But it also suggests that little importance was attached to the 'unconditional surrender' declaration, either at Casablanca or in Downing Street, by men who had a

great deal else on their minds. It was not so much a carefully debated declaration of policy, whose implications had been thoroughly explored, as a word of encouragement and exhortation addressed by companions to each other at a turning point on a journey which promised still to be long and arduous, although for the first time its end, however distant, was coming into sight. It was with the effect on their own peoples and those of their allies, rather than on the enemy, that President Roosevelt and Mr. Churchill were primarily concerned.

The historian must be careful to apply a realistic standard in judging the actions and decisions of the past, and make full allowance for the limits set by contemporary circumstances to any course of action. The President and the Prime Minister were leaders of two great embattled democracies where public opinion, slow to arouse to any interest in foreign affairs, had now acquired a momentum which it would have been very difficult indeed to curb or divert. The regime against which the allies fought seemed, as after a quarter of a century it still seems, one of the most evil which had ever taken possession of a great nation; and the chance of any transformation from within seemed, through the fog obscuring developments within Germany, to be exceedingly remote. As for the Japanese, the manner in which they had opened their campaign in the Far East and the appalling brutality with which they conducted it made it difficult for either the British or the American peoples to consider them a civilised people with whom any intercourse would henceforth be possible at all. Any peace with such nations short of their total overthrow seemed not so much politically unwise as psychologically inconceivable. A post-war world in which a Nazi Germany and a militaristic Japan, however chastened, continued to exist on terms of parity with the Western democracies which they had so nearly destroyed seemed, at this still critical stage of the war, to be entirely out of the question.

Nevertheless, while making all allowances for the atmosphere in which the decision was taken and the immediate motives which inspired it, one may still conclude that the announcement was made without any of the forethought and careful consideration which should have gone to the framing of so major an act of Allied policy. Subsequent volumes in this series deal with the problem whether it did in fact delay the ending of the war against Germany and Japan. So far as Italy was concerned, it produced only a passing embarrassment which skilful diplomacy was able quickly to resolve.\* But it must be noted that at Casablanca the question as to whether it would soften the enemy will to resist or to stiffen it does not appear to have been seriously considered at all. Neither experts on

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\* See note to Chapter XXVII below.

political warfare nor specialists on Axis internal affairs were present. Nor were the officials in Washington and London who were already drafting plans for the settlement of the post-war world. No representative of the Foreign Office or the State Department was invited to give an assessment of the policy in the wider context of international relations—particularly in the context of future relations with the Soviet Union. Had such advisers been present, there is no reason to suppose that they would necessarily have opposed a policy of ‘unconditional surrender’. The Foreign Office more than any other body had reason to know the difficulties of reaching with Nazi Germany any agreements likely to be kept. Political warfare specialists might have quoted Sun Tzu’s advice, about leaving one’s enemy a golden bridge for retreat, but the standing of such specialists in the framing of war policy was not high. Even if such advice had been given, it might well have been overruled by the arguments considered above. We can only record that there was no opportunity for such counsels to be heard at Casablanca. Had it been otherwise, the Allied leaders might have reflected a little more deeply on the question, whether total victory is necessarily the surest foundation for a lasting peace.



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BOOK FOUR:  
THE AFTERMATH OF CASABLANCA

CHAPTER XV

MANPOWER AND SHIPPING

THE OBJECTIVES on which the Allied war leaders had agreed at Casablanca were ambitious. For 1943 large-scale amphibious operations were planned both in the Mediterranean and in the Indian Ocean. For 1944 a massive assault was projected on North West Europe, for which American forces had to be transferred in large numbers to the United Kingdom. At the same time an attack of increasing intensity was to be mounted from the air against the cities and industrial resources of the Nazi Empire; while the United States was to maintain unabated pressure on the perimeter established in the Pacific by Japan. The demands imposed by these operations on resources of all kinds—above all on shipping—were enormous, and they were not at the time very closely scrutinised. It is not to be wondered at that, within a few weeks, the Combined Chiefs of Staff found themselves compelled to reconsider some of their strategic decisions in the light of logistic problems which they had miscalculated or overlooked.

As the requirement for resources increased, so the proportion of them which could be found by the British dwindled. During 1943 indeed, the United Kingdom came within sight of the end of her available manpower. By July of that year half her working population of 22·285 million men and women were employed either in the Armed Forces or essential industries\*, in accordance with the allocations made by the War Cabinet in December 1942. These allocations were naturally considered inadequate by the departments concerned, and the decisions taken at Casablanca gave some grounds for reconsidering them. The army, for example, had to be expanded to take the offensive in three widely-separated and totally diverse theatres. The Royal Air Force needed an increasing supply of heavy bombers to enable it to play its part in the Combined Bomber Offensive. Throughout the spring of 1943 the Service Ministries pressed demands which by the end of June totalled, together with those from Industry, 912,000 additional men and women; and there were, Sir John Anderson informed the Prime Minister on 25th June, only 414,000 available to meet them.<sup>(2)</sup> New allocations had to be made,

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\* 5·084 million in the Forces, 5·233 million in industry.

and the Prime Minister gave guidance on them in a note of 6th July 1943.<sup>(3)</sup> No relaxation, he laid down, was to be permitted in the priority to be accorded to weapons and vessels for use against the U-boats, but future naval programmes should be closely scrutinised. Further reductions could now be made in Civil Defence and Anti-Aircraft forces. The Army demand for a further 247,000 men was treated with little sympathy: the War Office, pointed out the Prime Minister, constantly over-estimated 'wastage'. 'Efficient organisation and good housekeeping' ought to make possible a cut in their allocation by at least 100,000 men. But the request from the Ministry of Aircraft Production he insisted ought to be met in full.

'A falling-off in the planned supply of aircraft and consequent grievous contraction of our war effort is the greatest shortcoming now threatening us in the sphere of manpower. It can be said of aircraft more than of any other form of war munitions that up to the end of the war they will all be certainly used against the enemy or in indispensable training.'

The Prime Minister wrote as he did on the advice of Lord Cherwell, who was alarmed by the continued failure of the Air Ministry and the Ministry of Aircraft Production to achieve the production targets on which he had himself based his calculations of the efficacy of strategic bombing. Of the hoped for first-line strength of 4,000 heavy bombers by mid 1943, he pointed out in a letter of 23rd June,<sup>(4)</sup> the Royal Air Force had only 864, and by the end of the year the total would have increased only to 1,360. Mr. Bevin replied that the Ministry of Aircraft Production could be given the 212,000 men it wanted only if the other Services were starved of essential tradesmen, and the War Cabinet shared his unwillingness to do this.<sup>(5)</sup> Mr. Churchill yielded with reluctance, and on 22nd July the War Cabinet allocated 115,000 men and women to aircraft production—a total made possible largely by taking 185,000 workers away from army munitions production at the Ministry of Supply.<sup>(6)</sup>

By September 1943 then, when this volume ends, mobilisation of manpower in the United Kingdom had reached its peak. Contemplating the demands for 1944 for a further 1,190,000 men which were coming in from the Services and industry, the Ministry of Labour in its autumn review stated bluntly 'These demands cannot be met. The standards and amenities of the civil population cannot be further reduced'.<sup>(7)</sup> Volume V in this series recounts the outcome. A Ministerial Committee under Sir John Anderson recommended in November that the situation should be resolved by assuming that the war would end by December 1944, running down the munitions industries accordingly and using the labour thus released to meet the demands of the fighting services so far as possible. The war did

not end in 1944; and before it did, it was necessary to start making inroads into the manpower of the Armed Forces themselves.

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The shortage of manpower was not to become critical for another twelve months. The shortage of shipping was immediate and severe and it was to have serious consequences before the defeat of the U-boats, the opening of the Mediterranean and the increasing production from American yards between them removed this crippling handicap to the deployment of Allied resources.

We have described in Chapter I of this volume the anxiety with which the British authorities had viewed the situation during the autumn of 1942, and the assurances of help which Captain Lyttelton had elicited from President Roosevelt during his visit to Washington in November. By January 1943 it was becoming clear that the situation was even worse than had been expected—largely as a result of the unexpected demands made by the North African campaign. Prolonged fighting of the kind which the Axis forced upon the Allies in Tunisia had not been foreseen. Not only were the Allies still denied the use of the Mediterranean, but extra shipping to nourish the fighting in North Africa had somehow to be found. The original planning assumptions had allowed for 66 sailings a month from the United Kingdom to North Africa from November through January, and thereafter 30 a month for maintenance. In fact 105 sailings a month took place up to the end of January, 92 in February, 75 in March, and 38 in April.<sup>(6)</sup> The demands which these convoys made on escorts had serious implications for the position in the Atlantic, where unescorted or inadequately escorted vessels fell victim in large numbers to German submarine attacks. The total of imports into the United Kingdom fell to the point where it was necessary to break into reserve stocks, and in the spring of 1943 the stock-pile resources of the United Kingdom reached their lowest point of the entire war.\*

\* (6)

| Stocks (in million tons) | <i>Food</i> | <i>Raw<br/>Materials</i> | <i>Petroleum<br/>Products</i> |
|--------------------------|-------------|--------------------------|-------------------------------|
| <i>1942</i>              |             |                          |                               |
| March .. .. .            | 9.0         | 13.7                     | 6.7                           |
| June .. .. .             | 6.6         | 13.4                     | 5.9                           |
| September .. .. .        | 12.8        | 14.1                     | 5.8                           |
| December .. .. .         | 13.7        | 13.4                     | 5.3                           |
| <i>1943</i>              |             |                          |                               |
| March .. .. .            | 9.2         | 12.0                     | 4.8                           |
| June .. .. .             | 6.4         | 12.3                     | 5.7                           |
| September .. .. .        | 13.9        | 13.6                     | 7.5                           |
| December .. .. .         | 15.8        | 13.8                     | 7.5                           |

A report by the Shipping Committee on the situation was circulated to the War Cabinet on 17th January.<sup>(10)</sup> This estimated that of the requirement of 12·5 million tons of imports for the first half of 1943, shipping for only 8·5 million tons could be found from British-controlled sources. If the help promised from the United States reached its expected level, provision for a further 1·8 million tons would be provided—a figure which Sir John Anderson reduced a few days later to one million at the outside.<sup>(11)</sup> Where was the rest to come from? The Shipping Committee urged that the United States be asked for still further help; but it suggested that a possible source of shipping remained in the sailings to the Indian Ocean, which supplied both the Middle East and the Far East theatres of war. If these could be reduced by half, to 40 sailings a month, some 3½ million tons of shipping would be released; though a gap would still remain too great, in Sir John Anderson's view, to be completely bridged by further reductions in consumption or by drawing on reserves.<sup>(12)</sup>

The Prime Minister accepted this advice. The Middle East was no longer in danger, and huge stockpiles remained there. The possibility of reducing shipments to this theatre had already been under discussion for some weeks. 'There are 400,000 tons of ammunition alone in the Middle East and 220,000 in India or on the way there'. Mr. Churchill pointed out in a note of 5th January.<sup>(13)</sup> 'Only 25,000 tons were fired in the first month of the campaign that began at the Battle of Alamein. Generally speaking, Eighth, Ninth and Tenth Armies and India must live on their tail, on their stocks, and their share of the 40 ships a month'.

The cut was therefore decreed, and its repercussions were to be considerable. The figure of 40 sailings a month was indeed half the total of the previous quarter, but that itself had been a reduction from an average of over 100 sailings a month during the first half of 1942.<sup>(14)</sup> On these vessels depended not only the military operations of the United Nations, but the civil economies of virtually every country bordering the Indian Ocean and in the Middle East. Egypt needed coal and nitrates. Australia and South Africa needed phosphates. Turkey, Iran, India and East Africa needed cereals. Humanitarian considerations apart, the political stability of India, East Africa and the Middle East was directly related to the economic viability of these areas, and the British officials responsible for or to their governments reacted to these cuts with natural consternation. The Minister of State in Cairo warned on 19th January that the situation was now such that 'substantial sinkings or unexpected developments in the Middle East may lead to food shortages with consequent effect on internal security'.<sup>(15)</sup> The following month the East African Governors' Conference

reported that shortage of imports threatened a general breakdown in agricultural production and in work at the naval base of Kilindini.<sup>(16)</sup> In India the Viceroy reported the cereal situation to be so grave, largely as a result of grain hoarding in anticipation of shortage, that on 16th January the Ministry of War Transport authorised the diversion of 50,000 tons of shipping at the expense of imports into the United Kingdom<sup>(17)</sup>—an action which drew from Lord Cherwell the comment, 'To take about 2½ pounds a head from this country in order to give 4 ounces a head to the Indians cannot at this moment be justified on its merits, and the hope that it may cause the hoarders in India to disgorge seems to me remote'.<sup>(18)\*</sup>

If Mr. Churchill had been in London instead of Casablanca it is questionable whether even this concession would have been made. On his return he set his face resolutely against any weakening of the policy he had laid down. 'I hope you will be as stiff as you can', he told Lord Leathers, the Minister for War Transport, on 16th February when the latter reported urgent demands for imports from Mauritius, Reunion, the Seychelles, South Africa, Rhodesia, Kenya, Iran, Turkey, and Ceylon.<sup>(19)</sup> 'There is no reason why all parts of the British Empire should not feel the pinch in the same way as the Mother Country has done'. And when the War Cabinet decided on 18th February that diversions of shipping from the United Kingdom import programme should be made only when absolutely necessary to meet the most urgent cases, the Prime Minister minuted his emphatic approval. 'A concession to one country at once encourages demands from all the others . . . They must learn to look after themselves as we have done. The grave situation of the United Kingdom import programme imperils the whole war effort and we cannot afford to send ships merely as a symbol of good will'.<sup>(20)</sup> The decision was harsh, but with the U-boat attacks at their height, British stocks at their lowest level and the Chiefs of Staff at their wits' end to find shipping for offensive operations, it was entirely understandable.

Such was the background against which the decisions were taken at Casablanca to mount seaborne invasions of Sicily ('Husky') and Burma ('Anakim') and to press ahead with the 'Bolero' movement of American forces to the United Kingdom. Lord Leathers was present at the Conference but was not consulted before these decisions were taken nor fully informed about them until several weeks later. From the American side, no representative of the War Shipping Administration was present, and shipping questions

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\* For a discussion of the connection between United Kingdom shipping policy and the Bengal famine in the autumn of 1943 in which 1½ million people died, see Behrens, *Merchant Shipping and the Demands of War*, pp. 345-53.



were handled by General Somervell who showed, in the words of the U.S. official historians, 'a degree of confusion' about the arrangements that had already been made between the shipping authorities of the two countries.<sup>(21)</sup> General Somervell was working on the assumption that the United States would be required to provide shipping to carry 3.6 million tons of British imports. In fact the figure was nearly double—7 million tons.<sup>(22)</sup> At Casablanca the confusion was compounded by the impression which General Somervell gained in discussions with Lord Leathers that the United Kingdom could find 1.6 million tons of shipping to help out with the movement of U.S. forces to the United Kingdom. This double misunderstanding involved a total of nearly six million tons of shipping, or 'almost a fourth of the entire tonnage that was actually to be shipped overseas to the U.S. Army in that year'.<sup>(23)</sup>

The seriousness of the situation became apparent about the middle of February. On the 18th of that month, the Quartermaster General, General Sir Thomas Riddell-Webster, reported to the Chiefs of Staff that the preparations for 'Anakim' required 40 ships a month, the total allotted to the entire Indian Ocean area; which was three times more than had actually been allocated to the operation.<sup>(24)</sup> Four days later General Eisenhower informed the Combined Chiefs of Staff that he could meet the June deadline for 'Husky' only if he were provided with shipping, including 30 merchant vessels, for 38,000 additional men.<sup>(25)</sup> On 26th February General Brooke reported the conclusions of the War Office 'that it will not be possible to carry out our strategy if this shipping restriction is continued, and that the essential minimum requirements [for Indian Ocean sailings] will be from 75 to 80 ships a month';<sup>(26)</sup> that is, twice the number already allotted.

Where were these ships to come from? The War Office and the Ministry of War Transport suggested a reduction in 'Bolero' sailings and in American sailings to the Indian Ocean; but the first course would involve, among other things, a postponement of the United States contribution to the Combined Bomber Offensive against Germany, while the second would mean a slowing down not only of the logistic build-up in India which was a necessary prerequisite to any offensive operations, but of the flow of aid to Russia through the Persian Gulf.<sup>(27)</sup> General Brooke urged reductions in the Pacific; but so far from entertaining any such idea, Admiral King recommended a reconsideration of the level of imports into the United Kingdom—the 27 million tons which the British had believed, ever since the President's assurance to Captain Lyttelton the previous November, to be sacrosanct.<sup>(28)</sup> Lord Leathers reported to the Chiefs of Staff on 2nd March that imports for the months of January and February had been at the rate of only 14 million

tons a year, and that thanks to the unilateral action of the U.S. Army and Navy the U.S. War Shipping Administration held out no hope of being able to increase their allocation of shipping to improve this figure.<sup>(29)</sup>

To clarify the situation the Chiefs of Staff with the assistance of Lord Leathers and Lord Cherwell, drew up and despatched to Washington a statement comparing the resources in shipping available to the United Kingdom (including the allocations already promised by the United States) with the commitments which these had to meet. This revealed four areas in which further American aid would be necessary: the build-up in the Middle East for 'Husky'; the build-up in India for 'Anakim'; the British contribution to 'Bolero'; and assistance to Turkey 'on anything like the necessary scale'.<sup>(30)</sup> The Prime Minister acquiesced only reluctantly in the despatch of this document:

'Pray proceed as you propose, [he minuted the Chiefs of Staff on 3rd March] but it should be clearly understood that the military authorities for their part must also pull in their horns. All our operations are being spoiled by overloading and playing for safety as a certainty. The "Anakim" demands are altogether excessive. An operation of war cannot be thought out like building a bridge; certainty is not demanded, but genius, improvisation and energy of mind must have their parts . . . Everywhere the British and Americans are overloading their operational plans with so many factors of safety that they are ceasing to be capable of making any form of aggressive war. For 6 to 8 months to come Great Britain and the United States will be playing about with half a dozen German divisions. That is the position to which we are reduced and which you should labour sedulously to correct'.<sup>(31)</sup>

These additional demands created so great an effect in Washington that they were dubbed 'the British bombshell'.<sup>(32)</sup> Their arrival coincided most unfortunately with a conference of senior American commanders from the Pacific theatres of war, whose demands for additional resources, especially aircraft, to carry out the heavy tasks which faced them further complicated the work of the Combined Chiefs of Staff in assessing global priorities. General MacArthur's assessment of the opposition which he had to overcome made it all the more important in some American eyes that the British should play their part in pinning down the Japanese by launching 'Anakim'. To provide the additional shipping demanded by the British would involve, considered the U.S. War Department, 'devastating cuts . . . in U.S. overseas troop movements envisaged for 1943'.<sup>(33)</sup>

Under these circumstances, the American members of the Combined Chiefs of Staff were unwilling to regard the British import requirements as sacred. 'The present position', General Somervell declared a little ominously at a meeting on 18th March, 'was that the United States had agreed to furnish shipping assistance to the United Kingdom import programme to the extent that the United States thinks it necessary'.<sup>(34)</sup> The same day Field Marshal Dill summed up the situation in a frank message to London.<sup>(35)</sup>

'We *think* that the Americans misuse ships in the Pacific, but we do not know. They *think* that we may be using too many ships for British imports, but they do not *know*. In fact neither side feels the other is being quite open, and there is distrust. I feel sure that we shall both have to put *all* our shipping cards on the table very soon. My impression is that on both British and American sides there is a good deal of disappointment and dangerous irritation'.

Dill's message itself did something to add to the irritation in London, where it was felt that all the cards in their hand had been fully displayed already. Nevertheless a special Shipping Mission was sent over to Washington to reinforce the British experts already operating there and give chapter and verse for their calculations. As for the British import requirements, this was a matter of such importance that it could be taken up only with the President himself. By a stroke of great good fortune Mr. Eden was due to visit Washington for wide-ranging discussions with Mr. Roosevelt on post-war planning and Allied co-operation. He took with him a note drafted by Lord Cherwell and the Prime Minister<sup>(36)</sup> which will be found printed in full as Appendix IV.

As will be seen, this note made two major points. It first pointed out that, owing to shortage of shipping, the military operations agreed upon at Casablanca could be carried out only at the expense of further cuts in the United Kingdom's import programme which the Government flatly refused to accept. Imports were now running at less than half the peacetime level and were carried by a fleet one third its peacetime size. The monthly requirement of one million tons of raw materials and one million tons of food was irreducible, and by April stocks would be nearly a million tons below the minimum safety level. 'Any further drop', the paper insisted, 'and the wheels would cease to turn and rations would be jeopardised'.

Secondly, the paper showed that this situation was not due to any overall shortage of shipping, but to its mal-distribution. Already shipping construction was exceeding sinkings by over half a million tons a month, and the speed of American construction was rapidly increasing.

'Our tonnage constantly dwindles, the American increases. This tonnage is not treated as freely interchangeable and distributed according to needs. The American services claim a prior call on all American building. United States imports form such a small proportion of their total consumption that it is difficult for American service men to realise the importance and indeed urgent need of British imports, on which we rely for something like half our food and vital raw materials . . .

We have undertaken arduous and essential operations encouraged by the belief that we can rely on American ship-building to see us through. But we must know where we stand. We cannot live from hand to mouth on promises limited by provisos . . . Unless we can get a satisfactory long-term settlement, British ships will have to be withdrawn from their present military service even though our agreed operations are crippled and prejudiced'.

Mr. Eden found the President sympathetic, and Mr. Douglas, head of the War Shipping Administration, a great deal more helpful than his military colleagues about the chances of finding the necessary resources. In Mr. Douglas's view the United States could provide enough shipping to fulfil its commitment to the British import programme, to mount 'Husky', to supply Russia through the Pacific and the Persian Gulf, to maintain the flow of U.S. air strength to the United Kingdom (Operation 'Sickle') and to maintain 'existing scale of maintenance in the South West Pacific'. He considered that shipping for Alaska and Hawaii could be considerably reduced, and that 'Anakim' should be deferred until it could be supported by shipping through the Mediterranean.<sup>(37)</sup> The President, for reasons of his own which we shall consider in due course,\* was anyhow cooling towards the 'Anakim' operation. He was even prepared to consider abandoning 'Bolero'. Thinking aloud on the evening of 29th March he scribbled for Mr. Eden his sketch for a revised global strategy:

|                      |   |
|----------------------|---|
| <i>Germany</i>       | No 'Bolero'. Build long-range bombing to maximum.                     |
| <i>Mediterranean</i> | (1) 'Husky'. If 'Husky' Italy next and at once.<br>(2) And/or Turkey. |

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\* See p. 403 below.

*Burma* 'Anakim' out. Keep China going by air.

*South West Pacific* Continue as now.

—all of which raised enormous questions, which we will consider later in this volume. But he informed Mr. Eden categorically that 'the American Chiefs of Staff must be told of the decision that American share of [the British import programme] must be fulfilled'; and on 31st March Field Marshal Dill sent home the welcome news that the order had been given.<sup>(30)</sup>

The President's assurance, as the U.S. authorities pointed out, did not amount to a guarantee of the full total of the 27 million tons of imports which had been agreed the previous November as the irreducible minimum. It extended only to shipping for the 7 million tons which the United States had already agreed to provide. In fact the total import figures for 1943 were to be 26·5 million tons,<sup>(40)</sup> and thereafter the problem was not to recur. But its final solution was to be the result neither of improved co-operation between U.S. and British shipping authorities nor even of the increasing production from American shipyards. It was due to the success of the Allied naval and air forces in winning, decisively, the Battle of the Atlantic.

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BOOK FOUR  
CHAPTER XVI  
WAR BY SEA AND AIR  
JANUARY—AUGUST, 1943

IN THE last month of 1942 the German Naval Staff took stock a little anxiously of the prospect before them. The North African landings, they observed in a memorandum of 1st December 1942,<sup>(1)</sup> had thrown the Axis on to the defensive. The probable result would be that each major partner, Germany and Japan, would tend in future to fend for itself, and abandon all attempt to combine in a global strategy to match that of their adversaries. The strategic situation, combined with shortage of fuel, already limited the heavy units of the German fleet to a defensive role on the Norwegian coast, where the threat they offered both to the Russian convoys and to the approaches to the British Isles gave Japan some relief by pinning down a substantial element of the British fleet. That meant, concluded the memorandum, that 'the destruction of hostile shipping space in order to impede the enemy in his deployment of military and economic strength is and will remain the decisive contribution which the allied fleets can make to victory'. And that meant, overwhelmingly, the deployment of the U-boat arm.

Admiral Dönitz could in fact look back on the performance of his submarines during the past autumn with satisfaction, and forward with some confidence. The tonnage of Allied shipping sunk had crept steadily up: 485,413 in September 1942, 619,417 in October, 729,160 in November;<sup>(2)</sup> and though winter conditions reduced the total in December to 330,806, the number of U-boats at sea was increasing and only a small fraction of them was being sunk. In November, when Dönitz reported a total of 107 boats on station in the North Sea, Atlantic and Mediterranean, the First Sea Lord informed the Anti-U-boat Warfare Committee at its first meeting that the U-boats were being destroyed at only one-third of the rate at which they were being constructed.<sup>(3)</sup> Escorts had been depleted to cover the North African landings; the effectiveness of air patrols in the Bay of Biscay had been drastically reduced once the U-boats picked up the 1½ metre radar scanning-beams with which Coastal Command aircraft were equipped; and above all there remained wide areas in mid-Atlantic which



could not yet be effectively covered by aircraft at all, and on which the U-boat packs were now concentrating.

Admiral Dönitz's hand was strengthened still further when, at the end of January 1943, the Commander-in-Chief of the German Navy, Grand Admiral Raeder, resigned his command. On 6th January he had been subjected by the Führer to a violent diatribe after the heavy units of his fleet had been repulsed in their attempt to break up the Arctic convoy JW 51 B on New Year's Eve 1942. The concept of the 'balanced fleet' in which Raeder believed had never, said Hitler, proved its worth. Large ships, he maintained, only absorbed resources in aircraft and smaller vessels to protect them; better scrap them altogether, he urged, as the Army had scrapped its equally anachronistic cavalry divisions, and use their heavy guns for coastal defence. Raeder, according to the minutes of this meeting, 'rarely had an opportunity to comment'.<sup>(4)</sup> Dönitz succeeded him as Commander-in-Chief, retaining at the same time his post as Flag-Officer U-boats, and had no difficulty in persuading Hitler that henceforward complete priority should be given to the construction, repair and manning of submarines. Field Marshal Keitel and the Minister of Production Albert Speer were brought to agree that no manpower should be transferred to the army out of the submarine branch; and prefabrication was introduced to make submarine construction more swift and, through dispersal, more secure. Marshal Göring however found insuperable difficulties in the way of providing aircraft for reconnaissance and, in the Bay of Biscay, for protection, in the quantities which Dönitz insistently demanded.

The British meanwhile were also providing themselves, at last, with command and control mechanisms to ensure that the Battle of the Atlantic received the priority that it needed in allocation of resources; resources of brain-power as well as of equipment. The Cabinet Anti-U-Boat Warfare Committee held its first meeting on 4th November, with the Prime Minister in the chair. Sir Stafford Cripps, then Minister for Aircraft Production, acted as Deputy Chairman, and Sir Edward Bridges, the Secretary of the War Cabinet, as its secretary. In addition to the ministers and military commanders immediately concerned—the First Lord of the Admiralty and the First Sea Lord, the Secretary of State for Air and the Chief of the Air Staff, the Minister for War Transport and the Commander-in-Chief, Coastal Command,—there were the scientists whose contribution was to be no less decisive: Sir Robert Watson-Watt, the specialist on radar from the Ministry of Aircraft Production; the Admiralty's experts on scientific and operational research, Professor P. M. S. Blackett and Dr Charles Goodeve; and of course Lord Cherwell himself, with his watching

brief over the entire scientific contribution to the war effort. By a wise act of courtesy Mr. Averill Harriman, President Roosevelt's Ambassador at large, and Admiral Harold Stark, Commander of U.S. Naval Forces in the European Theatre of Operations, were also invited to attend.

The Committee held weekly meetings until the second half of April. Then, the crisis past, the frequency of these meetings was halved, and after August 1943 it met only once a month. No matter was too great or too small to lie outside its competence. It considered such major inter-service controversies as the diversion of Bomber Command's attacks from German cities to submarine bases on the west coast of France. It studied the conflict of priorities created by increasing demands for centimetre radar equipment and for escort vessels. It discussed both the strategy of the deployment of naval and air forces and the tactics of convoy defence. It scrutinised the development of new weapons and techniques—depth-charges, bombs, torpedoes, fuses, protection nets, and arrester-gear for escort-carriers. A new spirit was evident—urgent, inquisitive, dispassionate, implacable—which created an atmosphere very different from the bitter, inconclusive arguments of the previous summer.

One of the most significant achievements of this Committee might be noted here: its pioneer work in the field of operational research. The conclusions of the analysts did not always convince the responsible commanders—the term 'slide-rule strategy' came into common, and pejorative, use—but they lifted the discussions on to a more fruitful level than the barren exchanges of assertion and counter-assertion into which they had previously tended to degenerate. A paper presented by Professor Blackett on 11th January 1943 provides a particularly interesting example of this approach.<sup>(6)</sup> Statistical analysis of the course of the Battle of the Atlantic to date, this suggested, showed that the provision of 200 LR or VLR aircraft\* would save some two million tons of shipping from being sunk during 1943, and that every additional escort vessel would save two ships. 'On the basis of the present figures', Professor Blackett suggested, 'it would seem profitable to raise very greatly the ratio of escort vessels building to merchant vessels building, so as to increase as quickly as possible the ratio of escort vessels to merchant vessels at sea to the point where the marginal gain by increasing the escort vessel number begins to fall'. He further made the point that, since losses in convoy did not appreciably

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\* L.R. (Long Range) Aircraft had a cruising range of 1,200 to 2,000 nautical miles, as possessed by Catalinas, Venturas, B. 17s and unmodified B. 24s. V.L.R. (Very Long Range) Aircraft could cruise upwards of 2,000 nautical miles. These were Liberators (B. 24s) modified by the removal of some of their armament and the addition of extra fuel tanks.

increase with the size of the convoy, a smaller number of large convoys was preferable to a large number of small ones.

Neither point passed unchallenged. The urgency of increasing the number of escorts was generally accepted—it had, it will be remembered, received particular attention at Casablanca—but to do so at the expense of the construction of merchant shipping, pointed out the Minister of War Transport, would only increase the number of merchant seamen waiting for ships. The Admiralty was equally reluctant to give it priority over naval construction needed to meet other commitments. In any case the existing programme of escort construction was already behind schedule. A committee set up under Captain Lyttelton to study the question reported on 30th March that the fulfilment and, if possible, acceleration of the construction programme already agreed was more important than its expansion and that even this would involve displacing 93,000 tons of merchant construction from the shipyards unless additional labour could be found.<sup>(7)</sup>

As for increasing the size of convoys—a point which Lord Leathers and Lord Cherwell were also pressing in the interest of meeting the sadly-lagging import programme<sup>(8)</sup>—the Naval Staff were unwilling to accept Professor Blackett's arguments as they stood. With the increase in the number of U-boats operating and the consequent difficulty of evading them the likelihood of convoys being sighted and attacked was now very great indeed, and they had, maintained the Naval Staff, to be provided with sufficient protection to fight their way through. The introduction of the U-boat wolf-pack capable of massacring an under-escorted convoy had transformed the situation—especially since a large convoy was particularly vulnerable to the tactics of frontal attack which the U-boats were increasingly favouring. Moreover the Admiralty pointed out that communication and control difficulties increased considerably once the size of convoys exceeded 60; to which it was replied, during the course of a committee meeting, that during March and April the average number of ships in convoy had been 'a great deal less than 60 and in some SC convoys (Halifax-United Kingdom) had been below 40'.<sup>(9)</sup> But with the slackening of U-boat attacks after April 1943 the Admiralty began, first tentatively, then with growing confidence to increase the size of their convoys; which in itself led to a considerable saving in escort vessels.\*

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\* Admiralty statistics show that the average number of ships per convoy had been well below 40 since the summer of 1941. It was to reach that figure again in April 1943. By October the figure was 50, and the average of 60 was to be reached and passed in June 1944. See: Naval Staff History, *Defeat of the Enemy Attack on Shipping, 1939-45*. Vol. 1B. Plan 35.

The protection of Atlantic convoys was not of course a matter for the British alone. The contribution of the Royal Canadian Navy and Air Force and of the sea and air forces of the United States was equally vital, and at the beginning of March a tripartite conference was held in Washington to survey the whole problem.<sup>(10)</sup> It was convoked in the first place at the request of the Canadians to sort out the confusion of commands in the North West Atlantic, but its agenda was rapidly broadened to include a whole range of questions including routing of convoys, assignment of escorts, air support, composition of Arctic Convoys, and the training of the Support Groups—those teams of specially equipped vessels capable of rapidly reinforcing escorts and then hunting U-boats to the death, whose introduction was to have so great an effect on the course of the war at sea. A number of major decisions were taken. First, the United States Navy withdrew all its forces from escort duties in the North Atlantic—where in any case they furnished only 4% of the escorts—accepting instead the task of convoying tankers to and from the Dutch West Indies and providing a most welcome support-group of one escort carrier and five destroyers to operate under British control. Secondly, the United Kingdom and Canada fixed the dividing line of their responsibilities on the North Atlantic route at 47°W. Finally the United States agreed to transfer 48 VLR aircraft to the control of the Royal Canadian Air Force to cover, from bases in Newfoundland, the Greenland Gap in mid-Atlantic—the area where the U-boats were operating with most lethal effect. Further, the Conference agreed that a further 128 aircraft were needed ‘with such urgency as to warrant recommendation that the Combined Chiefs of Staff arrange to supply them by diversion from other planned deployment’.

Now this touched on a most controversial question, both on the inter-allied and on the inter-service levels: the provision of aircraft for the Battle of the Atlantic. At Casablanca the Combined Chiefs of Staff had declared that ‘the defeat of the U-boat must remain a first charge on the resources of the United Nations’, and in implementation of this policy had called for contributions from the air forces for two purposes: intensive bombing raids against U-boat operating bases and construction yards, and provision of long-range aircraft for convoy protection. The first of these matters we shall deal with later in this chapter. Over the second the Royal Navy and the Royal Air Force had been at loggerheads, as we have already seen, throughout 1942, and it was the first problem to occupy the attention of the Anti-U-boat Warfare Committee at the beginning of November.

The contribution which the Royal Air Force could make to the filling of the Atlantic Gap was in any case only an indirect

one. The only aircraft which could be adequately adapted for the very long range patrols required was the American Liberator Mark V. of which Coastal Command possessed, in November, only 39, with a further 4 a month due to be delivered under the Arnold-Slessor-Towers Agreement\*. One solution proposed was to take them off the patrols in outer zones of the Bay of Biscay on which they were engaged—a particularly important role once the North African landings began—and adapt them for VLR work; but in that case their place would have to be taken by Halifax bombers from Bomber Command, which meant abandoning the 50-squadron target for that Command which the Prime Minister had laid down for the end of the year.† This dilemma could be avoided only if the United States were prepared to release 30 Liberators to patrol the Gap.<sup>(11)</sup> Little was expected of a direct appeal to the Joint Chiefs of Staff, where Fleet Admiral King was too concerned with his Pacific and West Atlantic responsibilities to give the matter the degree of priority the British would wish; but it was hoped that a direct appeal to the President through the ever-considerate Mr. Harry Hopkins might be more successful, and on 20th November a message was despatched over the Prime Minister's signature explaining the situation.<sup>(12)</sup> Mr. Hopkins could not help very much. He suggested that some arrangement might be made for joint use of the 21 Liberators temporarily allocated to the European theatre under the control of General Eisenhower,<sup>(13)</sup> but since these could not be regarded as a firm commitment to the European theatre, and would anyhow be needed for Mediterranean operations, this was not regarded by the Chief of Air Staff as a satisfactory solution. He therefore agreed, with Mr. Churchill's reluctant acquiescence, to transfer 20 Halifaxes from Bomber to Coastal Command.<sup>(14)</sup>

The question was raised again, as we have seen, at the Casablanca Conference, and there the Combined Chiefs of Staff did agree that 80 VLR aircraft in all should be provided to fill the Greenland air Gap; but this decision was not implemented with any degree of urgency. In February 1943, when the Atlantic sinkings rose to 283,820 tons from the January figure of 181,787 tons, only 18 VLR aircraft were operating, all of them west of Iceland.<sup>(15)</sup> This was the situation which led to the decision taken at the Atlantic Convoy Conference—a decision never fully implemented—to station 48 Liberators in Labrador and Newfoundland. The appeal for additional VLR aircraft, if necessary from other theatres, was considered by the Combined Chiefs of Staff, who agreed on 29th March to make suitably modified Liberators available

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\* See Gwyer & Butler, p. 524.

† See p. 25 above.

in sufficient quantity to meet a total target of 255 for the Atlantic;<sup>(16)</sup> but no firm date was agreed for the completion of this programme and in mid-April the total number of Liberators operating in the Atlantic was still only 41.<sup>(17)</sup>

The disappointing rate of progress over the provision of VLR aircraft did not, however, deter the British from despatching to Washington, on 21st April, an appeal for the transfer of U.S. aircraft to the Battle of the Atlantic on an even larger scale. Their reasons for doing so were as follows.

When Air Marshal J. C. Slessor took over the key position of Commander-in-Chief, Coastal Command, in February 1943, he decided that in allocating his limited resources priority should for the time being be given to covering the threatened convoys, where U-boats were more likely to be found, rather than to the long and often fruitless patrols over the Bay of Biscay. The statistics showed that aircraft covering convoys reported one U-boat sighting for every 29 hours of flying; the Bay patrols between October and February could report only one for every 312 hours, and during the first part of March only one for every 170. On 24th March the Anti-U-boat Warfare Committee accepted Air Marshal Slessor's recommendation, which involved 'the Bay patrols assuming the position of a residuary legatee'.<sup>(18)</sup> This decision was accepted with reluctance by the Admiralty as being 'necessary with our present limited resources'; but they—and indeed Slessor himself—emphasised the need to return to the Bay offensive at the very earliest possible moment. 'The possibility of killing U-boats in convoy area is dependent upon our intelligence and upon the enemy's strategy and tactics', they pointed out in a memorandum of 28th March;<sup>(19)</sup> '... he can withdraw altogether from any given convoy area ... He cannot withdraw from the Bay ... Without the Bay offensive we cannot hope to kill sufficient U-boats to get the upper hand in the Battle of the Atlantic, while on the other hand it is believed that we can with an adequately equipped Bay offensive sink sufficient U-boats to destroy their morale'.

The Admiralty memorandum went on to propose a strategy for winning the war against the U-boats; one which was echoed with remarkable precision by recommendations simultaneously put forward by the staff of Admiral Stark in London.<sup>(20)</sup> Both pointed out the need to exploit to the maximum the brief advantage given to Allied aircraft by the introduction of the new centimetre radar scanning-beam which the U-boats were not yet able to pick up. They suggested that the surest way to defeat the U-boats lay in breaking the morale of their crews by imposing a high and assured sinking rate, which the Admiralty estimated to be three in ten, or 12 a month; and on the basis of existing and hoped for

rates of sinking per sortie, they calculated their additional requirements of LR aircraft for the Bay Patrol at 70 immediately, with a further 120 once the U-boats began to read the centimetre radar beams and take evasive action. These additional aircraft, the First Sea Lord told the Committee on 31st March, should be considered an absolute necessity, and not a luxury, for the anti-U-boat campaign.<sup>(21)\*</sup>

Since the Admiralty hoped that the aircraft in question could be found from the resources of Bomber Command, their calculations came under the careful, not to say hostile scrutiny of Lord Cherwell; who commented that the Admiralty expectations of sinkings were justified only 'if the density of the U-boats doubled, the time spent by aircraft on patrol doubled, and the enemy's efficiency in observing our aircraft's approach and diving were halved'.<sup>(22)</sup> He himself put forward a different set of calculations which showed that on the most optimistic estimate the Bay patrols could save only 2 ships per aircraft lost; and 'since Admiralty calculations, from experience but not from theory, arrive at the figure of 16 ships saved in the life of one aircraft on convoy protection, it is evident where the balance of advantage lies'. Comparison with the effectiveness of the bomber offensive, he admitted, was less easy. 'To drop 1,000 tons on a German town has cost us in recent months about 15 bombers (the equivalent of one U-boat sunk). It is difficult to compare quantitatively the damage done to any of the 40-odd German cities in a 1,000 ton raid (Coventry got 230 tons) with the advantage of sinking one U-boat out of 400 and saving 3 or 4 ships out of 5,500. But it will surely be held in Russia as well as here that the bomber offensive must have more immediate effect on the course of the war in 1943'.<sup>(23)</sup>

An enquiry by Sir Stafford Cripps into the discrepancy between the calculations of the Admiralty and those of Lord Cherwell did something to justify the views of the former without, however, reaching clear enough conclusions to provide any basis for action.<sup>(24)</sup> It was Mr. Averill Harriman who, at the Committee meeting of 31st March, pointed a possible way out of the difficulty. On his advice the Committee invited the Admiralty and the Air Ministry to produce agreed figures of the results which could be expected from a given increase of air strength in the Bay; to state how many aircraft the United Kingdom could provide towards this total;

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\* The later verdict of Marshal of the Royal Air Force Sir John Slessor on these recommendations, is chastening. 'A fair comment on the value of this sort of theoretical-numerical "requirements" is the fact that the U-boat campaign against the North Atlantic convoys was defeated by midsummer, with less than fifty V.L.R. aircraft (all Coastal Command except six in 10 Sqn. R.C.A.A.F. in Newfoundland) in conjunction with the surface escorts and a couple of light carriers'. *The Central Blue*, p. 323.

and to invite Washington to consider whether they could make up the rest.<sup>(25)</sup>

Thus it came about that on 21st April the Chiefs of Staff sent to Washington a communication drafted by Air Marshal Slessor, over the signatures of Slessor himself, Admiral Stark and the First Sea Lord.<sup>(26)</sup> This pointed out that everything the Allies had done up till then had failed to keep pace with the growth of the U-boat fleet.

'The one place where we can always be certain of finding U-boats is the Bay. Setting aside the relatively small proportion that pass into the Atlantic North-about, the Bay is the trunk of the Atlantic U-boat menace, the roots being in the Biscay ports and the branches spreading far and wide, to the North Atlantic convoys, to the Caribbean, to the Eastern seaboard of North America, and to the sea lanes where the faster merchant ships sail without escorts . . . It is a strategic problem which can only be solved by an appropriate deployment of our joint resources, designed to concentrate the necessary force at the decisive point in the battlefield of the Atlantic. We are aware that the United States, like Great Britain, has not enough aircraft to meet in full their many commitments and to afford really adequate protection to the coastal shipping on their long coast lines. But if we strike a decisive blow at the trunk in the Bay, the branches will wither'.

The number of aircraft needed to break the morale of the U-boat crews and cripple the offensive was estimated at 260, of which the Royal Air Force already had available 150 and could provide between 30 and 40 more. The total required from the Americans was 72; not to be withdrawn, Slessor was careful to emphasise, from other theatres, but redeployed from other parts of the Atlantic.

For many months, this appeal was to go unanswered; partly because it arrived in Washington at the height of an inter-service dispute over the control of anti-submarine warfare which increased Admiral King's reluctance to second his forces to the control of any other authority.<sup>(27)</sup> Further pressure by the Chiefs of Staff at the Washington Conference in May had no better success, and on 9th June the Anti-U-boat Warfare Committee received a further request from the Air Ministry that the Joint Chiefs of Staff should have the matter kept in front of them 'in the hope that before long they will find it possible to help us'.<sup>(28)</sup> A personal visit by Air Marshal Slessor to Admiral King eased the situation. In July a U.S. squadron from the West Atlantic came into action in the Bay of Biscay, and by October there were four U.S. squadrons operational with Coastal Command and two more working up.<sup>(29)</sup> But by that time the back of the U-boat offensive had been broken.



The battle had reached its climax some six months earlier. At the beginning of February Dönitz had some 218 U-boats operational, 110 of them were at sea, mostly in the north and central Atlantic, with 37 stationed in the Greenland Gap,<sup>(30)</sup> which Coastal Command had still only 14 VLR aircraft to cover. These submarines sank 283,820 tons in the Atlantic in February: 45 ships, 26 of them in convoy. In March the Atlantic sinkings rose to 84 ships, 57 of them in convoy, totalling 501,162 tons;<sup>(31)</sup> while in all waters, during the first twenty days of March, no less than 97 ships were lost.<sup>(32)</sup>

The First Sea Lord explained the reasons to the Anti-U-boat Warfare Committee on 30th March. Exceptionally bad weather had led to straggling from convoys and reduced the efficiency both of escorts' tracking apparatus, and of air support. Ice made routing of convoys to the north hazardous; but more important than either factor, he explained, in causing the losses in late February and March, was 'the failure of evasion based on Direction Finding intelligence. The Atlantic is becoming so saturated by U-boats that the practise of evasion is rapidly becoming impossible'. Nevertheless he was able to sound a note of cautious optimism. The weather was improving. Both support-groups and escort carriers redeployed from their 'Torch' and their North Russian commitments were coming into operation; and, most important of all, more aircraft were gradually becoming available.<sup>(33)</sup> He might have added that, if the figures for sinkings were depressing, a tonic restorative was to be found in those for shipping construction. Since the previous July the monthly figures for construction had progressively exceeded the rate of sinkings, excepting only during November 1942. In March 1943, when total sinkings topped 700,000 tons, construction had already passed the million mark; and above that mark it was to stay.

A further cheering aspect of the situation was the increasing losses being inflicted on the U-boats themselves. On 3rd March the First Sea Lord had been able to report to the Anti-U-boat Warfare Committee that February had been, so far as U-boat casualties were concerned, the most successful month of the war.<sup>(34)</sup> Six weeks later, on 11th April, we find Admiral Dönitz giving even worse news to his Führer. 19 U-boats had been sunk in February, 15 in March, and so far in April, 18. 'These losses are high' he admitted; 'submarine warfare is difficult'; and he asked for further resources to increase submarine construction. Hitler agreed that construction must somehow be expanded, but where was the steel to come from? The demands of the Army in Russia were not diminishing, and a huge expansion of the *Luftwaffe* was necessary if they were not to lose the war in the air. Nevertheless Speer was

ordered to increase steel production for the *Wehrmacht* from 2.6 million to 4 million tons a month, and out of this 30,000 tons a month was to be allocated to the Navy to enable Dönitz to fulfill his programme.<sup>(35)</sup>

Speer did succeed, in spite of all the efforts of the Combined Bomber Offensive, in increasing steel production. Running at 8,956,000 for the first quarter of 1943, the total production of the Nazi Empire reached its peak of 9,192,000 tons in the first quarter of 1944, largely as a result of increasing exploitation of the resources of Belgium and France.<sup>(36)</sup> But this increase came too late to have any effect on the course of the Battle of the Atlantic. In May 47 U-boats were sunk, in June 16, in July 34, in August 21.<sup>(37)</sup> Simultaneously there was a dramatic fall in the number of ships they sank. The total for March was 197; that for May 95; and for June 10.<sup>(38)</sup> For by May, not only had escort-carriers and support-groups come into operation, but VLR aircraft operating from Labrador and Newfoundland had at last closed the Greenland Gap.

On 22nd May Dönitz took the decision to withdraw his boats from the North Atlantic altogether.<sup>(39)</sup> That did not save them, for Coastal Command aircraft, still enjoying the advantage given them by their centimetre radar scanning beams, then concentrated on the Bay of Biscay, where during the month of July they sank a total of 16 submarines. The U-boats tried in vain to protect themselves by sailing in groups, and firing back when attacked on the surface; ultimately they were forced to confine their passage to a devious and difficult route which hugged the coast of Spain. Dönitz reported to Hitler quite frankly that it was 'impossible to foretell to what extent submarine warfare will again become effective';<sup>(40)</sup> and in spite of all he could do by the introduction of acoustic torpedoes, improved radar intercept apparatus and faster, long-range submarines, it was never to become so again. The U-boat remained a menace which could never be ignored; but by September 1943 the Battle of the Atlantic had been won, and the first of the objectives which the Combined Chiefs of Staff had set themselves at Casablanca had been achieved.

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The contribution of the air forces to this victory had been considerable, perhaps decisive. But in one area they had failed to achieve the results for which their naval colleagues had hoped: their attacks on U-boat construction yards and operational bases. Attacks against these targets had already begun in 1942, but the Air Staff had always been sceptical about their value. Both construction yards and submarine-slips in dock areas were small targets, the latter highly protected, and a disproportionate effort,

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the Air Ministry pointed out in a paper of 9th December 1942, was needed to gain direct hits.<sup>(41)</sup> The most effective form of attack against the Biscay ports, they suggested, would be daylight high-level precision bombing of the submarine pens by the U.S.A.A.F. combined with area attacks at night by the R.A.F. to destroy the utilities of the port and damage the morale of the workers needed for the maintenance and servicing of the U-boats in harbour. Some doubt was expressed at the Anti-U-boat Warfare Committee about the value even of these operations.<sup>(42)</sup> The U-boat crews themselves, it was pointed out, were accommodated outside the towns; the concrete shelters for the boats themselves could probably survive even a direct hit; and however badly services and utilities were disrupted, the very highest priority would always be given after a raid to ensuring the uninterrupted functioning of the base. The people who would suffer most would be the unfortunate French inhabitants of the ports; and this, in the view of the Foreign Office, might have very unfortunate consequences for the Allies in North Africa.<sup>(43)</sup> Nevertheless the First Sea Lord felt sufficiently strongly about the matter to raise it, on the Prime Minister's encouragement, with the War Cabinet; to whom he pointed out, 'We must balance the loss of French lives against those of our own merchant seamen'.<sup>(44)</sup> The War Cabinet at a meeting on 11th January sanctioned the bombing as an iron necessity of war, and ordered that Bomber Command should give these targets an overriding priority.<sup>(45)</sup>

The directive, somewhat modified by the Air Staff, was issued to Bomber Command on 14th January.<sup>(46)</sup> The priority was made subject to the proviso that these operations should not prejudice any attack against Berlin, or raids of two hundred or more aircraft on important objectives in suitable weather. Lorient, La Pallice, Brest and St. Nazaire were to be attacked consecutively, and operations against each port were to continue until the Commander-in-Chief, Bomber Command, was satisfied that decisive results had been achieved. The French population were to be warned, in general terms, of what was in store for them, but there were to be no restrictions on area bombing even if complete devastation of inhabitable areas was the result.<sup>(47)</sup> The policy was confirmed by the War Cabinet on 20th January, and by the Combined Chiefs of Staff at Casablanca the following day.<sup>(48)</sup>

Bomber Command launched its first heavy attack on Lorient on 14th January, and by mid-February had dropped 4,363 tons of bombs on the port with the loss of 34 aircraft.<sup>(49)</sup> By then the port had been effectively flattened; but the U-boat pens remained intact. The First Sea Lord assured the Anti-U-boat Warfare Committee on 17th February that the turn-around of submarines in

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harbour had been significantly delayed, and strongly dissented from the proposal of the Chief of the Air Staff that the bombing should be suspended until its achievements had been properly assessed. Once again the question had to go to the War Cabinet for resolution. The First Sea Lord could provide little hard evidence of the effect of these raids on U-boat operations: he could only state that

'It is the considered opinion of officers who have been responsible for the maintenance of submarines that the destruction which has already been caused at Lorient must decrease the number of U-boats which can be fully maintained and operated. This will, of course, not only be due to material destruction, but to the incontrovertable fact that dockyard workmen and submarine crews cannot maintain the same standard of work and output under the strain of constant threat and frequent reality of heavy air attack and the resulting conditions which deprive them of practically every form of relaxation and even the most ordinary amenities . . .'

But the real weight of his argument lay in his inability to suggest any alternative. U-boats were filling the Atlantic in increasing numbers and observing a wireless silence which made evasive plotting of convoy routes impossible. Escorts, escort-carriers and VLR aircraft would not be available in adequate quantities for several months. Bombing the U-boat bases seemed the only recourse left.<sup>(50)</sup>

Against this the Chief of the Air Staff argued that there was no evidence that the bombing, which had absorbed half the total effort of Bomber Command over the last five weeks, had had any effect on submarine operations. He agreed that 'if the result is the virtual abandonment of the port as a U-boat base the expenditure effort may be well worthwhile, and the Air Staff will be keen to see the three remaining ports dealt with in the same way as soon as possible'; but if analysis revealed that this result was improbable, the whole policy, he suggested, should be abandoned. There was no likelihood of the attacks against the remaining Biscay ports proving any more conclusive than those against Lorient.<sup>(51)</sup>

The Defence Committee of the War Cabinet considered the question on 23rd February, and on balance supported the First Sea Lord. They could not believe that these air attacks were not causing serious interference with the refitting of U-boats, even though the pens themselves remained intact; and they thought it probable that to stop bombing now might undo such good (or, rather, harm) as had already been done. But they agreed that the effort over the next month should be reduced, and that only two heavy attacks should be launched against St. Nazaire.<sup>(52)</sup>



On this basis the attacks continued, until at the end of March the Admiralty asked for an extension of the raids to the other Biscay ports—Brest, La Pallice, Bordeaux. The Air Ministry objected. Examination of the effect of the Lorient raids now suggested that the total effect on U-boat operations had been the loss of three cruises, which meant the saving of between five and six ships. The attacks on St. Nazaire had had no appreciable effect at all. Meanwhile valuable sorties against Germany were being lost.<sup>(53)</sup> An acceptable compromise was reached whereby attacks on the lesser Biscay ports were left to relatively inexperienced bomber-crews who could be thus 'blooded' before the long and dangerous sorties over Germany; while the Americans could be encouraged to continue their daylight precision attacks against the submarine pens themselves. So the attacks went on into April.<sup>(54)</sup> Then the escorts and aircraft operating in mid-Atlantic became effective, the Admiralty ceased to press for the raids to continue, and by the end of the month Bomber Command was able to bring them to an end.<sup>(55)</sup>

Between January and May 1943 Bomber Command had dropped 5,429 tons of high explosive and 3,704 tons of incendiary bombs on the Biscay ports and lost 98 aircraft in doing so.<sup>(56)</sup> Post-war study revealed the scepticism of the Air Staff to have been fully justified: the effect of these expensive operations on the course of the Battle of the Atlantic was, in the words of Captain Stephen Roskill, 'not appreciable'.<sup>(57)</sup> The Germans rapidly adjusted themselves to these disagreeable working conditions and continued to function with their usual efficiency. The insistence of the Admiralty that the raids should continue in spite of the lack of evidence to show that they were achieving the desired results may be compared with the similar doggedness exhibited by Bomber Command during the previous year, and it was supported by the War Cabinet for very much the same reason: primarily, the absence of any alternative means of striking at the enemy. The very belated recognition by the War Cabinet—and by the Prime Minister himself—of the strength of the Admiralty's case for giving the Battle of the Atlantic an overriding priority over all other operations may also have played some part in their endorsement of the First Sea Lord's proposals, even when the Air Staff could make a strong case against them. Certainly this was one conflict which the Anti-U-boat Warfare Committee could not resolve; but that body played a valuable part in reducing it to its essential elements, providing an agreed body of data on which a decision could be taken, and preventing, to the limited extent that it was possible to do so, service interests from distorting the issue.

The chagrin with which the Commander-in-Chief, Bomber Command, viewed the diversion of his limited resources from what he considered to be their primary role can be well understood. He had entered vigorous protests when the matter was being debated in January, but once the directive was given—with the qualifications noted—he loyally carried it out. But the proposal which the Admiralty brought forward at the end of March for the immediate transfer of a further 70 aircraft to the Bay Offensive provoked Air Chief Marshal Harris to a characteristic protest which showed how little the views which he had held the previous summer had been changed by the events of the last nine months.

‘What is suggested is, in fact, [he wrote in a memorandum of 29th March<sup>(58)</sup>] that the Bomber Offensive, which is the only effective means open to the United Nations in the immediate future for striking directly at Germany, should be mainly employed for purely defensive purposes, which if successful will give a long-term dividend in the form of shipping to be used for offensive purposes. This means that practically the whole brunt of fighting Germany is to be thrown on the Russians during the vital period of 1943 . . .

The decided policy of the war is to bomb the enemy soft until a comparatively small land force, which we know is all we shall ever be able to employ against him, can overcome his remaining resistance . . . Opportunities do not last for ever, and we have got so near with the existing Bomber force to producing a state of destruction and chaos in Germany insupportable to the enemy, that to let up on it now would give him new encouragement, and would make it very difficult, if not impossible, to catch up again’.

Air Chief Marshal Harris’s exasperation was the greater since the forces at his command—if they had been left at his unrestricted disposal—at last seemed to be developing the capacity to carry out the role for which the Royal Air Force had cast itself since its fundamental doctrines had been worked out by Trenchard and his disciples twenty years before. At the end of 1942 Bomber Command had still had at its disposal a daily average of only some 500 aircraft, of which 80 were the unsuitable *Bostons* and *Venturas* and 120 *Wellingtons* which were nearing the end of their useful life. By August 1943 the figure had reached 787; by March 1944 it was to rise to 974, the greater part of them the excellent *Lancasters* which Sir Arthur Harris described in his Despatch as ‘immensely superior to all other types in the Command’.<sup>(59)</sup> More important however even than numbers were the navigational aids which were coming into service. In December 1942 the first aircraft came equipped with the *Oboe* pathfinding apparatus, which, in spite

of its limited range, made possible for the first time the accurate bombing of targets in the Ruhr Valley. In January 1943 the yet more effective H<sub>2</sub>S radar scanning apparatus was introduced, which enabled aircraft to 'see' the ground and keep track of their position in conditions of darkness and ten-tenths cloud. To these scientific aids were added, also in January 1943, improved tactical techniques of target location and illumination, in particular the famous 'Pathfinder Force'. The Air Staff believed that much of the value of these devices lay in the enemy's ignorance of their existence. Once he became aware of them and developed counter-measures their effectiveness was bound to be reduced. It was therefore important that they should be used to the full before he had the opportunity to do this; so the first few months of 1943 seemed to the Air Staff as vital for their purpose as they were in the eyes of the Admiralty for the course of the Battle of the Atlantic.

The overriding priority given to the bombing of the Biscay ports made it impossible for Bomber Command to devote more than a small fraction of its strength to bombing Germany during this critical period; though substantial raids were launched against Cologne on 2nd February, Hamburg on 3rd February, Wilhelms-haven on 11th February and Berlin itself on 1st March. On 5th March however Bomber Command was able to find 442 aircraft to bomb Essen, thereby initiating the series of heavy attacks which became known collectively as 'the Battle of the Ruhr'. By mid-July a total of 18,502 sorties had been flown against the area, 2,070 of them against Essen itself in five raids. Casualties to the raiding forces were heavy: a total of 872 aircraft failed to return, and 2,126 were damaged. At the same time attacks were made against such other major targets as Berlin, Stuttgart, Kiel, Frankfurt-am-Main and Münster, while on 16th May there occurred the famous precision raid against Möhne and Eder dams—a spectacular feat of skill and courage, but one whose effect on the German war effort was, unfortunately, slight.<sup>(60)</sup>

To 'the Battle of the Ruhr' succeeded 'the Battle of Hamburg', which opened on the 24th July with a series of virtually continuous attacks against the port and city on a quite unprecedented scale. 791 bombers attacked that night; the United States 8th Army Air Force continued the attacks by daylight on 25th and 26th July; on 27th July Bomber Command despatched a further 787 bombers, on 29th 777, on 2nd August a further 740. The raids continued until November, when the attacks were switched to Berlin. Altogether 17,021 sorties were flown against Hamburg in 33 major attacks, at a cost of 695 aircraft lost and 1,123 damaged.<sup>(61)</sup> According to contemporary German records a million people fled the city; 37,000 were wounded; between 40 and 50,000 killed.<sup>(62)</sup>

Reports to the German government spoke, as Goebbels put it in his diary, of 'a catastrophe the extent of which simply staggers the imagination. A city of a million inhabitants has been destroyed in a manner unparalleled in history. We are faced with problems which are almost impossible of solution'.<sup>(63)</sup> With the initiation of raids on such a scale, a new and grimmer era had dawned, not only for the Nazi régime (whose leaders were simultaneously receiving the first reports of Mussolini's fall in Rome) but perhaps in the history of mankind.

Yet in spite of the appalling damage inflicted on the city, nearly half of whose dwelling houses were totally destroyed,<sup>(64)</sup> the raids had surprisingly little effect on German war production. Damage was less on the outskirts of the city, where the main factories were located, than in the crowded centre; and the destruction of factory buildings did not necessarily involve destruction of the plant inside. Within five months, according to the United States Strategic Bombing Survey, the city had recovered eighty per cent of its productivity, and only 1·8 month's production was lost as a result of the raids—much of it in industries of minor importance to the war effort.<sup>(65)</sup> The total damage done to the Ruhr and the Rhineland as a whole during 1943 has been estimated by the official historians of the Strategic Bomber Offensive at between one month's and six weeks' total production; which was, they admit, 'small in proportion with the general rise in armament production at the time'.<sup>(66)</sup>

Indeed, during this period, thanks largely to the activities of Albert Speer, the output of factories in territories controlled by Germany markedly increased. Much of this additional production came from areas outside the Reich, but within Germany itself there were still resources which, unknown to the Ministry of Economic Warfare, had lain untapped during the first three years of the war and were only now becoming fully deployed. As a result of these factors, the total quantity of warlike stores produced between October 1942 and May 1943 rose from 1,432 million Reichsmarks to 2,158 million. The monthly output of tanks increased from 600 at the end of 1942 to 1,250 at the end of 1943, and reached a peak of 1,500 in March 1944. Most important of all, the production of fighter aircraft during 1943 increased threefold;<sup>(67)</sup> a figure of obvious relevance to the success of the Combined Bomber Offensive itself.

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It must be borne in mind that the activities of the Royal Air Force constituted only one part—though at this stage of the war, still the most important part—of the Combined Bomber Offensive which had been agreed on at Casablanca. At that Conference,

it will be recalled, the Combined Chiefs of Staff issued their directive to the Commanders of the British and United States Bomber Commands in the United Kingdom for operations to bring about 'the progressive destruction and dislocation of the German military, industrial and economic system, and the undermining of the morale of the German people to a point where their capacity for armed resistance is fatally weakened'. The Chief of the British Air Staff was allotted responsibility for the strategical direction of these operations, but matters of tactics and techniques he left in the hands of the respective Commanders-in-Chief, who naturally interpreted the directive in accordance with their own traditions and doctrines. Sir Arthur Harris read into it categorical approval of his employment of his forces with the ultimate object of destroying German morale.<sup>(68)</sup> The Americans saw it as a no less categorical endorsement of their policy of paralysing the German economy by precision attacks against selected targets, based on the maxim 'it is better to cause a high degree of destruction in a few really essential industries or services than to cause a small degree of destruction in many industries'.

With this as their basic premise, a Committee of Operational Analysts produced for the U.S.A.A.F. a list of target-systems in order of priority, concluding that 'the destruction and continued neutralisation of some sixty targets would gravely impair and might paralyse the Western Axis war effort'.<sup>(69)</sup> The list was examined in London in March by a joint Anglo-American Committee which revised it to comprise 76 targets in six systems. These, in order of priority, were submarine construction and bases, the aircraft industry, ball-bearings, oil, synthetic rubber, and mechanised transport. The growing effectiveness of German fighter defences led a few weeks later to the additional instruction that 'German fighter strength must be considered as an *intermediate objective* second to none in priority'. Thus amended, the complete plan for Operation 'Pointblank' (as it was now called) was presented to the Combined Chiefs of Staff when they met in conference at Washington in May, and there received their approval. It included, however, the important qualification: 'This plan does not attempt to prescribe the major effort of the R.A.F. Bomber Command. It simply recognises the fact that when precision targets are bombed by the Eighth Air Force in daylight, the effort should be complemented and completed by R.A.F. bombing attacks against the surrounding industrial area at night'.<sup>(70)</sup> A further directive from Air Chief Marshal Portal emphasised yet more strongly the autonomy of Bomber Command. 'While the forces of Bomber Command will be employed in accordance with their main aim in the general disintegration of German industry', this stated, 'their action will

be designed as far as practicable to be complementary to the 8th Air Force'.<sup>(71)</sup>

It was to take the best part of a year for Operation 'Pointblank' to develop the degree of co-ordination and effectiveness which had been hoped. In Washington General Arnold had to fight a series of stiff battles before he was able to secure for the build-up of the Eighth Air Force in the United Kingdom (Operation 'Sickle') the necessary priority in relation to operations in the South West Pacific. Field Marshal Dill reported on 18th March, after a somewhat tense meeting of the Combined Chiefs of Staff, that 'there were those in high places who *supposed* that the bombing of Germany was doing some good but *sure* that "their boys" were fighting in the Pacific and should be given the fullest possible air support'.<sup>(72)</sup> Next day however, 19th March, the necessary decisions were taken, and the Combined Chiefs of Staff allocated to 'Sickle' equal priority with operations in the South Pacific, second only to Operation 'Husky'.<sup>(73)</sup> But it was only after the Washington Conference in May that General Eaker's forces began to develop a strength anything like adequate to their task. Before March he was rarely able to put a hundred operational aircraft in the air: his first attack against an objective inside Germany was directed against Wilhelmshaven, raided by 91 U.S. bombers on 27th January with a loss of only three aircraft. On 17th April a force of 115 U.S. bombers attacked Bremen, losing 16 with 46 damaged. On 13th May General Eaker was able to write with satisfaction to General Arnold 'our combat crew availability went up in a straight line from 100 to 215'. By the end of the month he was flying up to 279 sorties, and setting his sights at 300.<sup>(74)</sup>

But fast as United States bomber strength grew, the strength of the German fighter defences grew still faster; and the experiences of the summer of 1943 forced the U.S.A.A.F. to a mortified re-examination of their doctrine that fighter defences could never inflict on unescorted forces of bombers engaged on daylight raids an unacceptable level of casualties. On 13th June 22 bombers out of 60 attacking Kiel were lost, and from raids between July 25th and 28th 65 failed to return. By the end of July Eighth Army Air Force Command had only 275 heavy bombers left available for operations, and had to suspend operations altogether for two weeks. When these were resumed the casualty rate was yet more alarming: 25 out of 243 on 12th August attacking the Ruhr; 60 out of 376 on 17th August attacking Schweinfurt and Regensburg; 45 out of 407 on 6th September attacking Stuttgart; 30 (with 29 more badly damaged) out of 399 on 8th October attacking Bremen and Vegesack. On 10th October 29 out of 119 aircraft attacking Münster were destroyed, and the climax came on 14th October

when, out of 291 bombers attacking Schweinfurt, 60 were lost and 17 badly damaged. No further attempts at deep penetration were made that year by American bombers.<sup>(76)</sup>

The effectiveness of German night fighter defences was less spectacular, but it was considerable enough to cause the British Air Staff some alarm. In the Battle of the Ruhr alone, as we have seen, out of 18,502 sorties flown 2,126 aircraft were damaged and 872 failed to return; figures which, in the words of Webster and Frankland, 'make it difficult to assess whether, in a long-drawn campaign of that sort, Bomber Command would become the victim or the victor'.<sup>(76)</sup> Through the summer the position grew worse; till on 25th September Air Vice Marshal Bottomley, Deputy Chief of Air Staff, wrote of the German night fighters: 'Unless we can stop their numbers increasing or else introduce some effective measure of combating them, we may find that either we are unable to maintain the night offensive against Germany, or that the Germans can sustain the intensity of attack which we develop'.<sup>(77)</sup> In November intelligence estimates—which proved remarkably accurate—suggested that between June and October German fighter strength in the West had increased from 1,210 to 1,525—a rate of increase which, if continued uninterrupted, would bring it to 1,710 by April, on the eve of 'Overlord', with a total front-line air strength of 2,865. The full gravity of these figures becomes clear when one realises that the 'Pointblank' plan aimed to reduce that total strength to 650 by the time 'Overlord' was launched.

The controversy which this discovery set off within the high command of the Royal Air Force, as the Air Staff attempted with only partial success to persuade Sir Arthur Harris to co-ordinate his attacks more closely with those of the Eighth Army Air Force and concentrate on the targets set out in the 'Pointblank' plan, lies outside the scope of this volume. It is fully dealt with by Sir Charles Webster and Dr. Frankland in their history of the Strategic Air Offensive against Germany.<sup>(78)</sup> Outside our scope also is the remarkable success of the Allied air forces in developing the P.51 Mustang, a long-range fighter aircraft whose capacity to escort bombers to any target in the Reich was to transform the entire Combined Bomber Offensive and make it possible to achieve completely in 1944 the task assigned to them at Casablanca. At the end of 1943 honours between the two adversaries were still even. Sir Arthur Harris's claim, on 3rd November, that nineteen German towns were 'virtually destroyed' and that 'Germany must collapse before this programme, which is more than half completed already, has proceeded much further',<sup>(79)</sup> is perhaps best described as an optimistic interpretation of intelligence estimates which did not themselves err on the side of caution.

Yet the very intensity with which the Germans battled to defend the skies over their homeland played into the Allies' hands. Fighter aircraft which might otherwise have been employed on the Russian front were drawn in to defend German cities. Between February 1943 and February 1944 the total number of German fighter aircraft on the Eastern Front remained stable, at the remarkably low figure of 485-475, while those allotted to home defence rose from 965 to 1,615.<sup>(80)</sup> In the battles over Germany fighters were destroyed and, more significant, trained pilots were killed who might otherwise have been available to attack the vulnerable Allied armada and beach-heads in June 1944. Into the manufacture of fighters went resources which might otherwise have been available for bombers to renew a 'blitz' against British cities. Into anti-aircraft defences was diverted manpower and material which might otherwise have been available for the armies in the field. Germany was nowhere near collapse in 1943; but in the air, as by sea and land, she had been thrown finally on the defensive, and there seemed every reason to hope that the following year might see the *coup de grâce*.



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BOOK FOUR  
CHAPTER XVII  
THE RUSSIAN ALLY  
JANUARY—APRIL, 1943

ON THE Eastern Front also the Germans had been thrown on the defensive; and a defensive which had to be conducted against an adversary who was now beginning to reveal a marked superiority in both manpower and material. The Russian figures indicate for this period only a slight overall superiority on the southern part of the front: a little over a million men on either side, with 900 Russian tanks confronting 700 German, 13,000 guns confronting 10,000, and a slight inferiority in aircraft of 1,100 to 1,200.<sup>(1)</sup> But of the German armour only 495 tanks were reported fit for action on the entire front on 23rd January 1943,<sup>(2)</sup> while the enormous over-extension of the German front, ballooning out over the Don towards the Caucasus and the Caspian, enabled the Russians to achieve a local superiority of up to three to one in manpower and four to one in material.<sup>(3)</sup> Much of the German front moreover was held by allied forces—Italian, Hungarian, Rumanian—of very indifferent quality. Hitler's military advisers continued to urge on him the need to shorten the front and establish a defensive line west of the Don, thus releasing forces which would enable the Germans again to take the initiative. But Hitler rejected their concept of a flexible strategy. He was reluctant to withdraw the forces which had so nearly reached the vital strategic objective of the Caucasus oilfields. He regarded the coal of the Donetz—in fact with little justification—as being essential to the German war economy. As a result German forces were withdrawn only under pressure of *force majeure*, at the last moment and in some disorder, and the Russians were able to exploit their numerical superiority to the full.

The Russian pincers had closed round General Paulus's *Sixth Army* at Stalingrad on 22nd November. Hitler had forbidden a break-out, relying on Marshal Göring's rash promise to keep the beleaguered forces supplied from the air. On 21st November a new *Army Group Don* was formed under Field Marshal Erich von Manstein, with the mission of restoring the positions lost to Soviet attacks. The forces at von Manstein's disposal were quite inadequate to the task, but he launched an offensive on 12th

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December in an effort to link up with the *Sixth Army*. After ten days, with his left flank and rear threatened by new Russian attacks, he had to abandon the attempt; but he continued to fight to hold open a corridor for retreat for *Army Group A* from the Caucasus, whose withdrawal Hitler grudgingly sanctioned on the night of 28th December.

Von Manstein himself considered with some reason that it was only the continued resistance of the *Sixth Army* at Stalingrad, containing some 90 of the 259 Russian formations confronting him, that made it possible to re-establish the situation on the Russian front at all.<sup>(4)</sup> Ignoring a call to capitulate on 9th January, the German troops at Stalingrad fought on until they were finally overrun and the survivors capitulated on 2nd February. They were not many. The Russians claimed 91,000 prisoners, and only some 35,000 German troops had been flown out of the pocket, so of the original quarter of a million men under Paulus's command, over half must have died; many of them from starvation and cold.<sup>(5)</sup>

Terrible as this blow was to the German army, von Manstein knew that it might have been only the overture to a yet more sweeping disaster. Even before *Sixth Army* surrendered at Stalingrad, Russian forces were advancing south and west over the Upper Don, aiming at the Dnieper crossings over which all the German armies in the south had to be supplied. Svoboda fell on 12th January, Voronezh a fortnight later, and on 2nd February the Russians reached the Donetz at Voroshilovgrad, leaving a corridor only a hundred miles wide for the withdrawal of the German forces east of Rostov. The seriousness of the situation penetrated at last even to Hitler, who on 6th February, after bitter arguments, consented to a shortening of the German line by a withdrawal to positions on the Donetz and the Mius on the Southern Front, and by the evacuation of the Viasma-Rzhev salient on the Central Front before Moscow. Von Manstein was placed in command of all the armies on the Southern Front, re-organised as a *Southern Army Group*, and began assembling forces for a counter-stroke.

Time was short. The Russians reached Belgorod and Kursk on 9th February, Kharkov on 15th February, and only negligible forces now stood between them and the Upper Dnieper. But now it was the Russians who were over-extended. On 22nd February von Manstein launched a counter-attack north east from Dnepropetrovsk, and within ten days his forces were able to claim 9,000 prisoners and 23,000 Russian dead. On 14th March the Germans re-entered Kharkov and, shortly afterwards, Belgorod. The line along the Donetz and the Mius was re-established: substantially the positions from which the German armies had set out on their

ill-fated offensive the previous June. Then came the spring rains, and, with them, mud. Mobile operations on either side came to a halt.

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When the Casablanca Conference officially ended on 24th January the Soviet attacks at Stalingrad were thus entering their final stage, and the German forces on the entire Southern Front were in headlong retreat. It was in these circumstances that the Prime Minister and President Roosevelt sent Stalin a joint message describing the outcome of the Casablanca Conference. The operations they had planned for the next nine months,<sup>(6)</sup> they suggested a little hopefully, together with those on the Russian front, 'could well bring Germany to her knees in 1943'. Their main desire, they explained, was 'to divert strong German land and air forces from the Russian front and to send to Russia the maximum flow of supplies'. They described the Allied intentions to clear the Axis out of North Africa so as to open the Mediterranean and intensify the bombing of Axis targets in South Europe, and then to launch large-scale amphibious operations in that theatre. In addition they would be concentrating strong forces in the United Kingdom to re-enter Europe 'as soon as practicable'. Finally they would increase the intensity of the bomber offensive, which by midsummer should be 'double its present strength'. 'Our ruling purpose' they concluded, 'is to bring to bear upon Germany and Italy the maximum forces by land, sea and air which can be physically applied'.

Mr. Churchill himself did not expect that this message would be very well received. He warned the War Cabinet, with good reason, that 'nothing in the world will be accepted by Stalin as an alternative to our placing 50 or 60 divisions in France by the Spring of this year. I think he will be disappointed and furious with the joint message'.<sup>(7)</sup> But Stalin's response was more enigmatic. He read through the message when it was delivered jointly by the British and American Ambassadors on 27th January 'without any noticeable enthusiasm'; said briskly, 'all right, anything further?' and concluded the interview on an amicable note.<sup>(8)</sup> In his written reply of 30th January Stalin thanked his allies for their 'friendly joint message' and went on to ask, not unreasonably, 'Taking your decisions with regard to Germany and settling the task to smash her in 1943 by way of a second front in Europe, I would be grateful to you for telling me what concrete operations and at what time they are envisaged'.<sup>(9)</sup>

This enquiry—as perhaps was intended—caused some embarrassment to the Western Allies. As we have seen, it was only due to



the unwearying insistence of the Prime Minister that the Chiefs of Staff were prepared to consider a landing in North West France in 1943 as even a remotely practicable operation. In their final report, the Combined Chiefs of Staff did speak of preparing 'for an operation against the Contentin peninsula with resources which will be available, the target date set at the 1st August 1943';<sup>(10)</sup> but they had also made it clear that such an operation depended on such imponderable elements as the availability of shipping, the numbers of German reserves available in the area, and the condition of German morale. When the Prime Minister suggested informing Stalin that they were aiming for a heavy operation across the Channel in August 1943 with 17-20 divisions, the Chiefs of Staff Committee had to point out to him that such a forecast was far too optimistic.<sup>(11)</sup> The President transmitted from Washington a more non-committal draft, which stated merely, 'We are also pushing preparations to the limit of our resources for a cross-Channel operation in August, in which both British and U.S. units would participate. Here again, shipping and assault landing-craft will be limiting factors. If the operation is delayed by weather or other reasons, it will be prepared with stronger forces for September. The timing of this attack must of course be dependent upon the condition of German defensive possibilities across the Channel at that time'.<sup>(12)</sup> This wording was embodied in a message to Stalin of 9th February, which gave also a fuller account of the operations visualised in the Mediterranean;<sup>(13)</sup> reference being made not only to Operation 'Husky' but to a subsequent 'operation in the Eastern Mediterranean, probably against the Dodecanese'.

Stalin's reply was cold.<sup>(14)</sup> He complained of the slow tempo visualised for the Mediterranean attacks at a moment when joint pressure from Russian and Anglo-American forces could achieve 'great results'. As for the 'second front', he regarded its establishment in August or September as being far too late. 'In order not to give the enemy any respite it is extremely important to deliver the blow from the West in the Spring or in the early Summer, and not to postpone it until the second half of the year'. He added that since the end of December, 'when the Anglo-American operations in Tunis for some reasons slowed down', the Germans had been able to transfer to the East 27 divisions, including five panzer divisions, from France, Belgium, Holland and Germany. 'It is just because the military operations in Tunis slackened', he suggested, 'Hitler was able to throw in some additional troops against the Russians'.

The relationship between operations in Tunisia and the German capacity to reinforce their Eastern Front was less direct than Stalin thought. Indeed, if the Allied forces in Tunisia had been

more successful it would have been impossible for the Axis to have sent any reinforcements to North Africa at all. None the less British intelligence sources confirmed that between 20 and 25 divisions had been sent to Russia from France and the Low Countries during the past few months,\* and that, although three had been transferred to the West from Russia and seven others had been sent to France from Germany or elsewhere, the total in France and the Low Countries had indeed been reduced to 30 from the 40 present there the previous September, and their quality had been appreciably lowered.<sup>(15)</sup>

When M. Maisky, the Soviet Ambassador, presented Stalin's message, Mr. Eden who received it on behalf of the Prime Minister, at that moment sick with pneumonia, informed him 'that in the Prime Minister's view every observation in Premier Stalin's message was fair and just'. It was certainly no fault of Mr. Churchill's that 'the Second Front' seemed once more to be slipping away into the remote future. Nor was it that of M. Maisky himself, who had throughout the last year been unwearied in canvassing opinion in the British press and Parliament in favour of an early landing in North West France. In presenting Stalin's message he added his own pleas. Operations in the Mediterranean, he insisted, could not divert so many German divisions as would an attack across the Channel. The decisions at Casablanca had been taken before the full magnitude of the Russian victories had been revealed, as a result of which the war might well now end in 1943. 'It was of the first importance', he added, according to Mr. Eden's account, 'that the German collapse should come about as a result of the simultaneous pressure from east and west. In such conditions the prospects for future collaboration between our two countries would be the best possible. If on the other hand almost the whole military burden had been borne by Russia and Germany was defeated by military blows alone, obviously the political position would be less satisfactory, not only for ourselves but, he believed, for Russia also'.<sup>(16)</sup>

Mr. Eden summoned a meeting of the Defence Committee to consider this *démarche* on 23rd February, but in Mr. Churchill's absence no decision could be taken. All that even Mr. Churchill could do, once he recovered, was to draft in collaboration with President Roosevelt yet another message to the Russian leader, which was despatched in 11th March.<sup>(17)</sup> This explained in greater detail both the operations which were being prepared and the difficulties which had to be overcome in mounting them. The British Army had 38 divisions tied down between Gibraltar and

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\* Post-war analysis gives a lower figure. See p. 337 below.

Calcutta which could not be brought back to join the 16 being prepared in the United Kingdom; while the general shortage of shipping and escorts made it unlikely that more than 5 U.S. divisions would be in the United Kingdom by August. 'In order to sustain the operations in North Africa, the Pacific and India, and to carry the supplies to Russia, the import programme into the United Kingdom has been cut to the bone, and we have eaten, and are eating into reserves'.

'However in case the enemy should weaken sufficiently [he pointed out] we are preparing to strike earlier than August, and plans are kept alive from week to week. If he does not weaken a premature attack with inferior and insufficient forces would merely lead to a bloody repulse, Nazi vengeance on the local population if they rose, and a great triumph for the enemy. The Channel situation can only be judged nearer the time, and in making this declaration of our intentions there for your own personal information, I must not be understood to limit freedom of decision'.

Stalin's reply was unyielding. Granted all the difficulties, he wrote on 15th March, 'I deem it my duty to warn you in the strongest possible manner how dangerous would be from the viewpoint of our common cause further delay in the opening of the second front in France'.<sup>(18)</sup> But he did not press the matter further; and in a telegram of the same date he sent friendly messages of congratulations on the progress of the air offensive against Germany. These continued to arrive from Moscow throughout March and April in reply to the bulletins which the Prime Minister sent him describing the mounting strength of the Allied attacks. 'Every blow delivered by your Air Force at the vital German centres', he wrote on 7th April, 'evokes a lively echo in the hearts of many millions throughout the width and breadth (sic) of our country'.<sup>(19)</sup> Yet these achievements could not compensate for the delays in launching the cross-Channel attack which the Russians, with their lack of experience of combined operations, found so inexplicable; and there can be no doubt that the failure of the Allies to live up to the assurances given on their behalf by their leaders the previous summer continued to rankle, both with Stalin himself and with the Russian people as a whole, long after the tide had turned quite decisively in their favour.

Unfortunately the Western Allies had further disappointments in store for the Russians. As we have already seen the Arctic convoys had been resumed after the interruption made necessary by the North African landings, and the two convoys which had sailed in December (JW 51 A and B) arrived safely with 29 ships.<sup>(20)</sup>

The Admiralty then found that shortage of escorts and of shipping made it necessary to reduce the size of the convoys temporarily, and planned a convoy of 20 ships for January (JW 52), 28–30 ships for February (JW 53) and 30 ships for March. News of this somehow leaked out to M. Maisky, who paid an agitated visit to Mr. Eden to complain that Stalin had been expecting 30 ships in the January convoy. Mr. Churchill hotly denied that the Russians had been given any reason to expect anything of the sort.

'Maisky should be told [he informed the Foreign Secretary on 9th January] that I am getting to the end of my tether with these repeated Russian naggings and that it is not the slightest use trying to knock me about any more. Our escorts all over the world are so attenuated that losses out of all proportion are falling upon the British Mercantile Marine. Only this morning news has come in of six out of nine great tankers sunk, full of oil and greatly needed, because we can only provide an escort of one destroyer and a few corvettes for this vital convoy'.<sup>(21)</sup>

Stalin in fact expressed no dissatisfaction when the programme was outlined to him.<sup>(22)</sup> Regrettably, of the 20 vessels promised for January only 14 sailed, owing to a combination of accidents, engine failures and labour disputes which Mr. Churchill with some reason stigmatised as 'lamentable'.<sup>(23)</sup> The February convoy sailed according to plan with 28 ships of which 22 reached their destination, the rest being turned back by bad weather.<sup>(24)</sup> But then serious trouble began. The lengthening hours of daylight as the winter solstice receded deprived the convoys of cover of darkness while at the same time the encroaching ice-cap forced them further south, within easy reach of the German bases in northern Norway. The growing intensity of the Battle of the Atlantic in March meant that the Admiralty was critically short of escort vessels—a shortage which could only increase when the time came to mount the invasion of Sicily. Finally, and most significant of all, the Germans were found to have concentrated three heavy units of their battlefleet, the *Tirpitz*, the *Scharnhorst* and the *Lützow*, at Altenfjord near Narvik. This meant that the British Home Fleet would have to send comparable vessels to escort the convoys to Murmansk. Once these entered the Barents Sea they would be at the mercy both of U-boats and land-based aircraft; and with the Home Fleet thus weakened, the German battle cruisers might break out into the Atlantic and create havoc among the convoys.<sup>(25)</sup>

The First Sea Lord explained this problem to the Defence Committee of the Cabinet on 16th March.<sup>(26)</sup> He insisted that, as a result of these factors, the March convoy would have to be cancelled.

The Prime Minister at first would not agree. Largely as a result of his pressure, it was decided at first to let the convoy sail. If possible the enemy ships were to be enticed into action west of Bear Island; if this could not be done, the convoy would turn back to Iceland and await a more favourable opportunity. But before this decision could be carried out news came in of the heavy U-boat attacks, and the heavy casualties inflicted, on two convoys, HX 229 and SC 122, in mid-Atlantic. So grave did the situation now appear that even the Prime Minister agreed that to sail the March convoy was out of the question.<sup>(27)</sup>

This was not all. When the invasion of Sicily was mounted it would be necessary to suspend the Arctic convoys again, as they had had to be suspended during the mounting of Operation 'Torch'. Mr. Churchill therefore accepted the need for a bold and disagreeable decision, the reasons for which he explained to President Roosevelt in a message of 18th March.<sup>(28)</sup> 'The strain on the British Navy', he stated, 'is becoming intolerable'. If they decided to suspend the convoys altogether until the following autumn, it would enable them to get over the 'hump' in the Battle of the Atlantic. 'My mind is therefore turning to blunt and complete cessation till after "Husky".' As he expressed it to Mr. Eden, then in Washington: 'I think we might just as well be hanged for a sheep as for a lamb'.<sup>(29)</sup> The President agreed after some hesitation, and Mr. Churchill broke the news to Stalin in a message of 30th March.<sup>(30)</sup>

Stalin's reply was glum but moderate in tone. 'I understand this unexpected action', he said, 'as a catastrophic diminution of supplies of arms and military raw materials to the U.S.S.R. on the part of Great Britain and the United States of America, as transport via Pacific is limited by the tonnage and not reliable and the southern route has a small transit capacity . . .'<sup>(31)</sup> 'A very natural and stout hearted response', was Mr. Churchill's comment to the President; ' . . . The answer makes me the more determined to back this man with every conceivable means'. And to Stalin he replied 'I acknowledge the force of all you say in your telegram about the convoys. I assure you that I shall do my utmost to make any improvement which is possible. I am deeply conscious of the giant burden borne by the Russian Armies and their unequalled contribution to the common cause'.\*

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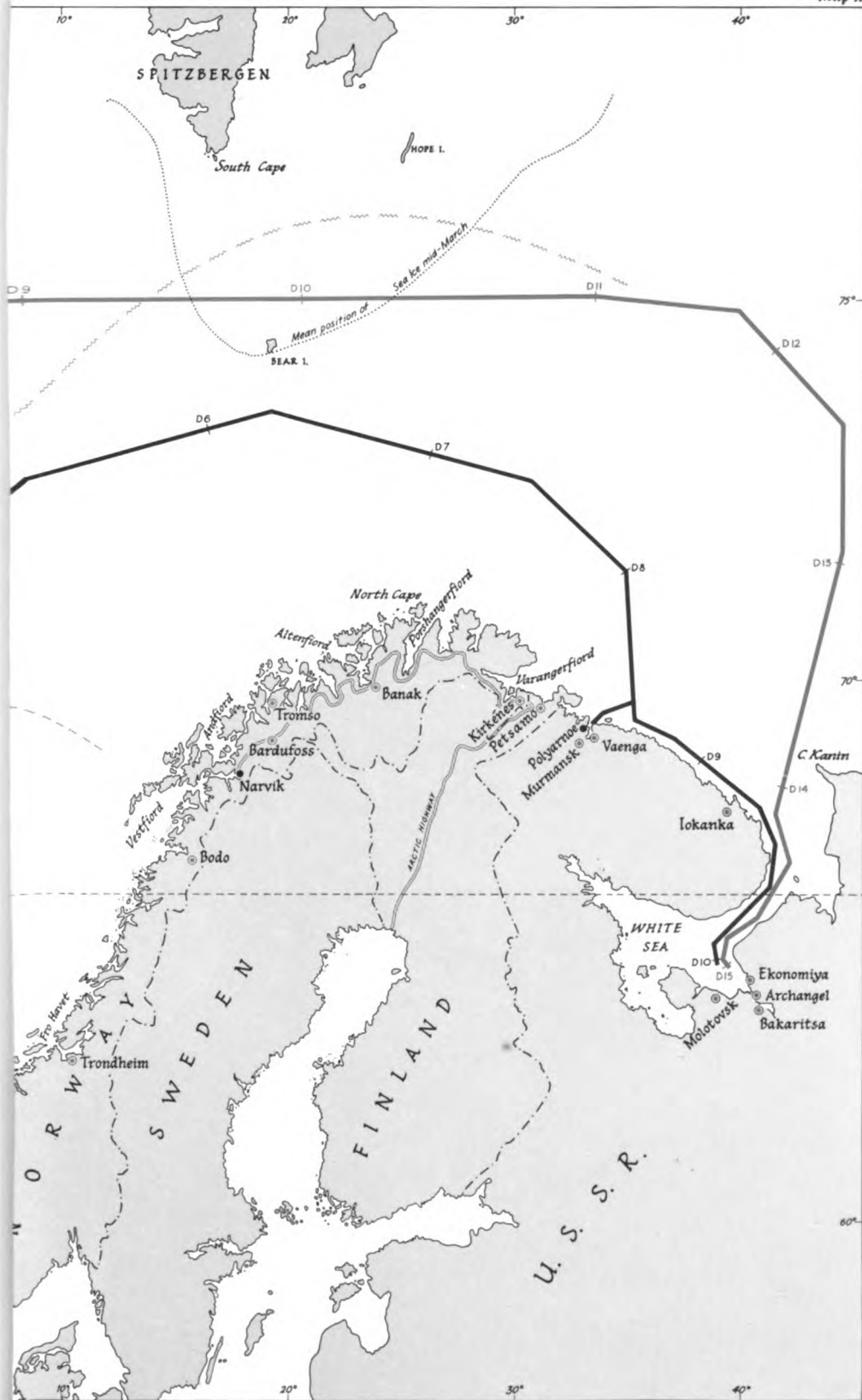
\* The supplies which were to have sailed on JW 54 were not lost to the Russians. 24,000 tons of cargo were routed via Vladivostok, 57,000 tons of cargo and 385 aircraft via the Persian Gulf, and 100 aircraft were flown direct via the Middle East. Many of the supplies especially of aircraft, intended for further convoys, were sent via the Mediterranean and the Persian Gulf when, after May 1943, access through these routes became easier. Of the 2,400 aircraft and 3,000 tanks promised under the Second Protocol, 2,184 and 1,719 respectively were shipped.<sup>(29)</sup>

It certainly seems likely that the Prime Minister succeeded in persuading the Russian leader that it was through no fault of his that more could not be done to help the Russians in their gigantic struggle. The British Ambassador in Moscow, Sir Archibald Clark-Kerr, told him that he himself was equally struck by Stalin's moderation; 'but it should be remembered that he believes in your good faith and will, I think, take from you more than from anyone else, even a hard blow like this'.<sup>(30)</sup> The two great warrior leaders had achieved a certain measure of mutual understanding and respect across the barriers of ideology and the mutual suspicions and misunderstandings of their two peoples.

It was as well that they did, for at lower levels friction was incessant—particularly at Murmansk, the only place where it was necessary for nationals of the two allied countries to work closely together. Many of the difficulties were no doubt due to misunderstandings arising out of different customs and languages. Some arose from the slow workings of a bureaucracy closely and not always very efficiently controlled from Moscow. There were the habitual difficulties caused by Russian suspicion and secretiveness—particularly in an area which had seen within living memory a British military occupation. And British and American merchant seamen, relaxing for a few days between weeks of hardship and danger at sea, did not always perhaps behave with perfect diplomatic correctness. The British complained about the obstructiveness of Russian officials, who imposed strictly and unimaginatively a stringent code of custom and immigration procedures, obstructed the landing of stores (including vital radar apparatus) and mail, and refused entry visas to personnel considered essential, by the British authorities, for servicing wireless transmitting stations, depots and medical units. Particular annoyance was caused by the Russian refusal to allow the Royal Air Force to establish a force of Hampden reconnaissance and torpedo-bomber aircraft in North Russia, considered essential for protection of the convoys east of Bear Island, unless these operated under Soviet control. When the Foreign Office objected, the Russians proposed that they should operate the aircraft themselves; to which the Air Ministry, after the suspension of convoy sailings in March 1943, ultimately agreed.

These accumulated grievances were taken up at the highest diplomatic level, both in Moscow and in London, and some slight easing occurred as a result.<sup>(31)</sup> The Russians in their turn complained about the quality and quantity of the supplies which they received from the British. The tanks sent to them they considered, not entirely unjustifiably, to be inferior to their own. The fighter aircraft they appreciated more; but they insisted that they did

not receive enough spare parts to keep their Hurricanes operational—to which the Air Ministry replied that these were provided on a scale considered excessive by R.A.F. standards.<sup>(32)</sup> They also complained at receiving reconditioned Spitfires instead of aircraft direct from the factories; to which Sir Charles Portal pointed out to the Chiefs of Staff Committee that they were treated exactly the same as all other overseas theatres and that the reconditioned aircraft had a full operational life before them.<sup>(33)</sup> Repeated incidents such as these, combined with the continued refusal of the Russian authorities to provide more than the most banal military information, meant that the good will, admiration and gratitude felt for the Russians during this period by the entire British people was tinged, among the officials who actually had to deal with them, by a considerable measure of exasperation. But it was not for a moment forgotten by any of those concerned in Allied war planning that during these critical months it was the Soviet Union that was bearing by far the largest share of the burden of the war against Germany; and the Prime Minister was only reflecting the general sentiment of his countrymen in his distress at the inability of the Western Allies to bring her more immediate help.







## SOURCES

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- (2) *Oberkommando der Wehrmacht Kriegstagebuch*, III, p. 1576.
- (3) Werth, p. 495.
- (4) Erich von Manstein: *Lost Victories* [Methuen, London, 1958] p. 354.
- (5) Alfred Philippi & Ferdinand Heim: *Der Feldzug gegen Sowjetrußland, 1941-45* [Kohlhammer, Stuttgart, 1962] p. 192.
- (6) Telegram STRATEGEM 224: P.M.402/30/A.
- (7) STRATEGEM 255: P.M.402/30/A.
- (8) Eden-W.S.C. of 28.1.43, quoting Moscow telegram of 27.1.43; TELESCOPE 320, in P.M.402/30/B.
- (9) P.M. telegram T.89/3.
- (10) C.C.S. 170/2.
- (11) D/Russia/1, fols. 240 and 243.
- (12) P.M. telegram T.106/3 of 5.2.43.
- (13) P.M. telegram T.123/3 of 9.2.43.
- (14) P.M. telegram T.192/3 of 16.2.43.
- (15) D.M.I.-Ismay of 3.3.43: D/Russia/1, fol. 270.
- (16) Eden-C.O.S. of 12.2.43: D/Russia/1, fol. 252.  
Eden-C.O.S. of 22.2.43: D.O.(43)3, Annex 1.
- (17) P.M. telegram T.277/3 of 11.3.43.
- (18) P.M. telegram T.317/3 of 15.3.43.
- (19) P.M. telegram T.485/3 of 7.4.43.
- (20) S. W. Roskill: *The War at Sea*, Vol. II, pp. 291-8.
- (21) C.P.393/8.
- (22) P.M. telegrams T.58/3 and T.67/3.
- (23) Pound-W.S.C. of 18.1.43: C.P.393/8.
- (24) Roskill, Vol. II, p. 398.
- (25) C.O.S.(43)44th Mtg. (O) of 15.3.43.  
C.O.S.(43)46th Mtg.(O) Annex.
- (26) D.O.(43)3rd Mtg. of 16.3.43.
- (27) C.O.S.(43)47th Mtg.(O) of 16.3.43.
- (28) P.M. telegram T.325/3 of 18.3.43.
- (29) A.S.E.(43)46 and 73.  
C.P.401/16.  
P.M. telegram T.699A/3: W.S.C.-Stalin of 14.5.43.

- (30) Moscow-F.O. No. 239 of 5.4.43.
- (31) D/Russia/2, *passim*. esp. fols. 330B, 331, 337, 341, 346, 361, 371, 372, 381, 391, 471D.
- (32) A.S.E.(43)49.
- (33) D/Russia/2, fols. 474 and 476.

BOOK FOUR  
CHAPTER XVIII  
THE END IN NORTH AFRICA  
JANUARY—MAY 1943

**A**LTHOUGH NEITHER to Stalin nor to Churchill did the Allied operations in the Mediterranean seem an adequate substitute for the hoped-for attack across the Channel, they were ultimately to bring substantial if indirect help to the Soviet Union. The Germans had to find the forces from somewhere to meet the threat to their southern flank. General Fromm, Commander-in-Chief of the Replacement Army in Germany, had explained his dilemma in a letter to Field Marshal Keitel on 18th November:

‘Without a doubt by throwing back Rommel’s army and with the American landings in Africa the enemy has created a Second Front . . . I am not in a position to estimate the forces of our Allies in Italy and the Balkans . . . The defence of the Southern European Front, in particular the defence of the Balkans or new attacks in Africa, should not be based on these forces alone. It follows from this that it is necessary to create a new German army for South Europe . . . New formations must be made from existing units. An increase is impossible, as even to maintain the *status quo* is already claiming all our forces to the last man.’<sup>(1)</sup>

But it was some time before the Allied pressure in the Mediterranean began to take effect. A German air fleet—*Luftflotte 2*—had already been moved to the Mediterranean from the Russian Front; but to transfer troops at the moment when the battle for Stalingrad was reaching its climax was out of the question. As it was, between November 1942 and February 1943 the Germans transferred some 17 divisions—not 27 divisions as alleged by Stalin in his message to the Prime Minister of 16th February<sup>(2)</sup>—from Western Europe to the Eastern Front. Only three divisions were transferred from the Eastern Front to Tunisia after the Allied landings in French North Africa. But Hitler realised very well the main implications of the Allied landings for the grand strategy of both sides. The lesson they held for the Axis, he agreed with his naval advisers at a conference on 17th November,<sup>(3)</sup> lay in the size of the shipping resources which they revealed the Anglo-Saxons to possess to meet their strategic needs. The Axis must therefore hold the Tunisian bridgehead for as long as possible

in order to strain those resources by denying free passage through the Mediterranean to Allied vessels. This objective was to determine Axis strategy for the next five months, and ultimately to result in the loss to the Axis forces of a quarter of a million men.

Hitler's Italian allies could not afford so detached an attitude towards the Allied landings. The heavy bombardment of their cities, the loss of their last possessions in North Africa and now the looming fear of physical invasion were creating throughout the land an atmosphere of defeatism which was a matter of increasing concern both to the Italian government and to the German authorities in Rome.<sup>(4)</sup> General von Rintelen, representative of *O.K.W.* at *Comando Supremo*, noted that the loss of Tripoli meant that 'all the struggles and battles of the last fifty years had been in vain'; while his naval colleague expressed doubt as to whether the Italians any longer possessed the qualities needed to check the 'retrograde tendencies' of the war in the Mediterranean.<sup>(5)</sup> Mussolini himself doubted it even more, and knew that it was precisely against this weakness in Italian morale that Allied strategy was now directed. 'This year', he told his leading party officials on 3rd January 1943, 'will decide whether the Italian people must resign itself to being a land of tourists, a large Switzerland'.<sup>(6)</sup> But he also knew that defeat in the Mediterranean was inevitable unless the Germans could be persuaded to concentrate sufficient forces there to avert it. These forces could be drawn only from the Eastern Front; and they could be made available only if peace were made with Russia. Once the dimensions of the débâcle in Libya became clear he urged this course on all his German visitors. He would have urged it on Hitler himself when on 6th December the Führer invited him to a conference, with Laval, to discuss the development of events in the Mediterranean, had his state of health not forced him to decline the invitation ('he does not want a lot of ravenous Germans to notice that he is compelled to live on rice and milk only', noted his son-in-law<sup>(7)</sup>); so Count Ciano had to take the message instead.

The conference, which took place at Hitler's headquarters at Rastenburg<sup>(8)</sup> on 18th–20th December, may be not unfairly compared, in the scope of its discussions if not of its decisions, with the Allied conference at Casablanca the following month. As at Casablanca, an attempt was made to consider the needs of all the fighting fronts in relation to each other. As at Casablanca some attempt was made to assess priorities; and as at Casablanca the assessment of priorities by each ally was markedly different.

For the Italians the conference came at an embarrassing moment: Ciano's arrival at Rastenburg coincided with the news of the collapse of the Italian *Eighth Army* on the Russian front. But it

is unlikely that he could at any time have made much impression on Hitler. Hitler in any case was able to bring forward solid arguments against seeking a peace with the Soviet Union. He had already in 1940-41, he pointed out, tried to find a basis for such a settlement, urging Russia (as Napoleon had done before him) to expand southwards and eastwards towards India and the Persian Gulf. Like Napoleon he had failed. Russia's eyes were fixed on the Baltic and the Balkans. Besides, Germany's demands on Russian economic resources were such that no peace could be conceived which would be acceptable to both parties. The object of the whole war in the East was 'to destroy the Bolshevik colossus and to assure ourselves living space from which Europe can draw not only the necessary foodstuffs, but also the indispensable raw materials for the prosecution of the war, such as coal, petroleum and iron'. Any peace would be simply a truce which the Russians would seize the first opportunity to break; so it would never be possible to transfer large forces to any other front. In any case he saw no point in transferring more troops to Africa unless their transport, supply and maintenance could be assured; so the Italian Navy must 'be impelled beyond the bounds of the possible' to assure communications with Tunis and Bizerta. So long as these ports were held, Anglo-Saxon shipping would still be compelled to use the Cape route to the Middle and Far East and expose itself to Dönitz's submarines. Once they fell, the whole southern flank of Europe would lie vulnerable to attack.

The picture which Ciano brought back from Rastenburg was thus, for the Italians, a very bleak one indeed.

'We are still far from a solution of the war [ran one official summary<sup>(9)</sup>]. While on the one hand there is the beginning of a shortage of manpower and a decline in the potential of war production, on the other the availability of oil and raw materials shows no sign of increasing. It seems that our main hope now lies in attacking enemy shipping by every means and especially submarines, so as to neutralise the enemy's advantage of higher war production as far as possible and to create a supply crisis for him. The maintenance of our position in Africa is of essential importance for this, as well as for avoiding the siege of Axis forces in Europe. But to keep our hold on Africa we must in the next few weeks use every available means to transport men and materials over there, without any kind of interruption. This is the explanation of Marshal Keitel's words "The outcome of the war depends on the Italian Navy".'

But the Italian Navy could do little. It was paralysed by shortage of oil and escort craft, and its repairing and docking facilities were subjected to accurate and intensive Allied air attack. The

proportion of shipping lost on the Mediterranean convoys was crippling: 40% in December, 55% in January, 47% in February, 57% in March. According to a report rendered by the Italian Minister of Communications Count Cini on 10th March, of the 3.3 million tons of shipping with which Italy had entered the war in 1940 only 595,000 tons were still fully operative. The 700,000 tons seized from the French in December tided over the worst of the difficulties; but between January and May 1943 a total of 455,463 tonnage in Italian vessels was to be sunk. As a result, though *Comando Supremo* assessed the supply needs of the forces in Tunisia at 50,000 tons a month (as against Kesselring's 'subsistence minimum' of 90,000 tons and von Arnim's hopeful figure of 150,000 tons) only some 24,000 tons reached Tunisia by sea and air in December, 35,000 tons in January and 30,000 tons in March. The loss of Tripolitania was a blessing in disguise, confessed the Chief of the General Staff, Marshal Ugo Cavallero; at least it reduced the supply requirements of the African front to a level rather more commensurate with 'the actual potentialities of our Fleet'. General Warlimont, Jodl's deputy at *O.K.W.*, did not exaggerate when, after a visit to Tunisia at the beginning of February, he described the military position there as 'a house of cards'.<sup>(10)</sup>

The Axis troops in Tunisia, like their compatriots in the Western Desert before the Battle of Alamein, had therefore to fight with a halter round their necks which Allied sea and air power squeezed steadily tighter. It was not a situation which made either for military efficiency or for good inter-allied relations, and it was made worse by the increasing attention which the unremitting Russian pressure throughout the first three months of 1943 forced Hitler to devote to the Eastern Front at the expense of the Mediterranean.<sup>(11)</sup> The Italians resented the German failure to give them more help in their difficulties; but such help as was forthcoming created further problems of liaison and command which increased the friction still further. Italian complaints of German indifference alternated with others, no less acrimonious, of German interference; while underlying both was a growing exasperation among all classes with an ally who had led Italy into a situation so disastrous that, to an increasing number of intelligent and influential men, there appeared to be only one way out.

This movement of opinion was so strong that on 4th February Mussolini felt compelled to dismiss Marshal Cavallero, who had occupied the post of Chief of the General Staff since December 1940 and was associated in the public mind with a policy of total subservience to the Germans. He was replaced by General Vittorio Ambrosio. A fortnight later, on 17th February, Ambrosio sub-

mitted to the Duce an unvarnished statement of his own views, which commanded substantial agreement among his colleagues. The Axis should go over to a strict defensive in Russia; Italian forces should be withdrawn from the Balkans for more urgent tasks nearer home; and Germany should provide more air and naval help in the Mediterranean. 'Above all', he concluded, 'this is the moment in which the ally must give up fighting a war of his own and understand that for his own salvation it is equally important to stand fast on the Dnieper as in Sicily or the Peloponnese. In conclusion the Germans must change their operational objectives and come to our aid, otherwise we shall not be obliged to follow them in their erroneous conduct of the war'.<sup>(12)</sup>

Mussolini, in the customary fashion of dictators, had balanced the dismissal of Cavallero by getting rid at the same time of his Foreign Minister and son-in-law Count Ciano, the most outspoken opponent of Cavallero's views. General von Rintelen told Hitler that although Cavallero's dismissal was from the German point of view regrettable, Ambrosio at least commanded the confidence of the Italian Armed Forces as his predecessor had not.<sup>(13)</sup> Nevertheless Cavallero's disappearance caused understandable concern in Germany, and on 14th February Ribbentrop and Warlimont visited Rome to see what, if anything, had changed, and to do what they could to stiffen their ally's morale. They brought with them a letter from Hitler which gave the Italians no comfort.<sup>(14)</sup> It acknowledged that 'the battle of North Africa and for Western Europe is naturally one of the decisive factors for the success of the war', and reiterated the significance of the Tunisian struggle for the Allied shipping position; but it still laid emphasis on the Balkans and the Eastern Front. The struggle, he insisted, was inexorable and by no means hopeless.

'We have captured a Russian General who, until he took over his present command, used to command the Russian home army. His information supplemented and confirmed our own observations. According to him, the losses of the Russian army up to the end of November in killed, missing and so severely wounded as to be unfit for further service amounted to some 11·3 million. German losses—killed, missing and severely wounded—1·4 million men. I therefore intend to continue fighting in the East until this colossus finally disintegrates and to do it with or without allies. For I regard the mere existence of this peril as so monstrous that Europe will not know a moment's peace if, heedlessly balanced on the edge of the abyss, she forgets or simply refuses to face reality. Furthermore, Duce, I know how hard it is to take historic decisions. Whether anyone with the strength to do so will appear after my death, I cannot say. But I am resolved to complete the



task which destiny has given me, and I am convinced that the battle on which I am engaged is not half so harsh and fraught with peril as that fight which Frederick the Great once waged, with his 3,700,000 inhabitants, against the whole of Europe. . .'

Any argument about changes or even priorities in the grand strategy of the Axis was thus ruled out *a priori*, and Warlimont and Ambrosio could only discuss their common problems in the Balkans and ways and means of improving the supply-route to Tunisia. It was not a satisfactory conference. Ribbentrop reported on his return to Germany that he had formed 'a very negative impression of the attitude and mentality of the Italian High Command'; while Ambrosio's mistrust of his allies had only deepened.

'The Germans [he reported to Mussolini on 1st March] are not greatly worried about an Anglo-American attack because, in the first instance, it would take place far from their territory. We are in the opposite position. One of the most likely objectives in the Mediterranean is Italy, and we shall end by bearing the weight of the struggle alone, a battle which will put our country to fire and the sword, and expose her to major damage. It may be that this thought forms part of the German plan, namely that they want to commit us to bear the brunt of the initial Anglo-American assault, with little regard to the fate of our population and cities.

If we receive aid in respect of the necessary and indispensable flow of supplies . . . there will be more chance of holding Tunisia as long as possible . . . Otherwise the prospects cannot be equally hopeful, and Italy will have to consider how to avoid the consequences of irreparable mistakes which are not of her making'.<sup>(15)</sup>

General Ambrosio was, as we shall see, not the only Italian in an official position whose mind was moving towards the making of a separate peace.

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While the Axis leaders quarrelled about their grand strategy, the conduct of operations by their forces in North Africa was complicated by problems of command. On 30th January the old Axis Commands, *Superlibia* and *Marilibia*, were dissolved. Rommel's force was renamed *1st (Italian) Army*, its boundaries with von Arnim's *5th Panzer Army* being fixed at the 34th parallel north of Gabes in South Tunisia. Both forces remained subordinate to *Comando Supremo*, but at first no commander was appointed to co-ordinate their activities. Field Marshal Kesselring as Supreme

Commander South now exercised titular command of all German troops in the Central Mediterranean; but, apart from his operational responsibility for his own air forces, *Luftflotte 2*, he was in a position only to advise *Comando Supremo* about the conduct of the operations for which they bore official responsibility, and Hitler's political regard for the susceptibilities of his ally made him reluctant at this stage to press for an extension of Kesselring's powers. Hitler did indeed decree on 28th January that since Rommel was about to go on sick leave von Arnim should take over the joint command of the two armies, but nothing was done about this for a month.<sup>(16)</sup> As a result, when the two German commanders launched that counter-offensive in Central Tunisia towards Kasserine between 14th and 22nd February which was, as we shall see, to cause the Allies so much concern, it was distinguished by disagreement as to ultimate objectives and acrimonious non-co-operation in execution. A single *Army Group Tunisia* only came into being, after much argument, on 23rd February, with Rommel in command so long as he remained in the theatre. The Italian General Giovanni Messe succeeded Rommel in command of the *1st Army*, retaining the German General Bayerlein as his Chief of Staff.<sup>(17)</sup>

Rommel exercised this joint command only for two weeks. On 9th March he left Africa for good, and neither his Italian allies nor his immediate superiors regretted his going. Tired, embittered and ill, Rommel had considered for the past three months that North Africa was in the long run untenable, and had repeatedly urged abandonment of Tripolitania—a view unacceptable not only to Hitler and to the Italians but also to Kesselring, whose shrewd airman's eye appreciated the overwhelming advantage which control of the whole North African coast would give the Allied air forces. We have seen how after the British breakthrough at El Alamein Rommel had flown to Rastenburg to lay his views before Hitler; and how, after being thwarted in this initiative, he had carried out a rapid retreat to Tunisia in spite of the protests of his Italian superior officers. When ordered to launch the counter-attack towards Kasserine of 14th February described below, an operation conceived by *O.K.W.* and carried out at the behest of *Comando Supremo*,<sup>(18)</sup> he mounted it with little enthusiasm; and although its initial success provoked one last flash of his old brilliance, he broke it off as soon as it ran into difficulties.<sup>(19)</sup> The counter-attack against the Eighth Army which followed on 6th March fared no better. Even before it began Rommel had made up his mind that the only hope for the Axis lay in withdrawing the *1st Army* behind a short line from Djebel Mansour to Enfidaville.<sup>(20)</sup> When Kesselring dissented, Rommel again flew off, on 9th March, to lay his views before Hitler, pausing at Rome

on the way to argue with Mussolini as well. Once again neither would accept his views, and this time Hitler ordered him to take sick leave which was long overdue. Rommel obeyed, but the news was kept quiet. It was thought best that the troops in Africa should not know that their great commander had left them for good.<sup>(21)</sup>

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These disagreements among their leaders did not affect the prowess of the German forces fighting in Tunisia. The arrival of *21st Panzer* Division from *1st Army* had enabled von Arnim to sustain a vigorous offensive-defensive throughout January, primarily in the mountainous area between Pont du Fahs and Faid which was held by the gallant but ill-equipped French. On 19th January *O.K.W.* first broached to *Comando Supremo* the idea of an attack through Sbeitla and Gafsa towards Tebessa, in Central Tunisia, whence an offensive could be developed northwards towards Bône and Constantine to bring about a collapse of the whole Allied left wing. *Comando Supremo* expanded this project into a convergent attack by elements of *1st* and *5th Armies* under Rommel's command. Von Arnim rejected this modification; so the operation which began on 14th February consisted of two separate and poorly co-ordinated attacks with indefinite ultimate objectives, von Arnim striking west through Faid and Sidi Bou Zid to Sbeitla, and Rommel northwards through Gafsa and Feriana.

These attacks met initially with a remarkable degree of success. Von Arnim, attacking with units of *10th* and *21st Panzer Divisions*, achieved at Sidi Bou Zid an alarmingly deep penetration through the thinly-held positions of U.S. II Corps. General Anderson, who since 21st January had been responsible for 'co-ordinating' Allied operations over the whole front, decided to withdraw the entire Allied left wing, whose outposts ran loosely through Fondouk and Faid to Gafsa, to a more easily defensible line covering Sbiba and Tebessa. General Eisenhower, explaining the situation to the Combined Chiefs of Staff, chivalrously took the blame on himself. 'Our present difficulties', he wrote on 15th February 'result from my attempt to do possibly too much, coupled with the deterioration of the French resistance in the central mountainous area, which began about 17th January'.<sup>(22)</sup> Certainly the confusion in the Allied command system, which we have considered in Chapter X, does much to explain the initial success of the German attack.

A large-scale withdrawal before a hotly pursuing enemy armoured force is at best a difficult operation. U.S. II Corps abandoned

Sbeitla in some disorder on 17th February, and next day both Rommel's and von Arnim's forces converged on the hurriedly-constructed defensive position at Kasserine. But at this moment of triumph the German attack began to falter for lack of a clear objective and single guiding hand. Rommel wanted a bold thrust westward to Tebessa. Von Arnim considered that this was beyond their strength and preferred to exploit northwards, to achieve the limited objective of forcing back the Allies from the Tunisian plain. On Kesselring's urging *Comando Supremo* put Rommel in charge of the whole operation, but ordered him to exploit, not westwards, but north-westwards towards Le Kef, taking Tebessa with the left wing of his advance. On 19th February Rommel, personally directing the attack, burst through the Kasserine Pass. But as it advanced northwards the German armour encountered stiffening resistance as American, French and British forces were hurried forward to fill the gap. On 21st February the advance was brought to a halt north of Thala by a battle in which the British 6th Armoured Division played the dominant role.<sup>(23)</sup> Next day, Rommel and Kesselring, reviewing the situation, agreed that they had shot their bolt and that their remaining mobile forces would be better employed against the Eighth Army south of Mareth. On 22nd February the Axis troops began to withdraw.<sup>(24)</sup>

Unsatisfactory as this operation may have appeared to the Axis commanders, it caused consternation in the Allied camp. Quite how anxious those days had been can be gauged from the terms of a message which General Eisenhower despatched to Washington on 22nd February.

'In view [he stated] of C.C.S. decision concerning target date (for the Sicily operation) and the continued aggressive employment by the enemy of powerful mechanised forces with considerable motor transport in this theatre, it becomes imperative to hasten shipments by every possible means and expedient . . . unless a rapid flow of equipment including tanks, A/tk., A/A and airplanes and personnel is certain, we will be lacking here the strength to do our part in knocking out the enemy when the time comes'.<sup>(25)</sup>

So far as British supplies were concerned, General Brooke was able to report that almost all General Eisenhower's requests were being met as fast as he was able to accept them;<sup>(26)</sup> but it was a salutary reminder to those whose eyes were already fixed on Sicily that very tough fighting might still lie ahead.

The German attack, indeed, only emphasised a point that General Eisenhower and the Chiefs of Staff had for some time been trying to make clear to Mr. Churchill and which the Prime Minister found some difficulty in accepting: that the Tunisian

commitment could not be liquidated and the necessary forces assembled and prepared in time to invade Sicily in June. In a message of 11th February giving his reasons for this,<sup>(27)</sup> Eisenhower had suggested 30th April as the date by which Tunisia would be clear. This seemed to the Prime Minister intolerably pessimistic. He had understood, he replied on 13th February, that the Allies would resume the offensive again early in March. 'We have not heard of anything that has happened to alter this plan. On the contrary, the arrival of the Eighth Army on the scene would seem to help it forward'.<sup>(28)</sup> General Eisenhower explained in reply on 17th February that the Eighth Army were not likely to be able to advance in strength before 15th March. In Tunisia the need to stiffen French with British and American units 'has resulted in all available transportation facilities being employed in current movement and maintenance and has exposed us to the reverse we have suffered in the Southern Sector. This has also prevented the accumulation, for which I had hoped, of the large quantity of ammunition and petrol necessary for the resumption of the offensive on the scale now essential'. Even the end of April might not see the destruction of the Axis forces: 'We must be prepared for hard and bitter fighting and the end may not come as soon as we hope'.<sup>(29)</sup> General Alexander reinforced the point ten days later in a personal message of 27th February. '[I] hate to disappoint you, but final victory in North Africa is not just round the corner. A very great deal requires to be done both on land and in the air'.<sup>(30)</sup> The Axis counter-attack may not have achieved its objectives, but it had administered a very rude shock to the Allied commanders and forced them to be yet more cautious in working out their future plans.

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Eisenhower and Alexander were not mistaken. The Germans had broken off their attack only to renew it elsewhere. On 26th February von Arnim opened a new offensive in Northern Tunisia towards Béja and Medjez-el-Bab, which kept the British V Corps pinned down in heavy fighting for a month. Meanwhile the principal German armoured force, consisting of *10th*, *15th* and *21st Panzer Divisions*, was allotted to Rommel to attack the Eighth Army which was now moving up to assault the strong defences at Mareth as quickly as the flow of supplies through the port of Tripoli permitted.

In the progress of the Eighth Army the Prime Minister took the same personal interest as he had shown in the build-up of armoured strength in the Middle East the previous autumn. The daily returns which were submitted to him showed the tonnage

unloaded at Tripoli rise from 1,498 tons on 7th February to a peak of 7,480 tons on 18th March; and when on 23rd February the figure first exceeded six thousand tons Mr. Churchill sent the famous message: 'Tell them from me they are unloading history'.<sup>(31)</sup>

Thanks largely to the excellence of this supply service, the Eighth Army was able to establish XXX Corps in good positions north of Medenine by 6th March, when the Germans launched their attack. Rommel could not afford another failure. The British forces, he told his troops, 'must be destroyed on the first day of the offensive as the general situation will not permit our mobile forces to become engaged in a long-drawn-out struggle'. But heavy and accurate fire from well-sited anti-tank guns and medium and field artillery brought his attack to a total halt within a few hours of its beginning, and Rommel called it off that evening, having lost 41 out of the 150 tanks he had committed to battle. An official German post-mortem discovered that 'the troops had not fought with the requisite dash and toughness because they lacked confidence in the success of the operation';<sup>(32)</sup> an attitude which faithfully reflected that of their commanding general.

The same complaint could not be made of the men of the Eighth Army as they moved in two weeks later to attack the Mareth Line—their first major battle since they had covered the thousand miles from Alamein in four and a half months. The line ran along the Wadi Zigzaou south of Mareth, filling the 22-mile gap between the Malmata mountains and the sea. The Axis forces had the advantage of the fortifications which the French had erected before the war against attack from Tripolitania; but the British had the advantage of the information and advice provided to them in Algiers by General Catroux, the designer and defender of these fortifications before 1939.<sup>(33)</sup> The position itself was a strong one, but it could be outflanked, by an inland *détour* west of the Matmata mountains more easily than appeared. In view of this weakness Rommel had considered it unwise to hold the position in strength at all, and urged a withdrawal to the more easily defensible bottleneck forty miles further north, where the Wadi Akarit blocked the twelve mile gap between the sea and the huge salt marshes known as the Chotts. But Rommel had left Africa on 9th March and von Arnim, who succeeded to the command of the combined armies, ordered two days later that the forward positions should be held to the last man.<sup>(34)</sup>

On the Allied side meanwhile the institution of a single Army Group command under General Alexander was beginning to produce the desired results. General Alexander established his headquarters at Constantine on 19th February, adjoining those of General Doolittle's North West Africa Strategic Air Force,

and set about restoring order to the confused situation which he found at the front. He divided the forces under his control into three commands: Eighth Army with its now world-renowned leader Lieut. General Montgomery; U.S. II Corps, to command which the vigorous Major General George S. Patton had been summoned forward from Morocco; and First Army of which Lieut. General Anderson retained command and to which the French forces, now organised in a single XIX Corps under General L. M. Koeltz, were subordinate. Simultaneously the air command was reorganised. With First Army Headquarters at Laverdure, a hundred miles east of Constantine, was North West Africa Tactical Air Force Headquarters, from which Air Marshal Coningham controlled the forces working with each command—Western Desert Air Force with Eighth Army, R.A.F. 242nd Group with First Army and 12th Air Support Command with U.S. II Corps—with the expertise in intimate ground-air liaison he had learned in the Western Desert. Within commands the confusion of *ad hoc* special forces and combat teams was replaced by regular divisional organisation. A proper system of reserves was organised, IX Corps headquarters (Lieut. General Sir J. T. Crocker) coming out from the United Kingdom to act as a nucleus for an Army Group Reserve; and directives went out to all combat units for the organisation of defensive positions, the withdrawal of mobile forces into reserve and the regaining of the initiative by a vigorous policy of patrolling and minor operations.<sup>(35)</sup> Much of this programme was already in hand; but it required a single commander, with a fresh eye and a vigorous touch, to pull the whole disjointed organisation together and give it a sense of new life and confidence.

General Alexander settled his plan of campaign within a week of his arrival in Algeria. On 21st February, at the blackest moment of Rommel's attack at Kasserine, he described it to the C.I.G.S.<sup>(36)</sup> First he needed to get the Eighth Army north of the Gabes Gap, so that it could make contact with the First Army and gain freedom to exploit its superior mobility and striking power. He hoped to use the First Army to help the Eighth Army forward by carefully prepared limited operations to draw off the enemy's reserves. Then both armies would press forward to secure the airfields from which the full striking power of the Allied Air Forces could be developed. Finally land, sea and air forces would combine to achieve the ultimate object of the campaign—the destruction of the entire enemy force in Tunisia and the capture of Tunis itself.

As it turned out, the First Army had no need to launch preparatory operations in Northern Tunisia as a distraction from the Eighth Army's attacks at Mareth, since von Arnim himself pro-

voked a prolonged engagement there. As we have seen, his forces had on 26th February opened an offensive in that area, which resulted in the recapture of Sejanane and Djebel Abiod. 'Our troops have fought very well', reported General Alexander, 'but they have been up against more experienced commanders and troops'.<sup>(37)</sup> General Anderson in his official despatch was to write more frankly: 'It was not a happy period. Things went wrong too often, and we lost some important ground'. Nevertheless the resistance of the First Army to these attacks, and its subsequent counter-offensive, fully served the purpose of pinning down and wearing out the enemy forces in front of it. Further south U.S. 34 Division, later joined by French XIX Corps and British IX Corps, was to attack on 27th March at Fondouk to drive von Arnim's forces back into the plain and threaten his line of retreat from the south through Kairouan. The rest of the U.S. II Corps were able to bring still more direct pressure to bear to help the Eighth Army. On 17th March General Patton's forces, their morale fully restored after their earlier setbacks, advanced through Gafsa, pressed on to seize Maknassy four days later, and hammered at the Axis defences east of El Quattar. And on 19th March General Montgomery opened his attack against the Mareth Line.

Von Arnim had the full support of his superiors in his decision to fight for the Tunisian bridgehead as far forward as possible. Kesselring knew that Allied air power could rapidly make a more constricted bridgehead completely untenable. Mussolini and *Comando Supremo* had been entirely unconvinced by Rommel's arguments and urged Hitler to make more air support available so that the bridgehead could be extended rather than contracted.<sup>(38)</sup> But Hitler, when he examined the situation with his naval and military advisers on 14th March, decided that the vital factor was not air power but sea power—transports and escorts for supplies. He therefore sent Admiral Dönitz to Rome to tell the Italians that unless they threw all their naval resources into the battle, Tunisia would be lost and Italy with it.<sup>(39)</sup>

The measures which Dönitz proposed—the attachment of German naval officers to the Italian Naval Staff, the addition of German crews to Italian ships, the provision by the Germans of anti-aircraft equipment and training—were greeted by the Italian Naval Staff, according to his own report, with 'restraint and disapproval'; and he was over-optimistic in going on to state that nevertheless 'complete agreement was reached'.<sup>(40)</sup> What he discovered of the general condition of the Italian Navy horrified him. The battle-fleet was paralysed for lack of fuel-oil, while the inadequacy of shipyard and repair facilities meant that at any one time two-thirds of their escort vessels were unfit for service.



The Italian railway system was in no better condition; and Kesselring's suggestion that German help should be provided to run it met the same cold response from Ambrosio as Dönitz's suggestion had provoked from his naval colleagues.<sup>(41)</sup> The Germans in fact found themselves confronted by a familiar dilemma. Without their help their allies could do nothing; but they had, in Dönitz's words, to 'take care lest, due to Italian mentality, the opposite of what is desired will be accomplished through passive resistance on the part of the Italians'.<sup>(42)</sup>

In fact nothing effective was done or could be done. Allied bombers operating from both Algerian and Tripolitanian air-fields were by March ranging virtually at will over the Sicilian Narrows and Southern Italy, destroying not only shipping but harbour-installations and railways. Italian shipping losses rose from 60 ships totalling 83,335 tons in February to 144 ships totalling 95,065 tons in May.<sup>(43)</sup> Between March 23rd and 30th no ships docked in Tunisia at all, and the total tonnage of supplies which reached North Africa during that month was less than 30,000 tons—half the 'realistic' target set by *Comando Supremo*. By mid-April Kesselring was demanding that the vessels of the Italian Navy themselves should be used to carry supplies—a demand which the Italians resisted the more strenuously since they were now beginning to consider seriously the problem of the defence of their own coast. Nevertheless Mussolini agreed to use destroyers as troop carriers, and at the beginning of May Dönitz took a hand, ordering his U-boats to ferry over fuel. Even after Tunis had fallen efforts were still being made to get supplies over. Only on 10th May was the decision formally taken to cease.<sup>(44)</sup>

In spite of this, and in spite of continuing confusion of command in the field, Axis resistance in Tunisia did not crumble easily. When the Eighth Army launched its attack on 19th March the German and Italian troops held firm for five days. The frontal attack by XXX Corps met tough opposition, and such gains as they made were wiped out by the counter-attacks of *15th Panzer Division*; but the New Zealand Corps successfully broke through the defences on the enemy's right, and General Montgomery committed his reserve, X Corps, to exploit its success. This threat to his rear—combined with that of U.S. II Corps' simultaneous advance on Maknassy—led von Arnim to order, on 24th March, a general withdrawal to the 'Chott Position' along the Wadi Akarit. Kesselring vehemently objected, and General Messe, the commander on the spot, protested at the impossibility of carrying out such a movement in the middle of a battle. A heavy attack launched on 26th March by X and New Zealand Corps, with close support from the Western Desert Air Force, lent point to his words. But

with some skill Messe prevented a total breakthrough until he had disengaged his forces from the Mareth position, and by the morning of 29th March he had withdrawn them to the precarious safety of the Chott line.<sup>(46)</sup>

The Mareth attack destroyed the balance of the Axis forces. Apart from their losses in material, they lost 7,000 prisoners of war. For the remaining six weeks their commanders showed a confusion and uncertainty of touch which cannot be attributed entirely to their desperate supply position. The unfortunate General Messe, in a report which found its way into the Italian press, described the Eighth Army as 'the most up to date and best equipped force that can be met with in any theatre of this global war'. Its resources were inexhaustible, he lamented, its command of the air complete. The deteriorating morale of the Italian units was shown by the ease with which they allowed themselves to be taken prisoner.<sup>(46)</sup> Nevertheless General Montgomery did not under-rate the difficulties which still lay before him. On 25th March, by-passing 'the usual channels', he addressed a personal message to the Prime Minister which was no doubt written under the influence of the rebuff to XXX Corps. In this he reported 'Enemy fighting desperately and much heavy fighting lies ahead. Essential I should be able to maintain momentum of my operations and not have to stop because of casualties. Request reinforcement from Egypt for my present divisions and consider this must be done at expense of "Husky" . . . . If we do not finish this business properly there will be no "Husky" '.<sup>(48)</sup>

When one considers the disparity of forces already in the theatre and the straits to which the Axis forces were now reduced, this message, like that of General Eisenhower of 22nd February quoted on p. 345 above, is significant. Like the contemporaneous conclusion reached by the Allied Commanders and reported by General Eisenhower on 20th March, that if the landings in Sicily were opposed by more than two German divisions the operation would offer 'scant prospect of success', it can only be seen as evidence of the respect which the German forces, in spite of all the difficulties under which they were fighting, had imposed on their more numerous and more powerful adversaries since the battle of Tunisia had begun four months earlier. In any case the Prime Minister and the Chiefs of Staff accepted General Montgomery's request. Mr. Churchill indeed had anticipated it, authorising General Alexander on 24th March to send to Palestine for 56 Division, hitherto earmarked for 'Husky'. The clearing of Tunisia, the Chiefs of Staff

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\* See p. 368 below.

agreed, must have overriding priority.<sup>(48)</sup> General Montgomery was right: if it was not successful there would be no 'Husky'.

General von Arnim might have been gratified, and somewhat surprised, if he had been able to read General Montgomery's message. His new positions on the Wadi Akarit were little less vulnerable to Allied pressure from the flank than was the Mareth Line, and far less well prepared. He reported that in any event shortage of supplies would limit his resistance there to two days at the most.<sup>(49)</sup> *Comando Supremo* was unhelpful. On 30th March they ordered him, while defending his front stubbornly, to make cautious preparations for withdrawal to the Djebel Mansour-Enfidaville line; a concept, as Messe sardonically pointed out, 'easier to express in an order than to carry out in reality'.<sup>(50)</sup> The decision to withdraw, however, *Comando Supremo* reserved to itself, unless 'events move so fast that an immediate decision is essential to prevent the destruction of the *First Army*'.<sup>(51)</sup>

That is exactly what they did. Von Arnim judged that Montgomery would choose a moonlight night for the operation, as he had at Mareth. Full moon was not due until 15th April. In fact the Eighth Army attacked in total darkness early on the morning of 6th April. XXX Corps forced its way through the defences and beat off German counter-attacks so successfully that von Arnim authorised a retreat that very evening. The Italians surrendered in droves. 'It was not a good battle', lamented the unfortunate Messe.<sup>(52)</sup> General Montgomery, reporting the battle to the Prime Minister, declared happily, 'my troops in TREMENDOUS form and fighting splendidly'.<sup>(53)</sup> Next day the Eighth Army began the pursuit, joining hands on the left with U.S. II Corps advancing from Gafsa. Sfax fell on 10th April; the same day 6 Armoured Division (IX Corps) burst out of the mountains at Fondouk and captured Kairouan, missing the enemy rearguard by only a few hours. Two days later Sousse was occupied, and on 13th April the Eighth Army closed up to the enemy positions in the Enfidaville line.

Kesselring's worst expectations were now fulfilled. The airfields in the southern part of the Tunisian plain were at the disposal of the Allied air forces. On 5th April General Spaatz launched a major interdiction drive with all the forces available to him, which placed the Tunisian bridgehead virtually in a state of siege. By 21st April 129 Axis transport aircraft had been shot down, and so complete was Allied command of the air that supplies could be brought into Tunisia only by night. As for the evacuation of the bridgehead, there could now be no question of getting away anything but a minute fraction of the Axis forces hemmed in there; and *O.K.W.* refused to sanction the withdrawal even of valuable specialists until 7th May—by when it was far too late.

When Mussolini asked Kesselring what would happen to the generals in Africa, he received the grim reply, 'they will stay at their posts'. 'I am sorry to lose Messe, one of my best generals' commented the Duce unhappily.<sup>(64)</sup> So much for the control over operations in Africa supposedly exercised by the Italian Supreme Command!

Meanwhile General Alexander was working on the plans for his final assault. Its pattern was clear in his mind as early as 12th April, when he informed the Prime Minister that he 'hope(d) to launch a very powerful attack from the sector Bou Arada—Medjez into the Tunis plain to start earliest possible date and not later than 25 April . . .',<sup>(65)</sup> This laconic explanation did not, unfortunately, make it clear that the attack would fall into two phases, and that much difficult fighting was still to be expected along the entire front before this spectacular thrust could be launched with any hope of success. Eighth Army was to open a general attack on 19th April with an assault at Enfidaville, with the object of drawing in enemy forces and ultimately advancing on Tunis via Hammamet, sealing off the Cap Bon peninsula. First Army was to join in on 21st and 22nd April, with attacks by French XIX Corps down the Kebir valley to Pont du Fahs, by IX Corps from Bou Arada to seize the high ground dominating the Pont du Fahs—Tunis road, and by V Corps down the Medjerda valley to take the hills north of Massicault. Finally on 23rd April U.S. II Corps, transferred to the left of the Allied line and commanded now by Major General Omar N. Bradley, was to attack eastwards towards Sidi Nsir and Jefna, with its ultimate object Mateur.

The offensive opened as planned, and the next ten days saw some of the fiercest fighting of the whole war. The Axis forces were now immobilised, having virtually exhausted their fuel supplies, but they occupied positions which gave them excellent observation over the rocky and barren hillsides which the Allies had to traverse. They fought not only with the skill and courage of seasoned troops but with the desperation of men who knew they could not retreat. The Eighth Army attacks in the Enfidaville sector slowed to a halt after three days. General Montgomery's forces, as General Alexander reported to the Prime Minister, were 'undoubtedly tired, and the 4th Indian Division and 7th Armoured Division are the only veteran ones which can be considered from now onwards as capable of full offensive action . . . Montgomery has to use massed artillery fire to help his infantry forward and avoid casualties as far as possible'.<sup>(66)</sup> But it was not terrain in which massed artillery fire could be effectively deployed, and it called for techniques of combat and command which the desert veterans had yet to learn.

Elsewhere the conflict ground dourly on. The attacks of IX Corps drew in von Arnim's only reserve formation, 19th Panzer Division, and forced the Germans to withdraw not on the British front but on that of the French on their right. On V Corps front the Germans launched a sudden spoiling attack on 21st April, but the British rapidly swung over to the offensive and doggedly fought their way forward to their objectives; while General Bradley's force in the north slowly evicted the Germans from hill after hill until, on 3rd May, 1 U.S. Armoured Division could be unleashed to drive on and capture Mateur. Like Alamein this was a battle of attrition against a stubborn but weaker foe, and it served its purpose. On 27th April von Arnim reported that his troops were showing signs of exhaustion; the next day his headquarters reported the fuel situation to be 'catastrophic'.<sup>(67)</sup>

General Alexander had already, as we have seen, selected the spot for his *coup de grâce*, on V Corps front, south of the Medjerda river. At the end of April he decided to make the blow there yet stronger. After agreeing with General Montgomery that the proposed Eighth Army thrust on Hammamet was no longer likely to succeed, he transferred Montgomery's two freshest divisions, 4th Indian and 7th Armoured, together with 201 Guards Brigade, to General Anderson's command, where they joined 4th Division and 6th Armoured Division in IX Corps. This formidable force, supported, in Alexander's words, by 'practically the entire Air Force', was launched along the axis of the road through Massicault to Tunis on the morning of 6th May. Although von Arnim realised the final assault was likely to come from the West rather than the South, he had misjudged both the place and the weight of the assault. The Axis defences disintegrated. Massicault fell that afternoon, Tunis the following day. Simultaneously on the flanks of the British advance the Americans surged forward to take Bizerta and the French passed through Pont du Fahs. 6th Armoured Division swung east across the base of the Cap Bon peninsula, and then south to link up with Eighth Army and cut off the German and Italian forces from all hope of retreat. Apart from one or two gallant last stands, the enemy's collapse was complete. General von Arnim surrendered with his headquarters on 12th May; General Messe, whose promotion as Field Marshal had been announced as consolation for his imminent years of captivity a few hours earlier, waited until the 13th. The grand total of prisoners reported to London was 238, 243.<sup>(68)</sup> On May 13th General Alexander was able at the Prime Minister's request to send a resonant message 'Sir, it is my duty to report that the Tunisian campaign is over. All enemy resistance has ceased. We are masters of the North African shores'.

Three months later Hitler, in a discussion with his commanders on the Eastern Front, justified the Tunisian campaign on two grounds: first, he said, it had postponed the invasion of Europe by half a year; secondly it had prevented Italy from leaving the Axis at a crucial moment. If Italy had seceded, he argued, 'the Allies would have been able to land in Italy and thrust up over the Brenner . . . at a time when, due to the Russian breakthrough at Stalingrad, Germany would not have had a single man to oppose them'.<sup>(60)</sup> This appreciation showed both a misunderstanding of Allied intentions and an over-estimation of their capacities. The best justification for the campaign was that which Hitler had given at the Rastenburg Conference in December 1942: it kept the Mediterranean closed to Allied shipping, and did so during a vital six months when the U-boat campaign was reaching its destructive peak and the building capacity of American yards had not yet come into full effect. The strain it imposed on Allied shipping reserves added appreciably to the difficulties of strategic planning throughout 1943. So also did the diversion of Allied ground forces involved. So far from the clearing of the Mediterranean being a preliminary to the main assault on Europe from the West, as had been visualised when Operation 'Torch' had been decided in August 1942, the stubbornness of the Axis resistance made it, as General Marshall had always feared, a major commitment not easily liquidated, competing for resources on equal terms with 'Bolero' and the Pacific, and exacerbating inter-allied tensions. The loss to the Axis of so many first-rate troops and irreplaceable equipment may have been a heavy item to set against these benefits; yet at no other point in the Axis defences could these losses have bought greater advantages.

At no other point, however, could the Western Allies at that time have achieved such gains and imposed so fatal a strain on the cohesion of the Axis. Their own losses were not light: in killed, wounded and missing in North Africa the British lost 38,360 men, the French 19,439 and the Americans 12,618\*. But these sacrifices had brought immense gains: the Mediterranean open again to Allied shipping, Italy on the brink of surrender, new French forces taking their place by the side of their old Allies, and a threat posed at the entire coast of Southern Europe from the South of France to Greece. The Axis prisoners who marched in their hundreds of thousands into captivity could justifiably feel that their sacrifices had not been in vain; but the Allies could equally feel that their victories were not only splendid in themselves but rich in the opportunities they opened for the future.

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\* The British figures are those for the First Army from 8th November 1942 and for the Eighth Army from 9th February 1943.<sup>(61)</sup>

## SOURCES

- (1) E.D.S./12, Chapter 2, p. 4.
- (2) P.M. telegram T.192/3 of 16.2.43.
- (3) Führer Naval Conference of 17.11.42.
- (4) e.g. *Ciano Diary 1939-1943* (ed. M. Muggerridge) [Heinemann, London, 1947] entries for 23.11.42 and 25.12.42.
- (5) E.D.S./12, Chapter 2, p. 14.
- (6) F. W. Deakin: *The Brutal Friendship*, p. 132.
- (7) Ciano Diary of 8.12.42.
- (8) E.D.S./12, Chapter 2, pp. 12-13.  
*Oberkommando der Wehrmacht Kriegstagebuch*, III, p. 1153.  
Deakin, pp. 89-100.
- (9) Quoted in Deakin, pp. 101-2.
- (10) E.D.S./12, Chapter 4, pp. 101-23 and Appendix 8.  
E.D.S./12, Chapter 6, pp. 223-5.  
E.D.S./12, Chapter 7, pp. 309-18.  
Deakin, pp. 212-3.  
OKW KTB, III, p. 130.
- (11) For details see E.D.S./12, Chapter 2, pp. 16-19.
- (12) Deakin, p. 166.
- (13) OKW KTB, III, p. 140.
- (14) E.D.S./12, Chapter 6, p. 43.  
Deakin, pp. 184-7.
- (15) Deakin, pp. 202, 208.
- (16) E.D.S./12, Chapter 6, pp. 33, 141.
- (17) E.D.S./12, Chapter 5, pp. 4, 19.  
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- (18) OKW KTB, III, pp. 42-3.  
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- (19) E.D.S./12, Chapter 6, pp. 141-77.  
Kesselring, p. 152.
- (20) Appreciation in E.D.S./12, Chapter 7, p. 4.
- (21) Rommel Papers, pp. 416-7.  
OKW KTB, III, p. 187.
- (22) Telegram NAF.149 of 15.2.43.
- (23) George F. Howe: *North West Africa*, pp. 464-8.

- (24) E.D.S./12, Chapter 6, pp. 31-9, 141-77.  
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BOOK FOUR  
CHAPTER XIX  
PLANNING FOR SICILY  
FEBRUARY—APRIL 1943

SO LONG AS the fighting continued in North Africa the Allied commanders in the Mediterranean could devote only intermittent attention to preparations for the invasion of Sicily which had been decided upon at Casablanca by the Combined Chiefs of Staff. The full story of the planning and execution of the Sicilian operation will be found elsewhere;<sup>(1)</sup> here we should concern ourselves with the details only in so far as they affect the broader aspects of the strategic planning of the Allies. Nevertheless something must be said of the problem as it appeared to General Eisenhower and his planning staff, if only to explain the difference in emphasis between the attitude held in London and, to some extent, Washington, and that prevailing in Algiers and Cairo. For Mr. Churchill the capture of Sicily appeared a comparatively minor operation which should not take up the resources of two mighty allies for very long. For the Chiefs of Staff it was a preliminary move in wide-ranging if ill-defined plans to bring about the collapse of Italy. But the responsible officers in the Mediterranean were conscious primarily that they faced an operation of unprecedented complexity and risk.

The Combined Chiefs of Staff had done their best to relieve General Eisenhower of the day-to-day responsibility for planning which he had had to bear in mounting Operation 'Torch'. General Alexander as his Deputy Commander-in-Chief was charged with 'the detailed planning and preparation and with the execution of the actual operation when launched'. A special planning staff was appointed under the British Major General C. H. Gairdner, with the American Major General Clarence R. Huebner as his deputy. General Alexander was to command all the land forces concerned—later to become known as 15 Army Group—with Admiral Cunningham and Air Chief Marshal Tedder Commanders-in-Chief respectively at sea and in the air. General Eisenhower did not at first welcome an arrangement which seemed to relegate him to an honorific position of elevated impotence, but he was persuaded to acquiesce in it by his Chief of Staff, Major General Bedell Smith.<sup>(2)</sup> In fact the arrangement proved a wise one. General Eisenhower's political and military tasks in North Africa, and his

general responsibilities for the Allied forces in the Mediterranean, were as much as any commander could reasonably be expected to shoulder. Had a similar arrangement been made for Operation 'Torch' much time and many lives might have been saved. In fact he was, as we shall see, to be called on to intervene at least once in the planning of Operation 'Husky', and then with decisive effect.

Since the planners had from the beginning assumed that two separate landings would be needed to secure enough ports in Sicily for a rapid build-up of strength, the forces designated for the operation were divided into two, each with its own planning staff and sea and air components. The Eastern Task Force, whose objective was Catania, was to consist of British forces commanded by Lieut. General Sir Bernard Montgomery, Vice Admiral Sir Bertram Ramsey and Air Vice Marshal H. Broadhurst. The Western Task Force, which was to capture Palermo, was composed of American forces commanded by Lieut. General George S. Patton, Vice Admiral H. K. Hewitt and Major General Edwin House, U.S.A.A.F. Originally these forces were known by the drab titles of, respectively, Force 545 and Force 343, but General Montgomery soon changed all that. The Eighth Army was the Eighth Army. It was this band of brothers and not some anonymous *ad hoc* force that he proposed to take to Europe with him. So the titles of Force 545 and 343 disappeared, and the more stirring ones of the Eighth and the Seventh Armies took their place.

For any landing operation on enemy territory there are always three major problems to be solved. The landing forces, both the assaulting wave and the subsequent reinforcements, have to be protected in transit, which is possible only if there is complete local command of the sea and of the air. Superiority of fire must be obtained during the actual landings when the assault forces are at their most vulnerable—a problem whose dimensions had been gruesomely illustrated at Dieppe the previous August. Finally, once the beachhead is established, a rate of build-up must be maintained at least equal to that of the enemy, who is likely to have more forces available and better facilities for moving them; otherwise his counter-attacks will drive the landing forces back into the sea.

Command of the sea was of course a *sine qua non*. The Royal Navy had established a healthy moral superiority over the Italian Fleet, but the latter, with its five capital ships and two heavy cruisers, might yet prove a considerable force when fighting to protect its own shores. In response to an appeal from Admiral Cunningham the Admiralty therefore agreed to send two more battleships to join H.M.S. *Nelson*, *Rodney*, *Warspite* and *Valiant* in the Mediterranean, although this ran down the strength of the

Home Fleet to the bare minimum compatible with safety.<sup>(3)</sup> This brought the strength of the First Battle Squadron in the Mediterranean to 6 battleships, shared between three divisions. The first two divisions, each with an aircraft-carrier, based on Mers-el-Kebir and Alexandria, made up Force H under Vice Admiral Sir Algernon Willis, while the third, Force Z, concentrated at Gibraltar in reserve.<sup>(4)</sup>

Command of the air was also no foregone conclusion. The Allies had a majority of more than two to one in first-line aircraft—4,328 against 1,750 available to the Axis in Sicily, Sardinia and Italy—but a long battle of attrition was still necessary to gain control of the air space over the invasion area, as well as to gain freedom of action against Axis communications. More aircraft would also be needed for the airborne troops taking part in the campaign to whom, in the early stages of planning, the task was committed of neutralising the beach defences. General Eisenhower therefore put in a request for additional aircraft of all kinds, transports, gliders, heavy bombers for day and night operations, and both day and night fighters;<sup>(5)</sup> a request which landed the Combined Chiefs of Staff in considerable difficulties. Transport aircraft were as rare and as much in demand all over the world as was shipping, and General Eisenhower's needs could ultimately be met only at the expense of training programmes—which in its turn led to a shortage of trained crews. The Royal Air Force could find the necessary night bombers, but the U.S. B.17 and B.24 day bombers had to come from the allotment to Operation 'Sickle'—the build-up of American air strength in the United Kingdom for the Combined Bomber Offensive agreed at Casablanca; and this, somewhat naturally, appeared to the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff as a deviation from the agreed basic strategic concept. Indeed as the requirements for the invasion of Sicily mounted through the spring of 1943, General Marshall's nightmare vision of the Mediterranean as a bottomless gulf swallowing Allied resources must sometimes have seemed not far from the truth.

The most critical shortage however, and the one most far-reaching in its strategic implications, was that of landing-craft; and over this there occurred a triangular correspondence between Algiers, London and Washington which foreshadowed most dismally the difficulties which this major problem was to raise for Allied strategists almost uninterruptedly for two years to come.

As early as 26th February Admiral Ramsay, commanding the Naval Task Force covering the British landings, had reported to the Chiefs of Staff that his allocation of assault craft was inadequate;<sup>(6)</sup> and after General Alexander and General Montgomery had examined, and revised, the Algiers plan in March,

it was obvious that substantially more would be needed. But where were they to be found? The needs of the U.S. Navy in the Pacific were enormous, but Admiral King agreed to make ten more available.<sup>(7)</sup> These did not fill the gap, and it was necessary to draw on the reserves in the United Kingdom. These were earmarked partly for training purposes and partly for the cross-Channel operation which, it had been agreed at Casablanca, should be launched if at all possible in the later part of the summer. On this operation the Prime Minister had set his heart; he and Mr. Roosevelt had given Stalin strong indications, albeit in carefully guarded terms, that it would take place. Neither the British nor the American Chiefs of Staff were in any doubt that 'Husky' should be given priority over a venture which, however desirable politically, no longer fitted into any of their strategic calculations.<sup>(8)</sup> But it was Mr. Churchill who had insisted that the option should be kept open, and it was to him that matters had to be explained.

Sickness had prevented the Prime Minister from following the development of the plans for Sicily during February and March with his usual remorseless attention, and when the situation was made clear to him by the Chiefs of Staff on 13th April<sup>(9)</sup> his reaction was predictable. He had not realised hitherto, he complained, 'and it had certainly not been made clear at Casablanca, that the mounting of "Husky" would entail this sacrifice'. Sir Alan Brooke explained that the Chiefs of Staff, in making their recommendation, 'had taken into account not only the requirements of the revised "Husky" plan but also the effect that the additional landing-craft would have on the exploitation of a successful "Husky" . . . in view of the importance of maintaining the momentum of the "Husky" assault and the probable advantage to be reaped from a rapid exploitation of a quick success, they had come to the conclusion that it would be wrong to stint the "Husky" plan for the sake of being able to mount a comparatively small-scale cross-Channel operation'. Only after a searching interrogation did the Prime Minister accept this advice, demanding instead that a feint operation should be mounted on a large enough scale to bring about a major battle over the Channel. But it is significant that it was only at this late hour, and under pressure of a stringent shortage of resources, that Mr. Churchill finally reconciled himself to the purely Mediterranean strategy for 1943 which the Chiefs of Staff had hammered out the previous autumn. Once he had accepted it he was to urge it on his allies with that eloquence and sustained intensity which has led to his name being so widely associated with its formulation.

The provision of landing-craft, like the provision of airborne troops, was required to solve the second of the major problems

listed above—the vulnerability of the assault forces at the moment of landing. But it was the third problem which was to cause the greatest difficulties to the Allied planners: time to equal their adversary's capacity for rapid reinforcement. Communications between Sicily and the mainland were excellent. Six train-ferries operated across the Straits of Messina, capable of transporting in 24 hours either 40,000 men or 7,500 men and 750 vehicles. In addition a steamboat service could transport a further 12,000 men a day, and another 1,000 tons of freight could be brought in by air.<sup>(10)</sup> Through these ample pipe-lines the full weight of the Axis forces could be poured to overwhelm the Allied troops within a few days of their landing; and the enemy ease of movement could be countered only if the Allied forces captured major ports quickly enough to bring in their own supplies and heavy forces. Of the three principal ports, Messina was so heavily protected as to be out of the question; which left Catania in the south-east of the island and Palermo in the north-west. The rapid capture of these cities therefore became the object of Allied planning in its first stages.<sup>(11)</sup> Palermo as we have seen was to be the American objective, Catania the British. Each force was to land on the nearest beaches to the objective over which continuous air cover could be provided—between Sciacca and Mazzara on the south west coast, between Syracuse and Gela in the south and south east. They were then to seize the adjacent airfields and, under the air cover which could thence be provided, press on to take Palermo and Catania. Through these major ports the Allies would then, it was hoped, be able very rapidly to build up an overall superiority of strength, and overrun the island.

But this basic framework was far from satisfactory. By landing at widely separated points, unable to give one another mutual support, the Allies laid themselves open to defeat in detail. Further it became clear, as planning proceeded, that each force separately would be too weak for the task allotted it. General Montgomery in particular complained at the proposed dispersal of his forces over some fifty miles of beaches; but the reduction in frontage which he demanded meant that the airfields round Gela would remain in enemy hands, and without those airfields Air Chief Marshal Tedder considered it impossible to guarantee command of the air over the invasion area. The problem seemed insoluble unless another division could be found—which meant additional shipping and landing-craft in proportion. At first the answer appeared to be to transfer an American division from the Western Task Force, and to compensate for the weakening of the assault on Palermo by delaying it until the Eastern Task Force had captured enough airfields to provide air cover. Yet this plan was equally

unsatisfactory. General Patton's troops would have to lie embarked in African ports for at least three days until the Eastern Task force had attained its objectives; days during which the enemy could concentrate his strength against a single adversary. Yet as General Eisenhower pointed out to the Chiefs of Staff in London, 'the salient fact remains that without Catania and Gela airfields, the whole plan becomes abortive and all later attacks, even if initially partly successful, would merely lead us into difficulties which could not be overcome'.<sup>(12)</sup>

This proposal therefore found no favour in London. The Joint Planning Staff agreed that the key to success lay in the south-east corner of the island, but they considered that the risk in leaving open Palermo and the other ports in the west of the island as conduits for Axis reinforcements—all of which could then be concentrated against the Eastern Task Force—was far too great.<sup>(13)</sup> If another assault division was needed, it must be found from outside the theatre, and the shipping and landing-craft problem be solved somehow. The Chiefs of Staff endorsed this view, and so did the Combined Chiefs in Washington.<sup>(14)</sup> An extra division could in fact be found, and the landing-craft could be provided, so long as all idea of any cross-Channel operation in 1943 was abandoned. Port and shipping difficulties could, with ingenuity, be solved.<sup>(15)</sup> Even so, the planners in Algiers remained unhappy with what was still no more than an uneasy compromise between the original two-pronged attack, and a single concentrated punch.

Much of the trouble arose not from the inherent difficulties of the operation itself, but from the absence at planning conclaves of any commander who could conceive the operation as a whole, impose on it his own imprint, see it through in practice and accept responsibility for the consequences. Until mid-April all the senior officers who would have to fight the battle were preoccupied with the fighting in Tunisia, and their planning staffs lay in uneasy doldrums. Out of these they were to be blown by a sharp gust from General Montgomery, who informed General Alexander on 23rd April<sup>(16)</sup>

'... 3. We must plan the operation on assumption that resistance will be fierce and that a prolonged dog-fight battle will follow the initial assault.

4. I am prepared to carry the war into Sicily with the 8th Army but must do so in my own way . . .

5. In view of the above considerations my army must operate concentrated with corps and divisions in supporting distance of each other . . . (and abandoning the landings directed at seizing the Gela airfields) . . .

9. I want to make it clear that I shall require for this the whole of the 8th Army . . . \* I also want to make it clear that the above solution is the only possible way to handle the E.T.F. [Eastern Task Force] problem with the resources available. I am not able to judge the repercussions of this solution on the operation as a whole . . .

I have given orders that so far as the army is concerned all planning and work is now to go ahead along the lines indicated.'

This brusque *démarche* disconcerted the planners in Algiers, but it certainly precipitated a decision. The reaction of General Montgomery's colleagues was not favourable. At a conference summoned by General Alexander at Algiers on 29th April, which Montgomery himself was unable, through illness, to attend, Admiral Cunningham and Air Chief Marshal Tedder rejected the proposals outright. In their view, to leave the airfields at Gela in enemy hands during the early stages of the operations would involve unacceptable risks so far as command of the air was concerned, and, as a consequence, command of the sea. Concentration of forces, however excellent in itself, could be bought at too high a price.<sup>(17)</sup>

At this stage General Eisenhower stepped in to solve the problem. At the end of April Montgomery flew to Algiers and presented him, through General Bedell Smith, with new proposals which involved the abandonment of the Palermo landings altogether. The entire American strength should be concentrated on the British left flank, and take over the objective of the Gela airfields. Once these were secured General Patton's force could form a firm flank while the British broke out from Syracuse to capture Catania. Supply would have to be undertaken over open beaches to a greater extent than the planners had hitherto considered acceptable; but this logistic risk seemed preferable to the operational risks inseparable from the attempt to seize two large ports in quick succession.<sup>(18)</sup>

Both General Eisenhower and General Bedell Smith were convinced by General Montgomery's presentation. Admiral Cunningham and Air Chief Marshal Tedder still had their doubts about leaving West Sicilian airfields for so long in enemy hands, but after a further meeting on 2nd May, which Montgomery himself addressed, the operation was recast along the lines which he proposed; and ten days later the Combined Chiefs of Staff formally approved the revised plan. General Patton and his staff were considerably less than enthusiastic about this transformation, but

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\* See p. 384 below.



General Eisenhower handled them with the friendly firmness that made him so excellent a commander of forces working in sometimes uneasy alliance.<sup>(19)</sup> But a further proposal from General Montgomery, 'to put U.S. Corps under me and let my Army H.Q. handle the whole operation of land-battle',<sup>(20)</sup> got no further than General Alexander. It was an understandable enough proposal for him to make: it was no less understandable that it should have been very firmly refused.

One major point remained to be settled: the date on which the operation was to be launched. At Casablanca the Combined Chiefs of Staff had given General Eisenhower the target of July, during the most favourable lunar phase of that month. It will be remembered that, on the insistence of the Prime Minister, a rider had been added to their official report recording their agreement 'that without prejudicing the July date for the operation, an intense effort will be made during the next three weeks to achieve by contrivance and ingenuity the favourable June moon period as the date for the operation. If at the end of three weeks their efforts have proved successful, the instructions to General Eisenhower will be modified accordingly'.<sup>(21)</sup>

Mr. Churchill reminded the Chiefs of Staff of this promise as soon as he returned to London. 'The efforts to bring "Husky" forward to June is now the first task of the Chiefs of Staff Committee', he minuted on 8th February.<sup>(22)</sup> The Joint Planning Staff was already working on the question; and although there were considerable difficulties, such as finding the trained troops needed by June, they did not think them insoluble. If the Americans could find the landing-craft, suggested the Chief of Combined Operations, the British could provide their share of the crews and the trained assault forces; and the Air Staff considered that the necessary air supremacy could be obtained by the June date.<sup>(23)</sup> General Ismay was therefore able to give the Prime Minister, on 10th February, a very cheerful account of the chances of seeing his hopes fulfilled.<sup>(24)</sup>

But from Algiers matters looked very different. In a message of 11th February<sup>(25)</sup> General Eisenhower described his problems to the Combined Chiefs of Staff. He considered the British optimistic in expecting to have their forces trained in time to the standard of efficiency which would be required for an opposed assault. Nor would the American divisions be ready and available in time, if only because the rate at which he could absorb new units into the North African theatre was severely limited by the operational requirements of the Tunisian campaign. Moreover, given that Tunis could be clear by the end of April, it would then take up to ten weeks to redeploy his air forces, and four weeks on top of that

for them to establish air superiority over the new theatre of war. 'I therefore consider', he concluded, 'that owing to lack of time for training and preparation a June assault is unlikely to succeed'.

Both in London and in Washington General Eisenhower's message had a most unfriendly reception. The Joint Planning Staff could not see that any of the problems listed by General Eisenhower were insuperable,<sup>(26)</sup> and both British and American Chiefs of Staff were unanimous that June must remain the target.<sup>(27)</sup> As for Mr. Churchill, he expressed himself 'most shocked' at General Eisenhower's message. 'It is absolutely necessary to do this operation in June', he told the Chiefs of Staff.<sup>(28)</sup> 'We shall become a laughing-stock if, during the spring and early summer, no British and American soldiers are firing at any German or Italian soldiers.' He developed the point in urgent personal messages to General Eisenhower, President Roosevelt and Mr. Harry Hopkins.<sup>(29)</sup> 'It seems to me that we shall be very much open to grievous reproach at the hands of Russia', he wrote to the latter, 'if, considering how very small is the sphere in which we are acting, we impose these enormous delays . . . What worries me is this appalling hiatus in the height of the campaigning season when we shall be doing absolutely nothing . . . We should not have had any "Torch" if we had yielded to the fears of the professionals'.

But the fears of the professionals were not groundless. The landings in North Africa, carried out as they were in face of an uncertain and short-lived opposition, had produced scenes of lamentable confusion. On the American beaches 34% of the assault craft had been lost, chiefly through mishandling.<sup>(30)</sup> Under the guns of a resolute enemy such a performance could lead only to humiliating disaster, and only by meticulous training could it be avoided. For these reasons, General Eisenhower informed the Prime Minister in his reply of 17th February, 'the date of "Husky" will depend primarily upon the time required for training and preparation of the various forces. I consider that time cannot be further reduced'.<sup>(31)</sup>

For a moment Mr. Churchill contemplated carrying out the landings with British forces alone, relying on the Americans simply for landing-craft and escort vessels, but the Chiefs of Staff had to point out that this would prove no solution since in any case the American landing-craft could not be made available in time.<sup>(32)</sup> But the Combined Chiefs of Staff in Washington were quite as reluctant to relax their pressure. On the suggestion of Sir John Dill they informed General Eisenhower on 19th February that the favourable June moon period was to remain the target date for 'Husky', 'and all preparations must be pushed with greatest vigour to achieve this date. 'You are to report to the Combined Chiefs of Staff on 10th April how your preparations have gone forward. Should, on this

date, June date appear to you impracticable, you will report earliest possible date which can be accomplished'.<sup>(33)</sup>

By 10th April General Eisenhower was able to give them better news. When the responsible commanders considered the question at a meeting in Algiers on 13th March, they still maintained that the June date was quite impracticable.<sup>(34)</sup> But they also agreed that the best time for the landings would not be, as had hitherto been assumed, at the end of the month, in the moon's last quarter, when the moonlight just before dawn would light the approaches to the shore.<sup>(35)</sup> A change in the role visualised for the airborne troops forced a change of plan.

The original proposals that these forces should be dropped simultaneously with the assault on the beaches to capture the air-fields had been abandoned as impracticable. Now their role was seen as being to soften up the beach-defences and seize the approaches to the beaches; which meant that they must go into action some hours before the landings took place. They would need moonlight for their drop, which would take place before midnight, and that would be at its best in the moon's second quarter. The earliest feasible favourable moon period would therefore be around 10th July.<sup>(36)</sup> This, for the Prime Minister, was an acceptable compromise, involving as it did a delay of a fortnight only instead of a month;<sup>(37)</sup> and when on 10th April General Eisenhower formally confirmed that the operation could not be launched in June but would be ready for the second quarter of the July moon, the Chiefs of Staff both in Washington and London were willing to acquiesce.<sup>(38)</sup>

There was considerably less satisfaction with another passage in the message of 28th March in which General Eisenhower reported the conclusions of the Commanders' Conference in Algiers.<sup>(39)</sup> 'There is', he wrote, 'unanimous agreement among all commanders as to the statement made in the initial planning paper to the effect that, if substantial German ground troops should be placed in the region prior to the attack, the chances for success become practically nil and the project should be abandoned.' In a further message of 7th April,<sup>(40)</sup> in which he associated Admiral Cunningham and General Alexander with his views, he was more specific. The operation would offer 'scant prospect of success if the region contained substantial, well-armed and fully-organised German ground forces . . . By the term substantial is meant more than two German divisions'. The allies would be launching an operation without either tactical or strategic surprise against an enemy force 8 to 9 divisions strong. The presence of German units, he pointed out, would mean a German command, and the German divisions themselves would probably be kept to counter-attack.

This proviso had figured in the original paper by the Joint Planning Staff which the Combined Chiefs of Staff had approved at Casablanca.<sup>(41)</sup> Nevertheless it is not difficult to understand the explosion of impatient wrath which this cautious warning set off in Whitehall. The Prime Minister addressed to the Chiefs of Staff on this subject one of the most memorable minutes of the war.

. . . 'If the presence of two German divisions is held to be decisive against any operation of an offensive or amphibious character open to the million men now in North Africa, it is difficult to see how the war can be carried on. Months of preparation, sea power and air power in abundance, and yet two German divisions are sufficient to knock it all on the head . . . I trust the Chiefs of Staff will not accept these pusillanimous and defeatist doctrines, from whoever they come . . . I regard the matter as serious in the last degree. We have told the Russians that they cannot have their supplies by the Northern convoy for the sake of "Husky", and now "Husky" is to be abandoned if there are two German divisions (strength unspecified) in the neighbourhood. What Stalin would think of this, when he has 185 German divisions on his front I cannot imagine'.<sup>(42)</sup>

The Chiefs of Staff needed no prompting. At their meeting of 8th April they agreed unanimously 'that the views expressed by General Eisenhower, which were tantamount to saying that amphibious operations could not succeed against organised German resistance, should not be accepted';<sup>(43)</sup> and they informed the Combined Chiefs of Staff in Washington of their strong dissent from a view which, they contended, 'implies that we cannot take on Germans in combined operations unless we can attack in overwhelming superiority at all points'. The hazards of landing on an almost undefended coast manned primarily by Italians were not comparable with those which they would face in the cross-Channel attack against a fortified coast manned by Germans. Moreover 'to count on forfeiture of strategical surprise implies the complete failure of all our cover and deception plans . . . As to tactical surprise, the enemy can hardly know the select day and hour and the exact beaches at which the landing will take place'. And they concluded, 'We feel bound to record our view that the abandonment of the Operation at any stage solely because the number of Germans in Huskyland had reached a small predetermined fraction of our own strength would be unthinkable'.<sup>(44)</sup> Needless to say, the Joint Chiefs of Staff expressed their emphatic agreement and informed Algiers accordingly.<sup>(45)</sup> General Eisenhower replied with firmness and dignity: 'No thought here except to carry out our orders to the ultimate limit of our ability, while we believe it our

duty to give our considered and agreed opinion of relative chances under conditions as stated in our previous message'.<sup>(46)</sup> The matter was not raised again.

The deception plans of the Allies were, in fact, as has since become widely known, remarkably ingenious and deservedly successful. 'The Chiefs of Staff', General Ismay informed the Prime Minister on 14th April,<sup>(47)</sup> 'have approved, subject to your consent, a somewhat startling cover plan in connection with "Husky"'. This was Operation 'Mince-meat'. A dead body in British uniform was to be washed ashore in the Huelva area of Spain, as if from a crashed aircraft, bearing a bag whose contents would include a letter addressed to General Alexander by the V.C.I.G.S., Lieut. General Sir Archibald Nye. The context of this document would make it clear that the objective of Operation 'Husky' was in fact Greece. A further operation, 'Brimstone', was being mounted in North Africa, whose destination was unspecified, and Sicily was the cover for this.<sup>(48)</sup> The timing of the assault-convoys and the disposition of naval concentrations was also arranged to fit in with this picture, British forces from the Middle East threatening Crete and the Peloponnese, American forces from French North Africa threatening Sardinia, Corsica and the Côte d'Azur.<sup>(49)</sup> 'The Man who Never Was'\* was duly launched on his gruesome errand; and on 14th May the Prime Minister, then in Washington, received from Whitehall the jubilant telegram, 'Mince-meat swallowed rod, line and sinker by right people and from best information they look like acting on it'.<sup>(50)</sup>

They did. The forged documents came into the hands of the *Oberkommando der Wehrmacht* on 9th May, and on 12th May an *O.K.W.* directive announced that operations were imminent and 'Measures regarding Sardinia and the Peloponnese take precedence over everything else'.<sup>(51)</sup> Hitler himself informed Admiral Dönitz on 14th May 'that the discovered Anglo-Saxon order confirms the impression that the planned attacks will be directed mainly against Sardinia and the Peloponnese'.<sup>(52)</sup> German reinforcements moved to Rhodes, Crete, the Peloponnese and Corsica. Operation 'Mince-meat' succeeded so extraordinarily well because it gave the German High Command additional evidence for the assumption which they already held: that the Balkans represented the greatest prize which the Allies could now win in the Mediterranean, and that this, in consequence, would be the next objective for their attacks.

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\* The title of the book by Mr. Ewan Montagu, one of those involved in the project, which describes the operation in detail. *The Man Who Never Was*. [Evans Bros., London, 1953.]

# MEDITERRANEAN

Map 12





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BOOK FOUR  
CHAPTER XX  
THE MIDDLE EAST AND THE  
BALKANS  
FEBRUARY—APRIL 1943

IN ASSUMING that the Balkan peninsula would be the focus for the forthcoming Allied offensive, the German High Command was of course mistaken. For the rest of the war the Eastern half of the Mediterranean theatre, on which such anxious attention had been focussed for so many years, was to remain a backwater.

At the time of the Casablanca Conference this could not be foreseen. It was an outcome intended by the British war leaders as little as it was expected by the Germans. Both realised the strategic significance of the Balkans whence the Axis drew so much of their war materials and where guerrilla activities were beginning to impose so heavy a strain on their armed forces. Both realised the advantages which the Allies would reap if the Dardanelles could be opened and direct communications established with the Soviet Union. In British staff appreciations the entry of Turkey into the war had long appeared as the next logical step after the opening of the Mediterranean and as a necessary part of the process of 'closing the ring'. The Prime Minister had vigorously espoused the idea throughout the autumn with some support from President Roosevelt;<sup>(1)</sup> and as the Casablanca Conference drew to a close he proposed to his colleagues in London that he should pay a personal visit to President İnönü and try to gain his support. 'Even if the Turks say no, it will do no harm', he stated, in a telegram to London of 24th January.<sup>(2)</sup> 'I have no false pride in these matters. The capture of Tripoli, the increasing Russian victories, and the fact that I speak for the two great allies creates a most favourable occasion. Do not, I beg you, lightly dismiss it'.

The War Cabinet did not lightly dismiss it, but they were unenthusiastic over the whole idea.

'If Turkish suspicions are aroused [replied Mr. Attlee and Mr. Eden<sup>(3)</sup>] that you have arrived hot foot from a conference with the President in order to persuade the Turks to come into the war they are surely likely to withdraw still further into

themselves for fear of being made our catspaw. For this reason we do not share your view that there would be no harm in a rebuff or in the failure of the meeting if it took place . . .'

The Prime Minister however would accept no denial, and his colleagues with some reluctance and much scepticism authorised the visit. The Turkish Government agreed to receive their distinguished visitor, together with his diplomatic and military advisers, and the conference took place on a train near Adana, in South East Turkey, on 30th and 31st January, when Mr. Churchill arrived after spending five days in Cairo. His hopes for the visit he set out in an explanatory telegram to the Commonwealth Prime Ministers:

'The object assigned to this conference is to promote "the general defensive strength of Turkey". I have no wish to press them into the war immediately. They must first be kitted up. But the time will come in the summer when they may feel able to take an even more forthright view than it is evident they are now adopting. You will see how vital it is to the whole of the Mediterranean combination that this additional weight should be thrown in when the climax is reached, and also how important that we should be able to plaster Ploesti oilfields with bombs'.<sup>(4)</sup>

About these proposals the Turks had considerable reservations, as the Foreign Office knew very well. They were determined not to risk the fate which had overtaken their Greek neighbours by entering the war while the Axis was still in a position to deal at them a blow which the Allies would not be able effectively to parry. This danger was certainly waning, but it remained sufficiently lively for the Turkish General Staff to make out a convincing case for being provided with large quantities of military material before they could even contemplate taking part in hostilities. Moreover, as this danger waned, another even more alarming began to loom in its place; that of the expansion of Turkey's traditional adversary, Russia. M. Saracoglu, the Turkish President of the Council, had already expressed to the British Ambassador his fears that a Russian victory would create chaos throughout Europe, and these he now reiterated to the Prime Minister himself. All Europe, he said, was full of Slavs and Communists. All the defeated countries would become Bolshevik or Slav if Germany were defeated. In what way, he demanded, would Turkey's security be enhanced by joining the Allies if the Soviet Union refused to co-operate after the war?<sup>(5)</sup>

Forewarned of the objections which the Turks were likely to raise, Mr. Churchill had armed himself with a memorandum to which he gave the gentle title of 'Morning Thoughts'.<sup>(6)</sup> Since this is perhaps

the earliest extant document in which the Prime Minister set out his views about the shape of the post-war world, and since it deals particularly with the place which he then foresaw the Soviet Union occupying in it, we reprint it in full at Appendix V. Much of it was extraordinarily prescient. The three major powers did join in enforcing the surrender, first of Italy and Germany, then of Japan. The defeated countries were disarmed, but no attempt was made to destroy their peoples or—at least on the part of the Western Allies—to make them pay for the war. A world organisation was set up for the preservation of peace, although the regional security organisations visualised by the Prime Minister did not come into being quite in the form he had expected. Nor was the following prophecy to be entirely belied:

‘No one can predict with certainty that the victors will never quarrel among themselves, or that the United States may not once again retire from Europe, but after the experiences which all have gone through, and their sufferings, and the certainty that the third struggle will destroy all that is left of the culture, wealth and civilisation of mankind and reduce us to the level almost of wild beasts, the most intense effort will be made by the leading powers to prolong their honourable association and by sacrifice and self-restraint win for themselves a glorious name in human annals. Great Britain will certainly do her utmost to organize a coalition resistance to any act of aggression committed by any power, and it is believed that the United States will co-operate with her and even possibly take the lead of the world, on account of her numbers and strength, in the good work of preventing such tendencies to aggression before they break into open war’.

Turkey’s best security, suggested Mr. Churchill, lay in her taking her place ‘as a victorious belligerent and ally at the side of the United States and Russia. In this way a start will be made in all friendship and confidence and the new instrument will grow around the good will and comradeship of those who have been in the field together with powerful armies’. She might begin by ‘taking the same extended view of neutrality and non-belligerency as characterised the attitude of the United States towards Great Britain before the United States was drawn into the war’; giving the Allies facilities for air attacks on the Ploesti oilfields, amphibious assaults on the Dodecanese and Crete, and access through the Dardanelles to the Black Sea. Ultimately there was ‘the possibility of Turkey becoming a full belligerent, and of her armies advancing into the Balkans side by side with the Russians on the one hand in the north and the

British to the southward'. If she did so she would receive full guarantees of her territories and rights, certainly from the United Kingdom and probably from the Soviet Union and the United States as well.

While the military delegates discussed the nature and quantity of military equipment that should be provided for the Turkish armed forces, the Turkish political leaders listened to Mr. Churchill's eloquent persuasions and assured him of their sympathy for the Allied cause.<sup>(7)</sup> Sir Alan Brooke left the conference with the cautious impression that 'Turkey's neutrality will, from now on, assume a more biased nature in favour of the Allies'.<sup>(8)</sup> The Prime Minister was more sanguine. 'I have not asked', he reported to Stalin, 'for any precise political engagement or promise about entering the war on our side, but it is my opinion that they will do so before the year is out, and that possibly earlier by a strained interpretation of neutrality similar to that of the U.S. before she came in, they may allow us to use these airfields for refuelling for British and American bombing attacks on the Ploesti oilwells'.

The Prime Minister's optimism was not shared by the British representatives in Ankara. In fact the scepticism with which the Foreign Office and the War Cabinet regarded the whole venture was to prove well justified. The Turks themselves apparently left Adana with a very different impression from Mr. Churchill. Barely a fortnight later, after an interview with the Deputy Chief of the Turkish General Staff, the British Naval Attaché in Ankara reported that the 'General Staff appear more isolationist than ever and consider Mr. Churchill accepted wholeheartedly Turkish neutrality until the end of the war and that Turkish arms should be strengthened so that after German collapse we should have solid bastion of a strong Turkey to cope with difficult situation in Near East'. The Turkish General Staff, he went on, frankly hoped that the 'Germans will be continuing resistance in order to destroy as much as possible of troops and materials of both Russians and Germans so as to wear out both of them'.<sup>(10)</sup>

The British Government did not share these Machiavellian views, difficult as it was to persuade either the Turks or the Russians of this.

'Our primary motive in supplying Turkey with these vast quantities of armaments [the Foreign Office informed its Ankara Embassy a few months later, on 13th May] is not only that she shall be strong enough to withstand any attack made on her but also to strengthen her so that she may with impunity grant us certain facilities in the conduct of our operations against Europe. We very definitely expect this return for our generosity before the end of the war. It may be impossible to dispel the mistaken Turkish belief that she needs these armaments to enable her to withstand Russian designs

in the post-war period, but Turkey must be made to understand that we are not supplying them with armaments for this purpose and that we resent any such suggestion, since it would imply that we were being disloyal to our Russian Allies'.<sup>(11)</sup>

Mr. Churchill was not alone in being over-optimistic as to the extent to which the Turks could be persuaded to abandon their position of watchful neutrality. Air Chief Marshal Sir Sholto Douglas, Air Officer Commanding Middle East, who visited Ankara on 18th March, cabled back to the Chiefs of Staff: 'My general impression is that the Turks have made up their minds that sooner or later they are coming into this war and want to be in every way prepared'.<sup>(12)</sup> But when the Air Chief Marshal was followed by the arrival in Ankara of a planning staff whose size was double that expected, which contained an American component, which worked under the direct orders of Middle East Command and which was prepared to remain until Turkey entered the war, the Turks, who had expected only a small and temporary addition to the staff of the Air Attaché, took alarm, and so did the British Embassy. 'Any appearance of saddling Turkey at this stage with a permanent mission responsible to Middle East Command and not to His Majesty's Ambassador', they warned on 1st April, 'is not only likely to drive the Turkish General Staff back into its shell but to put the Turkish Government into political difficulties'.<sup>(13)</sup> The Prime Minister brusquely ordered the Foreign Office not to fuss about 'ceremonial relationships': 'We have got our foot in the door', he said bluntly, 'and we mean to keep it there'.<sup>(14)</sup> But the Chiefs of Staff were more cautious. 'We must endeavour to consolidate and maintain the closer relations offered by Turkey in these negotiations', they told Middle East Command on 7th April, 'but even so must not endanger these advantages by going too fast'.<sup>(15)</sup>

A clear division was now appearing in the British ranks over how best to land the Turkish fish. On the one side was the Prime Minister, with some support from the Air Officer Commanding Middle East, who had commented on the Turkish alarm described above, 'Everyone seems to be making a great deal of fuss about minor details'.<sup>(16)</sup> On the other was the Foreign Office, the Chiefs of Staff and Lieut. General Sir Henry Maitland Wilson, General Alexander's successor as G.O.C.-in-C. Middle East. When General Wilson visited Ankara on 18th April 1943 and received Marshal Çakmak's firm declaration that Turkey would enter the war only if she felt herself imminently threatened by either Russia or Germany, he assured the Turkish Chief of Staff that the British had no intention of forcing Turkey into the war. 'It is for consideration', he suggested to General Brooke, 'whether, given favourable conditions,



the use of airfields without risk of Turkey being involved in the war would not be more advantageous to us than bringing Turkey into the war. I feel that, in its present condition, the Turkish Army is likely to be more of a liability than an asset'.<sup>(17)</sup> The Prime Minister replied grimly, 'There was no need for you to dwell so heavily on our not wishing to force Turkey into the war'. Later in the summer, if all went well, they would be asking Turkey for airfield facilities. If these were refused there would follow 'every form of pressure which it is in our power to exert, including letting the army supply peter out and withdrawing all guarantee by Britain and Russia for the maintenance of the *status quo*'. He hoped that this would not be necessary, but that 'at the right moment the Turkish Government will do its duty and join the ranks of the Allies'.<sup>(18)</sup> General Wilson remained unconvinced. 'When the time comes to put our demands to Turkey', he replied, 'the hand will require very careful playing'.<sup>(19)</sup>

Difficulties were arising in other fields as well. The aid which the British had promised to Turkey fell under three broad categories. The first was the provision of formed British units (Operation 'Hardihood'), which was divided into four phases: first the provision of 25 R.A.F. squadrons with attendant A.A. artillery to protect their airfields, and three anti-tank regiments; second, a further 25 R.A.F. squadrons with A.A. artillery; third, further heavy and light A.A. units and two anti-tank regiments; and fourth, the provision of two armoured divisions. The second category was general aid to Turkish economy, particularly by the supply of coal, locomotives, and rolling stock. Finally, considerable quantities of sophisticated equipment had been promised for the Turkish armed forces themselves.

All this equipment had to be found; it had to be shipped; it had to be transported within Turkey by railways chronically short of rolling stock and fuel; it had to be absorbed by an army which still consisted largely of hardy peasants. The Turks' demands did not always appear to the British authorities, therefore, to be entirely realistic. Mr. Eden pointed out to the Prime Minister on 9th March<sup>(20)</sup> that the Turkish Government had asked for a number of naval vessels which could be manned only if the strength of their Navy was doubled; for 1,470 heavy and 855 other tanks, 2,600 guns and howitzers, 1,198 aircraft with 120,000 tons of aviation petrol and 50,000 tons of bombs; and for 720,000 tons of M.T. petrol—thirty times their normal annual consumption. The Americans, who would have to find much of the equipment, were also unhappy; as one American official in Ankara put it, to supply the Turks with everything they wanted would be like 'feeding an eight course dinner to an eight-day-old baby'.<sup>(21)</sup> But the Prime

Minister would not agree to the shipments being scaled down. The greater the quantity supplied, he maintained, the stronger the position of the Allies would be vis-à-vis the Turks when the moment came to bring them into the war. He presided over a Staff Conference on 16th April where he compelled the representatives of the Services to increase their allocation of Turkish aid;<sup>(22)</sup> he closely scrutinised the shipping position; and he explained his policy to the President on 26th April:

‘ . . . In drawing up the list of what we are prepared to send, I have thought it necessary to avoid any appearance of being niggardly. It is better that there should be some slight indigestion rather than that the patient should have any cause to complain that he is being starved. Anyhow their reception ports and transportation facilities are a bottleneck. It is better that the fault should lie with them for not being able to receive, than with us for being unwilling to offer . . . I want the Turks to feel that they have a call on large supplies of the most modern equipment when the time comes, as it may be this Autumn, for strong pressure to be put on them to let us use their bases for [the Dodecanese] . . . and also for bombing Ploesti’.<sup>(23)</sup>

Much of the difficulty in supplying Turkey arose, not simply from the backwardness of the Turkish economy and the general inadequacy of communications, but from the blockade which the Axis powers were able to impose on the port of Smyrna through their occupation of the Dodecanese. So long as Smyrna was closed, all supplies had to be fed through the small ports of Iskanderun and Mersin on the south coast of Anatolia, and distributed by an inadequate railway system short of rolling stock, locomotives and coal. If Smyrna could be opened the whole problem would be greatly alleviated. It would then be possible also to bring in the ground forces planned for the last phase of Operation ‘Hardihood’. But first the Dodecanese must be captured; and if the Turks granted facilities for attacks on the Dodecanese, it was not likely that they would remain passive when the disposal of these islands came to be discussed after the war. The Italian-occupied islands were one of the few prizes which might have lured Turkey into the war in 1940 before the Germans appeared in the Mediterranean, and the force which they had then organised for the occupation of the islands, Marshal Çakmak revealed to General Wilson during his April visit, was still in being.<sup>(24)</sup> This force would certainly be a welcome addition to the meagre British elements available for the operation, but its use, as the Chiefs of Staff pointed out to General Wilson on 24th April,<sup>(25)</sup>

' . . . would have a most unfortunate effect on Turco-Greek relations . . . If however it is eventually found to be militarily impossible to capture both the Dodecanese and the Greek Islands with British troops the question of inviting the Turks to undertake the task will have to be considered in the light of the circumstances then existing; it being realised that in that eventuality these islands will have to be handed over to the Greek government at the earliest possible moment, and without waiting for the end of the war'.

Plans for an attack on the Dodecanese (Operation 'Accolade'), were kept under constant review in Cairo, but the place of this operation in the scale of strategic priorities was low. In the directive which General Wilson received from the Prime Minister on 12th February<sup>(26)</sup> on taking over his new Command, amphibious operations in the Eastern Mediterranean ranked fourth below maintenance of the Eighth Army in Tunisia, support for the invasion of Sicily and help for Turkey. At the time of the Casablanca Conference, on 12th January 1943, H.Q. Middle East had indeed suggested to the Combined Chiefs of Staff that if 'certain additional resources' were provided, they might mount an operation against Rhodes and the Dodecanese which would 'assist you in turning this area into an immense liability for Germany this year, and so contribute relief to the Russian front'.<sup>(27)</sup> Since there was no prospect of providing these resources (which included two auxiliary carriers and 88 landing ships) the suggestion was not taken up. But General Wilson did not despair of action. He had no shortage of manpower. On 23rd February the total force under his command, excluding the Eighth Army, was 551,735 men, with a further 331,388 in Persia and Iraq Command. Most of these were of course employed on base and maintenance duties, but there was still a total of 267,046 men available in combat units<sup>(28)</sup>—a formidable force if transport could be found for them. General Wilson therefore began detailed planning for operations, not only against the Dodecanese but against Crete and the mainland of Greece as 'diversions or alternatives' for 'Husky'. He suggested appointing a commander-designate for these operations 'so that if you wish us, perhaps at very short notice, to undertake any operations in the Aegean', he told the Chiefs of Staff on 27th February, 'there will be the minimum delay'.<sup>(29)</sup>

General Wilson's far-sightedness was to prove justified. It was not likely that any such demands would be made on Middle East Command until Sicily had been conquered. But what should then happen in the Mediterranean remained an open question throughout the spring and early summer of 1943. Mr. Churchill, in a note

to the President of 5th April,<sup>(30)</sup> suggested that if a German occupation of Italy made progress there impossible 'in that case we must be ready for an attack on the Dodecanese for supporting Turkey if she gets into trouble'. The Joint Planning Staff in a report of 7th April<sup>(31)</sup> proposed that advantage should be taken of an Italian collapse to occupy the Dodecanese and seize bridgeheads in the Balkan peninsula; and that if Italy did not collapse she should be invaded but the Dodecanese be captured nonetheless. On 3rd May the Joint Planners, during the last stages of the Tunisian campaign, further elaborated their proposals for action to occupy the Balkan Peninsula in the event of an Italian collapse.<sup>(32)</sup> By so doing, they pointed out, the Allies could deprive Germany of 50% of her chrome, 40% of her copper, 33% of her nickel ore and 16% of her bauxite, as well as posing a mortal threat to her oil supplies.\* A bridgehead should be seized at Durazzo while the Dodecanese should be occupied to forestall the Germans, to increase the threat to the Balkan mainland and to open the port of Smyrna as an essential preliminary to Turkey entering the war. Any indication of a German withdrawal from the Balkan Peninsula should be followed up at once; whether through Turkey and Macedonia, through Albania, or by landing at Athens.

When the Chiefs of Staff left for Washington at the beginning of May for their conference with the Americans, they had thus the possibility of continuing operations in the Eastern Mediterranean very much in mind;<sup>(33)</sup> and when, in preparation for that conference, they invited Middle East Command to submit proposals not only for the capture of the Dodecanese but for the invasion of Crete and the Greek mainland as well,<sup>(34)</sup> General Wilson's staff had their plans ready for immediate dispatch to Washington.<sup>(35)</sup>

General Wilson's own suggestions, which he cabled to General Brooke on 8th May, were far-reaching.<sup>(36)</sup> In his opinion 'Accolade' should be considered as a preliminary to

'. . . possible major operations based on Istanbul and Salonika with objectives up to the line of the Danube . . . Such operations would not only offer prospects of a decisive defeat of enemy but presence of powerful British forces in conjunction with Turkish forces in Eastern Europe would strengthen our hand in reaching final settlement on Eastern European problems with the Russians. Whether or not such far-reaching operations are accepted as our policy for future conduct of the war, Middle East must be prepared to open Aegean and support Turkey.

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\* It is interesting to compare the figures given by Jodl in an address to the German Reich-and Gauleiters in Munich on 7th November 1943: 50% of the total European oil production, 100% of chrome, 60% of bauxite, 21% of copper, 20% of antimony. *Oberkommando der Wehrmacht Kriegstagebuch*, Vol. IV, p. 1550. I am grateful to Mr. F. W. Deakin for drawing my attention to this source.

In event of Italian collapse and hasty withdrawal of Italian troops from Balkans popular resistance especially in Greece may increase suddenly. We must therefore be ready to take advantage of this before German forces can suppress Greeks. Such a major rising can usually be staged once only and after savage repression which is to be expected could not easily be resuscitated'.

He concluded with a warning that the resources for all this might be unnecessarily reduced by 'a tendency for Eighth Army to hang on to as much as possible on the chance of its being wanted later'. General Montgomery was certainly unlikely to acquiesce in the diversion of any of the victorious forces under his command without vigorous and prolonged protest.

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In drawing attention to the strategic possibilities offered by the Balkan Peninsula itself, General Wilson knew well that that theatre now offered greater prospects for military exploitation than at any time since the Germans had overrun it two years before. To understand why this was so, and further to understand why the Allies were able to take so little advantage of these opportunities, we must now retrace our steps, and consider the situation which had developed in the countries concerned since the summer of 1941.

Yugoslavia, a nation united only for twenty years, had been once more dismembered by the victorious Axis powers. Slovenia was divided between Italy and Germany. Italy occupied Dalmatia and Montenegro. A new state of Croatia was created, largely out of the territories which had belonged to the former Habsburg Monarchy—Croatia, Slavonia, Bosnia, Herzegovina, with outlets, which remained under strict Italian control, to the Dalmatian coast. The Italian Duke of Spoleto was declared King of this Ruritanian creation, but, fortunately for him, was never called upon to reign. The political head of the Croatian government was Dr. Ante Pavelic; and though the country was effectively controlled by German and Italian occupation forces, Pavelic's armed guards, the *Ustachi*, set to with a will to massacre their own personal enemies, together with such extraneous elements as Serbs and Jews who did not fit into their picture of the brave new Croatian State. Serbia, reduced again to its frontiers of 1912, was in principle ruled by a collaborationist government under General Milan Nedic. In practice all power was concentrated in the hands of German occupation officials, civil and military. The attitude of the German authorities was based on an *O.K.W.* directive of 16th September 1941, that

a death sentence of 50–100 hostages would be a 'suitable' reprisal for every German soldier killed; and since they showed no hesitation in implementing this order, Nedic did his best to persuade his countrymen to accept their unhappy fate.<sup>(37)</sup>

Not all were prepared to do so. Of the scattered groups of partisans who had taken to the mountains during the German invasion, two grew to political and military significance during the summer of 1941. The first, calling themselves Četniks after their forefathers who had harassed and ultimately driven out the Turkish administration, grouped themselves round the royalist army officer Colonel Draža Mihailovic, who established his headquarters in the mountains of Western Serbia; most of them sharing with him the social conservatism and pan-Serb outlook of the former rulers of Yugoslavia. The second were followers of Josep Broz Tito, the Secretary-General of the Yugoslav Communist Party, who set up a resistance centre at Užice. The desire of the communists to come to the aid of the Soviet Union awoke wider Pan-Slav sympathies among the Serb peasantry; their programme of agrarian reforms had its own attractions; and guerrilla activities began to which the Germans responded with immediate and calculated brutality. On 21st October 1941 7,000 people in the Serb town of Kragujevac were massacred. This had its effect on Mihailovic, who anyhow regarded Tito's programme of social reform with distaste and considered his military activities to be premature and self-destructive. Attempts at *rapprochement* came to nothing; and when in November 1941 the Axis occupation forces launched their first offensive against Tito's partisans, Mihailovic remained quiescent and maintained his links with Nedic, with whose position he had considerable sympathy. It was not long before his subordinate commanders outside Serbia were establishing links with Italian occupation forces as well.<sup>(38)</sup>

The Axis attempt to destroy Tito in the winter of 1941 was ineffective. So was a second offensive launched in April 1942; and during the summer Tito fought his way westward into Croatia, attracting as he went support from Croatians sickened by the *Ustachi* persecutions, and in November he assembled at Bihać an Anti-Fascist Council of National Liberation which declared itself 'the supreme executive and legislative body of the Yugoslav State'. The German High Command, preoccupied with finding men for the Russian front, had hitherto hoped that the Pavelic government would be able to take care of their own internal security problems. In September however the commander of the German forces in the South Eastern Theatre, General Löhr, presented a bleak report to Hitler which spoke of mounting chaos in Croatia, where the government troops were totally unreliable and the régime

on the verge of collapse. Drastic military measures, he advised, were necessary to deal with the situation.<sup>(30)</sup> Events were to prove him right. Throughout November savage battles were to rage in the mountains of West Bosnia round Jajce. By the end of 1942 Allied intelligence sources listed some forty Axis divisions, including five German, nineteen Italian, three Hungarian, six Croatian and six Bulgarian, as being pinned down by operations in Yugoslavia.<sup>(40)</sup>

The information which reached London about all this was scanty and confused. About Mihailovic's revolt the British government had known since the late summer of 1941, and in September an agent of Special Operations Executive, Major Hudson, had reached him, together with a small quantity of supplies landed by submarine on the Dalmatian coast.<sup>(41)</sup> The Chiefs of Staff had expressed the view that 'from our point of view the revolt is premature, but the patriots have thrown their caps over the fence and must be supported by all possible means';<sup>(42)</sup> and they instructed Middle East Command, on 7th November 1941, to get in such supplies as they could by submarine, aircraft and local craft.<sup>(43)</sup> But neither submarines nor aircraft could be spared, and early in 1942 S.O.E. lost contact with Hudson for the very simple reason that Mihailovic had confiscated his radio set; being unwilling, in his equivocal position, to associate himself too closely with the Allies.<sup>(44)</sup>

In November 1941 Mihailovic had been appointed by the Royal Yugoslav Government in exile in London as their Minister for War. During the course of the following year it became evident to London that his forces were not bearing the main brunt of the fighting in Yugoslavia. Nevertheless it was felt that support to him should be continued. A memorandum which the C.I.G.S. forwarded to the Prime Minister on 2nd June 1942<sup>(45)</sup> admitted the existence of other partisan activity but deplored it

'as they drive the more moderate opponents of the Axis into co-operation with any power that can restore a semblance of law and order. Although the activity of these wilder elements in the country will always necessitate considerable Axis garrisons, the policy of Mihailovic to curb their activities in order to conserve his potential forces and to wait his time is right'.

This view, which was at this time strongly held in the Foreign Office, was repeated six months later by Mr. Eden in a memorandum of 17th December 1942.<sup>(46)</sup> This frankly admitted not only that Mihailovic was abstaining from all military action against the occupation forces in order to conserve his forces to establish order after the war, but that he was now waging war against the Partisans with Italian support.

'It might be argued that it is in our short-term interest to break with Mihailovic, who is at present contributing little to the general war effort, and to transfer our support and assistance to the Partisans, who are offering active resistance to the occupying forces. On a long view however, I believe that we should be wise to go on supporting Mihailovic in order to prevent anarchy and Communist chaos after the war.'

For the moment this view remained the basis of official Government policy; but it was one with which elements inside the Government and Services, notably the Special Operations Executive whose agents were in a position to observe Mihailovic's activities or lack of them, were to grow increasingly dissatisfied.

In Greece a comparable situation was to develop, but there British intervention had been more immediate and effective. After the Germans had overrun the country they had handed it over for occupation purposes to their Bulgarian and Italian allies, retaining only the strategically vulnerable areas round Athens and Salonika and maintaining garrisons in the strategically exposed islands, particularly Crete. The Greek economy, dependent on freedom of trade through the Mediterranean, rapidly collapsed, and the Axis authorities did not give its resuscitation a very high priority. In the famine from which Athens suffered in the winter of 1941 about 24,000 people are said to have died. The countryside relapsed into a state of virtual anarchy in which guerrilla activities of every kind flourished. As in Yugoslavia, two significant political groups gradually emerged. In September 1941 the Greek Liberation Movement (E.A.M.), was formed; a broadly-based popular-front organisation in which the communist party provided the driving force, and which began early in 1942 to organise its own National People's Liberation Army (E.L.A.S.). At the same time a rival, largely right-wing organisation, the National Republican Greek League (E.D.E.S.), was established by Colonel Zervas. The Special Operations Executive was able to make contact with both groups; and a party dropped by parachute at the beginning of October 1942, commanded by Lt.Col. E. C. Myers and Captain C. M. Woodhouse, was able to gain their co-operation in destroying, on the night of 25th November the viaduct at Gorgopotamos which carried the only railway line connecting Southern Greece with the rest of Europe. The railway remained out of action for 39 days—a highly effective land contribution to the interdiction campaign being currently waged against Axis forces in North Africa by sea and air.

Relations between the resistance groups in Greece, and between those groups and the British authorities, were to develop in 1943 as unhappily as they did in Yugoslavia. They were indeed to lead



to serious divisions within the British Government itself. But at the end of 1942 it looked as though guerrilla activities in the Balkans had got off to an excellent start. That was certainly Hitler's own impression. At the Rastenburg conference in December he laid major emphasis on the need to pacify the Balkans; otherwise, he said, 'all the heroic courage of the Axis troops in Crete and the Peloponnese would have been in vain'. If operations like that at Gorgopotamos continued, he said, 'a catastrophic situation would arise'.<sup>(47)</sup> The Balkans in any case seemed to him—and Jodl shared this view—the most probable Allied objective once the coast of North Africa had been cleared;<sup>(48)</sup> so on 28th December he issued a new Directive to provide for their defence.<sup>(49)</sup> 'The South East' was made a fully operational theatre with a Commander-in-Chief, Colonel General Löhr, responsible directly to Hitler. Löhr was directed to prepare coastal defences, particularly in the Dodecanese, Crete and the Peloponnese; to undertake measures for 'the final pacification of the hinterland and destruction of the rebels and bandits of all kinds, in conjunction with the *Italian 2nd Army*;' and to make all necessary preparations for the eventuality of an Allied attack on the Balkans with the active or passive co-operation of Turkey. The German High Command appreciated as clearly as the British Joint Staff Planners what possibilities were open to the Allies in the Eastern Mediterranean.

The immediate result of this Directive was a joint offensive launched by the Axis forces to clear the Partisans out of Croatia and Bosnia. On 20th January German troops began to drive southward into the mountains of the Grimeč Planina from the Save valley, while the Italians advanced north from the coast. This attack—Operation 'Weiss' to the Germans, the Fourth Offensive to the Partisans—at first went well. Tito was driven from his headquarters at Bihac and forced south-east towards Herzegovina and Montenegro. Then the Axis ran into difficulties. The Italians moved too slowly and left too much to their unreliable Croat auxiliaries. The Partisans escaped from the closing jaws of the trap into the Neretva valley, where they were able to halt production in the bauxite mines round Mostar, from which Germany drew 10% of her total supplies.<sup>(50)</sup>

The Germans and Italians fell to angry recrimination. The Italians maintained that they could play their part in the agreed operations only if they enlisted the support of the Četniks—who were in fact already fighting the Partisans as the latter drove southward into their territory in the mountains bordering Herzegovina, Serbia and Montenegro. This *mariage de convenance* between Mihailovic and the Italian *Comando Supremo*, viewed with equal disfavour in London and in Berlin, increased the tensions within the already

crumbling Axis. During the visit which they paid to Rome between 24th and 27th February, Ribbentrop and General Warlimont tried in vain to get an undertaking from *Comando Supremo* that they would cease co-operation with the Çetniks. Ambrosio replied that this co-operation was a military necessity, and complained in his turn about the invasion of Italian areas by German troops in hot pursuit of the retreating partisan bands. An uneasy agreement was reached about the conduct of further operations, but, as Warlimont bitterly remarked later, 'it soon became clear that neither the Italian authorities in Rome nor those in the area of the revolt had any intention of abiding by their agreements'.<sup>(51)</sup>

These curiously triangular operations on the Montenegrin border continued well into April. At one stage a combined garrison of Çetniks and Italians found themselves besieged in Foca by Partisan forces, and could not be relieved by the Germans until the beginning of May. And while the main Axis forces were concentrated round this remote mountain redoubt, the rest of the country erupted into violence. In Serbia; in Albania; in Western Croatia around Otočac; in the north beyond the Save; everywhere the incidence of sabotage increased, and neither the dispirited Croatian government troops nor the calculated brutality of German reprisals could effectively check it.

As Yugoslavia gradually took fire, and as Tito conducted single-handed a campaign involving a dozen German, Croatian and Italian divisions,<sup>(52)</sup> the policy of Mihailovic seemed, to the British officers accredited to his headquarters, decreasingly excusable. Mihailovic had however a good answer to their importunities: if the British were unable to provide him with the supplies he needed, he had to find them where he could, and the Italians appeared the most convenient and reliable source.<sup>(53)</sup> Unfortunately at the beginning of 1943 the question of which group to support in Yugoslavia was, for the British, still largely academic. They did not have the capacity to get effective supplies to either.

The problem was very clearly set out in a memorandum which Middle East Command prepared for Mr. Churchill when he visited Cairo, *en route* for Adana, on 30th January.<sup>(54)</sup> S.O.E., this pointed out, had only four Liberator aircraft at its disposal to nourish all their activities in Yugoslavia, Greece and Crete. During the past twelve months they had been able to fly only 25 sorties to Mihailovic, who was containing three German and six Bulgarian divisions in Serbia. Resistance elsewhere (Tito's name was not mentioned) was tying down thirty Axis divisions. These other groups did not support the Çetniks; so 'if resistance in Croatia and Slovenia is to be maintained and raised to a level sufficiently effective to be of real military value to the Allied war effort, aid

must be organised independently of the existing programme regarding General Mihailovic'. If the British did not do so, the Russians or the Americans might; and 'the prospect of two members of the United Nations backing mutually antagonistic groups within Yugoslavia could only have lamentable consequences'.

The solution of this problem, the memorandum suggested, was to have British officers, controlled by the same organisation, attached to both sides, working for their co-operation, 'and in a position to bring pressure to bear on either side by withholding supplies'. With the aircraft at present available, this would be quite impossible; two extra flights would be needed of four Liberators each—the only aircraft with the necessary range. The document concluded by quoting a telegram despatched by the S.O.E. liaison mission with Mihailovic on 19th January:

'It is becoming increasingly difficult to convince people here that our interest in Serbian resistance is serious. They consider we are making callous demands for action involving sacrifice of Serbian lives whilst unwilling ourselves to take any risk in supplying material assistance . . .

In face of intensive Allied propaganda regarding production and air supremacy, the inability to provide serviceable aircraft for our work provokes unfortunate speculations as to the sincerity of our intentions . . .

The background of the Darlan case is well known here. Nedic may yet appear to be the best bet for the Serbs'.

This view was now endorsed by the Foreign Office, whose support for the Royal Serbian Government in exile in London was increasingly affected by the recognition accorded to the Partisans by the Soviet Union. Short-term policy, they suggested in a paper of 20th February,<sup>(65)</sup> should be to maximise resistance to the Axis; for the long-term they should aim at 'the establishment in the areas previously occupied by the Yugoslav state of one or more independent units capable of joining any federal scheme and of contributing a stable settlement of the Balkans'. It would therefore be unwise to drop Mihailovic altogether, thereby forfeiting the support which he commanded in Serbia and Montenegro, or to support him irrevocably and endorse his pan-Serb ideas. Both short-term and long-term objectives could best be secured, they concluded, by sending help to both sides.

This was all very well, but how was it to be done? Mr. Churchill had raised the matter of the additional Liberators with General Eisenhower when he saw him at Algiers on his way home, but without apparent result. The Commanders-in-Chief Middle East

could find no more from their own resources. They were prepared to let S.O.E. have six Halifaxes in addition to their four Liberators, which would mean that one-fifth of the total bombing force in the Middle East theatre would now be at their disposal. With these, they told the Chiefs of Staff on 22nd February,<sup>(56)</sup> it should be possible 'to maintain a measure of support to Mihailovic. This will be less than he expects, but should be sufficient to keep him active'. It would be possible also 'to maintain British parties in Crete, Greece and Serbia, accepting the fact that their activities will be on a reduced scale'. S.O.E., however, 'will probably be unable to make any contacts in Croatia and Slovenia'. In short the British would remain committed to Mihailovic, with only slightly increased probability of providing him with enough equipment to persuade him to fight.

It was not a good moment to ask the Chiefs of Staff to provide VLR aircraft: the requirement of these for the Battle of the Atlantic was now at its height. S.O.E. itself had an urgent and conflicting requirement for Liberators to assist underground activities in Poland. The Chiefs of Staff considered the whole question on 4th March<sup>(57)</sup> and came to the conclusion that they could provide four Halifaxes for the Middle East but no more. This would make available, for S.O.E. purposes, a total of 14 aircraft with the range necessary to reach Yugoslavia; enough, they recognised, to support either Mihailovic or the Partisans, but hardly both. 'Taking the long view', they concluded, 'it seems sounder on military grounds to back Mihailovic since he could provide some organisation and control whereas under the partisans chaos would probably ensue when the Axis forces were defeated'. It was some time before even this limited reinforcement of aircraft could take effect, so for the next two months the British officers with Mihailovic were to remain unhappy spectators of events which they were powerless to influence. But neither in Cairo nor in London was there any more doubt that the Balkans now constituted a fully active theatre of war; and this knowledge was to have its effect on the proposals which the Chiefs of Staff took with them to the Washington Conference in May 1943.

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## BOOK FOUR

### CHAPTER XXI

#### THE END OF 'ANAKIM'

THE RESULTS of the Casablanca Conference had to be announced not only to Stalin but to that other land-locked and beleaguered ally, Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek. Mr. Churchill and President Roosevelt did not inform him in so many words of their decision to launch an amphibious assault on Rangoon after the summer monsoon; more circumspectly they assured him that 'the vital importance of aiding China has filled our minds'. They were however able to tell him that the member of the Combined Chiefs of Staff most directly concerned with getting supplies through to China, General H. H. Arnold, would visit Chungking to convey 'our best judgment as to Burma' and to explain their plans for the conduct of the war in the European and Pacific Theatres. Mr. Churchill followed this up, on the advice of the President, with a personal assurance that on the conclusion of hostilities in Europe Great Britain would bring her entire resources to bear in the Far East.<sup>(1)</sup>

Soon afterwards General Arnold left on his mission. He was accompanied by General Somervell, who wished to see for himself the difficulties of transportation in India and across 'The Hump' on the solution of which all strategic combinations depended, and by Field Marshal Sir John Dill. Dill had originally intended to go no further than New Delhi, to discuss the problems facing General Wavell; but on reaching India he decided, possibly as a result of his discussions with Arnold and Somervell *en route*, that he should go on to Chungking as well; 'to keep our end up', as he informed the Chiefs of Staff on 3rd February, 'if I can'.<sup>(2)</sup>

In New Delhi from 1st to 5th February the three visitors went over their plans with Generals Wavell and Stilwell.<sup>(3)</sup> The postponement of 'Anakim' until the monsoon was over and the Generalissimo's refusal to co-operate had not affected the intention of the Allied leaders to begin limited operations from Assam in the spring. Their proposals for these and an outline plan for 'Anakim' were discussed and approved. Wavell reported home that all had gone well 'and there has been no point of disagreement'.<sup>(4)</sup> He was over-optimistic. Privately, General Stilwell was expressing to his American colleagues his disillusionment with the British, whose proposals he now considered to be simply bluff.<sup>(5)</sup> Then, while

Somervell stayed behind to discuss with General Wheeler the logistic problems which confronted him in India, Arnold and Dill flew on to Chungking, where their conference with Chiang Kai-shek and his colleagues opened on 6th February.<sup>(6)</sup>

The Generalissimo began the proceedings by reminding his allies of his principal demands. General Chennault must be given independent command of a separate Air Task Force; there must be a firm commitment to provide 500 first-line aircraft for operations in China before November; the capacity of the airlift must be increased to 10,000 tons monthly; and there must be an equally firm commitment of naval strength before operations in Burma could begin. General Arnold in reply explained what the Americans believed to be possible. Given a further 137 cargo planes they hoped to increase the airlift to 4,000 tons from its present figure of 1,700. Of this 1,750 tons would be assigned to General Chennault, as would a further 35 fighters, 13 medium bombers, and 35 heavy bombers to enable him to launch direct attacks on Japan. This would give him a total first-line strength of 260 aircraft, and as facilities to operate them increased more would be forthcoming. Field Marshal Dill expounded the plans for 'Anakim' 'in maximum number of words with minimum amount of real information', as he later told the Chiefs of Staff, 'for reasons of secrecy';<sup>(7)</sup> at which the Generalissimo expressed his satisfaction and, reported Dill, 'gave categorical assurance Chinese forces Assam and Yunnan would be ready trained and equipped to advance after monsoon. You will be able' added the Field Marshal cautiously in his report, 'to appreciate how much this is worth'.<sup>(8)</sup>

The following day the Generalissimo seemed to repent of this promise. The conference had been a failure, he told General Arnold. To all his requests he had received only excuses. He reiterated his demands: 10,000 tons monthly over the Hump, 500 aircraft and an independent command for General Chennault. The President must know that the Chinese armies had fought long and hard and had practically nothing left to fight with. Unless the resources he had named were made available he could give no assurance of success in the forthcoming campaign. But when pressed by General Stilwell he did not carry this warning to the point of withdrawing his agreement to take part; indeed at the conclusion of the conference he reaffirmed his determination to do so in personal letters both to the President and the Prime Minister. In the latter he dwelt, not on the naval requirements of the operation, but on the need to improve the logistic facilities of India to enable the 10,000 tons to be flown in. 'Of course, there are very great technical and organisational difficulties to be encountered, but as you will agree with me, this tonnage is a mere trickle for the needs of the

China theatre of war'. In return he gave 'the firm assurance that the Chinese Army will perform its given share in the Burma campaign and at the assigned date without fail'.<sup>(9)</sup>

The Prime Minister, sick with pneumonia, did not reply to this communication until 5th March, when he told Chiang Kai-shek, 'you may rest assured that Field Marshal Wavell will do his utmost to increase transport and air facilities in India in order that maximum freight may be flown to China'; a copy of this message being despatched to New Delhi.<sup>(10)</sup> The Generalissimo's target was more than double that which General Arnold had thought it realistic to promise at Chungking, but Brig. General Clayton Bissell, the commander of the U.S. 10th Air Force, considered that he might raise the figure to 7,500 tons if the R.A.F. could make available to him two of their airfields in Assam—which Air Chief Marshal Sir Richard Pierse was prepared to do. To achieve the target of 10,000 tons Bissell would, however, need more aircraft, which would in turn require three more airfields. These airfields, pointed out Wavell on 9th March

'are the crux of the problem. My engineer resources are strained to utmost and somewhat beyond to make necessary roads and bases and to complete and improve existing airfields. I cannot provide resources to make these additional airfields without destroying all chance of being ready for advance from Assam into Northern Burma next November'.<sup>(11)</sup>

But a month later General Wavell was to provide these resources and gave orders that the new airfields should be ready for use by 1st October.<sup>(12)</sup> As he predicted, this additional pressure on the precarious line of communication from India to Assam made any substantial progress impossible, not only with the British preparations for their attack in Upper Burma, but with the road which the Americans had in December 1942 begun to construct forward from Ledo; which came to a halt after covering less than 50 miles.

To understand why Wavell took this remarkable decision we must revert to the story of Operation 'Anakim'. To this ambitious and complicated venture the Combined Chiefs of Staff had pledged themselves at Casablanca and their representatives had worked to gain the co-operation of Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek. But they did so, as we know, on the basis of a total misconception of the amount of shipping which would be available to them during the next six months. It will be remembered that on the eve of the Casablanca Conference the War Cabinet had reduced sailings to the Indian Ocean to 40 ships a month, of which 13 were set aside for the requirements of 'Anakim'; that on 18th February the Quartermaster General informed the Chiefs of Staff that the minimum

requirement for 'Anakim' would be 40 ships a month, and that a week later General Brooke informed his colleagues that the essential minimum for the Indian Ocean, if the strategy agreed at Casablanca was to be carried out, would be between 75 and 80 ships a month.<sup>(13)\*</sup> On 2nd March the Chiefs of Staff formally stated their opinion that, if the restriction was maintained for the full six months visualised, 'Anakim' would be out of the question. On their report the Prime Minister scrawled the characteristic comment: 'I do not accept this'.<sup>(14)</sup>

It was not only 'Anakim' that was being starved. At the beginning of April Wavell had to report<sup>(15)</sup> that he was receiving insufficient supplies either to maintain the limited operations he was already conducting or to keep reserves for civilian use at a safe level—this last a warning which was to be tragically justified later in the year. Without further imports, he pointed out, prices would rise, discontent would increase throughout India and both morale and production would sink. If his present rate of tonnage was doubled, he considered that he could maintain operations at their existing level and develop the Indian base as planned. But to launch 'Anakim' it would be necessary virtually to triple the figure from 65,000 tons to 174,000 tons a month. A week later, on 8th April, he suggested it might already be too late to make up the backlog: even if arrears of equipment were to arrive, neither the ports nor the transport nor the ordnance facilities would be adequate to handle them, and the date of the assault would have, as a result, to be further delayed; this in a campaigning season which was already dangerously short for an operation so ambitious as the reconquest of the whole of Burma.<sup>(16)</sup> In the light of these calculations, Wavell's decision to give maximum priority to the airlift is understandable.

Shipping was not the only difficulty in the way of 'Anakim'. On 10th February, after his last round of meetings with General Stilwell, General Wavell had outlined his plans for the operation to the Chiefs of Staff.<sup>(17)</sup> The combined offensive was to open in November with the triple advance into Northern Burma by the Chinese from Yunnan, by General Stilwell's Ramgarh Chinese from Ledo, aiming at Myitkyina, and by the British IV Corps from Assam towards Pakokku and Mandalay. A month later a series of seaborne assaults would be launched to obtain airfields along the coast: at Kyaukpyu, Taungup, Sandoway, Gwa and Bassein. Finally in January 1944 would come, as the *coup de grâce*, the amphibious attack on Rangoon itself. For all this it would be necessary to reinforce the Eastern Fleet with capital ships, aircraft-carriers and escort vessels in sufficient number and in good time for them to be worked up. The operations would further call

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\* See p. 294 above.

for 6-9 brigade-groups of assault troops, an extra parachute brigade, two more infantry divisions, 240 fighter aircraft, 105 bombers, 200 transport aircraft and substantial quantities of extra landing-craft; all of which, to give time for training, would have to leave the United Kingdom or the United States before the end of June. The total requirement in shipping, over and above the normal convoys, Wavell estimated at 182,000 tons a month.

The shipping shortage apart, demands on this scale could be met only at the expense of other agreed operations in North West Europe, the Pacific, or the Mediterranean; and even if they could be met it remained doubtful, in the eyes of Wavell's air and naval colleagues, whether the operation was feasible at all. The longer they scrutinised the plans the greater their doubts grew. Wavell confessed to the Prime Minister as soon as he sent the first plans home, on 11th February,<sup>(18)</sup>

'My naval and air advisers and planning staff have all warned me that they consider the plan optimistic. But I believe that if the Japanese can be deceived by cover plan and other means as to our intentions, and secrecy kept, we shall have good chance of success. I should be grateful if our requirements could be met as early as possible to give time for preparation and training for this difficult operation.'

But it is clear that even Wavell's heart was not in the operation. Four days later, in a note to his planning staff, he wrote<sup>(19)</sup>

'It is obvious that the natural difficulties are such that, even if the Japanese forces in Burma are not increased, we may have to look elsewhere for a speedy and effective blow against the Japanese lines . . . the objective I have in mind for such a blow is the control of the Sunda Straits between Sumatra and Java. This would threaten Singapore and the whole Japanese position in the Netherlands East Indies. If we could at the same time seize a base in Northern Sumatra from which to control the Malacca Straits we should have gone far towards the defeat of Japan'.

This bold and imaginative scheme was later to occur to other British minds, not least to that of the Prime Minister himself, but it shows very clearly the fundamental lack of understanding which still obtained between General Wavell and his Chinese and American allies. The purpose of 'Anakim' was not simply to strike 'a speedy and effective blow' against the Japanese. It was to open the Burma Road. It was at this stage regarded, rightly or wrongly, as an inseparable adjunct to the operations in Northern Burma which Stilwell was trying so hard to co-ordinate. The fact that Stilwell no longer enjoyed the confidence of his President and that the President and General Marshall were increasingly

divided in their views over the correct strategy for the China-Burma-India theatre made this lack of understanding less serious than it might have been. But the need for a Supreme Allied Commander in the theatre to co-ordinate these divergent strategic concepts became evident as soon as the British began seriously to contemplate by-passing Burma altogether and striking further south.

But there seemed little alternative to such a proposal if 'Anakim' was really not feasible, and further studies only brought out the difficulties of that operation. On 3rd March Wavell reported the results of a conference with his colleagues, Admiral Sir James Somerville and Air Chief Marshal Sir Richard Pierse.<sup>(20)</sup> Both emphasised the precariousness of landings on a shore dominated by hostile land-based aircraft. Even if ten auxiliary and ten escort carriers were available to cover the landings, Pierse considered that success would depend 'on the hope that the enemy air forces had become impotent to intervene. [I] cannot envisage the circumstances which would bring this about nor how we should know before the assault was launched that this situation had in fact arisen'. The forces landed at Rangoon might have to depend on seaborne air cover for three weeks before airfields could be captured and used. The best chance lay in capturing the airfields one by one; but this could not be done in a single dry season. Wavell concluded that they should go on with their plans; but 'if enemy strength and counter-preparation in Burma make plan too hazardous at later date we should be ready with alternative objectives for expeditionary forces prepared in India: e.g. Andamans or Northern Sumatra or both'. Whether he intended that operations in North Burma should proceed unaffected by this change is not clear.

It does not appear that this message was shown to the invalid Prime Minister until 22nd March, when he had it summarised for him, and on the summary he scrawled in scornful red ink, 'A poor tale!'<sup>(21)</sup>

The Joint Planning Staff in London meanwhile examined the proposals from New Delhi and independently came to the conclusion that 'Anakim' was unlikely to succeed.<sup>(22)</sup> Apart from the question of air superiority, they considered it unlikely that a successful assault could be made on Rangoon if the Japanese took the elementary precaution of installing defences in the 20-mile river-channel which separated Rangoon from the sea. Wavell, they noted, was now asking for a further five assault brigade-groups which could only be provided from the United States, as well as shipping which could be provided only at the expense of the war in Europe. Moreover the alternatives he proposed looked attractive, and the Planners explored some of their implications.

'We do not think [they wrote] that the reconquest of Burma would lead very directly or quickly to the defeat of Japan, and we think that the capture of North Sumatra might well offer better prospects. The latter operation could be combined with smaller-scale operations in Burma'.

As for the Burma Road, they floated the heretical suggestion that its re-opening might not be so important after all. Even in peacetime its total capacity had been only 400 tons a day. This was the quantity which actually crossed the frontier into China; how much actually reached Chungking, they added darkly, was uncertain. Improvements might increase this capacity to a thousand tons a day, but it would probably take nine months after the fighting in Burma was over to make the road fit for use at all. Meanwhile 400 tons a day could be ferried by air if 600 aircraft could be provided to operate across the Hump; and the strengthening of Chennault's air force would probably do more than anything else to strengthen Chinese morale. All this led them to the conclusion that operations in Burma should be confined to limited seaborne operations on the Arakan coast, and land operations in the north: 'Cannibal', in short, and 'Ravenous'.

The dwindling of the prospects of launching 'Anakim' was not the only bad news that Wavell had to report to London. More immediately humiliating, if of less strategic significance, was the total failure of the operations which had been in progress since the previous December in Arakan. Here, it will be remembered, Wavell had launched Major General W. L. Lloyd's 14th Division in an overland advance, with its ultimate objective the Japanese-held airfields of Akyab. After his first visit to the front Wavell reported back to the C.I.G.S. in fairly cheerful vein. 'We are killing a good number of Japanese and have had about 100-150 casualties ourselves, mainly in the two British battalions', ran his message of 15th January; but he continued, slightly ominously, 'We still have a great deal to learn about jungle fighting'.<sup>(23)</sup> This was an understatement. A few weeks made it clear that Japanese forces fighting defensively, holding well-camouflaged positions in the jungle quite literally to the last man and the last round, still out-matched British and Indian troops as decisively as they had when taking the offensive. By the end of February Wavell had to admit that all hope of taking Akyab before the monsoon had gone and the morale of 14th Division was 'naturally not so high as at the outset'.<sup>(24)</sup> Against the advice of both Lieut. General N. M. S. Irwin, commanding the Eastern Army, and of General Lloyd himself, the Commander-in-Chief insisted that the attack should continue; but early in March the Japanese themselves went over to the offensive, and during the



next four weeks gradually forced 14th Division back to its starting point.<sup>(25)</sup>

'The main cause of failure [Wavell reported to CIGS on 22nd March<sup>(26)</sup>] has been inferiority of our tactics both in attack and defence to really skilful and enterprising opponents Japanese have shown themselves to be. I will do my best to have this remedied. We shall find it difficult to match enemy's extreme mobility in jungle or fanatical spirit in defence but I am sure we can find methods to take advantage of their weak points and defeat them later on'.

The subsequent course of the campaign in Burma was to show that Wavell did not overestimate the capacity of the British and Indian forces in the theatre to learn from their mistakes, but the immediate outlook was bleak, and the Prime Minister was not in a mood to overlook it.

'This campaign [he commented to General Brooke on 24th March<sup>(27)</sup>] has ended in a complete failure resulting in our being outmanoeuvred and outfought by smaller numbers than those of which we disposed. The whole position requires serious review . . . Field Marshal Wavell seems to take a very detached view of the whole business. But he is directly responsible for inspiring the necessary vigour into the operations and making sure that the right men are in charge of them'.

Not for the first time Mr. Churchill was being less than just to the Commander-in-Chief, who had pressed forward the offensive against the will of his subordinates, and who was shortly to relieve both the army and divisional commanders concerned of their commands and entrust operations in Arakan to the hands of the Officer Commanding XV Corps. Lieut. General W. J. Slim.<sup>(28)</sup> But it was clear that all was far from well in India. As Mr. Churchill observed to the Chiefs of Staff a fortnight later, on 8th April, 'luckily the small scale of operations and the attraction of other events has prevented public opinion being directed on this lamentable scene. We cannot however count on a continuation of this'.<sup>(29)</sup> The combination of the failure in Arakan and the growing improbability of 'Anakim' made necessary a radical reconsideration of Britain's entire contribution to the war in the Far East. So on 9th April, on the initiative of General Brooke, the three Commanders-in-Chief in India were summoned home to London for consultations.<sup>(30)</sup>

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Doubts were growing in Washington as well, particularly in the White House. In spite of opposition from both General Marshall

and General Arnold the President had agreed to the Generalissimo's reiterated demand that the independence of Chennault's command should be recognised, and on 14th February he ordered that the China Air Task Force should be reconstituted, in independence from Bissell's 10th Air Force in India, as 14th Air Force; both Chennault and Bissell being promoted with tactful simultaneity to the rank of Major General.<sup>(31)</sup> General Stilwell remained in overall command of the theatre, but Chennault was now in a greatly improved position to struggle for a larger share of the supplies being ferried over the Hump. This struggle was the more bitter in view of the inability of the ferry service to come anywhere near the monthly target of 5,000 tons at which the Americans aimed, let alone the 10,000 tons which Chiang Kai-shek demanded. Delays in the construction of airfields actually reduced the total airlift from 3,000 tons in February to 2,500 tons in April. The conclusion drawn by Chennault and Chiang Kai-shek was that *all* these meagre resources should be made available to the 14th Air Force; an idea to which President Roosevelt was increasingly sympathetic. 'I do not think', he told General Marshall on 8th May, 'that the Staff plans either in Casablanca or here have given sufficient weight to the attrition against Japan each week and each month, or that the attrition can be greatly accelerated through increasing air power in China, by the sinking of Japanese ships off the coast of China, the destruction of Japanese aircraft, and the occasional bombing of Japanese cities'. Marshall replied, correctly as events were to prove, that as soon as the Japanese began to suffer from the effects of American bombing their armies would move in on the ground. Chennault's airfields would then have to be defended by Chiang Kai-shek's armies, for the equipment and reform of which large stocks of supplies were still necessary and which, General Marshall argued, could be provided in adequate quantities only over the Burma Road.<sup>(32)</sup> But the President remained unconvinced.

It was soon after this that Mr. Eden paid his visit to Washington and, as we have seen, found Mr. Roosevelt disposed to abandon 'Anakim' altogether. ' "Anakim" out. Keep China going by air,' ran the relevant sentence in the interesting note which he scribbled on the evening of 29th March.\* But the President had not yet made up his mind. On 7th April, to the surprise of Mr. Eden, the War Shipping Administration in Washington informed the British that they had been ordered by the White House to provide 20 ships for 'Anakim',<sup>(33)</sup> while a week later Field Marshal Dill reported the desire of the Joint Chiefs of Staff that 'vigorous steps' should be taken to get on with preparations for 'Anakim'.<sup>(34)</sup> This uncertainty in Washington caused bewilderment and speculation

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\* See p. 297 above.

in London. Dill at first feared that the Americans might try to head off any British attempt to exploit further into the Mediterranean after the capture of Sicily; but when he sought assurances that accepting the 20 ships would not bind them to carry out 'Anakim', General Marshall gave them in generous terms. 'I want to assure you', he wrote to Dill on 15th April, 'that the acceptance on your part of the 20 ships made available by the United States is not considered as any commitment by you, or by the British Chiefs of Staff, to mount "Anakim" or any alternative operation'.<sup>(35)</sup>

The realisation that their American colleagues did not, on this question, enjoy the whole-hearted support of their President may have made it easier for the British Chiefs of Staff on 15th April, 'after a short discussion', to accept the recommendation of the Joint Planners that the decision be taken to cancel 'Anakim' for the season 1943-44, and to ask Wavell on his arrival in London what alternative operation he considered practicable.<sup>(36)</sup> Four days later, on the evening of 19th April, the Prime Minister was brought into the discussions and even he had to confess, after listening to the expositions of the various Directors of Plans, that 'he could not view the operation with enthusiasm'. It was, he said, like 'a man attacking a hedgehog by pulling out its bristles one by one'. And without wasting further time he began to review the possible alternatives: the Andamans; North East Sumatra; and Penang.<sup>(37)</sup>

When Field Marshal Wavell and his colleagues arrived in London on 22nd April, the discussions were continued. By now no voice was raised in favour of 'Anakim', and the Joint Planners produced a devastating paper stating the case against it.<sup>(38)</sup> It could be mounted only if any major combined operation in Europe after 'Husky' was foregone; if the Americans not only met all deficiencies in assault-shipping, naval and air forces but provided substantial additional shipping as well; and if the British transferred assault units and naval forces from the Mediterranean. Even then it could succeed only if the Japanese did not fortify the seaward approaches to Rangoon, while the assaulting forces would be dependent on the precarious security of seaborne air cover. Strategically the operation was undesirable, in that it would take the weight of Allied pressure off Germany and Italy; unnecessary, in that the reconquest of Burma was not essential to the ultimate defeat of Japan; and inadequate since under the best conditions conceivable the Burma Road could not be built up to handle 20,000 tons monthly until the middle of 1945. Considering possible alternatives, the Planners agreed that an attack on North Sumatra, followed by a landing in Malaya, was desirable 'but is quite beyond our resources in 1943-44'.

At the same time the Joint Planners produced a more constructive paper.<sup>(39)</sup> This began by outlining a possible strategy for the defeat of Japan, based on severing her maritime communications and recapturing her oil supplies. The best way of achieving this, they considered, would be to reinforce Allied naval forces in the Pacific and the United States air forces in China. They therefore recommended that the air-ferry service to China, and the forces available to General Chennault, should be expanded as soon as possible; and that operations in Burma should be limited to those needed to give additional protection to the air route, to contain and wear down the Japanese, and to train British-led forces. These they visualised in terms of limited operations from Imphal by forces comprising three divisions and Long Range Penetration Groups; a concurrent drive from Ledo by Chinese or British forces, so far as the overriding priority given to the air lift allowed; and the capture of Akyab and Ramree, which would strengthen the British defensive position, provide forward bases for air attacks on Burma, and bring Japanese Air Force to battle.

These proposals were discussed on 28th April by the Chiefs of Staff and broadly approved.<sup>(40)</sup> The expansion of the air route to China should now be the primary object of British strategy in the Far East. Land operations 'should continue in a minor offensive-defensive form with the object of keeping our troops in training'; and 'Anakim' should be abandoned. An *aide memoire* giving the reasons for this was drafted for the War Cabinet, and presented, with the Prime Minister's endorsement, the following day.<sup>(41)</sup>

So far as the British were concerned Operation 'Anakim' was now dead. What should take its place was, however, a matter which could only be decided by a further conference with the American leaders. A suggestion from Washington that the British Commanders-in-Chief should visit the United States on their way back to the Far East was coldly received. It might, thought the Chiefs of Staff, give the impression that the British were weakening on their policy of 'Germany First' and expose them to pressure for a greater concentration on the Pacific.<sup>(42)</sup> But a meeting of the Combined Chiefs of Staff to discuss long-term strategy for the defeat of Japan was another matter; and the Chiefs of Staff urged that this should now be arranged.<sup>(43)</sup>

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BOOK FIVE: THE STRATEGIC  
SITUATION IN SUMMER 1943

CHAPTER XXII

THE SECOND WASHINGTON  
CONFERENCE I

MAY 1943

ALTHOUGH IT HAD been agreed at the Casablanca Conference that a further meeting of the same kind should take place during the course of the summer, no arrangements had been made to summon one. But towards the end of April developments in the two major fighting theatres made it clear that such a meeting could not be much longer delayed.

In the Mediterranean the Axis front in Tunisia was crumbling under General Alexander's attacks, and although planning for the next stage of the Allied offensive, the invasion of Sicily, was already well advanced, there was no agreement—indeed there was considerable disagreement—about the course which operations should take once Sicily was in Allied hands. In the Far East there were no comparable achievements to show—rather the opposite; but failure called for new decisions no less than did success. President Roosevelt's growing concern over the deteriorating position of China made him more anxious than ever to increase the thin trickle of aid seeping into Chungking. This could be done only by a massive effort to increase the building of airfields in Burma and Assam, or by launching military operations to re-open the Burma Road, or both. Not only had the rate of airfield construction in Assam been disappointing, but the Chiefs of Staff had, with Mr. Churchill's reluctant agreement, decided that 'Anakim', the amphibious operation to reconquer Burma which had been agreed on at the Casablanca Conference for the autumn of 1943, was impracticable. This conclusion was expected by the Americans, but it had yet to be officially conveyed to them. The Far East Commanders-in-Chief had been summoned to London to discuss future operations, while President Roosevelt had almost simultaneously recalled to Washington for consultation the American officers principally concerned with aiding China; Lieut. General Stilwell and Major General Chennault. The *dramatis personae* seemed available for a conference even more global in its scope than had been that at Casablanca.



The Prime Minister proposed a conference to the President in a telegram of 29th April.<sup>(1)</sup> 'It seems to me most necessary', he wired, 'that we should all settle now first "Husky" and exploitation thereof and secondly the future of "Anakim" in light of Burma campaign experience and shipping stringency'. He declared himself prepared to visit Washington with his advisers, or to offer the Americans hospitality in London. The President at once invited the British to be his guests, and the offer was gladly accepted. The Prime Minister was too recently recovered from his severe attack of pneumonia for his medical advisers to consent to so long a journey by air, so the Cunard liner *Queen Mary*, at the time in service as a troop-carrier, was converted to carry the British delegation.

As at Casablanca the Chiefs of Staff Committee did not stint themselves in the matter of staff officers and secretariat, and this time the Americans were determined to match them, both in the size of the team they fielded and in the quality of their preparatory work.<sup>(2)</sup> It was all to the good that the British staff officers should have had to encounter a group of colleagues as numerous and as expert as themselves, and during the 14 days which the Conference lasted each side was to submit the proposals of the other to a gruelling examination, which, however wearing at the time, could only be good for the Allied cause as a whole. But the presence of these officers at meetings of the Combined Chiefs of Staff, sitting in serried ranks behind their principals,<sup>(3)</sup> may have done something to inhibit the freedom of discussion among the Chiefs of Staff themselves which had characterised earlier conferences, and it is not surprising that major problems were resolved only when meetings were held in camera. Moreover Washington did not provide a setting as helpfully tranquil as had been that at Casablanca. The American participants could not escape from their day-to-day duties, nor, more important, from domestic political pressures.<sup>(4)</sup> The British found themselves almost equally loaded with inescapable social commitments, and these, on top of three if not four full meetings a day, added appreciably to their work.<sup>(5)</sup> It is easy to understand why after this 'Trident' Conference, the Allies reverted to the precedent of Casablanca, and held their meetings under more insulated conditions away from either of their capitals.

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The British Chiefs of Staff embarked for Washington on 6th May determined to exploit the Allied successes in the Mediterranean to the full, but without having made up their minds how this could best be done. They left Washington three weeks later

equally uncertain. Only in the middle of July, after the invasion of Sicily had revealed the imminence of Italian collapse, was the decision taken to launch an invasion of the Italian mainland. Until then in London, in Washington, in Cairo and in Algiers, the advantages and disadvantages of invading Italy were closely debated and compared with those of possible alternatives: principally the capture of Corsica and Sardinia, and operations in the Eastern Mediterranean. Invasion would eliminate Italy from the war, make it possible to bring direct help to the Yugoslav revolt, and provide airfields in South East Italy from which the Combined Bomber Offensive could be intensified; but it could involve the Allies in a prolonged campaign under disadvantageous conditions which might impose a greater strain on their own resources than on those of the enemy. The possession of Corsica and Sardinia would provide air bases from which Italy might be neutralised without invasion; pose a threat which would pin down German forces in the South of France; and would not involve the Allies in an open-ended commitment. Operations in the Aegean might bring Turkey into the war, threaten the Axis oil supplies and bring direct help to Russia. The supporters of the first course were to be found mainly in London; those of the second in Algiers; those of the third in Cairo. In Washington there was little support for any of them.

The Prime Minister, as might be expected, had no time for the Sardinian alternative, but about the others he kept, and continued to keep, an open mind for the rest of the year; never accepting that operations in the Central and the Eastern Mediterranean might for logistic reasons be mutually exclusive. On 3rd April he had set out his ideas in a draft telegram to President Roosevelt,<sup>(6)</sup> in which he suggested that there were three possible courses of future action. If the Germans reinforced Italy in strength, no effective attack on Italy herself would be possible; 'In that case we must be ready with our plans in the Eastern Mediterranean and put it hard across Turkey to come in with us'; i.e. Operation 'Accolade' for the seizure of the Dodecanese and 'Hardihood' for reinforcement of a belligerent Turkey. If the Germans did not reinforce their ally and Italy crumpled completely, all available forces might be rushed northwards up the Italian peninsula till they came into contact with the Germans on the Brenner Pass and on the Riviera. Finally if the Italians remained in the war, with some partial help from the Germans, the Allies should try to establish themselves in the far South of Italy and from there establish a bridgehead on the Dalmatian coast, whence supplies and reinforcements could be poured into the partisans of Albania and Dalmatia. All this, wrote Mr. Churchill, needed to be studied with great urgency.

Mr Churchill's ideas were not remote from the thinking of the Joint Planning Staff, whose first report on the question was tabled on 7th April.<sup>(7)</sup> This considered future operations in the Mediterranean in the light, both of the other items in the Casablanca programme for 1943—the assault on Rangoon ('Anakim') and an invasion, if German resistance suddenly collapsed, of North West Europe—and of the major cross-Channel operation planned for 1944. As usual, shortage of shipping, of escort vessels and of landing-craft set rigorous limits to the Allied freedom of choice. Resources would not be available both for future operations in the Mediterranean and for 'Anakim', but reports from the Far East had already made it clear how unlikely the latter operation was to succeed. The Planners therefore recommended that 'Anakim' should be abandoned, Field Marshal Wavell being left to undertake such limited offensive operations as he found possible without calling on resources needed in the Mediterranean. If a total German collapse did take place during 1943, then the best way to exploit it might well be by a cross-Channel operation, supported by further landings both in the South of France and the Balkans. But if no such collapse had occurred to make such a cross-Channel operation possible, the Allies should invade Italy. If Italy had already collapsed, her territory should be occupied as a base for further attacks on the Balkans, in combination with an advance from the Near East through the Dodecanese and perhaps the mainland of Greece. Even if Italy did remain in the war, invasion would be the quickest way to knock her out of it and clear the way for operations against the Balkans. An assault in Corsica and Sardinia, they argued, should be mounted only in the event of an Italian collapse; otherwise it would only be an unnecessary diversion from the invasion of the mainland.

Even more explicitly than the Prime Minister, the Joint Planning Staff thus ruled out the Sardinian alternative; for even more strongly than he—as strongly indeed as Hitler himself—did they see the Balkans, with their turbulent populations and vital economic significance to Germany, as the real goal of the Allies in the Mediterranean. This view strongly affected their thinking, until the events of the summer made them wonder whether victory might not be so close that the long-term advantage of occupying the Balkans was irrelevant to the immediate need of exploiting the imminent collapse of the entire Axis position in Italy.<sup>(8)</sup>

The Chiefs of Staff however were not prepared at this stage to rule out the Sardinian alternative. The chief object of operations in the Mediterranean, they reiterated on 15th April, 'was to assist Russia in knocking out Germany by diverting German forces from the Russian front; and it was with this in view that it had been

decided to knock Italy out of the war'.<sup>(9)</sup> An assault on Sardinia might still achieve this latter purpose, by securing a base for intensive air attacks on Italian cities. They therefore directed on 8th April that this should be examined, together with the project of seizing a bridgehead in the foot of Italy in order to exploit either northward or eastward across the Adriatic.<sup>(10)</sup>

The examination duly took place, and the result indicated that the possession of Sardinia would add little to the Allied purpose of forcing an Italian surrender. The Joint Planning Staff in a further paper of 17th April<sup>(11)</sup> did indeed recommend that the main effort against Italy should take the form of bombardment from the air; but they produced statistics to show that an offensive mounted only from bases in Tunis and Sicily, if concentrated on the main centres of Italian industries such as Milan, Turin and Genoa 'should effectively paralyse activities at these centres, create widespread civil chaos and conditions such that it would be impossible to continue to plan the supply and maintenance of Italy's armed forces'. Similar attacks on South Italy, they added grimly, could make civilian life there 'almost, if not completely, unbearable'. Any advantage which could be gained by capturing Sardinia and Corsica would be outweighed by the cost and time needed to capture the islands and develop their airfields. In any case the air offensive would have to be reinforced by surface invasion, 'to ensure and accelerate' the collapse of Italy; and they made the interesting suggestion that this should be a purely British responsibility. Once Italy had collapsed, they proposed, American forces should occupy Sardinia and Corsica and Middle East Command occupy the Dodecanese. 'By these arrangements,' they concluded, 'the British will continue to control the Eastern Mediterranean and be ready to exploit success in the Balkans from both East and West, while the United States mounts a permanent threat to the South of France.'

In the view of the Chiefs of Staff this appreciation left a number of important questions unanswered. Would a landing in the South of Italy be enough to cause an Italian collapse? Would an Italian collapse be enough to cause a German withdrawal? 'It was most unlikely', they suggested presciently at a meeting on 20th April,<sup>(12)</sup> 'that the Italians, even if so inclined, would be able, without considerable assistance, to throw the Germans out'. Once the Allies had set foot on the mainland, General Brooke pointed out, they would be faced with large and inescapable land commitments, and they must be clear what these were likely to be.

This shrewd question did not disturb the optimism of the Joint Planning Staff, and on 3rd May they submitted a long paper to justify it. An invasion of the Italian mainland they considered<sup>(13)</sup>

would find the Italian people sick of the war and bitterly resentful of the Germans who kept them in it. If Italy was to be held at all, it would have to be by the Germans. But with their resources already overstretched the German High Command would find itself unable to hold both the Italian peninsula and the Balkans. Since the Balkans was an area so much more vital to their war effort, they would probably abandon Italy, withdrawing if not to the Alps then to a line from Pisa to Ravenna, in the mountains north of Florence\*. Even then they would need to find another 24 divisions: 12 for the Balkans, 3 for the South of France, and 9 to hold the North of Italy and the Alpine passes: divisions which could hardly be found without 'disastrous consequences elsewhere'. As for the Allies, they could land in Central as well as Southern Italy. They would need only a token force of perhaps two divisions to occupy the mainland with other garrisons in Sicily, Corsica and Sardinia. Therefore, they considered, 'it would not be in our interests to try and drive the Germans north-west from the Ravenna-Pisa line if they decided to hold Northern Italy. Any forces we have to spare would be better employed in exploiting the very favourable situation likely to obtain in the Balkans'. If the Germans did abandon North Italy, the Allies would then be able to operate from there against the South of France in conjunction with a cross-Channel offensive.

On 4th May the Chiefs of Staff considered a further study<sup>(14)</sup> comparing operations against Sardinia with operations against the mainland, to the decisive advantage of the latter. This recommended an assault on Reggio in Calabria (Operation 'Buttress') either during or immediately after the invasion of Sicily. If all went well this should be followed by assaults on Cotrone (Operation 'Goblet') and Apulia, the 'Heel' of Italy (Operation 'Musket'). Attacks on Bari and Naples would follow. If all did *not* go well, the Allies could then consider Operation 'Brimstone' against Sardinia. Allied Force Headquarters in Algiers, they recommended, should prepare plans for both operations.

But still the Chiefs of Staff were not prepared to come to a decision. The dangers of getting involved in protracted operations on the Italian mainland still loomed large in their minds. There remained the third possibility—operations in the Eastern Mediterranean. They therefore invited the Commanders-in-Chief, Middle East, to submit their proposals for operations both in the Aegean and against the Greek mainland; proposals which, as we have seen, General Wilson's staff had ready to hand. The whole question thus was still in suspense when the Chiefs of Staff set out for the United States on 6th May.<sup>(15)</sup>

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\* Compare Hitler's almost identical appreciation of the situation on p. 463 below.

The five-day voyage on the *Queen Mary* gave the Chiefs of Staff and the Prime Minister the opportunity, undisturbed by the everyday pressures which beat on them in London, to continue their discussions, and in particular to decide upon the line they should take on arrival in Washington. Their deliberations about Far Eastern strategy will be considered in the next chapter. So far as Europe is concerned, they rapidly reached agreement on the outlines of a future programme. The momentum of the attack on the Axis powers had, they agreed, at all costs to be kept up. The bomber offensive against the German homeland should be continued and intensified, and the pressure in the Mediterranean sustained by operations to pin down the greatest possible number of German troops and distract them from the Russian front. The strategy agreed at Casablanca in fact was to be maintained, with particular emphasis on the decisions affecting the Mediterranean Theatre. The line of communications there was to be made more secure; German forces diverted from Russia; pressure on Italy intensified; and a situation created in which Turkey could be enlisted as an active ally.<sup>(16)</sup>

These conclusions were embodied in an *aide-memoire*<sup>(17)</sup> by General Ismay which was to serve as a position paper for the British at the Conference. This paper made three significant points. First it insisted that the decisions taken at Casablanca were still valid, requiring only 'review and development in the light of the progress of the war in the last four months, the detailed studies which have been carried out, and the experience which has been gained'. Secondly it emphasised the need for continuing action during the critical months between the conquest of Sicily and the mounting of the full-scale offensive against North West Europe the following year. Finally it drew attention to the fact that this would almost certainly involve further amphibious operations, whose requirements in shipping would be bound to affect 'Bolero'. 'But we believe', insisted the paper, 'that this disadvantage will be greatly outweighed by the fact that successful Mediterranean operations, and still more the elimination of Italy, will ease the task confronting an army landing in Europe from the United Kingdom'.

Over the last point the British were emphatic and unanimous. The Prime Minister stated in one of his shipboard memoranda, 'We want them to agree to the exploitation of "Husky" and the attack on the underbelly taking priority of the build-up for "Bolero", as it must necessarily do for the execution of "Round-Up"'.<sup>(18)</sup> General Brooke pointed out that shipping for further operations in the Mediterranean would have to be found either from 'Bolero' or from the Pacific, and was frank in his opinion 'that "Bolero" could afford a cut'; while Air Chief Marshal Portal proposed, a little

optimistically, that they should 'seek an agreement that our import programme, and the requirements for whatever Mediterranean operations were eventually approved, should be sacrosanct. We could say that we were prepared to discuss whether the shipping should be found from the Pacific or from "Bolero"'.<sup>(19)</sup>

As to the shape of these further operations, the Chiefs of Staff could still come to no firm conclusion, and the advice they were receiving from Cairo and Algiers made it no easier to do so. About the views of G.H.Q. Middle East something has already been said in Chapter XX,\* and these were set out in a document they sent to Washington on 17th May.<sup>(20)</sup> This, as might be expected, urged a concentration against Greece. It assumed that Italy could be eliminated by air action alone, and not by 'occupation of the whole or even a substantial part of Italy itself which would involve a burdensome supply and administration commitment and the tying up of many British and American divisions'. If Sardinia was not essential for shipping protection, and the South of France was too heavily defended for landings to be possible, it followed that 'the most favourable course of action would be to force a back-door entry into Europe through Thrace and South East Europe'. Further assuming that forces would be available for large-scale operations after the conquest of Sicily, the planners in Cairo went on to advocate attacks, first on the Dodecanese and Aegean Islands, then on Morea and Attica in Greece, and finally on 'Central and Eastern Macedonia with a view eventually to an advance to the line of the Danube and the occupation of the Ploesti oilfields'.

On consideration, the Chiefs of Staff decided not to support these proposals. The Joint Planning Staff in London had already examined the possibility of following up 'Husky' by operations against the Dodecanese and against Greece. The former they considered would involve too great a diversion of resources, and the latter held out little prospect of any success beyond the occupation of the strategically unimportant Peloponnese.<sup>(21)</sup> Mr. Churchill at one meeting in the *Queen Mary* did indeed urge that Greece should not be ruled out as a possible objective, but only at a moment when the Chiefs of Staff were discussing his *bête noire*, Sardinia.<sup>(22)</sup> It was a basic principle of Churchillian strategy that no door should ever be regarded as finally barred; but the Chiefs of Staff did not again consider Greece as a major strategic objective.

The Sardinian alternative however was powerfully supported in a paper<sup>(23)</sup> submitted by General Bedell Smith from Algiers which embodied the views of General Eisenhower and Admiral Cunningham, but not those of Air Chief Marshal Tedder. This presented the arguments for operations against Sardinia and

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\* See p. 383 above.

Corsica ['Brimstone' and 'Firebrand'] and operations against the Italian mainland with exemplary fairness. Even limited operations on the Italian mainland, it agreed, would have considerable political value and might force the Italians to ask for terms. Attacks on the Italian 'toe' might be mounted to coincide with the final stages of 'Husky'; and bases would be provided for operations in the Balkans if it were decided to undertake any. On the other hand the requirements in forces would be considerable, not only for the fighting but for subsequent garrison duties, while the economic and administrative responsibilities for the occupied areas would be an additional strain on Allied shipping. If the Italians did not ask for terms the Allies would be committed to a major campaign involving all their forces in the Mediterranean; and if the Germans decided to reinforce this front, 'we might be involved in a campaign against superior German forces in a country in which superiority in numbers would have full weight'.

On the other hand, pointed out General Smith, the capture of Corsica and Sardinia, by placing the whole of Italy within easy range both of Allied bombers and Allied invasion forces, might in itself compel Italy to ask for terms, or at least induce them to withdraw their troops from the Balkans and force the maximum dispersal of their forces on the mainland. German troops in the South of France would be pinned down; Western Mediterranean communications would be made secure and the air threat to North Africa diminished, thus releasing Allied resources; and all this could be achieved at very low cost. It would take only five infantry and one armoured division to seize Sardinia and only two divisions to garrison it, while the capture of Corsica could be left to the French. Much would of course depend on the state of Italian morale after the capture of Sicily. 'It will not be easy to assess this accurately', suggested General Smith, 'and it is therefore considered that the course of action which does not definitely commit us to the mainland is preferable'. It is interesting to note that this paper did not take the possibility of an Italian surrender during or immediately after the Sicilian campaign seriously into account; but since uncertainty about the state of Italian morale appears to have been the decisive factor in leading its authors to advise against a landing on the mainland, clear evidence of its collapse would presumably have been enough to make them modify their views.

Air Chief Marshal Tedder's dissenting judgment should be noted here. It was based on two factors: the slight cover which could be provided by land-based fighter aircraft for the assault on Sardinia, and the exaggerated importance attached to the value of the island for the air offensive against Italy. Like the



Joint Planners in London, he pointed out that the whole of Italy was already within bombing range; 'the value of additional bases in Sardinia is more than balanced by the additional maintenance and supply involved'. The possession of the island would no doubt reduce the vulnerability of shipping along the coast of North Africa, but Allied bases on the south shore of the Mediterranean would still be within range of enemy aircraft operating from Italy. On the other hand, the possession of air bases in Central Italy would be of very great value in the Combined Bombing Offensive. 'The main value of such an air base', wrote Tedder, 'is that heavy bombing attacks on the majority of the most vital centres of Germany and other Axis countries pass through routes which completely evade the great belt of fighter and A.A. defences which Germany has set up along the whole North and North Western approaches. These defences are exacting an increasing toll on our bomber offensive. It would be quite impossible from every point of view for the enemy to create a similar organisation covering the Southern approach, and a bomber offensive from the South, especially when co-ordinated with that of the United Kingdom, would have enormously increased material and moral effects'.

Meanwhile the Joint Planning Staff submitted to the Chiefs of Staff in the *Queen Mary* a paper<sup>(24)</sup> which crystallised all their thinking over the past six weeks and provided the Chiefs of Staff with clear proposals which they were able to accept as a basis for their discussions with the Americans. This suggested that the decisive factors in the situation were two: the state of Italian morale, and the capacity, or rather the will, of the Germans to reinforce their ally. But their proposals were at once more circumspect and more ambitious than those sponsored by General Eisenhower. They recommended that preparations should be made at once to establish a bridgehead on the toe of Italy, either during or immediately after the Sicilian operations. If Italy were then on the point of collapse and the Germans were not in a position to reinforce her, 'we should enter the heel, so as to administer the *coup de grâce*, and prepare for exploitation across the Adriatic. If, on the other hand, Germany diverts large forces to Italy—an event which in itself would relieve the pressure on the Russian front—we would go for Sardinia and Corsica'.

In the event of the total collapse of Italy before she could either be invaded or reinforced, the Joint Planners considered that the Allies should act at once. They should occupy South Italy and seize airfields at Naples and Rome. They should establish a bridgehead at Durazzo to support the guerrillas in the Balkans. They should seize Ploesti by air. They should occupy Corsica and key points in Sardinia; and they should land sufficient troops in Central

Italy to prevent any German infiltration from the North. After that, they should act according to events. 'We do not believe', stated the Joint Planners, 'that Germany can hold both Northern Italy and the Balkans without risking a collapse on the Russian front'. The Allies should therefore be prepared either to exploit any weakening of the German position in the Balkans, or to invade the South of France, perhaps simultaneously with an attack across the Channel.

'Our final conclusion [the document ended] is that the Mediterranean offers us opportunities for action in the coming autumn and winter which may be decisive, and at the least will do far more to prepare the way for a cross-Channel operation in 1944 than we should achieve by attempting to transfer back to the United Kingdom any of the forces now in the Mediterranean theatre. If we take these opportunities, we shall have every chance of breaking the Axis and of bringing the war to a successful conclusion in 1944'.

This document was adopted virtually *in toto* by the British Chiefs of Staff. It breathed a spirit of resolute optimism and determination more typical of the Prime Minister's own memoranda than of the papers he was accustomed to receive from his service advisers. It is clear that the victories, first at Alamein and then in Tunisia, had raised all spirits and stimulated all imaginations. It was the spirit of the chase and not any dedication to 'peripheral strategy'—much less any calculation of post-war political advantage—which led the British now to urge impatiently that their recent victories in North Africa should be exploited to the full.

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The British attitude boded ill for an easy conference with the Americans. General Marshall's fears of the 'suction-pump' effect of Mediterranean operations had not abated during the past three months. He was very conscious of the fact that the strength of the United States forces in the Mediterranean which at the end of 1942 had totalled 180,000 men and 24½ Combat Air Groups had risen by the beginning of May to 388,000 men and 37 Combat Air Groups and this almost entirely at the expense of 'Bolero'.<sup>(25)</sup> American ground forces in the United Kingdom which at the beginning of November totalled 168,000 men now numbered no more than 59,000, and there seemed every reason to suppose that if Mediterranean operations continued on their existing scale it would be impossible to mount an invasion of North West Europe at all.

As a result, General Marshall viewed with alarm even the proposals of his own planning staff for limited operations in the Mediterranean after the fall of Sicily.<sup>(26)</sup> He could not conceive how any exploitation in the Mediterranean of the type visualised by the British was compatible with a serious attack in North West Europe in 1944, and, he declared frankly to his colleagues on the Joint Chiefs of Staff, 'if as a result of the adoption of a Mediterranean strategy there was to be only a cross-Channel attack of the "Sledgehammer" variety, a re-adjustment of landing-craft and troop-shipping should be made in favour of the Pacific'.<sup>(27)</sup>

It may well be imagined that such a statement was not unwelcome to Admiral King, who had his own problems in allocating resources between the demands of the Central Pacific and the South West Pacific theatres and was finding it impossible to satisfy both. The cost in attrition of the long drawn-out conflict in the Solomons had been heavy; and King felt, in the words of the American official historian, 'that the Casablanca decision should not be interpreted so literally that the operations set up for the Pacific would have to depend entirely upon what was left over from the European theatre'.<sup>(28)</sup>

This natural inclination to lay a renewed emphasis on the Pacific was shared by a substantial body of American public opinion, whose political importance was not to be underrated. Its strongest opponents were to be found among the ranks of the U.S. Army Air Force, who were now, as we have seen, far advanced with their plans, worked out in close co-operation with the Royal Air Force, for the Combined Bomber Offensive against Germany—a plan which demanded a substantial concentration of resources in the European theatre and which fitted in most harmoniously with plans for physical invasion in 1944. General Marshall indeed now regarded this bombardment as a major, even a vital factor in those plans. But for it, he admitted '“Roundup” would be a visionary matter',<sup>(29)</sup> but since it did make 'Roundup' a practical possibility, British diversions in the Mediterranean must not be allowed to stand in the way of its achievement.

There were thus no major contradictions of principle among the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, and they, like the British, were able to submit an agreed policy statement which received full Presidential endorsement.<sup>(30)</sup> They insisted first that the close relationship between the war in Europe and that against Japan should be emphasised. The basic strategy against Germany should consist of a progressively increasing air effort in preparation for a cross-Channel attack in 1944, and no other operation should be allowed to jeopardise this attack. They admitted that there might be certain merits in operations in the Western Mediterranean immediately

after the Sicilian campaign; so long as these involved the reduction rather than the increase of Allied forces in the theatre, supported the Combined Bomber Offensive and did not impede preparations for cross-Channel operations. Operations in the Eastern Mediterranean they ruled out completely. If the British wished to mount any, they would have to do so alone. Finally they declared 'in the event the British insisted on Mediterranean commitments that in American opinion would jeopardise the early defeat of Germany and the ultimate defeat of Japan, the U.S. representatives were to inform the British that the United States might be compelled to revise its basic strategy and extend its operations and commitments in the Pacific'. A British failure to carry out 'Anakim', they added, might in any case increase the need for the Americans to intensify their pressure in the Pacific theatre.

The British and American war leaders were thus set on courses which could only result when they met at Washington, in head-on collision. In principle their differences were less ones of substance than of emphasis. The Americans recognised the usefulness of further Mediterranean operations so long as the plans for a cross-Channel attack in 1944 remained sacrosanct; the British, while not abandoning the goal of a cross-Channel attack in 1944, were anxious to exploit to the utmost the successes they had already gained in the Mediterranean by giving the Axis no chance to recover. But since the emphasis had to be translated into terms of landing-craft and divisions, it was to take many days of discussion before agreement was reached as to where it was to lie.

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In describing the complicated negotiations which occupied the Combined Chiefs of Staff for the next two weeks, we shall once again consider their subject matter under its appropriate headings rather than in the somewhat random chronological order in which it was in fact discussed. This will involve first a consideration of the debate on general principles; then the discussions on strategy in the European theatre; then (in the next chapter) the discussions on South East Asia and the Pacific; and finally the question of availability of resources. In addition, two important and delicate questions rather of politics than of strategy were raised. The first was the possibility of inducing Italy to surrender by a change in the nature of Allied propaganda and war aims; the second, an approach to Portugal for the use of the Atlantic Islands to ease Allied difficulties in protecting Atlantic shipping in the U-boat war.

The British Chiefs of Staff in their preliminary discussions had agreed to recommend to the Americans that they should settle

their strategic programme by reviewing the various proposed operations on their merits. Then the necessary shipping requirements could be assessed and the means for their production determined.<sup>(31)</sup> They were too optimistic in expecting their Allies to acquiesce in such a pragmatic approach. On 13th May the Joint Chiefs of Staff presented them with a memorandum on Global Strategy<sup>(32)</sup> which laid down an *a priori* 'overall strategic concept'.

- ' (a) In co-operation with Russia and the lesser Allies, to force an unconditional surrender of the Axis in Europe.
- (b) Simultaneously, in co-operation with our Allies, to maintain and extend unremitting pressure against Japan in the Pacific and from China.
- (c) Thereafter, in co-operation with other Pacific Powers and if possible with Russia, to combine the full resources of the United States and Great Britain to force unconditional surrender of Japan. '

The memorandum went on briefly to elaborate this thesis. The need for defeating Germany first was not questioned. But

' . . . from our standpoint the concept of defeating Germany first involves making a determined attack against Germany on the Continent at the earliest practicable date; we consider that all proposed operations in Europe should be judged primarily on the basis of their contribution to that end. Similarly, we believe that all proposed operations now or later in the Pacific should be judged primarily on the basis of their contribution to defeating Japan in the shortest practicable time. It is the opinion of the United States Chiefs of Staff that a cross-Channel invasion of Europe is necessary to an early conclusion of the war with Germany, and that an early opening of communications with China is necessary in order to keep China in the war and to bring to a successful conclusion the war with Japan'.

The corresponding British paper was the *aide memoire* in which General Ismay summarized the decisions reached on board the *Queen Mary*; but this document, though it provided a valuable basis for the arguments of the Chiefs of Staff throughout the conference, did not offer an alternative 'strategic concept' to the Americans. The British Chiefs of Staff therefore when they met on the afternoon of 13th May<sup>(33)</sup> and examined the American paper, agreed not to amend it or offer an alternative, but to reassert their adherence to the Casablanca decisions. They did agree, however, that it would be necessary, first to ask the Americans for a categorical assurance that any action against Japan should not prejudice the measures needed for the defeat of Germany; and

secondly to formulate their own attitude towards 'Roundup'. This they did in the following terms:

'It is our firm intention to carry out "Round-Up" at the first moment that conditions are such that the operation will contribute decisively to the defeat of Germany. These conditions may arise this year, but in any case it is our firm belief that they will arise next year. They can be created only by the Russian Army. Our action, therefore, must consist of:

- (i) Continuing and increasing the bombardment of Germany; and
- (ii) Drawing off from the Russian front as many German forces as possible'.

Over both these questions there was prolonged and at times unfriendly debate. The British found themselves unable to get the categorical assurance they sought on the relationship of the war against Germany to that against Japan. They began by suggesting that the American formulation of the 'overall strategic concept' should be modified by the addition italicised below:

- '(a) In co-operation with Russia and other Allies to bring about at the earliest possible date the unconditional surrender of the Axis in Europe.
- (b) Simultaneously, in co-operation with other Pacific Powers concerned to maintain, *and so far as is consistent with (a) above* to extend, unremitting pressure against Japan . . .'

In defending this amendment, General Brooke once more reiterated to his American colleagues the British view that the quickest way to win the war was to concentrate the maximum effort first against one adversary and then against the other. But however correct such a doctrine might be in terms of abstract strategic principles, events in the Pacific had developed too far even at the time of the Casablanca Conference for the Americans to be brought to accept it in undiluted form, even as a declaratory statement. As Admiral Leahy admitted, the matter was not purely a strategic one:

'The defeat of Japan was a matter of vital importance to the United States. A situation might arise in which an extension of effort against Japan, if necessary even at the expense of the European Theatre, would be essential to maintain the integrity of the United States and her interests in the Pacific . . . If an unfavourable situation arose in the Pacific, all would realise that, whatever agreements were in existence, the United States would have to divert forces to meet this eventuality'.<sup>(34)</sup>

The Americans remained adamant in their refusal to accept the British insertion. When Air Chief Marshal Portal pointed out at the meeting on 24th May<sup>(35)</sup> when the Combined Chiefs were considering their final report to the President and Prime Minister that the British object was not in any way to restrict Pacific operations but only to ensure that surplus forces should be concentrated against Germany, General Marshall refused to accept even this interpretation. The United Kingdom, he said, was already receiving the maximum allocation of air forces that she could accommodate; therefore the surplus would have to go to the Pacific. And he agreed with Admiral Leahy that since public opinion in America would accept no major reverses in the Pacific, any surplus of forces must be sent to the South West Pacific Theatre 'to exploit and improve our position in that area'.\* The most that they would accept was an amendment suggested by Admiral Pound: 'The effect of any such extension on the overall objective to be given consideration by the Combined Chiefs of Staff before action is taken'. General Marshall made it clear however that he considered decisions in the European Theatre to be equally subject to review. If for instance Russia collapsed or made a separate peace, then a cross-Channel invasion would become impossible and the major Allied effort might have to be switched against Japan. To this extension of the principle of flexibility General Brooke raised no objection, for, as he put it, the position in Southern Europe 'might well be such that we should take advantage of it'. On this basis the British were satisfied that the American concession met their point.

With the rest of the draft statement on agreed essentials<sup>(37)</sup> the British found only minor points of difference. It laid down as first priority the maintenance of the security and war-making capacity of all committed forces (a paragraph the British considered redundant), the maintenance of vital overseas lines of communication, and the intensification of the air offensive in Europe. On this last phrase another interesting difference of emphasis appeared. The original draft read: 'Intensify the air offensive from the United Kingdom and concentrate maximum resources in a select area as early as practicable for the purpose of conducting a decisive invasion of the Axis citadel'. The British suggested the sentence should read 'Intensify the air offensive against the Axis Powers in Europe', *tout court*.<sup>(38)</sup> Beyond agreeing to substitute the words 'against the Axis Powers in Europe' for 'from the United Kingdom', thus recognising the value of developing air bases in the Mediterranean theatre, the Americans stood by the original wording, implying as it did a high priority for 'Bolero' and 'Sickle'; and in

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\* The minutes of this meeting do not bear out the assertion of Admiral King's biographer, that King's colleagues deserted him on this issue, leaving him '*contra mundum*.'<sup>(36)</sup>

this form it remained. Nor would they accept a proposed British addition, 'Take all possible measures to draw land and air forces from the Russian front', in which they no doubt saw an opening for prolonging Mediterranean operations at the expense of 'Bolero'. Instead this sentence ran more innocuously, in the final draft, 'Undertake such measures as may be necessary and practicable to aid the war effort of Russia'. On the wording of the final resolution, concerning aid to China, no major disagreement arose.

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These semantic disputes were of course important only as reflections of the broad disagreements which revealed themselves in the detailed discussions of future strategy; and it was over the question of further operations in the Mediterranean that these were most intense. We have examined the proposals which the British brought to Washington, and these the Chiefs of Staff put forward and supported with every argument they could muster. Both General Brooke and Air Chief Marshal Portal insisted, at the first meeting of the Combined Chiefs on 13th May,<sup>(39)</sup> on the necessary connection of the Mediterranean theatre, not only with the cross-Channel operations, but with the Russian front. Only the Russians could pin down the Germans in large numbers and they must be helped by the maximum diversion of forces as soon as possible. If the Russians collapsed the war would be prolonged by many years. If operations in the Mediterranean were not continued the question of landing troops in North West Europe would not arise at all. Unless the right conditions were created, the best that 15-20 inexperienced Anglo-American divisions could achieve would be an indecisive lodgement on the Brest peninsula. Neither General Brooke nor Air Chief Marshal Portal could accept the suggestion put forward by General Marshall that an Italian collapse might be brought about by air action alone. The operations visualised would not require that any more troops should be sent to the Mediterranean theatre; their only impact on 'Bolero' would be in shipping demands, which would reduce the number of divisions which could be ferried to the United Kingdom by 3-4 divisions in 1943, and by none in 1944.

Perhaps the British Chiefs of Staff, knowing as they did the American attitude, would have done better to have opened the proceedings with a declaration of their unchanged adherence to the principle of a cross-Channel attack in 1944; which they would without any equivocation have been quite sincerely able to do. It might have rendered their subsequent remarks more effective. As it was their arguments made little impression on the Americans, who



had, as we have seen, been carefully girding themselves to meet them. General Marshall based his opposition partly on his hopes of what could be achieved in the Mediterranean by air power alone, partly on his fears that further Mediterranean operations would let the Allies in for more than they bargained for. 'Operations', he said (and he could speak now from experience), 'invariably create a vacuum in to which it was essential to pour more and more means'. To land troops in Italy would be to create such a vacuum, 'which would preclude the assembly of sufficient forces in the United Kingdom to execute a successful cross-Channel operation . . . If further Mediterranean operations were undertaken, then in 1943 and virtually all of 1944 we should be committed, except for air attacks on Germany, to a Mediterranean policy'. 'This' he added significantly, 'would entail a very serious state of affairs in the Pacific'.

Admiral Leahy and Admiral King supported him. Both objected to doing anything in the Mediterranean which might prejudice the cross-Channel attack in 1944. Indeed Admiral Leahy disagreed so deeply with the British analysis of the connection between the three fronts that he declared, on the following day,<sup>(40)</sup> that an extension of military operations in the Mediterranean theatre, by delaying a concentration in the United Kingdom, would also delay a German withdrawal from other fronts to help defend Western Europe. 'The African venture', he pointed out with good reason, 'was undertaken in order to do something this year while preparing for cross-Channel operations.' It had not, in American eyes, involved the acceptance of the Mediterranean strategy now urged by General Brooke; nor had agreement to mount the limited Sicilian operation. The time had come for the Americans to make their position on this point absolutely clear.

On 15th May<sup>(41)</sup> the Combined Chiefs had another sterile discussion of the problem, which covered much old ground and came to no conclusion. It was then decided, and by no means too soon, that agreement could only be reached if each side were to spell out in detail exactly what plan they had in mind for the conduct of the war against Germany, and how they proposed to overcome the difficulties which to each seemed inherent in the other's proposals. How did the Americans visualise a successful 'Round-Up' against German defences undistracted by operations elsewhere? How did the British propose to mount the operation with forces weakened by distractions in the Mediterranean? The American planners were therefore instructed to produce in consultation with their British colleagues, a plan for defeating Germany by concentrating on 'Bolero'; and the British planners were, in consultation with the Americans, to produce a plan for defeating Germany which

accepted the elimination of Italy as a necessary preliminary. Once this was done the Combined Chiefs of Staff hoped that they would be able to see exactly wherein the differences consisted, which in general discussion seemed to loom so large.

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The British paper <sup>(42)\*</sup> was ready for consideration on 18th May. It marshalled the arguments, now familiar to both sides, in favour of exploiting in the Mediterranean, but in greater detail than had yet been presented to the Combined Chiefs. The two main factors in the problem of invading North West Europe, it pointed out, were the size of the force which could be used, which was determined by the quantity of assault-shipping and landing-craft available; and the relative rate of build-up on each side. The Germans would have 35 divisions in France and the Low Countries in 1944, of which four would be mobile reserve divisions; with possibly a further ten available in Germany, if these had not been absorbed by operations against Turkey. An Allied assault would encounter at least three divisions, which within 24 hours could be reinforced by four more. Within two weeks the Germans could build up to 18 divisions, and thereafter any reinforcements would have to come from Russia, which would be possible at a rate of two divisions a week. This rate of build-up, admitted the Planners, might be reduced by interdiction from the air, but to an extent they could not predict. The Allied assault, they suggested, should be ten divisions strong—four assault divisions, six in the immediate follow-up, the British and the Americans each providing half. These ten divisions could be established ashore by D + 7 and doubled by D + 90, but only if the limited capacity of the ports in the Cotentin peninsula had been reinforced by the capture of further ports north of the Seine. 'It seems clear' they concluded from these calculations, 'that unless Russian action or Allied action elsewhere reduces the enemy potential in France from the figures in paragraph 10 [35 divisions] to something approaching those given in paragraph 12 [22 divisions], we are unlikely to be able to retain a foothold in France until our rate of build-up gives us superiority over the enemy.' But if German strength in France could be reduced to the required extent—'and we are confident', wrote the Planners, 'that it can'—without serious effect on the availability of forces in the United Kingdom then successful invasion should be possible in the spring or summer of 1944. They went on to show how Germany would have to redistribute her forces in the event of an Italian

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\* See Appendix VI (A).

collapse, and the net gains which would result to the Allies. The Italian collapse, they wrote, might be decisive; it would certainly 'create a situation which will make the difference between success or failure of a re-entry into North West Europe in 1944'.

The British Planners went on to estimate the forces which would be needed for the pursuit of operations in the Mediterranean after 'Husky', and the effect their use would have on the 'Bolero' build-up in the United Kingdom. A landing in Italy would require 9 divisions, a landing in Sardinia 7. They estimated that the total Allied commitments in the Mediterranean would absorb 25 divisions, including 9 to garrison a defeated Italy, 3 to hold a bridgehead at Durazzo, 1 to seize the Dodecanese and 2 to help a belligerent Turkey; leaving from 10 to 13 divisions available for other operations. Two of these could be brought back to the United Kingdom without impinging on the shipping requirements of 'Bolero', but even if the rest were sent back, 'the availability of landing-craft and maintenance will preclude their use in "Roundup".' If operations continued in the Mediterranean along the lines the British suggested, there would still be between  $24\frac{1}{2}$  and  $28\frac{1}{2}$  divisions in the United Kingdom on 1st April 1944; while even if they did not so continue, the number of troops in the United Kingdom would be increased only by  $3\frac{1}{2}$  U.S. divisions. As for assault shipping and landing-craft, those allotted to 'Husky' would suffice for subsequent Mediterranean landings. The number available for cross-Channel operations would be reduced only by a number equivalent to 10% of the total personnel and 6% of the total vehicles to be landed; and the personnel anyhow, the Planners suggested hopefully, could be ferried from their ships to the shore.

It is not altogether surprising that General Marshall's first reaction to this paper was to suggest that the cost of Mediterranean operations had been assessed too low, since 'the wish may have been father to the thought'.<sup>(43)</sup> But the paper produced on 19th May by the U.S. Joint Staff Planners was in its way no less sanguine.<sup>(44)</sup>\* They saw their task as being, not to rebut the arguments which the British had brought forward in favour of Mediterranean operations, but to show that Germany could be defeated without them. They therefore accepted as a premise that the elimination of Italy was not a prerequisite for creating conditions favourable for 'Round-Up'; that Italy might be eliminated without further operations in the Mediterranean, and that even if she could not her elimination was 'not worth the cost in forces, shipping, amphibious equipment and time'. Their assessment of German strength in Western Europe, and its rate of build-up against an invasion, differed from the British only in being more cautious: where the

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\* See Appendix VI (B).

British warned of a build-up of 7 divisions in 24 hours, the Americans spoke of 4-9. But they pointed out that the Allies would enjoy an air superiority of 8 to 1, and that these reinforcements would arrive 'in a depleted and disorganised condition as a result of our air attacks'. They gave no estimate of the Allied rate of build-up after the invasion. Like the British, they advocated a strength of ten divisions in the cross-Channel attack, and they declared that the necessary amphibious craft would be available to lift them if those used in Sicily were returned to the United Kingdom, giving a total of 4,657. Each further operation in the Mediterranean, however, would reduce the force available by about 1,100 and the remainder would be unlikely to be back in England by April 1944.

Even more important than landing-craft, in the eyes of the American planners, were men: not numbers—the divisions for 'Roundup' could as easily come from the United States as from the Mediterranean—but quality. Their calculations showed that exactly the same number of divisions—thirty-four—could be built up in the United Kingdom by 1st April 1944 whether they were drawn from the Mediterranean or from the United States. Their reason for preferring the first of these choices was, they wrote, 'because of the desirability of using battle-seasoned units for the initial cross-Channel operations. Units can be found in the Mediterranean that are not only composed of veterans, but that have also participated in large-scale amphibious operations'.

This was not a negligible argument. Nobody could foresee that when it came to the point the 'green' divisions were to acquit themselves quite as well as, and in many cases considerably better than, the veterans from the Mediterranean, many of whom were not only bewildered by the totally different conditions of combat but felt that they had had their fair share of the war. But it was a slender basis for so major a strategic decision. It seems reasonable to suggest that the U.S. Planners were concerned not so much with securing the use of Mediterranean forces for 'Roundup', where shortage of shipping and assault-craft would anyhow narrowly restrict the number which could be employed, as with ensuring that those forces should not be used anywhere else. The conclusion of their paper, indeed, was that which General Marshall had so often expressed: 'operations in the Mediterranean subsequent to "Husky" should be limited to the air offensive, because any other operations would use resources vital to "Roundup" and present the risk of limitless commitment of United States resources to the Mediterranean vacuum, thus needlessly prolonging the war'.

Neither paper met the basic objections raised by the other. The Americans were objecting not so much to the operations

actually proposed by the British, but to their incalculable consequences, and about these the British planners could naturally say little. The Americans on the other hand did not meet the British arguments about the need to keep the Germans closely engaged during the next nine months, about the effect of an Italian collapse on the distribution of German forces, and about the need to reduce the rate of the German build-up in France if the invasion was to have any chance of success. Their only reply lay in their references to the effect of air power; and operational research in this field was too rudimentary for their reasoning to be more at that stage than the expression of pious hope.

Technical uncertainties of another sort also presented difficulties for both sides. The American planners had estimated that 4,657 assault-craft would suffice for the ten-division landing visualised; yet COSSAC's planners were simultaneously submitting to the Joint Chiefs of Staff an estimated requirement of 8,500.<sup>(45)</sup> General Marshall flatly declared this a logistic impossibility, while some of his colleagues expressed the view that this was a British ruse to sabotage the entire operation.<sup>(46)</sup> Such suspicions were not particularly intelligent. COSSAC's staff was an integrated Allied organisation; and the calculations of the British Joint Planning Staff, that the demands of 'Round-Up' could be met even if amphibious operations continued in the Mediterranean, were quite as much at variance with the COSSAC calculations as were those of the Americans.

In fact curiously little attention was paid by the Combined Chiefs of Staff at this stage to the problem of landing-craft. The determined attitude of Admiral King, that neither the rate of landing-craft production nor the allocation to the European Theatre could be increased,<sup>(47)</sup> passed unquestioned either by his British or by his American colleagues. But the realisation that shortage of landing-craft would reduce the attack in scale to something less than 'Roundup' but greater than 'Sledgehammer'—'Roundhammer', it was to be called, until this revolting neologism was mercifully replaced by the better-known term, 'Overlord'—weakened the American argument that the requirements of the operation would make it necessary to give it overriding priority over any further activities in the Mediterranean. Closer examination revealed that landing-craft would be available to lift only five divisions simultaneously; and to this figure the scale of the operation would have to be geared.<sup>(48)</sup>

The Combined Chiefs of Staff met again on the morning of Wednesday 19th May with both papers before them.<sup>(49)</sup> General Marshall and Sir Alan Brooke each pointed out the weaknesses in the other's case in terms now as wearily familiar to the reader

as they must have been to each other; but two examples of particular far-sighted wisdom deserve to be recorded. General Brooke indicated the absence in American thinking of any provision for action in the case of an Italian collapse. 'We might be called upon', he said, 'by some political party other than the Fascists to enter Italy, or we might be confronted with complete collapse and a state of chaos. In either case we would be faced with a decision as to what action was necessary to take advantage of this situation'. Certainly the overtures which both governments had received from Italian quarters made it unrealistic for them not to take the first of these possibilities very seriously indeed. On the other hand General Marshall considered that the British underestimated the German capacity for rising to emergencies. 'In this connection it must be remembered that in North Africa a relatively small German force had produced a serious factor of delay to our operations. A German decision to support Italy might make intended operations extremely difficult and time-consuming'.

Events were of course to prove General Marshall right. It was to be the speed and stubbornness of the German reaction, rather than the scope of British ambitions, which was to detain Allied forces in the Mediterranean, and make the distribution of Allied resources between that theatre and North West Europe a matter of continuing debate among the Chiefs of Staff for a full year to come. But even if this had not been the case; even if the Allies had been able to occupy a defeated Italy with the ease which the planners hoped; it still seems probable that operations so widely dispersed as those visualised by the British planners, from Sardinia through Apulia and Calabria to Albania and the Dodecanese, would inevitably have led to demands on shipping, troops and landing-craft far in excess of their estimates, and made the launching of the cross-Channel attack almost impossibly difficult. 'It was axiomatic', remarked General Marshall sadly, 'that every commander invariably asked for more troops than were originally estimated as being necessary'. It was this experience led him to impose a brake on the impetuosity of his allies.

For although the British were to get their way with regard to continuing operations in the Mediterranean, such a brake was to be applied. Their proposal had been that these operations should continue on a scale whose shipping requirements would deprive the 'Bolero' build-up of 4 divisions.<sup>(60)</sup> The conclusions reached by the Combined Chiefs of Staff in a private discussion, after the room had been cleared of their aides, were as follows:<sup>(61)</sup>

'(a) That forces and equipment shall be established in the United Kingdom with the object of mounting an operation with target date the 1st May 1944, to secure a lodgement

on the Continent from which further offensive operations can be carried out. The scope of the operations will be such as to necessitate the following forces being present and available for use in the United Kingdom by the 1st May 1944:

*Assault:*

- 5 Infantry Divisions (simultaneously loaded in landing-craft)
- 2 Infantry Divisions—Follow up.
- 2 Airborne Divisions.

*Total:* 9 Divisions in the Assault.

*Build-up:*

- 20 Divisions available for movement into lodgement area.

*Total:* 29 Divisions.

(b) That the Allied Commander-in-Chief, North Africa, should be instructed to mount such operations in exploitation of "Husky" as are best calculated to eliminate Italy from the war and to contain the maximum number of German forces. Each specific operation will be subject to the approval of the Combined Chiefs of Staff. The Allied Commander-in-Chief in North Africa may use for his operations all those forces available in the Mediterranean area except for four American and three British divisions which will be held in readiness from the 1st November onwards for withdrawal to take part in operations from the United Kingdom, provided that the naval vessels required will be approved by the Combined Chiefs of Staff when the plans are submitted. The additional air forces provided on a temporary basis for "Husky" will not be considered available.

(c) The above resolution shall be reviewed by the Combined Chiefs of Staff at a meeting in July or early August, the date to be decided later, in order that the situation may be examined in the light of the result of "Husky" and the situation in Russia'.

There would thus be no question of shipping for 'Bolero' being sacrificed for the Mediterranean. Rather, exploitation in the Mediterranean was to be kept within bounds, not only by the reduction by seven divisions of the forces left at General Eisenhower's disposal, but by the proviso, identical with that which was later to be accepted with reference to the extension of operations in the Pacific, that each several operation was to be subject to the approval of the Combined Chiefs of Staff. At the same time the scale of the cross-Channel attack was reduced to one compatible with the number of assault craft expected to be available. The number of assaulting divisions was reduced from ten to seven,

only five of them in the first wave, but with two airborne divisions provided as make-weight. The postponement in date by a month was made on British initiative.<sup>(52)</sup> The weather would be better, argued the Chiefs of Staff, it would allow more time for men and assault-craft to get back from the Mediterranean, and the Germans would be more likely at that time to be embroiled in intensive operations on the Russian front; arguments which General Marshall and Admiral King made no difficulty about accepting. After the long deadlock, agreement appeared complete.

Both sides had every reason to feel satisfied with the result. The British objective of eliminating Italy and giving Germany no respite in the Mediterranean was endorsed, even though their proposal to give this priority over 'Bolero' was not. The Americans had not only set limits to the scope of these operations by reducing the prospective forces available for them and fixing the date and the scale of the cross-Channel attack; they had also secured an explicit British commitment to an invasion of North West Europe on the greatest scale that the estimated number of assault-craft made possible. It was this restriction, and not any diversionary activities in the Mediterranean, that determined the scale of 'Overlord'. The soundness of the decisions was to be shown by subsequent developments. Unexpected circumstances were inevitably to force modifications, but the dispositions laid down at Washington were to provide a well-balanced basis for Allied strategy in 1944, and might with better fortune have led to victory in that year.

These decisions were translated into directives for the theatre commanders concerned—General Eisenhower in the Mediterranean and, in the absence of a Supreme Allied Commander for the cross-Channel attack, COSSAC.<sup>(53)</sup> COSSAC was instructed to plan camouflage and deception schemes to occupy the rest of the year; an emergency return to the Continent in the event of a sudden German collapse; and an assault against the Continent in 1944 'as early as possible' with 9 divisions in the assault and 20 to follow up, for which he was to submit an outline plan not later than 1st August 1943. General Eisenhower was informed of the 'Overlord' plans and of the effect these would be likely to have on the forces available to him in the Mediterranean. He would be left, it was estimated, with strength equivalent to 27 divisions: 19 British and Allied, 4 American and 4 French, together with 2 British divisions committed to Turkey, and 3,648 aircraft. He was 'to submit proposals with appropriate recommendations for operations in the Mediterranean Area, to be carried out concurrently with or subsequent to a successful "Husky"'.<sup>(54)</sup>

About this last paragraph, when the final plans were submitted to him and Mr. Roosevelt on 24th May,<sup>(55)</sup> Mr. Churchill was



to show a momentary hesitation. He doubted the wisdom of leaving General Eisenhower with no guidance as to what course to adopt after Sicily. He might even opt for Sardinia, an operation for which the Prime Minister still felt a hearty dislike. 'Operations in the general area of the Balkans opened up very wide prospects,' Mr. Churchill said, 'whereas the capture of Sardinia would merely place in our possession a desirable island. There was nothing in the paper to indicate to General Eisenhower that we held a view on this matter'. The point he raised was of course an important one. The Chiefs of Staff in their discussions had barely considered the part which might be played by guerrilla activities in the Balkans in their Grand Strategy for the defeat of the Axis—activities of whose scope the British, at least, were now fully aware. But to speak of 'very wide prospects' in relation to Mediterranean strategy was to introduce exactly that element of infinite expansion dreaded by General Marshall, and to open the whole debate once more, with no prospect of shaking the American determination to avoid all entanglements in the Eastern Mediterranean. The Prime Minister was persuaded not to press his point. The amendment he ultimately suggested to General Eisenhower's directive did no more than sharpen the language and make the sense clearer; and it was adopted by the Combined Chiefs at their final meeting, no doubt with a certain relief.<sup>(56)</sup>

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- (4) W.S.C.-Attlee: PENCIL 165 of 21.5.43.
- (5) Jacob-Hollis: PENCIL 135 of 18.5.43.
- (6) P.M. telegram T.439/3 of 3.4.43.
- (7) J.P.(43)140 of 7.4.43.
- (8) J.P.(43)221 of 12.7.43.
- (9) C.O.S.(43)69th Mtg.(O) of 8.4.43.  
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- (10) Hollis-W.S.C. of 12.4.43: C.P.228.
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- (13) J.P.(43)99(Final) of 3.5.43: C.P.228.
- (14) J.P.(43)174.
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- (16) C.O.S.(T)1st Mtg.
- (17) C.O.S.(T)4(Revised).
- (18) C.O.S.(T)8.
- (19) C.O.S.(T)4th Mtg.
- (20) Telegram ALCOVE 265.
- (21) J.P.(T)5 and 6.
- (22) C.O.S.(T)10th Mtg.
- (23) C.C.S. 223.
- (24) C.O.S.(T)11.
- (25) Matloff, pp. 52-5.
- (26) Matloff, p. 123.
- (27) Matloff, p. 136.
- (28) Matloff, p. 94.
- (29) Matloff, p. 131.
- (30) Matloff, p. 123.
- (31) C.O.S.(T)1st Mtg.
- (32) C.C.S. 83rd Mtg. Annex A.
- (33) C.O.S.(T)13th Mtg.

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- (34) C.C.S. 86th Mtg. (Revised).
- (35) C.C.S. 95th Mtg.
- (36) Ernest J. King & Walter M. Whitehill: *Fleet Admiral King*, p. 232.
- (37) C.C.S.242/6.
- (38) C.O.S.(T)15th Mtg.
- (39) C.C.S. 83rd Mtg.
- (40) C.C.S. 84th Mtg. (Revised).
- (41) C.C.S. 85th Mtg.
- (42) C.C.S. 234.
- (43) C.C.S. 87th Mtg.
- (44) C.C.S. 235.
- (45) Gordon A. Harrison: *Cross Channel Attack*, p. 64.
- (46) Harrison, p. 64.
- (47) Harrison, p. 63.
- (48) Harrison, p. 65.
- (49) C.C.S. 88th Mtg.
- (50) C.O.S.(T)18th Mtg.
- (51) C.C.S. 237/1.
- (52) C.O.S.(T)18th Mtg.
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- (55) TRIDENT 5th Mtg.
- (56) C.C.S. 96th Mtg.

BOOK FIVE  
CHAPTER XXIII  
THE SECOND WASHINGTON  
CONFERENCE II  
MAY 1943

OVER THEIR proposals for the Far East the Chiefs of Staff did not find it so easy to get the approval of the Prime Minister.

At Casablanca, it will be recalled, the British had agreed to capture Akyab before the onset of the monsoon in May 1943; simultaneously to undertake an advance from Assam into Upper Burma; to improve the air route to China; and to prepare an amphibious assault on Rangoon (Operation 'Anakim') with the provisional target-date of 15th November.<sup>(1)</sup> Now they had to admit that the advance on Akyab had failed; that the advance from Assam had not been undertaken partly because the administrative problems had proved too great, partly because of the difficulty of co-ordinating plans with the Chinese; and that, although some improvement in the air route had been made, it had been found impossible, with the limited engineering and transportation services available, both to develop this to the extent planned and simultaneously to carry on land operations towards Central Burma. As for 'Anakim', they had to advise their Allies that this operation could not be attempted in the campaigning season of 1943-44.

Their reasons were summarised in a memorandum<sup>(2)</sup> which was discussed and approved by the Chiefs of Staff in the *Queen Mary* on 9th May.<sup>(3)</sup>

'(a) The reconquest of Burma involves a large-scale combined operation, followed by extended operations in very difficult country. These operations must be brought to a conclusion in a limited period of time, otherwise the onset of the monsoon will find us in a position of great difficulty. Even when Burma is once more in our hands, the operation is by no means finished. The Japanese have a good reinforcement route from Siam and we should become involved in ever-extending operations in that country and in the Malay Peninsula. Operation "Anakim" is thus a very heavy commitment which we do not feel we can undertake at a time when the war with Germany is approaching

its climax and when we cannot afford to relax our pressure for an instant.

(b) We are very doubtful of the feasibility of the operation if undertaken this year. Burma is a country whose topography is far more suited to Japanese tactics and equipment than our own. The assault on Rangoon involves a difficult combined operation, which depends for its success on failure by the Japanese to fortify the river approach. For there to be any reasonable prospect of success, we must have sufficiency of forces, especially trained and equipped and backed up by ample reserves of men and material. These conditions cannot be fulfilled in the coming winter.

(c) Until long-term plans for the ultimate defeat of Japan have been decided upon, it cannot be assumed that the reconquest of Burma, however desirable the political effect, especially on China and India, is indispensable from the military point of view.

(d) Operation "Anakim", even if successful in 1943-44, would not be likely to re-open the Burma Road until the middle of 1945'.

The Joint Staff Planners had considered possible alternatives.<sup>(4)</sup> An attack on the Andaman Islands they dismissed as unlikely to produce any results commensurate with the cost. To an attack on Northern Sumatra they were more favourable, since in that area there was no monsoon problem, beaches existed suitable for landings, and there was a good chance of securing strategic surprise. But success would be of little value if it was not immediately followed up by further attacks against Malaya and Penang. Such an operation, it must be observed, would have achieved little towards opening the Burma Road. Instead they recommended, and the Chiefs of Staff accepted, a concentration of attention on Upper Burma.<sup>(5)</sup> First priority should go to the development of air facilities in Assam, so that both the rate of airborne supplies to China and the size of the United States air forces in that country could be increased. In addition limited land operations should be undertaken from Assam 'which would not prejudice the development of the air facilities by excessive demands on engineer and transportation resources'. And finally operations should be renewed on the coast, to capture Ramree Island and Akyab.

With these apparently modest proposals Mr. Churchill was not satisfied, and he expressed his dissatisfaction in a note on 8th May.<sup>(6)</sup> He accepted the decision to abandon the 'Anakim' operation for 1943; but he was unhappy about the prospect of operations in Northern Burma. 'Going into swampy jungles to fight the Japanese', he maintained, 'is like going into the water to fight a shark. It is

better to entice him into a trap or catch him on a hook and then demolish him with axes after hauling him out on to dry land. How then to deceive and entrap the shark?’

‘ . . . 6. The strategic virtues of “Torch” [he went on] compelled or induced the enemy to fight in a theatre most costly to himself. It gained us important territories, bases, and a new French Army, ultimately perhaps of eight or ten divisions. Its success opened the Mediterranean, thus freeing a vital part of our sea communications. Can we not seize in the A.B.D.A. area some strategic point or points which will force the Japanese to counter-attack under conditions detrimental to them and favourable to us? For this purpose the naval command of the Bay of Bengal must be secured. It will next be necessary to establish effective shore-based air command radiating from the key point captured. Thus protected, comparatively small numbers of troops can maintain themselves, unless the enemy brings a disproportionate army to bear, in which case our people can either be reinforced or withdrawn, according to our general plan.

7. The surest way to make a successful landing is to go where you are not expected. It should be possible to carry up to thirty thousand or forty thousand men across the Bay of Bengal, as required, to one or more points of the crescent from Moulemein to Timor. This crescent would include (i) the Andaman Islands; (ii) Margui, with Bangkok as the objective; (iii) the Kra Isthmus; (iv) assault of Northern Sumatra; (v) the southern tip of Sumatra; (vi) Java . . .

9. Once the Italian Fleet has been destroyed or neutralised and air control of our routes through and across the Mediterranean is established powerful British naval forces will be available to reconstitute the Eastern Fleet in battleships, aircraft-carriers, and ancillary vessels. We must not exaggerate the Japanese strength. They cannot possibly be strong enough at all points to resist the concentrated impact of a seaborne air-sustained descent. Their own air force is dwindling steadily and will be under great strain through the American and Australian campaign in the Pacific. It should be easy after one point has been attacked to compel still greater dispersion of enemy forces.

10. Our reports show only about 20,000 Japanese in Sumatra, which is 600 miles long, and 40,000 in Java. The Japanese themselves conquered Sumatra and Java with comparatively small forces against much larger garrisons than they have themselves installed. Why should we assume that we are not capable of planning and executing operations of the same vigour, and with the same close combination of naval, army

and, air forces? We have larger forces available; sea-power gives us almost unlimited choice of the point of attack, and we also ought to have learnt a lot from what has happened in the last fifteen months. Let us not rest content with the bleak and skinny programme set out. It could only be said of this that it is better than nothing and will serve to fill in time'.

Among the service chiefs, Field Marshal Wavell was quite prepared to accommodate the Prime Minister and work out an outline plan for operations against Sumatra and Malaya; a scheme he had himself been favouring as soon as the impossibility of 'Anakim' had become evident.<sup>(7)</sup> General Brooke was not. In his eyes the modesty of the operations proposed by the Joint Planners, particularly in their demands on landing-craft and shipping, was their great asset. He set his face against becoming involved at the forthcoming conference in any discussion of such major plans in the Far East, 'as it was quite clear that we could not embark on a major operation in the Far East while fully engaged in Germany'.

The last day at sea, Monday 10th May, was largely taken up in discussing this contentious point.<sup>(8)</sup> The Chiefs of Staff supported General Brooke. 'The essential point was to maintain maximum pressure against Germany. At Casablanca we had not committed ourselves to carrying out Operation "Anakim", and we should now press, in place of "Anakim", the development of the air route to China. We would find ourselves in difficulties', they pointed out, 'if we used with the Americans, on one hand, the argument that the Mediterranean operations should be designed to assist an eventual "Round-Up", while on the other hand, we pressed an operation in the Far East which would absorb the landing-craft required for "Round-Up" '. But Mr. Churchill was unrepentant. He continued to demand that at least a complete study should be made for an operation against Sumatra and Penang, to be mounted in March 1944; and although he agreed with his Chiefs of Staff that the matter should not be aired in any detail at the forthcoming conference, the concept of conducting operations primarily on an amphibious basis and with a south easterly orientation was to come to dominate British plans for South East Asia.

The British proposal to abandon 'Anakim' and substitute for it an increase in the airlift to China in conjunction with limited operations from Assam did not come as a surprise to the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff. Unwelcome as it was, the situation had its mitigating factors. The Joint Chiefs now fully appreciated the difficulties about supplying the shipping so generously promised at Casablanca, and Mr. Roosevelt had made clear his own view that 'Anakim' was expendable. Field Marshal Sir John Dill informed the British Chiefs of Staff on their arrival in Washington that the U.S. Joint

Chiefs of Staff were unlikely to be 'unduly distressed' by their decision: 'it would', he suggested, 'be for us to bear the brunt of Chiang Kai-shek's displeasure, and they would do their best to put more air into China'.<sup>(9)</sup> The British proposals in fact coincided very closely with Mr. Roosevelt's own views at that time, if not those of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

The President had already revealed at Casablanca how closely interested he was, as much for political as for strategic reasons, in the fate of China; and the news from Chungking during the past few months had been increasingly grave. 'The Chinese', a frank correspondent had written to Mr. Harry Hopkins<sup>(10)</sup> 'are really frightened about the future for the first time in my experience . . . Speaking perfectly coldbloodedly, I can tell you that T. V. [Soong] and the ablest people round him are downright terrified of what may happen if there is not some sort of immediate, fairly spectacular action to revive the spirits of the Chinese people and troops.' Dr. Soong, Chiang Kai-shek's brother-in-law, Foreign Minister and personal representative, and Madame Chiang Kai-shek, the Generalissimo's charming and persuasive wife, had both flown to the United States to lay the urgency of the situation before the President, and on 17th May Dr. Soong addressed the Combined Chiefs of Staff.<sup>(11)</sup> The Chinese government and people, he told them, regarded the plans to recapture Burma which had been worked out at Casablanca as 'a definite United States/British commitment, and he must therefore ask for its fulfilment . . . If not undertaken', he proceeded menacingly, 'they would believe themselves abandoned by the Allies and suspect that the latter did not intend to achieve the unconditional surrender of Japan by force of arms'. Thus the Chinese were insisting on the fulfilment of 'Anakim'. At the same time, however, Dr. Soong insisted that 'Air power and air power alone would be of any value in the present situation'. The Generalissimo regarded support for General Chennault's air forces as being all-important, and 'his military views' said Dr. Soong flatly, 'unless he was deprived of responsibility for this theatre, must be given overriding consideration'.

Mr. Roosevelt agreed. He declared at the opening meeting of the Conference that 'he thought it important to give the Generalissimo, who is head of both the Army and the State, what he wants at this time'.<sup>(12)</sup> We have seen what the Generalissimo wanted: an increase in airlift rising to 10,000 tons by November, the building-up of General Chennault's force to 500 aircraft, and the creation for him of an entirely independent command.<sup>(13)</sup> These demands, as we have also seen, had been strongly opposed by General Stilwell who after 14 months in Chungking was openly sceptical, both of the Generalissimo's capacity to make good use of further supplies



and of the ability of General Chennault, for whom he had little affection, to achieve by air power alone those successes against the Japanese armies in China which were confidently promised. Chennault's air bases, he believed, would be valueless unless properly defended, for an intensification of the air battle would only provoke a Japanese land offensive; and this defence could be provided only if an overland route of communication were secured by the re-opening of the Burma Road. This, and not the airlift, he wished to see enjoy priority; and he was supported in his views both by General Marshall and by Admiral King.<sup>(14)</sup>

Both General Chennault and General Stilwell had already stated their cases before the President, and they had the chance to do so again before the Combined Chiefs of Staff at their meeting on the morning of 14th May.<sup>(15)</sup> The British commanders in the Far East were also present: Field Marshal Wavell, Admiral Sir James Somerville and Air Chief Marshal Sir Richard Pierse. General Brooke and Field Marshal Wavell came down strongly on Chennault's side, pointing out not only the logistic impossibility of launching 'Anakim' in November, but the enormous difficulties in the way of any effective attack into Northern Burma from Assam. Assam itself, Wavell pointed out, was miserable as a base. There were no bridges across the Brahmaputra river, and the supply of river steam-boats had been heavily drawn on to improve communications to Russia through Iraq. The single-track railway was subject to interruption by flooding, while the roads from India, poor enough in the dry season, were impassable during the monsoon. All material for airfield or road construction had to come from India over these inadequate communications, and the airfields already constructed in India for defensive purposes lay too far back to be used either to provide cover for the operations in Burma or to provide terminal bases for the airlift to China. Facilities, emphasised Field Marshal Wavell, were quite inadequate both to build up a communications network for a force large enough to invade Upper Burma and to provide enough airfields for the support of China. By concentrating on the latter he could enable the American Air Force to build up to their target figures of 10,000 tons a month. Even when the Burma Road was opened, put in General Brooke, it would take from six to nine months to develop its capacity to an equivalent extent.

General Stilwell, with sympathetic support from Admiral Leahy, presented the contrary case, stressing the devastating effect on Chinese morale if 'Anakim' were not launched and the Burma Road were not reopened. 'If a route for supplying China could be made safe everything else would follow, and conversely, if the route were lost, all of China would be lost.' The route

must be opened, he insisted, within the year: it was not the volume of supplies over it that counted, but the psychological effect on the Chinese. In particular, he informed a full meeting later the same day in the presence of the President and the Prime Minister,<sup>(16)</sup> the Chinese regarded 'Anakim' as an earnest of British good faith: 'it would be necessary for the British to prove to them that they were in earnest'. Something in the General's tone may have suggested that he himself shared the Chinese suspicions, for he drew the crushing rejoinder from the Prime Minister that he was not prepared to undertake something foolish purely in order to placate the Chinese. The Prime Minister's proposal of 'some sort of Asiatic "Torch" ', however, fell on unsympathetic ears, as being unlikely to bring direct help to China in a desperate situation.

But President Roosevelt had himself abandoned the idea that air support for China would be enough. He took up a suggestion that General Stilwell had made that morning and which the Joint Chiefs of Staff had already been considering;<sup>(17)</sup> that limited operations should be undertaken north of a north-east/south-west line through Lashio, to clear North Burma and open a road from Ledo to Yunnan. Field Marshal Wavell pointed out that this would mean building 250 miles of all-weather road in 5 months—'an engineering effort entirely beyond the capacity of the line of communication through Assam to support'—and that 25 percent casualties from malaria should be expected. Mr. Roosevelt was not disturbed. He briskly summed up the proceedings by declaring that the two objectives before them were to get 7,000 tons of supplies a month to China before July,\* and to open land communications to China. How this was to be done it would be for his military advisers to find out.

This cavalier and apparently casual decision was to be of decisive importance. Left to themselves the British might well have decided to abandon offensive land operations in Upper Burma altogether. The Prime Minister's open aversion from jungle fighting and preference for amphibious operations coincided with Field Marshal Wavell's gloomy if realistic assessment of the difficulties of any advance from Assam. Sir Alan Brooke and his colleagues on the Chiefs of Staff Committee opposed amphibious operations, not because they considered a land campaign to be either necessary or desirable, but because the shipping required would constitute an intolerable diversion from the European theatre. Nobody in fact on the British side favoured more than limited and defensive operations in North West Burma: yet the President succeeded,

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\* General Stilwell had assessed the needs of the Yunnan armies at 2,000 tons a month for the next five months, and General Chennault asked for 4,700 tons a month for four months, thereafter 7,000 tons.

by this cheerful summing up, in tabling the re-opening of the Burma Road as the basis for all future planning. His directive was to have far-reaching results.

The Chiefs of Staff referred the matter to the Combined Staff Planners,<sup>(18)</sup> who six days later produced two papers for their consideration: one on the potentialities of the air route from Assam to China, and one on operations in Burma to open and secure an overland route to China.<sup>(19)</sup> Both seemed, to the British element on the planning staff, to err heavily on the side of optimism, in spite of all they could do in discussion to tone them down.<sup>(20)</sup> The capacity of the air route was assessed at 20,000 tons a month in the wet season, and given adequate local facilities, estimated the U.S. planners, this could be doubled in the dry months. The transport system into Assam could be improved, steamers found for the Brahmaputra, machinery transferred to airfield construction from road-building, air transport used to move construction material, additional airfields constructed and further aircraft and crews allotted to the route. These sanguine expectations puzzled the British, who were not surprised when their American colleagues later disclaimed them as being based on a mistaken estimate of the number of aircraft that could be made available for the route. But the principle of overriding priority for the air route was accepted, and this was made a limiting factor in all planning of the advance overland.

The land operations which the Planners advocated fell into three groups. The first comprised a British-Chinese offensive in November-December 1943 to open the Burma Road by a three-pronged advance: three Chinese divisions striking south from Ledo to Myitkyina, ten Chinese divisions advancing south-west from Yunnan to a line Myitkyina-Bhamo-Lashio, and three British divisions, with two Long-Range Penetration Groups, attacking from Imphal south-east to Mandalay. The second group involved simultaneous operations to establish air bases on the Arakan coast, by landings at Akyab, Ramree Island, Taungup and Sandoway. The third consisted of operations following on the first two, to capture Rangoon by overland advances through Prome and Bassein (where another landing would be necessary) and from the north through Mandalay.

It was admitted by the planners that everything depended on the provision of large quantities of transportation, construction and other equipment; and (somewhat grimly in the light of the recent failure in Arakan) 'the British and Chinese reaching a sufficiently high standard of training vis-à-vis the Japanese'. It would be necessary to construct an all-weather road from Ledo behind the Chinese advance to join the Burma Road at Bhamo.

The British could extend their all-weather road from Tamu as far as Kalewa, but beyond that they would be dependent on an airlift estimated at 300 tons a day, which would be feasible only if they captured airfields at Monywa and Shwebo. But the entire operation could be completed within the dry season, they warned, only if additional major operations were carried on in south Burma to divert Japanese forces from the North; and too much should not be expected of what the operations would ultimately achieve. The Burma Road from Ledo to Yunnan could not be opened to all-weather traffic until the end of 1944, and after the forces protecting it had been supplied, the total flow through would be negligible. The main advantages of the operation would lie in the capture of airfields in Upper Burma from which aircraft unable to negotiate the hazards of the Hump could be added to the airlift; and, of course, in the attrition it would inflict on the Japanese.

These plans were to be the basis for the outstandingly successful campaign by which the British Fourteenth Army and its allies were to clear Burma the following year, under the very different conditions created by the failure of the Japanese offensive of March–May 1944 against Assam. Now the British looked at them sceptically.<sup>(21)</sup> Not only did they appear totally unrealistic, but the effort involved seemed out of all proportion to the result to be gained. The British planners thought it impossible to maintain British forces in Mandalay by air-drop once the monsoon had broken. Field Marshal Wavell did not believe that the operation could be mounted in time, or that Mandalay could be reached before the 1944 monsoon, or that the Yunnan Chinese would take part at all. ‘The outcome of the operations’, he told the Chiefs of Staff Committee, ‘would be that we should sacrifice large quantities of men, and would achieve nothing’. The only realistic course, in his view, would be for the Chinese at Ledo and in Yunnan to link hands at Myitkyina, and for the British to advance to Kalewa to do battle with the Japanese there. Admiral Pound supported the idea of limited land operations proceeding step by step; Air Chief Marshal Portal and Air Marshal Piere, conscious of the drain which any land operations would impose on Allied air strength, preferred simply to concentrate on building up the airlift. No voice was raised among the British Chiefs of Staff to speak in favour of the operation as planned.

When General Brooke came to present the British view to the Combined Chiefs of Staff on 20th May,<sup>(22)</sup> he took his stand on the original British proposals formulated on board the *Queen Mary*. He believed, he told the Americans, ‘that operations aimed at the capture of Mandalay were not possible of achievement’. Instead the Allies should concentrate on building up the air route, undertake limited, protective operations from Ledo and Imphal, and, on

the coast, aim at capturing Akyab and Ramree Island. The further amphibious operations proposed at Sandoway, Taungup and Bassein seemed to the British too ambitious. Field Marshal Wavell went into further detail both about the administrative problems which he feared and about the operations in North Burma which he had in mind. The attack from Yunnan should be directed at Lashio, that from Ledo at Myitkyina and Bhamo, that from Imphal towards the Chindwin, in order to secure a line which would cover the Myitkyina airfields. There they could consolidate and act according to the circumstances.

General Marshall was unconvinced. 'He was in no doubt', he said, 'as to the difficulties of the operations, but equally he was in no doubt as to their vital importance'; not only for keeping up Chinese morale but also for relieving Japanese pressure in the South West Pacific. It became evident during the discussions that the Joint Chiefs of Staff fully accepted their President's directive, that not only was the capacity of the air ferry to be increased but a land route to China must be opened as well; and the consequent debate about the limitations which logistics would impose on a Burma campaign became at times very heated indeed. General Somervell, chief of the U.S. Army Service of Supply, in particular, showed himself stubbornly unwilling to accept the calculations of Field Marshal Wavell and the British Chiefs of Staff. At length the meeting was adjourned and it was agreed that, as in the case of the European decisions, the Combined Chiefs should resolve their differences in private rather than in public debate under the critical and somewhat partisan eyes of their professional advisers.

Once again the technique was effective. By 3.30 that afternoon the Combined Chiefs had hammered out an agreed resolution in the following terms:<sup>(23)</sup>

'(a) The concentration of available resources as first priority within the Assam-Burma theatre on the building up and increasing of the air route to China to a capacity of 10,000 tons a month by early Fall, and the development of air facilities in Assam with a view to:

1. Intensifying air operations against the Japanese in Burma.
2. Maintaining increased American air forces in China.
3. Maintaining the flow of airborne supplies to China.

(b) Vigorous and aggressive land and air operations from Assam into Burma via Ledo and Imphal, in step with an advance by Chinese forces from Yunnan, with the object of containing as many Japanese forces as possible, covering the air route to China, and as an essential step towards the opening of the Burma Road.

(c) The capture of Akyab and Ramree Island by amphibious operations.

(d) The interruption of Japanese sea communications into Burma'.

The resolution was based on one drawn up by the British Chiefs of Staff at a separate meeting an hour earlier.<sup>(24)</sup> The wording was essentially the same in all major respects, save one. In the British draft, the sentence italicised above did not appear. The passage inserted was cautiously worded and did not commit the Allies to any operations wider in scope than those which Field Marshal Wavell considered practicable; but the principle was established that the final object of land operations in Burma was, as President Roosevelt had demanded, to open a land route to China.

Next day, when the resolution was submitted to the President and the Prime Minister,<sup>(25)</sup> Mr. Roosevelt regretted only that it contained no mention of the capture of Rangoon, and suggested that one should be made 'for political reasons'; but the Combined Chiefs thought it unwise to promise more than they thought themselves able to perform. They set their faces also against the rebellious Prime Minister, who still hankered after his amphibious operations in Sumatra and Malaya. These, Admiral King and Admiral Pound told him firmly, might come later: there were no resources for them now. Neither statesman pressed his point, and the joint resolution was accepted as it stood.

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About the wider plans for the Pacific there was little contention. The Americans were no more willing than they had been at Casablanca to accept British intervention in a theatre for which they carried total responsibility and, apart from the contributions of Australia and New Zealand, provided virtually all the resources. On 20th May the British Chiefs of Staff examined a memorandum from the American Joint Chiefs of Staff setting out their strategic plan for the defeat of Japan;<sup>(26)</sup> accepting it cautiously as a summary of American views which they did not necessarily endorse. This took as its starting point the assumption that in order to enforce unconditional surrender it might be necessary physically to invade Japan. To prepare for this a heavy bomber offensive would be needed, which could only be launched from bases on the mainland of Asia. Therefore China must be kept in the war, which meant that the Burma Road must be opened. But to supplement the Burma Road, a port must be seized on the Chinese mainland, and the obvious choice was Hongkong. Lines of communication to Hongkong must be seized, the Americans clearing the approaches to and recapturing the Philippines, the British clearing the Malacca Straits and enforcing wide dispersal on the Japanese, the Chinese

attacking overland. However, 'since control of the seas in the Western Pacific by the United Nations may force the unconditional surrender of Japan before invasion and even before Japan is subjected to an intensive air offensive, every means to gain this control will be undertaken by the United States'.

Events were to prove the American estimates unduly pessimistic, and to endorse the views both of the naval strategists who maintained that a heavily industrialised island power was doomed to defeat as soon as she lost control of the sea, and of the apostles of → air power who saw the key to victory in command of the air over their opponent's territory. But the same initial steps were necessary, whether the ultimate object was to cut Japanese sea communications, to get within bombing range of her cities, to invade physically her homeland, or all three; and on 21st May Admiral King expounded the American view as to what those steps should be. It was necessary, he said, in a phrase now familiar and official, 'to maintain and extend unremitting pressure against Japan, particularly by intensifying action to cut her lines of communication and to attain positions of readiness from which a full-scale offensive could be launched as soon as the full resources of the United Nations could be made available'. The first phase of operations, the safeguarding of American base areas and lines of communication to Australasia, was now complete. The new task must be to sever the Japanese lines of communication and to recapture the Philippines; and the intermediate objectives in accomplishing it must be Rabaul, the Japanese forward base in the Bismarck Archipelago, Truk in the Carolines, and the Mariana Islands which dominated the Japanese lines of communication.

How all this was to be achieved was set out in a paper by the United States Joint Staff Planners on 'Operations in the Pacific and Far East in 1943-44'<sup>(27)</sup> which was approved with only minor amendments by the Combined Chiefs of Staff. This began by examining the existing situation. Operations in Burma were vital to keep China in the war. Operations in the Solomons and the Bismarck area contributed to the defence of Australia and kept up pressure on the Japanese. The conquest of New Guinea would make the defence of Australia still more secure and help to open a supply-route to the Celebes Sea. Operations in the Marshalls would shorten communications to the South West Pacific, operations in the Carolines would secure control of the Central Pacific, both leading to the establishing of a secure line of communications to the Celebes. All these operations, considered the American planners, were 'essential to the attainment of positions which enable the intensification and expansion of attacks on enemy lines of communication in the Pacific'; and they recommended that 'for

these purposes, United States naval forces should be increased to a maximum consistent with the minimum requirements in the Atlantic, and, with due regard to the requirements of the main effort against the European Axis, air and ground forces should be provided so as to facilitate joint action and make optimum use of the increasing strength of United States naval forces'.

These additional air and ground forces they estimated at seven Army divisions and 469 aircraft, together with 264 additional aircraft for the force operating in China; not an immoderate allocation in view of the voracious demands which had been made by the representatives both of Central Pacific and South West Pacific Commands when they had come to a Pacific Conference in Washington the previous March, but one which the Army planners viewed with regret.<sup>(28)</sup> Naval forces were considered adequate; which, in view of the ability of the U.S. Navy to make its own allocations was only to be expected.

Given these resources, the American planners reckoned that in China General Chennault could subject the Japanese air force to costly attrition, attack Japanese shipping and industrial targets on the mainland of Asia and even launch limited attacks against the Japanese islands themselves, preparing the way for the large-scale attack which would follow as soon as logistic support was possible through a Chinese port. In the Solomons and the Bismarcks it was hoped that Rabaul could be isolated by the capture of New Britain and New Ireland after the Solomons had been cleared; which might be done at earliest by 1st April 1944. In New Guinea the successive seizure of airbases along the north and south-west coasts would extend American lines of communication to the Vogelkop area, but when could not be precisely foreseen. The capture of the Marshalls by amphibious operations under carrier-borne air cover, and the preparation of a further attack on the Carolines, would take up to seven months at least. Then the Carolines should be seized and a main fleet base, protected by outlying air bases, should be established at Truk, to dominate the Central Pacific. Finally, in the Aleutian Islands the Japanese should be driven from Kiska, but no further operations should be undertaken until Russia entered the war against Japan.

All these operations it must be remembered, ambitious and far-flung as they seemed, were seen both by the Americans and by the British as preliminaries to a yet more intensive attack; the securing of favourable positions for an assault which could only be launched after Germany had been defeated and both Allies could bring their full strength to bear against Japan. The extent to which Japan would bleed herself to death in the stubborn defence of indefensible extremities; the speed with which attrition was to



waste her irreplaceable ships and aircraft; above all her total vulnerability to assault from the air—none of this could be fully foreseen. Moreover the shaping of Pacific strategy was now so purely a domestic matter for the Americans—although not to be settled without ferocious internal controversy—that the British Chiefs of Staff were content at ‘Trident’ to play the part of a sympathetic audience. But their passive acquiescence in American planning was made all the easier by one new factor which made the Conference a landmark, a vital turning-point, in the war: the conclusion that Allied resources, particularly in shipping, were likely to be adequate to all the demands which Allied strategy would impose.

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Three factors explain the change in the shipping position. The first we have already considered: the passing of the crisis of the U-boat war, which was evident less in the decrease of Allied losses, although these were striking enough [total losses, after touching an unprecedented peak of 102 vessels in March, sank to 53 in April and 50 in May], than in the dramatic increase in the rate of U-boat killings, which leapt up from 16 in March and 17 in April to 47 in May.<sup>(29)</sup> The situation was already clear enough by 24th May for Mr. Churchill to open proceedings on that day by saying of it, ‘Today we meet in the presence of a new fact’.<sup>(30)</sup> He was right, but this was only part of the picture. The second factor, no less encouraging, was the rate of launching of American ships, which was now at its peak.<sup>(31)</sup> Thirdly, the prospect of clearing the Mediterranean by the end of the summer encouraged the British authorities to hope for a considerable measure of relief on their overtaxed resources.

But the relief arising from all these sources could only be gradual. There already appeared to be a deficit estimated at between 9 per cent and 12 per cent of the total United Nations tonnage available for carrying both civil and military supplies.<sup>(32)</sup> As has been described in Chapter XV above, the causes for this deficit had been sharply debated between the two Allies. The American service authorities were reluctant to regard as sacrosanct the 27 million tons of British imports, for 7 million tons of which the United States had agreed to provide the shipping, even after the President had insisted that they should do so.<sup>(33)</sup> The British on the other hand considered that the American services were unnecessarily prodigal in their use of shipping. The fact that the Americans estimated the required tonnage per man at 1·3 tons a month, whereas the British made do with ·7 tons, lent some colour to this

belief,<sup>(34)</sup> which was widely shared by officials of the American War Shipping Administration. Nevertheless after a consultation which began on the morning of Saturday 22nd May and ended at 6.45 on the morning of Sunday 23rd, the shipping experts on both sides reached agreement. Their calculations were inevitably hurried and tentative; but they indicated that the total deficit for the rest of the year would only be 155 sailings; and this, the Americans asserted hopefully, would be 'not unmanageable'.<sup>(35)</sup> Thereafter in 1944 the deficit would be transformed by increasing production into a safe surplus.

The Combined Staff Planners were therefore able to report, in a remarkable and thorough survey of Allied commitments and capabilities,<sup>(36)</sup> that 'All the ground forces required can be made available . . . all the naval forces required can be made available', unless a covering force was required for operations at Akyab and Ramree before the Italian fleet had been eliminated; and 'broadly there are sufficient air forces to meet all requirements in all theatres', including, subject to the development of airfields and communications in Assam, the air transport and defence requirements of the air route into China, up to 10,000 tons a month. About shipping, they concluded,

'On the assumption that future losses do not exceed the agreed estimate, personnel ships will be available to permit of the optimum deployment of United Nations forces up to the limits imposed by the availability of cargo shipping.

The optimum deployment of available United Nations cargo shipping to meet the requirements of the basic undertakings and projected operations for 1943/1944 reveals small deficiencies in the third and fourth quarters of 1943 and the first quarter of 1944 and a surplus of sailings in the second and third quarters of 1944. The deficiencies are small and, if properly spread over all the programs concerned, the effect will not be unmanageable'.

Their conclusions about landing-craft were curious: on the one hand they stated that:

'Provided the casualties in operations are no greater than we have allowed for, and provided that the U.S. and British planned productions are maintained, all the assault shipping and landing-craft required can be made available'.

On the other hand they made it clear that steel for landing-craft construction was critically short. The British rate of construction, they agreed, could not be increased except at the expense of other naval construction, and that could not be accepted; while American production could be increased only if additional material were provided.

'For the *present* naval building program there is already a deficit of 110,000 tons of steel in the third quarter [they noted]. From the above it will be seen that a strong possibility exists that not only will it be impossible to increase production in landing-craft, but it may even become necessary to accept cuts in the *present* landing-craft program'.

Quite how from these gloomy premises the Planners derived their optimistic conclusion, it is not easy to see. Certainly neither they nor their military and civilian masters foresaw at this stage the extent to which this apparently minor shortcoming was to mar an outlook which seemed in every other respect to be so uniformly fair.

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The shipping situation was not so satisfactory that the Allies did not consider drastic measures to be still necessary to improve it. Ever since the war at sea entered its critical stage in 1940 with the German conquest of the Atlantic littoral of Europe from Narvik to Biarritz, the British Naval Staff had considered the advantages which possession of bases in the Azores and the Cape Verde Islands would afford in the protection of convoy routes.<sup>(37)</sup> If fuelling facilities could be obtained there for escort vessels and air bases for long-range aircraft, the task of routing and protecting convoys would be greatly eased. So far it had been possible to provide air-cover for convoys routed by the inconvenient and all too well-known northerly passage via Iceland. Bases in the Atlantic Islands would make possible the provision of air-cover not only over all Atlantic convoys, which would make evasive routing much easier, but over convoys on the South American, West African and Mediterranean runs as well; besides improving facilities for harassing submarines in mid-Atlantic, enabling more economical use to be made of escort vessels, and providing staging points on the air supply route between the United States and the Mediterranean. The British failure hitherto to take possession of these Portuguese islands, whose value to her very survival was so great, was due not simply to respect for the property of an old if now powerless friend and the punctilious observance of the laws of war, but also to the easy riposte which lay to the German hand in the physical invasion of Portugal, and possibly the whole Iberian peninsula as well, with consequent repercussions on the whole British position in the Mediterranean. As in her great wars of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, Britain found that the use of her sea power could be restrained by her inability to check the progress of a continental rival by land.

Now the situation was transformed. A hard pressed Germany was unlikely to be in any position to retaliate by invading Portugal, and the growing volume of Allied shipping was going to need all the facilities it could get. The Chiefs of Staff recognised<sup>(38)</sup> that it would be out of the question to help Portugal to repel a German attack except by jettisoning all further operations in the Mediterranean, Sicily included; but they considered that such an attack was a risk which could now be accepted. They recommended therefore 'that the War Cabinet should authorise an approach to the Portuguese Government now but no guarantee should be given, and every endeavour should be made to persuade the Portuguese that no threat exists'.

Mr. Churchill was prepared to go very much further. From the *Queen Mary* he had cabled to the Deputy Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary:

'... personally I should be prepared, if U.S. would join us ... not only to "approach" the Portuguese, but to let them know, if they made difficulties, that we intend to take over these islands which are necessary for our life and for the successful prosecution of the war, and hope that it might be done without bloodshed. It might be easier for them to yield to *force majeure* having made protest, even going so far as breaking off relations, than for them to connive at or openly assent to such a violation of their neutrality'.<sup>(39)</sup>

Neither Mr. Roosevelt nor his Joint Chiefs of Staff made any objection to the proposal. Admiral King suggested that, in view of the British alliance with Portugal, it might cause less embarrassment if the Americans undertook the occupation of the islands, but the British Chiefs of Staff thought—and rightly as events turned out—that this was fundamentally to mistake the Portuguese attitude. The Combined Chiefs were content to accept the British proposal that, since the Azores were in the British area of responsibility in the Atlantic, the British should carry out the occupation.<sup>(40)</sup> On 18th May they therefore made a formal recommendation to the President and the Prime Minister, on the lines of the British recommendation quoted above; adding the proposal 'that while the diplomatic approach is being made forces should be prepared for the prompt seizure and use of the Azores if diplomacy fails'.<sup>(41)</sup>

Mr. Churchill needed no prompting. He demanded that all reference to a diplomatic approach should be deleted from the recommendation and suggested that the Combined Chiefs should confine themselves to giving purely military advice.<sup>(42)</sup> To his political colleagues in London he sent off a cable urgently demanding their consent to a *coup de main* against the Azores.<sup>(43)</sup> He did not, he said, feel that a diplomatic approach to the Portuguese would

be successful, but he did consider that if presented with an ultimatum the night before the expedition landed they would yield, and bloodshed would be avoided. He quoted the formal recommendation by the Combined Chiefs of Staff, adding, 'my estimate that one million tons of shipping and several thousand lives might be saved was regarded by the Combined Chiefs of Staff as a serious under-estimate. In short military necessity is established in the most solid manner . . .' He dismissed 'the legalistic point involved in overriding the neutrality of Portugal in respect of these islands . . . the fate of all these small nations depends upon our victory'. He reminded his colleagues that in the First World War the United Kingdom, in spite of having gone to war to defend the neutrality of Belgium, had not hesitated to violate the neutrality of Greece. 'In this case the issue is more precisely pointed because the rate of new buildings over sinkings is the measure of our power to wage war and so to bring this pouring out of blood to a timely end'.

The War Cabinet were not convinced by the Prime Minister's urgings. Mr. Attlee and Mr. Eden had already had to inform Mr. Churchill that the Defence Committee was opposed to the forcible seizure of the Islands and believed that a frank request to the Portuguese Government would have 'a fair chance of success'.<sup>(44)</sup> When the War Cabinet itself met to consider the Prime Minister's recommendations of 21st May only one voice was raised in their support.<sup>(45)</sup> There was a general disinclination to follow the Nazi example by making an attack without provocation or warning on the territories of a friendly Power who had done her best to observe the obligations of neutrality and who had only recently been provided with arms to defend herself against possible German aggression. One Minister pointed out drily 'that the various recent public statements which had been made as to the progress of the Battle of the Atlantic would make it difficult to argue that the seizure of the Islands at this moment was absolutely necessary'. Another added that Portugal might retaliate by allowing Germany to pre-empt her entire supply of wolfram. Mr. Attlee and Mr. Eden cabled Mr. Churchill after the meeting, telling him that the Cabinet felt very strong objection to the course proposed on grounds of principle, which outweighed the military advantage of attacking without a preliminary diplomatic approach, and asking that a decision should be postponed until the matter could be discussed with him after his return.

The Prime Minister's military advisers were no less disturbed by his desire to by-pass diplomatic action than were his political colleagues. A message to the Chiefs of Staff in Washington from their Vice-Chiefs in London<sup>(46)</sup> pointed out that, unless generous American help was provided with landing-craft, the mounting of

the operation from the United Kingdom would delay preparations for 'Roundup'. Alternatively it might be possible to use assault-craft from the Sicilian landings; but that would postpone the attack until mid-September, which would be too late to establish bases for the winter.

Possibly as the result of this advice, the Chiefs of Staff raised again with their American colleagues the question of a diplomatic approach. It would have the advantage, they argued, of securing the use of the Islands earlier, and avoid all the problems presented by the collecting of resources for and the mounting of an expedition.<sup>(47)</sup> The possibility was also discussed of mounting an expedition with lighter forces as quickly as possible, without any prior diplomatic approach, but of calling it off at the last moment if the Portuguese threatened to fight;<sup>(48)</sup> but on reflection this policy of bluff was considered unwise. The British Cabinet proved adamant in face of Mr. Churchill's renewed urgings, agreeing only that preparations for the expedition should be made and that the Portuguese Government should be approached 'at a time to be agreed upon'.<sup>(49)</sup> The Prime Minister, with that impeccable respect for the Constitution which he showed even in his most bellicose moments, bowed to the collective Cabinet decision, though he did not hide his discontent with it. It was agreed therefore merely that the British should present a plan for the occupation and use of the Azores, and, once it was approved by the Combined Chiefs, make preparations to implement it. 'Meanwhile,' it was decided, 'the political decision involved will be settled by the two Governments'.<sup>(50)</sup>

In the event all was to be well. The diplomatic approach was tried and was successful, although the consequent negotiations were complicated and prolonged. The United Nations were spared a distasteful decision which could only have given rise to violent and justifiable controversy among their own peoples. A step which might have been applauded as a desperate expedient in the sombre days of 1940-41, when national survival hung by a thread, could no longer be justified in 1943 by the plea—doubtful at all times—of military necessity; and military convenience, however great, has seldom been regarded by posterity as a justifiable excuse for such flamboyant breaches of international law.

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One other matter came up for decision at 'Trident'; a question of political rather than military significance, and one settled by the President and the Prime Minister in the opposite sense to that recommended by their military advisers.

Both General Eisenhower in Algiers and General Wilson in Cairo had taken the opportunity of the 'Trident' Conference to voice their discontent with the directives they had received for prosecuting political warfare against Italy in order to speed her surrender. These<sup>(51)</sup> laid down that up to the moment of the invasion of Italy there should be no indication of lenient treatment for the conquered. The hopelessness of Italy's position and the Allied determination to prosecute the war with all possible force were to be emphasised, and though passive resistance and sabotage were to be encouraged there was to be no appeal to premature revolt. Only on the very eve of the invasion was this line to be modified to the extent of presenting the Allies as liberators, not conquerors, and giving assurance that Italy would survive as a nation after the Fascist régime had collapsed; but no specific territorial commitments were to be made.

This 'hard' line, in the view of both the commanders, underestimated the determination of the Italian people to fight in defence of their homeland. It would be wiser, they considered, not only to emphasise the overwhelming material superiority of the Allies which would make resistance anyhow hopeless, but suggest that honourable terms would be offered in the event of a surrender—that, as General Eisenhower put it, 'a cessation of hostilities on their part will be accepted by the Allies as evidence of good judgment, entitling them eventually to a "Peace with Honour";' and that 'the policy of the Allied Governments pledges full nationhood for Italy after the defeat of the Axis and the removal of the Fascist Government and assures full benefits as provided in the Atlantic Charter'.<sup>(52)</sup> Cairo went even further. 'We should *not* criticise unreservedly the Fascist régime', they suggested, 'which has many tangible and material achievements to its account, but should make it clear our quarrel is with those men and that part of the system responsible for the war'.<sup>(53)</sup>

The Vice-Chiefs of Staff in London endorsed General Eisenhower's proposals on purely military grounds. 'If Eisenhower thinks that propaganda switch now gives better chance of success', they recommended 'we feel that he should have his way'.<sup>(54)</sup> The Foreign Office had its reservations, disliking the phrase 'Peace with Honour', criticising the suggested timing of the statement and criticising also Eisenhower's suggested assurances as being 'vague' and likely to 'land us in commitments we are unable to fulfil'. But they supported the principle of a more positive and encouraging approach to the Italians, proposing an appeal to the spirit of Garibaldi and the great Risorgimento sentiment of *fuori i Tedeschi*. 'Italy can still be saved', ran their suggested proclamation, 'if you, the Italian people, will take her destinies out of the hands of Mussolini

and the Germans; if the armies of Italy, whose valour has so far been displayed in an unworthy cause, will turn their arms against their real enemies; if Italy will receive the armies of the United Nations, not as conquerors but as liberators!'<sup>(65)</sup>

This eloquence struck no answering chord in the breasts of Mr. Churchill and the President. They had already once allowed themselves to be persuaded by military arguments into accepting a political accommodation which their electorates had found too unsavoury for their tastes, and they had no desire now to encourage the hopes of any Italian Darlan. Whether they, any more than their electorates, had seriously considered with whom, if not with an Italian Darlan, peace *was* to be negotiated, may be doubted. In any event they turned down General Eisenhower's proposals flat. Mr. Roosevelt declared, in words with which the Prime Minister expressed his full agreement:

'Most certainly we cannot tell the Italians that if they cease hostilities they will have peace with honour. We cannot get away from unconditional surrender. All we can tell them is that they will be treated by us and the British with humanity and with the intention that the Italian people be reconstituted into a nation, in accordance with the principles of self-determination.

This latter would, of course, not include any form of Fascism or dictatorship'.

It is clear that at Washington, as at Casablanca, the problems of waging war were still too urgent to leave the Allied leaders opportunity to consider at any length the no less complicated issues involved in making peace.



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## BOOK FIVE

### CHAPTER XXIV

# THE DISINTEGRATION OF THE AXIS

APRIL – SEPTEMBER 1943

**T**HE NEED to deal with an Italian surrender was to arise sooner than Mr. Churchill and the President expected.

With the loss of the last remnants of their African Empire, with their armies crowded into a narrow and almost isolated bridge-head in Tunisia, with their shipping driven from the seas and their cities heavily attacked from the air, the Italian people had since the beginning of the year been suffering really seriously from the concentration of forces deployed by the Allies. In March a wave of strikes had swept the industrial towns of North Italy, leading Mussolini to dismiss both his Chief of Police and the Fascist Party Secretary for failing to prevent trouble or to mobilise morale; and their successors were given categorical directions to do better.<sup>(1)</sup> But suppression of discontent was of little value unless some positive steps could be taken to solve Italy's military predicament; and the Italian Government saw no prospect of such a solution unless Germany patched up some kind of agreement on the Eastern Front and concentrated her reserves in the Mediterranean, as Mussolini had been urging since the previous autumn.

On 7th April Mussolini himself, though still far from well, visited Hitler at Klessheim, near Salzburg, to press his views. They were no longer his views alone. They were shared by all Germany's allies. The Rumanian and Hungarian governments had been urging Mussolini to act as their spokesman and take the leadership of a kind of 'European movement' within the Axis. Even the Japanese, a few weeks later, were to express their alarm at the prospect of a further German offensive in Russia and at their allies' inability to save the situation in the Mediterranean, the loss of which would have far-reaching consequences for their own campaigns.<sup>(2)</sup> But Mussolini found Hitler as loquaciously obdurate as ever. Once again the Führer pointed out, with some reason, the impossibility of any disengagement from the Russian front. Once again he assured Mussolini that Tunisia would be held

'at whatever cost'. But once again, as General Ambrosio bitterly commented, Italian requests for positive help went unanswered—except for a supply of arms and equipment which the Führer prudently provided for Mussolini's personal protection. When a month later the Tunisian bridgehead collapsed, Italy thus found herself in the front line, with little prospect of obtaining any effective help from her ally. 'Can our country resist an invasion?' asked General Castellano, General Ambrosio's principal staff officer, in a pessimistic memorandum. 'The Italians do not lack patriotism, but it cannot be claimed that they will endure beyond a certain limit when their hopes of a final victory are fading day by day.'<sup>(3)</sup>

Yet when the Germans did offer substantial help the Italian response was equivocal. On 5th May General von Rintelen reported the low morale of the Italian forces to Hitler in very blunt terms. If Allied troops once secured a lodgement on Italian soil, he warned, 'most unpleasant consequences may follow in view of the atmosphere of reigning fatalism'.<sup>(4)</sup> Hitler offered his ally three German divisions, an offer which he later increased to five. This response only caused embarrassment. The Italians had hoped rather for equipment, armour and air support to enable them to fight for themselves; the prospect of large numbers of German troops coming to defend Italy was not one which they found alluring. Relations between Italian and German military staffs were rapidly cooling, and any increase in the powers—and the size—of the latter would be most unwelcome. Mussolini therefore replied, on 13th May, that three divisions would be ample, so long as they comprised a substantial proportion of armour and had adequate air and A.A. support. The reaction of *O.K.W.* to this treatment of their generous offer was one, according to General Warlimont, of 'painful surprise'.<sup>(5)</sup>

What were the Germans to make of all this? How far was their Italian ally still to be trusted? How important was the defence of Italy in the general context of the Mediterranean theatre? And how important was the Mediterranean theatre in the general context of the war? A new offensive on the Russian front was in preparation which left few German troops to spare; yet the collapse of Italy would lay open to attack not only the Italian mainland and islands but also the other areas garrisoned by Italian troops—a section of the coast of Southern France and, most important, the Balkans, where the Germans had as yet only some eight divisions. Allied command of the sea and air in the Mediterranean made any kind of counter-attack appear out of the question to anyone except the indefatigable Dönitz. Dönitz repeatedly urged a policy of harassing raids on Allied installations in North Africa, and,

most strongly, the occupation of Spain, which could ease the increasing difficulties which he was facing in waging the Battle of the Atlantic. But this Hitler rejected. A guerrilla war in Spain was more than the overburdened German war-machine could stand: 'They are the only tough Latin people', explained the Führer on 14th May, in terms which his racially-minded subordinates might be expected to understand.<sup>(6)</sup>

All the Axis could do therefore was to guess where the next blow would fall, and prepare to parry it as best they could. The pattern of Allied air attacks convinced the Italian High Command that the objectives were now Sicily or Sardinia.<sup>(7)</sup> About Sardinia Hitler agreed; but he could not believe that a primary objective of the Allies would not now be the strategically vulnerable, economically vital Balkan peninsula. If the worst came to the worst, he pointed out on 19th May, the Italian peninsula 'could be sealed off somehow'; but 'it is of decisive importance for us to hold the Balkans. Copper, bauxite, chrome, and, above all, security, so that there is not a complete smash there if the Italian matter develops'.<sup>(8)</sup> The Allies had considerably indicated, through Operation 'Mincemeat',\* that the Balkans, together with Sardinia, were indeed their objective; so on 12th May *O.K.W.*, in a directive announcing the imminence of Allied attack, laid it down that 'Measures regarding Sardinia and the Peloponnese take precedence over everything else'.<sup>(9)</sup>

But even if Hitler had judged Allied intentions correctly, it is doubtful whether he would have committed many German troops to the defence of Sicily. His suspicion of Italian intentions was growing. Mussolini he trusted entirely, but the Duce, as Hitler had noted with concern at Klessheim, was a sick man; and dictators cannot afford to be ill. In the background was the Court, Anglophile, unreliable, 'weaving its web', as Hitler put it, ever since 1939.<sup>(10)</sup> The General Staff was no better. The German Embassy in Rome reported that the Crown Prince, who held the titular command of all forces in southern Italy and the islands, and General Roatta, who at that time commanded the Italian *Sixth Army* in Sicily, were particularly suspect. Kesselring defended the trustworthiness of the allies with whom he had worked so closely and for so long; but Hitler commented at a conference on 20th May, 'Kesselring is a colossal optimist and we must take care that this optimism does not blind him to the fact that a moment may come when hardness is required, not optimism'.<sup>(11)</sup> Rommel, with more disagreeable memories of the Italians, urged caution. It might not, he suggested, be wise to send troops into Italy when

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\* See p. 370, above.

the Italians might at any moment block the frontier and stop them getting out again. Hitler was inclined to agree. Sicily could not be abandoned altogether, but preparations should be made to deal with the eventuality of an Italian collapse—even Italian treason. Of these measures Rommel, not the more Italophile Kesselring, was to take control.<sup>(12)</sup>

Rommel received his orders for this operation (Operation 'Alarich') on 22nd May.<sup>(13)</sup> Six or seven motorised or armoured divisions were to be brought from the Eastern Front and disposed round the Italian frontiers in three groups at Villach, in Bavaria and the Tyrol, and in the South of France, ready to enter Italy at short notice. Field Marshal von Rundstedt, Commander-in-Chief West, was to stand by to take over from the Italians in the South of France; while a further operation ('Konstantin') was mounted to secure the vital positions in the Balkans.<sup>(14)</sup>

At this stage, if we are to believe the evidence of General Warlimont,<sup>(15)</sup> Hitler considered that in the event of an Italian defection the requirements of all other theatres of war, including even the Russian, should be subordinated to the defence of the Mediterranean. The collapse of his strategy on the Eastern Front and the catastrophes which had overtaken German forces there during the past six months had deprived Hitler of all his somnambulist self-confidence in the conduct of operations. The line in Russia had been stabilized in March before the spring rains began, but the situation was still potentially disastrous. Kharkov was once more in German hands, but from there the front ran south-east along the Donetz and the Mius rivers, enclosing the rich mining and industrial areas which Hitler was desperately anxious to retain but offering the Russians a salient which was, in the words of General von Manstein, 'just begging to be sliced off'. Von Manstein saw that a Russian offensive against his depleted *Southern Army Group* could not only cut off this salient but strike deep into the Ukraine, menace the oilfields of Rumania, impress the wavering Turks and encourage the insurgent peoples of the Balkan peninsula.<sup>(16)</sup> The solution which he favoured was to turn against the Russians the strategy which they had themselves employed so successfully the previous autumn: allow their offensive to develop and, when it reached the Clausewitzian culmination point of over-extension, to strike down from the north against the exposed flank, giving them a choice between an annihilating battle of encirclement or precipitate withdrawal.

It may be doubted whether this bold strategy would have succeeded. The Russian superiority of force was now great. Since Soviet divisions were substantially smaller than German, comparisons are misleading; but German intelligence at the beginning

of March had identified 600 enemy units of divisional strength confronting the 159 they themselves were able to deploy.<sup>(17)</sup> This meant that the Russians could bring pressure to bear simultaneously on all parts of the front, especially against the exposed salients at Kharkov-Belgorod and Orel, to draw in German reserves; something which shortage of forces would have made impossible for the Germans in their offensive the previous summer. In any case this mobile strategy, involving the possible abandonment of the Donetz industrial area, was too bold for Hitler. He accepted instead the proposals put forward by General Zeitzler and the staff of *O.K.H.\** for a limited offensive against the Russian salient which jutted westwards between Belgorod and Orel, covering the town of Kursk. The advantages of this were obvious. It would deprive the Russians of a jumping-off place for their offensive into the Ukraine; it would shorten the line, enabling, according to *O.K.H.* calculations, about ten divisions to be withdrawn into reserve; it would be strictly limited in scope, making the best use of the equally limited forces still available to the *Wehrmacht*, but victory there would significantly raise the morale of the Axis peoples and act as a grim warning to the Western Powers as they contemplated the invasion of Europe. 'The victory at Kursk', wrote Hitler in a directive of 15th April, 'must be a beacon-light for the world'.<sup>(18)</sup>

But it was a beacon which he showed no enthusiasm about lighting. The Operation ('Citadel') had originally been planned in March, to take place at the beginning of May as soon as the ground was dry after the spring rains. It was to take the form of a pincer movement, forces from von Manstein's *Southern Army Group* striking north from Belgorod, while General Model's *Ninth Army*, from von Kluge's *Central Army Group*, struck south from Orel. But such an operation was highly predictable, and it soon became clear that the Russians were building up strong defences at exactly the points where the Germans were preparing to attack. As intelligence of their preparations accumulated, Hitler decided to wait until the new heavy armour coming off the German production-lines—The 'Tiger' and 'Panther' tanks, the 'Ferdinand' self-propelled gun—was available in sufficient quantities to break through the defences. The attack was therefore postponed, first till June, then till July. General Guderian, the leading German specialist on armoured warfare, opposed it flatly.<sup>(19)</sup> So did Jodl, who was appalled at the idea of committing such forces to battle in the East when so grave a threat was looming in the South and West.<sup>(20)</sup> Von Manstein lost all enthusiasm once he realised that surprise had been lost.<sup>(21)</sup> As for Hitler, he admitted on 10th May

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\* *Oberkommando des Heeres*: Army Supreme Command.



'whenever I think of this attack, my stomach turns over'.<sup>(22)</sup> Zeitzler still supported the operation; Keitel, for what he was worth, agreed with him 'for political reasons';<sup>(23)</sup> and on 18th June Hitler decreed that the attack should go forward. A week later the date was selected: 5th July.<sup>(24)</sup> Two Air Fleets, nineteen armoured and motorised and fourteen infantry divisions had now been concentrated for the operation, disposing of a total of 1,800 aircraft and nearly 2,000 tanks.<sup>(25)</sup>

The operation duly began, and in the south it did not go too badly. Von Manstein could report an advance of ten miles on the first day. But then both his forces and von Kluge's in the north settled down to a grinding battle of attrition among a network of mine-fields and anti-tank defences in which they possessed no clear advantage either in armour or in artillery, and in which their operations were increasingly restricted by shortage of fuel. North of the Kursk battlefield the Russians unleashed, on 11th July, an assault against the defences of Orel which pinned down the forces available to the Germans for their attack. Nevertheless von Manstein at least was satisfied with the progress of the battle, as measured by comparative casualties, when on 13th July he was summoned, with von Kluge, to Hitler's headquarters. There Hitler informed them that the attack must be broken off. Though evidence on this point is conflicting, von Manstein in his memoirs states that Hitler gave as his specific reason for the abandonment of the offensive the Anglo-American landings in Sicily three days earlier. German forces, he told his commanders, would have to be found from Russia to restore the situation or at least to prevent a complete disintegration of the Mediterranean flank.<sup>(26)</sup>

So the ill-fated Operation 'Citadel' was abandoned. Three weeks later, at the beginning of August, the Russians attacked on either side of the Kursk salient, driving the Germans from Belgorod and Orel. Kharkov they recaptured on 22nd August, and von Manstein barely had time to withdraw his threatened forces in the south and re-establish them along the line of the Dnieper before the Russians had established bridgeheads over the river themselves. Henceforth the Russians were not to lose the initiative again; and there was to be little pause in their progress until the Red Army, twenty months later, stormed into Berlin.

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The Allied landings in Sicily on 10th July did not take either the Italian High Command or their German colleagues in Rome by surprise. They had been less impressed by the documents on the drowned British 'courier' than by the concentration of shipping opposite their shores in the North African ports and by the pattern

of Allied strategic bombing<sup>(27)</sup>—in particular the overwhelming concentration against Pantelleria. This had begun on 8th June and led, after 5,258 sorties of aircraft had dropped 4,656 tons of high explosive,<sup>(28)</sup> to the capitulation of that island three days later; the most spectacular display of air power that the world had yet seen. At the end of the month Kesselring had submitted a sober assessment of the chances which the Axis stood of holding Sicily and Sardinia.<sup>(29)</sup> 'The fighting strength of the Italian fleet (with only one battleship ready for action at the moment) is so reduced', he admitted, 'that neither the resources of the Italian Navy nor the weak, light forces of the Germans can be expected to offer any serious obstruction to enemy landing operations'. The defence of Sicily, Sardinia and Corsica, he considered, would none the less be feasible 'in terms simply of forces and materials available. The decisive consideration is the attitude of the Italian troops. It is to be hoped that the presence and further commitment of German troops will enable Italian morale to rise to the occasion. If the defences crumble and the Italians themselves do not fight, then the islands will be lost sooner or later, as the German forces there are not strong enough to hold them alone for any length of time'.

The Axis fighting units in Sicily, where Roatta had now been replaced in command of the Italian *Sixth Army* by General Alfredo Guzzoni, consisted of ten Italian divisions—six of them coastal defence units of low quality—and two German formations, the *Hermann Göring* and *15th Panzer Grenadier Divisions*. These German units, which were reserved for a counter-attack role, were tactically subordinate to Italian headquarters, but Kesselring instructed them to operate 'only according to German principles'.<sup>(30)</sup> Coastal defences Kesselring admitted to be inadequate and obsolete. The morale of the Sicilians was low and their attitude to the German troops 'not very friendly'. Nevertheless Kesselring gave his colleague General von Senger und Etterlin, liaison officer with the Italian *Sixth Army* Headquarters, to understand that he had every hope of turning any invasion into 'another Dieppe'.<sup>(31)</sup>

The course of events on and after 10th July confounded Kesselring's brave professions, but bore out his analysis of the strategic situation. The Allied landings on the Sicilian beaches were virtually unopposed, and the immediate counter-attacks launched against the U.S. Seventh Army by the *Hermann Göring* and *Livorno Divisions* were effectively broken up by artillery and naval fire. The air fields at Gela and the port of Licata fell within a few hours. The ports of Syracuse and Augusta were open and in full working order within three days. Losses not only in men but in landing-craft were gratifyingly low; and the bold use of airborne troops, though most of them missed their destined targets, caused some

confusion to the Italian Army Command.<sup>(32)</sup> Within two days the Allies had landed, according to General Alexander's official Despatch, 80,000 men, 7,000 vehicles, 300 tanks and 900 guns. Most important of all, many Italian units made no attempt to fight, but at the very first opportunity surrendered *en masse*.

The landings in Sicily resolved at least some of the problems of the German planners. *O.K.W.* did not rule out the probability of a further landing in Greece, and they anticipated that the Allies might push their attack across to the Balkans rather than up the Italian mainland. But at least no attack was now likely in North West Europe, and Field Marshal von Rundstedt's forces could be freely drawn on as a reserve for the Mediterranean Front.<sup>(33)</sup> Hitler's own reaction was immediate. He ordered two more German formations, *1st Parachute* and *29th Panzer Grenadier Divisions*, to be hurried into Sicily to throw the invaders into the sea.<sup>(34)</sup> Also despatched was *XIV Panzer Corps Headquarters* whose commander, General Hube, had secret instructions to assume operational command by 'unobtrusively excluding the Italian higher formations'. Kesselring indeed informed him that 'if a certain situation arose' he was to take command of all forces in the island. Hitler was particularly infuriated by the supine attitude of the Italian troops, and above all by the ease with which they abandoned the important naval base at Augusta. He instructed General von Rintelen to urge Mussolini to take 'appropriate measures' and to point out the uselessness of Germany sending further troops if the Italians did not fight. Nevertheless, on 13th July, he confirmed his orders for the despatch of reinforcements. Further, in response to Italian pleas for air support he authorised the transfer of three groups of bombers from the West and one of bombers and one of fighters from the South East theatres. Next day German forces assumed responsibility for the A.A. defences round the Straits of Messina.<sup>(35)</sup>

In spite of widespread surrenders by Italian units the Axis forces in Sicily rapidly recovered their balance. It took a few days for the Allies, whose order of battle had been drawn up to meet tough opposition on the beaches, to reorganise themselves for a rapid penetration inland. The German and the more stalwart of their Italian allies were thus able to withdraw slowly to a strong position covering Catania, which they held successfully against the attacks opened by the Eighth Army on 14th July. On the British left flank operations were complicated by boundary disputes with the Americans which might have been avoided by a little more administrative efficiency and diplomatic tact on the part of some of the senior British officers concerned. The resulting tension was relieved when General Alexander released the U.S. Seventh Army from the unwelcome and passive role he had originally assigned to it,

as a mere flank-guard to the British advance, and authorised it to strike westward and seize the port of Palermo. General Patton needed no urging; and while his right wing bisected the island from south to north, his left entered Palermo on 22nd July.

By this time it was clear that General Montgomery's attempt to rush Catania had failed, and that the Axis forces, now virtually commanded by General Hube, were building up a formidably strong position, based on the massif of Mount Etna, across the whole north-east quarter of the island. General Alexander therefore regrouped his forces and on 25th July gave orders to his Army Commanders for a new combined assault. The U.S. Seventh Army was to drive eastward, leap-frogging its divisions along the narrow road skirting the northern shore of the island to break through the German line where it ran into the sea at San Fratello. Within the Eighth Army the main assault was to be delivered by its left wing, XXX Corps, in the centre of the island through Adrano and Agira. The attack was timed for 29th July. But by then a great deal had happened on the other side of the hill.

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Hitler's anger at the poor performance of the Italian forces had made no impression on the Italian Supreme Command. General Ambrosio indeed made clear his belief that responsibility for the débâcle lay at the door of the Germans alone, and that they alone must remedy it. Italy, he pointed out to the Duce in a memorandum of 4th July, now faced the prospect of a Second Front being opened on her own soil, and to deal with this situation immense quantities of land and air forces would be needed, which Italy could not find for herself and which must be found if necessary by interrupting operations in the East. 'If we cannot prevent the setting up of such a front,' he concluded, 'it will be up to the highest political authorities to consider whether it would not be more expedient to spare the country further horror and ruin, and to anticipate the end of the struggle, seeing the final result will undoubtedly be worse in one or more years'.

Mussolini did not rebuke Ambrosio. The evidence suggests indeed that he drafted—though did not send—a message to Hitler very much along the lines of Ambrosio's memorandum, suggesting 'a joint examination of the situation, to draw from it the conclusions which conform best to our common interests and those of my country'. But for him personally such a policy was now impossible. Instead on 21st July the Duce assured von Rintelen that he intended to defend Sicily to the last man. Von Rintelen also informed *O.K.W.* that the Italian High Command were resolved to defend Sicily;

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although Ambrosio 'had very little hope that it could be held for any length of time'.<sup>(36)</sup>

Meanwhile the Germans themselves were having second thoughts. On 15th July General Jodl at *O.K.W.* wondered whether there might be more in the Italian demand for troops than met the eye. There were treacherous elements in the Italian Officer Corps, he suggested, and to send further German formations to the South would be to expose them to the risk of destruction.<sup>(37)</sup> He proposed to Hitler that no further German reinforcements be sent until the whole of the Italian military and naval commands had been overhauled, officers of proved reliability installed in all key posts and a unified Axis command created with German officers in charge of both land and air forces.

Hitler was sufficiently impressed by this *démarche* to summon his envoys in Rome, the Ambassador von Mackensen and Prince Philip of Hesse, to a conference on 17th July. He was unwilling to believe the situation to be as bad as Jodl had painted. 'Some capable people must be left in Italy', he said a little pathetically; 'everything could not suddenly have turned evil'. But his advisers would give him no comfort. Dönitz declared both the Italian naval command and the Italian army to be rotten; while Rommel, asked which Italian officers could be trusted to collaborate with a German command, replied laconically but not inaccurately, 'There is no such person'. Hitler was still not convinced. He decided to deal with the situation himself by a personal confrontation with the Duce. Meanwhile the flow of reinforcements was to continue. Also, on the advice of Göring and von Mackensen, Hitler decided not to press Rommel's appointment as Commander-in-Chief in Italy. Instead, he sent him to take charge of the area which, in spite of the Sicilian landings, he still considered the most vulnerable of all: Greece and the Aegean Islands.<sup>(38)</sup>

The dictators therefore met at Feltre on the morning of 19th July in an atmosphere described by von Rintelen as one of 'leaden weariness, which was not attributable only to the heat'.<sup>(39)</sup> Both had been briefed by their military staffs; Hitler by Warlimont, to demand a unified command on the lines sketched out by Jodl, Mussolini by Ambrosio, to tell his ally frankly that Italy could not go on with the war. Neither spoke to their briefs. The morning was taken up by Hitler with a rambling monologue which dwelt on the need for iron will-power to master the forces of destiny. He agreed to send further German forces into Sicily, but on the understanding that the Italians would do more to protect their lines of supply and carry through 'far-reaching measures in the military and civil spheres'. Mussolini barely opened his mouth, except to read out, in a shaken voice, a message which arrived

in the course of the morning announcing that Allied aircraft had for the first time attacked Rome. The staff discussions between Keitel and Ambrosio were limited to the question of logistics, and the defence of the Messina Straits; with the Germans insisting that they would send no further reinforcements to the South of Italy unless Italian divisions were moved south as well. Nevertheless *O.K.W.* did resume the movements of reinforcements, and two days later Jodl himself suspended the preparations for Operations 'Alarich' and 'Konstantin'.

Ambrosio left the conference in a less friendly frame of mind. Furious at Mussolini's lack of moral courage, he next day offered his resignation. It was refused. Thereupon he turned to other, less orthodox, methods of extricating Italy from the war.

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This is not the place to describe the stages by which the opposition to Mussolini in Italy had gradually progressed from passive discontent to active plotting. Enough to say that German reports had not in any way exaggerated the defeatism and unreliability of the Italian Court and the High Command. Two senior retired officers, Marshal Badoglio and Marshal Caviglia, had independently been in contact with Allied agents in Berne since May 1942; two members of the royal family, the Duke of Aosta and the Prince of Piedmont, had made similar overtures through the Italian Consul-General in Geneva in December; all of them offering to organise a *coup d'état* with the help of the Armed Forces and to negotiate peace.<sup>(40)</sup> Early in June the veteran statesman Ivanoe Bonomi and the Fascist politician Dino Grandi separately visited the King to urge him to take the lead in overthrowing the régime and denouncing the 'Pact of Steel', and the King assured Grandi that the moment would come and he would choose it: 'in the meantime' he begged, 'help me to obtain the constitutional means'.<sup>(42)</sup> The threads of the plot rapidly came together under the guidance of the Minister for the Court, the Duke of Acquarone. Bonomi and Badoglio met on 30th June, and a few days later Ambrosio himself was drawn in. On 5th July he described to Victor Emmanuel the desperate position in which Italy found herself, with only some twelve immobilised divisions to defend the country against Allied attack. At the same time he began to prepare the military measures necessary to effect a change of régime—including the arrest of Mussolini.<sup>(42)</sup>

The Feltre meeting was Mussolini's last chance to save himself by taking the initiative in leading Italy out of the war. Once he



failed to take it the conspirators moved swiftly. On the evening of 24th July the Fascist Grand Council met on the initiative of Grandi. Von Rintelen, who must have heard something, reported, 'This meeting may have considerable significance'.<sup>(43)</sup> It had indeed. After a nine-hour meeting a motion by Grandi for the Crown to assume more power was voted by nineteen voices to seven. Next day Ambrosio's measures were put into effect. Mussolini was arrested as he emerged from an audience with the King, and spirited off to an unknown destination (in fact the island of Ponza). Army, police and Carabinieri, under Ambrosio's orders, took over all the key points in the city. But they need not have bothered. With the disappearance of the Duce the whole elaborate, overloaded, rotten apparatus of the Fascist Party collapsed overnight.

The news of the coup reached Hitler on the evening of 25th July. His immediate reaction was to order the evacuation of all German troops from Sicily, even at the cost of abandoning their heavy equipment, and to demand an operation with airborne units against Rome to arrest the conspirators, including the King and the Crown Prince, and to restore the fallen régime. 'I am firmly determined to strike with lightning speed, as I did in Yugoslavia' he declared. Operation 'Alarich' was re-activated; arrangements were made to keep the frontier passes open; and Rommel was summoned back from Salonika, where he had only just arrived, to take command in Italy. 'The first thing is to get our troops across, as it is out of the question to hold Sicily', Hitler told him when he reported on 25th July. 'Whether you can hold the "toe" remains to be seen but in any case it doesn't matter much. The most important thing is to maintain a connected front so that we can fight at all'. The assurances which Kesselring and von Rintelen reported from the new Italian government of their determination to carry on with the struggle, Hitler rightly brushed aside: 'they say they'll fight, but that is treachery. We must be clear about that: it's barefaced treachery'. But his advisers opposed both the operations which he wanted to set on foot. Dönitz pointed out how the evacuation of Sicily would release Allied forces for fresh operations elsewhere and open up the road through southern Italy to the Balkans; while not only Dönitz but Rommel, Kesselring and Field Marshal von Richthofen, who since June had commanded the German Air Forces in the Italian theatre, all protested strongly against the projected *coup* against the new Italian government which, they realised, commanded the loyalty of the only reliable elements in the Italian armed forces. Any attempt to overthrow it could lead only to civil chaos and inter-Axis war, which would make the position of the Germans in the south untenable.<sup>(44)</sup>

For the time being Hitler allowed himself to be persuaded. On 1st August Kesselring was able to report that any *coup* would now be impossible since the Italians had moved up five divisions for the protection of Rome.<sup>(45)</sup> But Operations 'Alarich' and 'Konstantin', so prematurely abandoned, were revived by *O.K.W.* and expanded into a new Operation 'Achse' (Axis) to include all the measures which would be taken, from the South of France through Italy and the Balkans to the Aegean Islands, when the Italian collapse eventually came.

The first orders for Operation 'Axis' went out on 28th July.<sup>(46)</sup> They provided for the taking over of all areas held by the Italians; the recruiting of all Italian forces willing to continue the fight and the disarmament, if necessary the internment, of the rest. Instructions were to be issued as far down as divisional level, where commanders were warned that they might have to act on their own initiative. A new *Army Group B*, eight divisions strong, began to assemble under Rommel, with its headquarters at Munich and its formations drawn mainly from France. Kesselring was simultaneously warned to conduct his relations with the Italian High Command so as not to hinder 'the penetration of German divisions into North Italy'.<sup>(47)</sup> *O.K.W.* in fact set out to accomplish a highly delicate operation. While doing nothing to provoke Italian hostility or collapse, the Germans had to get themselves into position to deal with either if it came.

Meanwhile on 6th August Keitel, Warlimont and Ribbentrop travelled to Tarvisio to meet the new Italian leaders and sound out their intentions. The encounter lacked cordiality. The German delegates arrived in an armoured train and provided themselves with a large and ostentatious guard of S.S. men. They were under explicit instructions from Hitler to eat nothing which they had not seen their hosts taste first—a Renaissance precaution which they did not strictly observe.<sup>(48)</sup> The Italian delegates, Ambrosio and the new Foreign Minister Raffaele Guariglia, took the offensive with complaints about the influx of German troops into Italy, whose attitude and dispositions were rather those of an army of occupation than of allies coming to defend Italian shores. Their presence, said Ambrosio, made it necessary to bring home Italian forces from the Balkans and France: a preponderance of German forces in Italy was 'inadmissible'.<sup>(49)</sup> With the Germans forced on to the defensive, the substance of the conference consisted simply of mutual assurances of good faith which commanded no more credence on either side than they deserved. Hitler commented, when the results of the conference were reported to him, 'the Italians are going ahead with their negotiations at full speed . . . they go along with us in order to gain time'.<sup>(50)</sup> He was quite right. As early as

28th July Badoglio's government had decided to open communications with the Allies, and their envoys were already busy in Lisbon and Tangier.<sup>(51)</sup>

Certain now of the imminence of an Italian betrayal, Hitler became more open in his precautions. The German forces in Southern Italy were reorganised in a new *10th Army* whose commander-designate, General von Vietinghoff, Hitler saw on 9th August and informed that 'he would not be happy until the German divisions in the South and on Sicily had been brought back to the area south of Rome'.<sup>(52)</sup> When on 15th August a further conference was held with the Italian High Command, this time at Bologna, to discuss operational questions left outstanding at Tarvisio, the Germans were represented by Jodl and by Rommel, Kesselring being excluded; and they pressed for the creation of a unified Axis Command in Northern Italy under Rommel himself. General Roatta, now Chief of the Italian Army Staff, accepted the principle of the unified command but insisted on the Supreme Commander being an Italian officer; while urging the Germans to send their forces to the South where invasion threatened most ominously. The conference broke up inconclusively. On 16th August Hitler ordered Rommel to begin moving his forces over the Italian frontier.<sup>(53)</sup>

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As this order went out to Rommel the last German troops were leaving Sicily. At first they had fought without knowing whether they were supposed to be defending the island at all costs or simply putting up a delaying action to cover their evacuation. When Kesselring briefed his troops on 27th July he warned them to be prepared to do both. Since Hitler himself, torn between his desire to withdraw his forces to safety and his obsessional hatred of abandoning ground, gave no clear orders, the question had to be decided by the commanders on the spot. The vigour of the Allied attack on 29th July helped the Germans to make up their minds.

It was clear to Hube that his line, strong as it was, could not hold out indefinitely under the pressure of the renewed Allied attack. On 1st August *XIV Corps'* staff drew up the first evacuation plan, and on 5th August the movement began. It did not affect the stubbornness with which the Germans contested the American advance along the San Fratello road in the north of the island and the Eighth Army attacks at Adrano and Centuripe in the centre. Catania fell on 5th August, Adrano the following evening, and San Fratello on the 8th; but Hube's men, holding the narrow roads which wound round the foothills

of Etna, were able to check the Allied armies for a further week. General Patton's forces entered Messina, beating the Eighth Army by a short head, on the evening of 16th August; the last Axis troops crossed the straits early next day. The Allies could congratulate themselves that they had cleared Sicily in 38 days at a cost to themselves of less than 20,000 casualties, and could claim to have inflicted on the Axis 164,000 casualties in dead, wounded and, very largely, prisoners of war.<sup>(64)</sup> But of these only 32,000 were German. Hube got 60,000 of his men away, with all their weapons and vehicles, to join the German forces now accumulating on the Italian mainland.<sup>(65)</sup>

These forces were divided into two distinct commands. North of a line from Pisa through Arezzo to Ancona Rommel's *Army Group B*, directly responsible to *O.K.W.*, was moving into position to dominate vital communication centres and other strategic objectives. One corps covered the Ligurian coast from Genoa to Viareggio; a second stretched between Parma and Modena in Lombardy; a division guarded the Brenner Pass and another had seeped over the frontier into Venezia Giulia, north of Trieste. South of the Pisa-Ancona line all German forces still came under the command of Kesselring, Commander-in-Chief South; who was still in principle subordinate to the Italian Supreme Command, and who, to his annoyance, was given no information about Rommel's plans. Two of his divisions remained menacingly near Rome. In the South von Vietinghoff's *10th Army* had three corps: one of two divisions in the toe of Italy in Calabria; one, three divisions strong, defending the coast on either side of Naples from Gaeta to Salerno;<sup>(66)</sup> and one under his direct command as army reserve.

A substantial part of von Vietinghoff's forces had to be drawn from Sicily, for in spite of Kesselring's pleas *O.K.W.* still refused to send more troops into South Italy until the Italian situation was 'clarified'.<sup>(67)</sup> Jodl indeed still considered the Italian peninsula expendable. In a memorandum of 6th September he expressed the view that if the Italians failed to accept the measures necessary for their defence, the Germans should establish a defensive position across the neck of the peninsula and transfer the divisions thus saved to the Balkans.<sup>(68)</sup> Kesselring strongly disagreed. When therefore Allied troops landed in Salerno Bay three days later the German strategy for the further conduct of the war in the Mediterranean was still as unsettled as that of the Allies themselves.

This uncertainty as to long-term aims was not reflected among German troops and commanders on the spot. A revised and final directive for Operation 'Axis' had been issued on 30th August. All Italian troops, this laid down, were to be disarmed and given the alternative of disbanding or fighting on with the Germans. The

Apennine passes, the railway installations and main ports in North Italy were to be seized, as were Italian warships, merchant vessels, aircraft and airfields, and all military installations and equipment. The entire South Eastern theatre was to be taken over, including the Aegean Islands. German forces were to be withdrawn from Sardinia to Corsica. Von Vietinghoff's *10th Army* was to fall back on Rome, and come under Rommel's command.<sup>(59)</sup> The German commanders had just over a week to study these final orders. On 8th September, at 7.45 p.m., they heard Marshal Badoglio announce over the radio the surrender of Italy to the forces of the Allies.\* Thirty-five minutes later Operation 'Axis' began.

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\* See p. 533 below.

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- (3) E.D.S./14, Pt. 1, Chapter 1, p. 4.
- (4) Deakin, p. 284.
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- (6) Führer Naval Conferences, 1943, pp. 35-39.
- (7) Führer Naval Conferences, 1943, pp. 24-5.
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- (10) Walther Warlimont: *In Hitler's Headquarters*, p. 322.
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- (13) E.D.S./14, Pt. 1, Chapter 1, p. 27.
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- (15) E.D.S./14, Pt. 1, Chapter 1, p. 31.
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- (18) OKW KTB, III, p. 749.
- (19) Heinz Guderian: *Panzer Leader* [Michael Joseph, London, 1952]  
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- (22) Guderian, p. 309.
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- (24) OKW KTB, III, p. 750.
- (25) OKW KTB, III, p. 1621.
- (26) OKW KTB, III, pp. 1622-4.  
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- (27) Report of 30.6.43: OKW KTB, III, p. 752.
- (28) See C.P.220/4.
- (29) OKW KTB, III, p. 1609.
- (30) OKW KTB, III, pp. 737-8.
- (31) E.D.S./14, Pt. 1, Chapter 2, p. 56.

- (32) OKW KTB, III, p. 777.
- (33) OKW KTB, III, pp. 763, 872.
- (34) OKW KTB, III, p. 771.
- (35) OKW KTB, III, pp. 777-8, 787.
- (36) E.D.S./14, Pt. 1, Chapter 3, pp. 18, 26-7, 46.  
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- (37) OKW KTB., III, pp. 789-90.
- (38) Führer Naval Conference of 17.7.43.  
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- (39) E.D.S./14, Pt. 1, Chapter 3, pp. 57-68.  
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OKW KTB, III, pp. 805-8, 820-1, 834.
- (40) P. M. McCallum: 'The Italian Armistice:' Cab/Hist/G./2/5,  
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- (41) Deakin, p. 343.
- (42) Deakin, p. 344.
- (43) OKW KTB, III, p. 821.
- (44) Hitler's *Lagebesprechungen*, edited by Helmut Heiber [Deutsche  
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- (47) E.D.S./14, Pt. 1, Chapter 3, p. 90.
- (48) Warlimont, p. 376.
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OKW KTB, III, p. 925.
- (50) Führer Naval Conferences, 1943, p. 81.
- (51) Deakin, p. 502.
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- (53) OKW KTB, III, p. 957.
- (54) Alexander's Dispatch.
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- (56) E.D.S./14, Pt. 1, Chapter 4, pp. 59-60, 70, 74-6.
- (57) OKW KTB, III, p. 941.
- (58) E.D.S./14, Pt. 1, Chapter 4, p. 10.
- (59) OKW KTB, III, p. 1038.

BOOK FIVE  
CHAPTER XXV  
THE BALKANS AND THE  
MIDDLE EAST  
JUNE - SEPTEMBER 1943

AN ALLIED INVASION of the Italian mainland, disagreeable though that would certainly be, was not the most alarming possibility which confronted the German High Command. We have seen how Hitler believed that the Italian peninsula 'could be sealed off somehow',\* but that 'a complete smash' in the Balkans, besides depriving Germany of necessary raw materials, would expose the whole southern flank of the Nazi Empire, with deplorable effect on his wavering Central European satellites, at a moment when the Soviet armies might be advancing in the same direction across the Ukraine. And the Balkans were now alive with resistance, from Athens in the south to Ljubljana in the north. During the lull in major operations between the end of the African campaign at the beginning of May, and the opening of the Kursk offensive two months later, the War Diary of O.K.W. was largely filled with reports of resistance activities in Yugoslavia and Greece. By the beginning of July 11 German divisions were deployed in the area,† but the bulk of the Axis occupation forces, apart from the Croatian and Bulgarian troops, was still made up of some 30 Italian divisions whose disappearance would, as the Joint Planning Staff in London had well appreciated, make the task of the German Commander-in-Chief, South-East, very difficult indeed.

Early in May the Germans had renewed their attacks on the partisans in Herzegovina and Montenegro: Operation 'Schwarz' or, in Partisan records, the 'Fifth Offensive'. On 15th June this was reported as successfully completed. The Germans claimed partisan losses at some 12,000 dead, by military action, hunger, disease and exposure.<sup>(2)</sup> But Tito himself, though wounded, had escaped with a nucleus of a few thousand men, and re-established his headquarters

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\* See page 463 above.

† Order of Battle of 7th July: 100, 104, 114, 117, 118 *Jäger Divisions*, SS *Prinz Eugen Division*, 1 *Pz. Division*, 292 *Division*, 1 *Mtn. Division*, 11 *Lw. Feld Division*, 187 *Reserve Division* (1).



in the mountains north of Sarajevo. Simultaneously partisan activity was increased north of the Save. The German representatives in Zagreb begged *O.K.W.* for more German troops: the Croat forces were showing themselves quite unable to cope with the situation in that area and allowing themselves to be disarmed and taken prisoner with suspicious ease.<sup>(3)</sup> From Greece the German and Italian authorities reported intensified activity throughout May and June, reaching a climax when, on the night of 20th June, the railway-line between Salonika and Athens was breached in six places. Thereafter reports multiplied of strikes, sabotage and guerrilla attacks throughout the country; all in fact carefully co-ordinated by representatives of S.O.E.<sup>(4)</sup>

Not even the invasion of Sicily led Hitler to revise his estimate of Allied intentions. On hearing of the landings he ordered further arrangements to be made to reinforce the Balkan peninsula. Rommel himself, released from his Italian assignment after the Feltre Conference, was sent to Salonika to organise the defence of Greece and the Aegean Islands, arriving on 25th July.<sup>(5)</sup> The fall of Mussolini led Hitler to recall Rommel in short order, but not to change his appreciation of the Allied threat. On 26th July he issued a Directive<sup>(6)</sup> which made his views clear and crystallised the arrangements which had been under review for the last two months. Allied landings, this stated, were now to be expected on the islands of the Aegean, on the Peloponnese peninsula, and on the western shores of Greece. The German Commander-in-Chief South East was, as had been agreed at the Feltre Conference, to assume command of the Italian forces in the area, and to assume responsibility for the defence of the Greek islands and the mainland. In order to gain freedom of movement to deal with the expected invasion he was to liquidate all partisan activity. In due course six divisions would be transferred from the Eastern Front to form an operational army in the Balkans.\*

The implementation of these orders involved the creation of a new *Army Group F*, with headquarters in Belgrade under a new Commander-in-Chief South East, General von Weichs. The former Commander-in-Chief, General Löhr, retained command of *Army Group E* in Greece and the Aegean, but was subordinate to von Weichs in Belgrade. The German order of battle for mid-August shows a total of thirteen German divisions, with miscellaneous units amounting perhaps to two more divisions,† on the mainland of the Balkan peninsula;<sup>(7)</sup> with another division and a miscellany of infantry and fortress units on Crete and the other islands. Their threefold task, of subduing the partisans, disarming and if necessary fighting the Italian forces, and preparing for a possible Allied invasion, certainly

\* This force was never to materialise.

† 4 SS police regiments, 1 Jäger replacement regiment, 2 infantry regiments.

stretched these forces to the utmost. When it came to the point the Italians, except for the garrisons of Rhodes, Cephalonia and Corfu, allowed themselves to be disarmed with no difficulty; by German forces if there were any in the neighbourhood, by partisans if there were not. But the need to guard the coasts against invasion meant moving troops from the hinterland where the partisans were strongest; and by mid-September Tito's forces, which only four months earlier had barely escaped total destruction in Montenegro, had reappeared in renewed strength in Slovenia and Croatia, plentifully equipped with Italian weapons, and in complete if temporary control of the Dalmatian coast.

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Such was the favourable situation in the Balkans of which the Prime Minister and the Joint Planning Staff in London were so conscious, and which they were urging the Allied commanders in the Mediterranean to exploit. The mist of ignorance which had made it so difficult for the Allies to discover what was going on in the Balkans and in consequence to decide what to do about it, was now clearing fast. Not only did the increasing military activity of the occupying powers provide an equivalent increase in information to the Allies through their normal intelligence sources, but the number and strength of the liaison missions sent in to join the resistance movements in Albania, Yugoslavia and Greece had multiplied. In Greece Brigadier Myers now commanded some ten missions in various parts of the country,<sup>(8)</sup> and five missions were at work in Albania.<sup>(9)</sup> As for Yugoslavia, not only were there now a dozen missions in Serbia, Bosnia and Croatia, but the headquarters of Special Operations Executive in Cairo had on 29th May sent a liaison officer, Captain F. W. Deakin, direct to Tito's headquarters. This officer arrived at the crisis of the 'Fifth Offensive', was wounded at the same time as Tito, and shared his dramatic escape.<sup>(10)</sup>

The decision to send an official representative to the Partisans reflected the general mood in Cairo. Their patience with Mihailovic was exhausted. Every additional mission parachuted to his forces confirmed his friendliness with the Italians, his hostility to the partisans, and his refusal to take any action against the Germans which might precipitate further reprisals. At the end of May both S.O.E. in Cairo and the Middle East Defence Committee urged on London a radical shift of policy. Mihailovic, they insisted, could no longer be considered as the national leader. The partisans could no longer be treated as if they were putting up a purely local resistance in Croatia. The position was reversed. The Çetniks were now effectively operating only in the restricted area of Serbia east of the river Ibar; everywhere to the west—not only in Croatia but in

Montenegro, Western Serbia, and the entire north of the country—the Partisans were in control. ‘The Partisans’, stated the Middle East Defence Committee in a telegram of 8th June ‘are now the most formidable anti-Axis element in Yugoslavia and our support of them is therefore logical and necessary’.<sup>(11)</sup>

To this view the Foreign Office strongly objected. So did the S.O.E. authorities in London. Lord Selborne, the minister responsible for S.O.E. affairs, declared that ‘my sympathy is definitely with Mihailovic, who has kept the flag flying since 1941. I believe the Partisans represent a spontaneous national explosion against the Axis, but they are led by Communists (mainly for accidental reasons) and I think it very desirable to support Mihailovic as far as we are able’. The Foreign Office argued that to write off Mihailovic as ineffective was politically undesirable and militarily premature. His inactivity had been approved by the Royal Yugoslav Government in London; and the British support for him, explained one official to the Prime Minister, was at least partially based on the need ‘to have an armed force in existence to prevent anarchy and Communist chaos on the withdrawal of the Axis’.<sup>(12)</sup> However the government in exile had been prevailed upon to send Mihailovic an ultimatum containing four demands. His whole aim must now be resistance to the Axis; he was to work under the strategic direction of the Commander-in-Chief, Middle East; he was to cease collaboration with the Italians; and he was to collaborate with all other resistance movements—certainly not to fight them.<sup>(13)</sup> To this message, despatched on 12th May, an affirmative reply had been received. The Foreign Office therefore recommended on 16th June that no change should be made in the policy of supporting Mihailovic, and that the orders already sent from Cairo for the Çetniks to abandon to the Partisans all territory west of the Ibar should be rescinded.<sup>(14)</sup>

The Chiefs of Staff disagreed. It seemed to them that Cairo had made out an effective case: Mihailovic was now ‘hopelessly compromised’ with the Axis; and they considered, they informed the Foreign Office on 17th June, that ‘we should supply Croatian guerillas and Communist partisans with war material inasmuch as these groups represent the most formidable anti-Axis elements existing outside Serbia’.<sup>(15)</sup> The Foreign Office, in reply, was willing to accept this point if the Chiefs of Staff were satisfied that these groups were ‘sufficiently well-organised and in a position to render our support desirable and above all that they will not hamper our efforts to bring about the unification of all the resistance movements in Yugoslavia’; but the kind of territorial division proposed by Cairo they regarded as operationally unworkable and politically unwise—a step which would encourage the disintegration of the country.<sup>(16)</sup>

On this basis the Chiefs of Staff were prepared to agree, and on 27th June they sent Cairo their answer.<sup>(17)</sup> Support for Mihailovic should be continued, they said, so long as he accepted the British directive, and the instructions for him to withdraw east of the Ibar should be suspended. But 'Croatian guerrillas and Communist partisans should forthwith be supplied with war material, but Partisans operating in close proximity to Mihailovic's forces should first be required to give assurances to British liaison officers that no operations will be carried out against Mihailovic except in self-defence'. Furthermore, 'no definite territories should be allotted to different resistance movements with a view to supporting them only in those districts, but resistance groups of all kinds should be supported wherever they are able to undertake operations against the Axis'.

But as had happened before, more support for Mihailovic only brought more evidence of his procrastination and unreliability. He repeated his assurances of loyalty to the terms of his directive; but British liaison officers with his forces in the field had to report that none of them had received orders from Mihailovic in the sense indicated: to stop collaborating with the Italians, to refrain from attacking the partisans, and to begin serious operations against the Germans.<sup>(18)</sup> The melancholy end of this story is told elsewhere in this series.<sup>(19)</sup> By the end of the year Mihailovic's ineffectiveness stood out in ever more dismal contrast to the achievements of the Partisans, political as well as military, which showed the concept of 'Communist chaos' to be something of a contradiction in terms. Mihailovic was given one last chance. He was ordered to attack two specific railway targets by 29th December or forfeit all Allied support. He failed to take it. In consequence, the British missions with his forces were gradually withdrawn during the next five months, and Tito was accorded by the British Government full recognition as the leader of Yugoslav resistance.<sup>(20)</sup>

The extent to which Tito deserved this role was made clear by the reports of the British missions with the Partisans, whose enthusiasm contrasted sharply with the frustration expressed by the officers attached to the Četniks. At their head now stood a political figure, Brigadier Fitzroy Maclean M.P., a former member of the Foreign Service, whom the Prime Minister had selected to be, as he expressed it, 'a daring Ambassador-leader with these hardy and hunted guerrillas'.<sup>(21)</sup> Brigadier Maclean embodied the Prime Minister's now intense personal interest in events in Yugoslavia. 'He is not', Mr. Churchill insisted, 'to be a political adviser but the effective chief of a Mission which requires a combination of military and civil qualities'.<sup>(22)</sup> Maclean's arrival in Yugoslavia on 18th September thus marked the opening of a new chapter, political as well as military, in Britain's relations with the Partisans.

Events in Yugoslavia provide a case-study of the conflict which almost inevitably arose in wartime between immediate military necessity and long-term political calculation. On the one hand there was the desire of the military authorities (which in this case included S.O.E.) to inflict the greatest possible damage on the enemy; on the other, the duty of the Foreign Office to ensure that the war should end in a political situation involving the fewest possible difficulties for long-term national policy. The problem in Yugoslavia was to be resolved not only by Mihailovic's military incapacity but by Tito's political skill. By the end of 1943 it was clear to the Foreign Office that he was a force for unity rather than disruption in Yugoslavia, and that the British debt to the Royal Government, though still one of personal honour, was no longer one of national interest.

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In Greece matters could not be settled so easily. There were points of similarity between the two countries. In Greece as in Yugoslavia the British Government recognised the royal government in exile as the legitimate rulers of the country. As in Yugoslavia, that government enjoyed only a precarious measure of national support. And as in Yugoslavia much of the most effective resistance to the German occupation came from forces which were, if not communist, at least *communisants*. But there the resemblance ended. The political spectrum in Greece, although not complicated as was the Yugoslav by national antagonisms, was no less confused. The communist groups had no monopoly of resistance to the Germans: indeed, E.A.M.'s activity in the early part of 1943 was largely devoted to the elimination of its own political rivals. The representatives of S.O.E. however were a great deal more successful than their colleagues in Yugoslavia in creating some unity among the various partisan bands, and the outbreak of sabotage at the end of June was a co-ordinated effort under British strategic direction. This co-ordination they extended into the political field; and in August they were able to assemble a delegation broadly representative of all parties within the Resistance, which they flew to Cairo to discuss the political future of Greece with the representatives of the royal government in exile.<sup>(23)</sup>

These activities were regarded by the Foreign Office with disfavour. They had already to contend with violent disagreements between royalists and republicans within the Greek community in exile about the future status of the monarchy—disagreements leading to mutinies among the Greek troops stationed in Egypt which British forces had to be brought in to quell. The King was prepared to submit the future of the monarchy to a plebiscite which, he

promised, would be held within six months of his return to Greece. The republicans considered that this would prejudice the issue—plebiscites in Greece had a tendency to favour the authorities conducting them—and demanded that he should return only after such a plebiscite had been held. The British Government supported the King; the delegation which S.O.E. brought out from Greece brought an unwelcome accretion of strength to his adversaries.<sup>(24)</sup>

The dominant role played in the delegation by the representative of E.A.M. also displeased the Foreign Office. The main object of E.A.M., Mr. Eden told the Prime Minister a few months later<sup>(25)</sup>,

‘is to build up its power in order to seize the reins of government and establish a Communist dictatorship at the first opportunity. From the beginning S.O.E. has worked with and through E.A.M. on the grounds that its support is necessary to enable British officers to carry out sabotage. This policy has led to a situation where we are forced to accept E.A.M. as the dominant power in Greece both now and when the Germans evacuate the country.

It is a policy, however, which it is impossible to harmonise with the Foreign Office policy, which is to support the King and Government until their return to Greece when free elections can be held. If the military value of the Greek guerrillas makes it necessary to continue our support of E.A.M. we may have to abandon our policy of support for the King and Government in order to avoid a conflict between two divergent British policies’.

The Foreign Secretary did not understate the problem. For the next year the Foreign Office was to persevere with its attempts to make the Greek monarchy acceptable by negotiation while E.A.M. concurrently tried to impose its authority over its rivals by force. When the Germans finally withdrew from Greece in the autumn of 1944 they left the British with a *damnosa hereditas* of civil war whose effects were long to outlast the war itself.

For the British military authorities, however, both in Cairo and in London, the problem was still not so much whom to support in Yugoslavia and Greece, as what to support them with. Their hands were still tied by the world-wide shortage of long-range aircraft. They had, as we have seen, made a small additional allocation in March to bring the total available to S.O.E. in Cairo up to 14; but on 18th June Lord Selborne had to complain to the Prime Minister that of these only the four Liberators had the range to reach Yugoslavia from Cairo, and these were ‘on their last legs’. Since April barely thirty tons of supplies had been dropped to the Yugoslav resistance movements, which limited not only their operational

efficiency but the extent to which the British could influence their policy. 'The difficulty has been', wrote Selborne, echoing the repeated complaints of S.O.E. representatives with Mihailovic, 'that up to now the British support has meant so little that the threat of its withdrawal has not been great enough to bring about the co-operation desired'.<sup>(26)</sup> If British policy was to be effective, he insisted, aircraft should be made available with the range and in the quantity needed to drop a hundred tons a month.

This request the Prime Minister passed on to the Chiefs of Staff with his strong endorsement. 'All this', he minuted on 22nd June, 'is of the highest importance . . . this demand has priority even over the bombing of Germany'. The rate of delivery, he further insisted, should be increased to 500 tons a month by the end of the coming September.<sup>(27)</sup> The Chiefs of Staff were sympathetic. Air Chief Marshal Portal agreed to provide, not indeed more Liberators, but Halifaxes (which would have the necessary range if operated from Tunisia) in sufficient quantities to drop 150 tons of supplies a month; and it was further agreed that the Air Ministry should work out a plan to meet the Prime Minister's target of 500 tons a month 'subject to operational requirements elsewhere'.<sup>(28)</sup> The calculations of the Air Staff showed that to meet this and other S.O.E. demands would require an allocation of 70 additional aircraft, which would deprive Bomber Command of  $4\frac{1}{2}$  squadrons when it was still three squadrons short of its agreed target strength and when the Battle of the Ruhr was at its height. Portal promised however to bring the total number of aircraft available to S.O.E. in the Mediterranean to 36, which should be capable of dropping 350 tons a month to Yugoslavia and Greece; and this was confirmed by the Chiefs of Staff on 27th July.<sup>(29)</sup>

This increase in strength made itself felt immediately. Between July and September 144 tons—mainly small arms and explosives—were dropped to Yugoslavia and 395 tons to Greece.<sup>(30)</sup> In the last quarter of the year the figure was lower, 125 tons and 234 tons, largely because of the requirements of the Italian campaign;<sup>(31)</sup> but the capture of stocks from the surrendered Italian garrisons compensated very amply for this shortfall. In 1944, when British and American aircraft operated from Italian airfields, their activities increased enormously, and the total deliveries for that year were to react 9,403 tons. Tito was to put this help to excellent effect. As for the unhappy Greeks, how many of their weapons were used against the Germans and how many against each other is a question no historian is ever likely to resolve.

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Meanwhile in Cairo General Wilson and his staff had not lost sight of the possibility of intervening more directly in Greece and the Aegean. As we have seen earlier, the proposals for large-scale operations in that area which they had submitted to the Combined Chiefs of Staff in Washington had not been accepted. On 10th June General Brooke wrote to tell General Wilson<sup>(32)</sup> that the die had been cast in favour of General Eisenhower's as yet indeterminate operations and against those of Middle East Command. Plans for the capture of Rhodes and the Dodecanese ('Accolade') were to remain in being, but everything was to be subordinate to the needs of General Eisenhower's forces. General Wilson sent his Chief of Staff Major General R. M. Scobie to Algiers to discuss the implementation of these instructions. Consultations there revealed, not only that it would be unrealistic to think in terms of operations in the Central and Eastern Mediterranean as concurrent possibilities, but that Middle East Command would only be able to provide General Eisenhower with the forces he needed if they cancelled their arrangements for sending forces to Turkey ('Hardihood'). Scobie flew on to London and on 21st June presented the agreed views of Wilson and Eisenhower to the Chiefs of Staff.<sup>(33)</sup> By pooling all the Allied resources in the Mediterranean, they considered, they might carry out *either* operations against Italy *or* 'full-scale operations designed to open the Aegean and to give the full promised support to Turkey; but not both'. The bottleneck lay not in fighting troops (except AA units) but in shipping, transportation and administrative resources. They recommended therefore that General Eisenhower's operations should be given priority over aid to Turkey; that planning for 'Accolade' should continue and that 'after meeting General Eisenhower's requirements Middle East Command should if possible be prepared to seize a foothold in the Aegean when Italy is defeated; and then, if desirable, "Hardihood" should be reconstituted', though this might have to wait until the following year.<sup>(34)</sup> The Chiefs of Staff accepted this advice, as did the Prime Minister; and on 28th June General Wilson was ordered to plan accordingly.<sup>(35)</sup>

This decision on priorities was made easier by the course taken during the previous five months by the negotiations with Ankara. We have considered some of the difficulties which had arisen since the promising days of the Adana Conference. In general it can be said that relations with the Turks deteriorated as Allied military fortunes in the Mediterranean and South Russia rose. This connection, as Mr. Eden pointed out to the Prime Minister on 12th June,<sup>(36)</sup> was not coincidental.

'Until the Tunisian victory they felt safe [he wrote] in discussing with us the—to them—academic question of entering the war, so as to obtain from us the supplies of war materials which they



wanted in order to protect themselves against the Russian menace, by which they were and still are obsessed. But now they realise for the first time that the question of their participation in the war is no longer academic and is likely to be precipitated in the near future by our military operations in the Eastern Mediterranean; and their first reaction is to resist the pressure which they expect us to bring to bear'.

A further insight into the mind of the Turkish Government was gained by Lieut. General Sir Wilfred Lindsell, the Senior Administrative Officer in Middle East Command, who reported back through the Embassy in Ankara that the 'Turkish authorities are genuinely frightened as to what would become of the State machine in the event of war. This is not fear of enemy action but of breakdown of internal organisation owing to the fact that all resources would be diverted to military needs'.<sup>(37)</sup>

It appeared in London that the Turks' assurances to Germany of their non-belligerent intentions were becoming unnecessarily profuse. Increasing difficulties arose over such questions as Turkish retention of Allied shipping for their own coastal traffic.<sup>(38)</sup> The Turkish General Staff complained that they were being fobbed off with second-rate and ineffective equipment instead of 'the best armament, in particular Spitfires and Sherman tanks', which, according to the Turkish Ambassador in London, Mr. Churchill had promised them at Adana.<sup>(39)</sup> Middle East Command for its part complained that the equipment which they had supplied\* was left unattended at the ports of delivery for months for lack of rolling-stock to shift it and military capacity to absorb it;<sup>(41)</sup> while attempts to ease this by the construction of depots and advanced bases were frustrated by the Turkish refusal of permission to Allied specialists to start work.<sup>(42)</sup>

Faced by this accumulation of difficulties, and aware that the *schwerpunkt* of Allied strategic planning was shifting to the Central Mediterranean, the Foreign Office invited the Chiefs of Staff to reconsider their attitude towards Turkish involvement in the war. 'Hitherto', they pointed out in a memorandum of 5th,<sup>(43)</sup> 'our policy has been based on the assumption that it would be sufficient, in order to bring Turkey into the war, that we should merely extend the hand of friendship and build up Turkish military strength. In this policy there was no risk, and indeed nothing but advantage for our long-term interests. What we have now to consider is whether it is worth imperilling both our short-term and long-term interests in a gamble to get Turkey into the war;' for the pressure which Britain could exert, either by cutting off supplies and causing economic

\* Up till the end of June 1943 this totalled £14 m. of military stores. In addition 5 ships, 40 railway engines, 470 railway wagons, 4,000 tons of coal, 97 aircraft and 2,000 tons of petrol had been supplied.<sup>(40)</sup>

chaos, or by withholding support against Russia, would not make Turkey an amicable partner after the war and might drive her into the Russian or even into the German arms. Was all this, enquired the Foreign Office, really necessary? Turkish entry into the war might even tie down British forces which could be used to advantage elsewhere. Even if Turkey was regarded simply as an aircraft carrier the problem of communications and administration, until the Dodecanese were captured, would stretch Allied resources and might cause political complications. Were Turkish airfields so vital for mounting an adequate attack on the Rumanian oilfields? On all this, the Foreign Office concluded, only the Chiefs of Staff were competent to pronounce. But the Chiefs of Staff did not feel themselves able to pronounce on it until the future course of Allied strategy in the Mediterranean had been more firmly settled; and they agreed, on 23rd July, that policy towards Turkey should continue unchanged until that settlement had been reached.<sup>(44)</sup>

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Three days later came the news of Mussolini's fall, and the picture seemed more obscure than ever. With the reports which almost immediately came in of Italian defections in the Balkans and Aegean Islands it seemed likely that the Eastern Mediterranean would once more become a highly active theatre of war.<sup>(45)</sup> The Prime Minister for one was resolved to make it so. On 27th July he asked for plans for a quick occupation of Rhodes if the Italians there asked for an armistice.<sup>(46)</sup> General Wilson already had these available. He proposed a descent on Rhodes with one division, two armoured regiments and a parachute battalion. But not only would this involve drawing heavily on the Central Mediterranean for air and naval forces, shipping and landing-craft, but the operation would take six weeks to mount.<sup>(47)</sup>

Mr. Churchill, naturally, was not satisfied.

'Here is a business of great consequence, to be thrust forward by every means [he minuted the Chiefs of Staff on 2nd August<sup>(48)</sup>]. This is no time for conventional establishments, but rather for using whatever fighting elements there are. [Nor did it follow that troops could only land from special landing-craft.] Provided that they are to be helped by friends on shore a different situation arises. Surely caiques and ships' boats can be used between ship and shore?'

The Chiefs of Staff urged General Wilson in a message of 3rd August to profit by any favourable opportunity and enlist local help wherever feasible. They authorised him to divert any supplies he needed from aid to Turkey and to approach General Eisenhower

for any assault vessels that could be spared from the Central Mediterranean. And, as we shall see, they held up the sailing for the Far East of the landing ships and craft recently released from the Sicily operation. All else, they concluded, would have to be found within the theatre itself.<sup>(49)</sup>

Middle East Command revised its plans, halving the forces required, but the help offered from London was still inadequate. The standstill order for the landing vessels produced complications with the Americans which we shall consider in the next chapter. The approach authorised to General Eisenhower—which did not, the Chiefs of Staff emphasised, overrule the priority allotted to A.F.H.Q.'s operations<sup>(50)</sup>—was sympathetically considered in Algiers and to a considerable extent met. General Eisenhower offered to release the special troops, the shipping and much of the equipment requested by Middle East Command. But General Wilson needed also four squadrons of fighter aircraft and sufficient transport aircraft to lift one parachute battalion-group; and it proved impossible to spare those from General Eisenhower's requirements.<sup>(51)</sup> As a result General Wilson reported on 10th August that 'the objective must be softer before an operation can be launched'; and that his forces would have to stand by for an opportunity which, if it occurred, might 'be of short duration'.<sup>(52)</sup>

Meanwhile the Chiefs of Staff had sailed with the Prime Minister for Quebec, and discussions during the next few vital weeks had to be carried out on a quadrilateral basis between them, the Vice-Chiefs in London, General Wilson in Cairo and General Eisenhower in Algiers. General Wilson's request for resources for 'Accolade' evidently caused some alarm at A.F.H.Q. 'I view with considerable concern', General Eisenhower informed London on 12th August, '[the] possibility that in practise the requirements for this operation will draw upon reserves urgently required for [the] main business in hand, which is to knock Italy out of the war. [The] fact is that in [the] Mediterranean there are many critical items, such as AA, landing-craft, air forces, which are barely sufficient for present operations. . . . In my opinion, with which Deputy Commander-in-Chief, Commander-in-Chief Mediterranean and Air Commander-in-Chief agree, we should concentrate on one thing at a time and "Accolade" should be abandoned for the present'.<sup>(53)</sup>

Middle East Command did not dissent in principle, that all resources should be concentrated on knocking Italy out of the war; but they had assumed, they informed the Chiefs of on 13th August,<sup>(54)</sup> that Italy's collapse would ease the strain on Allied resources in the Mediterranean; and they had certainly never realised that the resources they were holding for 'Accolade' would conflict with General Eisenhower's needs. But General Wilson himself<sup>(55)</sup> stressed

the strategic significance of pressure on the Balkans at this juncture. Even though every advantage should be taken of a collapse in Italy, pressure on the Balkans should not be relaxed, and preparations should be made to follow hard on the heels of any enemy withdrawal from the Aegean. 'Mideast should therefore have force available', he suggested, 'to follow up on axis Rhodes–Athens and eventually Salonika, and would require initially on mainland probably as far as Thermopylae a corps of two divisions. Subsequent forces would depend on extent [a] follow up [was] considered advisable in order to harass the enemy and accelerate his further withdrawal by making contact with and reorganising the large partisan and Çetnik forces in Yugoslavia. . . .'

The Vice-Chiefs in London thought that General Wilson was being too optimistic. Intelligence reports, they warned the Chiefs of Staff on 14th August,<sup>(66)</sup> showed that so far from evacuating the Aegean the Germans were reinforcing there, and the opportunity which General Wilson was awaiting was therefore very unlikely to occur. Meanwhile

'we are tying up forces and resources in Eastern Mediterranean which might play [a] more useful part as general reserve for Central Mediterranean rather than be dissipated on subsidiary operations. In our opinion, once we land anywhere on [the] Italian mainland it will be impossible to limit our commitment. Eisenhower must therefore, if strategy British Chiefs of Staff are advocating is to be accepted, be given maximum forces available. This will, we think, necessitate a modified directive to Cs.-in-C. Middle East limiting to the utmost their operational responsibilities'.

The Chiefs of Staff did not entirely agree. They did not foresee any necessary clash between the requirements for 'Accolade' and those of 'Avalanche',\* and they considered that it was too early, they informed the Vice-Chiefs of Staff,<sup>(67)</sup> 'to discount entirely the possibility of a favourable opportunity occurring, though we intend to keep the matter under constant review'.

So General Wilson, with more than a quarter of a million fighting troops under his command,† had to stand by and watch his chances of taking the offensive dwindle as the Germans eased their forces into positions to take over from the Italians as soon as the order came. Since there was no longer any point in holding up landing-ships destined for India, these were released on 26th August.<sup>(68)</sup> By the end of the month lack of shipping and landing-craft had reduced the offensive capacity of Middle East Command to the

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\* The Salerno landings. See p. 504 below.

† The figures for 28th August show a total strength of 513,850 men, of whom 241,000 were base troops, 142,400 mobile fighting troops and 130,450 static fighting troops.<sup>(68)</sup>

mounting of small-scale raids or landings so long as these were not opposed in strength.

This was the situation when the news came of the Italian surrender on 8th September. The tragic sequel is related elsewhere in this series.<sup>(60)</sup> An attempt to seize Rhodes by a *coup de main* was frustrated by the stubborn resistance of the German garrison. Small parties of British troops landed elsewhere in the Dodecanese, particularly on Cos and Leros, but so long as Rhodes remained in German hands their position was untenable. The capture of Rhodes would have demanded a diversion of resources which General Eisenhower could not spare and which the Combined Chiefs of Staff refused to allocate from other theatres. The Germans counter-attacked Leros on 12th November and had completed its capture by 16th November. By the end of the month the Dodecanese were once again securely under their control.

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A co-belligerent Turkey might have provided the facilities—especially the airfields—to have enabled the British to retain their hold on the Dodecanese. But Turkey's position remained unresolved. We have seen how the Chiefs of Staff had delayed giving a definite reply to the Foreign Office memorandum of 5th July inviting them to reconsider their policy towards Turkey, and they did not return to the matter until they had embarked in the *Queen Mary* for Quebec. Then the Prime Minister, prompted by a message from the Foreign Secretary, raised the matter again.<sup>(61)</sup> Would an Italian collapse make it unnecessary for Turkey to enter the war, he asked? The Aegean might now fall without a fight, while Ploesti could be reached by aircraft operating from Southern Italy. But there would still be advantages in Turkish co-belligerency. The British could conveniently use the airfields they had been constructing in Turkey to bomb the Rumanian oil installations at close range. It would be easier for the Allies to get air and naval help to Russia; and an outlet would be provided for the force still remaining in the Middle East. 'The whole of this area wants galvanising', he concluded, 'and nothing would galvanise them so much as a purpose'.

The Chiefs of Staff considered the question while still aboard the *Queen Mary*,<sup>(62)</sup> and again in Quebec; and on 20th August they presented their recommendations to their American colleagues.<sup>(63)</sup> The overriding factor was the decision to concentrate all available forces on Italy, which left Middle East Command with only small units available for improvised operations. A Turkish entry into the war, they granted, would be an additional commitment for the Germans; but the Turkish armed forces in their existing state would certainly

not be able to take the offensive, and 'the commitment might well work in the opposite direction'. The bombing of Ploesti was still desirable, 'but a general bombing offensive from Northern Italy, which could include Ploesti, presents even greater attractions'. All things considered, therefore, the Chiefs of Staff decided that the time was not ripe for Turkey to enter the war. She should be urged to make more concessions to the Allies—in particular to interpret the Montreux Convention strictly so as to exclude the passage of all German shipping of military value through the Straits, and to prohibit all export of chrome to Germany. And she should be encouraged to press on with the measures set on foot at Adana—improvement of communications, completion of airfields and storage facilities for 'Hardihood', the installation of British air control and radar facilities and the refurbishing of her fighting forces. To this the Joint Chiefs of Staff agreed, adding the proposal that the rate of aid should be drastically reduced in the light of the evident incapacity of the Turks to absorb it.

Mr. Churchill, when the Combined Chiefs presented their agreed solution to him and the President on 23rd August,<sup>(64)</sup> was not entirely satisfied. He believed, he said, the time had come for Turkey to do something in return for the aid she had received and that 'the Turks would be considerably relieved if they were only asked to give up their neutrality and enter the war'. But he did not press the matter, and it was allowed to rest. Two months later, the critical situation of their forces in the Dodecanese led the British to reopen the question once again, with no more positive outcome than before.<sup>(65)</sup> German control of the Aegean was to remain secure for another year; and Turkish neutrality continued intact until the last months of the war.

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- (1) *Oberkommando der Wehrmacht Kriegstagebuch*, III, p. 735.
- (2) OKW KTB, III, pp. 647, 660.
- (3) OKW KTB, III, pp. 440, 569, 740.
- (4) OKW KTB, III, p. 680.  
W. J. M. Mackenzie: *History of Special Operations Executive*, (unpublished), pp. 697-8.
- (5) OKW KTB, III, pp. 792, 815.
- (6) Directive No. 48: Führer Directives, 1942-45.
- (7) OKW KTB, III, p. 969.
- (8) Mackenzie, p. 687.
- (9) Mackenzie, p. 746.
- (10) Mackenzie, p. 649.
- (11) C.C.248 in Hist(B)11.  
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- (12) Cadogan-W.S.C. of 23.3.43: C.P.510/6.  
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- (13) Mackenzie, p. 648.  
C.O.S.(43)95th Mtg.(O) of 6.5.43.
- (14) C.O.S.(43)175 of 15.6.43.
- (15) Hollis-Pierson Dixon of 14.6.43: F/Yugoslavia/3, fol. 88.
- (16) Cadogan-C.O.S. of 22.6.43: F/Yugoslavia/3, fol. 89.
- (17) C.O.S.(ME)387 of 27.6.43.
- (18) See F/Yugoslavia/3, fol. 135A *et seq.*
- (19) John Ehrman: *Grand Strategy*, Vol. V [H.M.S.O., London, 1956], pp. 270-6.
- (20) Mackenzie, p. 652.
- (21) W.S.C.-Eden: M.530/3 of 28.6.43.
- (22) W.S.C.-C.-in-C., M.E.: OZ.2276 of 5.8.43.
- (23) On all this see Mackenzie, pp. 692-710.
- (24) Casey-W.S.C. MOS.83 of 25.8.43: Hist(B)11.  
See also E. L. Woodward: *British Foreign Policy in the Second World War*, Vol. II (unpublished), pp. 352-6.
- (25) Eden-W.S.C.: PM/43/297 of 9.10.43: C.P.66.
- (26) C.O.S.(43)336(O).
- (27) W.S.C.-Ismay: D.105/3 of 22.6.43.  
C.O.S.(43)135th Mtg.(O) of 23.6.43.

- (28) C.O.S.(43)135th Mtg.(O) of 23.6.43.
- (29) C.O.S.(43)173rd Mtg.(O).  
C.O.S.(43)404(O).  
The whole question of S.O.E. priorities was discussed by the Defence Committee on 2.8.43: D.O.(43)17.
- (30) Mackenzie, p. 693.  
A C.O.S. Memo. of 14.10.43 gives a slightly different distribution of 190 tons to Yugoslavia, 380 tons to Greece.
- (31) Dawson, pp. 105-6, 109-11.
- (32) Telegram 88429: A/Policy/Mideast/4, fol. 58.
- (33) C.O.S.(43)129th Mtg.(O).
- (34) J.P.(43)218(Final).
- (35) Telegram OZ.1801 in F/Turkey/5, Vol. I.  
C.O.S.(43)140th Mtg.(O).
- (36) PM/43/168 in C.P.446.
- (37) Hugesson-F.O. No. 1129 of 11.6.43: C.P.446.
- (38) See misc. docs. in C.P.446.
- (39) Eden-Hugesson No. 1140 of 5.8.43, in P.M.412/52, Vol. I.
- (40) C.O.S.(43)364(O) Annex, of 5.7.43.
- (41) Jacob-W.S.C. of 30.6.43: C.P.446.
- (42) Report by Jacob of 26.7.43: C.P.448.
- (43) C.O.S.(43)364(O) of 5.7.43.
- (44) C.O.S.(43)170th Mtg.(O).
- (45) Wilson-C.I.G.S: CS/2126 of 1.8.43: F/Italy/2, fol. 12.  
See also CC/168 of 1.8.43 and I/89372 of 31.7.43: C.P.3.
- (46) P.M. directive D.144/3 of 27.7.43.
- (47) CC/270 of 2.8.43: F/Italy/2, fol. 14.
- (48) P.M. directive D.150/3 of 2.8.43.
- (49) C.O.S.(ME)400 of 3.8.43.
- (50) C.O.S. to Eisenhower-Wilson-Alexander: 4327 of 6.8.43 in F/Italy/2, Vol. I.
- (51) A.F.H.Q.-Mideast: 8608 of 7.8.43 (CONCRETE 111).
- (52) CC/273 of 10.8.43.
- (53) CONCRETE 164.
- (54) CONCRETE 188.
- (55) CONCRETE 162.
- (56) CONCRETE 185 of 14.8.43.
- (57) CONCRETE 157 of 16.8.43.
- (58) Jacob-W.S.C. of 9.10.43: C.P.284.
- (59) C.O.S.(ME)412 of 26.8.43.



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- (60) Ehrman Vol. V, pp. 92-103.
- (61) C.O.S.(Q)5 of 7.8.43.
- (62) C.O.S.(Q)6th Mtg.
- (63) C.O.S.(Q)18th Mtg.
- (64) QUADRANT 2nd Plenary Session of 23.8.43.
- (65) Ehrman Vol. V, pp. 100-2.

## BOOK FIVE

### CHAPTER XXVI

# THE DECISION TO INVADE ITALY

**H**ITLER'S continuing uncertainty even after the invasion of Sicily whether the main Allied thrust would really be directed against the Italian mainland was well-founded. The Allied leaders still did not know themselves. At Washington they had been able to agree only that, after the capture of Sicily, operations should be mounted in the Mediterranean such 'as were calculated to eliminate Italy from the war and to contain the maximum number of German forces'; but they had not decided what form these operations should take. A strong case had been made in Algiers (with Air Chief Marshal Tedder's emphatic dissent) in favour of invading Sardinia. British opinion both in London and North Africa was hardening in favour of the Italian mainland. But the Combined Chiefs of Staff had left it to General Eisenhower to propose whatever operations he considered suitable, and had agreed to consider the matter again in the light of his recommendations. At the end of May, immediately after the Washington Conference, Mr. Churchill, General Brooke and General Marshall flew to Algiers to see whether this indeterminate situation could be any further resolved by consultations on the spot.

Mr. Churchill's mind was already made up. He was, he later wrote, 'determined to obtain before leaving Africa the decision to invade Italy should Sicily be taken'.<sup>(1)</sup> In Algiers he met not only General Eisenhower but the commanders of the victorious forces of the British Commonwealth—Admiral Cunningham, General Alexander, Air Chief Marshal Tedder. Among them he found strong and natural support for his own desire to see their armies sweep across the Mediterranean on to the mainland of Europe.<sup>(2)</sup> General Eisenhower was more reserved, but he made it clear that he did not regard an attack against Sardinia and seizing a bridgehead on the mainland as mutually exclusive alternatives. The latter operation, he suggested, might be looked on as an intrinsic part of the Sicilian campaign. All depended on how that campaign went.

General Eisenhower presented his views to the Prime Minister and General Marshall in discussions which lasted from 29th May to 3rd June. The Allies, he suggested, must take account of three possibilities. First, resistance in Sicily might collapse immediately and

completely. In that case the Allied armies would cross to the mainland and seize a bridgehead without any more ado. Secondly, there might be such stubborn resistance that no reserves would be left to the Allies for any further operations. Finally, there might be resistance which kept the Allied armies occupied until the middle of August. This would make it difficult to be specific about the next step. For this eventuality two separate headquarters, he suggested, should be set up; one 'to plan and partially mount' operations against Corsica and Sardinia, the other to plan operations against the mainland. As soon as possible after the invasion of Sicily General Eisenhower would submit his recommendation which of these two operations should be carried out.

With this proposal General Marshall agreed. He considered that the Combined Chiefs of Staff should see how matters went in Sicily before coming to any final decision. 'A great deal', he said reasonably enough, 'could happen between now and July'. The extent of Axis resistance in Sicily would enable the Allies to gauge the size of the problem which they would face in invading the mainland, and lay their plans accordingly.

This cautious attitude carried the day; but the conference was not to close without a powerful Churchillian plea for an immediate decision to launch a full-blooded invasion of the Italian mainland as far north of Rome. The Prime Minister did not conceal his emotional approach to this question. The minutes of the previous meeting, he declared, on 30th May, the second day of the conference, 'did not represent his whole feeling, since he very passionately wanted to see Italy out of the war and Rome in our possession'; and 'the alternative between Southern Italy and Sardinia involved the difference between a glorious campaign and a mere convenience'. When General Marshall reminded him of the limitations imposed by the shipping shortage, the Prime Minister stoutly declared himself ready to cut British rations if necessary in order to make enough available. But he supported his plea with powerful strategic arguments. If the Germans reacted strongly the Allied armies might have 'to withdraw towards the tip, forcing them to attack successive prepared positions at heavy cost with all the advantages of a procured diversion and of the air battle. . . . There would be no reason to regard this as a disaster. As long as we are fighting heavily with the Germans or even with the Italians we shall be playing our part'.

Once Allied forces were established on the Italian mainland, continued Mr. Churchill, the way would be open to the Balkans; and he was quite explicit what he wanted to do and, more important, what not to do in the Balkans. The Allies, he said, would be able

' . . . to send shiploads of munitions to Adriatic ports, and also Agents and possibly small Commando bands. We should not

have the troops to engage in any serious operations there, and His Majesty's Government do not contemplate or desire the provision of any organised armed force for the Balkan theatre, either this year or in any period with which we are now concerned. Nevertheless the aiding within the limits proposed of the patriot bands in Yugoslavia, the fomenting of revolt in Greece and Albania are measures of the highest importance, all of which, together with our main operations, will influence the action of Turkey when (provided the necessary conditions are established) she is subjected to our demands later in the year. In this way the utmost aid in our power will be given to Russia and also to "Bolero". It is only when and if these prospects are decisively closed to us that we should consider secondary or minor alternatives for Mediterranean action'.

This plan of action in the Balkans was of a piece with the strategic concept worked out during the dark days of 1940 and 1941 when the British, without any major Ally who could engage the might of the German army, visualised raising armies from the occupied nations themselves, and conceived of their eventual invasion of Europe in terms of a detonator to spark off a far mightier explosion among the armed and vengeful victims of the Nazi régime. The importance which Mr Churchill attached to this view became evident a little later in the conference, when Mr. Eden, who had arrived from London, ventured the suggestion that Turkey might be more inclined to join the Allies once Allied troops had reached the Balkan area. 'The Prime Minister intervened', in the words of the Conference Minutes, 'to observe emphatically that he was not advocating sending any army into the Balkans now or in the near future.' The picture which Mr. Churchill painted of Allied forces waging a stalwart campaign to pin down German forces in Italy and sending the maximum aid and succour to the Balkan partisans did in fact provide a remarkably accurate forecast of the future course of events in the Mediterranean theatre.

The result of the Algiers Conference, in spite of the Prime Minister's intervention, was thus to postpone a decision on future operations until the invasion of Sicily had been launched. Meanwhile General Eisenhower's staff prepared a memorandum on the subject which was dispatched to the Combined Chiefs of Staff on 30th June.<sup>(3)</sup> This document examined the requirements of operations against Sardinia and against the mainland, and did not under-emphasise the difficulties of either. Mainland operations, it reported, could take the form of assaults first on the 'toe' of Italy at Reggio ('Buttress') and then on the 'ball' at Cotrone ('Goblet'); or, if resistance was weak enough, of 'Buttress' and then a rapid advance overland to Naples. Resources would not stretch to a further assault on Apulia, the 'heel' of Italy ('Musket'). A modified invasion of

Sardinia might be launched after 'Buttress'; or if no mainland operations were undertaken, a full-scale invasion of the island could be prepared for 1st October. Resources within the Mediterranean theatre would in general be adequate to any of these operations, but long-range fighter squadrons might need to be supplemented, and a number of combat loaders would have to be retained in the theatre to give the American forces an adequate lift.

To this balanced if indecisive appreciation, Air Marshal Tedder once again entered a note of dissent. In a personal telegram to the Chief of Air Staff of 1st July<sup>(4)</sup> he repeated his view that the occupation of the toe and ball of Italy would do more to affect Italian morale and contain German forces, besides being easier to cover from the air, than would the invasion of Sardinia. 'In short', he concluded, 'once again benefits to be gained from an advance on mainland even at considerable cost to us have been minimised and in my view difficulties have been overstated whereas those inherent in "Brimstone" have been skated over'.

The same thought occurred to the Prime Minister.

'1. The Supreme Commander [he minuted the Chiefs' of Staff on 2nd July<sup>(5)</sup>] seems to be getting more than ever "sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought". It is quite right for planning staffs to explore mentally all possible hypotheses, but happily human affairs are simpler than that.

2. We must first fight the battle which is in the hands of Alexander and Montgomery. Suppose that all goes well or that there is even a collapse, the next step will show itself quite clearly. If, on the other hand, we do not succeed in "Husky", no question of the next step arises. Why is this poor man torturing himself in this unhappy manner?

3. We cannot allow the Americans to prevent our powerful armies from having full employment. Eisenhower now seems to be wriggling away to "Brimstone". We must stiffen them up and allow no weakness. I trust the Chiefs of Staff will once again prevent through the Combined Chiefs of Staff this weak shuffling away from the issue by the American generals. They are simply wrapped up in their staff work.

4. Above all we must preserve to ourselves the full power to judge and launch once we know what "Husky" tastes like'.

The Chiefs of Staff did not react so strongly. The poor man, after all, was only tormenting himself in this unhappy manner because he had been ordered to; and there were other factors to be taken into account in strategic planning besides the desirability of continuing to provide employment and glory for British arms. But they were prepared to support the view of the Prime Minister and

Air Chief Marshal Tedder that the time had come to express definitely a preference for invading the mainland of Italy, and on 3rd July, after consultation with Mr Churchill, they did so in a telegram to the Combined Chiefs of Staff<sup>(6)</sup> which echoed, if it did not repeat, Tedder's words.

'... 2. We wish to assert our conviction that the full exploitation of "Husky" will be best secured if offensive action be prosecuted on the mainland of Italy with all the means at our disposal towards the final elimination of Italy from the war.

3. In our opinion advantages of occupying as much as possible of the Toe and Ball of Italy, even if we have to fight hard for it, will far outweigh any accruing from capture of Sardinia. . . . We should be containing greater German forces on the mainland than we should in Sardinia. We hold this as primary consideration in determining which operation to undertake'.

Mr Churchill himself wrote to General Eisenhower on 7th July,<sup>(7)</sup> urging another consideration.

'You know my hope that you will put your right paw on the mainland as soon as possible. Rome is the bulls-eye. . . . If we can get hold of the mouth of the Adriatic so as to be able to run even a few ships into Dalmatian or Greek ports, the whole of the Western Balkans might flare up with far-reaching results'.

The Joint Chiefs of Staff in Washington remained hesitant at the prospect of a campaign on the mainland, with all that it might imply in terms of resources, and considered it unnecessary to bring any pressure to bear on General Eisenhower.<sup>(8)</sup> But they were seriously disturbed by his request to retain the shipping he specified. If this remained in the Mediterranean, pointed out the Combined Planning Staff in Washington, it would be at the expense either of operations in the Pacific—either those projected by the U.S. Navy in the Gilbert and Caroline Islands, or else the British landings at Akyab—or of the build-up of forces in the United Kingdom.

As usual, shortages of resources once again brought Anglo-American differences into the open. The Combined Planning Staff were able to recommend that 90 cargo ships should be allotted to General Eisenhower for 'post-"Husky" operations', and that a further convoy should sail to the Mediterranean in late August, even though this would mean reducing the 'Bolero' build-up by 66,000 men; but beyond that no agreement could be reached. The American members of the Combined Planning Staff recommended, strictly in the spirit of the 'Trident' decisions, that General Eisenhower should cut his coat in accordance with the cloth already allotted to him. The British members considered 'that the potential results to be obtained in the Mediterranean are so great that General Eisenhower

should not be denied the combat-loaders he requires'. They recommended therefore that the Combined Chiefs of Staff should decide whether the Pacific or "Bolero"—"Sickle" should suffer'. But they also recommended that the Combined Chiefs should not be presented with this disagreeable if familiar problem until events proved whether losses in assault-craft incurred during the Sicilian invasion would really be as high as was expected. On the success of the Sicilian landings there thus depended major decisions not only about the next step in the Mediterranean, but about global strategy.

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The immediate success of the landings in Sicily on 10th July therefore had a decisive effect on Allied planning and the future course of the war. It gave the Prime Minister his cue, and he returned to the charge as soon as the course of events became clear. In an exhilarating mixture of metaphor he urged the Chiefs of Staff to be bold. 'The question arises' he minuted them on 13th July<sup>(9)</sup>

'. . . why we should crawl up the leg like a harvest-bug from the ankle upwards? Let us rather strike at the knee. . . .

3. Once we have established our Air power strongly in the Catanian plain and have occupied Messina, etc., why should we not use sea power and air power to land as high up Italy as air fighter cover from the Catania area warrants?

4. Let the Planners immediately prepare the best scheme possible for landing on the Italian west coast with the objective the port of Naples and the march on Rome, thus cut off and leave behind all the Axis forces in Western Sicily and all ditto in the toe, ball, heel and ankle. It would seem that two or three good Divisions could take Naples and produce decisive results if not on the political attitude of Italy then upon the capital. Tell the planners to throw their hat over the fence; they need not be afraid there will not be plenty of dead weight to clog it.'

Within two days the British Joint Planning Staff produced the appreciation he demanded.<sup>(10)</sup> All depended, they pointed out, on the capacity of the *Luftwaffe* to contest command of the air over the beaches chosen for the Allied landings; and 'provided the German air forces in Italy are harassed on the ground and brought to battle in the air without respite during the interim period, operations against the Italian mainland will, if they take place within the next 5-7 weeks, be as ineffectively opposed by the enemy close-support units as have been our operations in Sicily'. If mounted by 25th August, an operation against the Naples area might be possible supported only by carrier-borne aircraft and Lightnings. Four or five escort carriers could be found, with 160 aircraft—enough for

the Naples operation 'provided the enemy has little opportunity to recover'. An attack on Rome itself, which could be supported only by carrier-borne fighters and where there would be inadequate port facilities available to maintain three divisions in battle, would be 'too great a gamble to warrant the abandonment of our present plans' (to which Mr. Churchill commented 'I agree'). Naples itself would be too strongly defended for direct assault; but landings might be effected either in the Gulf of Gaeta to the north of it or the Gulf of Salerno to the south, in preparation for an overland attack on the city and a rapid advance on Rome. 'In this operation we should be at the limit of [air] cover. We should secure a good natural bridgehead with a large port and the ability to move rapidly on Rome. The psychological effect should be almost comparable to that produced by a direct assault on Rome' (to which Churchill commented 'Yes'). The paper concluded:

'An amphibious operation against Naples or Rome must depend for its success on giving the G.A.F. [German Air Force] no respite from now until the landing. If this is achieved, and if the Axis military policy proves to be one of fighting forward on the toe, a favourable but short opportunity may occur to carry out a surprise landing on the Gulf of Gaeta to seize Naples and advance to Rome. Only the Commander in the field can judge the chances'.

The Prime Minister and his military advisers thus found themselves in agreement. Mr. Churchill saw new vistas opening up, and he was determined not to allow the Americans to prevent him from exploiting them. 'I will in no circumstances allow the powerful British and British-controlled armies in the Mediterranean to stand idle', he wrote to his confidant, Field Marshal Smuts<sup>(11)</sup> '... Not only must we take Rome and march as far north as possible in Italy, but our right hand must give succour to the Balkan patriots. . . . I shall go to all lengths to procure the agreement of our Allies. If not, we have ample forces to act by ourselves'.

There was no need for Mr. Churchill to worry. General Marshall had certainly counselled delaying all decisions about further Mediterranean operations until the course of events in Sicily was known. Now he was no less anxious than the Prime Minister to exploit the Italian collapse. On 16th July he persuaded the Combined Chiefs of Staff to express to General Eisenhower their interest 'in the possibilities of a direct amphibious landing operation against Naples in lieu of an attack on Sardinia if the indications regarding Italian resistance makes risks worthwhile'; and stressed in almost Churchillian terms the importance of 'boldness and taking justifiable risks'.<sup>(12)</sup> The Prime Minister on hearing of this initiative cabled to General Marshall: 'Post-"Husky". I am with you heart and soul'.<sup>(13)</sup>



General Eisenhower himself met with his Commanders to consider the question on 18th July.<sup>(14)</sup> The toughness of German resistance in Sicily, and the possibility of prolonged defence of the Messina–Mount Etna line, made them unwilling to promise the capture of Messina and the end of the campaign before the middle of August. But the collapse of Italian morale, General Eisenhower informed the Combined Chiefs of Staff, left them in no further doubt that they should then exploit their success by invading the Italian mainland in order to force Italy out of the war and contain the maximum number of German forces in the area. The possibility of substantial German reinforcement of South Italy would have to be taken into account. They agreed also to reconsider the possibility of an assault on Naples, but pointed out that there had been good reasons for regarding this hitherto as impracticable. There were not enough landing-craft; the area was beyond the limit of effective fighter support, and the use of aircraft-carriers was considered too risky; and there seemed little prospect of success against an enemy who could delay the Allied advance for any appreciable length of time. But General Eisenhower now formally recommended that the war should be carried to the Italian mainland as soon as Sicily had been captured, and he asked for ‘very early approval’ of this recommendation so that preparation could begin at once. This approval was forthcoming within 24 hours, with the firm instruction that he was to extend his amphibious operations as far northwards as shore-based fighter cover could be made effective.

Meanwhile the Chiefs of Staff in London and their planners, on 19th and 20th July, scrutinised the implications of the attack against Naples (Operation ‘Avalanche’) more closely.<sup>(16)</sup> The strategic advantages which it offered, as against landings further south, were as obvious as the operational problems involved; and these were stressed in particular by General Brooke. The Allies, he insisted, must expect to meet three German divisions in the Naples area, whose build-up rate would be slightly better than they themselves could achieve. Carrier-borne fighter support, however effective to cover the landings, would be a wasting asset. The strength contemplated for the Allied assault force, three divisions, would therefore not be adequate, but it was doubtful whether landing-craft could be found for more. In view of these difficulties the Chiefs of Staff agreed that planning for ‘Avalanche’ and for operations in the far South of Italy should go forward together and the decision which operation to mount should be taken on the spot in the light of circumstances a decision which the Prime Minister conveyed to General Alexander in more forceful terms:

‘... It would seem that after “Husky” is finished or has become certain you can use both the right and the left hand like a boxer

and strike or feint as you choose. Only the Germans count. If they mass in the toe, ball and heel, great advantage will be gained by cutting in above them near the knee if that is physically possible. This will leave those in the southern tip in a forlorn situation and yield immense advantage for the northward advance.

6. On the other hand if the Germans mass two or three divisions around Naples or Rome and you feel that their strength is beyond your powers, there is quite a good secondary gambit by capturing the toe, ball and heel and reaching out with seaborne supplies, agents, commandos and air power into Albania and Yugoslavia. There is no need to consider this project in terms of divisions and Army Corps. The American authorities will require to be reassured that no heavy commitment is opened up in the Balkan peninsula. I cannot think this would be necessary though here, as elsewhere, we must follow the luck.

7. I am sending you by an officer a full account of the marvellous resistance put up by the so-called partisan followers of Tito in Bosnia and the powerful cold-blooded manoeuvres of Mihailovic in Serbia. Besides this there are the resistances of the guerrillas in Albania and recently in Greece. The Germans have not only been reinforcing the Balkan Peninsula with divisions but they have been continually improving the quality and mobility of these divisions and have been stiffening up the local Italians. The Balkans are now absorbing the following enemy divisions:

(a) In Yugoslavia: 17 Italian, 9 German, 5 Bulgarian and 8 Croat.

(b) on the Greek mainland: 6 German, 8 Italian and 2 Bulgarian.

The enemy cannot spare these forces and if Italy collapses the Germans could not bear the weight themselves. Great prizes lie in the Balkan direction.

8. Nevertheless all being said and done, no objective can compete with the capture of Rome which in its turn gives a stage later all the advantages hoped for from the Balkan liberation. I hope therefore that you will do your utmost to solve the problem by whatever you feel are the best manoeuvres. There is no use in looking further ahead. . . .<sup>(17)</sup>

One decision the Chiefs of Staff did take, and its implications might have been far-reaching. At their meeting on the morning of 28th July<sup>(18)</sup> they agreed that, whatever plan was decided upon, it was important that no resources at present in the Mediterranean should be dispersed until the situation was clarified. They authorised the dispatch of two messages. The first, to the Joint Chiefs of Staff in Washington, pointed out that since Italy 'might be within measurable distance of collapse . . . it would be a profound mistake

to allow anyone or anything which General Eisenhower might need to move from the Mediterranean area until we know the outcome of the examination on which he is engaged and his precise requirements for whatever operation may be decided upon'.<sup>(19)</sup> The second went from the First Sea Lord to the Commander-in-Chief Mediterranean informing him of the message and adding further: 'In view of the effect this proposal will have on "Overlord" and "Bullfrog" (the attack on Akyab) there may be objections from Washington but meanwhile you should hold everybody and everything you think may be required for "Priceless" (the invasion of Italy) whatever form it may take'.<sup>(20)</sup>

There were indeed objections from Washington. It did not appear to the Joint Chiefs of Staff that the success of the Sicilian operation gave any excuse for abandoning the agreement so painfully reached at the 'Trident' Conference. It had there been agreed that operations in the Mediterranean after the fall of Sicily should be conducted with the resources allotted after the requirements for operations in the Pacific and for the build-up against North West Europe had been satisfied. The resources affected by the 'stand-still order' included vessels from the Atlantic fleet, cargo-ships and liners required for the build-up of American forces in the United Kingdom, as well as assault-craft earmarked for the amphibious assaults on Akyab and Ramree.<sup>(21)</sup> General Marshall had certainly not intended that the assault on Naples which he was urging on General Eisenhower should be carried out with the resources designated for other theatres; and he feared also, the Joint Staff Mission reported to London, 'that "Avalanche" might well be a first step to similar further demands as success after success opened further possibilities'.<sup>(22)</sup> Events were to prove him right.

These views were set out in a strong message which the Joint Chiefs of Staff sent to London on 26th July:<sup>(23)</sup>

'When the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff recommended sending the message to General Eisenhower which pointed out "their interest in the possibility of a direct amphibious landing operation against Naples" the suggestion was based on the opinion that we were justified in accepting a calculated risk. They view the British proposal as a conservative and orthodox plan which would require the allocation of additional resources to an indefinite extent and in which the element of calculated risk is lacking. It was not the intention of the U.S. Chiefs of Staff to propose operations requiring an increase of the means available in the Mediterranean for post-"Husky" . . . [60,000 men over and above the "Trident" agreement had in fact been made available already.]

The British Chiefs of Staff proposal states that a general "stand fast" in the Mediterranean will cause postponement of

operations against Akyab and Ramree but that nevertheless there will remain "the possibility of carrying out these operations early in 1944". The United States Chiefs of Staff do not consider that the accelerated rate of success in the Mediterranean eliminates the need for the execution of the Burma operations as agreed upon. They are concerned with the apparently slow progress of the plans and preparations for operations in Burma.

The United States Chiefs of Staff adhere to their previous recommendations—that General Eisenhower be instructed to prepare a plan as a matter of urgency for direct attack on Naples using the resources that have already been made available for "Priceless".

This last recommendation was conveyed to General Eisenhower as a directive from the Combined Chiefs of Staff.<sup>(24)</sup>

The British Chiefs of Staff refused to regard this veto as final. At their meeting on 27th July some ingenious member pointed out 'that General Eisenhower would undoubtedly request additional resources and thus a further opportunity of pressing the U.S. Chiefs of Staff to provide certain forces would be presented'; and they informed their American colleagues that since the departure of the forces concerned would not be necessary until early August, they were maintaining their standstill order until they had a chance to discuss the whole situation at the forthcoming 'Quadrant' Conference which would assemble at Quebec the following month.<sup>(25)</sup> This decision was endorsed by the Prime Minister at a meeting of the Defence Committee on 28th July, where he raised the possibility of recasting British strategy in the Far East on radically different lines, eliminating the need for attacking Akyab altogether. 'It would be folly to spoil Mediterranean operations', he declared, 'for the sake of a bleak "Bullfrog";'<sup>(26)</sup> and the Committee formally approved the action taken by the Chiefs of Staff.

In view of the information reaching the Allies from all parts of the Mediterranean where Italian troops were still deployed, this approval was a foregone conclusion. From the Balkans, from the Aegean, from Italy itself reports were coming of friction between Italian and German troops, of overtures to local resistance leaders, of attempts to establish contact with the Allies, of desertion and low morale. It was only as the climax to these that there came, on 26th July, the first news of the fall of Mussolini. That dramatic event was bound to reinforce the British determination to do nothing which would weaken the impetus of their Mediterranean thrust; so when they sailed for Quebec on 5th August, the Chiefs of Staff faced the paradoxical situation that this excellent news, the result of weary years of sacrifice, planning and repeated disappointment, created for them

fresh difficulties with their Allies which would now have to be resolved.

The storm over the stand-still order in fact evaporated almost as quickly as it had arisen. Closer examination revealed that General Eisenhower could not find a use for all the landing-craft concerned; the reshaping of the Far Eastern strategy reduced the urgency with which they were required in Burma; and ingenious reshuffling enabled General Eisenhower to meet a substantial part of his requirements in the ever-scarce L.S.Ts. (Landing Ships Tanks). On 19th August the stand-still order was therefore revoked.<sup>(27)</sup> Far greater difficulties arose in another field: that of heavy bombers.

A preliminary study of the Naples operation had made it clear to A.F.H.Q. how difficult it would be to maintain command of the air over the battlefield at extreme range of fighter-cover; so, 'Of all types of additional strength that could be made available to us to assure a reasonable success in the whole venture', they cabled on 28th July, 'a temporary doubling of our heavy bomber types would be most effective'.<sup>(28)</sup> If four groups of Flying Fortresses (B.17s) could be spared for four or five weeks, they argued, it would not in the long run weaken the Combined Bombing Offensive, for it would make bomber bases in Italy more quickly available. Mr Churchill endorsed the request; Air Chief Marshal Portal and General Eaker, who commanded the U.S. Eighth Air Force in the United Kingdom, did not. To transfer even a single group from the battle for command of the German air space which was now at its height, they claimed, would have a disastrous effect on the course of the battle and the morale of the men conducting it. It would take a month for the groups withdrawn to come into action again, and when they did so they would be operating under strange conditions which would reduce the effectiveness of their intervention. The Chiefs of Staff Committee accepted these arguments, as did the Combined Chiefs of Staff in Washington; who informed General Eisenhower on 2nd August; 'That the combined bomber offensive from bases now available in the United Kingdom be sustained and intensified, it is deemed of the utmost importance'.<sup>(29)</sup>

A further disagreeable shock was administered to General Eisenhower when he was informed that the three groups of B.24s in the Mediterranean, which had been used for the bombing of Ploesti, would not be available for him either;\* and in a message of 19th August he pointed out the implications of this.<sup>(30)</sup> There were three German divisions south of Naples, not counting the *Hermann*

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\* A low-level attack was carried out against Ploesti on 1st August 1943 by 177 B.24s from North African bases. Fifty-four planes were lost, forty-one of them in action. An estimated 42% of the total refining capacity was destroyed, possibly 40% of the cracking capacity knocked out for a period from four to six months and the production of lubricating oils was considerably reduced. Craven & Cate, Vol. II, pp. 477-83.

*Göring Division* which had just been withdrawn from Sicily, and the value of Italian units could not be totally discounted. Interdiction from the air was vital to prevent an overwhelming concentration of hostile forces against the landings; and he did not believe that the four under-strength groups of B.17s and the two groups of B.24s which were left to him would be enough to maintain command of the air by raiding enemy airfields on the necessary scale. As for covering the landings, he pointed out, 'the assault will be at extreme range of single-engined fighters and the hostile airfields are scattered over a great area. Some of our P.38 (Lightning) pilots are also approaching the point of exhaustion. As a consequence of these things our convoys will have to anticipate higher losses from air attack while at sea and while lying off-shore'.\*

Nevertheless he had to plan on the basis of the forces already available to him, and on 24th August his proposals were submitted to the Combined Chiefs of Staff now in session at Quebec.<sup>(33)</sup> Between 3rd and 4th September XIII British Corps would cross the Messina Straits (Operation 'Baytown'), and seize a bridgehead on the mainland in order to pin down the German forces in South Italy and open the Straits to cargo shipping. Heavy opposition to this landing was not expected, but in view of probable demolitions and mountainous country further progress was likely to be slow. A week later, between 9th and 11th September, Operation 'Avalanche' would follow: the landing of Fifth Army, consisting of X British and VI U.S. Corps in Salerno Bay, to secure the port of Naples.

Salerno was not ideal as an objective. The beaches were good but completely overlooked from the surrounding hills, and the only roads to Naples led through narrow and easily defensible passes. But landings north of Naples were ruled out by poor beaches, and the difficulties of providing adequate air cover.<sup>(34)</sup> Both single-engined and twin-engined fighters from Sicily as well as carrier-borne aircraft would be able to cover the Salerno beaches and it was hoped to maintain a force of 30 fighters continuously over the assault area during the hours of daylight.

Nevertheless General Eisenhower confessed to some anxiety about 'Avalanche'. 'If and when the Germans realise that our assault is not in very great strength,' explained his emissary in Quebec, 'they may move divisions to the sound of the guns and attack us with up to 6 divisions sometime before September. On the other hand communication with Italy is poor, and it may not be easy for the Germans to alter their withdrawal plans and concentrate divisions against

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\* The reluctance of the Chiefs of Staff to change their mind is understandable in the light of the figures which they presented to the Prime Minister on 31st August. These showed the total number of Allied serviceable aircraft in the Mediterranean theatre as 2,400, as against 600 German.<sup>(31)</sup> In fact a squadron of B.24s was temporarily transferred to General Eisenhower from patrolling duties in the Bay of Biscay.<sup>(32)</sup>

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our "Avalanche" assault'. Allied intelligence had now identified the sixteen German divisions in Italy, and correctly divined Hitler's ultimate intention of withdrawing these to the Pisa-Rimini line. Nor could General Eisenhower offer any very favourable rate of build-up. Not only the rate at which captured ports in Italy could be opened, but the overladen dock facilities in North Africa would limit the forces he could send across; and many of the 'divisions' at his disposal were paper units only, not armed or trained for operations. He hoped to land six divisions in the Naples area by December, and a further six could be passed through Calabria; but he might need as many as sixteen divisions to secure Rome and the airfields round it.<sup>(36)</sup>

These figures caused the Prime Minister considerable concern, which he expressed to General Alexander in a message of 26th August:<sup>(36)</sup>

'... Assuming that our landings are successful and that we are not defeated in the subsequent battles I cannot understand why two and a half months or more will be required to get ashore or why it would be necessary once we had obtained an effective port and bridgehead at "Avalanche" to march all the "Baytown" divisions through Calabria, instead of sending some at least of them round by sea.

Moreover the rate of build-up to twelve divisions on the mainland by December 1st seems to me to open dangers of the gravest kind. First no effective help can come to enable the Italians in Rome to turn against the Germans and the danger of a German Quisling Government being installed or alternatively sheer anarchy supervening will be aggravated and prolonged. Secondly, if your rate of build-up is no more than twelve divisions by 1st December and these only in the Naples area what is to prevent the Germans in the same time from bringing far larger forces against them? They are at present said to have 16 divisions in the Italian Peninsula. I am not convinced that these are complete divisions. . . . But if the liberation of Rome and the gaining of the important political and military advantages following therefrom is to be delayed for more than three months from now no one can measure the consequences.'

General Alexander's staff assured him that everything possible was being done to speed the build-up, and that it would certainly be more rapid than had so far been suggested.<sup>(37)</sup> But the Chiefs of Staff were no less anxious than the Prime Minister. Examining General Eisenhower's plan on 2nd September they found the timing for the overland advance to be 'optimistic' and the build-up rates he promised 'unfavourable'; particularly since the War Office estimate of the possible rate of the German build-up was 'considerably in excess' of that produced by Algiers. Reporting their doubts to

Washington, they stressed the 'overwhelming importance of straining every nerve to increase our own rate of build-up'.<sup>(38)</sup> The availability of shipping and the capacity of ports was again re-examined, and the possibility of seizing Taranto was also reconsidered.<sup>(39)</sup>

But in Algiers it seemed that help might come from another direction. On 28th August General Eisenhower cabled to Washington.

'The risks attendant on "Avalanche" which have been pointed out to you and which we are perfectly prepared to accept will be minimised to a large extent if we are able to secure Italian assistance just prior to and during the critical period of the actual landing. Even passive assistance will greatly increase our chances of success and there is even some possibility of the Italians being willing to immobilize certain German divisions'.<sup>(40)</sup>

Diplomacy, in short, must be invoked to solve the problems which seemed to the military almost insoluble; and diplomacy had been at work for some considerable time.

## SOURCES

- (1) W. S. Churchill: *The Second World War*, Vol. IV, p. 730.
- (2) Minutes of Conference: C.O.S.(43)290(O). The account in Churchill, Vol. IV, pp. 730-40 is a paraphrase of these.
- (3) NAF.250.
- (4) F/Italy/6, fol. 9
- (5) P.M. directive D.114/3.
- (6) C.O.S.(43)144th and 145th Mtgs.(O).  
C.O.S.(W)683.
- (7) P.M. telegram T.971/3: C.P.228.
- (8) Maurice Matloff: *Strategic Planning for Coalition Warfare, 1943-1944*, pp. 156-7.  
J.S.M.1065 of 14.7.43.
- (9) P.M. directive D.127/3 of 13.7.43: C.P.228.
- (10) J.P.(43)253(Final) of 15.7.43.
- (11) P.M. telegram T.1043/3 of 15.7.43: C.P.228.
- (12) J.S.M.1073 of 16.7.43.
- (13) W.S.C.-Marshall: OZ.2029 of 17.7.43: C.P.228.
- (14) Eisenhower-C.C.S.: NAF.265 of 18.7.43.
- (15) C.C.S.-Eisenhower: FAN.165.
- (16) C.O.S.(43)165th Mtg.(O) of 19.7.43.  
C.O.S.(43)166th Mtg.(O) of 20.7.43.  
J.P.(43)265(Final) of 21.7.43.
- (17) W.S.C.-Alexander: T.1083/3 of 22.7.43: C.P.228.
- (18) C.O.S.(43)166th Mtg.(O).
- (19) C.O.S.-J.S.M. of 21.7.43: C.O.S.(W)717.
- (20) F.S.L.-C.-in-C., Medn. of 20.7.43: F/Italy/6, fol. 72.  
C.O.S.(43)167th Mtg.(O) of 21.7.43.
- (21) J.P.(43)264 of 24.7.43.
- (22) J.S.M.-C.O.S.: J.S.M.1100 of 23.7.43.  
C.O.S.-J.S.M.: C.O.S.(W)729 of 24.7.43.  
J.S.M.-C.O.S.: LETOD 1227 of 25.7.43.
- (23) J.S.M.-C.O.S.: J.S.M.1104 of 26.7.43.
- (24) FAN.175 of 26.7.43.
- (25) C.O.S.(43)173rd Mtg.(O) of 27.7.43.  
C.O.S.-J.S.M.: C.O.S.(W)739 of 28.7.43.
- (26) D.O.(43)16 of 28.7.43.

- (27) C.O.S.(Q)6th Mtg. of 9.8.43.  
C.O.S.(Q)15th Mtg. of 18.8.43.  
C.O.S.(Q)16th Mtg. of 19.8.43.
- (28) NAF.303 of 28.7.43.
- (29) C.O.S.(43)175th and 176th Mtgs.(O) of 29 and 30.7.43.  
C.O.S.(W)742 of 2.8.43.  
FAN.180 of 2.8.43.
- (30) NAF.532 of 19.18.43.
- (31) C.O.S.-Dill: OZ.2601 of 31.8.43.
- (32) F/Italy/6, fols. 164-172.
- (33) C.O.S.(Q)45.  
C.C.S. 166th Mtg.
- (34) NAF.345 of 31.8.43.
- (35) NAF.345 of 31.8.43 and  
Alexander-C.I.G.S. of 31.8.43: F/Italy/6, fol. 169.
- (36) W.S.C.-Alexander: WELFARE 423 of 26.8.43.
- (37) Richardson-C.I.G.S.: CONCRETE 597 of 27.8.43.
- (38) C.O.S.(43)205th Mtg.(O) of 2.9.43.  
C.O.S.(W)779 of 2.9.43.
- (39) See F/Italy/6, fol. 204.
- (40) NAF.542 of 28.8.43.



## PART FIVE

### CHAPTER XXVII

# THE ITALIAN SURRENDER

THERE WAS little doubt either in London or Washington that the overthrow of Mussolini would shortly be followed by overtures for surrender. The Joint Intelligence Committee on 27th July warned the Chiefs of Staff that these might be imminent.<sup>(1)</sup> Mr. Churchill and President Roosevelt exchanged telegrams expressing the same belief as soon as they heard the news on the 26th.<sup>(2)</sup> We have already considered the military decisions which they took in the light of this information; but the situation called also for political decisions no less delicate and certainly no less urgent. When the Italian Government did make its expected offer to surrender, what terms were the Allies to exact? There had been no lack of thinking about this problem, which was not so simple as it might appear; and the thinking had revealed differences of approach between the Americans and the British which complicated the issue still further. As a result, although the Foreign Office had been studying the question since the previous December, the Allies now found themselves in the embarrassing position of having no agreed official document to hand to the Italian representatives whose appearance was now assumed to be a matter of days.

Such a document had indeed been drafted and was still being debated. It had originated in London, as the result of the work of a Foreign Office Ministerial Committee on Reconstruction Problems, and had been circulated to the War Cabinet at the end of April.<sup>(3)</sup> It covered not only arrangements for the surrender and demobilisation of the Italian armed forces, but questions of shipping, censorship, occupation, disposal of war criminals, treatment of prisoners of war, the remodelling of civil laws, the disbandment of Fascist organisations and the general demilitarisation of the Italian State. It visualised the execution of these terms by an Italian government under the directions of an Allied Armistice Commission; a point which, among others, aroused the objections of the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff when the document came before them on 16th June. The Americans held that the British draft did not constitute an unconditional surrender. They considered that the Italian government should be suspended altogether and an Allied Military Government established for the whole of Italian territory under the direction of the military authorities—a proposal which the British held to be not only

unnecessarily cumbersome but in practice impossible. The Combined Chiefs of Staff referred the matter to their Combined Civil Affairs Committee,<sup>(4)</sup> and there the question was still being discussed, with little sign of agreement being reached, when the news came of Mussolini's fall.

Neither Mr Churchill nor General Eisenhower was inclined to wait for this Committee to complete its deliberations before taking action. Their concern was not so much the conclusion of peace as the effective prosecution of the war. The Prime Minister set out his own ideas in a document reprinted in full in his own history of the Second World War.<sup>(5)</sup> The Allies, this stated, should secure the use of all Italian territory for the deployment of their armed forces, the surrender of the Italian fleet and the withdrawal of Italian forces from all the French and Balkan territories of which they were in occupation. The surrender of German forces in Italy should also be demanded of the Italians, and if this led to fighting between Germans and Italians so much the better. 'We should provoke this conflict as much as possible', Mr Churchill suggested, 'and should not hesitate to send troops and air support to assist the Italians in procuring the surrender of the Germans south of Rome'. The return of Allied prisoners of war in Italian hands should be mandatory. Anti-German feeling among the Italian population should be stimulated so that Italy could be treated as a firm and friendly base from which the Combined Bomber Offensive could be carried on and partisan activities stimulated in the Balkans. The strongest pressure should be brought to bear upon the Turks 'to act in accordance with the spirit of the Alliance'. As to the fate of 'war criminals', he agreed that the Allied Governments should now decide on the treatment of those who fell into Allied hands, but as to what the treatment should be the Prime Minister expressed himself to be 'fairly indifferent on this matter provided always that no solid military advantages are sacrificed for the sake of immediate vengeance'.

The Prime Minister's paper was discussed and approved at a meeting of the War Cabinet and the Chiefs of Staff on the afternoon of 26th July, and sent both to President Roosevelt and to General Eisenhower.<sup>(6)</sup> The President agreed cautiously that it expressed 'my thoughts of today on prospects and methods of handling the Italian situation with which we are now confronted'.<sup>(7)</sup> General Eisenhower however had already been doing some thinking on his own.

At A.F.H.Q. the principal concern naturally enough was with the need to exploit the situation to the greatest possible military effect. General Eisenhower and his advisers thought in terms not of surrender negotiated between governments but of an armistice in the field on terms imposed by the Commander-in-Chief. On 27th July, even before he received the British draft, General Eisenhower cabled

to Washington his own views about the conditions to be imposed on the defeated enemy.<sup>(8)</sup> The conditions he formulated were to become known as 'the Short Terms', in contrast to 'the Long Terms' which were being considered by the Combined Civil Affairs Committee in Washington. They dealt almost exclusively with his requirements as Allied Force Commander in the theatre. The Italian forces were to cease all hostilities, and the Italian government was to guarantee the compliance of German forces on the mainland with the terms of the armistice. All Allied prisoners were to be handed over; the Italian fleet was to be surrendered; German forces were to be compelled to evacuate Italian territory and Corsica, which should be made available for Allied operational use; the Italian Government was to guarantee to employ, if necessary, 'all its available Armed Forces to ensure prompt and exact compliance with all the provisions of this Armistice'; and there should be 'immediate acknowledgement of the overriding authority of the Allied Commander-in-Chief to establish Military Government and with the unquestioning right to effect, through such Agencies as he may set up, any change in personnel that may seem to him desirable'.

This last demand raised a host of new questions. So did General Eisenhower's further suggestion that these terms should not merely be approved by the Combined Chiefs of Staff but 'immediately broadcast to the Italian population, and, together with the message previously recommended to the Combined Chiefs of Staff on this general subject, would present to the Italian population such a promise of peace under honourable conditions that if it refused an Armistice, no Italian Government could remain in power'. The previous message to which he referred consisted of a general assurance to the Italian people that they could now have peace if they asked for it and refused all further collaboration with the Germans. Their soldiers would then be able to return to their peacetime avocations; their prisoners of war would come home; Allied occupation would, as in Sicily, be 'mild and beneficent'; and 'the ancient liberties and traditions of your country will be restored'. After careful vetting by American and British authorities, this message was broadcast on 29th July and had, according to some observers, considerable effect.<sup>(9)</sup>

Its proposed sequel ran into greater difficulties. The Defence Committee of the Cabinet considered Eisenhower's request on the evening of 28th July, and disliked it for two reasons. They considered it impolitic to broadcast the Allied terms before the Italian government had actually asked for them; and they thought it unwise to announce these military conditions alone, unaccompanied by the more elaborate conditions of 'the Long Terms' covering civil and economic requirements.<sup>(10)</sup> During the course of this meeting the



Prime Minister communicated these views to the President over the transatlantic telephone. The conversation was overheard by German listening apparatus and confirmed *O.K.W.* in their erroneous assumption that the new Italian Government was already negotiating for surrender.<sup>(11)</sup>

Mr. Churchill followed up his telephone message with a telegram to Mr. Roosevelt making clear his Government's view. Until they did receive overtures from the Italians, the British considered that the Allies should take no action; and when such overtures did come, General Eisenhower should not be empowered to negotiate on the Short Terms.<sup>(12)</sup>

'I suppose envoys would be appointed and a rendezvous fixed. Our version [of the Armistice terms] is already in your hands. As you will see, it follows the main lines of Eisenhower's draft, but is more precise, and cast in a form suited to discussion between plenipotentiaries rather than a popular appeal. There are great dangers in trying to dish this sort of dose up with jam for the patient.

We also think that the terms should cover civil as well as military requirements, and that it would be better for them to be settled by envoys appointed by our two Governments than by the General Commanding in the field. He can of course deal with any proposals coming from the troops on his immediate front for a local surrender. . . .'

The War Cabinet's decision reflected the views of the Foreign Office. Officials of that department had laboured long over drafting a document which should take care not only of immediate necessities but of the long-term problems of dealing with the Italian government and people, and they were very properly concerned, in this case as in so many others, lest the plea of 'military necessity' should lay up still graver problems for the future. They objected both to General Eisenhower's proposed 'Short Terms' and to his request to be allowed to negotiate them in person.

'If he receives a request for cessation of hostilities from the King and Badoglio [the Foreign Office informed Mr. Macmillan on 29th July <sup>(13)</sup>] he is to put forward our full instrument with authority to sign, but not of course to negotiate. If signature of this document is refused, i.e. if the Italians refuse to surrender unconditionally, General Eisenhower should simply continue the fighting until the Italians are prepared to surrender unconditionally.

He may sign a purely military instrument only in exceptional and unforeseen circumstances on grounds of urgent military necessity. For instance if the King and Badoglio disappeared

and were not replaced by any central authority whose signature would be of any value, he may then sign the military instrument which would be followed by occupation of the country and the issue of proclamations'.

In the tense atmosphere of Algiers these instructions, which left the Germans completely out of account, seemed quite unrealistic. As Mr. Macmillan pointed out to the Prime Minister, the Foreign Office draft 'presupposes an Italian Government or Commander being prepared to sign such severe terms without negotiations or argument. This obviously demands a military situation which leaves them no choice'.<sup>(14)</sup> With German troops moving into Italy in increasing numbers and no Allied soldier yet landed on the Italian mainland such a situation had certainly not yet developed. So General Eisenhower begged the Prime Minister on 29th July to rescind his decision, and let him use his own discretion. 'I realise clearly that there are many implications and corollaries to the problem that far transcend the military field and my own authority', he wrote, 'but I urge that we do not allow ourselves to get in a position where military opportunity may slip out of our fingers and important advantages therefore disappear'.<sup>(15)</sup> President Roosevelt agreed.<sup>(16)</sup> While accepting the British view that the 'Short Terms' should not be broadcast, he was convinced, he told Mr. Churchill the same day, 'that it is necessary in order to avoid unnecessary and possibly costly military action against Italy that Eisenhower should be authorised to state conditions when and if the Italian government ask him for an Armistice'. For this purpose he thought that the Short Terms, with modifications, would suffice.

The British yielded. After a midnight meeting of the War Cabinet the Prime Minister replied to Washington on 29th July that if General Eisenhower were approached by the Italians the British Government agreed that he should present the Short Terms, suitably amended; though Mr. Churchill pointed out also that the first overtures for surrender were likely to come, not to General Eisenhower, but to the Allied Governments through normal, or abnormal, diplomatic channels.<sup>(17)</sup> Eisenhower thus received the powers he wanted; and the Short Terms reached the final form in which they were signed on 3rd September by the representatives of General Eisenhower and the Italian Government.<sup>(18)\*</sup>

But agreement on the Short Terms did not resolve the differences which had arisen between the British and the Americans over the Long Terms. The American insistence in particular on Unconditional Surrender was unweakened, and Mr. Roosevelt voiced it in a public speech on 28th July. 'Our terms for Italy are still the same as

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\* Printed in full as Appendix VII(A).

our terms for Germany and Japan—Unconditional Surrender', he insisted. 'We will have no truck with Fascism in any way, shape or manner. We will permit no vestige of Fascism to remain.'<sup>(19)</sup> Mr. Churchill's request, made on 30th July and reiterated the following day,<sup>(20)</sup> that he should 'consider our most carefully drafted terms of surrender which we sent a fortnight ago', obviously placed the President in a difficult position. He extricated himself by proposing that there should be no Long Terms at all. 'After all', he cabled the Prime Minister 3rd August,<sup>(21)</sup> 'the terms of surrender already approved and sent to Eisenhower ought to be all that is necessary. Why tie his hands by an instrument that may be oversufficient or insufficient? Why not let him act to meet situations as they arise? You and I can discuss this matter at Quadrant'. With the last sentence at least Mr. Churchill agreed; and since he and his staff left for Quebec in the *Queen Mary* the following day, further discussion was deferred until he could meet Mr Roosevelt face to face.

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By the time Mr. Churchill reached Quebec events had moved fast. On the evening of 28th July, almost simultaneously with the British War Cabinet's decision to take no action until the Italian Government asked for terms, Marshal Badoglio and the King of Italy decided to approach the Allies.<sup>(22)</sup> On 3rd August the Italian Foreign Office despatched the Counsellor of the Italian Embassy to the Vatican, the Marchese Lanza d'Ajeta, to make contact with the British Embassy in Lisbon.<sup>(23)</sup> The following day, 4th August, d'Ajeta saw the British Ambassador to Portugal, Sir Ronald Campbell; and Campbell's report of this meeting reached London the same evening, before the *Queen Mary* had left the Clyde.

This report<sup>(24)</sup> introduced a new element into the situation which it took the Allies some time to appreciate. For d'Ajeta's purpose was not to ask for terms: it was to inform the Allies that, unless they intervened with military force, the Germans would make it physically impossible for Italy to leave the war at all. To prevent a blood-bath, d'Ajeta said, the Italian Government was having to make a show of going on with the fight. But the whole country was longing for peace. The sooner the Allies landed in Italy the better, and they were likely to find active collaboration from the Italian population; but the Germans were still likely to defend the peninsula line by line. As an earnest of good faith d'Ajeta had brought full details of the German order of battle, which Campbell also transmitted; he depicted the King and the Badoglio government as the only barriers against a red tide of communism; and he begged the Allies to suspend their bombing of Italian cities.

Two days later there came a rather more positive message from the Badoglio government. On 6th August a second Italian diplomat, Signor Alberto Berio, called on the British Consul-General in Tangier. Berio was more categorical than d'Ajeta. He stated specifically that Badoglio was ready to treat for peace and was only prevented by the German presence from doing so openly; and that he personally was authorised to negotiate with any representative of the British Government or of General Eisenhower.<sup>(25)</sup> Like d'Ajeta he emphasised the need to support Badoglio as the only bulwark of order; he warned that Badoglio's public pronouncements of continued belligerence should not be taken seriously; and he asked that Allied bombing of Italian cities should be suspended.

The Foreign Office had been a little sceptical about d'Ajeta, but this, they agreed, looked like a genuine offer. In his covering note to Mr. Churchill, Mr. Eden suggested that the Berio approach should be taken seriously, and that the Allies should reply with a formal demand for unconditional surrender. 'Don't miss the bus,' the Prime Minister scrawled on Mr. Eden's telegram, but after consultation with the Chiefs of Staff he replied expressing his agreement. 'Badoglio admits he is going to doublecross someone, but his interests and the mood of the Italian peoples makes it more likely that Hitler will be the one to be tricked. Allowance should be made for the difficulties of his position'; but, concluded the Prime Minister, the bombing should go on, subject only to the limits dictated by the weather.<sup>(26)</sup> Attacks were in fact launched on 12th August against Rome, Milan, Genoa and Turin.

It took some little time to collate the exact text of a reply between Mr Roosevelt in Washington, the Prime Minister and the Chiefs of Staff on the high seas and the War Cabinet in London, so the British Consul in Tangier did not receive his instructions until 12th August.<sup>(27)</sup> He was then ordered to tell Signor Berio that the Allies could not negotiate but would require unconditional surrender: the Italian Government were to place themselves in the hands of the Allied Governments, who would then state their terms. These terms would provide for an honourable capitulation; but Signor Berio should be reminded of the Allied intention, already announced, that in due course Italy would occupy a respected place in the New Europe; and that Italian prisoners taken in Tunisia and Sicily would be released provided the Italian Government reciprocated. It is curious that in these instructions the repeated statements by the unfortunate Italians, that they were in no position to surrender whether unconditionally or otherwise, should have been so completely ignored.

Meanwhile the Italian Government, anxious at the delay, had decided to send yet a third emissary to the Allies; General Giuseppe

Castellano, a senior officer on General Ambrosio's staff. Castellano came primarily as the representative of *Comando Supremo*; and although his mission had been sanctioned, somewhat reluctantly, by the Italian Foreign Office, he knew little of the messages carried by d'Ajeta and Berio and, of course, nothing of their fate. Like d'Ajeta, he did not see his role as being to offer the surrender of Italy; rather, as a patriotic officer whose dislike of the Germans now amounted to loathing, he hoped to arrange for the transfer of his country's allegiance and her continuation of the war on the Allied side.<sup>(28)</sup> Castellano travelled to Lisbon incognito with a party of Italian government officials, furnished with no credentials except a letter of introduction from the British Minister to the Vatican. On 15th August he reached Madrid, slipped away from his companions, and presented himself to the British Ambassador, Sir Samuel Hoare.

Hoare conveyed Castellano's message in a telegram to London that evening.<sup>(29)</sup>

'General Castellano informed me that he had come officially and with full authority from Marshal Badoglio to put before His Majesty's Government the Italian position and to make a specific and very urgent proposal. The Marshal wished His Majesty's Government to know that Italy was in a terrible position. Practically the whole country was in favour of peace, the Italian Army was badly armed, there was no Italian Aviation and German troops were streaming in by the Brenner and the Riviera. Feeling against the Germans was intense. The Italian Government however felt powerless to act until the Allies landed on the mainland. If and when however the Allies landed, Italy was prepared to join the Allies and fight against Germany. If the Allies agreed in principle to this proposal General Castellano would immediately give detailed information as to the disposition of German troops and stores and as to co-operation that the Italians would offer Mihailovic in the Balkans. General Castellano was also empowered to concert operations, e.g. connected with the Allied landings from Sicily. Marshal Badoglio regarded it as essential that action should be taken immediately as every hour meant the arrival of more German Units in Italy and at present there were thirteen Divisions and the German plan was to hold the line of the Apennines and Ravenna'.

When asked how his Government would react to a demand for unconditional surrender Castellano replied 'We are not in a position to make any terms. We will accept unconditional surrender provided we can join the Allies in fighting the Germans.' He also suggested that General Eisenhower should send a representative familiar with Allied military plans to meet him when he arrived in Lisbon.

Sir Samuel Hoare was impressed by Castellano, who struck him as a man of 'weight and sincerity'. In his covering telegram he expressed his own view that unless the Italian Government could look forward to an Allied landing and the opportunity of fighting the Germans, they 'will not have sufficient courage or justification to make a complete *volte face* and will drift impotently into chaos. . . .'<sup>(30)</sup> The Foreign Office was more sceptical. Mr. Eden, when he forwarded Hoare's telegram to Mr. Churchill in Quebec, pointed out that co-ordination of operations with the Italians was out of the question if it meant taking them into the Allied confidence over military planning. Once the Allied forces reached the mainland the Italians would probably co-operate anyway; while in the Balkans Italian help would be of doubtful military advantage and considerable political liability.<sup>(31)</sup>

But Mr Churchill and the Chiefs of Staff saw an opportunity not to be missed. The Italians could do a great deal—destroying German communications, releasing Allied prisoners, sailing their warships into Allied ports, co-operating with Allied invaders of the mainland or partisan forces in the Balkans—which would 'without any bargain facilitate a more friendly relationship with the United Nations'.<sup>(32)</sup> To their American colleagues the Chiefs of Staff proposed on 16th August that General Castellano's offer should be followed up immediately.<sup>(33)</sup> General Eisenhower should be instructed to send two staff officers, one American and one British, to Lisbon to present Castellano with the Short Terms. 'The extent to which the terms will be modified in favour of Italy', they suggested, 'would depend on how far the Italian Government and people do, in fact, aid the United Nations against Germany during the remainder of the war'. The cessation of hostilities should take effect from a date and hour to be notified by General Eisenhower, which should be a few hours before Allied forces landed on the mainland. The Italian Government should undertake to proclaim the Armistice simultaneously with the Allies and, from that moment, order their forces and people to collaborate with them and resist the Germans. Further, they should be required to release Allied prisoners of war and order their Fleet, merchant shipping and aircraft to make for Allied ports and airfields; destroying any vessels or aircraft likely to fall into enemy hands. Until the Armistice was proclaimed the Italians should practice passive resistance and minor sabotage, safeguard Allied prisoners, ensure that no warship, merchant shipping or coastal defences fell into German hands, and prepare to evacuate their forces from the Balkan peninsula.

With slight amendments these proposals were adopted by the Combined Chiefs of Staff, now assembled at Quebec, on 17th August,<sup>(34)</sup> and confirmed by the President. Messages from the Foreign

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With slight amendments these proposals were adopted by the Combined Chiefs of Staff, now assembled at Quebec, on 17th August,<sup>(34)</sup> and confirmed by the President. Messages from the Foreign



Office indicated that the Department still had reservations. The multiple negotiations with different emissaries they considered unwise. The Russians, they pointed out, would be suspicious at the unilateral action of the Western Allies, and the resistance movements in the Balkans would be highly discouraged by negotiations with their late oppressors. But time pressed. Mr. Eden reached Quebec on 18th August to find that the decision had been taken and General Eisenhower had already received his instructions. Not only the Foreign Office but also the War Cabinet were virtually presented by the Prime Minister and the Chiefs of Staff with a *fait accompli*.<sup>(35)</sup>

Once he received his instructions General Eisenhower moved fast. By the afternoon of 18th August his Chief of Staff Major General Walter Bedell Smith, and the British head of his Intelligence Section Brigadier K. W. D. Strong, were flying to Gibraltar, having been hastily fitted out with civilian clothes and forged passports in what Mr. Macmillan described as 'an atmosphere of amateur theatricals'.<sup>(36)</sup> They reached Lisbon the following day, and that evening at 10 p.m. met Castellano at the British Embassy.<sup>(37)</sup> The session lasted all night. It was first necessary to make it clear what they were talking about. Smith and Strong were authorised simply to communicate General Eisenhower's terms for a military armistice, which were to be accepted by the Italians without any conditions. General Castellano saw his task as being to arrange for a transfer of Italian loyalties and fighting forces from one camp to the other. General Smith pointed out that this was a matter of 'high government policy' which they could not discuss; but any Italian forces which did fight against or obstruct the Germans, he assured Castellano, would receive Allied assistance and support.

General Smith then took Castellano through Eisenhower's 'Short Terms', and they began to discuss the problem of implementing them. The capacity of the Italians to prevent German movement of Allied prisoners was small, explained Castellano; fuel shortage limited their movement of ships and aircraft; most of their airfields were already in German hands; and few of the Italian forces at present in the Balkans could be withdrawn to the coast. To these objections General Smith replied that the Italian Government must do what they could. To Castellano's questions about the compatibility of the surrender terms with the preservation of Italian sovereignty, Smith asserted that he could not discuss the question of the future government of Italy, but an Allied Military Government on the lines of that already operating in Sicily would certainly be necessary in certain areas. The Sicilian experience however should convince the Italians that this would be 'fair and humane'. The person of the King, he further assured Castellano, would be treated with 'all due personal consideration'.

After making sure that the surrender terms were fully understood, the Allied representatives allowed the discussion to return to the question of Italian participation in the war. General Smith linked the two questions by emphasising that the extent to which the Armistice terms would be modified in the Italian favour would depend on the degree to which Italy did in fact help the Allies against Germany. Italians fighting Germans, destroying German property or hampering German communications would receive all possible Allied support. Any reprisals which the Germans might attempt once the Armistice became known—General Castellano had spoken particularly of the possible use of gas—would be countered by Allied retaliation; and in any case, suggested General Smith, a few days of vindictive action by the Germans would be less serious for Italy than a long war of attrition fought on her soil.

At length General Castellano agreed to take back the surrender terms to his Government. But he added that it would be helpful if he could be told where and when the invasion would take place; for, with German forces dominating Rome, the Italian government might find it necessary to leave the city as soon as the Armistice was announced. It was an understandable request. No less understandably the Allied representatives could not grant it. General Smith could promise only that General Eisenhower would make his announcement five or six hours before the landing took place. Meanwhile a channel of communication between General Eisenhower's Headquarters was to be arranged. If the Italian Government accepted the Allied terms they were to signify the fact by 30th August. Castellano would then fly to Sicily to meet the Allied representative again on the 31st. The meeting broke up at 7 a.m. on August 20th in an atmosphere of hopeful amiability. Castellano rejoined his party of officials and, to disarm German suspicion, returned to Rome with them by train. Their departure was delayed and the journey slow: he arrived only on 27th August; the Italian Government were left with three days to make up their minds whether or not to accept the Allied terms.<sup>(38)</sup>

Meanwhile the Allies had at last reached agreement over the full armistice conditions to be presented to the Italian Government, and Mr. Roosevelt, in spite of his original doubts as to its necessity, gave his approval on 26th August.<sup>(39)</sup> This instrument of surrender<sup>(40)</sup>\* met the American wishes in that, in its original form, it declared that 'The Italian land, sea and air forces, wherever located, hereby surrender unconditionally'. It met the British in that it covered political and economic conditions as well as military, and left the sovereignty of the Italian Government intact. It stated merely that 'the forces of the United Nations will require to occupy certain parts of Italian territory'; and that in this territory the United Nations

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\* Printed in its final form at Appendix VII(B).  
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would exercise all the rights of an occupying power. 'Personnel of the Italian Administrative, Judicial and Public Service', it laid down, 'will carry out their function under the control of the Allied Commander-in-Chief'. The Italian Government was made responsible for all financial and commercial dealings, and for providing the Allies with all the currency they required; and in general was to act as the agent of the Allies in carrying out their directions in all branches, civil as well as military, of public life. It was an arrangement which was to save not only Italian honour but a great deal of Allied trouble and time.

The concern of the Allied Governments was now how to communicate these 'Long Terms' to the Italians and make it clear that they, and not the Short Terms handed to Castellano, were to be considered definitive. But A.F.H.Q. viewed the matter very differently. There anxiety was mounting as reports came in of the growing German strength in Italy. If the Italians felt that they could not surrender without a firm assurance of Allied military help, doubts were developing in Algiers whether the Allies could bring them such help without a firm assurance of Italian surrender; and it was not clear to General Eisenhower and his advisers that the policy-makers in London and Washington had fully appreciated this point.

In Algiers therefore the Long Terms were awaited with something like apprehension, and their arrival on 27th August was far from welcome. Was valuable time really to be lost while the Italians pored over the forty-three clauses of this document? On 28th August, after conferring with his principal lieutenants, General Eisenhower reiterated Mr. Macmillan's suggestion in an urgent message to the Combined Chiefs of Staff:

'I wish to emphasise that acceptance of the military capitulation is possible within the next day or two, and, failing that, General Castellano may arrive on the 31st with a signed acceptance of the original short-term military instrument accomplished in good faith. In this event I strongly urge that the matter be closed on the spot and that Castellano then be handed the long document with the information that these are the complete surrender terms which will be imposed by the United Nations. The risks attendant on "Avalanche" which have been pointed out to you and which we are perfectly prepared to accept will be minimized to a large extent if we are able to secure Italian assistance just prior to and during the critical period of the actual landing. Even passive assistance will greatly increase our chances of success and there is even some possibility of the Italians being willing to immobilise certain German divisions. It is these factors which make me so very anxious to get something done now'.<sup>(41)</sup>

In fact the Allies had already transmitted the comprehensive terms to an accredited emissary of the Italian Government. On 26th

August yet another envoy had presented himself at the British Embassy in Lisbon—General Zanussi from the staff of General Roatta, Chief of the Italian Army Staff. Roatta had not previously been informed of the course of negotiations: when he met Jodl at Bologna on 15th August he had done so in perfect good faith.\* After that Conference he learned that negotiations were in progress, and sought to influence events by sending his own representative to talk to the Allies. Badoglio and Ambrosio, disturbed by Castellano's long absence, allowed him to do so. They did not however inform the Italian Foreign Office, so Zanussi was provided with no proper credentials. Instead he took with him as evidence of good faith the illustrious British prisoner of war, Lieut. General Carton de Wiart.<sup>(42)</sup> Zanussi arrived at the British Embassy in Lisbon almost simultaneously with a telegram from the Foreign Office containing the text of the Long Terms, which was handed over to him on 27th August. He expressed his own 'regret and alarm' at the decision to force Italy to make a public surrender, which he feared would place Italy at the mercy of the Germans and lead to internal chaos; he considered that the deadline given to Castellano should be retarded to enable the Italian government to study these terms; but he agreed to take them back with him the following morning, on an aircraft flying via Gibraltar.<sup>(43)</sup>

He did not have the opportunity: Allied Force Headquarters in Algiers intervened to take matters into their own hands. General Smith and Mr. Macmillan mistrusted Zanussi. They knew that he was Roatta's man and that Roatta himself had been talking to the Germans only two weeks earlier; so on 28th August they intercepted his flight at Gibraltar and took him to Algiers where they could examine him themselves. Mr. Macmillan and Mr. Murphy, assisted by General Smith and Brigadier Strong, quickly assured themselves of Zanussi's *bona fides* and persuaded him to send a message to Rome urging the Italian Government to sign the Short Terms as quickly as possible; but they did not permit him to transmit the Long Terms, 'in order to ensure' as Mr. Macmillan put it, 'that their arrival in Rome should not be used by the Italians as a pretext for procrastination'.<sup>(44)</sup>

Their growing anxiety about the outcome of 'Avalanche' made this unorthodox initiative by General Eisenhower and his advisers understandable, and neither President Roosevelt nor Mr. Churchill complained. On 30th August the President gave Eisenhower the authorisation for which he had asked, to obtain Castellano's signature to the Short Terms before presenting him with the long ones.<sup>(45)</sup> In London the War Cabinet expressed their doubts about this irregular procedure, but the Prime Minister overrode them.<sup>(46)</sup>

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\* See p. 474 above.

'I hope you realise [he cabled to Mr. Attlee on 1st September] the extreme hazard and gravity of the great battle impending at "Avalanche". Owing to the delays the Germans may be nearly as strong as us and able to build up quicker. In my opinion this is the biggest risk we have yet run, though I am fully in favour of running it. I do not wonder that General Eisenhower wants every possible assistance, and I do not think we should hamper or worry him with what I must consider minor matters like relative merits of the short and long terms, or when and how the Armistice is made public, or what other Powers should attend and participate in these signatures. All this would be blown sky high if we lost the battle and were driven back into the sea. . . . The overwhelming need is to win the battle and get Italians fighting Germans, and the Italian people and armies throughout Italy tearing up and obstructing the communications of the enemy. . . .'

On the same day, 30th August, that General Eisenhower received permission to conduct the negotiations in the manner he wished, the awaited message came from Rome that the negotiations would take place: General Castellano would appear at the rendezvous in Sicily the following day. So Mr. Macmillan, Mr. Murphy, General Smith and Brigadier Strong flew over to Sicily, taking General Zanussi with them, and on 31st August they met General Castellano at Cassibile.

The meeting was inconclusive. General Castellano presented a memorandum from his government in which they explained that they would happily accept the terms laid down by the Allies if they were their own masters, but that unfortunately they were not. German troops were now in occupation of virtually the whole of Italy, and to announce the Armistice before the Allies had landed in sufficient force to guarantee the safety of Rome—where the King and the Government proposed to remain—would be to court certain disaster. Castellano added that in Badoglio's view it would be necessary for the Allies to make their main landing in the neighbourhood of Rome in a strength of at least fifteen divisions.<sup>(47)</sup>

This took the negotiators to the root of the problem. The Italians felt they could not surrender until the Allies landed in strength near Rome; but the Allies considered that such a landing was out of the question, and that even the Salerno landings would be hazardous unless the Italians surrendered first. This fundamental difficulty could be solved only by the most careful combined planning, and for such planning the Allies were entirely unprepared. General Smith merely informed Castellano that the Allied terms were not negotiable. All he would do was extend the deadline for their acceptance until midnight the following day. All attempts by Castellano and Zanussi to find out where, when, and in what strength the Allies proposed to

land met with an equally negative response. Smith bluntly informed them that, whatever the German strength or the Italian attitude, the Allies proposed to drive the Germans out of Italy regardless of the sufferings involved for the Italian people. Italy would anyhow become a battlefield, but the duration of the battle, he said, would be shortened if the Italian government accepted the Allied conditions without further demur.

With this disheartening information the Italian generals returned to Rome. But before they did so Castellano suggested that, irrespective of what the Allied plans for their invasion might be, they should land an armoured division at Ostia and an airborne division outside the capital, to help the Italians to defend Rome.<sup>(48)</sup> This proposal would hardly have stood up to the careful scrutiny of the planning staff in London or Washington, or even perhaps in Algiers; but by now General Alexander was so anxious about the prospects for the Salerno operation that he was prepared to run considerable risks in order to gain Italian support. On the evening of 31st August he therefore recommended that the proposal to send an airborne division be accepted, and the following day General Eisenhower gave his approval.<sup>(49)</sup> There was little more than a week to go before Operation 'Avalanche' was due to begin.

On 1st September the Italian Government informed General Eisenhower, over the secret radio-link now established by Special Operations Executive, that they were prepared to accept the armistice terms, and the following day General Castellano reappeared at Cassibile. Now, assumed the Allied representatives, the armistice would be signed at last. But when General Castellano appeared he still held no authority to sign. He regarded his task as being simply to plan the military co-operation for which he had worked ever since he had left for Lisbon three weeks before.

Not surprisingly the Allied representatives had reached the end of their patience. Operation 'Baytown', the attack on the Italian mainland across the Straits of Messina, was due to begin the following day. On Mr. Macmillan's suggestion General Alexander himself intervened. Making a dramatic appearance in full parade uniform—a rare sight in the Mediterranean Theatre—he berated the Italians for breaking their faith and threatened dire consequences. Castellano—who claimed later that at none of his previous visits had the question of a formal signature been broached<sup>(50)</sup>—hastened to inform Rome, but permission for him to sign did not come through until 4 p.m. the following day, 3rd September. General Castellano then signed the Short Terms of surrender, in the presence of General Eisenhower, at 5.15 p.m. The first Allied troops had set foot on the mainland of Italy that morning. It was four years to the day since Britain's entry into the Second World War.

Shortly afterwards General Smith presented the Long Terms. These came to General Castellano as a very unpleasant surprise.<sup>(51)</sup> Apart from anything else they contained the phrase 'unconditional surrender' of which no mention had been made in the document he had just signed; a phrase which he feared might be unacceptable to his government. The Allied representatives for their part were surprised that the Italians did not know what was in store for them. After all, General Zanussi had been shown the Long Terms a week before, and had then protested about the 'unconditional surrender' demand. Either there was a failure of communication within the Italian government machine, or the Italians had been as anxious as General Eisenhower himself not to waste over further negotiations time which was now desperately needed for military action.

It now remained to co-ordinate the plans for the simultaneous announcements of the armistice, the Salerno landings and the dispatch of the airborne division to Rome. The commanding officer of the U.S. 82nd Airborne Division Major General Matthew B. Ridgway joined the group at Cassibile, and during the night of 3rd/4th September they laid their plans. The Italians agreed to make available four airfields in the Rome area and to protect them against the Germans during the arrival of the 82nd Airborne Division, which would take place a few hours before the Salerno landings. The Italians would also furnish labour and supplies, while further supplies would be sent up the Tiber by landing-craft. A senior officer on Ridgway's staff would go to Rome to complete these arrangements. The Italians also agreed to open the ports of Taranto and Brindisi to Allied shipping, which would make it possible for Allied troops to land without the paraphernalia required for an assault landing on a hostile shore. Finally it was agreed that simultaneous broadcasts should be made by Eisenhower and Badoglio at 6.30 p.m. on the evening before the Allies landed on the Salerno beaches. 'The timing', Eisenhower pointed out to the Combined Chiefs of Staff, 'will permit cancellation of airborne operation at Rome if for some reason the Italian announcement should not be made.'<sup>(52)</sup>

On 5th September General Castellano sent the completed plans back to Rome to be implemented by his colleagues. They were not well received. Neither General Roatta nor General Carboni, who commanded the motorised forces around Rome, had ever been so optimistic as Castellano about the practicability of the Italian Armed Forces transferring their allegiance overnight. Now it appeared to them that Castellano had pledged the Italian Army to a task well beyond its capacity to perform. And there was a further complicating factor. Castellano had tried in vain to find out from the Allies the date of the planned invasion. The most that General Smith would say, in his farewell conversation on 4th September, was that the

landings would take place 'within two weeks'.<sup>(53)</sup> From this Castellano had deduced that they would not take place for at least a week, but were probable any day after that. He therefore wrote to Ambrosio: 'from confidential information I presume that the landing will take place between the 10th and 15th September, possibly the 12th'.<sup>(54)</sup> September 12th therefore became fixed in the minds of the Italians as the date for which all plans would have to be made. But reconnaissance of Allied shipping movements on 6th September suggested that an operation was being planned to take place very much earlier than that—and very much further to the south than the Italians had been hoping. The prospects of the operations at Rome being successful appeared in consequence to be even more remote.

The three days after General Castellano's plans reached Rome were therefore spent by the Italian generals in mutual recrimination rather than in serious preparations for receiving the American airborne troops. When General Ridgway's representative Brigadier General Maxwell Taylor was smuggled into Rome by sea on the evening of 7th September, he was confronted by a situation as unexpected as it was disagreeable. General Carboni was frankly defeatist and demanded that the whole operation should be cancelled. When Taylor appealed over his head to Marshal Badoglio, the Head of the Government supported Carboni and bluntly refused to abide by the terms of the agreement signed by General Castellano on his behalf. The situation, he explained, had now changed. An immediate armistice was impossible. On Taylor's insistence Badoglio sent a direct message to General Eisenhower giving him this unwelcome news—it was now barely twenty-four hours before the Fifth Army was due to land at Salerno—and Taylor himself, at 11.30 a.m. on the morning of 8th September, sent a message to Algiers cancelling the air drop. He did so only just in time. The cancellation reached the aircraft as they were loading up for the operation on which they were due to set out that evening.

Badoglio's message reached Algiers and was decoded only by 8 a.m. on 8th September, less than 24 hours before the first Allied forces were due to land. It had then to be forwarded to Eisenhower who had left for his forward command post at Bizerta. It was a crisis which only the Supreme Allied Commander could resolve, and he rose to the occasion with unhesitating assurance. He summoned the unfortunate Castellano and icily accused him of bad faith. To Badoglio he radioed as follows:<sup>(55)</sup>

'I intend to broadcast the existence of the armistice at the hour originally planned. If you or any part of your armed forces fail to co-operate as previously agreed I will publish to the world the full record of this affair. Today is X-day and I expect you to do your part. I do not accept your message of this morning



postponing the armistice. Your accredited representative has signed an agreement with me and the sole hope of Italy is bound up in your adherence to that agreement. On your earnest representation the airborne operations are temporarily suspended. . . .

. . . Plans have been made on the assumption that you were acting in good faith and we have been prepared to carry out future operations on that basis. Failure on your part to carry out the full obligations to the signed agreement will have most serious consequences for your country. No future action of yours could then restore any confidence whatever in your good faith and consequently the dissolution of your government and nation would ensue'.

The President and the Prime Minister, both of whom were by now in Washington, endorsed Eisenhower's actions. It was their view, they informed him in a telegram which reached Algiers at 5 p.m. that evening,<sup>(56)</sup> 'that the agreement having been signed you should make such public announcement regarding it as would facilitate your military operations. . . . No consideration, repeat no consideration, need be given to the embarrassment it might cause the Italian Government.'

Armed with this authority General Eisenhower went ahead, and at 6.30 p.m. that evening, 8th September, his message was broadcast by Radio Algiers. The Italian Government, he stated, had surrendered its armed forces unconditionally. As Allied Commander-in-Chief he had granted a military armistice, the terms of which had been accepted by the Italian government 'without reservation'. 'The armistice was signed by my representative and the representative of Marshal Badoglio and becomes effective this instant. Hostilities between the armed forces of the United Nations and those of Italy terminate at once. All Italians who now act to help eject the German aggressor from Italian soil will have the assistance and support of the United Nations.' Ten minutes later, nothing having been heard from Rome, Radio Algiers broadcast the agreed text of Marshal Badoglio's own message:

'The Italian Government, recognising the impossibility of continuing the unequal struggle against the overwhelming power of the enemy, with the object of avoiding further and more grievous harm to the nation, has requested an armistice from General Eisenhower, Commander-in-Chief of the Anglo-American Allied Force. This request has been granted. The Italian forces will, therefore, cease all acts of hostility against the Anglo-American forces wherever they may be met. They will, however, oppose attacks from any other quarter'.<sup>(57)</sup>

While these broadcasts were being transmitted Marshal Badoglio

was holding a meeting of his civil and military advisers at the Quirinale Palace in the presence of the King. General Eisenhower's message had reached the Italian government only at 5.30 p.m. and had taken them completely by surprise. In the same way as they had persuaded themselves that the landings were not due until 12th September, they had assumed that their request for a delay would automatically be granted. The disillusion was painful; and one school of thought led by General Carboni maintained that, since the Allies had broken faith with Italy by landing prematurely, Italy should abandon her own commitment to the Allies. With this view both Guariglia and Ambrosio disagreed, on the grounds that they were too deeply implicated to draw back; an argument to which the broadcasts from Radio Algiers now gave timely weight. With the evidence of collusion which the Allies could produce the Italians could expect no mercy from the Germans whatever they now decided to do. It was left to the King to take the decision. He resolved that the only course now open was to honour the agreement with the Allies and accept the consequences. Badoglio at once drove to the Rome radio station and broadcast the agreed announcement, at 7.45 p.m.; only an hour later than the appointed time.

The result in Rome was chaotic. The Royal Family, the senior ministers of the government and most of the key figures of the High Command left the city the same night or early the following morning and made their way southwards to Brindisi, leaving in their wake a situation of total confusion. No orders had been issued to the Italian armed forces how to conduct themselves in this situation; the initiative lay entirely in the hands of the Germans who had, as we have seen, been preparing for precisely this situation for the past two months. General Carboni almost alone among the senior army commanders remained at his post and did his best to organise the defence of the city. Into the vacuum of political authority moved Marshal Caviglia, a respected veteran who had held aloof from the Fascist and Badoglio regimes alike, and the commander of the *Centauro Division*, General Calvi di Bergolo; who negotiated the surrender of the city on the afternoon of 10th September. Elsewhere in Italy and Italian-occupied areas there was little fighting. The Germans consolidated their hold over the frontier passes without difficulty, and with few exceptions—mainly in the northern cities—Italian troops allowed themselves to be disarmed virtually without firing a shot. In the south one Italian divisional commander was shot on the spot for refusing to co-operate. His example was not widely followed, and General von Vietinghoff's forces were able to devote themselves without distraction to dealing with the Allied forces which began to land in the area of Salerno in the early morning of September 9th.

All the hopes of the Allies that Italian intervention might tip the balance at Salerno in their favour thus proved vain. The Allied troops in the beach-head had to fight alone. Thanks largely to the massive strength of Allied air power and the power of the guns of the Allied fleets, Operation 'Avalanche' was to prove, though only by the barest of margins, a success. But the armistice did achieve one striking result. Instructions to the Italian Navy at least had been clear, and on the evening of 8th September the fleet, including the battleships *Roma*, *Italia* and *Vittorio Veneto*, left La Spezia and Genoa to steam south. The following day German aircraft damaged the *Italia* and sank the *Roma* with great loss of life. Next morning the Italian vessels came under the protection of a British squadron off Sardinia. They were joined by another Italian squadron which had sailed safely from Taranto; and on 11th September Admiral Cunningham was able to send to the Admiralty the terse but satisfactory signal:<sup>(58)</sup>

'Be pleased to inform their Lordships that the Italian battle fleet is anchored under the fortress guns of Malta.'

The way now lay open to the Allies for the uninterrupted reinforcement of their forces in the Italian peninsula, should their general strategy require it. About that requirement opinions were sharply to differ; but to study the subsequent debates between the Allies over this issue, the reader must turn to the next volume in this Series: *Grand Strategy*, Volume V.

*Note:* The Long Terms were eventually signed by Marshal Badoglio on board H.M.S. *Nelson* in Malta Harbour on 29th September. Badoglio signed with reluctance, protesting against both the title, 'Instrument of Surrender' and the first clause, which stated 'The Italian Land, Sea and Air Forces wherever located, hereby surrender unconditionally'. Since the words 'unconditional surrender' had not, he pointed out, been included in the armistice signed at Cassibile, to produce them now might be damaging to his Government and to its attempts to rally Italian public opinion to the Allied cause. He also insisted that it did not lie within the power of his Government to comply with many of the requirements laid down by the Allies. He was only persuaded to sign the document at all on the understanding that his appeals for textual changes would be passed on to the Allied Governments with a strong recommendation that they be accepted. In the meantime General Eisenhower gave him a formal letter over his own signature which admitted that the terms were 'based upon the situation obtaining prior to the cessation of hostilities' and that 'developments since that time

have altered considerably the status of Italy, which has become in effect a co-operator of the United Nations'. The letter stated that the Italian Government would not be held to account if existing conditions made it impossible to carry out any of the terms to which it had pledged itself; and that 'the terms both of this document and of the short military armistice of the 3rd September may be modified from time to time if military necessity or the extent of co-operation by the Italian Government indicates this as desirable'.<sup>(69)</sup> Both General Eisenhower and Mr. Macmillan urged their governments to meet the Italian plea for modification of the term 'unconditional surrender'. On 30th September Eisenhower cabled to the Combined Chiefs of Staff:<sup>(60)</sup> 'My chief commanders and advisers agree with me that Badoglio's apprehensions are well founded. Our information indicates that Fascist propaganda directed against the Badoglio Government and the King is having some influence on the younger Army officers. We know that the Fascists are re-appointing local officials and reforming party groups in Rome and Northern Italy. Much enemy propaganda is based on what the Fascists refer to as "Dishonourable Surrender" which they say makes the present government unworthy of allegiance. We all feel that our Governments have much to gain and will have lost nothing by granting Badoglio's request. The terms of the Document just signed and the Armistice of 3rd September give us full control and amount to complete capitulation by Italy. Italian Combat Units are about to join our forces in the Foggia area, and units of the fleet are becoming a valuable asset to us. Italian aviation has been and is actively fighting against the Germans. Any further deterioration of Italian military morale or the possible scuttling of Italian Naval Units which might result from a revulsion of feeling would be a serious blow to us. I therefore strongly recommend that the title of the Long Term Document be changed to read "Additional Conditions of the Armistice with Italy" and that the last sentence of the preamble be changed to read "and have been accepted unconditionally by Marshal Pietro Badoglio, head of the Italian Government" (note the word "unconditional" has been added) and that the statement of unconditional surrender in paragraph one be omitted. Cunningham, Alexander, Tedder, Macmillan and Murphy concur in this recommendation'. After some further discussion, the Allied Governments also concurred. A Protocol was signed on 9th November, by which the title of the Instrument was changed to 'Additional Conditions of Armistice with Italy'; it was made clear that the two Allied Governments were acting on behalf of the United Nations as a whole; and the word 'unconditionally' was transposed as General Eisenhower's message had suggested.<sup>(61)</sup>

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TUNISIA, SICILY  
and SOUTHERN ITALY







BOOK FIVE  
CHAPTER XXVIII  
THE FAR EAST  
JUNE - AUGUST 1943

**S**O FAR as the Far East was concerned, the decisions taken at the Washington Conference had given only a very general indication of the lines along which the Allied offensive should proceed now that the Japanese attack appeared at last to have spent itself. The first stages of operations in the Central Pacific, the South West Pacific and in Burma had all been sketched out, but what lay beyond was still obscure. It was not at all clear what resources would be required; how they should be allotted between these theatres; at what sequence of objectives the offensive should aim; how the defeat of Japan would ultimately be brought about; and above all, how long it was likely to take. It was all the more urgent to get answers to these questions now that the defeat of the Axis in Europe was clearly only a matter of time, since the redeployment of Allied forces from Europe to the Far East was already beginning to occupy the minds of the planning staffs in Washington and London.

To assist in working out an Allied 'strategic concept' for the Far East comparable to that which had been hammered out for Europe, an American planning team visited London during the summer of 1943 to work with a section of the Joint Planning Staff. The British element in the team then went over to Washington to complete their report. As was inevitable differences of emphasis appeared between the national teams, but a very large measure of agreement was reached; and by the time the Combined Chiefs of Staff again met in August the outlines of a common 'strategic concept' had begun to appear.

About the predicament of their adversary British and American experts were unanimous.<sup>(1)</sup> Japan, they reported, produced less than a quarter of her annual requirements in oil, and had only about six months' stocks in hand. She was short of tankers, her shipping was strained to the limit, and since the disaster at Midway the inequality between her fleet and those of the Allies had rapidly increased. Her army had to hold an immense outer perimeter stretching from Siberia, through China and Burma to the Netherlands East Indies, and thence to the Solomon Islands and the Pacific atolls. Shortage



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of shipping limited her capacity to move reinforcements to a rate of one division a month, and her potential in the air was equally limited.

As a result, the combined intelligence staffs agreed, Japan was likely to follow a basically defensive strategy directed to establishing control of an area militarily secure and economically self-sufficient; though she still would retain the capacity to conduct limited offensive operations to improve her position and to weaken the striking power of the Allies. She was unlikely to provoke a conflict with the Soviet Union unless the Russians looked like allowing their Allies to establish themselves in Siberian airfields or, conceivably, appeared in danger of an imminent collapse under German attacks in the West. In China Japanese forces would probably confine themselves to maintaining order within their zone of occupation; they were likely to take the offensive only if forced to do it by the threat of Allied land or air attack. There was evidence of growing Japanese strength in the South West Pacific in the general area of New Guinea and the Timor Sea, but this was probably designed simply to resist further Allied penetration in that area.

The Allied planners also agreed that to defeat Japan finally it might be necessary to invade her. A bombing offensive, they recognised, would cripple her industry and might even bring about her surrender, but this was far from certain. The Allies had therefore to aim at destroying the Japanese fleet; at wearing down her air force and bombing her aircraft industry; at occupying or destroying her sources of overseas supply from the Asian mainland and the Netherland East Indies and severing her communications with them by sinking her ships; and by seizing bases from which an air assault and an invasion could be mounted.

Where could such bases be found? Ideally, considered the planning staffs, they should be established on the mainland of China near Shanghai, though they agreed that the Ryuku, Bonin and Kurile Islands might offer 'inferior alternatives'. These mainland bases would have to be secured by amphibious attacks mounted from Formosa, or possibly by an overland campaign from Hongkong and Canton; and such a campaign, though the difficulties presented by poor communications would be considerable, would afford the opportunity of decisively defeating the Japanese Army in battle. But in any case it would be necessary first to seize one or more of the great islands lying off the Chinese coast—Formosa, Luzon or Hainan. The first could be approached directly from the east, through the Marshall and Caroline Islands already marked out as the axis of Admiral Nimitz's advance. Luzon offered a natural prolongation of General MacArthur's offensive through New Guinea; and the obvious approach to Hainan was by a British offen-

sive from the west via Singapore and the South China Sea. These protracted operations, the planners estimated, were unlikely to bring the Allies to the mainland of China before the end of 1946. The final defeat of Japan might thus be expected by about 1948.

This gloomy prognosis was regarded by British and American planners alike as totally unacceptable. As they put it in a memorandum to the Combined Chiefs of Staff at Quebec, 'operations which do not contemplate the complete nullification of Japanese gains before 1947 will produce the serious hazard that the war against Japan will not, in fact, be won by the United Nations'.<sup>(2)</sup> But what could be done about it? The planners agreed that in order to eliminate unnecessary delays the reorientation of Allied forces to the Far East should begin from four to six months in advance of the prospective date of the defeat of Germany. The Americans wanted to go further, and boldly plan to defeat Japan within twelve months of the end of the war in Europe, but the British disagreed. They did not see how this could realistically be done short of a direct assault on Japan without any preliminary bombing at all. They may also have feared that it would involve a change in the basic strategic concept of 'Europe First'—a change indeed being urged by the U.S. Navy planners who suggested that, rather than aim at defeating Germany in 1944 and Japan in 1948, it would make better sense to defeat both of them in 1946.<sup>(3)</sup>

On two other points there was disagreement. First, the British did not consider that the thrust through New Guinea constituted a wise deployment of effort and proposed instead that it should become subsidiary to that from the Central Pacific through the Marshalls and Carolines. On this naturally they found considerable sympathy from Admiral King's representatives and very little from those of the U.S. Army who had to consider the interests of General MacArthur. The recommendation touched too nearly upon the internal conflicts of the U.S. Armed Forces to be practical politics. More important was the second point: the old disagreement over the importance of China and, arising from that the place of the reconquest of Burma in Allied grand strategy.

The planners did not disagree over the progressive deterioration in Chinese morale, in China's economic predicament and in Chiang Kai-shek's ability to control the defeatist elements within his government and his army. They were agreed that little could be expected of the Chinese Army. To bring it up 'to a reasonable standard of military efficiency', stated the Combined Intelligence Committee, 'would be an undertaking so vast that it could only be accomplished in a period of years'.<sup>(4)</sup> And they agreed that a formal conclusion of peace by China, though improbable, would do serious political damage to the Allied cause, and that her disintegration into chaos

would greatly complicate the eventual establishment of bases on her soil for the invasion of Japan.

In the light of this the chief value of any aid which the Allies could give to China would obviously be moral. The British were prepared to admit that the 're-opening of the Burma Road, which has acquired a psychological importance out of proportion to the material help it would bring China, would greatly stimulate morale'. But that the reopening of the Burma Road could make any appreciable military or economic contribution to the Chinese war effort in less than two years was more than the British planners could be brought to accept; while the final disintegration of Chinese resistance, deplorable as it would be for the Allied cause, did not appear to them quite so catastrophic as their American colleagues feared.

This difference in attitude underlay the divergence of opinion which developed between British and American planners over the course which should be followed in Burma. The Americans wanted to see Burma cleared completely, in two successive campaigning seasons, and the Burma Road opened by the recapture of Rangoon before any attack was launched on Singapore. The British, while agreeing that operations in Upper Burma for the coming winter should proceed as planned, wished then to proceed directly to the capture of Singapore via North Sumatra. This they agreed would delay the opening of the Burma Road, but they argued that it would have a great psychological effect on the entire Japanese Empire, speed the converging attacks from East and West and lead to the more rapid opening of a port in South China itself. Unfortunately the resources for such an attack could only be made available after the war in Europe was over, which they estimated would be at the very earliest, by March 1945; so an entire season would have to go by without major operations in South East Asia.

This the Americans found unacceptable. To make matters worse, it appeared to certain suspicious minds in Washington that the British were playing the same game in the Far East as they believed them to be playing in the Mediterranean; aiming, that is, at establishing a position of post-war advantage rather than at defeating their mutual adversary in the shortest possible time.<sup>(5)</sup> This suspicion was not easily to be assuaged, and so far as the Prime Minister himself was concerned it was not entirely without justification.<sup>(6)</sup>

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Whatever form they took, operations in South East Asia were now assuming a scope and significance which demanded a radical overhaul of the structure of the Allied High Command in that theatre. Although this question did not formally figure as an item

on the agenda of the Washington Conference there were many informal discussions during the course of that Conference, both as to how the existing system could best be modified, and whether the High Command was in the right hands. It was increasingly clear that the Commander-in-Chief, India, with all the huge problems of running the Indian base on his hands, could not also be expected to bear responsibility for the conduct of operations once these were no longer primarily concerned with the security of India's eastern frontiers. Nor was the Prime Minister the only man in the higher councils of the Allies who doubted whether Field Marshal Wavell, with all his great abilities and experience, was the best man to deal with the new phase of operations.<sup>(7)</sup>

In a message to the War Cabinet on 29th May Mr. Churchill suggested that Wavell might usefully be found employment as Governor-General of Australia, while General Auchinleck, who had now been unemployed for nine months, should again take up the post which he had turned over to Wavell two years earlier. The War Cabinet did not consider it wise to send Wavell to Australia, where his presence might be seen as an infringement of General MacArthur's military responsibilities; but the Viceroyalty of India itself was shortly due to fall vacant on the retirement of the Marquess of Linlithgow, and to occupy this post in wartime nobody could be better fitted than Wavell himself. On 18th June therefore Wavell's appointment as Viceroy was announced, simultaneously with that of General Auchinleck as Commander-in-Chief. The official announcement also forecast the creation of a separate East Asia Command 'to relieve the Commander-in-Chief, India, of responsibility for the conduct of operations against Japan'.<sup>(8)</sup> Among the names canvassed for this new post that of the Chief of Combined Operations, Lord Louis Mountbatten, had already been mooted by the Secretary of State for India, Mr. L. S. Amery, as being peculiarly suitable for 'what in its later stages will be largely an amphibious and air transport campaign'; but no decision was taken either as to the responsibilities of the new Command or as to who should exercise them, until the Quebec Conference assembled three months later.

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Responsibility for implementing the decisions taken at the Washington Conference therefore rested for the time being with General Auchinleck. The Combined Chiefs of Staff, it will be remembered, had laid down four tasks for the Burma theatre. The air route to China was to be built up to sustain a delivery capacity of 10,000 tons a month by the autumn. 'Vigorous and aggressive' land and air operations were to be mounted from Assam into Burma via Ledo and



Imphal, in step with an advance by Chinese forces from Yunnan. Akyab and Ramree Islands were to be captured by amphibious operations; and Japanese sea communications into Burma were to be cut.

Within a fortnight of his appointment, on 2nd July, General Auchinleck sent to London his first appreciation of the problems confronting him and his proposals for action. The picture he painted was cheerless.<sup>(10)</sup> He dealt first with operations from Assam. These he pointed out were dependent on a precarious line of communication which had to support also not only the air-lift (which had an overriding priority) but the jute and tea industries of Assam, with all the contribution which they made to India's frail economy. The demands made on these communications by the waging of offensive operations and the construction of all-weather roads to keep pace with the advance would inevitably compete with one another and it would be poor strategy to push fighting-units forward beyond the point where they could be maintained throughout the monsoon. General Auchinleck concluded that 'the aim for the coming winter must therefore be to reduce the gap between our all-weather line of communications and the permanent road system in Burma to a distance which can be covered in the dry season of 1944-5. This can be done if the all-weather road is extended to Sittaung and Kalemyo, which is in any event the maximum practicable'. The objective of all the three offensives in Upper Burma (IV Corps from Imphal, General Stilwell's from Ledo and the Chinese from Yunnan), should thus be limited to the extent of possible maintenance, and to establishing secure starting points for the next campaigning season.

As for the attack on Akyab, now known as Operation 'Bullfrog', General Auchinleck considered that for reasons of morale its success was quite essential. The disaster of Arakan must not be repeated. But that did not make the operation any easier. The Japanese had now strongly fortified their position, and Auchinleck reckoned that in order to take it he would need an assault force three brigades strong; together with a division to follow up, all the air and naval cover available, and possibly parachute units as well. An operation on such a scale could certainly not be mounted before January 1944. If the same shipping had then to be used against Ramree, a further delay of three to four months must follow; though a surprise *coup* mounted from Akyab immediately after its capture might possibly succeed. Finally, Auchinleck added in a supplementary message, the resources allotted for these operations by the Combined Chiefs of Staff would not be adequate, and would have to be increased.<sup>(11)</sup>

General Auchinleck's proposals created dismay in London. 'It will' stated the Joint Planning Staff<sup>(12)</sup>

'be contrary to the spirit of the "Trident" decisions if the problem is approached in this manner. We feel that the object must be to advance as far as we possibly can and if the Commander-in-Chief lays down the limits he expects to reach, he may restrict the initiative of the Commanders on the spot, who, in the interests of Anglo-American co-operation if nothing else, must strain every nerve to overcome the administrative difficulties and even get to Myitkyina and Mandalay if they possibly can'.

The postponement of the assault of Akyab and Ramree beyond the agreed target date of December 1943 would also, they considered, lay the British open to an accusation of bad faith, particularly as the Americans had promised considerable naval forces for the operation. And a further problem was likely to arise:

'In juggling with the numbers and types of landing-craft which will be required for Akyab and Ramree [they wrote] it is becoming clear to us that the requirements of these operations will eventually conflict with those of "Overlord". Allocations to both were agreed at "Trident" but the demands from C.-in-C. India and COSSAC, which will inevitably increase with detailed planning, must bring the two operations into conflict'.

The Chiefs of Staff however gave General Auchinleck's problems a more sympathetic hearing; particularly since they were able to hear, on 23rd July, a full presentation of the difficulties by Major General A. W. S. Mallaby, his Director of Military Operations. They agreed with all his recommendations except the delay of three to four months in the assault of Ramree, which was apparently due only to the need to send all assault-craft and shipping back to Bombay to refit. Was it really impossible, they asked, to do this on the east coast of India, whose facilities would anyhow have to be developed for the mounting of further amphibious operations? 'We should be most reluctant', they insisted, 'to agree to the postponement of Ramree until 1944-45'.<sup>(13)</sup>

This message crossed with one from General Auchinleck, dispatched on 22nd July, which was even less encouraging in tone.<sup>(14)</sup> He repeated his need for additional resources if he were to overcome the numerous problems presented by 'Bullfrog'—the long approach which would make surprise impossible, the small number of beaches, the dependence on seaborne air cover, the flat shore which would make it more difficult for naval guns to give effective support. He reiterated also the vital importance of success.

'Failure [he wrote] might seriously affect our plans for the use of India as a base for future large-scale operations and might well lead to internal disaffection and grave deterioration in the political and economic situation. This might result in the

diversion of troops and other resources from the task of defeating the Japanese. The result of a failure on other Asiatic countries might also be serious'.

In view of the strength that the Japanese might deploy at Akyab both his military and naval commanders had declared that 'with the present allocation of shipping and craft "Bullfrog" is an operation that should *not* be undertaken'. He himself, and his air colleague, did not agree; but 'In view of the difficulties and hazards attendant on combined operations in general and this one in particular, I consider a reasonable margin is essential and that extra resources should be made available to us. . . .' As to Ramree, he doubted the feasibility of mounting the operation in a hurry, especially from a captured port; he pointed out that the necessary delay in mounting a full attack would bring them perilously near the monsoon season; and he concluded by wondering frankly whether Ramree was worth the trouble of an attack after all.

These discouraging messages reached London at a moment when dazzling new prospects seemed to be opening in the Mediterranean with the collapse of Italian resistance in Sicily. We have seen how on 20th July the Chiefs of Staff had imposed a 'stand-still order' on all shipping and amphibious craft in the Mediterranean earmarked for the Far East until the course of future operations became clear. It now seemed evident to them that, in the light of these new circumstances, the decisions taken at Washington would have to be reviewed and possibly revised.

General Auchinleck's messages were accordingly laid before the Prime Minister, who was in no mood to be charitable. In two blistering papers to the Chiefs of Staff of 24th and 26th July<sup>(18)</sup> he castigated both the command in India and the pointlessness of the operations for which such ponderous resources were now being required. 'All the Commanders on the spot seem to be competing with one another to magnify their demands and the obstacles they have to overcome'. Auchinleck's report 'shows how vital and urgent is the appointment of a young, competent soldier, well-trained in war, to become Supreme Commander and to re-examine the whole problem of the war on this front so as to infuse vigour and audacity into the operations. The kind of paper we have just received from General Auchinleck would rightly excite the deepest suspicions in the United States that we are only playing and dawdling with the war in this theatre'. As for the operation itself, he wrote

'I know the Chiefs of Staff fully realise what a foolish thing it now looks to go and concentrate precious resources from the Mediterranean in order to attack the one speck of land in the whole of this theatre, namely Akyab, where the enemy are making a kind of Gibraltar and are capable of reinforcing up

to an entire Japanese division. For this petty purpose, now rightly stripped of its consequential attempt upon Rangoon, we are to utilise the whole amphibious resources in the Bay of Bengal for the whole of the year 1944. Even Ramree is to be left over until after the monsoon. A more silly way of waging war by a nation possessing overwhelming sea power and air power can hardly be conceived, and I should certainly not be prepared to take responsibility for such a waste of effort and above all of time.

The proper course for the campaign of 1944 is as follows:

- (a) Maximum air aid to China, improvement of the air route and protection of the air-fields.
- (b) Maximum pressure by operations similar to those conducted by General Wingate in Assam and wherever contact can be made on land with Japanese forces.
- (c) The far-flung amphibious operation hitherto called "Second Anakim" which can be launched in regions where fighting is not interrupted by the monsoon season and where our naval and air powers can be brought into the fullest play. It is on this that the most urgent and intense study should now be concentrated by the Staffs'.

He concluded by requiring that 'General Auchinleck's two new papers, one requiring more forces and the other more delay' should be circulated to all members of the Defence Committee of the Cabinet, which met to examine the whole strategic picture on 28th July.<sup>(18)</sup>

At this meeting the 'stand-still order' was confirmed, but General Brooke had to point out that the 'far-flung operation' sketched by Mr. Churchill and indeed recommended by the British element on the Combined Planning Team had already been studied by the Joint Planning Staff, who had concluded that the resources which it would require could not possibly be found until the war in Europe was over. The Prime Minister was undeterred. He would like, he said, 'to be able to put across to the Americans, who were likely to criticise our lack of enterprise and drive, a bold project for the summer of 1944 on the lines of the Sumatra operation'. By then the Eastern Fleet would be concentrated in the Indian Ocean and would command the Bay of Bengal; and no monsoon would hamper operations in that area. The Committee therefore agreed, first, not to divert resources from the Mediterranean which could affect the successful prosecution of operations there in order to assault Akyab; second, that the projected operations from India should be reviewed; and third, that 'we should draw attention to the greater advantage offered by a plan to by-pass Burma and launch amphibious operations in the summer of 1944. The study of a plan on these lines should in the meanwhile be pressed forward'.

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The Prime Minister could discern one gleam of light in the dismal prospect presented by Britain's inability to fulfil even her reduced commitments to her Allies in the Far East. On 3rd May, after three months behind the Japanese lines in Upper Burma, Brigadier Orde Wingate and the survivors of his Long Range Penetration Group had returned to Imphal.

Wingate, one of those unorthodox soldiers so common in the British Army, had developed his doctrines of irregular warfare when serving with the British Army in Palestine, and in the campaign against the Italians in East Africa in 1941. There he had caught the attention of Field Marshal Wavell who, as Allenby's disciple and biographer, well understood the value of operations of the kind which Colonel T. E. Lawrence had pioneered in the First World War. Wavell had invited Wingate to form and train a 'Long Range Penetration Group' to operate behind the Japanese lines, and had originally intended to use it in co-ordination with the projected Chinese advance from Yunnan, to harass Japanese communications between Shwebo and Myikyina. Although the advance did not materialise Wavell allowed Wingate's 'Chindits' to operate none the less, and they had set out on 13th February.

The material results of their three-month sojourn in enemy-occupied country was less significant than the moral impact on friend and foe alike. The Japanese realised that they had to deal with a more formidable adversary than the performance of British and Indian forces in Burma had so far led them to expect, and that movement across the mountains separating Burma from Assam was easier than they had hitherto believed. They began therefore to plan an offensive which, launched in the dry season of 1943-44, was to exhaust Japanese strength and pave the way for Fourteenth Army's successful invasion of Upper Burma the following year.<sup>(17)</sup>

As for the British Army and nation, Wingate revealed, at a moment when such a revelation was very necessary, that there was nothing natural or inevitable about the superiority in jungle fighting which the Japanese had hitherto shown. With proper training British and British-led troops could do quite as well. No official attempt, therefore, was made to restrain the natural elation with which the press reported Wingate's success, and the justifiable mood of national enthusiasm which developed was focussed by the Prime Minister himself. Wingate, recommended Mr. Churchill on 24th July, should be promoted to command all operations in Burma. 'There is no doubt that in the welter of inefficiency and lassitude which has characterised our operations on the Indian front, this man, his force and his achievements stand out; and no question of seniority must obstruct the advance of real personalities in their proper station in war'.<sup>(18)</sup> He demanded that Wingate be

brought home for discussions. Wingate was duly summoned, to arrive just in time to embark in the *Queen Mary* on 5th August with the Prime Minister and Chiefs of Staff, *en route* for the 'Quadrant' Conference at Quebec.

For the Prime Minister, Brigadier Wingate served a purpose analogous to the part which General Chennault played in the calculations of President Roosevelt. He was a saviour whose bold and unorthodox ideas might bring about decisive results for an economical outlay of force in a theatre whose difficulties had so far baffled the commanders on the spot and where national prestige was rapidly ebbing. Once aboard the *Queen Mary* Mr. Churchill demanded that his military advisers should present their allies with 'positive proposals for attacking the enemy, proving our zeal in this theatre of war, which by its failure and sluggishness is in a measure under reasonable reproach'.<sup>(19)</sup> Using Wingate's methods, he suggested, a strong feature could be made of overland assault from Assam and Yunnan to open the Burma Road. It might reconcile the Americans to the abandonment of the assault on Akyab—an unsound operation anyway, using up shipping for what he now called 'the "Torch" of Asia'—'Culverin'; the sweeping amphibious movement directed south-eastward towards Singapore.

The Chiefs of Staff listened with great interest to Brigadier Wingate's proposals when he presented them on board the *Queen Mary* on 8th August.<sup>(20)</sup> These were based on the use of Long Range Penetration Groups 'as an essential part of a plan of conquest to create a situation leading to the advance of our main forces'.<sup>(21)</sup> Wingate proposed the launching of three groups, one operating from China against Japanese communications north-east from Mandalay, one from India against the Shwebo-Myitkyina railway, and one from the Chin Hills against the communications of Kalewa and Kalemio. The main forces would then follow in their wake. Each group would be capable of operating for twelve weeks, and should then be replaced. The following season a further offensive should be launched to clear Burma altogether and penetrate into Thailand and Indo-China. Ample aircraft would be needed for supply and communications; but 'the first essential is to construct a machine for turning out L.R.P.Gs. at a steady and increasing rate'.

The Joint Planners examined Wingate's plan and found it 'promising'. They pointed out that only General Auchinleck could tell if the resources could be provided, and what the effect would be on the operations he was preparing; so they drafted telegrams inviting Auchinleck's views on Wingate's proposals.<sup>(22)</sup> But the Chiefs of Staff considered that these drafts were 'too negative in character and unnecessarily drew attention to difficulties in implementing the scheme. It should be made clear to the Commander-in-Chief India',

they laid down, 'that in the light of Brigadier Wingate's report and discussions with him, the Chiefs of Staff had decided to make the maximum possible use of long range penetration groups in Burma, and wished to know to what extent this requirement could be met'.<sup>(23)</sup> This was accordingly done.<sup>(24)</sup>

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Meanwhile the Chiefs of Staff continued their consideration of long-term strategy in the Far East on the basis of the paper drafted by the Combined Planning Team which we have summarised earlier in this chapter. Naturally their attention concentrated on the conflicting proposals for operations in South East Asia; and the British Joint Planning Staff, equally naturally, endorsed the recommendations of their own compatriots.<sup>(25)</sup>

'Our own view is that the correct strategy, and one that would make for a speedier end to the war, requires the capture of Northern Sumatra and Singapore to precede the capture of Burma. Although this course will not open up the Burma Road as early as the other and the rate of supplies will initially be slower, ultimately the rate will be greater by reason of our gaining, at an earlier date, control of the South China Sea and access to a Chinese port . . . the earlier capture of Singapore is undoubtedly the greater strategic prize, and this is the course we incline to recommend in the attached appreciation'.

But as they pointed out, no such operation could be launched until 1945; and to suspend all major operations for a further year would impose a heavy strain on Anglo-American, to say nothing of Anglo-Chinese relations. This the Chiefs of Staff were anxious to avoid; and for the same reason they hesitated to bow to the Prime Minister's urgings and abandon the assault on Akyab and Ramree. General Brooke pointed out that, if they accepted Wingate's proposals for the conquest of Upper Burma, 'it would be essential to carry on in that theatre the following year and complete [Burma's] conquest';<sup>(26)</sup> and it was generally accepted that Akyab and Ramree would be necessary if they were going on to capture Rangoon.

After some discussion a conclusion was reached which shows that the situation was not governed by the strict requirements of military logic. It was reported to the Prime Minister on 8th August: 'The Chiefs of Staff agree with you that we should do our best to abandon or perhaps postpone "Bullfrog" '; but if the Americans insisted, the Akyab assault might be mounted on 1st March; in which case the shipping required for it could remain in the Mediterranean until 10th October, when the weather in that theatre would anyhow have broken and it would be of no further use to General Eisenhower.

The Chiefs of Staff agreed also to examine the Prime Minister's proposal of an operation against the northern part of Sumatra. This had certain obvious advantages. It would provide bases for a major air offensive against Japanese communications; it might provoke a Japanese counter-offensive which would draw off Japanese reserves at least as effectively as would an attack at Akyab; it would not involve any necessary further steps in consolidation; and it might be presented to the Americans as a satisfactory substitute for the assault on Akyab.<sup>(27)</sup> But in spite of these considerations the Joint Planning Staff advised against the operation. If a subsequent attack on Singapore were contemplated, it would alert the Japanese; while operations in South Burma, which themselves would leave open the door for a later attack on Singapore, would no longer be possible if Sumatra were attacked instead. To abandon the Akyab landings would be to forfeit a desirable measure of strategic flexibility, as well as shaking American confidence.<sup>(28)</sup>

The Prime Minister was unimpressed. 'The task which was set the Joint Planning Staff', he observed,<sup>(29)</sup> 'was not to advise on the remote future of the war in the East but to explore the details and immediate consequences of a precisely specific operation'. Singapore was anyhow an utterly remote objective, more likely to be recovered at the peace table than during the war, and 'for the present it should be ruled out altogether as a target for which we have to save up and for which we should sacrifice other operations'. He saw no reason why the Sumatra attack could not be launched simultaneously with Wingate's attacks in North Burma and an intensification of the air lift to China; and the Chiefs of Staff could no more dissuade him from urging this on his allies than they could make him keep quiet about his *idèle fixe* in Europe, Operation 'Jupiter'. And till the very end of the Quebec Conference he was to maintain his stubborn opposition to any amphibious attack on Akyab.

Meanwhile the Chiefs of Staff were encountering other difficulties in trying to formulate the 'positive proposals for attacking the enemy' which the Prime Minister demanded of them. On the eve of their departure for Quebec at the beginning of August they learned that disaster had struck the already overburdened lines of communication to the Burmese Front. The river Damodar had burst its banks fifty miles north-west of Calcutta, breaching the two main railway lines and the Grand Trunk Road. It was impossible, General Auchinleck reported, to assess the damage immediately, but it was clear that both the land operations into Upper Burma and the construction of airfields for the airlift would be severely affected.<sup>(30)</sup>

This threw all plans for the forthcoming campaigning season into the melting pot, and forced some disagreeable decisions. Delivery of supplies to the Assam front was already considerably in arrear.



The original assessment of total operational requirements, 4,300 tons a day, had already proved inadequate. The original assessment of delivery capacity of the lines of communications, 3,400 tons a day had already proved over-optimistic. Already therefore General Auchinleck faced a deficit of 128,000 tons.<sup>(31)</sup> Now, he reported on 11th August, he could not expect normal running on the railway until November and would have to face a further daily shortfall of 600 tons. It would, he suggested, not be possible to support both General Stilwell's advance from Ledo, the object of which was to open a new link with China, and IV Corps' operations from Imphal. He therefore proposed that the former operation should be abandoned. The practical advantages of General Stilwell's operations were, he said, 'in any case small, as slow progress of road had confirmed the opinion always held here that it will not be possible within reasonable time to carry through by this route any substantial tonnage to China'.<sup>(32)</sup>

The calculations of the Joint Planners as to the capacity of the proposed new road from Ledo through Myitkyina to Paoshan bore out those of General Auchinleck's staff. The Americans believed it could carry 80,000 tons a month. The British considered 30,000 tons to be nearer the mark and they did not see how it could be open, let alone operated, before the autumn of 1946.<sup>(33)</sup> But the Chiefs of Staff were not prepared to abandon an operation which gave the best hope of re-opening of communications with China—which was, after all, the object of fighting in Burma at all. 'This being so', they informed General Auchinleck on 14th August, 'and bearing in mind that [the Ledo operation] provides the only opportunity for engaging General Stilwell's Chinese forces from Ramgahr, we cannot willingly contemplate [its] abandonment. . . .'<sup>(34)</sup>

This message crossed with one dispatched by General Auchinleck on 13th August which was yet more depressing in its conclusions. He now proposed the abandonment of all offensive operations for the coming season. '[I] fully appreciate the pressure which is being brought to bear on you in favour of starting large-scale offensive operations against Burma', he wrote, 'and believe you are fully aware of the disadvantages of this course. But the course of planning for even the limited operations [projected] has brought me to the conclusion that the best military course would be to avoid wasting effort on this unprofitable objective and to concentrate on supply to China by air, at the same time increasing and conserving strength of India and preparing resources for "Culverin" next winter'.<sup>(35)</sup>

The Chiefs of Staff were unable to accept a recommendation which would involve, because of an estimated deficiency (as they put it) of 'only 600 tons a day for a period of six months . . . the abandonment of an entire campaign with consequent probability of pro-

longing the war for years'; an estimate which General Auchinleck, with some reason, considered unfair.<sup>(36)</sup> The Joint Planners examined the position and came up with a different course. To them there seemed to be three possibilities. They could concentrate on operations by land and air to make the air route totally secure, if necessary at the expense of the size of the airlift itself. They could concentrate on building up and maintaining the target of 10,000 tons a month flown into China, taking risks with the security of the route itself. Or they could concentrate for the immediate future on the development of the lines of communication, so that the following year they would be able to build up the capacity of the air route and to guarantee its security. Of these courses they recommended the first—the continuation with ground operations already planned. 'We suggest', they wrote, 'that the successful conquest of North Burma in the coming dry season, which should result in our joining hands with the Chinese, should go far to compensate the Generalissimo for a temporary reduction in the supplies he will receive by air'.<sup>(37)</sup>

The Chiefs of Staff agreed. This meant that they rejected not only General Auchinleck's proposal that land operations should be abandoned altogether, but his earlier suggestion that their pace should be dictated by that of the construction of all-weather communications in their rear. The only concession which they made to this view, on the intervention of the Quartermaster General, was to agree to instruct the new commander of South East Asia Command to use any surplus capacity he could develop on his supply lines to improving the lines of communication. Immediate operational requirements, however, should continue to receive priority.<sup>(38)</sup>

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The decision to persevere with land operations in Upper Burma gave renewed significance to Brigadier Wingate's proposals, in discussing which a certain note of exasperation had crept into the messages exchanged between New Delhi and Quebec. These proposals had been dispatched to General Auchinleck on 14th August. We have considered the pattern of operations which Wingate proposed. In order to carry them out on the scale he envisaged, he demanded the creation of a new military hierarchy. In overall command should be a Force Headquarters, equivalent to a Corps Headquarters. This should command two Wings of light divisional strength, each containing four Groups; and each Group should contain eight columns, six of them British, the other two Indian or African.<sup>(39)</sup> 'We trust', said the Chiefs of Staff in their covering comments, 'that you will do your best to make these proposals possible'.

Five days later General Auchinleck replied, stating at some length why he could not.<sup>(41)</sup> First he analysed the function of the Long

Range Penetration Groups. It was not to fight and defeat the enemy but to harass and evade him. Their effectiveness depended on the presence of main forces on the battlefield capable of forcing the necessary decision: the matador, whose sword would dispatch the bull after the picadors had harassed and confused him. Since it would not be possible, without substantial air transport reinforcements, to maintain these main forces forward through the monsoon, a strike of L.R.P.Gs. on the scale visualised by Wingate would be left in the air and its results could only be inconclusive. Moreover the creation of a force of the size which Wingate specified would be possible only if the Army in India was drastically reorganised, and this, when it was only just settling down after a series of upheavals to train along the lines indicated by the lessons of the past year, would, wrote Auchinleck, have a disastrous effect on the training and morale of the majority of major formations in India. British troops in the quantity demanded could be found only by breaking up one British and one Indian division and disorganising a third. Other units would have to be milked for specialists. No army reserve, and no British formations outside the assault brigades, would then remain. 'Therefore', concluded General Auchinleck, 'in my opinion the proposal is unsound and uneconomical as it would break up divisions which will certainly be required for prosecution of main campaign in 1944-5'. Finally, he could not accept the idea of what would virtually be a large private army. There could only be one commander on each corps front. Experts might be attached to this headquarters 'to deal with maintenance problems peculiar to Long Range Penetration formations'; but the corps commander must be the man in ultimate control.

General Auchinleck made however an alternative suggestion. He already had under his command one West African division whose troops were accustomed to the jungle and trained in Long Range Penetration tactics, and a second could be summoned if necessary. These were already organised for movement and fighting in jungle country. If to these were added two Indian brigades, all the L.R.P. troops that could be maintained during the coming season would have been found. But he insisted that their existing organisation, at least as brigades, should be maintained; and he saw no need for a separate L.R.P.G. Force Headquarters. These troops must act under the command of the corps commander within whose area they were to operate.

It was not to be expected that this conservative version of his proposals would commend itself to Wingate. He pointed out that the West African troops offered had not been tested in battle. At most he was prepared to experiment with one brigade of them, but any more widespread use of these forces must depend on the results of

that experiment. The retention of orthodox brigade organisation, in his view, cut across the whole purpose of his proposed innovations. If his proposals were to work he would have, he told the Joint Planners, to 'do the thing on his own lines'; and a Force Headquarters would in consequence be essential not only for training but for operations.

The Joint Planning Staff on the whole supported Wingate.<sup>(42)</sup> They considered that the uncertainty of future operations in Burma made the breaking up of existing formations less deplorable than General Auchinleck believed. 'Such dislocations are inherent in the new concept', they pointed out, 'and if we are to go through with this new idea they must be accepted and overcome.' They also considered that a Force Headquarters would certainly be needed for organising and training the new forces, and suggested that it should be left to the new Supreme Commander to decide whether it should control operations as well. The Chiefs of Staff modified these proposals, but the gist of the message which they dispatched to General Auchinleck on 26th August was that the substance of Wingate's proposals must stand.<sup>(43)</sup> He must still aim at eight L.R.P. Groups, with a large British element, and to provide this 7th British Division would have to be broken up and possibly 36th Indian Division as well. A Force Headquarters should be established to deal with organisation and training; it would control operations when the number of Groups involved in any particular campaign called for it; and in any case its commander would be available as adviser to the commander responsible for the campaign. Under Force Headquarters, Wings and Groups were to be established as Wingate had outlined; and 'in all cases the L.R.P. Forces employed, whatever their size, should be controlled by their own Commander (Group, Wing or Force as necessary) under the G.O.C. of the field force concerned'.

Wingate's success in converting to his views not only the ever-sanguine Prime Minister but the cautious Chief of the Imperial General Staff and the careful professionals of the Joint Planning Staff was an achievement as remarkable of its kind as any of his exploits in the field. It is not to belittle the force of his arguments to suggest that his task was made easier by the unbroken sequence of defeats and frustrations which was all that the British Commanders in the Far East, through no fault of their own, had so far been able to report to their superiors in London. The uncritical acceptance of orthodox concepts had certainly played some part in the series of disasters which had overtaken the British forces in the Far East up till the spring of 1943. Adherence to sound strategic and logistic principles had caused continual postponement of projected operations and at best could promise substantial results only in a matter of years. The time seemed more than ripe for a really daring approach

Range Penetration Groups. It was not to fight and defeat the enemy but to harass and evade him. Their effectiveness depended on the presence of main forces on the battlefield capable of forcing the necessary decision: the matador, whose sword would dispatch the bull after the picadors had harassed and confused him. Since it would not be possible, without substantial air transport reinforcements, to maintain these main forces forward through the monsoon, a strike of L.R.P.Gs. on the scale visualised by Wingate would be left in the air and its results could only be inconclusive. Moreover the creation of a force of the size which Wingate specified would be possible only if the Army in India was drastically reorganised, and this, when it was only just settling down after a series of upheavals to train along the lines indicated by the lessons of the past year, would, wrote Auchinleck, have a disastrous effect on the training and morale of the majority of major formations in India. British troops in the quantity demanded could be found only by breaking up one British and one Indian division and disorganising a third. Other units would have to be milked for specialists. No army reserve, and no British formations outside the assault brigades, would then remain. 'Therefore', concluded General Auchinleck, 'in my opinion the proposal is unsound and uneconomical as it would break up divisions which will certainly be required for prosecution of main campaign in 1944-5'. Finally, he could not accept the idea of what would virtually be a large private army. There could only be one commander on each corps front. Experts might be attached to this headquarters 'to deal with maintenance problems peculiar to Long Range Penetration formations'; but the corps commander must be the man in ultimate control.

General Auchinleck made however an alternative suggestion. He already had under his command one West African division whose troops were accustomed to the jungle and trained in Long Range Penetration tactics, and a second could be summoned if necessary. These were already organised for movement and fighting in jungle country. If to these were added two Indian brigades, all the L.R.P. troops that could be maintained during the coming season would have been found. But he insisted that their existing organisation, at least as brigades, should be maintained; and he saw no need for a separate L.R.P.G. Force Headquarters. These troops must act under the command of the corps commander within whose area they were to operate.

It was not to be expected that this conservative version of his proposals would commend itself to Wingate. He pointed out that the West African troops offered had not been tested in battle. At most he was prepared to experiment with one brigade of them, but any more widespread use of these forces must depend on the results of

that experiment. The retention of orthodox brigade organisation, in his view, cut across the whole purpose of his proposed innovations. If his proposals were to work he would have, he told the Joint Planners, to 'do the thing on his own lines'; and a Force Headquarters would in consequence be essential not only for training but for operations.

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to the problems of these least glorious of British battlefields, and Wingate's proposals must have appeared as a welcome alternative to the careful logistic calculations, with their invariably disappointing outcome, on which British strategic thinking had so far been based. Only this mood can explain the summary fashion in which the Chiefs of Staff overrode the advice of the responsible authorities in the theatre and ordered them to carry out the wishes of a young officer whose views those authorities considered fundamentally unsound. It was a courageous and most unusual decision: one can only regret that it was not better justified by results.\*

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\* For the L.R.P.G. operations in Burma during the subsequent campaigns, see: S. W. Kirby, *The War Against Japan* Vol. III [H.M.S.O. 1961] Chapters XII, XIV, XX.







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BOOK FIVE  
CHAPTER XXIX  
THE FIRST QUEBEC  
CONFERENCE  
AUGUST 1943

IT HAD BEEN foreseen at the Washington Conference in May that the speed with which events were unfolding in the Mediterranean, and the urgency of the questions on which decisions still had to be reached, would make necessary another full-dress conference of Allied military and political leaders before the summer was over. The President and the Prime Minister had further agreed that at this encounter Marshal Stalin should if possible be present as well. On 25th June Mr. Churchill proposed to President Roosevelt that the three Allied leaders should meet at Scapa Flow 'or anywhere else on the globe'; a suggestion prompted by the Prime Minister's reluctance to contemplate a meeting of the other two in his absence, which Mr. Averill Harriman informed him the President had under consideration.

'I do not underrate [Mr. Churchill informed the President] the use that enemy propaganda would make of a meeting between the heads of Soviet Russia and the United States at this juncture with the British Commonwealth and Empire excluded. It would be serious and vexatious and many would be bewildered and alarmed thereby. My journey to Moscow with Averill in August 1942 was on an altogether lower level and at a stage in the war when we had only to explain why no second front.'<sup>(1)</sup>

The President's reply was conciliatory. He wanted only, he said, to explore Russian post-war intentions, much as Mr. Eden had done in Moscow the previous year, and this was best done informally. Later there should certainly be a full-dress meeting with the staffs. Meanwhile, he asked 'What would you think of coming over soon afterwards and that you and I with staffs should meet in the Citadel at Quebec?'<sup>(2)</sup> Washington was not an agreeable centre in the summer; the American Chiefs wanted to get away from their desks and concentrate on the business of the Conference;<sup>(3)</sup> and a trans-oceanic flight seemed inadvisable to the President's medical advisers.<sup>(4)</sup> The British Chiefs of Staff were not enthusiastic about

Quebec, where communications were inferior to those of Washington and where the Canadians might very reasonably want to take part,<sup>(6)</sup> but they were prepared to accept the President's preference.<sup>(6)</sup> The month he proposed however, September, seemed far too late in view of the rapid course of operations in the Mediterranean. Decisions about the next step in Italy, as Mr. Churchill told the President on 16th July, might anyhow have to be made before the Conference met, but they would still have to settle 'the larger issues which the brilliant victories of our Forces are thrusting upon us about Italy as a whole'.<sup>(7)</sup> He suggested mid-August, and the President agreed. From the Russians nothing more had been heard, and no further attempt appears to have been made to press them; so the Conference was arranged to open on 15th August.<sup>(8)</sup> The Prime Minister suggested that their Canadian hosts should be invited to attend all plenary meetings of the Conference, without prejudice to the British and American Chiefs of Staff continuing to meet *in camera* or the President and himself holding private discussions, but Mr. Roosevelt felt that this would lead to undesirable complications. If Canada was invited to attend meetings of the Combined Chiefs, he pointed out, it would not be easy to refuse the requests of other allies in the Western hemisphere. The Canadian Prime Minister, Mr. Mackenzie King, was quick to take the point, and gracefully agreed that Canada's role should be simply that of host.<sup>(9)</sup>

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The problems now confronting the Allies all centred on General Eisenhower's victories in Sicily. It was not evident in mid-July how close the Allied forces in the Mediterranean were to their goal of knocking Italy out of the war, but the incapacity of the Italian forces even to defend their own soil foreshadowed opportunities for exploitation which the British Chiefs of Staff, and even more the British Prime Minister, were determined not to miss.

We have seen how the Chiefs of Staff, even before hearing of the overthrow of Mussolini, had on 20th July frozen all resources in the Mediterranean.<sup>(10)</sup> In London this seemed no more than common sense. To Washington it appeared that the British had unilaterally abrogated the agreement on Allied grand strategy, both in Europe and in the Far East, which had been so painfully reached at the 'Trident' Conference. It had there been settled that once the occupation of Sicily was complete General Eisenhower should return certain resources in shipping and landing-craft to the United Kingdom, together with seven experienced divisions, in preparation for 'Overlord' the following year. It had further been agreed that other shipping and landing-craft should be sent on to India to

make possible the amphibious attacks on Akyab and Ramree in Burma which were part of the British contribution to the reconquest of Upper Burma and the reopening of the Burma Road to China. These were the two major operations, above all others, on which General Marshall had set his heart. The expansion of the fighting in the Mediterranean Theatre appeared to threaten both. Yet with the whole of the southern flank of the Axis suddenly laid bare, could so magnificent an opportunity be allowed to run to waste?

The Allied military leaders thus approached the conference in a mood of mutual exasperation which on the American side verged on outright mistrust. General Marshall's planning staff still saw behind the British interest in the Mediterranean subtle motivations of a kind political rather than military, concerned with post-war calculations of the balance of power in Europe rather than the defeat of Germany in the shortest possible time. It was their view, as Marshall himself put it, 'that in the Mediterranean political consequences were the goal, whereas "Overlord" was an aggressive offensive action that would accomplish military results by itself from its inception'.<sup>(11)</sup> Even if this were not so, 'the Mediterranean strategy' involved a gamble which the United States should not be prepared to underwrite. It was, Marshall explained to the President on 25th July, 'based on the speculation that a political and economic collapse could be brought about in the occupied countries, especially in the Balkans. If that speculation proved to be faulty the Allies would be committed to a long drawn-out struggle of blockade and attrition in Europe.'<sup>(12)</sup> Rather than endure that, he feared that the American people might lose patience and turn their attention entirely to the Pacific.

Further, the Americans were still doubtful how far the British were seriously committed to 'Overlord' at all, and their doubts were increased by the soundings taken in London during the summer by Henry L. Stimson, their Secretary of War. Shortly before the Quebec Conference Mr. Stimson reported to the President:

'We cannot now rationally hope to be able to cross the Channel and come to grips with our German enemy under a British commander. His Prime Minister and his Chief of Staff are frankly at variance with such a proposal. The shadows of Passchendaele and Dunkerque still hang too heavily over the imagination of these leaders of his government. Though they have rendered lip-service to the Operation, their heart is not in it and it will require more independence, more faith, and more vigour than it is reasonable to expect we can find in any British commander to overcome the natural difficulties of such an operation carried on in such an atmosphere of his government'.<sup>(13)</sup>

The Joint Chiefs of Staff thus expected that Quebec would be a battleground between two fundamentally different concepts of strategy. As Marshall put it to his colleagues on 15th August, 'We must go into this argument in the spirit of winning'. If, after fighting it out on that basis, the President and the Prime Minister decided that the Mediterranean strategy should be adopted, he wished that the decision be made firm in order that definite plans could be made with reasonable expectation of their being carried out.<sup>(14)</sup>

When therefore the Chiefs of Staff suggested<sup>(15)</sup> that the main object of the forthcoming meeting should be 'to enable rapid decisions to be taken, in the light of the result of "Husky", on the question of further operations in the Mediterranean to eliminate Italy from the war', and advised that 'the first subject for discussion should be the post-"Husky" operations, followed by policy in the event of an Italian collapse', with operations in the Far East figuring second on the agenda and operations from the United Kingdom only third, all American suspicions were reawakened. The Joint Chiefs responded with counter-proposals, which placed at the head of the agenda 'Consideration of overall objective, overall strategic concept and basic undertakings in support of overall strategic concept'. Operations in Europe would come next, with 'Overlord' and the Combined Bomber Offensive leading; submarine warfare third, 'Review of approved post-"Husky" operations' fourth, 'Employment of French forces' sixth, and 'subsequent operations in the Mediterranean' only seventh. Then they would come to 'Consideration of specific operations in the Pacific-Asiatic Area'; decide on operations for 1943-44; review resources, draft a report and issue the necessary directives.<sup>(16)</sup>

The Chiefs of Staff viewed these counter-proposals, they told Field Marshal Dill on 29th July, with considerable misgivings. 'We had hoped that the U.S. Chiefs of Staff would be willing to dispense with lengthy discussions of overall strategic concepts or global strategy and to confine the agenda to those specific issues on which decisions are required to govern operations in the comparatively near future'.<sup>(17)</sup> They agreed however to accept a further suggestion from Washington that 'the overall objective, the overall strategic concept for prosecution of the war and basis for undertakings in support of the overall strategic concept remain the same as those approved at "Trident",' so long as 'we do not thereby exclude from consideration any course of action which may appear likely to facilitate or accelerate the attainment of the overall objective'.<sup>(18)</sup> They did not, for example, want to find that discussion of operations to occupy North Italy would be ruled out of order as 'contrary to one of the basic undertakings'. This was accepted, as was the further proposal that discussion of the agenda and of procedure

should be left until the conference itself; and much unnecessary wrangling was no doubt avoided thereby.<sup>(19)</sup>

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The Joint Staff Mission in Washington were careful to brief the Chiefs of Staff on the reception they were likely to find at Quebec. The problems they would face would not, they pointed out, involve European strategy alone. They summed them all up in a document which the Chiefs of Staff studied on their arrival in Canada.<sup>(20)</sup>

‘ . . . We feel that before your arrival in Canada you should realise some serious difficulties may lie ahead in “Quadrant”.

2. MEDITERRANEAN. There is apparent in all the U.S. Chiefs of Staff a feeling that the British are not standing firm enough to considered decision of “Trident”, and are tending too readily to depart from these decisions and to set aside the operations agreed upon. They realise importance put Italy out of war, but are not prepared to see “Bullfrog”, the Pacific or “Overlord” suffer unduly in consequence new commitments in the Mediterranean. They seem particularly to take exception to British “standstill” order in the Mediterranean, to which they refer as a unilateral decision.

3. BURMA. There is an increasing feeling with U.S. Chiefs that we do not mean business in Burma, and have never meant business in Burma. We think you will find rigid insistence on everything possibly [*sic*] being done in that theatre, and that there will be an effort to back up demand for maximum action in Burma by absurd calculations as to possibilities of opening up road communications with Burma. Undoubtedly they will be bitterly disappointed at very modest result that, according to latest dapers from London, would appear likely this winter.

4. PACIFIC. We think it fair to say that for some time past it has been Admiral King’s determination to effect such progress before “Quadrant” regarding operations in Pacific that his position will be impregnable. The Planners out here completing the “Defeat of Japan” appreciation have found that they are preparing an appreciation with American part of plan already in large part decided upon.

Admiral King and his aides have not refrained from statement to effect that British do not want the Americans to have too great a share in reconquering Burma and Malaya for reasons connected with post-war status of these territories.

In letter to Admiral Noble, Admiral King has said “The British Chiefs of Staff have recently by their unilateral decision in not sending amphibious craft to India, indicated their view



that 'Bullfrog' operation agreed upon at 'Trident' is not a firm commitment. Further, we have not as yet received any concrete plan for this operation and no C.-in-C. therefore has been appointed". In consequence he is stopping any force being sent to the Indian Ocean other than 10 L.S.Ts. already on the way.

5. Today we have had confirmation from Embassy source that strong efforts are being made to convince everyone from President downwards that his free hand in the Pacific must be assured, that the British must play all out in Burma, and that Mediterranean must temper accordingly. . . .'

By the time they reached Quebec on 10th August the British Chiefs of Staff had taken advantage of the four days provided by the sea voyage in the *Queen Mary* to get their own attitude clear. The British attitude was in fact very different from that feared by the Americans. The Prime Minister's enthusiasm for a landing in North West Europe had certainly waned since the early months of the year, when he had urged this operation so implacably on his reluctant Chiefs of Staff. But it seems unlikely that this change of attitude was simply due to the grim spectres of Passchendaele and Dunkirk to which Mr. Stimson had attached such importance. These memories can have been no less fresh in Mr. Churchill's mind in the spring than in the summer of 1943. What had now changed in the situation was the opening up of splendid opportunities elsewhere which Mr. Churchill was not temperamentally inclined to underrate. The 'Post-"Husky"' operations which he now envisaged were neither a strategy of attrition, as General Marshall believed, nor 'politically' motivated, as the U.S. planners feared. They were opportunistic, in true Napoleonic style: the exploitation of a collapse in the enemy battle-line which if relentlessly driven home might, he believed, have rapid and decisive results. And if 'Overlord' were to prove impracticable, what better alternative employment could there be for the forces assembling in the United Kingdom than the operation which he had cherished for so long, the invasion of Norway, Operation 'Jupiter'?

'I have no doubt myself [he wrote to the Chiefs of Staff on 19th July] that the right strategy for 1944 is:

- (a) Maximum post-"Husky", certainly to the Po, with option to attack westwards in the South of France or north-eastward towards Vienna, and meanwhile to procure the expulsion of the enemy from the Balkans and Greece.
- (b) "Jupiter" prepared under cover of "Overlord".

I do not believe that 27 Anglo-American divisions are sufficient for "Overlord" in view of the extraordinary fighting

efficiency of the German Army, and the much larger forces they could so readily bring to bear against our troops even if the landings were successfully accomplished. It is right for many reasons to make every preparation with the utmost sincerity and vigour, but if later on it is realised by all concerned that the Operation is beyond our strength in May and will have to be postponed until August 1944, then it is essential that we should have this other considerable Operation up our sleeves. We cannot allow our Metropolitan forces to remain inert'.<sup>(21)</sup>

The Chiefs of Staff gave no support whatever to the 'Jupiter' alternative and tried, unsuccessfully, to persuade the Prime Minister not to raise it at the conference at all.<sup>(22)</sup> Nor did they in any way share his view that 'Overlord' might be abandoned in favour of maximum exploitation in the Mediterranean. For them, especially for General Brooke, the two theatres were not in rivalry, much less mutually exclusive. They were interdependent. The one could prosper only by the success of the other. As Brooke had repeatedly argued at Casablanca and at Washington, the object of the 'Mediterranean strategy' was, by drawing off German reserves, to create the conditions which alone would make 'Overlord' possible; and these conditions did not simply consist, as General Marshall and his advisers appeared to believe, in a Clausewitzian concentration of overwhelming force at a decisive point, but in ensuring that the Germans did not have enough strength on hand to throw the initial allied landings back into the sea before the overwhelming force could be deployed at all. If the Prime Minister's motives for pressing on in the Mediterranean were somewhat romantic, those of the Chiefs of Staff were coldly professional.

The hand of the Chiefs of Staff was strengthened by the timely appearance of the first plans for 'Overlord', on which COSSAC, Lieut.General Sir Frederick Morgan, and his staff had been working for the past six months.<sup>(23)</sup> These laid down three conditions for success. The overall strength of German fighter aircraft would have to be substantially reduced before the assault went in. German reserves in France and the Low Countries, excluding coastal, *Luftwaffe* and training divisions, must not exceed 12 first quality divisions at full strength, nor should the Germans be able to transfer 15 first quality divisions from the Eastern front during the first two months after the landings. And finally, the problem of maintaining the invading forces over open beaches for a prolonged period must somehow be overcome.

It was in terms of making these conditions possible that 'post-"Husky"' operations had to be justified, and the Chiefs of Staff drafted a memorandum showing how closely they were connected.<sup>(24)</sup> Sixty-five per cent of German fighter production, including the

entire production of Me.109s, came from areas which could be more easily attacked from Northern Italy than from any existing bases. Since Germany had at present no effective air defences on her southern flank, and to establish any would have to divert one third of her fighters from the Western front, her capacity to defend herself in the air would be correspondingly weakened. As to the second condition, an advance in strength into Northern Italy, without halting even at the Pisa–Ravenna line, was the best way to force a diversion of German reserves. ‘He will be faced with the dilemma that he must either abandon an area of great value for the security of his whole position in Southern Europe or reinforce the theatre at the risk of defeat by the Russians or of the successful invasion of Northern France by the British and the Americans. . . . Further, our forces in Northern Italy will be in a position to create a diversion into Southern France simultaneously with “Overlord” and thus compel Germany to maintain forces and more reserves for the protection of that front’.

From this three recommendations followed:

- (1) “Overlord” should be carried out, on the basis of COS-SAC’s plan, as near the target date as possible.
- (2) To procure conditions for the success of “Overlord”, General Eisenhower should exploit his victories to the full, aiming at the Milan–Turin area.
- (3) Resources devoted to the Mediterranean campaign should be limited to those necessary to produce conditions essential to the success of “Overlord”.

This might, agreed the Chiefs of Staff, involve the retention in the Mediterranean of some or all of the divisions due to return for ‘Overlord’, and in consequence the postponement of ‘Overlord’ until June or July from the date agreed at ‘Trident’ of 1st May 1944.

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The debate on European strategy which took place at Quebec therefore followed what was becoming a familiar course. The Joint Chiefs of Staff stated the American position in a paper which the British Chiefs of Staff considered on 13th August, the day before their first combined meeting.<sup>(26)</sup> This laid down in general that it was necessary to force a decision in Europe before the Axis defensive strategy prolonged the struggle into stalemate. ‘In the early stages of the present war, the United Nations of necessity pursued an opportunistic strategy forced upon them by their comparative weakness. However the present rapidly improving position of the United Nations in relation to the Axis in Europe demands an abrogation of opportunistic strategy and requires the adoption of and

adherence to sound strategic plans which envisage decisive military operations conducted at times and places of our own choosing—the enemy's'. Nothing had occurred, they insisted, 'to justify on sound military grounds the renunciation of the "Trident" concept. We must not jeopardise our sound overall strategy simply to exploit local successes in a generally-accepted secondary theatre, the Mediterranean, where logistical and terrain difficulties preclude decisive and final operations designed to reach the heart of Germany'. 'Overlord', they considered, if carefully synchronised with the Combined Bomber Offensive and given '*whole-hearted and immediate support*', would result in early and decisive victory in Europe.

As for the Mediterranean, the Americans agreed that operations should continue there with available Allied resources, as stipulated at 'Trident', to bring about the collapse of Italy, to create diversions of enemy forces, and to destroy vital Axis installations. Sardinia and Corsica should be seized and air bases established on the mainland 'at least as far north as the Rome area'. 'As between the operation "Overlord" and operations in the Mediterranean', they insisted, 'when there is shortage of resources "Overlord" will have an overriding priority'. In particular the promise to send seven battle-tested divisions from the Mediterranean to take part in 'Overlord' must be kept. This would still, they calculated, leave in the Mediterranean 4,500 combat aircraft and 24 divisions available for offensive purposes—a force greater than would be needed for 'the mere maintenance of pressure on German forces remaining in Italy'. They recommended that the surplus (which they calculated at 10 Anglo-American and 4 French divisions) should be used, not in any divergent operations into the Balkans or through the Lubljana Gap towards Vienna, but in a landing in the South of France which could be exploited northwards and create a diversion in direct connection with 'Overlord': the first appearance of that Operation 'Anvil' which was so to bedevil inter-Allied relations for nine months to come.\*

The British Chiefs of Staff were pleasantly surprised to find how little the practical recommendations of this paper, in spite of its stern prologue, differed from their own ideas. They criticised primarily its lack of emphasis on the importance of obtaining bomber bases in North Italy; its inflexibility in the allocation of forces; and its apparent failure to realise that the success of 'Overlord' depended not so much on the total strength which the Allies assembled for the operation as on the relative strength of the opposing forces at the point, and at the moment, when landings actually occurred.

These points were stressed by Air Chief Marshal Portal and General Brooke when the Combined Chiefs of Staff met, together

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\* See *Grand Strategy*, Vol. V, *passim*.

entire production of Me.109s, came from areas which could be more easily attacked from Northern Italy than from any existing bases. Since Germany had at present no effective air defences on her southern flank, and to establish any would have to divert one third of her fighters from the Western front, her capacity to defend herself in the air would be correspondingly weakened. As to the second condition, an advance in strength into Northern Italy, without halting even at the Pisa–Ravenna line, was the best way to force a diversion of German reserves. ‘He will be faced with the dilemma that he must either abandon an area of great value for the security of his whole position in Southern Europe or reinforce the theatre at the risk of defeat by the Russians or of the successful invasion of Northern France by the British and the Americans. . . . Further, our forces in Northern Italy will be in a position to create a diversion into Southern France simultaneously with “Overlord” and thus compel Germany to maintain forces and more reserves for the protection of that front’.

From this three recommendations followed :

- (1) “Overlord” should be carried out, on the basis of COS-SAC’s plan, as near the target date as possible.
- (2) To procure conditions for the success of “Overlord”, General Eisenhower should exploit his victories to the full, aiming at the Milan–Turin area.
- (3) Resources devoted to the Mediterranean campaign should be limited to those necessary to produce conditions essential to the success of “Overlord”.

This might, agreed the Chiefs of Staff, involve the retention in the Mediterranean of some or all of the divisions due to return for ‘Overlord’, and in consequence the postponement of ‘Overlord’ until June or July from the date agreed at ‘Trident’ of 1st May 1944.

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The debate on European strategy which took place at Quebec therefore followed what was becoming a familiar course. The Joint Chiefs of Staff stated the American position in a paper which the British Chiefs of Staff considered on 13th August, the day before their first combined meeting.<sup>(25)</sup> This laid down in general that it was necessary to force a decision in Europe before the Axis defensive strategy prolonged the struggle into stalemate. ‘In the early stages of the present war, the United Nations of necessity pursued an opportunistic strategy forced upon them by their comparative weakness. However the present rapidly improving position of the United Nations in relation to the Axis in Europe demands an abrogation of opportunistic strategy and requires the adoption of and

adherence to sound strategic plans which envisage decisive military operations conducted at times and places of our own choosing—not the enemy's'. Nothing had occurred, they insisted, 'to justify on sound military grounds the renunciation of the "Trident" concept. We must not jeopardise our sound overall strategy simply to exploit local successes in a generally-accepted secondary theatre, the Mediterranean, where logistical and terrain difficulties preclude decisive and final operations designed to reach the heart of Germany'. 'Overlord', they considered, if carefully synchronised with the Combined Bomber Offensive and given '*whole-hearted and immediate support*', would result in early and decisive victory in Europe.

As for the Mediterranean, the Americans agreed that operations should continue there with available Allied resources, as stipulated at 'Trident', to bring about the collapse of Italy, to create diversions of enemy forces, and to destroy vital Axis installations. Sardinia and Corsica should be seized and air bases established on the mainland 'at least as far north as the Rome area'. 'As between the operation "Overlord" and operations in the Mediterranean', they insisted, 'when there is shortage of resources "Overlord" will have an overriding priority'. In particular the promise to send seven battle-tested divisions from the Mediterranean to take part in 'Overlord' must be kept. This would still, they calculated, leave in the Mediterranean 4,500 combat aircraft and 24 divisions available for offensive purposes—a force greater than would be needed for 'the mere maintenance of pressure on German forces remaining in Italy'. They recommended that the surplus (which they calculated at 10 Anglo-American and 4 French divisions) should be used, not in any divergent operations into the Balkans or through the Lubljana Gap towards Vienna, but in a landing in the South of France which could be exploited northwards and create a diversion in direct connection with 'Overlord': the first appearance of that Operation 'Anvil' which was so to bedevil inter-Allied relations for nine months to come.\*

The British Chiefs of Staff were pleasantly surprised to find how little the practical recommendations of this paper, in spite of its stern prologue, differed from their own ideas. They criticised primarily its lack of emphasis on the importance of obtaining bomber bases in North Italy; its inflexibility in the allocation of forces; and its apparent failure to realise that the success of 'Overlord' depended not so much on the total strength which the Allies assembled for the operation as on the relative strength of the opposing forces at the point, and at the moment, when landings actually occurred.

These points were stressed by Air Chief Marshal Portal and General Brooke when the Combined Chiefs of Staff met, together

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\* See *Grand Strategy*, Vol. V, *passim*.

with their staffs, on the mornings of 14th and 15th August.<sup>(26)</sup> Portal in particular placed the Mediterranean operations in the setting of the development of the Combined Bomber Offensive. He pointed out that, although the Germans had succeeded in increasing their fighter forces by 22% since the beginning of the year, the increase had all been absorbed in the fighting on the Western front, and that even so Germany had had to withdraw units from the Mediterranean and Russia to defend herself against the offensive mounted from the United Kingdom.

‘The key to the situation [said Portal] from the air point of view would be the placing of strong offensive air forces in Northern Italy. From there all South Germany would be within comfortable range, and above all two of the largest German aircraft factories which between them produced nearly 60% of the German fighters. . . . If we could base a strong force of Heavy and Medium Bombers there in the near future, Germany would be faced with a problem that seemed insoluble’.

As to the allocation of resources between ‘Overlord’ and the Mediterranean, General Brooke insisted that ‘sufficient forces *must* be used in Italy in order to make “Overlord” a possibility’; enough to whittle away German fighter strength and pin down German reserves. If the Allies were to penetrate to the North Italian plain, where air bases could be established and whence the South of France could be attacked, they would need to retain the seven divisions due for return to the United Kingdom, or at least others would have to be sent from Britain or the United States to take their place.

These arguments seem to have made no impression whatever on the Americans. General Marshall continued to reiterate that unless ‘Overlord’ was given an overriding priority it would dwindle to a minor operation, if it materialised at all. He reminded his Allies how ‘in every previous operation requirements had arisen additional to those already envisaged’. To allow ‘Overlord’ thus to dwindle would be ‘opening a new concept which in his view weakened our chances of early victory and rendered necessary a re-examination of our basic strategy, with a possible readjustment towards the Pacific’.

The following day, 16th August, the Joint Chiefs sent over to the British a grimly-worded memorandum.<sup>(27)</sup>

‘The discussion in the Combined Chiefs of Staff Meeting yesterday made more apparent than ever the necessity for decision now as to whether our main effort in the European Theater is to be in the Mediterranean or from the United Kingdom. The United States Chiefs of Staff believe that this is the critical question before the Conference and that the

effective conduct of the war in Europe makes this decision now a must.

We propose the following:

The Combined Chiefs of Staff reaffirm the decisions of the "Trident" Conference as to the execution of "Overlord" including the definite allotment of forces thereto and assign to it an overriding priority over all other preparations in the European theater.

The United States Chiefs of Staff believe that the acceptance of this decision must be without conditions and without mental reservations. They accept the fact that a grave emergency will always call for appropriate action to meet it. However, long-range decisions for the conduct of the war, must not be dominated by possible eventualities'.

The manner in which the Joint Chiefs of Staff thus ignored the British arguments without attempting to counter them showed very clearly that they regarded them as diplomatic evasions concealing a fundamental unwillingness to undertake 'Overlord' at all. The situation could no longer be met by reasoned discussion but by blunt speaking *ad hominem*. That afternoon the Combined Chiefs met in closed session, and for a record of their discussion we must turn to Lord Alanbrooke's own diary:<sup>(28)</sup>

'Our talk was pretty frank. I opened by telling them that the root of the matter was that we were not trusting one another. They doubted our real intentions to put our full hearts into the cross-Channel operation next spring, and we had not full confidence that they would not in future insist in our carrying out previous agreements irrespective of changed strategic conditions. I then had to go over our whole Mediterranean strategy to prove its objects which they have never fully realised, and finally I had to produce countless arguments to prove the close relation that exists between cross-Channel and Italian operations. In the end I think our arguments did have some effect on Marshall'.

Evidently they did. After a further discussion behind closed doors the following afternoon, 17th August, the Combined Chiefs of Staff found it possible to agree on a strategic concept for the defeat of the Axis in Europe. The wording was basically that of the paper which the U.S. Joint Chiefs had submitted to the British at the beginning of the Conference, with two major alterations. In the sentence 'As between the operation "Overlord" and operations in the Mediterranean, when there is a shortage of resources "*Overlord*" will have an overriding priority', instead of words italicised a British alternative was accepted: 'Available resources will be distributed



and employed with the main object of ensuring the success of "Overlord". Operations in the Mediterranean theatre will be carried out with the forces allotted at "Trident", except insofar as these may be varied by decisions of the Combined Chiefs of Staff'. And in the sentence: 'the maintenance of unremitting pressure on German forces in Northern Italy and the creation, with available Mediterranean forces, of a situation favourable for the eventual entry of our forces, including the bulk of the re-equipped French Army and Air Force, into Southern France', the words 'of the conditions required for "Overlord" and' were inserted, also on British initiative, after the words 'available Mediterranean forces'.<sup>(29)</sup> The British had succeeded in getting the principle of flexibility, and the recognition of the interdependence of the two operations, written in to the strategic concept; but only, it will be observed, by abandoning their attempt to leave General Eisenhower his seven battle-hardened divisions.

A further result of this decision was the cancellation of the 'stand-still' order on shipping and landing-craft in the Mediterranean which had caused so much concern. But the Chiefs of Staff had already concluded that the transference of the vessels to India as planned would not materially affect General Eisenhower's capabilities. He had enough shipping for his landings at Salerno, and if an additional assault operation were to be launched in the Eastern Mediterranean, it could anyhow be done only at 'Avalanche's' expense.<sup>(30)</sup> On 19th August therefore the 'stand-still' was revoked.<sup>(31)</sup>

About Operation 'Pointblank', the Combined Bomber Offensive, there was no disagreement. Air Chief Marshal Portal on 16th August amplified the remarks with which he had opened the Conference. The German defences were under heavy strain, but their fighter production had increased to an extent unforeseen at Casablanca, and the build-up of the United States Eighth Bomber Command in the United Kingdom was falling short of its target.

'If we do not now strain every nerve to bring enough force to bear to win this battle during the next two or three months but are content to see the 8th Bomber Command hampered by lack of reinforcements just as success is within its grasp, we may well miss the opportunity to win a decisive victory against the German Air Force which will have incalculable effects on all future operations and on the length of the war. And the opportunity, once lost, may not recur'.

To this the U.S. Chiefs of Staff listened courteously and assured him that 'every resource within U.S. capabilities is being strained to bring this about'.<sup>(32)</sup>

With the Combined Chiefs of Staff agreed in principle over operations in Europe, there was little need for the Prime Minister or

the President to add anything of substance at the two Plenary Sessions of the Conference on the afternoons of 19th and 23rd August. Mr. Churchill expressed some doubt, at the first of these sessions, about the practicability of the projected landings in the South of France—a doubt which the private calculations of the British planners as to the small quantity of amphibious craft and shipping available in the Mediterranean may have done something to nourish.<sup>(33)</sup> Instead he suggested a sustained airlift to the French *maquis* in the mountains thirty miles or so inland; and it was agreed that this should be examined. At both sessions he reiterated the dependence of 'Overlord' on the fulfilment of the condition laid down by COSSAC.

'If it developed [he stated, at the second Session] that the German ground or air fighter strength proved to be greater than that upon which success of the plan was premised, the question as to whether or not the operation should be launched would be subject to review by the Combined Chiefs of Staff. In this connection he suggested that the United Nations have "a second string to their bow" in the form of a prepared plan to undertake Operation "Jupiter". He did not in any way wish to imply that he was not whole-heartedly in favour of "Overlord"; but, at the same time, he wished to emphasise that its launching was dependent upon certain conditions, which would give it a reasonable chance of success'.<sup>(34)</sup>

This proposal also the Combined Chiefs diplomatically agreed to write into their final report.

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So far as the European Theatre was concerned, then, the 'Quadrant' Conference confirmed the decisions taken at 'Trident' three months earlier, in the light of the detailed analysis of the requirements for 'Overlord' which was now available, and of the successful achievement of the goals set at Casablanca at the beginning of the year. To agree on a comparable strategy for the Far East was very much more difficult. In fact owing to the number of unknown factors involved in their calculations it proved, for the time being at least, completely impossible.

We have seen in the last chapter how the British Chiefs of Staff and the Prime Minister, with Brigadier Wingate in attendance, had devoted a considerable part of their time in the *Queen Mary* to discussing the problems of Far East strategy. These discussions continued spasmodically and inconclusively throughout the conference. The Prime Minister knew what he wanted: L.R.P. operations in Upper Burma, an assault on Sumatra, and the abandonment of the

projected assaults on Akyab and Ramree Island. Unfortunately this programme took account neither of logistic feasibility, nor of obligations to allies, nor of any long-term strategy for the defeat of Japan. The Commander-in-Chief, India, his communications to the front disorganised by floods, had advised the abandonment of all offensive operations for the coming season and concentration on the improvement of lines of communication. The Joint Planning Staff wished to restrict operations in Burma to those needed to safeguard the air route to China and to keep an open mind whether then to proceed to the reconquest of Southern Burma, for which the Akyab assault would be a necessary preliminary, or to concentrate on longer term arrangements for the capture of Singapore. The Americans, concerned above all with opening a land route to China, strongly favoured the former course, and the Akyab operation had become for them virtually a symbol of British commitment in this theatre. The operations in Upper Burma had the additional attraction for them of opening the Ledo tributary to the Burma Road, about the value of which the British planners were still, at this stage, very sceptical.

The Chiefs of Staff themselves, preoccupied with the immediate problems of planning for the European theatre, failed to derive any clear guidance from this tangle of conflicting advice. Everything was uncertain: India's potential as a base, the capacity of the lines of communication to Assam, the date by which major forces could be made available from Europe, above all the object of fighting in Burma at all. They had never fully accepted the reasoning of their Allies, that the preservation of Chinese resistance warranted major sacrifices on the part of the West. They saw the Burmese theatre rather as the only area where, with the resources available, they could bring the Japanese to battle and match the efforts being made by the Allied forces under the command of General MacArthur and Admiral Halsey in the South West Pacific. During the six months which had passed since the Casablanca Conference it had become clear that to engage the Japanese anywhere except in Upper Burma would require amphibious and naval forces on a scale which could be made available only at the expense of the European theatre; and on the unalterable priority to be accorded to that the Chiefs of Staff and Mr. Churchill were unanimous and resolute. The wish to maintain pressure on the Japanese combined with the loyal determination to meet American wishes with regard to China, and with the new prospects opened by Brigadier Wingate, to make the Chiefs of Staff determined to press on with land operations in Upper Burma itself during the coming campaigning season. But as to what should happen elsewhere and afterwards, British ideas were still very nebulous indeed.

The American Joint Chiefs of Staff had been able to define their own intentions with a greater degree of precision. The operations in the South West Pacific approved the previous spring had already got under way with the seizure of the islands of Kiriwina and Woodlark and the invasion of New Georgia on 30th June. In the North Pacific, Attu in the Aleutians had been captured in May, and an assault was being mounted against Kiska; a blow which fell on 15th August on the empty air, since the Japanese had succeeded in evacuating their garrison unobserved. The U.S. Navy had now obtained the agreement of the Joint Chiefs to the opening of a new theatre of operations in the Central Pacific, where their great resources, particularly the vessels laid down in 1940 and now coming into service, could be effectively deployed.\* Their original proposal for a direct attack on the heavily defended Marshall Islands drawing on amphibious forces from the South Pacific, had aroused strong objections from General MacArthur, which General Marshall had sustained. But a modified programme aiming first at the more vulnerable Gilbert Islands and delaying the attack on the Marshalls until early in 1944 had received the approval of the Joint Chiefs of Staff on 20th July. Admiral Nimitz had been sent a directive accordingly, and on 5th August had established a new Central Pacific Force. Thus American forces were to be committed along two lines of advance: one, under the land-based air cover of the U.S. Army Air Force, through the Bismarck Archipelago and along the northern coast of New Guinea; the other under protection of the aircraft-carriers of the United States Navy through the Gilberts, the Marshalls and the Caroline Islands; mutually supporting, with reserves being switched between them as occasion demanded.<sup>(36)</sup>

The ultimate objective of these operations, it will be recalled, was the establishment of bases on the Chinese mainland from which could be launched, if necessary, a physical invasion of Japan in 1947-8. The British planning staffs had disagreed with their American colleagues only on three major points: the importance attached to operations in the South West Pacific, the priority given to the clearing of Burma over an attack against Singapore, and the American recommendation that the Combined Chiefs of Staff should plan to defeat the Japanese within twelve months of the end of the war in Europe. General Brooke raised the first of these points with the Americans on 17th August, suggesting that there was some duplication of resources in the Pacific which might be made available for 'Overlord'.<sup>(37)</sup> But neither General Marshall nor Admiral King showed any interest in re-examining the decisions which they had reached only through very hard bargaining, and

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\* These included, by the end of 1943, 50 carriers and 6 battleships.<sup>(36)</sup>

the British sensibly did not press a matter on which they had very little *locus standi*.

The status of operations in Burma was more difficult to agree. The Joint Chiefs of Staff, in a report on 'Specific Operations in the Pacific and Far East for 1943-4'<sup>(38)</sup>, expressed the view that these 'should include the recapture of Burma and the opening of a land route to China through Northern Burma, meanwhile furnishing all possible logistic and air support to China in order to ensure the availability of Chinese areas suitable for operations of United Nations forces against Japan'. When he came to speak to this point General Marshall agreed that an approach to China via the Straits of Malacca and the South China Sea appeared to offer a feasible alternative to the reopening of the Burma Road if the shipping could be found,<sup>(39)</sup> but made it plain that he did not favour either this or Mr. Churchill's favoured operation of an attack on North Sumatra. He insisted that the main route to China should be reopened by the reconquest of the whole of Burma, and that therefore the Akyab and Ramree operations should go ahead before the next monsoon, to make possible the recapture of Rangoon the following year.<sup>(40)</sup>

There was no time at Quebec to thresh the question out thoroughly. Nor was it possible, in view of the uncertainties introduced by the floods on the lines of communication, to plan realistically for operations in North Burma; though Brigadier Wingate was duly produced and gave hope of more positive and immediate results than had been shown in the past. The Combined Chiefs of Staff agreed therefore to recommend only in general terms that operations should be carried out for the capture of Upper Burma, starting in February 1944, to improve the air route and establish overland communication with China; and 'to continue preparations for an amphibious operation in the Spring of 1944 on the scale already contemplated, namely for the capture of Akyab and Ramree'. Further operations should be a matter of study and report.<sup>(41)</sup> But even this diplomatic compromise did not satisfy the Prime Minister, who was as annoyed that 'Bullfrog', his pet aversion, should have been mentioned as that 'Culverin', which he had espoused so enthusiastically, should have been ignored. He insisted on a yet more tortuous formulation: 'To continue preparations for an amphibious operation in the Spring of 1944. Pending a decision on the particular operation, the scale of these operations should be of the order of those hitherto contemplated for the capture of Akyab and Ramree'.<sup>(42)</sup> Fortunately the Americans made no difficulties about accepting this amendment to the final report.

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Over the final point of dissension, the estimated target-date for the defeat of Japan, the British did not press their objections. The Prime Minister indeed welcomed the American proposal to set this at twelve months after the defeat of Germany, on the grounds that it would discourage planning for a long war of attrition.<sup>(43)</sup> Since it was assumed that the war in Europe would be over by Autumn 1944, this meant that the timetable established by the Combined Planners would have to be shortened by some three years. It was not made explicit how this should be done, but a number of proposals were canvassed in the course of the conference—mainly for a dramatic increase in the employment of air power against Japan. Quite how dramatic this increase was to be, only very few of those present could foretell.

Among the proposals considered were the famous 'Habbakuks' whose cause was so enthusiastically sponsored by the Prime Minister and Lord Louis Mountbatten. These, in the words of the latter, were 'any large form of seadrome or aircraft-carrier made with the object of giving air superiority where landing facilities did not exist near enough for this to be gained in other ways'.<sup>(44)</sup> One of the projects under study at Combined Operations Headquarters was one for the construction of 2,000 foot long unsinkable aircraft-carriers made of 'Pykrete': a synthetic substance whose resistant qualities were dramatically demonstrated by Vice Admiral Mountbatten on 19th August.<sup>(45)</sup> The Combined Chiefs of Staff were sufficiently impressed to authorise the creation of an Anglo-American-Canadian Board to examine this monster's possibilities; and they agreed that these should be among the methods to be explored 'to enable the superior power of the United Nations to be deployed in unexpected and undeveloped areas'.<sup>(46)</sup>

It was not likely that even aids such as these could entirely solve the problem of how to deploy the huge resources of Allied air power which would become available once the war in Europe was over, and to which Air Chief Marshal Portal repeatedly drew the attention of his colleagues. The U.S.A.A.F. was now bringing into service the B.29, a bomber with an operational range of 1,500 miles. General Arnold did not at this time consider it possible to operate these from Pacific Island bases,<sup>(47)</sup> nor could the Russians be relied on to furnish the necessary facilities. This left China; but if bases were to be established there in time to defeat Japan within the time limits accepted by the Combined Chiefs of Staff they could be nourished only from India, possibly by land and certainly by air. Portal, at a meeting of the Combined Chiefs on 20th August, laid stress on the possibilities that this concept opened up. The airlift might be built up by 1945 to such magnitude that deliveries by the Burma Road would be comparatively insignificant. It would then be

possible, he suggested, 'to continue attacks on the periphery of the wheel to achieve attrition, to attack the heart of Japan by air, with devastating results on her industry and morale, while at the same time the westerly drive in the Pacific would cut the spokes of the wheel'.<sup>(48)</sup> This fitted in with the proposals which the U.S.A.A.F. presented to the Combined Chiefs of Staff the following day, and which were referred by them to the Combined Planners for study.<sup>(49)</sup> These suggested that 28 groups each of 28 B.29s conducting 5 missions a month for six months could achieve 'the degree of destruction of Japanese resources essential to crush the enemy's capacity for effective armed resistance'. Ten such groups could be available in China by October 1944, twenty by May 1945, each supported by 20 groups of B.24s in India. By 31st August 1945 their task would have been 'fully accomplished'.

The prospect was encouraging; but it brought the Combined Chiefs back to the intractable problems of communications to, and protection of, airfields in Assam; the opening of the Burma Road; and the inadequacy of India as a base for operations on this scale—problems with which Wavell and Auchinleck had wrestled so far in vain. Monthly deliveries by air to China had in July reached only 3,451 tons<sup>(50)</sup>—half the target figure of 7,000 tons. These could be substantially increased only at the expense of the ground operations to open the Ledo and ultimately the Rangoon roads to China, and the road construction programme needed to support them. The estimated capacity of the communications to Assam to sustain all these operations was 102,000 tons a month, and there was already a considerable backlog which the Bengal floods were likely, as we have seen, to increase by a further 600 tons a day.<sup>(51)</sup>

A Committee set up under General Somervell and the Quartermaster-General, General Sir Thomas Riddell-Webster, calculated that once the Ledo Road was open, together with a pipeline which could transmit a monthly supply of 72,000 tons of petrol and oil, a total monthly capacity of 118,000 tons would be needed to support a delivery to China of 10,000 tons on the air route and 65,000 tons overland. This figure, recommended the Committee, should be reached and passed in the first months of 1944. The target for 1st January 1945 should be 170,000 tons, for 1st January 1946 220,000 tons. This would make possible the eventual monthly delivery to China of 85,000 tons of supplies, in addition to the flow along the pipeline.<sup>(52)</sup> These recommendations were considered by the Combined Chiefs of Staff at a meeting of 21st August, and approved.<sup>(53)</sup> Their implementation was to be one of the responsibilities—and not the least formidable—of the Supreme Commander of the new South East Asia Command.

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About the structure of the new Command the British Chiefs of Staff were now able to put forward firm proposals, based on a mixture of their experience in the Mediterranean and in the South West Pacific Theatres.<sup>(64)</sup> As in the Mediterranean, they proposed, there should be a Supreme Commander, in this case British, with an American Deputy and with Naval, Army and Air Commanders-in-Chief responsible to him. A bold suggestion from the Prime Minister that the Supreme Commander should also exercise direct responsibility for amphibious operations was not accepted by the Chiefs of Staff. But they considered that, unlike General Eisenhower, the Supreme Commander should report, not direct to the Combined Chiefs of Staff, but through the British Chiefs of Staff Committee; who 'would exercise jurisdiction over all matters pertaining to operational strategy and would be the channel through which all instructions to the Supreme Commander were passed'.

The pattern for this had already been set by General MacArthur's relationship to the Joint Chiefs of Staff in Washington. The determination to retain direct British responsibility for this theatre had been, if anything, strengthened by the experience of the South-West Pacific Command, about whose activities the Chiefs of Staff were given extraordinarily little information. In preliminary discussions in the *Queen Mary* the Chiefs of Staff had indeed made the point that the Americans might be given access to the new S.E.A.C. Commander in direct proportion to British access to General MacArthur's Headquarters.<sup>(65)</sup> The boundaries of the new Command should include the mainland of S.E. Asia exclusive of China and India, Sumatra and the Indian Ocean to 60°E. The Commander-in-Chief India would remain responsible for the administration of the Indian base for S.E.A.C. forces and for all India's internal requirements, and any differences over administrative priorities were to be resolved by the Viceroy on behalf of the British War Cabinet.

The main problems about these proposals arose from American reluctance to see their troops in the theatre serving under a British command whose record of success was not as yet considerable,<sup>(66)</sup> and the reluctance of the British to accept the obvious candidate as Deputy Supreme Commander, General Stilwell, if he remained in direct command of American and Chinese forces and as Chief of Staff to Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek. But the British well understood the delicate and necessary purpose which General Stilwell served vis-à-vis the Chinese. As General Marshall pointed out, 'politically, all United States forces in China, or in the South-East Asia Command, were regarded as being there for the sole purpose of supporting China'.<sup>(67)</sup> Ultimately it was agreed that General Stilwell should not shed any of his responsibilities, but that he would



command all United States air and ground forces committed to the South East Asia Theatre, and the Chinese troops operating in Burma, in his capacity as Deputy Supreme Commander. He would exercise operational control over the Chinese forces operating in Burma 'in conformity with the overall plan of the British Army Commander', and, through his representative with the Air Commander-in-Chief, of U.S. 10th Air Force as well. In addition, his separate status as Chief of Staff to the Generalissimo was recognised. This it was hoped would meet Chinese susceptibilities. Further, all American air transport services in the theatre were left under direct American control 'subject to such supply and service functions as may be delegated . . . to the Deputy Supreme Allied Commander'; to whom the Supreme Allied Commander would have to address any request for the U.S. troop-carrier aircraft for operational purposes. Finally, Indo-China and Siam were explicitly excluded from the area of the Command.<sup>(58)</sup>

A man still had to be found to accept a Command distinguished as much by the complexity of its structure as by the immensity of its tasks. The name of Air Chief Marshal Sir Sholto Douglas, the Air Officer Commanding, Middle East, had been put forward by the British, but was unacceptable to the Americans since that officer had had no experience of inter-allied command.<sup>(59)</sup> Of the other British nominees, Air Chief Marshal Sir Arthur Tedder was indispensable in the Mediterranean and Admiral Sir Andrew Cunningham declined the appointment.<sup>(60)</sup> With no suitable senior commander available the Prime Minister brought forward the name already proposed, as we have seen, by his Cabinet colleague Mr. L. S. Amery: Vice Admiral Lord Louis Mountbatten, Chief of Combined Operations. 'He knows the whole story from the top', Mr. Churchill cabled home to the War Cabinet 'he is young, enthusiastic and triphibious . . . his appointment would I think command public interest and approval and show that youth is no barrier to merit'.<sup>(61)</sup> The proposal proved highly acceptable to the President and to the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and on 25th August the appointment was announced. With it a new if not indeed a happier chapter opened in the history of the British war in the Far East.

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With the broad outline of strategy in the Far East agreed so far as circumstances allowed, the Combined Chiefs of Staff on 24th August considered the resources available to implement it, and approved their final report. The figures produced by the Combined Staff Planners were on the whole encouraging.<sup>(62)</sup> The necessary

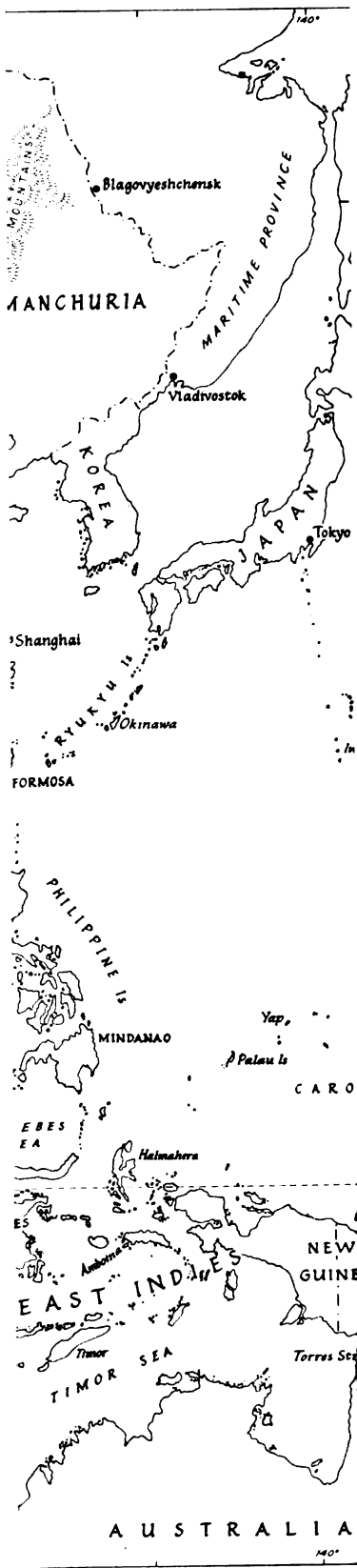
ground forces for operations in all theatres could be made available,\* and, more important, there would be enough shipping to carry them. The very shortness of the time which the Conference had devoted to discussing anti-submarine warfare (and that concerned mainly with the future of the Azores) was evidence enough of the victory achieved in the Battle of the Atlantic in the six months which had elapsed since Casablanca. Subject to certain provisions, air resources would also be adequate, as would naval; but it was foreseen that the requirements of future amphibious operations in the Mediterranean would certainly conflict with those of the landings at Akyab. The only critical shortage which the Planners foresaw was in landing-craft and assault shipping. Arrangements had been made to provide enough—or so it was hoped—for the ‘Overlord’ operation, largely at the expense of the Mediterranean theatre; but thereafter the full scope of operations both in the Far East and the European Theatres would be restricted unless production could be expanded—probably at the expense of cargo-shipping and escort craft. The events of the next twelve months were to justify this forecast with most sombre precision.

The final report<sup>(63)</sup> showed how unnecessary had been General Marshall’s fears that the Conference would be a ‘fight’ which the United States would have to win if it were not to lose. There was no difficulty about reaffirming the general principles established at ‘Trident’ as to the relationship of the war in Europe to that in the Pacific; in defining the major role which the combined Bomber Offensive should play in Allied strategy; or in accepting that operations in the Mediterranean should be conducted in such a manner and with such resources as would best pave the way for the major operation against the Axis citadel, Operation ‘Overlord’. The British Chiefs of Staff showed that, whatever the private opinions the Prime Minister may have expressed, ‘Overlord’ still remained a firm commitment to which their plans and resources were geared; while the Americans accepted that it was a commitment which could be undertaken only under conditions which operations in the air and the Mediterranean could most effectively bring about. On the Far East there was agreement that resources must be concentrated and devices sought on a scale to make possible a rapid victory within a year of the defeat of Germany; but apart from the employment of air power on an altogether new degree of magnitude no clear idea emerged from either party how this was to be done. It was recognised that a further conference would probably be needed to consider this. Meanwhile the operations already approved in

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\* The total deployment of allied resources available for combat in June 1944 were forecasts as: N.W. Europe 36 divns.; Mediterranean 22 divns.; S.E.A.C. 30 divns. plus L.R.P.G.s; Pacific 37 divns.

Upper Burma, in New Guinea and the Bismarck Archipelago and in the Gilberts and Marshalls were to go ahead; wearing down Japanese strength, compelling the Japanese to dispatch reinforcements over their vulnerable lines of communication, and seizing further positions from which Allied forces, once they were redeployed from Europe, could operate with overwhelming superiority. The difficulties which still lay ahead were formidable; but the misunderstandings which had clouded Allied relations throughout the summer had, for the time being at least, been dispelled, and the Chiefs of Staff both American and British were able to return with easier minds to their exacting tasks.





## SOURCES

- (1) P.M. telegram T.885/3 of 25.6.43: C.P.366.
- (2) P.M. telegram T.904/3, loc. cit.
- (3) Dill-C.I.G.S. of 9.7.43, loc. cit.
- (4) Dill-C.I.G.S. of 3.7.43, loc. cit.
- (5) Ismay-W.S.C. of 14.7.43, loc. cit.
- (6) C.O.S.(43)159th Mtg.(O) of 15.7.43.
- (7) P.M. telegram T.1039/3 of 16.7.43: C.P.366.
- (8) P.M. telegram T.1046/3: F.D.R.-W.S.C. of 16.7.43  
P.M. telegram T.1066/3: W.S.C.-F.D.R. of 19.7.43  
P.M. telegram T.1081/3 of 21.7.43 } C.P.366.
- (9) P.M. telegram T.1114/3: Mackenzie King-W.S.C., loc. cit.
- (10) C.O.S.(43)166th Mtg.(O) of 20.7.43.
- (11) Maurice Matloff; *Strategic Planning for Coalition Warfare, 1943-1944*,  
p. 173.
- (12) Matloff, p. 174.  
See also Dill-C.O.S. of 21.7.43 (FMD.14) in P.M.402/33/1.
- (13) Matloff, p. 214.
- (14) Matloff, p. 220.
- (15) C.O.S.(W)732 of 25.7.43.
- (16) J.S.M.1105 of 27.7.43.
- (17) C.O.S.(W)740 of 29.7.43.
- (18) J.S.M.1108 of 29.7.43.  
C.O.S.(W)745 of 31.7.43.
- (19) J.S.M.1111 of 30.7.43.
- (20) J.S.M.1133 of 7.8.43.  
C.O.S.(Q)7th Mtg. of 11.8.43.
- (21) P.M. directive D.134/3 of 19.8.43: P.M.402/33/1.
- (22) Ismay-W.S.C. of 19.8.43: C.P.366.  
C.O.S.(Q)17th Mtg. of 19.8.43.
- (23) C.O.S.(Q)8(Revised).
- (24) C.O.S.(Q)3.
- (25) C.C.S. 303.
- (26) C.C.S. 106th and 108th Mtgs.
- (27) C.C.S. 303/1.
- (28) Arthur Bryant: *The Turn of the Tide*, p. 708.

- (29) C.O.S.(Q)13th Mtg.  
C.C.S. 110th Mtg. of 17.8.43.  
C.C.S. 303/3.
- (30) C.O.S.(Q)6th Mtg. of 9.8.43.  
C.O.S.(Q)15th Mtg. of 18.8.43.
- (31) C.O.S.(Q)16th Mtg. of 19.8.43.
- (32) C.C.S. 309.  
C.C.S. 109th Mtg. of 16.8.43.
- (33) J.S.(Q)16.
- (34) QUADRANT 2nd Plenary Session of 23.8.43.
- (35) Louis Morton: *The War in the Pacific: Strategy and Command: The First Two Years*, p. 449.
- (36) Matloff, pp. 185-93.  
Morton, pp. 449-70.
- (37) C.C.S. 110th Mtg. of 17.8.43.  
C.O.S.(Q)14th Mtg.
- (38) C.C.S. 301.
- (39) C.C.S. 107th Mtg.
- (40) C.C.S. 113th Mtg.
- (41) C.C.S. 114th Mtg.  
C.C.S. 319/2.
- (42) C.O.S.(Q)21st Mtg.
- (43) QUADRANT 2nd Plenary Session of 23.8.43.
- (44) C.O.S.(Q)8th Mtg. of 11.8.43.
- (45) C.C.S. 112th Mtg. For a lively description of the scene which resulted see Bryant, *op. cit.* pp. 713-4.
- (46) C.C.S. 112th Mtg.  
C.C.S. 319/2.  
C.C.S. 114th Mtg.
- (47) C.C.S. 107th Mtg.
- (48) C.C.S. 113th Mtg. of 20.8.43.
- (49) C.C.S. 323.  
C.C.S. 114th Mtg. of 21.8.43.
- (50) CONCRETE 123 of 11.8.43.
- (51) Auchinleck-C.O.S.: 65566/COS.
- (52) C.O.S.(Q)36.  
C.O.S.-Auchinleck: WELFARE 419 of 25.8.43.
- (53) C.C.S. 114th Mtg.
- (54) C.C.S. 308.
- (55) C.O.S.(Q)4th Mtg. of 7.8.43.
- (56) Matloff, p. 202.

- (57) C.C.S. 111th Mtg. of 18.8.43.
- (58) C.C.S. 308/3.  
C.C.S. 114th Mtg.
- (59) Matloff, p. 203.
- (60) W.S.C.-Attlee: WELFARE 64 of 11.8.43.
- (61) W.S.C.-Attlee; WELFARE 9 and 64 of 9 and 11.8.43.
- (62) C.C.S. 329.
- (63) C.C.S. 319/5.





## Epilogue

### 'TUBE ALLOYS'

ONE OF THE MOST important decisions taken at the Quebec Conference was not recorded in the Conference Records and was known at the time to barely a score of people on either side of the Atlantic. It was the 'Quebec Agreement' signed by President Roosevelt and Mr. Churchill, regulating the procedure for inter-allied co-operation in the scientific research and industrial development which was to result in the production, and use, of the first atomic bombs. The events which led to this agreement have already been fully recorded elsewhere;<sup>(1)\*</sup> but in any account of Anglo-American co-operation during 1942-3 they must at least be summarised.

When war broke out in September 1939 scientists had already discovered that if atoms of the element uranium were bombarded with neutrons, not only might they undergo a process of 'fission', but a self-sustaining chain reaction might be induced which would release quantities of energy more than a million times greater than that resulting from chemical combustion of an equal quantity of coal. This fission occurred in one of the isotopes of uranium, U 235; but this constituted only 0.7% of the element in its natural state. Thus although scientists in every industrialised country were asking themselves whether this energy could be used for a bomb, the answer at first seemed reassuring. A chain-reaction in natural uranium could almost certainly be achieved, but only by the use of a 'moderator'—a light element which would slow down the bombarding neutrons; and if the neutrons were slowed down the chain reaction, although useful for industrial purposes, would not be remotely fast enough for an explosive bomb. The possibility of producing a fast reaction by using U 235 in isolation was not at first seriously considered: the difficulty of separating the isotope from natural uranium in anything except microscopic quantities seemed virtually insuperable.

It was from German-born scientists working in the United Kingdom that there came the first convincing arguments that a bomb of appalling violence might be constructed. These were set out in a memorandum drafted in the spring of 1940 by Professor Rudolf Peierls and Dr. Otto Frisch of the University of Birmingham. In this remarkable document they indicated how U 235 might be separated from natural uranium on an industrial scale; they calculated its critical mass (i.e. the minimum quantity of material in which a chain reaction would occur) and found it not too large to be contained in a bomb; they suggested a detonating process; and they gave a warning of the radio-active after-effects of a nuclear explosion. It was largely on the strength of this document that the British Government set up, in April 1940, a scientific committee under the auspices of the Committee for the Scientific Study of Air Warfare, to study in greater detail the possibility of constructing such a weapon as Frisch and Peierls proposed; a committee which acquired the name 'The MAUD Committee' from a curious mis-reading of a message about the Danish physicist Niels Bohr which Lise Meitner, famous scientist and aunt of Frisch, sent from Stockholm.

Under the aegis of the Maud Committee further studies were carried out in various British universities, including important work undertaken at Cambridge

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\* *Britain and Atomic Energy 1939-45*. By Margaret Gowing. (London 1964). Except where otherwise indicated, the Epilogue is based on that work.

by French scientists who escaped to Britain in the summer of 1940 with their supplies of 'heavy water'—the most effective moderating substance for a nuclear reaction. These men and their British collaborators worked on an alternative method of producing an explosion. Already American scientists had indicated that in the course of slow neutron reactions a new element unknown in nature, later to be called 'plutonium', was produced; and by the end of 1940 members of the Cambridge team were correctly predicting that plutonium would also be fissile and could be used for producing a bomb.

In June 1941 the Maud Committee submitted its report. This endorsed the calculations of Frisch and Peierls; stating that

'It will be possible to make an effective uranium bomb, which, containing some 25 lbs. of active material would be equivalent as regards destructive effect to 1,800 tons of T.N.T. and would also release large quantities of radio-active substances which would make places near to where the bomb exploded dangerous to human life for a long period,

The report recommended that the most appropriate material would be U 235, and that it should be separated out from natural uranium by a process of gaseous diffusion. The process would be expensive: a plant capable of producing one kilogram of U 235 daily would cost some £5 million; but the Committee considered that 'the destructive effect both material and moral is so great that every effort should be made to produce bombs of this kind'. It believed that it would be possible to produce the first bomb within two and a half years, in time for use in the war; but even if the war should end before the bombs were ready the effort, said the Committee, would not be wasted 'except in the unlikely event of complete disarmament, since no nation would care to risk being caught without a weapon of such decisive possibilities'.

Only one member of the Maud Committee, Professor P. M. S. Blackett, expressed doubts whether the United Kingdom could produce this weapon out of its own resources. He considered the Report to be over-optimistic in its assessment of the resources that would be required and the technical difficulties which would have to be overcome. In consequence he recommended that the plant should be erected in the United States. These doubts were shared by the experts within the Ministry of Aircraft Production to whom the Report was submitted; but Lord Cherwell, through whom the recommendation reached the Prime Minister at the end of August, was strongly in favour of keeping the manufacture of so politically decisive a weapon in British hands. 'However much I may trust my neighbour and depend on him' he wrote, 'I am very much averse to putting myself completely at his mercy and would therefore not press the Americans to undertake this work'. But the Defence Services Panel of the Scientific Advisory Committee, which examined the matter in September under the chairmanship of Lord Hankey, considered that full-scale manufacture in the United Kingdom, under constant threat of interruption or damage by air attack, was not feasible. The Panel proposed instead that a pilot plant should be built in Britain and the full-scale separation plant in Canada, with the necessary components being manufactured in the United States.

Meanwhile, on the basis of the report which he had received from Lord Cherwell, the Prime Minister had decided to go ahead with the project, and entrusted ministerial responsibility for it to Sir John Anderson; a man whose scientific training and special knowledge of the chemistry of uranium made him a particularly appropriate choice. Anderson appointed as his chief executive officer the Research Director of Imperial Chemical Industries, Mr. W. A. Akers, and gave to the enterprise the impressively meaningless title of 'Tube Alloys'. The new Directorate had hardly had time to establish itself when, in December 1941,

the United States was transformed from an actively beneficent neutral power into a fully belligerent ally.

As early as October 1939 President Roosevelt, after receiving advice from Professor Einstein, had set up an Advisory Committee on Uranium; but until the United States entered the war, nuclear research in that country had been unco-ordinated and concerned primarily with slow neutrons in natural uranium which had the greatest possibilities of industrial application. The head of the National Defence Research Committee, Dr. Vannevar Bush, had kept the work being carried out in various American universities under careful review. In July 1941 he was told the conclusions of the Maud Report, and in October invited a Committee of the National Academy of Sciences to consider them. The Committee broadly endorsed the Report, but recommended that in addition to gaseous diffusion two further methods of separation, centrifugation and electro-magnetism, should be studied. Before long the production of plutonium—whose explosive possibilities had been demonstrated in experiments in California—was also added to the American programme. Meanwhile President Roosevelt, informed of what was afoot, had authorised a full exchange of information with Britain. He established a directing committee which contained, in addition to the Secretary for War and General Marshall, his own two principal scientific advisers: Dr. Bush, who had now become Director of a new Presidential Office of Scientific Research, and Dr. James Conant, who had succeeded Dr. Bush as Chairman of the National Defence Research Committee.<sup>(2)</sup>

As early as August 1941 Dr. Bush and Dr. Conant had proposed to the British Central Scientific Office in Washington not only that research into atomic weapons in both countries should be co-ordinated, but that the two Governments should undertake that construction as a joint project. They received no reply. In October the matter was taken up again by the President himself, who suggested in a letter to Mr. Churchill that they should discuss the whole question 'in order that any extended efforts may be co-ordinated or even jointly conducted'. This proposal also fell on stony ground. Sir John Anderson and Lord Cherwell informed the United States scientific liaison officer in London, Mr. Frederick L. Hovde, that while the British Government was anxious to collaborate with that of the United States as fully as possible, they were 'disturbed about the possibility of leakage of information to the enemy'. The British authorities therefore offered only to exchange information about the organisation of atomic energy programmes; and since such organisation as existed at that time in the United States was very primitive indeed, the British gained a misleading impression both of the potentialities of the work in progress beyond the Atlantic and of the resources which could be put into its organisation and exploitation once the United States entered the war.

In the early months of 1942 Mr. Akers and a number of his scientific colleagues visited the United States, and any illusions they may have had were quickly dispelled. 'One thing is clear', Akers wrote home, 'and that is that an enormous number of people are now on this work so that their resources for working out schemes quickly are vastly greater than ours'. The British team returned convinced of the need for the greatest possible fusion of effort and, in particular, for the building of the British separation plant in the United States. In June Mr. Akers formally proposed to the Consultative Council of Tube Alloys that this should be done; ten months after the Americans had first proposed such co-operation themselves.

The Council still hesitated at the prospect of taking so grave a step. Lord Cherwell for one was still not convinced that the necessary plant could not be built in Britain. But reports from America indicated that such hesitation might be fatal. Akers's deputy, Mr. M. W. Perrin, wrote from Washington at the beginning

of June that barely a month remained for making the decision. He warned that the Americans were soon likely to 'completely outstrip us in ideas, research and application of nuclear energy, and that then, quite rightly, they will see no reason for our butting in'. Under pressure from Akers and Perrin, and faced by discouraging reports about the chances of building even a pilot plant in the United Kingdom, the Tube Alloys Consultative Council finally agreed at the end of July to approach the United States. The American Government was to be asked to appoint British members to its own newly-established Executive Committee and to co-operate in creating further machinery for liaison; the U.S. Army was to be invited to build the British pilot plant and to study the work which the British had already carried out on separation methods; and British scientists working on these processes were to move to the United States. It was still assumed that on certain aspects of U 235 separation the British led the United States. On plutonium production, however, there could be no doubt of American superiority; so it was further agreed by the Council that the Cambridge team working on heavy water processes should move to Canada where they could more easily co-ordinate their work with that of their American colleagues.

Sir John Anderson submitted these proposals to the Prime Minister on 30th July 1942 and did so, he admitted, with reluctance. 'We must face the fact', he pointed out, 'that the pioneer work done in this country is a dwindling asset and that unless we capitalise it quickly we shall be rapidly out-stripped. We now have a real contribution to make to a merger. Soon we shall have little or none'. Mr. Churchill does not appear to have shared any of Anderson's regrets. He had already discussed the matter in general terms with the President on his visit to Washington in June. He had then urged, he records in his memoirs,<sup>(3)</sup> that all information and work on atomic weapons should be pooled and all results shared; and he himself had then suggested that the plant should be built in the United States. He gained the impression that the President agreed. It is not surprising, therefore, that Sir John Anderson's proposals were approved within twenty-four hours. On 5th August they were transmitted to Dr. Bush.

The British proposals arrived in Washington at a bad moment. The Americans were now going ahead with no less than four plants for which they were finding it difficult enough to secure the necessary priorities, and they were reluctant to take on a fifth. They were also unwilling, until their own organisation had settled down, to consider the kind of formal link which the British proposed; although they would be glad to see the interchange of views and information continue as before, and indeed to invite the British visitors to attend their Executive Committee meetings. All this Dr. Bush explained in a letter to Anderson of 1st September. Although unenthusiastic, this letter gave no hint that the British proposals were likely to be rejected out of hand.

But as the autumn wore on, the situation deteriorated. These, it will be remembered, were the months of the prolonged debates over strategy which followed the abandonment of General Marshall's proposals for 'Bolero' and 'Round-Up'. The honeymoon was over, and the unexpected difficulties of formulating a common policy with a proud and strong-minded ally were causing some bitterness on both sides of the Atlantic.<sup>(4)</sup> The British were not particularly popular in Washington in the autumn of 1942. In addition, the whole of the American atomic energy programme was being reorganised. In September all construction work was placed under a Military Policy Committee dominated by the armed services, whose executive agent was Brigadier (later Major) General Leslie R. Groves.<sup>(5)</sup>

Groves was impatient of unnecessary delays, and also professionally concerned with the problem of security. He had already registered his alarm at the freedom with which nuclear information was being discussed within the scientific com-

munity. As for Dr. Conant and Dr. Bush, the considerations against which Mr. Perrin had warned London a few months earlier had now come to dominate their thinking. Since the United States, they estimated, was now doing 90% of the work on nuclear weapons, they saw little point in the kind of collaboration being offered by the British. It seemed to them more likely to retard than to accelerate production of the bomb. At the end of October they therefore advised the President that no further measures should be taken to establish co-operative machinery with the British. With this advice the President apparently concurred.<sup>(6)</sup>

The question now arose of how to inform the British; and Dr. Bush suggested that Mr. Akers should visit him in Washington so that he himself could explain 'the implications of the recent organisational changes in the United States'. Akers arrived in November and found the situation far worse than anyone in London had realised. General Groves explained to him the new policy of restricting the circulation of information on a 'need to know' basis, which would have to apply to British scientists as well as to American. Dr. Bush and Dr. Conant told him that they saw no reason to give the British any information about processes to which they had made no contribution, such as the electro-magnetic separation of U 235 or the graphite-pile process of plutonium manufacture. It was from this last process that Professor Fermi and his colleagues at the University of Chicago had just succeeded, on 2nd December 1942, in inducing the first man-made self-sustaining chain reaction; a triumph which may have played some part in convincing the American authorities that they could now dispense with British help. Finally, and most significantly, Mr. Akers was informed that no information would be passed to the British which they would not be in a position to use in the course of the present war.

Mr. Akers did not fully appreciate the reasoning which lay behind this last decision, and he contested it with a vehemence which the Americans found suspicious. They in their turn found it difficult to understand the politico-military motives underlying the British desire to maintain an independent post-war nuclear capability. Even had they understood them they might not have regarded them with sympathy. As it was they saw in the British importunity, especially when expressed by a senior executive of I.C.I., merely the self-interest of a possible industrial rival.<sup>(7)</sup> The discussions between Akers, Bush, Conant and Groves thus did nothing to bring agreement closer. Indeed they seemed to have confirmed the American authorities in their view that interchange with the British should in future be strictly limited to information which the recipient could use for immediate war purposes. A memorandum along these lines was submitted to Mr. Roosevelt on 23rd December, and he confirmed it five days later.<sup>(8)</sup>

The new conditions were spelled out in a paper which Dr. Conant presented to Mr. Akers on 13th January 1943. In future the British and the Canadians were to be given no more information about electro-magnetic separation, about the production of heavy water, about fast neutron reaction, or about the manufacture of the bomb itself. Interchange of information about the gaseous diffusion separation process was to be controlled by General Groves. The Canadian-British-French group working on heavy water at Montreal might be given information about the use of heavy water in chain reactions, but was to be told nothing about the production or properties of plutonium. For the rest, basic scientific information could be passed to the British and Canadians only with the direct approval of Dr. Conant himself.

When Sir John Anderson learned of the Conant Memorandum he at once told the Prime Minister. 'This development has come as a bombshell and is quite intolerable', he minuted. 'I think you may wish to ask President Roosevelt to go into the matter without delay'. It now appeared to the officials in London that the Americans were proposing to use British and British-sponsored discoveries to

establish their own post-war monopoly of nuclear energy for military and industrial purposes, and that the possibility of developing the project within the United Kingdom would have to be looked at again.

Mr Churchill agreed to raise the question with the President at the Casablanca Conference, but he contented himself with talking to Mr. Harry Hopkins, who assured him that Mr. Roosevelt would go into the whole question when he got home. After a month of silence the Prime Minister reminded Hopkins of this promise. Mr. Hopkins in reply stated that he could trace no breach of agreement in the American action, and invited the British to set out their case. This was done in a memorandum which Sir John Anderson drafted and dispatched on 27th February 1943, tracing the development of the whole Tube Alloys programme and emphasising the full co-operation which had characterised every stage. Mr. Churchill appended a personal telegram. He was not, he insisted, alleging any formal breach of agreement; but 'when the President and I talked on the matter at Hyde Park in June 1942, my real understanding was that everything was on the basis of fully sharing the results as equal partners'. The British case, if one had to be made out, would rest on grounds of 'fair play'.

To these messages also Mr. Hopkins did not reply, and since in spite of repeated reminders he remained silent throughout March and April the British began to look again at the possibility of developing their own weapon. On 15th April the Prime Minister asked Sir John Anderson to examine the implications of erecting a gaseous diffusion plant and a heavy water plant in the United Kingdom, with all the demands it would make on manpower and production. These figures were to hand, and they were discouraging. The necessary research might be completed and a plant built in the United Kingdom to produce 1 kilogram of U 235 a day within five years, at a cost of £52-53 million. A plutonium-producing pile might be erected in Canada in the same period for £5 million, exclusive of the cost of producing heavy water (£5-10 million). But the monetary cost was less significant than the scale of the demands which would be made on Britain's overstretched resources of men, material and power.

'The Minister of Labour would be horrified [wrote Margaret Gowing] if he were presented with a new project demanding a peak labour force of about 20,000 men, a quarter of it skilled and probably in difficult labour areas. The Ministry of Supply would be equally shocked to receive a request for half a million tons of steel, and the Ministry of Fuel and Power to know that there was going to be an extra consumption of half a million kilowatts of electricity'.

The programme did not appear completely impracticable; but to divert resources on this scale to a project which was most unlikely to mature before the end of the war—certainly the war in Europe—would indeed be, as Mr. Churchill described it in a message to Mr. Hopkins, 'a sombre decision'.

But in May Mr. Churchill again visited Washington, for the 'Trident' Conference, and this time he was able to raise the matter with the President himself. He received affable reassurances.

'The President agreed [Mr. Churchill wired back to London] that the exchange of information on Tube Alloys should be resumed, and that the enterprise should be considered a joint one, to which both countries would contribute their best endeavours. I understand that his ruling would be based upon the fact that this weapon may well be developed in time for the present war and that it thus falls within the general agreement covering the interchange of research and invention secrets'.

This appeared very satisfactory. But as is so often the case in international affairs, generous assurances of good will and co-operation at the summit concealed the very considerable difficulties which remained for responsible officials a little lower down. Another discussion took place at the 'Trident' Conference, one rather less affable but no less significant than that between the Prime Minister and the President. Lord Cherwell was invited by Mr. Hopkins to meet Dr. Bush at the White House on 25th May. At this meeting Lord Cherwell apparently stated quite bluntly that Britain wanted access to nuclear information, not because she could make any use of it during the current war, but to safeguard her independence and interests in the post-war world. He denied any competitive interest in industrial production; but British interests, he insisted, demanded that she should be able to manufacture the weapon herself after the war, and if necessary she might have to divert resources from her current war effort in order to do so.\*

Lord Cherwell's frankness, coming as it did on top of the suspicions aroused by Mr. Akers, did not make a favourable impression on the Americans, and when his views were reported to Mr. Roosevelt they seem to have taken the President completely by surprise. This was not the language which had been used to him by Mr. Churchill. So once more the Presidential promises were not followed by performance. Once more British requests for action remained unanswered. And now the British position had deteriorated sharply. The United States Government had reached an agreement with the Canadian Government which placed at their disposal the entire output of the Canadian uranium mines and the Canadian heavy water plant, on which the British would have been heavily dependent for an independent project of their own. Without American goodwill it was now doubtful whether any British enterprise could be undertaken at all.

But American goodwill was forthcoming. In July the position was suddenly transformed: on reflection Mr. Roosevelt decided that his original commitment to Mr. Churchill must stand. Mr. Hopkins himself advised him to keep his word. 'I think', he wrote, 'you made a firm commitment to Churchill when he was here and there is nothing to do but go through with it'. So on 20th July the President sent explicit instructions to Dr. Bush directing him to 'renew, in an inclusive manner, the full exchange of information with the British government regarding tube alloys'. And he informed the Prime Minister: 'I have now arranged satisfactorily for tube alloys. Unless you have the proper person in this country now, it might be well if your top man in this enterprise comes over to get full understanding from our people'.<sup>(10)</sup>

A year had passed almost to the day since a similar Presidential decision had compelled the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff to abandon the strategic concept on which they had set their heart and to accept instead the British proposals which they distrusted and disliked. The parallel was the closer in that, like General Marshall and Admiral King in July 1942, Dr. Bush and Secretary Stimson were already in London discussing the whole question with the British authorities. But there, fortunately, the parallel breaks down. In the course of conversations with the Prime Minister, Lord Cherwell and Sir John Anderson, Mr. Stimson and Dr. Bush had already gone a long way towards settling their differences before the Presidential instructions reached them across the Atlantic. The British denied emphatically that they had any commercial interest in the post-war industrial exploitation of nuclear energy. Dr. Bush, rather surprisingly, disclaimed all knowledge of the Conant Memorandum. And Sir John Anderson and Mr.

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\* Reports of this conversation rest on purely American sources, but the views attributed to Lord Cherwell are not at variance with the advice he had given the British Government since the initiation of the Tube Alloys project.<sup>(9)</sup>



Churchill drafted an agreement which Mr. Stimson was to put before the President.

The British draft\* apparently set American doubts at rest, for it was accepted without further amendment. The two parties agreed never to use the weapon against each other; not to use it against third parties without each others' consent; and not to communicate any information to third parties without each others' consent. The fourth clause was Britain's self denying ordinance. It ran as follows:

'Fourthly . . . in view of the heavy burden of production falling upon the United States as a result of a wise division of war effort, the British Government recognise that any post-war advantages of an industrial or commercial character shall be dealt with as between the United States and Great Britain on terms to be specified by the President of the United States to the Prime Minister of Great Britain. The Prime Minister expressly disclaims any interest in these industrial and commercial aspects beyond what may be considered by the President of the United States to be fair and just and in harmony with the economic welfare of the world'.

Finally it was agreed to set up in Washington a Combined Policy Committee to supervise the entire project, including the allocation of scarce resources where necessary and the interpretation of the Agreement. Between members of the Committee and their 'immediate technical advisers' there was to be complete interchange of information. In scientific research and development there was to be full exchange between scientists working in the same field; while in matters of design, construction and operation of plant, interchange was to be regulated by pragmatic *ad hoc* arrangements subject to the Policy Committee.

This was the 'Quebec Agreement' which the President and the Prime Minister signed at the 'Quadrant' Conference on 19th August. At the same time the President nominated the American members of the Combined Policy Committee: Mr. Stimson, Dr. Bush and Dr. Conant. The British appointed, not scientists, but the men most likely to carry weight in wartime Washington: Field Marshal Sir John Dill and the Minister Resident, Colonel J. J. Llewellyn; while Canada appointed as her representative her Minister for Munitions and Supply, Mr. C. J. Howe.

The Combined Policy Committee held its first meeting on 8th September. Within a few months the Quebec Agreement had been implemented and the British scientists had been integrated into the American teams. This achievement was in large measure due to the leader of the British team, Sir James Chadwick, whose honesty and tact, combined with firmness, ensured him the friendship of General Groves. After a year of suspicion and misunderstanding, the record of Allied co-operation in this secret and terrifying enterprise was to prove perhaps the most remarkable in any field of effort in the entire war.

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\* See Appendix IX.

## SOURCES

- (1) Margaret Gowing: *Britain and Atomic Energy, 1939-1945* [Macmillan, London, 1964].
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- (3) W. S. Churchill: *The Second World War*, Vol. IV, pp. 341-2. No contemporary record of this discussion can be traced.
- (4) Hewlett & Anderson, p. 264.
- (5) Hewlett & Anderson, pp. 79-83.
- (6) Hewlett & Anderson, pp. 264-5.
- (7) Hewlett & Anderson, p. 271.  
Leslie R. Groves: *Now It Can Be Told* [Deutsch, London, 1963] p. 129.
- (8) Hewlett & Anderson, pp. 266-8.
- (9) Hewlett & Anderson, p. 272.
- (10) Hewlett & Anderson, pp. 274-5.



# Appendices

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## APPENDIX I

### Washington War Conference American and British Strategy

*Memorandum by the United States and British  
Chiefs of Staff (WWI)*

#### I. GRAND STRATEGY

1. At the A-B\* Staff conversations in February 1941 it was agreed that Germany was the predominant member of the Axis Powers, and, consequently, the Atlantic and European area was considered to be the decisive theatre.
2. Much has happened since February last, but, notwithstanding the entry of Japan into the War, our view remains that Germany is still the prime enemy and her defeat is the key to victory. Once Germany is defeated, the collapse of Italy and the defeat of Japan must follow.
3. In our considered opinion, therefore, it should be a cardinal principle of A-B strategy that only the minimum of force necessary for the safeguarding of vital interests in other theatres should be diverted from operations against Germany.

#### II. ESSENTIAL FEATURES OF OUR STRATEGY

4. The essential features of the above grand strategy are as follows. Each will be examined in greater detail later in this paper:
  - (a) The realisation of the victory programme of armaments, which first and foremost requires the security of the main areas of war industry.
  - (b) The maintenance of essential communications.
  - (c) Closing and tightening the ring round Germany.
  - (d) Wearing down and undermining German resistance by air bombardment, blockade, subversive activities and propaganda.
  - (e) The continuous development of offensive action against Germany.
  - (f) Maintaining only such positions in the Eastern theatre as will safeguard vital interests (see paragraph 18) and deny to Japan access to raw materials vital to her continuous war effort while we are concentrating on the defeat of Germany.

#### III. STEPS TO BE TAKEN IN 1942 TO PUT INTO EFFECT THE ABOVE GENERAL POLICY

5. In so far as these are likely to be attacked, the main areas of war industry are situated in:
  - (a) The United Kingdom.

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\* For brevity the abbreviation A-B is used to denote American-British.

(b) Continental United States, particularly the West Coast.

(c) Russia.

6. *The United Kingdom*—To safeguard the United Kingdom it will be necessary to maintain at all times the minimum forces required to defeat invasion.

7. *The United States*—The main centres of production on or near the West Coast of the United States must be protected from Japanese sea-borne attack. This will be facilitated by holding Hawaii and Alaska. We consider that a Japanese invasion of the United States on a large scale is highly improbable, whether Hawaii or Alaska are held or not.

8. The probable scale of attack and the general nature of the forces required for the defence of the United States are matters for the United States Chiefs of Staff to assess.

9. *Russia*—It will be essential to afford the Russians assistance to enable them to maintain their hold on Leningrad, Moscow and the oilfields of the Caucasus, and to continue their war effort.

#### *Maintenance of Communications*

10. The main sea-routes which must be secured are:

- (a) From United States to the United Kingdom.
- (b) From United States and the United Kingdom to North Russia.
- (c) The various routes from the United Kingdom and United States to Freetown, South America and the Cape.
- (d) The routes in the Indian Ocean to the Red Sea and the Persian Gulf, to India and Burma, to the East Indies and to Australasia.
- (e) The route through the Panama Canal, and United States coastal traffic.
- (f) The Pacific routes from the United States and the Panama Canal to Alaska, Hawaii, Australia and the Far East.

In addition to the above routes, we shall do everything possible to open up and secure the Mediterranean route.

11. The main air-routes which must be secured are:

- (a) From the United States to South America, Ascension, Freetown, Takoradi and Cairo.
- (b) From the United Kingdom to Gibraltar, Malta and Cairo.
- (c) From Cairo to Karachi, Calcutta, China, Malaya, Philippines, Australasia.
- (d) From the United States to Australia via Hawaii, Christmas Island, Canton, Palmyra, Samoa, Fiji, New Caledonia.
- (e) The routes from Australia to the Philippines and Malaya via the Netherlands East Indies.
- (f) From the United States to the United Kingdom via Newfoundland, Canada, Greenland and Iceland.
- (g) From the United States to the United Kingdom via the Azores.
- (h) From the United States to Vladivostok via Alaska.

12. The security of these routes involves:

- (a) Well-balanced A-B naval and air dispositions.
- (b) Holding and capturing essential sea and air bases.

*Closing and Tightening the Ring Around Germany*

13. This ring may be defined as a line running roughly as follows: Archangel—Black Sea—Anatolia—the Northern Seaboard of the Mediterranean—the Western Seaboard of Europe.

The main object will be to strengthen this ring, and close the gaps in it, by sustaining the Russian front, by arming and supporting Turkey, by increasing our strength in the Middle East, and by gaining possession of the whole North African coast.

14. If this ring can be closed, the blockade of Germany and Italy will be complete, and German eruptions, e.g. towards the Persian Gulf, or the Atlantic seaboard of Africa, will be prevented. Furthermore, the seizing of the North African coast may open the Mediterranean to convoys, thus enormously shortening the route to the Middle East and saving considerable tonnage now employed in the long haul round the Cape.

*The Undermining and Wearing Down of German Resistance*

15. In 1942 the main methods of wearing down Germany's resistance will be:

- (a) Ever-increasing air bombardment by British and American Forces.
- (b) Assistance to Russia's offensive by all available means.
- (c) The blockade.
- (d) The maintenance of the spirit of revolt in the occupied countries, and the organisation of subversive movements.

*Development of Land Offensives on the Continent*

16. It does not seem likely that in 1942 any large-scale land offensive against Germany except on the Russian front will be possible. We must, however, be ready to take advantage of any opening that may result from the wearing down process referred to in paragraph 15 to conduct limited land offensives.

17. In 1943 the way may be clear for a return to the Continent, across the Mediterranean, from Turkey into the Balkans, or by landings in Western Europe. Such operations must be the prelude to the final assault on Germany itself, and the scope of the victory programme should be such as to provide means by which they can be carried out.

*The Safeguarding of Vital Interests in the Eastern Theatre*

18. The security of Australia, New Zealand and India must be maintained and the Chinese war effort supported. Secondly, points of vantage from which an offensive against Japan can eventually be developed must be secured. Our immediate object must therefore be to hold:

- (a) Hawaii and Alaska.
- (b) Singapore, the East Indies Barrier and the Philippines.
- (c) Rangoon and the route to China.
- (d) The Maritime Provinces of Siberia.

The minimum forces required to hold the above will have to be a matter of mutual discussion.

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[December 1941]



## APPENDIX II

### Directive to Commander-in-Chief, North Africa

C.O.S.(42) 90th Mtg(O) Annex I. 14th August 1942

The President and Prime Minister have agreed that combined military operations be directed against Africa as early as practicable with a view to gaining, in conjunction with Allied Forces in the Middle East, complete control of North Africa from the Atlantic to the Red Sea.

(a) *Command*

- (i) You are appointed Commander-in-Chief, Allied Expeditionary Force to undertake the above-mentioned operation.
- (ii) You are responsible to the Combined Chiefs of Staff and you will receive from that body all directives for the operation. Whenever feasible and appropriate, matters pertaining to and affecting the operation with which you are charged will be referred to you for advance consideration and recommendations, prior to formal promulgation.
- (iii) In the interests of speedy preparation of plans, you are authorised to communicate direct with the U.S. Chiefs of Staff or the British Chiefs of Staff.

(b) *Concept of Operations*

The operations should be conducted with a view to accomplishing as rapidly as possible the following initial, intermediate and ultimate objectives:

(1) Establishment of firm and mutually supported lodgements in the Oran–Algiers–Tunis area on the North coast, and in the Casablanca area on the North West coast, in order that appropriate bases for continued and intensified air, ground and sea operations will be readily available.

(2) Vigorous and rapid exploitation from lodgements obtained in order to acquire complete control of the entire area, including French Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia, (it will be necessary to be prepared to take similar action against Spanish Morocco in the event of hostile action by the Spaniards) to facilitate effective air and ground operations against the enemy, and to create favourable conditions for extensive offensive operations to the East through Libya against the rear of Axis forces in the Western Desert.

(3) Complete annihilation of Axis Forces now opposing the British forces in the Western Desert and intensification of air and sea operations against Axis installations in the Mediterranean

area in order to insure communications through the Mediterranean and to facilitate operations against the Axis on the European continent.

(c) *Preparation of Outline Plan and Estimate of Resources*

In consonance with the above you are to submit to the Combined Chiefs of Staff as early as possible your outline plan together with an estimate of the resources required to implement it. Subsequent to approval of your basic outline plan a more detailed Directive will be issued.

(d) *Date of Operation*

You will determine the date on which the initial assaults at selected points will be launched.

## APPENDIX III (A)

### War Cabinet

*Chiefs of Staff Committee*

C.O.S.(42)466(O). FINAL. 31st December 1942

### American-British Strategy in 1943

#### REPORT

1. Our combined resources have increased to the point where we have been able to wrest the initiative from Germany and Italy, and to pin down the Japanese in the South West Pacific. The days of plugging holes are over. We must now agree on a plan that will lead to victory quickly and decisively.

2. The main factors bearing on the conduct of the war are:

- (a) The fighting power of Germany is on the wane and her oil situation is at the moment critical; what she needs, above all, is a period for recuperation.
- (b) All that stands between Germany and the opportunity for recuperation, with an abundant oil supply, is Russia. The Russian war effort is also the greatest single drain on the power and hope of Germany and must be sustained and assisted at all costs.
- (c) The Japanese war effort is incapable of much expansion provided communications with Germany are kept severed.
- (d) The offensive power of the United States is growing; the main problem is to decide how her armed forces can best be deployed against the enemy.
- (e) The war potential of the British Empire is not capable of much more overall expansion. The bulk of the British armed forces are already directed against Germany; as long as Germany is in the field, a considerable proportion of these forces must continue to be located in the United Kingdom and Home Waters.
- (f) Shipping is vital—not only to maintain the British war effort—but to deploy the forces of the United Nations against the enemy.
- (g) Submarine warfare is now the only means whereby Germany could cripple our offensive action.

3. The resources of the United Nations are insufficient to defeat Germany and Japan simultaneously. We must therefore either concentrate on defeating Germany while holding Japan or *vice versa*.

The arguments may be summarised as follows:

- (a) If Germany were allowed breathing-space to recuperate she might well become unbeatable. Provided we maintain limited pressure on Japan, she can never become unbeatable.

- (b) By concentrating on Germany we uphold Russia. By concentrating on Japan we should cause little, if any, relief to the Russians. Moreover, for a given amount of shipping more United States forces can be deployed against Germany than against Japan.
- (c) In order to defeat Japan we should need to concentrate against her so large a naval force that the security of the United Kingdom and of Atlantic sea communications would be seriously jeopardised.
- (d) If we do not bring sufficient pressure to bear on Japan there is a risk of China dropping out of the fight. We must therefore continue to give China such support as will ensure that she will not give up the struggle.
- (e) Important though China is as an ally against Japan, Russia is far more important as an ally against Germany. Moreover, after the defeat of Germany, Russia might be a decisive factor in the war against Japan, whereas China could never help us in the war against Germany.

4. *It is clear from the above that we should persist in the strategic policy adopted at the first Washington Conference, namely, that we should bend all our efforts to the early and decisive defeat of Germany, diverting only the minimum force necessary to hold Japan.*

#### HOLDING JAPAN

5. The operations in the south-west Pacific during the last few months have forced the Japanese to make this area their principal theatre of operations. These have directly relieved the threat to India and the Indian Ocean and indirectly assisted Russia by staving off a Japanese attack on the Maritime Provinces.

6. The best way of holding Japan is to continue limited offensive operations on a scale sufficient to contain the bulk of the Japanese forces in the Pacific. It is necessary to define the broad action required to implement this strategy.

The only way of bringing material help to China is to open the Burma Road. The reconquest of Burma should therefore be undertaken as soon as resources permit.

#### DEFEAT OF GERMANY

7. The occupation of Germany will ultimately be necessary. For the present, however, north-west Europe may be likened to a powerful fortress which can be assaulted only after adequate preparations. To make a fruitless assault before the time is ripe would be disastrous for ourselves, of no assistance to Russia, and devastating to the morale of occupied Europe. We cannot yet bring to bear sufficient forces to overcome the German garrison of France and the Low Countries which can rapidly concentrate against us in superior strength and behind powerful coast defences.

8. The alternatives which lie before us are:

- (a) To devote our main effort towards building up in the United Kingdom a force of sufficient size to invade the Continent.
- (b) To devote our main effort towards undermining the foundations of German military power, simultaneously building up in the United Kingdom the maximum American-British forces which our remaining resources allow in order to return to the Continent as soon as German powers of resistance have been sufficiently weakened.

The effect of each of these courses of action is discussed in the following paragraphs:

*Invasion of the Continent*

9. If we go for the maximum 'Bolero' with the intention of assaulting the Continent in 1943, we must be ready to strike by September. Thereafter weather conditions will progressively deteriorate. The strongest Anglo-American force which we could assemble in the United Kingdom by that date for an attack on Northern France would be some 13 British and 9 American divisions with perhaps a further 3 American divisions collecting in the United Kingdom. Six divisions are probably the maximum which could be organised as assault forces.

10. The assembly of the above forces would have the following effects:

*On the Axis*

- (a) We should have to accept only a small increase in the scale of bomber offensive against Germany and Italy from now onwards. This would be due to giving a higher priority to the passage of United States soldiers across the Atlantic and the need for bringing over a larger proportion of army support type of United States aircraft.
- (b) We should have to abandon all amphibious operations in the Mediterranean, thereby giving Germany the opportunity she so desperately needs for rest and recuperation, and Italy a chance to steady her morale.

*On Russia*

- (c) We could run a limited number of convoys to North Russia.
- (d) The Axis might well take advantage of the relaxation of pressure to transfer forces from the Mediterranean to Russia.

*On Turkey*

- (e) There would be sufficient Allied forces left over in the Mediterranean to support Turkey but these could not be used for offensive operations owing to lack of shippings and assault craft. The reduction of our offensive in the Mediterranean would make Turkey all the more reluctant to join in the war on our side.

*On Spain*

- (f) Relaxation of Allied pressure in the Mediterranean would make Spain more inclined to yield to German pressure.

11. Even if we accept the above curtailment of our activities in other theatres, we should probably find that the expedition which we had prepared was inadequate to overcome the scale of German resistance existing when the time came for the assault. The scale of the old 'Round-up' was a total of 48 British and American divisions since then the defences of the French coast and the German garrison in France have been increased to some 40 divisions.

In short, the adoption of this strategy would mean a relaxation of pressure on the Axis for eight or nine months, with incalculable consequences to the Russian front, and at the end of the period no certainty that the assault on France could, in fact, be carried out; or even if it were carried out, that it would draw any land forces from the Russian front.

#### *Attrition of Germany*

12. Apart from operations to clear the enemy out of North Africa our attrition of Germany has hitherto comprised bombing, blockade, raids and subversive action. All these methods strike at the enemy's industrial and economic system, submarine construction, sources of air power and, last but not least, at the morale of the German people—and all can be intensified.

13. The bomber offensive is susceptible of great development and holds out most promising prospects. For this purpose we should aim at an Anglo-American bomber force of 3,000 heavy and medium Bombers in the United Kingdom by the end of 1943. (See Annex I).

14. Our success in North Africa opens up wide possibilities of offensive operations against the southern flank of the Axis. In particular, we may be able to detach Italy from the Axis and induce Turkey to join the Allies. If we force Italy out of the war and the Germans try to maintain their line in Russia at its present length, we estimate that they will be some 54 divisions and 2,200 aircraft short of what they need on all fronts. If the defection of Italy were followed by that of other satellite Powers, these deficiencies would be still larger. (See Annex II).

15. While we follow this policy of bombing and amphibious operations in the Mediterranean, our surplus resources can be devoted to the build-up of Anglo-American forces in the United Kingdom to take advantage of any deterioration in German military power. Any decision to re-enter the Continent would have to allow three months for the collection of landing-craft and other preparations.

We estimate that, under favourable conditions, a force of twelve British and six American divisions could be made available in the United Kingdom by September, with a further three American divisions collecting in the United Kingdom. (See Annex III).

16. The effect of devoting our main effort initially to undermining German military power will be:

#### *On the Axis*

- (a) We can substantially increase the weight of the bomber offensive.
- (b) By amphibious operations in the Mediterranean, aimed at bringing about the collapse of Italy, we can give the maximum

relief to Russia, wear out the German Air Force and ultimately threaten Axis economic resources in the Balkans.

- (c) The build-up of forces in the United Kingdom, though below the maximum rate, would still be sufficient to pin down substantial German forces in north-west Europe, and would permit us to take advantage in the autumn of a pronounced decline in German fighting power.

*On Russia*

- (d) During the period of amphibious operations in the Mediterranean it will not be possible to run convoys to North Russia unless the Americans can provide escort vessels.

*On Turkey*

- (e) We should have forces available in the Mediterranean which we could use to support Turkey. Turkey is more likely to come into the war on our side if we succeed in eliminating Italy—as we hope to do during 1943. With Turkey on our side, we should be well placed for offensive action against the Balkans.

*On Spain*

- (f) Germany will have no forces to spare to invade Spain. Spain is less likely to yield to German pressure if we keep the German forces fully extended by a vigorous offensive in the Mediterranean.

CONCLUSIONS

17. Our proposals for the conduct of the war throughout 1943 are these:

- (a) the defeat of the U-boat menace to remain a first charge on our resources;
- (b) the expansion of the Anglo-American bomber offensive against Germany and Italy;
- (c) the exploitation of our position in the Mediterranean with a view to:
  - (i) knocking Italy out of the war
  - (ii) bringing Turkey into the war; and
  - (iii) giving the Axis no respite for recuperation;
- (d) the maintenance of supplies to Russia;
- (e) limited offensive operations in the Pacific on a scale sufficient only to contain the bulk of Japanese forces in that area;
- (f) operations to re-open the Burma Road to be undertaken as soon as resources permit;
- (g) subject to the claims of the above, the greatest possible concentration of forces in the United Kingdom with a view to re-entry

on to the Continent in August or September 1943, should conditions hold out a good prospect of success, or anyhow a 'Sledgehammer' to wear down the enemy air forces.

(signed) A. F. BROOKE  
DUDLEY POUND  
C. PORTAL

Offices of the War Cabinet, S.W.1.

## ANNEX I

### The Bomber Offensive

18. The aim of the bomber offensive is the progressive destruction and dislocation of the enemy's war industrial and economic system, and the undermining of his morale to a point where his capacity for armed resistance is fatally weakened.

19. In estimating the prospective results of the air offensive, it is important not to be misled by the limited results obtained in the past two and a half years. Bombing methods and technique have been passing through a phase of rapid development; new navigational aids and other ancillary equipment which should bring about a great advance in bombing accuracy are being introduced; the training of air crews has been improved, and better tactical methods, showing great promise, have been devised.

20. As a result, the British bomber force will attain far higher standards of efficiency and accuracy in night bombing in future than have been possible in the past. We have gained a lead in quality over the German defences, and we do not believe that they will be able to develop counter-measures sufficient to offset our advantage.

21. In spite of the progress made during recent months by the United States Bomber Command in the bombing of targets in Occupied Territory, it is still an open question whether regular penetration of the defences of Germany by daylight will be practicable without prohibitive losses.

While every effort should continue to be made to achieve success by day, it is important to arrange that, if the daylight bombing of Germany proves impracticable, it will be possible to convert the United States Bomber Command from a primarily day to a primarily night force with the least possible delay and loss of efficiency.

22. The result attained with a given bombing effort does not vary directly with the scale of that effort, but tends to become progressively more fruitful as the effort increases. Moreover, experience shows that, as the bombing effort mounts above a certain level, the defences become saturated and the aircraft casualty rate is reduced.

23. While the enemy's attention is focused on Russia, the Allies have the initiative in strategic bombing, which is the chief method by which they



can at present inflict direct damage on Germany and Germans. We must, therefore, exploit it to the full.

24. British heavy bombers are in steadily increasing production. In parallel, the build-up of American heavy bombers in the United Kingdom will increase our combined strengths at little cost to shipping space, once the transfer of American ground personnel has been completed.

25. *It is not claimed that the bomber offensive will at once shatter the enemy's morale. It is claimed that it already has an appreciable, and will have an increasing effect, on the enemy's distribution system and industrial potential—an effect which the German High Command and German people will fear more and more.*

26. We recommend that we should aim at operating a force of 3,000 British and American heavy and medium bombers from the United Kingdom by the end of 1943. Without drawing on reserve stocks, this increase in the Allied Bomber Force in the United Kingdom will only involve an increase in petrol import requirements of about 350,000 tons in 1943—a very small proportion of total requirements.

## ANNEX II

### Plan of Action in the Mediterranean

27. Communications prevent our maintaining large forces in Southern Russia. It would be unwise to operate against Southern France except in conjunction with an offensive across the Channel, and difficult to operate in the Balkans unless either Italy goes out of the war or Turkey comes in. To exploit our African successes, therefore, our plan of action will be:

- (a) To bring about the collapse of Italy.
- (b) To bring Turkey into the war.
- (c) To seize any chance offered by (a) or (b) to operate in the Balkans.

#### PART I—ELIMINATION OF ITALY

##### *Amphibious Operations*

28. Once North Africa is cleared, it will be necessary to seize one or other of the island bases—Sicily, Sardinia or Corsica—in order to increase the pressure on Italy. Since we cannot capture Corsica until we have Sardinia, the initial choice will lie between Sicily and Sardinia.

29. Plans for both these operations are already being prepared and should be pressed forward as a matter of urgency. We do not, however, feel able at this stage to express a definite opinion as to which of the two alternatives should be chosen.

##### *The Bombing of Italy*

30. The bomber offensive which is at present being conducted by Bomber Command against Northern Italy is already creating panic and dislocation.

As the situation in North Africa clears, complementary bombing offensives should be developed from the south, mainly against targets in Central and Southern Italy.

The proposed plan is:

- (a) The heavy bombers of Bomber Command based in the United Kingdom will usually operate against targets in Northern Italy when weather permits.
- (b) The heavy and medium bomber squadrons at present in the Middle East will concentrate against targets in Southern Italy from bases in the Benghazi area, using Malta as an advance base.
- (c) The American bomber groups in North Africa which will be available for the attack on targets in Italy may be supplemented by Wellington squadrons of Bomber Command detached periodically to North Africa to the extent which airfield capacity and maintenance facilities allow.

All important Italian towns will then have been brought within the range of effective attack.

#### *Political Warfare Campaign*

31. We should as yet make no promises to the Italian people, but we should warn them of what is in store, concentrate blame for Italian sufferings upon Mussolini and the Fascist régime and continuously remind them that their salvation lies entirely in their own hands.

32. We should exploit to the full the existing internal and international dissensions in Bulgaria, Rumania and Hungary, with a view to inducing these countries to recall their forces from Russia and Occupied Territories.

#### *Raids on the Italian Coast and Coastal Shipping*

33. 'Commando' raids and harassing attacks by sea and air against the Italian coast and shipping would produce military results out of proportion to the effect involved.

Later, from bases in Sardinia, Corsica or Sicily, we should be able to carry out large and sustained raids against Italian ports and cities.

#### *Diversions in the Eastern Mediterranean*

34. When we are in occupation of the whole North African coast, we shall be well placed for developing threats and deception plans in any quarter; for example, simultaneously with operations in the Central Mediterranean, we could build up a large deception plan against Crete and the Dodecanese.

#### *Increased Subversive Activities in the Balkans, Corsica and Italy*

35. We must give increased assistance to the insurgents in Yugoslavia and stimulate sabotage in Greece, since in both countries the garrisons are largely Italian. By sabotage in Italy and subversive activities in Corsica we shall add to the burdens of the Italians.

*The Collapse and After*

36. It is not beyond hope that the cumulative effect of the above measures, if pressed forward with vigour and determination, and especially if accompanied by assaults on the mainland, will result in the collapse of Italy, possibly at an early stage in our operations.

The garrison of the Balkans is mainly Italian. Germany will be unable to undertake the two new commitments of garrisoning both the Balkans and an Italy in a state of collapse, without devastating results on the Russian front. She must choose one or the other.

37. If the Italian collapse results in a request for an Armistice, which will mean that Germany has decided to withdraw from Italy, we should welcome the proposal, provided that:

- (a) Italy lays down her arms everywhere.
- (b) She grants the limited facilities which we shall require in Sardinia, Sicily and the Dodecanese and in certain areas of Italy, for the further prosecution of the offensive against Germany, particularly in the Balkans.

38. We should not assume any obligation for the defence and full occupation of Italy since:

- (a) It would entail a considerable liability for internal security.
- (b) We should encounter insuperable difficulties in conducting operations against the Germans established in a strong, natural defensive position in the Alps, to which their communications would be short, easy and by land—in contrast to ours.

## PART II—TURKEY

39. Our motives in inducing Turkey to join us in the war would be:

- (a) To use Turkey as a base for air attacks on important objectives, such as the Rumanian oilfields and Black Sea communications.
- (b) To close the Dardanelles to the Axis and open them to the United Nations.
- (c) To force an increased dispersal of German forces by using Turkey as a base for potential threats in the Balkans and South Russia.
- (d) To deny Turkish chrome to Germany.

We should not want Turkey to embark on major land operations in the Balkans, with or without Allied help.

40. A prime factor influencing Turkey's entry into the war will be her fear that by staying out she will be penalised at the Peace Conference in favour of the Russians. British and American diplomatic action should be concerted to exploit this anxiety to the full in the hope of accelerating a Turkish decision to join the Allies.

Turkey will not come into the war until she feels reasonably sure of her own security. She will become increasingly reassured as we develop our operations against Italy, as the Germans become more stretched on all fronts and as the Balkans become more restive. From the Turkish point of view a sufficient degree of security may be achieved considerably before the end of the war.

*Staff Talks*

41. In the meantime the opening of semi-official staff talks is a practical step which we can take. Such talks are being initiated by His Majesty's Ambassador and will be kept informal for the present.

Although these will deal initially with Turkish disposition: and British air assistance under existing *defensive* plans, they should be extended as soon as possible to cover *offensive* operations based on Turkey and the use of Turkey as a base for staging threats to the Axis.

The transportation and port facilities which we should require, the provision of coal for the Turkish railways and the provision of wheat for Turkey herself should also be considered.

*Supply of Material and Financial Assistance*

42. We should adhere to our programme of financial assistance and credits and continue to supply Turkey with materials and equipment, though these will not *in themselves* cause Turkey to abandon her neutrality. The extent of this supply must suffice at least to ensure the benevolent neutrality of Turkey so that she limits and obstructs her export of chrome to Germany.

Beyond this, further supply should depend on the progress of the staff talks. Serious shortcomings in Turkish clearance capacity will, in any case, limit the volume of materials and equipment which can be sent into the country.

*Military Co-operation*

43. The details of Allied/Turkish military co-operation must be settled at the Staff Talks; the general form of this co-operation might be British naval control of Eastern Mediterranean and Aegean Sea communications, while the Black Sea might be a Russian responsibility; we might provide air forces for the defence of Istanbul and Ankara; on the army side we should be prepared to make full use of the potentially first-class infantry of which the Turkish Army is mainly composed, and limit the provision of military forces to armoured and specialist troops. We could thus form a balanced army for defence or offensive purposes.

PART III—ACTION IN THE BALKANS  
AFTER THE COLLAPSE OF ITALY

44. In the event of an Italian collapse, our further action in the Mediterranean will be influenced by Germany's concentration and distribution of her forces and by the attitude of Turkey. Action in the Balkans might result in the following benefits:

- (a) We should obtain bases for air attack on Rumanian oilfields and refineries, and for fanning the already glowing embers of revolt in the Balkans.
- (b) We should:
  - (i) be able to interrupt the Danube supply route to Germany;
  - (ii) create a threat to the German southern lines of communication to South Russia;

- (iii) cut Axis sea communications between the Mediterranean and the Black Sea.
- (c) The raw material of the Balkans (particularly oil, chrome and copper) are vitally important to the Axis. The loss of chrome and copper, together with the cutting of Axis sea communications in the Aegean on which the Axis supply of chrome from Turkey largely depends, would deprive Germany of almost all her sources of these indispensable products.

#### *Plan of Action*

45. Our plan of action for developing our effort against the Balkans might be:

- (a) Intensification of subversive activity in the Balkans and supply of arms and equipment for the patriot forces in Greece, Yugoslavia and Albania; and
- (b) when the time is ripe, the despatch of Allied land and air forces to act as a rallying point for offensive action of insurgent forces in this area.

### ANNEX III

#### Cross-Channel Operations

46. We intend to return to the Continent the moment the time is ripe.

47. Subject to the prior claims of the Mediterranean and of the bomber offensive, therefore, our policy should be to assemble the maximum British and American forces in the United Kingdom for the invasion of the Continent in the event of a sudden crack in German military power.

48. As an example, events might turn out as follows:

Continued pressure on the Russian front, the bombing offensive from the United Kingdom and offensives in the Mediterranean might combine seriously to weaken Germany and to bring Italy to surrender during the summer.

It might then be justifiable to forego further offensives in the Mediterranean and concentrate rapidly on a cross-Channel operation. If the decision were taken at the end of May, we calculate that Allied shipping resources might allow us to have in the United Kingdom ready for an invasion of the Continent on the 15th September, some:

12 British and Canadian divisions.

6 American divisions, with a further 3 collecting in the United Kingdom.

There would be enough air forces to support the operation.

Out of these 18 divisions we estimate that we shall be able to launch an assault of about 5 divisions (3 British and 2 American).

49. In addition to providing the maximum possible force for our ultimate return to the Continent when Germany has been effectively weakened, the gradual build-up of forces in the United Kingdom will play an important part meanwhile in containing German forces in France and the Low Countries. The assault forces available should, moreover, allow this containing effect to be intensified by raids.

50. Our re-entry to the Continent during 1943 will be impracticable at less than three months' notice, owing to the necessity of bringing home landing-craft from the Mediterranean. Owing to the difficulty of carrying out cross-Channel operations during the six months October to April this delay may be increased by anything up to nine months.

51. The deterioration of German power, when it does come, is likely to be rapid. If, therefore, in the summer of 1943 German strength is considered likely to fail during the forthcoming winter, it may be advantageous to secure a foothold on the Continent in the late autumn—for example—in the Cherbourg Peninsula, in order that we may be ready to exploit any German weakening during the winter.

52. Our preparations for re-entering the Continent to stay should therefore, include plans for:

- (a) establishing a permanent foothold in autumn 1943, and
- (b) a re-entry of the Continent at any time with the maximum forces available, in the event of a pronounced deterioration in the fighting power of the German armed forces generally; this operation to be at three months' notice.

## APPENDIX III(B)

C.C.S.135 26th December 1942

### Basic Strategic Concept for 1943

#### *Memorandum by the Joint Chiefs of Staff*

1. The Joint Chiefs of Staff have reviewed, in the light of current developments, references (a) to (e), inclusive, covering the evolution of United Nations strategy, for the purpose of determining what adjustments, if any, are necessary or desirable at this time, in the basic strategic concept.

#### *Conclusions and Recommendations*

2. The present basic strategic concept of the United Nations, reduced to its simplest form, has been stated:

‘To conduct the strategic offensive with maximum forces in the Atlantic–Western European theater at the earliest practicable date, and to maintain the strategic defensive in other theaters with appropriate forces.’

In the opinion of the Joint Chiefs of Staff this concept, while basically sound, should be restated with a view to setting forth more exactly the strategic concept as regards the Pacific Theater. The following statement is proposed:

‘Conduct a strategic offensive in the Atlantic–Western European theater directly against Germany, employing the maximum forces consistent with maintaining the accepted strategic concept in other theaters. Continue offensive and defensive operations in the Pacific and in Burma to break the Japanese hold on positions which threaten the security of our communications and positions. Maintain the strategic defensive in other theaters.’

‘It is well understood that the strategic concept contained herein is based on the strategic situation as it exists and can be foreseen at this time, and that it is subject to alteration in keeping with the changing situation.’

3. It is recommended that the following (see paragraph 4) be approved as the strategic objectives of the United Nations in support of the basic strategic concept as stated above. In arriving at its recommendations the Joint Chiefs of Staff have taken note:

- (a) That Germany is our primary enemy;
- (b) That Russia is exerting great pressure on Germany and is absorbing the major part of her war effort;
- (c) That Russia’s continuance as a major factor in the war is of cardinal importance;
- (d) That timely and substantial support of Russia, direct by supplies

and indirectly by offensive operations against Germany, must be a basic factor in our strategic policy;

- (e) That until such a time as major offensive operations can be undertaken against Japan, we must prevent her from consolidating and exploiting her conquests by rendering all practicable support to China and by inflicting irreplaceable losses on Japanese naval, shipping and air resources.
- (f) That a prerequisite of the successful accomplishment of the strategic concept for 1943 is an improvement in the present critical shipping situation by intensified and more effective anti-submarine warfare.

#### 4. *Strategic objectives*

##### (a) *Western Hemisphere and United Kingdom*

Maintain the security, the productive capacity, and the essential communications of the Western Hemisphere and of the British Isles.

##### (b) *Western Europe*

Insure that the primary effort of the United Nations is directed against Germany rather than against her satellite states by:

(1) Conducting from bases in United Kingdom, Northern Africa, and, as practicable, from the Middle East, an integrated air offensive on the largest practicable scale against German production and resources, designed to achieve a progressive deterioration of her war effort.

(2) Building up as rapidly as possible adequate balanced forces in the United Kingdom in preparation for a land offensive against Germany in 1943.

##### (c) *North Africa*

Expel the Axis forces from North Africa, and thereafter:

(1) Consolidate and hold that area with the forces adequate for its security, including the forces necessary to maintain our lines of communication through the Straits of Gibraltar against an Axis or Spanish effort;

(2) Exploit the success of the North African operations by establishing large scale air installations in North Africa and by conducting intensive air operations against Germany and against Italy with a view to destroying Italian resources and morale, and eliminating her from the war;

(3) Transfer any excess forces from North Africa to the U.K. for employment there as part of the build-up for the invasion of Western Europe in 1943.

##### (d) *Russia*

Support Russia to the utmost, by supplying munitions, by rendering all practicable air assistance from the Middle East and by making the principal offensive effort of 1943 directly against Germany in Western Europe.



(e) *Middle East*

(1) Maintain Turkey in a state of neutrality favourable to the United Nations until such a time as she can, aided by supplies and minimum specialised forces, insure the integrity of her territory and make it available for our use.

(2) If Turkey can then be brought into the war, conduct offensive air operations from bases on her northern coast, in aid of Russia and against German controlled resources and transportation facilities in the Balkans.

(f) *Pacific*

Conduct such offensive and defensive operations as are necessary to secure Alaska, Hawaii, New Zealand, Australia, and our lines of communication thereto, and to maintain the initiative in the Solomon-Bismarck-East New Guinea Area with a view to controlling that area as a base for further offensive operations and involving Japan in costly counter-operations.

(g) *Far East*

Conduct offensive operations in Burma with a view to reopening the supply routes to China, thereby encouraging China, and supplying her with munitions to continue her war effort and maintain available to us bases essential for eventual offensive operations against Japan proper.

## APPENDIX III(C)

### Former Naval Person to President Roosevelt Most Secret and Personal

NOTE BY THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE TO THE CHIEFS  
OF STAFF ON PLANS AND OPERATIONS IN THE  
MEDITERRANEAN, MIDDLE EAST AND NEAR EAST

1. In settling what to do in a vast war situation like this, it may sometimes be found better to take a particular major operation to which one is committed and follow that through vigorously to the end, making other things subordinate to it, rather than to assemble all the data from the whole world scene in a baffling array. After the needs of the major operation have been satisfied so far as possible, other aspects of the war will fall into their proper places. Moreover, it is by the continued stressing of the major operation that our will may be imposed upon the enemy and the initiative regained.

2. The paramount task before us is, first, to conquer the African shores of the Mediterranean and set up there the naval and air installations which are necessary to open an effective passage through it for military traffic; and secondly, using the bases on the African shore, to strike at the under-belly of the Axis in effective strength and in the shortest time.

3. There are therefore two phases—consolidation and exploitation. Dealing with consolidation first, we may hope that General Alexander will become master of the whole of Cyrenaica during the present month, and that he will be pressing the enemy in the Agheila position or even at Sirte. We may also assume that in the same period or not long after the American and British forces will become masters of the whole of French North Africa including Tunis, provided they press forward with their present energy and violence.

4. It will be necessary to set up air stations at suitable intervals along all the African shore in our power, but particularly and urgently in the Tunis tip. The largest installations for American bombers ought to be set up here so that long-range bombers sent by the United States to North Africa, together with American bombers already based on the Middle East can operate against Italian targets. The United States form of daylight attack would have its best chance in the better weather of the Mediterranean.

5. The bombing weight of the British night attack should be brought to bear on Italy whenever the weather is more favourable than for bombing Germany. Every endeavour should be made to make Italy feel

the weight of the war. All the industrial centres should be attacked in an intensive fashion every effort being made to render them uninhabitable and to terrorize and paralyze the population. I have asked for a scheme of desirable targets in Italy.

6. It will no doubt be necessary also to act against the Catania and Cagliari airfields so as to keep down the attack on Tunis in the period of consolidation.

7. As soon as we are sure of ourselves, and consolidated, in French North Africa, including especially Tunis, two successive operations present themselves. The first is the advance to Tripoli. It is possible that General Alexander may be able to take this important prize from the East, and I have asked him how he feels about it, and how long he thinks it would require; but we must also be prepared for a rapid advance from the West. Would General Anderson's two British divisions be sufficient, assuming that Tunis itself can be held by American and French Allied troops? I should like the best possible estimate of the time that this will take.

8. The second immediate objective is obviously either Sardinia or Sicily. The possession of either of these Islands and of the airfields in the South would create an Air triangle in which we should fight for and secure air mastery. Moreover, from either of them continuous intensified short-range attacks on Naples, Rome, and the Italian fleet bases would raise the war against Italy to an intense degree. Let an immediate report be prepared in order that a decision can be taken. Whichever it may be, the fight for air control in the Central Mediterranean should be undertaken as a great air battle with extreme priority, the fullest advantage being taken of the Axis shortage of aircraft.

9. The swift success in French North Africa has completely changed the character of the problem which we have been bound to face in that region. We need no longer contemplate a protracted campaign against the French in Algeria, nor immediate trouble with the Spaniards in Morocco. On the contrary, all is well in Algeria, and a French army will be coming into existence, fed by Allied munitions at our discretion. An examination should be made as to how the follow-up 'Torch' convoys can be drastically reduced and revised. Will the four British divisions now in North Africa or under orders to go there be required for 'Torch'? It should be possible sensibly to reduce the 'tail' of these divisions, thus saving escorts for other purposes, including, in the following order:

- (a) Sardinia or Sicily.
- (b) Restoration of the British trans-Atlantic convoys up to standard strength.
- (c) Resumption of the PQ convoys in the latter part of December.

To facilitate these vital needs, and to provide the large naval, particularly anti-submarine, forces which will be required, together with the necessary air forces, to secure a safe passage through the Mediterranean, United States naval help will be urgently needed. Cannot the American naval authorities reduce the strength of their follow-up trans-Atlantic convoys and can the American 'tail' be reduced in the same way as I hope the British 'tail' will be combed?

10. What are General Eisenhower's wishes about the force to attack Sardinia or Sicily? There are two British divisions of the First Army, as well as two others which are standing by. Is there any need to put the first two into North Africa? Can they not be combat-loaded here? Are the losses among our combat-loaders crippling? How serious are they? There are great advantages and saving of time in going straight from the United Kingdom to the landings in Sardinia or Sicily. We must expect a steady reinforcement of both islands by the enemy, and speed will make our task definitely lighter. Note that the preparations to attack Sardinia may take as long as those to attack Sicily, and that Sicily is by far the greater prize.

Decisions on all the above are needed within the next week.

11. The relief and re-supplying of Malta should follow naturally from the operations now in progress or in prospect in the Central Mediterranean, and the immediate needs of the island are being dealt with on an effective scale. It would be well, when circumstances and shipping permit, to exchange the units who have long been in the fortress for some of those who have been in the Desert, and vice versa.

12. I have received a telegram from the President containing the following paragraph:

'It is hoped that you with your Chiefs of Staff in London and I with the Combined Staff here may make a survey of the possibilities including forward movement directed against Sardinia, Sicily, Italy, Greece and other Balkan areas and including the possibility of obtaining Turkish support to an attack through the Black Sea against Germany's flank.'

I endorse the above conception by the President. The first part of the President's wishes are being studied by the Combined Staffs in Washington, and are the subject of the foregoing paragraphs for our discussions.

13. The second part relating to Turkey is also of vital importance, though it is a slower process. A supreme and prolonged effort must be made to bring Turkey into the war in the spring. We must expect that our naval forces and shipping, landing-craft etc. will be fully engaged in the Central Mediterranean, and that only minor amphibious facilities will be available in the Levant. Access can however be had to Turkey by railways through Syria as well as by coastal shipping, and by a gradual build-up of air protection not only Adalia but the Dardenelles itself might become open to supplies for Turkey. Troops can move by rail and road from Syria.

I wish to record my opinion that Turkey may be won if the proper measures are taken. Turkey is an Ally. She will wish to have a seat among the victors at the Peace Conference. She has a great desire to be well-armed. Her army is in good order except for the specialised modern weapons, in which the Bulgarians have been given so great an advantage by the Germans. The Turkish army has been mobilised for nearly three years, and is warlike. Hitherto Turkey had been restrained by fear from fulfilling her obligations and our own ability to help. The situation has now changed. By the destruction of Rommel's army, large forces may presently become available in Egypt and Cyrenaica. By a strengthened

Russian resistance and a possible counter-stroke in the Caucasus, which we should urge upon the Russians with all emphasis, great easement will be secured in Persia and the Tenth Army may be drawn upon. There is also the Ninth Army in Syria. From all these sources it should be possible, on the assumption of the Russians maintaining themselves in the Caucasus north of the mountain line and holding the Caspian, to build up a powerful British land and air force to assist the Turks. A target date for the concentration should be April or May. Let me have proposals.

14. The following is the order of procedure, political and military:

- (a) Turkey should be offered a Russian-American-British guarantee of territorial integrity and *status quo*. The Russians have already agreed with us upon this. The addition of the United States would probably be a decisive reassurance. This should be followed by the despatch to Turkey of a strong Anglo-American Military Mission.
- (b) All through the winter from now on, Turkey must be equipped from Egypt and from the United States with tanks, A/T and AA guns, and active construction of airfields must be undertaken. We have been working upon airfield construction in Turkey for two years. What progress has been made so far? Now that Rommel has been beaten, there is evidently a surplus of material in Egypt. We have over 2,500 tanks at the disposal of the Middle East army. Much enemy material has been captured, both German and Italian. This is also true of A/T and AA guns. Experts must be provided to assist the Turks in learning to use and maintain this material. A ceaseless flow of weapons and equipment must go to Turkey. We have already promised a consignment, but the moment Turkey agrees secretly with the plan above, far greater quantities must be sent. What is the capacity of the railways from Syria to the Bosphorus and the Dardanelles? It would seem a great mistake to attack Rhodes and other islands in enemy hands in the Eastern Mediterranean until we have got Turkey on our side. Any attacks can then be supported by heavy shore-based air power. We have to creep round this coast both by land and sea, building up our air as we go.
- (c) In conjunction with the above, we should urge the Russians to develop their strength on their southern flank, to try to clear the Caucasus, to regain Novorossisk and, above all, to resume at the earliest date their intentions explained to me by Premier Stalin, of striking south-west from the region north of Stalingrad towards Rostov on the Don. An ultimate result of these operations, if successful, would be the opening of the Dardanelles under heavy air protection, to the passage of supplies to Russian Black Sea ports, and to any naval assistance the Russians might require in the Black Sea.
- (d) Lastly, all being well, we should assemble in Syria the British and Imperial forces mentioned in preceding paragraphs.

W.S.C.

17.11.42.

## APPENDIX III(D)

C.C.S.155/1. 19th January 1943

### Conduct of the War in 1943

#### *Memorandum by the Combined Chiefs of Staff*

The Combined Chiefs of Staff have agreed to submit the following recommendations for the conduct of the war in 1943:

1. *Security*

The defeat of the U-boat must remain a first charge on the resources of the United Nations.

2. *Assistance to Russia*

The Soviet forces must be sustained by the greatest volume of supplies that can be transported to Russia without prohibitive cost in shipping.

3. *Operations in the European Theatre*

Operations in the European Theatre will be conducted with the object of defeating Germany in 1943 with the maximum forces that can be brought to bear upon her by the United Nations.

4. The main lines of offensive action will be:

*In the Mediterranean*

- (a) The occupation of Sicily with the object of:
  - (i) Making the Mediterranean line of communications more secure.
  - (ii) Diverting German pressure from the Russian front.
  - (iii) Intensifying the pressure on Italy.
- (b) To create a situation in which Turkey can be enlisted as an active ally.

*In the United Kingdom*

- (c) The heaviest possible bomber offensive against the German war effort.
- (d) Such limited offensive operations as may be practicable with the amphibious forces available.
- (e) The assembly of the strongest possible force (subject to (a) and (b) above and paragraph 6 below) in constant readiness to re-enter the continent as soon as German resistance is weakened to the required extent.

5. In order to ensure that these operations and preparations are not prejudiced by the necessity to divert forces to retrieve an adverse situation elsewhere, adequate forces shall be allocated to the Pacific and Far Eastern Theatres.

*6. Operations in the Pacific and Far East*

- (a) Operations in these theatres shall continue with the forces allocated, with the object of maintaining pressure on Japan, retaining the initiative and attaining a position of readiness for the full-scale offensive against Japan by the United Nations as soon as Germany is defeated.
- (b) These operations must be kept within such limits as will not, in the opinion of the Combined Chiefs of Staff, jeopardise the capacity of the United Nations to take advantage of any favourable opportunity that may present itself for the decisive defeat of Germany in 1943.
- (c) Subject to the above reservation, plans and preparations shall be made for:
  - (i) The recapture of Burma ('Anakim') beginning in 1943.
  - (ii) Operations, after the capture of Rabaul, against the Marshalls and Carolines if time and resources allow without prejudice to 'Anakim'.

ANFA CAMP

## APPENDIX III(E)

C.C.S.166/1/D. 21st January 1943

### The Bomber Offensive from the United Kingdom

DIRECTIVE TO THE APPROPRIATE BRITISH AND  
UNITED STATES AIR FORCE COMMANDERS, TO GOVERN  
THE OPERATION OF THE BRITISH AND UNITED STATES  
BOMBER COMMANDS IN THE UNITED KINGDOM

*(Approved by the Combined Chiefs of Staff at their  
65th Meeting on 21st January 1943.)*

Your primary object will be the progressive destruction and dislocation of the German military, industrial and economic system, and the undermining of the morale of the German people to a point where their capacity for armed resistance is fatally weakened.

2. Within that general concept, your primary objectives, subject to the exigencies of weather and of tactical feasibility, will for the present be in the following order of priority:

- (a) German submarine construction yards.
- (b) The German aircraft industry.
- (c) Transportation.
- (d) Oil plants.
- (e) Other targets in enemy war industry.

The above order of priority may be varied from time to time according to developments in the strategical situation. Moreover, other objectives of great importance either from the political or military point of view must be attacked. Examples of these are:

- (i) Submarine operating bases on the Biscay coast. If these can be put out of action, a great step forward will have been taken in the U-boat war which the C.C.S. have agreed to be a first charge on our resources. Day and night attacks on these bases have been inaugurated and should be continued so that an assessment of their effects can be made as soon as possible. If it is found that successful results can be achieved, these attacks should continue whenever conditions are favourable for as long and as often as is necessary. These objectives have not been included in the order of priority, which covers long-term operations, particularly as the bases are not situated in Germany.
- (ii) Berlin, which should be attacked when conditions are suitable for the attainment of specially valuable results unfavourable to the morale of the enemy or favourable to that of Russia.



3. You may also be required, at the appropriate time, to attack objectives in Northern Italy, in connection with amphibious operations in the Mediterranean theatre.

4. There may be certain other objectives of great but fleeting importance for the attack of which all necessary plans and preparations should be made. Of these, an example would be the important units of the German Fleet in harbour or at sea.

5. You should take every opportunity to attack Germany by day, to destroy objectives that are unsuitable for night attack, to sustain continuous pressure on German morale, to impose heavy losses on the German day fighter force and to contain German fighter strength away from the Russian and Mediterranean theatres of war.

6. When the Allied Armies re-enter the Continent, you will afford them all possible support in the manner most effective.

7. In attacking objectives in occupied territories, you will conform to such instructions as may be issued from time to time for political reasons by His Majesty's Government through the British Chiefs of Staff.

## APPENDIX III(F)

C.C.S.170/2. 23rd January 1943

### Symbol

*Report by the Combined Chiefs of Staff as approved by the  
President and Prime Minister*

In a previous memorandum (C.C.S.155/1)\* the Combined Chiefs of Staff presented their proposals for the Conduct of the War in 1943. These proposals were in broad outline, and we have subsequently examined them and reached certain conclusions on points of detail. We have also studied a number of matters closely related to these proposals. The present memorandum contains a summary of what has been accomplished.

#### 1. *Security of Sea Communications*

A close examination of the minimum escort requirements to maintain the sea communications of the United Nations has been completed (C.C.S.160). In the course of this examination we have laid down certain scales of ocean-going escort vessels as the minimum acceptable. Our broad conclusion is that the minimum acceptable requirements of escort craft will not be met until about August or September 1943. We ought not to count on the destruction of U-boats at a rate in excess of the production rate before the end of the year. If it is desired to provide escorts for offensive operations, the acceptance of increased losses must be balanced against the importance of the operations in question. We have adopted certain resolutions on measures necessary to intensify the anti-U-boat war (C.C.S. 65th Meeting, Item 1).

#### 2. *Assistance to Russia in relation to other Commitments*

We have examined the extent of the shipments to Russia required to fulfil United States and British obligations throughout 1943 with a view to estimating the effect of these shipments on other commitments. Our conclusion is that provided a shipping loss rate of not more than 2.4 per cent. per month can be relied on, it will be possible to meet full commitments by the end of the calendar year 1943, and we have approved a programme of shipments on this basis subject to the proviso that supplies to Russia shall not be continued at prohibitive cost to the United Nations effort.

An essential point is that an agreed loss rate for 1943 shall be established so that all British and American calculations can be made on the same basis. We have accordingly directed the Combined Military Transportation Committee to make an agreed estimate.

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\* See Appendix III(D).

We are agreed that in the preparation of the next Protocol with Russia (should this be necessary) to cover the period after the 1st July, 1943, a clause should be inserted to the effect that the commitments included in the Protocol may be reduced if the shipping losses or the necessities of other operations render their fulfilment prohibitive (C.C.S. 63rd Meeting, Item 1, and C.C.S. 162/1).

### 3. *Operations in the Mediterranean*

#### (a) *Operations for the Capture of Sicily*

We have carefully examined possible operations in the Mediterranean theatre, and we have recorded the following conclusions C.C.S. 6th Meeting, Item 2 and C.C.S. 161/1):

- (i) To attack Sicily in 1943 with the favourable July\* moon as the target date.
- (ii) To instruct General Eisenhower to report not later than the 1st March, firstly, whether any insurmountable difficulty as to resources and training will cause the date of the assault to be delayed beyond the favourable July moon, and, secondly, in that event to confirm that the date will not be later than the favourable August moon.
- (iii) That the following should be the Command set up for the operation:
  - A. General Eisenhower to be in Supreme Command with General Alexander as Deputy Commander-in-Chief, charged with the detailed planning and preparation and with the execution of the actual operation when launched.
  - B. Admiral Cunningham to be Naval Commander and Air Chief Marshal Tedder the Air Commander.
  - C. Recommendations for the officers to be appointed Western and Eastern Task Force Commanders to be submitted in due course by General Eisenhower.
- (iv) That General Eisenhower should be instructed to set up forthwith, after consultation with General Alexander, a special operational and administrative staff, with its own Chief of Staff, for planning and preparing the operation.

The necessary directive to General Eisenhower, conveying the above decisions has been drafted.†

#### (b) *Cover Plans*

We intend to instruct the appropriate agencies in Washington and London and the Commander-in-Chief, Allied Expeditionary Force in North Africa, to draw up a comprehensive cover plan

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\* The Combined Chiefs of Staff have agreed that without prejudicing the July date for the operation, an intense effort will be made during the next three weeks to achieve by contrivance and ingenuity the favourable June moon period as the date for the operation. If at the end of the three weeks their efforts have proved successful, the instructions to General Eisenhower will be modified accordingly.

† Subsequently approved and issued as 171/2.

for the Mediterranean. The possibility of carrying out feints or minor operations in the Eastern Mediterranean will be examined.

(c) *Command in the Mediterranean Theatre*

We have agreed the following Command arrangements in the Mediterranean (C.C.S. 63rd Meeting, Item 4 and C.C.S. 163):

- (i) *Sea*—For operation 'Husky' the Naval Commander Force X will assume the title of Commander-in-Chief, Mediterranean. The present Commander-in-Chief, Mediterranean, will be designated Commander-in-Chief, Levant. The boundary between the two Commands will be determined later. The Commander-in-Chief, Mediterranean, will, however, be responsible for naval matters which affect the Mediterranean as a whole.
- (ii) *Land*—At a moment to be determined after the British Eighth Army has crossed the Tunisian border, General Alexander will become Deputy Commander-in-Chief to General Eisenhower, the Eighth Army at the same time being transferred to General Eisenhower's command. Subject to the concurrence of General Eisenhower, General Alexander's primary task will be to command the Allied forces on the Tunisian front with a small Headquarters of his own provided from the Middle East and after the conclusion of these operations, he will take charge of Operation 'Husky'. The boundary between the North African and Middle East Commands will be the Tunisia-Tripolitania frontier.
- (iii) *Air*—We have agreed that Air Chief Marshal Sir Arthur Tedder shall be appointed Air Commander-in-Chief of the whole Mediterranean theatre with his Headquarters at Algiers. Under him will be the Air Officer Commanding-in-Chief, North West Africa (General Spaatz), and the Air Officer Commanding-in-Chief, Middle East (Air Chief Marshal Sir Sholto Douglas). We have defined the relationship and mutual responsibilities of the Air Commander-in-Chief, Mediterranean, and the Commander-in-Chief, Allied Expeditionary Forces in North West Africa, and we have laid down certain principles for the organisation of the Mediterranean Air Command subject to any minor changes which the Air Commander-in-Chief may find necessary after his appointment.

(d) *The Bomber Offensive from North Africa*

We have laid down the following as the objects of the bomber offensive from North Africa in order of time (C.C.S. 159/1):

- (i) The furtherance of operations for the eviction of all Axis Forces from Africa.
- (ii) When (i) has been achieved, infliction of the heaviest possible losses on the Axis Air and Naval forces in preparation for 'Husky', including bombing required by cover plans.

(iii) The direct furtherance of Operation 'Husky'.

(iv) The destruction of the oil refineries at Ploesti.

So far as is possible without prejudice to the achievement of objects (i), (ii) and (iii) above, bombing objectives will be chosen with a view to weakening the Italian will to continue the war.

#### 4. Operations in and from the United Kingdom

##### (a) *The Operation of Air Forces from the United Kingdom*

We have agreed that the United States Heavy Bombardment Units in the United Kingdom shall operate under the strategical direction of the British Chief of Air Staff. Under this general direction the United States Commanding General will decide upon the technique and method to be employed. (C.C.S. 65th Meeting, Item 2.).

We have agreed upon a directive (C.C.S. 166/1/D) to be issued to the British Commander-in-Chief, Bomber Command, and to the Commanding General, United States Air Forces in the United Kingdom.

##### (b) *'Bolero'* (C.C.S. 172 and C.C.S. 68th Meeting, Item 1.)

A study has been made of the shipping capabilities for 'Bolero' build-up in 1943.

With the date available at the conference and making a number of assumptions (which are set out in full in C.C.S. 172, Appendix III), we calculate that the United States Forces, as shown in the following table, will be available for continental operations in the United Kingdom on the dates shown. The figures given in the last column include the build-up of the air contingent to 172,000. They may be regarded as the minimum, and every effort will be made to increase the number of trained and equipped divisions in the United Kingdom by the 15th August.

|                | <i>Division</i> | <i>Total Numbers<br/>Equipped</i> |
|----------------|-----------------|-----------------------------------|
| By 15th August | 4               | 384,000                           |
| 15th September | 7               | 509,000                           |
| 15th October   | 9               | 634,000                           |
| 15th November  | 12              | 759,000                           |
| 31st December  | 15              | 938,000                           |

This is based on (1) the figures of 50,000 troops per division with supporting troops (2) 45 days' allowance between sailing date and availability date.

As the movement proceeds the overall number of men per division will decrease and by the end of the year it may be down to 40,000, in which case the number of divisions available on the 31st December may be 19 instead of 15. The number of divisions earlier in the year is unlikely to be increased.

- (c) *Amphibious Operations in 1943 from the United Kingdom.* (C.C.S. 167 and 169 and C.C.S. 68th Meeting, Item 2.)

We have examined the problem of amphibious operations from the United Kingdom in 1943. There are three types of operation for which plans and preparations must now be made:

- (i) Raids with the primary object of provoking air battles and causing enemy losses.
- (ii) Operations with the object of seizing and holding a bridge-head and, if the state of German morale and resources permit, of rigorously exploiting successes.
- (iii) A return to the continent to take advantage of German disintegration.

Plans and preparations for (i) above will proceed as at present. An attack on the Channel Islands is an example of the type of operation which we have in mind.

We propose to prepare for an operation against the Cotentin Peninsula with resources which will be available, the target date being set at the 1st August, 1943. This operation comes under type (ii) above.

We have agreed to establish forthwith a Combined Staff under a British Chief of Staff until such time as a Supreme Commander with an American Deputy Commander is appointed. A directive to govern the planning is in course of preparation. We intend to include in this directive provision for a return to the continent under (iii) above with the forces which will be available for the purpose in the United Kingdom month by month.

5. *Pacific and Far East Theatre*

- (a) *Operations in the Pacific Theatre.* (C.C.S. 168 and C.C.S. 67th Meeting, Item 1.)

The following is an outline of the operations which it is intended to carry out in the Pacific in conformity with the provisions of our previous report (C.C.S. 155/1):

- (i) Operations to make the Aleutians as secure as may be.
- (ii) An advance from Midway towards Truk-Guam as practicable and particularly in conjunction with the operations now in hand for the capture of Rabaul.
- (iii) An advance along the line Samoa/Jaluit.
- (iv) An advance on the Malay Barrier (as Timor) on a limited scale to counter enemy capabilities and divert his forces.
- (v) It is not intended to advance from the Rabaul area towards the Truk-Guam line unless and until forces are in hand to enable the advance to be carried through and followed up.

(b) *Support of China*

- (i) *Immediate Operations*

Subsequent to the operations now in progress which are aimed at the capture of Akyab, a limited advance from

Assam will be carried out to gain bridgeheads for further operations; to improve the air transport route to China by enabling aircraft to fly at lower altitudes; and, if Chinese co-operation is available, to gain ground for additional airfields and to extend the air-warning system.

(ii) *Operations in China*

In order to support the Chinese war effort, to provide means for intensifying attacks on Japanese shipping, and to strike at Japan herself when opportunity offers, it is intended to improve air transportation into China by supplying additional transport aircraft, and to build up the United States Air Forces now operating in China to the maximum extent that logistical limitations and other important claims will permit. We hope that more sustained operations with increased Air Forces may begin in the Spring, and we regard this development as of great importance in the general scheme.

(iii) *Reconquest of Burma*

We have approved the 15th November, 1943, as the provisional date for the 'Anakim' assault. It will be necessary to decide in July 1943 whether to undertake or to postpone the operation (C.C.S. 65th Meeting, Item 4).

We have prepared a provisional schedule of the forces required for the operation, and have investigated the possibility of their provision. The land and air forces can be provided. The provision of naval forces, assault shipping, landing-craft and shipping cannot be guaranteed so far in advance, and must depend upon the situation existing in the late summer of 1943 (C.C.S. 164/1).

6. *The Axis Oil Position*

We have had laid before us certain information from British sources on the Axis oil position (C.C.S. 158). It is believed that additional information available in Washington may modify the conclusions which have been drawn by the British. We have accordingly directed the Combined Intelligence Committee to submit as early as possible an agreed assessment of the Axis oil situation based on the latest information available from both British and United States sources. In the meanwhile, we have taken note that the Axis oil situation is so restricted that it is decidedly advantageous that bombing attacks on the sources of Axis oil, namely, the Rumanian oilfields and oil traffic via the Danube, and the synthetic and producer gas plants in Germany, be undertaken as soon as other commitments allow (C.C.S. 62nd Meeting, Item 1).

*7. Naval and Air Command in West Africa*

We have agreed upon the following naval and air arrangements to cover the French West African Coast (C.C.S. 61st Meeting, Item 3):

- (i) That the West African Coast (offshore) from Cape Bojadar (Rio d'Oro) southward shall be an area under command of a British Naval Officer for naval operations, and of a British Air Officer for air operations in co-operation with naval forces.
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## APPENDIX IV

### The Shipping Position

[COS(W)511 of 7th March 1943]

*Note by Prime Minister and Lord Cherwell*

(All *shipping* figures refer to non-tanker vessels, and are in gross tons unless otherwise stated. *Imports* are reckoned in tons of 20 cwt.)

While the United Nations shipping position is improving and likely to continue doing so, the British position is becoming steadily worse.

#### *Imports into the United Kingdom*

In 1937 we imported nearly 5 million tons a month. After the inevitable dislocation at the outbreak of war, our imports in the summer of 1940 recovered to about 4 million tons a month. Military demands were light and sinkings low. With the loss of France and Scandinavia, and the entry of Italy into the war, with the resultant closing of the Mediterranean, our imports dropped to about 2½ million tons a month. This was not only because we had to fetch supplies from more distant sources over more circuitous routes; increased despatches to the Middle East had made a serious inroad into our importing tonnage. The entry of Russia and Japan into the war and the growing threat to Egypt imposed more severe calls on our shipping. Despatches to the Middle East, India and Australasia increased, supplies had to be sent to Russia, and in the summer of 1942 the United Nations tonnage primarily employed on military or quasi-military purposes rose to something like 14 million gross tons. American resources did not make up for increased demands and our imports dropped to 2 million tons a month. In the Autumn came 'Torch', using 2-2½ million gross tons of cargo shipping alone, of which we contributed more than half. This has resulted in our imports dropping in the 4 months, November to February, to a record low level of 1¼ million tons a month.

Thus our imports in the last four months have been only a quarter of the total in a good pre-war year, half what they averaged in 1941 (and for that matter in 1918), and only three-fifths of the monthly average in the first ten months of 1942.

#### *United Kingdom import fleet*

Amongst the many deleterious factors which have caused this appalling drop in imports, the outstanding one is simply that the ships have not been made available for bringing goods to this country. Since the beginning of the war losses of all kinds have reduced our ocean-going fleet of non-tanker tonnage under the British flag from 14½ million gross tons to 12 million tons. (We have now, in addition, 2½ million tons of foreign

shipping on time-charter, but in peacetime foreign shipping also worked for us.) But it is not these losses which have caused the threat to our imports; it is the increasing demands upon our shipping for military purposes. In peace-time the equivalent of perhaps 12 million gross tons of full-time, fully laden shipping were importing to the United Kingdom. Today we have only 3 million gross tons of shipping freely available for bringing supplies from America and other convenient sources. These three million tons bring in about three-quarters of our imports. For the rest we rely on whatever can be brought back by vessels on their return journeys from military errands. Wartime delays (convoys, ports, routing, etc.) fade into insignificance compared with this brute fact that we are trying with the equivalent of about one-third of the normal fleet to feed this country and maintain it in full war production. The impression must be dispelled that the bulk of our ships are importing to this country and that only a small fraction is grudgingly allotted to the Services. Only one-fifth of the British-controlled fleet, or one-eighth of the United Nations fleet, is now wholly reserved for supplying the essential needs of the United Kingdom.

Owing to the large losses of shipping in the early part of 1942 and the fact that American shipbuilding has only exhibited its big rise in the latter part of the year, the United Nations fleet at the end of January 1943 was barely a million tons greater than when Japan entered the war. With all the extra military demands which have emerged since then, it is not surprising that our imports, which have always been regarded as a sort of inverted residual legatee, have suffered severely. But this cannot go on.

#### *Import Requirements*

In peace time about two-fifths of our imports were in the category which would today come under the Ministry of Food, as against three-fifths in the purview of the Ministry of Production.

The Ministry of Food has been cut by about one-half. Fruit, vegetables and feeding stuffs have been virtually eliminated, and sugar imports halved. Much of the strenuous effort of the Ministry of Agriculture has been devoted to replacing the animal feeding stuffs we used to import. Even so, the output of meat, bacon and eggs has dropped to two-thirds. Despite the large increase in the wheat crop, it still provides only one-third to two-fifths of our total wheat consumption. Whether measured in calories or protein, considerably more than half the food of our 47 million people still has to be imported from overseas.

Notwithstanding the need to maintain our imports of metals, we have, on the Ministry of Production side as a whole, restricted our consumption of imports to about two-fifths of the 1937 level. Timber has been reduced to one-fifth, iron-ore to one-third, paper and paper-making materials to one sixth. Imported materials used for purely civilian purposes are now negligible, and, unless we reduce munitions production (already drastically pruned) by a considerable amount, there is no hope of further notable economies on the Ministry of Production programme.

Thus we must have nearly a million tons of food imports a month and over a million tons of raw materials. Together with finished munitions, etc. this brings us up to something like  $2\frac{1}{4}$  million tons a month, corresponding to the 27 million ton minimum import programme.

### *Stocks*

In 1941 our imports averaged just over  $2\frac{1}{2}$  million tons a month; war-time restrictions on consumption had taken effect and we built up stocks from  $1\frac{3}{4}$  million to 4 million tons over and above the minimum safety level laid down by the War Cabinet and described by Dr. Stacy May, the American economic analyst, as the 'bedrock minimum'. When our imports dropped to 2 million tons a month in the first 10 months of 1942 these stocks fell by nearly  $1\frac{1}{4}$  million tons. The recent fall in imports to  $1\frac{1}{4}$  million tons a month has slashed our stocks further by about  $2\frac{1}{4}$  million tons despite every expedient and by April it seems likely that stocks will be nearly 1 million tons below the minimum safety level. With these stocks, industry will not come to a stop, but we shall be living from hand to mouth. Any further drop and the wheels would cease to turn and rations would be jeopardised. When we observe the enormous cost in imports of military operations ('Torch' has been costing us about  $\frac{1}{2}$  a million tons of imports a month), and the inevitable uncertainties of forecasting imports (the actual imports in the three months November, December and January averaged 300,000 tons less than forecasts made only a fortnight before the end of each month), it is plain that we could not undertake new military undertakings with stocks at the present levels. Even if ships are more plentiful later in the year, which is none too certain, it may be hard to find escorts. Only if we can build up our stocks to something like the 1942 level shall we be in a position to seize our opportunities in the summer and autumn. For this we must increase our imports to well over 2 million tons a month.

### *American Assistance*

When the Minister of Production was in Washington, the President agreed that our imports should be maintained at a level of about 27 million tons ( $2\frac{1}{4}$  million tons a month), and said that he had been advised that 300,000 dead-weight tons of extra American shipping a month would suffice for this purpose. The first few months he said would be tight, but he would see that our imports were maintained over the year. Recently we received from the War Shipping Administration their interpretation of the President's promise. It was hedged in by numerous provisos, and even so only offered us additional *cargo space* totalling 900,000 tons in the first five months, i.e. 180,000 tons a month—not *tonnage*, whose cumulative value until it is sunk is of course vastly greater. This proposal was strenuously resisted by the Minister of War Transport, and he has now obtained a greatly improved offer equivalent to something like  $1\frac{3}{4}$  million tons of additional cargo loading space in the five months (which would bring in nearly 300,000 tons a month in the first half of the year); but these promises were still not unconditional nor did we get

tonnage rather than cargo space. Furthermore, this cargo space was only to build up to important figures in the second quarter.

#### *Other Expedients*

In order to escape from our immediate dilemma it has been decided that not more than 40 ships instead of 90 a month can be sent to the Indian Ocean theatres. The advantage of this saving is cumulative. We gain 50 ships in the first month, another 50 in the second, and so on up to the 6-8 months which the normal round voyage takes. It is hoped that in the first six months of the year this measure will increase our imports by an average of something over 300,000 tons a month. Thus with the 1·4 millions a month which, allowing for the summer months, we hope to bring in with our normal importing fleet, the 300,000 tons monthly saved from the Indian Ocean fleet and the 300,000 tons monthly of new help promised from America we may come somewhere near the 2 million mark and keep our heads above water. But it will be a close thing. We cannot afford to forgo a single ton.

#### *Allocation of Shipping*

The anomaly of the position is brought home to us if we compare the amount of tonnage built by the United Nations with the amount lost. Since the middle of 1942 there has always been a credit balance; in the last three months building has exceeded sinkings by over  $\frac{1}{2}$  millions tons a month. American construction is scheduled to rise a good 50 per cent above the January level, so that, unless the rate of sinkings in 1943 rises to twice the 1942 level, the Allied fleet should steadily increase. Despite this, as has been shown, the United Kingdom is compelled to scrape every reserve for importing tonnage. The reason is, of course, that the British and American merchant fleets are not pooled. British and Canadian building amounts to only about 160,000 tons a month, whereas American building is scheduled to rise from about 500,000 tons in January to over 900,000 tons a month in the last three-quarters of the year. Meanwhile, British shipping operates in all the dangerous areas, whereas American shipping is predominantly in the safer regions far from the U-boat bases; and the Americans are reluctant to allow their ships in dangerous waters such as the Mediterranean. In 1942 we lost 3·9 million tons and built 1·9 million tons—a net loss of 2 million tons. In the same period America lost 1·6 million tons and built 4·3 million tons—a net gain of 2·7 million tons. Our tonnage constantly dwindles, the American increases. This tonnage is not treated as freely interchangeable and distributed according to needs. The American services claim a prior call on all American building. United States imports form such a small portion of their total consumption that it is difficult for American Service men to realise the importance, and indeed urgent need, of British imports, and which we rely for something like half our food and vital raw materials.

It is essential to bring home to our friends in the United States that our minimum imports must be considered an absolute first charge on Allied shipping; that they are as vital to the war effort as supplies to the various

theatres. North West Africa has recently been receiving about three-quarters as much cargo shipping each month as the whole of the United Kingdom; one-eighth of the Allied fleet is not a great fraction to reserve for United Kingdom imports, to maintain a great munition output, as well as 44 million civilians and 3 millions in the Services. Our own fleet is diminishing by operating, before and after America came into the war, in the most dangerous waters. We have undertaken arduous and essential operations encouraged by the belief that we could rely on American ship-building to see us through. But we must know where we stand. We cannot live from hand to mouth on promises limited by provisos. This not only prevents planning and makes the use of ships less economical, it may, in the long run, even imperil good relations. Unless we can get a satisfactory long-term settlement, British ships will have to be withdrawn from their present military service even though our agreed operations are crippled or prejudiced.

## APPENDIX V

T.93/S. STRATAGEM C/8.

1st February, 1943

### Morning Thoughts

*Note on Post War Security  
by the Prime Minister*

1. When the United Nations led by the three great powers, Great Britain, the United States and the U.S.S.R. have received the unconditional surrender of Germany and Italy, Great Britain and the United States will turn their full force against Japan in order to punish effectively that greedy and ambitious nation for its treacherous assaults and outrages and to procure likewise from Japan unconditional surrender.

2. In this although no treaty arrangement has been made, it seems probable that Great Britain and the United States will be joined by Russia.

3. The peace conference of the victorious powers will probably assemble in Europe while the final stages of the war against Japan are still in progress. At this conference the defeated aggressor countries will receive the directions of the victors. The object of these directions will be to prevent as effectively as possible the renewal of acts of aggression of the kind which have caused these two terrible wars in Europe in one generation. For this purpose and so far as possible the total disarmament of the guilty nations will be enforced. On the other hand no attempt will be made to destroy their peoples or to prevent them from gaining their living and leading a decent life in spite of all the crimes they have committed.

4. It is recognised that it is not possible to make the vanquished pay for the war as was tried last time and consequently the task of rebuilding ruined and starving Europe will demand from the conquerors a period of exertion scarcely less severe than that of the war. Russia particularly which has suffered such horrible devastation will be aided in every possible way in her work of restoring the economic life of her people. It seems probable that economic reconstruction and rehabilitation will occupy the full energies of all countries for a good many years in view of their previous experiences and lessons they have learnt.

5. Russia has signed a treaty with Great Britain on the basis of the Atlantic Charter binding both nations mutually to aid each other. The duration of this treaty is twenty years. By it and by the Atlantic Charter, the two nations renounce all idea of territorial gains. The Russians no doubt interpret this as giving them the right to claim, subject to their agreement with Poland, their frontiers of June, 1941, before they were attacked by Germany.

6. It is the intention of the Chiefs of the United Nations to create a world organisation for the preservation of peace, based upon the conceptions of freedom and justice and the revival of prosperity. As a part of this organisation an instrument of European Government will be established which will embody the spirit but not be subject to the weakness of the former League of Nations. The units forming this body will not only be the great nations of Europe and Asia Minor as long established, but a number of confederations formed among the smaller states, among which a Scandinavian bloc, Danubian bloc and a Balkan bloc appear obvious. A smaller instrument will be formed in the Far East with different membership and the whole will be held together by the fact that the victorious powers intend to continue fully armed, especially in the air, while imposing complete disarmament upon the guilty. No one can predict with certainty that the victors will never quarrel among themselves, or that the United States may not once again retire from Europe, but after the experiences which all have gone through and their sufferings, and the certainty that the third struggle will destroy all that is left of the culture, wealth and civilisation of mankind and reduce us to the level almost of wild beasts, the most intense effort will be made by the leading powers to prolong their honourable association and by sacrifice and self-restraint win for themselves a glorious name in human annals. Great Britain will certainly do her utmost to organise a coalition resistance to any act of aggression committed by any power, and it is believed that the United States will co-operate with her and even possibly take the lead of the world, on account of her numbers and strength, in the good work of preventing such tendencies to aggression before they break into open war.

7. The highest security for Turkey in the post-war world will be found by her taking her place as a victorious belligerent and ally at the side of Great Britain, the United States and Russia. In this way a start will be made in all friendship and confidence, and the new instrument will grow around the goodwill and comradeship of those who have been in the field together with powerful armies.

8. Turkey may be drawn into the war either by being attacked in the despairing convulsions of the still very powerful Nazi power, or because her interests require her to intervene to help prevent total anarchy in the Balkans, and also because the sentiments of modern Turkey are in harmony with the large generous conceptions embodied in the Atlantic Charter which are going to be fought for and defended by new generations of men.

9. We must therefore consider the case of Turkey becoming a belligerent. The military and technical side is under examination by Marshal Chakmak(*sic*), Generals Brooke, Alexander and Wilson and other high technical authorities. The political aspect is no less important. It would be wrong for Turkey to enter the war unless herself attacked if that only led her to a disaster, and her ally Britain has never asked, and will never ask, her to do so under such conditions. On the other hand, if the general offensive strength of Turkey is raised by the measures now being taken and also by the increasing weakness of Nazi Germany, or their withdrawal to a greater distance or by great divisions taking place in Bulgaria, or by bitter

quarrels between the Rumanians and Hungarians over Transylvania or through the internal resistance to the German and Italian tyranny shown by Yugoslavia and Greece, for any or all of these reasons and causes Turkey should play a part and win her place in the council of the victors.

10. In the first instance it is possible that the military situation might be such that Turkey would feel justified in taking the same extended view of neutrality or non-belligerency as characterised the attitude of the United States towards Britain before the United States was drawn into the war. In this connection, the destruction of the Rumanian oilfields by air attacks by British and American aircraft operating from Turkish airfields, or refuelling there, would have far-reaching consequences and might, in view of the oil scarcity in Germany, appreciably shorten the struggle. In the same way, also, the availability of air-bases, for refuelling points, in Turkey would be of great assistance to Great Britain in her necessary attack on the Dodecanese, and later upon Crete for which in any case, whether we get the help or not, General Wilson has been directed to prepare during the present year. There is also the immensely important question of the opening of the Straits to Allied and their closing to Axis traffic. The case contemplated in this paragraph is one in which Turkey would have departed from strict impartial neutrality and definitely have taken sides with the United Nations without, however, engaging her armies offensively against the Germans and the Bulgars, and those nations would put up with this action on the part of Turkey because they would not wish to excite her more active hostility.

11. However, we cannot survey this field without facing the possibility of Turkey becoming a full belligerent, and of her armies advancing into the Balkans side by side with the Russians on one hand, in the north, and the British to the southward. In the event of Turkey becoming thus directly involved either offensively or through being attacked in consequence of her attitude, she would receive the utmost aid from all her allies, and in addition it would be right for her before incurring additional risks to seek precise guarantees as to her territory and rights after the war. Great Britain would be willing to give these guarantees in a treaty at any time quite independently of any other power. She is also willing to join with Russia in giving such guarantees, and it is believed that Russia would be willing to make a treaty to cover the case of Turkey becoming a full belligerent, either independently or in conjunction with Great Britain. It seems certain to Mr. Churchill that President Roosevelt would gladly associate himself with such treaties and that the whole weight of the United States would be used in the peace settlement to that end. At the same time, one must not ignore the difficulties which the United States constitution interposes against prolonged European commitments. These treaties and assurances would naturally fall within the ambit of the world instrument to protect all countries from wrong-doers which it is our main intention and inflexible resolve to create should God give us the power and lay this high duty upon us.



## APPENDIX VI(A)

C.C.S. 234. (Taken C.C.S. 88th Mtg.)  
17th May, 1943

### Defeat of the Axis Powers in Europe

(ELIMINATION OF ITALY FIRST)

(Previous Reference: C.C.S. 85th Mtg.)

(*Note by the British Joint Planning Staff*)

The attached memorandum by the British Joint Planning Staff, prepared after consultation with the United States Joint Planners, contains a plan for the defeat of Germany, showing the course of operations and their feasibility accepting the elimination of Italy as a necessary preliminary.

H. REDMAN  
J. R. DEANE,  
Combined Secretariat.

#### *British Plan for the Defeat of Axis Powers in Europe*

##### *Object*

The decisive defeat of the Axis Powers in Europe as early as practicable.

##### SECTION I—INVASION OF NORTH WEST EUROPE

1. A necessary prerequisite to a re-entry on the Continent across the Channel is the initial softening of German war potential by the intensified combined bomber offensive, the naval blockade and the Russian offensive on the Eastern front. Since this re-entry will ultimately be necessary, no plan for the defeat of Germany can be drawn up without first examining the essential features of the operation.

2. The essentials for invasion are as follows:

- (a) A high degree of air superiority must be achieved during the assault and build-up.
- (b) Airfields must be captured at an early date.
- (c) The coast defences must be sufficiently reduced by the employment of all available means both before and during the assault.
- (d) The initial assault must be on a sufficiently large scale and our rate of build-up must compete with that of the enemy.

- (e) The beach capacity must be sufficient to allow for the subsequent maintenance of the force landed in the first seven days. Sufficient ports must be captured and available for use early.
  - (f) Weather conditions must be suitable.
3. There are two main factors in this problem. These are:
- (a) The size of force which can be employed in the assault, which in general is limited by the assault shipping and landing-craft available.
  - (b) The relative rate of build-up of our own force, compared to that of the enemy, which can be achieved after the initial assault.

#### *Assault Shipping and Landing-Craft Requirements*

4. Any assault is likely to meet not less than three divisions in the coastal zone reinforced by up to four divisions after 24 hours. The scale of assault cannot, therefore, be less than 10 divisions.

The assault shipping and landing-craft required for an operation involving a force of this nature, run into large figures owing to the necessity for seven of these divisions being afloat simultaneously.

The scale of craft has been worked out in great detail by the British Planners in conjunction with the 'Roundup' Combined Planners. The number of craft required to cross the Channel is higher than in other parts of the world on account of the need for a quicker rate of build-up and of the higher degree of resistance expected.

5. Of the total force of 10 divisions, the British can provide 2 assault and 3 immediate follow-up divisions provided that the Americans allot the following assault shipping and craft:

|                               |     |   |
|-------------------------------|-----|---|
| L.S.T.2                       | 122 | } All required in United Kingdom by the 1st February, 1944. |
| L.S.E.                        | 6   |   |
| L.C.I.(L)                     | 140 |   |
| L.C.T.5 or 6                  | 125 |   |
| L.C.M.3                       | 280 |   |
| Certain maintenance equipment |     |   |

The above figures are based on the assumption that operations after 'Husky' will take place in the Mediterranean, resulting in additional casualties to landing-craft and ships.

6. The American contribution in the assault will amount to two assault divisions and three follow-up divisions. The two assault divisions which must be assault trained before arrival in United Kingdom must be carried in American assault shipping and American-manned craft. The three follow-up divisions will be carried in the first turn-round of the ships and craft employed in the British and American assaults.

7. We understand that it is very doubtful if the total requirements could be found by the 1st February, 1944—to permit an assault date of the 1st April, 1944. This would mean either a reduction in the scale of the assault or a rate of build-up too slow to be acceptable.

#### *Rate of Build-up for Invasion*

8. The most favourable area for build-up is that of the North Seine ports—Dieppe to Rouen—in which we estimate that there would be by

D plus 7 ten divisions ashore. Allowing for the build-up of reserves and for ports being put into working order, we estimate that by D plus 90 twenty divisions would be ashore, and by D plus 125 twenty-five divisions would be ashore. Thereafter, additional ports would have to be used for the maintenance of a force of more than twenty-five divisions.

9. The maximum maintenance capacity of the ports in the Cotentin peninsula is ten divisions by D plus 90. Any build-up in this area can only be accomplished if additional ports outside the peninsula are captured.

#### *Enemy Strength*

10. The estimated German strength in France and the Low Countries in 1944 is thirty-five divisions of which at least four would be available as a mobile reserve. In addition, there are some 100,000 static internal security defence troops. Reinforcing divisions would have to come from Germany or the Eastern front. Up to ten under-strength divisions might conceivably be available in Germany, but would almost certainly not be available if Turkey were already in the war. Advance units of these might arrive four days after the decision to reinforce and might arrive thereafter in France (but not necessarily in the threatened area) at the rate of six divisions a week. The arrival of reinforcements from Russia must depend on the situation on that front. None could, in any case, arrive in less than 14 days, after which any available could come at the rate of two divisions a week. The defection of Italy would, however, have already reduced the German strength in Russia. Assuming, therefore, that the initial assault is faced by four divisions our forces would in the worst case, be faced by eighteen German divisions within the first fortnight, after which mobile reinforcements could only come at the expense of the Russian front.

11. These rates of reinforcement might be considerably reduced by successful Allied air action, but the extent of this reduction would depend on a number of factors and cannot be assessed until the outline plan is firm.

12. Over and above the fixed defences the minimum Axis garrison which might be in France and the Low Countries, short of a complete withdrawal, is estimated at twenty-two divisions of which three would be in mobile reserve.

13. It is clear that unless Russian action or Allied action elsewhere reduced the enemy potential in France from the figures in paragraph 10 to something approaching those given in paragraph 12, we are unlikely to be able to retain a foothold in France until our rate of build-up gives us superiority over the enemy.

14. Another most important factor, though it cannot be defined as one that is limiting, is the achievement of a high degree of air superiority during the assault and build-up. The Combined Intelligence Staffs have agreed:

- (a) If the exploitation of 'Husky' is abandoned, the opposition to cross-Channel operations at the 1st May, 1944, will be 105 squadrons or 950 combat planes in France and the Low Countries. These might be reinforced immediately by some 10 squadrons, say 100 planes. Within a week 50 additional squadrons, 450 planes,

would be concentrated in the area, giving a total, without losses of 165 squadrons or 1,485 planes. Further reinforcements would depend on Germany's will to strip the Russian front.

- (b) If Italy is out of the war the early opposition to cross-Channel operations will also be 105 squadrons of 950 combat planes. *But the enemy's ability to reinforce this force will be negligible unless he is prepared to strip the Russian front.*

#### *Deductions*

15. To ignore the limitations of a cross-Channel operation outlined above would be to invite the danger of entering on a build-up race in which we could probably never obtain the necessary margin of superiority for success. If, however, the German strength in France can be reduced to the required extent—and we feel confident that it can—without too serious an effect on the availability of our forces in the United Kingdom, successful invasion should be possible, with the forces outlined above, in the spring or summer of 1944.

16. The Mediterranean commitment which would result from a collapse of Italy would cause a reduction from some 1,480 to 950 aircraft in the potential ability of Germany to resist our cross-Channel operations. Only some unknown and incalculable weakness on the part of Russia could ease this situation for Germany.

#### *Method of Defeating Germany*

17. After 'Husky' we must intensify, with every means at our disposal, the process of weakening Germany sufficiently to ensure a successful invasion across the Channel in 1944. To the effect of the intensified bomber offensive, the naval blockade and the Russian war, we must therefore add continued pressure by our combined forces further to stretch the enemy without respite, and, if possible, win new bases from which to hit him.

#### *Potentialities of the Mediterranean Theatre*

18. We have in the Mediterranean powerful and seasoned forces, whose attack is now gaining its full impetus, destroying the enemy and forcing him to give ground. This momentum must be sustained till we have reaped the great advantages in weakening Germany which it promises. Not to do so would be to cast away an unrivalled opportunity of inflicting on Germany a mortal injury and, instead, to give her a chance to parry the final blow and delay her defeat for at least another year.

19. This final blow can only be struck across the Channel; it cannot be delivered from the Mediterranean—but the peculiar nature of the cross-Channel operation sets limits to the weight of this blow.

We therefore strongly hold the belief that, to make this blow possible, every opportunity must be taken between now and its delivery to exhaust and weaken Germany.

*Deception*

20. Moreover, apart from weakening the Germans, it is an essential part of this preparation to deceive them as to our intentions. To discontinue operations in the Mediterranean and concentrate our forces in the United Kingdom in a series of moves which could not be concealed would be to invite them to take appropriate measures to meet what would become an obvious threat.

*Immediate Effects of an Italian Collapse*

21. After a successful 'Husky' the greatest aid we could give to Russia, and thereby inflict greatest injury which could be done to Germany, would be to tear Italy from the Axis.

22. Seven Italian divisions in France and Corsica, and 32 in the Balkans and the Aegean would lay down their arms and Germany would have to find at least fifteen divisions to replace them or so weaken her hold on the Balkans that she would be in danger of losing control in this vital area—a prospect which she could not tolerate. The loss of some 1,400 Italian aircraft, and the approach of the war towards the southern boundaries of the Reich would cost the extended *Luftwaffe* at least 450 fighters, half of which would have to be found by improvisation. The enemy's total air commitments would reduce his ability to reinforce the Western Front to negligible proportions unless he were prepared to strip the Russian Front. The Italian fleet, though admittedly no great menace, contains valuable British heavy units which would be immediately released to engage the Japanese.

23. Apart, therefore, from the moral and political effects of the collapse of Italy, this calamity would immediately prove for Germany a military disaster of the first magnitude.

*Subsequent Effects*

24. In the West, the occupation of key points in Sardinia and the restoration of Corsica to France would create a threat to Southern France which the Germans could not ignore. The Germans would either have to occupy and fight for Northern Italy, which they might well be unable to do, or yield air bases which could place 500 bombers within range of a large number of important German targets—notably aircraft factories and oil plants—which cannot be attacked from England, North Africa or Sicily. The 'safe areas' to which the population of Western Germany are being evacuated would come under constant threat of air attack, with serious effect on morale. The German air defences would be split and the effectiveness of the air offensive greatly increased. Moreover, the threat of invasion to Southern France would be increased, together with the potentialities of diversionary action to coincide with our invasion across the Channel.

25. In Russia the German forces on land and in the air would have to be reduced below the strength that was already inadequate during the winters of 1941-42 and 1942-43.

26. In the East the Germans would have great difficulty in controlling the Balkans. Sustained at comparatively little cost to the Allies,

and supported by air action, up to 300,000 guerrillas could harass the enemy's vulnerable communications, denying him important economic resources in Yugoslavia and Greece, facing him with seriously increasing recalcitrance and throttling his garrisons in Greece to such an extent that it is difficult to see how they could be maintained.

27. Added to this, Ploesti itself would, for the first time, be brought within range of effective air attack, from Italy; great—possibly vital—damage could be done, and the German air defence commitments would once more be increased. The Rumanians are, moreover, unlikely to show much firmness under air bombardment, and only a small proportion of the 38,000 operatives are thought to be Germans.

28. In the Aegean, the Dodecanese would be weakened and might well be taken, and the way opened for Turkey to enter the lists. This event would be a further heavy blow. Its political effect would be immense, Ploesti would be threatened, together with the eastern Balkan and Black Sea communications, and Germany would be faced with a land front in Thrace which she could only attack if she were to find 7 or 8 more divisions and allot proportionate air squadrons from her already attenuated air forces. We are committed to support Turkey if she is attacked with 48 squadrons and two armoured divisions. These forces must, therefore, be held ready in the Mediterranean against this possibility.

#### *Deduction*

29. Collectively, all these strategic prizes might even be decisive. This policy, together with the effects of the Eastern Front and the weighty air offensive, is bound to produce powerful results. The results, in our opinion, will create a situation which will make the difference between success or failure of a re-entry into North West Europe in 1944.

### SECTION II—SEQUENCE OF OPERATIONS IN THE MEDITERRANEAN

#### *The Collapse of Italy*

30. The Tunisian disaster has been a severe shock to the Italians. While 'Husky' is being mounted, Southern Italy will be bombed, and virtually blockaded at sea. Success in 'Husky' will be a further blow to Italian morale. Whether Italy will collapse at once will depend to a great extent on the degree of support which she receives from Germany and on events on the Eastern Front.

31. If 'Husky' does not bring about a collapse, Italy can be subjected to a heavy scale of air attack. From August onwards, the bomber force from the United Kingdom could develop a scale of attack on the industrial areas concentrated in the North which would create conditions in which the supply and maintenance of the Italian armed forces would become precarious. Concurrently, an even heavier attack could be directed from North Africa and Sicily against the South. The combined effects of these attacks might well bring about the collapse of Italy.

32. It is, however, so important to knock Italy out quickly that we cannot rely on air attack alone. We, therefore, consider that limited

combined operations should be developed to support the air offensive, maintain the momentum of the onslaught and tip the scales in our favour, as this can be done at reasonable cost and with the resources present on the spot.

33. In the Central Mediterranean, we have the choice of two lines of advance, one north-eastwards into the Toe and Heel of Italy, to threaten, if necessary, the Rome-Naples area, the other north-westwards to Sardinia and Corsica. An Aegean advance by the Dodecanese would not have an immediate or speedy effect on the collapse of Italy. Operations against the Mainland are more continuous than an attack on Sardinia and are more likely to collapse Italy this Autumn. The capture of Sardinia would cost the equivalent of seven divisions. The capture of the Heel of Italy would involve a total of nine divisions. In either case, we should employ the bulk of our resources in present Allied air forces in the Mediterranean. The selection of the course to be pursued must await 'Husky', and will turn on such factors as the general air and land situation at the time, German reinforcement, if any, of the objectives and the morale of the Army and people of Italy.

34. We feel that either of these operations following rapidly upon a successful 'Husky' and in conditions of rising air bombardment would tip the scale in our favour.

#### *Situation after an Italian Collapse*

35. The general war-weariness and dissatisfaction of all sections of the Italian people will dispose them towards dealing with the Allies. Owing to the heavy commitment imposed by an Italian default, Germany will be forced to cut her unessential commitments and dispose her available forces so as to hold the areas which she considers essential to her security. These are, we consider:

- (a) The Maritime Alps between France and Italy, which she will hold with some two or three divisions.
- (b) The area East of the River Adige towards Yugoslav frontier, held by some two or three divisions.

36. The fear of air attack on South Germany from aerodromes in the Milan and Turin areas might force the enemy to fight a delaying action on the line Ravenna-Pisa. In this case five low-category divisions would be required for internal security in North Italy, twelve divisions for a determined stand on the line Ravenna-Pisa or four divisions for a token stand to delay our progress Northward. The provision of these forces would leave the Balkans disastrously weak.

#### *Operations after an Italian Collapse*

37. After an Italian collapse we must take full advantage of the situation, to give the maximum further aid to Russia and to facilitate cross-Channel operations in 1944.

38. During the period of confusion we should secure a bridgehead at Durazzo. This would cost 4 assault brigades and two infantry divisions with one mixed division in reserve in Italy, and might be accomplished

with little opposition. We should thus put in a total force of three divisions. This force would activate the guerrillas, and we could support it with up to 500 bombers and 300 transport aircraft from the mainland.

39. On an Italian collapse we should forestall the Germans in the Dodecanese and bring pressure on Turkey to enter the war, and so make available to us the benefits we have already noted, and in particular the use of air bases from which to bomb Ploesti.

40. Should the Germans decide to remain on the Ravenna–Pisa line, three divisions would be required in the Rome–Naples area to stop German infiltration to the Southward. An enemy withdrawal from the Milan–Turin area would leave the airfields open to occupation by us, if we wished to do so. A force of six divisions would be required to secure the airfields against an estimated scale of German attack of 4–6 divisions, but only minor forces would then be required in the Rome–Naples area.

#### *Garrison Commitments*

41. We should occupy the Cagliari and Alghero areas in Sardinia and Corsica and occupy, or remain in occupation of, the Trapani, Messina and possibly the Catania area of Sicily. This commitment would amount to about 15 battalions and 3 brigades.

#### *Summary of Commitments*

42. Our proposals for meeting these commitments and our commitments in North Africa are detailed in Appendix 'A'.\* After they have been met, we estimate that we shall have available in reserve, or for further operations such as an attack on the South of France:

5 American Divisions.  
4–7 British Divisions.  
1 French Division.

In any event our total commitment on the Italian mainland in the event of collapse will not exceed 9 divisions.

43. The economic commitment which may have to be shouldered is described in C.C.S. 227. This problem will have to be faced in the event of an Italian collapse, whether or not we carry out any further operations in the Mediterranean after 'Husky'.

### SECTION III—EFFECT OF MEDITERRANEAN STRATEGY ON THE BUILD-UP OF BRITISH AND AMERICAN FORCES IN THE UNITED KINGDOM

#### *Assault Ships and Craft*

44. Allowing for casualties at the agreed rate any of the above courses of action can be carried out with the assault shipping and landing-craft (British and American combined) allocated to the Mediterranean theatre

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\* Not reproduced.



for 'Husky', together with one or two minor reinforcements of certain specialised British types.

45. Operations in the Mediterranean subsequent to 'Husky' would only reduce the amount of assault shipping and landing-craft for cross-Channel operations in 1944 by the equivalent of 10 per cent. of the total personnel and 6 per cent. of the total number of vehicles to be landed. The reduction in personnel lift is not serious, as the numbers could be ferried from ship to shore.

Thus, in terms of assault shipping and craft, it is evident that the continuance of Mediterranean operations after 'Husky' has comparatively little effect on cross-Channel operations in 1944.

*'Bolero' build-up*

46. After allowing for a 'Sickle' movement of 380,000 men as well as for the necessary R.N., R.A.F. and Canadian troop movements by the 1st April, 1944, the number of United States divisions which will be in the United Kingdom by this date will be:

- (a) Assuming no further Mediterranean operation after 'Husky' 20
- (b) Assuming a continuance of Mediterranean operation after 'Husky' 14½

Of the above divisions, under (a) two will be in process of disembarkation and two will be linking up with their equipment, but under (b), owing to the slower rate of movement to the United Kingdom, only one will be in process of disembarkation and one linking up with its equipment. The total number of United States divisions which will, therefore, be available for operations from the United Kingdom on the 1st April, 1944, under the two above hypotheses will be:

- (a) 16 divisions.
- (b) 12½ divisions.

47. In this connection, the two examinations of the cargo shipping position just completed by the British and United States Committees on Shipping Availability reveal an apparent deficiency against total requirements, other than post 'Husky', of 336 sailings for the rest of the year.

Losses have so far been less than the agreed rate taken as the basis of the calculations. In view of this and the economies that could be effected by the Combined Loading of British imports and United States Army supplies in the North Atlantic this deficiency may be largely eliminated and all calculations in the above paragraph are based on the realisation of this hope. It may even happen that the reduction in the programmed 'Bolero' movement shown above, due to additional requirement of some 90 ships for post 'Husky' operations, may not be fully necessary.

*British Forces available in the United Kingdom*

48. The British forces available in the United Kingdom for cross-Channel operations by the 1st April, 1944, amount to 10-14 divisions, dependent on whether cannibalisation proves necessary or not.

*Return of Land Forces from the Mediterranean*

49. The size of the cross-Channel assault, as we have already shown, is limited by the number of landing-craft that will be available. It would be possible to bring two additional British divisions *ex-North Africa* to the United Kingdom in the first quarter of 1944 without materially affecting the 'Bolero' programme as planned for that quarter.

50. It will be seen that, after the elimination of Italy, there will be some ten divisions (British and American) in the Mediterranean available for other employment. Even if we halted in the Mediterranean after 'Husky' there will be no object in bringing these forces back to the United Kingdom except that they are battle-experienced troops, since the availability of landing-craft and maintenance limitations will preclude their use in 'Roundup'.

*Deduction*

51. Thus, if we continue operations in the Mediterranean after 'Husky', there can be available in the United Kingdom by April 1944 for cross-Channel operations some  $22\frac{1}{2}$ – $26\frac{1}{2}$  divisions, United States and British. These figures could be increased by a further two divisions if it is decided to bring two British divisions back from North Africa (see paragraph 49 above). Even if no post-'Husky' operations are carried out the total number of divisions available in the United Kingdom would only be increased by  $3\frac{1}{2}$ .

*Air Forces*

52. There are sufficient air forces in the Mediterranean to implement the strategy recommended. Allowing for the bombing of Italy and necessary air striking forces, defensive fighter commitments and air forces for Turkey, we could possibly return to the United Kingdom, if offensive amphibious operations in the Mediterranean stopped after 'Husky', up to the following strength of air forces:

| Type                | U.S.  |      | British |      | Total |      |
|---------------------|-------|------|---------|------|-------|------|
|                     | Sqns. | A/C. | Sqns.   | A/C. | Sqns. | A/C. |
| Fighter . . .       | 16    | 400  | 9       | 144  | 25    | 544  |
| Fighter/Recce . . . | 2     | 36   | 2       | 32   | 4     | 68   |
| Light Bomber . . .  | 12    | 156  | 5       | 80   | 17    | 236  |
| P.R.U. . . .        | 1     | 13   | 2       | 24   | 3     | 37   |
| Transport . . .     | 20    | 250  | —       | —    | 20    | 250  |

53. It is at present impossible to say to what extent this would actually increase the air forces available in the United Kingdom in April 1944, since only a proportion of these units could actually be reconstituted in the line. Additional strength would, however, be given to existing formations by additional reserves of aircraft and personnel.

54. If amphibious operations were continued in the Mediterranean after 'Husky', the air forces stated in paragraph 52 would have to remain until offensive operations were concluded. There should then still be time to bring back a proportion before April 1944, but there would be no fighter squadrons to spare, and extra transport aircraft would have to be retained. The retention of fighter squadrons in the Mediterranean

would, in addition to the considerations stated in paragraph 53, probably not have a restricting effect on fighter reserves for cross-Channel operations.

## SECTION IV—CONCLUSIONS

55. To concentrate our efforts after the completion of 'Husky' solely upon 'Roundup' is to forgo the initiative to the enemy for some months to adopt a defensive attitude on land and to allow Germany to concentrate for the defence of France and the Low Countries against our invasion.

56. Our plan for the defeat of Germany is therefore:

(a) To eliminate Italy by:

(1) Air action and one of the following alternatives:

Either:

(2) During or immediately after 'Husky', a landing in the Reggio area and thereafter continuing operations as soon as possible on the mainland by landing first at Cotrone and then in the Heel.

We estimate that the approximate timings of these operations might be mid-August, 1st September and mid-October.

Or:

(3) During or immediately after 'Husky' a landing in the Reggio area, and thereafter continuing operations as soon as possible by a landing in Sardinia, followed by one in Corsica.

We estimate that the approximate timing of these operations might be mid-August, mid-October and mid-November, respectively.

(b) To invade North West Europe with the target date of April 1944.

(signed) C. E. LAMBE  
W. PORTER  
W. ELLIOT

Washington, D.C., 17 May, 1943.

## APPENDIX VI(B)

C.C.S. 235. (Taken C.C.S. 88th Mtg.)  
18th May, 1943.

### Defeat of Axis Powers in Europe

#### (CONCENTRATION OF LARGEST POSSIBLE FORCE IN UNITED KINGDOM)

Previous reference: C.C.S. 85th Meeting

##### *Note by the U.S. Joint Staff Planners*

The attached memorandum by the United States Joint Staff Planners, prepared after consultation with the British Joint Planning Staff, contains a plan for the defeat of Germany showing the course of operations and their feasibility by concentrating the biggest possible invasion force in the United Kingdom as soon as possible.

H. REDMAN  
J. R. DEANE,  
Combined Secretariat

##### *Defeat of Germany from the United Kingdom*

###### *Problem*

1. To present a plan for the defeat of Germany (showing the course of operations and their feasibility) by concentrating on the biggest possible invasion force in the United Kingdom as soon as possible.

###### *Assumptions, 1943-44*

2. (a) Russia remains an effective Ally in the war and is containing the bulk of the German forces. She is at peace with Japan.
- (b) No amphibious operations will be undertaken in the Mediterranean area subsequent to 'Husky'.
- (c) 'Husky' starts on the date at present planned and all organised opposition in the island ceases by the 31st August. Landing-craft can be released by the 15th August for movement to other areas for further operations by the 15th August.
- (d) 'Sickle' continues at full scale as planned.
- (e) Air operations in the Mediterranean area will be limited to the protection of shipping and the bombing of Italy and other remunerative Axis targets.
- (f) Spain remains neutral.
- (g) Turkey is either neutral or an active ally.

*Objective*

3. The decisive defeat of the Axis Powers in Europe as early as practicable.

## GENERAL STRATEGICAL CONSIDERATIONS

*European-Mediterranean Area, 1943-44*

4. To attain this objective we believe that the courses of action outlined below are essential:

- (a) 'Sickle', and the bomber offensive from the United Kingdom.
- (b) 'Bolero', in order to achieve the primary objective, 'Roundup', in the spring of 1944.
- (c) Keep Russia in the war.
- (d) Mediterranean air operations after 'Husky' must not prejudice 'Sickle', the bomber offensive from the United Kingdom, 'Bolero', and 'Roundup'.

5. A sound strategic concept for the defeat of Germany at the earliest possible date can only be developed after careful analysis of existing and anticipated conditions in the entire European-Mediterranean area in 1943-44. Our strategic concept is firmly based on such an assessment, and accepts the following premises:

- (a) Defeat of the Western Axis by means of an invasion from the Mediterranean is unsound strategically and logistically.
- (b) The United Kingdom is an unparalleled base from which to create conditions for a successful landing on the Continent and to launch the decisive invasion of the Fortress of Europe.
- (c) Germany intends to concentrate on the defeat of the Russian armed forces in 1943. Only a major threat from another direction will divert Germany from this purpose, as she is fully conscious that failure on the Russian Front means her ultimate defeat by the United Nations. The minor operations in the Mediterranean which could be conducted after 'Husky', within the limited capabilities of the United Nations, even if they resulted in the defection or collapse of Italy, would be of lesser importance to Germany than the defeat of Russia. The United States and British forces are incapable of interfering seriously, by military action other than air, with Axis operations against Russia in 1943. Germany will either fail or succeed in Russia this summer.
- (d) We believe that Russia will continue to require the major part of the Axis effort in 1944. The heavy pressure on the Axis by the Russian armies, together with the devastating results of an overwhelming and uninterrupted bomber offensive from the United Kingdom, Africa and Sicily, will create a situation favourable for 'Roundup' in April 1944.
- (e) We further believe: that the elimination of Italy is not a prerequisite for the creation of conditions favourable for 'Roundup',

that the elimination of Italy may possibly be brought about without need of further amphibious operations in the Mediterranean, by a successful 'Husky' and an intensified bomber offensive against Italy—in fact, Italian defection might precede 'Husky'; that if, after 'Husky', Italy has not surrendered or collapsed, the advantages to be gained in eliminating Italy by conducting further amphibious operations are not worth the cost in forces, shipping, amphibious equipment, and time; that secondary operations after 'Husky' to eliminate Italy will have a drastic effect in forces, shipping, amphibious equipment, and time on our main effort—'Sickle', the bomber offensive, 'Bolero' and 'Roundup'.

- (f) Experience in 'Torch' and in preparation for 'Husky' has shown that once an operation, even though admittedly secondary, is directed, the desire to insure its success leads to increasing demands for greater and greater forces. Such would undoubtedly be the case with secondary operations in the Mediterranean after 'Husky', especially if directed against Italy. The additional forces can only be provided at the direct expense of 'Sickle', 'Bolero' and 'Roundup'.

AXIS CAPABILITIES IN THE SPRING OF 1944  
(Reference CIC. 24, 16 May, 1943)

*General*

6. Germany will be increasingly war-weary and will be faced with an economy inadequate to a prolonged war, resulting, among other things, in the armed forces beginning to experience shortages in supply. The presence of Russia on the East and the Allied threat on the West will prevent the hoped-for remanning of industry by men released from the armed forces. Her total number of divisions will remain approximately static, but they will be under strength. Our build-up in the United Kingdom will offer for the first time a positive threat of a war on a second front. While this build-up is being effected, the bomber offensive will be carrying the striking power of the United Nations to the Germans and creating conditions favourable for a successful invasion.

*Ground Forces*

7. In the spring of 1944 German ground forces may be estimated at about 280 combat divisions, which could be distributed as follows:

|                                   |                               |
|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Eastern Front (including Finland) | 195                           |
| Norway                            | 11                            |
| Poland                            | 2                             |
| Denmark                           | 2                             |
| South Eastern Europe              | 11                            |
| France and Low Countries          | 32 ( $\frac{1}{3}$ refitting) |
| Germany (Strategic reserve)       | 27 ( $\frac{1}{3}$ refitting) |

8. An attack against the European coast would be met by coastal divisions varying, with the area attacked, from 2-3 to 3-5. The mobile reserves of 2 to 4 divisions could begin to arrive after 24 hours, but the movement of these divisions can reasonably be expected to be delayed by aerial action.

9. The strategic reserve in Germany will total a maximum of 18 under-strength divisions. Units could begin to arrive in 4 days and the total could be in France, but not in the areas of operations, in 3½ weeks. If this movement were not undertaken prior to our attack it would require 5 weeks to complete the move to France. If units could be spared from the Eastern Front, the first division would arrive in 14 days and 2 each week thereafter. Continued air attack on these units while en route will materially reduce their combat effectiveness.

#### *Air Forces*

10. The number of aeroplanes is difficult to determine, but after planes have been allocated to the Russian front, it is estimated that there will be 2,050 planes available for all other areas.

11. It is estimated that on the 1st May, 1944, there will be 950 combat aeroplanes in France and the Low Countries. These might be reinforced immediately by 100 additional planes. Within a week 450 planes probably could be concentrated in the area giving a total of 1,500 planes, assuming no losses. Further reinforcements would depend on Germany's will to strip the Russian Front, but in any event the absolute number of German planes is of relatively minor importance due to the United Nations' preponderance (8 to 1) of air power, in the United Kingdom.

#### *Naval Forces*

12. An invasion would probably be opposed at sea by 70 E-boats, 17 destroyers, 30 torpedo boats and a large but indeterminate number of submarines.

#### *Summary*

13. A cross-Channel assault would be faced, initially, with from 2 to 5 coastal defence divisions, which might be reinforced by 2 to 4 mobile divisions after a minimum of 24 hours. A minimum delay of from 3 to 5 weeks can be expected before the 18 under-strength divisions in Germany could be moved to France. Additional time would be required to move them to the combat zone.

14. Our overwhelming air superiority (8 to 1) could seriously delay, or even prevent, the arrival of reserves, if not eliminate them entirely from early arrival in combat. This applies equally to the mobile reserves in France as well as to the 18 under-strength divisions in Germany. Therefore, 3 to 4 coastal divisions must be defeated initially and a build-up effected to face a reinforcement of 2 to 4 divisions, which may arrive in a depleted and disorganised condition as a result of our air attacks. After 30 to 60 days, Germany might be in a position to face us with a

maximum of 15-20 under strength divisions. At this time their air strength would be negligible unless they chose to strip other areas, including the Russian Front.

#### CONCEPT OF THE OPERATION

##### *Target date*

15. Because the 1st April, 1944, coincides with the completion of the 4th phase of the Allied bomber offensive against Germany, and is the earliest date on which the weather becomes favourable for a cross-Channel operation, it should be accepted for planning purposes as the date on which we must be prepared to re-enter the Continent. The continued examination of the results of the bomber offensive and the integration of its effects with other factors, including events on the Russian Front and in the Mediterranean, will enable the United Nations to decide by November 1943, if a change in the proposed target date should be necessary.

##### *General concept*

16. The Chief of Staff of the Supreme Commander for cross-Channel operations has been directed to study and prepare plans for invasion at any time with whatever forces may be available. This planning is proceeding, but has not yet progressed to a full study of 'Roundup'. Lacking complete examination of this problem, only the broader aspects of a plan can be presented. Detailed examination may therefore result in some modifications to the plan presented herewith.

17. In general, it is proposed that an operation be conducted to secure a lodgement in the North of France. It is estimated that ten divisions will be required for the initial cross-Channel movement, and that sufficient amphibious assault craft will be available to float those required in the initial assault provided those now in the Mediterranean are moved to the United Kingdom on the completion of 'Husky', and that no other major amphibious operations in the Mediterranean are undertaken. Thereafter, a build-up of forces be accomplished at the maximum rate consistent with available port capacities together with an exploitation of the lodgement to secure additional ports and air bases. When sufficient build-up forces and the organisation of logistical establishments have been accomplished, and when the effects of the air offensive has been reflected in decreased German resistance, the advance to the heart of the German citadel can be accomplished.

#### AVAILABILITY OF UNITED NATIONS FORCES

##### *Air Forces*

18. The U.S.A.A.F. programme and the R.A.F. projected order of battle for April 1944 is indicated below. The U.S.A.A.F. must be given first priority of shipping if the bomber offensive programme is to be accomplished.



|                         | U.S.A.A.F.  |                    | R.A.F.      |                    |
|-------------------------|-------------|--------------------|-------------|--------------------|
|                         | Groups      | Aircraft<br>(U.E.) | Squadrons   | Aircraft<br>(U.E.) |
| Heavy Bombers           | 51          | 2,448              | 80          | 1,600              |
| Medium Bombers          | 9           | 576                | 12          | 240                |
| Light and Dive Bombers  | 13          | 832                | 13          | 260                |
| Bomber Recon.           | —           | —                  | 1           | 14                 |
| Day Fighter             | 25          | 2,500              | 62          | 1,116              |
| Night Fighter           | —           | —                  | 19          | 412                |
| Fighter Recon.          | —           | —                  | 15          | 231                |
| Army Support (Fighters) | —           | —                  | 8           | 112                |
| Army Support (Bombers)  | —           | —                  | 4           | 56                 |
| Photo Recon.            | 2           | 168                | 5           | 100                |
| Observation             | 4           | 336                | 10          | 160                |
| Air/Sea Rescue          | —           | —                  | 8½          | 170                |
| Transport               | 8½          | 442                | 7           | 190                |
| <b>Total</b>            | <b>112½</b> | <b>7,302</b>       | <b>244½</b> | <b>4,661</b>       |

#### *Ground Forces*

19. If commitments to other theatres remain at the 1943 level there will be available in the United States, through 1944, more divisions than can be shipped to the United Kingdom. After 'Husky', 6 additional United States divisions in the Mediterranean will be available for use elsewhere.

20. The British will have 10 offensive divisions available in the United Kingdom by October, 1943. This may be increased to 14 divisions by the 1st April, 1944. After 'Husky' 11 additional British divisions in the Mediterranean will be available for use elsewhere.

#### *Build-up in the United Kingdom*

21. The build-up in the United Kingdom for a cross-Channel operation can be obtained by the movement of forces from the United States only, or by moving troops from the United States and transferring surplus United States and British formations from North Africa. The two methods of build-up are indicated below (priority on shipping has been given to the air force units and provides for completion of U.S.A.A.F. build-up by May 1944). These figures are based on British estimates of the numbers that can be processed through United Kingdom ports rather than on a larger number which can actually be moved by available shipping.

#### *Build-up (Divisions) from the United States only*

|               | October 1,<br>1943 | January 1,<br>1944 | April 1,<br>1944 | July 1,<br>1944 | October 1,<br>1944 | January 1,<br>1945 |
|---------------|--------------------|--------------------|------------------|-----------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| United States | 7                  | 13                 | 20               | 25              | 28                 | 31                 |
| British       | 10                 | 10                 | 14*              | 14              | 14                 | 14                 |
| <b>Total</b>  | <b>17</b>          | <b>23</b>          | <b>34</b>        | <b>39</b>       | <b>42</b>          | <b>45</b>          |

\* These 4 additional British divisions are dependent on the present programme of conversion of defensive divisions to an offensive type.

22. It is reasonable to assume that operations have secured continental ports through which troops and cargo may pass, and that the flow through United Kingdom ports has been increased, thus permitting the following build-up:

|                 |                     |                        |                        |
|-----------------|---------------------|------------------------|------------------------|
|                 | <i>July 1, 1944</i> | <i>October 1, 1944</i> | <i>January 1, 1945</i> |
| Total divisions | 43                  | 50                     | 64                     |

23. *Build-up (Divisions) from the United States and North Africa*

|               | <i>October 1,<br/>1943</i> | <i>January 1,<br/>1944</i> | <i>April 1,<br/>1944</i> | <i>July 1,<br/>1944</i> | <i>October 1,<br/>1944</i> | <i>January 1,<br/>1945</i> |
|---------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|
| United States | 6                          | 8                          | 10                       | 18                      | 24                         | 27                         |
| British       | 10                         | 14                         | 24                       | 25                      | 25                         | 25                         |
| Total         | 16                         | 22                         | 34                       | 43                      | 49                         | 52                         |

These figures are based on what the British have indicated can be processed through United Kingdom ports and not on the availability of shipping. The latter would permit a material increase in the build-up indicated were it not for the limitations imposed by the port capacities of the United Kingdom.

24. The second method of build-up from the United States and North Africa is presented because of the *desirability of using battle seasoned units for the initial cross-Channel operations*. Units can be found in the Mediterranean that are not only composed of veterans, but that have also participated in large scale amphibious operations.

*Amphibious assault-craft*

25. Appendix 'B'\* lists the amphibious assault craft which will be available after 'Husky' and also after each of two major amphibious operations subsequent to 'Husky', if such operations are conducted.

*Garrisons in the Mediterranean*

26. Proposed garrisons in the Mediterranean are contained in Appendix 'C'.†

EFFECT OF OPERATIONS SUBSEQUENT TO 'HUSKY'  
ON 'ROUNDUP' AND 'SICKLE'

*Ground forces*

27. If major operations, other than by air are undertaken in the Mediterranean after the successful completion of 'Husky', no ground forces may be released for 'Bolero' until after the collapse of Italy.

28. Such operations may interfere seriously with 'Roundup' if shipping available for 'Bolero' has to be diverted to reinforce and support the forces engaged in the Mediterranean.

29. The time required to gain the objective of the Mediterranean operations—the collapse of Italy—is indefinite. Success cannot be expected before the 1st January, 1944. After the date sufficient time remains to

\* Not reproduced.

† Not reproduced.

move two divisions from the Mediterranean to the United Kingdom before the target date selected for 'Roundup', but there can be no assurance that shipping will be available. 'Roundup', would probably be deprived, therefore, of battle experienced troops.

30. Little would be gained in the build-up following 'Roundup' by moving any other available forces from the Mediterranean to the United Kingdom over the movement of similar numbers from the United States.

#### *Air forces*

31. After providing for an air offensive against Italy, convoy protection and defence, about 900 combat aircraft and 250 transports will be available and could be moved to the United Kingdom following the completion of 'Husky'. However, if further advances are undertaken, all aircraft employed at the time of 'Husky' will remain in the Mediterranean until offensive operations are completed. All of the fighters (550) most of which are first-line, and 250 transports, sufficient to lift two parachute regiments simultaneously, would be retained in the Mediterranean for garrison and supply of additionally occupied areas. Only light bombers and special purpose aeroplanes (about 350) could be released for transfer to the United Kingdom.

#### *Amphibious assault craft*

32. If no operations are conducted subsequent to 'Husky', the number of amphibious assault craft available for 'Roundup' will total 4,657 of all types.

33. After one major amphibious operation subsequent to 'Husky', the total will be reduced to 3,540, or 76 per cent of the maximum.

34. A second major amphibious operation subsequent to 'Husky' will reduce the total to 2,461, or 53 per cent of the total.

35. If the second operation is not undertaken until the middle of November 1943, the amphibious assault craft remaining cannot arrive in the United Kingdom until about the 1st March, 1944.

36. It is probable that the amphibious assault craft available after 'Husky', will not meet fully the maximum vehicle requirements of a large-scale 'Roundup'. It is apparent, therefore, that any lesser number would be entirely inadequate.

#### CONCLUSIONS

37. After 'Husky' the main effort of the United Nations should be concentrated on executing 'Sickle', the bomber offensive, 'Bolero', and 'Roundup'.

38. The planning date for 'Roundup' should be the 1st April, 1944.

39. The launching of a 'Roundup' operation about the 1st April, 1944, is considered entirely feasible, and the movement of United States and British resources to the United Kingdom, therefore, should be executed.

40. Operations in the Mediterranean subsequent to 'Husky' should be limited to the air offensive, because any other operations would use resources vital to 'Roundup' and present the risk of a limitless commitment of United Nations resources to the Mediterranean vacuum, thus needlessly prolonging the war.

## APPENDIX VI(C)

C.C.S. 242/6. (Taken C.C.S. 96th Mtg.)  
25th May, 1943.

### Final Report to the President and Prime Minister

*Memorandum by the Combined Chiefs of Staff*

The enclosure is the final report on the results of the 'Trident' Conference as approved by the President and the Prime Minister of the 25th May, 1943.

#### 'TRIDENT'

#### REPORT TO THE PRESIDENT AND PRIME MINISTER OF THE FINAL AGREED SUMMARY OF CONCLUSIONS REACHED BY THE COMBINED CHIEFS OF STAFF

In a previous memorandum (C.C.S. 242) the Combined Chiefs of Staff presented certain agreed conclusions reached during the present conference regarding operations in the three main theatres. These conclusions have been amended to accord with the views expressed by the President and the Prime Minister. The amended conclusions, and others reached since the previous memorandum was submitted, have now been related to resources available, and a final agreed summary of conclusions is submitted herein.

#### I—OVERALL OBJECTIVE

In conjunction with Russia and other Allies, to bring about at the earliest possible date the unconditional surrender of the Axis powers.

#### II—OVERALL STRATEGIC CONCEPT FOR THE PROSECUTION OF THE WAR

1. In co-operation with Russia and other Allies, to bring about the earliest possible date the unconditional surrender of the Axis in Europe.
2. Simultaneously, in co-operation with other Pacific Powers concerned, to maintain and extend unremitting pressure against Japan with the purpose of continually reducing her military power and attaining positions from which her ultimate surrender can be forced. The effect of any such extension on the overall objective to be given consideration by the Combined Chiefs of Staff before action is taken.
3. Upon the defeat of the Axis in Europe in co-operation with other Pacific Powers, and if possible, with Russia, to direct the full resources of the United States and Great Britain to bring about at the earliest possible date the unconditional surrender of Japan.

III—BASIC UNDERTAKINGS IN SUPPORT OF  
OVERALL STRATEGIC CONCEPT

Whatever operations are decided on in support of the overall strategic concept, the following established undertakings will be a first charge against our resources, subject to review by the Combined Chiefs of Staff in keeping with the changing situation:

1. Maintain the security and war-making capacity of the Western Hemisphere and the British Isles.
2. Support the war-making capacity of our forces in all areas.
3. Maintain vital overseas lines of communication, with particular emphasis on the defeat of the U-boat menace.
4. Intensify the air offensive against the Axis Powers in Europe.
5. Concentrate maximum resources in a selected area as early as practicable for the purpose of conducting a decisive invasion of the Axis citadel.
6. Undertake such measures as may be necessary and practicable to aid the war effort of Russia.
7. Undertake such measures as may be necessary and practicable in order to aid the war effort of China as an effective ally and as a base for operations against Japan.
8. To prepare the ground for the active or passive participation of Turkey in the war on the side of the Allies. (See also Section VI 1.)
9. To prepare the French Forces in Africa to fulfil an active role in the war against the Axis Powers. (See also Section VI 2.)

IV—SPECIFIC OPERATIONS FOR 1943-44 IN  
EXECUTION OF OVERALL STRATEGIC CONCEPT

The following operations in execution of the overall strategic concept are agreed upon. No order of priority is necessary since the result of relating resources to operations shows that all are possible of accomplishment. (See Section V.) If a conflict of interests should arise, it will be referred to the Combined Chiefs of Staff.

## I. THE U-BOAT WAR.

(a) *Operation to Seize the Azores Islands*

The Combined Chiefs of Staff have agreed that the occupation of the Azores is essential to the efficient conduct of the anti-U-boat war for the reasons set out in the Annex. The preparation of the plan for the capture of the Azores Islands is a responsibility of the British Chiefs of Staff, and accordingly, plans are actively in preparation under their authority. The British Chiefs of Staff have made a preliminary examination of these plans. It is proposed that the expedition should be mounted from the United Kingdom and that, in the first place, the islands of Fayal and Terceira should be seized. It is expected that a force of about nine battalions will be required. The availability of landing-craft is likely to be the limiting factor regarding the date of the operation and as far as can be seen at present, the earliest date for

the arrival of the force in the Azores will be about the end of August. It is agreed that the land, air and sea facilities of the Azores will be available to all United Nations forces.

The possibility of an earlier move on the Azores will receive further study. Meanwhile, the political decision involved will be settled by the two Governments.

(b) *Other Anti-U-boat Measures*

All possible measures for strengthening the air forces engaged in the Bay of Biscay Offensive and for increasing the number of VLR aircraft engaged in convoy protection have been examined and such steps as are practicable are being taken.

(c) *Flexibility of Forces*

The necessity for flexibility in the utilisation of both air and sea forces has been agreed, and steps to improve matters in this respect are being constantly studied and implemented.

2. DEFEAT OF THE AXIS POWERS IN EUROPE.

(a) *Combined Bomber Offensive from the United Kingdom*

The Combined Chiefs of Staff have approved a plan to accomplish, by a combined United States-British air offensive, the progressive destruction and dislocation of the German military, industrial and economic system, and the undermining of the morale of the German people to a point where their capacity for armed resistance is fatally weakened.

The plan will be accomplished in four phases between now and the 1st April, 1944. In each successive phase our increased strength will allow a deeper penetration into enemy territory. An intermediate objective of particular importance is the continuing reduction of German fighter strength.

(b) *Cross-Channel Operations*

The Combined Chiefs of Staff have resolved:

That forces and equipment shall be established in the United Kingdom with the object of mounting an operation with target date 1st May, 1944, to secure a lodgement on the Continent from which further offensive operations can be carried out. The scope of the operation will be such as to necessitate the following forces being present and available for use in the United Kingdom by 1st May, 1944, in addition to the air forces then available:

|          |   |  |
|----------|---|--|
| Assault: | 5 | Infantry Divisions (simultaneously loaded in landing-craft). |
|          | 2 | Infantry Divisions—Follow-up.                                |
|          | 2 | Airborne Divisions.  |
|          | — |  |
| Total    | 9 | Divisions in the Assault.                                    |

Build-up 20 Divisions available for movement into lodgement area.

—  
Total 29 Divisions.

The possibility of adding one French Division will be considered at a later date.

The expansion of logistical facilities in the United Kingdom will be undertaken immediately and after the initial assault the seizure and development of Continental ports will be expedited in order that the build-up forces may be augmented by follow-up shipments from the United States or elsewhere of additional divisions and supporting units at the rate of 3 to 5 divisions per month.

The preparation and constant keeping up to date of plans for an emergency crossing of the Channel in the event of a German collapse will proceed in accordance with the directive already given to General Morgan. In addition, General Morgan will prepare and submit to the Combined Chiefs of Staff a plan for sending forces to Norway in the event of a German evacuation becoming apparent.

(c) *Operations in the Mediterranean to Eliminate Italy from the War*

The Combined Chiefs of Staff have resolved:

That the Allied Commander-in-Chief, North Africa, will be instructed, as a matter of urgency, to plan such operations in exploitation of 'Husky' as are best calculated to eliminate Italy from the War and to contain the maximum number of German forces. Which of the various specific operations should be adopted, and thereafter mounted, is a decision which will be reserved to the Combined Chiefs of Staff. The Allied Commander-in-Chief in North Africa may use for his operations all those forces available in the Mediterranean Area except for four American and three British divisions which will be held in readiness from the 1st November onward for withdrawal to take part in operations from the United Kingdom, provided that the naval vessels required will be approved by the Combined Chiefs of Staff when the plans are submitted. The additional air forces provided on a temporary basis for 'Husky' will not be considered available. It is estimated that the equivalent strength of 19 British and Allied, 4 United States, and 4 French divisions or a total of 27 divisions will be available for garrisons and operations in the Mediterranean Area subsequent to 'Husky'. These figures exclude the 4 United States and 3 British divisions to be transferred to the United Kingdom and the 2 British divisions constituting the British commitment to Turkey. It is further estimated that there will be available after 'Husky' a total of 3,648 aircraft including 242 heavy bombers (day and night), 519 medium bombers (day and night), 299 light and dive-bombers, 2,012 fighters, 412 transports, and 164 army co-operatives.



(d) *Bombing of Ploesti*

The Combined Chiefs of Staff have agreed that the United States Army Air Forces should send representatives, without delay, to present to the Commander-in-Chief, North African Theatre, the plan which they have prepared concerning the bombing of the Rumanian oil fields from bases in North Africa. Further, they have agreed that the Commander-in-Chief, North African Theatre, will be asked to submit appropriate comments and recommendations to the Combined Chiefs of Staff. These steps have been taken.

## 3. OPERATIONS FOR THE DEFEAT OF JAPAN.

We have directed the Combined Staff Planners to prepare an appreciation leading up to a plan for the defeat of Japan, including an estimate of the forces required.

(a) *Operations in the Burma-China Theatre*

The Combined Chiefs of Staff have agreed on:

- (1) The concentration of available resources, as first priority within the Assam-Burma Theatre, on the building up and increasing of the air route to China to a capacity of 10,000 tons a month by early Fall, and the development of air facilities in Assam with a view to:
  - (a) Intensifying air operations against the Japanese in Burma;
  - (b) Maintaining increased American air forces in China; and
  - (c) Maintaining the flow of airborne supplies to China.
- (2) Vigorous and aggressive land and air operations at the end of the 1943 monsoon from Assam into Burma via Ledo and Imphal, in step with an advance by Chinese forces from Yunnan, with the object of containing as many Japanese forces as possible, covering the air route to China, and as an essential step towards the opening of the Burma Road.
- (3) The capture of Akyab and of Ramree Island by amphibious operations, with possible exploitation.
- (4) The interruption of Japanese sea communications into Burma.
- (5) The continuance of administrative preparations in India for the eventual launching of an overseas operation of about the size of 'Anakim'.

(b) *Operations in the Pacific*

Various courses of action have been examined by the Combined Chiefs of Staff and the operations they have agreed to undertake have the following objects:

- (1) Conduct of air operations in and from China.
- (2) Ejection of the Japanese from the Aleutians.
- (3) Seizure of the Marshall and Caroline Islands.
- (4) Seizure of the Solomons, the Bismarck Archipelago, and Japanese-held New Guinea.
- (5) Intensification of operations against enemy lines of communication.

V—AVAILABILITY OF RESOURCES TO MEET THE  
REQUIREMENTS OF BASIC UNDERTAKINGS AND SPECIFIC  
OPERATIONS IN EXECUTION OF OVERALL  
STRATEGIC CONCEPT 1943-44

We have examined our resources with the object of assessing our ability to carry out the above operations and our conclusions are as follows:

*Ground Forces*

1. All the ground forces required can be made available.

*Naval Forces*

2. If a covering force is required for the operations to capture Akyab and Ramree, and if the Italian fleet has not been eliminated some diversion of United States naval forces may be required. Subject to this, all the naval forces required can be made available.

*Air Forces*

3. Broadly there are sufficient air forces to meet all requirements in all theatres.

4. For cross-Channel operations there will be sufficient air forces in the United Kingdom with the exception of transport aircraft, the provision of which needs further investigation. In the absence of any detailed plan for cross-Channel operations, it has not been possible to estimate the requirements in gliders. This will have to be the subject of urgent study, which we are initiating.

5. For operations in Burma there are only small deficiencies which can probably be reconciled by adjustments within the theatre.

6. Subject to the development of air fields and necessary communications in Assam, the air transport and defence requirements of the air route into China, up to 10,000 tons per month, can be met.

*Assault Shipping and Landing-Craft*

7. Provided the casualties in operations are no greater than we have allowed for, and provided that the United States and British planned productions are maintained, all the assault shipping and landing-craft required can be made available. We have agreed upon the necessary allocations.

*Supply of Critical Items*

8. In the absence of detailed plans of operations for each theatre it is not possible to give finalised requirements and to estimate detailed shortages of critical items. With the exception of steel for landing-craft construction, deficiencies do not appear serious. We recommend that the possibilities of providing the necessary items, and particularly steel, should be further examined.

*Shipping*

9. The examination of the shipping resources of the United Nations shows that so far as can be foreseen now, and on the assumption that

future losses do not exceed the agreed estimate, personnel shipping will be available to permit of the optimum deployment of United Nations forces up to the limits imposed by the availability of cargo shipping.

The optimum deployment of available United Nations cargo shipping to meet the requirements of the basic undertakings and projected operations for 1943-44 reveals small deficiencies in the third and fourth quarters of 1943 and first quarter of 1944 and a surplus of sailings in the second and third quarters in 1944. The deficiencies are small and, if properly spread over all the programmes concerned, the effect will not be unmanageable.

### *Oil*

10. We have not been able to include a survey of the oil position in the various theatres, but the whole question of stocks and of tankers must receive urgent examination in the light of the decisions taken at the 'Trident' Conference.

## VI—CONCLUSIONS ON MISCELLANEOUS SUBJECTS

### 1. *Equipment for Turkey*

The Combined Chiefs of Staff agreed at the Anfa Conference that the British should be responsible for framing and presenting to the Munitions Assignments Boards all bids for equipment for Turkey. The Combined Chiefs of Staff have now agreed that, with due regard to other important commitments, the assignment of such equipment as may be agreed to by the Combined Chiefs of Staff should be made with the least practicable delay.

### 2. *Rearming of the French in North Africa*

The Combined Chiefs of Staff have agreed that the rearming and re-equipping of the French forces in North Africa should be proceeded with as rapidly as the availability of shipping and equipment will allow, but as a secondary commitment to the requirements of British and United States forces. The use of captured German equipment for this purpose will be explored.

## VII—OTHER CONFERENCES

1. Decisions of the Casablanca conference in conflict with the provisions of this report are modified or cancelled accordingly.

2. The Combined Chiefs of Staff will meet in July or early August in order to examine the decisions reached at this conference in the light of the situation existing at the time.

## ANNEX

### ADVANTAGES TO BE GAINED BY THE USE OF THE AZORES

1. Experience has shown that so long as we can keep even a single aircraft with a convoy during the greater part of each day, the operation of U-boats is greatly hampered. In order to obtain maximum air protection at the present time it is necessary for United States-United Kingdom

convoys to follow a northerly route, which not only suffers from the disadvantages of bad weather and ice, but which inevitably becomes known to the enemy. If we take a southerly route at the present time we lose shore-based air protection over a large part of the passage. There is the further peril of U-boat concentrations against the United States-Mediterranean convoys. We regard the immediate occupation of the Azores as imperative to conserve lives and shipping and, above all, to shorten the War.

2. The facilities which we particularly require are as follows:

- (a) Facilities in the Azores on Terceira for operating V.L.R. aircraft;
- (b) Unrestricted fuelling facilities for naval escorts at either San Miguel or Fayal.

3. The benefits which would accrue from these facilities may be summarised as follows:

- (a) They would give us a much extended air cover for all convoys plying between:
  - (1) United States or West Indies and the Mediterranean;
  - (2) West Indies and the United Kingdom;
  - (3) South America and the United Kingdom;
  - (4) United Kingdom and the Mediterranean;
  - (5) United Kingdom and West Africa, and the Cape and Eastwards.
- (b) The increased areas under air cover would give us much greater scope for evasive routeing, e.g., when U-boats were concentrated in northern waters, North Atlantic convoys could be routed via the Azores instead of always having to follow the Iceland (C) route.
- (c) Without the Azores we shall always be moving on the outside of the circle while the enemy operates inside it. Air forces there would be centrally placed to cover all varieties of the U-boat campaign against the North Atlantic and Mediterranean theatres.
- (d) We should be able to increase our carrying capacity owing to the possibility of using more direct routes across the middle of the Atlantic.
- (e) We could increase our harassing action against U-boats not only when on passage to and from the Biscay bases, but also while resting, refuelling and recharging their batteries in mid-ocean, where hitherto they have been practically immune from interference by aircraft. New detection and attacking devices, which are expected to come into service this spring, would enhance the effect of such action.
- (f) Unrestricted fuelling facilities in the Islands would enable us to make better use of our inadequate numbers of surface escorts.
- (g) Blockade running between Germany and Japan would be rendered so hazardous as not to be worth the risk.
- (h) German warships and raiders would have greater difficulty in evading detection after breaking out into the Atlantic.
- (i) The Islands would provide more direct all-weather air supply routes from the United States to Europe, Africa, and the Far East.

## APPENDIX VI(D)

C.C.S. 250/1 (Taken C.C.S. 96th Mtg.)  
25th May, 1943.

### Implementation of Decisions reached at the 'Trident' Conference

#### *Note by Combined Staff Planners*

The attached memorandum by the Combined Staff Planners is in the form as amended and approved by the Combined Chiefs of Staff in their 96th Meeting.

H. REDMAN  
J. R. DEANE  
Combined Secretariat.

#### Implementation of Decisions Reached at the 'Trident' Conference

##### *Memorandum by the Combined Staff Planners*

1. In order that there may be no delay in action to implement the decisions arrived at the 'Trident' Conference, the Combined Staff Planners recommend as follows:
  - (a) That a directive be issued to General Eisenhower for operations after 'Husky' (Enclosure 'A').
  - (b) That a supplementary directive be issued to General Morgan (Enclosure 'B').
  - (c) That General Morgan should be instructed to give, as soon as possible, a preliminary estimate of the requirements for operation 'Roundhammer' in transport aircraft and gliders.
2. In view of the urgency of completing the 'Roundhammer' plan, we suggest that further consideration should be given to the early appointment of the Supreme Commander.

#### ENCLOSURE 'A'

##### DRAFT DIRECTIVE TO GENERAL EISENHOWER

1. The Combined Chiefs of Staff have resolved:
  - (a) That forces and equipment shall be established in the United Kingdom with the object of mounting an operation with target date the 1st May, 1944, to secure a lodgement on the Continent from which further offensive operations can be carried out. The

scope of the operation will be such as to necessitate the following forces being present and available for use in the United Kingdom by the 1st May, 1944, in addition to the air forces then available.

*Assault:* 5 Infantry Divisions (simultaneously loaded in landing-craft).

2 Infantry Divisions—Follow-up

2 Airborne Divisions.

Total 9 Divisions in the Assault.

*Build-up:* 20 Divisions available for movement into lodgement area.

Total 29 Divisions.

The possibility of adding one French Division will be considered at a later date.

The expansion of logistical facilities in the United Kingdom will be undertaken immediately, and after the initial assault the seizure and development of Continental ports will be expedited in order that the build-up forces may be augmented by follow-up shipments from the United States or elsewhere of additional divisions and supporting units at the rate of 3 to 5 divisions per month.

- (b) That the Allied Commander-in-Chief, North Africa, will be instructed, as a matter of urgency, to plan such operations in exploitation of 'Husky' as are best calculated to eliminate Italy from the war and to contain the maximum number of German forces. Which of the various specific operations should be adopted, and thereafter mounted, is a decision which will be reserved to the Combined Chiefs of Staff. The Allied Commander-in-Chief in North Africa may use for his operations all those forces available in the Mediterranean Area except for four American and three British divisions which will be held in readiness from the 1st November onward for withdrawal to take part in operations from the United Kingdom, provided that the naval vessels required will be approved by the Combined Chiefs of Staff when the plans are submitted. The additional air forces provided on a temporary basis for 'Husky' will not be considered available. It is estimated that the equivalent strength of 19 British and Allied, 4 United States and 4 French divisions, or a total of 27 divisions, will be available for garrisons and operations in the Mediterranean Area subsequent to 'Husky'. These figures exclude the 4 United States and 3 British divisions to be transferred to the United Kingdom and the 2 British divisions constituting the British commitment to Turkey. It is further estimated that there will be available after 'Husky' a total of 3,648 aircraft, including 242 heavy bombers (day and night), 519 medium bombers (day and night), 299 light and dive-bombers, 2,012 fighters, 412 transports and 164 army co-operatives. Further instructions will be issued as to the availability of combat loaders and cargo ships.

2. You are directed to submit proposals with appropriate recommendations for operations in the Mediterranean Area, to be carried out concur-

rently with or subsequent to a successful 'Husky'. All considerations related to your proposed operations must be in consonance with the Combined Chiefs of Staff agreements quoted in paragraph 1 above. Proposals will be submitted to the Combined Chiefs of Staff not later than the 1st July, 1943.

3. *Landing-Craft*—In view of necessity for starting preparations in the United Kingdom at once for the cross-Channel operations referred to in paragraph 1(a) above, it may be necessary after 'Husky' to withdraw from the Mediterranean and Levant:

- (a) The crews of all landing-craft that may be lost in 'Husky'.
- (b) Maintenance and base staffs, with repair equipment and spare gear surplus to those required for the upkeep of landing ships and craft then remaining.

The landing-craft available for operations in the Mediterranean after 'Husky' are based on an estimate of 50 per cent. loss in that operation. If the losses are less than this, surplus crews and craft may have to be returned to the United Kingdom. This does not necessarily apply to special ships.

#### ENCLOSURE 'B'

#### *Draft Supplementary Directive to the Chief of Staff to the Supreme Commander (Designate)*

##### AMPHIBIOUS OPERATIONS FROM THE UNITED KINGDOM

1. Under the terms of your present directive you have been instructed to prepare plans for:
  - (a) An elaborate camouflage and deception scheme extending over the whole summer with a view to pinning the enemy in the West and keeping alive the expectation of large-scale cross-Channel operations in 1943. This would include at least one amphibious feint with the object of bringing on an air battle employing the Metropolitan Royal Air Force and the United States Air Force.
  - (b) A return to the Continent in the event of German disintegration at any time from now onwards with whatever forces may be available at the time.
  - (c) A full-scale assault against the Continent in 1944 as early as possible.
2. In amplification of paragraph (c) above the Combined Chiefs of Staff have now resolved that forces and equipment shall be established in the United Kingdom with the object of mounting an operation with target date the 1st May, 1944, to secure a lodgement on the Continent from which further offensive operations can be carried out.
3. You will, therefore, plan an operation based on the presence of the following ground forces available for use in the United Kingdom on the 1st May, 1944:

*Assault:*

5 Infantry Divisions simultaneously loaded in landing-craft.

2 Infantry Divisions—follow up.

2 Airborne Divisions.

Total—9 Divisions in the assault.

*Build Up:* 20 Divisions available for movement into lodgement area.

Total 29 Divisions.

A detailed statement of the forces which it is estimated will be available for this operation will be provided separately, and the possibility of adding one French division will be considered at a later date.

4. The expansion of logistical facilities in the United Kingdom will be undertaken immediately. You should plan for the seizure and development of Continental ports in order that the initial assault and build-up of forces may be augmented and follow up shipments may be made from the United States or elsewhere of additional divisions and supporting units at the rate of 3 to 5 divisions per month. The preparation and constant keeping up to date of plans for an emergency crossing of the Channel in the event of a German collapse will proceed in accordance with the directive already given to you. In addition, you will prepare and submit to the Combined Chiefs of Staff a plan for sending forces to Norway in the event of a German evacuation becoming apparent.

5. Your *outline plan* for this operation should be prepared and submitted to the Combined Chiefs of Staff as early as possible and not later than the *1st August, 1943*.



## APPENDIX VII(A)

White Paper:  
Cmd. 6693, No. 1.

### Conditions of Armistice Signed on 3rd September, 1943

The following conditions of an armistice are presented by General Dwight D. Eisenhower, Commander-in-Chief of the Allied forces, acting by authority of the Governments of the United States and Great Britain in the interest of the United Nations, and accepted by Marshal Pietro Badoglio, head of the Italian Government:

1. Immediate cessation of all hostile activity by the Italian armed forces.
2. Italy will use its best endeavours to deny, to the Germans, facilities that might be used against the United Nations.
3. All prisoners or internees of the United Nations to be immediately turned over to the Allied Commander-in-Chief, and none of these may now or at any time be evacuated to Germany.
4. Immediate transfer of the Italian fleet and Italian aircraft to such points as may be designated by the Allied Commander-in-Chief, with details of disarmament to be prescribed by him.
5. Italian merchant shipping may be requisitioned by the Allied Commander-in-Chief to meet the needs of his military–naval programme.
6. Immediate surrender of Corsica and of all Italian territory, both islands and mainland, to the Allies, for such use as operational bases and other purposes as the Allies may see fit.
7. Immediate guarantee of the free use by the Allies of all airfields and naval ports in Italian territory, regardless of the rate of evacuation of the Italian territory by the German forces. These ports and fields to be protected by Italian armed forces until this function is taken over by the Allies.
8. Immediate withdrawal to Italy of Italian armed forces from all participation in the current war from whatever areas in which they may be now engaged.
9. Guarantee by the Italian Government that, if necessary, it will employ all its available armed forces to ensure prompt and exact compliance with all the provisions of this armistice.
10. The Commander-in-Chief of the Allied forces reserves to himself the right to take any measure which in his opinion may be necessary for the protection of the interest of the Allied forces for the prosecution of the war, and the Italian Government binds itself to take such administrative or other action as the Commander-in-Chief may require; and in particular, the Commander-in-Chief will establish

Allied military government over such parts of Italian territory as he may deem necessary in the military interests of the Allied nations.

11. The Commander-in-Chief of the Allied forces will have a full right to impose measures of disarmament, demobilisation and demilitarisation.
12. Other conditions of a political, economic and financial nature with which Italy will be bound to comply will be transmitted at a later date.

The conditions of this armistice will not be made public without prior approval of the Allied Commander-in-Chief. The English will be considered the official text.

Marshal **BADOGLIO**  
Head of the Italian Government  
by  
**GUISEPPE CASTELLANO**,  
Brigadier-General attached to  
Italian High Command

**DWIGHT D. EISENHOWER**  
General, United States Army,  
Commander-in-Chief, Allied Forces,  
by  
**WALTER B. SMITH**  
Major-General, Chief of Staff.

## APPENDIX VII(B)

White Paper  
Cmd. 6693. No. 2.

### Instrument of Surrender of Italy Signed on 29th September, 1943

Whereas in consequence of an armistice dated the 3rd September, 1943, between the United States and the United Kingdom Governments on the one hand and the Italian Government on the other hand, hostilities were suspended between Italy and the United Nations on certain terms of a military nature;

And whereas in addition to those terms it was also provided in the said Armistice that the Italian Government bound themselves to comply with other conditions of a political, economic and financial nature to be transmitted later;

And whereas it is convenient that the terms of a military nature and the said other conditions of a political, economic and financial nature should without prejudice to the continued validity of the terms of the said Armistice of the 3rd September, 1943, be comprised in a further instrument;

The following, together with the terms of the Armistice of the 3rd September, 1943, are the terms on which the United States and United Kingdom Governments acting on behalf of the United Nations are prepared to suspend hostilities against Italy so long as their military operations against Germany and her Allies are not obstructed and Italy does not assist these Powers in any way and complies with the requirements of these Governments.

These terms have been presented by General Dwight D. Eisenhower, Commander-in-Chief, Allied Forces, duly authorised to that effect;

And have been accepted by Marshal Pietro Badoglio, Head of the Italian Government.

1. (A) The Italian Land, Sea and Air Forces wherever located hereby surrender unconditionally.

(B) Italian participation in the war in all Theatres will cease immediately. There will be no opposition to landings, movements or other operations of the Land, Sea and Air Forces of the United Nations. Accordingly, the Italian Supreme Command will order the immediate cessation of hostilities of any kind against the Forces of the United Nations and will direct the Italian Navy, Military and Air Force authorities in all Theatres to issue forthwith the appropriate instructions to those under their Command.

- (C) The Italian Supreme Command will further order all Italian Naval, Military and Air Forces or authorities and personnel to refrain immediately from destruction of or damage to any real or personal property, whether public or private.
2. The Italian Supreme Command will give full information concerning the disposition and condition of all Italian Land, Sea and Air Forces, wherever they are situated and of all such forces of Italy's Allies as are situated in Italian or Italian-occupied territory.
  3. The Italian Supreme Command will take the necessary measures to secure airfields, port facilities, and all other installations against seizure or attack by any of Italy's Allies. The Italian Supreme Command will take the necessary measures to insure Law and Order, and to use its available armed forces to insure prompt and exact compliance with all the provisions of the present instrument. Subject to such use of Italian troops for the above purposes, as may be sanctioned by the Allied Commander-in-Chief, all other Italian Land, Sea and Air Forces will proceed to and remain in their barracks, camps or ships pending directions from the United Nations as to their future status and disposal. Exceptionally such Naval personnel shall proceed to shore establishments as the United Nations may direct.
  4. Italian Land, Sea and Air Forces will within the periods to be laid down by the United Nations withdraw from all areas outside Italian territory notified to the Italian Government by the United Nations and proceed to areas to be specified by the United Nations. Such movement of Italian Land, Sea and Air Forces will be carried out in conditions to be laid down by the United Nations and in accordance with the orders to be issued by them. All Italian officials will similarly leave the areas notified except any who may be permitted to remain by the United Nations. Those permitted to remain will comply with the instructions of the Allied Commander-in-Chief.
  5. No requisitioning, seizure or other coercive measures shall be effected by Italian Land, Sea and Air Forces or officials in regard to persons or property in the areas notified under Article 4.
  6. The demobilisation of Italian Land, Sea and Air Forces in excess of such establishments as shall be notified will take place as prescribed by the Allied Commander-in-Chief.
  7. Italian warships of all descriptions, auxiliaries and transports will be assembled as directed in ports to be specified by the Allied Commander-in-Chief and will be dealt with as prescribed by the Allied Commander-in-Chief.
- (Note—If at the date of the Armistice the whole of the Italian Fleet has been assembled in Allied ports, this article would run: 'Italian warships of all descriptions, auxiliaries and transports will remain until further notice in the ports where they are at present assembled, and will be dealt with as prescribed by the Allied Commander-in-Chief.')
8. Italian aircraft of all kinds will not leave the ground or water or ships, except as directed by the Allied Commander-in-Chief.

9. Without prejudice to the provisions 14, 15 and 28 (A) and (D) below, all merchant ships, or other craft of whatever flag, all aircraft and inland transport of whatever nationality in Italian or Italian-occupied territory or waters will, pending verification of their identity and status, be prevented from leaving.
10. The Italian Supreme Command will make available all information about naval, military and air devices, installations and defences, about all transport and inter-communication systems established by Italy or her allies on Italian territory or in the approaches thereto, about minefields or other obstacles to movement by land, sea or air and such other particulars as the United Nations may require in connection with the use of Italian bases, or with operations, security or welfare of the United Nations Land, Sea or Air Forces. Italian forces and equipment will be made available as required by the United Nations for the removal of the above-mentioned obstacles.
11. The Italian Government will furnish forthwith lists of quantities of all war material showing the location of the same. Subject to such use as the Allied Commander-in-Chief may make of it, the war material will be placed in store under such control as he may direct. The ultimate disposal of war material will be prescribed by the United Nations.
12. There will be no destruction of nor damage to nor except as authorised or directed by the United Nations any removal of war material, wireless, radio location or meteorological stations, railroad, port or other installations or in general, public or private utilities or property of any kind, wherever situated, and the necessary maintenance and repair will be the responsibility of the Italian authorities.
13. The manufacture, production and construction of war material and its import, export and transit is prohibited, except as directed by the United Nations. The Italian Government will comply with any directions given by the United Nations for the manufacture, production or construction and the import, export or transit of war material.
14. (A) All Italian merchant shipping and fishing and other craft, wherever they may be, and any constructed or completed during the period of the present instrument will be made available in good repair and in seaworthy condition by the competent Italian authorities at such places and for such purposes and periods as the United Nations may prescribe. Transfer to enemy or neutral flags is prohibited. Crews will remain on board pending further instructions regarding their continued employment or dispersal. Any existing options to repurchase or reacquire or to resume control of Italian or former Italian vessels sold or otherwise transferred or chartered during the war will forthwith be exercised and the above provisions will apply to all such vessels and their crews.  
(B) All Italian inland transport and all port equipment will be held at the disposal of the United Nations for such purposes as they may direct.
15. United Nations merchant ships, fishing and other craft in Italian hands wherever they may be (including for this purpose those of

any country which has broken off diplomatic relations with Italy) whether or not the title has been transferred as the result of prize court proceedings or otherwise, will be surrendered to the United Nations and will be assembled in ports to be specified by the United Nations for disposal as directed by them. The Italian Government will take all such steps as may be required to secure any necessary transfers of title. Any neutral merchant ship, fishing or other craft under Italian operation or control will be assembled in the same manner pending arrangements for their ultimate disposal. Any necessary repairs to any of the above mentioned vessels will be effected by the Italian Government, if required, at their expense. The Italian Government will take the necessary measures to insure that the vessels and their cargo are not damaged.

16. No radio or telecommunication installations or other forms of inter-communication, shore or afloat, under Italian control whether belonging to Italy or any nation other than the United Nations will transmit until directions for the control of these installations have been prescribed by the Allied Commander-in-Chief. The Italian authorities will conform to such measures for control and censorship of press and of other publications, of theatrical and cinematograph performances, of broadcasting, and also of all forms of inter-communication as the Allied Commander-in-Chief may direct. The Allied Commander-in-Chief may, at his discretion, take over radio, cable and other communication stations.
17. The warships, auxiliaries, transports and merchant and other vessels and aircraft in the service of the United Nations will have the right freely to use the territorial waters around and the air over Italian territory.
18. The forces of the United Nations will require to occupy certain parts of Italian territory. The territories or areas concerned will from time to time be notified by the United Nations and all Italian Land, Sea and Air Forces will thereupon withdraw from such territories or areas in accordance with the instructions issued by the Allied Commander-in-Chief. The provisions of this article are without prejudice to those of article 4 above. The Italian Supreme Command will guarantee immediate use and access to the Allies of all airfields and naval ports in Italy under their control.
19. In the territories or areas referred to in article 18 all Naval, Military and Air installations, power stations, oil refineries, public utility services, all ports and harbours, all transport and all inter-communication installations, facilities and equipment and such other installations or facilities and all such stocks as may be required by the United Nations will be made available in good condition by the competent Italian authorities with the personnel required for working them. The Italian Government will make available such other local resources or services as the United Nations may require.
20. Without prejudice to the provisions of the present instrument the United Nations will exercise all the right of an occupying power throughout the territories or areas referred to in article 18, the ad-

ministration of which will be provided for by the issue of proclamations, orders or regulations. Personnel of the Italian administrative, judicial and public services will carry out their functions under the control of the Allied Commander-in-Chief unless otherwise directed.

21. In addition to the rights in respect of occupied territories described in articles 18 to 20:
  - (A) Members of the Land, Sea or Air Forces and officials of the United Nations will have the right of passage in or over non-occupied Italian territory, and will be afforded all the necessary facilities and assistance in performing their functions.
  - (B) The Italian authorities will make available on non-occupied, Italian territory all transport facilities required by the United Nations including free transit for their war material and supplies, and will comply with instructions issued by the Allied Commander-in-Chief regarding the use and control of airfields, ports, shipping, inland transport systems and vehicles, inter-communication systems, power stations and public utility services, oil refineries, stocks and such other fuel and power supplies and means of producing same as United Nations may specify, together with connected repair and construction facilities.
22. The Italian Government and people will abstain from all action detrimental to the interests of the United Nations and will carry out promptly and efficiently all orders given by the United Nations.
23. The Italian Government will make available such Italian currency as the United Nations may require. The Italian Government will withdraw and redeem in Italian currency within such time limits and on such terms as the United Nations may specify all holdings in Italian territory of currencies issued by the United Nations during military operations or occupation and will hand over the currencies withdrawn free of cost to the United Nations. The Italian Government will take such measures as may be required by the United Nations for the control of banks and business in Italian territory, for the control of foreign exchange and foreign commercial and financial transactions and for the regulation of trade and production and will comply with any instructions issued by the United Nations regarding these and similar matters.
24. There shall be no financial, commercial or other intercourse with or dealing with or for the benefit of countries at war with any of the United Nations or territories occupied by such countries or any other foreign country except under authorisation of the Allied Commander-in-Chief or designated officials.
25. (A) Relations with countries at war with any of the United Nations, or occupied by any such country, will be broken off. Italian diplomatic, consular and other officials and members of the Italian Land, Sea and Air Forces accredited to or serving on missions with any such country or in any other territory specified by the United Nations will be recalled. Diplomatic and consular officials of such countries will be dealt with as the United Nations may prescribe.
  - (B) The United Nations reserve the right to require the withdrawal

- of neutral diplomatic and consular officers from occupied Italian territory and to prescribe and lay down regulations governing the procedure for the methods of communication between the Italian Government and its representatives in neutral countries and regarding communications emanating from or destined for the representatives of neutral countries in Italian territory.
26. Italian subjects will pending further instructions be prevented from leaving Italian territory except as authorised by the Allied Commander-in-Chief and will not in any event take service with any of the countries or in any of the territories referred to in article 25 (A) nor will they proceed to any place for the purpose of undertaking work for any such country. Those at present so serving or working will be recalled as directed by the Allied Commander-in-Chief.
  27. The Military, Naval and Air personnel and material and the merchant shipping, fishing and other craft and the aircraft, vehicles and other transport equipment of any country against which any of the United Nations is carrying on hostilities or which is occupied by any such country, remain liable to attack or seizure wherever found in or over Italian territory or waters.
  28. (A) The warships, auxiliaries and transports of any such country or occupied country referred to in article 27 in Italian or Italian-occupied ports and waters and the aircraft, vehicles and other transport equipment of such countries in or over Italian or Italian-occupied territory will, pending further instructions, be prevented from leaving.  
(B) The Military, Naval and Air personnel and the civilian nationals of any such country or occupied country in Italian or Italian-occupied territory will be prevented from leaving and will be interned pending further instructions.  
(C) All property in Italian territory belonging to any such country or occupied country or its nationals will be impounded and kept in custody pending further instructions.  
(D) The Italian Government will comply with any instructions given by the Allied Commander-in-Chief concerning the internment, custody or subsequent disposal, utilisation or employment of any of the above-mentioned persons, vessels, aircraft, material or property.
  29. Benito Mussolini, his Chief Fascist associates and all persons suspected of having committed war crimes or analogous offences whose names appear on lists to be communicated by the United Nations will forthwith be apprehended and surrendered into the hands of the United Nations. Any instructions given by the United Nations for this purpose will be complied with.
  30. All Fascist organisations, including all branches of the Fascist Militia (MVSN), the Secret Police (OVRA), all Fascist organisations will in so far as this is not already accomplished be disbanded in accordance with the directions of the Allied Commander-in-Chief. The Italian Government will comply with all such further directions as the United Nations may give for abolition of Fascist institutions, the dismissal and internment of Fascist personnel, the control of Fascists funds, the suppression of Fascist ideology and teaching.



- ministration of which will be provided for by the issue of proclamations, orders or regulations. Personnel of the Italian administrative, judicial and public services will carry out their functions under the control of the Allied Commander-in-Chief unless otherwise directed.
21. In addition to the rights in respect of occupied territories described in articles 18 to 20:
    - (A) Members of the Land, Sea or Air Forces and officials of the United Nations will have the right of passage in or over non-occupied Italian territory, and will be afforded all the necessary facilities and assistance in performing their functions.
    - (B) The Italian authorities will make available on non-occupied, Italian territory all transport facilities required by the United Nations including free transit for their war material and supplies, and will comply with instructions issued by the Allied Commander-in-Chief regarding the use and control of airfields, ports, shipping, inland transport systems and vehicles, inter-communication systems, power stations and public utility services, oil refineries, stocks and such other fuel and power supplies and means of producing same as United Nations may specify, together with connected repair and construction facilities.
  22. The Italian Government and people will abstain from all action detrimental to the interests of the United Nations and will carry out promptly and efficiently all orders given by the United Nations.
  23. The Italian Government will make available such Italian currency as the United Nations may require. The Italian Government will withdraw and redeem in Italian currency within such time limits and on such terms as the United Nations may specify all holdings in Italian territory of currencies issued by the United Nations during military operations or occupation and will hand over the currencies withdrawn free of cost to the United Nations. The Italian Government will take such measures as may be required by the United Nations for the control of banks and business in Italian territory, for the control of foreign exchange and foreign commercial and financial transactions and for the regulation of trade and production and will comply with any instructions issued by the United Nations regarding these and similar matters.
  24. There shall be no financial, commercial or other intercourse with or dealing with or for the benefit of countries at war with any of the United Nations or territories occupied by such countries or any other foreign country except under authorisation of the Allied Commander-in-Chief or designated officials.
  25. (A) Relations with countries at war with any of the United Nations, or occupied by any such country, will be broken off. Italian diplomatic, consular and other officials and members of the Italian Land, Sea and Air Forces accredited to or serving on missions with any such country or in any other territory specified by the United Nations will be recalled. Diplomatic and consular officials of such countries will be dealt with as the United Nations may prescribe.
    - (B) The United Nations reserve the right to require the withdrawal

- of neutral diplomatic and consular officers from occupied Italian territory and to prescribe and lay down regulations governing the procedure for the methods of communication between the Italian Government and its representatives in neutral countries and regarding communications emanating from or destined for the representatives of neutral countries in Italian territory.
26. Italian subjects will pending further instructions be prevented from leaving Italian territory except as authorised by the Allied Commander-in-Chief and will not in any event take service with any of the countries or in any of the territories referred to in article 25 (A) nor will they proceed to any place for the purpose of undertaking work for any such country. Those at present so serving or working will be recalled as directed by the Allied Commander-in-Chief.
  27. The Military, Naval and Air personnel and material and the merchant shipping, fishing and other craft and the aircraft, vehicles and other transport equipment of any country against which any of the United Nations is carrying on hostilities or which is occupied by any such country, remain liable to attack or seizure wherever found in or over Italian territory or waters.
  28. (A) The warships, auxiliaries and transports of any such country or occupied country referred to in article 27 in Italian or Italian-occupied ports and waters and the aircraft, vehicles and other transport equipment of such countries in or over Italian or Italian-occupied territory will, pending further instructions, be prevented from leaving.  
(B) The Military, Naval and Air personnel and the civilian nationals of any such country or occupied country in Italian or Italian-occupied territory will be prevented from leaving and will be interned pending further instructions.  
(C) All property in Italian territory belonging to any such country or occupied country or its nationals will be impounded and kept in custody pending further instructions.  
(D) The Italian Government will comply with any instructions given by the Allied Commander-in-Chief concerning the internment, custody or subsequent disposal, utilisation or employment of any of the above-mentioned persons, vessels, aircraft, material or property.
  29. Benito Mussolini, his Chief Fascist associates and all persons suspected of having committed war crimes or analogous offences whose names appear on lists to be communicated by the United Nations will forthwith be apprehended and surrendered into the hands of the United Nations. Any instructions given by the United Nations for this purpose will be complied with.
  30. All Fascist organisations, including all branches of the Fascist Militia (MVSN), the Secret Police (OVRA), all Fascist organisations will in so far as this is not already accomplished be disbanded in accordance with the directions of the Allied Commander-in-Chief. The Italian Government will comply with all such further directions as the United Nations may give for abolition of Fascist institutions, the dismissal and internment of Fascist personnel, the control of Fascists funds, the suppression of Fascist ideology and teaching.

31. All Italian laws involving discrimination on grounds of race, colour, creed or political opinions will in so far as this is not already accomplished be rescinded, and persons detained on such grounds will, as directed by the United Nations, be released and relieved from all legal disabilities to which they have been subjected. The Italian Government will comply with all such further directions as the Allied Commander-in-Chief may give for repeal of Fascist legislation and removal of any disabilities or prohibitions resulting therefrom.
32. (A) Prisoners of war belonging to the forces of or specified by the United Nations and any nationals of the United Nations, including Abyssinian subjects, confined, interned, or otherwise under restraint in Italian or Italian-occupied territory will not be removed and will forthwith be handed over to representatives of the United Nations or otherwise dealt with as the United Nations may direct. Any removal during the period between the presentation and the signature of the present instrument will be regarded as a breach of its terms.  
(B) Persons of whatever nationality who have been placed under restriction, detention or sentence (including sentences *in absentia*) on account of their dealings or sympathies with the United Nations will be released under the direction of the United Nations and relieved from all legal disabilities to which they have been subjected.  
(C) The Italian Government will take such steps as the United Nations may direct to safeguard the persons of foreign nationals and property of foreign nationals and property of foreign states and nationals.
33. (A) The Italian Government will comply with such directions as the United Nations may prescribe regarding restitutions, deliveries, services or payments by way of reparation and payment of the costs of occupation during the period of the present instrument.  
(B) The Italian Government will give to the Allied Commander-in-Chief such information as may be prescribed regarding the assets, whether inside or outside Italian territory, of the Italian state, the Bank of Italy, any Italian state or semi-state institutions or Fascist organisations or residents in Italian territory and will not dispose or allow the disposal, outside Italian territory of any such assets except with the permission of the United Nations.
34. The Italian Government will carry out during the period of the present instrument such measures of disarmament, demobilisation and demilitarisation as may be prescribed by the Allied Commander-in-Chief.
35. The Italian Government will supply all information and provide all documents required by the United Nations. There shall be no destruction or concealment of archives, records, plans or any other documents or information.
36. The Italian Government will take and enforce such legislative and other measures as may be necessary for the execution of the present instrument. Italian military and civil authorities will comply with any instruction issued by the Allied Commander-in-Chief for the same purpose.

37. There will be appointed a Control Commission representative of the United Nations charged with regulating and executing this instrument under the orders and general directions of the Allied Commander-in-Chief.
38. (A) The term "United Nations" in the present instrument includes the Allied Commander-in-Chief, the Control Commission and any other authority which the United Nations may designate.  
(B) The term "Allied Commander-in-Chief" in the present instrument includes the Control Commission and such other officers and representatives as the Commander-in-Chief may designate.
39. Reference to Italian Land, Sea and Air Forces in the present instrument shall be deemed to include Fascist Militia and all such other military or para-military units, formations or bodies as the Allied Commander-in-Chief may prescribe.
40. The term 'War Materials' in the present instrument denotes all material specified in such lists or definitions as may from time to time be issued by the Control Commission.
41. The term 'Italian Territory' includes all Italian colonies and dependencies and shall for the purpose of the present instrument (but without prejudice to the question of sovereignty) be deemed to include Albania. Provided, however, that except in such cases and to such extent as the United Nations may direct the provisions of the present instrument shall not apply in or affect the administration of any Italian colony or dependency already occupied by the United Nations or the rights or powers therein possessed or exercised by them.
42. The Italian Government will send a delegation to the Headquarters of the Control Commission to represent Italian interests and to transmit the order of the Control Commission to the competent Italian authorities.
43. The present instrument shall enter into force at once. It will remain in operation until superseded by any other arrangements or until the voting into force of the peace treaty with Italy.
44. The present instrument may be denounced by the United Nations with immediate effect if Italian obligations thereunder are not fulfilled or, as an alternative, the United Nations may penalise contravention of it by measures appropriate to the circumstances such as the extension of the areas of military occupation or air or other punitive action. The present instrument is drawn up in English and Italian, the English text being authentic, and in case of any dispute regarding its interpretation, the decision of the Control Commission will prevail.

Signed at Malta on the 29th day of September, 1943.

BADOGLIO  
Marshal Pietro Badoglio,  
Head of the Italian Government.

DWIGHT D. EISENHOWER  
Dwight D. Eisenhower,  
General, United States Army,  
Commander-in-Chief, Allied Force.

## APPENDIX VIII

C.C.S. 319/5.  
24th August, 1943.

### Final Report to the President and Prime Minister

*Note by the Combined Chiefs of Staff*

The Enclosure of the final report of the Combined Chiefs of Staff on the 'Quadrant' Conference. It has been approved by the President and the Prime Minister, except for paragraph 61, upon which action has been deferred pending further consideration by the United States and British Governments.

Offices of the War Cabinet, S.W.1.  
27th August, 1943.

ENCLOSURE

'QUADRANT'

*Report to the President and the Prime Minister of the Final  
Agreed Summary of Conclusions reached by the Combined Chiefs of Staff*

1. In previous memoranda (C.C.S. 319 and C.C.S. 319/2) the Combined Chiefs of Staff presented certain agreed conclusions reached during the present Conference regarding operations in the main theatres of war. These amended conclusions have been related to sources available, and an agreed summary is submitted herewith.

#### I. *Over-All Objective*

2. In conjunction with Russia and other Allies, to bring about at the earliest possible date the unconditional surrender of the Axis Powers.

#### II. *Over-All Strategic Concept for the Prosecution of the War*

3. In co-operation with Russia and other Allies, to bring about at the earliest possible date the unconditional surrender of the Axis in Europe.

4. Simultaneously, in co-operation with other Pacific Powers concerned to maintain and exert unremitting pressure against Japan with the purpose of continually reducing her Military power and attaining positions from which her ultimate surrender can be forced. The effect of any such extension on the over-all objective to be given consideration by the Combined Chiefs of Staff before action is taken.

5. Upon the defeat of the Axis in Europe, in co-operation with other Pacific Powers, and if possible with Russia, to direct the full resources of the United States and Great Britain to bring about at the earliest possible date the unconditional surrender of Japan.

### III. *Basic Undertakings in Support of Over-all Strategic Concept*

6. Whatever operations are decided on in support of the over-all strategic concept, the following established undertakings will be a first charge against our resources, subject to review by the Combined Chiefs of Staff in keeping with the changing situation:

- (a) Maintain the security and war-making capacity of the Western Hemisphere and British Isles.
- (b) Support the war-making capacity of our forces in all areas.
- (c) Maintain vital overseas lines of communication, with particular emphasis on the defeat of the U-boat menace.
- (d) Continue the disruption of the Axis sea communications.
- (e) Intensify the air offensive against the Axis Powers of Europe.
- (f) Concentrate maximum resources in a selected area as early as practicable for the purpose of conducting a decisive invasion of the Axis citadel.
- (g) Undertake such measures as may be necessary and practicable to aid the war effort of Russia.
- (h) Undertake such measures as may be necessary and practicable in order to aid the war effort of China as an effective Ally and as a base for operations against Japan.
- (i) To prepare the ground for the active or passive participation of Turkey in the war on the side of the Allies (see also paragraph 62).
- (j) To prepare the French Forces in Africa to fulfil an active role in the war against the Axis Powers. (See also paragraph 63.)

### IV. *Execution of the Over-all Strategic Concept*

7. The following operations in execution of the overall strategic concept are agreed upon:

#### *The U-Boat War*

##### (a) *Progress report*

8. We have had encouraging reports from the Chiefs of the two Naval Staffs regarding the U-boat war. We have approved recommendations made by the Allied Submarine Board which should result in further strengthening our anti-U-boat operations. The Board has been directed to continue and expand its studies in search of further improvements.

##### (b) *Facilities in the Azores Islands*

The facilities of the Azores Islands will be used for intensive sea and air operations against the U-boat.

*Note:* On the successful conclusions of the negotiations for the use of the Azores we have taken note of the assurance given by the British Chiefs of Staff that everything will be done by the British as soon as possible after actual entry into the Azores has been gained to make arrangements for their operational and transit use by United States aircraft.

*The Defeat of the Axis in Europe*

9. We have approved the following operations in 1943-44 for the defeat of the Axis Powers in Europe:

*The Bomber Offensive*

10. The progressive destruction and dislocation of the German military, industrial and economic system, the disruption of vital elements of lines of communication, and the material reduction of German air combat strength by the successful prosecution of the Combined Bomber Offensive from all convenient bases is a prerequisite to 'Overlord' (barring an independent and complete Russian victory before 'Overlord' can be mounted). This operation must therefore continue to have highest strategic priority.

*Operation 'Overlord'*

11. (a) This operation will be the primary United States—British ground and air effort against the Axis of Europe. (Target date 1st May, 1944). After securing adequate Channel ports, exploitation will be directed towards securing areas, that will facilitate both ground and air operations against the enemy. Following the establishment of strong Allied forces in France, operations designed to strike at the heart of Germany and to destroy her military forces will be undertaken.
- (b) There will be a balanced ground and air force build-up for 'Overlord' and continuous planning for and maintenance of those forces available in the United Kingdom in readiness to take advantage of any situation permitting an opportunistic cross-Channel move into France.
- (c) As between Operation 'Overlord' and operations in the Mediterranean, where there is a shortage of resources, available resources will be distributed and employed with the main object of ensuring the success of 'Overlord'. Operations in the Mediterranean Theatre will be carried out with the forces allotted at 'Trident', except in so far as these may be varied by decision of the Combined Chiefs of Staff.

12. We have approved the outline plan of General Morgan for Operation 'Overlord' and have authorised him to proceed with the detailed planning and with full preparations.

*Operation 'Jupiter'*

13. In case circumstances render the execution of 'Overlord' impossible, it may be necessary to consider 'Jupiter' as an alternative. Plans for this operation, with particular reference to an entry into Southern Norway, should therefore be made and kept up to date.

*Operations in Italy*

14. (a) First Phase—The elimination of Italy as a belligerent and the establishment of air bases in the Rome area, and, if feasible, further north.

- (b) Second Phase—Seizure of Sardinia and Corsica.
- (c) Third Phase—The maintenance of unremitting pressure on German forces in Northern Italy, and the creation of the conditions required for 'Overlord' and of a situation favourable for the eventual entry of our forces, including the bulk of the re-equipped French Army and Air Force, into Southern France.

#### *Operations in Southern France*

15. Offensive operations in Southern France (to include the use of trained and equipped French forces) should be undertaken to establish a lodgement in the Toulon-Marseilles area and to exploit northwards in order to create a diversion in connection with 'Overlord'. Air-nourished guerrilla operations in the Southern Alps will, if possible, be initiated.

#### *Air Operations*

16. (a) Strategic bombing operations from Italy and Central Mediterranean bases, complementing 'Pointblank'.
- (b) Development of an air ferry route through the Azores.
- (c) Air supply of Balkan and French guerrillas (see paragraph 17 below).

#### *Operations in the Balkans*

17. Operations in the Balkan area will be limited to supply of Balkan guerrillas by air and sea transport, to minor Commando forces, and to the bombing of strategic objectives.

#### *Garrison requirements and security of lines of communication in the Mediterranean*

18. Defensive garrison commitments in the Mediterranean area will be reviewed from time to time, with a view to effecting economy of forces. The security of our lines of communication through the Straits of Gibraltar will be assured by appropriate dispositions of our forces in North-West Africa, so long as there remains even a remote possibility of the Germans invading the Iberian Peninsula.

#### *Emergency return to the Continent*

19. We have examined the plans that have been prepared by General Morgan's staff for an emergency operation to enter the Continent. We have taken note of these plans and have directed that they be kept under continuous review, with particular reference to the premises regarding the attainment of air superiority and the number of troops necessary for the success of these operations.

### THE WAR AGAINST JAPAN

#### *Long-Term strategy*

20. We have made a preliminary study of long-term strategy for the defeat of Japan and are of the opinion that the following factors require particular emphasis:

GS23\*



- (a) The dependence of Japan upon air power, naval power, and shipping for maintaining her position in the Pacific and South East Asia.
- (b) The consequent need for applying the maximum attrition to Japan's air force, naval forces, and shipping by all possible means in all possible areas.
- (c) The advantage to be gained and the time to be saved by a more extensive use of the superior air resources at the disposal of the United Nations, both in the strategic field and in conjunction with operations on land.

21. We consider that great advantage may be obtained, by modern and untried methods, from the vast resources which, with the defeat of Germany, will become available to the United Nations. We have in mind :

- (a) A project rapidly to expand and extend the striking power of the United Nations air forces in China as well as of the ground troops for their defence by employing the large numbers of load-carrying aircraft available to open an 'air road' to China.
- (b) The employment of lightly equipped jungle forces dependent largely upon air supply lines.
- (c) The use of special equipment, such as artificial harbours, 'Habakuks', & etc. to enable the superior power of the United Nations to be employed in unexpected and undeveloped areas.

22. From every point of view operations should be framed to force the defeat of Japan as soon as possible after the defeat of Germany. Planning should be on the basis of accomplishing this within twelve months of that event. Decisions as to specific operations which will ensure a rapid course of events must await further examination on the lines indicated above.

23. The development of forces and the operations to be undertaken in the war against Japan must be in accord with the overall objective and strategic concept reaffirmed in Section I and II above (paragraphs 2-5).

24. We are agreed that the reorientation of forces from the European Theatre to the Pacific and Far East should be started as soon as the German situation, in our opinion, so allows.

25. The principle has been accepted that the forces to carry out operations from the East, including the South West Pacific, shall be provided by the United States, and for operations from the West by Great Britain, except for special types not available to Great Britain which will be provided by the United States. The employment of Dominion forces will be a matter of discussion between all Governments concerned.

#### *Specific Operations, 1943-44*

26. We have found it impracticable during 'Quadrant' to arrive at all the necessary decisions for operations against Japan in 1943-44. We therefore propose that, as soon as the necessary examinations have been made, a Combined Chiefs of Staff Conference should be held wherever may be most convenient, unless agreement is reached through the ordinary channels. There are, nevertheless, certain decisions which we feel able to make at once.

*Operations in the Pacific, 1943-44*

27. We approve the proposals of the United States Chiefs of Staff for operations in the Pacific in 1943-44 as follows:

*Gilberts*

28. The seizure and consolidation of the Gilberts preparatory to a further advance into the Marshalls.

*Marshalls*

29. The seizure of the Marshall Islands (including Wake and Kusaie) preparatory to a westward advance through the Central Pacific.

*Ponape*

30. The capture of Ponape preparatory to operations against the Truk area.

*Carolines (Truk area)*

31. The seizure of the Eastern Carolines as far west as Woleai and the establishment of a fleet base at Truk.

*Palau Islands*

32. The capture of the Palaus, including Yap.

*Operations against Guam and the Japanese Marianas*

33. The seizure of Guam and the Japanese Marianas.

*Paramushiru*

34. Consideration of operations against Paramushiru and the Kuriles.

*Operations in the New Guinea-Bismarcks-Admiralty Islands subsequent to current operations*

35. The seizure or neutralisation of eastern New Guinea as far west as Wewak and including the Admiralty Islands and Bismarck Archipelago. *Rabaul is to be neutralised rather than captured.*

*Operations in New Guinea subsequent to the Wewak-Kavieng Operations*

36. An advance along the north coast of New Guinea as far west as Vogelkop, *by step-by-step airborne-waterborne advances.*

*Operations in India-Burma-China Theatre, 1943-44*

37. To carry out preparations for the capture of Upper Burma in order to improve the air route and establish over-land communications with China. Target date mid-February 1944.

It is recognised that the extent of these operations depend upon logistic considerations as affected by recent floods.

38. To continue preparations for an amphibious operation in the Spring of 1944. Pending a decision on the particular operation, the scale of these

preparations should be of the order of those contemplated at 'Trident' for the capture of Akyab and Ramree.

39. To continue the preparation of India as a base for the operations eventually contemplated in the South East Asia Command.

40. To continue to build up and increase the air routes and air supplies of China, and the development of air facilities, with a view to:

- (a) Keeping China in the war.
- (b) Intensifying operations against the Japanese.
- (c) Maintaining increased United States and Chinese Air Forces in China.
- (d) Equipping Chinese ground forces.

41. We have decided that our main effort should be put into offensive operations with the object of establishing land communications with China and improving and securing the air route. Priorities cannot be rigid, and we therefore propose to instruct the Supreme Commander in formulating his proposals to regard this decision as a guide, and to bear in mind the importance of the longer term development of the lines of communication.

#### *Examination of future operations*

42. We have directed that the following studies shall be made forthwith :

43. A study and report on the following operations and their relation one to another:

- (a) An operation against Northern Sumatra; target date Spring 1944.
- (b) Operations southward from Northern Burma; target date November 1944.
- (c) Operations through Moulmein area or Kra Isthmus in the direction of Bangkok; target date to be as early as practicable.
- (d) Operations through the Malacca Straits and Malaya for the direct capture of Singapore; target date as early as practicable.
- (e) The capture of Akyab and Ramree to determine whether it is necessary to the success of operations in (a) to (d) above or the operations in Upper Burma (paragraph 37).

44. A study of the potentialities and limitations of developing the air route to China on a scale sufficient to employ all the heavy bomber and transport aircraft likely to be available for the South East Asia Theatre and China in 1944-45, on the assumption that Germany is defeated in the Autumn of 1944.

45. This study to specify the action required to implement the best possible plan resulting from the above without prejudice to the operations in paragraph 37 and 38.

#### *South East Asia Command—General*

46. The vigorous and effective prosecution of large-scale operations against Japan in South East Asia, and the rapid development of the air route through Burma to China, necessitate the reorganisation of the High Command in the Indian Theatre. It has, therefore, been decided that the Command in India should be divided from the operational Command in South East Asia as described below:

*Command in India*

47. The administration of India as a base for the forces in South East Asia will remain under control of the Commander-in-Chief, India. Co-ordination of movement and maintenance both of the operational forces based on India, and of the internal garrison can best be carried out efficiently by one staff responsible in the last resort to one authority with power to decide priorities. This machinery exists today in the Government of India and in G.H.Q., India. It is the only machinery that can carry out the dual tasks of meeting the internal requirements of India as well as the requirements of operations in the South-East Asia Theatre.

*Command in South-East Asia*

48. A Supreme Allied Command in South-East Asia should be set up as follows:

- (a) The command and staff to be a combined British and American one on the lines of the North African Command.
- (b) The Supreme Allied Commander to be British, with an American deputy. He should have under him Naval, Army and Air Commanders-in-Chief, and also a Principal Administrative Officer to co-ordinate the administrative planning of all three Services and of the Allied forces.
- (c) The Deputy Supreme Allied Commander and the Commanders of the three Services mentioned above, acting under the orders of the Supreme Allied Commander, to control all operations and have under their command such Naval, Military and Air forces as may be assigned to the South-East Asia Theatre from time to time.

*Area included*

49. The boundaries are set out in detail in C.C.S. 308/3, but, generally, they include Burma, Ceylon, Thailand (Siam), the Malaya Peninsula and Sumatra.

*Divisions of Responsibility between India and South-East Asia*

50. Conflicts of opinion over priorities in connection with administration must be anticipated. It will, therefore, be necessary for someone on the spot to resolve these differences day by day as they occur. This authority should be the Viceroy, not in his statutory capacity as Governor-General, but acting on behalf of the British War Cabinet.

51. The Supreme Commander will in any event have direct access to the British Chiefs of Staff on all matters, and if he is not satisfied with the ruling of the Viceroy on administrative matters, he will be able to exercise this right. The Commander-in-Chief, India, will continue to have the right of direct access to the British Chiefs of Staff.

*Deputy Supreme Allied Commander*

52. General Stilwell will be Deputy Supreme Allied Commander of the South-East Asia Theatre and in that capacity will command the Chinese troops operating in Burma and all United States air and ground forces committed to the South-East Asia Theatre.

53. The operational control of the Chinese forces operating into Burma will be exercised, in conformity with the over-all plan of the British Army Commander, by the Deputy Supreme Allied Commander or by his representative, who will be located with the troops.

54. The operational control of the 10th Air force will be vested in the Deputy Supreme Allied Commander and exercised by his air representative located at the headquarters of the Air Commander-in-Chief.

55. General Stilwell will continue to have the same direct responsibility to Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek as heretofore. His dual function under the Supreme Allied Commander and under the Generalissimo is recognised.

56. The organisation and command of the United States Army and Navy Air Transport Services in the South East Asia area will remain under the direct control of the Commanding General, United States Army Air Forces and of the Commander-in-Chief, United States Fleet, respectively, subject to such supply and service functions as may be by them delegated to the Deputy Supreme Allied Commander. Requests by the Supreme Allied Commander for the use of United States troop-carrier aircraft for operational purposes will be transmitted to the Deputy Supreme Allied Commander.

57. Requests for the use of surface transportation capacity in and through India, or for development involving construction for the air route to China, will be passed through the Supreme Allied Commander in order that they may be related, as regards priority, to his requirements before being placed on the Commander-in-Chief, India.

#### *Command Relationship*

58. The Combined Chiefs of Staff would exercise a general jurisdiction over strategy for the South East Asia Theatre, and the allocation of American and British resources of all kinds between the China Theatre and the South East Asia Command. The British Chiefs of Staff would exercise jurisdiction over all matters pertaining to operations, and would be the channel through which all instructions to the Supreme Commander are passed.

#### *The Co-ordination of American Agencies such as O.S.S., O.W.I., F.C.B., and etc. with comparable British Organisation*

59. In order to facilitate the free exchange of information and co-ordination between the United States and British quasi-military agencies in India and the South East Asia Command, a Combined Liaison Committee will be set up at New Delhi.

60. There will be full and open discussion in the Combined Liaison Committee before any quasi-military activities involving operations in India or the South East Asia Theatre are undertaken. However, before plans for such operations in these areas are put into effect by United States agencies, the concurrence of the Government of India, the Commander-in-Chief, India, or the Supreme Commander, South East Asia Theatre, must be obtained as applicable.

*V. Conclusions on Miscellaneous Subjects**Military consideration in relation to Spain*

61. We suggest that our general policy should be to deny the enemy his present privileged position in Spain, and to supplant him there to as great an extent as possible, thus transferring to the Germans the anxiety that has hitherto been ours. In pursuance of this policy, we suggest that we should now intensify pressure by economic and political means in order to obtain the following objectives:

- (a) Discontinuance of supplies of raw materials to Germany. The most important material which Germany obtains from Spain is wolfram, of which commodity Spain and Portugal supply the largest proportion of German requirements.
- (b) Withdrawal of the Blue Division from the ranks of the enemy.
- (c) A modification of the present distribution of Spanish forces in Morocco so as to remove any suggestion of distrust of the United Nations.
- (d) Cessation of the use of Spanish shipping for the benefit of our enemies.
- (e) Denial to the enemy of secret intelligence facilities.
- (f) Facilities for civil aircraft of United Nations.
- (g) A more benevolent attitude towards escaping Allied prisoners of war.
- (h) Elimination of objectionable anti-Allied propaganda and increase in pro-Allied propaganda.

*Military considerations in relation to Turkey*

62. We are of the opinion that, from the military point of view, the time is not ripe for Turkey to enter the war on our side. Our policy should be as follows:

- (a) We should ask Turkey to interpret the Montreux Convention strictly, so as to exclude the passage of all German shipping of military value through the Straits.
- (b) We should ask that supplies of chrome to Germany should be stopped.
- (c) We should ask Turkey to continue:
  - (1) To improve her internal communications.
  - (2) To complete the airfields required for 'Hardihood'.
  - (3) To allow us to install the full R.D.F. and Sector Control facilities which we require.
  - (4) To complete the construction of storage facilities required for the full 'Hardihood' Plan.
  - (5) To raise the effectiveness of their fighter forces.
- (c) Our policy on equipment to Turkey should be that we should continue to supply such equipment as we can spare and as the Turks can absorb.

*Re-equipping French forces*

63. We have approved the rearmament of French units up to and

including eleven divisions by 31st December, 1943, as recommended by the Commander North African Theatre.

*'Plough' force*

64. General Morgan and General Eisenhower have been given the details of 'Plough' force and have been asked to report as to possible uses for it in their respective theatres.

*Special operations in Sardinia and Corsica*

65. We have asked General Eisenhower to examine the possibilities of intensifying subversive activities in Sardinia and Corsica with a view to facilitating entry into those islands.

*'Habbakuk'*

66. We have examined the possibilities of constructing 'floating air-fields' and have given our approval to the active pursuit of further experiments.

*Pipeline, Indo-China*

67. We have approved, subject to prior requirements for Military operations in Burma, the construction of a 4-in. pipeline from Assam to Kuming and of a 6-in. pipeline from Calcutta to Assam. These will facilitate air operations in China and ease congestion on the existing lines of supply.

*Supply Routes in N.E. India*

68. We have approved, subject to prior requirements of operations in Burma, intensified development of the supply routes into and in Assam and have issued directives to theatre commanders concerned with a view to a target of 22,000 tons per month being reached by 31st December, 1945.

RELATION OF AVAILABLE RESOURCES TO THE  
OPERATIONS DECIDED UPON

69. We have carried out an examination of the available resources of the United Nations with a view to assessing our ability to carry out the operations decided upon. We find in general that these resources will be sufficient to meet our needs. In some cases, however, the availability of resources is dependent upon conditions which cannot be foreseen at this time. This subject, therefore, should be kept under constant review, and if shortages should develop or conflicts of interest arise, they will be referred to the Combined Chiefs of Staff for decision.

## APPENDIX IX

### The Quebec Conference

Articles of Agreement Governing Collaboration  
between the Authorities of the U.S.A. and the U.K.  
in the matter of 'Tube Alloys'

Whereas it is vital to our common safety in the present War to bring the 'Tube Alloys' project to fruition at the earliest moment; and whereas this may be more speedily achieved if all available British and American brains and resources are pooled; and whereas owing to war conditions it would be an improvident use of war resources to duplicate plants on a large scale on both sides of the Atlantic and therefore a far greater expense has fallen upon the United States;

It is agreed between us

First, that we will never use this agency against each other.

Secondly, that we will not use it against third parties without each other's consent.

Thirdly, that we will not either of us communicate any information about Tube Alloys to third parties except by mutual consent.

Fourthly, that in view of the heavy burden of production falling upon the United States as the result of a wise division of war effort, the British Government recognise that any post-war advantages of an industrial or commercial character shall be dealt with as between the United States and Great Britain on terms to be specified by the President of the United States to the Prime Minister of Great Britain. The Prime Minister expressly disclaims any interest in these industrial and commercial aspects beyond what may be considered by the President of the United States to be fair and just and in harmony with the economic welfare of the world.

And fifthly, that the following arrangements shall be made to ensure full and effective collaboration between the two countries in bringing the project to fruition:

- (a) There shall be set up in Washington a Combined Policy Committee composed of:

The Secretary for War (United States)

Dr. Vannevar Bush (United States)

Dr. James B. Conant (United States)

Field Marshal Sir John Dill, G.C.B., C.M.G., D.S.O. (United Kingdom)

Colonel the Right Hon. J. J. Llewellyn, C.B.E., M.C., M.P. (United Kingdom)

The Honourable C. D. Howe (Canada)



The functions of this Committee, subject to the control of the respective Governments, will be:

- (1) To agree from time to time upon the programme of work to be carried out in the two countries.
  - (2) To keep all sections of the project under constant review.
  - (3) To allocate materials, apparatus and plant, in limited supply, in accordance with the requirements of the programme agreed by the Committee.
  - (4) To settle any questions which may arise on the interpretation or application of this Agreement.
- (b) There shall be complete interchange of information and ideas on all sections of the project between members of the Policy Committee and their immediate technical advisers.
- (c) In the field of scientific research and development there shall be full and effective interchange of information and ideas between those in the two countries engaged in the same section of the field.
- (d) In the field of design, construction and operation of large-scale plants, interchange of information and ideas shall be regulated by such *ad hoc* arrangements as may, in each section of the field, appear to be necessary or desirable if the project is brought to fruition at the earliest moment. Such *ad hoc* arrangements shall be subject to the approval of the Policy Committee.

## APPENDIX X

### Cover Names

|              |   |
|--------------|---|
| ACCOLADE     | Proposed British attack on the Dodecanese.                              |
| ACHSE (AXIS) | German overall action in case of an Italian collapse.                   |
| ALARICH      | German troop movements into Italy in the case of an Italian collapse.   |
| ANAKIM       | Seaborne assault on Rangoon.  |
| ANVIL        | Allied invasion of the South of France.                                 |
| ARCADIA      | First Washington Conference, December 1941.                             |
| AVALANCHE    | Amphibious assault on Naples (Salerno).                                 |
| BACKBONE     | Proposed action against Spanish Morocco.                                |
| BAYTOWN      | Crossing of the Straits of Messina.                                     |
| BOLERO       | Build-up of U.S. forces in the United Kingdom.                          |
| BRIMSTONE    | Invasion of Sardinia.   |
| BULLFROG*    | Attack on Akyab.  |
| BUTTRESS     | Assault on 'Toe' of Italy at Reggio.                                    |
| CANNIBAL     | Early name for amphibious attack on Akyab.                              |
| CITADEL      | Plan for limited German offensive against Kursk.<br>Summer 1943.        |
| CULVERIN     | Operations against Northern Sumatra.                                    |
| FIREBRAND    | Invasion of Corsica.  |
| GEE          | Radar aid to bomber navigation.   |
| GOBLET       | Assault on 'Ball' of Italy at Cotrone.                                  |
| GYMNAST      | Invasion of French North Africa later called TORCH.                     |
| HABBAKUK     | Floating seadrome made of ice.  |
| HARDIHOOD    | British military aid to Turkey.   |
| HERCULES     | Projected Axis plan to capture Malta.                                   |
| HUSKY        | Invasion of Sicily.   |
| JUPITER      | Projected invasion of Northern Norway.                                  |
| KONSTANTIN   | German troop movements into the Balkans in case of an Italian collapse. |
| LIGHTFOOT    | Battle of El Alamein, October 1942.                                     |
| MINCEMEAT    | Deception plan for Sicilian operation.                                  |
| MUSKET       | Assault on 'Heel' of Italy at Apulia.                                   |
| OVERLORD     | Allied invasion of North West Europe.                                   |
| PEDESTAL     | Malta Convoy, August 1942.  |
| PLOUGH       | Special Combined Operations Force.                                      |
| POINTBLANK   | The Combined Bomber Offensive.  |
| PRICELESS    | Allied invasion of Italy.   |
| QUADRANT     | First Quebec Conference, August 1943.                                   |

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\* The cover name 'Bullfrog' was originally used for operations in Arakan but later replaced the name 'Cannibal' for the Akyab amphibious plans.

|              |  |
|--------------|--|
| RAVENOUS     | Proposed advance into Upper Burma across the Chindwin.                             |
| ROUNDHAMMER  | Early name for Operation OVERLORD.   |
| ROUND-UP     | Proposed Anglo-American invasion of Western Europe in 1943. Later called OVERLORD. |
| SCHWARZ      | German operation against Yugoslav Partisans. (The Fifth Offensive).                |
| SICKLE       | Movement of U.S. Air Forces to the United Kingdom.                                 |
| SLEDGEHAMMER | Proposed emergency invasion of N.W. Europe in 1942.                                |
| SUPERCHARGE  | Follow-up attack to LIGHTFOOT, November 1942.                                      |
| SYMBOL       | Casablanca Conference, January 1943.   |
| TORCH        | Anglo-American invasion of French North Africa.                                    |
| TRIDENT      | Second Washington Conference, May 1943.  |
| TUBE ALLOYS  | Atom Bomb Project.   |
| WEISS        | German operation against Yugoslav Partisans. (The Fourth Offensive).               |

## APPENDIX XI(A)

### Holders of Certain Appointments

#### MINISTERIAL

*Note: Members of the War Cabinet are shown in Italics.*

|  |   |
|--|---|
| Prime Minister, First Lord of the }<br>Treasury, Minister of Defence } | <i>Mr. Winston S. Churchill.</i>  |
| Lord President of the Council  | <i>Sir John Anderson.</i>   |
| Lord Privy Seal  | (a) <i>Sir Stafford Cripps.</i><br>(b) <i>Viscount Cranborne.</i><br>(from 22.11.42)      |
| Chancellor of the Exchequer  | <i>Sir Kingsley Wood.</i>   |
| Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs                                 | <i>Mr. Anthony Eden.</i>  |
| Secretary of State for Home Affairs, }<br>Minister for Home Security } | <i>Mr. Herbert Morrison.</i><br>(entered War Cabinet<br>22.11.42)                         |
| Secretary of State for Dominions                                       | <i>Mr. Clement Attlee.</i><br>(Deputy Prime Minister)                                     |
| Secretary of State for Colonies  | (a) <i>Viscount Cranborne.</i><br>(b) <i>Colonel Oliver Stanley.</i><br>(from 22.11.42)   |
| Secretary of State for India and Burma                                 | <i>Mr. L. S. Amery.</i>   |
| First Lord of the Admiralty  | <i>Mr. A. V. Alexander.</i>   |
| Secretary of State for War   | <i>Sir James Grigg.</i>   |
| Secretary of State for Air   | <i>Sir Archibald Sinclair.</i>  |
| Minister of Aircraft Production  | (a) <i>Colonel J. J. Llewellyn.</i><br>(b) <i>Sir Stafford Cripps.</i><br>(from 22.11.42) |
| Minister of Supply   | <i>Sir Andrew Duncan.</i>   |
| Minister of Production   | <i>Mr. Oliver Lyttelton.</i>  |
| Minister of War Transport  | <i>Lord Leathers.</i>   |
| President of the Board of Trade  | <i>Dr. Hugh Dalton.</i>   |
| Minister of Economic Warfare   | <i>Lord Selborne.</i>   |
| Minister of Food   | <i>Lord Woolton.</i>  |
| Minister of Labour and National Service                                | <i>Mr. Ernest Bevin.</i>  |
| Minister Without Portfolio   | <i>Sir William Jowitt.</i>  |
| Paymaster General  | <i>Lord Cherwell.</i>   |
| Minister of State (Middle East)  | <i>Mr. R. G. Casey.</i>   |
| Minister Resident for Supply<br>(Washington)                           | <i>Colonel J. J. Llewellyn</i><br>(from 22.11.42)   |
| Minister Resident (AFHQ)   | <i>Mr. Harold Macmillan.</i><br>(from 30.12.42)   |

Minister Resident (West Africa)

Leader of the House of Lords

Leader of the House of Commons

Viscount Swinton.

(from 8.6.42)

Viscount Cranborne.

(a) *Sir Stafford Cripps.*

(b) *Mr. Anthony Eden.*

(from 22.11.42)

# APPENDIX XI(B)

## Holders of Certain Appointments

### SERVICE

#### CHIEFS OF STAFF COMMITTEE

|  |   |
|--|---|
| Chief of Naval Staff and First Sea Lord          | Admiral of the Fleet<br>Sir Dudley Pound.           |
| Chief of the Imperial General Staff              | General Sir Alan Brooke.<br>(Chairman of Committee) |
| Chief of the Air Staff                           | Air Chief Marshal Sir<br>Charles Portal.            |
| Chief of Combined Operations                     | Vice Admiral<br>Lord Louis Mountbatten.             |
| Chief of Staff to the Minister of Defence        | Lieut. General Sir<br>Hastings Ismay.               |
| Chief of British Joint Staff Mission, Washington | Field Marshal Sir John Dill.                        |

#### DIRECTORS OF PLANS

Captain C. E. Lambe, R.N.  
Brigadier G. M. Stewart.  
(killed January 1943)  
Brigadier W. Porter.  
(from 19.2.43)  
Air Commodore W. Elliot.

#### U.S. JOINT CHIEFS OF STAFF

|  |                               |
|--|-------------------------------|
| Chief of Staff to the President and Chairman of the Committee      | Admiral William D. Leahy.     |
| Chief of Staff to U.S. Army  | General George C. Marshall    |
| Commander-in-Chief of the U.S. Fleet and Chief of Naval Operations | Fleet Admiral Ernest J. King. |
| Commanding General U.S. Army Air Forces                            | General Henry H. Arnold.      |































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