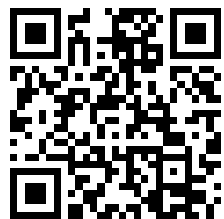


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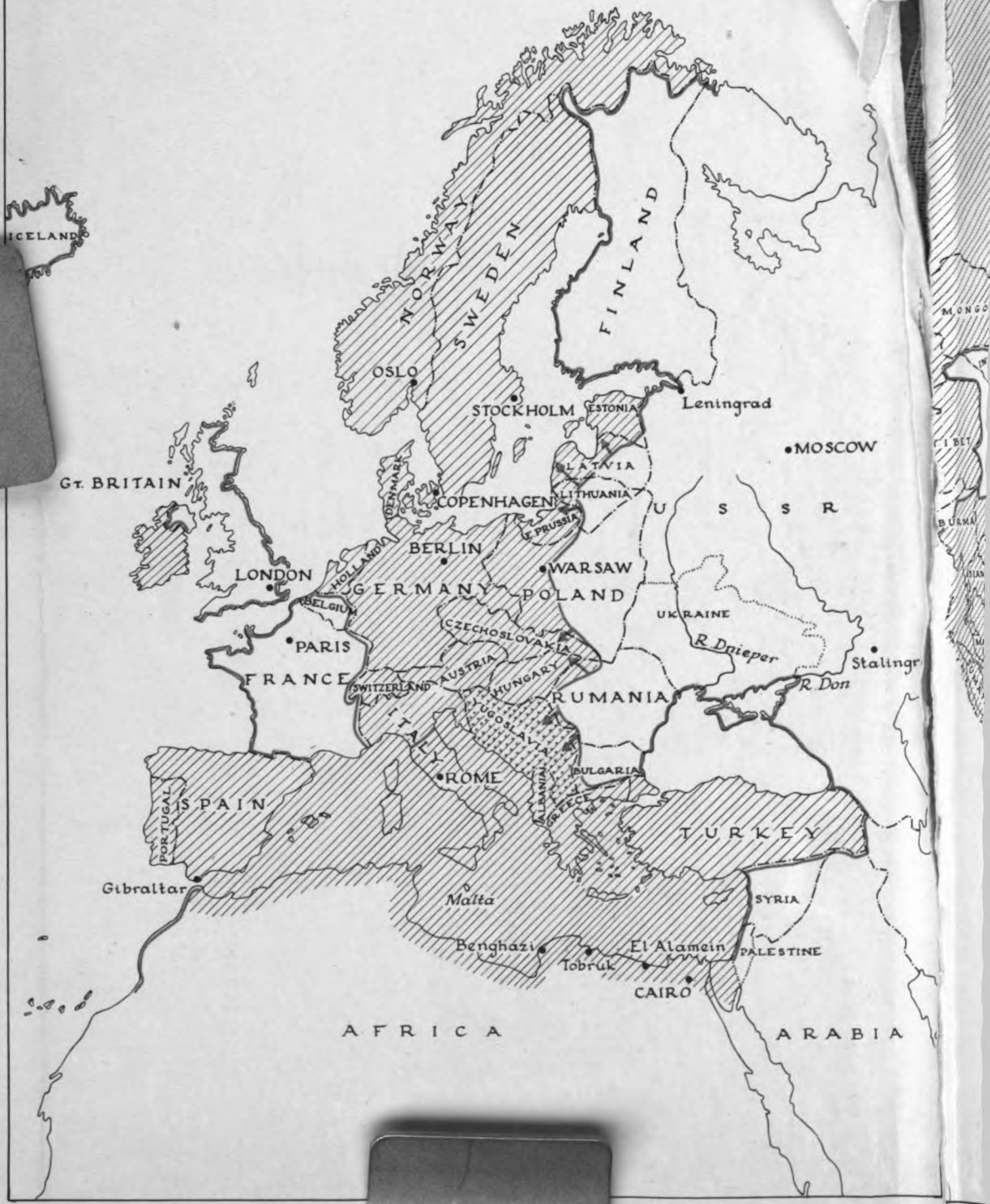




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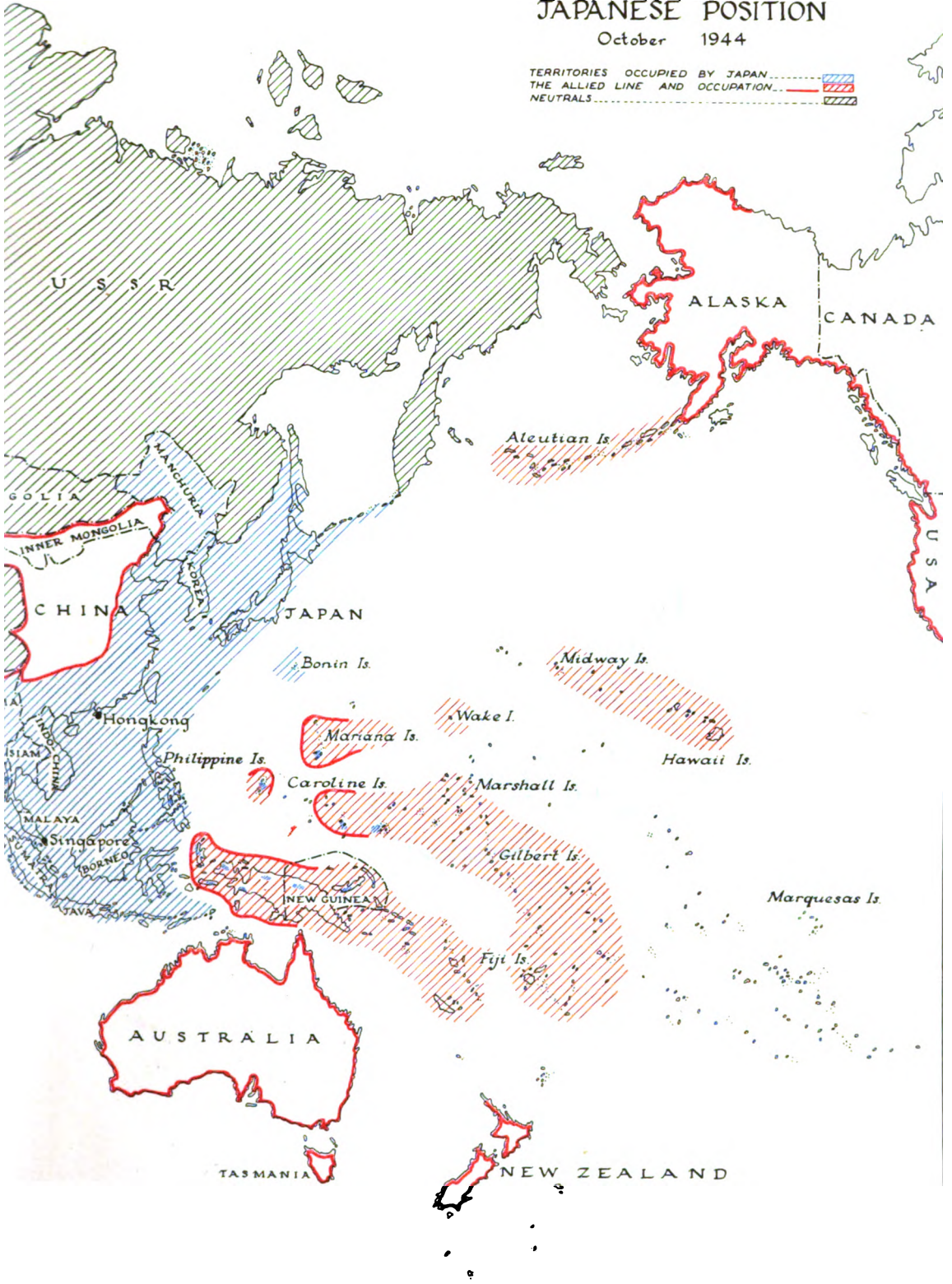
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- OCCUPIED TERRITORIES SUBJECT TO GUERRILLA WARFARE... [cross-hatching]
- THE ALLIED LINE AND OCCUPATION... [dotted line]
- RUSSIAN OFFENSIVE IN PROGRESS... [dashed line]
- NEUTRALS... [horizontal hatching]



# JAPANESE POSITION

October 1944

TERRITORIES OCCUPIED BY JAPAN .....  
THE ALLIED LINE AND OCCUPATION...  
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**HISTORY OF  
THE SECOND WORLD WAR  
UNITED KINGDOM MILITARY SERIES**

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



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PRESIDENT ROOSEVELT AND MR. CHURCHILL

GRAND  
STRATEGY

VOLUME VI

October 1944–August 1945

by

JOHN EHRMAN

*Sometime Fellow of Trinity College, Cambridge*

LONDON: 1956

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## INTRODUCTION

**T**HE LAST two years of the war, from August, 1943 to August 1945, form a single period in the history of grand strategy, which may be called that of the strategic offensive. The design for Europe which emerged from the First Quebec Conference in August 1943, and the complementary limits to the Allied effort in the Far East, governed the plans for the next twelve months, and provided the background to developments in 1945. Ideally, therefore, the whole of the period should have been covered in one volume. But the weight and variety of the events make this difficult, if not impossible; and we have accordingly been obliged to divide the period into two parts, which form Volumes V and VI of this series.

The dividing line has fallen at September/October, 1944. For it was in September, 1944 that an important change took place within the pattern of the strategic offensive. From August 1943, the Western Allies hoped to defeat Germany before the end of the following year; and in some respects—for example, in planning the allocation of manpower in Britain, and in their strategy for the Far East—based their calculations upon that event. In the summer of 1944, the importance of this timely victory became increasingly plain, particularly to the British who were by then straining the limits of manpower and production, and could not therefore hope long to maintain their accustomed share of the Allied effort. The successful invasion of north-west France in June (operation 'Overlord')<sup>1</sup> sealed Germany's fate in the long run, confronting her with the dreaded war on three fronts—in western Europe, on the Russian front, and in Italy—which must lead to her destruction. But it remained to be seen if she could be beaten quickly. Towards the end of August, it looked for the first time as if this might be so. A series of great victories on each front—in France, in Italy, on the Russian front north of the Carpathians, and in Rumania—combined with reports of growing dislocation inside Germany, led the military authorities in Britain and America to forecast an early surrender; and when the Second Quebec Conference opened early in September, it was in an atmosphere of high enthusiasm. But by the end of the month, the hopes had been disappointed. A serious check on the western front at Arnhem, a threatened stalemate in the Apennines in Italy, and an enforced pause by the Russians along the eastern bank of the Vistula, imposed delays upon the Allies which could not be overcome before the winter.<sup>2</sup> The Germans, defeated on every field, at

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<sup>1</sup> Code names used in this volume are given in Appendix I below.

<sup>2</sup> See Front End-paper.



sea and in the air, and increasingly disorganized at home, contrived to muster just enough strength in the autumn to make their opponents prepare final campaigns on each front, none of which in the event could be launched until 1945. While the strategy of First Quebec thus brought the enemy in Europe to the brink of defeat, it failed to bring about his surrender by the end of 1944, with consequences which were to be seen in the following year.

This last volume therefore covers a period which is in one sense an anticlimax. In Europe the grand design disappears, to be replaced for some months by a series of local designs which no longer form a coherent whole. Germany's surrender is almost certain; but it has still to be secured, and that rests now with the commanders in the theatres more than with the planners and the Chiefs of Staff in London and Washington. To a series concerned principally with the central authorities, the last nine months in Europe thus form a somewhat disjointed epilogue to the main story.

But if it is in this sense an anticlimax, the period has a different interest of its own. For the change of emphasis between the centre and the theatres is accompanied by a new development of growing importance to the central authorities themselves. As the strategic design gives way largely to the event, the movements of the armies and air forces raise fresh issues throughout Europe in which military and diplomatic interests are closely associated. Operational strategy becomes increasingly a matter for the theatre commanders; but its consequences become increasingly the concern of the Foreign Departments, and the Governments in London and Washington are thus brought again into the detail of local plans. The combinations and conflicts between the military and diplomatic issues, and the part played in this association by the central strategic authorities, form the main theme of that part of our volume in which grand strategy itself falls increasingly into the background.

The pattern changes also in the Far East; but in another way. The decisions of First Quebec, defining the proportions of the Allied effort in the two wars, had limited severely what could be done against the Japanese; and the disappointment in Europe immediately after Second Quebec caused further difficulties in the Eastern theatres. But in the winter of 1944/45, the Americans in the Pacific and the Allies (mainly British) in Burma gained notable successes, which allowed the former at last to contemplate an assault on the Japanese inner zone of defence, and the latter the reconquest of the rest of south-east Asia. Plans and operations gained pace from the early summer of 1945, based for the first time on the knowledge that reinforcements would soon arrive from Europe. The last phase of the war in the Far East—however prolonged that might be—was thus in prospect, when in August the two atomic bombs were dropped upon Japan.

The sole connexion between the two wars had for long been that of supply. By the beginning of 1945, the prospect of Germany's surrender removed many of the earlier difficulties, and the later Allied conferences had no occasion to survey the relations between East and West in detail. This volume therefore falls into two distinct parts, the first covering the war in Europe from October, 1944 to May 1945, the second the war in the Far East from October, 1944 to August, 1945. They are linked by a chapter on the problems of the turn-over. The independence of each of these parts from the other has led me to provide separate introductory remarks to each, designed to link them with the appropriate parts of Volume V. But I would stress again here, what has already been mentioned, that the two volumes form one work and, while as self-contained as possible, should really be read together. References to Volume V thus occur throughout Volume VI, and the introductory remarks to the two wars have been kept as short as possible. They are preceded here by a brief factual introduction to those parts of the Western military organization with which we shall be principally concerned, which the reader of the earlier volume may, if he so wishes, omit.

In the last two years of the war, there were two dominating features of the Western Allies' direction of military affairs. First, the supreme control was in the hands personally of the Heads of Government, advised and assisted by their Chiefs of Staff. The Chiefs of Staff in Britain, and the Joint Chiefs of Staff in the United States, forming together the Combined Chiefs of Staff,<sup>1</sup> held executive power over the commanders, and constituted in practice the sole continuous advisory body to their political superiors. The constitutional position, however, was not similar in each case. The Joint Chiefs of Staff were responsible solely to the President, who was also Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces of the United States; they had been created by his fiat, and within the limits of the Constitution exercised their powers entirely in accordance with his wishes. The British Chiefs of Staff, on the other hand, formed a part of the Cabinet committee system, and were collectively responsible to the War Cabinet through the Minister of Defence. The fact that the Minister of Defence was also the Prime Minister led to their elevation in practice above the status which they occupied in theory, and to the complementary depression of the War Cabinet's Defence Committee, set up originally to provide the political control which Mr. Churchill now exercised by himself. Nevertheless,

<sup>1</sup> It is necessary to stress, at this point, the difference between 'Joint' and 'Combined', for the terms will appear often throughout this volume. 'Joint' always applies to inter-Service committees of one nationality, 'Combined' to Anglo-American (usually inter-Service) committees. Of the three Chiefs of Staff's Committees, the British were called simply the Chiefs of Staff, the Americans were called the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and the combination was called the Combined Chiefs of Staff.

while the Chiefs of Staff in practice controlled the British strategy with the Prime Minister, they were well aware of the constitutional position and of the origin and nature of their exceptional powers.

The membership of the two Chiefs of Staff's Committees, in Britain and in the United States, remained constant from October, 1943 to August, 1945. The Joint Chiefs of Staff consisted of Admiral William D. Leahy (Chairman, and Chief of Staff to the President in the latter's capacity as Commander-in-Chief of the U.S. Armed Forces), General George C. Marshall (Chief of Staff of the U.S. Army), Admiral Ernest J. King (Commander-in-Chief of the U.S. Fleet and Chief of Naval Operations), and General Henry H. Arnold (Commanding General, U.S. Army Air Forces).<sup>1</sup> The British Chiefs of Staff were Field Marshal Sir Alan Brooke (Chairman, and Chief of the Imperial General Staff), Marshal of the Royal Air Force Sir Charles Portal (Chief of the Air Staff), Admiral of the Fleet Sir Andrew Cunningham (First Sea Lord and Chief of the Naval Staff), and General Sir Hastings Ismay (Deputy Secretary (Military) of the War Cabinet, and Chief of Staff to the Minister of Defence). The Chief of Combined Operations (Major-General R. E. Laycock) attended those meetings which concerned his affairs.

Each committee disposed of an effective organization, which had developed from that of the pre-war Committee of Imperial Defence in Britain. The main components in each case were the Joint Planning Staff, the Joint Intelligence Committee, and the Joint Administrative Planning Staff; all composed, as were the Chiefs of Staff themselves, of the appropriate officers of each Service, responsible in their individual capacities to their own Departments and in their collective capacities to the Chiefs of Staff's Committees.<sup>2</sup> In Britain, the system was linked closely with the system of central civil committees, through the War Cabinet Offices to which both belonged.

The Combined Chiefs of Staff consisted of both sets of Chiefs of Staff in session. But it was of course normally impossible for the two committees to meet, and in the intervals they had headquarters in Washington, where the British were represented by their Joint Staff Mission, headed until November, 1944 by Field Marshal Sir John Dill, and from December, 1944 by Field Marshal Sir Henry Maitland Wilson.<sup>3</sup> The Head of the Joint Staff Mission attended meetings of the full Combined Chiefs of Staff's Committee, when that met. The Combined Chiefs of Staff had their own committee system, identical to the systems of the two national committees, and composed of the members of the Joint Chiefs of Staff's and of the British Joint Staff Mission's sub-committees in Washington.

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<sup>1</sup> All created Fleet Admirals and Generals of the Army in December, 1944.

<sup>2</sup> For details, see Chapter X below.

<sup>3</sup> The latter promoted to Field Marshal in December, 1944.

The Combined Chiefs of Staff exercised 'a grand strategic jurisdiction' over all theatres of operations in which British and American forces were engaged.<sup>1</sup> Its form varied with the type of operations and with the nature of the theatre. The Combined Chiefs of Staff themselves were responsible for operational strategy on the continent of Europe and in the Mediterranean Command; the Joint Chiefs of Staff were responsible for operational strategy in the Pacific, and for relating operations in China (where the Western Allies recognized Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek as commander) to Allied strategy in the Far East; the British Chiefs of Staff were responsible for operational strategy in south-east Asia and (so far as it retained a separate identity) in the Middle East Command. The respective navies were responsible for operational strategy in their zones in the Atlantic. Long-range air operations against Germany were the responsibility of the Supreme Commander in western Europe from February to September 1944, and then reverted to the control of the Combined Chiefs of Staff; long-range air operations against Japan were conducted partly under the command of the Commander-in-Chief, Pacific Ocean Areas, and partly under that of the War Department in Washington.

The second dominating feature of the Western military organization lay in the fact that, by the spring of 1944, a single broad pattern of command obtained in all theatres of operations containing Allied forces of all three Services. This was the system of the Supreme Command, whose details naturally varied in each theatre.<sup>2</sup> In Europe and in south-east Asia, the commanders were known as Supreme Commanders. General Dwight D. Eisenhower<sup>3</sup> was Supreme Commander of the Allied Expeditionary Force in western Europe; General Sir Henry Maitland Wilson was Supreme Commander in the Mediterranean until November 1944, when he was relieved by Field Marshal Sir Harold Alexander; and Admiral Lord Louis Mountbatten was Supreme Commander in south-east Asia. There were still three (British) Commanders-in-Chief in committee in the Middle East Command; but that was itself subordinate to the Mediterranean Command for operations throughout the Mediterranean Sea and in south-east Europe, and exercised a separate jurisdiction only over certain African territories, the Levant, and the Red Sea with its coastal territories. In the Pacific, the commanders were known as Commanders-in-Chief. Admiral Chester Nimitz<sup>4</sup> was Commander-in-Chief of the Pacific Ocean Areas, General Douglas MacArthur<sup>5</sup> of the South-West Pacific Area. But whatever his title, each of these commanders controlled the forces of all three Services within his command,

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<sup>1</sup> See Rear End-paper.

<sup>2</sup> For details, see Chapter X below.

<sup>3</sup> Created General of the Army in December, 1944.

<sup>4</sup> Created Fleet Admiral in December, 1944.

<sup>5</sup> Created General of the Army in December, 1944.

and each was equally responsible to the appropriate organ of the Combined Chiefs of Staff. In operations, as in planning, the two Allies thus formed a combination in which the Services and the Governments themselves assumed a corporate responsibility.

Place names in this volume follow official practice. I have referred to individuals by the styles they held at the time—e.g., Mr. Churchill, General Eisenhower, Mr. Eden—and, where I have omitted prefixes, have tried to combine courtesy with convenience.

I wish to thank all those who, by research, information, or comment on the text, have helped in the production of the book: the wartime Ministers, Chiefs of Staff and commanders, staff officers, and officials; the historians and staff of the United Kingdom Official Histories, Military and Civil; the members of the Advisory Panel of the Official Military Histories; the staffs of the Records and Historical Sections of the Cabinet Office, and of various Departments; and the historians in Commonwealth and Allied countries. I am glad to repeat the observation that I made in Volume V of this series: that despite the novel nature of these volumes on grand strategy in the writing of official history, no Department or individual has asked me to censor or to alter anything of substance; nor has there been any obstacle to quoting the documents from which I have wished to quote. Ministers, the Secretary of the Cabinet, Departments, and the United States Government have given permission for documents to be reproduced where required. Certain cypher telegrams have been paraphrased for security, but without affecting their substance or sense; otherwise, quotations have been shortened, as shown in the text, only when I have considered a passage irrelevant or redundant. Where I reproduce substantial extracts from Sir Winston Churchill's unpublished Minutes and telegrams, as distinct from the full text, the full relevant text is given in an appendix: where I quote one of his Minutes or telegrams already published in his memoirs, I refer for comparison to the relevant volume. Otherwise, I have cited publications for statements or quotations not available in the documents I have used.

As in the previous volume, I would wish to conclude with two special words of thanks: to my Editor, Professor J. R. M. Butler, who has borne the ultimate responsibility for the work throughout, and has given me most valuable advice and support; and to my principal Research Assistant, Miss Jean Dawson, to whose industry, scholarship and judgment I have been constantly indebted throughout the writing of these books.

*March, 1956.*



CHAPTER I  
GERMANY AND THE WESTERN  
ALLIES IN THE AUTUMN  
OF 1944

(i)  
Germany

**B**Y THE END of September 1944, the Germans had gained a valuable respite from the defeat which had seemed to confront them a few weeks before. They had managed to check the Allies' advance in the west, in the south, and in the east north of the Carpathians; and thus to deny them victory before the winter. The question now was, to what extent would Germany be able to benefit from the time she had gained?

Provided that the three-fold offensive was maintained, her position ultimately was hopeless, and recovery could be only partial and temporary. The prospect of large American reinforcements in the west, of renewed pressure in the east and of containment at least in the south, combined with the heavier air bombardment of the Reich itself, allowed of only one conclusion. This indeed was obvious, even to Hitler. His motives for continuing to fight were, first, that he doubted if the three-fold offensive would be maintained; and secondly, that if it were, he preferred to see Germany destroyed than to surrender a hopeless cause.

Hitler's conviction that the pressure would ease arose from his invariable habit of over-simplifying his problems, so that a solution which in the long run may have been partially, or even essentially, correct was taken as immediate and inevitable. This Marxist cast of mind—for Hitler, like Mussolini, was the product of the abortive European revolution—with its respect for the Idea, tended always to equate developments with principles, often in disregard of the circumstances. Hitler indeed was an opportunist, but never a pragmatist; and as his messianic complex grew, and the principles were transformed into decrees of fate, his opportunism became the more limited and the more unreal. Convinced that the Western Allies and Russia, enjoying no final aim in common, could not long enjoy a common immediate aim, he had already suffered heavily by making this, the basis of his diplomacy, the basis of his strategy. Now, as relations

between the three Allies showed clear signs of strain, the illusion revived, the more strongly because it offered to an apparently doomed Hero the only prospect of that victory for which he was destined and had been preserved. The myth persisted almost to the end. 'The time will come,' the Fuehrer remarked at the end of August 1944, 'when the tension between the Allies will become so great that the break will occur. All the coalitions have disintegrated in history sooner or later.' 'Never in history', he told his Generals in December, 'was there a coalition like that of our enemies, composed of such heterogeneous elements with such divergent aims . . . he who, like a spider sitting in the middle of his web, can watch developments, observes how these antagonisms grow stronger and stronger from hour to hour. If now we can deliver a few more heavy blows, then at any moment this artificially-boasted common front may suddenly collapse with a gigantic clap of thunder . . .' 'Do you think,' he asked his advisers in January 1945, when the Red Army was sweeping into Eastern Germany, 'the English can be really enthusiastic about all the Russian developments?' And even at the end of April, when the Americans and Russians met on the Elbe, he seized on a report from neutral sources that they had quarrelled over their conquests. 'Here again is striking proof of the disunity of our enemies. Is it not still possible that any day—nay, any hour—war may break out between the Bolsheviks and the Anglo-Saxons over their prey, Germany?'

The Fuehrer's later theories had little bearing on events. But in the autumn and winter of 1944 his attitude was of supreme importance, providing an immediate object for the national effort that led to the counter-attack at the end of the year. In the last resort, however, it was irrelevant. For win, draw or lose, Hitler was determined not to surrender. The element of nihilism in his nature, always strong, was released by the events of 1945. As early as 1934, when talking of a future war, he had remarked that 'We may be destroyed, but if we are, we shall drag a world with us—a world in flames.'<sup>1</sup> He meant what he said, and he did not change his mind. In November 1942, he declared over the wireless that he would fight if necessary to 'five minutes past twelve'; and when the necessity seemed likely to arise, he was willing—in a sense eager—to make good his words. This acceptance of destruction, which found an echo in many German hearts, was given a peculiar flavour by Hitler's contempt for his own associates and people, a legacy from the early days of failure which its return revived. 'The nation,' he told Albert Speer in March 1945, 'has proved weak.' Therefore it did not deserve to live. It was the logical end for the theory on which the Third Reich had been built.

These rationalizations of hope and of despair alternately governed the Fuehrer after July, 1944; and indeed, as we read the discussions at

<sup>1</sup> Hermann Rauschning, *Hitler Speaks* (1939), p. 15.

his headquarters, we are far removed from the prosaic but sane deliberations of the British and American Chiefs of Staff and Governments. But whatever his motives, Hitler retained the power almost to the end to impose his will on Germany. The mounting disasters had strengthened and not weakened his position, until there was no conceivable alternative to his leadership. The fissiparous structure of government, combined with gutter politics at the centre, effectually prevented any of the lesser figures from challenging the supreme authority; Goering had gone to seed, Goebbels disposed of no organization and in any case was loyal, Himmler lacked initiative and was disliked by the Party, and Bormann and Ribbentrop were hated by the rest. None had the power or the prestige to overcome his rivals. But in any case all, in the end, were meaningless apart from Hitler. All owed him their political existence, and none dared or indeed wished to deny it. 'They were all under his spell, blindly obedient to him and with no will of their own.' Even Speer, who pronounced this verdict, and who perhaps alone of the more important figures was capable of intellectual independence, confessed himself unable to reject the man who, as it seemed to him, contained for good or ill the German destiny.

Nor was the Army in a position to resist. The failure of its last and most serious attempt to kill Hitler on 20th July, 1944 had been followed by an exceptionally savage purge. The numbers affected are not known; but certainly some thousands (almost 5,000 according to one estimate) were executed, and thousands more were despatched to the concentration camps. Almost all the leaders of the plot, with their civilian colleagues, were caught, tried by a People's Court, and done to death. But they proved only the occasion for a wider revenge. Many of the victims had little or no connexion with the plotters, let alone with the plot; but it was enough to have shown independence of mind in the past now to be deemed guilty or capable of treason. The Civil Service, and to a lesser extent the Churches and the professions, felt the weight of the attack; but the heaviest blows naturally fell on the higher Army officers, long the target of Hitler's resentment. While the Army itself was explicitly dissociated from their guilt, the Generals were finally eliminated as a political force. Himmler was placed in command of the Reserve Army; political officers, on the earlier Russian model, were appointed to all military headquarters; and officers and men were required to adopt the Nazi salute. No further opposition was encountered. The Officers' Corps had now reaped the fruits of its long association with the Fuehrer; and harried and hunted, cowed and without hope, the survivors fought the last campaigns immediately under his baleful eye.

The failure of the Army at this late hour removed any possibility of opposition from other sources. The Air Force, which had shared Hitler's growing disfavour, lacked its prestige and organization; while

the Navy, traditionally of less importance, was also incapable of effective independent action, and in any case had recently been favoured by the Fuehrer in contrast to the Army. Outside the armed forces, the gallant groups of civilian opposition, some connected with elements in the Churches, shared no common organization and were divided on both means and ends. Some favoured an approach to Goering and the military leaders, others to Himmler: some an appeal to the West, others to the East. Thus from the summer of 1944 there was no effective alternative to Hitler. This one man, and perhaps he alone, held the German people together and impelled it to destruction.

The state of Germany in the last quarter of 1944 still allowed of this exercise in will power. For morally and materially, the country was not yet done. Various explanations have been given to account for its continued resistance under such unpromising circumstances. The relative importance of patriotism, fear of the régime, and fear of the enemy have been debated at length. An account of Allied strategy is not the place for a detailed discussion of German morale; but the Allies' attitude towards the enemy formed part of their strategy, and its effect must be considered in relation to other factors. It may be examined under two headings: 'unconditional surrender', and the bombing of the German towns.

The formula of 'unconditional surrender', announced at the Casablanca Conference in January, 1943 chiefly to prevent Hitler from setting the Western Allies and the Russians against each other, is often held to have played into his hands, allowing Goebbels to convince the German people that it could expect no mercy in defeat. This impression, it has been argued, was strengthened first by the Western Allies' refusal to enlarge in any way upon the formula, and subsequently by the President's and Prime Minister's endorsement, in September 1944, of the Morgenthau Plan, whereby they gave notice of their intention to dismantle the metallurgical, chemical and electrical industries of the Ruhr and Saar after the war, with a view to 'converting Germany into a country primarily agricultural and pastoral in character.' These are said to have been psychological blunders, which discouraged the opposition to Hitler, strengthened the German people's resolve to fight on to the end, and thereby deterred any of its representatives from approaching the West at an earlier stage as a refuge from the vengeance of the East.

The formula of 'unconditional surrender' undoubtedly had a significant and precise effect on the last stage of the war against Japan, when both the national traditions of the enemy and the current circumstances gave to it a particular importance.<sup>1</sup> But its effect in

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<sup>1</sup> See Chapter IX below.

Europe is difficult, perhaps impossible, to assess. Without explicit supporting evidence, how indeed are we to measure the consequences of a formula upon a country? And in the case of Germany, no such evidence can be produced. Whatever the effect of 'unconditional surrender' on the opposition to Hitler, there is no compelling reason to suppose that the opposition would have succeeded if 'unconditional surrender' had never been announced. Nor can we say what was its effect on the country, for there is no way of showing that it deterred any Germans from surrendering who would have surrendered otherwise. It had no demonstrable effect on the German troops in North Africa or in France, many of whom were taken prisoner without bothering about conditions; nor, in the last resort, on those in Italy or Germany. Whether 'unconditional surrender' postponed that last resort, we again cannot say without reference to other factors which are themselves capable of explaining its timing. It is in fact quite possible to account on military grounds alone for the continuation of the German resistance throughout 1944, and for its collapse in 1945; and 'benevolent promises', it has been said, 'will not produce surrender so long as military conditions continue hopeful, nor will the absence of benevolent promises prevent surrender when the military situation becomes hopeless.'<sup>1</sup>

This is not to say that the military situation was not affected by, indeed did not depend on, adequate morale, in which the effect of 'unconditional surrender' may well have played its part. It is possible that Goebbels' propaganda on the subject stimulated the Germans to fight on and to produce more. It is also possible that they would have done so anyway. We cannot really tell, and we do not belittle the possible consequences of the Allies' attitude by declining to claim what can scarcely be measured or proved.

But in fact, of course, 'unconditional surrender' cannot be taken as a factor in isolation; and the relation between *matériel* and morale may perhaps be seen more clearly in the case of the other possible Allied deterrent to surrender, which German propaganda linked with 'unconditional surrender' and from which the latter may well have derived a greater force. It is generally agreed that the British campaign of area bombing, which in 1943 and 1944 caused the partial destruction of such great cities as Berlin, Hamburg, Cologne, Essen and Düsseldorf, had a profound effect, perhaps equal to that produced by the Russians' advances, on the German people. But if the effect was profound, what precisely was its nature? The raids certainly aroused hatred and defiance, as the German raids on British towns had aroused the same emotions. But this does not answer the question. Were the hatred and defiance strong enough to overcome the misery and fear which the same attacks produced? Did the campaign recoil upon the

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<sup>1</sup> Arthur J. Schlesinger, jr., in *The Reporter* (N.Y.), 26/4/52.

heads of its authors? Or were the results by the winter of 1944 sufficient to prepare directly for its object, 'the undermining of the morale of the German people to the point at which their capacity for armed resistance is fatally weakened'?

This question is in turn extremely difficult to answer; for it is difficult, if not impossible, to take area bombing in isolation at this period of the war. We should rather examine its rôle and its results within the whole Allied air campaign in Europe, which at this stage was of immediate and critical importance. For Germany's ability to continue into 1945 now rested on her ability to realize two aims, each at this time of equal significance: the reinforcement of her armies on at least one of the two main fronts, and the maintenance of production. The solution to both of these problems—each of them urgent in the autumn of 1944, and the second of long-range importance also—depended largely on the Allies' distribution of their air power between their various commitments.

Germany's immediate difficulties were met in the event. While her armies were retreating fast in August, the Reich itself was scoured for reinforcements. In the course of that month, the recruiting age was lowered from 17½ to 16 years, and men and boys were transferred to the army from industry and reserved occupations, and—as in Britain—from the navy and air. Training methods and organization were meanwhile modified, to produce defensive divisions more quickly. By these measures, the Germans managed to re-form and raise the equivalent of some forty divisions, of varying strength and efficiency, between the beginning of September and the middle of December;<sup>1</sup> and while this did not, owing to current losses, result in a marked increase in strength over the period, it enabled the enemy to deploy just enough force in the west to block the Allies' advance and thereafter to prepare a serious counter-attack. In these tasks, he was not materially hampered from the air.

The reinforcement of the army threw a heavy strain on the German war economy, from which it took men and demanded greater output at a time of increasing difficulties. Nevertheless, while production declined from its peak, it managed to meet the immediate needs until almost the end of 1944. This achievement, and its survival into 1945, seem, like the deployment of new forces, to have been due mainly to two causes: first, improved administration in Germany; secondly, the Allies' failure to deliver a decisive blow from the air.

Some at least of the credit for the achievements of German production in 1944 must be given to the reorganization which the Ministry of Armaments and War Production, under the direction of Albert Speer,

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<sup>1</sup> This figure, which is the result of a piece of complicated mathematical research by the Enemy Documents Section of the Cabinet Office, includes divisions entirely re-formed, but not battered and replenished divisions.



imposed upon the national economy. For by British standards, this had not hitherto been fully mobilized for war. Early in 1944, German production was still surprisingly varied, and its control still inexact. Speer himself had recently cited some curious instances: an annual output of 120,000 typewriters, 150,000 electric cushions, 3,600 electric refrigerators, 300,000 electric counting machines, 800 tons of piano string, 364,000 spurs. The distribution of industry was correspondingly unsatisfactory: at the end of 1943, it was calculated that 1.8 million workers were employed by the basic industries, such as coal, iron, chemicals and power; 5.2 million by the armaments industry, including components; and some 6 million on producing consumer goods, partly in cottage industries. There was also room, as indeed was probably the case in all of the belligerent nations, for an increase in efficiency, and particularly for better measures of maintaining production after air raids. In the first half of 1944, Speer managed to overcome many of the difficulties. The dispersal of key industries, already advanced, was increased; somewhat greater protection was afforded, particularly to aircraft production, in underground and concrete factories; rigorous measures were taken, and publicized, against inefficiency; and, perhaps most important, Speer's increased control allowed him to insist on modifications in design and on a closer contact with the armed forces which saved material. The process was never completed; in July, 1944 Speer was still talking of great unexploited reserves, and he never managed, in particular, to mobilize large numbers of women for industry. But the production of armaments was rising steadily and that of consumer goods falling, and the products were being related more effectively to the tasks in hand.

The impetus given by these reforms endured after German production had again entered a decline, and enabled Speer to guide it through the autumn and into the winter in spite of the growing difficulties. These were indeed becoming immense. The effect of the further withdrawal of men for the forces has already been mentioned. There was now no reserve of manpower for industry other than a proportion of the new age group, and efforts to mobilize women, first made in the autumn of 1944, failed completely. The administrative machine, already extended, could not absorb a new task of such magnitude, and only a few thousands were added to the small figure of 182,000 recruited since May, 1939. As serious as the lack of manpower was the loss of foreign material and production. The summer campaigns had deprived Germany of the manufactures, raw materials and produce of France, Belgium and Rumania, and particularly of coal and oil. The maritime blockade of Europe had meant comparatively little: a land blockade of the Reich was another matter.

But above all, Germany in the autumn of 1944 had to face the prospect of a renewal, on a greater scale and in changed conditions,

of the bombing campaign from the West. Much has been written on the rôle of air power in subduing the German economy and in winning the war. Final judgment on these claims must await the publication of the official history of strategic bombing; but something may be hazarded at this stage on a problem of central interest to strategy. We cannot tell the verdict of future historians. But in these post-war years, the emergence of air power as a potentially decisive factor seems one of the most important military consequences of the Second World War; and in its exercise the long-range bombers played one of the most notable parts. From August, 1944 to August, 1945, they were able to display their power to the full. First Germany, then Japan, saw her war potential destroyed, although in neither case was victory achieved by bombing alone; while the flexibility of the weapon was demonstrated by the accomplishment of minor but significant tasks: by precision bombing on occasions in support of land or conjunct operations, by the dropping of food to a civil population,<sup>1</sup> by trooping duties in Europe and the Far East, and on at least one occasion by the operational transfer of troops from one area to another.<sup>2</sup> The scale and variety of the operations in fact reflected the achievement of an air superiority for which the strategic bombers were mainly responsible, and of which they in turn took advantage.

But the full effects of this superiority had still to be seen in the autumn of 1944. Since early in 1943, the British and American strategic air forces in Europe had worked to a plan designed to bring about '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.' The means to achieve, and the priority between, these ends, defined by operation 'Pointblank', were modified on several occasions between February, 1943 and the end of 1944; and early in 1944, 'Pointblank' itself was brought for a time into the orbit of the preparatory air operations for 'Overlord', and the strategic air forces in Britain, together with the American strategic air force in the Mediterranean, came under General Eisenhower's direction.<sup>3</sup> Their objects were then defined as:

(a) To deplete the German air force and particularly the German fighter forces and to destroy and disorganise the facilities supporting them.

(b) To destroy and disrupt the enemy's rail communications, particularly those affecting the enemy's movements towards the 'Overlord' lodgement area. . . .'

<sup>1</sup> See p. 157 below.

<sup>2</sup> See pp. 61-2 below.

<sup>3</sup> See John Ehrman, *Grand Strategy, August 1943—September 1944* (Volume V in this series), pp. 5-6, 292-3, 295-7, 304. Throughout the rest of this volume, references to the earlier volume will be in the form 'See Volume V'.

The American strategic bombing force in Britain, included in Eighth U.S. Army Air Force, was instructed to attack first the enemy's aircraft industry, and secondly his rail communications; the British Bomber Command was first to disrupt German industry, as far as possible in conformity with Eighth U.S. Air Force's efforts, and secondly to attack communications; and the American strategic bombing force in Italy, forming Fifteenth U.S. Army Air Force, was to attack targets in south-east Europe (operations in Italy permitting) similar to those of Eighth U.S. Air Force. The strategic air forces in Britain were also to help the 'Overlord' air commander to counter the Germans' preparations for an attack by rockets or pilotless aircraft (operation 'Crossbow').

These operations achieved their immediate purpose, in preparing and supporting 'Overlord'. But by September, 1944 the strategic air forces were no longer needed so much in direct support of the campaign, and it was possible again to envisage the full resumption of 'Pointblank'. The conditions for such a campaign were now more favourable than those of six months before. Hitherto, the long-range bombing of Germany, impressive as it was, had failed to produce all of the effects claimed for it. The continued existence of a large force of German fighters, the limited weight and experience of the attack, and the limitations of artificial aids to navigation and bombing, had combined to rob it of decisive success. Each of these factors had now changed or was changing. The German fighters had been largely subdued, there were more Allied bombers than ever before, improved artificial aids were being introduced which lessened the hazards of bad weather, and a new system of attack had been suggested to complement or replace those already tried. In addition, the Allies' advance through France and into the Low Countries had robbed the Germans of defensive airfields and an advanced warning system, and had provided advanced facilities for the attacking bombers. These conditions for the first time offered to strategic bombing the far-reaching results which its authors had anticipated since early in 1943.

The campaign had in fact never been entirely relinquished, even at the height of the operations in north-west Europe. Since May and June 1944, Eighth U.S. Air Force and Bomber Command respectively had devoted some of the effort not engaged by 'Overlord' and 'Crossbow' to attacking oil targets in Germany; and with unexpectedly good results. By the end of August, indeed, the Allied Intelligence estimated that Germany might collapse for lack of fuel;<sup>1</sup> and the figures of production from April to September tell a remarkable tale.

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<sup>1</sup> See Volume V, p. 396.

## GERMANY &amp; THE WESTERN ALLIES

	<i>Aviation Fuel</i>	<i>Carburettor Fuel</i>	<i>Diesel Fuel and J.2.*</i>
	(All figures in tons)		
April, 1944	175,000	125,000	88,900
May	156,000	93,000	74,000
June	53,000	76,000	66,000
July	29,000	56,000	62,000
August	12,000	60,000	65,000
September	9,400	48,400	77,300

\* A mixture of carburettor and diesel fuel used in jet aircraft.

In September 1944, when the strategic bombers reverted to their traditional ownership, it therefore seemed possible that a supreme effort would soon cripple Germany's capacity to resist. But from September to November the air offensive was less effective on oil, and not noticeably more effective on industry, than it had been during the summer. Figures of production for oil and munitions illustrate the position.

	<i>Aviation Fuel (tons)</i>	<i>Car- burettor Fuel (tons)</i>	<i>Diesel Fuel and J.2. (tons)</i>	<i>Guns*</i>	<i>Small Arms†</i>	<i>Ammunition (tons)</i>
July, 1944	29,000	56,000	62,000	4,714	293,221	306,000
August	12,000	60,000	65,000	4,484	228,173	310,000
September	9,400	48,400	77,300	4,480	195,652	321,000
October	18,000	57,000	66,000	4,623	199,602	308,000
November	41,000	50,000	73,000	4,556	239,083	294,000

\*Howitzers, infantry guns, mortars, anti-tank guns.

†Rifles and machine-guns.

The reason for this disappointment lay partly in the onset of bad weather earlier than usual, which interrupted the operations from both the United Kingdom and Italy. The monthly figures of production could be reduced only by continuous attack; for, as the oscillations of the weekly figures show, it was still possible for most of the key industries to recover quickly given a lull. Bad weather therefore played its part, although the application of a new aid to bombing in October offset its worst disadvantages. But the chief reason for the disappointment lay elsewhere, in the failure to produce a comprehensive plan which struck the correct balance between the various types of target open to attack.

In September 1944, three distinct points of view were held on 'Pointblank', outside the 'Overlord' Command. The British Chiefs of Staff, as before, favoured an independent air offensive against Germany, divided mainly between attacks on oil targets and on German morale. For this purpose, they proposed that control of the strategic bombers should be vested in the British Chief of the Air Staff and the

Commanding General, U.S. Army Air Forces on behalf of the Combined Chiefs of Staff, suitable arrangements being made to protect Eisenhower's interests. The Americans, on the other hand, impressed by the achievements of the summer, feared the return of a divided command and a divided effort. General Arnold argued, with force, that the British Chiefs of Staff's proposals would no longer meet the case. The bombers had two tasks to perform in future as they had in the recent past, to destroy the German economy and to support the land operations; and while the emphasis between them was about to change, the combination remained the same. To revert to separate commands, and to give high priority to targets in Germany not connected directly with those affecting the land operations, seemed to him to invite an undue waste of effort. He therefore suggested that the second disadvantage at least might be overcome by concentrating on the Germans' systems of transport, which were of critical importance both to their economy and to their defence in the west.

At variance with both opinions stood Air Chief Marshal Harris of Bomber Command. Less optimistic than other authorities about the effect of new technical devices, he was not convinced that precision bombing could achieve the objects which both British and American Chiefs of Staff believed could be achieved; and he remained more cautious than they about the extent of the Allies' air supremacy. Underlying these *caveats* was Harris' persistent faith in area bombing as potentially the most damaging form of attack, whose merits had still not received their due because the attack itself remained incomplete. His theory of command likewise remained the same as before. Like others, he was anxious to avoid a division of responsibility; but, unlike others, he proposed to achieve this by concentrating more authority in Bomber Command.

Harris' influence was less than it had been a year before. Indeed, his views remained important only so long as there was no alternative. But the discussion between the British and American Chiefs of Staff in September failed to produce it. Neither side could agree entirely with the other's proposals, and both accordingly compromised on a statement which, in changing circumstances, largely repeated the earlier directives.<sup>1</sup> Control of the strategic air forces reverted to the Combined Chiefs of Staff, represented by the British Chief of the Air Staff and the Commanding General, U.S. Army Air Forces, who themselves delegated authority to the Deputy Chief of the Air Staff (Air Marshal Sir Norman Bottomley) and the Commanding General, U.S. Strategic Air Forces in Europe (General Carl Spaatz). The 'overall mission' was defined, without precision, as 'the progressive destruction and dislocation of the German military, industrial and economic systems, and the direct support of land operations.'

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<sup>1</sup> See Volume V. pp. 5-6, 295-6.

It was not therefore surprising that over the next two months the debate on bombing policy should have continued as vigorously as ever. The Combined Chiefs of Staff's directive was followed on 25th September by a directive from Bottomley and Spaatz to Bomber Command, Eighth and Fifteenth U.S. Air Forces, to accord first priority to oil installations and second priority equally to a variety of targets—transport, ordnance and transport depôts, and production of transport and tanks. Direct support of land operations remained an immediate commitment when required: area bombing would be undertaken when the weather prevented precision attacks. This allowed the different Commands to pursue, without great difficulty, a number of different and not necessarily complementary objects. The results were soon apparent. Bomber Command returned to area bombing, which accounted for about two-thirds of its effort in October, 1944 compared with a smaller tonnage of bombs dropped on oil targets than it had dropped in June; while Eighth U.S. Air Force devoted about two-fifths of its effort to marshalling yards, and the rest more or less equally between oil and the rest of the secondary targets. While German production received further heavy blows, the damage thus remained miscellaneous and the results indecisive.

An attempt was made in October, 1944 to overcome this state of affairs. A Combined Strategic Targets Committee was then formed, on which representatives of the British Air Staff, the U.S. Strategic Air Forces in Europe and—a significant step—the 'Overlord' Command sat with those of the various Intelligence agencies, empowered to review and adjust the priority of targets within the directive of 25th September, or if necessary to advise a change of directive itself. In the event, the Committee was led by its discussion of the first alternative to recommend the second. Most of its members were convinced adherents of the campaign against oil targets, which had produced such favourable results over the past few months. But throughout October they were challenged by the representatives of the 'Overlord' Command, led by Air Chief Marshal Tedder, who wished to prolong and extend the campaign against transport. Each argument had much to commend it. The supporters of the oil plan could claim that German production and stocks of this vital commodity were already dangerously low, and that the Allies now enjoyed considerable experience in conducting such attacks. The limited campaign of the summer had crippled the enemy's economy to a greater extent than ever before: a larger campaign should therefore finish the job, while simultaneously crippling the activities of his armies and air forces. Moreover, it was argued, the converse was equally true. If attacks on oil were reduced for any length of time, experience showed that the Germans could recover far enough to increase their production and to sustain the operations of their armed forces. The choice was therefore plain.

and urgent if Germany was to be beaten in the next few months.

The advocates of the transport plan did not accept all of the evidence. They pointed out that the increasing dispersal and weight of protection given to both oil installations and industry lessened the chance of a decision. Transport, on the other hand, could not be dispersed or carried on underground, and indeed the more that power and industry were scattered the more important communications became. While oil was vital to production and to operations, so was transport; the consequences of its failure were more likely to be immediate; and, as a result of the air operations before and immediately after the landings in France, experience was now equally available for such attacks. In Tedder's words, transport was the most effective 'common factor in the whole German war effort', and the extent of the latter's deterioration would be reflected directly in its own.

These arguments were perhaps academic; for in fact, given a co-ordinated policy, the Western Allies possessed large enough air forces to attack both oil and transport effectively. But in the absence of such a policy, the dispute served to bring the issues into focus, and to produce, if not the 'really comprehensive pattern' of attack which Tedder demanded, at least a clearer definition of the aim. In the last week of October 1944, the Combined Strategic Targets Committee recommended that the scope of attack on transport should be extended from France and the Low Countries to Germany; and on 1st November, Bottomley and Spaatz issued a revised directive to the strategic air forces in which two primary targets alone were recommended, transport and oil. Oil retained first place, but transport alone occupied the second, and such area bombing as weather might still make inevitable was to be confined to towns directly associated with one or other of those activities. The variety of targets which had reappeared in the directive of 25th September was thus abolished; and in the last winter of the war, the strategic air forces concentrated their immense strength more fully on the two activities of critical importance to the enemy.

As in the autumn, the results soon reflected the policy. Bomber Command still managed in November, 1944 to devote more than half its total weight of bombs to area bombing, and it was not indeed until the spring of 1945 that such attacks virtually ceased. But they were no longer an alternative, but rather complementary, to the main campaign. In November 1944, Eighth U.S. Air Force and Bomber Command dropped some 30,000 tons of bombs on oil targets, more than three times the weight they had dropped on such targets in October. Fifteenth U.S. Air Force from Italy meanwhile sustained its attacks. In the same period, the air forces from Britain dropped 20,000 tons of bombs on transport. While the proportion of the two attacks varied over the next few months, their combined weight increased steadily,

and occupied a steadily greater proportion of the total weight of bombs dropped.

The effect on Germany was soon apparent. In June 1944, Speer had remarked that bad weather and an ineffective Allied bombing policy alone could save German production in 1944. His own efforts, combined with these two factors, had saved it into the winter. But bad weather now mattered less, thanks to improved artificial aids, and Allied policy was more effective than before. Despite the temporary improvement as a result of its diminution in the autumn, Speer was already gravely embarrassed by the attack on oil; as he watched the growth of the campaign against transport in November, he predicted 'complete disaster and a general catastrophe'. 'Transport', he then explained, 'governs us all'; and the first effect of its dislocation was a coal famine for the industries of western Germany. In the first quarter of 1944, 32·1 million tons of hard coal had been produced from the Ruhr and 71·1 million tons throughout the country. In the last quarter of the year, the figures were 17·8 and 44·7 million tons respectively. Armaments were at once affected. In the first quarter of 1944, production of crude steel in the Ruhr was 3·4 million tons, and throughout Germany 9·2 million tons; in the last quarter, the figures were 1·5 and 3·9 million tons respectively. Faced with the prospect of continuous and unremitting bombardment, and with an economy already operating on a siege basis, Speer's measures could no longer hope to avert a final collapse in 1945.

Germany thus survived throughout the autumn of 1944, with no real hope for the future other than a break between her opponents such as had occurred in the Seven Years' War. Her armies were hard pressed, her naval and air forces were subdued, and her economy functioned with increasing strain on the basis of perpetual emergency. That she then neither collapsed nor admitted defeat was, on the short view, due to the elements in her position which in the long view promised disaster. If production faced continual emergency, a continual emergency sustained production. If the future of the armies could be disregarded, the armies could be reinforced and supplied for the present. Temporary successes could be gained on both of the main fronts against enemies who had temporarily reached their limits on land, and who in the west had not yet settled the shape of the decisive assault by air; and such successes were enough to sustain the German people, still capable of organized effort if organization could be provided, and in no position, even if it wished, to resist the determination of a leader who, possessing supreme authority and the means to enforce it, was prepared to mortgage the future to the present until hope no longer remained.



(ii)

## The Western Allies

The position of the Western Allies by now offered a complete contrast to that of the enemy in Europe. The operations of the past year had deprived the German alliance of the governments of Italy, Rumania, Bulgaria and Finland, and had led the government of Turkey to sever diplomatic and commercial relations: they had enabled the British and Americans to recognize a Provisional Government in France. Growing pressure on each of the fronts, and the dislocation of their transport and economy, had offset the Germans' accustomed strategic advantage of interior lines of communication: British and American maritime power made possible the regular supply of growing forces throughout Europe. German production was beginning to fall, and its decline would soon be swift: Western production proved sufficient in most respects for larger forces than ever before, all on the attack and fighting heavily in every theatre of war. German successes by now offset or retarded a general failure: British and American weaknesses limited or retarded the general success.

The Western strategy relied on production and on maritime power. In the autumn of 1944, the war at sea seemed to be reaching a new stage whose prospects were uncertain. The British and American surface fleets were by now supreme in western waters. The Italian fleet had been eliminated a year before, and some of its ships were being used by its late opponents; while the small German surface fleet, then largely ineffective, was now entirely so. The *Tirpitz*, damaged by underwater and air attacks, was immobilized in Norwegian waters, where she was finally sunk by British aircraft in November, 1944; the battle-cruiser *Gneisenau*, which had been badly damaged in 1942, lay in a Baltic port, where she was captured by the Russians in the spring of 1945; the last two 'pocket battleships' and the cruisers, scattered between Norway, Denmark, Germany and Poland, seldom put to sea on operations, and were subjected when in harbour to constant watch and occasional attack from the air; and the destroyers, some of which still operated from French ports early in 1944, all joined the larger ships in the course of the summer. Only the E-boats remained, in declining strength, to challenge the Royal Navy in the English Channel and North Sea, while the Allied convoys to north Russia were free from all surface attack. When British troops entered the Baltic ports at the beginning of May 1945, the effective seagoing strength of the German surface fleet had been reduced to three cruisers, some fifteen destroyers, a dozen torpedo boats and a few minesweepers.

The limits to action by the German surface fleet had first been set by Hitler's conception of its rôle. Its subsequent inaction even within those limits, imposed upon it by the British navy and air force with American support, helped further to release men and material for the U-boats. For until the final surrender, the German High Command continued to place great hopes upon this weapon. That this should have been so was due partly to the change in the nature of the war in Europe, which offered new opportunities for submarine warfare, and partly to a change in the performance of the vessels themselves. The concentration of shipping in and around the English Channel, necessary to support operations in north-west Europe, provided targets in some ways easier to find and to attack than those in the Atlantic; while the development of the 'schnorkel' in the second half of 1944, enabling the submarine to stay submerged for longer periods, and the prospect in 1945 of a revolutionary vessel capable of sustained bursts of high speed under water, extended the promise of success which earlier forms of attack had failed finally to produce.

The Allies' victories against the U-boats in the summer of 1943 had frustrated the enemy's attempts to stop the Atlantic convoys. In September, fortified by the possession of a new acoustic torpedo, he resumed his efforts on familiar lines; but swift counter-measures, and a stronger concentration of the tried methods of defence, soon overcame the danger, and early in 1944 the U-boat packs disappeared never to return. The attack then shifted largely to other areas, and its proportions altered. The emphasis fell more on the outer oceans and the coastal waters, and aircraft and mines accounted for a higher proportion of the losses. But while the enemy's visitations in the Indian Ocean and the South Atlantic, and his reappearance around the British Isles, caused temporary inconvenience, the results were not serious. Measures of defence soon reduced the toll in the outer oceans, while the losses encountered in the crowded coastal waters at a time of unparalleled activity were remarkably small. Of the vast mass of ships in the English Channel in June 1944, only five were sunk by U-boats; and the total Allied loss by U-boats for the month was only eleven vessels. In the course of the next five months, the figures declined. U-boats, on the other hand, were sunk at an increasing rate: sixty in the first quarter of 1944, sixty-nine in the second quarter, and seventy-six in the third. In the autumn of 1944, the Western navies could therefore look with satisfaction on the developments of the past year.

But at the same time, the Admiralty was aware that conditions might soon alter, and again for the worse. Reliable intelligence indicated that the enemy meant to launch a further offensive before the end of 1944, based on a series of new and important technical developments. Hitherto, the U-boats had been beaten because low speed and

limited endurance under water had obliged them to approach the area of their target largely on the surface, and to surface after submersion for a period of at most twenty-four hours. These weaknesses now seemed likely to be mitigated, or even overcome. It was difficult to tell how soon the U-boat organization could act upon the new developments; but towards the end of October 1944, the Admiralty suspected that it might be between the middle of November and the middle of December. The U-boat fleet available on 1st December was thought likely to consist of 195 operational boats and 128 in training, of which twenty-five could be used on operations if necessary. Such numbers in themselves corresponded closely with those of the spring of 1943; but all of the boats would now probably be fitted with 'schnorkel', and twenty-five of the operational craft, and twenty-three of those in training, might be the new fast under-water types. The Germans were moreover known to be concentrating on the production of these types, which might reach a monthly figure of thirty new boats by February, 1945. Only trained men and fuel seemed likely to limit the performance of this fleet; and the former, though of declining quality, could be supplied from the surface fleet and from the air force, while the latter could still be made available at the expense of other users.

Events in the last two months of the year did not support the Admiralty's forecast. Losses rose in December, but not so steeply as had been expected, and the new type of U-boat failed to appear. Nor did the attacks during the first four months of 1945 reach the level that had been feared. From 1st January to 7th May, 398,000 tons of merchant shipping was sunk, of which U-boats accounted for 263,000 tons.<sup>1</sup> The quarterly rate was higher than that for any quarter in 1944, and the losses were more evenly spread towards the end between coastal waters and the Atlantic. But they did not approach the losses in the worst period, from the last quarter of 1940 to the first quarter of 1943, and the results did not seriously affect the Allies' capacity to execute their plans. Familiar methods of defence continued to limit the success of the older type of submarine; while the new types, which posed questions of defence that were not answered before the end of the war, were produced more slowly than had been anticipated, largely owing to the conditions in Germany over this period. Despite the highest priority in production, training and protection, the programme could not survive the general dislocation; and when the U-boat fleet surrendered, only a few of the new craft were near completion, and none had been used on operations.

But if the last of the U-boat offensives failed to arrest the Allies' victory, it caused them serious misgivings and threatened, if it did not alter, their plans. The rise in sinkings, though not significant, was in itself disappointing after the success of the past eighteen months; but

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<sup>1</sup> To the nearest thousand tons.

the fear of something worse, which remained real almost to the end, occupied the background of strategic thought, and occasionally impinged directly upon it. The destruction or capture of the northern German ports was an object of high priority to the British Chiefs of Staff in the last stage of the war, affecting the strategic bombing programme and, at the end of March 1945, their views on the shape of the campaign in Germany;<sup>1</sup> while the shadow of heavy sinkings may be observed in the discussions on the use of ocean shipping, which, amid the general success, remained an uncertain factor in planning.<sup>2</sup> Nor indeed was this nervousness surprising. The postponement and lack of success of the new offensive were attributable partly to the growing disintegration of the German industry and economy; and while Allied maritime power proved entirely adequate to support the ambitious strategy which depended upon it, the threat of submarine attack in the last nine months of the European war may serve as an example, and a warning, of the dangers to which Britain must always lie open. Command of the sea, as of the air, is not guaranteed by local or temporary success. The battle of the Atlantic had been won once, in 1943. But the failure to defeat Germany before the winter of 1944 provided the U-boats with the opportunity to renew the battle in 1945, and their prospects of success were decided in the event by developments at base rather than by the performance of the boats at sea. Alone of the German armed forces, the submarines still offered at the end a threat whose extent could not be gauged precisely; and the U-boat war could not therefore be considered at an end until the Allied armies reached the German ports.

Command of the sea and air enabled the Western Allies to deploy a steadily growing strength with a steadily growing effect, over a period in which the Germans were mobilizing and using their last reserves. The armed forces increased in numbers until the end of the war in Europe. In the middle of 1943, the British and American fighting strength, excluding the British civil defence, amounted to 14 million men and women; in the middle of 1944, it was 16·7 million; and in the spring of 1945, 17·1 million. A substantially greater proportion of the forces, moreover, was engaged on operations after the summer of 1944. On 1st July of that year, for instance, eighty-six British and American divisions, with their allies from the Commonwealth and Europe, were in contact with the Germans and Japanese; on 1st January, 1945, 126. In Europe itself, Eisenhower disposed of the equivalent of fifty-six divisions on 1st October, 1944, of sixty-nine

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<sup>1</sup> See p. 134 below.

<sup>2</sup> See pp. 26-7 below.

divisions on 1st December, of eighty-one on 1st February, 1945, and of ninety-nine at the beginning of May.

This increase in fighting strength was provided mainly by the United States; and indeed from the summer of 1944, a marked disparity in this respect may be observed for the first time between the contributions of the two partners. In March 1944, the American armed forces consisted of 11·2 million men and women, the British of 4·9 million; in July 1944, the figures were 11·8 and 5 million; and at the end of the year, 12 million and 4·9 million respectively. The same process may be observed, and more clearly, in the growth of the forces in the field. In March 1944, there were as many British and British-controlled divisions in contact with the enemy as there were American. By the beginning of July, the figures were thirty-eight British and British-controlled to forty-eight American; and by the end of the year, forty-eight to seventy-eight. The American mobilization of 1942-3 was now bearing fruit; and it is a notable memorial to the earlier Allied strategy, and to the direction of the American war effort, that 'the immensely greater strength of the United States—potential at first—became actual at the time of culminating impact upon the enemy.'<sup>1</sup>

The growth of the armed forces was sustained during 1944 by an industrial production which declined, slightly in the United States and appreciably in Britain, from that of 1943. The position, however, was not similar in each case. American industrial production, which on the point index system had risen steadily from 100 for 1939 to over 240 for 1943, slipped back to just below 235 for 1944, and the difference was accounted for entirely by production for war. But these figures suggest a false picture. The decline was not continuous: it represented partly a decline in construction of buildings and plant, which was natural by 1944; and the programme had not in fact reached its limits, but was allowed to rest for much of the period at a level which was considered, and in general was, adequate to the demands. The fall in output took place almost wholly in the first quarter of 1944, largely as a temporary result of the full mobilization of manpower on the existing basis towards the end of 1943, and of a sudden rise early in 1944 in the mobilization for the Services. In the second and third quarters, production of war stores other than of ships and aircraft regained the levels of 1943, and in the last quarter, and throughout the first half of 1945, rose appreciably above them. The output of munitions, to take the largest sector of war production, rose, on an index of 100 for 1943, from 56·5 for 1942 to 108·3 for 1944.

The quarterly figures of production illustrate the true position. The Americans had reached in 1943 the goals they had set themselves in the distribution of manpower and effort between the sectors of their

<sup>1</sup> W. K. Hancock and M. M. Gowing, *British War Economy* (H.M.S.O., 1949), p. 366.

economy; and on that basis, a further notable rise in production was more difficult than before. But it also seemed in general unnecessary throughout most of 1944. The distribution of effort had been well judged in relation to the needs for the first nine months, and supply did not fail demand throughout that period. The programme, however, had not allowed adequately for heavy fighting in Europe after the autumn; and as a result, there were some shortages in the winter of 1944 which embarrassed the commanders. Even so, the new demands were met, with some inconvenience and sometimes belatedly, out of a programme that proved adequate to the task without a further revision of the national economy. There might be a temporary failure of supply through administrative inefficiency or strategic miscalculation. But such shortcomings could still be made good. The war effort of the United States, towards the end of their longest and most expensive foreign war, could in fact be described in words which a British observer had applied to his own country during the War of American Independence: it 'may aptly be compared to a spring of mighty powers, which always exerts its force in proportion to the weight of its compression.'<sup>1</sup>

The position was far different in Britain, where the capacity of war production was now severely strained within a national economy already distorted in its support. While construction of bombers and of assault shipping continued to rise, other production fell at an increasing rate. Output of munitions, which on the point index system had risen steadily from 37·2 for 1939 to 100 for 1943, declined in 1944 to 97·4; and the process may be seen more clearly in the quarterly index figures of selected items.

(4th Qtr. 1939=100)	Guns*	Small Arms†	Shells and Bombs‡	Small Arms' Ammunition	Armoured Fighting Vehicles
4th Qtr. 1943	505	886	2,226	3,648	1,702
1st ,, 1944	443	732	1,983	4,010	1,774
2nd ,, 1944	335	671	1,543	4,678	1,807
3rd ,, 1944	291	584	1,093	5,000	1,596
4th ,, 1944	193	502	1,031	5,427	1,494

\* Includes field, medium, anti-aircraft, tank and anti-tank guns.

† Includes small arms, machine-guns and mortars.

‡ Filled and empty components.

With the exception of small arms' ammunition, production for the army was thus declining over a period when more British divisions than ever before were in contact with the enemy. Stocks, as well as a falling current production, helped to meet the British share in the maintenance of British operations until the autumn of 1944. But the prolongation of the war in Europe imposed new demands which

<sup>1</sup> George Chalmers, *An Estimate of the Comparative Strength of Britain . . .* (1782), pp. 5-6.

could scarcely be met except by increased aid from America. It was not a case, as in the United States, of adjustment within a programme which still held a measure of slack; but of extracting the last ounce from an economy which, already pledged to war more fully than at any time in British history, was becoming steadily less competent to maintain, in its accustomed proportion, the operations of the British armed forces.

The cause lay largely, and the problems were reflected, in the limits of British manpower. The previous volume in this series has shown the difficulties which the War Cabinet encountered in its provisional allocations for 1944.<sup>1</sup> By the summer of that year, those difficulties were growing fast. The figures approved in December, 1943 were due to be reviewed in May, 1944; but it was not in fact until June that a report from the War Office inaugurated the process. This warned the War Cabinet, as earlier reports had warned its Manpower Committees, that five divisions and four armoured brigades might soon have to be disbanded unless more men could be made available immediately for the army. The subsequent investigations showed the position for the immediate future. By the figures of December 1943, the army had been due to receive 25,000 men and women in the second half of 1944, the navy 20,000 and the air force 25,000. But the cuts approved for this purpose in industry and agriculture had meanwhile been modified, and even the modified figures were proving unrealistic. There seemed likely, indeed, to be a gap of some 80,000 between supply and the allocations approved before the army made its urgent report in June.

The Services' demands had always been met hitherto by the new age group combined with transfers from industry, agriculture and civil defence. But these measures no longer sufficed, and the Manpower Committees now proposed to meet the army's most pressing needs partly from the navy and the air force. They accordingly planned to move some 11,900 men from those Services into the army in July and August, 1944. No further transfer on these lines, however, was possible over the rest of the year, and in order to maintain the army even at the reduced level threatened, without further reducing the navy and the air force, the Manpower Committees hoped to allot a total of 140,500 men and women to the forces in the second half of 1944, as compared with the 70,000 approved in December, 1943. The War Cabinet approved these figures in July. Industry, agriculture and civil defence, already failing to meet the cuts imposed earlier, must therefore be subjected to greater cuts to keep the armed forces even near their existing strength.

To achieve this result, the Manpower Committees were prepared further to reduce materially the numbers employed in the munitions

<sup>1</sup> See Volume V, pp. 41-7.

industries, and to accept slightly greater cuts in other sectors of the economy. But even so their measures, devised with considerable difficulty, left a gap of 130,000 between approved demands and supply, to which might have to be added a further 125,000 from the estimated decline in the industrial labour force over the period.

When the War Cabinet came to consider the proposed cuts, it therefore decided that it must review the assumptions on which the programme had been based. This proved difficult, for in the summer of 1944 there was no means of telling either the date of the end of the war in Europe, or the nature of the final British contribution to the war against Japan. It was not therefore surprising that the calculations should have changed constantly, indeed almost continuously, over the next few months. The War Cabinet, while accepting the figures for the armed forces as a basis for further planning, first instructed the planners to proceed on the assumption that the navy might have to be cut by perhaps 200,000 men over the next twelve months, that the number of squadrons in the air force would not be increased beyond that planned for the end of 1944, and—an important departure from the decision of a year before<sup>1</sup>—that Germany might not be defeated before the end of June, 1945. At the beginning of September, however, the date was again changed to the end of December, 1944; and it was on this assumption that revised figures were submitted early in that month. They showed a cut in the allocations for the armed forces, and modified the proportions of the cuts to be made elsewhere over the whole year.

	<i>Demand for 1944</i>	<i>Supply for the Services in 1944</i>
	(In Thousands)	
Intakes into the Armed Forces . . . . .	332	
Net reduction in Civil Defence . . . . .		50
Net reduction in Munitions . . . . .		436
Increase in other Government Departments . . . . .	13	
Net increase in Group II Industries <sup>2</sup>	75	
Net reduction in Group III Industries <sup>3</sup> . . . . .		64
Intake into the Armed Forces from the unoccupied . . . . .		42
Estimated decrease in occupied pop- ulation . . . . .	175	
	—	—
	595	592

<sup>1</sup> See Volume V, pp. 44-6.

<sup>2</sup> Group II included the chief basic industries, such as shipping, land transport, coal and agriculture, and the public services: Group III, such industries and services as building, distribution, textiles, and food services.



These adjustments allowed the navy 9,400 men and women in the last four months of 1944, the army 55,000, and the air force 2,000. The War Cabinet accepted the figures, and the deficit of 3,000, early in September.

The allocations for 1944 had scarcely been settled when the War Cabinet had to consider those for the first six months of 1945. By October, all authorities had again to accept the planning date for the end of the war in Europe which had been briefly accepted in the summer; they also knew the plans for the final British share in the war against Japan, and could begin to assess the administrative implications. But on the other hand, the calculations were now bedevilled by new and still largely unknown problems affecting the immediate post-war period in Europe, on which Ministers could work so far only in the broad. The nature, timing and scope of a return to peace-time production, themselves depending on the needs of Europe and on the extent of American co-operation or aid, could not yet be judged with any precision; nor therefore could the details of demobilization, and their exact impact on operations. It was in these difficult circumstances, adding greatly to the severe problems which a shortage of manpower already imposed, that the British authorities strove to estimate the needs of 1945 as a whole, and to make detailed provision for its first six months.

The first fact to be recognized was that, irrespective of transfers to the forces, the number of men and women in industry would decline more in the new year than it had in the old. Apart from wastage, many women would wish to leave their work once the German war was over, and older women would not then have to register. The net loss was estimated at 1,225,000. Taking all possible sources of supply, the Minister of Labour therefore calculated that only 140,000 men and women could be made available for the Services during the year. Against this, the Services were demanding a further 225,300 men and women (navy 30,000, army 195,300). Their full demands were indeed considerably higher; but the difference was again to be met by transfers between the forces—from the navy and air to the army, and from the air to the navy—and by transfers and economies within each Service. The Manpower Committees had therefore to try, in uncertain and largely unknown circumstances, to close a gap of some 85,000.

As had happened in the second half of 1944, their proposals changed almost from month to month, and in the last phase of the war in Europe almost continuously. Despite serious protests, the Services' demands were soon reduced from 225,300 to 155,000 men and women, of whom the navy was to receive 23,000, the army 132,000, and the air force none. But both the navy and the air were told to transfer 20,000 men to the army, so that in fact, disregarding the relative efficiency of those involved, the former would gain only 3,000 women, and the latter

would lose 20,000 men, while the army would gain 172,000 men and women. The War Cabinet accepted these figures towards the end of December, 1944. But it was by no means clear how the necessary cuts were to be imposed elsewhere, and the Manpower Committees continued to debate the problem over the following months.

There is little point in following the calculations. In any case, their nature was changing by the spring of 1945. Germany was now on the brink of defeat, and the problem was therefore no longer how to maintain the armed forces at the greatest possible strength, but how far and how fast to reduce them without hampering operations against Japan. Questions of peace in Europe now largely replaced questions of war, and altered the context of those that remained. While the Departments were drafting the new entry in the spring of 1945, they and the Manpower Committees were planning simultaneously the details of partial demobilization.

In the event, 148,300 men and women joined the Services in the first six months of 1945. They brought the numbers, though not the effective strength, of the British armed forces to their highest peak of the war. In June 1939, the forces comprised 480,000 men and women; in June 1945, 5,090,000. Over the same period, the number of working civilians declined from 18,270,000 to 16,559,000. Of these 16½ million working civilians, some 43 per cent were employed on war production by the summer of 1944. These figures represent a direct mobilization for war that was not surpassed in any Allied country whose figures have been open to inspection.<sup>1</sup> Comparisons are odious, and in any case cannot be exact. The cuts in production for civilian purposes in Britain, for instance, could not have been so great had not the United States and Canada helped to meet the needs of civilian consumption. But the British, for their part, did not abandon their help to other nations, either in reverse lend-lease to the Americans, or in gifts and loans of material and money to the Russians, the Commonwealth, European allies, and neutrals. Shipments of goods to Russia alone amounted in value to some £312,000,000; and aid to other countries, other than the United States, to at least £383,000,000.<sup>2</sup> The British war effort, in fact, was not allowed to slacken as conditions grew more difficult; and its decline towards the end within the effort of the Western Alliance, whose consequences for strategy may be observed in the subsequent narrative, was the inescapable result of compelling restrictions and not of any decline in purpose or in skill.

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<sup>1</sup> And see comparative figures in *The Impact of the War on Civilian Consumption* (H.M.S.O., 1945).

<sup>2</sup> *Statistical Digest of the War* (H.M.S.O., 1951), Table 179.

The Allies' strategic position by the autumn of 1944 was such that the prolongation of the European war into 1945 caused no revision of strategy from a failure of supply. British and American programmes of production had to be modified in some cases, and of the three familiar threats to strategic mobility—ocean shipping, assault shipping, and transport aircraft<sup>1</sup>—two—ocean and assault shipping—revived in the new circumstances. But the threats remained threats, and only in one important instance was there an actual shortage of material to embarrass current operations.

The shortage, which for some three months looked serious, was in certain types of ammunition. Towards the end of 1943, when stocks of ammunition and of shells were high, production of both had been reduced in the United States and of shells in Britain, the redundant labour in Britain being transferred to building aircraft. It was then calculated that future production and existing reserves would suffice for a year's operations in Europe and the Far East. This estimate was in fact reasonable, and in August, 1944 the British were even considering a further reduction in the output of 25- pounder ammunition to meet a lower rate of expenditure than had been anticipated. By October, however, the position had changed. The battles in Europe in September, and the prospect of a winter's stubborn fighting, suddenly reduced the reserves and made current production of some types of ammunition inadequate. The armies in France and Italy became anxious about the supply of ammunition for medium artillery, and—the Americans in particular—of small arms' ammunition. The Defence Committee (Supply) considered the British position towards the end of October, 1944. While confident that supply would exceed demand over the winter, it foresaw a possible deficit thereafter, at a time when a return of labour to the ammunition industry might prove extremely difficult. It therefore resolved to prepare forthwith to increase production in filled ammunition for medium artillery, and to allocate priorities accordingly in material and industrial manpower. The Committee, and the Prime Minister and the Chiefs of Staff, kept a close eye on the position for the rest of the year, and by January, 1945 saw with relief that production was again beginning to rise. By March they seemed likely to be safe, and in April the war in Europe was obviously nearing its end.

But while the final offensives of the spring were thus adequately supplied, the immediate shortage occurred in Europe which the authorities had denied would occur. By the beginning of November 1944, Eisenhower was obliged to take the state of ammunition into account in planning his operations, and in the course of that month he received permission from the United States Government to broadcast

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<sup>1</sup> See Volume V, Chapter I, section III.

an appeal for greater production to the American people. This reflected the greater shortage of ammunition for American than for British troops. But at the same time Alexander reported similar difficulties in Italy, which he thought would hamper the operations of each of his two Armies. Little could in fact be done in either case to meet the immediate difficulties. The effects of a higher rate of production would not be felt for some time: meanwhile, the campaigns must if necessary conform to existing supplies. This embarrassment was largely avoided in the event, for a comparative lull in operations over the turn of the year enabled stocks and production to meet the subsequent demands. But for a time the margin had seemed narrow, and the affair provided a warning to the Western Allies not to anticipate strategic results too closely in their programmes of production.

The shortage of ammunition was brief and unexpected. The threat of a shortage of merchant and assault shipping, thoroughly familiar from earlier periods, continued until almost the end of the war. Merchant shipping indeed caused a worse scare in the winter of 1944/45 than at any time since the spring of 1943, leading the authorities in January, 1945 to report that the deficits 'must be regarded as unmanageable.' For the British, the position certainly seemed grave. American help declined in the last quarter of 1944 by roughly half a million tons of shipping to a level which, disregarding the use of ships already transferred to the British flag, was scarcely higher than that of two years before. British programmes were cut accordingly, but even so there seemed likely to be a deficit of nearly  $4\frac{1}{2}$  million tons of shipping in the first quarter of the new year; and by the end of 1944, the shipping authorities in London were contemplating a reduction of imports of over a million tons for that period.

The apparent crisis continued over the next two months. The comparative needs of civilian consumption and of war production in Britain and in the United States, of movements of troops and materials, and of the needs of Europe, were canvassed and debated, not without heat and misunderstanding. But the process revealed, gradually but inescapably, the real cause of the shortage. As on earlier occasions,<sup>1</sup> it could be traced to a lack of control, and again almost entirely on the part of the American military authorities. The structure of wartime government in Washington, in which the military dominated the civilians, had never favoured the efficient direction of shipping,<sup>2</sup> and waste was suspected, particularly in the Pacific. But it was not until the later stages of the crisis that its proportions were revealed. The figures that then gradually came to light surprised all authorities: indeed, the historian of shipping has concluded from them that 'the Americans could have saved far more by good management than ever

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<sup>1</sup> See Volume V, pp. 30-2.

<sup>2</sup> *Loc cit.*, pp. 29-30.

they lost from enemy action.<sup>1</sup> The immediate consequence was to strengthen the hands of the American civilian shipping authorities. While still unable to gain the measure of control they would have liked, they at last succeeded in forcing the Joint Chiefs of Staff to impose some restraint on the use of shipping for military purposes, and above all to release ships from the Pacific. The result was startling. In February 1945, the Allied shipping authorities were still remarking that the deficit, after all their efforts, 'might be regarded as approaching the unmanageable'. A month later, as ships began to appear out of the East, the British noted with surprise that there was 'a sudden flush of tonnage . . . of a volume which could hardly have been foreseen.' In the second quarter of the year, American help to British programmes reached the unprecedented figure of some five million tons. The threatened deficits disappeared, British imports and the immediate needs of Europe were met, and troop movements for Europe maintained. The crisis had caused temporary dislocation in the British programmes throughout the world. But it did not affect the movement or supply of the Allied forces, or the movement of material for Allied production; and its sudden onset and as sudden disappearance provided merely one more example, on a larger scale, of the inherent difficulties in controlling shipping which experience alone seemed able to surmount.

Assault shipping had by now become of less vital importance to grand strategy than it had been a year before. But it remained a factor in the war in Europe, and essential to the offensive in south-east Asia; and the prolongation of the former, combined with growing problems of production in Britain, caused further embarrassment to the latter until the spring of 1945, and posed a threat to subsequent operations which only the end of the war removed.

In the spring of 1944, when it had seemed possible that British forces would operate in the south-west Pacific,<sup>2</sup> the Chiefs of Staff had proposed that an assault lift for three divisions should be placed in the Far East by March, 1945; and, after some debate, this was confirmed in June. The subsequent decision, in September 1944, to confine the main British effort to a Fleet and air force in the central Pacific did not disturb the plan, for part of the assault lift was now needed for forthcoming operations in south-east Asia, and the rest might be required to support operations in the south-west Pacific, which the forces from south-east Asia might later conduct with the forces already in that area. The Americans agreed to the proposal in the course of the summer, and offered to provide some of the necessary ships and craft; and the British therefore decided to modify their programme of construction so as to provide the rest.

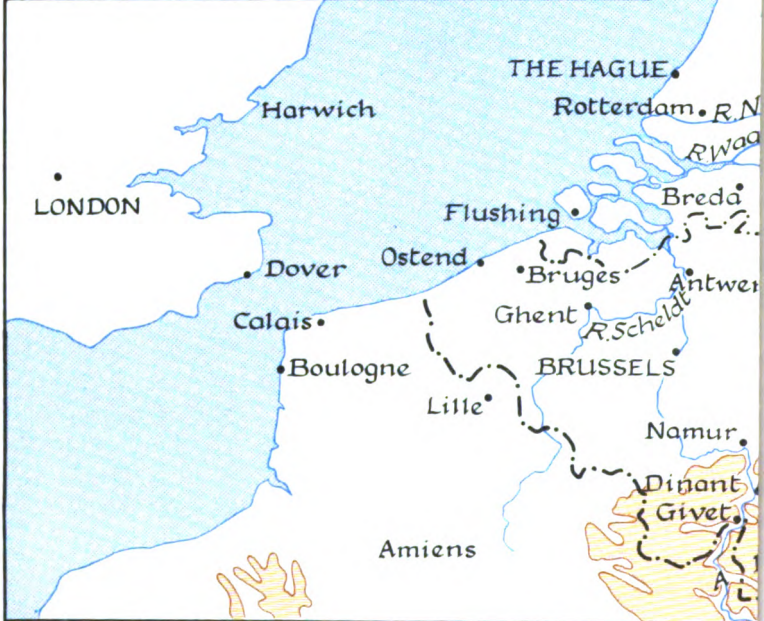
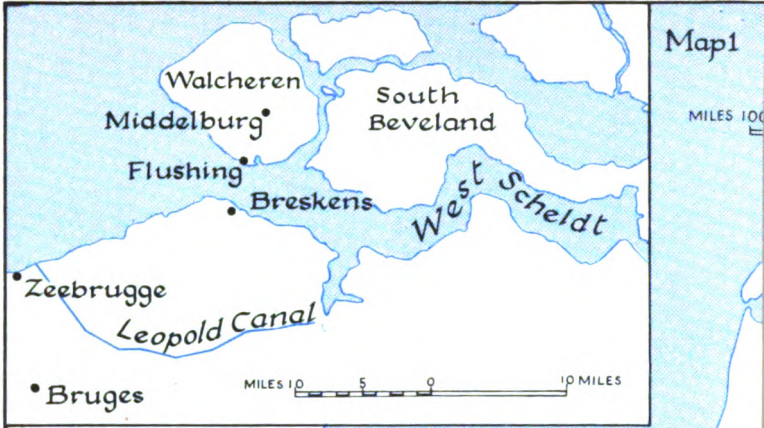
<sup>1</sup> C. B. A. Behrens, *Merchant Shipping and the Demands of War* (H.M.S.O., 1955), p. 415.

<sup>2</sup> See Volume V, Chapters XI, XII.

The timetable depended on several factors that could not yet be estimated exactly. In the first place, it demanded the construction of more of the larger types of L.S.T., which the British had hitherto left virtually to the Americans, as well as of more assault craft than had been settled earlier. It also depended partly on the withdrawal of assault shipping from Europe, in time to be refitted and despatched to the Far East by March, 1945. It was not therefore surprising that by the end of 1944 the programme should have run into difficulties. Conjoint operations in north-west Europe, and the continued possibility of such operations in the Mediterranean, held many of the necessary vessels throughout the winter; while the estimates of production were proving impossible to achieve. The construction of L.S.T. interrupted the naval programmes, causing work to be stopped on one aircraft carrier, one battleship and two cruisers already under way, and on other keels which had recently been laid. But even so, the vessels were not coming forward in the numbers that had been hoped. The programme of landing craft, too, was falling behind the estimates, and early in 1945 had to be substantially modified. It was also becoming difficult to find the crews for a force of these dimensions, as men were taken from the navy to meet the more pressing needs of the army. Early in December 1944, the First Sea Lord therefore reported to the Chiefs of Staff that it would be impossible to provide an assault lift for more than two divisions in the Far East by the spring of 1945. A few weeks later, he doubted if the lift for the third division could arrive there before the spring of 1946; and in January, 1945 he wished to postpone the despatch of the lift for the second division until six months after the end of the war in Europe. He also proposed to re-organize each of the forces, so as to save vessels and manpower, on the basis of experience gained by the Americans in the Pacific.

The Chiefs of Staff could not but accept this revised programme. In the event, therefore, only the first assault force, for one division, was employed in the Far East. Part of the second was due to leave England when the war ended in August 1945, and the rest of it should have arrived in south-east Asia by the end of that year. But the third force could probably not have reached the theatre until June 1946, and the Chiefs of Staff accordingly decided in July, 1945 to cancel it, and instead to send only those elements that could be ready earlier. The sudden end to the war against Japan saved the British from the possible consequences of these adjustments. But if that war had continued, and if British forces had been free to develop operations in the Pacific, the consequences must have been faced. The strategic problems set by assault shipping were less noticeable after the summer of 1944 than over the previous year. But they had not disappeared, and the British were aware that they might yet return if Japan, like Germany, continued to resist for longer than the Western Allies had hoped.







## CHAPTER II

### DELAY IN EUROPE, OCTOBER, 1944—JANUARY, 1945

(i)

#### The Western Front and Italy

**A**T THE beginning of October 1944, the Allied armies on the western front were disposed in three Army Groups.<sup>1</sup> In the north lay Twenty-First Army Group under Field Marshal Sir Bernard Montgomery, with First Canadian Army on the left from the neighbourhood of Zeebrugge to that of Antwerp, and Second (British) Army on the right as far as the Dutch frontier. Immediately to the south lay Twelfth Army Group under the American General Omar Bradley, with the bulk of First U.S. Army around Aachen and elements in the Ardennes, and Third U.S. Army from the southern Ardennes down to the area south-east of Verdun. Ninth U.S. Army was moving from Brittany, and later in the month arrived on the left of First Army, due north of Aachen. On the right of the Allied line lay Sixth Army Group under the American General J. L. Devers, with Seventh U.S. Army near and south of Nancy, and First French Army to the west of Belfort.

In the first week of October, these armies turned to the tasks which General Eisenhower had defined for them towards the end of September. The emphasis had then fallen on Montgomery's sector, making 'the envelopment of the Ruhr from the north by Twenty-First Army Group, supported by First [U.S.] Army, . . . the main effort of the present phase of operations.' As a necessary preliminary to the subsequent drive into Germany, Twenty-First Army Group was also instructed to open the port of Antwerp 'as a matter of urgency.' While these operations were in train, the rest of Twelfth Army Group was to 'take no more aggressive action' in the south of the Ardennes, and Sixth Army Group was to protect the right flank of the line.

But the plan was approved at a time when conditions were changing to its immediate disadvantage. The critical check at Arnhem in the second half of September served notice of a stiffening of the enemy's resistance which was soon apparent along the line, and which, in view of the Allies' dispositions and the length of their supply lines, was

<sup>1</sup> See Map I.

enough to frustrate the movement of roughly equal forces in every sector. The failure to capture a solitary bridge across the Nederrijn might indeed not have seemed of decisive importance: the airborne troops had achieved eight of the nine tasks set them, and the impetus of the advance farther south, though lessening, had not yet been obviously halted. But the first impression made by Arnhem proved to be correct. At the beginning of October, 1944 the Western Allies, foiled of success in their effort to turn the enemy's flank, were barred from the northern edge of the Ruhr by two rivers, the Nederrijn and Ijssel, along which the Germans lay in strength, and had still to reach the Rhine itself on a front from Wesel to Bonn. They now had some fifty-six divisions on the Continent; but the line was six hundred miles long, eight divisions were held for lack of transport in Normandy and the south, some formations were below strength, and on average less than one division could be deployed for every ten miles of front. Various steps were taken to strengthen the line and to afford some rest to formations actively engaged since June, and the timetable of reinforcements from the United States was advanced in October. But the effects would not be felt before December; and meanwhile the Germans, by drafting new divisions to the western front, were able to muster enough strength to halt the Allies in their awkward positions and extended state. The question for Eisenhower was therefore no longer how to gain a quick decision, but rather how best to maintain an advantage which would prepare the way for subsequent victory.

It was in the north that the new conditions were first appreciated. When Montgomery surveyed the prospects after Arnhem, he recognized that three commitments stood between himself and the final approach to the Rhine. First, the Scheldt must be opened and the use of Antwerp guaranteed. Secondly, the bridgehead at Nijmegen, a springboard for any future advance in the north, must be strengthened and its northern flank secured. Thirdly, the enemy's bridgehead west of the Maas must be destroyed. Until these three tasks had been achieved, the Allied front in the north was compressed between two hostile salients, and the whole of the Command was denied the use of an essential line of supply. There must therefore be a period of clearance—brief, it was hoped, but necessary—before the Western Allies could again contemplate reaching and crossing the Rhine in the north, in sufficient strength on this occasion to sweep without interruption deep into Germany.

This preliminary task, which it was thought at the beginning of October should soon be completed, was to take almost four months in the event. Each of its parts, in fact, raised difficulties which had been badly underestimated. By 7th October, the equivalent of about twenty German divisions was grouped between Zeebrugge and Roermond,

most of them weak, many new and hurriedly assembled, but including panzer troops, and deployed in the good defensive positions that the many water crossings afforded. The first effort to reduce the bridge-head west of the Maas showed that careful planning and considerable strength would be required. No further advance, moreover, seemed likely until First U.S. Army to the south was in a position to cross the Rhine and join the attack on the Ruhr; and an unsuccessful attempt to capture Aachen in the first week of October made it clear that this offered serious difficulties. By the end of that week, Montgomery had therefore to report that he favoured postponing the attack towards the Rhine, and even the clearance of the Maas, until he had freed the approaches to Antwerp. The effects of a recent gale, which, as in June, quickly reduced the rate of supply through the Normandy beaches, lent further weight to this argument; and on 9th October, the Supreme Commander instructed Twenty-First Army Group to give first priority to clearing the estuary of the Scheldt. All other offensive operations were accordingly stopped in the northern sector, and the whole effort of the Army Group was concentrated on this one object.

But the difficulties of clearing the Scheldt had themselves been underestimated. In the urgency and excitement of September, when greater prospects beckoned, the German garrisons in the estuary had been largely neglected.<sup>1</sup> The West Scheldt, which leads from the North Sea to Antwerp, winds for some seventy miles, with an average width of three to four miles, between low-lying lands, the southern shore comprising the Belgian and Dutch coasts east of Zeebrugge, the northern shore the Dutch island of Walcheren and the connecting isthmus of South Beveland. Much of this isthmus, and all of the island, are reclaimed land, easily flooded if the dykes should yield by nature or intent; while in the coastal area east of Zeebrugge, the semi-circle of the Leopold Canal forms a natural defensive boundary to the southern approach to the estuary, which became known as 'the Breskens pocket'. As long as the Germans held this pocket and Walcheren, Antwerp could not be used. Early in September 1944, Walcheren at least might have been captured without great difficulty. But the necessary assault craft were already earmarked for other purposes, farther targets occupied the Command's attention, and the task accordingly was not given the necessary priority. By October, the garrisons had settled in; and, entrenched on the island behind the dykes and on the mainland behind the canal, their ejection was to prove costly and slow.

The task fell to First Canadian Army, which since the fighting round Caen had formed the left of the Allied line. It had already tried, with the small forces available from operations in the Pas de Calais and around Ghent, to clear the country north-east of Antwerp and

<sup>1</sup> See Volume V, p. 382; and Inset to Map I, facing p. 29.

across the Leopold Canal; but at the end of September, with little success. Early in October, it embarked on a co-ordinated series of operations against the three targets of the Breskens pocket, Walcheren and South Beveland, and, assisted by Second (British) Army, on a drive north-east of Antwerp to clear the area to the mouth of the Maas. But each of these movements encountered stiff resistance. Attacking on 1st October from north of Antwerp, the Canadians reached the entrance to South Beveland on the 10th; but they were then held for a fortnight before they could begin their assault on the isthmus, and it was another week before South Beveland was cleared. By 31st October, however, the Canadians were ready to attack Walcheren from South Beveland; and meanwhile they had gone far towards clearing the Breskens pocket on the southern shore of the Scheldt, where heavy fighting ended on 2nd November. On 1st November, Walcheren was assaulted from the sea, and attacks from the sea and from South Beveland throughout the next few days brought the surrender of the German garrison on the 6th. Minesweepers had already begun to clear the mouth of the estuary; but it was not until 28th November that the first convoy could enter Antwerp, eighty-five days after the town itself had been captured. Meanwhile, the divisions from Second Army had cleared the country immediately to the east, reaching the line of the Maas by 5th November. The operations had claimed eleven Allied divisions in all, and strong naval assault and air forces, since the beginning of October.

The time occupied by these operations, and the stagnation immediately to the south, led the Supreme Commander in October to modify the balance, though not the object, of his plans. The results were promulgated to the Command on the 28th, ten days after an important meeting at Brussels between Eisenhower, Tedder, Montgomery and Bradley. After recognizing that the enemy had now dictated a pause in the Allied advance, which would probably last until after Antwerp had been secured, the directive stipulated that:

‘ . . . 6. The general plan subject always to prior capture of the approaches to Antwerp, is as follows:

(a) Making the main effort in the north, decisively to defeat the enemy west of the Rhine and secure bridgeheads over the river; then to seize the Ruhr and subsequently advance deep into Germany.

(b) To conduct operations so as to destroy the enemy in the Saar, to secure crossings over the Rhine, and to be prepared to advance from the Saar later in accordance with the situation then prevailing. All of these operations are to be timed so as best to support the main effort to which they are subsidiary.

(c) On the right, i.e. the southern, flank making full use of

maintenance available from the Mediterranean, to act aggressively with the initial object of overwhelming the enemy west of the Rhine and subsequently of advancing into Germany.'

These operations could be divided into three phases: first, those west of the Rhine; second, the crossing of the Rhine; third, the subsequent advance. In contrast to earlier plans, the emphasis in the first phase now fell on Twelfth Army Group, and the main attack north of the Ardennes was entrusted to Bradley. It was timed to start at the beginning of November, aimed through the Aachen Gap and over the river Roer at Cologne and Bonn (First U.S. Army) and Krefeld (Ninth U.S. Army), while Second (British) Army in the north moved forward between the Maas and the Rhine, and Third U.S. Army south of the Ardennes occupied the Saar. Thus, whereas the attack on Cologne had hitherto been regarded as complementary to the main thrust farther north, the advance through Holland now acted as the necessary complement to the main thrusts between Cologne and Krefeld.

The success of these plans, when the opponents were so evenly matched, depended on a precise control of effort and of timing between the different sectors. But in the event this was disturbed. On 27th October, the Germans west of the Maas staged an attack on the southern flank of Second Army, which, though contained within the next few days, postponed Montgomery's offensive and unbalanced First U.S. Army immediately to the south. The advance towards Cologne was correspondingly delayed, and on 2nd November Eisenhower issued fresh orders to Twenty-First Army Group, confining it for the time being to operations west of the Maas, and thereafter to an advance conforming to the movements of First U.S. Army. This development in the north inclined Bradley to place a greater emphasis on the centre, where Third U.S. Army was now ready and eager to move. On 2nd November, he authorized it to attack towards the Saar as soon as weather permitted; and six days later, in heavy rain, the offensive began. The manoeuvre, however, did not achieve its expected result. In continuing bad weather, Third Army gained little ground, while the Germans refused to divert reserves from the neighbourhood of Aachen to meet the threat to the Saar. In mid-November, the Allies therefore launched their main attack by First and Ninth U.S. Armies as they had intended a fortnight before. But resolute defence in difficult country, and continued bad weather, again bogged down the advance, and after two weeks of heavy fighting the Americans had advanced only eight miles south-east of Aachen. Meanwhile, Second Army to the north was still pushing slowly to the line of the Maas and Roer, whose western bank as far as Roermond it cleared only at the beginning of December.

The position at that time was therefore not particularly encouraging. The main defences of the Siegfried Line remained inviolate, winter was closing in, and the Allies were committed to the remains of a plan whose initial timing and coherence had now been upset, along a front uncomfortably extended and uncomfortably short of reserves of ammunition.<sup>1</sup> In the middle of November, indeed, it was clear that the American armies north of the Ardennes could not hope to stage a prolonged attack without substantially greater supplies; and on the 19th, Eisenhower startled the Western publics by broadcasting his appeal to the American people for more ammunition. To nations now accustomed to a superiority of material, and so recently anticipating victory, the incident came as something of a shock.

The prospects were the less encouraging from the disappointment of hopes raised suddenly in the south. Throughout November, Sixth Army Group (Seventh U.S. and First French Armies) had been maintaining pressure against the Germans in the Vosges, between Nancy and Belfort; and on the 19th, the French broke through the Belfort Gap to reach the upper Rhine and Mulhouse within the day. On the 22nd, Seventh U.S. Army followed suit farther north, driving the Germans' right wing back beyond Strasbourg and forming a northern pincer around the rest in the vicinity of Colmar. This raised a serious situation for the enemy; for if the Allies could eliminate the pocket and establish an unbroken front along the upper Rhine, they might then be able to transfer substantial forces for the critical operations against the Ruhr. Hitler therefore ordered that the Colmar pocket should be held at all costs, and, suspicious of his Generals' capacity and intentions, sent Himmler to take command. But the Allies, possibly over-optimistic, failed to exploit their success to the full. The Germans regained their bridgehead west of the Rhine, and despite the prestige of freeing Belfort, Mulhouse and Strasbourg, and despite a further advance by Third U.S. Army to Metz in the last week of November, the Allied operations south of the Ardennes had failed by that time to relieve the *impasse* to the north.

The course of these events provoked a further exchange between Montgomery and Eisenhower. In August, and again in September 1944, the British commander had protested against the strategy of the 'broad front', and had claimed that concentration in one sector, and a complementary revision of command, would alone gain a decisive result.<sup>2</sup> The disagreements had then officially been confined to the Command. But their reappearance now attracted, for the first time, the intervention of the British Chiefs of Staff. Throughout November,

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<sup>1</sup> See pp. 25-6 above.

<sup>2</sup> See Volume V, pp. 379-81, 524-7.

Montgomery grew increasingly uneasy at what he considered to be a fatal dispersal of strength and a disintegration of the Allied plans; and at two meetings with Eisenhower on the 28th and 29th, urged his familiar solution. On the 30th, he followed up his verbal recommendations with a short but cogent letter. The Western Allies, he argued, had 'suffered a strategic reverse' since September, and the plans for the winter offered no logical prospect of its redemption. The series of attacks in different sectors had brought no significant reward; nor could their continuation be related satisfactorily to the offensive which must follow in the spring. The first step was to return to the object defined in Eisenhower's directive of 28th October;<sup>1</sup> and this involved a concentration of strength in the north, which must be accompanied by a change in the pattern of command. The borders between the Army Groups should be redrawn; one man should control all operations north of the Ardennes, and one to the south; and the team of Montgomery and Bradley should be revived for the main sector, with one of them, whichever Eisenhower decided to appoint, in command.

The contents and the tone of this letter annoyed the Supreme Commander. But he agreed to meet Montgomery and Bradley, as Montgomery suggested; and the issues were argued amicably enough at a meeting at Maastricht on 7th December. All agreed on the immediate future in the north. Twelfth and Twenty-First Army Groups should operate north of the Ardennes, the former aiming with some twenty-five divisions at Cologne and Bonn, while ten of its divisions attacked north from the Roer to meet Twenty-First Army Group as it pushed south-east from the Nijmegen salient. These movements, which would bring the Allies to the western bank of the Rhine as far south as the Ruhr, should be complete by 12th January, 1945. But the context of the operations still appeared differently to the different commanders. Montgomery proposed that Twenty-First Army Group, reinforced as necessary by American and airborne divisions, should cross the Rhine as soon as possible between Wesel and Nijmegen, and should develop mobile operations to outflank the Ruhr to the north. Part of Twelfth Army Group should meanwhile conduct holding operations in the centre, while the rest crossed the Rhine near Bonn to outflank the Ruhr from the south. Sixth Army Group should operate in the Saar as far as its strength and resources would allow. Eisenhower, however, could not agree. While admitting that the current operations in all sectors would not prove immediately decisive, he claimed that they were fulfilling his ultimate purpose by wearing down the Germans continuously along an extended line—a process which, thanks to their lack of mobility, they could not hope to

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<sup>1</sup> See pp. 32-3 above.

check. To halt these operations in favour of those suggested by Montgomery, might on the other hand allow them to reinforce one sector and to reorganize in others. Eisenhower, in fact, less optimistic than Montgomery about the state of the enemy, now placed a greater reliance on attrition than on a concentrated attack in a particular area, whose difficulties were well known. He was therefore prepared to adopt a policy of opportunism, and to rely on his superiority of manoeuvre to exploit the break which, sooner or later, continuous pressure must cause. In his view, moreover, the prospects might prove more favourable to the south than to the north of the Ardennes. The enemy seemed badly stretched in the region of the Saar, and might even yield a crossing of the Rhine near Worms which in turn might open the way for an advance along the axis Frankfurt-Kassel. On this reasoning, Eisenhower ordered Third U.S. Army at the beginning of December to stage another attack on the Saar, so as to capture the area if possible by Christmas.

Montgomery was not convinced by the Supreme Commander's arguments, and he accordingly reported the disagreement to London. His messages increased the fears for the western front which the British Chiefs of Staff, and Ministers, already entertained. Like him, they had recently been worried by the apparent disappearance of a master plan, and by the shift of emphasis to operations south of the Ardennes, which seemed to disregard the Combined Chiefs of Staff's earlier recommendation to Eisenhower to follow the northern line of approach into Germany.<sup>1</sup> These misgivings were aired at a meeting on 12th December, which Eisenhower and Tedder attended in London with the Prime Minister and the Chiefs of Staff. The two commanders again argued on the lines developed at Maastricht, although on this occasion Eisenhower agreed that an advance on Frankfurt should complement and not replace the main thrust on the Ruhr. This, as he claimed, seemed to narrow the difference to one of means rather than of ends. But it still did not follow that the means would not prejudice the ends. It was not enough now, the British maintained, to agree on the shape of the later advance: it was equally important to ensure that the preliminary operations met the subsequent demands. The Supreme Commander's arguments failed to satisfy their fears on this head, and on 18th December the Chiefs of Staff returned to the charge. In a memorandum to the Prime Minister, they submitted that Eisenhower's strength in the spring of 1945, which they estimated at eighty to eighty-five divisions, would not allow of the double enveloping movement which he now seemed to contemplate. They feared a departure from the Combined Chiefs of Staff's support of the northern approach, and recommended therefore that the British should seek agreement from the Americans to ask Eisenhower for a

<sup>1</sup> See Volume V, p. 526.





PLATE I. COMMANDERS ON THE WESTERN FRONT  
*Left to right: Field Marshal Montgomery, General Eisenhower, General Bradley.*



detailed plan of operations in the winter and spring, including an account of the general disposition of his forces.

Thus British opinion stood when dramatic developments in the middle of December threw the western front into confusion.

Over the same period, the Allies experienced a disappointment in Italy.<sup>1</sup> On 7th September, General Alexander had issued his orders for the main assault with Fifth and Eighth Armies on the Gothic Line, running from the western coast by Lucca to the edge of the mountains near Rimini. Eighth Army consisted of three Corps (two British, one Canadian), Fifth Army of three Corps (two American, one British). Over the next fortnight the operations went well. Eighth Army, under Lieut.-General Sir Oliver Leese (who was relieved on 1st October by Lieut.-General Sir Richard McCreery), advanced with two Corps up the Adriatic coast, capturing Rimini on 21st September. Fifth Army, under the American General Mark Clark, meanwhile pushed steadily with two Corps through the central mountains round Bologna. In the third week of the month, it seemed possible that the enemy might crack, thereby opening the Lombard plain to the Allies. But the outcome was still uncertain, and was likely to be a close-run thing. Alexander calculated that he was attacking twenty German divisions with some twenty Allied divisions, in very difficult country and after a long period of incessant fighting. It was therefore quite possible that he might not achieve a decisive victory; and if he did not, the Allies might be halted in the mountains for at least a part of the winter.

In the last week of September, the end of the battle could still not be foreseen. Fifth Army had then penetrated the main defences of the Gothic Line in the northern Apennines, but faced another belt of mountainous country, guarded by a vigorous if retreating enemy of almost equal strength to itself, before it could debouch onto the lateral road near Bologna and gain the Lombard plain. Eighth Army on the right was similarly pushing through the last stretch of mountain south-east of Faenza, but in the extreme east had been halted beyond Rimini, seemingly just too weak to turn the enemy's flank. On 21st September, Alexander informed the C.I.G.S.:

'We are inflicting very heavy losses on the enemy and are making slow but steady progress, but our losses are also heavy and we are fighting in country where, it is generally agreed, a superiority of at least 3-1 is required for successful offensive operations. It will be small wonder, therefore, if we fail to score a really decisive success when the opposing forces are so equally matched.'

The course of the operations over the next two months was to confirm his forecast.

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<sup>1</sup> See Inset to Map II, facing p. 130.

From the last week of September to the last week of October, Eighth Army pushed slowly north and west. Although Rimini had been captured on 21st September, the country immediately beyond still offered serious obstacles to a weak attack. Nine rivers, and hundreds of minor watercourses, lie between the Adriatic coast and Bologna; while up the coast itself the lagoon of the Valli di Comacchio guards the southern approach to the river Po. Unusually bad weather added to the difficulties which inadequate strength imposed. After an enforced lull during the first half of October, two Corps of Eighth Army resumed the offensive on both sides of the Rimini-Bologna road. They made some small initial gains, chiefly on the left in the mountains south of the area Cesena-Forli; and on 19th October, Cesena itself fell to attack from the east. The enemy then withdrew through the mountains to the line of the river Ronco, which cuts the lateral road some five miles from Forli. But on 25th October, when Eighth Army had established bridgeheads across the river, sudden storms damaged communications and again brought the advance to a stand. Meanwhile, operations to the north of Rimini had cleared the coastal area between Cesena and Cervia; but the enemy still occupied the latter, and a line east of the Ronco.

Over the same period, Fifth Army fought a critical battle for Bologna. In the last week of September, its right reached a point thirteen miles south of Imola, and its left a point some twenty-two miles south of Bologna, over the series of passes which marked the crest of the mountains. Clark then decided to switch his main effort to the western axis, and, reinforced by the one division immediately available from reserve, an American Corps began the attack for Bologna on 1st October. Advancing slowly in continuously bad weather, it captured Monghidoro on the 2nd, and ten days later occupied the mountains around Livergnano. The enemy (commanded temporarily by Colonel-General von Vietinghoff, in the absence of Marshal Kesselring through injury), reinforced from the western sector and from reserves, and stimulated by an order from Hitler that the Apennines must be held, offered a stubborn defence. But between 20th and 24th October, Fifth Army reached positions only four miles from the lateral road and nine miles from the centre of Bologna. This was the crisis. If the Allies could reach the road, the Germans would be divided, and the northern plain could be entered at a more favourable point than existed farther east. The enemy accordingly threw everything into the battle. By 25th October, three of his most experienced divisions south of the Alps were defending the road, and Fifth Army, weakened by its exertions in exceptionally severe weather, was forced on the 27th to go over to the defensive.

The future did not look promising. The two Allied Armies were deployed in unsatisfactory positions for the winter; both were tired and

starved of men; and the same shortage of ammunition which threatened the western front, threatened the front in Italy. In November, Alexander estimated that his British ammunition would support Eighth Army's current operations and an offensive of fifteen days in December; his American ammunition would suffice only for ten days' intensive fighting before the end of the year. Both Armies, too, badly needed men. On 6th October, Fifth Army reported that its current operations would soon be endangered without reinforcements, and a fortnight later Alexander had seriously to consider the disbandment of two divisions and one battalion of Eighth Army for lack of replacements. The immediate crisis was postponed on Fifth Army's front, by a loan of 3,000 men by Eisenhower from Seventh U.S. Army in France. But the position in November was potentially serious, and was not improved in the following weeks by the necessity, which then arose, to divert troops from Italy to Greece.<sup>1</sup> Nevertheless, the need to contain as many German divisions as possible which might otherwise be sent to the western front, and the disadvantages of the line as it stood, obliged the Mediterranean Command to consider a further limited offensive before the end of the year. A short spell of fine weather early in November enabled Eighth Army finally to clear the coastal area north of Rimini, to capture Forli on the 9th, and to cross the lower Ronco within the next few days. Alexander therefore proposed, on the 19th, to use his ammunition in a three weeks' offensive aimed at the capture of Bologna and Ravenna. Eighth Army was to take Ravenna, and to strike westwards at once from Forli so as to reach the line of the river Santerno through Imola in the first week of December. One Corps of Fifth Army, which was meanwhile reorganizing, would then resume its attack up the road to Imola, starting if possible on 7th December. The advance on Bologna must be rapid if it were to succeed, in view of the limited stock of ammunition; and it would accordingly take place only if the weather allowed.

Alexander was unable himself to supervise the operations throughout December, for on 25th November he was appointed to succeed General Wilson as Supreme Commander in the Mediterranean, when the latter was appointed head of the Joint Staff Mission in Washington in place of Field Marshal Dill, who had died on the 4th. The transfer took place early in December, when General Mark Clark, hitherto commanding Fifth Army, became Commander-in-Chief of the Armies in Italy, once more called Fifteenth Army Group.<sup>2</sup> But in the event, the full offensive could not be launched. Although Eighth Army began its attack towards the end of November, taking Ravenna on 4th December and Faenza on the 6th, bad weather in the mountains prevented Fifth Army from moving. The Allied line at the end of the year accordingly

<sup>1</sup> See pp. 61, 62 below.

<sup>2</sup> See Volume V, p. 21.

settled in the west and centre at its limits of October, and in the east along the river Senio to the southern shore of the Valli di Comacchio. The Allies had failed by the narrowest of margins to gain a decisive advantage; and it now seemed impossible to break the deadlock before the spring of 1945.

(ii)

## Developments in South-East Europe

The deadlock on the western front and in Italy seemed likely, in November 1944, to place the Western Allies in a strategic strait-jacket until the following spring. For the first time since the plans were made at the First Quebec Conference, they had lost the initiative in Europe. Hitherto, their success in 1944 had been due to a combination of three causes: the existence of forces as yet uncommitted, whose deployment, however difficult for the Allies, could not be foreseen by the enemy; the existence of areas still immune from assault, but demanding a measure of his protection; and, as a result of these two factors combined with the operations themselves, the fact that the attack in Italy contained a defence of almost equal strength to itself. The Allies had thus possessed a strategic choice of manoeuvre, even when their local choice of manoeuvre had been lost. But by the beginning of the winter, each of these factors had changed. All British and American divisions immediately available for operations were now engaged in the west and south of Europe; their earlier success left few immediate opportunities for fresh manoeuvre; and, deprived of these advantages, the attack in Italy had lost its unwonted advantage over the defence. The danger in the winter of 1944/45 was therefore not merely that a stalemate had supervened on the western front, but that a coherent European strategy seemed about to be lost.

This constriction of strategic choice was felt in the course of October, even before the failure of the attack in Italy had been confirmed. As early as the first week in that month, the commanders in the Mediterranean began to doubt if they would reach the river Adige before the winter, although they still based their plans on that assumption and counted at least on reaching the Lombard plain. Their forebodings alarmed the Prime Minister, who was then visiting Italy *en route* for a meeting with Stalin in Moscow which had recently been arranged.<sup>1</sup> On the 10th, he accordingly asked the President to divert to Italy two, or if possible three, of the American divisions about to

<sup>1</sup> See p. 104 below.

leave the United States for France. This extra strength, in his opinion, should ensure that Kesselring was driven out of the Apennines, and thereafter kept too busy for the German High Command to withdraw any divisions from the peninsula. But the Prime Minister's telegram, though seen by the C.I.G.S., was sent without the approval of the Chiefs of Staff in London; and neither they nor the Americans were inclined to support its argument. Both preferred to send the extra divisions to the western front, where they would have a direct effect on the main battle, rather than to an area where decisive success was now unlikely before the spring, and where even the limited success that alone seemed possible could not prevent the enemy from reducing his forces temporarily if he so wished. 'We do not see', the Chiefs of Staff remarked, 'how Alexander could now do more for the Western Front than by continuing the pressure on Kesselring with his existing forces until winter and terrain bring his campaign to a standstill'; and while they hoped that this would result in the capture of positions in which to winter more satisfactorily, such results alone could not justify the reinforcement of Italy at this time.

The disappointment of the Italian campaign involved the disappointment of the hopes of its exploitation. It was no longer possible, as had been the case in September, to envisage an immediate advance upon Vienna through Venetia and the Ljubljana Gap.<sup>1</sup> But this did not mean that plans for operations in south-east Europe were at once abandoned. On the contrary, the deadlock in Italy concentrated attention upon them. If the Allies could not chase the Germans out of the peninsula, operations outside the peninsula could alone make the Germans withdraw. If Kesselring could not be defeated by the frontal attack, he might be defeated by a threat to his rear. Operations across the Adriatic, therefore, now provided the best chance of restoring the war of movement, and of allowing the Italian campaign to fulfil its traditional rôle in support of 'Overlord'.

The state of their resources in October, 1944 did not allow the Western Allies themselves to provoke developments in south-east Europe. They could only hope to exploit a Russian success. Throughout the last half of September, the Red Army had swept irresistibly through the Balkans.<sup>2</sup> When Bulgaria capitulated on the 9th, three groups of armies, under General Petrov, Marshal Malinovsky and Marshal Tolbukhin, lay from the Carpathians on the Polish-Czechoslovak border due east to the neighbourhood of Cernowitz in Rumania (Petrov), thence south to the neighbourhood of Brasov, thence south-east to Turnu Severin on the Yugoslav frontier (Malinovsky), and

<sup>1</sup> See Volume V, pp. 391-4, 511.

<sup>2</sup> See Map II, facing p. 130.

thence through northern and central Bulgaria (Tolbukhin). At the end of the first week in September, Malinovsky began to move west towards the Hungarian frontier. Five German formations of varying strengths, and possibly eight Hungarian divisions, opposed him in hilly terrain well suited to defence. But the Hungarians offered only a nominal resistance; the Germans were embroiled in the rear in the political and military consequences of defeat; and Malinovsky soon reached the broad Transylvanian plains. On 19th September he took Temesvar, one hundred miles north-west of Turnu Severin, and on the 21st Arad. Meanwhile, Tolbukhin completed the occupation of Bulgaria, taking Sofia on 16th September, and moving up the Danube in the north towards the Yugoslav border. Late in the month, he crossed the river near Turnu Severin, and on 1st October joined Tito's Partisans directly to the south.

This was the signal for Malinovsky to advance farther up the Danube. By 5th October, his left was a few miles north of Belgrade. On the same day, his centre crossed the frontier of Hungary beyond Arad, and a few days later his right moved north of Cluj. Petrov meanwhile, against growing German opposition, pushed slowly through the Carpathians, and in the third week of October threatened the road and rail junction of Cop. By that time, amid growing political confusion, Malinovsky had reached the Danube south of Budapest, and the enemy was being squeezed into a long and increasingly narrow salient in Transylvania. In the first ten days of November, the Russians closed gradually on Budapest; but four German panzer divisions barred the eastern approaches, and Malinovsky accordingly swung north towards the Czechoslovak frontier. Petrov had meanwhile been moving steadily forward, and on 3rd December the two groups of armies met at Miskolcz. The enemy had now been cleared almost entirely from the eastern bank of the Danube as far as Budapest, and the last defence of the river line was concentrated in a salient round the city. But that defence remained formidable. The Germans, again in full political control and determined to hold Budapest as the eastern bastion of Austria, had concentrated approximately fifteen divisions, with two Hungarian armies, along a front of some fifty miles. The Russians accordingly paused to regroup for the critical battle, and to await reinforcements from Tolbukhin farther south.

These momentous events affected the position in Greece and Yugoslavia, although not so quickly as the Western Allies had anticipated. At first indeed, determined not to abandon territory until they were forced to do so, well aware of the defensive qualities of the terrain, and by no means convinced that the Allies saw eye to eye over the future of the area, the Germans had no intention of evacuating the southern regions. When Rumania withdrew from the war on 23rd August, they decided to concentrate their forces on a more defensible line; and on



the 26th, the German Commander-in-Chief, South-East was instructed to prepare to withdraw from the Aegean islands and southern Greece, and on the 30th to evacuate some of the Dalmatian islands. The orders had scarcely been issued when Bulgaria sued for peace, and political chaos developed in Hungary. But while the danger was increasing, its exact shape could still not be foreseen. We now know that early in September, Hitler and the High Command thought that the Russians might advance from Bulgaria on Greece and the Aegean, so as to forestall the Western Allies; and on this assumption, there might be time for the Germans to regain control in Hungary, and—with the tacit consent of the Russians—to redeploy in Yugoslavia and western Greece so as to form a screen against British movements from Italy. This mistaken deduction—not in itself remarkable when the possibilities were open, but typical of a state of mind which was later to bedevil the defence of the Reich—supported the Germans' determination in any case not to move before they had to. In answer to his questions, the Commander-in-Chief, South-East was informed early in September that he should evacuate most of the Aegean and Ionian islands and the Peloponnese, but should hold the mainland of Greece for the time being. Meanwhile, in case it proved necessary to withdraw into Yugoslavia, the Germans renewed their wooing of both Serbs and Croats, in an effort to establish a more satisfactory political base on which to concentrate their defence.

But this plan was largely upset by events inside Yugoslavia. In the course of the summer, the Western Allies and the Partisans had concerted measures to exploit a German withdrawal through the country from the south;<sup>1</sup> and as the situation became more fluid throughout south-east Europe, they agreed to put the plan ('Ratweek') into effect for the week beginning 1st September. Since this coincided with various movements on the part of the Germans—to reinforce the fronts farther east, to guarantee communications with the north, and to prepare a line in southern Yugoslavia—the timing of the operation appeared at first to be perfect. But while in fact the enemy did not intend to withdraw entirely, he found his limited retreat seriously hampered. 'Ratweek' aimed at paralysing the enemy's communications between north and south. It is difficult to ascertain its results exactly. But by its close, the Partisans and the Allied Balkans Air Forces<sup>2</sup> had cut many, if not all, of the railway lines between Belgrade and the frontiers with Bulgaria and Greece; had restricted much of the enemy's movement by road to the night; had destroyed or damaged several important bridges and viaducts; and had harried, in some places seriously, the Germans' garrison towns. The effect was felt over the rest of the month. German troop movements, thoroughly

<sup>1</sup> See Volume V, pp. 385-6.

<sup>2</sup> *Loc. cit.*, pp. 274-5.

disorganized during 'Ratweek' itself, were still uncertain three weeks later; neither the reinforcement of Rumania and Bulgaria, nor the immediate concentration of forces in southern Yugoslavia, could be properly carried out; and the attempts to gain a greater political harmony were rudely interrupted. The Germans in fact suffered a reverse from which, despite their later efforts, they never entirely recovered. In this period of chaos, the Partisans steadily enlarged their gains. They had already recovered much of their power in central Yugoslavia during the summer. By the middle of September, they had regained most of the Dalmatian islands; and by the end of the month, controlled the mountains along much of the eastern frontier, and in the north had entered Serbia and were threatening Belgrade. When the Russians, now reinforced by Bulgarian levies, entered Yugoslavia on 1st October, the German position therefore seemed grave.

Tolbukhin's advance into Yugoslavia served notice on the Germans that the attack from Bulgaria would after all be to the west and not to the south; and on 7th October, threatened in the rear by the Red Army and with their communications already under siege, they decided to evacuate Greece, together with southern Albania and southern Macedonia. The Commander-in-Chief, South-East had indeed been warning the High Command since 21st September that hesitation might prove dangerous; but the delay in giving the order was caused in part by its reluctance to admit defeat in an area where the Germans were still in control. For throughout the first half of September, the planned evacuation of the southern regions had been carried out with surprising ease. Neither guerrillas nor British had offered serious interruption; and indeed the lack of activity by the Western Allies led Hitler, on 14th September, again to advance his theory that they preferred Germans to Russians in Greece. A severe air attack from Italy on the airfield at Athens, and reports of larger British naval forces in the Aegean, dispelled this view within the next few days. But it was not until the Russians had joined hands with the Partisans in Yugoslavia, that Hitler and the High Command would agree to abandon a country whose possession was not yet seriously in dispute.

The measure of the Germans' miscalculation may be seen by comparing their estimates with the Allies' plans. The Russians had moved west and not south; while the British had never hoped to expel the enemy from Greece, an enterprise for which they possessed neither enough forces nor enough control over the guerrillas, but rather to harass a withdrawal to be brought about, as it was, by events elsewhere. As soon as the withdrawal began, the measures were put into effect. Action in Greece was defined by the two plans 'Noah's Ark' and 'Manna', the former comprising operations by guerrillas against the

retreating forces, the latter landings by British forces in the south, once the Germans had left Athens, to prevent a *coup d'état* by the Greek political party E.A.M.<sup>1</sup> 'Noah's Ark', while not comparable in effect with 'Ratweek', was more successful than the British had expected. The German troops in Greece, though not of the first quality, still constituted a disciplined force which retreated in reasonable order. But the guerrillas, aided by the Allied Balkans Air Forces, killed perhaps some 5,000 men, wounded and captured as many more, and destroyed or captured perhaps a hundred locomotives and five hundred vehicles, together with arms and ammunition. While the enemy thus managed to extricate the bulk of his forces, his losses in men and material were not inconsiderable.

Meanwhile, the Mediterranean Command had been preparing to put 'Manna' into effect. On 13th September, Wilson received his directive from the Combined Chiefs of Staff. He was instructed to assume control of all operations for the occupation of Greece in the event of a German withdrawal or surrender, to pave the way for the establishment of a Greek Government, and to organize relief. While the last task would be the responsibility of the Western Allies, the other two would be the responsibility of the British. Wilson promptly formed a separate force for these purposes, consisting eventually of an armoured brigade with British and Greek Special forces from the Middle East, a British parachute brigade and a brigade of Greek mountain troops from Italy, and some 3,500 Greeks already near Athens, which he placed under the British Lieut.-General R. MacK. Scobie. Supporting naval and air operations in the eastern Mediterranean, and land operations in the Aegean islands other than Crete, were entrusted to the commanders in the Middle East. The forces allotted to these operations were held ready throughout September, while small commandos and Special forces probed the islands and the Peloponnese where the Germans were already withdrawing. The last uncertainty in the plans was resolved on 26th September, when the leaders of the main guerrilla movements agreed to operate under British guidance; and on 1st October, the first Allied advanced forces landed on the islands and at points along the coast. On the night of the 13th/14th, Greek troops occupied the Piraeus; on the 15th, various forces entered southern Greece and Salonika; and on the 18th, the Greek Government from Cairo reached Athens. The operation had been carried out, with the forces and in the conditions envisaged, which the British had canvassed since September, 1943.<sup>2</sup>

The pace of events in Yugoslavia had upset the Germans' preliminary plans before they could be put into effect. The Commander-in-Chief, South-East intended at the beginning of October to yield only

<sup>1</sup> See Volume V, pp. 385-7 for the background to these plans.

<sup>2</sup> See *loc. cit.*, pp. 86-7.

the extreme south and east of Serbia. But it soon became plain that a more extensive withdrawal was necessary, and on 10th October the line in the east was moved back to the river Morava. This again proved impossible to hold. The Red Army, with its Bulgars, was now advancing through the area between Nis and Belgrade. On 15th October, Nis fell to a combined force of Bulgars, Russians and Partisans, and on the 20th the Russians and Partisans entered the capital. The Bulgars then drove on to the south-west from Nis; and on 17th October, the Germans decided to fall back slowly through the mountains to the line of the river Drina. Meanwhile, their forces in western Yugoslavia were withdrawing inland from the Dalmatian coast, in face of attacks by the Partisans aided by elements of Allied Land Forces, Adriatic,<sup>1</sup> to a line along the hills. By the third week in October, the enemy had therefore decided to confine his forces entirely to the centre of Yugoslavia, holding Slovenia as long as possible in the north, and in the south the main communications with the Greek frontier. He would thereby keep the escape route open to the north, would protect the vital approach to Istria and Italy, and, in country whose defensive qualities he had good cause to know, would still provide the Allies with a difficult military problem.

The whole of this position turned on the possibility of holding Slovenia. If the Russians decided to move up the Sava from Belgrade, they would soon threaten both Istria and communications with the south. But in the last week of October, it was clear that their main advance lay in another direction. Although the Partisans were active to the west of Belgrade, the Red Army swung north up the Danube, and at the end of the month Tolbukhin sent heavy reinforcements into Hungary. His remaining forces wheeled south from Belgrade, while the Bulgars on their left turned to attack the enemy withdrawing from Greece. Such a movement offered a more direct threat to the Germans' area of concentration than an advance up the Sava; but in country better suited to defence. In the last days of October, a series of battles began around Kraljevo and Pristina, two important positions along the main road to the north. On 2nd November, the Germans succeeded in holding both. Despite further pressure early in that month, from the Russians and Bulgars and from the Partisans, they managed to stand on the line of the road, while the troops from Greece deployed in their new positions. By the middle of November, the enemy had stabilized the front. He had protected his position in the central mountains, and in the more open country to the north had checked the Partisans west of Belgrade. The disappearance of the main Russian forces had eased the immediate danger which their appearance had earlier provoked; and although

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<sup>1</sup> See Volume V, pp. 274-5.

Greece had fallen to the Allies, it was now clear that in Yugoslavia, as elsewhere, a German collapse was unlikely to occur during the winter.

As the British surveyed this changing scene in the first half of October 1944, it seemed to offer considerable opportunities for relieving the deadlock in Italy; and at a meeting in Naples on the 8th, the Prime Minister and the C.I.G.S., with the Foreign Secretary and General Ismay, discussed them with the commanders in the theatre. The precise nature of the operations was difficult to envisage, and none of the conditions could be exactly assessed as yet. The Russians' plans, the extent of the final gains in Italy, and the Americans' intentions for some of their resources in the Mediterranean, were all unknown; so too was the effect on the Americans of the proposal, under new circumstances, to extend operations to the east. For an attack at the head of, or across, the Adriatic must almost certainly involve the immediate use of American assault shipping, which then comprised five-sixths of the assault shipping in the theatre, and which the Joint Chiefs of Staff were at liberty to remove after 15th October;<sup>1</sup> and while the President and the Joint Chiefs of Staff had recently accepted the prospect of an advance through Istria to the north-east,<sup>2</sup> their approval had been given in conditions that no longer obtained. It was one thing to agree to an entry into the Balkans when the issue in Italy was no longer in doubt: quite another, when an operation in or near the Balkans was designed to settle that issue. While the meeting at Naples was anxious to open the question of an attack up the Adriatic, it was therefore in some doubt as to how this should be done.

On a preliminary survey, there seemed to be two possible ways by which to relieve the front in Italy. First, the Western Allies might launch a seaborne attack on the Istrian peninsula, including Trieste, as had been proposed earlier,<sup>3</sup> but with a different date to suit the changed conditions. Secondly, they might land south of Fiume, and advance northwards on Trieste. The object in each case was the same; the choice between the means would depend on the situation in Yugoslavia and on the state of the Allies' resources. Since neither was certain, Wilson was asked to report to the Combined Chiefs of Staff as soon as possible, examining in particular the implications of a seaborne attack on Istria, with which the Americans were familiar.

But the report, when it appeared on 10th October, was somewhat discouraging. Wilson began by stating that the campaign in Italy now seemed unlikely to contribute directly over the next few months to the campaign in western Europe. Indeed,

<sup>1</sup> See Volume V, p. 510.

<sup>2</sup> *Loc. cit.*, p. 511.

<sup>3</sup> *Loc. cit.* pp. 393-4, 510.

'... it would appear

(a) That the Russian advance will be a more decisive factor in influencing the withdrawal of Kesselring's army out of Italy than the advance of General Alexander's army . . .

(b) That this Russian advance will result in the withdrawal of all German forces in the Balkans that can be disengaged . . .'

The Western Allies should accordingly seek not only to maintain their existing pressure on Kesselring, but also to free as many forces as possible to exploit a general retreat by the Germans towards the Austrian frontier. The difficulty lay in the dates. If Alexander's current operations were to be sustained until the end of November, no troops could be spared from Italy before December at the earliest, to prepare for a seaborne assault. An attack on Istria in 1944, as originally envisaged, would therefore prove impossible. Moreover, it now seemed likely that unless developments in south-east Europe forced Kesselring to withdraw out of Italy during the winter, the Allies would need all of their armies in the peninsula for an offensive in the spring. Wilson therefore concluded that in any case he could not count on launching an attack on Istria until early in 1945, and that even to attack in February or March of that year he would need reinforcements in the Mediterranean before the end of 1944. The operation had originally been designed on the basis of one airborne and two seaborne divisions in the assault, with one division to follow up, using the assault shipping, and subsequently the merchant shipping, already in the theatre. He would therefore now need three fresh divisions, including the airborne division, if it were to be carried out. The alternative of a landing south of Fiume—which would depend on the Germans' movements in western Yugoslavia over the next few months—would demand the same seaborne assault, but probably not the airborne division and possibly not so many minesweepers and merchant ships.

Wilson's report was followed by the Prime Minister's appeal to the President, on different grounds, for the three divisions.<sup>1</sup> Neither met with favour from the authorities in London. On 14th October, the British Planners explained their objections. Operations in Italy, as all agreed, must conform to the needs of 'Overlord'; and after examining in some detail the possibilities of the western and eastern fronts, the Joint Planners were inclined to think that German resistance might well cease before the end of the year. Even if it did not, Eisenhower might be able to launch a 'major offensive' in January 1945, and the months of December and January would in that case prove critical. The consequences for Italy were not therefore as Wilson had supposed. It remained vital for his armies to engage the enemy fully after November, and that could be done only by continuing to fight hard in the peninsula itself. But it was also true that the growing exhaustion of the

<sup>1</sup> See pp. 40-1 above.

Allied troops, their lack of reserves, and the nature of the country in north-east Italy, would assist the Germans' withdrawal; and three courses therefore seemed open at the close of the year:

(a) To prepare for an overland Spring offensive [in Italy], combined with an assault on Istria or the Dalmatian coast.

(b) To withdraw the U.S. portion of the Fifth Army (1 armoured, 4 infantry and 1 equivalent divisions) with a view to transferring it to N.W. Europe.

(c) To withdraw British and Imperial troops to form a strategic reserve.

To hold the line of the Adige or Piave would probably require some 8 to 10 infantry divisions and 4 independent armoured brigades. We consider that a force of this order would be sufficient to consolidate any line we may reach by December. This would release 4 to 5 armoured and 6 to 8 infantry divisions for rest and refit.'

In the circumstances, the Joint Planners preferred either of the last two courses they had suggested to the first.

'If the enemy is still holding North East Italy and Istria in the spring 1945, either the Istrian or Dalmatian operations would probably bring about the final defeat of Kesselring's armies. On the other hand, in view of the time it would take to defeat Kesselring's armies and cross the Alps, it is doubtful whether this would make an effective contribution before offensives in the West and on the Russian front, coupled with a greatly decreased German war-making capacity, bring about the final defeat of Germany.

If the enemy withdraws from Istria or the North Dalmatian coast, although the full resources for which General Wilson has asked would be desirable to enable him to reap the maximum advantage from such withdrawal, it could be followed up with less forces.

... The exact effect of providing the necessary resources or, in fact, whether they can be provided in time, cannot be determined without consultation with the United States Chiefs of Staff and S.C.A.E.F.[Eisenhower]. However, bearing in mind that S.C.A.E.F. has already asked for an extra airborne division to be diverted from the Pacific to North West Europe, we consider that only the gravest need elsewhere could justify the diversion of an airborne division and three infantry divisions from the December offensive, which may decide the issue of the war.

Moreover, provision of the full resources, including the assault ships and craft, required by General Wilson for operations in the spring would prejudice their redeployment to South East Asia Command and might delay operations in the Pacific.'

They therefore concluded:

(a) That the overland offensive in Italy should be relentlessly pursued until the major offensive in North West Europe has been launched, probably at the end of December.

(b) Bearing in mind the effect on other theatres, we cannot on our present information, recommend that, on military grounds, additional resources should be allotted to the Mediterranean; nor that the American assault lift should be retained there.

(c) If (a) and (b) are accepted, there is no necessity to take any decision now on the course to be adopted after the offensive in North West Europe had been launched.'

The British Chiefs of Staff agreed in general with the Planners' report; and when on 16th October the President refused to divert the three divisions to Italy, Wilson's immediate design had to be dropped.

But neither Churchill nor the Mediterranean Command was prepared to surrender the prospect of operations beyond the Adige during the winter, and on 21st October another meeting was held in Naples with the Prime Minister, now on his way back from Moscow, again in the chair. The three American divisions were lost. But the American assault shipping remained, and at least part might still be held if a good case could be made for its use. In the past fortnight, moreover, the position had altered in south-east Europe. In the first three weeks of October, the Red Army and the Partisans recorded their greatest gains. During that period, the Germans were driven back in Rumania, Czechoslovakia and Hungary, lost Nis and Belgrade in Yugoslavia, and withdrew steadily through Greece. Of more immediate importance, they ceded much of the Dalmatian coast. These events came at a time when the offensive in Italy seemed increasingly likely to be halted beyond Bologna, and there was therefore the greater inducement for the Western Allies to look farther afield. At the meeting on 21st October, Alexander announced that he was prepared to start withdrawing divisions from the line in Italy as soon as Bologna had been captured. In view of the developments in Yugoslavia, Wilson proposed that they should then be used in the more economical attack on the Dalmatian coast, instead of in a direct assault on Istria. He was now inclined to think that, while the eventual size of the force to be put ashore must probably be much the same in either case, the initial attack on the Dalmatian coast could probably be carried out by one division, with a correspondingly smaller weight of assault shipping. The Prime Minister liked these suggestions, although he thought that the emphasis on Yugoslavia might arouse some fears in the United States. But their detail had still to be examined, and Wilson was accordingly asked again to report to the Combined Chiefs of Staff, drawing attention to the favourable developments in the Balkan



situation and containing a plan for taking advantage of them by a landing on the Dalmatian coast with the object of capturing Fiume and cutting Kesselring's communications.'

The report appeared on 24th October. After drawing attention to the prospective stalemate in Italy and to developments in the Balkans, Wilson stated that he proposed, after capturing Bologna, to pass to 'an offensive defensive' in Italy on or near the line Spezia-Bologna-Ravenna, and to withdraw up to six divisions for rest and reorganization. As soon as the position on the Dalmatian coast allowed, he would put in light forces near and south of Zara, and would prepare to pass three or four divisions through Zara, Split and Dubrovnik for an attack overland on Fiume and Trieste. The advance might begin in the first week of February, 1945. Once Fiume had fallen, the Supreme Commander proposed to increase his force in Yugoslavia to six divisions, and to advance north, cutting Kesselring's communications with south-east Austria and the Balkans, while the air forces in Italy, aided by the operations of Italian partisans, cut the Germans' escape routes through the Alps, and the Allied armies in Italy advanced through the northern plain. To carry out his operations across the Adriatic, Wilson asked permission to keep in the Mediterranean an assault lift for at least one division. This would allow him forthwith to release 28 L.S.T., 52 L.C.T. and 35 L.C.I.(L). Meanwhile, in order to harry the enemy as much as possible, he was anxious to switch the weight of his air effort for the time being from Italy to Yugoslavia.

But, despite its clear statement of the advantages to be gained from the lesser assault, this report found no more favour than its predecessor with the authorities in London. Indeed, it lost the Mediterranean Command its principle supporter. This was perhaps not surprising. The crux of the matter lay in the timing of the operation; for if it could not be launched, as Wilson seemed to assume, until the late months of the winter, then the preparatory withdrawal of forces from Italy would merely produce an immediate disadvantage for no subsequent gain. It would increase the possibility that Kesselring's front would not be fully engaged in December and January, while failing to provide a compensating threat to his rear. 'One of the absurd things', the Prime Minister remarked on 30th October,<sup>1</sup> 'in all the plans which are submitted by [the Mediterranean Command], is the idea that if they move in February they will be in time to effect anything.' Disappointed by the 'slow-moving, heavy-footed methods' proposed, he was now inclined to agree with the British Chiefs of Staff that the Balkans Air Forces and Land Forces, Adriatic should increase their immediate support to the Partisans, but that, since a pincer movement on Trieste in February, 1945 was 'much too late,' Wilson should be

<sup>1</sup> See Appendix VIII below for the complete text.

ordered to prepare 'a large-scale operation' on such lines to take place only if an earlier date could be secured.

The Americans were informed of these views on 31st October. They themselves went further.

'The United States Chiefs of Staff', they replied on 17th November, after a pause of more than a fortnight, 'concur in the views of the British Chiefs of Staff as to operations in the Mediterranean . . . The United States Chiefs of Staff therefore propose that General Wilson be directed to make Bologna his immediate objective and that upon obtaining the Ravenna-Bologna-Spezia line, he should maintain pressure to contain Kesselring's forces. They recognise the necessity of withdrawing divisions for rest and rehabilitation. The United States Chiefs of Staff have arranged to dispatch [a] Mountain Division to Italy, the first infantry regiment sailing December 10th. This reinforcement should aid General Wilson in his efforts to rest tired divisions.

2. The United States Chiefs of Staff also agree that February 1945 would be too late to execute any major operation across the Adriatic into the Balkans unless the war is prolonged into the Spring and Summer of 1945. We question seriously that, under any circumstances, General Wilson has the capability of carrying out a large-scale operation in the Balkans by February. It appears he cannot do this and also take Bologna and maintain pressure on the Ravenna-Bologna-Spezia line. Factors leading to these conclusions include logistical considerations such as the critical shortage of shipping to fill present requirements for approved operations, the time-consuming and costly development of Dalmatian ports, and the logistical difficulties connected with the campaign in the mountainous Balkans during winter weather. The opening of new areas to major operations invariably results in demands for forces and resources in excess of original estimates, and such increased demands must therefore be anticipated. It therefore appears to the United States Chiefs of Staff that we cannot launch a major campaign in the Balkans until late winter at the earliest, and that such an action should be considered only on the assumption the war will last into the late spring.

3. If the problems of timing and logistics could be overcome, the United States Chiefs of Staff question the advisability of undertaking major operations in the Balkans with the Germans still present in force in Northern Italy. Mediterranean operations have been aimed primarily at furnishing maximum support to the Western Front. The objective has therefore been first to destroy Kesselring's army and, short of that, to harass, and exert pressure and attrition on his forces. The Germans, however, now have the capability of withdrawing both from Italy and the Balkans to shorter lines, and transferring forces thus freed to more seriously threatened fronts. It would seem that the transfer of major forces

to the Balkans would gravely reduce such containing and attrition power as we now possess in Italy, and would fail to achieve any military objectives to the north and north-east of the Adriatic in time to be of assistance in the general war effort.

4. In the light of the foregoing, the United States Chiefs of Staff consider the proper action at this time is to introduce light forces into the Dalmatian ports in order to maintain pressure and harass the German forces withdrawing from the Balkans. Any divisions withdrawn from the line in Italy should be held as a strategic reserve, well-placed and prepared to reinforce the effort against Kesselring while serving as a pool to facilitate the rotation of tired units.'

They proposed a directive to Wilson which would meet these views.

By the time that this message had been received, the position had again altered, and to the disadvantage of Wilson's 'large-scale operation'. By the third week in November, the enemy had managed to regain a measure of control over the western half of Yugoslavia, which in the absence of Tolbukhin's main forces he might well be able to hold. Unless the Red Army gained a decisive victory beyond Budapest—which as yet was far from certain—there would therefore be no German withdrawal from the south towards the Austrian frontier, and an attack up the Dalmatian coast towards Fiume and Trieste might prove more difficult than had been supposed. Other factors had also emerged, which seemed likely to increase the hazards. The capture of Bologna, which was to be the signal for the withdrawal of the necessary forces, had been delayed until its very prospect was now uncertain; the prolongation of the struggle had by now confirmed the threatened shortage of ammunition; and lastly, the Western Allies could no longer rely on the full co-operation of the Partisans.

In all of the operations in Yugoslavia over the past year, the British had been able to count with reasonable confidence on a friendly reception. Relations between the British Government and Marshal Tito, tolerable in the last quarter of 1943, had improved steadily throughout the first half of 1944, and co-operation between the Mediterranean Command and the Partisans had grown correspondingly closer. The creation of the Balkans Air Forces in the summer had improved the machinery of collaboration, which the British hoped and expected would be further improved by the experience gained in 'Ratweek'.<sup>1</sup> They were therefore disappointed, and at first surprised, by a marked change in their treatment in November, 1944.

The disappointment was the greater because it was provoked by the first occasion on which British land forces had operated on the mainland of Yugoslavia. Air support had been provided continuously since the summer, and had increased substantially from September. But in the

<sup>1</sup> See Volume V, pp. 385-6.

middle of October, Tito asked the British to send some field artillery for operations in Montenegro, and on the 20th Wilson instructed Land Forces, Adriatic to provide at least sixteen to twenty guns. Since the Partisans had no experience of handling the weapons, a small British force, known as Floydforce from its commander Brigadier Sir Henry Floyd, Bart., landed at Dubrovnik on 28th October to operate under the orders of the local Partisan commander. For the first few weeks, all went well. Floydforce carried out a successful operation against the Germans early in November, which earned the thanks of the Yugoslavs. But in the second half of the month, the atmosphere suddenly changed. The British artillery, which by then was operating inland, was ordered to withdraw at once to the neighbourhood of Dubrovnik, on the patently artificial excuse that the Germans were threatening to attack the town; and on the 25th, the Partisans stated over the wireless that no agreement had been signed authorizing the entry of British or American troops into Yugoslavia, 'such as has been signed between Yugoslavia and Soviet High Command.' Floydforce thereafter found itself in an unenviable position. Despite occasional hints that its services would be required, it was not used again; and after a period of uncertainty, punctuated by complaints of its behaviour or existence, was withdrawn in the middle of January, 1945.

The treatment of Floydforce could perhaps be explained partly by a lack of central control over the local Partisan commander, coupled with a national pride which disliked admitting to any direct dependence on foreign troops, as distinct from foreign supplies. But while these explanations were doubtless true as far as they went, they did not account for the fact that the antagonism was concentrated on troops from the West, and was indeed specifically contrasted with the agreement to 'admit' troops from the East. The incident, moreover, occurred after a period in which Tito's behaviour had been causing uneasiness in London. In August 1944, after conversations in Italy with the Prime Minister, it had seemed possible that the good offices of the British might lead to the formation of a Yugoslav government including exiles and guerrillas, and affording reasonable safeguards to King Peter's position.<sup>1</sup> But these hopes had soon to be qualified. In the third week of September, Tito disappeared without warning from his headquarters in the island of Vis, not to be seen or heard of until he reappeared in Yugoslavia just before the capture of Belgrade. It later transpired that he had in fact been with the Russians; meanwhile, the talks with the head of King Peter's Government, M. Subasic, were perforce interrupted, and the British left to master their irritation as best they could. In the interval, moreover, the Partisan authorities seemed to be doing their best to sabotage the most immediate item of collaboration, the creation of a united Yugoslav

<sup>1</sup> See Volume V, pp. 387-8.

navy which had recently been agreed in principle.<sup>1</sup> Tito disavowed their behaviour on his return; but his own attitude to the negotiations for a united Government soon gave further cause for anxiety. By the end of October, it was clear that he intended to drive a harder bargain than had seemed likely earlier. As had been agreed, the new Government was to be composed of representatives from the National Committee of Liberation and from the Royal Government in London. But the former was to be accorded an overwhelming majority of seats, and the relations between the Government and the Regency which was now proposed as a temporary measure, seemed likely to preserve the King's immediate authority only at the expense of his ultimate position. The British were not therefore particularly impressed by the proposals. But since Subasic was obliged to agree to them, there was little they could do; and their rôle in the winter was accordingly confined mainly to that of a, somewhat unhappy, intermediary, in an effort to induce King Peter to comply with Tito's demands.

The developments in Yugoslavia invited an obvious deduction. The arrival of the Red Army had drawn the Communist Tito back into the Russian orbit, freeing him to some extent from the results of his recent association with the West. There was no reason to suppose that all connexions would be severed: liaison and discussion were still too active to be broken off immediately, the Partisans still needed air support from the West, and the Russians themselves did not seem inclined to oppose, at least for the time being, Western strategic interest in the country.<sup>2</sup> But now that Tito was in Belgrade, and the Red Army in the Balkans, the position was quite different from that of a few months before. This was not in itself of decisive military consequence. Landings in Yugoslavia from Italy seemed likely in any case to prove impossible. But it provided a further argument against a large-scale landing south of Fiume, in territory where the British had recognized for some time that they must depend on the full co-operation of the Partisans, and where they were now publicly warned that their troops might not be welcome.

These growing difficulties impressed the Mediterranean Command as they impressed the Combined Chiefs of Staff. On 22nd November, Wilson reported that recent developments obliged him now to concentrate 'primarily' on the campaign in Italy. He therefore proposed to order Alexander 'to exploit to the limit of his resources with the object of destroying or containing the maximum enemy forces remaining' in the peninsula. At the same time, he proposed to contain the Germans in Yugoslavia as far as possible by creating a threat across the Adriatic, in which Land Forces Adriatic, the Balkans Air Forces and deception would play their part, and for which purpose he

<sup>1</sup> See Volume V, p. 388.

See pp. 104-5 below.

asked permission to establish an air base at Zara. Meanwhile, he would no longer need the assault shipping for which he had asked in October, and would be prepared to release a further twenty L.S.T., forty L.C.I. and fifteen L.C.T., or their equivalent. The British Chiefs of Staff agreed with Wilson's proposals, and hoped to release the assault shipping (to which they added a further eight L.S.T.) at once. After conferring with him in London at the end of November, they decided to recommend to the Joint Chiefs of Staff that the theatre should be given its new directive immediately; and after final amendments had been agreed, this was sent on 2nd December.

'The introduction of major forces into the Balkans as recommended by you . . . is not favourably considered at this time. Your first, and immediate objective should be to capture Bologna, then to secure the general line Ravenna-Bologna-Spezia and thereafter continue operations with a view to containing Kesselring's army. Withdrawal of forces from the line for rest, rehabilitation and rotation should be consistent with the above mission.

2. You should continue to introduce light forces through liberated Dalmatian ports in order to harass, and exert pressure and attrition on the Germans withdrawing from the Balkans.

3. Such of your forces and resources as become available as a result of withdrawals from the line will constitute a strategic reserve well placed to reinforce the effort against Kesselring and facilitate the rotation of tired units to be available for prompt employment in other operations as the changing situation permits.

4. Arrangements should be made so that air forces can be rapidly switched between Italian and Yugoslav fronts. You should allot such administrative resources as can be spared without detriment to your present campaign in Italy, to the preparation of bases on the Dalmatian coast, so as to enable you to take full advantage of any favourable situation which may later develop. These arrangements must be subject to constant review and revision in the light of the swiftly changing situation both to the westwards and to the eastwards of our armies in Italy.'

By this time Alexander, promoted to Field Marshal, had taken over as Supreme Commander; and on 6th December, in the course of a visit to London primarily to discuss ammunition, he confirmed that 'he was in complete agreement with the policy outlined in the directive.' There was accordingly no further thought for the time being of operations beyond the Lombard plain; and as winter descended, the British and Americans resigned themselves to the immediate prospect of limited local offensives on both the western and Italian fronts.



**PLATE II. MEDITERRANEAN COMMANDERS**  
*Left to right: General Clark, Field Marshal Alexander.*





The only Allied operations, indeed, which took place in south-east Europe during the winter, were operations in Greece—the one area in which it had been hoped they would not prove necessary. Their course and background, though no longer related to the main strategic theme, are nevertheless of interest. For not only did they exert an immediate effect on the Allies' strength in Italy, but the close interaction of military and diplomatic factors, which was their main characteristic, provided the first instance of a type of problem that might confront the Western Governments as the war in Europe drew to a close, affecting their relations with countries formerly occupied by the enemy, with the Russians, with each other, and with their publics.

The occupation of Greece, which in September, 1944 had seemed likely to demand the provision of 10,000 British troops for a short time, absorbed over 60,000 by the end of December, with another 18,000-odd designed to reinforce, most of whom were still there in February, 1945. The causes of this event must be traced over the preceding year. Greek affairs had always fallen within the strategic orbit of the British Government, whose responsibility was confirmed, although only provisionally, by the Americans in June and by the Russians in October, 1944.<sup>1</sup> Throughout 1944, it pursued three related objects. Within Greece, it was concerned to establish a modicum of tolerance and co-operation between the rival guerrilla movements, of which the most important were the left-wing E.A.M., controlling the armed forces of E.L.A.S. and itself controlled by Communists, and the Royalist bands under General Zervas.<sup>2</sup> Outside Greece, it worked for a representative and united Government in which guerrillas and exiles would be included, capable of assuming control throughout the country when the time came. Thirdly, and connecting these two activities, it sought a solution to the vexed constitutional question of the manner and time of the King's return, which would prove agreeable to all political parties.

In the first half of the year, conditions for the first of these tasks seemed slightly to improve. Towards the end of January 1944, after five months of intermittent fighting, the rival guerrilla movements sought the intervention of the Allied Military Mission, and early in February agreed to a truce.<sup>3</sup> The recent trial of strength had shown, what had indeed been obvious before, that E.L.A.S. was easily the strongest military force in the country, and that E.A.M. was correspondingly formidable as a political association. But it had also shown the obstacles to the latter's ambitions. For seizure of power in Greece, which remained E.A.M.'s goal, must be preceded by the disappearance

<sup>1</sup> See Volume V, pp. 368-9; and pp. 104-5 below.

<sup>2</sup> See Volume V, pp. 83-4.

<sup>3</sup> *Loc. cit.*, p. 88.

of the Germans, which still seemed likely to demand the intervention of the Western Allies; and the British Government, which represented them, had already shown its suspicion of E.A.M.'s motives. Ignorance of the Allies' strategic intentions, and the advantages of a connexion with the exiled Greek Government, accordingly influenced that movement's tactics over the next few months. While not abandoning entirely the familiar attacks on its rivals, it sought at the same time a measure of co-operation with the British. At the end of February, 1944 it agreed to collaborate with the other movements, under British orders, in operations directed against a German withdrawal; and in the following month, while unwilling to join them in a single guerrilla army, set up a new committee designed nominally to co-ordinate their political activities, which soon attracted some of the more moderate left-wing elements. These measures, which did not deceive the British authorities, at least offered them some immediate military profit, and the prospect, hitherto faint, of turning a period of comparative quiescence to their own advantage. They accordingly welcomed the overtures from the new committee and E.A.M., and although refusing officially to recognize the former body, in practice worked harmoniously with it. While the position in the early summer of 1944 could not therefore be said really to have changed—for Zervas and E.A.M. were still on the verge of civil war, the local E.L.A.S. forces still showed little inclination to obey the British, and E.A.M.'s ambitions had not diminished—at least peace reigned officially, E.L.A.S.' headquarters were more respectful than hitherto, and the new political committee was friendly. At the beginning of June 1944, when the leaders of the Allied Military Mission were summoned to Cairo for discussion, they accordingly left the country in a mood of restrained confidence.

Their confidence was perhaps fortified by the better relations which had recently developed between the guerrillas' committee and the Greeks in Cairo. In March 1944, the political groups in Athens demanded that the exiled Government should be made more representative of feeling within the country. The exiles accepted the proposal, and agreed to hold conversations as soon as possible. A leading Athenian politician, M. Papandreou, visited Egypt in April to pursue negotiations; and early in May, when he became Prime Minister, he concluded arrangements for the talks to be held in the Lebanon. In the middle of that month, they opened near Beirut.

The Lebanon Conference, as it came to be known, represented the high-water mark in the search for Greek unity. That is not to say that the omens were bright, or the proceedings particularly amicable. But at least the meeting included all shades of Greek opinion, and all were anxious to be included. On 20th May, indeed, after a surprisingly short time, the delegates signed a Charter providing for a united

Government and a single guerrilla army. This seemed a considerable achievement, and Papandreou himself was highly pleased.

The British were less impressed by this suspiciously easy triumph. Even so, they were not prepared for what followed. For the Lebanon Charter had no sooner been signed than it was challenged by E.A.M. The movement indeed seems at this time to have been debating the alternatives of conciliation and aggression, both of which courses it had pursued over the past six months; and, while the conference was in progress, to have resolved in favour of the latter. The results soon appeared. On 24th May, the King asked Papandreou to form a new Government, to include representatives of E.A.M. and E.L.A.S. But on the same day, E.A.M. and the guerrillas' committee informed their delegates that they should not have signed the Charter, and a few days later E.A.M. raised the ominous question of the King's return, whose settlement it demanded before joining a united Government.

This was a clear danger signal; for the constitutional issue remained, as it had always been, at the heart of Greek politics,<sup>1</sup> governing the attitudes of all parties and providing the occasion, where it did not provide the reason, for the constant changes in the Cairo Government which Greek political practice raised almost to a principle. The Lebanon Conference, indeed, had gained its rapid success only by referring the issue to the future. But in fact the issue could not be so evaded, particularly in view of recent events.

For in April 1944, the constitutional question had again been thrust to the fore. When the Athenian political groups demanded a more representative Government, they urged as a complementary measure that a Regent should be appointed pending a national plebiscite to decide if the King should return. This suggestion appealed to the exiled Greek Government and to the British as a reasonable extension, in new circumstances, of the advice they had earlier pressed on the King of the Hellenes, that he should publicly state his intention not to return to Greece until invited to do so by a representative Government. The King, however, entirely disagreed. His opposition to the earlier proposal had arisen rather from a reluctance to commit himself in public than from a disagreement in principle; but the new proposal forced him to 'set aside [his] mandate' by delegating his authority before a plebiscite had been held, and this he was not prepared to do. Neither his own Government nor the British could persuade His Majesty to abandon this position, and on 3rd April the Greek Prime Minister resigned. Twenty-four hours later, ships of the Greek navy in the Middle East mutinied, and on 6th April elements in the army followed suit. The British were soon obliged to act. Greek soldiers were disarmed, the Greek ships were placed under observation, and after

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<sup>1</sup> See Volume V, p. 83.

three weeks, in which the only fatal casualty was one British officer, the mutiny came to an end. But it produced one result. On 12th April, in the course of an appeal for unity, the King issued the public declaration which had long been urged upon him, declaring that he would submit himself to the result of a national plebiscite on the nature of the future régime, to be held when Greece had been freed of the enemy.<sup>1</sup> The more recent proposal of a Regency, however, remained open, and it was clear that the whole Greek world remained peculiarly sensitive to all aspects of the constitutional question.

When E.A.M. announced that its collaboration turned upon this issue, Papandreou and the British were therefore disturbed. After some uncertainty, the Greek Prime Minister took his stand on the Lebanon Charter, which referred the problem to the end of the war. But this argument had no effect. Despite the efforts of some of the delegates to the conference, who were genuinely concerned to reach a settlement, E.A.M. disavowed their actions early in June, adding provocatively that it would 'cease all negotiations unless Royalist bands at once stopped fighting E.L.A.S.' forces. In the public dispute that followed, it added two further demands, for a general amnesty and for the repeal of the death sentence on some of the recent mutineers. Papandreou rejected these terms, and early in July, 1944 E.A.M. broke off negotiations.

This seemed final, and the British prepared to reconsider their policy inside Greece. There were strong arguments for condemning E.A.M. in public, and for withdrawing the British Military Mission and stopping British supplies. But this would forfeit any hope of controlling operations against a German withdrawal, at the very time when it was at last in prospect; might enable E.A.M., by posing as the victim of foreign hostility, to gain popularity within the country; and might endanger the lives of British officers with E.L.A.S., and of Royalist supporters. While fully supporting Papandreou's rejection of its terms, the British were therefore inclined to maintain relations with E.A.M. and to keep their Mission in Greece, but at once to reduce supplies to E.L.A.S.' forces. But while the discussions were under way, the position again altered. In the middle of July, when the prospects seemed at their bleakest and British policy hung in the balance, E.A.M. unexpectedly reopened negotiations with Papandreou. The reason seems almost certainly to have lain in advice from the Russian Military Mission in Italy, soon after to despatch a party to Greece<sup>2</sup> which—contrary to the fears of the Western Allies—corrected local impressions of Soviet policy and discouraged aggression. The results again soon appeared. Ignoring its recent demands, E.A.M. suddenly offered to join a coalition if Papandreou were removed; and when this condition

<sup>1</sup> Cf. his declaration in July, 1943 (Volume V, p. 85).

<sup>2</sup> See Volume V, p. 369.

was refused, consented early in August to serve in the existing Administration. Its offer was accepted, five portfolios were allotted to its representatives, and on 2nd September the new Ministers joined the Government in Cairo. There was therefore no longer any question of severing relations with E.A.M. and E.L.A.S. Although British supplies virtually stopped from the end of June 1944, and relations with the movement deteriorated further within Greece itself, British policy remained as before, and towards the end of September Wilson was able to bring E.L.A.S. with Zervas into the plan for operation 'Noah's Ark'.<sup>1</sup>

One of the arguments used in July in favour of maintaining relations with E.A.M., had been that the British must in any case enter Greece as soon as the Germans had left, and that their military commitments should then be kept as small as possible. Operation 'Manna' was designed to prevent, not to counter, a seizure of power by the Communists, and to hold the ring until a representative Greek Government had arranged a settlement of the constitutional question. But in the event E.A.M. could not be restrained, and the result occurred which the British had tried to avoid. By 18th October, when Papandreou's Government reached Athens, E.L.A.S.' forces had occupied many of the large provincial towns, where after an initial welcome they held aloof from the British troops. Meanwhile, Athens itself was in a ferment. Political feeling, and the pressing problems of relief and inflation, checked the first wild joy with which the British were greeted. E.A.M.'s supporters were vociferous, and the Mediterranean Command soon abandoned the idea of limiting the Allied force to 10,000 men. By the end of the month, over 22,600 troops and five squadrons of aircraft were in the country, a further division was on its way from Italy, and the balance of another division, together with a Greek mountain brigade, was held ready in the peninsula.

These movements, and particularly the proposal to bring back the Greek mountain brigade from Italy, inflamed the Communists behind E.A.M. The British reaction was immediate and unhesitating. 'I fully expect', remarked the Prime Minister, 'a clash with E.A.M. and we must not shrink from it, provided the ground is well chosen.' Wilson was ordered to reinforce in Athens without delay, and Scobie to resist all acts of lawlessness. On 15th November, Wilson reported that the Communists seemed likely soon to bring matters to a head, and that he had therefore instructed Scobie to hold all troops already in Greece, to concentrate on Athens whose neighbourhood he should declare a military area, to order E.L.A.S. to withdraw entirely from it, and in the event of a refusal to disarm and if necessary imprison its troops. If attacked, he was to use such force, British and Greek, as he might need to crush opposition.

The British Government at once approved these instructions.

<sup>1</sup> See pp. 44-5 above.

Meanwhile, Papandreou proposed a series of measures to establish order, including the formation of a National Guard and the dissolution of all guerrilla forces. At first, the programme seemed likely to isolate E.A.M., which opposed it, from the more moderate elements in the guerrillas' committee; but on 29th November the extremists won the day, and Papandreou's Government at once broke up. This was the signal for the revolution which followed a few days later. At the beginning of December, E.L.A.S. reinforced its troops near Athens, and E.A.M., through one of its newspapers, called for a settlement by force. On the 2nd, the remains of Papandreou's Government issued a decree dissolving the guerrilla forces, and on the 3rd the Communists emerged with a call for a general strike. Athens by now was in a state of high excitement, and in the course of that day Greek police opened fire on the crowd—whether with or without provocation has never been settled. General Scobie declared martial law on the 4th, and fighting soon developed between the British and E.L.A.S.

By 6th December, it was clear that Scobie's task was going to be difficult. E.L.A.S. was thought to dispose of some 20,000 men near Athens, and its adherents within the city were numerous and active. In the provinces it controlled Macedonia and Thrace. The British troops in Athens soon found themselves virtually besieged, and able only with difficulty to communicate with the Piraeus and with the airfield. Wilson therefore despatched the balance of his reserve division from Italy, and a further squadron of fighters.

While these military problems were occupying the Mediterranean Command, the political question had also to be tackled. No proper settlement could be reached, and indeed no real authority vested in the Greeks themselves, until a solution had been found to the constitutional issue. Its absence, moreover, laid the British open to the accusation, already widespread, of interfering with force in an essentially domestic question. Feeling in Britain and in the United States, exacerbated by simultaneous political difficulties in Belgium and Italy in which the British were involved, was indeed running high; and a large section of the Press in both countries, some members in the House of Commons, and above all the newly-appointed American Secretary of State, Mr Edward Stettinius jr., voiced the apprehension that the Government was forcing a 'reactionary' solution on liberated countries, and was denying to patriotic forces the attention and support they deserved. The War Cabinet, and particularly the Prime Minister, were indignant at these charges, and at the nebulous but vehement emotions which accompanied the public's inevitable ignorance of the facts. But they could not deny that developments in Greece were arousing a feeling at least equal to that roused by the Darlan affair; and while determined in no way to alter their policy, were the more anxious to resolve the problem which alone could bring foreign

intervention to an end. They had in fact been debating since August the advantages of a Regency, and since early in October had been pressing its adoption on the King of the Hellenes. But while His Majesty then confirmed that he would not return to Greece before a plebiscite, he still could not consent to transfer his authority pending the result. On 10th December, however, the Mediterranean Command took a hand. Alexander and his diplomatic adviser Mr. Harold Macmillan<sup>1</sup> together visited Athens. They reported the next day that only a Regency could hope to release the British forces within a reasonable time, and recommended that Archbishop Damaskinos of Athens, a commanding personality long versed in politics and widely respected for himself and for his office, should at once assume the task. Churchill thereupon asked the King to give his consent immediately to this proposal.

A further stubborn struggle ensued. The King was willing to give full powers to the Archbishop, but as Prime Minister, not as Regent; and all the pressure of the British Government, now supported by President Roosevelt, failed to alter his resolve. His refusal made E.A.M. the more intransigent, and though the military position slowly improved, there seemed little likelihood by the third week in December that E.L.A.S. would surrender. The deadlock seemed complete. On 24th December, the Prime Minister therefore decided that he and the Foreign Secretary must themselves fly to Athens.

Mr. Churchill and Mr. Eden arrived in Greece on Christmas Day. After a rapid series of meetings with the British and Greek authorities, they summoned a conference of all parties, including E.A.M., which lasted from 26th to 28th December. The British Ministers failed to bring about a cease-fire; but their presence, as was not unnatural, awed and sobered the Greeks, and they were soon able to bring all parties to acknowledge Damaskinos as Regent. Armed with this knowledge they returned to the King, and after a severe talk on the night of the 29th/30th, His Majesty at length complied with their demand. The Archbishop took the oath as Regent on the 30th, and on 3rd January, 1945 appointed General Plastiras Prime Minister of a predominantly republican Cabinet.

This proved to be the turning point. The two Ministers had accomplished, if indirectly, what they had set out to do, for a military settlement followed at once. Throughout the last half of December, the British had been slowly clearing the area round Athens. By the end of the month E.A.M. and E.L.A.S. had obviously failed, and early in January, 1945 they decided to recognize the position, which the appointment of the Regent now allowed them to do. On the 10th, delegates from E.L.A.S. arrived at General Scobie's headquarters, and on the 11th a truce was signed to take effect from midnight on the 15th. On 2nd February, a conference of all parties began at the village of

<sup>1</sup> See Volume V, pp. 206-7.

Varkiza near Athens, and on the 12th the Varkiza Agreement was signed. The Greek Government then ordered the demobilization of E.L.A.S. and its associated forces, provided for the subsequent formation of a National Army, and guaranteed public and individual liberties. All parties agreed that a national plebiscite on the constitutional issue should be held within the current year, to be followed by elections for the Constituent Assembly.

The cease-fire was intended to be the signal for the first stage of a British withdrawal. But while it relieved the Mediterranean Command of its most immediate anxieties, this hope was disappointed. The work of the Allied Military Mission ended with the disbandment of the guerrilla forces, and early in January, 1945 the last of its officers left the mainland. The British Government hoped to withdraw all troops from the mainland between April and July, as soon as the country had been cleared of guerrilla forces, the plebiscite and elections had been held, and the first elements of the new National Army, supplied and supervised by the Western Allies, had found their feet. But as the months went by, fresh difficulties arose over each of these developments. While some of the British air forces, and elements amounting to one division, left Greece in March, two full divisions therefore remained indefinitely. The elections were in fact held only in March 1946, and the plebiscite in September. But by then civil war again threatened, and British troops were again required. It was not until October, 1949 that the last British force left Greece, five years to the month after 'Manna' had taken place.

### (iii)

## The German Counter-Attack

In the second week of December 1944, Twelfth Army Group on the western front prepared for the further operations against the Roer and the Saar which Eisenhower had ordered following the meeting at Maastricht on the 7th.<sup>1</sup> The immediate emphasis now lay on Third U.S. Army, which it was hoped would capture the Saar by Christmas, while First U.S. Army attacked from the Roer and Twenty-First Army Group concentrated for the complementary attack in the north. This strategy accepted two possible and related dangers: the Allies' weakness in the Ardennes, which lay between the two sectors of attack, and their ignorance of the enemy's plans for the use of the armoured reserve he was known to possess.

At the beginning of December, only four divisions of First U.S. Army held the Ardennes along a front of seventy-five miles, and there

<sup>1</sup> See pp. 35-6 above, and Map I facing p. 29.



was no prospect of reinforcing them while the Allies' attacks developed to north and south. But this weakness could be accepted on the assumption that the attacks themselves would soon contain the enemy, and would prevent him from counter-attacking in a sector where his flanks would be exposed. The prospect of a serious counter-attack, despite certain symptoms to the contrary, was not in any case taken seriously. The Germans were thought to dispose of some seventy divisions on the western front, many inexperienced or below strength, compared with some fifty-two, of greater average strength, late in August; and Intelligence early in December indicated a disturbing concentration of strength between Coblenz and the frontier of Luxembourg, and the existence of eight or nine reorganized panzer divisions in reserve. But if these forces were to be used in attack, it seemed as likely that it would be north of the Ardennes, where the main strength already lay and where Antwerp offered an obvious target, as in the Ardennes themselves; and in any event the Allies did not believe that they would be so staked. Impressive as the German recovery appeared, it probably could not be repeated; and the new strength therefore seemed more likely to be employed in defending the frontier of the Reich than in an offensive which could scarcely be expected to have a lasting effect. The recent conduct of German operations seemed moreover to show that Field Marshal von Rundstedt, dismissed in July,<sup>1</sup> was again in full command; and, as a competent soldier, he was unlikely to indulge in such a venture. While not altogether happy about the German armoured reserve, Eisenhower therefore decided that it was worth-while to remain weak in the Ardennes in order to hold the initiative elsewhere.

The Allies' arguments were perfectly sound as far as they went. Von Rundstedt, as they surmised, saw the folly of a counter-attack in the centre. But he was not, as they thought, in effective command. The decision lay with the Fuehrer; and since the end of September, the Fuehrer had been planning precisely that drive through the Ardennes which both the Allied and the German commanders dismissed as not worth-while. The plan was not hatched for purely military reasons. It was rather the product of Hitler's statecraft, which had by now produced the curious argument that the more his strategic initiative declined, the better the prospects for his diplomatic initiative. The closer the Allies approached each other, from the east and from the west, the more strained their relations would become. If Germany therefore could deliver a critical blow on either front, she might well extract reasonable peace terms from the injured party, independently of its potential rival. Such was the purpose, and the justification, of the German recovery in the autumn. It remained only to decide on which front, and in which sector, the critical blow should fall.

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<sup>1</sup> See Volume V, p. 342.

By the end of September 1944, conditions seemed to favour the west. The British and Americans had been checked, and Hitler's opinion of the Western Powers inclined him to hope for a readier response from them than from the Russians. If only he could gain a victory which would demonstrate that the war was far from won, he believed that British exhaustion, American lack of endurance, and British and American fears of Russia, would combine to extricate him from the war on three fronts which offered inevitable defeat.

Looking therefore to the west, the Fuehrer picked on the Ardennes. The Allies were weakest in that sector, the terrain—as he knew from 1940—could be exploited for attack, and the open country beyond offered great opportunities to a swift and resolute advance. At the least, the armoured divisions might drive the Allies back from the Roer to the Meuse, forcing them to pull back farther from the German frontier behind the difficult country which was already causing them trouble. But this was only the least. Beyond the Meuse lay Brussels and Antwerp, whose capture would remove the Allies' immediate line of supply, and—even more important—might force their armies lying north of the Ardennes into a pocket whose northern boundary was the sea. With no great port then at their disposal, Hitler could envisage another, and this time fatal, Dunkirk, on whose conclusion he could negotiate from strength.

The plan itself, we now know, emerged within the Fuehrer's headquarters early in October, 1944. The offensive was to be launched at the end of November with a force of thirty-two divisions (almost half the whole German strength on the western front), including twelve panzer and panzer grenadier, and two parachute divisions. This force would be divided into three Armies, whose targets were respectively Antwerp, Brussels and the line Givet-Luxembourg.<sup>1</sup> Preliminary planning continued in secret at the Fuehrer's headquarters, until at the end of October the details were shown to von Rundstedt and his subordinate Field Marshal Model. The two commanders replied at once that the forces were too weak, and their reserves of petrol probably too low, to attain such distant targets. They therefore proposed instead a limited offensive to destroy the Allied salient around Aachen, or, if that did not meet Hitler's object, an attack from the Roer to the Meuse to include the capture of Liège. But the Fuehrer, not surprisingly, was not prepared to accept these limited gains; and the final plan, while showing some important alterations, contained the same targets as before. The offensive was now timed to start in mid-December, with three Armies containing twenty-eight divisions, aiming respectively at Antwerp via the Meuse between Liège and Namur, at Brussels via Namur and Dinant, and at the line Givet-Luxembourg

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<sup>1</sup> See second Inset to Map I, facing p. 29.

to cover the southern flank. The northern and decisive thrust would be accompanied by measures to spread confusion and disrupt communications. Three subsidiary attacks would also be launched, to contain the Allied forces on the flanks: on D+3, from the lower Roer to recapture Maastricht; on D+10, from northern Holland to recapture Breda; and on D+15 at the latest, to reconquer northern Alsace. All objections were overruled, Hitler himself briefed the senior generals involved, and von Rundstedt was handed his copy of the plan complete in every detail, and marked by the Fuehrer 'Not to Be Altered'. Early in December, D-day was fixed for the 16th; and early that morning, under cover of a heavy barrage by artillery and V.1 weapons, the advanced German divisions moved forward into the hills.

For three days before the attack, rain and fog had reduced the Allies' air reconnaissance; and, aided by this circumstance, the Germans achieved complete surprise. The American divisions fought well, and managed to deny to the enemy his targets for the first day. But neither First U.S. Army nor Twelfth Army Group appreciated the nature of the offensive, and both took only limited steps to contain what they regarded as a spoiling attack to forestall Third U.S. Army's move on the Saar. By 18th December, the enemy was approaching Stavelot, where the Allies held large dumps of fuel, and farther south had opened a gap between St. Vith and Bastogne. The weight and extent of these movements now convinced the Allies that, amazing as it seemed, they were faced by a full-scale offensive. On the night of the 18th, Bradley accordingly cancelled Third Army's proposed attack on the Saar, and ordered it to intervene in strength on the southern flank of the German advance. The next morning, Eisenhower ordered First Army to hold the enemy in the north, and Third Army and elements of Sixth Army Group to attack in the south towards Bastogne. Sixth Army Group was to withdraw for that purpose if necessary from its advanced positions along the Rhine by Strasbourg. But events on 19th December soon overtook this plan. By the evening, the leading columns of the northern German Army were barely fifteen miles from Liège, its main formations were near Stavelot on either side, and the central Army was driving through the hills towards St. Hubert, Marche and Hotton. Only St. Vith and Bastogne held out behind the enemy's lines; and it was impossible to tell in the confusion what effect, if any, their resistance would have on the shape of the advance. While the plan of campaign could still not be gauged, there now seemed an immediate danger of a break-through on a wide front to the Meuse. On the evening of the 19th, Eisenhower therefore warned Montgomery and Bradley to prepare a co-ordinated defence of the river line, Bradley commanding all troops from Twelfth and Sixth Army Groups in the southern sector of the battle, Montgomery all elements of Twenty-First and Twelfth Army Groups in the northern sector. These instructions were confirmed

the next morning, and Montgomery at once assumed control of First and Ninth U.S. Armies.

Aided by recent Intelligence, Montgomery decided that the enemy's first target would be the stretch of the Meuse between Liège and Namur. He therefore regrouped First U.S. Army between Marche and Malmédy, and assembled two reserves for a counter-attack, one behind the area Marche – Hotton and one behind the threatened sector of the Meuse. So that First Army could concentrate entirely on the battle, Ninth U.S. Army took over its commitments on the Roer. While these movements were taking place, the battle reached its climax. The northern German Army, on which the Fuehrer had placed his main hopes, attacked fiercely between Stavelot and Malmédy. But First U.S. Army held firm, and on 22nd December part of the German force turned south-west. On the same day, elements of the central German Army reached the area Marche – Hotton, and probed to the south-west to within thirteen miles of Dinant. Much of the Allied reserve had accordingly to be thrown into the battle. Meanwhile, Third U.S. Army on the southern flank attacked towards the road junction of Bastogne, where the surrounded American troops continued to hold out against great odds. An Allied line was coming into existence, and the shape of the operations, though still confused, was slowly becoming clear.

By 24th December, the enemy's advance had been halted. Thanks largely to the Americans' resistance at St. Vith and Bastogne, his central Army had not exploited its initial success to the full, and First U.S. Army had been able to form a line before the leading German columns could reach the Meuse. Their plan had moreover been upset by a swifter rate of advance in the centre than in the north, and strict obedience to the Fuehrer's intentions prevented a rapid redeployment. But perhaps most important, on 24th December the weather improved, and the American and British air forces at once took the sky. The odds were now lengthening in favour of the Allies. With the greater weight of their divisions deployed against the enemy's main line of advance, and able at last to harry him from the air, they could face with reasonable confidence a powerful but unbalanced force, whose reserves of fuel, not replenished as had been hoped from the stocks at Stavelot, would now almost certainly not take it far beyond the Meuse. By Christmas Day, the crisis was over; and in the hard fighting ahead opportunity lay with the Allies.

In the last days of December, Montgomery organized his counter-attack. The operations began on 3rd January, 1945. By the 7th, the enemy was falling back slowly in the centre around Marche and Hotton, and over the following week the Americans on either flank pushed slowly towards the area Houffalize – Bastogne, where no fewer than ten German divisions were engaged against the beleaguered

garrison. On 16th January, they met near Houffalize. By this time, the enemy was everywhere back half way to his starting line. First and Ninth U.S. Armies now returned to Bradley's command, and the elements of Twenty-First Army Group withdrew into Holland. The Fuehrer's offensive had failed, and in the process the Germans were thought to have lost some 120,000 men and some 600 tanks. It seemed certain, indeed, that they had shot their bolt. In the middle of January, 1945 the Allies therefore turned again to consider, and with a new urgency, their interrupted offensive; for 'Now was the opportunity to proceed with the utmost despatch to carry out our plans, in order to take full advantage of the enemy's failure.'<sup>1</sup>

These plans were the subject of discussion between the Supreme Commander and the Combined Chiefs of Staff. The battle in the Ardennes had interrupted the attempt by the British Chiefs of Staff to ensure that the next, and as it was hoped decisive, stage of Eisenhower's offensive was not imperilled by an undue dispersal of strength between the different sectors. But as soon as the German attack had been contained, they returned to the charge. On 28th December, the Prime Minister agreed that their memorandum of the 18th<sup>2</sup> should form the basis of a communication to the Americans; and this was sent to the Joint Staff Mission in Washington on 6th January, 1945.

'Before the German counter-offensive opened we were concerned about the handling of the campaign in North-West Europe. In the middle of December we intended to take this matter up with the United States Chiefs of Staff, but postponed doing so on account of the German counter-offensive.

2. The situation has clarified and you should now take the first opportunity of reviewing the strategy in the West frankly with the United States Chiefs of Staff along the lines set out in this brief.

3. There are two major issues on which we feel the Combined Chiefs of Staff must reach agreement if further setbacks in Europe are to be avoided. These are:

- (a) Concentration of effort on one thrust in the North;
- (b) The command set-up in the North.

#### CONCENTRATION OF EFFORT ON ONE NORTH THRUST

4. In the report . . . prepared by General Eisenhower for the Combined Chiefs of Staff at the time of the 'Octagon' Conference in September, 1944, he considered that his "best opportunity of defeating the enemy in the West lies in striking at the

<sup>1</sup> Field Marshal Viscount Montgomery of Alamein, *From Normandy to the Baltic* (n.d., but 1946), p. 180.

<sup>2</sup> See pp. 36-7 above.

Ruhr and the Saar." He went on to say that "the first operation is one to break the Siegfried Line and seize crossings over the Rhine. In doing this the main effort will be on the left."

5. In approving General Eisenhower's proposals . . . the Combined Chiefs of Staff drew his attention "to the advantages of the Northern line of approach into Germany as opposed to the Southern". General Eisenhower replied . . . that he had "already instituted measures to give full support to his advance on the Northern line of approach to Germany".

6. Although it is clear from the above that all concerned were agreed that the main effort of the forces . . . must be made in the North, and although this consideration was emphasised in General Eisenhower's subsequent directive . . . of 28th October, there has not been the expected concentration of effort in the North. There has instead been dispersion of effort as between the North and South.

7. The attacks against the Ruhr and the Saar areas were launched in mid-November with forces of approximately equal strength.

#### . . . COMMAND SET-UP IN THE NORTH

9. We consider that ever since there ceased to be one commander in charge of all ground forces and responsible as such only to General Eisenhower, the conduct of the campaign has suffered from a lack of proper co-ordination at the top.

10. In our view one man must be given power of operational control and co-ordination of all the ground forces employed for the Northern thrust, i.e. from about Prüm Northwards.

#### GERMAN COUNTER-OFFENSIVE

11. Although we were as much surprised as anybody by von Rundstedt's counter-offensive, the quick initial successes this attack achieved go a long way to confirm the misgiving we have expressed above.

#### . . . GENERAL EISENHOWER'S FUTURE PLANS

15. Shortly before the present German offensive we had an informal meeting with General Eisenhower at which he explained in broad terms his plans for the future. These were as follows:

*Winter.* To keep up pressure on the enemy and, if possible, clear him back to the Rhine; both in the North between Nijmegen and Bonn, and in the South, south-west of Frankfurt.

*Summer.* (Probably not before May, 1945)—to launch strong converging attacks from widely separated areas; one attack to be carried out north of the Ruhr by 21 Army Group with a U.S. Army of 10 divisions under command; the other attack on the line Frankfurt – Kassel by 12 Army Group covered on the right flank by 6 Army Group. The possibility of an additional

subsidiary attack in the Bonn area to be considered. This would also be the responsibility of 12 Army Group.

16. General Eisenhower will probably have some 80-85 divisions available next spring. Of those, he will have to allot at least some 15-20 divisions to hold defensive parts of the line. We do not consider that the remaining forces which are available for offensive purposes are adequate to allow of the double enveloping movement which appears to be intended. We consider that it is important to decide now on one major thrust. Sufficient forces could then be allotted to this thrust, in order to ensure that it is made in overwhelming strength with sufficient fresh formations always available to keep up the momentum of the advance. From now on, nothing should be allowed to interfere with the preparations for this main thrust.

17. We still think that the opinion of the Combined Chiefs of Staff last September was the correct one and that this one main thrust should be made in the North if tactical considerations allow. Only such forces as cannot be employed in this main thrust should be used in subsidiary operations. If, however, the main thrust is held and the subsidiary operations prosper, then, and only then, the latter should be exploited.

18. Henceforth all operations during the winter should bear direct relation to the plan for the main thrust in the spring.

#### CONCLUSION

19. Clearly General Eisenhower's plans will be influenced by the result of the hard fighting now in progress and cannot be finally decided until . . . [we have] information regarding future Russian plans.

We consider, however, that General Eisenhower should be in a position to submit his appreciation and plan to the Combined Chiefs of Staff in sufficient time for them to consider it at the meeting proposed in the near future.<sup>1</sup>

The Combined Chiefs of Staff can then fully satisfy themselves that the basic essentials of our strategy in the West are fulfilled, namely:

- (a) All available offensive power must be allotted to the Northern front—i.e. from about Prüm northwards; and
- (b) one man must have power of operational control and co-ordination of the ground forces employed on this front.<sup>2</sup>

As they had earlier proposed to the Prime Minister, the Chiefs of Staff asked that the Supreme Commander should be instructed to submit his plan of operations for the winter and spring, and an account of the general disposition of his forces.

The Americans agreed at once with this proposal. Nor did they quarrel with the British desire to ensure that the main attack should command the main strength. But they preferred to await Eisenhower's

<sup>1</sup> See p. 76 below.

reply before considering in detail the merits of the possible lines of advance; and meanwhile they opposed firmly any change in the system of command. This last factor, indeed, was of some importance to the argument. For the stress laid by the British on the relation between strategy and command influenced the Americans, already suspicious of the argument on command, in their attitude to the strategy. They had never sympathized with Montgomery's case for a return to the system of a single subordinate land commander. They were the less disposed to accept it now from the British Chiefs of Staff, in view of reports received of his recent behaviour. For Montgomery, already unpopular with American officers, had notably increased his unpopularity since the start of the Ardennes offensive, by the attitude of superiority which they then conceived him to have adopted. It was not therefore a happy moment for the British to propose a change of command in accordance with his ideas.

The Combined Chiefs of Staff asked Eisenhower for his plans on 10th January. They received his answer on the 20th, when First and Third U.S. Armies had joined hands and the Germans were in retreat. Since it provided the basis for future discussion, and since some of its wording was to be closely debated, it will be quoted at some length.<sup>1</sup>

'. . . 2. My object remains, in accordance with my original instructions, to undertake operations aimed at the heart of Germany and the destruction of the German armed forces.

3. These operations fall into three phases:

- (1) The destruction of the German forces West of the Rhine and the closing of the Rhine.
- (2) The seizing of bridgeheads over the Rhine from which to develop operations into Germany.
- (3) The destruction of the German forces East of the Rhine and the advance into Germany.

4. These three phases form three distinct operations. Our immediate aim is the destruction of the bulk of the enemy forces west of the Rhine. If this can be effected the remaining phases will be immeasurably simplified. But such destruction cannot be guaranteed, and operations in Phase One must thus be designed to some extent to facilitate the subsequent operations in Phases Two and Three. I propose therefore in this appreciation to examine possible courses of action in Phases Two and Three before discussing Phase One. Before proceeding to this examination I wish to emphasise that the attack North of the Ruhr is definitely the one we must hold in front of us as our principal purpose. In this discussion it is to be understood that other areas are analysed from two standpoints:

- (a) for staging a supporting effort for the Northern attack

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<sup>1</sup> See Map I, facing p. 29.



with such means as may be left over after concentrating in the North all the power that can be sustained and  
(b) to have the flexibility to switch the main effort if the Northern attack encounters an impossible situation.

PHASE THREE

5. To consider Phase Three first. Assuming that serious opposition is still to be met East of the Rhine, there are two main avenues of approach into Germany by which we can advance and defeat the enemy forces. These run (a) from Mainz – Karlsruhe area to Frankfurt and Kassel, and (b) from the lower Rhine North of the Ruhr into the plains of N. Germany. . . .

6. (a) An advance on the Frankfurt – Kassel axis would secure only the important industrial area around Frankfurt. The Germans in the West are likely to accord a priority to the defence of this area second only to that of the Ruhr, and there should therefore be an opportunity of destroying considerable German forces although we should have less opposition to our advance than would be the case in the North. Moreover, the occupation of the Frankfurt – Giessen area offers very suitable airfield sites both to support a further advance and to help support of operations North of the Ruhr.

(b) The advance from Frankfurt on Kassel would be over terrain less suitable for armoured operations than the area North of the Ruhr, but once we reached the Kassel area several further developments would be possible—a thrust northward to cut some of the communications from the Ruhr, a thrust north-east towards Berlin or a thrust eastward towards Leipzig.

7. (a) An advance North of the Ruhr offers the quickest means of denying the enemy the industries in the Ruhr. The eastern exits from the industrial area could be cut by enveloping the area on the north and east, and the southern exits by air action. The area North of the Ruhr offers the most suitable terrain East of the Rhine for mobile operations and this is the type of warfare we want to force on the enemy in view of our superior mobility.

(b) Because of the importance of the Ruhr to the German economy, and because of the fact that this route offers the most direct and obvious approach to the centre of Germany, this area is likely to receive first priority from the point of view of defence. While I should be glad of an opportunity of defeating the bulk of the German forces on favourable terrain, I would have to deploy a superior force rapidly across the Rhine to ensure success. It will not, however, be possible to maintain more than some 35 divisions across the Rhine in this sector until the railway has been extended over the river.

8. The country between the Ruhr and Frankfurt is easily defensible and not suited to offensive operations.

9. To sum up. An examination of Phase Three suggests that operations across the Rhine North of the Ruhr offer the greatest strategic rewards within a short distance, but that this area will be held most strongly by the enemy. An advance in the Frankfurt area offers less favourable terrain and a longer route to vital strategic objectives. Depending on the degree of enemy resistance it may be necessary to use either or both of these two avenues.

#### PHASE TWO

10. To examine next the most favourable areas in which to seize bridgeheads across the Rhine. . . .

. . . 15. (a) There are two main areas suitable for forming bridgeheads namely that between Emmerich and Wesel and that between Mainz and Karlsruhe.

(b) An assault crossing in the North would be on a very narrow frontage and would be opposed by the heaviest available enemy concentrations. To effect a crossing in the North it may be necessary therefore to divert enemy forces by closing and perhaps crossing the Rhine in the Frankfurt sector. Operations in the Saar would not have a comparable effect.

(c) An assault in the Southern sector would be on a wider front and would not meet such heavy opposition. It would be desirable that it should be carried out in time to have our permanent bridges ready by May.

#### OTHER FACTORS, AFFECTING PHASE ONE

16. The comparative strength of my forces and those of the enemy is a factor of the greatest importance in the development of my operations. The Germans now have some 80 divisions on the Western front, not all at full strength. Provided that the Russian offensive is continued with vigour and that the enemy maintains his front in Italy this number is likely to dwindle. But should the Russian offensive weaken and the Germans carry out a partial withdrawal from the Italian front there might be a diversion to my front of some ten or more divisions from Russia and a dozen divisions from Italy. Thus I may be faced in the spring with at best about 80 divisions, some under-strength, and at the worst a hundred or more divisions with adequate replacements.

17. Moreover from the suitability of the terrain for defence and his Siegfried fortifications, the enemy will be able to get the maximum value even out of his weaker divisions in a defensive rôle. Only when we too have closed the Rhine shall we share with the enemy a strong defensive barrier giving us the ability to hold defensive sectors with security and economy of effort.

18. I have 71 divisions immediately available including many below strength to drive the German forces from their strong positions. In May I should have 85 divisions (including six airborne) with a possibility of five to eight more French divisions becoming available during the summer.

19. My superiority on land is not therefore so very great on present reckoning. Before we advance East of the Rhine I must be assured of security in other sectors and as I have explained above it will probably be essential to close the Rhine along its length leaving only minor bridgeheads in the enemy's hands from which he cannot stage a major counterstroke. Only in this way shall I be able to concentrate in great strength East of the river.

#### CONCLUSIONS

20. Bearing in mind the above factors and the probable development of further operations it is clear that my operations to destroy the enemy forces West of the Rhine must be so designed as to enable me to close the Rhine throughout its length. In view of the present relative strength I am not in a position to carry out more than one offensive at a time. I am therefore concentrating at the moment on a series of offensives designed to destroy the enemy and to close the Rhine in the North.

#### PLAN

21. My plan is as follows:

(a) To carry out a series of operations North of the Moselle immediately with a view to destroying the enemy and closing the Rhine North of Düsseldorf. South of the Moselle we shall remain on the defensive.

(b) After closing the Rhine in the North to direct our main effort to the destruction of all enemy forces remaining West of the Rhine both in the North and in the South.

(c) To seize bridgeheads over the Rhine in the North and in the South.

(d) To deploy East of the Rhine and North of the Ruhr the maximum number of divisions which can be maintained (estimated at some 35 divisions). The initial task of this force assisted by air action will be to deny the industries of the Ruhr to the enemy.

(e) To deploy East of the Rhine, on the axis Frankfurt-Kassel, such forces, if adequate, as may be available after providing 35 divisions for the North and essential security elsewhere. The task of this force will be to draw enemy forces away from the North by capturing Frankfurt and advancing on Kassel.

22. It will be appreciated that a crossing of the Rhine, particularly on the narrow frontages in which such crossings are possible, will be a tactical and engineering operation of the greatest magnitude. I propose to spare no efforts, allotting the maximum possible support to such operations. For this purpose I envisage the use of airborne forces and strategic air support on a large scale. I foresee the necessity for the employment in addition on a very large scale of amphibious vehicles of all types. The possibility of failure to secure bridgeheads in the North or

in the South cannot, however, be overlooked. I am therefore making logistical preparations which will enable me to switch my main effort from the North to the South should this be forced upon me. . . .'

This report arrived on the eve of a further Allied conference, due to be held at Yalta, whose final details were arranged in the course of December and January. The British Chiefs of Staff therefore contented themselves with tabling their views, in preparation for the talks with the Americans which were soon to take place.

CHAPTER III  
PLANS FOR  
FINAL VICTORY IN EUROPE,  
JANUARY—FEBRUARY, 1945

(i)

Agreement on the Western Front and Italy

SINCE early in November 1944, the Prime Minister had been trying to arrange a meeting between the British, the Americans and the Russians, or, if this proved impossible, between the British and the Americans. Since the recent Anglo-American conference at Quebec, strategic problems had arisen in Europe which in his view would benefit from fresh discussion between the Combined Chiefs of Staff; while the Red Army's progress raised, ever more urgently, various military and diplomatic questions which experience showed could best be settled with Stalin in person. Mr. Churchill's anxiety for a meeting was moreover sharpened by the contrast between the military situation as he saw it and the expectations of the Western publics.

' . . . 7. . . . It is clear,' he telegraphed to Mr. Roosevelt on 6th December,<sup>1</sup> 'that we have to face in varying degrees of probability:

- (a) A considerable delay in reaching, still more in forcing, the Rhine on the shortest road to Berlin.
- (b) A marked degree of frustration in Italy.
- (c) The escape home of a large part of the German forces from the Balkan Peninsula.
- (d) Frustration in Burma.
- (e) Elimination of China as a combatant.<sup>2</sup>

When we contrast these realities with the rosy expectations of our peoples, in spite of our joint efforts to damp them down, the question very definitely arises, "what are we going to do about it?" . . . Our British plans are dependent on yours, our Anglo-American problems at least must be surveyed as a whole, and the telegraph and the telephone more often than not only darken

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<sup>1</sup> See *Triumph and Tragedy* (1954), pp. 234-6.

<sup>2</sup> See pp. 178-9, 182 below.

counsel. . . .’ ‘My anxiety,’ he stressed, ‘is increased by the destruction of all hopes of an early meeting between the three of us and the indefinite postponement of another meeting of you and me with our Staffs.’

For the conference was proving difficult to convene. Stalin was no more likely than on other occasions to leave Russia or the vicinity, and while Churchill and Roosevelt were willing to go to him, Roosevelt found it difficult to leave the United States for some weeks after his reelection as President on 7th November, or indeed until he had made his inaugural speech to Congress when it met again on 20th January, 1945. An early meeting of the Combined Chiefs of Staff also proved impossible, for the Americans were not convinced of its necessity, and the German attack in the Ardennes in any case soon occupied the attention of both sets of Chiefs of Staff. Negotiations accordingly proceeded throughout December for a tripartite conference, to begin late in January or early in February, 1945; and after the usual prolonged discussion, the Heads of Government settled on Yalta in the Crimea as the place, and on 4th February as the date.

The final arrangements, as had happened at the Cairo Conference in November 1943, had a significant result.<sup>1</sup> The President had intended to travel by ship to Italy, and thence by air to the Crimea. But his doctors and associates considered that he should not be exposed to the heights which such a passage would entail, and he therefore decided to fly from Malta instead. This gave the Prime Minister the opportunity to suggest, as he had done before Cairo, that the British and American delegations should meet together for a few days before they met the Russians, to concert their strategy for Europe and to discuss the war against Japan in which Russia was not a partner. The President at first doubted if such a meeting could be arranged, for he himself could not reach Malta by sea before 2nd February, and must therefore leave on the same day so as to reach Yalta on the 3rd. But he agreed, early in January, to send the Joint Chiefs of Staff ahead; and they arranged to begin their talks with the British on the morning of the 30th. At Churchill’s suggestion, the whole conference, including this preliminary, was given the code name of ‘Argonaut’. On 29th January, he and the British Chiefs of Staff left England by air for Malta.

The ‘Argonaut’ Conference was not strategically important as the First and Second Quebec Conferences, and the Conferences at Cairo and Teheran, were important. Each of them, whether by design or by chance, had proved a landmark in the formulation of strategy, providing a synthesis and an impulse at a critical point in its development. ‘Quadrant’ had established, ‘Sextant’ and ‘Eureka’ had confirmed, the form of operations against Germany and against Japan,

<sup>1</sup> See Volume V, pp. 157-8.

whose success provided the starting point for 'Octagon'.<sup>1</sup> 'Argonaut', in different circumstances, was of a different character. At the beginning of 1945, there was no need to redefine the relations between the wars in Europe and in the Far East, and the conference therefore lacked that universal quality which had distinguished its predecessors. Nor had either war reached a further turning point since the 'Octagon' Conference in September, and neither therefore falls naturally, as had earlier been the case, into phases divided by the conference itself. Nevertheless, 'Argonaut' deserves consideration in its own right. It happened to follow immediately the defeat of the Germans' last counter-attack in the west, and thus coincided with the moment for considering in detail the plans for the invasion of the Reich; and its proceedings underline dramatically a development that was growing steadily clearer as the end in Europe approached, the interdependence of military and diplomatic factors in the war against Germany. The minutes of the military meetings, both at Malta and at Yalta, may yield limited results; but they must be seen against the background of the more important diplomatic meetings, with most of whose detail we are not concerned, but which provided the context for the subsequent military developments, and influenced even the subsidiary arrangements for military co-operation which were handled at the conference. For these reasons, the 'Argonaut' Conference, from the preliminaries at Malta to the conclusion at Yalta, forms as it were an occasion of secondary strategic importance; not, like its predecessors, summing up and redefining the relations between the wars against Germany and against Japan, but convenient for the discussion of the last plans for victory in Europe and for the subsequent immediate division of authority between the victors.

The military topics discussed at the 'Argonaut' Conference, which affected the war in Europe, fall into three main groups: the Western Allies' strategy for the final defeat of Germany; liaison between the Western Allies and the Russians in the course of the operations; and the division of responsibility between them for the territories under their control. The first of these formed the substance of the military conversations at Malta; the second and third, of the military conversations at Yalta.

General Eisenhower's new plan for the conquest of Germany emphasized the extent to which the three European fronts were now linked with each other. The British Chiefs of Staff had earlier drawn attention to the importance of the Russians' plans: he himself now related his operations directly to events on the Eastern front and in

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<sup>1</sup> For the code names, see Appendix I below.

Italy.<sup>1</sup> The connexion between the two main fronts had in fact already been demonstrated by the Germans' counter-attack in the Ardennes. According to the Russians, the battle determined the date on which they themselves opened their main operations for the winter; certainly, its preparation and course, drawing German divisions to the west which might otherwise have been sent east, illustrated the growing interdependence of the Allies' operations. As a direct result of these movements, the Red Army north of the Carpathians was able to build up a force of at least 180 divisions with some 9,000 aircraft by the end of 1944, while the Germans on that front declined appreciably between the middle of August and the end of December. But while the omens thus favoured a fresh Russian offensive, the Western Allies remained, despite frequent inquiries, entirely ignorant of Moscow's intentions. It seemed possible, even likely, that the great advance south of the Carpathians would be followed by a complementary series of blows farther north; but although Stalin had mentioned a design to Churchill in October, no details had followed, then or later.

But the German offensive in the Ardennes brought the question to the fore. On 21st December, Eisenhower reported that he found it difficult to plan for the current battle or its aftermath without some knowledge of the Russians' intentions, which must obviously affect, if they did not dictate, the enemy's ability further to reinforce the west. He therefore asked that if possible he should be informed of their plans. This request stirred the Western Governments. The British Chiefs of Staff, already irritated by their complete lack of information, at once suggested to the Prime Minister that a 'high ranking officer' should go to Moscow to seek the facts. The Americans agreed, and on 23rd December the President informed Stalin that he was sending a 'fully qualified' member of Eisenhower's staff, whom he hoped Stalin himself would see. The Prime Minister supported this request in a separate telegram; Stalin consented to meet the envoy; and on 27th December, the Combined Chiefs of Staff informed the Allied Military Missions in Moscow that Air Chief Marshal Tedder was soon to be expected.

Tedder left France by air at the end of December. But bad weather held him for some days in the Mediterranean, and as Eisenhower by this time was beginning to consider his further movements in detail, the Prime Minister decided to intervene in an effort to extract the information from Moscow without more delay. On 6th January, he sent a telegram to Stalin.<sup>2</sup>

'The battle in the West is very heavy and at any time large decisions may be called for from the Supreme Command.

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<sup>1</sup> See p. 74 above.

<sup>2</sup> See *Triumph and Tragedy*, p. 243.



You know yourself from your own experience how very anxious the position is when a very broad front has to be defended after the temporary loss of the initiative. It is Eisenhower's great desire and need to know in outline what you plan to do, as this obviously affects all his and our major decisions. Our envoy, Air Chief Marshal Tedder, was last night reported weather-bound in Cairo. His journey has been much delayed through no fault of yours. In case he has not reached you yet, I shall be grateful if you can tell me whether we can count on a major Russian offensive on the Vistula front, or elsewhere during January, with any other points you may care to mention. I shall not pass this most secret information to anyone except Field Marshal Brooke and General Eisenhower, and only under conditions of the utmost secrecy. I regard the matter as urgent.'

The answer came at once.

'I received your message of January 6th, 1945 on the evening of January 7th.

Unfortunately Air Chief Marshal Tedder has not yet arrived in Moscow.

It is important that we should be able to take advantage of our supremacy over the Germans in artillery and in the air.

This demands clear flying weather and an absence of low mists which hinder aimed artillery fire. We are preparing an offensive, but the weather is at present unfavourable. Nevertheless, taking into account the position of our Allies on the Western Front, G.H.Q. of the Supreme Command has decided to accelerate the completion of our preparations, and, regardless of the weather, to commence large-scale offensive operations against the Germans along the whole Central Front not later than the second half of January. You may rest assured that we shall do everything possible to render assistance to the glorious forces of our Allies.'

This, as Churchill replied immediately, was a 'thrilling message'.<sup>1</sup> Eisenhower was accordingly able to plan his immediate movements in the knowledge, which Tedder confirmed later in the month, that all German forces in the east would be fully contained in the course of the next few weeks.

The offensive had indeed opened before Tedder reached Moscow. At the end of 1944, the Russian forces between Latvia and the Carpathians were disposed in six main groups of armies.<sup>2</sup> In Latvia and Lithuania, General Bagramyan contained two separate German forces in Courland and around Memel, which had been pressed back into these pockets, from the limits of the summer offensive,<sup>3</sup> in the course of September and October. On his left, Marshal Chernyakovsky

<sup>1</sup> *Loc. cit.*, p. 244.

<sup>2</sup> See Map III, facing p. 162.

<sup>3</sup> See Volume V, pp. 344, 382.

lay along the border of East Prussia. In the northern half of Poland, Rokossovsky lay as far as the Vistula due north of Warsaw, where he had been halted in September, 1944. Immediately to the south, Zhukov occupied the western bank of the river to the neighbourhood of Sandomierz, whence Koniev's line stretched to the south-west, curving back across the river some thirty miles from Cracow and thence running south to Petrov's right flank north of the Carpathians. On the morning of 12th January, Koniev attacked around Sandomierz, aiming at Breslau and the upper Oder. All the other groups of armies, except for Bagramyan in the north, followed suit within the next few days. On 17th January, Zhukov captured Warsaw, whence he swept due west across the Polish plains towards Frankfurt-on-Oder and Berlin. Rokossovsky meanwhile drove in a curve towards Danzig, and Chernyakovsky on his right moved from the border of East Prussia towards the coast from Danzig to Königsberg. In the south, Petrov guarded Koniev's left flank along the northern frontier of Czechoslovakia. All of these great movements gained immediate success. By 22nd January, the Germans were in general retreat, reinforcements were hastily mustered, and one of the Panzer Armies was recalled from the Ardennes. By that time, Koniev had penetrated the industrial Silesian basin north and south of Breslau, Zhukov had spanned more than half the distance from Warsaw to Posnan, Rokossovsky was heading north from the battlefield of Tannenberg, and Chernyakovsky was in Tilsit. By the end of the month, Koniev had taken Breslau, had substantial bridgeheads across the Oder, and was approaching the Niesse; Zhukov, leaving several fortified places uncaptured in his rear, was near Frankfurt-on-Oder and Kuestrin, and within seventy miles of Stettin; and Chernyakovsky had surrounded Königsberg and was fast approaching the Baltic to the south-west. The Germans were now being pressed into a coastal corridor through East Prussia, and had yielded the whole of Poland except for two small sectors, half of the Silesian basin, and a large stretch of the Oder. Their greatest fear had now been realized. After an advance at the farthest point of over 250 miles in three weeks, the Red Army was inside Germany, one hundred miles from Dresden and forty miles from Berlin.

Meanwhile, the Russians south of the Carpathians had launched the attack on Budapest for which they had been forced to pause, in the face of strong German forces, early in December.<sup>1</sup> By the middle of that month, heavy reinforcements from Tolbukhin had fought up the last stretch of the Danube towards the city, to support Malinovsky to the north and east. Advancing from Mohacs, whence Suleyman the Magnificent had marched on Budapest, by 8th December they held a line from Lake Balaton to within a few miles of its southern suburbs.

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<sup>1</sup> See p. 42 above, and Map II, facing p. 130.

On the 20th, Tolbukhin struck behind Budapest, joining forces with Malinovsky who had meanwhile advanced from the neighbourhood of Hatvan and Miskolcz almost as far as Estergom and Komarno. The Germans at once counter-attacked in strength, breaking the Russian line between Estergom and Komarno on 2nd and 3rd January, retaking Estergom on the 5th, and in the next few days driving the Russians from the hills behind Budapest. But they were now almost exhausted by fighting on three flanks, and on 18th January Malinovsky forced the centre of Pest, on the eastern bank of the Danube. Both groups of Russian armies now closed from all sides on Buda, and after further hard fighting the enemy withdrew on 13th February. The German army in Hungary had been severely mauled, and the Russians were astride the road to Vienna.

These dramatic events affected the future of the armies in Italy, whose operations, as Eisenhower had stated, were now of direct interest to his own. The Combined Chiefs of Staff's directive of 2nd December<sup>1</sup> had recognized that operations in Istria or Dalmatia were impossible, and had provided for the frontal pressure in Italy to continue during December and January. This design gained its immediate object. No German division was withdrawn from Italy for the Ardennes offensive, and Alexander could claim in January, 1945 that he was containing a force roughly equal to that of November, 1944. But it was now necessary to look ahead, in the light of Eisenhower's detailed plans and of the probable developments north of Yugoslavia; and this proved as difficult as a similar forecast had proved in October and November. For, as had been the case since Kesselring had first withdrawn to the fringe of the Lombard plain, the Allies in Italy were in the unfortunate position that their plans must be dictated entirely by what he elected to do. In October and November he had solved the problem by defending the plain. But he might soon be ordered, or might decide, to withdraw some divisions through the Alps, which would immediately open new possibilities for the large Allied forces in the peninsula. It would probably be impossible, as it had always been impossible, to prevent such a transfer of strength. The familiar question therefore arose again, if the Germans did not continue to defend northern Italy in strength, what preparations should the Allies make there to aid operations on other fronts?

The possibilities had already been discussed, in rather different circumstances, by the British Joint Planners in their paper of 14th October.<sup>2</sup> If the front in Italy were stabilized about the end of the year, the courses open to the Allies would then be:

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<sup>1</sup> See p. 56 above.

<sup>2</sup> See pp. 48-50 above.

- (a) To prepare for an overland Spring offensive, combined with an assault on Istria or the Dalmatian coast.
- (b) To withdraw the U.S. portion of the Fifth Army (1 armoured, 4 infantry and 1 equivalent divisions) with a view to transferring it to N.W. Europe.
- (c) To withdraw British and Imperial troops to form a strategic reserve.'

The Joint Planners had concluded that, as long as pressure in Italy was maintained over the next two months, it was unnecessary then to decide which of these courses to adopt. In January 1945, the time had come to consider them further.

The occasion was provided by Alexander's plans for the rest of the winter, which he submitted to the British Chiefs of Staff on 8th January. His recent directive had enjoined him to capture Bologna, to secure the line Ravenna – Bologna – Spezia, and thereafter to 'continue operations with a view to containing Kesselring's Army'. But the Allies' inability to gain the first two objects was now endangering the third. When the last effort to capture Bologna had to be abandoned in December,<sup>1</sup> Alexander decided that the armies in Italy, short of ammunition and men, must pause until the spring. The weight must therefore fall for the time being on air operations against the enemy's communications with the north, while the land forces confined themselves to minor offensive operations and remained ready to exploit a withdrawal by the enemy. 'This telegram', the Chiefs of Staff at once remarked, 'raises big issues', which they and the Joint Planners reviewed over the next fortnight.

The results, as perhaps was not surprising when action was dictated so immediately by the enemy, were inconclusive. The Joint Planners took as the governing factor the opposing strengths in the two theatres. So far as they could see, the position would be as follows:

	<i>Western Front</i>		<i>Italy</i>	
	<i>mid- January</i>	<i>mid- April</i>	<i>mid- January</i>	<i>mid- April</i>
<b>Armoured divisions</b>				
(a) Allied	20	23	4	4
(b) German	15	16	4	4
<b>Others</b>				
(a) Allied	52	68	19	20
(b) German	67	74	23	23
<b>Total</b>				
(a) Allied	72	91	23	24
(b) German	82	90	27	27

<sup>1</sup> See pp. 39-40 above.

Thus, in neither theatre would the British and Americans enjoy a clear superiority over the Germans, during a period when they intended to attack in both; and since there now seemed little prospect of containing the enemy actively in the south until the spring, he was the more free to reinforce the decisive western front from his interior lines of communication. The Italian campaign therefore seemed unlikely, on the plans presented, to fulfil its rôle in support of the main operations.

The Joint Planning Staff instead envisaged two possible courses of action: first, to go over to the defensive in Italy, and at once to withdraw to the western front as many divisions as possible; secondly, 'to adopt an offensive-defensive' in Italy for the time being, while preparing for a full offensive to start probably in mid-April and to aim at the line of the Adige, after which as many Allied divisions as possible would be withdrawn to the western front. In the first case, they estimated that six divisions—three (including two armoured) from Italy, three from Greece once the civil war was over—could probably be transferred; in the second case, eight to ten, provided that Kesselring had been weakened decisively on the way to the Adige. In neither case should tactical air forces be removed from the southern front.

It was difficult to choose between these alternatives. If Kesselring elected to stand with his full strength, then perhaps the second course would be best. Whether or not the Allied offensive succeeded, it would contain, and would seriously weaken, the German forces in Italy during the spring and early summer; if successful, it would achieve the conquest of northern Italy; and the Allies would then bring more reinforcements to bear on the western front, if operations there had not already proved successful, than by the first alternative. Nothing more, it might seem, could be demanded of the Italian campaign.

But if, on the other hand, Kesselring withdrew some of his forces in the winter or spring, then perhaps the first course should be preferred. It would strengthen the western front more quickly than the second alternative, providing Eisenhower with necessary reinforcements to counter any German reinforcements from Italy, and with a definite superiority if the German divisions from Italy were sent to eastern Europe; and, although leading specifically to the abandonment of the plans for conquering northern Italy, might still in fact produce that result if the enemy should withdraw more divisions than the Allies. The choice, in fact, turned entirely on the estimate of Kesselring's movements, which in turn depended partly on his estimate of the Russians' intentions.

The Prime Minister and the Chiefs of Staff were inclined at first to favour an immediate withdrawal of divisions for the western front, and the Chiefs of Staff drafted a directive to that end. But, as so often, all depended on the dates. According to the Joint Planners, it would take two and a half months to transfer a division from Italy to the line in the

west. On that basis, the first of the six divisions under their first alternative would be ready for operations late in April 1945, and the last early in June; under the second alternative, the eight to ten divisions would become available for operations in western Europe between mid-September, 1945 and the end of December. These forecasts depressed the Prime Minister. 'He thought that the gain to the western front was a small reward for having to give up all hopes for offensive action in Italy and the Adriatic'; he was equally unimpressed by the second alternative, which seemed of even more doubtful value to Eisenhower; and on 24th January, he accordingly canvassed the possibility of keeping both Armies in Italy indefinitely at full strength, to meet such opportunities as might arise there.

'The plan, as it stands at present,' he then remarked,<sup>1</sup> 'seems, first, to deprive the 15th Army Group [in Italy] with its vast establishments throughout the Mediterranean, especially in Egypt, of all opportunity of offensive action till the end of the War; secondly, to keep three or four divisions out of all operations anywhere during the most decisive months, and this doubtless applies to other divisions preparing to follow in the northward stream once it is open. . . .'

Always averse to wasting facilities already assembled, and reluctant to abandon without good reason a cause that lay close to his heart, Churchill was anxious to keep an option on the future in Italy, at least until an acceptable alternative had been produced which would meet Eisenhower's needs effectively. He therefore instructed the Chiefs of Staff not to commit themselves or him, until he had had a chance to discuss the future with Alexander.

The possibility which the Prime Minister wished again particularly to examine was the familiar proposal to advance from Italy upon Vienna. Its military and diplomatic advantages remained broadly the same as before; but the former appeared more attainable, and the latter more urgent, after the Russians' successes around Budapest. The recent failure of the Allies' operations in Italy had stopped further talk of an advance to the north-east. But if the Red Army opened the way to the Austrian frontier, Kesselring might soon be forced to withdraw, and the conditions would then be favourable. It would, of course, be necessary to gain the consent of the Americans and the Russians. But, although the check on the western front might now turn their thoughts away from the east, the Americans had not opposed such a move at the 'Octagon' Conference,<sup>2</sup> provided Italy had been cleared; while in the interval, Stalin himself had raised its possibility. When talking to the Prime Minister and the C.I.G.S. at Moscow in October, he had remarked that 'the Russians did not propose to advance west-

<sup>1</sup> See Appendix VIII below for the complete text.

<sup>2</sup> See Volume V, p. 511.

wards across Yugoslavia. They would prefer to join hands with General Wilson's forces in Austria.' This was merely thrown out in passing, and could not be taken to mean that the Russians either needed or would welcome British and American operations on their flank. But, at least to the Prime Minister, it augured the possibility of a friendly reception if such operations were seriously proposed.

Churchill's interest in this hypothesis had moreover recently been aroused by a chance occasion. The activities of the Balkans Air Forces in Yugoslavia, and the possibility of a withdrawal by Kesselring from Italy, had led Alexander in November to propose that he should confer with Tito in Belgrade on further measures of collaboration. Events in Greece postponed such a meeting, and Alexander meanwhile suggested that he might speak with more authority in Belgrade if he had already visited Moscow. The Prime Minister supported this request, and tried hard to include Alexander with Tedder in the visit to Stalin which the latter paid in January.<sup>1</sup> But neither the British Chiefs of Staff nor the Americans were anxious to expose Alexander to inquiries from the Russians, on a policy which the Western Allies had not yet decided between themselves; and the matter was accordingly dropped, Alexander being instructed instead to take part in the 'Argonaut' Conference. The incident, however, had again stimulated interest in a possibility that had receded over the past few months, and the Prime Minister was the more anxious to learn the reactions of Alexander and of the American Chiefs of Staff at Malta, before deciding further to weaken the armies in Italy on the eve of what might yet be their greatest opportunity.

The Combined Chiefs of Staff met in Malta from 30th January to 2nd February. The bulk of their discussion on European strategy, which itself occupied the greater part of the meetings, was concerned with Eisenhower's plan for the invasion of Germany, and with the consequences for Italy.

Before the conference began, the British Chiefs of Staff had prepared draft directives to cover policy in both areas. While the directive on the Mediterranean awaited the Prime Minister's further comments, that on the western front had been approved before leaving London for submission to the Combined Chiefs of Staff.

'Your primary object remains to undertake, in conjunction with the other United Nations,<sup>2</sup> operations aimed at the heart of Germany and the destruction of her armed forces.

2. Every effort is being made to provide you with the maximum forces which can be made available. You will be informed

<sup>1</sup> See pp. 80-1 above.

<sup>2</sup> The term used to denote the Allied nations in combination.

separately of the additional resources with which it is planned to provide you and the dates by which they should become available.

3. In preparing your plans you should bear in mind our views as follows:

- (a) All the resources which can be made available for offensive operations should be concentrated on one main thrust. This thrust should be made in the maximum possible strength with sufficient fresh formations held available to keep up the momentum of the advance. Only such forces as cannot be employed to support this main thrust should be used for subsidiary operations. Only if the main thrust is held and the subsidiary operations prosper should the latter be exploited.
- (b) If tactical considerations allow, this main thrust should be made in the north, in view of the over-riding importance to the enemy of the Ruhr area.
- (c) The best results will be achieved if one Land Force Commander, directly responsible to you, is given power of operational control and co-ordination of all ground forces employed in the main thrust.'

The Joint Chiefs of Staff replied at once.

'The United States Chiefs of Staff . . . agree with the British Chiefs of Staff that operations during the remainder of the winter should bear a direct relation to the plan for the main thrust in the spring, and that the main thrust should be in the north.

As to the manner of implementation by General Eisenhower of this directive, the United States Chiefs of Staff consider that his past operations and proposed plan are clearly designed to carry out his main effort in the north. The opposing forces on the Western Front have been and are now nearly in balance insofar as number of divisions are concerned . . . the enemy is able to move and concentrate his forces behind . . . fixed defences and strike blows at our long defensive line, which could gravely upset our main effort. The constant threat of these attacks would compel the Supreme Commander, Allied Expeditionary Force (S.C.A.E.F.), to immobilise in local reserves and on the defensive line itself divisions which are essential to the generation of the offensive effort required to break into the heart of Germany. Hence the United States Chiefs of Staff consider S.C.A.E.F. should, starting with the Colmar pocket, reduce German bridgeheads west of the Rhine and secure such other strong defensive positions as will free the maximum number of Allied divisions for the maintenance of the continuous offensive effort.

The United States Chiefs of Staff are in complete agreement with S.C.A.E.F.'s plan to have a secondary effort supplementing



his main thrust. The narrow front of the main thrust, the lack of surprise, the small number of our divisions employed initially and which build up only to a total of 35, and the enemy capabilities which we must recognise—all these are reasons convincing us there must be a strong secondary effort.

Concerning the command arrangements for S.C.A.E.F.'s armies in the coming operations, the United States Chiefs of Staff consider this an operational matter to be handled by S.C.A.E.F.

The United States Chiefs of Staff do not consider that a new directive for S.C.A.E.F. is necessary or desirable, other than an approval of his present plans . . . , together with instructions to implement them. Any directive which restricts his flexibility and freedom of decision more than his present instructions appears particularly unwise at the present time in view of our inability to foresee with any certainty the development of the military situation on the western or the eastern or the Italian front. . . .'

This exchange underlined the apparent difference in emphasis, which to the British seemed all-important, between their and the Americans' conception of the balance between the sectors on Eisenhower's front. A long discussion ensued on 30th and 31st January and on 1st February. It was indeed vehement as well as prolonged, and, according to some of the participants, provoked the most acrimonious dispute between the Combined Chiefs of Staff during the war. As an American authority has remarked,<sup>1</sup> 'One can read the official minutes of these meetings without suspecting that a single harsh word had been exchanged.' But in fact both sides were thoroughly angry, and the last phase of the debate is shrouded in the decent obscurity of a closed session.

At first sight, this vehemence may seem surprising. For, as the result was to show, Eisenhower's plans did not conflict fundamentally with the British aims, and were not by any means unreasonable. But by the end of January 1945, the Supreme Commander's intentions had become entangled in misunderstanding and resentment, the result of faults on both sides. Eisenhower himself had contributed to the misunderstanding, by his arguments over the past few months and by the obscurity of their language. As the British Chiefs of Staff reflected on the recent course of the campaign, and on the Supreme Commander's replies to the objections which had been raised, they were driven to suspect that not only had his strategy been inadequate, but that he had not always grasped the point of the objections. Sceptical therefore of assurances, however well founded these might now be, that the new plans did not really run counter to their proposals, they were determined to ensure that the latter were not accepted in theory

<sup>1</sup> Robert E. Sherwood, *The White House papers of Harry L. Hopkins* (1949), II, p. 848

only to be disregarded in practice. The British Chiefs of Staff, in fact, feared misapprehension almost more than opposition; and their resolve to make the position clear did not foster a tactful approach.

It is doubtful if the British appreciated how much this attitude annoyed the Americans. To the Joint Chiefs of Staff, who had supported Eisenhower's policy of the broad front, it seemed intolerable that a campaign which, contrary to the fears of many Britons, had driven the enemy in four months from the Channel coast to the German frontier, should at once be followed by complaints and interference. They resented the implied lack of faith in Eisenhower's judgment, the more so because they disliked the manner in which it had been expressed at various stages. They had never favoured Montgomery's case; they were the angrier now to see it revived by his superiors after it had been rejected, without his formal complaint to higher authority, only a few months before.<sup>1</sup>

The dispute moreover was exacerbated by the disagreement on command, which to the British, but not to the Americans, was integral to the strategic issue. The Joint Chiefs of Staff had never looked with sympathy on Montgomery's desire to return to the pattern of June and July, 1944; and it was therefore unfortunate that, shortly before the same proposal appeared in the British Chiefs of Staff's draft directive, the Prime Minister should have chosen to raise the question, in a different form, directly with the President. Mr. Churchill had indeed been considering for some time a change in the 'Overlord' Command, to conform to a changed situation. As the Allied line grew longer, and as the control of its air operations became less complicated, he turned to the idea of replacing an airman by a soldier as Deputy Supreme Commander. Tedder, appointed originally to solve a complex problem of air support and command, had fulfilled that function. The need was now for a soldier of equal distinction to do the same for operations on land. Eisenhower himself, as Supreme Commander, could scarcely be expected to assume this rôle. Churchill therefore suggested to Roosevelt early in January, 1945 that Alexander should be appointed as the Deputy. Roosevelt at first agreed. But the Joint Chiefs of Staff, already sensitive to any proposal affecting the shape of the Command, at once made it clear that if Alexander were to relieve Tedder, it must be with the same powers and in the same sense as his predecessor, and not as a land commander interposed between Eisenhower and the Army Groups. Weary of the efforts, first by Montgomery, then—as yet more tentatively—by the British Chiefs of Staff, and now by the Prime Minister, to force upon the 'Overlord' Command an arrangement of which neither they nor the Supreme Commander approved, they reacted strongly to the latest suggestion; and

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<sup>1</sup> See Volume V, pp. 379-81.

while the British Chiefs of Staff abstained (except possibly in the last, closed session) from raising the question at Malta, its influence could be perceived in the course of the discussions on strategy.

It was against this unfortunate background that the debate took place on a plan which, in fact, was not so far removed from the position the British wished to secure. The legacy of misunderstanding was indeed soon obvious when the details were examined. Field Marshal Brooke opened the discussion by explaining the British objections to the policy of two thrusts, based on the opposing strengths in the different sectors which seemed to them to preclude more than one serious offensive. The Americans, aided by Eisenhower's Chief of Staff, in turn developed the objections to putting all of the Allies' eggs into one basket, in a sector where communications were at first limited and where the attack must take place initially on a narrow front. 'The southern advance was not intended to compete with the northern attack but must be of sufficient strength to draw off German forces to protect the important Frankfurt area and to provide an alternate line of attack if the main effort failed.' There was no question of withdrawing any force from the northern offensive that could be deployed there; but since communications limited this force to thirty-six divisions<sup>1</sup> with ten in reserve, there was no objection to using the rest available in a complementary attack which might mean the difference between success and failure in the north. After allowing for the forty-six divisions reserved for the main offensive, and for necessary rest and reorganization elsewhere, this secondary attack could be launched with about twelve divisions—enough, in the Supreme Commander's view, to fulfil its purpose.

The British welcomed this explanation, which, as Brooke remarked, placed a different complexion on Eisenhower's report. They therefore proposed that the wording of the report should be amended. Certainly, as it stood it did not satisfy close scrutiny. As the British pointed out, the last sentence of its paragraph 9<sup>2</sup> ('Depending on the degree of enemy resistance it may be necessary to use either or both of these two avenues'), and the first sentence of paragraph 20 ('. . . it is clear that my operations to destroy the enemy forces West of the Rhine must be so designed as to enable me to close the Rhine throughout its length'), might seem to allow a roughly equal priority to more than one attack. But, as Admiral King rejoined, paragraph 22 of the report, which indicated the scale of the preparations for the northern attack, and mentioned the possibility of 'switching' resources to the south only 'should this be forced upon me', might seem to support precisely the opposite policy. Eisenhower's Chief of Staff and the British therefore set about redrafting the critical paragraph 21 of the report, which

<sup>1</sup> Cf. with 35 divisions as calculated earlier (pp. 73, 89 above), and later (p. 92 below).

<sup>2</sup> See pp. 74, 75 above.

defined the Supreme Commander's intentions, in the light of their recent discussion. The result was as follows:<sup>1</sup>

'My plan is . . .

(a) To carry out immediately a series of operations north of the Moselle with a view to destroying the enemy and closing the Rhine north of Düsseldorf.

(b) To direct our efforts to eliminating other enemy forces west of the Rhine which still constitute an obstacle or a potential threat to our subsequent Rhine crossing operations.

(c) To seize bridgeheads over the Rhine in the north and the south.

(d) To deploy east of the Rhine and north of the Ruhr the maximum number of divisions which can be maintained (estimated at some 35 divisions). The initial task of this force, assisted by air action, will be to deny to the enemy the industries of the Ruhr.

(e) To deploy east of the Rhine, on the axis Frankfurt – Kassel, such forces, if adequate, as may be available after providing 35 divisions for the North and essential security elsewhere. The task of this force will be to draw enemy forces away from the North by capturing Frankfurt and advancing on Kassel.'

The draft was sent at once to Eisenhower, who accepted it on the same day. He added:

'You may assure the Combined Chiefs of Staff that I will seize the Rhine crossings in the North immediately this is a feasible operation and without waiting to close the Rhine throughout its length. Furthermore, I will advance across the Rhine in the North with maximum strength and complete determination as soon as the situation in the South allows me to collect the necessary forces and do this without incurring unreasonable risks.'

The Supreme Commander was indeed anxious to launch the northern offensive as soon as possible, while a Russian offensive against eastern Germany was still under way; and he hoped therefore to start on 8th February, and that the northern group of armies would be ready to cross the Rhine itself by the middle of March. On 1st February, the Combined Chiefs of Staff approved these plans, which seemed to answer the wishes of both parties. Eisenhower retained his choice of manoeuvre and form of command; while the British were satisfied that they had prevented any further dispersal of force west of the Rhine, and that the main effort would thereafter be concentrated north of the Ruhr provided that the intervening operations, which they had now approved, allowed. 'The issue', an American account has stated,<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Cf. p. 75 above, and see Map III, facing p. 162.

<sup>2</sup> Sherwood, *loc. cit.*, p. 849.

'was settled by the Combined Chiefs of Staff in Eisenhower's favour.' 'General Eisenhower's intentions', Ismay informed the Prime Minister, 'are more or less exactly what you and the Chiefs of Staff would have them be.'

The discussion on the Mediterranean proceeded at the same time, and much more smoothly. Before the British party left for Malta, the Chiefs of Staff had consulted Eisenhower's headquarters on the length of time involved in the later stages of a transfer of divisions from Italy to his front. As a result, they were able to inform the Prime Minister that the whole process seemed likely to take some six weeks, compared with the Joint Planners' estimate of ten.<sup>1</sup> In that case, all of the six divisions, under their first alternative, could probably be ready for operations in the west early in May. Strengthened by this more favourable estimate, the Chiefs of Staff discussed the position in the Mediterranean with Alexander on the morning of 30th January. Churchill, who had a high temperature, did not attend; nor is there any record of the discussion between him and Alexander which had earlier been envisaged.<sup>2</sup> Nevertheless, on the morning of the 31st Brooke was able to inform his colleagues that the Prime Minister had agreed to table their draft directive for the Mediterranean, amended slightly after their talk with Alexander, for discussion with the Americans.<sup>3</sup> This now allowed for the immediate withdrawal of three Allied divisions from Italy, followed by a further two divisions from Italy (instead of the three from Greece originally proposed) which would themselves be relieved by the withdrawal of forces still in Greece. These movements made it the more necessary to discharge as soon as possible all British obligations in Greece, and redefined the Allies' immediate aims in Italy. The latter should now be confined to holding the front already gained, to containing the Germans by means of 'limited offensive action' and deception, and to preparing for a more extensive advance should the enemy withdraw enough of his forces. Minor operations could also be carried out, subject to the needs of Italy, on the eastern shores of the Adriatic.

The Combined Chiefs of Staff considered this draft on 31st January. They fully agreed with the British plans for the theatre, and the discussion passed at once to the detail of the arrangements. The British had hoped to withdraw Canadian and British divisions from Italy, in that order: partly because such a reinforcement would increase the proportion of British-controlled troops in the main operations on the western front, partly because the Canadian Government had been anxious for some time to concentrate all of the Canadian formations in Europe in one Canadian Army. They had not counted on having their

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<sup>1</sup> See pp. 85-6 above.

<sup>2</sup> See p. 86 above.

<sup>3</sup> See p. 85 above.

way; but, to their relief, the Americans now stated that they wished to leave Fifth Army in Italy intact, and that they would welcome a larger British force in the main attack on Germany. It was therefore agreed that three Canadian divisions, which could begin to move at once, should be sent straight from Italy to Montgomery's sector in France. The further two, British, divisions must await the withdrawal of their equivalent from Greece, a development which the Joint Chiefs of Staff agreed to hasten as far as possible by helping to ship equipment to the new Greek National Army. This settled the main question. But the Joint Chiefs of Staff wished also to transfer part of the tactical Twelfth U.S. Air Force from Italy to the western front, where Eisenhower would be glad of air reinforcements in his southern sector; and, after details had been discussed, the Combined Chiefs of Staff agreed on 2nd February to transfer two groups of fighters from Italy to France at once, followed 'in the near future' by as much of Twelfth U.S. Air Force as could be spared. The way was now open for the issue of a fresh directive to the Supreme Commander, which was approved on 2nd February and promulgated the next day.

'1. It is our primary intention in the war against Germany to build up the maximum possible strength on the Western Front and to seek a decision in that theatre. We have, therefore, reviewed your directive and decided as follows:

**GREECE**

2. The earliest possible discharge of British obligations in Greece must be your constant aim.

The object of British presence and operations in Greece is to secure that part of Greece which is necessary for the establishment of the authority of a free Greek Government.

3. This object must always be regarded in the light of the paramount need for releasing troops from Greece for use against the Germans. You should, therefore, concentrate on building up a Greek force on a national basis as soon as possible.

**ITALY**

4. In pursuance of the policy given in paragraph 1, it has been decided to withdraw from your theatre to the Western Front up to five divisions (of which not more than two should be armoured) as follows:

(a) At the earliest possible date three Allied divisions drawn from the Allied Armies in Italy.

(b) Further complete formations as the forces now in Greece are released from that country.

(c) It is intended to withdraw Canadian and British divisions. The nomination of ground formations to be withdrawn and the arrangements for their transfer will form the subject of a separate instruction. The programme will be agreed between you and the Supreme Commander, Allied Expeditionary

Force (S.C.A.E.F.), and approved by the Combined Chiefs of Staff before any moves take place.

AIR FORCES

5. Two fighter groups of Twelfth Air Force will be moved to France at once. Combined Chiefs of Staff intend to move to France in the near future as much of the Twelfth Air Force as can be released without hazard to the accomplishment of your mission. You should consult with S.C.A.E.F. and submit agreed proposals for confirmation by the Combined Chiefs of Staff.

6. There will be no significant withdrawal of amphibious assault forces.

7. We recognise that these withdrawals will affect the scope of your operations in the Italian theatre. We, therefore, redefine your objects as follows:

(a) Your first object should be to ensure that, subject to any minor adjustments you may find necessary, the front already reached in Italy is solidly held.

(b) Within the limits of the forces remaining available to you after the withdrawals in paragraph 4 above have been effected, you should do your utmost, by means of such limited offensive action as may be possible and by the skilful use of cover and deception plans, to contain the German forces now in Italy and prevent their withdrawal to other fronts.

(c) You should, in any case, remain prepared to take immediate advantage of any weakening or withdrawal of the German forces.

ADRIATIC

8. Subject to the requirements of the Italian Theatre, you should continue to give all possible support to the Yugoslav Army of National Liberation, until the territory of Yugoslavia has been completely cleared. You will carry out such minor operations on the eastern shores of the Adriatic as your resources allow.'

The Combined Chiefs of Staff had thus settled, in four days, the immediate strategy for their European fronts; and a Plenary Meeting, following the arrival of the President on 2nd February, approved their interim report. The Prime Minister took the occasion to remind all parties that more extensive movements might still prove feasible and necessary in the south, where assault shipping should accordingly still be held and plans kept up to date for occupying 'as much of Austria as possible, as it was undesirable that more of Western Europe than necessary should be occupied by the Russians.' Such a prospect, and indeed all action relating to the Russians, must remain uncertain; but the Western Allies had at least agreed, before the tripartite conference, on their strategic intentions in those areas where the decision lay between themselves.

(ii)

## Relations with the Russians: Yalta

The Combined Chiefs of Staff left Malta for Yalta with two main topics for discussion: closer co-operation with the Russians in the last stage of the war in Europe; and a settlement of the respective military responsibilities in the areas occupied by the Allies.

The most urgent of these problems was, as the proposed agenda put it, the 'Co-ordination of Operations, Bomb Lines, etc.' The need for some co-ordination of air operations had indeed been raised as early as November 1943, when the Americans had wished to arrange for the 'shuttle bombing' of targets in eastern Germany from bases in East Anglia and in Russia. These proposals hung fire. But in February 1944, when the Red Army was first approaching the Balkans, General Wilson suggested the need for some form of co-operation in the air, and in the middle of April the Combined Chiefs of Staff took up the matter with Moscow. The Russian General Staff soon agreed to establish a temporary bomb line through Rumania and Hungary, from Constanza to Ploesti to Bucharest to Budapest, the first city being included in the Russian sphere and the rest in that of the Western Allies. It also suggested that the General Staff and the Allied Military Missions should carry out the necessary liaison in Moscow, whence all Russian bombing operations were controlled; and, this having been accepted, the details were worked out in the following weeks. So matters stood theoretically until November, 1944. But on the 10th of that month, the Russians complained that American aircraft had recently attacked their troops in Yugoslavia, a few miles north of Nis; and the incident raised anew the question of liaison between the air forces. The temporary line of April had long been overtaken by events; the arrangements in Moscow had lapsed through disuse; and the intervening campaigns now suggested the need not only for preventing such occurrences in future, but for detailed co-operation between both the local and strategic air forces in East and West. Bomb lines in south-east Europe, the allocation of targets in Germany, and the establishment of effective machinery, should in fact now be considered together, the first as a matter of operational urgency.

These problems were bound to affect the earlier proposal for liaison with the Russians, which had been made, without specific reference to air operations, in September, 1944.<sup>1</sup> At the end of the 'Octagon' Conference, the Combined Chiefs of Staff, in response to approaches from Moscow, had suggested that a 'Combined British, United States

<sup>1</sup> See Volume V, pp. 512-13.





PLATE III. THE YALTA CONFERENCE

*Left to right, standing:* Field Marshal Alexander, Field Marshal Wilson, Field Marshal Brooke, Admiral Cunningham, General Ismay, Admiral King, Air Marshal Portal, Admiral Leahy, General Marshall.

*Left to right, seated:* Mr. Churchill, President Roosevelt, Marshal Stalin.



and Soviet Committee' should be set up, to advise the Combined Chiefs of Staff and the Russian General Staff on all matters demanding combined planning or action in the military sphere. The heads of the Allied Military Missions in Moscow, whom the Combined Chiefs of Staff proposed as the British and American members of the committee, approached the General Staff later in the month. But in contrast to the earlier interest, they were accorded no reply, and when the Ambassadors raised the matter with Stalin he showed little eagerness. Nothing more, in fact, was heard of the project during October; and the British and Americans accordingly decided to leave the initiative to Moscow, whence the proposals had originated.

The talks were now due to be resumed; but, as was soon to appear, the three Powers regarded the problem from different points of view. The British and Americans shared essentially the same object: to establish liaison on operational matters on land and in the air between the appropriate Allied and Russian Commands, while reserving matters of strategic policy to the Combined Chiefs of Staff and the Russian General Staff. But they differed in the means they proposed to adopt. The Americans, as in September,<sup>1</sup> wished to concentrate on liaison in the field, and for that purpose were now disposed to allow the Supreme Commanders to correspond on air, as on land, matters direct with the effective Russian authority, whether in the field or in Moscow. The British, on the other hand, had insisted from the start that the levels of responsibility must be kept distinct from each other, and that the Supreme Commanders should not be allowed to deal with authorities in Moscow who were the natural counterpart of the Combined Chiefs of Staff. Otherwise a difficult situation would soon become completely confused, the Supreme Commanders and the putative tripartite committee in Moscow would alternately overlap and ignore each other, and the Combined Chiefs of Staff themselves would lose control. This difference in emphasis was increased by the Russians' attitude. In the first place, the detailed control which Moscow exercised over air policy in the theatres tended to upset the careful distinction between the levels of authority which the British were anxious to preserve. But secondly, the Russians' conception of a bomb line, which was the immediate topic for consideration, itself increased the confusion between these levels. For, accustomed only to direct tactical air support of their armies, and with no experience of strategic bombing on a large scale, the Russians held an entirely different idea of its functions from that held by the Western Allies. Whereas the latter regarded a bomb line as tactical and flexible—'a line as close as may be agreed from time to time to the position occupied by friendly ground forces', beyond which 'all targets can be freely

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<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*

attacked by any Allied Air Forces without risk of damage to the friendly ground forces'—the former looked on it as 'a line dividing an area into exclusive theatres of air operations', which applied equally to strategic as to tactical bombing. When the Western Allies sought effective arrangements for air liaison in the theatres, to realize their tactical object, the Russians therefore countered with proposals for mutually exclusive areas of operations, defined and alterable only in Moscow, which they applied to the areas of strategic bombing over Germany as well as to the areas in south-east Europe under immediate consideration. They thus, to Western eyes, muddled two separate questions, and set the Combined Chiefs of Staff a difficult problem in their efforts to relate machinery to policy.

In these circumstances, it was not surprising that the negotiations should have been confused. Following the incident early in November 1944, the Mediterranean Command instructed its fighters not to attack targets within forty miles, and its bombers within eighty miles, of the main forward Russian positions in Yugoslavia. At the same time, Wilson asked the Combined Chiefs of Staff to press for the effective establishment of Allied air missions with the Russian armies in south-east Europe. The British and American Chiefs of Staff could not agree what powers to seek for such missions, in view of the fact that the Russian armies in the field were subject directly to decisions from Moscow. But while they were debating this problem, the Russian General Staff proposed its own solution, a temporary division of Europe into two areas along a line Stettin – Görlitz – Zagreb – Sarajevo – Preilep – southern border of Yugoslavia – southern border of Bulgaria.<sup>1</sup> All cities on this line except Zagreb, and all territory to the north and east, would fall to the Russian air forces, which would attack such targets in their area, apart from those selected by themselves, as the Western Allies might demand. The Western Allies in turn proposed a line running roughly fifty to one hundred miles to the west of the Russians' forward positions at any time. But when this was rejected, the Military Missions in Moscow decided to accept, as of urgent operational importance, the Russians' line south from Sarajevo, while referring the rest, which did not affect current operations, to their respective Chiefs of Staff.

The Combined Chiefs of Staff at once confirmed the acceptance of the line south from Sarajevo, as a temporary measure; and Wilson's recent orders to his air forces meanwhile held good over the rest of his area. But both British and Americans were disturbed by the Russians' proposals for Europe north of the Alps, which seemed to misunderstand the nature of strategic bombing, and moreover included Vienna and its surrounding factories in the eastern area of operations. Their remedies, however, still differed from each other. The Americans

<sup>1</sup> See Map III, facing p. 162, and Map II, facing p. 130.

remained anxious to establish liaison with Moscow on air operations at all levels, including the Supreme Commanders and the strategic air authorities as well as the Combined Chiefs of Staff. The British still preferred to confine the Supreme Commanders to missions with the Red Army in the field, and to leave discussion with Moscow on strategic air problems entirely to the Combined Chiefs of Staff. But ~~whatever the solution~~, the disadvantages of the existing arrangements were again emphasized by an incident towards the end of November. On the 27th, Wilson reported that the recently established bomb line was allowing considerable German forces to move unhindered in the vital area south-east of Sarajevo, and he therefore suggested a revised line closer to the Russians' positions, which he asked the Combined Chiefs of Staff to propose at once to Moscow. The Military Missions in Moscow approached the General Staff. But it was soon clear that they were not to receive an immediate answer, and in order to impress the importance of the issue upon the Russians, the Combined Chiefs of Staff asked the Prime Minister to take up the matter direct with Stalin. Churchill accordingly sent a message on 1st December, asking that the Russian General Staff should at once accept the new line. But even this failed to produce an answer immediately, and on the morning of 2nd December, after a further urgent message from Wilson, the Combined Chiefs of Staff informed the General Staff that the Mediterranean Air Forces would adopt the new line through Yugoslavia as from 0200 G.M.T. on the 3rd. This incident impressed on the Western Allies the inadequacy of the existing arrangements, and the growing need for their improvement.

Developments in December lent weight to their anxiety. On the 3rd, the Russians accepted the new line through Yugoslavia. But they took the opportunity to propose an amended bomb line farther north, this time running from Koslin through Schneidemühl to Breslau, thence via Olomouc to the Danube immediately east of Vienna, thence along the Austro-Hungarian frontier to a point east of Zagreb, and thence to Sarajevo.<sup>1</sup> A few days later, Wilson again modified his line in Yugoslavia to conform to a changing situation. These constant adjustments and counter-proposals, all demanding the attention of the Combined Chiefs of Staff, and, where affecting current operations, necessarily lagging behind events, were thoroughly unsatisfactory. The British and American Chiefs of Staff corresponded long and hard over the solution, while their Military Missions in Moscow tried to place their views before the Russians. At the end of December, the British suggested that the subject should be reserved for the forthcoming conference; and in preparation for that event, and to cover the intervening period, the Combined Chiefs of Staff on 15th January sent a message to Moscow.

<sup>1</sup> See Map III, facing p. 162.

‘ . . . 2. Existing procedure for Anglo-U.S. designation of a bomb line in advance of Soviet Armies is contrary to our accepted operational principles under which any Army Field Commander designates his own bomb line. The Combined Chiefs of Staff therefore recognise the Soviet right to establish bomb lines to protect their own forces in the Balkans and in Eastern Europe, subject to agreement on the following:

(a) Acceptance by the Soviets of the following definition of a bomb line:

“A bomb line may be defined as an imaginary line on the ground established by Army Field Commanders setting forth the forward boundary of an area in front of their ground forces in which the attack of ground targets by friendly aircraft is prohibited. This line must be delineated by terrain features easily recognisable to pilots in the air at all altitudes. It should be close enough to advancing troops to permit the attack of all vital strategic air objectives and tactical targets, air attacks on which will materially assist in the advance of ground troops or are necessary to the success of a strategic bomber offensive in carrying the war to the enemy. It should not be construed as a boundary for restricting movement of friendly aircraft.”

(b) Establishment of effective liaison parties with the Russian forces in the field. Any bomb line is subject to frequent and rapid changes in accordance with the moving military situation of the ground forces concerned. Such timely changes, in the opinion of the Combined Chiefs of Staff can be effectively disseminated only by the establishment of direct liaison between the Russian forces in the field and the U.S./British forces concerned.

(c) Acceptance of the right of the Allied Air Forces to fly over areas occupied by the Soviet ground forces in order to reach target objectives in front of any established bomb line. (This would be necessary if the current Russian drive in Western Hungary should continue westward).

3. . . . the Combined Chiefs of Staff feel that in the absence of agreement on the above, including the arrangements in paragraph 2(b) and (c), the Soviets share responsibility for any incidents of air attacks on their troops which occur as the result of their troops over-running a bomb line which must be established on the basis of the poor liaison which presently exists with the Russian Field Armies.

4. Until such time as agreement is reached with the Soviet General Staff on the above,

(a) the Supreme Allied Commander, Mediterranean, is authorised to make changes in the bomb line south of the latitude of Vienna, transmitting the information to the Commanding General, U.S. Strategic Air Forces and Deputy

Chief of Air Staff, and the Heads of the U.S. and British Missions in Moscow for transmittal to the Red Army Staff, with copies of such communications to the Combined Chiefs of Staff for information.

(b) the Commanding General United States Strategic Air Forces and the Deputy Chief of Air Staff are authorised jointly to establish and make changes in the bomb line north of the latitude of Vienna: the Commanding General, U.S. Strategic Air Forces to transmit such information to the Supreme Allied Commander, Mediterranean and to the Heads of the U.S. and British Military Missions in Moscow for transmittal to the Red Army Staff, with copies of such communications to the Combined Chiefs of Staff for information. . . .'

So matters stood on the eve of the 'Argonaut' Conference; and when the Combined Chiefs of Staff discussed the 'Co-ordination of Operations, Bomb Lines etc.' on 30th January at Malta, it was only to confirm that the instructions of the 15th held good pending a settlement. Proposals for that event, reflecting the recent discussions between London and Washington, were tabled by the British at Yalta on 5th February; and the result, amended slightly by the Americans, was read to the Russians on the same day. The Combined Chiefs of Staff drew a clear distinction between strategic and tactical air operations. They pointed out that a bomb line did not apply to the former, and must be flexible to serve the latter. To achieve this flexibility without causing confusion, they suggested that the Russian General Staff should inform the Allied Military Missions in Moscow of the Red Army's positions every day, and should give them at least twenty-four, and preferably forty-eight hours' notice of targets which they wished the Western Allies to bomb. The Russians in turn at once proposed a new bomb line north of the Alps, on this occasion to run from Stettin to Berlin to Dresden to Zagreb.<sup>1</sup>

The alternative proposals were discussed at two tripartite military meetings on 5th and 6th February, and subsequently in conversations between Sir Charles Portal, Major-General L. S. Kuter for the Americans, and Marshal of Aviation Khudyakov for the Russians. The Russians seemed, as a result, to appreciate the reasons for the Western proposals, and by the 8th Portal and Kuter thought that an agreement was in sight. But on the 9th, Portal was obliged to inform the British Chiefs of Staff that the Russians had produced a draft for his signature which differed materially from what they had already accepted orally. 'The Russian text in effect forbade Allied Air operations east of the agreed bomb line save with the express permission of the Soviet authorities, whereas the agreement that had previously been reached provided only for a period of twenty-four hours during

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<sup>1</sup> See Map III, facing p. 162.

which the Russian authorities could object to Anglo-American operations east of that line of which they had had warning.' The Russians, moreover, again demanded a rigid line to be altered from time to time by themselves, instead of a line that would move forward automatically at a given distance from their forward positions. The Combined Chiefs of Staff, to whom the new development was reported later in the day, therefore instructed Portal and Kuter to refuse the Russian draft; and when nothing more was heard, the arrangements proposed in paragraph 4 of the message of 15th January<sup>1</sup> were allowed to stand pending further agreement. In the event, they remained in force until almost the end of the war in Europe.<sup>2</sup>

The prospect of effective liaison on land operations suffered a similar fate. Both British and Americans had already proposed, independently of each other and along separate lines, to approach the Russians on the question. The British concentrated on the establishment of the tripartite Military Committee in Moscow. The Chiefs of Staff's decision in October 1944, to await a further move from the Russians,<sup>3</sup> had not satisfied the Foreign Office, and in November it suggested that the subject might again be raised through the British Ambassador in Moscow. The Chiefs of Staff agreed, although without great enthusiasm and somewhat fearful lest the negotiations should hamper the current talks on air missions in the Balkans. Early in January 1945, the British Minister in Moscow (in the temporary absence of the Ambassador) was therefore instructed to tackle M. Molotov on the question. But no immediate opportunity arose, and after Yalta there seemed little point in pursuing the matter.

For, as the result of a separate process and with a somewhat different end in view, the Americans raised the question of liaison on land early in the conference; and its reception did not encourage another approach for some time. Already anxious to establish effective arrangements in the field, aware that their views were not shared by the British, and under some pressure from the Supreme Commanders themselves, they decided to tackle the Russians on their own. At the first tripartite military meeting on 5th February, Admiral Leahy accordingly opened the discussion on liaison by saying that 'He had been directed by the President to bring up this question . . . before the British, Russian and United States Chiefs of Staff. It was the opinion of the United States Chiefs of Staff, who had not yet discussed it with their British colleagues, that arrangements should be made for the

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<sup>1</sup> See pp. 100-1 above.

<sup>2</sup> See pp. 151, 155 below.

<sup>3</sup> See p. 97 above.



Allied armies in the West to deal rapidly with the Soviet Commanders on the Eastern front through the Military Missions now in Moscow . . .'

But the invitation was not accepted. Ignoring the proposal for improvement, General Antonov, who headed the Russian delegation, at once replied that the existing machinery in Moscow was adequate for the time being, and that 'later, as operations advanced, the question of liaison between Army Commanders could be reviewed and adjusted.' When Marshall remarked that 'He had not entirely understood the necessity for limiting liaison', the Russian stated flatly that 'at the present time no tactical co-ordination was required between Allied and Russian ground forces.' The subject was thereupon dropped, and the discussion turned to the arrangements for a bomb line.

Nor did the Western Allies gain more satisfaction from the direct exchange of information on future operations. At the first meeting of the three Powers on 4th February, the Western delegates stated their plans for the western and Italian fronts, and the Russian delegates the position in the east. But when, on the following day, Brooke and Marshall wished to consider the co-ordination of operations in March and April 1945,

'General Antonov said that, as Marshal Stalin had pointed out, the Russians would continue the offensive in the East as long as the weather permitted. There might be interruptions during the offensive and, as Sir Alan Brooke had said, there was the need to re-establish Russian communications. The Soviet Army would, however, take measures to make such interruptions as short as possible and would continue the offensive to the limit of their capacity.'

He then asked for details of the Allies' intentions in Italy, which would be of interest to the Russians' advance towards Vienna; and this subject occupied the rest of the discussion on that part of the agenda.

The result was much the same the next day, when Brooke and Marshall returned to the charge.

'General Antonov said that Soviet offensive action had started and would continue. The Soviet forces would press forward until hampered by weather. With regard to the summer offensive, it would be difficult to give exact data with regard to the interval between the end of the winter and the beginning of the summer attack. The most difficult season from the point of view of weather was the second part of March and the month of April . . .'

He assured the Western delegates that 'if during this period operations in the West were carried out actively, the Soviet would take every possible action on the Eastern front wherever this could be done', and 'would do everything possible to prevent the transference of German

forces from east to west during this period.' But no more precise information could be gained, and the subject had perforce to be dropped. At the end of the 'Argonaut' Conference, the Western Allies therefore knew no more about the Russians' intentions, and had made no better arrangements for military liaison, than when the conference began.

There had been greater progress since the 'Octagon' Conference on the division of responsibility for the territories occupied by the Allies. Three separate problems had to be considered here which affected the immediate future, while the armies would still be directly in control: the zones of responsibility in south-east Europe, the zones of occupation in Austria, and the zones of occupation in Germany. Formal agreement was reached on one of these questions, and informal agreement on another, between October, 1944 and the middle of February, 1945.

The division of military responsibilities in south-east Europe had been raised, by the British, in the spring of 1944; and in June the President had agreed to recognize a provisional demarcation in that area between them and the Russians for a period of three months.<sup>1</sup> British control in Greece, and Russian control in Rumania, were to be accepted without prejudice to subsequent decisions. While this arrangement was only the first step in what the British had hoped would prove a comprehensive if temporary settlement, and while it never received any form of official confirmation, it survived tacitly throughout the period to which it referred. But by the end of the 'Octagon' Conference that period had elapsed, and the Russians' advance had meanwhile raised more acutely the problem of co-ordination in south-east Europe. Churchill in particular was anxious to discuss these and other questions in person with Stalin; and on his initiative a meeting (the 'Tolstoy' Conference) was arranged in Moscow to start on 9th October. The Prime Minister was accompanied by the Foreign Secretary, the C.I.G.S. and Ismay, who were joined by the British Ambassador and the head of the Military Mission in Moscow; Stalin, Molotov and Antonov were the main representatives for Russia; and the American Ambassador and the head of the American Military Mission attended for the United States. At the first meeting, on the evening of the 9th, Churchill pressed for an immediate decision on south-east Europe. The story is told best in his own words, which in this instance add to the official record.<sup>2</sup>

'The moment was apt for business, so I said, "Let us settle about our affairs in the Balkans. Your armies are in Roumania and Bulgaria. We have interests, missions, and agents there. Don't let us get at cross-purposes in small ways. So far as Britain and

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<sup>1</sup> See Volume V, p. 369.

<sup>2</sup> *Triumph and Tragedy*, p. 198.

Russia are concerned, how would it do for you to have ninety per cent. predominance in Roumania, for us to have ninety per cent. of the say in Greece, and go fifty-fifty about Yugoslavia?" While this was being translated I wrote out on a half-sheet of paper:

Roumania	
Russia	90%
The others	10%
Greece	
Great Britain (in accord with U.S.A.)	90%
Russia	10%
Yugoslavia	50-50%
Hungary	50-50%
Bulgaria	
Russia	75%
The others	25%

I pushed this across to Stalin, who had by then heard the translation. There was a slight pause. Then he took his blue pencil and made a large tick upon it, and passed it back to us. It was all settled in no more time than it takes to set down.

Of course we had long and anxiously considered our point, and were only dealing with immediate war-time arrangements. All larger questions were reserved on both sides for what we then hoped would be a peace table when the war was won.

After this there was a long silence. The pencilled paper lay in the centre of the table. At length I said, "Might it not be thought rather cynical if it seemed we had disposed of these issues, so fateful to millions of people, in such an offhand manner? Let us burn the paper." "No, you keep it," said Stalin.'

As the Prime Minister hastened to inform the War Cabinet:<sup>1</sup>

'The system of percentage is not intended to prescribe the numbers sitting on commissions for the different Balkan countries, but rather to express the interest and sentiment with which the British and Soviet Governments approach the problems of these countries, and so that they might reveal their minds to each other in some way that could be comprehended. It is not intended to be more than a guide, and of course, in no way commits the United States, nor does it attempt to set up a rigid system of spheres of interest. It may however help the United States to see how their two principal Allies feel about these regions when the picture is presented as a whole.

. . . 6. It must be emphasised that this broad disclosure of Soviet and British feelings in the countries mentioned . . . is only

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<sup>1</sup> See *Triumph and Tragedy*, pp. 203-4.

an interim guide for the immediate war-time future, and will be surveyed by the Great Powers when they meet at the armistice or peace table to make a general settlement of Europe.'

The symbols were intended to show that in the cases of Rumania and Bulgaria, 'Soviet Russia has vital interests', to which, 'and to the Soviet desire to take the lead in a practical way in guiding them in the name of the common cause,' 'Great Britain feels it right to show particular respect'; that in Greece, 'Great Britain will take the lead in a military sense and try to help the existing Royal Greek Government to establish itself in Athens upon as broad and united a basis as possible. Soviet Russia would be ready to concede this position and function to Great Britain in the same sort of way as Britain would recognise the intimate relationship between Russia and Roumania'; that in Yugoslavia, 'the numerical symbol . . . is intended to be the foundation of joint action and an agreed policy between the two Powers . . . so as to favour the creation of a united Yugoslavia'; and that in Hungary, 'it would be natural that a major share of influence should rest with [the Russian armies], subject . . . to agreement with Great Britain and probably the United States, who, though not actually operating in Hungary, must view it as a Central European and not a Balkan State.'

The percentages naturally gave rise at once to further talks between the Foreign Ministers, in which the Russians asked for a larger proportion of responsibility in Hungary and Yugoslavia, and the British for more powerful representation on the Armistice Commission in Bulgaria. As might have been expected, not all of the authorities on either side were prepared to accept the arrangement in all of its aspects; but the figures were finally allowed to stand, and received general consent as a guide for the work of the relevant Allied committees.

Agreement on Austria proved more difficult. The subject was first considered in August, 1944. The Allies' aim here was formally to allocate zones of occupation, inevitably a more difficult task than that of allocating broad spheres of interest, particularly in a country where their respective military efforts were still unknown and where all were conscious that the spheres of interest met. It was therefore perhaps not surprising that little progress should have been made by the time of the 'Argonaut' Conference. In July 1944, the British had proposed to march at once into Austria should the Germans collapse,<sup>1</sup> and in the middle of August they suggested that the country should subsequently be divided into zones of occupation between the British, Americans and Russians. Vienna should be garrisoned and administered by the three Powers in combination, which would absorb the whole of the small American contingent;<sup>2</sup> the British should occupy a western 'Reichsgau' of Salzburg, Tyrol, Carinthia and Styria; and the

<sup>1</sup> See Volume V, p. 389.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

Russians an eastern 'Reichsgau' of Lower and Upper Austria. Administration would at first be in the hands of the Supreme Commander, Mediterranean and his Russian counterpart, and as soon as possible in those of an Anglo-Russian Control Commission, on which the Americans would be represented. But when these proposals were submitted to the European Advisory Council in London, consisting of the British, the Americans and the Russians, the Russians proposed instead that the country should be divided into three zones apart from Vienna, the Americans taking a zone in the west as well as sharing control in the capital, the British a zone down the centre of the country as far east as Graz, and the Russians a zone to the east. This would divide the country vertically, instead of horizontally as the British had proposed. After some consideration, the Americans agreed early in January, 1945 to take a zone, and conversations then began about the machinery for Allied control. But while the British welcomed this development, they objected to the proposed vertical divisions, which disregarded the existing structure of provincial administration and the natural lines of communications through each area, cut off their zone from its natural supply route from Italy, and placed most of the industrial areas in the Russian zone. The Foreign Office therefore suggested in January, 1945 that the British should take Carinthia and Styria, the Americans Upper Austria, Salzburg and Tyrol-Vorarlberg, and the Russians Lower Austria. This would give the Americans virtually the zone they had already agreed to take, would divide the industrial resources fairly between the three Powers, and would preserve for each the natural lines of communication. Its disadvantages were that it gave the Russians a comparatively small, though important, area, and that it placed the onus for controlling the whole of the disputed Austro-Yugoslav frontier solely upon the British. The Prime Minister suggested that the proposals should be referred to the 'Argonaut' Conference. But there was no time before that event to reach agreement with the Americans; and apart from submitting a note on the problems affecting the Austro-Yugoslav frontier, the British did not therefore raise the matter at Yalta. In the event, it was not until April, 1945 that a draft agreement could be produced by the three Powers, and not until July that Russian procrastination could be overcome, and the final zones and Control Commission established.<sup>1</sup>

Meanwhile, the three Powers had agreed on the greatest of these problems, the allocation of zones in Germany. Since early in 1944, the officials of the European Advisory Council had been considering a scheme of military partition to recommend to their Governments. The British and the Russians submitted proposals respectively in January and February 1944, and a draft protocol was ready in the third week in

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<sup>1</sup> See Inset to Rear End-paper.

July. After further discussion, the Council approved an amended version in September; and when this in turn had been revised in accordance with the arrangements made at the 'Octagon' Conference between the British and the Americans,<sup>1</sup> the result appeared in November for consideration by the three Governments. It provided for three zones of occupation in Germany, within the frontiers of 31st December, 1937: the British in the north-west, the Americans in the south-west, and the Russians in the east. The Americans would also hold an *enclave* surrounding the port of Bremen, and certain rights over the communications thence to their zone. Berlin would be occupied by troops of the three nations, each in their own sectors, under the orders of their commanders, and the city itself would be administered by an 'Inter-Allied Governing Authority (Kommandatura) consisting of three Commandants, appointed by their respective Commanders-in-Chief.' These arrangements would come into force as soon as Germany signed the instrument of surrender.

At the same time, the European Advisory Council submitted a draft protocol for the machinery of control in Germany 'in the period during which Germany will be carrying out the basic requirements of unconditional surrender.' This proposed the establishment of a tripartite Control Commission, consisting of the 'Commanders-in-Chief of the Armed Forces' of Britain, the United States and Russia, each of whom would exercise supreme authority, under his Government, in his zone of occupation, and who together would exercise authority in Berlin.

More discussion followed between the British and the Americans, and disagreement on the detailed arrangements for linking the Bremen *enclave* with the south-western zone delayed acceptance of the first protocol by the Western Governments. But by the beginning of February, 1945 each was ready to approve the two documents, and the Russian Government followed suit on the 6th, in the course of the conference at Yalta.

These arrangements, however, were at once subject to modification. For while they had been under debate, so too had been a suggestion for allocating a zone in Germany to the French; and since nothing had been decided on this subject by the beginning of February 1945, it came up for discussion at Yalta while the earlier protocols were being confirmed.

French participation in the control of Germany was peculiarly a British proposal, which had first been raised in September, 1944. At that time, General de Gaulle's Administration had not been recognized as the Provisional Government of France, nor had the various French forces been assembled into a national army. But when both

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<sup>1</sup> See Volume V, pp. 515-17.

developments had taken place in October,<sup>1</sup> the British felt able again to raise the subject. Eisenhower, under pressure from de Gaulle, was himself anxious to know how to deal with the French on German soil, and early in November, 1944 the Combined Chiefs of Staff informed him that French participation in military government should be limited for the time being to 'individuals forming part of the British or American Military Government machine.' Meanwhile, however, the British were considering a policy which seemed to them to be more in keeping with the facts. France was now once more a Sovereign Power, enjoying a Government recognized by the three major Allies, and capable—as indeed was shown in the course of the winter by de Gaulle's negotiation of a new Franco-Soviet Pact—of entering into formal alliance with them. It was idle to suppose that she would consent to garrison a part of Germany under British or American command, or that she could be allotted a sphere of occupation without an equal share in the Allied military government. These problems seemed the more pressing to the British, because they were anxious that the French should be identified from the start with the responsibilities of occupation. France was Germany's neighbour, she alone disposed of the troops capable of replacing the Americans in due course, and her necessary participation would be rendered the easier if she were to be granted at once, and without reluctance, full and equal authority with the other Powers in the task that all must share eventually. When the prospect of the 'Argonaut' Conference arose, the Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary decided to press these proposals.

The Americans and Russians had less reason than the British to welcome the French into Germany. Stalin, it was true, had remarked to Churchill at Moscow in October, 1944 that 'France should provide some forces'; and he did not now particularly object to those forces occupying a specific zone. But he was inclined to cavil at the admittance of the French to the Control Commission, on the grounds that the three great Allies alone should continue to take the decisions in the immediate future, and that inclusion of a lesser partner might both complicate their business and lead others to seek admittance to their counsels. Roosevelt, with his traditional distrust of de Gaulle, was equally unenthusiastic. The British, however, pressed their case, the more urgently because the President made it clear in discussion at Yalta that the Americans, though prepared to 'take all reasonable steps to preserve peace', could not guarantee to keep troops in Europe for more than two years after the defeat of Germany. This implicitly supported the arguments for admitting France as soon as possible; and the Heads of Government therefore agreed, as a first step, that she should be allotted a zone of occupation, and that the Foreign Ministers should consider further how it should be controlled.

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<sup>1</sup> See Volume V, p. 335.

The Foreign Ministers, however, could not agree on this second question. Mr. Eden continued to advocate the admittance of France to the Control Commission, Mr. Stettinius and M. Molotov her exclusion. They therefore reported back to the Heads of Government, and at a Plenary Meeting on 7th February the Prime Minister again took up the cudgels. Distinguishing carefully between the admittance of France to the Allied conferences and her inclusion in the Control Commission for Germany, he urged the Heads of Government to accept his arguments on a matter so important to Britain. Roosevelt and Stalin consented to consider the question further, and on 10th February, probably as a result of Harry Hopkins' advocacy, the President announced that he had changed his mind. Stalin, whom Roosevelt had already informed, agreed to follow suit; and the protocol of the conference accordingly included the following passage.

'It was agreed that a zone in Germany, to be occupied by the French Forces, should be allocated to France. This zone would be formed out of the British and American zones and its extent would be settled by the British and Americans in consultation with the French Provisional Government.

It was also agreed that the French Provisional Government should be invited to become a member of the Allied Control Commission for Germany.'

The French Government was at once informed, and negotiations began on the boundaries of the zone. Their course was protracted, and the details were not settled until early in June, 1945.<sup>1</sup> Meanwhile, the discussions did not affect the necessary business between the three great Allies in preparation for the day of unconditional surrender.

The Yalta Conference, from the subsequent failure of the agreements reached, has attracted more attention than any other Allied conference of the war. It is well known that, while Churchill and Roosevelt did not view the Russians with equal enthusiasm, both thought at the end of the meetings that the prospects for co-operation looked better than before. Since, on the contrary, they were about to encounter new and bitter disappointments which soon began to affect strategic views in London and Washington, we must allude briefly to the reasons which led the two statesmen to form this mistaken opinion.

Certainly, it cannot be explained by the discussions affecting military affairs and forces in Europe. The talks with the Russians on liaison in the field and in the air achieved nothing; the immediate division of responsibility in south-east Europe, and the partition and government of Germany by the three Powers, had been virtually settled beforehand; Austria was not, after all, discussed; and the only

<sup>1</sup> For the results, see Inset to Rear End-paper.



positive step was the admittance of France to a zone and to the Control Commission in Germany. But military affairs did not dominate the conference as they had dominated its predecessors. The most important issues were now diplomatic; and it was the diplomatic negotiations that gave rise to the hopes which the military conversations themselves scarcely supported.

That this was so, was due in the first place to the warmer atmosphere which permeated the conference, as it had permeated other meetings with the highest Russian authorities over the past few months. The Prime Minister in October 1944, and Tedder in January 1945, had felt in Moscow that they were at last being shown real goodwill. The same feeling emerged at Yalta, the more strongly from the more testing circumstances. The British and Americans, accustomed to debate important issues frankly between themselves, greeted with relief, as an indispensable first step, the readiness of the highest Russian authorities to discuss controversial problems at length. This in itself appeared a notable improvement, supported and sweetened, as it seemed, by Stalin's friendliness on informal occasions. But secondly, the results of the discussions showed some real and important gains, which if not directly affecting the war in Europe, might perhaps still provide a more favourable context for military collaboration than had existed hitherto. The three Allies, it was true, failed to agree on some of the most important questions, including the dismemberment of Germany and the reparations she should pay. Nor did all of the agreements, reached after long debate, entirely satisfy the Western Governments. The future of Poland, in particular, still seemed dangerously insecure. But there were other agreements of principle or of detail—on the future of the liberated territories in Europe, on Yugoslavia, and above all on the procedure for voting in the United Nations—which seemed to provide a reasonable foundation for subsequent progress in the friendlier atmosphere that prevailed. Moreover, the Americans had made a notable advance in their negotiations for Russian action in the war against Japan—a measure which was thought to be of supreme importance.<sup>1</sup> While much therefore remained to be done, and while the British in particular tempered their hope with caution, much seemed to have changed in the past few months; and the lack of progress in European military matters, themselves less prominent than on earlier occasions, could thus be viewed in the light of marked if limited progress elsewhere, and above all against a background of apparent personal goodwill which Roosevelt and Churchill, with whatever reservations, alike regarded as of the greater importance from the success of their own personal association.

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<sup>1</sup> See Volume V, pp. 427-30; and pp. 215-16 below.



CHAPTER IV  
VICTORY IN EUROPE,  
FEBRUARY–MAY, 1945

(i)

The Western and Eastern Fronts,  
February – March

**A**T THE END of a Plenary Meeting at Yalta on the afternoon of 9th February, the Prime Minister, in answer to a question from Stalin, 'gave certain details of the offensive that had begun at 10 a.m. the previous day by an attack carried out by British troops from Nijmegen'. The advance towards the Rhine had indeed been launched on the 8th, as General Eisenhower had hoped.<sup>1</sup> Preceded by a very heavy artillery barrage, one Corps of First Canadian Army attacked south-east, in bad weather, across difficult country. Field Marshal Montgomery had intended to launch a converging attack by Ninth U.S. Army from the line of the Roer within forty-eight hours. But his plan was frustrated on 9th February, when the Germans flooded the river from the last of the dams, thereby preventing any movement for a fortnight. The British and Canadians were thus involved in heavier fighting than had been anticipated. But while this brought some immediate disappointment, the outcome was significant. For the enemy, obliged to stand west of the Rhine by the Fuehrer's orders and by the growing chaos in the Ruhr,<sup>2</sup> threw the bulk of his reserves into the battle; and the opportunity thus provided to engage and wear them down was to prove of the greatest value when it could later be exploited. By 11th March, Second British and First Canadian Armies had counted over 65,000 German prisoners, and estimated they had killed probably 20,000 men. Their own casualties by then were over 15,000; but they had cleared the awkward triangle between the Maas and the Rhine, from Emmerich in the north to a line Venlo-Wesel in the south.

The Americans meanwhile had made contact with the British. For on 23rd February, Ninth U.S. Army had begun its postponed attack from the Roer, and it soon advanced north and north-east. On the 26th, its right reached the Rhine south of Düsseldorf, and on

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<sup>1</sup> See p. 92 above. For these operations, see Map I, facing p. 29.

<sup>2</sup> See p. 14 above.

3rd March its left entered Venlo. Two days later the centre took Krefeld, and a line began to form north of Düsseldorf towards the enemy's bridgehead west of Wesel. On 10th March, the last Germans withdrew behind the river into that town, blowing the last bridge behind them; and the Allies began to prepare to follow them across.

By that time, events had moved dramatically farther south. On 23rd February, First U.S. Army, on the left of General Bradley's Twelfth Army Group, accompanied Ninth U.S. Army across the Roer. By 5th March, its left had reached Cologne, while its main forces swung south-east towards the hills of the Eifel behind the Ardennes. On the same day, Third U.S. Army immediately to the south attacked across the Eifel, after preliminary operations which secured the capture of Trier. The enemy soon broke, and on the 7th American armour reached the Rhine north of Coblenz. The Germans had managed, as elsewhere, to destroy all of the bridges in that area, and Third Army accordingly paused. But on the same afternoon, an advanced force from a division of First U.S. Army reached the river farther north at Remagen, where to its surprise one bridge remained apparently intact. Despite hurried attempts by the Germans to explode their charges, by the late afternoon it was in American hands. When night fell on 7th March, a small force was deployed on the farther bank, and the Allies had a bridgehead east of the Rhine.

Another success soon followed. Third U.S. Army's swift advance threatened the enemy's northern flank in the Palatinate. Operations to clear this area, and to secure bridgeheads across the Rhine from Mainz to Karlsruhe, had been assigned, as phases 1 and 2 of Eisenhower's plan,<sup>1</sup> to Third and Seventh U.S. Armies, supported by a French thrust from Strasbourg. Bradley now urged that Third Army should launch its attack immediately, and along the whole of the northern flank. Eisenhower agreed, and on 14th March Third Army crossed the lower Moselle, while Seventh Army pushed forward into the Saar. The enemy held the frontal attack for a few days. But he could not hope to contain a heavy assault on his exposed flank, and by the evening of the 16th Third Army was moving fast through the open country towards Mainz and Worms. By the 21st, it had cleared the western bank of the Rhine from Mainz to Mannheim; on the night of the 22nd /23rd, a small force crossed the river at Oppenheim, south of Mainz; and by the evening of the next day the Allies had consolidated their second bridgehead across the Rhine. By that time, von Rundstedt had been summarily replaced by Kesselring, brought direct from Italy, and the Germans had yielded over 290,000 prisoners, and according to Allied estimates had lost probably at least another 60,000 men, since 8th February.

Meanwhile, Eisenhower had decided to exploit the earlier crossing

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<sup>1</sup> See pp. 72-6 above.

at Remagen. On 7th March, he ordered Bradley to consolidate the bridgehead with some five divisions; but ten days later, as Twelfth Army Group drove forward along the whole front, he decided to reinforce it with more American divisions hitherto reserved for the thrust in the north. Bradley thereupon enlarged the bridgehead beyond Remagen, and by 24th March the whole of First U.S. Army was deployed east of the Rhine between Bonn and Coblenz. The next day it attacked to the east, and by the 28th had reached Giessen. Third U.S. Army meanwhile exploited its bridgehead by Oppenheim as fast as possible. On the 25th it captured Darmstadt, and Frankfurt on the 29th. The day before, advanced elements had joined First U.S. Army near Giessen, and the two forces were ready to drive behind the Ruhr. Meanwhile, Seventh U.S. Army took Mannheim on the 29th, and four days later, when it was beyond Heidelberg, the French crossed the Rhine near Karlsruhe.

While these momentous events were taking place, the forces in the north—now reinforced by Canadian divisions from Italy<sup>1</sup>—were preparing to cross the Rhine. This seemed likely to be a task of some magnitude, 'the largest and most difficult operation', as Eisenhower stated in his later report to the Combined Chiefs of Staff, 'undertaken since the landings on the coast of Normandy.' The Rhine at Wesel, still swollen by the winter floods, was some five hundred yards wide, the neighbouring banks and approaches were unfirm, and the enemy was thought (wrongly) to dispose of seven divisions along that sector of the river, with two panzer, and the equivalent of three weak infantry divisions behind. Montgomery was anxious, moreover, to prepare thoroughly at this stage for the support of his subsequent operations, so that once across the Rhine he need not pause again until he had reached the heart of Germany. By 23rd March, he was ready to attack, with Second British Army on the left and Ninth U.S. Army on the right. After heavy bombardment by artillery and from the air, the first troops crossed the river that night, and by the following evening the Allies had established a substantial bridgehead around Wesel. Opposition proved weaker than had been expected, and by the night of the 28th the bridgehead had become a salient. Meanwhile, stores and communications were being built up in the rear. When the enemy finally gave way on 29th March, all was ready to support a rapid advance.

At the end of March, the Ruhr was thus threatened from north and south. First and Third U.S. Armies were moving fast from Frankfurt towards Kassel, while Second British and Ninth U.S. Armies were poised north of Essen. In the Ruhr itself, Field Marshal Model, compelled to hold the area to the last, disposed of an Army Group controlling two Armies and six Corps. Montgomery now issued his

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<sup>1</sup> See pp. 93-4 above.

instructions for the northern armies.<sup>1</sup> First Canadian Army was to advance to the north, cutting off the Germans in Holland and clearing the coast along Second Army's flank. Second Army itself was to advance as fast as possible to the river Elbe. Ninth U.S. Army was to complete the encirclement of the Ruhr from the north, joining First U.S. Army if possible near Paderborn, but, if First Army were delayed, pushing due east to the Elbe. The junction, however, did not prove difficult. On 28th March, First U.S. Army swung north beyond Giessen, and the next day reached the area of Paderborn. Despite the Germans' efforts to defend their last communications with the Ruhr, Paderborn fell on 1st April. Meanwhile Ninth U.S. Army had advanced steadily from the Rhine, and that afternoon the two Armies joined at Lippstadt, not far from the field where Varus had lost his legions. Eighteen days of fighting, occupying eighteen American divisions, followed in the Ruhr itself. But the Germans began to disintegrate on 13th April, and five days later Model surrendered 325,000 men before taking his own life. Germany's greatest industrial area, already reduced to near impotence by air attack, was now in the Allies' hands, and the German army had suffered its largest single capitulation since the beginning of the war.<sup>2</sup> But this great victory was almost swamped by other dramatic events. By the time that the last remnants of resistance were being cleared in the Ruhr, the main British and American forces had reached Bremen, Magdeburg, Leipzig and the border of Czechoslovakia.

Over this period, the Russians' advance slackened pace. Strong German opposition, combined in many cases with the effects of its own recent gains, imposed delays and a change of direction on the Red Army north of the Carpathians, the more striking in contrast with developments in the west. Early in February 1945, it seemed possible that the Russians' main drive would be directed, with scarcely a pause, from the Oder on Berlin.<sup>3</sup> But a sudden thaw, combined with the great depth of the central thrust, seems to have influenced their immediate strategy, and over the next eight weeks the armies concentrated on clearing the northern flank. On 10th February, Zhukov halted on the eastern bank of the Oder opposite the area between Kuestrin and Frankfurt, and turned his attention to the fortified places in his rear which still threatened communications. These were taken by the last week in the month. Zhukov then attacked to the north through Pomerania. By 9th March, he had established a salient

<sup>1</sup> See Map III, facing p. 162.

<sup>2</sup> Some 91,000 Germans surrendered (and some 100,000 died) at Stalingrad: some 252,000 Germans and Italians surrendered in Tunisia. For the subsequent capitulation in Italy, see p. 121 below.

<sup>3</sup> See p. 82 above; and Map III, facing p. 162.

to within twenty miles of the coast at Kolberg, which itself fell on the 18th. On his main front, he attacked Kuestrin, occupying most of the town by 12th March and thereafter throwing two bridges across the river. Meanwhile, Koniev to the south gained farther ground beyond Breslau.

Zhukov's advance to the north threatened, and then severed, the Germans' last communications with Danzig and the east. Throughout February and March, Rokossovsky pressed slowly towards the city, and in the middle of March the enemy decided to evacuate it gradually by sea. On the 23rd, the Russians reached the coast immediately to the north; and on the 30th, the remaining garrison of Danzig surrendered to attack. Farther east, twenty weak German divisions were steadily driven back to the coast. Pushing slowly north through the centre of East Prussia, Chernyakovsky closed on Pillau; and early in March, when he had been fatally wounded, his successor Marshal Vassilevsky attacked the fortress of Königsberg. Bitter fighting lasted until early in April; but Königsberg fell on the 9th of that month, and with its capture the campaign along the Baltic virtually ended. Only in eastern Pomerania and in Courland did German forces continue to resist, their communications with the west now confined to the sea.

A more dramatic advance took place south of the Carpathians towards the end of March.<sup>1</sup> Following the fall of Budapest in mid-February, the Germans and Hungarians counter-attacked north and south of the Danube, at first indeed with some success. By 3rd March, they had driven back the Russians from north of Lake Balaton almost to the river, and on its northern bank had regained ground beyond Estergom. But they were halted by the middle of the month, and on 18th March Tolbukhin and Malinovsky resumed the offensive. Driving fast across the plains, the former reached the Austrian frontier at Koszeg on the 29th, and on the 30th the latter took Komarno in Czechoslovakia. The German front was obviously crumbling, and while the Russians north of the Carpathians still waited to resume the march on Dresden and Berlin, at the beginning of April their colleagues were closing on Vienna.

## (ii)

### Victory in the South, April – May

By the end of March 1945, the Allies were ready to resume the offensive in Italy. The system of command and the distribution of forces had both changed since late in 1944. Field Marshal Alexander, as Supreme

<sup>1</sup> See p. 83 above; and Map II, facing p. 130.

Commander, had as his Deputy the American General Joseph T. McNarney. His naval commander remained Admiral Sir John Cunningham; his air commander was now the American Lieut-General John K. Cannon, who, after directing the highly successful operations of the tactical air forces against communications in northern Italy,<sup>1</sup> relieved Lieut.-General Ira C. Eaker on 20th March. General Mark Clark, as Commander-in-Chief, Fifteenth Army Group, directed the operations of Fifth and Eighth Armies, the former commanded by the American Lieut.-General Lucien S. Truscott, the latter by General Sir Richard McCreery.

On land, the Allies had seventeen divisions (three British, two British/Indian, one New Zealand, one South African, seven American, two Polish, one Brazilian) plus six armoured and four infantry brigades and four Italian combat groups. In the air, they disposed of 258 squadrons throughout the Command, comprising almost 4,000 aircraft, of which 118 squadrons belonged to the strategic air forces.<sup>2</sup> At sea, they had eight British and American, five French and five Italian cruisers, and forty British and American, twelve French and seven Italian destroyers, as well as coastal and assault forces.<sup>3</sup>

The Germans, commanded by von Vietinghoff after Kesselring's departure in March, still maintained a superior force on land. At the beginning of April 1945, they had twenty-three German and four Italian divisions, as well as various auxiliary formations, divided between three Armies forming Army Group C. Most of these divisions were up to strength, the force was predominantly of one nationality, it included panzer and parachute troops, was well armed and supplied though short of fuel, and possessed a surprisingly high morale. 'As a fighting unit', Alexander has recorded, 'Army Group C was undoubtedly of higher value than any other comparable body of troops still remaining to Germany.' Nevertheless, it had three important weaknesses. It disposed of under two hundred aircraft to support the armies, compared with the 4,000-odd of the Allies; it was open to attack from the sea, whose likelihood moreover it lacked the technical knowledge to judge; and, obliged by the Fuehrer's personal orders not to yield ground voluntarily, it was forced to give battle south of the Po, where defeat invited irremediable disaster. This last factor, indeed, was to determine the course of events, and to convert the Allies' successful campaign of containment into open and spectacular victory.

Alexander's directive of 3rd February<sup>4</sup> had instructed him, as his first object, to ensure that the existing front in Italy was 'solidly held'. If the forces remaining to him allowed, he might contain the enemy

<sup>1</sup> See p. 84 above.

<sup>2</sup> These figures exclude squadrons under command at Aden and in East Africa, and squadrons destined for south-east Asia.

<sup>3</sup> These figures exclude Allied ships in the Mediterranean destined for other theatres.

<sup>4</sup> See pp. 94-5 above.



'by means of such limited offensive action as may be possible and by the skilful use of cover and deception plans'. Only if the enemy should be weakened, was he to 'take immediate advantage' of a changed situation. Such a policy, the consequence of the decision to remove five divisions and two groups of fighters from the Mediterranean as soon as possible, did not appeal to the Supreme Commander; and he began at once, in collaboration with Clark, to investigate the possibility of doing something more. The ensuing plan was based on the fundamental object of all operations in the Italian campaign, the destruction of German forces rather than the acquisition of territory for its own sake. Assuming that the enemy would wish to stand his ground, the most promising area for battle seemed now to lie in the quadrilateral Modena-Ferrara-Argenta-Bologna.<sup>1</sup> Bologna itself, as a target, set the same problems as before; an advance along the Adriatic coast, through the lagoons of the Valli di Comacchio, was impossible on a large scale; while the quadrilateral, offering the most direct entry to the Germans' most probable line of retreat, held peculiar advantages for attack. These were determined by the course of the river Reno, which, traversing the area, collects into itself all of the north-flowing rivers that lay across Eighth Army's westward thrust towards Bologna, and gives access immediately to flat country, uninterrupted by large water courses and boasting a good road system to the north. Since substantial German forces were deployed throughout this area, Alexander proposed to launch converging attacks upon it which might yield a valuable prize south of the Po.

A preliminary plan had been studied in January 1945, before the future state of the Allies' resources was known. They were still uncertain in February; but towards the end of March, as the Mediterranean Command pressed the advantages of the plan and as the position in Greece seemed still to be doubtful, the Combined Chiefs of Staff decided not to transfer the last two of the five divisions from the theatre to the western front,<sup>2</sup> and to leave the assault shipping and resources which were there at the beginning of the year. The initial plan was accordingly allowed to stand in its essentials. The attack, as on earlier occasions, would consist of two complementary thrusts: the first in the east by Eighth Army, to cross the Reno as near to its mouth as possible, and thence to move along the road through Ferrara and Rovigo to Padua; the second by Fifth Army, to develop west of the upper Reno towards the plain, and thence along the road from Modena to Verona. Success seemed likely to turn on the first stage of the operations, the attack by Eighth Army across the Reno. It was important to cross the river near the coast, so as to avoid the many tributaries that joined it from the south. But the line of approach was severely defined, by marsh

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<sup>1</sup> See Inset to Map II, facing p. 130.

<sup>2</sup> See p. 94 above.

and lagoon, to a narrow gap around Argenta. The defence of this gap, moreover, was of the greatest importance to the enemy; for if he wished to retreat in good order to the north-east, it must form the hinge on which his line swung back across the plains. If the Allies could break the hinge, they would therefore threaten the withdrawal of the whole of the enemy's force, and might well reach the Adige before its more westerly formations.

By the middle of March, Alexander had completed the details of the plan. Preliminary operations would start in the east on the night of 1st/2nd April. The first phase of the main attack, with three divisions of a British Corps, would begin on the evening of the 9th from Lugo to the north-west. A second thrust, with almost three divisions under command of a Polish Corps, would develop simultaneously from the neighbourhood of Lugo towards Bologna. Fifth Army, after preliminary operations on the west coast from 5th April, would launch its main attack probably on the 13th, three American divisions aiming for the road between Bologna and Modena, and four American divisions later aiming for the same road immediately west of Bologna. While one division then took the town, the rest of Fifth Army would advance west of the Reno to the line of the Po. Meanwhile, having secured Argenta, Eighth Army would advance upon Ferrara. Each Army in turn would receive full support from the air, a task made the easier by the decision to launch the two attacks in succession. Assault forces would play their part by feigning a threat to the coastline north of the Po—an area in which a landing on any scale was in fact impossible, but to which the Germans, ignorant of such warfare, duly attached the desired attention.

The plan was completely successful. The preliminary attacks in the east, and the diversionary operations in the west, attained their immediate objects; and on the evening of 9th April, the two Corps of Eighth Army moved forward from the area of Lugo. By the next morning, the operations were going well. On the morning of the 14th, aided by a flank attack from the Valli di Comacchio, the British were near the Argenta gap, while on the same day the Poles captured Imola. That morning, with the heaviest air support yet afforded in the Italian campaign, one Corps of Fifth Army attacked towards the lateral road through Bologna, followed on the evening of the 15th by its neighbour on the right. By the evening of the 17th, both were standing in the last line of the mountains, and on the 20th the Americans entered the plain. Meanwhile the Poles, now reinforced from Eighth Army's reserve, had advanced to within ten miles of Bologna, and the British Corps after heavy fighting had gained the critical Argenta gap.

The loss of Argenta, and of his last mountain line, forced von Vietinghoff to withdraw as best he could towards the Po. As he himself knew, it was too late. Bologna fell on 21st April. But its capture, so

long desired, was now swamped by greater events. On the 22nd and 23rd the Americans and British respectively reached the line of the river, and Army Group C fled on towards the Adige. It was fast overtaken. While the main Allied forces were still crossing the Po, advanced elements of Fifth Army reached Verona on the 25th, and two days later Eighth Army crossed the Adige in two places. The end was now at hand. While the Allied armies raced through northern Italy, the Italian guerrillas and their sympathizers staged a general rising, seizing control in many areas and towns including Milan and Venice, and, on the 28th, capturing and killing Mussolini on his way to the Swiss frontier. On the 27th, the remaining German forces began to surrender, and, after some local capitulations, on 29th April representatives of the German Command in Italy signed an instrument of unconditional surrender in Alexander's headquarters, to take effect from noon on 2nd May. By then, Allied troops were in Genoa, Turin and Vercelli in the west, in Como and near Trento and Bolzano in the north, and in Trieste and beyond Udine in the east.

The surrender of Army Group C involved almost one million men, and was the first act of unconditional surrender by a theatre Command. It was a remarkable end to a campaign whose primary object had always been limited to strategic containment. Even without such a result, the invasion of Italy had indeed fulfilled its main purpose. But the result itself was peculiarly gratifying, not only because it finally prevented the reinforcement of either of the principal fronts from Italy, but also because it crowned with complete success the arduous efforts, interrupted by serious disappointments, of the Allied forces in the peninsula. As Field Marshal Alexander has remarked,

'The soldiers, sailors and airmen of so many nationalities who fought in Italy never had the pleasure of a conquering advance into the heart of Germany; they had none of the obvious targets before them which buoyed up the spirits of their comrades on the Western Front, but only one more mountain range or river to cross in the face of an enemy resistance which never seemed to weaken.'

It was the more satisfactory that they should have conquered, and conquered obviously, in the end.

The last word on the campaign may rest with Alexander.

'Any estimate of the value of the campaign must be expressed, not in terms of the ground gained, for the ground was not vital, in the strict sense, either to us or to the enemy, but in terms of its effect on the war as a whole. The Allied Armies in Italy were not engaged with the enemy's main armies and their attacks were not directed, as were those of the Allies in the west or the Russians in the east, against the heart of the German Fatherland and the nerve-centres of Germany's national existence. Our

rôle was subordinate and preparatory. Ten months before the great assault in the west our invasion of Italy, at first in very moderate strength, drew off to that remote quarter forces that might have turned the scale in France. As the campaign progressed more and more German troops were drawn in to oppose us. The supreme directors of Allied strategy were always careful to see that our strength was never allowed to grow above the minimum necessary for our tasks; at one time and another during those twenty months no less than twenty-one divisions in all were removed from my command for the benefit of other theatres. The Germans made no comparable detachments. Except for a short period in the spring of 1944 they had always more formations in Italy than we had, and we made such good use of that brief exceptional period that in the summer of 1944, the crisis of the war, they found themselves forced to divert eight divisions to this secondary theatre. At that time, when the value of our strategic contribution was at its greatest, fifty-five German divisions were tied down in the Mediterranean by the threat, actual or potential, presented by our armies in Italy. The record of the comparative casualties tells the same story. On the German side they amounted to 536,000. Allied casualties were 312,000. The difference is the more remarkable in that we were always the attackers. Four times we carried out that most difficult operation of war, an amphibious landing. Three times we launched a prepared offensive with the full strength of an army group. Nowhere in Europe did soldiers face more difficult terrain or more determined adversaries.

The conclusion is that the campaign in Italy fulfilled its strategic mission.'

Unconditional surrender on the scale experienced in Italy was not likely to have been offered out of an entirely clear sky. And in fact, as in Germany, it was preceded by several weeks of negotiation, whose course pointed vividly the difficulties and dangers which such an event might hold for the victors. The whole incident indeed served as a warning to the Allies, and illustrated the deterioration in the relations between the Western Governments and the Russians which followed so swiftly on the 'Argonaut' Conference. For these reasons, its outlines should be traced.

As early as February 1945, representatives of the American Office of Strategic Services (the counterpart of the British S.O.E.) had been approached in Switzerland by an Italian intermediary; and on 2nd March, two German officers appeared from the staff of General Karl Wolff, the S.S. commander in Italy, responsible for administration and for liaison with the puppet Italian Republican Government. Six days later, when two prominent Italian partisans had been released

as a mark of good faith, Wolff himself came to Switzerland with a provisional offer of terms, to which, as he stressed, Kesselring had not yet been asked to agree. He was told that only unconditional surrender would suffice, that the signature of the Commander-in-Chief was essential, and that, once the Germans' *bona fides* had been established in Switzerland, the detailed discussions would take place at Allied headquarters in Italy. Alexander at once reported these events to the C.I.G.S., and thereafter to the Combined Chiefs of Staff, and asked permission to send two high officers from his staff, one American and one British, to attend further talks in Switzerland for the establishment of the Germans' *bona fides*. The Combined Chiefs of Staff gave their approval on 12th March, and on the 15th the two officers crossed the border. Four days later, they met Wolff, but only to learn that Kesselring had now left Italy and that Wolff himself must therefore gain von Vietinghoff's consent. This he proposed to do with Kesselring's support, for which purpose he must find an opportunity to go to Germany.

By the time that this meeting took place, the question had arisen of Russia's participation in the talks. The Western Allies were fully alive to the importance of moving in step with Moscow; and when the C.I.G.S. replied to Alexander on 10th March, he emphasized that it was 'of first importance' that the procedure for surrender should be agreed between the Combined Chiefs of Staff, and that the Russians should be 'constantly and fully informed'. On the 12th, the Prime Minister asked that the British Ambassador in Moscow should be instructed to convey Alexander's proposals to the Russian Government 'through highest representative available', and to stress that no contact would be made with the German emissaries until the Russians' reply had been received. The Russians were so informed the same day. On the night of the 12th, they agreed to the talks being held, and asked that three Russian officers, two of whom they named, should attend immediately in Switzerland.

The British were at first inclined to agree, as long as Alexander's sole responsibility was recognized. But the Americans doubted the wisdom or necessity of the Russians' presence in Switzerland, where the negotiations would be confined entirely to establishing the Germans' *bona fides*, and proposed instead that they should attend the subsequent talks at Allied headquarters. Meanwhile, they suggested that Alexander should inform the Russians of the results of the Swiss talks, through the Allied Military Missions in Moscow. The British agreed to these suggestions, and the Russians were informed accordingly on 15th March.

The result appeared at once. On the 16th, M. Molotov wrote to the British Ambassador that the exclusion of the Russian officers from the Swiss talks seemed to his Government 'utterly unexpected and

incomprehensible'. He insisted that the talks should be broken off, and that the British Government should 'rule out' any separate negotiation with the Germans in future. The Military Missions received a similar communication from General Antonov on the 19th. The British, however, suspected that these replies might be the result of misunderstanding, and the War Cabinet, to whom the Prime Minister reported on 19th March, agreed with him that a procedure should now be settled, preferably between the Heads of Government, which would meet such cases in the future. The Americans thought the same, and on the 21st the Ambassadors explained the situation to Molotov, pointing out that there was an important distinction between the talks in Switzerland, which were merely to establish *bona fides*, and those anticipated in Italy, that the latter would themselves be concerned only with military affairs, and that the presence of Russian representatives at them was designed solely 'for the purpose of assuring you that no other matter than the terms of such a military surrender were being discussed.' 'It goes without saying', the Americans' note continued, 'that whenever an occasion may arise for discussion between our Three Powers of political as distinguished from purely military matters of surrender each of the Three Powers should be fully represented and participate in the discussion.' Assuming that this explanation would clear the air, the Western Allies proposed to continue along the lines already indicated.

The reply was unexpected.

'I must say', Molotov wrote to the British Ambassador on 22nd March, 'that in this instance the Soviet Government sees not a misunderstanding but something worse. . . . In Berne for two weeks behind the backs of the Soviet Union, which is bearing the brunt of the war against Germany, negotiations have been going on between representatives of German Military Command on the one hand and representatives of the English and American Command on the other. Soviet Government consider this completely impermissible and insist on its statement which was sent out in my letter of March 16.'

Discarding the firm rejoinder which they were first tempted to send, the British decided to ignore this communication, particularly in view of the delay at which Wolff had hinted on 19th March. Little in fact occurred for some time which demanded further action. Nothing more was heard from Wolff until 31st March, when a German representative informed the Americans in Switzerland that the General had nothing definite to report. Kesselring—who had, naturally enough in the circumstances, proved difficult to contact—had agreed that surrender was the best solution in Italy, and had said that he would so inform von Vietinghoff; but he was not known to have done so yet, and the result had still to be seen. On 2nd April, moreover, the Allies

learned that Himmler had interviewed Wolff in Berlin, and that the latter's family had been placed under supervision. For the next ten days, intermittent contact was maintained with Wolff through the original Italian intermediary; but there was no further development, and the Western Allies could only pass indefinite news to their Missions in Moscow.

But the lull in the negotiations was not accompanied, as the British had hoped, by a lull in the dispute with Moscow. It seems likely that towards the end of March the President replied to Molotov's communications. Certainly, on 5th April he sent the Prime Minister the text of a recent exchange with Stalin.

'I have received your message,' Stalin informed Roosevelt on 3rd April, 'on the question of negotiations in Berne. You are absolutely right that, in connection with the affair regarding negotiations of the Anglo-American Command with the German Command . . . , "there has developed an atmosphere of fear and distrust deserving regrets".'

You insist that there have been no negotiations yet.

It may be assumed that you have not yet been fully informed. As regards my military colleagues, they on the basis of data which they have on hand, do not have any doubts that the negotiations have taken place, and that they have ended in an agreement with the Germans, on the basis of which the German Commander on the Western Front, Marshal Kesselring, has agreed to open the Front and permit the Anglo-American troops to advance to the east, and the Anglo-Americans have promised in return to ease for the Germans the peace terms.

I think that my colleagues are close to the truth. Otherwise one could not have understood the fact that the Anglo-Americans have refused to admit to Berne representatives of the Soviet Command for participation in the negotiations with the Germans.

I also cannot understand the silence of the British, who have allowed you to correspond with me on this unpleasant matter, and they themselves remain silent, although it is known that the initiative in this whole affair with the negotiations in Berne belongs to the British.

I understand that there are certain advantages for the Anglo-American troops as a result of these separate negotiations in Berne . . . , since the Anglo-American troops get the possibility to advance into the heart of Germany almost without resistance on the part of the Germans, but why is it necessary to conceal this from the Russians, and why were your Allies, the Russians, not notified?

As a result of this at the present moment the Germans on the Western Front in fact have ceased the war against England and the United States. At the same time the Germans continue the war with Russia, the Ally of England and the United

States. It is understandable that such a situation can in no way serve the cause—preservation of the strengthening of trust between our countries.

I have already written to you in my previous message, and consider it necessary to repeat it here, that I personally and my colleagues would never have made such a risky step, being aware that a momentary advantage, no matter what it would be, is fading before the principal advantage of the preservation and strengthening of the trust among the Allies.<sup>1</sup>

Roosevelt, or rather General Marshall in his name,<sup>1</sup> replied sternly.

‘I have received with astonishment your message of April 3 containing an allegation that arrangements which were made between Field-Marshal Alexander and Kesselring at Berne “permitted the Anglo-American troops to advance to the east, and the Anglo-Americans promised in return to ease for the Germans the peace terms.”

In my previous messages to you in regard to the attempts made in Berne to arrange a conference to discuss the surrender of the German Army in Italy I have told you that (i) no negotiations were held in Berne; (ii) that the meeting had no political implications whatever; (iii) that in any surrender of the enemy Army in Italy there could be no violation of our agreed principle of unconditional surrender; (iv) that Soviet officers would be welcomed at any meeting that might be arranged to discuss surrender.

For the advantage of our common war effort against Germany, which today gives excellent promise of an early success in a disintegration of the German armies, I must continue to assume that you have the same high confidence in my truthfulness and reliability that I have always had in yours.

. . . I am certain that there were no negotiations in Berne at any time, and I feel that your information to that effect must have come from German sources, which have made persistent efforts to create dissension between us in order to escape in some measure the responsibility for their war crimes. If that was Wolff’s purpose in Berne your message proves that he has had some success.

With a confidence in your belief in my personal reliability and in my determination to bring about together with you an unconditional surrender of the Nazis, it is astonishing that a belief seems to have reached the Soviet Government that I have entered into an agreement with the enemy without first obtaining your full agreement.

Finally I would say this: it would be one of the great tragedies of history if at the very moment of the victory now within our grasp such distrust, such lack of faith should prejudice

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<sup>1</sup> See p. 149 below.



the entire undertaking after the colossal losses of life, material, and treasure involved.

Frankly, I cannot avoid a feeling of bitter resentment towards your informers, whoever they are, for such vile misrepresentations of my actions or those of my trusted subordinates.'

The Prime Minister at once reported these developments to the War Cabinet, which agreed with him that the British should now support the President's protest. He accordingly sent a long message to Stalin on 5th April,<sup>1</sup> repeating the facts of the case and ending:

' . . . 8. With regard to the charges which you have made in your message to the President of April 3, which also asperse His Majesty's Government, I associate myself and my colleagues with the last sentence of the President's reply.'

These replies elicited a more moderate telegram from Moscow.

' . . . In my message of April 3,' Stalin remarked to Roosevelt on the 7th, 'the point at issue is not that of integrity and trustworthiness. I have never doubted your integrity and trustworthiness or Mr. Churchill's either. My point is that in the course of our correspondence it has become evident that our views differ on the point as to what is admissible and what is inadmissible as between one ally and another. We Russians think that in the present situation on the Fronts, when the enemy is faced with inevitable surrender, if the representatives of any one ally ever meet the Germans to discuss surrender the representatives of another ally should be afforded an opportunity of participating in such a meeting. In any case, this is absolutely essential if the ally in question asks for such participation. The Americans and British however think differently and regard the Russian standpoint as wrong. They have, accordingly, refused the Russians the right to join in meeting the Germans in Switzerland. I have already written you, and I think it should be repeated, that in a similar situation the Russians would never have denied the Americans and British the right to join in such a meeting. I still think the Russian point of view to be the only correct one, as it precludes all possibility of mutual suspicions and makes it impossible for the enemy to sow distrust between us. . . .'

The Prime Minister received an answer on similar lines.

The Western Allies decided that these messages were probably designed to close the affair; and Roosevelt replied accordingly to Stalin on the 12th. As he remarked to Churchill the same day,

'I would minimise the general Soviet problem as much as possible, because these problems, in one form or another, seem to arise every day, and most of them straighten out, as in the case of the Berne meeting. We must be firm, however, and our course thus far is correct.'

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<sup>1</sup> See *Triumph and Tragedy*, pp. 394-6.

The incident had ended. But it had gravely perturbed the two Western Governments, and had added materially to that growing distrust of the Russians' behaviour which, as will be seen, was already affecting strategic views in London.

Two days after Roosevelt's last message had been sent, the negotiations themselves suddenly revived. A message from Wolff on 14th April, five days after the start of the Allies' offensive, indicated that the Germans were now ready to surrender in Italy. A further pause followed, in which Himmler's intervention was again rumoured, and on the 21st the Combined Chiefs of Staff instructed Alexander to sever all contact with Wolff. But on the same day Wolff himself appeared in Switzerland, and on the 24th two delegates from von Vietinghoff's headquarters arrived in that country with full powers to effect surrender. The Combined Chiefs of Staff authorized the Supreme Commander to receive the officers in Italy, and the talks, at which a Russian representative was present with Stalin's authority, began at Allied headquarters on 28th April. The instrument was signed the next day, and, after a last period of extreme uncertainty, was accepted at the Germans' headquarters on the morning of 2nd May. The Russians were kept informed of developments during the last phase of the negotiations, and, as the Prime Minister noted to the President on 1st May, 'the tone is greatly improved.'

Three weeks before the Allies attacked in Italy, the Partisans in Yugoslavia launched their last offensive from the area of Bihac towards Trieste.<sup>1</sup> At that time, the German Command disposed of twelve German, three German-Croat and twelve Croat divisions, the Germans themselves consisting partly of the troops withdrawn from Greece. Although he had reinforced other fronts from Yugoslavia to some extent, the enemy in fact still had no intention of abandoning a defensive line in that country; and in the first two months of 1945 he had indeed consolidated his position in the centre and north, by a series of vigorous counter-attacks. He had dealt the Partisans some hard blows, particularly in Slovenia, and had repelled all efforts by the Russians and Bulgars to break into Croatia from the east.

But despite its apparent strength, the German position was in fact unstable. Towards the end of January, Hitler had called on the Command in Yugoslavia to prepare an attack north of the river Drava, so as to support the counter-offensive which he proposed to launch in February around Budapest. In order to provide the necessary forces, the Command was instructed a few weeks later to concentrate behind a line Senj—Bihac—Banjaluka—Doboj—east of Brod. This order removed the possibility, which current operations were designed to

<sup>1</sup> See Map II, facing p. 130.

pursue, of stabilizing the southern flank in the area south of Bihac. But the Fuehrer's concern for the defence of western Hungary allowed of no alternative, and on 6th March, after several postponements, the attack was launched across the Drava. By the 23rd, when their main counter-offensive around Budapest had also failed,<sup>1</sup> the Germans had been held and driven back. Meanwhile, their weakened forces in ~~Germany had dispersed as far~~ as possible around the key position of

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less hope of success than a few around Bihac.anced force which faced the operations had been prepared made possible by supplies from mber 1944, the Western Allies ties of arms and ammunition Dalmatian coast. Balkans Air lvanced base at Zara,<sup>2</sup> while ighbouring islands and coast. der visited Tito at Belgrade, to entions for the spring. He was coming operations, and agreed und to provide support from the

isans disposed of six divisions, igade. By 4th April, Bihac had ack along the coast; the last jevo were cleared on the 6th; id the Russians through western ck as fast as possible to the north. ighbouring islands in the next division attacked Istria; Fiume n 30th April, Tito announced burbs of Trieste. Meanwhile, ack slowly before the combined artisans. Following the failure of orced to retreat to the line of that the rest of the month withdrew

gradually to the south-west, by the 27th, he had abandoned Brod to the Partisans, while immediately to the north the Russians gathered for a further assault. But before that could be launched the war came to an end, leaving the German fortress in the Balkans confined to a last, long strip of territory from the lower Drava to Ljubljana. While its defence over the past nine months had been a not inconsiderable feat of arms, the significance of that defence had steadily declined.

<sup>1</sup> See p. 117 above.

<sup>2</sup> See p. 56 above.

The Partisans' entry into Istria raised an awkward diplomatic problem, which affected the movement of Allied forces in Italy. Since the collapse of the Austrian Empire to which it owed importance and prosperity, the province of Venezia Giulia, of which Istria with its port of Trieste formed a part, had been claimed by Yugoslavia and by Italy; and its award to the latter in 1919 had been responsible for the former's development of the neighbouring harbour of Fiume. The British had failed to solve the old dispute in their negotiations with Tito in 1944.<sup>1</sup> It was less likely to be solved now, when he had formed and consolidated his position within the new Government,<sup>2</sup> was apparently assured of Russian support, and was in the full spate of a final victorious offensive. The British feared particularly a Yugoslav occupation of Trieste, which would almost certainly prejudice an eventual settlement for the province, and meanwhile might affect the supply of their proposed zone in Austria.<sup>3</sup> When Alexander visited Belgrade in February, he therefore got Tito to agree that the Supreme Allied Commander should be placed in charge of all operations and forces in Venezia Giulia. But this arrangement might still prove difficult to enforce unless backed by physical possession; and on 26th April, Alexander therefore proposed to the Chiefs of Staff in London that he should 'seize those parts of Venezia Giulia which are of importance to my military operations' as soon as possible, including Trieste and Pola with their communications to the north, and should inform Tito of his intentions. The Prime Minister and the President soon concurred, and on the 28th the Supreme Commander was ordered to establish Allied military government over the province, including that part of it already occupied by Partisans.

On 30th April, a New Zealand division of Eighth Army accordingly entered Venezia Giulia in the course of its pursuit. On 1st May, it met Partisan irregulars at Monfalcone; on the 2nd, some of its troops entered Trieste, where they received the German surrender and occupied the docks; and on the 3rd, others entered Gorizia, where again they encountered Partisans. The position was delicate. Alexander had duly informed Tito of his intentions on 30th April. But the reply on 1st May, while offering facilities in and from Trieste and Pola, had shown that, contrary to the Belgrade agreement, the Yugoslavs regarded as their property all territory east of the line running north through Gorizia. The Prime Minister and the Chiefs of Staff instructed the Supreme Commander to hold firm, and if possible to concentrate some force in the area with which to support his authority. Meanwhile he tried to reach agreement with Tito, and on 7th May sent a representative for that purpose to Belgrade. But, while the Marshal was

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<sup>1</sup> See Volume V, p. 388.

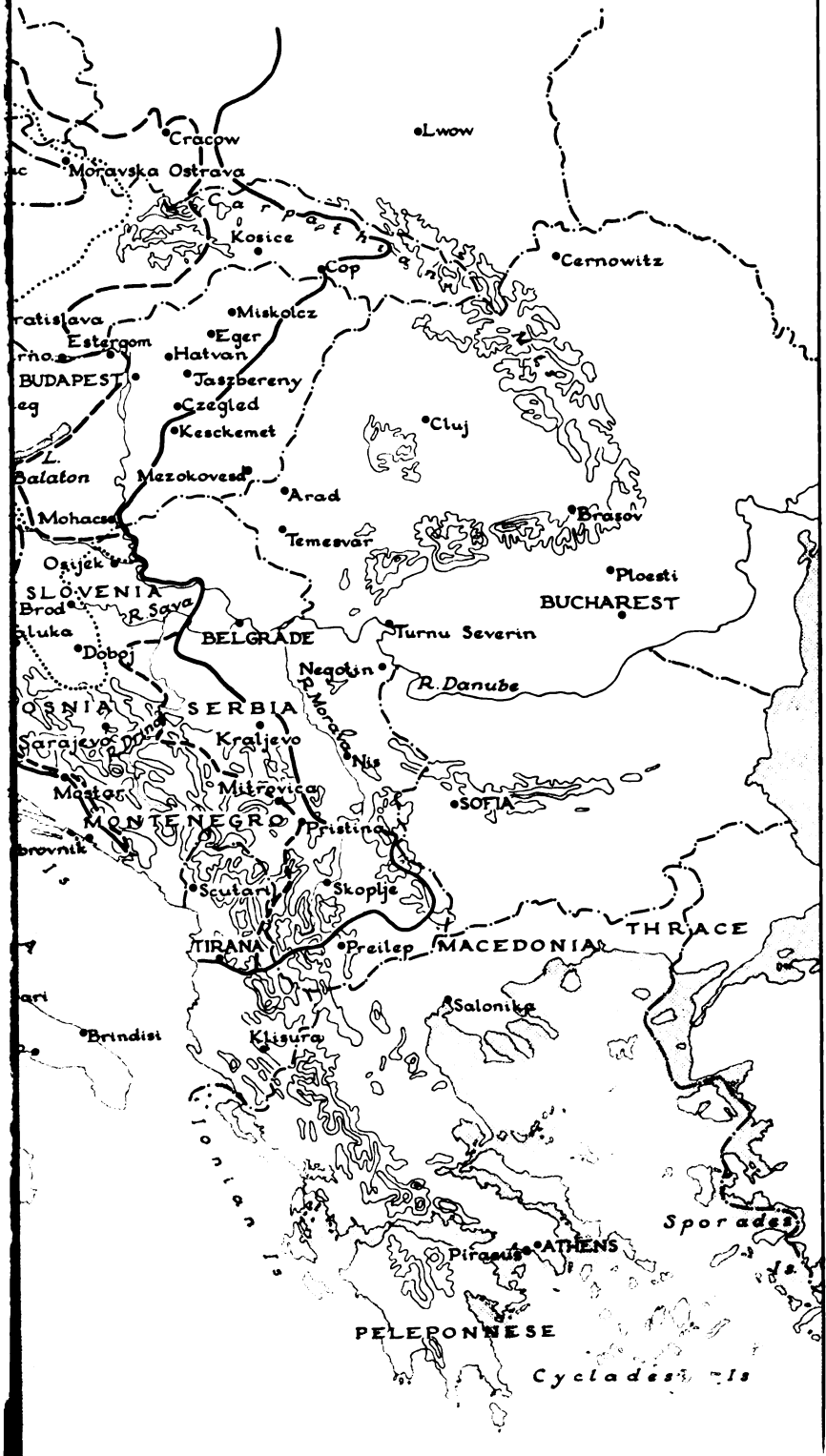
<sup>2</sup> See p. 55 above.

<sup>3</sup> See p. 107 above.

EAST

Legend

Allied	Positions	1st. November 1944	1st. February 1945	16th April 1945	6th May 1945
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prepared to make satisfactory arrangements for the Western Allies to use Trieste and Pola, he stressed that this could be only on the understanding that they recognized Yugoslav sovereignty over the province. This was of course a matter for Governments, and Alexander informed Tito that it had passed out of his hands.

The subsequent negotiations are not our concern. The Allied troops stood fast in the areas under their control, and after much dispute, in the course of which Yugoslav troops entered Austria, an agreement was signed at Belgrade on 9th June. Allied military government was imposed on the whole of the area originally stipulated by Alexander, some Yugoslav troops remaining there under his command and the Yugoslavs being represented in the administration of the territory. The agreement was in no way to prejudice a subsequent settlement, which was reserved for the Peace Conference. The Partisans had already withdrawn from Austria; and with their failure to take over Trieste and the hinterland, the immediate problems were settled in favour of the Western Allies.

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## Dresden or Berlin?

As his armies deployed from the eastern bank of the Rhine, Eisenhower had swiftly to decide the shape of the advance into central Germany. No directive or agreement of the Combined Chiefs of Staff governed the form of his operations; nor had the Supreme Commander committed himself at any time. 'From the very beginning', as he informed Marshall, 'extending back to before D-day, my plan . . . has been to link up the primary and secondary efforts in the Kassel area and then make one great thrust to the eastward'; and the direction of that thrust had never been specified. Nevertheless, the British were under the firm impression that it would be aimed through northern Germany, probably at Berlin. The city had been defined by the 'Overlord' headquarters, as early as May 1944, as the goal of the Western armies; and although the final target had not been mentioned, the redefinition of Eisenhower's plans by the Combined Chiefs of Staff at Malta seemed to British eyes, after the vagaries of the autumn, to have confirmed that the weight of attack would lie in the north.<sup>1</sup> This impression was strengthened by a signal from Montgomery on 27th March, in which he informed the C.I.G.S. that he had ordered Second British and Ninth U.S. Armies to advance 'with utmost speed and drive' to the Elbe in the sector Hamburg-Magdeburg, while First Canadian Army cleared Arnhem and the rest of Holland. But on the evening of 28th

<sup>1</sup> See pp. 92-3 above; and for the following pages, Map III facing p. 162.

March, the Combined Chiefs of Staff received 'for information' a telegram which Eisenhower had sent that afternoon to the Allied Military Missions in Moscow.

'Our operations are now reaching a stage where it is essential I should know the Russians' plans in order to achieve most rapid success. Will you, therefore, transmit a personal message from me to Marshal Stalin, and do anything you can to assist in getting a full reply.

Personal message to Marshal Stalin from General Eisenhower.

1. My immediate operations are designed to encircle and destroy the enemy forces defending the Ruhr, and to isolate that area from the rest of Germany. This will be accomplished by developing around north of Ruhr and from Frankfurt through Kassel line until I close the ring. The enemy thus enclosed will then be mopped up.

2. I estimate that this phase of operations will end late in April or even earlier, and my next task will be to divide the remaining enemy forces by joining hands with your forces.

3. For my forces the best axis on which to effect this junction would be Erfurt—Leipzig—Dresden. I believe, moreover, that this is the area to which main German Governmental Departments are being moved. It is along this axis that I propose to make my main effort. In addition, as soon as the situation allows, a secondary advance will be made to effect a junction with your forces in the area Regensburg—Linz, thereby preventing the consolidation of German resistance in Redoubt in Southern Germany.

4. Before deciding firmly on my plans, it is, I think, most important they should be co-ordinated as closely as possible with yours both as to direction and timing. Could you, therefore, tell me your intentions and let me know how far the proposals outlined in this message conform to your probable action.

5. If we are to complete the destruction of German armies without delay, I regard it as essential that we co-ordinate our action and make every effort to perfect the liaison between our advancing forces. I am prepared to send officers to you for this purpose.'

This message, coming with no warning and following so closely on Montgomery's signal, seriously alarmed the authorities in London. 'This seems', minuted the Prime Minister to Ismay, 'to differ from last night's Montgomery, who spoke of Elbe. Please explain.' But the Chiefs of Staff were equally at a loss. Indeed, the more they examined the telegram, the more perturbed they became. 'In the first place', as their Secretary informed Churchill, 'they have never contemplated a direct approach by S.C.A.E.F. [Eisenhower] to Marshal Stalin on the subject of our major strategy, the responsibility for which lies with the Combined Chiefs of Staff and their Governments.' The



Supreme Commander had confused the levels of communication which they had always been anxious to observe,<sup>1</sup> with consequences which they feared might increase rather than diminish the existing difficulties of liaison. As they informed Wilson in Washington, 'we regard General Eisenhower's direct approach to Marshal Stalin as comparable to the communication of a personal message by Marshal Tolbukhin to the President and Prime Minister with a request for information as to the future plans of S.A.C.M.E.D. [Alexander].' They condemned the procedure; they were annoyed not to have heard anything from the British Deputy Supreme Commander; and their irritation was soon increased on hearing from Montgomery, but not from Eisenhower, that Ninth U.S. Army was to be returned immediately to Twelfth Army Group in support of the thrust on Dresden.

Secondly, the British Chiefs of Staff could not determine, from the information given in Eisenhower's telegram, the military merits of the plan. These had in fact been reviewed with care by the Supreme Commander and by Twelfth Army Group. As they surveyed the scene towards the end of March, Eisenhower and Bradley were impressed by three facts. First, the encirclement of the Ruhr had removed any possibility of further coherent resistance by the enemy in the north and centre, so that the task was now to isolate or to overrun his remaining forces as soon as possible. Secondly, the Russians had nearly a million men on the Oder within forty miles of Berlin, while the Western Allies were still almost two hundred miles from the capital, across country intersected by numerous lakes and waterways. Thirdly, there was some evidence that the Germans intended if possible to withdraw troops, and perhaps the Government, into a 'National Redoubt' in Bavaria and Austria, where the forests and mountains might make their final destruction difficult and costly. The combination of these factors seemed to the Supreme Commander to favour a decisive thrust through the centre of Germany. The route from Kassel to Dresden offered the shortest line between the two points which the Western and Eastern fronts had reached, and one moreover which avoided the waterways that traversed the northern plains; it provided a central axis from which later to turn north or south if required; it would lead directly to the second greatest industrial area of Germany, in the Silesian basin; and it spanned the lines of communication between Berlin and the south. This last factor, indeed, was deemed to be of great importance. 'The evidence', General Eisenhower has since stated, 'was clear that the Nazis intended to make the attempt [to set up a stronghold in the south] and I decided to give him [*sic*] no opportunity to carry it out.' He was much impressed by the harm that prolonged resistance there might inflict on the Allied forces and on the relations between their Governments, involving at best 'a costly siege'

<sup>1</sup> See Volume V, pp. 512-13; and pp. 96-7 above.

and at worst 'disagreement among the Allies . . . [through which the Germans] might yet be able to secure terms more favourable than unconditional surrender.'

This was a reasoned case. But, as on previous occasions, the Supreme Commander's first telegram unfortunately failed to cover all of its aspects, and thus suggested that he had not in fact considered it as a whole. The Combined Chiefs of Staff, and the Military Missions in Moscow to whom the message was addressed, were obliged to ask for more information. Meanwhile, the authorities in London were inclined to question the merits of the central thrust. In the first place, British Intelligence was not greatly impressed by the evidence for a major German withdrawal to a National Redoubt. While admitting that Government Departments were moving south from Berlin, and that there were signs of preparations to harbour an armed force in the mountains, it questioned if the area could long support large forces and an effective Government organization, and was inclined therefore to dismiss the Redoubt as a factor determining German strategy.

But secondly, the British were not convinced that an advance from Kassel to Dresden would meet the Supreme Commander's objects. For given greater opposition than he expected in any sector, a thrust from the centre of the line, whose speed must be related to that of the flanks, might result in precisely that exhaustion of resources over a broad front which the concentration of effort in the centre was designed to prevent. An advance in the north might possibly have immediate disadvantages, by hampering movement elsewhere at the outset; but an advance in the centre might have disadvantages at a later stage, when it was essential to maintain the pace that had by then been set.

On the information Eisenhower had so far given them, the British could not properly assess these possibilities. But meanwhile they had another objection to his proposal. As the Chiefs of Staff put it to Washington, 'we have gained the impression that the Northern part of Germany is not receiving the attention which the consideration of wider issues outside the purview of General Eisenhower demands.' This factor in turn was viewed differently by the Chiefs of Staff and by the Prime Minister. The former were dismayed chiefly by the possible repercussions along the North Sea and the Baltic if the Western Allies did not gain control quickly. They stressed the importance of capturing the German ports as soon as possible, so as to seize and inspect ships and material and to prevent the renewal of the U-boat attacks which the Admiralty still feared;<sup>1</sup> they were equally anxious to end the war in Holland, where the Germans also held naval bases and where the population was suffering great hardship; and they wished to send troops into Denmark, to free shipping in the Baltic and to

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<sup>1</sup> See pp. 16-18 above.

threaten the German forces in Norway. 'For the above reasons,' they stated, 'the emphasis placed by General Eisenhower on the main thrust on an axis Kassel/Leipzig/Dresden causes us much concern. We are forced to doubt whether there has been sufficient appreciation of issues which have a wider import than the destruction of the main enemy forces in Germany.'

The Prime Minister did not share all of these anxieties, which he regarded as out of proportion. The Chiefs of Staff had despatched their telegram to Washington before he had seen it; and he hastened to record his dissent from both its manner and its matter.<sup>1</sup> Whatever the merits of the argument, he reminded them, conditions had changed over the past six months.

'... 1. ... Of course, it is a good thing for the military points to be placed before the Combined Chiefs of Staff Committee. I hope, however, we shall realise that we have only a quarter of the forces invading Germany and that the situation has thus changed remarkably from the days of June...

... 7. ... It must be remembered that Eisenhower's credit with the [Joint Chiefs of Staff] stands very high. He may claim to have correctly estimated so far the resisting strength of the enemy and to have established by deeds:

- (a) The "closing" of the Rhine along its whole length;
- (b) The power to make the double advance instead of staking all on the northern advance.

This change in the plan agreed to at Malta really settled itself by the weakness shown by the enemy on the front south of the Ruhr and the audacious forward thrusting of the American armies there. It is, however, nevertheless a fact. These events, combined with the continual arrival of American reinforcements, have greatly enhanced General Eisenhower's power and prestige, and the Americans will feel that, as the victorious Supreme Commander, he has a right, and indeed a vital need, to try to elicit from the Russians their views as to the best point for making contact by the armies of the West and of the East.'

But he was not in any case much impressed by the arguments of the Chiefs of Staff.

'... 2. It seems to me that the ... sentence ... about "issues which have a wider import than the destruction of the main enemy forces in Germany" is a very odd phrase to be used in a Staff communication. I should have thought it laid itself open to a charge of extreme unorthodoxy. It is also very inconsistent with our usual line. [The] paragraphs [dealing with an entry into Denmark and into Holland] should certainly be put before the U.S. Chiefs of Staff but not at all so as to conflict with the "overall strategic concept," viz. the destruction of the main enemy forces.

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<sup>1</sup> See *Triumph and Tragedy*, pp. 403-4.

. . . 6. You weaken our case for a stronger concentration between the sea and the Hanover-Berlin flank by suggesting we should like to turn aside to clean up matters in Denmark, Norway and along the Baltic shore. It was only the other day that the C.I.G.S. was pointing out to me the impropriety of turning back or making a diversion to clean up Holland in spite of the shocking conditions prevailing in Western Holland. I accepted that view because I could not resist the argument that the speediest relief would come from the destruction of the main armed forces of the enemy and the advance towards Berlin. It seems to me to apply with much greater force against wasting time now with ferreting the Germans out of all the Baltic ports or going into Denmark. These views are contradictory.

7. In short, I see argumentative possibilities being opened to the U.S. Chiefs of Staff by our telegram on which they will riposte heavily . . .

8. Finally, the capture of Danzig [at the end of March] and consequent annihilation of one of the three principal U-boat bases is a new event bringing great relief to the Admiralty. The renewal of the U-boat warfare on the scale which they predicted is plainly now impossible. So also has it been shown that the dates they spoke of have not been fulfilled. First it was to begin in November; then in February. We are now into April. The renewed U-boat effort so far is feeble and, on the other hand, the losses this month have been most satisfactory. Therefore I cannot admit a state of urgency in any way justifying left-handed diversions to clear the Baltic ports etc. if these diversions take anything from the speed or weight of the advance of the 21st Group of Armies.'

His own objections were different.

' . . . 3. It seems to me that the main criticism of the new Eisenhower plan is that it shifts the axis of the main advance upon Berlin to the direction through Leipzig to Dresden and thus raises the question of whether the 21st Army Group will not be so stretched as to lose its offensive power, especially after it has been deprived of the 9th U.S. Army. Thus, we might be condemned to an almost static rôle in the North and virtually prevented from crossing the Elbe until an altogether later stage in the operations has been reached. All prospect also of the British entering Berlin with the Americans is ruled out.

4. The validity of such criticism depends on the extent of the enemy's resistance. If that resistance is practically collapsing there is no reason why the advances, both of the main army and of the 21st Army Group should not take place on a broader front than hitherto. This is a point on which the Supreme Commander must have the final word.

5. It also seems that General Eisenhower may be wrong in:

supposing Berlin to be largely devoid of military and political importance. Even though German Government Departments have to a great extent moved to the South, the dominating fact on German minds of the fall of Berlin should not be overlooked. The idea of neglecting Berlin and leaving it to the Russians to take at a later stage does not appear to me correct. As long as Berlin holds out and withstands a siege in the ruins, as it may easily do, German resistance will be stimulated. The fall of Berlin might cause nearly all Germans to despair.'

The Prime Minister, like the British Chiefs of Staff but for different reasons, thus placed a greater reliance on a northern than on a central thrust to affect the enemy's will to resist. In contrast to Eisenhower's preoccupation with the National Redoubt, he was convinced that the capital still held the greatest moral value for the Germans, and rated its capture as an object of high military priority. He was therefore perturbed by the Supreme Commander's apparent neglect of an important target; and he was more perturbed by the possibility of its being left to the Russians, while the forces of the Western Allies concentrated on the thrust for Dresden. Even if such a strategy were militarily sound—which the British doubted but could not as yet determine—it seemed to Churchill to ignore completely one very important factor. For as Germany sank into the last stage of defeat, he was becoming increasingly concerned by the implications of the Red Army's advance.

The Prime Minister's concern, which was fully shared by Ministers, rose directly from the diplomatic developments of the past six weeks. Since the end of the 'Argonaut' Conference, relations between the Western Allies and the Russians had deteriorated fast. The first serious incident had occurred almost at once. The three Powers had agreed at Yalta on a declaration of principle to the liberated territories of Europe, which, *inter alia*, guaranteed free elections.<sup>1</sup> But at the end of February, the Russians suddenly insisted that the Government in Rumania, set up by the King on their entry into the country in August 1944, should be dismissed in favour of a Communist Administration on which no Rumanian authority had been consulted. The change took place, under the guns of the Red Army, early in March. A few weeks later, the Americans were refused permission to inspect aerodromes around Budapest, which Stalin had told Roosevelt at Yalta they could use for 'shuttle-bombing' from Italy. Other equally discouraging developments followed soon. The Polish question, which the Western Allies had striven hard to settle, and on which they had recently made substantial concessions, took a rapid turn for the worse in March. The Russians now seemed determined to hamper in every way the formation of a Provisional

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<sup>1</sup> See p. 111 above.

Government representing both Lublin and the exiled Poles,<sup>1</sup> which the three Powers had accepted at Yalta, and to readopt their earlier position of support for the Lublin Poles alone. In the same month, they were equally unhelpful in setting up the zones of occupation in Austria, on which agreement was now becoming urgent. They announced further, during March, that M. Molotov would not lead the Russian delegation to the United Nations' Conference at San Francisco in April, when the new World Instrument, debated so closely at Yalta, would be set up. Finally, the tone of their objections to the talks in Switzerland on the possibility of a German surrender in Italy shocked and angered their allies. These serious infringements of the recent agreements, accompanied as they were by a recurrence of the familiar discourtesy and pinpricks, seemed possibly to augur an important change in Russian policy, which was entirely unexpected on the morrow of the conference.

It was still too early to tell if this would be the case; and the Prime Minister himself was not yet convinced that the situation might not improve. As he telegraphed to Roosevelt early in April,<sup>2</sup> 'We must always be anxious lest the brutality of the Russian messages does not foreshadow some deep change of policy for which they are preparing.' But, 'On the whole I am inclined to think that it is no more than their natural expression when vexed or jealous'; and two days later, a more conciliatory message from Stalin on the Polish question strengthened this impression. Nevertheless, 'For that very reason I deem it of the highest importance that a firm and blunt stand should be made at this junction by our two countries . . . I believe that this is the best chance of saving the future. If they are ever convinced that we are afraid of them and can be bullied into submission, then indeed I should despair of our future relations with them and much else.'

In this task, the armies had an important, perhaps for the moment a critical, part to play.

'There is very little doubt in my mind,' the Prime Minister remarked to the President,<sup>3</sup> 'that the Soviet leaders, whoever they may be, are surprised and disconcerted at the rapid advance of the Allied Armies in the West . . . All this makes it the more important that we should join hands with the Russian Armies as far to the East as possible, and if circumstances allow, enter Berlin.'

As he surveyed the scene in eastern Europe and Austria, Mr. Churchill was in fact convinced that whatever strategy was adopted must be related to a difficult, possibly a dangerous, diplomatic situation.

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<sup>1</sup> See Volume V, pp. 371-2, 375.

<sup>2</sup> See *Triumph and Tragedy*, p. 446.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

Eisenhower had meanwhile been informed of the Prime Minister's military views. In answer to a query on 29th March, he elaborated his intentions on the 30th. He repeated the reasons for concentrating on the central sector as far as the Elbe; but added that once the success of the main thrust was assured, he would 'take action to clear the Northern ports' including Kiel, and in the south would advance 'on axis Nurnberg-Regensburg' to join the Russians in the valley of the Danube. Churchill in turn repeated his arguments, adding on this occasion the political reasons for taking Berlin, and asking accordingly that Ninth U.S. Army should be left under Montgomery's command.

Meanwhile, the Joint Chiefs of Staff had considered the views of their British colleagues. Talks in Washington between 28th and 30th March showed that Marshall would support Eisenhower unless good military arguments to the contrary were produced. As before, he saw no overriding objection to direct liaison between the Supreme Commander's headquarters and Moscow; and, as before, he was sensitive to an implied lack of confidence in Eisenhower's judgement. His views were to be seen in the Joint Chiefs of Staff's reply.

'1. The United States Chiefs of Staff are not in agreement with the views of the British Chiefs of Staff . . .

2. As to the procedure of General Eisenhower's communicating with the Russians for the purpose of co-ordinating the junction between the advancing armies and those of the Soviets this appears to have been an operational necessity in view of the rapidity of the advances into Germany.

. . . 4. General Eisenhower's course of action . . . appears to be in accord with agreed major strategy and with his directive, particularly in light of the present development of the battle in Germany. The information we have is that General Eisenhower is deploying East of the Rhine and North of the Ruhr the maximum number of forces which can be employed. We now appear to have a deployment in which the Northern effort is making good progress, while a secondary effort has, thus far, achieved an outstanding success which is being exploited to the extent of logistic capabilities. These efforts of the Central and Southern Armies should quickly make it possible for the Northern advance to accelerate its drive Eastward across the North German plain.

5. The United States Chiefs of Staff consider that to disperse the strong forces which probably would be required to reach and reduce the Northern ports before the primary object of destroying the German Armies is accomplished, would seriously limit the momentum of a decisive thrust straight through the centre. We are confident that his [Eisenhower's] course of action would secure the ports and everything else mentioned [by the British Chiefs of Staff] more quickly and much more decisively than the course of action urged by [them].

6. The battle of Germany is now at the point where the Commander in the Field is the best judge of the measures which offer the earliest prospect of destroying the German Armies or their power to resist. Deliberately to turn to the region where the German resistance has appeared to be most successful and more or less abandon or seriously limit operations exploiting enemy weakness does not appear to be a sound procedure. General Eisenhower now has the enemy off balance and disorganised and should strike relentlessly with the single objective of quick and complete victory.

7. While the United States Chiefs of Staff recognise that there are important factors which are not the direct concern and responsibility of General Eisenhower they consider that his strategic conception is sound from the overall viewpoint of crushing Germany as expeditiously as possible and should receive full support.

8. It is also the view of the United States Chiefs of Staff that General Eisenhower should continue to be free to communicate with the Commander-in-Chief of the Soviet Army. . . .'

They agreed, however, to ask Eisenhower for more detailed information.

The Supreme Commander's answer, which was sent on 31st March, did something to dispel the worst fears of the British. He stressed that he did not intend to abandon a timely thrust in the north. On the contrary, he emphasized the importance of the northern area, and the desirability of 'the early liberation of Denmark and Norway'; explained the movements which he anticipated; and concluded that the central thrust might well achieve the British objects more effectively than any alternative. The Supreme Commander was indeed puzzled by the objections from London. As he put it to Churchill on 1st April,

' . . . I repeat I have not changed any plan. I have made certain groupings of my forces in order to cross the Rhine with the main deliberate thrust in the North, to isolate the Ruhr and to disrupt, surround or destroy the Germans defending that area. This is as far as I have ever approved strategic objectives of this force because obviously such a victory over the German forces in the West and such a blow to his industrial capacity would necessarily create new situations requiring study and analysis before the next broad pattern of effort could be sketched accurately.

The situation now developing is one that I have held before my staff for over a year as one towards which we should strive, namely that our forces should be concentrated across the Rhine through avenues of Wesel and Frankfurt and situated roughly in a great triangle with the apex resting in the Cassel [Kassel] area. From there the problem was to determine the direction of the blow that would create the greatest disorganisation to the remaining



German forces and the German power of resisting. I have never lost sight of the great importance of the drive to the northernmost coast although your telegram did introduce a new idea respecting the political importance of the early attainment of particular objectives. I see your point clearly in this.

The only difference between your suggestions and my plan is in the timing and even this might be relegated to a matter of relative unimportance depending on the degree of resistance we meet. What I mean is that: In order to assure the success of each of my planned efforts I concentrate first in the centre to gain the position I need. As it looks to me now, the next move thereafter should be to have Montgomery cross the Elbe, reinforced, as necessary, by American troops, and reach at least a line including Lübeck on the coast. If German resistance from now on should crumble progressively and definitely, you can see that there would be little if any difference in time between gaining the central position and crossing the Elbe. If on the other hand resistance tends to stiffen at all, I can see that it is vitally necessary that I concentrate for each effort, and do not allow myself to be dispersed by attempting to do all these projects at once. . . .'

The British were still not convinced that the central thrust would in fact achieve this concentration, or that its advantages would compensate for the possible capture of Berlin by the Russians. But Eisenhower's explanation at least narrowed the field for disagreement; and on 1st April, after a Staff Conference at Chequers, the Prime Minister sought to compose the recent misunderstandings and to isolate the points of difference that remained. He then telegraphed to Roosevelt:<sup>1</sup>

' . . . 6. Having dealt with and I trust disposed of these misunderstandings between the truest friends and comrades that ever fought side by side as Allies, I venture to put to you a few considerations upon the merits of the changes in our original plans now desired by General Eisenhower. It seems to me the differences are small and as usual not of principle but of emphasis. Obviously, laying aside every impediment and shunning every diversion, the Allied Armies of the North and centre should now march at the highest speed towards the Elbe. Hitherto the axis has been upon Berlin. General Eisenhower on his estimate of the enemy's resistance, to which I attach the greatest importance, now wishes to shift the axis somewhat to the southward and strike through Leipzig even perhaps as far south as Dresden. He withdraws the Ninth U.S. Army from the Northern Group of Armies and in consequence stretches its front southwards. I should be sorry if the resistance of the enemy was such as to destroy the weight and momentum

<sup>1</sup> See *Triumph and Tragedy*, pp. 406-7, where paragraph numbers are given differently.

of the advance of the British 21st Army Group and to leave them in an almost static condition along the Elbe when and if they reach it. I say quite frankly that Berlin remains of high strategic importance. Nothing will exert a psychological effect of despair upon all German forces of resistance equal to that of the fall of Berlin. . . . On the other hand, if left to itself to maintain a siege by the Russians among its ruins and as long as the German Flag flies there, it will animate the resistance of all Germans under arms.

7. There is moreover another aspect which it is proper for you and me to consider. The Russian armies will no doubt overrun all Austria and enter Vienna. If they also take Berlin, will not their impression that they have been the overwhelming contributor to our common victory be unduly imprinted in their minds, and may this not lead them into a mood which will raise grave and formidable difficulties in the future? I therefore consider that from a political standpoint we should march as far east into Germany as possible and that should Berlin be in our grasp we should certainly take it. This also appears sound on military grounds. . . .'

The British Chiefs of Staff also replied to their American colleagues in similar strain, emphasizing their continued objections to the procedure which the Supreme Commander had used in approaching Moscow.

The British arguments for the northern thrust seemed, at least to their authors, to receive indirect support at this time from an unexpected and important quarter. On the night of 1st April, after calling on Eisenhower for further information, the British and American authorities in Moscow passed his original message of 28th March<sup>1</sup> to Stalin and Molotov. Stalin's first reaction was to approve of the central thrust, which would cut the Germans in half and would reach the Red Army in a favourable area. Later on the same night, his official reply was received. The Marshal confirmed that he entirely approved of the plan, and agreed that the two fronts should meet in the area Erfurt—Leipzig—Dresden, with 'a second additional ring' in the area Vienna—Linz—Regensburg. 'Berlin', the message continued, 'has lost its former strategic importance. The Soviet High Command therefore plans to allot secondary forces in the direction of Berlin.' The main Soviet offensive would probably be resumed in 'approximately the second half of May', following the operations already under way against Austria.

The British Chiefs of Staff found this information interesting and important.

'Since the recent exchange of views in this series,' they informed the Joint Chiefs of Staff on 4th April, 'the British Chiefs of Staff

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<sup>1</sup> See pp. 131-2 above.

have seen General Eisenhower's further elaboration of his plan . . . , Marshal Stalin's reply . . . and the instructions which General Eisenhower has issued . . .<sup>1</sup>

2. The first of the above telegrams which shows clearly that in the preparation of his plan, General Eisenhower had taken account of the issues which the British Chiefs of Staff considered so important, has done much to allay their anxieties. But there are two points which they . . . lay before the United States Chiefs of Staff.

3. The first is their feeling that, in General Eisenhower's plan as at present stated, sufficient emphasis does not appear to have been placed on the desirability of maintaining the momentum of the drive in the north, particularly towards Berlin. Marshal Stalin is apparently not going to start his main drive towards Dresden and Leipzig until mid-May and gives no indication of the date on which he intends to launch "his secondary forces" in the direction of Berlin. These two factors, coupled with the obvious psychological and political advantages in reaching Berlin as soon as possible, seem to the British Chiefs of Staff to point to the desirability of Anglo-American forces capturing Berlin as soon as possible.

4. All these thoughts may well be in General Eisenhower's mind but they do not appear to be reflected in the messages we have seen. The British Chiefs of Staff feel, therefore, that it would be appropriate for the Combined Chiefs of Staff to give General Eisenhower guidance on the matter.

5. The second point is the question of procedure in handling matters of strategic policy with the Russians. As the United States Chiefs of Staff are aware, the British Chiefs of Staff have always felt very strongly that in correspondence with the Russians the correct level should be maintained. That is to say, the Heads of States should communicate with Heads of States,<sup>2</sup> the High Command with the High Command and the Commanders in the Field with Commanders in the Field. The British Chiefs of Staff note that the United States Chiefs of Staff feel that General Eisenhower had no alternative but to communicate direct to the Russians on his plan, in view of the rapid development of events in Germany. The British Chiefs of Staff, however, are not convinced of this, and do feel that in the future there should always be sufficient time for the proper channels to be used. For example, the fact that the Russians are not proposing to start their drive until the middle of May places General Eisenhower in a very favourable position to discuss with the Combined Chiefs of Staff any further major points that may arise. In any event, in the coming weeks there will almost certainly be other matters of high strategic importance requiring

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<sup>1</sup> See pp. 145-6 below.

<sup>2</sup> i.e., Heads of Government in each case.

discussion with the Russians and they, therefore, feel that it is important that an agreement should be reached on the procedure to be used. . . .'

But this telegram met with no better response than its predecessors. The Joint Chiefs of Staff replied on 6th April.

'1. The United States Chiefs of Staff consider that the issues raised by the British Chiefs of Staff . . . have, for the time being, been overtaken by General Eisenhower's recent messages, Marshal Stalin's reply to General Eisenhower and the rapid development of events in the field.

2. . . . The United States Chiefs of Staff continue to regard [Eisenhower's] plan as sound.

3. The United States Chiefs of Staff believe that such psychological and political advantages as would result from a possible capture of Berlin ahead of the Russians should not override the imperative military consideration, which in their opinion is the destruction and dismemberment of the German Armed Forces. . . .

4. Regarding the question of procedure, . . . the United States Chiefs of Staff believe that no further guidance is required or should be given to Eisenhower, at least pending receipt of Marshal Stalin's promised views concerning communication. While Marshal Stalin is the Head of the Russian State [*sic*], Eisenhower's dealings with him have been in his capacity as Commander-in-Chief of the forces on the Eastern front. There does not appear to be any other military head. Possibly it might be desired that Eisenhower should communicate with General Antonov, the Chief of Staff. Experience, however, has shown that attempts to secure information or decisions on any lower level than Stalin result in interminable and unacceptable delays.

5. The speed with which our armies are driving into Germany so far outstrips the best possible speed of action of Combined Chiefs of Staff agencies as to prohibit thought of review of operational matters by this or any other form of Committee action. . . . Only Eisenhower is in a position to know how to fight his battle, and to exploit to the full the changing situation.

6. In view of the above, United States Chiefs of Staff believe that there is no present necessity for giving guidance to SCAEF . . . and recommend the despatch of the following message from C.C.S. to SCAEF.

" . . . The Combined Chiefs of Staff consider you should proceed with the communications with the Soviet Military Authorities required to effect co-ordination between your operations and theirs".'

As the Joint Chiefs of Staff had stated, events were now outstripping the main dispute. But the British succeeded in getting their way on

the subsidiary question of procedure. In answer to the Americans' proposal of 6th April, they repeated their objections on the 12th, adding that in their view any delay in the past fortnight had been caused precisely by the fact that the Supreme Commander had used the wrong channels initially. Three days later, when fresh decisions were called for, they were therefore pleased to see that Eisenhower addressed himself to the Combined Chiefs of Staff, asking their permission to inform Stalin of his intentions, and that the Joint Chiefs of Staff then recommended to the British that he should be authorized to communicate, not with the Marshal, but with the Russian General Staff. The British accepted the proposal as a reasonable compromise, and this channel of communication was used throughout the few weeks that remained.

The Joint Chiefs of Staff's refusal to 'guide' Eisenhower as the British had suggested, left him free to develop the central thrust as he had planned. He had indeed issued orders to that effect on 2nd April; and so convinced was he of their 'military soundness' that he was prepared, in the event of further opposition, 'to make an issue of it'.<sup>1</sup> This did not mean to say that the Supreme Commander overruled other considerations. As he informed Marshall on 7th April,

'I am the first to admit that a war is waged in pursuance of political aims, and if the Combined Chiefs of Staff should decide that the Allied effort to take Berlin outweighs military considerations in this theater, I would cheerfully readjust my plans . . .'

But he was not called upon to do so, and, with the full support of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, was accordingly able to develop his campaign in accordance with his own convictions.

By the Supreme Commander's orders of 2nd April, Twenty-First Army Group was to advance without pause to the river Leine and to Bremen, and thereafter to the line of the Elbe along the flank of Twelfth Army Group.<sup>2</sup> It should seize any opportunity of capturing a bridgehead over that river, and prepare for operations beyond. The decision whether or not to open Bremen itself would be taken later. Twelfth Army Group would clear the enemy's resistance in the Ruhr, would guard the southern flank of Twenty-First Army Group in its advance to the river Leine, and would launch the thrust on Leipzig. In the last operation, its left flank would lie from Münster through Minden and Celle to Wittenberge, its right from Meiningen through Coburg to Bayreuth. Sixth Army Group would move along the southern

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<sup>1</sup> General of the Army Dwight D. Eisenhower, *Crusade in Europe* (1948), p. 434.

<sup>2</sup> See Map III, facing p. 162.

flank, and prepare to advance thereafter on an axis Nuremberg—Regensburg—Linz. A new Fifteenth Army was created to occupy and administer the territories falling to the Western Allies.

The armies moved forward, with scarcely a pause, over the next fortnight. The stiffest fighting occurred on the flanks. In the north, the advance to the Leine was largely complete by 10th April. Two Corps of Second (British) Army, aiming respectively at Celle and at Lüneburg, reached the river Weser from Minden to the north on the 5th, and five days later were fighting around Celle. Soltau and Lüneburg fell on the 18th, and the next day one Corps reached the Elbe south of Hamburg while the other cut the road between Hamburg and Bremen. The remaining Corps of Second Army, aiming at Bremen itself, had meanwhile crossed the Ems river and canal by 6th April, and over the next fortnight pushed steadily to the north-east. By the 19th, it lay in a semi-circle around the city, distant from two to ten miles. Over the same period, First Canadian Army cleared a large part of Holland. One force moved towards Leeuwarden and Gröningen; another to secure Oldenburg, and thereafter the area and port of Wilhelmshaven; and a third and fourth on Arnhem, Apeldoorn and the country around the Zuider Zee. By 20th April, north-east Holland had been freed apart from a small pocket near the mouth of the Ems; Arnhem and Apeldoorn had been taken; and the country cleared immediately to the north and north-west. Only north-west Holland was still occupied by Germans, and negotiations were under way to relieve the population under their control.

Over the same period, Twelfth Army Group moved fast through central Germany. Ninth U.S. Army, leaving some divisions in the Ruhr, advanced on Second Army's flank to the Weser, and then drove at greater speed towards the Elbe. It took Hameln on 6th April and Brunswick on the 12th, while on that and the following day advanced elements crossed the Elbe north of Magdeburg and south of Wittenberge. The bridgeheads held against strong counter-attacks over the next few days, and on the 18th the Americans captured Magdeburg. Immediately to the south, First U.S. Army (less its divisions in the Ruhr) cleared Kassel on 4th April, Göttingen on the 7th, and on the 11th began to move south of the Harz mountains. By the 14th, one force had reached Dessau on the river Mulde near its junction with the Elbe, another was advancing on Leipzig, while the rest contained some 10,000 Germans in the Harz Mountains. Leipzig fell, after severe fighting, on the 19th, and on the 21st the force in the mountains surrendered. On the right of First Army, Third U.S. Army drove through Weimar on 11th April, one Corps then advancing to Chemnitz on the 13th, the other two wheeling south-east through Hof to the Czechoslovak frontier, which they reached on 18th April. Farther south, Seventh U.S. Army encountered greater

opposition between the area of Mannheim and Nuremberg, which it reached on 16th April and took on the 20th. The French on the right meanwhile advanced due east from the area of Baden.

On 16th April, Eisenhower's line ran as shown on Map III.<sup>1</sup> In the central thrust, Ninth Army had advanced at its limit some 130 miles, First Army some 120 miles, and Third Army some 150 miles. Between Wittenberge and the Czechoslovak frontier their line ran well within the Soviet zone as defined at Yalta, and, near Magdeburg, within sixty miles of Berlin. But the very depth of these advances, combined with the fact that substantial German forces still offered resistance to north and south, made a further immediate advance unwise. The flanks must be cleared, and supply was strained. The central thrust, in fact, had been blunted by its own success. As Eisenhower informed the Military Missions in Moscow,

' . . . 2. As a result of our rapid advance our logistical position is growing more difficult—if we go on advancing indefinitely in strength in the centre we will not have the logistic ability to make a strong effort on the flanks against the remaining enemy forces. We must, moreover, make sure of cleaning out Austria and Norway if the Germans hold out there, before the winter, and these operations may take considerable time.'

On the 14th, he therefore informed the Combined Chiefs of Staff that he would concentrate on his flanks. Sixth Army Group in the south would aim at Salzburg, while Twenty-First Army Group in the north would be ordered to cross the Elbe, secure Hamburg and advance on the area Lübeck—Kiel, its left meanwhile clearing Holland and the coastal belt. This plan of campaign still reflected the spectre of the National Redoubt.

' . . . 2. To reduce the time in which the enemy may prolong hostilities there remain two main tasks to undertake: the further sub-division of the enemy's remaining forces: and the capture of those areas where he might form a last stand effectively.

3. The quickest way to divide the forces in the north will be by driving forward to the area of Lübeck, and in the south will be by joining with the Russians on the axis of their present thrust up the Danube Valley. It would be most desirable in addition, to make a thrust to Berlin as the enemy may group forces around his capital and, in any event, its fall would greatly affect the morale of the enemy and that of our own peoples.

But, as explained below this operation must take a low priority in point of time unless operations to clear our flanks proceed with unexpected rapidity.

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<sup>1</sup> Facing p. 162.

4. The two main areas where the enemy could offer prolonged resistance are in Norway and in the National Redoubt in the south. In the National Redoubt winter operations would be most laborious—in Norway they would be almost impracticable. Moreover, until we have liberated Norway, the enemy U-boat warfare can be continued for some months and Scandinavian merchant shipping cannot be freed. Time therefore is most important to us.

5. Norway can be approached in strength only via Sweden. This, in turn, will necessitate the liberation of Denmark. Operations to liberate Denmark must be conducted therefore as early and as quickly as possible. The thrust to Lübeck and Kiel would be essential as a preliminary.

6. The rapid elimination of the Redoubt might reduce the effectiveness of the German defence of Denmark and Norway, or even bring about a surrender in those countries. The capability of enemy forces to resist in the south will be greatly reduced [by] thrusts to join the Russians in the Danube Valley. But even then the National Redoubt could remain in being and it must be our aim to break into it rapidly before the enemy has an opportunity to man it and fully organise its defences.

7. To ensure adequate logistical support for operations in Denmark and Norway, we require to open a North Sea port, preferably Hamburg. The enemy, however, may delay our opening the sea line of communications by holding on in minor fortress areas in North Germany, in the fortified islands and in North West Holland. We can ultimately reduce fortress areas around ports and fortified islands, but operations into Holland may be slow if we are to avoid considerable devastation of country. We cannot therefore, count on the early opening of the German ports.

8. In view of the urgency and importance of initiating operations in north and south, operations to Berlin will have to take second place, and await the development of the situation.

. . . 10. The essence of my plan is to stop on the Elbe and clean up my flanks . . .'

On the same day, he issued the necessary orders to his commanders.

The British Chiefs of Staff considered this message on 16th April. As was to be expected, they were not entirely satisfied by the low priority assigned to the capture of Berlin. Given the existing dispositions, they recognized that such an operation might preclude a strong thrust from the Elbe to Kiel and Denmark, of whose importance they, like Eisenhower, were convinced. But in view of the political implications, they suggested that the Combined Chiefs of Staff might still draw his attention to the desirability of taking any opportunity to advance upon the city. The Prime Minister agreed. But after a discussion with the Supreme Commander in London on the 17th, he



allowed reluctantly that the priorities must stand pending further developments; and on the 18th the British therefore approved Eisenhower's proposals, 'with such modifications as may be indicated by the rapid development of the situation.' On the 21st, the Russians were informed.

On 12th April, in the midst of these great events, President Roosevelt died. He had for some time been weak and unable to do his customary day's work, and, unknown to the British, General Marshall had recently been largely responsible for the strategic decisions bearing his name. But the sudden end was entirely unexpected, and his associates were as stunned and dismayed as the rest of the Allied world. The tributes which flowed from every quarter reflected the doubts for the future. For the new President, emerging from the international obscurity of the office of Vice-President, chosen by his predecessor at the time of the Party Convention to fill a subordinate political rôle, and hitherto not consulted on or informed of diplomatic or strategic policy, had now immediately to assume the immense personal control vested in his office on the eve of victory in Europe and at a time of great, possibly critical, decisions. His qualities were entirely, his very name virtually, unknown. The central direction of the war in the United States now rested largely, and in the last resort finally, in the hands of one who had so far been confined entirely to domestic affairs.

None were more perturbed by the change than the British War Cabinet and Chiefs of Staff; and of them, none more than the Prime Minister. The long and intimate personal association, unique between Heads of Government in modern times, which he had established with President Roosevelt, could not be repeated, at least immediately, with President Truman; and the contrast would prove the more serious because there was now no time for a relatively peaceful apprenticeship, in which to foster a new association. In the confusion, perhaps inevitable, of the last stages of the European war, and through the almost impenetrable mist that cloaked the Russians' behaviour, important developments seemed to be taking shape on which the Western Governments could not decide or agree. It is of course impossible to say if Roosevelt, at the height of his powers, would have acted differently from Roosevelt in decline; or if, in decline, he would have approved the last military decisions in Europe. But whatever course he might have taken at this difficult time, the President's death seemed to the Prime Minister to have removed the one figure whose knowledge and experience resembled his own, and who could bring them to bear upon fast-moving events. At a time when influence within the Western Alliance reflected increasingly the balance of strength between the partners, this personal association between the

two men seemed the best guarantee that the British view would receive due attention. As we follow events in the last few weeks of the European war, we must remember that, in Roosevelt's absence, the American background seemed uncertain to the Prime Minister, and therefore unfavourable to the British cause.

The President's death produced as great an effect on his enemies as on his own people and allies. To Hitler, now entrenched in the bunker of the Chancellery in Berlin, it vouchsafed the awaited heaven-sent assurance that Germany would yet be saved. The story has been told of how Goebbels telephoned the news, and of how, after hearing the Fuehrer's reply, he informed his staff that 'This is like the death of the Czarina in the Seven Years' War.' To a mind obsessed by the inevitability of an early and complete break between his foes, the historical analogy must indeed have seemed exact. But in fact, misled by the familiar miscalculation, Hitler's timing was fatally wrong. Instead of making peace with the Germans so as the better to oppose the Russians, the Western Allies, in so far as any of their representatives considered the question, wished to conquer Germany as fast as possible so as the better to negotiate with Russia from strength.

For the British attitude at this stage should not be misunderstood. It is perhaps easy, in view of developments in the following decade, to see in it the emergence of a policy which later became orthodox throughout the Western world. But attitudes and policy should not be confused. In the first place, even if the Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary—the authorities principally concerned at this stage—had decided in the spring of 1945 that action should be taken on the assumption that Russia might be a potential enemy, there was no likelihood of such action being adopted by their country or in the United States. But secondly, they did not so decide. Disappointed, distrustful and sometimes deeply alarmed as they were, their hopes, and British policy, rested on a continuing partnership of the three Powers expressed in and operating through the instrument of the United Nations to which it was complementary. The strategy they wished to adopt in Germany was designed, not for reasons of defence or attack against Russia—which should then have taken high priority in the campaign—but with the object, which they recognized must remain subsidiary to the immediate military task, of negotiating from strength. In the atmosphere of the time, this seemed to them a useful—possibly an essential—contribution to the tripartite alliance, guarding it from that threat of excessive Soviet ambition which Soviet conquests appeared to foster. The British in fact had not abandoned the objects, or even entirely the hopes, of the Yalta Conference. Rather, they had returned to the attitude they first adopted in the late summer of 1944. They did not despair of a solution with the Russians: indeed they expected it. But they expected it as a result of firm and

timely measures which would remind their ally of his obligations, and whose inception depended on the movements of the Western armies in the few weeks that remained.

(iv)

## The Last Weeks

When the Americans halted on the Elbe north of Dessau, they were some hundred miles from the Russians in the latitude of Berlin, and some eighty miles in the latitude of Dresden. The question therefore arose, how to settle lines of demarcation between the converging forces which would leave them free to operate most effectively while preventing accidents or clashes between them. Cases of mistaken identity might easily arise, while the risk of incidents, such as had occurred between Germans and Russians in Poland in 1939, was the greater because no agreement had been reached on the zones of immediate military responsibility, at a time when the Western armies were already well into the Russian zone of occupation. Liaison was still confined to pronouncements from Moscow on a bomb line running south from the Baltic, moved from time to time in accordance with the armies' advances and not necessarily recognized by the Western Allies.<sup>1</sup> Eisenhower's headquarters began to consider these problems in the middle of March, and early in April he proposed a solution. Recognition signals and procedures should be agreed for both land and air forces, but no lines should be set in advance, and both fronts should be free to move as events dictated until contact was imminent. Thereafter, 'subject to the dictates of operational necessity', the forces should be withdrawn, by voluntary action or on request, behind the 'inter-zonal boundary' defined by the agreement on the zones of occupation.

The British Chiefs of Staff awaited more information on these proposals, which a visit to London on 9th April enabled the Deputy Supreme Commander to provide. This confirmed their first impression, that immediate zones of responsibility should be settled by the commanders on the spot which should not prejudice subsequent arrangements between the three Governments. As they informed Field Marshal Wilson in Washington,

' . . . 2. The reasons why we object to any mention of inter-zonal occupational boundaries are as follows:

(a) *Military*

To approach the Russians on this matter might lead to an attempt by them to restrict the scope of our advance and

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<sup>1</sup> See pp. 100-2 above.

to secure withdrawal of our forces whilst still in conflict with the enemy. Moreover General Eisenhower's proposal far exceeds the immediate military needs.

(b) *Political*

Withdrawal into zones of occupation is a matter of State to be considered between the three Governments in relation to what the Russians do in the South, where they may soon be in occupation of the British and U.S. zones in Austria.'

They therefore suggested to the Joint Chiefs of Staff on 11th April that, when the fronts seemed about to join, 'the division of responsibility should be defined by boundary lines to be agreed between Groups of Armies. On cessation of operations our respective armies will stand fast until they receive orders from their Governments.'

The British Chiefs of Staff had mentioned to Wilson that 'the Prime Minister attaches great importance to this matter'; and their explanation of the diplomatic background in fact reflected his views. For Churchill was determined that the gains of the Western Powers should not immediately be surrendered to increase those of the East. If, as now seemed possible, both Berlin and the proposed Western zones in Austria fell to the Russians, the more important that the British and Americans should have other possessions to show, which they should not yield without further question while the Red Army remained in territories allotted to the West. He saw no military or diplomatic advantage in the Supreme Commander's proposals, and refused to accept them without further reference to the President and himself.

While the Americans were considering these arguments, another message was received from Eisenhower asking for immediate directions. American and Russian aircraft had been involved in incidents over eastern Germany, which underlined the urgency of establishing some form of co-ordination between the land forces. The Joint Chiefs of Staff accordingly proposed, as an immediate measure, to inform the Supreme Commander that

'while hostilities continue, it does not seem practicable to restrict our operations or areas by a demarcation line prepared in advance. Both fronts should be free to advance until contact is imminent. Thereafter, the division of responsibility should be defined by boundary lines to be agreed between Groups of Armies.'

This met the immediate situation, while leaving the British proposal for a 'standfast' order to be considered at leisure. In view of the urgency of the case, Wilson agreed on behalf of the British, and the Chiefs of Staff in London at once confirmed his action.

Eisenhower therefore now had authority to decide the first lines of demarcation. More exchanges followed between London and Washington on the guidance he should receive in the process, and on his

instructions for the subsequent period. The Joint Chiefs of Staff appreciated, and broadly agreed with, the British argument as developed on 11th April; and on the 14th, they suggested a directive to cover both stages. After amendment by both sides, the final version was sent to Eisenhower on the 20th.

'The Combined Chiefs of Staff have considered the policy that should be adopted as the forces under your command approach the Russian Armies, and the channels through which relevant matters should be discussed with the Russians.

2. It is considered essential that both fronts should be free to advance until contact is imminent and that thereafter the divisions of responsibility should be defined by boundary lines to be agreed between groups of armies. The Combined Chiefs of Staff have taken note of the arrangements you are making with the Russians in this regard<sup>1</sup> and hope that you will be able to arrange for their effective implementation through the exchange of liaison officers between groups of armies.

3. The following general policies are given you for your guidance in further negotiations with the Russians:

(a) To avoid confusion between the two armies and to prevent either of them from expanding into areas already occupied by the other, both sides should halt as and where they meet, subject to such adjustments to the rear or to the flanks as are required, in the opinion of the local commander on either side, to deal with any remaining opposition.

(b) As to adjustments of forces after cessation of hostilities in an area, your troops should be disposed in accordance with military requirements regardless of zonal boundaries. You will, insofar as permitted by the urgency of the situation, obtain the approval of the Combined Chiefs of Staff prior to any major adjustment in contrast to local adjustments for operational and administrative reasons.

4. Within the above policies you are free to negotiate directly with the Russian General Staff through the Missions in Moscow. However, you will appreciate that as your campaign proceeds there will arise political and military questions of high importance to the British and United States Governments. The Combined Chiefs of Staff desire that, unless in your judgement the delay is unacceptable on vital military grounds, you raise such questions with the Combined Chiefs of Staff particularly before reference to the Russians. They will do their utmost to expedite the decisions which you require.'

These instructions to Eisenhower held good over the fortnight that remained of the European war.

The Combined Chiefs of Staff's directive covered temporary arrangements, to be followed at some time by the movement of the armies

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<sup>1</sup> See pp. 155-6 below.

to their final zones of occupation. But the Prime Minister was uneasy lest these arrangements should be affected, or their period cut short, by misunderstanding on the part of the Russians. He did not object to an eventual retirement to the zones agreed at Yalta; but he was anxious, for the reasons already given, not to retire until the outlines of the diplomatic scene could be discerned more clearly, and he feared some infringement of the temporary zones which might lead the Russian Government to deny an agreement reached only by the military advisers. While allowing that the Combined Chiefs of Staff's instructions seemed satisfactory as far as they went, he therefore wished to secure the consent of the three Governments to the principle they laid down. On 18th April he approached President Truman, and, after some discussion on the wording, they agreed to send a telegram to Stalin on the 27th.<sup>1</sup>

1. The Anglo-American Armies will soon make contact in Germany with Soviet forces, and the approaching end of German resistance makes it necessary that the United States, Great Britain and the Soviet Union decide upon an orderly procedure for the occupation by their forces of the zones which they will occupy in Germany and in Austria.

2. Our immediate task is the final defeat of the German Army. During this period the boundaries between the forces of the three Allies must be decided by Commanders in the Field, and will be governed by operational considerations and requirements. It is inevitable that our Armies will in this phase find themselves in occupation of territory outside the boundaries of the ultimate occupational zones.

3. When the fighting is finished, the next task is for the Allied Control Commissions to be set up in Berlin and Vienna, and for the forces of the Allies to be redispersed and to take over their respective occupational zones. The demarcation of the zones in Germany has already been decided upon and it is necessary that we shall without delay reach an agreement on the zones to be occupied in Austria. . . .

4. It appears now that no signed instrument of surrender will be forthcoming. In this event Governments should decide to set up at once the Allied Control Commissions, and to entrust to them the task of making detailed arrangements for the withdrawal of the forces to their agreed occupational zones.

5. In order to meet the requirements of the situation referred to in paragraph 2 above, namely the emergency and temporary arrangements for the tactical zones, instructions have been sent to General Eisenhower. . . . [The details followed.]

6. It is requested that you will issue similar instructions to your commanders in the field. . . .'

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<sup>1</sup> See *Triumph and Tragedy*, pp. 450-1.

The reply did not come until 2nd May.

'I received your message of April 27th . . . For my part I should inform you that the Soviet High Command has issued instructions that, when the Soviet and Allied Forces meet, the Soviet Command should immediately establish contact with the Command of the American or English Forces, and that they should in agreement together:

- (1) Define a provisional tactical demarcation boundary line, and
- (2) Take measures to suppress any opposition by the German forces within their provisional demarcation line.'

The war in Europe therefore ended without specific agreement on the part of the Russian Government to the arrangement which the President and Prime Minister had proposed.

Meanwhile, General Eisenhower had been making his arrangements direct with the Russian General Staff, as the Combined Chiefs of Staff's instructions of 11th and 20th April allowed.<sup>1</sup> Impressed indeed by the importance of reaching an immediate agreement, and conscious of the support of Marshall and the President, he took full advantage of their permission, if 'in your judgement the delay is unacceptable on vital military grounds',<sup>2</sup> to inform Moscow of his intentions without consulting London and Washington in advance. On 12th April, he sent the Military Missions in Moscow his proposals of the 5th, amended by the terms of the Combined Chiefs of Staff's instructions of the 11th.<sup>3</sup> The Russians at once agreed to exchange recognition signals; and the details were settled over the next nine days, and amended thereafter as occasion demanded. But the complementary proposal, that the commanders of Army Groups should settle the immediate boundaries, was not accepted so easily. The Russian General Staff seemed to suspect that it was designed to create new zones of occupation, and Eisenhower's reassurance evoked neither consent nor denial. On 22nd April, he therefore returned to the charge. He had already, on the 21st, sent the plan of campaign to Moscow which the Combined Chiefs of Staff had approved on the 18th.<sup>4</sup> He now proposed detailed arrangements based upon it. After announcing the orders he had given to the Army Groups on gaining contact, he continued:

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<sup>1</sup> See pp. 152-3 above.

<sup>2</sup> See p. 153 above.

<sup>3</sup> See pp. 151-2 above.

<sup>4</sup> See pp. 147-9 above.

'... 3. One important question which I have raised in my cables to you still remains unanswered. This is the question of agreeing in advance upon procedure in operational areas to be observed by our troops and those of Red Army when contact is established . . .

4. It appears that contact between our two forces will most probably occur in the Dresden—Wittenberg[e] area as mutually planned. With this in mind, I have chosen the line of the Elbe River—Mulde River on our central front as being identified easily on the ground and desirable as the general boundary between our forces. If the Soviet High Command, however, wishes to stop on the Elbe and wants us to push on to it in the Dresden area, we shall be glad to undertake that readjustment on our south-central front.

5. On contact, our principal purpose must be to make a firm junction between the two armies, preferably along a well-defined geographical feature, pending final mutual adjustment on the basis of the local tactical situation as it develops at the time of contact. . . .'

The Russians replied on the 24th.

'... 2. The Soviet Command already has issued the order that when the Soviet troops meet with the Allied troops, the senior Soviet Commanders present will immediately establish contact with senior Commanders of the American or British troops, extend to them hearty greetings and in accordance with an agreement among themselves establish a tactical limiting line between the Soviet and Allied Expeditionary troops, to avoid mixing the troops.

3. The Soviet Command agrees to the establishment of a common border between the Soviet troops and the troops of the Allied Expeditionary forces along the line of the Rivers Elbe and Mulde. . . .'

By the time that this message was received, the two fronts had closed appreciably.<sup>1</sup> On 15th April, Stalin had informed the American Ambassador that the Red Army was about to renew the offensive, the main attack aiming in the direction of Dresden and a subsidiary attack at Berlin. The operations began on the 17th, when Rokossovsky, Zhukov and Koniev moved forward from the Oder and Niesse. The first drove on Stettin, the second on Berlin, while the third moved with his right on Berlin and with his centre and left on Torgau and Dresden. Resolute but scattered resistance by the Germans failed completely to check the advance. On 25th April, the Russians entered Stettin, encircled Berlin, and met the Americans at Torgau. Other advanced elements were closing on the Elbe between Wittenberge and Dresden.

Meanwhile, Tolbukhin and Malinovsky pushed into Czechoslovakia and Austria. Following their defeat of the enemy's counter-attack

<sup>1</sup> See Map III, facing p. 162.



in western Hungary, they had crossed the Austrian frontier at the end of March. In the first week of April, they moved along both banks of the Danube; on the 7th, Malinovsky reached the suburbs of Vienna; and by the 13th the Austrian capital, with Bratislava, was completely in his hands. Its fall heralded a retreat by the Germans in the western Carpathians, where they had been under pressure from Tolbukhin and Petrov. By the 26th, the Red Army was moving slowly out of the foothills towards Moravska Ostrava and Brno, whence shallow valleys and plains run for some 120 miles to Prague.

On 24th April, the Russian General Staff sent a further message to Eisenhower.

‘ . . . Please inform General Eisenhower that the immediate plan of the Soviet Command contemplates both the occupation of Berlin, and also cleaning out the German forces from the Eastern shore of the Elbe River North and South of Berlin, and the Vltava (Moldau) (tributary of the Elbe) river valley, where according to information we have, the Germans are concentrating considerable forces. . . . ’

This sentence meant that the Russians would take Prague.

The message perturbed the British Chiefs of Staff. For it appeared to confirm, what they had feared on reading the Russians' other telegram of the 24th,<sup>1</sup> that the General Staff in Moscow did not appreciate that Eisenhower's boundary of the Elbe and Mulde applied only to the central front. There seemed accordingly to be some danger of misunderstanding in the north as well as in the south, the more so since the British were now ready to cross the Elbe in that sector. For over the past ten days the Western Armies had been advancing steadily on both flanks.<sup>2</sup> Twenty-First Army Group continued its operations west of the Elbe, to prepare for the capture of the northern German ports. While one Corps invested Bremen, the other two closed along the western bank of the river, to concentrate for the capture of Hamburg and for a thrust to Lübeck and Wismar. Stiff resistance until the last week in April delayed their progress. But Bremen fell on the 26th, and three days later Second Army crossed the Elbe near Lauenburg, whence one Corps moved north-east against dwindling opposition while another turned along the river to invest Hamburg. At the same time, a Canadian Corps moved slowly from the area of Oldenburg towards Wilhelmshaven. Only in western Holland did the enemy continue to hold out, entrenched behind water barriers and in command of the dykes. The Western Governments accordingly instructed the Supreme Commander to try to arrange for the relief of the population, in return for a halt to his operations; and this he succeeded in doing on 30th April.

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<sup>1</sup> See p. 156 above.

<sup>2</sup> See Map III, facing p. 162.

The Americans and the French were meanwhile moving fast in the south. Between 20th and 22nd April, three Armies advanced between Bayreuth and the area east of Baden. Third U.S. Army aimed south at Regensburg, whence it was to turn south-east along the Danube into Austria; Seventh U.S. Army was directed south across the Danube to the 'Redoubt' in southern Germany and Austria; First French Army was to clear the Swiss border on the flank of Seventh Army, and the Black Forest to Ulm. All three movements prospered. French forces reached the Swiss frontier on 22nd and 23rd April, and Ulm on the 24th. Seventh U.S. Army crossed the Danube between the 22nd and 24th, took Augsburg on the 28th, and Munich on the 30th. Third U.S. Army captured Regensburg on the 26th, and by the end of the month was closing on Passau. By that time, only pockets of resistance remained in southern Germany as far as the Alps.

On 30th April, Eisenhower was therefore able to inform Moscow of the probable lines of demarcation in the north and south, to complement that already agreed in the centre. As the Combined Chiefs of Staff desired, he made the position quite clear in the north.

' . . . 1. Unless developments in the changing situation dictate otherwise, my plans stand as expressed in my message of 21st April.<sup>1</sup>

2. While our present operational positions in the centre are now being adjusted as agreed along the Elbe and Mulde Rivers, I am now launching an operation across the Lower Elbe intended to establish a firm operational east flank on approximately the line Wismar—Schwerin—Domitz. The exact position will be adjusted locally by co-operative action when our forces meet.

3. From the head waters of the Mulde River my forces will hold initially along approximately the 1937 frontiers of Czechoslovakia. Later, if the situation should dictate, these forces may be advanced to the towns of Karlsbad, Pilsen, Budejovice. You will be informed as my operational plans develop. I note that the Soviet forces will be undertaking the cleaning out of the Eastern shores of Elbe and Vltava (Moldau) Rivers in this sector of the front. With knowledge of our mutual plans, adjustment of contacts in this area should be readily made by co-operative action of local commanders as contact becomes imminent.

4. My plans on the southern flank call for an advance to the general area of Linz from which forces will be directed to clean out any resistance continuing to the south. A suitable line for tactical adjustment on this front appears to be the main north-south railway line east of Linz and thence along the valley of the River Enns.

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<sup>1</sup> See pp. 147-9 above.

5. At present, operations farther to the south have not developed enough to indicate suitable probable lines for local adjustment between our forces but action will be taken later to indicate my views on this subject. . . .

6. If at any time operations on your front call for co-operative action by my forces involving a farther advance on my part in order to succeed in our common purpose I shall always be glad to take such action as the situation permits. . . .'

These proposals were acknowledged on 4th May, when the Russian General Staff signified its 'full agreement'. But by that time further developments had taken place. In the north, the British and the Russians had met on 2nd May at Wismar, a few hours after the former had taken the town. Lübeck fell on the same day, and the next day Hamburg surrendered. In the south, the French had crossed the Austrian frontier, and were moving fast through its western provinces. Seventh U.S. Army had penetrated the centre of the 'Redoubt', one Corps reaching Innsbruck on 3rd May, whence it crossed the Brenner to join troops of Fifth Army in Italy, another taking Berchtesgaden and Salzburg on the 4th. Third U.S. Army meanwhile, with elements of First U.S. Army, had entered Austria and Czechoslovakia, and on 4th May its right was a few miles from Linz and its left was preparing to attack Pilsen. The Western Armies were now in sight of the line on which the Supreme Commander had thought of stopping, while the Russians had still not moved far beyond Moravska Ostrava and Brno. They were thus still over a hundred miles from Prague, compared with the Americans' sixty-odd miles. On the morning of 4th May, the Supreme Commander therefore ordered Twelfth Army Group to be prepared if necessary to advance to the line of the upper Elbe and Mulde; and in the afternoon, he sent the following message to Moscow.

' . . . 2. We are about to embark on a thrust into Czechoslovakia to the general line Budweis [Budejovice], Pilsen, Karlsbad and to seize those places.

3. Later we are prepared, if the situation so dictates, to advance in Czechoslovakia to the line of the Vltava (Moldau) and Elbe Rivers to clear the west banks of the Rivers in conjunction with the Soviet move to clear the east banks.'

The answer came the next day, in a letter from General Antonov.

' . . . [on] April 24, 1945, . . . I stated that the Soviet forces will conduct operations for the clearing of German forces from the East bank of the Elbe River North and South of Berlin and from the valley of the Vltava River. What was meant was that the Soviet forces will clear the enemy from both banks (East and West) of the Vltava River.

In the answering letter . . . , General Eisenhower informed us

that the Allied forces will advance in Czechoslovakian territory to the points: Karlsbad, Pilsen, Budejovice.

As a result of this, the Soviet Command has already established the appropriate grouping of its forces and approached the fulfilment of the stated operations.

Yesterday I received your letter, in which you state that General Eisenhower intends . . . to move forward, if the situation requires it, to the line of the Rivers Vltava and Elbe, in order to clear the West bank of the rivers.

In order to avoid a possible confusion of forces, the Soviet Command asks General Eisenhower not to move the Allied forces in Czechoslovakia East of the originally intended line, that is, Budejovice, Pilsen, Karlsbad.

At the same time the Soviet Command, to meet the wishes of General Eisenhower, . . . stopped the advance of its own forces to the Lower Elbe East of the line Wismar, Schwerin, Domitz.

We hope that General Eisenhower in turn will comply with our wishes relative to the advance of his forces in Czechoslovakia.'

On the morning of 6th May, Eisenhower therefore ordered Twelfth Army Group not, after all, to move beyond the line Karlsbad—Pilsen—Budejovice. 'Presume', he added when informing Moscow of this decision, 'Soviet forces can advance rapidly to clear up the situation in the centre of the country.'

The decision to leave central Austria and central Czechoslovakia to the Russians was thus taken by General Eisenhower alone. He was in no way bound by prior orders from the Combined Chiefs of Staff, nor were his decisions after 11th April questioned by them or by the Western Governments. The British Chiefs of Staff confined themselves, from the middle of April, to 'noting' or 'approving' the communications to Moscow, apart from the one occasion on which they wished the Supreme Commander to stress that the line of the Elbe did not necessarily apply to the northern sector. By that time, indeed, they were scarcely in a position to do anything else. The recent dispute on the central thrust had shown the limits to their influence, and had left no doubt of the Americans' reluctance to hamper the Supreme Commander's freedom of action in the last, crowded stage of the campaign. Concurring with his reasoning, and trusting his judgment, the Joint Chiefs of Staff were not inclined to subscribe to the doctrine that the Combined Chiefs of Staff should intervene in the detailed conduct of operations; and, in the circumstances, their definition of responsibility prevailed.

The nature and weight of the Americans' views were indeed shown by the last exchange between London and Washington, on the occupation of Prague. Towards the end of April, the British began to consider the advantages that might accrue from its capture by the Americans. The possession of the capital, if only temporary, might be

expected to yield great results in Czechoslovakia itself; it might also have some effect on the Russians' behaviour in Vienna, where they were now obstructing the arrival of missions from the Western Allies. The British Chiefs of Staff do not seem to have been directly concerned. But the Foreign Office argued a case which coincided with, and supported, the views of the Prime Minister. The Foreign Secretary had already broached the question to the Americans, when he attended the inauguration of the United Nations at San Francisco in the last week of April. On the 30th, Mr. Churchill raised it with the President.<sup>1</sup>

'There can be little doubt that the liberation of Prague and as much as possible of the territory of Western Czechoslovakia by your forces might make the whole difference to the post-war situation in Czechoslovakia, and might well influence that in nearby countries. On the other hand if the Western Allies play no significant part in Czechoslovakian liberation that country will go the way of Yugoslavia.

Of course, such a move by Eisenhower must not interfere with his main operations against the Germans, but I think the highly important political consideration mentioned above should be brought to his attention.'

But the suggestion did not prove welcome. On 28th April, Marshall had already informed Eisenhower that such a proposal might be made, and had added that 'Personally, and aside from all logistic, tactical, or strategical implications, I should be loath to hazard American lives for purely political purposes.' The Supreme Commander answered on the 29th, 'I shall certainly not attempt any move I deem militarily unwise merely to gain a political advantage unless I receive specific orders from the Combined Chiefs of Staff.' As has been seen, these were unlikely to be given; and on 1st May the President replied to Churchill that he approved the Supreme Commander's plan not to move initially beyond Pilsen and Karlsbad. Eisenhower's subsequent proposal of 4th May to advance to Prague, and its rejection by the Russians, were accordingly treated in Washington, and perforce accepted in London, as the responsibility of the theatre Command; and a last message from Churchill to Eisenhower on 7th May, urging a move on the Czech capital, had no effect.

The last advances took place amid rumours and offers of a German surrender. For Wolff's approach from Italy was not the only swallow to herald the spring. In March, an offer reached the British Embassy in Stockholm for a truce with the Western Powers; and early in April, the German commanders in the Hamburg area and in Denmark

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<sup>1</sup> See *Triumph and Tragedy*, p. 442.

were reported to be willing to capitulate. But these and other tentative approaches were no more than encouraging signs. Neither local surrender north of the Alps, nor offers of surrender to the West alone, met the Allies' terms. The German Government or High Command must capitulate, and without conditions to the three great Powers simultaneously.

Such an act, however, was not possible until the end of April. For unconditional surrender depended on Hitler's incapacity or death. Since January 1945, he had been conducting the defence of the Reich from Berlin; and, until mid-April, with his usual deep if erratic confidence. On the 22nd, when the future seemed desperate and when many of the other leaders were despatched north and south, he decided to stay in the capital if necessary to the end. But even under these conditions, he retained some vestige of hope and much of his accustomed power over the machinery of government. Immured in an underground bunker, half-paralyzed with drugs, and with the Russians closing on the streets around him, he continued indeed to dominate the German scene. The succession was all-important; and even now, who could tell what the Fuehrer might not do to a weakling or a traitor? The habit of years was strong. Although Goering and Himmler left Berlin on the 20th with thoughts of peace, the former was soon rendered powerless and the latter could act only in secret, and because he was now convinced that his Leader's approaching death released him from the oath of loyalty.

Hitler's policy, moreover, survived with his power. When Himmler at last decided to take the responsibility for surrender, his thoughts still did not move beyond a capitulation to the West alone. The offer reached the Prime Minister on 25th April. He at once informed the War Cabinet, and with its consent the President;<sup>1</sup> and a few hours later, sent Stalin the news on behalf of them both. With memories of the affair in Italy, Churchill stated unambiguously that the Western Allies would not consider anything but unconditional surrender simultaneously to the three major Powers, and that until such a surrender was received the fighting would continue unabated. Stalin returned a warm message of thanks, and Himmler was told that his offer was useless.

With its rejection, a paralysis descended on the German leaders. The Fuehrer still lived, and none could take the responsibility which was his. But the end was at hand. On the night of 28th/29th April, Hitler composed his political testament; the next morning, he married his devoted companion Eva Braun, who wished to share death as his wife; and on the afternoon of the 30th, when the Russians were only a few hundred yards from his headquarters, he seems to have shot

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<sup>1</sup> For the text of the telephone conversation with the President, see Harry S. Truman, *Year of Decisions*, 1945 (1955), pp. 92-7.

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himself. His body, according to reliable information, was burnt with that of Eva Braun in the garden of the Chancellery.

The Fuehrer's political testament named Admiral Doenitz as his successor—a last expression of his disgust with the Party hierarchy and with the Army. The Admiral learned the news through a telegram from Goebbels on 1st May. On the morning of the 3rd he sent a delegation, headed by Admiral Hans von Friedeburg, to Montgomery's headquarters near Lüneburg; and on the evening of the 4th they signed an instrument of surrender, to become effective at 8 a.m. on the 5th, covering the German armed forces in Holland, north-west Germany, the German islands, Schleswig-Holstein and Denmark. Later on the same evening, von Friedeburg reached Eisenhower's headquarters at Reims, to 'clarify a number of points' leading to surrender. He was informed, in the presence of a Russian officer, that the German High Command must surrender unconditionally and simultaneously to the Western and Eastern commanders. After a last attempt at evasion, Doenitz accepted the inevitable on the night of 6th/7th May; and at 2.41 a.m. on the 7th, General Jodl signed the instrument of surrender on behalf of the German High Command, to take effect at midnight on the 8th/9th. General Bedell Smith signed for the Supreme Commander, a Russian officer for the Russian General Staff, and a French officer as witness. A formal ratification took place in Berlin on 9th May, when Field Marshal Keitel signed for the Germans, Air Chief Marshal Tedder for the Supreme Commander, and Marshal Zhukov for the Russians. After five years and eight months Europe was again at peace, and the victors could turn to consider the problems which its damage and dismemberment had raised.







CHAPTER V  
THE RECONQUEST OF  
CENTRAL BURMA,  
OCTOBER, 1944 - MAY, 1945

(i)

The Plan of Campaign and the  
System of Command

**A**T THE beginning of October 1944, the prospects for the campaign in south-east Asia were uncertain. After long and close debate, a plan had been approved at the Second Quebec Conference ('Octagon') which reconciled the aims of the British and the Americans. The latter, whose contribution to the theatre had always been designed to provide help for China, wished to concentrate on the two tasks necessary to that object: the defence in depth of the northern airfields in India and Burma, and the clearance of the old Burma Road in the extreme north-east of Burma, which would then be connected with India by the road which the Allies were constructing from Ledo as they advanced. The British accepted these commitments. But they had long argued that both must involve the reconquest of central Burma, without which the northern territories themselves could not be held securely; and they were moreover anxious to develop a further campaign to the south, to recapture Malaya including Singapore, and thereafter to enable forces from south-east Asia to reconquer the Netherlands East Indies and possibly to contribute to the main operations against Japan. The paucity of resources had brought these divergent views into frequent conflict throughout the first nine months of 1944, and the dispute had been complicated by a serious disagreement on strategy between the Prime Minister and the British Chiefs of Staff.<sup>1</sup> But the plan accepted at Quebec in September satisfied all parties, and for the first time allowed the two policies in Burma to complement rather than to stultify each other.

The key to the new plan lay in its timing. This may be seen most clearly by looking at it in reverse. It was essential to British strategy in the Far East to recapture Burma and the whole of Malaya (including Singapore) by the spring of 1946, the date taken at this time as

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<sup>1</sup> See Volume V, Chapters III, IV, V, X, XI, XII.

the planning date for the end of the war against Japan.<sup>1</sup> But it was estimated that six months must elapse between the start of the attack on Malaya and the final recapture of Singapore. The attack on Malaya must therefore be launched in the last quarter of 1945, immediately after the end of the south-west monsoon. Six months again must be allowed between the climax of the attack on central Burma and the start of the attack on Malaya, which brought the former operation to March, 1945; and this in turn had to be related to the progress of the advance from northern Burma, which was due to begin in November, 1944.

The reconquest of central Burma was accordingly divided into two main parts. In the autumn of 1944 the campaign embraced three fronts, on all of which Allied forces were advancing slowly after defeating a major attempt by the Japanese to invade India in the summer.<sup>2</sup> In the coastal province of Arakan, one (15th) Corps was moving down the coast in the direction of Akyab; on the central front, Fourteenth Army was driving through the hills north and south of Imphal; and on the northern front, the forces of the Northern Combat Area Command were pushing down from the area of Myitkyina. In the middle of September 1944, the Combined Chiefs of Staff ordered the Supreme Commander, Admiral Mountbatten, to launch an operation ('Capital') aiming at the conquest of the central plain in four phases: the first, lasting from mid-November, 1944 to the end of January 1945, to consist of an advance to the line of the Chindwin in the area Kalewa-Kalemyo; the second, occupying February and the first half of March, to seize the gateway to the Mandalay plain at Yeu with airborne forces, while ground forces deployed across the Chindwin and north of the Irrawaddy in the area Yeu-Shwebo; the third, to gain the line Mandalay-Pakokku; the fourth, 'consolidation of line reached in Phase 3 and exploitation southward.' Throughout the operations, the forces of the Northern Combat Area Command would advance southwards along the eastern flank, with the eventual target of Loilem, south of the Burma Road. These various movements formed the first part of the plan. The second consisted of an assault on Rangoon from the sea and air (operation 'Dracula') to be launched in the middle of March 1945, the forces thereafter moving north towards Fourteenth Army which by then would be attacking the central plain. This attack on Rangoon, which was deemed vital to the success of the whole design, would demand six divisions in all, of which only two could be spared from 'Capital'. The other four must therefore come from outside the theatre, or in other words from Europe. After a close examination of the possibilities, the British Chiefs of Staff were prepared to make two divisions available from north-

<sup>1</sup> See Volume V, p. 494.

<sup>2</sup> See Map IV, facing p. 165.







west Europe and two from the Mediterranean, provided that operations in each of those theatres allowed.<sup>1</sup>

By the third week in September 1944, the British had thus fitted the campaign in Burma satisfactorily into their pattern for the war against Japan. But they had no sooner done so when their plans were entirely upset. The check at Arnhem, and the stalemate in Italy, removed any possibility of sending reinforcements from Europe to Asia, and on 5th October the Prime Minister was obliged to inform Admiral Mountbatten that 'Dracula' in March, 1945 must be cancelled. This meant that it could not take place until after the south-west monsoon, probably in November, and the design for the subsequent attack on Malaya must be correspondingly delayed.

The postponement of 'Dracula' moreover upset the structure of the campaign in Burma itself. Mountbatten reported on 10th October that, owing to the effect of the monsoon on the country around Rangoon, the attack on the city was unlikely now to take place before December, 1945; and meanwhile no serious conjunct operation was possible. It was therefore necessary to devise a series of minor assaults, to fill the interval between the end of the second phase of 'Capital' and the beginning of the proposed 'Dracula', and if possible to complement 'Capital' itself before the monsoon. One such operation was already being considered in London. Mountbatten had brought with him in August, 1944 a plan for the occupation and development of the Cocos Islands,<sup>2</sup> an isolated group some 550 miles to the south-west of Java where aircraft and landing craft could call on their way between Ceylon and Australia, and whence they could reconnoitre and if necessary attack the islands of the Malay Barrier. The project had attracted the Chiefs of Staff, and its details, which were unaffected by the collapse of the main plan, continued to be studied during September and October.

Other plans were meanwhile being hurriedly drawn up. The process was hastened by the Prime Minister, who took the opportunity of his visit to Moscow in October<sup>3</sup> to suggest a meeting with Mountbatten in Cairo on his way home. The talks took place on the 20th, by which time the Supreme Commander was able to present a revised forecast for the next twelve months. The limiting factor was of course the shortage of resources. In September, Mountbatten had been prepared to reduce the forces for 'Capital' by two divisions in order to undertake a timely 'Dracula'<sup>4</sup>; but now that 'Dracula' had been postponed he was no longer willing to gamble on the main operation, and there was therefore no reserve for minor ventures. There was a

<sup>1</sup> For the background to these plans, see Volume V, pp. 486-98.

<sup>2</sup> See *loc. cit.*, p. 493.

<sup>3</sup> See p. 104 above.

<sup>4</sup> See Volume V, p. 531.

prospect, however, that an equivalent force might later be gained from Arakan. 15th Corps, after consolidating in the summer of 1944, had passed to the attack in September, and by the end of that month had removed any threat to the northern airfields and bases. Mountbatten now proposed to maintain the offensive, and to clear northern Arakan by the end of January, 1945 down to and including Akyab. This would free two divisions, and their administrative troops, which might then be used between March and May in an assault on the Kra Isthmus—possibly near Victoria Point—to cut the Japanese communications between Burma and Malaya, and to secure an anchorage and airfields for further attacks both north and south<sup>1</sup>. This assault might be followed in turn by a larger operation, involving four divisions against the area Port Swettenham—Port Dickson, from which to threaten Singapore. Meanwhile, 'Dracula' itself would be staged after all at the turn of the year. By the beginning of 1945, the Allies might thus be in a position to exploit the capture of Rangoon and the clearance of central Burma.

More detailed study was necessary before these proposals could be firmly recommended or approved, and Mountbatten was asked to submit his conclusions as soon as possible. On 29th October he presented a programme which closely followed the earlier estimates.

'... (10) ... My proposals, for which I request early approval, are:

- (a) to carry out phases I and II of 'Capital' certain resources for which are still lacking. Further exploitation will depend on the situation at the time and on the available resources.
- (b) The final clearing of the Arakan down to and including Akyab with the object of releasing two divisions and administrative resources from the Arakan.
- (c) An amphibious operation in March 1945 of the order of two divisions with the object of establishing a forward Naval and Air base on the Kra Isthmus before the beginning of the monsoon. [Either in the Mergui-Tavoy area or at Hastings Harbour and Victoria Point.]
- (d) A post-monsoon 'Dracula'. In addition an amphibious operation down the coast of Malaya as soon as resources arrive, irrespective of the monsoon.'

Code names were assigned to the various operations to be carried out before the monsoon:

- the clearance of Arakan down to Akyab: 'Romulus';
- the seaborne attack on Akyab: 'Talon';
- operations against the Kra Isthmus, in the area Mergui-Tavoy: 'Clinch';

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<sup>1</sup> See Map V, facing p. 167.

operations against the Kra Isthmus, in the area Hastings Harbour-Victoria Point: 'Bamboo'.

This programme, like its many predecessors, could allow of no margin for error. 'Capital' could only just be carried out with the troops and aircraft available on the central and northern fronts, and the other operations would need reinforcements of assault shipping from outside the theatre. Mountbatten estimated that he could provide most of the landing craft for Arakan, but that he would still be short of four landing ships, eighteen landing craft and two hundred amphibious vehicles, all of which should reach Calcutta if possible by mid-December, 1944. The larger operations against the Kra Isthmus in March, 1945 would need an additional assault lift for one division. The Chiefs of Staff were satisfied that they could meet the requirements for Arakan, although not before January, 1945. But they were less certain of their ability to provide the assault shipping for an operation against Malaya. The only surplus in Europe was an American force in the Mediterranean amounting to a lift for one division, for which Wilson, who had now dropped his plans for an attack on the Istrian peninsula, could find no specific use.<sup>1</sup> But it was known that the Joint Chiefs of Staff intended to transfer this force to the Pacific, and they were unlikely to change their minds without good reason. The British Chiefs of Staff themselves were not convinced by the plans for the attack on the Kra Isthmus, which unless completely successful might well absorb more forces than had been expected, prejudicing later assaults to the south. The history of small seaborne operations had not hitherto been particularly happy; and with their recent experiences in mind, the Chiefs of Staff were not inclined to promise too much from Europe in the event of a misfortune. On 17th November they therefore approved operations 'Romulus' and 'Talon', but deferred a decision on 'Clinch' and 'Bamboo' until they had studied the implications more closely. Meanwhile they called for an appreciation of an attack on the Andaman Islands, an alternative which they had considered favourably exactly a year before.<sup>2</sup> On 20th November they approved the separate proposal to occupy and develop the Cocos Islands, which in the event were taken unopposed on 25th March, 1945.

The system of command for the winter campaign in south-east Asia differed in some important respects from that of the year before, not without effect on the campaign itself.<sup>3</sup> Between August and November 1944, the Deputy Supreme Commander and the three

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<sup>1</sup> See pp. 47-56 above.

<sup>2</sup> See Volume V, p. 153.

<sup>3</sup> *Loc. cit.*, pp. 140-6.

Commanders-in-Chief were replaced, the American China-Burma-India theatre disappeared, a new land command was created, and the organization of the Supreme Commander's staff was radically altered. These changes reflected a year's events and experience since the Command had been set up.

From the time that the South-East Asia Command had been created, Admiral Sir James Somerville, as Commander-in-Chief of the British Eastern Fleet, had been its naval commander. In August 1944, he was relieved by Admiral Sir Bruce Fraser. The occasion marked the end in practice of the disagreement between the naval and Supreme Commanders over the control of naval forces on different occasions in the theatre. The responsibility which every naval Commander-in-Chief owes first to the Admiralty for the safety and conduct of his fleet could always be interpreted as limiting, and could always confuse, the powers of a Supreme Commander whose allegiance was to the Combined Chiefs of Staff; particularly when, as in this case, the boundaries of their Commands did not coincide. The constitutional implications are of interest, and are examined briefly elsewhere.<sup>1</sup> It is enough to say here that Somerville was determined not to abandon in any way a responsibility which he had every right to assume, while Mountbatten was as determined to exercise an equal measure of control, subject to the reservations of the Combined Chiefs of Staff, over all of the forces within his theatre. The official relations between the Commander-in-Chief and the Supreme Commander suffered accordingly, and in June, 1944 the difference became pronounced. Somerville went to Washington as head of the British Admiralty Delegation, an important post for which he had been proposed in the spring, and Admiral Sir Bruce Fraser was selected as his successor with the Eastern Fleet. The result was entirely satisfactory, and was maintained when Fraser left the theatre in November, 1944. 'A generous interpretation of my position', Admiral Mountbatten has since recorded, 'by Admiral Sir Bruce Fraser . . . —and, when he went to the Pacific, by Admiral Sir Arthur Power—enabled co-ordination with the other services to be achieved in every department where this was necessary.'

The air command also changed. Air Chief Marshal Sir Richard Peirse retired in November 1944, and was succeeded temporarily by Air Marshal Sir Guy Garrod, until Air Marshal Sir Keith Park arrived in February, 1945.<sup>2</sup> Recent experience had meanwhile led to a revision of the system of command, a new air transport command being formed to support the troops in Burma, and the tactical air forces being reorganized under a new headquarters.

<sup>1</sup> See pp. 353-4 below.

<sup>2</sup> Park was appointed to replace Air Chief Marshal Sir Trafford Leigh-Mallory, who was killed in an air accident on 14th November, 1944 while on his way from Europe to south-cast Asia.

But the most significant change took place in the land command. Mountbatten had long proposed, with little success, that a single Land Forces Commander should be created; and the question was raised again when his Chief of Staff visited England in May, 1944.<sup>1</sup> Two problems were involved: first, the choice of a new commander to replace General Sir George Giffard, commanding Eleventh Army Group; secondly, and more important, the clarification of the position of the Deputy Supreme Commander, whose peculiar combination of duties would otherwise affect any effort to bring the land forces of the theatre under a single authority.

When the South-East Asia Command had been set up under a British commander in August 1943, the Combined Chiefs of Staff had agreed that his Deputy should be American. Since the Americans were interested primarily in China, and had already set up a Command in Asia for her support (the China-Burma-India theatre), they decided to appoint to this new post Lieut.-General Joseph B. Stilwell, who in various capacities controlled all American activities in eastern Asia. At the same time, he was given control over the American air forces in India, reserved for the supply of China, and was placed in command of the Chinese and American troops in northern Burma, in which capacity he operated directly under Mountbatten.<sup>2</sup> This curious amalgam of functions was too complicated for any man, let alone one of Stilwell's morose and excitable temperament, successfully to discharge. Difficulties arose from the start, and in May, 1944 Mountbatten proposed that the General should be relieved of those duties which did not affect his main responsibility as Chief of Staff to the Generalissimo in China. This involved the abolition for operational purposes of a single China-Burma-India theatre, American interests in south-east Asia being represented by an American Deputy Supreme Commander while Stilwell continued to control all American activities in China. The British Chiefs of Staff concurred, and Brooke accordingly approached Marshall on the subject in June. But the discussion proved unsatisfactory, and the British Chiefs of Staff therefore pursued the argument in a memorandum of 22nd June. They recommended that the South-East Asia Command and China should be recognized as two separate operational theatres, with the China-Burma-India theatre retained if necessary for administrative purposes only; that the three appointments of Chief of Staff to the Generalissimo, of commander of the American-Chinese forces in northern Burma, and of Deputy Supreme Commander, South-East Asia Command, should henceforth be separated; that the Deputy Supreme Commander should work in Delhi; and that he should control the American Air

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<sup>1</sup> See Volume V, p. 418.

<sup>2</sup> See *loc. cit.*, pp. 140-1, 145-6, 415-16.

Transport Wing in India on behalf of the authorities in Washington.

The Americans did not reply for some time, for during July and August, 1944 they were themselves involved in an attempt to place Stilwell in active command of the front in China, where the Japanese were now threatening the American airfields. Such an appointment would naturally affect his other responsibilities, and Marshall was therefore anxious to await its issue before continuing the discussion with the British. Meanwhile the domestic aspects of the proposed Land Forces Command were examined closely in London. Mountbatten continued to press for an Allied headquarters which would be capable of controlling operations simultaneously in Burma and to the south, with a subordinate administrative command to supervise transport and supply. After further discussion in August 1944, the Chiefs of Staff decided to replace General Giffard by Lieut.-General Sir Oliver Leese, at that time commanding Eighth Army in Italy. In the middle of September, the Joint Planners reported in favour of the proposed Command, and on the 27th Leese was officially appointed as 'Commander of the Allied Land Forces in S.E.A.C.' Meanwhile, the Supreme Commander had been obliged for over three months himself to co-ordinate the activities of Eleventh Army Group with those of Stilwell's northern forces.

The new Command meant little without the American and Chinese forces; but the uncertainty of Stilwell's future continued to prevent any useful discussion. It was the third week in October before the position suddenly changed. The plans to place Stilwell in command of the Nationalist armies in China had succeeded only in exciting Chiang Kai-shek's ready mistrust, and after a long series of intricate negotiations he was relieved and recalled to an important appointment in the United States. The China-Burma-India theatre at once disappeared with its Commanding General, to be replaced by the Burma-India and China theatres. Lieut.-General Daniel I. Sultan (former Deputy to Stilwell) was given command of the first, and Major (promoted to Lieutenant)-General A. C. Wedemeyer (hitherto Deputy Chief of Staff to Mountbatten) of the second.<sup>1</sup> The American Lieut.-General R. A. Wheeler, hitherto Principal Administrative Officer in the South-East Asia Command, now became its Deputy Supreme Commander. Three Lieutenant-Generals were thus required to relieve Stilwell. As General Marshall put it in his subsequent report, 'It was deemed necessary in the fall of 1944 to . . . give him a respite from attempting the impossible.'<sup>2</sup>

British efforts now turned on ensuring that Sultan came under Leese's operational control. Marshall was unwilling 'for several

<sup>1</sup> See Appendix III(B) below.

<sup>2</sup> *Biennial Report of the Chief of Staff of the United States Army, July 1st, 1943 to June 30th, 1945, to the Secretary of War* (N.Y., 1947), p. 215.

reasons' to commit any arrangement to paper, which indeed might have been unwise in the political ferment that followed Stilwell's recall. Mountbatten accordingly proposed to remind the Generalissimo that in October, 1943 he had agreed to place all Chinese forces within Burma under the Supreme Commander's operational command,<sup>1</sup> and to ask him and Wedemeyer to recognize Leese as the Supreme Commander's delegate for all Allied land forces within the theatre. Wedemeyer supported this approach, and early in November Chiang Kai-shek agreed 'that Sir Oliver should exercise operational control in the name of the Supreme Allied Commander over the Chinese forces which are under Sultan's direct control'. On 8th November, the Joint Chiefs of Staff concurred in Leese's appointment, and on the 11th he received his directive from Mountbatten. The new Command included Fourteenth Army (4th and 33rd Corps), 15th Corps in Arakan, all formations in northern Burma, the new administrative command, and Ceylon Army Command. Its headquarters were at Kandy, with advanced headquarters near Calcutta for the campaign in Burma.

Other changes occurred in the same period, of which the most important was that in December, 1944 the British Lieut.-General F. A. M. Browning relieved Lieut.-General Sir Henry Pownall, who was seriously ill, as Chief of Staff to the Supreme Commander.<sup>2</sup> The organization for planning was also radically changed as the result of a year's experience. Mountbatten had originally set up a Supreme Commander's planning staff, distinct from the Commanders-in-Chief's planners. This was abolished as a separate entity in September, and all planning staffs were merged into a single organization composed of the three Service Directors of Plans with their assistants, nominated by the Supreme Commander, and responsible collectively to him and individually to their respective Commanders-in-Chief.<sup>3</sup> A Joint Logistical Planning Committee was set up to advise the Joint Planners on matters of supply and transport. The new organization worked more smoothly in—perhaps because of—the new conditions than its predecessor had worked in the old; and with the exception of the air, there was no further important development in the machinery of the Command for the rest of the war.

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<sup>1</sup> See Volume V, p. 417.

<sup>2</sup> See Appendix III(B) below.

<sup>3</sup> For a discussion of this change, see p. 356 below.

(ii)

## Operations to January, 1945

In November 1944, the enemy in Burma disposed of three Armies under the command of Burma Area Army headquarters in Rangoon. They consisted of ten Japanese divisions plus two brigades, with two divisions of the 'Indian National Army': in all 220,000 men, compared with some 135,000 in the autumn of 1944. Seven of the Japanese, and one of the Indian, divisions were on the central front. In the rest of south-east Asia, the enemy had:

Sumatra:	80,000 men (including two operational divisions).
Andamans:	} 25,000 men (garrison).
Nicobars:	
Malaya:	40,000 men (largely garrison).
Siam:	} 45,000 men (including one operational division).
Indo-China:	

The Allies had on the fronts in Burma ten British and Commonwealth divisions plus five brigades, one large American brigade, and five Chinese divisions (of greatly inferior strength to British divisions) directly under Allied command. Five of the British and Commonwealth divisions were on the central front. There were a further three divisions and other units in India, in reserve for the campaign. The opponents were thus not unequally matched on land, particularly as the Allies' superiority in armour could not be fully developed until they had gained the open country beyond the Chindwin and the Irrawaddy.

The Allies, however, were greatly superior in the air. The British and American aircraft at the disposal of the South-East Asia Command amounted to some 2,500 (British 1,269, American 1,230), of which some 1,850 were accounted 'operational' at any one time. They were not however all reserved exclusively for the campaign in Burma, but had also to serve the needs of India and of the Chinese troops advancing on Burma from Yunnan. An estimate of the Japanese air strength in Burma can be given only for the end of September, 1944. It was then thought to consist of sixty-five fighters, twelve reconnaissance aircraft and very few bombers, probably less than ten. A further 275 fighters, seventy-eight bombers and twenty-seven reconnaissance aircraft were thought to be in other parts of south-east Asia. This formed a sharp contrast to the relative positions a year before. The Allies now enjoyed a superiority in the air amounting to supremacy, of which they took full advantage to offset the difficulties of the terrain in the campaign of 1944-45.



Control of the sea had also passed to the Allies. The Eastern Fleet had grown in the course of the year, until in the late summer of 1944 it formed a balanced force around five battleships and four fleet carriers. Such of the Japanese Fleet as had earlier been based on Singapore<sup>1</sup> had left in October 1944, and only some cruisers and small units—a minelayer and some minesweepers, escorts and submarine chasers, and some coastal forces—now remained in the Malay Barrier and the Bay of Bengal. The enemy could therefore neither undertake an important action, nor oppose the British Fleet, without reinforcement from the Pacific. But the presence of a Japanese Fleet had made no more difference in the summer of 1944 than its absence made thereafter. While British submarines interrupted the coastal traffic off Malaya and in the Malacca Straits, and coastal forces supported 15th Corps in Arakan, the Eastern Fleet itself ranged unopposed to the eastward, often in indirect support of General MacArthur's operations in the south-west Pacific. It also swept the Indian Ocean for the enemy's submarine supply ships, while the escort forces steadily reduced the activities of the submarines themselves. The Eastern Fleet was reduced in strength in November 1944, when the British Pacific Fleet was formed, and was renamed the East Indies Fleet; but it continued its activities unopposed, protecting from a distance the close naval support for the campaign in Burma.

The position in northern Burma had improved steadily during the monsoon.<sup>2</sup> The Allies had achieved the unprecedented task of maintaining the offensive on the central and northern fronts during the rains, and in Arakan 15th Corps had been engaged on limited offensive operations since September. By the end of October, 1944 it stood in the Mayu range with three divisions near the Maungdaw-Buthidaung road, and in the east had re-entered the Kaladan valley. The fresh orders of November thus found the Corps with the initiative in its hands and in a good position to attack.

The operations on the central front had meanwhile developed fast. Early in August, having cleared the Imphal plain, Fourteenth Army (its divisions now under command of 33rd Corps alone, while 4th Corps' headquarters were withdrawn for rest) was ordered to proceed towards the Chindwin on three separate lines as far south as Kalewa, and if possible to force a bridgehead in that position. Two of these operations were completed in the next three months. One division pushed down the Tiddim road, reaching Kalemyo in the middle of November; a second thrust southward down the Kabaw valley from Tamu, to join its companion at Kalemyo and thence to attack and take Kalewa early in December; and a third, exploiting a bridgehead farther up the Chindwin which advanced troops had

<sup>1</sup> See Volume V, p. 440.

<sup>2</sup> For the operations described in this chapter, see Map IV, facing p. 165.

gained earlier, began to advance into the plain towards the end of November.

By the beginning of December, Fourteenth Army had thus virtually carried out the plan devised in August, and with a firm foothold across the Chindwin, and a strong concentration at Kalewa, was well placed to enter on the next phase of 'Capital'.<sup>1</sup> Its commander, General Sir William Slim, had formed his plans on the assumption that the Japanese would defend central Burma in the plain between the Chindwin and the Irrawaddy, thereby forcing him to mount his offensive in the broken and difficult country to the west of the Chindwin, where he calculated that poor communications could maintain only 4½ divisions out of the 6½ at his disposal. He therefore intended to gain a firm foothold on the plain, before the enemy could recover from his defeat in the mountains, by directing 33rd and 4th Corps (whose headquarters were again in operation) on the area Yeu-Shwebo and Monywa, one force advancing from Kalewa and one in a south-easterly sweep via Indaw. The enemy would then be held in the bend of the two rivers, where he could be destroyed to the north of Mandalay. It seemed likely at first that Fourteenth Army might also be given airborne troops; but this proved impossible in December, partly because the necessary aircraft were no longer available,<sup>2</sup> and partly because the formations, weakened in the battle of Imphal, could not be re-formed in time. Their absence, however, did not affect the earlier stages of the main plan. The division already across the Chindwin, under command of 4th Corps, moved fast to the east, its left joining General Sultan's troops from the north near Indaw on 16th December, its right reaching Wuntho a few days later. It then swung south towards the two divisions of 33rd Corps, which had meanwhile crossed the Chindwin near and south of Kalewa, and had advanced on the left towards Yeu. On 26th December, it again passed under command of 33rd Corps, after an advance of 192 miles in twenty days.

While Fourteenth Army had thus bitten deep into phase 2 of 'Capital' by the end of the year, the forces in the north had virtually completed phase I.<sup>3</sup> Myitkyina had fallen on 3rd August after a severe siege, and during the rest of August and September Stilwell cleared the area immediately to the south, brought the pipeline and the road to Myitkyina, and re-formed his force for a further three-fold advance under Sultan to the Irrawaddy. On the right, one British division (which had been transferred to his command in July), with one Chinese division in reserve, was to move down the railway to the area Katha-Indaw; in the centre, one Chinese division was to follow

<sup>1</sup> See p. 166 above.

<sup>2</sup> See p. 182 below.

<sup>3</sup> See p. 166 above.



PLATE IV. COMMANDERS IN SOUTH-EAST ASIA

*Left to right: General Slim, General Wheeler, Admiral Mountbatten, Admiral Power, Air Marshal Park, General Browning.*



the railway to Hopin, and thence strike south-east to the Irrawaddy at Shwegu; while on the left, two Chinese divisions (now forming First Chinese Army) were to push down the Myitkyina-Bhamo track to Bhamo, so as to clear the most direct line to the old Burma Road. All these operations went well. The British division on the right reached Katha and Indaw in mid-December, where it was joined by the division from 4th Corps.<sup>1</sup> One brigade then crossed the Irrawaddy and struck to the south-east. The Chinese in the centre crossed the Irrawaddy, and in mid-December reached Siu some forty-eight miles to the south, where they halted before being withdrawn from the campaign.<sup>2</sup> But the most important gains were made in the east. The early stages of the advance were not contested, and throughout October First Chinese Army pushed down towards Bhamo. Here it met stronger opposition, but after a leisurely investment the town fell on 15th December, and by the end of the month the Chinese had reached a point seven miles north of Namhkam. The strong American brigade meanwhile cleared the area between Bhamo and Shwegu. The enemy's resistance around Bhamo and Namhkam was clearly designed to protect the approaches to the old Burma Road; it also covered an attempt to counter-attack the Chinese force now advancing from Yunnan, while the Japanese forces on the central front consolidated new positions.

The armies were naturally elated by their swift and dramatic successes. But the very speed of events in December, particularly on the central front, showed that the main work still lay ahead. Although the Allies did not know the enemy's design, they suspected that he would no longer try to stand north of the Irrawaddy, but would fight delaying actions while withdrawing to positions beyond. Slim therefore recast his plan. He was now faced by the task of forcing a great river, without the necessary equipment for an opposed crossing and against a strong enemy on the farther bank. He therefore proposed to make several crossings, one of which would be a feint in strength, and to rely on measures of deception to catch the enemy on the wrong foot. The plan involved a bold redistribution of Fourteenth Army. The main body of 33rd Corps was to occupy, and later to cross from, the northern bank of the Irrawaddy between Monywa and Mandalay. Meanwhile, its northernmost division, recently joined from 4th Corps,<sup>3</sup> would move east from Shwebo to force a bridgehead across the river well to the north of Mandalay. The enemy would thus expect a frontal attack by 33rd Corps, assisted on the left flank by 4th Corps, of which this division was known to form a part. But meanwhile the reconstituted 4th Corps was to move down-country

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<sup>1</sup> See p. 176 above.

<sup>2</sup> See pp. 179-80 below.

<sup>3</sup> See p. 176 above.

west of the Chindwin to the right flank of 33rd Corps, and to establish a bridgehead across the Irrawaddy at Pakokku whence to attack the communications' centre of Meiktila, some sixty miles south of Mandalay. If this movement could be kept secret, the enemy would then find himself surprised in strength on the flank, his communications and main escape route cut by a highly mobile force, and his main army brought to battle in the Mandalay plain. The operational orders were issued verbally on 18th December, and 4th Corps began to move in the following week.

The success of the plan rested on three assumptions: that the air lift for the forward troops, which was likely to involve the use of all available air transport, would be fully maintained; that advanced airfields would be rapidly developed near the battle both in central Burma and in Arakan; and that the Allied forces in Arakan and on the northern front would continue to engage the Japanese divisions which could otherwise be sent to the central front. Fresh operations had already begun in Arakan. The plans for 'Romulus' and 'Talon'<sup>1</sup> were complete by 27th November, and on 12th December 15th Corps began to advance. By the end of the month, one of its divisions had pushed down both sides of the Mayu Range, assisted by a flotilla of river craft and by coastal bombardment in the south, to occupy the peninsula and the eastern shore of the Mayu river. The northern approaches to Akyab were thus secured by the end of the year. This advance was supported by the main body of a second division, which on 15th December captured Buthidaung, thereby opening the transverse Maungdaw-Buthidaung road, and thence struck south-east across the head of the Mayu river to Kanzauk and the lower reaches of the Kaladan river, which it reached early in January, 1945. Meanwhile, a third division of 15th Corps advanced down the Kaladan valley on both sides of the river, and after encountering heavy resistance on the western bank at Kyauktaw, consolidated on the eastern bank opposite Kanzauk at the end of December before resuming the advance. At the end of the year all of these operations were well ahead of time; and Akyab itself, with the coastal plain where airfields could be prepared, was within reach of 15th Corps.

But Slim's other assumptions were destined to be disturbed by a series of events which lay beyond his control. In May 1944, soon after Chiang Kai-shek had consented to release his Yunnan force for operations in Burma,<sup>2</sup> the Japanese had begun an offensive from the line of the Peking-Canton railway against the American airfields in China. The operations were clumsily handled; but the mass of Chinese troops, suffering as usual from an apathetic or ignorant command, failed to offer effective resistance, and after a temporary

<sup>1</sup> See p. 168 above.

<sup>2</sup> See Volume V, pp. 416-17.

check in July the Japanese advanced steadily towards Kweilin and Liuchow, overrunning the advanced airfields and threatening the rest. By the time that Wedemeyer relieved Stilwell in October, he was faced with the immediate prospect of losing both bases, and with the further possibility of having to surrender Kweiyang on the Burma Road. In that case there seemed nothing to stop the enemy from reaching Chungking or Kunming; and while the loss of the capital might perhaps be accepted, the capture of the air terminal would mean the end of air supply from Burma and possibly the end of the war in China.

It was not surprising in these circumstances that the Generalissimo and Wedemeyer should have turned to the Chinese and American resources in the South-East Asia Command, whose *raison d'être* had always been the support of China. In their view the Japanese advance could be stopped only by trained formations, and Chiang Kai-shek therefore wished to transfer three of his best divisions from Sultan's command, where they had received the unique benefits of American training and of experience in attack. By 21st November, Lieut.-General Adrian Carton de Wiart, representing the Prime Minister and Admiral Mountbatten in Chungking,<sup>1</sup> had wind of this move, and Mountbatten was warned accordingly. At the same time, Wedemeyer decided that he must have a greater air lift for the re-disposition and supply of his front, and on the 22nd he asked Mountbatten to release two of his American combat cargo squadrons, of twenty-five aircraft each, for the period 25th November to 15th January. Mountbatten feared that this transfer might prejudice the immediate future of his operations, which were already pinched for air transport, and he preferred to lend a Group of forty-eight bombers which was then reserved for the support of 'Talon' in February, 1945.<sup>2</sup> The Combined Chiefs of Staff accepted the alternative after a brief exchange, and on 27th November Mountbatten was told to arrange the details with Wedemeyer. But meanwhile events were moving fast in China, and on the 23rd the Generalissimo made his request for at least two of the active Chinese divisions on the northern front in Burma, naming one which at that moment was advancing south of Shwegu and one which was investing Bhamo.<sup>3</sup> Mountbatten at once protested that this might delay the northern advance, with grave effects on 'Capital'; and the authorities in London strongly supported him, to the extent of composing for the President's eye the draft of a message to Chiang Kai-shek. But as the news from China continued to grow worse, the Americans felt unable to deny the Generalissimo the right to withdraw his troops, and the Prime Minister

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<sup>1</sup> *Loc. cit.*, p. 144.

<sup>2</sup> See p. 168 above.

<sup>3</sup> See p. 177 above.

could not but agree. The Joint Chiefs of Staff, however, consented to ask Wedemeyer to arrange the transfer of troops with as little disturbance as possible to Mountbatten, and with this support Wedemeyer was able to substitute a Chinese division in reserve in northern Burma for one of those actively engaged.

The transfer of the two divisions was held to be a matter of urgency. It thus involved a substantial measure of air transport. Wedemeyer was of course entitled to call on the American air forces in India, whose presence there had been designed for just such an emergency; and on 1st December the Joint Chiefs of Staff proposed to authorize him to 'call on Sultan for any United States air forces including A.T.C. [Air Transport Command] or other United States resources required for the transport and support of the two divisions and to meet other requirements arising out of the present emergency in China'. This formula aroused British fears of a steady and unforeseeable drain on the resources of the South-East Asia Command, and the Chiefs of Staff suggested that Wedemeyer should be asked to report his requirements before he received permission to satisfy them. The Joint Chiefs of Staff, not unnaturally, refused to entertain such a proposal; but they consented to add a rider to Wedemeyer's instructions, asking him to limit his demands to those aircraft not actively employed or urgently required by the South-East Asia Command, 'unless no other means of meeting his emergency requirements can be found'. This provision failed to satisfy the British; but they could do nothing more, and the orders were accordingly sent to Wedemeyer on 4th December.

By 5th December, Mountbatten's air commanders had arranged to reserve two troop carrier squadrons for the transport of the two divisions to China; and the troops were accordingly removed over the next three weeks. The next day, following the orders from Washington, Wedemeyer asked for two combat cargo squadrons in addition. Mountbatten met the demand immediately, and further consented a few days later to leave in China a third combat cargo squadron which had earlier been transferred to the Yunnan force,<sup>1</sup> and which he had recently hoped to use again in Burma. In a matter of some two and a half weeks, the South-East Asia Command had therefore lost the use of

two Chinese divisions,  
two combat cargo squadrons, and a third already with the Yunnan force,  
two troop-carrier squadrons until at least 1st January,  
one Group of bombers, of which eighteen had so far been withdrawn.

By 8th December, Wedemeyer was able to forecast the probable

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<sup>1</sup> See Volume V, p. 414.



extent of his demands. So far as he could foresee, these would amount to five combat cargo squadrons, four in China and one in support in Burma or Assam. The Generalissimo might also require a third Chinese division from Burma, although this proved later not to be the case. Mountbatten could now consider the probable effect of these diversions on his three sets of plans—'Capital', 'Romulus'/'Talon', and 'Clinch'/'Bamboo'.<sup>1</sup> Operations in the north were unlikely to be affected immediately by the withdrawal of two divisions of which only one was in action, and there was no reason to suppose that Sultan would not soon reach the Burma Road to join hands with the Yunnan force. But the pressure on the Japanese must be fully maintained to prevent them from reinforcing on the Irrawaddy, and Mountbatten accordingly considered stiffening the northern front with a division in reserve from 4th Corps. This in turn must be replaced from India, where the theatre had by now only one division in reserve, itself already earmarked for the seaborne operations in March, 1945. It was clearly unwise in the current uncertainty to count for these operations on 15th Corps in Arakan, which might be needed for other purposes; and the first effect of the transfer of the Chinese divisions was therefore the cancellation of the attack on the Kra Isthmus.<sup>2</sup> Operation 'Clinch' had indeed already been abandoned at the end of November in favour of the less ambitious 'Bamboo'; and on 6th December Mountbatten decided reluctantly to postpone all seaborne operations, against the Kra Isthmus or the Andamans, until after the south-west monsoon.

The operations in Arakan had also to be reviewed. Wedemeyer reported to Marshall on 13th December, when supporting his demands of the 8th, that in his opinion 'adequate and appropriate resources will remain in S.E.A.C. to accomplish Phase II of 'Capital'<sup>3</sup> even after the withdrawal of two or three Chinese divisions and six or seven transport air squadrons. 'Romulus' and 'Talon', however, would probably have to be postponed or changed in scope or context.' The British Chiefs of Staff thereupon inquired if Mountbatten agreed with this remark. On 21st December, he replied emphatically that he did not. The prosecution of 'Romulus' remained essential to the success of Fourteenth Army's plans, while its cancellation or curtailment would probably release fewer British than Japanese. So far indeed from hedging in Arakan, Mountbatten was engaged in planning with his commanders how best to exploit the favourable situation. Their intelligence now informed them that the Japanese garrison on Akyab had been drastically reduced, to reinforce the enemy under attack in the Kaladan valley.<sup>4</sup> On 27th December, they decided

<sup>1</sup> See pp. 168-9 above.

<sup>2</sup> In the event, the shortage of transport aircraft did not enable Mountbatten to move the division in reserve from the central to the northern front.

<sup>3</sup> See p. 166 above.

<sup>4</sup> See p. 178 above.

accordingly to land on the island on 3rd January, in the hope that it would fall to a surprise assault and thereby render unnecessary a full scale 'Talon' in February. The authorities in London fully supported these conclusions.

The withdrawal of aircraft for China had more serious effects than the withdrawal of troops. The two combat cargo squadrons had to be replaced immediately by two British transport squadrons from India, which were then engaged in preparing for airborne operations north of the Irrawaddy. No substitute could be found, and Fourteenth Army was thus deprived of the benefits of such a diversion both then and in the immediate future. The temporary loss of the cargo squadrons, moreover, involving some 1,300 sorties over a period of three weeks, delayed the build-up of supplies on the central front by a corresponding period, with effects that were to be felt later. Provided, however, that no more aircraft were withdrawn, Mountbatten reported that Slim could proceed throughout January and February; but should a further withdrawal take place, not only might it prove fatal to the first stages of the forthcoming battle, but it might even lead to a retreat to the western bank of the Chindwin so as to shorten the line of supply. Mountbatten therefore asked the British Chiefs of Staff to prevent any further transfer of troops from his theatre, to make good his three combat cargo squadrons by 1st March, when a greater measure of air supply would be required, and to limit the transfer of the bomber Group to eighteen aircraft until 'Talon' had been completed.<sup>1</sup>

The British Chiefs of Staff agreed with Mountbatten's analysis of the situation. By the middle of December, moreover, the position in China seemed to have eased. The Japanese had recently withdrawn from some of their forward positions, and the latest information suggested that they might temporarily have reached the limit of their advance. Although the position was still grave, the threat to Kweiyang seemed to have receded. While the date of return of the aircraft already in China could probably not be settled as yet, the Chiefs of Staff therefore suggested to Washington that Wedemeyer should be told not to take more. The whole position could then be reviewed towards the end of January 1945, when events should have developed far enough to take a final decision. This did not satisfy Mountbatten. 'The speed of advance into central Burma', he reported on 1st January, 'is such that 14th Army are about to enter the Mandalay Plain. Exploitation south from Meiktila-Mandalay is already under examination. It is urgent to know now what logistical backing can be counted upon at least four months before this exploitation can proceed. The advance of the army into Burma depends absolutely on air supply because the land lines of communication are inadequate.' The British

<sup>1</sup> See p. 179 above.

Chiefs of Staff thereupon again urged the Americans to agree to the return of the three combat cargo squadrons by 1st March; but it was 22nd January before a reply was received.

By that time Mountbatten's demands had become more pressing. As the shape of the forthcoming battle became clearer in January, the commanders in the theatre concluded that at least a hundred extra aircraft would be needed to support Fourteenth Army during the next two months. Another forty seemed likely to be needed for the supply of the population in the central plains, so that a total of 140 must be found from outside the theatre. One hundred transports equalled four combat cargo squadrons, and Mountbatten urged on 11th January that they should be made available as follows:

- Two squadrons by 1st February,
- One squadron by mid-February,
- One squadron by 1st March.

With these reinforcements, the Supreme Commander felt confident, despite the delay to which he had already been subjected, of turning his advantage into a major victory, resulting in the capture of Mandalay and the destruction of the main Japanese army in Burma. He considered the decision to be 'of such overwhelming consequence' that, despite advice to the contrary from the British Chiefs of Staff, he decided to send his new Chief of Staff to London to press for a quick answer.

General Browning arrived in England on 15th January, and on the 18th the Chiefs of Staff sent an important signal to the Joint Staff Mission in Washington.

'The outlook in Burma has improved out of all recognition. Our advance has gathered such momentum that there are excellent prospects of Mountbatten routing the Japanese in the Mandalay area, and a reasonable chance of his reaching Rangoon overland. If this can be achieved it would shorten the Burma campaign by many months, dispense with 'Dracula',<sup>1</sup> free substantial land forces for further operations much earlier than previously expected, and open the Western end of the Burma road. If, however, the Japanese do not fight at Mandalay we should, after crossing the Irrawaddy, be faced with our major battle outside Rangoon. Forward maintenance has always been the bugbear in Burma and we have seen from previous experience that the only satisfactory way of ensuring maintenance of forces in that country at the end of a long L of C is by providing sufficient transport aircraft. This will apply particularly if the main battle takes place outside Rangoon. Failure to meet Admiral Mountbatten's request may therefore well make the difference between rapid and complete victory and a stalemate,

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<sup>1</sup> See p. 166 above.

which would prolong the campaign by many months. It is clear therefore that we must exploit success in Burma provided that this can be done without detriment to our first object of bringing the German war to an end at the earliest possible date.

2. Now that the immediate danger in China has receded and no renewed threat to Kweiyang is imminent, Wedemeyer should be able, without detriment to his operations, to release by the dates [requested by Mountbatten] the three squadrons which were loaned from S.E.A.C. to China. We feel that the difference this will make in making possible a probable major success against the Japanese in Burma far outweighs any disadvantage, which should not now amount to more than inconvenience, in China.

. . . 4. You should therefore draw the U.S. Chiefs of Staff's attention to our previous telegram . . .,<sup>1</sup> to the proposals in which we have not yet received their agreement, and impress upon them the importance we attach in meeting Mountbatten's requests and notifying him accordingly as soon as possible. . . . You should therefore invite the U.S. Chiefs of Staff. . . .

To instruct Wedemeyer to return to S.E.A.C. . . . two combat cargo squadrons by 1st February, and one further squadron by 14th February. . . .'

The Joint Chiefs of Staff agreed to pass this request to Wedemeyer, and by 21st January the latter felt himself able to return two of the squadrons in a week's time. He still wished, and was allowed, to retain the third squadron in China. Mountbatten had thus obtained the first instalment of the force he required. The rest was provided from British sources. One squadron of twenty-five transports was sent from the Mediterranean, and a second squadron of thirty was diverted while on passage to the newly formed British Pacific Fleet. The Chiefs of Staff also decided on 26th January to strengthen the eight British transport squadrons in south-east Asia, from twenty-five to thirty aircraft apiece. In all, Mountbatten was reinforced by 1st March by 145 aircraft, or five more than he had demanded. He could now approach with more confidence the climax of the battle for central Burma.

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<sup>1</sup> See p. 183 above.

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## The New Directive, and Operations to May, 1945

The rapid progress of the campaign had overtaken the Combined Chiefs of Staff's directive of September 1944,<sup>1</sup> for the first two phases of 'Capital' had already been completed in the main, and the later phases might soon merge in a general pursuit. The British Chiefs of Staff were therefore anxious to issue a fresh directive. As in the previous September, an opportunity arose to discuss the new orders with the Americans, when the Western Allies met at Malta at the end of January before proceeding to Yalta.<sup>2</sup> On 31st January, the British circulated their draft.

1. Your first object is to liberate Burma at the earliest date. (To be known as operation 'X'.)
2. Subject to the accomplishment of this object your next main task will be the liberation of Malaya and the opening of the Straits of Malacca. (To be known as operation 'Y'.)
3. In view of your recent success in Burma, and of the uncertainty of the date of the final defeat of Germany, you must aim at the accomplishment of your first object with the forces at present at your disposal. This does not preclude the despatch of further reinforcements from the European theatre should circumstances make this possible.
4. You will prepare a programme of operations for the approval of the Combined Chiefs of Staff.'

These proposals opened a new chapter in the history of the South-East Asia Command. For the first time since it had been formed, no mention was made of China, but only of operations to the south. They therefore raised the familiar question of the use of American resources in a new and direct form. The problem had indeed already been adumbrated, as was so often the case, in a disagreement over procedure. During the emergency in China in December, Wedemeyer was authorized to make his demands for aircraft through Sultan to Mountbatten. This raised a protest from the British Chiefs of Staff that the allocation of resources between theatres was a matter for the Combined Chiefs of Staff, which in turn led the Americans into a defence of Wedemeyer's position. They recalled that in January 1944, when Mountbatten had had occasion to reorganize his air command, the Joint Chiefs of Staff had specifically reserved to themselves, and to their agent in south-east Asia, the right to reassign units from the American air

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<sup>1</sup> See pp. 165-6 above.

<sup>2</sup> See p. 78 above.

forces in India to those in China;<sup>1</sup> and argued that this reservation now covered any transfer for which Wedemeyer might call. But the British wished to be reassured that the authority of the Combined Chiefs of Staff could not indefinitely be evaded by these means, and on 23rd December the Americans proposed a formula to safeguard the interests of both theatres.

‘. . . Should the S.A.C.S.E.A. [Mountbatten] report that proposed diversions from his theatre would materially limit the execution of operation ‘Capital’, the decision on such a move would lie with the Combined Chiefs of Staff. Should, however, a situation develop in China which, in the opinion of the United States Joint Chiefs of Staff is one of extreme urgency, such a diversion could be made on the direction of the United States Joint Chiefs of Staff without awaiting the final decision of the Combined Chiefs of Staff.’

The Joint Chiefs of Staff added privately that their sole aim was to ensure quick action in a grave emergency in China, which was less likely to upset progress in Burma than the greater diversions that might prove necessary if such action were delayed. But the British felt strongly that the question could no longer admit of compromise, and it was with reluctance that they agreed on 29th December to accept the American formula ‘as an interim measure’. They insisted, however, that the words ‘operation “Capital”’ should be replaced by the phrase ‘approved operations or place any substantial part of his forces in jeopardy’. Meanwhile, the Joint Chiefs of Staff refused to waive their rights in the original memorandum so long as they thought the situation required it.

The dispute on procedure revealed the gulf on strategy still existing between the two Governments, and when the Combined Chiefs of Staff met at Malta the Americans were anxious to define their position. When the British proposed their draft directive, Marshall remarked at once that ‘the question of a directive to the Supreme Commander should be linked with the problem of the allocation of resources between the India-Burma and China theatres. . . . He felt that the situation was developing to a point where the resources of the China and Burma-India theatres would be separated. United States resources required for China would not be available for operations in Malaysia.’ He was therefore prepared to agree to the British proposals only so long as they were accompanied by a statement governing the future employment of American forces. This read as follows.

‘The primary military object of the United States in the China and India-Burma theatres is the continuance of aid to China on a scale that will permit the fullest utilisation of the area

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<sup>1</sup> See Volume V, p. 145.

and resources of China for operations against the Japanese. United States resources are deployed in India-Burma to provide direct or indirect support for China. These forces and resources participate not only in operating the base and the line of communications for United States and Chinese forces in China, but also constitute a reserve immediately available to China without permanently increasing the requirements for transport of supplies to China.

The United States Chiefs of Staff contemplate no change in their agreement to S.A.C.S.E.A.'s use of resources of the United States India-Burma theatre in Burma when this use does not prevent the fulfilment of their primary object of rendering support to China including protection of the line of communication. If, in the opinion of the British Chiefs of Staff, any transfer of forces contemplated by the United States Chiefs of Staff will jeopardise British forces engaged in approved operations in Burma, the transfer will be subject to discussion in the Combined Chiefs of Staff.

The United States Chiefs of Staff propose acceptance of the foregoing as the agreed policy with respect to United States resources in the India-Burma theatre.

In light of the above, the statement in the directive for Admiral Mountbatten proposed by the British Chiefs of Staff . . . that he will aim at the liberation of Burma at the earliest date "with the forces at present at his disposal", there is danger of a misunderstanding on the part of Admiral Mountbatten.

United States Chiefs of Staff recognise that Admiral Mountbatten should have available all possible information in connection with preparing his programme of operations. The Draft Directive . . . is therefore agreed to with the understanding that he will be informed of the policy contained in this memorandum. Admiral Mountbatten will continue to be informed through General Sultan of plans and requirements of the China theatre involving transfers of United States resources in India-Burma.'

Replying to questions on this paper, Marshall redefined the American position with a slight change of emphasis. 'It was meant,' he stated, 'to make it quite clear that the employment of United States forces outside Burma must be the subject of fresh agreement, and that Admiral Mountbatten must not be led to assume that they would be available to him.' The British Chiefs of Staff then declared themselves content with the paper, which in view of their ally's position was indeed the best they could expect. It at least provided for consultation by the Combined Chiefs of Staff in the event of a transfer of resources, and did not completely bar the door to the further employment of those resources to the south. They asked, however, that the last sentence of paragraph 2 of the American paper should be changed to read:

'Any transfer of forces engaged in approved operations in progress in Burma which is contemplated by the United States Chiefs of Staff and which, in the opinion of the British Chiefs of Staff, would jeopardise those operations, will be subject to discussion by the Combined Chiefs of Staff.'

This amendment was accepted, and the British thereupon withdrew a paper of their own on the same subject which had largely repeated their earlier objections to unilateral action. The new directive was sent to Mountbatten on 3rd February, 1945, together with the first two paragraphs of the revised American memorandum, to which his attention was drawn.

Mountbatten was naturally disappointed by the statement from the Joint Chiefs of Staff, which he considered to have placed him in a difficult position. 'In our plans', he later remarked, 'we could either regard the great American air resources, and the not inconsiderable Chinese ground forces, as being held in reserve for the Generalissimo, and leave them out of the account in case we should lose them; or else we could plan on the assumption that the British Chiefs of Staff would succeed in persuading the United States Joint Chiefs of Staff not to remove my American resources in the middle of operations of which they were an essential factor—in either case, firm or satisfactory planning was impossible.' But whatever the Americans might later decide, the contents of the new directive and the progress of the campaign in fact left the Supreme Commander with no alternative but to plan on the most ambitious basis; and on 6th February he issued fresh orders to his Commanders-in-Chief.<sup>1</sup>

' . . . 2. My intention is to continue the attack to the limit of my resources to secure the port of Rangoon before the monsoon.

3. Your overall task is to secure the Ledo-Burma Road, capture Rangoon by 1st June, 1945, open the Port of Rangoon and destroy Japanese forces in Burma, excluding the Tenasserim Coast.'

The second part of the directive was covered by a separate communication from the Supreme Commander, impressing on the Commanders-in-Chief the importance of recapturing Singapore as soon as possible after the south-west monsoon.

But the precise relation between the two projects raised difficulties in their execution. If Singapore was to be recaptured after the monsoon, it was desirable to establish a forward base for the purpose before the monsoon began. Phuket Island, about half way down the Kra Isthmus, was chosen as the best of several possibilities, and in the middle of February Mountbatten ordered preparations to be made for its assault under the code name 'Roger'. But Rangoon had also

<sup>1</sup> See Map V, facing p. 167.



to be secured before the monsoon. Assuming that the Allies gained a decisive victory in the Mandalay plain, its defence was unlikely to be on a large scale; and a plan was therefore produced by 14th February for an attack on the port with small airborne and seaborne forces, which amounted to a reduced version of 'Dracula'. This would have to be launched by 5th May, after which date the growing monsoon conditions would intervene. But the removal from current operations even of the small airborne force involved might affect Fourteenth Army's progress in central Burma, while the use of the only assault force in the theatre would mean postponing operation 'Roger' against Phuket Island. Fourteenth Army therefore submitted another plan, for the capture of Rangoon by land from the north. This again assumed that the Japanese would be routed in the Mandalay plain by the middle of March, and proposed to follow up their defeat boldly with a strong mobile column, supported and supplied by air, which would strike to the south and reach Rangoon itself by 10th-15th April. Such an operation, however, would be possible only by reserving all air transport and other resources, and would thus remove any chance of the modified version of 'Dracula'.

From the combination of the three possibilities, alternatives thus emerged.

- (1) Modified 'Dracula', with slower advance by Fourteenth Army. No 'Roger'.
- (2) Fast advance by Fourteenth Army, followed by 'Roger'. No 'Dracula'.

The Commanders-in-Chief declared that a decision must be taken by 23rd February, to enable detailed planning to begin in time.

The decisive meeting was accordingly held on the 23rd between Mountbatten and his principal commanders. General Leese reported that Fourteenth Army was making good enough progress to warrant a decision in favour of the overland advance on Rangoon. He expected Mandalay to fall within three weeks, and the Japanese to retreat fast as soon as that occurred. Provided that air transport bases could be developed quickly in Arakan, for the sustenance of the Army as it drove down the central plain, he was prepared to accept the risk. The air commanders confirmed that this would be possible, and Mountbatten thereupon ordered the overland advance to be carried out with no diversion of resources, to be followed by operation 'Roger'. On the 26th he reported to the Chiefs of Staff on his subsequent plans.

' . . . 9. I consider that the best outline timetable, whether Rangoon is cleared or not before monsoon, though I am planning for the former, is as follows:

- (1) Early June 1945 secure Phuket area with two divisions plus.

(2) October, 1945 secure Port Swettenham-Port Dickson area with force of order of four divisions. This will depend upon the completion of [Assault] Force W in this theatre by August 1945 as well as a proportion of Force Y earlier than at present forecast though no earlier than promised previously.<sup>1</sup>

(3) December, 1945—March, 1946 capture of Singapore. Unless opposition by the Japanese is unexpectedly weak this operation will probably require leading formations from Europe and the balance of [Assault] Force Y to have arrived in time to release sufficient of my present forces for the final assault.

(4) Thereafter the complete clearance of South-East Asia for which the balance of present forces will be required. . . .'

Codewords were assigned to the proposed operations as follows:

Securing Phuket Island and naval and air bases in the area—  
'Roger'.

Landings in Port Swettenham-Port Dickson area preparatory to the advance southwards on Singapore—'Zipper'.

The capture of Singapore—'Mailist'.

Throughout January and February 1945, operations continued to go well on the three fronts.<sup>2</sup> In the north, Sultan brought to a close the campaign for the Burma Road, which to American eyes spelt the end of his mission. One Chinese division took Namkham on 16th January, and then drove eastward to meet Chiang Kai-shek's force from Yunnan on the Burmese side of the frontier some twenty miles south-west of Wanting. At this point, in accordance with the agreement of October 1943, the Yunnan armies (now called Eleventh Chinese Army Group) came under Mountbatten's control.<sup>3</sup> On 22nd January the Supreme Commander telegraphed to the President, the Prime Minister and the Combined Chiefs of Staff, 'the first part of order I received at Quebec completely carried out. The land route to China is open.' The next day the first American-Chinese convoy from India reached the Burma Road by way of the Ledo Road and the track from Bhamo (the whole now appropriately renamed the Stilwell Road), and proceeded amid the customary demonstrations across the frontier to China. The American brigade meanwhile cleared the area to the south between Namkham and Hsenwi. To the west, the British division of the northern force advanced towards Mongmit.

The last stage of these operations was concluded in February. The British division on the right, now encountering stronger opposition,

<sup>1</sup> See pp. 27-8 above.

<sup>2</sup> See Map IV, facing p. 165.

<sup>3</sup> See p. 173 above.

moved slowly towards Momgmit; one Chinese division advanced to Namtu, some fifteen miles north-west of Lashio; and another pushed down the Burma Road to take Hsenwi. By the end of the month the northern forces were therefore in a position, as envisaged in Mountbatten's plan of the previous August, 'to co-operate [with phases 3 and 4 of 'Capital'] by advancing southwards on the Eastern flank, eventually exploiting to Loilem';<sup>1</sup> and with this in view, Leese ordered Sultan on 27th February to secure the area Kyaukme-Lashio. It remained to be seen how such instructions would accord with the Americans' attitude towards the use of their resources.

The campaign in Arakan was also going well. The original orders for 'Romulus' and 'Talon' had envisaged the clearance of the northern part of the province and the occupation of Akyab by the middle of February. Akyab was in fact abandoned by the Japanese before it was assaulted on 3rd January; and nine days later a seaborne attack was launched on the Myebon peninsula, thirty-five miles to the south-east, to cut off the main body of the enemy in the valleys to the north. Very severe and complicated fighting ensued over the next four weeks; but by 9th February the combined effect of the seaborne landing and of pressure from the north, supported by heavy bombardment from the air and by diversionary movements on the coast, had forced the enemy to abandon the area after suffering heavy loss, and by the middle of the month he had retreated from the northern valleys. The initial plan had now been carried out. But by this time the progress of the main battle in central Burma involved further efforts in Arakan, which it will be convenient at this point to follow to their close.

These efforts took two forms: the occupation of the areas most suitable for the development of air bases from which to support Fourteenth Army's advance; and continued pressure on the enemy, so as to contain as many of his troops as possible while releasing part of 15th Corps to prepare for subsequent operations. The first step was taken with an assault on Ramree Island by one division on 21st January. The enemy fought hard, but thanks to the Allies' command of the sea he was beaten by 16th February, although the island was not finally cleared for some weeks; and in the second half of February an air base was developed there to supplement another already completing in Akyab. Fresh operations on land began at the same time, to clear the coast as far as Taungup and if possible to open the transverse road from Taungup to Prome, a town on the Irrawaddy which lay on Fourteenth Army's line of advance. These were assisted by the occupation of the islands south of Ramree, to protect the communications of raids from that base. One division moved south from the Myebon peninsula in the third week of February, while troops from Akyab landed on the neighbouring coast. The combined force then

<sup>1</sup> See p. 166 above.

pushed ahead for some thirty miles against weakening opposition, assisted early in March by a landing from Ramree. But the shortage of transport aircraft now affected its operations, and after a further advance it halted towards the end of the month five miles north of Taungup. The Japanese, however, were by now pulling out of Arakan as a result of the battle in the central plain, and 15th Corps could therefore transfer most of its troops from the mainland to Akyab and Ramree, to train for the further operations to the south. By the end of March only one division remained; and on 13th April, as the enemy withdrew, it had the satisfaction of occupying Taungup.

On the central front, preparations proceeded throughout January for the main crossing of the Irrawaddy. On the 10th, 33rd Corps took Shwebo, and by the end of the month had cleared the area between the rivers. Meanwhile, one of its three divisions crossed the Irrawaddy north-east of Shwebo, duly attracting the attention of the enemy under the impression that it represented the attack by 4th Corps,<sup>1</sup> and consolidated its bridgeheads by the end of January. 4th Corps itself approached the Irrawaddy to the south from Gangaw. By the end of the month, Fourteenth Army was thus almost ready for its two assaults on Mandalay and Meiktila.

On the night of 12th February, 33rd Corps began to cross the Irrawaddy west of Sagaing, taking the enemy by surprise. The bridgehead was quickly developed, and survived the growing attacks which followed over the next ten days. On the night of the 24th, the rest of the Corps crossed the river, securing a firm lodgement on the farther bank, where it was held for the rest of the month. The Japanese now reacted exactly as had been hoped. Convinced that the two sets of crossings showed the shape of the attack, they reinforced their main strength with a division from the north, and moved other elements from southern Burma to the area south of Mandalay. Their eyes were thus on the north as 4th Corps struck to the south. On the night of 13th February, one of its divisions began to cross the river from Myitche, followed over the next six days by the bulk of another with a tank brigade. Stiff fighting ensued for some days. But on the 21st, one division broke out of the bridgehead; on the 24th, it captured Taungtha with a large store of supplies; on the 25th, it occupied an airfield fifteen miles north-west of Meiktila; and on the 27th prepared for the attack on Meiktila itself.

By this time the enemy had decided to reinforce the town. But after five days of bitter fighting, the Allies reached its centre. 'To say', remarked Leese, 'that our capture of Meiktila came as a surprise to the enemy Command would be an understatement.' The Japanese, indeed, were now entirely confused by the course of the battle. Unwilling to abandon their positions to the north, they were equally

<sup>1</sup> See p. 177 above.

sensitive to the threat from the south. As a result, they dispersed their forces in a belated effort to counter every advance. 33rd Corps at first could make no further progress. But on 20th February its left broke out of the extended bridgehead to the north, and struck down river in the direction of Mandalay, some forty miles away. By the end of February, Fourteenth Army was therefore in the position for which it had hoped, with both flanks on the move and with the main strength of the enemy uneasily disposed in the central plains, where superior armour and air power could be displayed to the best effect.

It was at this promising juncture that Chinese affairs again intervened. The Japanese had now been halted near Kweilin, and with their extended communications were unlikely to thrust to the south, although they were still active farther north. By the middle of February, Wedemeyer could contemplate a counter-offensive in the summer, to recapture the lost airfields and to relieve the starving provinces recently overrun. Any such plan demanded a higher standard of efficiency than most Chinese formations could display; and he therefore intended to use the intervening months in training those already at his disposal and in forming a new striking force. The means in each case lay in Sultan's troops in Burma. The American brigade could be split into a number of cadres for training and stiffening the formations already in China, while the remaining Chinese divisions, with the two already transferred, would provide the necessary striking force to give impetus to the campaign. On 23rd February, at the important meeting which decided to strike for Rangoon from the north,<sup>1</sup> Sultan informed Mountbatten unofficially of these demands. All American and Chinese forces in south-east Asia were to be transferred to China as soon as they could be absorbed, the American brigade arriving by 1st April and two of its battalions at once. Mountbatten was willing to meet an immediate request for one battalion, and to transfer the whole brigade after the fall of Rangoon; but he protested at the disappearance of Sultan's entire force, on which he had been counting to maintain pressure on the enemy's flank towards Loilem.<sup>2</sup> Its withdrawal, moreover, would not only remove a desirable form of support in the north, but might well divert thither some of the essential resources from the central front itself. Transport aircraft would be needed to carry at least some of the formations to China, and if no Americans or Chinese were left the British would presumably have to protect and administer the Burma Road. The Supreme Commander therefore proposed, as he informed the British Chiefs of Staff, to raise the matter with the Generalissimo in person, during a visit to Chungking which had already been arranged for 8th March.

The Chinese demand for the American brigade was made officially

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<sup>1</sup> See p. 189 above.

<sup>2</sup> See p. 191 above.

on 1st March: one battalion was to be withdrawn from Burma immediately, followed by the rest of the infantry by 10th March and by the rest of the brigade on or after 1st April. The infantry was to be carried, as Mountbatten had feared, by aircraft already engaged on operations in Burma; the rest of the brigade by aircraft from other sources. When Mountbatten met Chiang Kai-shek on 8th March, the latter made it clear that he would also require the remaining Chinese divisions as soon as possible, to re-form and prepare for an offensive in July. He therefore intended to halt them on the line Lashio-Hsipaw, and he recommended Mountbatten to halt at Mandalay.

On 2nd March, the British Chiefs of Staff supported Mountbatten in a telegram to Washington.

'Our main conclusions on Mountbatten's telegram are as follows:

(a) We have taken note of transfer of one U.S. aviation engineer battalion from S.E.A.C. and of Admiral Mountbatten's willingness to release up to equivalent of one battalion from [the American brigade];

(b) Any other withdrawal of forces from Burma would jeopardise success of current and approved operations in S.E.A.C. and should not be agreed without fullest discussion and a clear case being made for their withdrawal;

(c) Except in cases of emergency in China, moves of forces from Burma to China should be carried out without calling on transport aircraft resources of S.E.A.C. We have no evidence whatever of existence of any such emergency at present time;

(d) We feel that responsibility for protection of L. of C. to China must remain with U.S. India-Burma Command. . . .'

The British message placed the Joint Chiefs of Staff in an unenviable position. Marshall's words at Malta, 'that the situation was developing to a point where the resources of the China and Burma-India theatres would be separated', had soon been confirmed; and in view of their declaration at that time the Americans naturally supported the Chinese demands. But they were unwilling to jeopardize Mountbatten's campaign, the difficulties of which they recognized, and they agreed to ask the Generalissimo to delay the transfer of the Chinese divisions until at least 1st June, by which time Rangoon should have been taken. They also accepted full responsibility for the protection of the Burma Road by American and Chinese forces, and ordered Sultan to provide for this in his arrangements. The British Joint Staff Mission in Washington reported that the American Chiefs of Staff genuinely sympathized with Mountbatten, and advised London to accept their offer as the best that could be made at the time. The British Chiefs of Staff agreed, with the important proviso that the South-East Asia Command should not be asked to release for the transfer of the American brigade any transport aircraft which it urgently required.

Mountbatten himself was meanwhile encountering difficulties within the theatre. Having accepted the immediate removal of certain American forces, he was now informed by Leese that this would endanger the course of the battle in the central plain, which at the beginning of March was in the vital phase, by releasing Japanese forces from the north. The Land Forces Commander's representations were such that Mountbatten allowed him to state them directly to the British Chiefs of Staff; but he ordered him meanwhile to continue with the preparations for the transfer, unless he remained convinced, after talking to Sultan, that the withdrawal of the rest of the American force by early in April would have a 'crucial' effect on the battle. The Chiefs of Staff approved Mountbatten's decision on 19th March.

But in the next few days the commanders in south-east Asia changed their minds. The growing intensity of the battle for Mandalay had led by this time to the concentration of all available transport aircraft in support of Fourteenth Army, leaving few to spare for Arakan or for the north. It was thus becoming increasingly difficult adequately to supply the three fronts, and unless other commitments were removed it seemed likely that the British division of the northern force—which Leese now urgently wanted to reinforce Fourteenth Army—and possibly one division on the central front itself, would have to be withdrawn. At a conference of commanders on 19th March, Leese therefore asked that the American and Chinese forces should be transferred by air to China as soon as possible, so that the air transport affected would be available to him again before the vital battle for Mandalay. Mountbatten agreed with the proposal after a further meeting on the 22nd, as long as one Chinese division was left to guard the Burma Road; and the British Chiefs of Staff, after their initial surprise at the reversal of policy, duly supported it to Washington.

Towards the end of March, the margin of air transport assumed critical importance. Mountbatten reported on the 27th that, in order to win a battle 'the outcome of which will determine the tempo of the remainder of the campaign in Burma', he must continue to maintain six divisions with armoured support. The aircraft at his disposal were already operating at over sixty per cent above their normal effort, and he had cut air supply for an undernourished civil population to a dangerous extent. Even so, unless he could be given more air transport, he would be forced to withdraw two divisions at the end of the current battle, when the advance on Rangoon would begin. He therefore asked for 'a few more transport aircraft' if possible, and for a 'firm and early assurance' at least that no more would be withdrawn from central Burma.

This message was repeated to Washington. The British Chiefs of Staff were therefore shocked to hear from the Americans on 28th March, 'that in their opinion the provision of transport aircraft for

movement [of the American Brigade] will not prejudice the operations now in progress either of Fourteenth Army or of the northern forces.' On the 30th, the Prime Minister telegraphed personally to Marshall.<sup>1</sup>

'As General Marshall will remember from our talks at 'Octagon', we greatly disliked the prospect of a large-scale campaign in the jungles of Burma and I have always had other ideas myself. But the United States Chiefs of Staff attached the greatest importance to this campaign against the Japanese and especially to the opening of the Burma road. We therefore threw ourselves into the campaign with the utmost vigour. Although the prolongation of the German war has withheld from Mountbatten the three British-Indian divisions on which all his hopes were built, he has succeeded far beyond our hopes. . . . The very considerable battle upon such difficult communications, which is now being fought with the main Japanese army in Burma, is important not only for Burma and as a preliminary to the capture of Rangoon, but plays its part in the general wearing-down of the military and particularly the air-power of Japan. Moreover, once Rangoon is taken, these powerful forces which we have on foot there will be set free for further operations in 1946 and even earlier, in combination with the general American onslaught. . . . I feel therefore entitled to appeal to General Marshall's sense of what is fair and right between us, in which I have the highest confidence, that he will do all in his power to let Mountbatten have the comparatively small additional support which his air force requires to enable the decisive battle now raging in Burma to be won. It will be a terrible thing if Mountbatten has to try to go on to Rangoon with only 4 instead of 6 divisions and thus fails to achieve a victory in the campaign which will liberate all Forces in Burma for other and closer action against the Japanese . . .'

On 3rd April he received a reassuring reply.

'There is complete agreement on the American side with your desire to continue the momentum of Admiral Mountbatten's present offensive to effect the early capture of Rangoon.

Mountbatten has informed the Combined Chiefs of Staff that in his opinion he will be able to capture Rangoon by 1st June. Based on this statement the U.S. Chiefs of Staff informed the British Chiefs that they do not intend to remove U.S. air resources from Burma prior to the fall of Rangoon, or 1st June, whichever date is earlier. It is our purpose to leave with Mountbatten all that he requires to secure Rangoon in this dry season, but reserving the right to transfer U.S. air resources to China if Mountbatten is not in fact successful in his attempt to capture Rangoon before the monsoon. In this last case his operations in Burma might drag on indefinitely and it does not seem wise,

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<sup>1</sup> See *Triumph and Tragedy*, pp. 534-5.



in view of the urgent needs of the China theatre, particularly in relation to prospective Pacific operations, to make a firm commitment to leave all U.S. resources in Burma for the conduct of the campaign for such an indeterminate period of time. It is for this reason that the limiting date of 1st June was mentioned by U.S. Chiefs of Staff, following Mountbatten's prediction. A more recent message from Mountbatten states the necessity to retain all transport aircraft for 2 months after the capture of Rangoon. We have not been given his reasons for this long retention and we are therefore not prepared at this time to agree. . . .

The U.S. Chiefs of Staff's intention is to permit Mountbatten's employment of all the U.S. resources now at his disposal which are essential to the success of his current operations in Burma . . .'

Mountbatten in fact was now safe, and a fortnight later the final timetable was agreed for the withdrawal of the Chinese Divisions and the American air forces,

April, 1945:	rest of the American brigade.
May, 1945:	advanced échelon headquarters, U.S. air forces.
15th May:	one Chinese division.
June, 1945:	rest of headquarters, U.S. air forces; two U.S. combat cargo groups.
1st June:	one Chinese division.
15th June:	one Chinese division.
July, 1945:	various U.S. air forces.
August, 1945:	various U.S. air forces.
September, 1945:	rest of U.S. air forces.

It will be seen that the timetable could not provide for the immediate transfer of the Chinese, as Leese had hoped.<sup>1</sup>

One further demand was made on Mountbatten's aircraft. In the middle of April, when the Japanese made their last effort in China, Wedemeyer asked for the temporary loan of one combat cargo squadron. But Mountbatten resisted the demand, and in the event he was not disturbed. His operations could continue as planned, although the results of the earlier shortage of air transport were to be seen in the last stage of the campaign.

After the end of February, little occurred on the northern front.<sup>2</sup> One Chinese division captured Lashio on 7th March, and pushed a further forty miles to the south-east by the end of the month. Meanwhile another Chinese division and the British division advanced

<sup>1</sup> See p. 195 above.

<sup>2</sup> See Map IV, facing p. 165.

towards Kyaukme, the former from Hsipaw which it captured on 16th March, the latter from Mongmit. In the distracting circumstances, this proved to be the end of the advance, and on 30th March Leese ordered the British division to join 33rd Corps to the south.

The diminution of these operations enabled the Japanese gradually to disengage. As has been seen, one of their divisions was withdrawn to the central front towards the end of February,<sup>1</sup> and one more followed in March. This accession of strength was of great importance. While Fourteenth Army continued to advance, its timetable was upset.

Towards the end of February, the northern division of 33rd Corps broke out of its extended bridgehead, and in the next ten days pushed steadily towards the south. On 9th March, it entered Mandalay. On the evening of the 11th Mandalay Hill was taken, and on the 21st the city was declared clear of the enemy. The other two divisions of 33rd Corps meanwhile attacked from their bridgeheads. After making contact on 2nd March, one secured the area immediately to the south-west, while the other moved farther afield to the area of Myingyan-Meiktila. By the end of the month, the Corps had severed the Japanese communications between Mandalay and Meiktila. Meanwhile, 4th Corps was contained for some weeks around Nyaungu and in Meiktila, where the Japanese launched an important counter-attack. But they were repelled after a severe struggle, and on 28th March withdrew to the south-east. By the beginning of April, Fourteenth Army had its teeth into a disorganized enemy, and 'the battle of the Irrawaddy', to give it its Japanese title, was over.

The enemy now intended to withdraw down the central plain for a stand in the area Toungoo-Pegu, while the remains of his forces in the west held the line of the Irrawaddy to the north of Yenangyaung, and those from the north delayed the Allied advance down the Mandalay-Rangoon railway. But the plan, conceived in haste and executed under pressure, was complicated by incessant attack from the air, and provided that Fourteenth Army could be continuously and fully supplied, there was every reason to hope that the victory would be complete in time to take Rangoon from the north. It seemed increasingly doubtful, however, if the supplies could be maintained. The deployment of the extra divisions to offset the Japanese reinforcements, and the absence of the planned reserve of stores thanks to the earlier diversion of aircraft, placed an unacceptable burden on the air forces. If Fourteenth Army was to reach Rangoon in time, it must now advance at an average rate of ten miles a day. The effect on the transport aircraft has already been observed, and at the beginning of April Mountbatten reported that he had been forced, as he had forecast, to withdraw one division and a part of a brigade from the battle in order to supply the rest. With the reduced weight of

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<sup>1</sup> See p. 192 above.

attack, it seemed doubtful if the timetable could be kept; and if it could not, the results might be disastrous. As General Leese put it later:

'The long land L of C . . . was not designed to withstand monsoon conditions, [and] air supply on a considerable scale was in any case essential to supplement what came by land and river. But during the monsoon, flying conditions were often hazardous, and would certainly interrupt air supply altogether for periods, at a time when our land L of C was interrupted and possibly the . . . traffic on the Chindwin was reduced too. Moreover, . . . the Americans had been quite candid . . . that if we did not get into Rangoon by June, their American transport aircraft which formed a large proportion of the theatre resources, would be taken off to China. Thus we might well have the position where our troops, halted only a comparatively short distance from Rangoon by the monsoon rains, would have to be withdrawn back to Mandalay or even to the Chindwin, with all the attendant losses in vehicles and morale, for reasons of supply.'

On 26th March, Leese therefore recommended that an immediate study should be made of the possibility of launching a modified 'Dracula', even at this late date, to capture Rangoon before the monsoon.

Any form of 'Dracula' clearly prejudiced the plans for 'Roger' which were now well under way,<sup>1</sup> while its own preparation was bound to suffer from the earlier decision against it. Little time remained in which to mount an operation which, in its reduced version, had always involved serious risks; and the commanders did not underestimate the hazards. 'Roger' on the other hand was of less immediate importance, and the Chiefs of Staff preferred that it should not be undertaken until Rangoon had been secured. On 2nd April the Supreme Commander decided to risk the reduced 'Dracula', and to launch an assault from Akyab and Kyaukpyu between 1st and 5th May with one battalion of airborne troops and one seaborne division, to be followed if necessary by a second seaborne division. 'Roger' was postponed for at least six weeks, and more if the second division had to be used.

All variants of 'Dracula' had always relied on the airborne element, for the shallow waters of the Irrawaddy estuary prevented a heavy naval bombardment in the earlier stages of the operation. Fourteenth Army could ill afford to spare any aircraft, but Leese consented, with great reluctance, to withdraw two air commando squadrons for the assault. The rest could come only from outside the theatre, and Mountbatten therefore asked the British Chiefs of Staff to provide two

<sup>1</sup> See pp. 188-90 above.

transport squadrons by mid-April, trained in parachute operations. On 7th April they replied that this was impossible, but that they could provide two transport squadrons (one untrained for airborne operations) early in May. Meanwhile, Mountbatten instructed Fourteenth Army to concentrate on capturing the airfields to the south of Pyinmana and Toungoo, so as to give close air support to 'Dracula'. The detailed plans were approved on 16th April, and on the 17th the necessary directive was issued. One division and a naval force had already been withdrawn from the Arakan front to Akyab, where they were training for the operation.

At the beginning of April, Slim regrouped Fourteenth Army for the advance of some 240 miles to Rangoon, with 33rd Corps on the line of the Irrawaddy and 4th Corps on the Mandalay-Rangoon railway. The dual thrust began in the first week of the month. One division of 33rd Corps was withdrawn to India, to be held in reserve as the follow-up division for 'Dracula'. But the other two advanced steadily to the south. One followed the river to Yenangyaung, which it took on 22nd April, while the other moved on a parallel axis until it reached the road junction of Taungdwingyi on the 13th, whence it struck west to the river itself. On the 19th it captured Magwe, cutting the enemy's main retreat from Yenangyaung. An advanced force continued to the south against light opposition, reaching Prome at the end of the month and taking it on 2nd May.

4th Corps' first target was the groups of airfields at Pyinmana and Toungoo, for the closer support of 'Dracula'. The advance began on 30th March against stubborn resistance, based on the Japanese second line of defence between Meiktila and Pyawbwe. But on 10th April the enemy gave way, not to fight again so stubbornly for the rest of the month. On the 11th, the drive to the south began. By the night of the 14th, the leading division had passed through Yamethin; on the 18th, it forced the important Shwemyo Bluff; and by the 21st had taken Pyinmana. Toungoo and its airfields were still almost seventy miles away; but on the 22nd the armoured columns reached the town, and by the 24th one airfield was ready for operations. Meanwhile the leading division drove on to the south, reaching Pyu on the 25th and receiving on the way the surrender of some 3,000 members of the 'Indian National Army'. Here it halted after an advance of 170 miles in twenty-one days, and another division took over the lead for the final dash towards Rangoon.

On 25th April, Allied armour passed through Pyu. The enemy was dispersed and confused, and the advance at first continued at high speed. As the division approached Pegu, the key to the lower Burmese plain, the opposition increased; but by the 29th its advanced units were in the outskirts of the town, some thirty miles from Rangoon. On that day the rains broke. All but one of the airfields at Toungoo

were rendered useless, and the road itself was flooded. The Japanese had reinforced Pegu with the garrison from Rangoon, in time to blow most of the bridges across the tributaries dissecting the town; and heavy fighting ensued in torrential rain over the next three days. But by 2nd May the opposition had been broken, and on the day that 'Dracula' was launched the advance from the north was resumed.

The preparations for 'Dracula' were ready by 25th April. 'D' day was 2nd May. The naval force was assembled at Akyab and Kyaukpyu, and air support was provided from Arakan. Preliminary bombing and bombardment began on 30th April; but on 1st May, aircraft flying over Rangoon reported that the roof of the local prisoners'-of-war camp bore the notice 'Japs gone'. The enemy had in fact decided that at all costs he must hold the junction of Pegu, and on 22nd April had transferred the garrison thither and to Moulmein. By the night of 1st May, his intentions were clear. The scale of the air support was accordingly reduced and the seaborne reinforcements were cancelled. On the morning of 2nd May, in weather which heralded the monsoon, the seaborne assault was launched unopposed on the approaches to the port. A few hours later the rains began on the coast; but by the evening of the 3rd a British brigade was in Rangoon, and on the 6th the advanced troops made contact with Fourteenth Army south of Pegu. After all its adventures, 'Dracula' had beaten the monsoon by a few hours, and the reconquest of central Burma, apart from the necessary clearing operations, had been achieved two days before the end of the war with Germany.



CHAPTER VI  
THE STRATEGY  
FOR THE PACIFIC,  
OCTOBER, 1944-JUNE, 1945  
(i)  
The American Strategy

**U**NTIL the 'Octagon' Conference in September 1944, events in the Pacific had affected the British only indirectly or by implication. But the Western Allies then agreed that a British Fleet should be sent as soon as possible to work with the Americans in the main theatre of operations against Japan, and that a British force of long-range bombers should take part, as a self-contained force, in the attacks on the Japanese Home Islands. From this point, therefore, developments in the Pacific became of direct importance to British strategy.

Throughout the first half of 1944, the Americans had developed two main lines of approach towards the inner zone of the Japanese defences.<sup>1</sup> The forces of the Pacific Ocean Areas, under Admiral Nimitz, advanced through the Gilbert and Marshall islands in the central Pacific, while those of the South-West Pacific Area, under General MacArthur, moved through New Guinea towards the western islands of the Netherlands East Indies and the southern Philippines. By the middle of the summer, both these great movements were nearing the point at which further decisions must be taken on the shape of the subsequent advance. In the first half of June, the Joint Chiefs of Staff contemplated the following programme:

15th June: occupation of the Marianas.

15th September: occupation of the Palaus.

15th November: occupation of Mindanao.

15th February, 1945: occupation of Formosa, or failing that of Luzon, followed by Formosa.

The first two operations were assigned, by an earlier directive of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, to Nimitz's forces: the third to MacArthur's. Beyond that, the outline of events was blurred, and it even seemed possible that Formosa as well as Luzon would be by-passed in favour of a direct assault on Kyushu in the Japanese Home Islands.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> See Map VI, facing p. 312.

<sup>2</sup> See Volume V, p. 483.

From June to September, the programme was faithfully carried out. After the usual seaborne air strikes at the end of May, Saipan in the Marianas was attacked on 15th June, while the submarines and aircraft of the American Pacific Fleet inflicted a severe reverse in the battle of the Philippine Sea on the Japanese Fleet attempting to intervene. The occupation of the island proved to be slow and expensive, delaying the complementary assaults on Tinian and Guam; but by 9th July the enemy had been broken, and by 1st August Tinian, and by 10th August Guam, were controlled although not finally cleared by the Americans. At the end of the month Nimitz turned to the adjacent Western Carolines, forming the southern half of the crescent whence the enemy's 'inner zone' could be threatened and his bases at Truk and Ponape isolated. Sea and air strikes were followed by the first landings on 15th September, and the group was effectively secured by the end of that month.

MacArthur meanwhile, employing under different circumstances a similar technique of by-passing operations, was advancing along the northern coast of New Guinea. After completing the reconquest of New Britain, and occupying the adjacent Admiralty Islands in February and March 1944, he attacked Aitape and Hollandia, some four hundred miles to the west of his existing positions, towards the end of April. By the middle of May he had isolated some 50,000 Japanese, and was preparing fresh assaults to the west; and by the end of July had reached the western extremity of New Guinea, and had occupied the most important of the adjoining islands. In August he was preparing for further seaborne operations to the north; on 15th September he landed on Morotai island, directly to the north of Halmahera. The crescent now extended from Saipan to Morotai, leaving the Japanese garrison on the island of Yap to be added to other by-passed garrisons in the rear.

When the Combined Chiefs of Staff met at the 'Octagon' Conference, the first stage of the offensive was thus complete. But the shape of future operations remained far from clear. The Americans still had two questions to answer. First, and most important, was it necessary to invade the Japanese islands themselves, with the possibility of a protracted campaign involving heavy casualties, or could Japan be subdued by an intensification of blockade and bombardment from sea and air? Secondly, and more immediate, should the inner zone be pierced by an early attack on Formosa, leaving the central and northern islands of the Philippines to be conquered later, or by the reconquest of the Philippine group before Formosa was approached? The two problems were naturally, although not inevitably, connected: if Japan was to be invaded, Formosa seemed to offer the most direct approach; if it was not, the Philippines occupied an admirable strategic position from which to exert further pressure to both north



and west. The debate on these two questions continued in Washington throughout the first nine months of 1944, as that on south-east Asia and the Pacific proceeded during the same period in London.

The Joint Chiefs of Staff's directive in March, 1944 had seemed to favour Nimitz and Formosa rather than MacArthur and the Philippines; for while it agreed, with MacArthur, on the necessity for taking Mindanao in the southern Philippines in November, it listed the occupation of Luzon in February, 1945 only as an alternative to that of Formosa.<sup>1</sup> This was confirmed by the timetable presented to the British in June. By that time, also, the U.S. War Department had concluded that Japan could and must be invaded, and the Joint Chiefs of Staff had agreed at least to plan on this assumption. On 11th July, they proposed their revised 'overall objective' for the Far East.<sup>2</sup>

'To force the unconditional surrender of Japan by:

- (i) lowering Japanese ability and will to resist by establishing sea and air blockades, conducting intensive air bombardment and destroying Japanese air and naval strength;
- (ii) invading and seizing objectives in the industrial heart of Japan.'

But despite the set of opinion towards Formosa and invasion, argument was still open, pressure still applicable, and rumour in consequence still active. The adherents of Nimitz and of MacArthur maintained their positions uncompromisingly, and in July the President decided to meet the two commanders at Pearl Harbour for a full discussion. On the 21st, accompanied by Admiral Leahy, he set out on his one visit to the Pacific during the war. The conference was held on the 27th and 28th, in a calmer atmosphere than had been expected in Washington. The minutes are not available, nor were the British officially informed of the results. We rely accordingly on Admiral Leahy's published account.<sup>3</sup> According to this, each commander began by developing his argument—Nimitz for the occupation of Formosa, MacArthur for that of the Philippines—but 'as the discussions progressed, the navy commander . . . admitted that developments might indicate a necessity for the occupation of the Manila area' in Luzon. In the end, 'MacArthur and Nimitz . . . were in agreement that the Philippines should be recovered with ground and air power then available in the western Pacific', and—to Leahy's gratification as an opponent of eventual invasion—'that Japan could be forced to accept our terms of surrender by the use of sea and air power without an invasion of the Japanese homeland.'

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<sup>1</sup> See Volume V, pp. 450-1.

<sup>2</sup> *Loc. cit.*, p. 498.

<sup>3</sup> Fleet Admiral William D. Leahy, *I Was There* (1950), pp. 291-6.

Leahy has remarked of the occasion that 'the agreement on fundamental strategy to be employed in defeating Japan and the President's familiarity with the situation acquired at this conference were to be of great value in preventing an unnecessary invasion of Japan which the planning staffs of the Chiefs and the War Department were advocating.' But in fact, whatever agreement was achieved in Honolulu seems not to have been reflected in Washington. The Joint Chiefs of Staff continued—and it had a decisive bearing on their dealings with their allies—to postulate the eventual invasion of Japan, while the choice between Formosa and Luzon continued to be evaded over the next two months. Towards the end of August 1944, MacArthur remarked to Lieut.-General Lumsden, the British representative at his headquarters, 'that he . . . felt considerably mystified as to what were the true opinions held by any of the parties concerned' in Washington; and the prevailing atmosphere of indecision and rumour undoubtedly affected his reaction, and that of the Australian Government, to British proposals then current for a Commonwealth task force in the south-west Pacific.<sup>1</sup> On 9th September, on the eve of the 'Octagon' Conference, the Joint Chiefs of Staff produced a revised programme for the Pacific which failed conspicuously to resolve either of the two main questions.

'1. The agreed over-all objective in the war against Japan has been expressed as follows:

to force the unconditional surrender of Japan by:

- (i) lowering Japanese ability and will to resist by establishing sea and air blockade, conducting intensive air bombardment, and destroying Japanese air and naval strength;
- (ii) invading and seizing objectives in the industrial heart of Japan.

2. Pursuant to the above, the United States Chiefs of Staff have evolved a course of action for planning purposes. The schedule of major operations comprising this course of action follows:

<i>Target date</i>	<i>Objective</i>
15th October 1944	Talud. [Island between Morotai and Mindanao].
15th November 1944	Sarangani Bay [Mindanao].
20th December 1944	Leyte-Suriagao Area.
1st March 1945	Formosa-Amoy Area.
or	
20th February 1945	Luzon.

If the Formosa operation is undertaken, the following operations have been approved for planning purposes:

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<sup>1</sup> See Volume V, pp. 479-83, 498-9, 503-4.

April 1945  
 May 1945  
 March-June 1945

October 1945  
 December 1945

Bonins.  
 Ryukyus.  
 China coast  
 (Foochow-Wenchow Area).  
 Southern Kyushu.  
 Tokyo Plain.

A course of action to follow the Luzon operation, if undertaken, is under study.

3. It is believed that operations should be devised to accomplish the defeat of Japan at the earliest possible date and to that end plans will retain flexibility and provision will be made to take full advantage of favourable developments in the strategic situation which may permit taking all manner of short cuts. It is proposed to exploit to the fullest the Allied superiority of naval and air power and to avoid, wherever possible, commitment to costly land campaigns. Unremitting submarine warfare against enemy shipping will be continued. Very long-range bomber operations against Japan proper will be continued from China bases and will be instituted from bases being established in the Marianas and from bases to be seized in the future. The air forces in China will continue to support operations of the Chinese ground forces and will also provide the maximum practicable support for the campaign in the Pacific.

4. It is agreed that every effort should be made to bring the U.S.S.R. into the war against Japan at the earliest practicable date and planning for such a contingency is continuing . . .'

The inclusion of Leyte in the list of targets, the addition of a cautionary rider on the dangers of invading Japan, and the introduction of operations on the coast of China, might appear to have reflected the conclusions reached at Honolulu. But the tenor of earlier papers was otherwise undisturbed, and the Chinese operations themselves favoured the prior occupation of Formosa. At Quebec, therefore, neither of the outstanding questions had been settled, and the relations between them were correspondingly obscure.

But within the next few days, one question at least was answered by events. On 27th August, following the conference in July, MacArthur submitted his timetable for the immediate future to the Joint Chiefs of Staff.<sup>1</sup>

'Morotai Island:	15th September 1944
Talau Island:	15th October 1944
Sarangani Bay, Mindanao:	15th November 1944
Leyte:	20th December 1944
Mindoro:	15th January 1945
Aparri, Luzon:	31st January 1945
Lingayen, Luzon:	20th February 1945.'

<sup>1</sup> George C. Kenney, *General Kenney Reports*, (N.Y., 1949), p. 420.

Meanwhile, the Pacific Ocean Areas Command proposed to take the island of Yap in October, before joining the South-West Pacific Area Command in preparing and supporting operations for the reconquest of Mindanao and Leyte. But these plans were soon overtaken. On 9th and 10th September, naval forces from both Commands began to bomb Mindanao and the islands to the north. The results confirmed the belief, which submarine reconnaissance had fostered, that opposition was slighter than had been judged, and that the central Philippines could be attacked without first occupying Mindanao. On the 13th Admiral Halsey, the commander in the subordinate South Pacific Area,<sup>1</sup> suggested to Nimitz that the reoccupation of Leyte, hitherto planned for 20th December, should replace the group of operations destined for October and November. Nimitz at once agreed to transfer one of his large assault forces to MacArthur for the purpose, and on the 15th the latter's staff—in the absence of MacArthur himself at sea—asked the Joint Chiefs of Staff at Quebec to agree to the change of plan. Their permission was received and acknowledged within two hours, and the commanders immediately embarked on the complex reorganization of their plans.

With the decision to land on Leyte in October, the Joint Chiefs of Staff felt themselves committed to the reconquest of Luzon. The concentration of force which the earlier operation demanded, and the ensuing possibility of inflicting severe damage on the Japanese, made such a sequel almost inevitable. The decision was taken on 3rd October, and the shape of future operations was amended to conform to the new plan. In their memorandum of 9th September, the Joint Chiefs of Staff had declared that 'a course of action to follow the Luzon operation, if undertaken, is under study.' On 1st December this appeared. The elimination of the attack on Formosa led to a shift of emphasis, in which the possibility of an assault on the Chinese coast was temporarily subordinated to an extension of operations in the Ryukyus.

'1. The United States Chiefs of Staff have adopted the following as a basis for planning in the war against Japan:

The concept of operations for the main effort in the Pacific is:

- A. Following the Okinawa operations to seize additional positions to intensify the blockade and air bombardment of Japan in order to create a situation favourable to:
- B. An assault on Kyushu for the purpose of further reducing Japanese capabilities by containing and destroying major enemy forces and further intensifying the blockade and air bombardment in order to establish a tactical condition favourable to:

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<sup>1</sup> See Appendix III (B) below.



PLATE V. COMMANDERS IN THE PACIFIC  
*Left to right: General MacArthur, Admiral Nimitz.*



c. The decisive invasion of the industrial heart of Japan through the Tokyo Plain.

2. Future developments of the strategical situation may require contributory operations subsequent to the Okinawa operation in March 1945 from which to intensify the blockade and the air bombardment of Japan in order to create an acceptable condition for an assault on Kyushu. Until forces and resources are available in the Pacific following the defeat of Germany we shall be restricted to a choice of limited objectives in the presently indicated order of suitability as follows:

- a. Extension of our holdings in the Ryukyus.
- b. Limited objective on the China coast north of Swatow.

3. The following sequence and timing of operations have been directed by the United States Chiefs of Staff and plans prepared by theatre commanders.

<i>Objective</i>	<i>Target date</i>
Luzon	20th December, 1944
Bonins	3rd February, 1945
Ryukyus (Okinawa area)	15th March, 1945

The following sequence and timing of operations is established for planning purposes:

<i>Objective</i>	<i>Target date</i>
Additional objectives in the Ryukyus or limited objectives on the China coast north of Swatow	June, 1945
Kyushu	September, 1945
Tokyo Plain	December, 1945

4. Should the strategical situation require the seizure of major objectives prior to the assault on Kyushu in order to assist in accomplishing adequate reduction of Japan's defensive capabilities, such operations must await the redeployment of forces and resources to the Pacific following the defeat of Germany. In the event these operations are undertaken it is probable that the ultimate invasion of the Tokyo Plain must be delayed until 1946. The following objectives are established for contingent contributory operations:

- a. Formosa, either in whole or in part.
- b. Hokkaido.

5. The entry of Russia into the war may lead to a requirement for operations to seize possessions in the Kurile Chain in order to support Russian effort. These operations would not be directly contributory to the main effort and could only be accomplished in lieu of operations listed in paragraph 2.'

This timetable was slightly modified by events. The reconquest of Leyte included the largest single group of operations in the course of the Pacific war, precipitating the last great naval action and affecting the enemy's dispositions as far afield as China and the Malay peninsula. The challenge of the Japanese Fleet was met in the battle of Leyte Gulf between 23rd and 26th October, and while Admiral Halsey's conduct of the operations remains under dispute, the results were conclusive. Although the Japanese continued for another month to reinforce the island, they lost local command of the sea, while the damage they had suffered and the manner of their defeat virtually eliminated them as a naval power for the rest of the war. But the landings themselves, which began on Leyte on 20th October, were followed by greater resistance than had been expected, and a hard battle continued for six weeks. It was almost the end of December before the main fighting was over, leaving the usual lengthy and difficult clearing operations to be undertaken. A small force had meanwhile landed on Mindoro, adjacent to Luzon, whence aircraft reconnoitred that island.

The prolongation of the battle in Leyte delayed the preparation of the air bases which were needed for the attack on Luzon, and the Joint Chiefs of Staff were therefore obliged to postpone that operation for a fortnight.<sup>1</sup> The dates for the attacks on the Bonins and Ryukyus were correspondingly postponed. The Joint Chiefs of Staff remarked to the British Joint Staff Mission, on conveying this information, that the nature of the fighting ahead might well impose further changes on the programme.

But this forecast proved to be the most conservative that the Americans were called on to make. Early in January 1945, MacArthur's forces entered Luzon at the historic landing place of Lingayen Bay, and pushed southwards almost half way to Manila before they were temporarily halted. More landings followed at the end of the month, and the battle for Manila itself began early in February. The city did not fall until the 23rd, by which time the enemy's last strongpoint in Batan had also been reduced. By March, Luzon could be regarded as conquered, although scattered resistance continued until the end of the war. These operations, though stubborn and slow, were no slower than had been expected; and when the Joint Chiefs of Staff produced their timetable of Pacific operations for the 'Argonaut' Conference, they were able slightly to anticipate the dates which they had given six weeks before. A further memorandum on 'Operations for the Defeat of Japan' appeared on 22nd January. After repeating, as its first two paragraphs, the 'overall objective' and the first paragraph of the paper of 1st December, it continued:

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<sup>1</sup> See para. 3 of the directive, on p. 209 above.



' . . . 3. The following sequence and timing of operations have been directed by the United States Chiefs of Staff and plans prepared by theatre commanders.

<i>Objectives</i>	<i>Target date</i>
Continuation of the operations in the Philippines (Luzon, Mindoro, Leyte) and Iwo Jima.	19th February, 1945
Okinawa and extension therefrom in the Ryukyus.	1st April-August, 1945
4. Until a firm date can be established when redeployment from Europe can begin, planning will be continued for an operation to seize a position in the Chusan-Ningpo area [in China] and for invasion of Kyushu-Honshu in the winter of 1945-46.	
5. Examination is being conducted of the necessity for and cost of operations to maintain and defend a sea route to the Sea of Okhotsk when the entry of Russia into the war against Japan becomes imminent. Examination so far has shown that the possibility of seizing a position in the Kuriles for that purpose during the favourable weather period of 1945 is remote due to lack of sufficient resources. The possibility of maintaining and defending such a sea route from bases in Kamchatka alone is being further examined.	
6. The United States Chiefs of Staff have also directed examination and preparation of the plan of campaign against Japan in the event that prolongation of the European war requires postponement of the invasion until well into 1946.'	

(ii)

## The Russian Rôle

This strategy governed the Americans' relations in the Far East with the Russians and with the British. The acceptance of invasion as a possible necessity, and the fear of heavy casualties which it inspired, allied with the fear of a prolonged resistance on the mainland of Asia even after invasion had succeeded, led the U.S. War Department, and to a lesser extent the Joint Chiefs of Staff, to attach great importance to Russian intervention against Japan. In August, 1943 the Joint Chiefs of Staff had stated that 'with Russia as an ally in the war against Japan, the war can be terminated in less time and at less expense in life and resources than if the reverse were the case'. By February 1945, when the shape of future plans seemed clearer, their representations had acquired a greater urgency.

'We desire Russian entry at the earliest possible date consistent with her ability to engage in offensive operations and are prepared to offer the maximum support possible without prejudice to our main effort against Japan . . .'<sup>1</sup>

The British were not concerned in the detail of the arrangements with the Russians on their entry into the Far Eastern war, although they intervened with effect on occasion and were implicated in the results. The negotiations, which at the end of 1943 had shown promise,<sup>2</sup> did not in fact prosper until towards the end of 1944. Three separate issues were involved: the creation of a Russian strategic air force with American aircraft and training, the establishment and supply of an American strategic air force in eastern Russia, and the supply of the Russian armies in the east.<sup>3</sup> Interest centred on the first two questions during the first nine months of 1944. The Americans were informed in February of that year that an American long-range bombing force could operate from Siberia after the Soviet Union had declared war on Japan, and in fact, unknown at first to the beneficiaries, six or seven large aerodromes seem to have been built and reserved for the purpose during the following months in the neighbourhood of Vladivostock. In the spring, the Russians raised the complementary question of the creation of a Russian bombing force, asking for 300 B.24's and 240 B.29's from America, to be piloted by Russian airmen. The Americans agreed, in a series of negotiations during July and August, to deliver to the Russians some 200 B.24's at the rate of fifty a month, probably via Abadan and the Persian Gulf, and to train Russian maintenance crews in America and Russian operational crews with American specialists in Russia. But these arrangements were followed by the increasingly familiar difficulties, and on 29th September the Russian Government announced through an official that it intended to forego the American training in view of the uncertainty in delivering the B.24's. Despite further mention of the plan in later agreements between the two Governments, 'this really ended all efforts on both sides to provide the Red air force with long-range bombers'.<sup>4</sup>

By the middle of September 1944, indeed, discussion on Russia's entry into the war against Japan, no doubt affected by the current disagreements on other subjects, had virtually ceased; and towards

<sup>1</sup> The first quotation is given in Sherwood, *op. cit.*, II, p. 753; the second in Edward R. Stettinius, *Roosevelt and the Russians* (1950), p. 89. But see also *The Entry of the Soviet Union into the War against Japan, Military Plans, 1941-1945* (U.S. Government, cyclostiled for public use, 1955), pp. 38-44, for the emergence of a parallel, and more cautious, attitude in the winter of 1944/45.

<sup>2</sup> See Volume V, pp. 427-9.

<sup>3</sup> The following account derives from *The Entry of the Soviet Union into the War against Japan*, pp. 31-8; and from John R. Deane, *The Strange Alliance*, (N.Y., 1947) Part III. Major-General Deane was head of the American Military Mission in Moscow throughout this period.

<sup>4</sup> Deane, *loc. cit.*, p. 235.

the end of that month, Stalin inquired if the President still considered it to be essential. On being informed, verbally by the American and British Ambassadors and by telegram by the Prime Minister, that the American and British Governments were certainly counting on such a step, he suggested that the necessary talks—which had still not taken place on any level—should begin between the planners. Thus stimulated, the Joint Chiefs of Staff recommended on 28th September 'a broad strategic concept of Russian participation', in an order of priority.<sup>1</sup>

1. Securing the trans-Siberian railway and the Vladivostock Peninsula.

2. Setting up American and Soviet strategic air forces for operations against Japan from the Maritime Provinces, and interdicting the lines of communication between Japan proper and the Asiatic mainland.

3. Destroying Japanese ground and air forces in Manchuria [Manchukuo].

4. Concurrently with the above, as a joint American-Soviet operation, securing the Pacific supply route.

Soviet participation in the latter would include:

(a) Making available for United States use of Petropavlovsk as a naval support and supply base, and areas on the Kamchatka Peninsula, from which to extend operations in, and passage through the Kuriles.

(b) Neutralisation by air of Southern Sakhalin and Hokkaido.

(c) The improvement of port facilities and inland transportation for use by United States and Soviet forces at Nikolaevsk, Magadan, Petropavlovsk, and Sovietskaya Gagan.

(d) Military occupation of Southern Sakhalin.

(e) Soviet naval co-operation with the United States navy as the situation might dictate.'

On 9th October the Prime Minister, with the Foreign Secretary and the C.I.G.S., arrived in Moscow for a meeting (the 'Tolstoy' Conference),<sup>2</sup> and on the 15th and 16th, when the American Ambassador and the head of the American Military Mission attended, considerable progress was made on the plans for the war against Japan. The American representatives asked four questions of the Russians on the 15th, to the first three of which they received important replies:

- (i) How soon after the end of the war with Germany would Russia declare war on Japan?
- (ii) How long would it be before the Russians would be strong enough to attack?

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<sup>1</sup> See Map VI, facing p. 312.

<sup>2</sup> See p. 104 above.

- (iii) How much of the capacity of the trans-Siberian railway could be devoted to the build-up of strategic air forces?
- (iv) Could there now be an agreement, on the understanding that the American Chiefs of Staff were ready to allocate the aircraft, to build up and train a Russian strategic air force?

Stalin and Antonov answered on the 16th. The Russians disposed of thirty divisions and nineteen infantry brigades in the Far East, as against an estimated Japanese concentration in Manchukuo and Korea of twenty-four divisions and forty-two brigades.<sup>1</sup> To secure the necessary superiority in strength, the Russians would have to move another thirty divisions to the east before they could attack, an operation which would require 1,000 troop trains on the trans-Siberian railway. The daily capacity of the railway was thirty-six trains, of which twenty-six could be spared for military purposes. Under these circumstances, it would take two and a half to three months to move the thirty divisions. The Russians could then attack, assuming that the enemy, with his better lines of communication, had been prevented by Allied operations elsewhere from reinforcing his troops in Manchukuo and Korea; and as they were not inclined to rate the Japanese very highly, they estimated that the operations would be over within two months of their declaration of war. Stalin concluded that 'the Soviet would . . . be able to strike a few months after the defeat of Germany', a period which was taken by Americans and British alike to mean approximately three months from that event.

The Russians emphasized that, so far as they could tell from limited experience, the trans-Siberian railway could not maintain the armies which it could move to the east, and could certainly not be used to build up a strategic air force while that movement was taking place. They therefore virtually ignored the possibility of creating a Russian long-range bombing force, and concentrated their demands on American supplies for their eastern armies. These would have to be delivered by sea, and mainly to Petropavlovsk in Kamchatka. The development of the port, and the allocation of the necessary shipping, should therefore begin as soon as possible.

A third meeting took place on 17th October between the Americans and the Russians, which the British preferred not to attend, and at which the Russians presented their detailed requirements for the eastern campaign.<sup>2</sup> Based on a force of some 1,500,000 men, 5,000 aircraft, 3,000 tanks and 75,000 motor vehicles, the tonnage required from the Americans for the supply of two months' food and equipment amounted to 860,410 tons of dry cargo and 206,000 tons of liquid

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<sup>1</sup> The strength of an average Japanese division was taken as 18,000 men; an average Russian division consisted of 10,000 men.

<sup>2</sup> Deane, *loc. cit.*, p. 248.

cargo. The Russians asked that deliveries should be complete by the end of June 1945, and that they should not be subtracted from the amounts already listed under the lend-lease programme. Stalin then apparently entered into further detail on the Russians' intentions. After accepting the proposals which the Americans had presented on the 15th, he reiterated that the Russian attack against Japan would be launched about three months after Germany's surrender. 'In general, he proposed to exert direct pressure on the Japanese along the northern and eastern borders of Manchuria, while making his main effort with a highly mobile force that would sweep down from the Lake Baikal area through Outer and Inner Mongolia to Kalgan, Peiping [Peking] and Tientsin. The purpose of this wide movement was to separate the Japanese forces in Manchuria from those in China.'<sup>1</sup> This strategy, it may be remarked, was followed in the event. Stalin agreed to the Americans' request for air bases near Vladivostock, to their use of Petropavlovsk as a base, and to their sending small parties to make surveys in both areas. The 'Tolstoy' Conference thus revived and advanced the flagging negotiations.

But, as had happened after the Teheran Conference in 1943, these conversations were followed by a period of inactivity, and indeed of retrogression. A powerful American planning team arrived in Moscow early in December 1944, to make the detailed arrangements which had been discussed in October; but their Russian counterparts could provide neither the technique necessary for the task—to which indeed they were unaccustomed—nor, as it seemed, the co-operation without which any such technique must fail. Little therefore occurred between December, 1944 and the Yalta Conference in February, 1945. The 'Tolstoy' agreements themselves, indeed, did not survive intact. On 16th December, Antonov informed the Americans that, after further study, the naval and air bases in the Maritime Provinces would be needed for Russian forces, and that the American navy and air could therefore not operate from that area. The decision remained despite a protest from the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and the American Mission was obliged to study the possibility of basing B.29's far to the north of Vladivostock, near the mouth of the Amur river. Despite the obvious disadvantages, it decided to press for this at Yalta.<sup>2</sup>

The 'Argonaut' Conference saw the theoretical consolidation of the work done at 'Tolstoy' three and a half months before. The presence of the President and of Stalin enabled answers to be given to past queries, and assurances to be made for the future, which had languished in the intervening months. Stalin now informed Roosevelt that the B.29's could operate from the area Komsomolsk-Nikolaevsk, along the

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<sup>1</sup> *Loc. cit.*, p. 249.

<sup>2</sup> Deane, *loc. cit.*, pp. 251, 257-61. But see Leahy, *I Was There*, p. 361, for the suggestion that Stalin revived the earlier project at Yalta.

lower reaches of the Amur river; and Antonov, under the stimulus of the conference, replied with precision to seven questions from the Joint Chiefs of Staff.<sup>1</sup>

(1) There would be no change in the Russians' operational plans as outlined at the 'Tolstoy' Conference.

(2) American assistance in the defence of Kamchatka would be desirable.

(3) The Russians would undertake the preliminary construction necessary for an American air force to be based in the Komsomolsk-Nikolaevsk area.

(4) American survey parties would be authorized to visit Kamchatka and the Amur river district. The Kamchatka survey should be delayed as long as possible for reasons of secrecy, but the Amur survey could be made at once.

(5) The Red Army would take the southern half of Sakhalin island as one of its first operations.

(6) Planning between American and Russian teams in Moscow would be pursued vigorously.

(7) Extra weather stations would be opened in the Far East to give greater cover.

The Russians also confirmed that they would attack the Japanese on the mainland two or three months after Germany had surrendered.

Russia's intervention in the Far East was now assured beyond reasonable doubt. It remained to discover her terms. Nothing had as yet been said officially of the conditions on which she would declare war against Japan, although both British and Americans had prepared as best they could for the inevitable question. The Allies' intentions remained in February, 1945 as had been publicly stated at Cairo in December 1943, when the President, the Prime Minister and Chiang Kai-shek had issued the following statement:<sup>2</sup>

'The several military missions have agreed upon future military operations against Japan.

The three great allies expressed their resolve to bring unrelenting pressure against their brutal enemies by sea, land and air. This pressure is already rising.

The three great Allies are fighting this war to restrain and punish the aggression of Japan. They covet no gain for themselves and have no thought of territorial expansion.

It is their purpose that Japan shall be stripped of all the islands in the Pacific which she has seized or occupied since the beginning of the First World War in 1914, and that all the territories that Japan has stolen from the Chinese, such as

<sup>1</sup> Deane, *loc. cit.*, p. 252; and *The Entry of the Soviet Union into the War against Japan*, pp. 47-9.

<sup>2</sup> 'The Times', 2nd December, 1943.

Manchuria, Formosa and the Pescadores, shall be restored to the Republic of China.

Japan will also be expelled from all other territories which she has taken by violence and greed.

The aforesaid three Great Powers, mindful of the enslavement of the people of Korea, are determined that in due course Korea shall become free and independent.

With these objectives in view the three Allies, in harmony with those of the United Nations at war with Japan, will continue to persevere in the serious and prolonged operations necessary to produce the unconditional surrender of Japan.'

Stalin had confined himself at the time to remarking that he had no comment to make, but that Russia would have something to add when she herself was active in that part of the world. In February, 1945 the time had come to add it. In the early days of the Yalta Conference, Stalin remarked to Roosevelt that Russia must be granted some concessions in the Far East to reassure her people on the necessity for entering the war against Japan, which they might otherwise fail to grasp. The nature of these concessions was not hard to foresee. As in Europe, the Soviet Union would wish to guarantee the security of its frontiers by occupying or neutralizing the adjacent territories, which in this case were Outer Mongolia, Manchukuo, southern Sakhalin and the Kurile Islands. The status of Outer Mongolia was theoretically governed by successive agreements between China and Russia, which reflected its complicated history. In 1913, the Russian Government recognized Chinese suzerainty over the territory while the Chinese Government recognized its autonomy, and both agreed not to send troops into, to colonize, or to interfere with the area. In 1924, Outer Mongolian autonomy temporarily disappeared in the Peking Agreement, whereby the Soviet Government recognized the territory as an integral part of the Republic of China under Chinese sovereignty. But in November of that year the Mongols proclaimed the People's Republic of Mongolia, and declared their independence of China; and in 1936 Mongolia concluded a Protocol of Mutual Assistance with the Soviet Union, providing for consultation and mutual assistance in the event of a threat of attack. In answer to Chinese protests, the Russians replied that the Protocol did not constitute a violation of Chinese sovereignty, and that they reaffirmed the agreement of 1924. But in April 1941, when the Russians signed a pact of neutrality with the Japanese, the two Governments declared 'that they agreed to respect, on the part of the Japanese Empire the territorial integrity and inviolability of the People's Republic of Mongolia, and, on the part of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics the territorial integrity and inviolability of the Empire of Manchukuo'. Russian ambitions in the area were therefore not unlikely. Manchukuo, under the terms

of the Cairo Declaration of 1943, would return to China, and Russia might therefore seek only for concessions there, probably in the control of communications. Southern Sakhalin had passed from Russia to Japan by the Treaty of Portsmouth in 1905, which the Soviet Government, like its Tsarist predecessors, was determined to see revoked; and thus, while the territory was not covered by the Cairo Declaration, the Russians were likely to demand its cession. The Kuriles, which had been in Japanese hands since 1875, formed an old quarrel between the two countries, which Stalin might well wish to settle in the existing favourable circumstances. The denunciation of the Treaty of Portsmouth might also affect the status of Port Arthur and Dairen in the southern peninsula of Manchukuo, both former possessions of Russia and the only warm water ports open to her on the Pacific apart from Vladivostock; and indeed the President had already mentioned at Teheran the possibility, which appealed to him, of placing Dairen under international trusteeship.

Russian demands on these lines were likely to be met with sympathy at Yalta. The matter had not been discussed by the British War Cabinet; but studies had been made for the Prime Minister during 1944 by the Foreign Office and by the Chiefs of Staff, which indicated the most likely demands and accepted the reappearance of Russia as a Pacific power. In January 1945, the Foreign Office was disposed 'to go warily and to avoid anything like commitments or encouragement to Russia', while the Prime Minister was aware that 'I should not be able to oppose the kind of Russian wishes which you mentioned' in view of the military advantages of her intervention against Japan. But the difference was one of emphasis rather than of principle, in a situation where the decision lay inevitably with the Americans. The British indeed, unwilling to be excluded from an agreement affecting the future in the Pacific, were content in the circumstances to be associated with the President's arrangements; the President, who was under pressure from his military advisers to bring Russia into the Far Eastern war, seemed prepared to accede to requests which did not contravene explicitly the Cairo Declaration, and which appeared to him legitimate for the future security of Russia; and there was in fact little discussion between the Western Allies of the Russian proposals, which later, partly because of the necessary secrecy in which they were accepted and partly because of their contravention by the Russians themselves, caused such indignation.

The preliminary conversations were conducted by Roosevelt and Stalin on 8th February,<sup>1</sup> and the three Heads of Government signed the resulting agreement on the 11th. The greatest secrecy was observed in view of Russia's neutrality in the Far East, which could be broken only by her rejection at three months' notice of the existing Russo-

<sup>1</sup> Leahy, *loc. cit.*, pp. 361-2.



Japanese Treaty of Neutrality of April, 1941. Few copies of the agreement were made, and their circulation was severely restricted. The Chinese, although a principal ally and affected by some of the clauses, were not informed of its contents because of the notorious lack of security in Chungking. The text was eventually published in Britain as a White Paper<sup>1</sup> exactly one year later, on 11th February, 1946.

The agreement read as follows:

'The leaders of the three Great Powers—the Soviet Union, the United States of America and Great Britain— have agreed that in two or three months after Germany has surrendered and the war in Europe has terminated the Soviet Union shall enter into the war against Japan on the side of the Allies on condition that:

- (i) the status quo in Outer Mongolia (the Mongolian People's Republic) shall be preserved;
- (ii) the former rights of Russia violated by the treacherous attack of Japan in 1904 shall be restored, viz:
  - (a) the Southern part of Sakhalin as well as all the islands adjacent to it shall be returned to the Soviet Union,
  - (b) the commercial port of Dairen shall be internationalised, the pre-eminent interests of the Soviet Union in this port being safeguarded and the lease of Port Arthur as a naval base of the U.S.S.R. restored,
  - (c) the Chinese-Eastern railroad and the South Manchurian railroad which provides an outlet to Dairen shall be jointly operated by the establishment of a joint Soviet-Chinese company it being understood that the pre-eminent interests of the Soviet Union shall be safeguarded and that China shall retain full sovereignty in Manchuria,
- (iii) the Kurile Islands shall be handed over to the Soviet Union.

It is understood that the agreement concerning Outer Mongolia and the ports and railroads referred to above will require the concurrence of Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek. The President will take measures in order to obtain this concurrence on advice from Marshal Stalin.

The heads of the three great Powers have agreed that these claims of the Soviet Union shall be unquestionably fulfilled after Japan has been defeated.

For its part the Soviet Union expresses its readiness to conclude with the national government of China a pact of friendship and alliance between the U.S.S.R. and China in order to render assistance to China with its armed forces for the purpose of liberating China from the Japanese yoke.

(Signed) J. STALIN  
FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT  
WINSTON S. CHURCHILL'

<sup>1</sup> *Command* 6735.

(iii)

## The British Rôle

The strategy which favoured Russian intervention against Japan discounted, for the same reasons, the British effort in the Pacific. The British Pacific Fleet, which by the decisions taken at Quebec could alone provide an effective contribution within the next few months, would make little difference to the supreme problem of invasion, while its value in the preceding stages, when American sea and air power already seemed sufficient for the task, was offset by the complications it would introduce to supply. On the other hand, there were no British forces in the south-west Pacific. The resulting negotiations in the winter of 1944/45, unlike those conducted during the same period between the Americans and the Russians, turned therefore on the employment of a force whose presence in the main theatre was judged not to be strategically essential.

This attitude changed slightly in the spring of 1945, as British plans expanded for the Far East under the stimulus of victory in Burma and with the renewed prospect of a German surrender, and as the Americans encountered a stiffer opposition which encouraged them to receive such plans with greater sympathy. The results, thanks to the Japanese surrender in August 1945, were never seen, and in the event the British contribution in the Pacific was limited to a series of bombardments and air strikes by a relatively small Fleet, acting as one of two naval task forces under American command. But had the war continued into the spring of 1946, the position might have been different. A larger Fleet, an air force of perhaps two hundred heavy bombers, and either three or four Commonwealth divisions with fifteen squadrons of supporting aircraft, might have been present at the final assault on Japan, while to the south British land and air forces from south-east Asia and a part of the East Indies Fleet, allied with the Australians and New Zealanders remaining in the south-west Pacific and perhaps reinforced by French and Dutch troops, would have been released for operations in the Netherlands East Indies and possibly up the Chinese coast, under new British and Australian Commands embracing the former South-West Pacific Area.<sup>1</sup> This chapter is concerned, therefore, not only with the early negotiations on the employment of a relatively small naval force, but with the emergence, in this setting, of larger plans which were under way in the summer of 1945 but were destined not to be fulfilled. Three subjects for discussion may be observed during the period: the employment of the British Pacific Fleet, the creation of a British Command in the

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<sup>1</sup> See Chapter VIII, section II below.

south-west Pacific, and the preparations for a British bomber force in the central Pacific.

The Americans' acceptance of a self-supporting British Fleet in the central Pacific again focused attention on facilities in Australia. A report on this subject had been received from the Australian Chiefs of Staff early in September, 1944:<sup>1</sup> its conclusions, reached in different circumstances, had now to be reviewed. When the report had been compiled, it had assumed that a Commonwealth force of the three Services might be based on Australia. Now all demands for the army and air were cancelled, and those for the Fleet alone retained. On 24th September, Mr. Churchill gave the Australian Government the details of the new naval programme, which seemed likely to place 47,000 British sailors in Australian waters (1,200 ashore) by January, 1945, and 120,000 (29,000 ashore) by July. British requirements were now as follows:

- (a) Use and expansion of existing ship repair facilities at Sydney and other ports on east coast of Australia.
- (b) Development of existing British storage facilities for all types of stores chiefly in Sydney and Brisbane area but also to lesser extent in Darwin area and minor Queensland ports. Small facilities may also be required at Fremantle.
- (c) Establishment of necessary assembly repairs and storage facilities for naval aircraft chiefly in Sydney and Brisbane area and to limited extent in Darwin area.
- (d) Provision for accommodation and hospital accommodation for the personnel who will be concerned with the above undertakings and with the administration of the fleet.'

The Americans had agreed at Quebec to transfer their installations in Australia as fully as possible to the British, and the Admiralty hoped that these would ease the burden. On this assumption, the programme demanded a labour force of 1,930 persons by the end of 1944, and one of 4,890 by the middle of 1945.

The Australian economy was no less strained at the end of 1944 than it had been in May, when the Australian Prime Minister had emphasized its limitations in London.<sup>2</sup> The Government had already ordered the release of 30,000 men from the army and air force by the end of June 1945, to maintain its existing commitments; and it could not now guarantee the bulk of the labour to meet the British demands. A committee, however, was formed to study the position, which reported early in December, 1944. As a result, the Australian Government agreed to spend some £22,150,000 on material and labour for construction and services required by the British Pacific Fleet. The

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<sup>1</sup> See Volume V, pp. 470-5.

<sup>2</sup> *Loc. cit.*, pp. 474, 479.

work would absorb 4,920 Australians by June 1945, apart from labour affected indirectly by the programme.

The preparations went ahead, though with increasing disturbance to the Australian economy, throughout the winter of 1944/45 and the subsequent spring. Meanwhile the channel along the northern coast of Australia, leading to the advanced base of Darwin, was dredged to allow the passage of battleships, the work being completed in July, 1945. In the winter of 1944, in response to a request from the British Government, the Government of New Zealand also hastened its work on the docks and repair facilities at Auckland, Wellington and elsewhere, to supplement the bases and repair yards in Australia.

The arrangements for the arrival and organization of the Fleet in Australia were made in the course of October and November, 1944. Admiral Sir Bruce Fraser was appointed Commander-in-Chief, British Pacific Fleet on 22nd November, and three weeks later Vice-Admiral Sir Arthur Power relieved him in the Indian Ocean as Commander-in-Chief of the new East Indies Fleet, consisting of two old battleships (with one on passage), five small aircraft carriers, seven cruisers, two destroyer flotillas, one submarine flotilla and a number of escorts, and a substantial assault force. Fraser himself arrived in Sydney in his flagship on 10th December, to be followed by the nucleus of the Fleet over the rest of the month. Reinforcements were due to be sent over the next six months, until in June, 1945 the Fleet would consist of four battleships, ten aircraft carriers, sixteen cruisers (including two from New Zealand and one from Canada), forty destroyers, and about ninety escorts (including Canadian escorts). They would be accompanied by a large and varied Fleet Train, amounting to over 300,000 tons of shipping, composed of vessels fitted specially for the support and maintenance of a Fleet at sea, and built or converted almost entirely in British shipyards since the beginning of 1944.<sup>1</sup> But the immediate arrangements were soon altered. At the end of November 1944, Nimitz, under whose orders the British Pacific Fleet had been placed, asked that it should begin its operations by destroying the oil refineries on Sumatra, 'as the best initial means of assisting Pacific strategy.' It accordingly bombarded the refineries on three occasions between 20th December and 24th January, after which it proceeded to Australia, arriving on 4th February. The Fleet then consisted of two battleships, four fleet carriers, three cruisers and the accompanying destroyers.

It was indeed doubtful if the Fleet could usefully have arrived sooner. The base, whose details had been settled only in October, had still largely to be created; and, as Fraser reported, the essentials for maintenance were barely ready. Nor was the employment of the Fleet at all certain. Nimitz was prepared, as soon as its training and

<sup>1</sup> For the early discussions on the Fleet Train, see Volume V, pp. 476-8.

supply permitted, to include it as a task force in one of the American Fleets in 'his most advanced operations,' and to provide facilities for a forward base at Manus in the Admiralty Islands on the same basis as for American ships. But Manus, whose position as a forward base was in any case not ideal for operations some 2,000 miles to the north, would not be ready for some months, and Nimitz was also obliged to emphasize that with his other commitments he could offer no help in supply or in the provision of fuel. He estimated therefore that the British Pacific Fleet would not be ready for action before April 1945, when he proposed to include it as a task force in the covering operations for the landings in the Ryukyus, which would last from March to May against Formosa and the adjoining islands. He ordered it meanwhile to work up at Espiritu Santo in the New Hebrides, until the necessary facilities at Manus could be transferred.

MacArthur, on the other hand, was anxious to use the British Pacific Fleet in the south-west Pacific, where operations in the Philippines were still under way and where, unlike Nimitz, he could offer opportunities for immediate action. The competing claims of the two commanders, exacerbated by their unresolved rivalry, were reflected in Washington early in the new year. The Joint Chiefs of Staff themselves could not decide on the immediate future. Iwo Jima, assaulted on 19th February, was conquered by the end of March; Okinawa, due to be attacked on 2nd April, was expected to fall by the end of that month. But no further operations had yet been specified in the central Pacific, and in the south-west the reconquest of the Philippines, beyond which nothing had been planned, was expected to be complete in March. Future operations, moreover, must be related to an invasion of Japan whose date could not yet be accurately foreseen. The Joint Chiefs of Staff anticipated that the redeployment of the necessary forces from Europe would take from four to six months after the surrender of Germany, which now might not occur until the summer of 1945 or even the following winter. The intermediate operations must therefore contain the large Japanese forces outside Japan for a period of perhaps six to nine months, while preparing directly or indirectly for the ensuing climax. The Joint Chiefs of Staff accordingly stated at Yalta that a plan of campaign was being prepared 'in the event that prolongation of the European war requires postponement of the invasion of Japan until well into 1946.' It included three possibilities.

- (1) An attack on the island of Hainan, to assist in cutting the Japanese sea communications and to secure a new airway to China.
- (2) An attack on North Borneo, to secure the oil and rubber supplies, and to threaten Japanese communications with south-east Asia.
- (3) An operation against the area Chusan-Ningpo in China

(south of Hangchow and the estuary of the Yangtse River), to threaten the main Japanese river communications in China and to provide another base for close air attack on the Home Islands.

Since the final choice would affect the forces in both the central and the south-west Pacific, the decision must await the completion of current operations in Luzon, and possibly the capture of Okinawa in April; meanwhile it seemed likely that Hainan and Borneo must be regarded as mutually exclusive alternatives.

In these circumstances, the American Navy was reluctant to commit the British Pacific Fleet, which it regarded as the most flexible element in the theatre's naval command, definitely to operations against the Ryukyus. Planning suffered accordingly, and in February Nimitz and Fraser reported as much to their respective superiors. Admiral Cunningham raised the matter with Admiral King at Yalta, but little could be done until the Joint Chiefs of Staff had reached a decision. The discussion continued in Washington for another month, delayed partly by the absence of the chief naval expert on oil, who was required to give evidence on the advantages of an attack on Borneo; but by the middle of March 1945, under pressure from the British and from Nimitz himself, the Joint Chiefs of Staff decided to approve the operations against the Ryukyus on the original scale. On 14th March, Fraser was ordered to report to Nimitz. He was informed, however, that his part in the operations would be such that the British Fleet could be withdrawn at seven days' notice.

The reason for this *caveat* was not far to seek. With Nimitz fully committed throughout April and May, but with operations impending elsewhere, the American Navy still wished to use the British force as a flexible strategic reserve. By the middle of March, these operations were taking shape. The Joint Chiefs of Staff were now in favour of an attack on North Borneo, to secure its rubber and—more important—the oil on which the Japanese Fleet largely depended, and to establish an advanced naval base in Brunei Bay, possibly for British use, which would serve further operations either to the north or to the west. Borneo, however, was a former possession of the British and the Dutch, whose reoccupation by American forces might be resented in America when other offensive alternatives lay to hand. The Joint Chiefs of Staff therefore planned to use Australian troops in the attack, particularly as the Australians themselves, dissatisfied with their relegation to the areas south of the Philippines, were threatening further to reduce their army if it was not more actively employed. The presence of the British Fleet would clearly be equally acceptable, while the occupation of Brunei Bay might provide it with the more advanced base which it would undoubtedly prefer to Manus.

The plans, whose tenor was conveyed to the British Chiefs of Staff by Wilson on 17th March, reached London officially on 13th April.

The operations were to be in two stages: first, an attack on the island of Tarakan on 1st May, as a preliminary to securing Brunei Bay on the 28th; secondly, an attack on Balikpapan, on the east coast, on 28th June. 'Main object of the operations,' Wilson remarked, 'is to secure a naval base for the British Pacific Fleet at Brunei Bay. A secondary object is to secure sources of oil.' He added that King had stressed that the new base was not intended to 'rule out' the British in any way from participating in the main operations against Japan.

The British Chiefs of Staff, who had already considered the merits of the operation on the receipt of Wilson's first telegram, replied on 27th April.

'(1) British Chiefs of Staff have taken note of operations against Borneo already approved by U.S. Chiefs of Staff, but they must point out that the main object of these operations as stated does not in their view justify initial and continuing expenditure of effort.

(2) In their view Brunei Bay is unsuitable as an intermediate fleet base for following reasons:

(a) It is too far from main theatre of operations against Japan.

(b) It is unlikely that its development as a base could be completed before beginning of 1946. This is too late.

(c) It is a long haul from main base in Australia, compared with other possible sites at same distance from Japan.

(3) In their opinion it is essential for effective operation of British Pacific Fleet to obtain a suitable anchorage with facilities at least partially developed much nearer Japan than Brunei Bay.

(4) Philippines appear to be only area in which immediate British requirements can be met and British Chiefs of Staff would therefore welcome provision of necessary facilities at Subic Bay, or some similar anchorage where immediate action could be taken to set up intermediate base organisation.

(5) In the light of the above we suggest that the U.S. Chiefs of Staff should consider whether the allocation of resources to this project at this time is justified.'

The Chiefs of Staff hastened to point out that it was not for them to advise if the operation should be undertaken; but they wished to make it clear that if it were being undertaken mainly on their behalf, they would be glad to see it abandoned.

British participation in the attack on Brunei proved in any case to be impossible. The main body of the British Pacific Fleet, operating as a task force under Vice-Admiral Herbert Rawlings, had sailed for the Ryukyus on 23rd March. By 20th April it had carried out five series of strikes, making British naval history by operating off the enemy's coast in face of continuous attack for a period of thirty-two days. Meanwhile, the attack on Okinawa itself was progressing more

slowly than had been expected. The Japanese 'kamikaze', or suicide pilots, were proving a serious threat to the supporting Fleet, and when the British force retired to Leyte to refuel and re-store, Nimitz was concerned to keep it under his orders for the second phase of the operations. King agreed on 26th April, and it accordingly sailed again from Leyte on 1st May, and continued in action off the Ryukyus until the 25th. There was thus no possibility of its participating in operations to the south, and naval support was confined in the event to the Americans and Australians.

Despite the unpromising British attitude, the Americans decided to stage the operations in Borneo, of whose merits they were convinced. But they urged their allies to reconsider their attitude towards Brunei. There was no alternative base for the British available in the Philippines, and Borneo itself held obvious advantages for the support of operations which might later be undertaken in the Netherlands East Indies or the South China Sea, in which 'both United States and British Naval Forces may be employed'. But neither argument attracted the British Chiefs of Staff, and they replied on 24th May:

'We consider that to develop Brunei Bay as an intermediate base (for either the north or the west) would be a waste of the constructional resources at our disposal, especially in view of the fact that the base would not be complete until the end of the year, by which time Singapore may well have been captured.'

In the event, the attack on Tarakan took place on 1st May, and on 10th June, a fortnight later than originally planned, the Australians landed unopposed in Brunei Bay. Balikpapan was attacked on 1st July, and a fortnight later the harbour was open to Allied shipping. By that time North Borneo was effectively in Australian hands.

The attack on Borneo was not an isolated question. It was involved in the plans for the final operations against Japan. At Yalta, the Combined Chiefs of Staff had estimated, as a basis for planning, that the war against Germany would end on a date between 1st July and 31st December, 1945. By the middle of April, as resistance weakened fast on the three European fronts, this estimate could be revised; and the Allies then agreed to work in future to 31st May. On this assumption, Kyushu might be attacked at any time between 1st October and 1st December, 1945. But the structure of command in the Pacific was still designed for the approach to invasion rather than for invasion itself. The first and decisive step was taken by a directive from the Joint Chiefs of Staff on 6th April, when a new structure of command by Service was created to parallel for the time being, and later to replace, the existing area Commands. This departure from the



normal practice of the war, whereby the higher command in the theatres had always been based on area alone, occasioned some surprise; but it enabled the troops redeployed from Europe to be placed under one authority, as a necessary preliminary to the final reorganization of command for further operations.

' . . . 3. (a) The Supreme Commander, South West Pacific Area, is hereby also designated Commander-in-Chief, U.S. Army Forces, Pacific (CINCAFPAC) and . . . all army resources in the Pacific theatre . . . are placed under his command. CINCAFPAC will be responsible for the provision of army resources to meet the requirements for operations in the Pacific directed by the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

(b) . . . All U.S. naval resources in the Pacific theatre . . . are placed under the command of the Commander-in-Chief U.S. Pacific Fleet and Pacific Ocean Areas in his capacity as Commander-in-Chief U.S. Pacific Fleet. CINCPAC will be responsible for the provision of naval resources to meet the requirements for operations in the Pacific directed by the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

(c) The Twentieth Air Force [of very long-range bombers]<sup>1</sup> for the present will continue operations to support the accomplishment of the over-all objective under the direct control of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

4. The Joint Chiefs of Staff will exercise strategic jurisdiction over the Pacific Theatre . . . The Joint Chiefs of Staff will normally charge CINCAFPAC with the responsibility for conducting land campaigns and CINCPAC with conducting sea campaigns. The Chief of Staff, United States Army, will act as executive agency for the Joint Chiefs of Staff in all matters pertaining to United States army forces. The Commander-in-Chief United States Fleet, will act as executive agency for the Joint Chiefs of Staff in all matters, pertaining to United States naval forces . . .'

While arrangements were being made for the transfer of forces, MacArthur and Nimitz would continue to act as Commanders-in-Chief of all forces within their respective areas.

MacArthur's future now lay to the north. He must therefore be freed as far as possible from responsibilities in the south. The American Chiefs of Staff thus came to consider the creation of a British Command in the south-west Pacific; and on 13th April, on the same day that they announced their plans for Borneo, they submitted the possibility to the British Chiefs of Staff. Wilson then reported:

'The proposal is that the whole of the South-West Pacific area, excluding what amounts to the Philippines and Hainan should be detached from MacArthur and set up under South-East Asia Command, or as a separate command, as you think fit. The

<sup>1</sup> See Volume V, pp. 487-8.

actual line of demarcation between what would presumably be a Central Pacific command and the new South-West Pacific command, they suggest might be from the point on the China coast on the boundary between China and French Indo-China, down south-south-east (excluding the Island of Hainan) to the Balabac Strait just north of Borneo, and thence to Equator at longitude 130° east.

U.S. Chiefs of Staff clearly felt that the sooner changes on these lines could be introduced the better. They are not wedded to any particular line of demarcation and would no doubt be ready to consider any alternative you might like to suggest. They appreciate of course that they are setting you a difficult problem.'

The position in April, 1945 had changed considerably since September 1944, the last occasion on which the British had considered the creation of a Commonwealth task force in the south-west Pacific.<sup>1</sup> At that time, the British rôle posed irreconcilable alternatives: a Fleet and an air force in the central Pacific, or land and air forces with naval support in the south-west. It could now embrace both. In September 1944, Mountbatten was approaching the Chindwin, with the full strength of the Japanese in Burma still to be overcome: in April, 1945 he was fast approaching Rangoon, and was envisaging the reconquest of Malaya and the recapture of Singapore by the end of the year. In September 1944, the British Pacific Fleet did not exist, and its acceptance in the Pacific was uncertain: in April, 1945 it was at sea off Okinawa, and its co-operation with the main American Fleet was assured. Thus the British might be in the South China Sea within a year, with forces which would still leave others to spare for the main campaign against Japan. Whereas the prospect of a British task force, and possibly of a British Command, in the south-west Pacific had seemed dangerous in the autumn of 1944, in the spring of 1945 it offered obvious advantages.

The implications of the proposal were ably examined by the Joint Planning Staff in a paper of 29th April, which formed the basis for the subsequent discussions.

' . . . GENERAL EXAMINATION OF THE PROPOSALS

*Advantages*

(5) Reorganisation of command at some period on the lines proposed has the following advantages:

- (a) The recognition of Indo-China as an area under SACSEA's [Mountbatten's] effective operational control would assist SACSEA.
- (b) If it were decided to undertake operations from the east to assist SACSEA's operations in Malaya, these would be

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<sup>1</sup> For the background to this question, see Volume V, pp. 481-2.

better co-ordinated if they were mounted from an area of joint responsibility under British Command.

(c) British Commonwealth forces now in S.W.P.A. would come under British Commonwealth command . . .

(d) We should establish British Commonwealth control in an area in which we have vital strategical interests from the point of view of long-term security.

(e) Our policy is that we must either conduct or, at least, participate in operations to capture Hong-Kong. Control of S.W.P.A. will bring us a great deal nearer to this objective.

(f) It enables us to play a greater part in the liberation of occupied territories.

(g) It is desirable that the French and the Dutch should deal with us rather than the Americans on questions concerning the recovery of their possessions.

#### *Disadvantages*

(6) The main disadvantages are:

(a) After the invasion of the Japanese mainland and the defeat of the main Japanese forces, there may well be a continuing commitment for clearing up S.W.P.A. If the Americans had already given up S.W.P.A. as a purely American theatre, they would be likely to leave the maximum amount of this commitment to us.

(b) The addition of the further area of British responsibility might well enhance the difficulty of obtaining the assignment of the necessary United States resources . . . especially if operations continued, as suggested in (a) above, after the main United States operations were over.

#### *Implications of early change*

(7) The Americans have proposed 1st July, 1945, as a target date for the introduction of the change. We have, however, not previously taken into account this additional commitment and we would, therefore, be dependent on existing forces and resources in the South-West Pacific area.

(8) Furthermore, the area is largely dependent on United States resources in men, equipment, stores and shipping. . . . We are unable to say now exactly what scale of resources will, in fact, be required, but it is certain that there are some, including merchant shipping, which we shall not be able to provide even after a considerable period, except at the expense of our other operational commitments. The details can only be obtained in consultation with the Australian authorities.

(9) It may well be that the Americans wish to transfer S.W.P.A. to us in order to concentrate on their main operations against Japan. However, without these resources we would find ourselves in control of an area without the ability to carry out operations. In these circumstances it would be better to refuse to take over the area.

We, therefore, consider that we should not take over the area until the detailed resources required have been worked out and we have been given an assurance by the Americans that they will be provided and will remain in the theatre; and that the maintenance requirements and shipping which have been provided by the Americans will continue to be allotted.

*Effect on other British operations in the Pacific*

(10) The support of operations in S.W.P.A. will undoubtedly lead to some diversion of effort from the British Pacific Fleet, especially of carrierborne aircraft and at least a part of the fleet train. The extent of this diversion cannot be calculated until the scope and timing of operations has been decided, but it should not be large.

If the area were to continue under American responsibility, we would have little control over the diversions to support similar operations. Whereas if the area were under our control, we would be in a position to adjust the timing and scope of operations in S.W.P.A. so that they did not conflict with the British naval participation in the main operations against Japan.

*Conclusion on the General examination*

(11) We, therefore, conclude that:

- (a) It would suit our policy to assume control of the proposed area as soon as practicable.
- (b) We should not take over the area before we are assured that the necessary resources, which we cannot provide and are now in the theatre, will be made available and that the United States will continue to allot maintenance requirements and shipping. It will be necessary to work out, in conjunction with the Australians, the detail of the resources required.
- (c) Some diversion of the British Pacific Fleet to support operations in this area is inevitable, but we would have more control over this diversion if the area were under British control rather than American. . . .'

The Joint Planners approved the proposed boundaries, subject to a recognition by the Americans of Mountbatten's right to operate in Indo-China under an agreement with the Generalissimo which he had made verbally in October, 1943; to the inclusion of Morotai Island; and to the extension of the Command along the Equator from longitude 130° East, so as to include the Ocean and Nauru Groups lying near the Date Line.

They recommended, however, that within these boundaries the command should be divided in one of two ways :

' . . . (23) The possible alternatives appear to be:

- (a) To include part of the new area, say Borneo and Java,

in South-East Asia Command, and to form the rest of the area into a separate command (Course A):

OR

(b) To form a new South-West Pacific Command to include the whole of the new area (Course B).

(24) *Course A.* Although it would be an advantage for all operations against Malaya, both from the west and the east, to be under one command, this would entail S.A.C.S.E.A. taking over control of Borneo and Java from [headquarters at] Kandy. We do not consider that this is desirable. . .

*Course B.* All forces in S.W.P.A. would be united under one command, whose operations would be supported from Australia. Even if forces from this command were used to assault Malaya from the east in conjunction with S.A.C.S.E.A.'s attack from the west, it would be possible to mount them from S.W.P.A. and place them under S.A.C.S.E.A. after arrival in his theatre.

Operationally, therefore, Course B is the more suitable.

(25) In course A, the new area would be small, the majority of the forces would be Australian and operations are primarily concerned with Australian interests. The Australian Government might, therefore, wish that the control of their forces should be exercised through the Australian Chiefs of Staff. This would add an additional link in the chain of command, but the operations would be so little related to operations elsewhere that it should not prove unworkable. In Course B, the area would be greater, other commands would be affected and it is considered unlikely that the Australian Government would insist on exercising control of this area through their own Chiefs of Staff.

(26) Both courses should, therefore, be acceptable to the Australian Government, but Course B is preferable from the operational point of view.

The question of the appointment of a Supreme Commander should be a subject for discussion with the Australian Government.'

The Joint Planners finally were careful to insist that the creation of the new Command should not affect the existing rights of the British to share in the control of strategy throughout the Pacific, although naturally the direction of operations in the central and northern areas would continue to be the Americans' affair.

The merits of the proposals depended on the attitudes of the Americans and the Australians, and on 2nd May the Chiefs of Staff asked Washington to give details of the plans for the American forces and equipment in the south-west Pacific, on the assumption that the Australian forces there would remain at their existing strength. But this was by no means certain. Whatever else was decided, the Australians seemed unlikely to allow their main effort to continue in an area of secondary importance. The Government had for some time

felt strongly that the forces, whose maintenance imposed such a burden on the national economy, must be used to the best advantage, which in the spring of 1945 meant in the assaults on Japan; and this only became the more necessary as the forces themselves seemed likely to be reduced. The Australian Government decided in May, 1945 to release a further 50,000 men from the armed forces by the end of the year, in addition to the 30,000 who were already to be demobilized by that date. In June, it placed its case before the Combined Chiefs of Staff. It proposed to distribute the latest reductions as follows:

Navy — Nil.

Army — Reduction from six divisions and two armoured brigades to an operational force of three divisions.

Air — A reduction proportionate to that of the army.

The Australian Government stated that these forces, besides maintaining essential commitments in the south-west Pacific, should if possible be represented in the main operations against Japan, and on a small scale, for reasons of honour, in south-east Asia. It therefore suggested that the three divisions should eventually be allocated as follows:

- one brigade group to the Solomon Islands,
- one brigade group to New Guinea,
- one division of three brigades to New Britain,
- one division to the operations against Japan,
- probably one brigade to south-east Asia.

These dispositions did not affect the immediate commitment of two Australian divisions to Borneo; but the Government hoped that, subject to MacArthur's concurrence, they might subsequently be withdrawn. A naval squadron could be attached to the British Pacific Fleet, and three air squadrons could be associated with the British air force destined for the Pacific.<sup>1</sup>

Should a new Command be set up in the south-west Pacific—on which, it should be remarked, the Australians had not been officially informed—the Government considered that it should be granted operational control of the Australian forces in Australia itself, in Australian mandated areas, and in Papua.

This programme, of which the Joint Staff Mission in Washington informed the British Government between 10th and 13th June, at once affected the plans for the new Command. The British demands on the Americans were drastically reduced. The Joint Chiefs of Staff had replied on 7th June, in answer to the inquiries on the disposal of their resources, that they must remove from the south-west Pacific all transferable American equipment and all administrative staffs. But the reduction of the Australian forces would mean that the rest of the Australians could support themselves, and American action

<sup>1</sup> See p. 233 *et seq.* below.

was no longer of decisive importance. The date and conditions of acceptance could therefore be correspondingly advanced.

The proposed structure of the Command was also affected by the Australians' proposals, for these involved the subdivision of the area and thus favoured an extension of the South-East Asia Command to the eastward. The Joint Planners therefore recommended, in contrast to their earlier report, that Mountbatten should be made responsible for Borneo, Java and the Celebes, the Australians accounting to the Combined Chiefs of Staff for the rest. The boundaries of the Command, following an American proposal on 7th June, were also redefined. They now included all of the Netherlands East Indies and New Guinea, but not the Admiralty Islands or the eastern Solomons, in both of which the Commonwealth was interested, or the Ocean and Nauru Groups. Since the Americans disposed of most of the facilities at Manus and at Guadalcanal, these omissions had however to be accepted.

The Americans suggested further on 7th June that the new Command should be set up on about 15th August. The Joint Planners, however, preferred to wait until Singapore had been captured, when Mountbatten would be better placed to accept his new responsibilities.

Thus, by the middle of June the Combined Chiefs of Staff had reached a large measure of agreement which comprehended Australian interests; and on the 21st, the Joint Planners felt able to recommend that the revised proposals should be included in the comprehensive paper on the future British effort against Japan, which they were now preparing for the next Allied conference.<sup>1</sup>

A third factor had to be considered in the formation of the new plans. When the British contribution to the war in the Pacific had been discussed at the 'Octagon' Conference in September 1944, it had included the offer of forty squadrons of long-range bombers, of which twenty would act as tankers in flight, to operate against the inner zone and against Japan herself.<sup>2</sup> No agreement had then been reached. But the Combined Chiefs of Staff had asked for detailed plans; these were soon submitted; and as a result the Joint Chiefs of Staff accepted the offer on 27th October, subject to bases becoming available in the course of operations. The Air Ministry thereupon prepared a provisional plan for the creation of three Groups, each consisting of twelve squadrons of heavy bombers and six squadrons of long-range fighters, one from Britain (including one Canadian fighter and two Canadian bomber squadrons), one from Canada and one from south-east Asia. The Group from Britain would receive first priority, so as to leave for India very soon after Germany's defeat. In November 1944, Air

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<sup>1</sup> See pp. 265-7 below.

<sup>2</sup> See Volume V, pp. 504, 518-23.

Marshal Sir Hugh Lloyd was appointed commander designate of the force, which was later named 'Tiger' Force.

It was assumed at this stage that the Americans would provide, and where necessary construct, the bases for the force, although maintenance would presumably be a British responsibility. The Air Ministry accordingly decided in January, 1945 to send three airfield construction wings from Britain, and to ask the Canadians for 10,000 airfield engineers. But it soon appeared, from conversations held at Yalta in February, that the Americans would be unable to act as the British had hoped. Their resources for airfield construction were already fully stretched, and they were therefore obliged to ask the British to be responsible for 'all development from tide-water to aircraft to ensure the full employment of your Force'. This placed the project on a completely different footing. It meant mounting a large force on a base or bases, whose precise nature was still unknown but which must be built and equipped entirely with British resources over British lines of supply, at a distance of over 14,000 miles from England. Such plans as were possible must clearly be begun at once, and at the end of February, 1945 the Air Ministry decided to reserve a mobile force of 2,500 British airfield engineers at two or three weeks' notice, to withdraw two wings of Commonwealth engineers immediately from France, and to ask the Canadians to provide 5,000 or 6,000 engineers as soon as possible. The last demand was delayed until March, to allow further details to be given in support; but the situation was still too fluid for the Canadian Government to take an immediate decision.

Detailed preparations awaited the choice of a base, and the British attacked this question during March and April, 1945. Lloyd was told, while on a visit to America in March, that the only area which was likely to be available soon was the northern part of Luzon; for the Americans themselves disposed of more heavy bombers than could be accommodated in the Pacific, while the situation in China did not encourage the expansion of bases on the mainland. Northern Luzon was by no means ideal: harbours were few and poor, communications uncertain, and facilities entirely undeveloped. But there seemed to be no alternative, and the British concluded in April that an adequate base could be developed in the Calgayan valley for twenty squadrons of heavy bombers and three squadrons of supporting aircraft. Since the base would be in American territory, fighter squadrons would not be needed for its defence.

The British estimated that 56,000 men would be needed to build and develop the base before the force could be deployed, of whom 19,000 must be retained thereafter. The air force could supply 21,500; the rest must be found elsewhere, presumably by the army. But only 2,500 airmen were immediately available, while the army could spare no labour troops from Europe before Germany was defeated, and none



from south-east Asia before the fall of Rangoon. It therefore seemed unlikely that the first airfield could be ready in Luzon before February, 1946.

But while these plans were being considered, the position was changing to the north. On 2nd April, the Americans attacked Okinawa, which was expected to fall by the end of the month. Facilities on the island were not thought to be large enough to base both the tactical and strategic air forces required, and since the former held precedence, the Pacific Ocean Areas Command proposed to attack the adjacent island of Miyako in June, so as to establish an advanced bomber base as soon as possible. But even if a base were available, it seemed doubtful if the necessary construction could be undertaken immediately, for the Americans were still desperately short of airfield engineers. They therefore seemed prepared in the middle of April to accept a British force in Miyako, provided that the British themselves would build the necessary airfields. But the situation changed again within the next few weeks. As the Japanese on Okinawa continued to resist, other plans, including those for the attack on Miyako, had to be abandoned. At the same time it became clear that facilities for air bases on Okinawa itself were more numerous than had been believed. With the surrender of Germany early in May, their development became more urgent for future operations; and on the 30th, the Americans offered to provide bases in the island for ten British squadrons immediately, on the same terms as had been unofficially suggested for Miyako.

The British Chiefs of Staff accepted this offer on 4th June, and on the 11th their administrative advisers reported on its implications. They calculated that 37,400 men would be required for the new base, 15,000 for operations and the rest for construction and administration. The army could supply 12,400 of the total, and the air force a further 7,500 engineers. The remaining 2,500 engineers could perhaps be found in Canada. Meanwhile, provisional plans had been made to despatch a convoy of 2,500 engineers, with elements of force and base headquarters, via the Panama Canal. On 14th June, the Chiefs of Staff decided to sail it without awaiting information from the Americans on its routeing through the Pacific. The cargo ships sailed from Liverpool on the 20th, with vehicles and stores; and on 7th July a faster ship followed with 3,000 men. The sailing of this convoy, with the other events and agreements already recorded at about the same time, marked the end of the first phase of the British plans to contribute to the war in the Pacific.



## CHAPTER VII

### STAGE TWO

WHEN Germany surrendered early in May 1945, the nature of the British war effort moved in theory into a new stage, whose place in the sequence had been determined for some time. The 'overall objective' that Germany should be beaten before Japan, which had been formulated in January 1942, suggested a programme whose objects became more definite as the war progressed. It comprised three stages. Stage One occupied the period of war against Germany and Japan simultaneously; Stage Two, the period of war against Japan alone, after Germany had been beaten; Stage Three, the subsequent full reconversion from war to peace. These chronological distinctions were of course regarded as useful points of reference rather than as immutable divisions of time. But from the first a greater distinction was assumed to exist between Stage One and Stage Two than between Stage Two and Stage Three. The former seemed likely to involve a definite and fairly rapid change from a period of full mobilization for war to a period of partial demobilization: the latter, an extension of that demobilization, on foundations already laid, so as to achieve a full peace economy as soon as possible. The problems of the intermediate Stage Two were thus complex and uncertain, demanding for their solution a reasonably clear idea of the shape both of future strategy and of the future national economy.

As it turned out, this programme was falsified by events. The break occurred not, as had been expected, between Stage One and Stage Two, but between Stage Two and Stage Three. Until April 1944, it was assumed for purposes of planning that the war against Japan would continue for three years after Germany was defeated; from April to September 1944, the figure stood at two years; and thereafter at eighteen months. But in fact that period lasted only thirteen and a half weeks, and Stage Two thus never occupied the place in the timetable which had been foreseen. Its problems must nevertheless be briefly surveyed, if we are to appreciate this country's position at the end of the war in Europe, and to see its plans for the Far East in their proper prospective.

In 1944, the most immediate of the problems raised by Stage Two was to decide when it was likely to start. A full list of the calculations, and their background, is given in Appendix VII to this volume. A

summary shows the most important estimates of the date for Germany's surrender.

- 1st December, 1943 —end of 1944.
- 14th August, 1944 —not beyond 30th June, 1945.
- 4th September, 1944 —by 31st December, 1944.
- 30th October, 1944 —between 31st January and 15th May, 1945.
- 25th January, 1945 —between mid-June and early in November, 1945.
- 29th March, 1945 —by 31st May, 1945.

These varying estimates, and the anxiety to produce them, reflected the difficulties confronting the military and political authorities. The former did not know the shape of their effort in the Pacific until September 1944, and thereafter could not judge the rate at which it would develop until the date of Germany's surrender could be foreseen. The latter found it equally difficult to foretell the shape of the British economy until they could judge with some precision both the extent of the military programme and the extent of American co-operation, decisions on which must in turn probably await the end of the war in Europe. Thus the very nature, as well as the detail, of the relation of military to economic effort was for long in doubt, when the satisfaction of both depended upon its firm definition.

This relation could be measured in various ways. But common to them all was measurement by manpower. The authorities concentrated first on the needs of the Services in the twelve months following Germany's surrender. At first, late in 1943, these were estimated at over 7,000,000 men and women in the armed forces and munitions at the end of that period—a reduction of only 20 per cent from the numbers so employed in December 1943, and one which would still leave as many men and women mobilized for war purposes as had been mobilized late in 1941. Such figures clearly could not stand. In the spring of 1944, the Minister of Production asked the War Cabinet to agree in principle that, twelve months after the defeat of Germany, the number of men and women still mobilized in the Services and in production for war should not exceed 65 per cent of the numbers at the end of 1944. This would allow the armed forces 3,000,000 men and women, and munitions 2.5 million. The War Cabinet accepted the figures, and the Services set to work accordingly.

Their calculations need not trouble us, for the assumptions on which they proceeded—Germany defeated by the end of 1944, the war against Japan lasting a further two years, and the British rôle not yet determined—were all overtaken by events, in the first two cases within the next nine months. The difficulties, however, were such that at the end of July, 1944 the War Cabinet asked the Prime Minister to prepare a draft directive on the policy to be adopted in planning manpower

for Stage Two. This appeared early in August, and was at once accepted. The Prime Minister called for a cut of 1,100,000 men in the armed forces and munitions when Germany had been beaten, of whom 700,000 should come from the armed forces themselves, at least 200,000 from the navy, 300,000 from the army, and 200,000 from the air force. Civilian claims apart from munitions, as hitherto produced, should be cut by 200,000. These reductions should be timed on the assumption that the European war would end in 1944.

Planning proceeded on these lines until early in January 1945, modified from the end of the previous October by the amended date for the surrender of Germany. The Chiefs of Staff then produced figures which approached, if they did not meet, the War Cabinet's demands, and were accepted as a guide for further detailed planning and for discussion with the Americans.

*Numbers to be employed in the armed forces  
twelve months after the defeat of Germany*

Navy	665,000
Army	1,487,400
Air Force	757,760
	<hr/>
Total	2,910,160

It was estimated that between 1 and  $1\frac{1}{4}$  million men and women might be employed on munitions at that time.

The calculations of the military figures were of course affected, from early in 1944, by comparable calculations of the manpower to be employed in the reconstruction of the national economy. The obstacles in this case were greater than in the military sphere. The country was faced by three urgent tasks, easy enough to define but difficult to satisfy without a more accurate knowledge of future American action. First, the population must be granted a somewhat higher standard of life than it had endured over the past few years. The reasons for this claim, as stated by the Government, bear repetition.

‘The British civilian has had five years of blackout and four years of intermittent blitz. The privacy of his home has been periodically invaded by soldiers or evacuees or war workers requiring billets. In five years of drastic labour mobilisation, nearly every man and every woman under 50 without young children has been subject to direction to work, often far from home. The hours of work average 53 a week for men and 50 overall; when work is done, every citizen who is not excused for reasons of family circumstances, work, etc. has had to do 40-8 hours a month duty in the Home Guard or Civil Defence. Supplies of all kinds have been progressively limited by shipping and manpower shortage; the queue is part of normal life.

Taxation is probably the severest in the world, and is coupled with continuous pressure to save. The scarce supplies, both of goods and services, must be shared with hundreds of thousands of United States, Dominion and Allied troops; in the preparation of Britain first as the base and then as the bridgehead, the civilian has inevitably suffered hardships spread over almost every aspect of his daily life.'

The amelioration of these conditions was not only just and desirable in itself: it was absolutely necessary if the country's other two tasks were to be achieved.

The first of these tasks was to restore as far as possible the nation's capital equipment, particularly in houses and industrial machinery. By the end of 1944, this could indeed no longer be postponed, and some urgent work was already being undertaken before the end of the war in Europe. The other task, and one of outstanding importance, was to recover the export trade. By June 1945, Britain had sold over £1,100,000,000 of capital assets abroad, had increased her external debt by over £2,800,000,000, and had reduced her gold and dollar reserves by £152,000,000. She must therefore pay for her essential imports, now and indefinitely, almost entirely by what she could sell—'in sober truth, a matter of national life and death for a nation of 47,000,000 people crowded into an area one-third the size of Texas.'<sup>1</sup>

These three tasks were estimated to demand together 3.4 million workers. In January 1945, the supply seemed likely to be 2.6 million. The rest of the working population, not in the armed forces or in munitions, would be absorbed by the maintenance of the current level of production and standard of life. But these figures, ominous as they were, had themselves been calculated on the assumption that American aid, in lend-lease for military and civilian purposes and in financial regulation, would continue on a scale appropriate to Stage Two. If American munitions or goods were cut unduly, or if the dollar was allowed to operate without regard to other currencies, the British task would at once become immensely more difficult, and perhaps impossible.

Such a development, the British argued, would be unjust in itself and dangerous to the Alliance. They were not indeed disposed to apologize for the weakness which now led them to ask for continued help. Britain's military effort had surpassed her economic strength; and the burden had been assumed as part—and a disproportionate part—of the pooling of resources between the Western Allies. The British therefore conceived that it was both to the Americans' honour and to their interest to provide reasonable conditions for a British recovery; and it was in that spirit that towards the end of 1944 they placed their detailed requests for aid in Stage Two.

<sup>1</sup> Hancock and Gowing, *British War Economy*, p. 520.

The British case was at first well received in Washington. Conversations had been held intermittently on the subject since the middle of 1943. But they were given a fresh impetus in September 1944, when the problems were discussed by the Heads of Government at the Second Quebec Conference. Roosevelt and Churchill were then able to agree in principle that American food, shipping and goods should be supplied in Stage Two to cover Britain's reasonable needs, and munitions in proportion to the nature of her military effort, even though this should free British labour for essential civilian tasks. The supplies, as before, would be in the form of lend-lease, to which the President hoped no conditions of use would be attached. The Heads of Government issued a directive along these lines, and set up a committee to consider the scope and scale of the arrangements.

The 'Octagon' agreement was brief, and open to different interpretations. But its sense seemed clear to the British, and the subsequent conversations went far to implement its objects. The British put their case to the committee in a long and able document, whose provisions were expounded by Lord Keynes. It affirmed four principles.

1. American supplies of munitions on lend-lease should not only complement the munitions for British use provided in Britain, but should make possible the release of some British manpower for other tasks.
2. The standard of life in Britain should be raised to some extent.
3. There should be no restriction on the recovery of the British export trade.
4. The British reserves of gold and dollars should not deteriorate further.

On this basis, the British asked for aid in munitions to the extent of \$4 billion in the first year of Stage Two, compared with \$5.1 billion in 1944; and for aid in supplies other than munitions to the extent of \$3 billion in the first year of Stage Two, compared with \$3.9 billion already appropriated for 1944/45.

Of the four British principles, the last three do not concern us directly. It may suffice to say here that the second and third, which like the first conformed explicitly to the 'Octagon' agreement, received a favourable hearing, while the fourth, which did not, proved difficult to satisfy. By the end of January 1945, the Americans had decided to grant supplies for the civilian economy to the extent of \$2.6 billion—substantially what had been asked—and not to oppose complete freedom for British exports after the end of the war in Europe. They had also agreed to relieve to some extent the British shortage of dollars, though by no means to the extent that had been asked.

They consented further to grant substantial help in munitions. Although the British had to pare down their original demands, they

were informed in January, 1945 that they would receive \$2.8 billion worth of munitions over the first year of Stage Two, and the programme was moreover agreed, as the negotiators reported to London, with 'remarkable ease and celerity'. The outlook in fact seemed fair, and only one proviso marred the satisfaction of the British delegates. Despite strenuous efforts, they had failed to get 'protocol validity' for the supplies, such as the Americans had earlier granted to lend-lease supplies to Russia, and they thus could not count on complete security of tenure. But the American officials agreed to regard production of lend-lease material for Britain as of equal priority to production for themselves; and, while not entirely happy, the British negotiators and Government were reasonably content with this assurance.

But in the event, the failure to secure 'protocol validity' was to have serious consequences. During the first half of 1945, telegrams from Washington warned that trouble might soon arise over the programme of aid. As the defeat of Germany grew closer, and the Administration prepared to submit new estimates of expenditure to Congress, signs were not wanting that appropriations for Britain might have to be curtailed. It was by no means certain that a fresh programme of lend-lease would be accepted as easily as had its predecessors. In April, the British Ambassador therefore warned the Government to expect 'something like a crisis' within the next few months.

The crisis, at this stage, was anticipated mainly in the appropriations for goods other than munitions. But by the beginning of May 1945, it had spread to the appropriations for munitions themselves. In the middle of that month, less than a fortnight after Germany's surrender, the British Joint Staff Mission in Washington learned that the whole of the programme of air supplies would probably have to be recast. This seemed to be the point at which the British must protest. On 28th May, the Prime Minister accordingly asked President Truman to ensure that the terms of the 'Octagon' agreement would be honoured, 'and in particular that the appropriations given to your War Department will be enough to provide for our needs as finally worked out between us.'

But this approach, unlike its predecessor in the autumn of 1944, met with no success. The President did not reply, and towards the end of June the British Chiefs of Staff despatched a long memorandum to Washington, which they had been holding for some time, designed to support the Administration's case to Congress. But it was now too late. Early in July, the Joint Staff Mission reported to London that the foundations of the munitions agreement were crumbling.

'For some time now,' they reported, 'there has been a tendency on the United States side to suggest that no military supplies can be made available under lend-lease unless it can be shown that they are required for "direct use in the war against Japan".'



This tendency is now hardening into a definite policy . . . it would appear, too, that a very rigid interpretation will be placed on "direct use against Japan" . . .'

This forecast soon proved correct, for in the middle of July the U.S. War Department informed the Joint Staff Mission that in future no military supplies could be made available under lend-lease except for direct employment against Japan. The British therefore decided to raise the matter at the forthcoming Allied conference at Potsdam.

Before the conference met, the President replied to the Prime Minister's telegram of 28th May. His answer was couched in general terms. He confirmed that supplies 'for the prosecution of the war against Japan' would continue on the lines already settled; but he gave no hint of how that phrase was to be defined, and warned that the quantity of the supplies might not prove equal to the earlier estimates. The Prime Minister therefore sought at once to clarify the issue, and on 29th June the President amplified his message. After reaffirming that munitions would be supplied 'in the war against Japan, and . . . will not be used for any other purpose', he announced that this could be taken to cover the maintenance and support of Allied forces while fighting the Japanese, and while being redeployed to fight them. It would not, however, cover the needs of occupation forces in Europe. The British were far from satisfied with this ruling: it abandoned the first of their principles, as expounded in the autumn of 1944;<sup>1</sup> it was capable of various constructions; and it offered no guarantee against further encroachments on the detailed requirements. They therefore took it up when the Allies met at Potsdam in July. But the President, after explaining that opinion in Congress might not allow him to include areas such as Germany and Austria in future lend-lease agreements, asked the Prime Minister 'to be patient' on this question, and assured him meanwhile that the import programme would not suffer. The British had perforce to accept this reply, and they accordingly prepared, early in August 1945, to submit new demands better suited to the case. Thus matters stood when the war against Japan suddenly ended, and plunged the Allies immediately into the problems of Stage Three.

The fluctuating fortunes of the talks on lend-lease, combined at first with the fluctuations in the estimates of the date for Germany's surrender, effectively hamstrung the British preparations for Stage Two; and the period itself thus became, as has been said, 'a chaos of uncertainties'.<sup>2</sup> I do not propose to plunge into the consequences

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<sup>1</sup> See p. 241 above.

<sup>2</sup> Hancock and Gowing, *loc. cit.*, p. 533.

for manpower, which were at once serious, unknown and nugatory. But one fact stood out, which affected the immediate future of all plans for reconstruction, and which in one of its aspects was to enter into the immediate military plans. Demobilization from the armed forces must be as rapid as possible within the limits already agreed, and must be combined to some extent with the relief of troops who had served long periods oversea.

The principles of demobilization had been under consideration since the beginning of 1941, and had been settled by the autumn of 1944. With the experience of 1918/19 in mind, the War Cabinet had taken pains to design a scheme which would appeal to those concerned and to the public as reliable and fair. At first, the claim to release was designed to rest solely on a combination of age and length of service. But when Stage Two was envisaged, and the problem changed from one of full demobilization to a reallocation of labour between the military and civil sectors, a new category was formed, in addition to the normal releases, of those men and women whose services would be needed urgently for the immediate national reconstruction. This Class B, as it came to be known by the end of 1943, comprised those persons essential to the expansion of production for civil needs, and to immediate tasks in mining, building, education and police. The War Cabinet approved the scheme in February 1944, and published it, after revision, at the beginning of September. It was at once well received by Parliament and by the country.

The reallocation of manpower was not the only problem for the Services when the war in Europe had ended. They thought it equitable also to provide as far as possible for the repatriation of men and women who had by that time served long periods oversea. Until the spring of 1945, the longest term of foreign duty was fixed at four years, subject always to the needs of operations. But in the previous autumn, the Government had resolved in principle that it should be reduced by stages to three years, and in May, 1945 the War Office decided to take the first step by lowering the qualification to three years and eight months, and to apply it as fully as possible to the remaining operational theatre of south-east Asia, where the men had for long been living in peculiarly trying conditions. It also planned to give home leave to certain categories of men. The subsequent arrangements for repatriation were given the code name of 'Python'.

The two schemes, of partial demobilization and 'Python', were planned to start within six weeks of Germany's surrender. The Government hoped that about 750,000 men and women would be released from the forces by the end of 1945, although this estimate might prove optimistic. Most of them would come from the army, since the British rôle in the Far East would be sustained largely by the navy and air force; but, along these lines and subject to operational necessity,

the process would apply to south-east Asia and the Pacific equally with other theatres.

The consequences of these movements of troops over the second half of 1945 had engaged the attention of the shipping authorities and the Combined Chiefs of Staff for some time before its dimensions could be estimated even in the broad. The calculations early in the year were gloomy; but this was owing to the presumed crisis in shipping which was later dispersed,<sup>1</sup> and in fact the claims of the British demobilization did not add significantly to the problems of the period. Nor were they likely to affect seriously the military plans in south-east Asia, the only active British theatre of operations at the time of Germany's surrender. The number of men immediately affected was not unduly large, and the rate of release was subject explicitly to the needs of operations. But 'Python' and the schemes of leave were another matter. The repatriation of troops who had served a long term in that most inhospitable of theatres, at a time when large reserves, not due for demobilization, became available in Europe, could scarcely be evaded and involved a significant proportion of the experienced men. It was in this field, accordingly, that the impact of Stage Two was felt directly on the war against Japan. The large problems of redistributing the national manpower and production, of regaining the export trade, and of relating sterling satisfactorily to the dollar, were still confined to Whitehall. But the comparatively minor question of repatriating men from the Far East had immediate repercussions, which in the event were to provide the only measurable effect of Stage Two on the operational plans.

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<sup>1</sup> See pp. 26-7 above.



CHAPTER VIII  
THE STRATEGY FOR SOUTH-EAST  
ASIA AND THE PACIFIC,  
JUNE - AUGUST, 1945

(i)

South-East Asia: To Singapore and Beyond

**W**HEN Rangoon fell in the first week of May 1945, the immediate task of the British Fourteenth Army was to destroy the considerable forces of the enemy still remaining to the north and north-west, before they could withdraw around the Gulf of Martaban.<sup>1</sup> The Japanese headquarters for Burma now exercised only a shadowy control over these forces, themselves split into two groups, one consisting of two Armies east of the Mandalay-Rangoon road around the latitude of Toungoo, the other of a single Army in the triangle Prome-Toungoo-Rangoon. Throughout May and June, those British divisions not withdrawn for future operations drove the eastern group of Japanese slowly to the south, and pressed the western Army into the hills between the two roads. In July, this force tried to break out to the east. But, harried by Burmese guerrillas and from the air, and surrounded by the formations of Fourteenth Army, it gradually disintegrated; and in the last ten days of the month, when the fighting was at its height, lost over 6,200 killed. Meanwhile, the other two Japanese Armies withdrew slowly. At the beginning of August, they lay west of the Salween between Toungoo and Moulmein; and it was in that last narrow strip of central Burma that they surrendered later in the month.

The British carried out these mopping-up operations under a new command. For with the capture of Rangoon, and the consequent prospect of operations in Malaya, the time had come to remodel the system devised for a campaign in Burma alone. In the course of May 1945, Slim succeeded Leese as Commander-in-Chief, Allied Land Forces;<sup>2</sup> Fourteenth Army, consisting of two Corps, was given charge of the future campaign in Malaya; and a new Twelfth Army was formed of one Corps with extra formations, to conduct the

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<sup>1</sup> See Map IV, facing p. 165.

<sup>2</sup> See p. 172 above.

remaining operations north of Rangoon. In June, the air forces were also reorganized, following the withdrawal of the American air headquarters to China.<sup>1</sup> All British bombers now came under the command of R.A.F. Burma, itself subordinate to Air Command, South-East Asia; and while some American formations remained temporarily in the theatre, the familiar and complicated machinery, embodying at their different levels Tenth U.S. Army Air Force, the Air Transport, Strategic Air and Eastern Air Commands, the Combat Cargo Task Force and the Air Commandos, came to an end.

While the last areas of central Burma were being cleared, the South-East Asia Command was preparing the operations to the south which had been adumbrated in February.<sup>2</sup> The object had then been to capture Singapore between the end of December, 1945 and the end of March, 1946. For this purpose, Mountbatten had proposed to secure advanced sea and air bases on Phuket Island and the adjacent mainland early in June (operation 'Roger'), and to land in the area Port Swettenham-Port Dickson in October (operation 'Zipper').<sup>3</sup> He would then be well placed to attack Singapore (operation 'Mail-fist') at a date to be determined by the provision of assault shipping from Europe. But these plans could now be modified as a result of the successful advance upon Rangoon. On 4th May, Mountbatten reported to the British Chiefs of Staff that the deteriorating position of the Japanese land forces, and the eclipse of their air and sea power, should enable him to launch the attack on the area Port Swettenham-Port Dickson in the second half of August, without a preliminary attack on Phuket Island; and this in turn should allow him to attack Singapore by the end of 1945. But he asked the Chiefs of Staff, if they approved his intentions, to return to the theatre a squadron of light fleet carriers which had recently left to join the British Pacific Fleet, so as to compensate for the absence of an intermediate base. The Chiefs of Staff liked the plan, and hastened to seek the Americans' consent. The Joint Chiefs of Staff soon agreed. But they added that the operations should be conducted 'without prejudice' to those connected with the invasion of Japan; and this reply made the authorities in London the more reluctant to weaken the new British force in the Pacific, whose rôle was deemed so important to the British cause, and which moreover was beginning to experience the casualties already familiar to the Americans. On 16th May, the British Chiefs of Staff accordingly informed Mountbatten that he could not expect the light fleet carriers; but they offered instead to divert two escort carriers

<sup>1</sup> See p. 197 above.

<sup>2</sup> See pp. 189-90 above.

<sup>3</sup> See Map V, facing p. 167.

then on passage to the Pacific, and two days later the Supreme Commander announced that he could carry out 'Zipper' with these reinforcements.

Detailed planning for the operation had already begun. Accurate intelligence was difficult; but the Japanese were known to dispose of several divisions in Malaya and Singapore (possibly three to four divisions in Singapore and Johore alone), and to be reinforcing from Siam, French Indo-China and the Netherlands East Indies. Mountbatten therefore proposed to land two British infantry divisions with one brigade, following up with a further three divisions and one brigade, and reserving two more divisions for subsequent operations. These forces—the least, it was estimated, that could achieve their object from a distant base—would be carried in seventy-two landing ships, of which ten would be L.S.T. and fifty-nine L.S.I., and in a variety of landing craft. Substantial air and sea support would be provided, and some 3,000 Burmese guerrillas would supply diversionary action. In the middle of May, the British forces were concentrated in India and around Rangoon, and by the end of the month the preparations were well in hand.

But early in June a *contretemps* arose. It will be recalled that in the autumn of 1944, the Government had stated publicly that the longest period of service oversea for the army and air force would be cut as fast as possible from four to three years; and that in the middle of May, when Germany had surrendered, an immediate reduction was ordered to three years and eight months.<sup>1</sup> The Commander-in-Chief, Allied Land Forces in south-east Asia thereupon agreed with the War Office to withdraw from operational units all of the men likely to be affected over the next few months; and on 30th May he informed the Supreme Commander that this must delay 'Zipper' by about a fortnight. On 1st June, Mountbatten accordingly informed London that the operation would be launched on 9th September. This was accepted without demur. But meanwhile, anxious to maintain local morale and public support for the war against Japan, the War Office had decided that the qualifying period for repatriation from south-east Asia should be reduced at once by a further four months, from three years eight months to three years four months. The Command, it seems to have argued, had already agreed to withdraw from operations the men affected by the earlier reduction; the new reduction would not affect more than 3-4,000 men a month in the divisions for 'Zipper', out of an anticipated withdrawal of some 12,000 men a month from the theatre over the last quarter of the year; and the familiar clause to safeguard operational needs would of course be retained. Satisfied, therefore, that the new reduction would not endanger forthcoming operations, and that it would help morale in the

<sup>1</sup> See p. 244 above.

theatre and at home, the Secretary of State for War decided to take the opportunity of a debate to announce it on 8th June in the House of Commons. On the evening of the 6th, he informed the South-East Asia Command; and on the 8th, duly made his announcement.

On receiving the first news of the Government's intention on the 6th, Mountbatten at once protested to the Secretary for War and to the Chiefs of Staff; and on 9th June, by which time the Minister had made his statement in the House, he sent a detailed account of what he conceived to be the consequences for the Command. He reminded the authorities in London that 'Zipper' was, on his estimate, already 'working to the narrowest possible margin'. The new reduction in the period of service would affect some 32,300 men over the next six months, and would bring the total number of men to be sent home under 'Python' and the leave schemes to one-third of the British strength in India and south-east Asia. The effect, in his opinion, would be to postpone 'indefinitely' both 'Zipper' and 'Mailfist'. The only means of salvage would be to invoke the clause on operational necessity; and this he dismissed, on the ground that the public announcement of the new measure would be accepted at its face value by the men concerned, and that to make use of the clause would therefore only damage the morale which the measure was designed to sustain.

Mountbatten's protests were accompanied by others from the Commanders-in-Chief, Allied Land Forces and India, the latter pointing out that the extra men released could not in any case expect to be shipped home for some time in view of the limits to transport within the theatre. The Chiefs of Staff and the War Office were not, however, greatly impressed. They did not dismiss the possibility of invoking the clause on operational necessity; and they do not seem entirely to have accepted Mountbatten's estimate of the enemy's strength, and hence his claim that he was working to the narrowest margin. On 13th June, the Chiefs of Staff therefore decided to inform the Supreme Commander that in their view 'Zipper' could probably take place as planned. Meanwhile, the War Office arranged to send officers to the theatre to discuss the implications on the spot.

But the subsequent examination showed that the Command's forebodings could not be disregarded. 'Zipper' would be affected materially by the new measure; and it was inescapably true that, owing to the limits of Indian transport, the immediate withdrawal of more men from the operational divisions would not hasten their repatriation. On 24th June, when the discussions in India were almost over, Mountbatten gave his considered opinion of the problem.

- ' . . . 2. Situation here is plain and we see only three alternatives:
- (a) To honour the Secretary of State's promise in full. This will automatically cancel 'Zipper' this year.
  - (b) To carry out 'Zipper' as previously arranged by invoking



on a large scale the clauses on operations and shipping introduced by the Secretary of State and bearing in formations the men who are concerned.

(c) To carry out 'Zipper' on date arranged but withdrawing now from formations involved all those men who will have more than three years four months service by the end of 1945 despite a consequent considerable reduction in the fighting efficiency of formations as well as loss of at least one division and by holding these men without employment until they can be shipped home at about the end of the year.

3. In the opinion of the senior formation Commanders soldiers here took the Secretary of State's promise at its face value and never imagined that his promise could not be carried out this year despite the safe-guards he mentions.

4. If all men with over three years four months service before the end of 1945 are withdrawn from formations . . . I am prepared to carry out 'Zipper' on the present date if you wish me to do so since I consider that during 1945 further delay would favour the Japanese rather than ourselves. But it is necessary in this case that the serious situation which will be produced in this theatre and particularly in India should be faced when many thousands of disappointed men find that they are held for months after the dates on which they had been promised repatriation.

5. As regards alternative (b) in paragraph 2 neither Auchinleck [the Commander-in-Chief, India] nor I are prepared to assume the responsibility of invoking the operational clauses on a large scale.

6. The only solution therefore which we can see if you wish 'Zipper' to be carried out this year is to adopt alternative (c) in paragraph 2 . . .'

In that case, the men concerned should be warned publicly that their shipment home would probably be delayed until near the end of the year.

The War Office considered the situation over the next week. Its cogitations were not referred in detail to the Chiefs of Staff; but the result was clear enough.

'In view of the very strong representations by Admiral Mountbatten and General Auchinleck the Secretary of State for War is prepared to make a suitable statement [along the lines suggested by Mountbatten] provided that it can be shown that no men will be excessively delayed [on 'Zipper'] beyond their 'Python' date on the new basis.'

So far as could be seen, this delay would in fact amount only to one or two months; and the Chiefs of Staff therefore informed Mountbatten on 2nd July that the statement would be made, and that he should carry out 'Zipper' as planned. Thereafter, the preparations for the operation were concerned mainly with air support and with the

assault lift, on both of which the Command made good progress in the course of July. So ended the only incident of its kind in the short period of Stage Two, in which the needs of operations seemed likely to be jeopardized by political considerations.

While preparing for 'Zipper', it was necessary to consider the shape of operations in and from south-east Asia after the capture of Singapore. This of course would depend largely on the extent to which the British would be associated with the Americans' plans for invading Japan, by now well advanced. But whatever form their contribution might take in the central Pacific, two tasks seemed necessary and immediate in the southern sphere: to clear the Japanese from Siam, and to recapture some at least of the Netherlands East Indies.

Mountbatten first raised the question of action in Siam in April, 1945. He then wished to take such measures as would help the current operations in Burma, would protect his flank for the further campaign to the south, and would prepare the strong elements of native resistance for subsequent co-operation with the Allies. The British Chiefs of Staff recognized the advantages of these proposals; but operations of any sort in Siam raised serious problems of Allied policy, affecting the future in south-east Asia and both current and future relations with China in the vexed area of Indo-China, which were already under debate by the War Cabinet and its Far Eastern Committee. The situation was complex, the negotiations with elements in Siam were prolonged, and no decision could be taken in the course of the early summer. Mountbatten was therefore instructed to confine himself for the time being to staff studies for the liberation of the country. Early in June, however, he raised the matter again. Opinion in London was now inclined to favour operations against Siam and Sumatra;<sup>1</sup> and in his view Siam took priority. The immediate importance of action there had receded with the reconquest of central Burma and the accompanying defeat of large Japanese forces; but the subsequent liberation of the country offered several advantages. The Allies could almost certainly count on help from a large and well organized Resistance, increasingly anxious to act; less than a hundred miles separated the eastern border of Siam, at the narrowest point, from the South China Sea, a possible area of future activity for the Command; and the possession of the Siamese rice fields would help to feed the peoples of Burma and Malaya, for all of whom the Allies would soon be responsible. Mountbatten therefore proposed that the Siamese should be dissuaded from hazarding their strength in premature risings, that if however they rose he should be allowed to help them, and that he should meanwhile prepare to arm and train

<sup>1</sup> See pp. 266-7 below.

the native Resistance against the time for co-ordinated action, which might be soon after the recapture of Singapore. The Chiefs of Staff could still not approve these proposals in detail, pending the War Cabinet's decision on policy. But, while instructing the Supreme Commander not to put his plans into effect until he heard from them again, at the end of June they agreed in principle to his proposals, on which detailed planning proceeded in the weeks that remained.

Action in Siam fell definitely within the orbit of the South-East Asia Command.<sup>1</sup> So did action against Sumatra, the necessary preliminary to operations in the Netherlands East Indies. But its consequences must affect the South-West Pacific Area, and Mountbatten, already aware of the negotiations on the subject, therefore inquired as a first step if he should take the existing theatre boundaries as likely to remain unchanged. The British Chiefs of Staff replied early in June that he should not; and indeed, as we have seen, they had by that time agreed in principle with the Americans that his theatre should be enlarged.<sup>2</sup> On 7th June, the Joint Chiefs of Staff proposed details; and while neither the area nor the date of transfer could yet be taken as certain, Mountbatten soon received permission to visit MacArthur in mid-July, to discuss a closer interchange of plans and intelligence between them. After a useful conference, he returned briefly to his headquarters, before leaving again, as ordered, to report in person to the Allied authorities at Potsdam.

By this time, the future in south-east Asia had come to depend more closely on the plans for the British contribution to the main operations against Japan;<sup>3</sup> and its detail accordingly had to await further discussion on that subject with the Americans. The conclusions appeared in a directive from the Combined Chiefs of Staff to Admiral Mountbatten on 2nd August.

'1. Your primary task is the opening of the Straits of Malacca at the earliest possible moment. It is also intended that British Commonwealth land forces should take part in the main operations against Japan, which have been agreed as the supreme operations in the war; and that operations should continue in the Outer Zone to the extent that forces and resources permit.

#### BOUNDARIES OF COMMAND

2. The Eastern Boundary of your command will be extended to include Borneo, Java and the Celebes.<sup>4</sup>

3. Further information will be sent to you regarding Indo-China.

4. It is desirable that you assume command of the additional areas as soon as convenient after 15th August, 1945. You will

<sup>1</sup> See Volume V, p. 140.

<sup>2</sup> See pp. 227-33 above.

<sup>3</sup> See section II below.

<sup>4</sup> See Rear End-paper.

report to the Combined Chiefs of Staff the date on which you expect to be in a position to undertake this additional responsibility.

5. From that date, such Dominion and Dutch forces as may be operating in your new area will come under your command. They will, however, continue to be based on Australia.

6. The area to the east of your new boundary will be an Australian command under the British Chiefs of Staff.

#### BRITISH PARTICIPATION IN MAIN OPERATIONS AGAINST JAPAN

7. It has been agreed in principle that a British Commonwealth land force of from three to five divisions and a small tactical air force should take part in the main operations against Japan in the Spring of 1946. Certain important factors relating to this are still under examination.

8. You will be required to provide a proportion of this force, together with the long-range portion of two assault forces. Units of the East Indies fleet may also take part. The exact composition of this force and its rôle and the mounting and supporting arrangements will be discussed between General MacArthur and the British Force Commanders, and will receive final approval by the Combined Chiefs of Staff.

9. The requirements for the force taking part in the main operations against Japan must have priority over all the other tasks indicated below.

#### OPERATIONS IN THE OUTER ZONE

10. Subject to the fulfilment of the higher priority commitments given above, you will, within the limits of available resources, carry out operations designed to:

- (a) Complete the liberation of Malaya.
- (b) Maintain pressure on the Japanese across the Burma-Siam frontier.
- (c) Capture the key areas of Siam.
- (d) Establish bridge-heads in Java and/or Sumatra to enable the subsequent clearance of these areas to be undertaken in due course.

11. You will submit a programme of operations to the Combined Chiefs of Staff as soon as you are in a position to do so.

#### DEVELOPMENT OF BASES

12. You will develop Singapore and such other bases as you may require to the extent necessary for operations against the Japanese.

In the event, Mountbatten did not have time to decide when he would be ready to take over his new area; and on 14th August, when the Japanese Government had capitulated, he was ordered to do so on the following day.

These last deliberations seemed at the time, as they seem now, rather unreal. By mid-July, the Heads of Government were inclined to believe that atomic bombs must soon be dropped on Japan;<sup>1</sup> and thanks to his presence in Europe at the time, Mountbatten (unlike MacArthur or Nimitz) was verbally so informed, and allowed to warn his Chief of Staff to prepare for a sudden Japanese surrender. As a result, the last moves in Burma and Malaya went smoothly. The Japanese Government surrendered on 14th August, and MacArthur then became Supreme Commander of all Allied forces in the Far East. On the 19th, he ordered his commanders to complete local surrenders after the general surrender had been signed; and on the 20th, Mountbatten got in touch with the enemy in Burma. On the 26th and 27th, Japanese representatives visited Rangoon to sign a preliminary agreement of surrender in south-east Asia. Over the next fortnight, Allied forces landed at or were flown to Singapore, Penang and Sabang, Port Swettenham and Port Dickson (in the full strength of operation 'Zipper'), Bangkok and Saigon. On 12th September, ten days after the general capitulation had been signed in Tokyo Bay, Mountbatten received the surrender of the Japanese Expeditionary Forces of the Southern Regions in the Council Chamber at Singapore.

The Japanese surrender in south-east Asia involved over 738,000 men. The Allies in the South-East Asia Command at the time numbered in all some 1,304,000, of whom almost 955,000 were men of the British Commonwealth. The difficulties they had overcome in the reconquest of Burma had been enormous, and equal at least to those of any other campaign in the war. When Field Marshal Wavell had been ordered in 1942 to plan the capture of Rangoon from India, he had mentioned some of the implications.

' . . . From the Bengal Coast to Cape Negrais is 500 miles, and Rangoon is 200 miles round the corner. So our problem is roughly equivalent to starting an expedition from Southampton to reach the north coast of Spain and then to proceed down the west coast to, say, Oporto with the whole of France and Spain in enemy hands . . . '

The alternative which had to be adopted, of fighting down through Burma itself, offered equally formidable obstacles of weather, terrain and communications, never tackled in combination before by even small European forces, and wholly unfamiliar in the experience of a large campaign. Tens, and later hundreds of thousands of men, using the complicated weapons of modern war, were required to operate over great distances in country much of which had hitherto been known only to a few explorers, in one of the worst climates in the world, against an enemy possessing greater experience of the conditions, and

<sup>1</sup> See Chapter IX below.

themselves often hampered by inadequate resources. That in these circumstances they should have compelled almost half a million Japanese, fully up to the normal standards of efficiency and morale, to retreat some 450 miles in less than a year, was a remarkable achievement of planning, leadership and performance.

The achievement was mainly British; and while we may applaud it, we must ask if the effort, for the Alliance and for the British rôle within it, was in fact worth-while. What part did the reconquest of Burma play in the defeat of Japan, and was it worth the complications it introduced to the Allied grand strategy? The first reaction of the British to such a venture, in the spring of 1942, had been distinctly unfavourable. They had then concluded that there were five possible courses of action which might lead to the defeat of Japan: the occupation of the industrial areas and sources of raw material in Manchukuo, Korea and northern China; the cutting of sea communications between Japan and northern China and Korea; air bombardment of the Japanese Home Islands (then considered feasible only from shore bases); the recapture of the sources of oil in the Netherlands East Indies; and the cutting of communications between that area and Japan. 'The reconquest of Burma is not one of the five methods . . . it will not necessarily lead either quickly or directly to Japanese downfall, without other measures.' Why then did they decide soon afterwards, and with full knowledge of the difficulties, to embark on such a course? And why was their decision confirmed later, when the alternative first offered of putting a comparable British effort into the Pacific?

We must distinguish at this point between a decision to fight in Burma and the decision to reconquer Burma at least as far as Rangoon. The former would in any case have been taken, so as to protect India in greater depth and to engage the Japanese in the only theatre where the British could readily find them. But this need have involved only a campaign in Upper Burma. The reconquest of Burma as a whole arose from the necessity, as it was then seen, to keep China in the war. This, it was thought, could be secured most effectively by reopening the Burma Road, which in turn meant, as the British recognized, that 'we shall have to retake Burma.' The Road could scarcely be guarded from Upper Burma alone: its protection must eventually involve, in the words of the British Joint Planning Staff in May 1942, 'naval control of the Bay of Bengal, a major combined operation on Rangoon and an offensive from Assam into Northern Burma.' The subsequent campaigns thus derived their meaning and validity initially from the decision to support China. They were later continued, in preference to placing the main British effort in the Pacific, because the obstacles to that course of action could not be satisfactorily resolved.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See Volume V, Chapters XI, XII.

The eventual advantages of a campaign in Burma thus remained obscure throughout much of its course, while the disadvantages—the comparatively large resources needed from Britain and India, and the fact, as President Roosevelt pointed out, that other campaigns brought the Allies closer to Japan itself—were obvious enough. Nevertheless, the strategy in south-east Asia was to have important consequences, other than that which had originally dictated its form. In the event, both the Allies and the British found their rewards. The campaign in Burma was responsible for the deaths of probably 128,000 Japanese, just over 10 per cent of the Japanese soldiers thought to have been killed in the whole of the war, and for the largest single defeat of the Japanese army which occurred anywhere in the Far East. It obliged the enemy constantly to reinforce a distant and expensive theatre, to protect more actively than might otherwise have been the case his longest lines of communication, and to incur in that unprofitable cause severe losses to his sea and air power. It thus directly aided the Allied strategy by containing a significant proportion of the Japanese effort in circumstances largely adverse to it. It also opened a prospect of direct strategic advantage, which an alternative policy might have brought sooner but which at least seemed certain in 1945 soon to be fulfilled, of reconquering Malaya and the Netherlands East Indies, with their minerals and oil. Such results benefited both Allies. The British had the further satisfaction of regaining British territory by force of arms, and of being able to re-establish order, and to initiate new policies, in accordance with their own designs. The combination of these secondary results is not to be dismissed lightly. Nor is it possible to say if any alternative strategy—likely, in the difficult circumstances, itself to have encountered serious obstacles—would have produced consequences of equal value. The merits of the Allied strategy in south-east Asia, and of the British part in it, may provoke various opinions. We can only say at this stage, first, that the effort was not without important rewards; and secondly, that not all of those rewards were clearly foreseen when the strategic decisions themselves were formed.

(ii)

## Plans for the Invasion of Japan

In January 1945, the Joint Chiefs of Staff had announced their plans for the next seven months in the Pacific, in preparation for the Allied conference at Yalta.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> See pp. 210-11 above.

<i>Target</i>	<i>Target Date</i>
Continuation of the operations in the Philippines (Luzon, Mindoro, Leyte) and Iwo Jima.	19th February, 1945
Okinawa and extension therefrom in the Ryukyus.	1st April-August, 1945

The prospects thereafter were less well defined, but might include an operation on the Chinese coast and the invasion of the Japanese Home Islands of Kyushu and Honshu in the winter of 1945/46, and operations 'to maintain and defend' sea communications to the sea of Okhotsk when the entry of Russia into the war became imminent. Six months later, when another Allied conference was due to start, events had moved fast enough for this next stage to have been planned in greater detail.

This last conference (the 'Terminal' Conference) had been arranged in the course of May and June, 1945 to begin on 16th July in Potsdam, just outside Berlin. British, Americans and Russians attended, on much the same scale as at Yalta. But there were some significant changes in the composition of the delegations. President Truman now headed the Americans; while Mr. Churchill led the British party as Prime Minister no longer in the Coalition but in a Caretaker Government, following the decision of the two main political parties in May to go to the country in July. He was accompanied by the leader of the Labour Party, Mr. Attlee, to preserve some continuity should the Caretaker Government be defeated at the polls; and when this occurred on 26th July, the new Prime Minister and his Foreign Secretary, Mr. Ernest Bevin, returned to Potsdam to lead the British delegation.

On 16th July, the Joint Chiefs of Staff tabled a paper on the progress of the war in the Pacific between 1st February and 1st July. They could report great achievements.<sup>1</sup> In the south-west Pacific, American forces had almost completed the subjugation of the remnants of Japanese in Luzon, retaking in the process the fortresses, so dear to American pride, of Batan and Corregidor; had captured the central Philippines by a series of landings in March and April; and were slowly eliminating the enemy in Mindanao, following landings from March to May. In Borneo, the Australians had regained Tarakan in the course of May, and had successfully exploited their landing at Brunei Bay on 10th June. On 1st July, another force landed at Balikpapan, and by the middle of the month was moving inland against stiffening opposition. Meanwhile, Australians and Americans had by-passed Japanese garrisons in New Guinea, the Bismarcks and the Solomons.

In the central Pacific, the Americans had secured Iwo Jima in the

<sup>1</sup> See Map VI, facing p. 312.



Bonins by the end of March, and on 1st April, after continued sea and air attacks over a large area, had landed on Okinawa in the Ryukyus. Very stubborn fighting ensued, but by 21st June the whole of the island was under control. In the northern Pacific, operations were confined to air attacks on the northern Kuriles, and to naval sweeps and bombardments in the Sea of Okhotsk.

By the middle of June, the Americans could therefore envisage with some precision the operations for the autumn and winter; and on the 14th, 15th, 18th and 21st, the President called a series of meetings at the White House to discuss the plans. We do not know all of the details;<sup>1</sup> but according to Admiral Leahy,<sup>2</sup> it was agreed on the 14th 'that invading and seizing objectives in the Japanese Home Islands would be the main effort, and that no other operation would be considered that did not contribute toward this objective. However, it was deemed advisable to liberate any Japanese-held territory that might be necessary to aid the main undertaking.' Meanwhile, the sea and air blockade and bombardment of Japan would be maintained, and as far as possible increased.

In the course of these conversations, it appears that the idea of a landing in China was dropped.<sup>3</sup> Leahy and at least a section of naval opinion had favoured such an operation, preferably near Amoy, as a preliminary or even an alternative to an invasion of the Home Islands. But the Army's views prevailed, and on 29th June the President approved its plan for invading Kyushu on 1st November. The next day, the strategic decisions were conveyed in a memorandum to the British.

'1. In conformity with the over-all objective to bring about the unconditional surrender of Japan at the earliest possible date, the United States Chiefs of Staff have adopted the following concept of operations for the main effort in the Pacific:

(a) From bases in Okinawa, Iwo Jima, Marianas and the Philippines to intensify the blockade and air bombardment of Japan in order to create a situation favourable to:

(b) An assault on Kyushu for the purpose of further reducing Japanese capabilities by containing and destroying major enemy forces and further intensifying the blockade and air bombardment in order to establish a tactical condition favourable to:

(c) The decisive invasion of the industrial heart of Japan through the Tokyo Plain.

2. We have curtailed our projected expansion in the Ryukyus by deferring indefinitely the seizure of Miyako Jima and Kikai Jima. Using resources originally provided for Miyako and

<sup>1</sup> The minutes of the meeting on the 18th, however, are published in *The Entry of the Soviet Union into the War against Japan*, pp. 77-85.

<sup>2</sup> *I Was There*, p. 448.

<sup>3</sup> See pp. 207, 209, 211 above.

Kikai, we have accelerated the development of Okinawa. By doing this, a greater weight of effort will more promptly be brought to bear against Japan and the risk of becoming involved in operations which might delay the seizure of Southern Kyushu is avoided.

3. In furtherance of the accomplishment of the over-all objective, we have directed:

(a) The invasion of Kyushu, target date 1st November, 1945.

(b) The continuation of operations for securing and maintaining control of such sea communications to and in the Western Pacific as are required for the accomplishment of the over-all objective.

(c) The defeat of the remaining Japanese in the Philippines by such operations as can be executed without prejudice to the over-all objective.

(d) The seizure of Balikpapan, target date 1st July, 1945.

(e) The continuance of strategic air operations to support the accomplishment of the over-all objective.

4. Planning and preparation for the campaign in Japan subsequent to the invasion of Kyushu is continuing on the basis of meeting a target date of 1st March, 1946 for the invasion of the Tokyo Plain. This planning is premised on the belief that defeat of the enemy's armed forces in the Japanese homeland is a prerequisite to unconditional surrender, and that such a defeat will establish the optimum prospect of capitulation by Japanese forces outside the main Japanese Islands. We recognise the possibility also that our success in the main Islands may not obviate the necessity of defeating Japanese forces elsewhere; decision as to steps to be taken in this eventuality must await further developments.

5. We are keeping under continuing review the possibility of capitalising at small cost, without delaying the supreme operations, upon Japanese military deterioration and withdrawals in the China Theatre.

6. We have directed the preparation of plans for the following: . . .

(b) Operations to effect an entry into Japan proper for occupational purposes in order to take immediate advantage of favourable circumstances such as a sudden enemy collapse or surrender.'

The Joint Chiefs of Staff did not officially divulge the preliminary plans for the invasion of either Kyushu (operation 'Olympic') or Honshu (operation 'Coronet'), before or during the Potsdam Conference. But some information was given unofficially, and it was clear that the design was on the largest scale. Some five million men would take part in the operations, the troops being covered and supported by a Fleet and air force larger than had been used in 'Overlord', and



PLATE VI. THE POTSDAM CONFERENCE

*The photograph includes, reading left from bottom centre: Admiral Leahy, Mr. Byrnes, President Truman, Mr. Eden, Mr. Churchill, Mr. Attlee, M. Vyshinsky, M. Molotov, Marshal Stalin.*



assembled in the adjacent islands from a variety of bases extending to the west coast of the United States. Almost all of the forces would be American, and they would absorb almost all of the Americans' available strength. It seemed therefore to the Joint Chiefs of Staff at this stage that their allies could help best by complementary action elsewhere, the British in the south-west Pacific and the Russians, when they entered the war, on the mainland of Asia.

In the earlier part of 1945, the Russians' contribution had appeared of great importance to the Joint Chiefs of Staff.<sup>1</sup> But by the summer, their views had largely changed. An examination of the problems by their Military Mission in Moscow, and the pace of the Americans' advance in the Pacific, now suggested that American air action against Japan from Siberia would prove both difficult and unnecessary. There would soon be enough American bombers to carry out the desired programme of attack, to which the two groups of B.29's scheduled for northern Russia<sup>2</sup> would add only 1.39 per cent to the tonnage of bombs to be dropped; while the preparation of the necessary bases by the end of October, 1945 would involve probably 52,000 men, some 572,000 tons of material, and over two million barrels of petroleum products, all to be carried from the United States. It also no longer seemed likely that a supply route through the Pacific would be needed to support the Red Army's offensive against Manchukuo. The Military Mission in Moscow calculated that the Russians already had a reserve of some two million tons of stores in Siberia, that the trans-Siberian railway would fall short by some 200,000 tons a month of the capacity required for the operations, and that therefore the Red Army could call on existing reserves for a period of nine to ten months without other supplies. Since Stalin had indicated at Yalta that he expected the campaign to be over in three months, the Americans saw no pressing reason to open a sea route from the United States. They were moreover prepared now to escort convoys to the Kurile Islands, should that prove necessary, without a base in Kamchatka.

These estimates at once altered the relations between the Americans and the Russians. As the head of the Military Mission in Moscow expressed it,<sup>3</sup> 'for the first time [they] put the United States in the position of being able to comply or to refuse to comply with Soviet requests purely on the merits of the case.' The Joint Chiefs of Staff still wanted the Red Army to attack the Japanese army on the mainland, which might otherwise pose an awkward problem even after Japan

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<sup>1</sup> See p. 211 *et seq.* above.

<sup>2</sup> See Volume V, pp. 487-8.

<sup>3</sup> Deane, *The Strange Alliance*, p. 265.

herself had been invaded.<sup>1</sup> But the Russians themselves were clearly anxious to gain the rewards of such a campaign, and the Americans need make no further concession on its behalf. This growth of strategic independence was particularly gratifying to the American Government, for it coincided with the change in the diplomatic atmosphere which had been developing since Yalta. The Western Allies had already been shocked and angered by the Russians' behaviour in Europe in the spring and early summer. In June, they were perturbed by evidence of similar behaviour in the Far East. The Americans, because of the notorious lack of security in Chungking, did not inform the Chinese until that month of the terms of the Yalta Agreement;<sup>2</sup> and Chiang Kai-shek, though naturally indignant, then accepted them as inevitable. But towards the end of June, the Chinese Foreign Minister visited Moscow, and was at once left under no illusion that the Russians were already trying to enlarge their advantages. Stalin made it clear that he interpreted some of the clauses of the Agreement in a way which the Western Allies had certainly not intended, and that he proposed to regard his interpretation as correct. This information, affecting an area hitherto of greater interest to them than eastern and central Europe, alarmed the Americans; and they were the better pleased that military considerations now allowed them to treat more independently with a Government which they were increasingly inclined to distrust.

In the last two months of the war, the Joint Chiefs of Staff accordingly placed less emphasis on operations in the northern Pacific. In June 1945, they informed the Russian General Staff that they no longer wished to establish air bases near the Amur river, and added a month later at Potsdam that they would not after all occupy the Kuriles, but if necessary would maintain a line of communication to Russia without them.<sup>3</sup> The change of plans did not seem to have any ill effect on the Russians: on the contrary, it was followed by—perhaps produced—improved relations. The Americans received a favourable answer to all of the questions they now put to the General Staff.<sup>4</sup> They were allowed to establish two weather stations on Russian territory, manned by Americans; their suggestions for boundaries of operations between the respective navies and air forces were accepted with minor amendments; so were their proposals for liaison in the field with the Russian armies in the East, to which the Russians added a proposal for liaison at Russian naval headquarters; and they were given the information for which they had asked on ports and airfields available for shelter

<sup>1</sup> And see Truman, *Year of Decisions*, pp. 238-9, 341.

<sup>2</sup> See p. 219 above.

<sup>3</sup> See pp. 213, 215-16 above.

<sup>4</sup> For the minutes of the principal meeting between the American Chiefs of Staff and the Russians at Potsdam, on 26th July, see *The Entry of the Soviet Union into the War against Japan*, pp. 94-104.

and repair. 'The military meetings at Potsdam thus ended in complete accord',<sup>1</sup> less than a fortnight before Russia declared war on Japan.

While the Americans were moving towards a more modest strategy in the north Pacific, they were obliged to consider the possibility of a more ambitious British effort in the central area. Until the end of June 1945, the British contribution to the main attack on Japan was confined officially to the British Pacific Fleet and to the prospect of a force of long-range bombers based on Okinawa. Both progressed in the last weeks of the war. The British Pacific Fleet repeated in May its operations of March and April off the Ryukyus,<sup>2</sup> and after a pause for replenishment at Manus, reappeared in July off the Japanese coast. Throughout the second half of that month, reinforced by new arrivals, it took part in the formidable strokes by sea and air against the Home Islands, in which the Allied Fleet claimed to have sunk or damaged over four hundred of the enemy's ships and some 550 aircraft. The Fleet Train, too, was gaining steadily in experience and strength.

Preparations for the British strategic bombing force were meanwhile going ahead in Okinawa and in London. It will be recalled that the British Chiefs of Staff had sailed the first convoy of technicians and material in mid-June, without awaiting the consent of the Americans.<sup>3</sup> The latter's reaction, in Washington and in the Pacific, was distinctly cool; but a hasty visit by Air Marshal Lloyd, the force commander, to Admiral Nimitz improved the atmosphere, and early in July, while the convoy was at sea without definite orders, the Americans agreed to accept it and a successor at Okinawa. Further conferences followed, which were entirely satisfactory. The Americans gave every help in Okinawa itself; consented to an intermediate base being established in Luzon, to connect the force with Australia; and asked for its first two squadrons to be ready for operations by the middle of October. The authorities in London were working hard to this end, when the war ended suddenly in August.

But while the Fleet and the preparations for the air force were gaining momentum, plans were being drawn up in London for a more ambitious British contribution to operations in the central Pacific, which in turn defined action in south-east Asia and the south-west Pacific from the end of 1945. It was generally agreed that immediate commitments and a presumed shortage of merchant shipping must govern the British strategy over the rest of the year. But the recapture of Singapore would release men and material, to which more could be

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<sup>1</sup> Deane, *loc. cit.*, p. 275.

<sup>2</sup> See p. 225 above.

<sup>3</sup> See p. 235 above.

added from other sources in 1946, that might well be used in a specifically British contribution, by all three Services, to the last stages in the defeat of Japan. The authorities in London were anxious to seize the opportunity. The questions, wearisomely familiar to them all, were what type of force to provide, and where to provide it.

The problems were tackled first by the British Joint Planning Staff in April 1945, and their report appeared early in May. It could not then be assumed that the invasion of the Japanese Home Islands would prevent the enemy from continuing to resist in the south-west Pacific and in south-east Asia. The Joint Planners accordingly concentrated on the possible courses of action in this 'outer zone', where a separate British Command was already in prospect. Their report, however, did not find favour with the British Chiefs of Staff. If the Japanese Home Islands were to be invaded over the next ten months, it was important for political reasons that the British should play a part in the operations. Naval and air support of the invasion, accompanied by 'mopping-up' operations far away, were not considered enough. Land forces must participate, on whatever scale, in the invasion itself. Unfortunately, it was unlikely that more than two or three British and Commonwealth divisions could take part, and even then only in the invasion of Honshu (operation 'Coronet') in the spring of 1946. But whatever the difficulties, operations in the outer zone must be planned in relation to such an object, which the British Chiefs of Staff regarded as of the first importance.

The Joint Planners accordingly continued their studies on this altered basis. It soon became clear that there were alternatives: a force of about 3½ divisions for 'Coronet', which could support itself administratively from India with its own lines of communication; or a force of about 5½ divisions, depending at least in part on American administrative services. In the second case, a proportion of the force might consist of Australian divisions from the south-west Pacific, which MacArthur was thought to be willing to use in the invasion of Japan. The Chiefs of Staff preferred the larger force, and the Joint Planning Staff therefore examined the possibilities. In the middle of May they reported that alternatives could again be considered: an assault and follow-up force of 2½ divisions from India, supported by a build-up of Australians from the south-west Pacific, all to be carried in British shipping; or an assault force of Australians from the south-west Pacific carried in American shipping, supported by a build-up of 3½ divisions from India carried in British shipping.

The introduction of Australian divisions raised several questions to which the British could not give answers. They did not know the extent to which the Americans were prepared to supply Australian forces and bases once the main operations shifted to the north, or if MacArthur was really prepared to include Australians in the invasion of Japan,



or what forces the Australian Government intended to keep in the field.<sup>1</sup> Rumours from MacArthur's headquarters in May even suggested that Australians might not after all be used in the invasion. But early in June, the picture cleared when both Americans and Australians reported their intentions. On 7th June, the Joint Chiefs of Staff replied, in answer to British inquiries, that they must remove most of the American forces and staffs from the south-west Pacific; but this appeared less serious when the Australian Government announced that it intended to reduce its operational land forces to three divisions, of which one might be available for the invasion of Japan.<sup>2</sup> The scope of the British action could now be defined more closely. On 8th June, the Chiefs of Staff 'felt that the time had now come to crystallise plans for British participation in the war against Japan'; the Joint Planning Staff submitted a fresh report on the 17th; this was considered on the 21st; and after further consultation with their administrative officers, the Chiefs of Staff tabled a paper to the Prime Minister on the 30th.

The Joint Planners' report, though destined to be modified, formed the basis of the subsequent British case. The coming reduction of the Australian forces meant that participation in 'Coronet' must probably be confined to the 3½ divisions mentioned earlier, whose examination had been abandoned in favour of that of the larger force. Their composition seemed likely to be one British, one New Zealand and one Indian division, with possibly one Australian division in the build-up. One Canadian division, already known to be included in the Americans' plans, might also perhaps be transferred to the build-up with the Australians. The first three divisions would be maintained from India in British shipping, the Australians in British shipping from the south-west Pacific, and the Canadians (if included) in American shipping from the United States. The whole force would depend for its subsequent supply on American 'rear services'. Naval and air support might be provided by the British East Indies Fleet, augmented as necessary by the British Pacific Fleet, and by a tactical air force of some fifteen squadrons supplied as far as possible by the Commonwealth. All this would leave free for operations by the Commonwealth in the 'outer zone' some twelve divisions in south-east Asia, the East Indies Fleet except for a period of six to eight weeks, some ninety air squadrons in south-east Asia and up to fifty in the south-west Pacific, assault forces for one division, and shipping for about 10,000 men. French and Dutch forces could probably be added for such operations early in 1946.

This division of effort was likely to involve serious administrative problems, to which the Principal Administrative Officers draw

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<sup>1</sup> See p. 231 above.

<sup>2</sup> See p. 232 above.

attention in the middle of June. Their warnings suggested various possibilities, which were included in the Chiefs of Staff's report to the Prime Minister at the end of the month.

' . . . 2. It is agreed that the invasion of Japan is the supreme operation in the war. The prospect of the recapture of Singapore in November, 1945, together with the opening of the Malacca Straits, enables us to offer, in addition to the British Pacific Fleet and the V.L.R. [very long-range] Bomber Force, a British, Dominion and Indian land force to take part in this invasion. Owing to limitations of shipping, however, such a project will only absorb a part of the forces at present deployed in the South-East Asia Command. We have therefore planned that British Forces should continue operations in the Outer Zone as far as limitations of other resources allow.

3. We propose, therefore, that British participation in the final phase of the war against Japan should take the following form:

- (a) The British Pacific Fleet as at present planned.
- (b) A V.L.R. Bomber Force of ten squadrons increasing to twenty squadrons at a later date when more airfields become available.
- (c) A British Commonwealth Force to participate in 'Coronet' under American Command, of three to five divisions, all to be carried in British shipping and provided with the necessary assault lift. This force would be supported by the East Indies Fleet, augmented by the British Pacific Fleet as necessary, and by a tactical air component of some fifteen squadrons. The exact size, composition and rôle of this force can only be determined by consultation between British and United States Staffs in the light of United States operational plans, the target date of 'Coronet' and its relation to the date of the capture of Singapore. Our preliminary investigations show that it might take one of the following forms:

- (i) A force of one or possibly two divisions in the assault, together with two to three divisions in the build-up administratively largely self-supporting.
- (ii) A force of three divisions in the assault and immediate follow-up and one or possibly two divisions in the build-up, relying, to a considerable degree, on American administrative assistance.
- (iii) A force of up to five divisions in the build-up, administratively largely self-supporting.

We should naturally prefer a course which allowed us to take part in the assault.

- (d) Operations in the Outer Zone to maintain pressure against the Japanese across the Burma-Siam frontier. In addition, plans for an operation against Siam, for the establishment

of bridgeheads in Java or Sumatra, and for the recapture of Hong Kong will be studied. A decision will be made at a later date as to whether, and if so when, any of these operations will be undertaken.

4. We therefore propose that the Combined Chiefs of Staff should agree the British contribution to the final phase of the war against Japan, as set out in this memorandum.'

The Chiefs of Staff also submitted complementary recommendations for a revised Command in the south-west Pacific, of which the Prime Minister and the Americans were already aware.<sup>1</sup>

The Prime Minister approved this paper at a Staff Conference on 4th July, remarking only that he hoped two British divisions rather than one would be included in the proposed Commonwealth force. As the Allies were now due to meet at Potsdam, the British sent the papers to Washington for study by the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and asked the Prime Ministers of Australia and New Zealand to state their reactions.

Replies were soon received. The Americans answered on 17th July, in a memorandum from the Joint Chiefs of Staff. They reaffirmed their agreement to the British proposal for action by the British Pacific Fleet and by a bomber force, adding that there was little prospect of airfields being available for more than ten squadrons in the course of 1945. They also agreed in principle to the participation of a Commonwealth land force in 'the final phase in the war against Japan', subject to the approval of operational and administrative details by MacArthur and Nimitz. But they added some points that seemed to need further thought.

(a) It is essential that a firm commitment be received as to date of availability and composition of forces in order to plan for their participation in the final effort and to effect adjustment of the United States redeployment programme. It is not practicable to plan on using forces whose availability is contingent upon their relief following the conclusion of a separate major operation. Hence, it appears these forces cannot at present be planned for use earlier than the build-up phase of 'Coronet'.

(b) The difficulties incident to the employment of Indian troops (language complications and the necessity for prior acclimatisation) make it doubtful that the Indian division can be effectively employed.

(c) Arrangements have already been made with the Canadian Government to organise and equip along United States lines one Canadian Division, to operate as a part of a United States Corps.

(d) It is noted that agreement of the Dominions concerned has not yet been obtained.

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<sup>1</sup> See pp. 232-3 above.

- (e) A solution must be found to the complicated logistical problems involved.
- (f) The forces should be concentrated in the Pacific or the United States in advance of the date scheduled for their participation in the campaign.
- (g) The question of the provision of assault lift requires clarification.
- (h) It is considered impracticable to superimpose upon the already adequate United States tactical air forces a small British tactical air force, since this would overload prospective airfields and introduce complications resulting from additional aircraft types.
- (i) The effect of the proposals upon continued operations in the South-East Asia Command requires further examination.<sup>1</sup>

The Australians replied three days later. They foresaw serious difficulties in training and assembling a Commonwealth force in time to take part in 'Coronet', when the Straits of Malacca would be opened only at about the end of 1945. They also showed some anxiety, as they had shown before in negotiations on the new Command in the south-west Pacific,<sup>1</sup> lest they should be denied operational control in an area of direct interest to them. The British, however, were not particularly perturbed by these misgivings, or by the points raised by the Americans. The Prime Minister reassured the Australian Prime Minister that an Australian representative would be asked to take part in any discussion which the British might hold with MacArthur, and suggested further that an Australian officer should attend the talks in London which Mountbatten would soon be holding with the British Chiefs of Staff. Under these circumstances, 'I hope and believe that you will . . . find it possible to join with us in this enterprise.' The Chiefs of Staff meanwhile answered some of the cautionary remarks of their American colleagues. Neither 'Zipper' nor 'Mailfist'<sup>2</sup> would include those Commonwealth troops destined for 'Coronet'; the Indians were good troops, who if possible should be used; the British did not press for the use of the Canadians, but would like to discuss the question with MacArthur; they proposed to discuss the administrative problems with the American commanders in the Pacific; they would hope to provide an assault lift for two divisions; air support by the Commonwealth should not complicate existing plans unduly, for it would consist of squadrons using Mustang aircraft similar to those used by the Americans; the South-East Asia Command would lose assault shipping for a time, but could meanwhile undertake valuable operations in Siam and, on a small scale, in Sumatra and Java. These

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<sup>1</sup> See p. 232 above.

<sup>2</sup> See p. 248 above.

arguments proved satisfactory; and the Combined Chiefs of Staff on 17th July accordingly

- (a) Agreed in principle to the participation of a British Commonwealth land force in the final phase of the war against Japan, subject to the satisfactory resolution of operational problems and to the clarification of certain factors which the United States Chiefs of Staff believe will be controlling.
- (b) Agreed that the British Chiefs of Staff should send out appropriate commanders and staff to visit General MacArthur and Admiral Nimitz and draw up with them a plan for submission to the Combined Chiefs of Staff.
- (c) Took note that the British Chiefs of Staff would keep the United States Chiefs of Staff informed of the reactions of the Dominions to the proposals.
- (d) Took note that the United States Chiefs of Staff would take up with the appropriate theatre commanders the responsibility of establishing a small British tactical air force in support of the proposed Commonwealth force.'

The 'satisfactory resolution of operational problems' promised, however, to be difficult, and was indeed soon materially to alter the British plans. On 18th July, the day after the Combined Chiefs of Staff had agreed to the participation of a British force in 'Coronet', MacArthur's comments were circulated. Unaware that the troops would not be those taking part in the attack on Singapore, he repeated the Joint Chiefs of Staff's objections on this head; but he also drew attention to the difficulties in allocating a separate national sector to the Commonwealth, and to the dangers of introducing a new force, unaccustomed to the practice of the rest, into a complex operation. He therefore preferred to limit the Commonwealth troops definitely to three divisions—one British, one Canadian, one Australian—who should be concentrated by 1st December, 1945 in Borneo or the United States and moved to the operational area by 10th March, should be trained in American methods, lifted by British assault shipping but equipped and supplied by the Americans, and should function, as a Corps within a U.S. Army, as part of the assault reserve. He was not anxious to use Indians, who might cause administrative and political difficulties. The Commonwealth air squadrons should form an integral part of the American air forces.

The British Chiefs of Staff examined MacArthur's proposals over the second half of July. By the 31st, they were ready to give their opinion. 'We consider', they stated, 'that the views of the Supreme Commander concerned should be accepted wherever possible.' They therefore agreed to limit the force to three divisions, subject to the proviso that the New Zealand Government, which had not yet replied to the Prime Minister's inquiries, might press for the inclusion of a

New Zealand division which they should then support. They also acknowledged that they could not be responsible for a given sector of territory. While deciding to ask MacArthur to use the Commonwealth force in the assault, they were prepared if necessary to accept its employment in the assault reserve; they agreed to let the divisions be re-equipped by the Americans, except for their uniforms; but they still hoped to persuade the General to allow Commonwealth naval and air forces to support Commonwealth troops.

Under these new arrangements, the Chiefs of Staff calculated that the British divisions and Corps troops must come from Britain or from north-west Europe, must be trained in and maintained from the United States, and must use the first of the British assault forces to have reached south-east Asia in 1945.<sup>1</sup> The Australians would be trained in and maintained from the area of Borneo, and would use a second British assault force from south-east Asia. The Canadians would be trained in and maintained from the United States, and carried in American assault shipping. The air component would come from the south-west Pacific. The Chiefs of Staff concluded:

‘ . . . 30. From a purely British point of view there are considerable advantages in accepting General MacArthur’s proposals in general and in implementing them in the way we have proposed above. The most important of these are:

(a) We provide a force which, though possibly not in the assault, should take part in the very early stages of the operation.

(b) The Americans have offered to provide far more administrative assistance than we had ever anticipated. We thereby effect a great saving in engineers and administrative troops and many complicated administrative problems are avoided.

(c) The interdependence between the rapid opening of the Straits of Malacca and our participation in ‘Coronet’ is reduced to a minimum.

(d) The passage of a British Division through the United States will have a good effect on United States public opinion.

Apart from the above, however, we suggest that the overriding consideration must be that, having placed ourselves under an American Supreme Commander, who is planning a very large operation using predominantly American forces, we should, except where our interests are vitally affected, attempt to meet his wishes. General MacArthur can make a very strong operational case to support his views. . . .’

These proposals were discussed and approved by the Defence Committee on 8th August. Meanwhile, the Chiefs of Staff and the Service Departments embarked on the detailed arrangements, informing the Dominions and the Americans. But it is certain that had the war

<sup>1</sup> See p. 28 above.

continued into the spring of 1946, the British plans for 'Coronet' would have suffered further modification. On 10th August, when the atomic bombs had been dropped and the Japanese leaders were contemplating surrender, the Joint Chiefs of Staff replied to the new proposals from London. 'Analysis,' they then remarked, '... has proceeded to a point where the United States Chiefs of Staff question very seriously the feasibility of utilising any British forces requiring both United States equipment and amphibious training in an assault rôle.' Much debate must have lain ahead before British troops could have waded ashore onto the beaches of Honshu.

The inclusion of a Commonwealth force in 'Coronet' suggested to the British that the machinery for formulating strategy in the Far East should be revised. The Chiefs of Staff took the opportunity of raising the question during the final negotiations over the Command in the south-west Pacific.

'... 8. We feel', they stated on 9th July, 'that the time has now come when we should take upon ourselves a greater share of the burden of strategic decisions which will be required before Japan is defeated. Although our contribution in the Pacific must always remain small in comparison with that of the United States, it is natural that our interest and concern should grow as more of our forces begin to be deployed in the Pacific area. Moreover, when the Straits of Malacca had been opened, there will no longer be the same natural geographical division between SEAC and the Pacific. All operations in the war against the Japanese would then form one strategic concept.

9. We therefore propose for consideration that the control of the different theatres in the war against Japan should now be organised as follows:

- (a) The Combined Chiefs of Staff will exercise general jurisdiction over strategic policy and a proper co-ordination of the Allied efforts in all theatres engaged against the Japanese.
- (b) The United States Chiefs of Staff acting as agent of the Combined Chiefs of Staff will exercise jurisdiction over all matters pertaining to operations in the Pacific Ocean area and China.
- (c) The British Chiefs of Staff acting as agents of the Combined Chiefs of Staff will exercise jurisdiction over all matters pertaining to operations in SEAC and SWPA.
- (d) The Combined Chiefs of Staff will exercise jurisdiction over allocation of forces and war materials as between all theatres against the Japanese.'

Behind these proposals lay the feeling, as the C.I.G.S. expressed it at Potsdam, that 'the British . . . had felt that they had been rather left out of the picture', and that the likelihood of fresh responsibilities for Commonwealth forces obliged them to seek a fuller share in the decisions. He assured the Americans that he and his colleagues did not wish to 'interfere in any way' with operational strategy, but only to be consulted on developments. The Joint Chiefs of Staff, however, were not inclined to alter the existing machinery. There were indeed good reasons why they should not. Strategy in the central Pacific affected the Americans almost alone: they alone possessed the experience and the resources to defeat Japan, and they alone must remain responsible for the administrative arrangements. The British and Commonwealth forces would account for only a small fraction of the whole, would serve directly under American command, and would be supplied largely from American sources. In these circumstances, the authorities in London could in practice scarcely aid the counsels in Washington or in the theatre. Nor could they appreciate properly the exact effect of decisions relating to that theatre on complementary operations elsewhere. They would not be conversant with the detail of the arrangements between the Americans and the Russians; while their own operations in the southern 'outer zone' must take their form from the Americans' progress in the centre. Marshall therefore at once replied that while he

'recognised that in the past the British Chiefs of Staff had not had all the information that they wanted and assured them that this would be remedied in the future [he] felt . . . that the operational strategy in the Pacific must remain the responsibility of the United States Chiefs of Staff. He explained the extensive difficulties in the conduct of the strategy of the Pacific arising from the great distances involved and the enormous land, sea and air forces employed. He said that the United States Chiefs of Staff felt that they could not, in addition to these problems, shoulder the burden of debating the pros and cons of operational strategy with the British Chiefs of Staff.'

Nothing in fact could alter the case that now 'the British . . . did most of the proposing and the Americans did most of the disposing.'<sup>1</sup> Nevertheless, the Joint Chiefs of Staff were anxious not to deny their allies legitimate opportunity for consultation. They therefore proposed, and the British accepted, the following formula, which was embodied in the Combined Chiefs of Staff's Final Report of 24th July.

' . . . (a) The control of operational strategy in the Pacific theatre will remain in the hands of the United States Chiefs of Staff.

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<sup>1</sup> Leahy, *I Was There*, p. 478.



(b) The United States Chiefs of Staff will provide the British Chiefs of Staff with full and timely information as to their future plans and intentions.

(c) The United States Chiefs of Staff will consult the British Chiefs of Staff on matters of general strategy on the understanding that in the event of disagreement the final decision on the action to be taken will lie with the United States Chiefs of Staff.

(d) In the event the British Chiefs of Staff should decide that they cannot commit British troops in support of a decision made by the United States Chiefs of Staff as indicated in (c) above, the British Chiefs of Staff will give the United States Chiefs of Staff such advance notice of their decision as will permit them to make timely rearrangements.

(e) In the event the U.S.S.R. enters the war against Japan, the strategy to be pursued should be discussed between the parties concerned.'

This indeed could not be taken as unreasonable in the circumstances; and Mr. Churchill, at his last appearance at the conference, voiced the common view when he remarked on the arrangements that 'What was good enough for the United States would certainly be good enough for the British.'





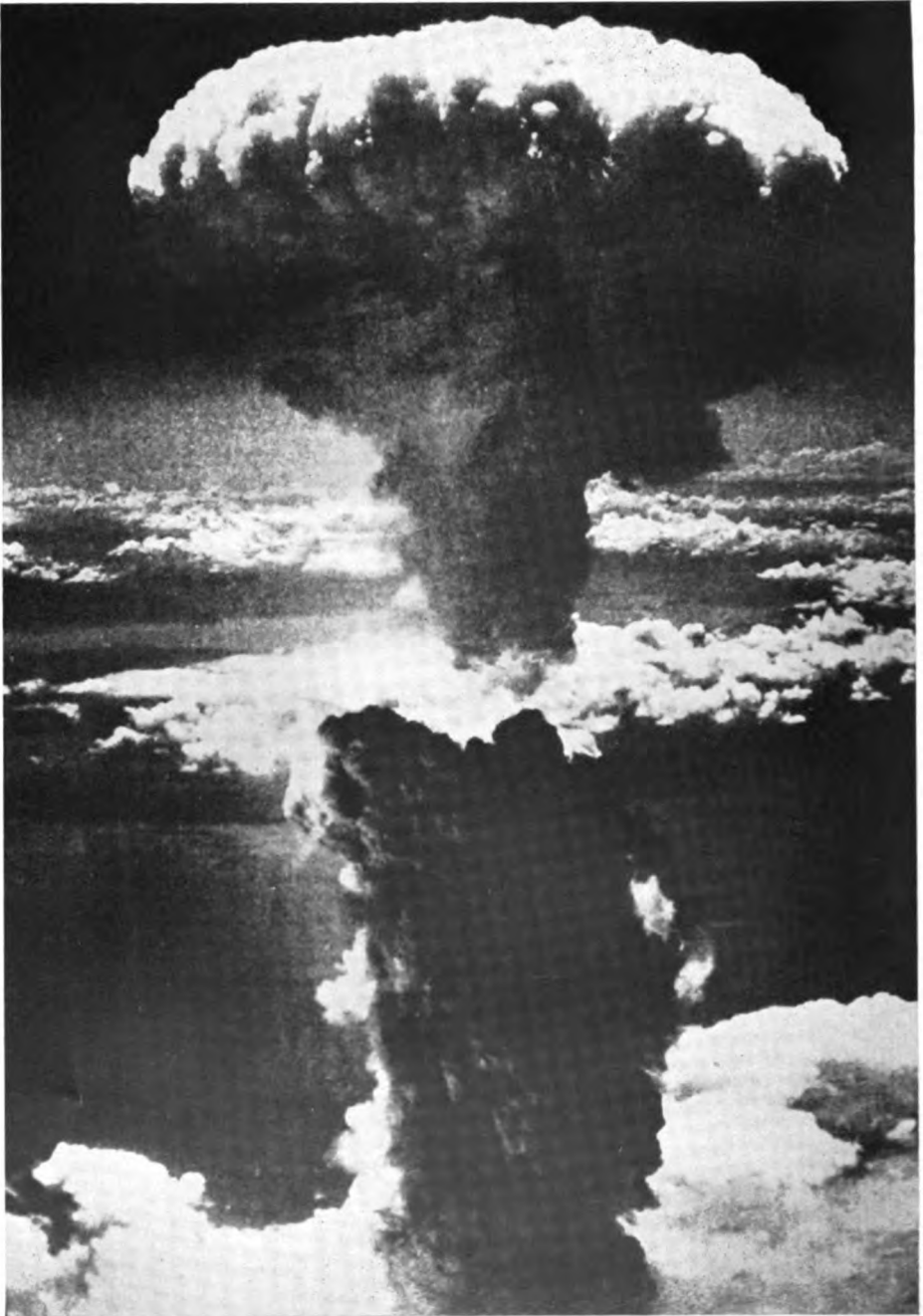


PLATE VII. THE ATOMIC BOMB

CHAPTER IX  
THE DECISION TO USE  
THE ATOMIC BOMB

(i)

The Initial American Decision

**T**HE DECISION to drop an atomic bomb on Japan, and the manner in which that decision was taken, form part of the history of the development of the weapon as well as of grand strategy; and it will be necessary therefore to refer occasionally in this chapter to developments of policy whose detail is not our concern. The decision moreover was taken in the United States, on evidence available in its entirety to the Americans alone, and included an appreciation of diplomatic negotiations which, concerning other Powers, are again not wholly available in London. It cannot therefore be pretended that the treatment of this subject here, based as it is on the sources in this country, necessarily provides final answers to the questions that may be raised. It can only be said that all of those sources, documentary and personal, have been used as fully and freely as in all other parts of the volume.<sup>1</sup>

It was not until the end of March, 1945 that the Americans could estimate with accuracy the probable date for the test of an atomic bomb, and the probable date for its operational use thereafter. Even in February, the President seems to have thought that it would probably not be available until September. But by the middle of March it seemed likely that the scientists would say by 1st April when the weapon would be ready for testing; and on the 23rd, the British technical adviser to the Combined Policy Committee on atomic affairs in Washington, Professor James Chadwick, informed Sir John Anderson, the Minister in charge of the British part of the project, that it was 'as certain as such things can be' that a weapon would be ready in the late summer. This estimate was confirmed on 30th April,

<sup>1</sup> On the British side, the documentary evidence is mainly, as in other chapters, contained in official papers. But I have made considerably greater use than elsewhere of publications which record events in the United States and in Japan, and have given the references in the text. This does not mean to say that I have relied solely on the published evidence where it is cited; but its importance to the argument demands that such references should be shown, even if they are not the only source for a statement.

when Field Marshal Wilson, who as head of the Joint Staff Mission in Washington was one of the British members of the committee, informed Anderson that 'the Americans propose to drop a bomb some time in August.'

The British and Americans had agreed earlier, and their agreement was recorded in the Quebec Agreement of August 1943, not to use an atomic weapon against a third party without first obtaining each other's consent. But the statement of 30th April showed that the Americans had more recently considered the question among themselves. We do not know the details of their discussions in the first three months of 1945; but it seems unlikely that President Roosevelt himself had ever seriously to consider the timing and the manner of using the weapon. It also seems unlikely that he, or any other responsible American authority, doubted at that time that it should be used if circumstances warranted. Mr. Henry Stimson, the American Secretary of War who was chairman of both the American and the Combined Policy Committees on atomic affairs, has remarked:<sup>1</sup>

'The policy adopted and steadily pursued by President Roosevelt and his advisers was a simple one. It was to spare no effort in securing the earliest possible successful development of an atomic weapon. . . . At no time, from 1941 to 1945, did I ever hear it suggested by the President, or by any other responsible member of the Government, that atomic energy should not be used in the war. All of us of course understood the terrible responsibility involved in our attempt to unlock the doors to such a devastating weapon; President Roosevelt particularly spoke to me many times of his own awareness of the catastrophic potentialities of our work. But we were at war, and the work must be done. I therefore emphasise that it was our common objective, throughout the war, to be the first to produce an atomic weapon and use it. The possible atomic weapon was considered to be a new and tremendously powerful explosive, as legitimate as any other of the deadly explosive weapons of modern war. The entire purpose was the production of a military weapon; on no other ground could the wartime expenditure of so much time and money have been justified.'

On 15th March, Stimson saw Roosevelt for the last time before the President died, and discussed the atomic project with him. But the discussion seems to have turned on the possible effects of using the weapon rather than on the possibility of using it.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Henry L. Stimson, 'The Decision to Use the Atomic Bomb', *Harper's Magazine* (February, 1947), p. 98. This article was reproduced, with some extra comments, in Henry L. Stimson and McGeorge Bundy, *On Active Service in Peace and War* (1947), Ch. XXIII. I have taken the references from the article, and have referred to the book only when I am referring to a comment which did not appear in the article.

<sup>2</sup> *Harper's Magazine*, p. 98.

'... I outlined to him the future of it and when it was likely to come off and told him how important it was to get ready. I went over with him the two schools of thought that exist in respect to the future control after the war of this project, in case it is successful, one of them being the secret close-in attempted control of the project by those who control it now, and the other being the international control based upon freedom both of science and of access. I told him that those things must be settled before the first projectile is used and that he must be ready with a statement to come out to the people on it just as soon as that is done. He agreed to that.'

The same emphasis marked Stimson's first conversation on the subject with the new President, on 25th April.<sup>1</sup> Accompanied on this occasion by Major-General L. R. Groves, the executive head of the project, he explained to Mr. Truman the state and history of the programme, and predicted that 'within four months' a bomb would be available for use. They then apparently proceeded, as in March, to consider the consequences of using it. This indeed was the only sensible course to adopt. It was impossible at that date, when no weapon had been tested and when the war in the Pacific was moving so fast, to calculate with any accuracy the circumstances under which a weapon might be used, and thus to argue whether or not it should be used at all. On the other hand, it was important, and indeed necessary, to consider in good time the diplomatic consequences, assuming that the weapon was used when it became available.

At the end of April, however, the Americans informed the British that the 'weapon will be brought into military planning on the United States side in May in connection with certain operations projected against Japan towards the end of the year.' At the same time, the British learned that the Americans would probably soon set up a committee (which at the end of May was established as the Interim Committee) 'to consider the whole range of political questions which will arise in connection with the eventual disclosure of the project'; and this body was also empowered to consider the question of using the weapon,<sup>2</sup> although the authorities in London do not seem to have been informed of that fact.

The Interim Committee submitted its report on 1st June, after talking to Generals Marshall and Groves and to the Scientific Panel which it had set up to advise on technical questions. It then recommended unanimously that<sup>3</sup>

- (1) The bomb should be used against Japan as soon as possible.
- (2) It should be used on a dual target—that is, a military

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<sup>1</sup> *Loc. cit.*, pp. 99, 100; and Truman, *Year of Decisions*, pp. 90-1.

<sup>2</sup> See Stimson, *loc. cit.*, pp. 100-1; James F. Byrnes, *Speaking Frankly* (1947), p. 259.

<sup>3</sup> See Stimson, *loc. cit.*, p. 100.

installation or war plant surrounded by or adjacent to houses and other buildings most susceptible to damage, and

(3) It should be used without prior warning [of the nature of the weapon].'

One member of the Committee later dissented from the third recommendation.

'In reaching these conclusions,' Mr. Stimson remarked later,<sup>1</sup> 'the Interim Committee carefully considered such alternatives as a detailed advance warning or a demonstration in some uninhabited areas. Both of these suggestions were discarded as impractical. They were not regarded as likely to be effective in compelling a surrender of Japan, and both of them involved serious risks. Even the New Mexico test would not give final proof that any given bomb was certain to explode when dropped from an aeroplane. Quite apart from the generally unfamiliar nature of atomic explosives, there was the whole problem of exploding a bomb at a predetermined height in the air by a complicated mechanism which could not be tested in the static test of New Mexico. Nothing would have been more damaging to our effort to obtain surrender than a warning or a demonstration followed by a dud—and this was a real possibility. Furthermore, we had no bombs to waste. It was vital that a sufficient effect be quickly obtained with the few we had.'

Mr. Byrnes, another member of the Committee, has added on this point:<sup>2</sup>

'We feared that, if the Japanese were told that the bomb would be used on a given locality, they might bring our boys who were prisoners of war to that area. Also, the experts had warned us that the static test which was to take place in New Mexico, even if successful, would not be conclusive proof that the bomb would explode when dropped from an aeroplane.'

The Scientific Panel also reported on the views of scientists themselves.<sup>3</sup>

'The opinions of our scientific colleagues on the initial use of these weapons are not unanimous: they range from the proposal of a purely technical demonstration to that of the military application best designed to induce surrender. Those who advocate a purely technical demonstration would wish to outlaw the use of atomic weapons, and have feared that if we use the weapons now our position in future negotiations will be prejudiced. Others emphasise the opportunity of saving American lives by immediate military use, and believe that such use will improve the international prospects, in that they are more

<sup>1</sup> *Loc. cit.*, pp. 100-1.

<sup>2</sup> Byrnes, *Speaking Frankly*, p. 261. 'July 1' there would seem to be a mistake for June 1st.

<sup>3</sup> Stimson, *loc. cit.*, p. 101.



concerned with the prevention of war than with the elimination of this special weapon. We find ourselves closer to these latter views; we can propose no technical demonstration likely to bring an end to the war; we see no acceptable alternative to direct military use.'

The Interim Committee made its recommendations with full knowledge of the strategy for the Pacific. At successive Allied conferences, the Combined Chiefs of Staff's 'Over-all Strategic Concept for the Prosecution of the War' had included the sentence:

'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.'

Thus, while the formula of unconditional surrender was not applied publicly to Japan at the Casablanca Conference as it was to Germany, it remained the basis of the military plans, and came in fact to be publicly accepted as such.<sup>1</sup> From June 1944, the Joint Chiefs of Staff accepted that such a design might involve an invasion of the Japanese Home Islands, as well as the close sea and air blockade which current operations were preparing. The last discussions on the need for such an undertaking were in fact under way when the Interim Committee first met at the end of May, 1945. These talks proceeded, as they had to proceed, without considering the atomic bomb; for the bomb was 'brought into military planning . . . in May in connection with certain operations projected against Japan', only as a possible alternative to plans which it could not itself affect.<sup>2</sup> As a result, invasion was approved, of Kyushu if possible in November 1945, and of Honshu if possible in March, 1946.<sup>3</sup>

The operations were expected—as indeed was indicated by the length of time assigned to the conquest of Kyushu—to be very severe. For the Allied Intelligence in the summer of 1945 portrayed Japan in a curious but forbidding light, as a defeated nation whose effective leaders were blind to defeat. The evidence on which the Joint Chiefs of Staff had reached their conclusions was assembled at the beginning of July, in a report from the Combined Intelligence Committee. By that time, the American Pacific air forces were dropping some 40,000 tons of bombs a month on the Home Islands, with results which were estimated as follows.

<sup>1</sup> See also pp. 216-17 above; and *The Entry of the Soviet Union into the War against Japan*, p. 88.

<sup>2</sup> See Stimson, *loc. cit.*, p. 102; Stimson and Bundy, *On Active Service in Peace and War*, Ch. XXIII. Leahy, *I Was There*, pp. 448-50, tacitly supports this statement.

<sup>3</sup> See pp. 259-60 above.

'Japan . . . will become a nation without cities, with her transportation disrupted, and will have tremendous difficulty in holding her people together for continued resistance to our terms of unconditional surrender.'

But air forces were always inclined to overestimate the effect of their attacks, and the Combined Intelligence Committee itself was rather less optimistic.

'The Japanese economic position', it stated, 'has deteriorated greatly. The resources of the Outer Zone are no longer available. Transportation between the complementary parts of the Inner Zone [Japan proper, Korea, Manchukuo, North China and Sakhalin] . . . has been seriously curtailed during the last few months, owing to the shortage of shipping (now only 1,300,000 gross registered tons of operable ships over 1,000 tons), Allied submarine and mining activities and aerial bombardment. Thus, heavy industry in Japan is currently able to produce only at rates far below the capacity of existing plant facilities. . . .

Increasingly heavy air attacks, supplementing continued and intensified blockade, are seriously reducing Japan's residual production . . . . Recent aircraft production is estimated at 1,200-1,500 combat planes monthly, as compared with a peak production of 2,300 reached late in 1944. The Japanese are so short of aviation fuel that orthodox air operations of a sustained nature in any significant force are improbable, although sufficient gasoline will be available to meet their capabilities for all-out suicide attacks. The electronics industry is not able to provide the armed forces with adequate supplies of radar or of radio and sound equipment. On the other hand, reserves of ordnance, other than heavier types of equipment, are believed to be large. . . .

There is increasing evidence of Japanese concern with regard to the food situation in Japan proper. Only slight decreases in overall food supplies are, however, anticipated during 1945, although urban dwellers may be seriously affected by disturbances in distribution and losses of stocks resulting from air attacks. More acute is the shortage of consumer goods, the supply of which has been inadequate and which has been aggravated by the current bombings. On the other hand, stocks of ammunition and ammunition production facilities still require intensive and extremely heavy attacks to produce any shortage significant to the interest of invasion and occupation.'

Hopeless as the future seemed for the enemy, the Committee doubted if this severe economic deterioration had yet reached the point where it would sway the strategic prospects. For although any serious Japanese movement outside Japan was now out of the question, and defence itself was severely affected by the virtual disappearance of the

Japanese navy and air force, the Japanese army was thought still to be strong, and still to be governed by its ancient discipline. Its strength was estimated in July, 1945 at some 4,600,000 men, rising possibly by the end of 1945 to over 5,000,000 men. Of these, some 2,000,000—well provided, as it was estimated, with ammunition—would be stationed in the Home Islands at the end of the year, and the rest throughout the Japanese conquests in the Pacific and Asia. On the mainland of Asia, the Japanese also disposed of probably 120,000 Manchurians and Chinese. This formidable army was thought to be ready, and indeed eager, to repel an invasion, and still, despite its losses and defeats, to hold the faith, if not the admiration, of a people likely to prove as intractable as itself.

On this evidence, therefore, the Combined Intelligence Committee did not believe that the economic results of bombing and blockade alone would force the Japanese to surrender unconditionally before the date already decided for invasion, although 'a conditional surrender by the Japanese Government . . . might be offered by them at any time from now until the time of the complete destruction of all Japanese power of resistance.' Invasion itself, by the same token, would be costly and might be prolonged. From the Intelligence reports, and from their experience in other island groups, the Americans expected to have to fight hard and with heavy losses, possibly in Kyushu and certainly in Honshu. One estimate, indeed, put the Allies' casualties at around a million. The Joint Chiefs of Staff accordingly accepted the possibility that the struggle might last into the winter of 1946, and made their plans on an appropriate scale. But while they were prepared to embark on this campaign, they viewed its prospect with the gravest reluctance. The heavy casualties, and the possible length of time involved, would prove most unwelcome to forces, and to a country, already showing signs of war weariness and unused to such losses. An alternative which might seem to meet the facts of the timetable would accordingly be studied with the greatest sympathy.

The argument of the Combined Intelligence Committee, as related so far, was of course limited and might seem to be illogical. On its premises, invasion was necessary because the Japanese would not have surrendered unconditionally by the time that invasion was possible. But, by the same token, invasion and its sequel might be costly and prolonged. Why then, it might be asked, should the bombing and blockade not proceed without invasion at all? Might not invasion indeed inflame a resistance which they might otherwise steadily reduce? The two measures, on the admission of the Allied Intelligence, had already weakened Japan to the point at which her leaders might contemplate a conditional surrender. It was also admitted that opposition at sea and in the air must steadily decline. Why, therefore, should not the measures bring about by themselves in due course (and possibly

well before the end of 1946) the desired unconditional surrender which admittedly they could not bring about immediately?

The reason why the Joint Chiefs of Staff did not accept this view was given by the Combined Intelligence Committee in the report already quoted.

'The Japanese ruling groups are aware of the desperate military situation and are increasingly desirous of a compromise peace, but still find unconditional surrender unacceptable. The basic policy of the present Government is to fight as long and as desperately as possible in the hope of avoiding complete defeat and of acquiring a better bargaining position in a negotiated peace. Japanese leaders are now playing for time in the hope that Allied war-weariness, Allied disunity, or some "miracle" will present an opportunity to arrange a compromise peace.

As regards the Japanese people as a whole, we believe that a considerable portion of them now consider absolute defeat to be probable. . . . We doubt that the nation as a whole is predisposed towards national suicide. Rather, the Japanese as a nation have a strong concept of national survival, regardless of the fate of individuals. They would probably prefer national survival, even through surrender, to virtual extinction.

The Japanese believe, however, that unconditional surrender would be the equivalent of national extinction. There are as yet no indications that the Japanese are ready to accept such terms. The ideas of foreign occupation of the Japanese homeland, foreign custody of the person of the Emperor, and the loss of prestige entailed by the acceptance of "unconditional surrender" are most revolting to the Japanese. To avoid these conditions, if possible, and, in any event, to ensure survival of the institution of the Emperor, the Japanese might well be willing to withdraw from all the territory they have seized on the Asiatic continent and in the Southern Pacific, and even to agree to the independence of Korea and to the practical disarmament of their military forces.

A conditional surrender by the Japanese Government along the lines stated above might be offered by them at any time from now until the time of the complete destruction of all Japanese power of resistance.

Since the Japanese Army is the principal repository of the Japanese military tradition it follows that the Army leaders must, with a sufficient degree of unanimity, acknowledge defeat before Japan can be induced to surrender. This might be brought about either by the defeat of the main Japanese Armies in the Inner Zone or through a desire on the part of the Army leaders to salvage something from the wreck with a view to maintaining military tradition. For a surrender to be acceptable to the Japanese Army, it would be necessary for the Military leaders to believe that it would not entail discrediting warrior tradition

and that it would permit the ultimate resurgence of a military Japan.'

This analysis of morale and power in Japan confirmed, or at least did not challenge, the belief of the American Army and Government that something more than bombing and blockade was needed to defeat the military leaders in Japan. The estimate was criticized severely at the time and later. Many American sailors, and the advocates of strategic bombing, claimed then, and have since claimed, that sea and air attacks alone would have forced the military leaders to accept unconditional surrender in due course, even if not by the date contemplated for invasion. Their views have received powerful support since the end of the war. The United States Strategic Bombing Survey, which carried out a long and detailed inquiry in Japan itself, has indeed gone farther.

'Based on a detailed investigation of all the facts, and supported by the testimony of the surviving Japanese leaders involved, it is the Survey's opinion that certainly prior to the 31st December, 1945, Japan would have surrendered even if the atomic bombs had not been dropped, even if Russia had not entered the war, and even if no invasion had been planned or contemplated.'

Whether this or the more modest claims would in fact have been proved correct, must always remain a matter for speculation; nor is all of the detailed evidence which was then available to the Combined Intelligence Committee now available in this country. But it is possible to test the Committee's conclusions by what we now know of Japanese policy at the time; and from the results of such a comparison, it seems less easy to form a confident adverse judgment upon them than the critics have sometimes supposed.

As early as April 1945, when the Americans landed on Okinawa, a peace party began to emerge in the small inner circle which held complete power in Japan.<sup>1</sup> A change of Cabinet, due to this disaster, then served to define the two sides. A Japanese Cabinet contained four key members: the Prime Minister, the Foreign Minister, and the Ministers of the Army and Navy. Of these, the new Prime Minister,

<sup>1</sup> Most of the primary material for the following account is available only in Washington. I have therefore relied mainly on a published account, Robert J. C. Butow, *Japan's Decision to Surrender* (Stanford University Press, 1954). This work, which provides the most detailed and comprehensive secondary account of the subject, is based on a large amount and variety of material, documentary and personal, in Japan and in the United States. It may be compared with two other accounts, both of which it uses and corrects, but which supplement it in places:

- (1) the relevant section of the (unpublished) United States Strategic Bombing Survey of the War;
- (2) Toshikazu Kase, *Eclipse of the Rising Sun* (1951). Kase was the representative of the Japanese Foreign Office on the small Supreme War Council. His work, which places a different emphasis, and sometimes a different interpretation, on the facts from those of the United States Strategic Bombing Survey, is corrected in several details by Dr. Butow. But it is nevertheless the most valuable Japanese record of events published in this country, and adds to Dr. Butow's account in a few respects.

the aged Admiral Kantaro Suzuki, seemed inclined, though uncertainly, to peace; the Foreign Minister, Shigenoi Togo, was definitely in favour of peace; so was the Minister of the Navy, Admiral Mitsumasa Yonai; while the Minister of the Army, General Korechika Anami, was as definitely for continuing the war. The Cabinet, however, was not the supreme organ of government, for it did not contain the real rulers of Japan, the representatives of the Staffs of the armed forces. These exercised their influence through the Supreme War Council, which was composed of the four Cabinet Ministers already mentioned, the Chief Secretary of the Cabinet, the two Chiefs of Staff of the Armed Forces, the two Vice-Chiefs of Staff, and the two Directors of the Military Affairs Bureaux of the Army and Navy. After the change of Cabinet, the new Prime Minister was persuaded to limit the active participants of the Supreme Council to the four Ministers and the two Chiefs of Staff, thus evenly balancing the numbers of the two parties; and at the same time, the 'peace party' managed to alter the character and to reduce the numbers of the Council's secretariat, which had hitherto been filled largely by officers of the Army and Navy. The new secretariat of four, indeed, seems thereafter to have played a significant part in fostering the negotiations for peace. Even more important than these changes, the peace party now knew that, if conditions allowed, they could count on the secret support of the Emperor.

But in the early summer of 1945, conditions did not allow. The peace party, influential though it was, dared not move openly; for while it had introduced a numerical balance into the Supreme War Council, the real power, both on the Council and beyond, still rested with its military opponents, who would not scruple to hold it at any cost. The peace party itself, moreover, had not reached a position where it could contemplate unconditional surrender, with the possible consequences for the Imperial House. It was still more concerned to preserve 'the stability of the Far East'; and its first move, in May 1945, was confined to approaching Russia, in the hope primarily of discovering her aims in the East.<sup>1</sup> This attitude was confirmed on 18th June, when six members of the Supreme War Council and its secretariat met secretly and decided that<sup>2</sup>

'Although we have no choice but to continue the war so long as the enemy insists upon unconditional surrender, we deem it advisable, while we still possess considerable power of resistance, to propose peace through neutral powers, especially the Soviet Union, and to obtain terms which will at least ensure the preservation of our monarchy.

With that in mind, we entrust it to the Foreign Minister to

<sup>1</sup> Feelers were also extended to other parties, including the American Office of Strategic Services; but these were at best tentative, sometimes unauthorized, and in general of little importance. (See Butow, *loc. cit.*, Ch. 5.)

<sup>2</sup> Kase, *loc. cit.*, p. 184.

ascertain the Soviet attitude by the beginning of July with a view to terminating the war if possible by September.<sup>1</sup>

A few days later, the Emperor himself advanced the negotiations for peace. On 22nd June, he summoned the six members of the Supreme War Council and urged them secretly to devise means for ending the war. The Japanese thereupon again approached the Russians, with the same object as before, and this time with an indication of the limits to Japanese interests which they might accept on the mainland of Asia. But they received no response, and meanwhile the Army countered effectively by inducing the Prime Minister to issue a public statement, preaching determination and confidence in the future.

At the end of June 1945, the position therefore was much as the Combined Intelligence Committee reported. Faced with the demand for unconditional surrender, the peace party could move only in great secrecy, and even then only tentatively. The war party outwardly remained supreme, and showed no sign of compromising its position. Its strength indeed was revealed even in the circumstances of defeat. Even after the atomic bombs had been dropped and after Russia had declared war on Japan, the Army refused to contemplate surrender; when finally confronted with the Emperor's decision to surrender, it tried to stage an armed rising in Tokyo; and when the Instrument of Surrender itself was about to be signed, the Japanese Government still judged it unwise to publish the names of the Japanese delegates until they had left the country.<sup>1</sup> While therefore bombing and blockade might later have given the peace party its chance, it may also be argued, as the Combined Intelligence Committee argued at the beginning of July, that some new and graver pressure was required which neither party could hope to withstand, and which would thus enable both to surrender unconditionally without loss of honour.

Such was the strategic background to the recommendations of the Interim Committee. They naturally carried much weight. But the Committee acted only in an advisory capacity; the strategic decision itself had to be taken on military and diplomatic advice. The responsibility for proffering this advice lay with Mr. Stimson as Secretary of War. In that capacity, and with the advantage of having acted as chairman of the Interim Committee and of the senior of the committees controlling the atomic project itself, he submitted a memorandum to Mr. Truman on 2nd July. It had been prepared, with great care, in consultation with the Secretary of the Navy and the Acting Secretary of State.<sup>2</sup> Its importance demands that it should be given in full.

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<sup>1</sup> Butow, *loc. cit.*, Chs. 7-10; Kase, *loc. cit.*, Chs. X, XI.

<sup>2</sup> Stimson, *loc. cit.*, pp. 102-4.

## 'PROPOSED PROGRAM FOR JAPAN

1. The plans of operations up to and including the first landing have been authorised and the preparations for the operations are now actually going on. This situation was accepted by all members of your Conference on Monday, June 18.

2. There is reason to believe that the operation for the occupation of Japan following the landing may be a very long, costly, and arduous struggle on our part. The terrain, much of which I have visited several times, has left the impression on my memory of being one which would be susceptible to a last ditch defence such as has been made on Iwo Jima and Okinawa and which of course is very much larger than either of those two areas. According to my recollection it will be much more unfavourable with regard to tank manoeuvring than either the Philippines or Germany.

3. If we once land on one of the main islands and begin a forceful occupation of Japan, we shall probably have cast the die of last ditch resistance. The Japanese are highly patriotic and certainly susceptible to calls for fanatical resistance to repel an invasion. Once started in actual invasion, we shall in my opinion have to go through with an even more bitter finish fight than in Germany. We shall incur the losses incident to such a war and we shall have to leave the Japanese islands even more thoroughly destroyed than was the case with Germany. This would be due both to the difference in the Japanese and German personal character and the differences in the size and character of the terrain through which the operations will take place.

4. A question then comes: Is there any alternative to such a forceful occupation of Japan which will secure for us the equivalent of an unconditional surrender of her forces and a permanent destruction of her power again to strike an aggressive blow at the "peace of the Pacific"? I am inclined to think that there is enough such chance to make it well worthwhile our giving them a warning of what is to come and a definite opportunity to capitulate. As above suggested, it should be tried before the actual forceful occupation of the homeland islands is begun and furthermore the warning should be given in ample time to permit a national reaction to set in.

We have the following enormously favourable factors on our side—factors much weightier than those we had against Germany:

Japan has no allies.

Her navy is nearly destroyed and she is vulnerable to a surface and under-water blockade which can deprive her of sufficient food and supplies for her population.

She is terribly vulnerable to our concentrated air attack upon her crowded cities, industrial and food resources.



She has against her not only the Anglo-American forces but the rising forces of China and the ominous threat of Russia.

We have inexhaustible and untouched industrial resources to bring to bear against her diminishing potential.

We have great moral superiority through being the victim of her first sneak attack.

The problem is to translate these advantages into prompt and economical achievement of our objectives. I believe Japan is susceptible to reason in such a crisis to a much greater extent than is indicated by our current press and other current comment. Japan is not a nation composed wholly of mad fanatics of an entirely different mentality from ours. On the contrary, she has within the past century shown herself to possess extremely intelligent people, capable in an unprecedentedly short time of adopting not only the complicated techniques of Occidental civilisation but to a substantial extent their culture and their political and social ideas. Her advance in all these respects during the short period of sixty or seventy years has been one of the most astounding feats of national progress in history—a lead from the isolated feudalism of centuries into the position of one of the six or seven great powers of the world. She has not only built up powerful armies and navies. She has maintained an honest and effective national finance and respected position in many of the sciences in which we pride ourselves. Prior to the forcible seizure of power over her Government by the fanatical military group in 1931, she had for ten years lived a reasonably responsible and respectable international life.

My own opinion is in her favour on the two points involved in this question:

A. I think the Japanese nation has the mental intelligence and versatile capacity in such a crisis to recognise the folly of the fight to the finish and to accept the proffer of what will amount to an unconditional surrender; and

B. I think she has within her population enough liberal leaders (although now submerged by the terrorists) to be depended upon for her reconstruction as a responsible member of the family of nations. I think she is better in this last respect than Germany was. Her liberals yielded only at the point of the pistol and, so far as I am aware, their liberal attitude has not been personally subverted in the way which was so general in Germany. On the other hand, I think that the attempt to exterminate her armies and her population by gunfire or other means will tend to produce a fusion of race, solidity and antipathy which has no analogy in the case of Germany. We have a national interest in creating, if possible, a condition wherein the Japanese nation may live as a peaceful and useful member of the future Pacific community.

5. It is therefore my conclusion that a carefully timed warning be given to Japan by the chief representatives of the United States, Great Britain, China, and, if then a Belligerent, Russia by calling upon Japan to surrender and permit the occupation of her country in order to ensure its complete demilitarization for the sake of the future peace.

This warning should contain the following elements:

The varied and overwhelming character of the force we are about to bring to bear on the islands.

The inevitability and completeness of the destruction which the full application of this force will entail.

The determination of the Allies to destroy permanently all authority and influence of those who have deceived and misled the country into embarking on world conquest.

The determination of the Allies to limit Japanese sovereignty to her main islands and to render them powerless to mount and support another war.

The disavowal of any attempt to extirpate the Japanese as a race or to destroy them as a nation.

A statement of our readiness, once her economy is purged of its militaristic influence, to permit the Japanese to maintain such industries, particularly of a light consumer character, as offer no threat of aggression against their neighbours, but which can produce a sustaining economy, and provide a reasonable standard of living. The statement should indicate our willingness, for this purpose, to give Japan trade access to external raw materials but no longer any control over the sources of supply outside her main islands. It should also indicate our willingness, in accordance with our now established foreign trade policy, in due course to enter into mutually advantageous trade relations with her.

The withdrawal from their country as soon as the above objectives of the Allies are accomplished, and as soon as there has been established a peacefully inclined Government, of a character representative of the masses of the Japanese people. I personally think that if in saying this we should add that we do not exclude a constitutional monarchy under her present dynasty, it would substantially add to the chances of acceptance.

6. Success of course will depend on the potency of the warning which we give her. She has an extremely sensitive national pride and, as we are now seeing every day, when actually locked with the enemy will fight to the very death. For that reason the warning must be tendered before the actual invasion has occurred and while the impending destruction, though clear beyond peradventure, had not yet reduced her to fanatical despair. If Russia is a part of the threat, the Russian attack, if actual, must not have progressed too far. Our own bombing should be confined to military objectives as far as possible.'

This memorandum is of great, indeed of critical, importance. Not only did the President take his decision of principle upon it,<sup>1</sup> but that decision was not modified by subsequent developments. Many of the questions, indeed, which have been asked about those developments should be asked instead of this document. For while the details of time and place were not settled until the weapon had been tested successfully, the main decision had already been taken, and for reasons that were unlikely to change.

Two points about the memorandum should be noted before we go farther. First, the proposed warning, while not departing from the formula of unconditional surrender, would contain the first indication of what the Western Allies meant by it. If Stimson's suggestions were adopted, the formula might well be taken by the Japanese as less objectionable than they had anticipated and the warning might thus provide the 'liberal leaders' with the chance for which they were looking. But whether or not this would be the case might well depend on what was said of the position of the Emperor, which was still undecided.

Secondly, the memorandum supported the conclusion of the Interim Committee, presumably for the reasons already given, that no warning should be given of the atomic bomb itself.<sup>2</sup> It will be noted, indeed, that the memorandum did not specifically mention the bomb. But as Stimson explained later, this was only for reasons of security; and 'it was of course well forward in our minds, as the memorandum was written and discussed, that the bomb would be the best possible sanction if our warning were rejected.'<sup>3</sup> Why, we must then ask, did the Americans believe at the beginning of July that the atomic bomb would in fact be 'the best possible sanction'? What other possible sanctions were there, and could any of them have been preferred to it?

We have seen that the only alternative suggested was the continuation of the existing bombing and blockade, coupled with appeals to the Japanese. This had already been rejected as insufficient by itself; but there is one argument still to be considered when the policy is compared with the specific alternative of an atomic bomb. 'Had the war continued until the projected invasion on 1st November', Stimson remarked later,<sup>4</sup> 'additional fire raids of B.29's would have been more destructive of life and property than the very limited number of atomic raids which we could have executed in the same period.' This belief was based on the fact that in August, 1945 the Americans had only two atomic bombs ready for use, and at the most three

<sup>1</sup> Stimson, *loc. cit.*, pp. 102, 104. See also Mr. Truman's letter to Dr. Karl Compton of 16th December, 1946, in *The Atlantic Monthly* (February, 1947), p. 27; and Byrnes, *Speaking Frankly*, p. 262 for, presumably, early in June.

<sup>2</sup> See p. 278 above.

<sup>3</sup> *Loc. cit.*, p. 104.

<sup>4</sup> *Loc. cit.*, p. 105.

bombs a month available for some time thereafter. On this argument, therefore, the Americans were pinning their faith to a weapon judged to be less destructive than the weapon they were already using but had rejected as a determining factor in rapidly ending the war. But the case for the atomic bomb lay not only in its material, but in its moral, effect. It was the promise of further attacks, as well as the attacks themselves, that were calculated to enforce surrender. 'The atomic bomb was more than a weapon of terrible destruction; it was a psychological weapon.'<sup>1</sup> It introduced a new standard of destruction, even if the amount of destruction caused by the small number of bombs available was not itself decisive. The advocates of the bomb could thus claim that a greater effect might be obtained, with less widespread destruction, than by existing weapons.

But this alternative, and the ultimate sanction of invasion which its use was designed to prevent, referred to the activities of the Western Allies (in practice, the Americans) alone. There was, however, a third possible sanction, which when taken with the first might seem to provide a hopeful alternative both to invasion and to the use of an atomic bomb. This sanction was provided by the prospect of Russia's entry into the war against Japan before 1st November, 1945.

We do not know from the available evidence if the Interim Committee took this possibility into account, and Stimson's memorandum makes only passing references to it.<sup>2</sup> The Western Allies, however, had been able to count on it with confidence for some time. Stalin had first indicated that Russia would eventually declare war on Japan when talking to Cordell Hull in Moscow in October, 1943; he had given formal notice of the fact during the Teheran Conference in November; in October 1944, after the usual delays, the Americans had made some headway with preparations of mutual interest; and, again after disappointment and delay and in return for diplomatic concessions, had confirmed and extended those preparations at the Yalta Conference.<sup>3</sup> In the summer of 1945, there was thus every reason to take the Russians' intervention into account, as a possible military sanction which would almost certainly come into force in August. Nor in fact did the Americans neglect to do so. When, early in July, the Combined Intelligence Committee summed up the evidence on which the Joint Chiefs of Staff had acted, they remarked in the course of their section on 'Surrender':

'An entry of the Soviet Union into the war would finally convince the Japanese of the inevitability of complete defeat.'

This statement, however, was left in isolation, and its possible relation

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<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>2</sup> See pp. 287, 288 above.

<sup>3</sup> See Volume V, pp. 161, 173; and pp. 211-16 above.

to other factors seems not to have been discussed. It seems, indeed, from the context to have referred to the attitude of the Japanese people rather than to that of the Japanese leaders, and thus to have been taken in the same category as the other, purely American, measures which were then judged not to render invasion unnecessary. But the matter was taken farther at the beginning of the Potsdam Conference. On 17th July, General Ismay submitted a Minute to the Prime Minister.

‘1. The Combined Chiefs of Staff at their first meeting had under consideration a paper prepared by the Combined Intelligence Staffs on the enemy situation, in which it was suggested that if and when Russia came into the war against Japan, the Japanese would probably wish to get out on almost any terms short of the dethronement of the Emperor. This led to a discussion on the interpretation to be placed on the term ‘Unconditional Surrender’. It was generally agreed that, if this involved the dissolution of the Imperial Dynasty, there would be no one to order the cease fire in outlying areas, and fighting might continue in various British and Dutch territories, and also in China for many months or even years. Thus from the military point of view, there was a good deal to be said for the retention in Japan of some central authority who would command obedience.

2. The United States Chiefs of Staff said that they had had considerable discussion on this point among themselves, and suggested that it ought to be considered at the highest level during ‘Terminal’ [the Potsdam Conference]. They asked whether you yourself would be prepared to raise the point with the President.

3. We replied that, as the Americans were so very much the predominant partner in the war against Japan, you might feel reluctant to take the lead in this matter; but we agreed to inform you at once of what had taken place.’

As will be seen, the Prime Minister in fact raised this point with the President during the first part of the conference, when possibly he succeeded in influencing the terms of the resulting declaration to Japan.<sup>1</sup> The prospect of Russia’s entry into the war may thus have had an effect, in this way, upon the first step in the Americans’ plan to end the war. But there is no evidence that it had any effect on the subsequent steps, or that the Americans considered waiting to see the effect of the Russian declaration of war on Japan; after the Allies had released their statement.

This may seem strange at first sight. But there are two points to consider about the Americans’ attitude to the Russians’ move. First, the Joint Chiefs of Staff had always wanted Russia to declare war on

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<sup>1</sup> See p. 303 below.

Japan so as to ensure that the Japanese armies on the mainland would not continue to resist, even if the Home Islands were invaded and conquered. A Russian attack was thus considered primarily as a measure of insurance, and not as a solution in itself. While it would undoubtedly come as a tremendous shock to the Japanese Ministers (who, as has been seen, placed their hopes on Russia as a mediator with the Western Allies) and even more to the Japanese people, it would not increase the direct pressure on the Army in the Home Islands, which was thought to be the obstacle to peace.<sup>1</sup>

But secondly, by July, 1945 the United States Government was no longer prepared to accept with equanimity, as it had accepted hitherto, the diplomatic consequences of Russia's entry into the war against Japan. We have seen the growing apprehension of Russia's policy in Washington, and its effect on the strategy for the Pacific.<sup>2</sup> Mr. Byrnes has since stated:<sup>3</sup>

'As for myself, I must frankly admit that in view of what we knew of Soviet actions in eastern Germany and the violations of the Yalta agreements in Poland, Rumania and Bulgaria, I would have been satisfied had the Russians determined not to enter the war [against Japan]. Notwithstanding Japan's persistent refusal to surrender unconditionally, I believed the atomic bomb would be successful and would force the Japanese to accept surrender on our terms. I feared what would happen when the Red Army entered Manchuria.'

And on 23rd July, the Prime Minister noted that

'Mr. Byrnes told me this morning that he had cabled to T. V. Soong [the Chinese Foreign Minister] advising him not to give way on any point to the Russians, but to return to Moscow and keep on negotiating pending further developments.

It is quite clear that the United States do not at the present time desire Russian participation in the war against Japan.'

We must, however, distinguish carefully at this point. It is clear that the U.S. State Department, and possibly the President himself, would have preferred the Russians not to declare war on Japan. If any military alternative offered, they would therefore welcome it. But they did not intend to seek actively to prevent Russia from declaring war on Japan: partly because, in view of their earlier request, they could not now do so,<sup>4</sup> and partly because the Russians' intervention remained an important military factor if the Americans' alternative did not succeed. It is reasonable to say that this point of

<sup>1</sup> See *The Entry of the Soviet Union into the War against Japan*, pp. 38-44.

<sup>2</sup> See pp. 261-2 above.

<sup>3</sup> *Speaking Frankly*, p. 208.

<sup>4</sup> See, e.g., Byrnes, *loc. cit.*, pp. 207-9; and *The Forrestal Diaries*, ed. Walter Millis (1952), p. 86.

view would support the argument for using an atomic weapon as soon as the circumstances seemed to demand it. But it would not necessarily determine those circumstances, or do more than support an argument already formed on other grounds. This deduction is supported by the later course of events.

The arguments we have followed so far (perforce with some speculation) comprise those arguments considered as arguments at the time. But there is one more factor in the problem which we should not ignore. It has often, and incorrectly, been stated that the existence of a weapon is in itself an incentive to use the weapon; but in the case of the atomic bomb, there may be more truth in such an assertion than is sometimes the case. This springs from two causes. In the first place, it seems to have been generally and genuinely felt that this revolutionary weapon, the like of which had never been seen, must have an unrivalled effect on opinion throughout the world, and might well prove a more potent deterrent to future wars than any that had yet appeared. But if this were to be so, its power must be dramatically revealed; and that could be done best, and possibly only, by using a bomb in earnest. Secondly, there was the influence on American officials of the traditional fear of Congress, intensified in this case by the immense implications of a programme so far withheld from Congressional inquiry. This factor had entered earlier into the history of the atomic project; and it may well have made the American administrators feel that a decision to drop the product would prove their most powerful support when facing the inevitable examination on their expenditure and policy after the war. There is indeed some evidence to support this conclusion. Admiral Leahy has stated:<sup>1</sup>

'It was my reaction that the scientists and others wanted to make this test [dropping the bomb operationally] because of the vast sums that had been spent on the project. Truman knew that, and so did the other people involved'.

British officials in Washington were also aware of this factor.

Again, we must distinguish carefully at this point. Because we cannot ignore the relations between the Executive and Congress in considering American policy, that does not mean to say that they necessarily dominated policy, particularly in wartime. There is no reason to suppose that the point of view we have described would have carried significant weight if the President and his advisers had decided on other grounds not to use the weapon. It must be emphasized, moreover, that this point of view probably did not affect the Joint Chiefs of Staff to the extent that it may have affected those immediately responsible for the atomic programme; and that even where it existed, it was probably not regarded as an argument, was possibly not adopted

<sup>1</sup> *I Was There*, p. 514.

explicitly, and was certainly not held, in whatever degree, except with severe qualifications and only as one element in a wider problem. We can only say that the point of view undoubtedly existed in some quarters, probably most explicitly among those who did not themselves have to take the final decision, and that it formed not an argument like those we have considered hitherto, but rather a condition for argument, which cannot therefore be ignored in considering the decision and its background.

To sum up. Early in July 1945, the Americans could assemble a logical case, from the various factors under review, which seems to have run somewhat as follows:<sup>1</sup>

On the evidence, we are not willing to rely on bombing and blockade alone, or combined with appeals to 'liberal' opinion in Japan, to force the Japanese to surrender unconditionally. In the last resort, therefore, we must invade the Home Islands in November 1945, although we recognize that the operations may prove costly and prolonged, and may moreover bequeath a legacy of bitterness to the peace. We are thus anxious to force the Japanese to surrender unconditionally before that time. We are prepared, in conjunction with our allies, to call on them to do so, warning them of the destruction which will inevitably follow if they refuse, and strengthening our appeal by a statement of the Allies' intentions (whose details we have still to decide) after their unconditional surrender. If this fails to win an adequate response, we seek a military 'sanction' which will end the war without our having to invade, and the sooner the better. Fortunately, there seem to be two possible 'sanctions': the atomic bomb, and the entry of Russia into the war against Japan. But our Chiefs of Staff have always regarded the latter principally as an insurance against a continued resistance by the Japanese on the mainland of Asia; and while it will undoubtedly have a very severe effect, and may have a decisive effect, on the Japanese people, it will not directly affect the most uncompromising element, the Army in the Home Islands. Our State Department, moreover, does not welcome Russia's entry into the war against Japan, which, from its experience of the Russians' behaviour in Europe and its most recent information of their attitude in the Far East, may soon lead to grave trouble. We will not try to dissuade Russia from declaring war on Japan: not only have we asked her to do so in the past, but her intervention would still be very useful if our alternative 'sanction' did not prove successful. But if an acceptable military alternative can be found whose success would either prevent or limit the effect of Russia's intervention, it would not be unwelcome to us.

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<sup>1</sup> It seems likely that the different arguments were assembled in this way at the time; but without a detailed knowledge of developments in the United States, it is impossible to reproduce their combination exactly.



The alternative of the atomic bomb thus seems to fill the bill on negative grounds; for all other courses have greater disadvantages. It also has two positive advantages, and may have a third. First, although it will almost certainly cause appalling local destruction, if successful it will stop any further widespread destruction in Japan. Secondly (though this may not be an argument in itself), its success will greatly strengthen our hand in dealing with any criticism from the country or from Congress on the expenditure incurred on the bombs, and on the manner and terms of our collaboration with the British and Canadians. Thirdly—and this may prove of decisive importance—it must profoundly affect opinion throughout the world, possibly leading thereby to the prevention of war in the future. On balance, therefore, the use of the atomic bomb offers military advantages, coupled with diplomatic and political consequences, which are offered by no other course of action open to us. No one argument leads us to conclude that it must be dropped; but conversely, no argument can be balanced against another argument with enough force to disturb the accumulation of arguments in favour of its being dropped.

(ii)

### The British Part in the Initial Decision

It will have been noticed that no mention is made of the British in the discussions before Potsdam; that indeed is why we know so little of their detail. There is no record of a British contribution in the papers of any of the responsible authorities. Nevertheless, by agreements formally recorded, the weapon could not be used until they had given their consent.

The British knew a good deal of the preparations for the event. Operational planning had begun in November 1944, when a special group in Washington, responsible directly to Stimson alone, began to study targets in Japan. One representative from the research station at Los Alamos was included, and it so happened that the British Dr. W. G. Penney was the only scientist, British or American, already to have studied the subject. It thus came about that a member of the British team represented the project in planning the operation; and both he and General Groves informed Wilson personally of the developments, which Wilson in turn reported by personal correspondence to Sir John Anderson in London. The Combined Policy Committee itself knew nothing of the plans, and the American Chiefs of Staff only of their existence.

By the spring of 1945, the conditions for the operation had been settled in some detail. It was based on the expectation that one U.235 bomb would be ready in about March 1945, and one plutonium bomb in May or June; and that production after those initial dates might be one U.235, and two plutonium, bombs a month. The planners had made a list of some ten targets, none of which had so far been seriously bombed. Hiroshima was placed first, as a town of military importance which was about the right size. A bomb containing U.235 would be used. No one could be sure of its effect, or indeed if it would explode; and it was in fact never tested before it was dropped in August. But tests of the components were successful, and in the event the estimates were not inexact. If a second bomb were needed, it was to be a plutonium bomb, of whose performance less could then be predicted (although, thanks to the test in July, more was known eventually) than of the performance of the U.235 bomb. Both, or all, of the bombs were to be set to explode in the air, so as to give the greatest blast effect and also to spread as little contamination as possible from radio-activity—a point on which the Americans were particularly sensitive in view of the provisions against chemical warfare in the Geneva Convention, recognized by European Powers if not by themselves, and so far observed by both sides during the war.

The operation was to be carried out from, and the bombs sent direct to, the island of Tinian in the Marianas. Training had been under way secretly from three bases, using a special wing of aircraft, at least since the late summer of 1944. The aircraft crews, all of whom had considerable experience of operations in Europe, were divided into two main groups, one for each type of bomb.

But knowledge of these preparations did not affect the problem of consenting to the decision itself. The form in which this consent should be recorded had concerned the British since the early spring of 1945. Much discussion had already taken place, as it continued to take place later, within the Embassy in Washington; and when informing Anderson on 30th April of the Americans' intention to drop a bomb in August, Wilson remarked:

‘ . . . 2. The raises the question of the implementation of the [agreements] concerning consultation about the use of the weapon.

3. I should be grateful for your views on this. Do we agree that the weapon should be used against the Japanese? If for any reason we did not, matter would presumably have to be raised by the Prime Minister with the President. If we do agree. various points still arise on which it would be desirable to have consultation with the Americans . . .

(a) Whether any Warning should be given to the Japanese. . . .

If you agree, I can arrange for these points to be discussed informally with the Americans in the first instance, but I gather that U.S. Chiefs of Staff would oppose (a).'

Anderson replied on 2nd May.

'On the operational aspect and the points directly connected directly therewith . . . I think that you should draw General Marshall's attention to the Quebec Agreement and say that, in view of this provision, you feel that you ought to report what he has told you about U.S. intentions to the Prime Minister and seek his instructions as to both the U.S. proposals themselves and the machinery for Anglo-American consultation on these operational aspects of [the project]; and that you should then telegraph direct to the Prime Minister on these matters. . . .'

On the same day, he took the matter to the Prime Minister.

'Field Marshal Wilson has reported that General Marshall has given him, in informal discussion, some information about U.S. intentions in regard to the operational use of [an atomic weapon] and has asked for guidance on the way in which he should handle this matter.

I have told Field Marshal Wilson, that, in my view, he should draw General Marshall's attention to the Quebec Agreement and should say that, having regard to this provision, he feels that he ought to report what General Marshall has told him to you, and seek your instructions on both the U.S. proposals themselves and the machinery for Anglo-American consultations on the operational aspects of [the project] and that he should then telegraph on these matters direct to you. . . .'

In the rush of urgent business that followed Germany's surrender, the Prime Minister was unable to give the subject his immediate attention; and it was not until 21st May that he replied to Anderson.

'I agree that you should instruct Field Marshal Wilson to tell General Marshall that, in view of the terms of the Quebec Agreement, he feels that he ought to report what General Marshall has told him to me and that he should then telegraph me the results of his conversation. I am sure Field Marshal Wilson will put these matters in a tactful and friendly way and that the question of machinery for Anglo-American consultation will emerge in his talk. It would be better if we did not have to insist, at this stage, on any legalistic interpretation of the Quebec Agreement. Please draft your telegram accordingly for my consideration.'

Anderson drafted his telegram, but again the Prime Minister did not consider it until 18th June. He then approved the text with some small alterations, and it was sent to Washington on that day.

Stimson and Marshall were then out of the capital, but Wilson learned that they intended soon to approach the British 'as to the best means of recording concurrence by his Majesty's Government to the operational employment of [an atomic weapon]'. It appeared finally that the most satisfactory procedure would be to record the decision in a Minute of the Combined Policy Committee, whose next meeting was due to be held on 4th July, rather than of the Combined Chiefs of Staff. On 28th June, Wilson accordingly asked Anderson to confirm whether the British should now agree to 'the implementation of the Quebec Agreement relating to the use of the weapon against Japan', and on the next day Anderson submitted the necessary Minute to the Prime Minister. The Prime Minister initialled this Minute on 1st July, thus signifying his approval; and on the 2nd Anderson informed the British in Washington:

'Prime Minister has approved my proposal that agreement to decision to use Weapon should be recorded at next meeting of Committee. Prime Minister mentioned that he would naturally wish to discuss this matter with President at 'Terminal' [the Potsdam Conference] and it would be as well that Committee should take note of this.'

Wilson conveyed this information to the committee on 4th July.

Two things should be noted about this exchange. First, it was confined to those authorities who had managed atomic affairs throughout, and did not include the British Chiefs of Staff. Secondly, the British gave their formal consent to the use of the bomb apparently without hearing the arguments for its use, and without seeing the recommendations of the Interim Committee or Stimson's memorandum of 2nd July. Their approval, indeed, was in effect given in the middle of June, and seems to have been assumed, at least in London, from early in May. Even taking 1st July as the determining date, the British consented to use the weapon before the Americans themselves had finally decided to use it.

This blank cheque, however, was not as surprising as it might seem. For in fact the authorities in London did not want or expect to participate actively in the discussions on the use of the bomb, and their procedure therefore fairly reflects their attitude. There were indeed good reasons for them to adopt it. The decision to use the weapon was primarily a military decision, in which the advice of the Chiefs of Staff on the enemy's position was a potent factor; and the relation of the British to the American Chiefs of Staff in the conduct of the war against Japan was not such as to encourage their intervention. Since 1942, the Pacific had been peculiarly an American area, and the end of the war in Europe did nothing to modify that fact. The British made only tentative efforts thereafter to amend the

procedure for considering strategy, and the Western Allies agreed at Potsdam that the Joint Chiefs of Staff should continue to take the decisions, informing their Allies when necessary what those decisions were.<sup>1</sup> On strategic grounds there was therefore no reason why the British should have been consulted in detail on the use of the atomic bomb, any more than they were consulted on the decision to invade Japan.

The development of the atomic bomb, however, was a special project, in which the British stood in a special relation to the Americans; and it might therefore have been thought that they would have co-operated more actively in its climax. But the partnership between the Allies in this field had for some time taken a definite form, in which the British had found that they were most successful when they acknowledged the limits of their contribution; and the manner in which they now gave their formal consent to the use of the weapon was designed to respect that fact. The balance of power, both in the atomic project and in the Pacific, lay too heavily with the United States for the British to be able, or to wish, to participate in this decision. They therefore preferred to acquiesce in it without more ado, relying on talks between the President and the Prime Minister at Potsdam to learn the reasons for it and to influence, if need be, the manner of its execution. This more modest procedure, which had worked reasonably well before, was undoubtedly more in accord with the facts, and may have served the British purpose better, than an attempt to force on the Americans a legal interpretation of earlier agreements which could not, in the last resort, be carried through.

(iii)

## Potsdam and After: The Japanese Surrender

Thus, by 5th July the discussion on the use of the atomic bomb was over. On the 7th, the Presidential party left the United States for Europe. On the 16th, an atomic bomb, containing plutonium, was exploded successfully at Alamogordo. On the 17th, the Potsdam Conference began.

For the reasons we have already given, the Americans were unlikely to alter their intention to use the atomic bomb unless the Japanese showed a real sign of surrendering without conditions. Otherwise, a bomb or bombs would soon be dropped, and it remained only to settle the details of the date, the targets and the number of bombs to be used—none of which, as we have argued, involved any new discussion

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<sup>1</sup> See pp. 271-3 above.

of principle. Our interest in the Potsdam Conference therefore lies in the evidence that may be produced for any change in the Japanese attitude, whether directly or as a result of a change in the attitude of the Americans themselves.

There were two occasions between 17th July and 2nd August, when the conference ended, on which the question of the Japanese attitude arose. The first occurred at its start.<sup>1</sup> On 7th July, the Emperor of Japan again appealed to the inner Supreme War Cabinet to negotiate for peace; and a few days later, the Supreme War Council accordingly decided, in strict secrecy, to propose that he should send Prince Fumimaro Konoye, one of the senior statesmen of Japan, to negotiate in Moscow. The Emperor saw Konoye on the 12th, and, according to the United States Strategic Bombing Survey, 'secretly instructed him to accept any terms he could get and to wire these terms direct to the Emperor.' On the same day, the Japanese asked the Russians to receive him, ostensibly at any rate as an emissary to negotiate terms. Togo then telegraphed to Sato, the Japanese Ambassador in Moscow:<sup>2</sup>

'The Emperor is greatly concerned over the mounting calamity and the sacrifices of the people of the belligerent powers as a result of this recent war. Although he fervently desires that the war be terminated swiftly, so long as the United States and Great Britain adhere to an unconditional surrender in the Greater East Asia War, for the honour and survival of the country the Emperor has no alternative but to continue an all-out war. However, He is extremely reluctant to permit the increased shedding of blood by the peoples of both sides and He desires that peace be restored as soon as possible for the sake of humanity. The Emperor's intention is to send Prince Fumimaro Konoye as a special envoy with an autographed letter containing the above meaning: I request that you submit this proposal to Molotov . . .'

Sato at once sought an interview with Molotov, but failed to obtain it. On the afternoon of 13th July he saw Molotov's deputy, M. Lozovsky,<sup>3</sup> but was told that the Russian Government could not answer at once, for Molotov was on the point of leaving with Stalin for Potsdam. Lozovsky undertook, however, to get in touch later with the Russian party in Berlin. Nothing more was heard for the next few days, but on the 18th Lozovsky told Sato that his Government

<sup>1</sup> The following account is taken from the three sources cited on p. 283 above, as well as from the series of Japanese telegrams quoted below. The Japanese Ambassador in Moscow, Naotake Sato, who figures in these telegrams, has published his own account of events (*Futatsu no Roshia*, 1948); but as this has not been translated, I have not been able to consult it.

<sup>2</sup> Compare Kase's account in *Eclipse of the Rising Sun*, pp. 193-4; and see also Butow, *Japan's Decision to Surrender*, p. 124.

<sup>3</sup> Kase calls him, wrongly, Rozovsky.

could not reply to the Japanese request, which was too vague to be assessed precisely. As a result, Togo telephoned fresh instructions to Sato on the 21st.

'Special Envoy Konoye carries with him on his mission the Will of His Imperial Majesty. It is desired that, through the good offices of the Soviet Government, the war be brought to a termination and that, in this connection, a statement of concrete plans be made. At the same time, it is desired that negotiations be opened relative to matters which concern the establishment of Japan-Soviet solidarity, which has been during the war, and which will continue to be in the postwar period, the basis of our Empire's diplomatic relations.'

An accompanying message explained the background.<sup>1</sup>

'Under no circumstances will it be possible for us to accept the terms of unconditional surrender . . . However, in keeping with the Will of His Imperial Majesty . . . it is desired that through the good offices of the Soviet Union, a peace be brought about that is not the so-called unconditional surrender demanded by the enemy . . . Under the circumstances . . . it is known from the outset that to request the Soviet Union to render her good offices in this peace move without attached conditions would be impossible. At the same time, to offer readily specific conditions at this juncture would be beyond the range of possibility and unfavourable in the light of our relations with the Cabinet, as well as with foreign nations. It is during this period of delicate circumstances that we would have Prince Konoye convey our concrete plan based on the Will of His Imperial Majesty to the Soviet Union and, upon arriving at an understanding with the Soviet Union, have her approach the Governments of Great Britain and the United States . . .'

This telegram apparently reached Sato only on 24th July, in time for him to convey its message to the Russians on the 25th. On that day, Togo sent the Ambassador a further telegram, instructing him to get in touch with Molotov himself immediately and to repeat to him the offer of 12th July. By then, according to Kase, the Japanese Foreign Office was considering whether it should not make a parallel approach to the British.<sup>2</sup>

To judge from their reaction, these moves seem not to have made much impression on the Russians. Whether this was in fact the case, we have no means of knowing. According to Byrnes,<sup>3</sup> 'Stalin stated the last message to him<sup>4</sup> had said that Japan would "fight to the death

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Kase, *loc. cit.*, p. 205.

<sup>2</sup> *Loc. cit.*, p. 219.

<sup>3</sup> *Speaking Frankly*, p. 262.

<sup>4</sup> The context suggests that this statement was made early in the Potsdam Conference, so that the message would be that conveyed by Sato on 13th July. And see Truman, *Year of Decisions*, p. 325.

rather than accept unconditional surrender.”’ At a later meeting with the Americans, he told them that ‘the Emperor wished to send Prince Konoye to Moscow with a message saying that Japan wanted to end the war but had decided to fight on with all its strength as long as unconditional surrender was demanded.’ ‘A letter’, he added, ‘was then sent to the Ambassador stating that the character of the indicated message was general, contained no specific proposal, and therefore it was impossible to give a definite reply.’ The President expressed his approval of this action.<sup>1</sup>

A more complete account of the affair was recorded at the time by Mr. Churchill. On 17th July he had a private talk with Stalin, at which only Major Birse, the British interpreter, was present. After hearing Stalin’s account of the Japanese approach, which was factual and accurate,

‘The Prime Minister thought the Generalissimo Stalin should send the President a note on the subject in order to warn him before the next Session.

The Generalissimo pointed out that he did not wish the President to think that the Soviet Government wanted to act as an intermediary, but he would have no objection if the Prime Minister mentioned it to the President.

The Prime Minister agreed to do so, pointing out that he also did not wish the President to feel that we were not at one with the United States in their aim of achieving complete victory over Japan. America had helped us enormously in the war against Germany and we intended to help her now to the full . . .’

Churchill passed this on to Truman, when they lunched together on the 18th.

‘I said that the Japanese war might end much quicker than had been expected, and that the eighteen months period which we had taken as a working rule required to be reviewed. Also, Stage III<sup>2</sup> might be upon us in a few months, or perhaps even earlier. I imparted to the President the disclosure about the offer from the Mikado, made to me by Marshal Stalin the night before; and I told him he was quite free to talk it over with the Marshal, as I had informed him at the Marshal’s expressed desire. (See my conversation recorded by Birse).

The President also thought the war might come to a speedy end. Here I explained that Marshal Stalin had not wished to transmit this information direct to him for fear he might think the Russians were trying to influence him towards peace. In the same way I would abstain from saying anything which would

<sup>1</sup> Byrnes, *Speaking Frankly*, p. 205. Truman, *loc. cit.*, pp. 325-6, suggests that the order of Stalin’s statements to the Americans at Potsdam may have been slightly different from that given by Byrnes.

<sup>2</sup> See p. 237 above.



indicate that we were in any way reluctant to go on with the war against Japan as long as the United States thought fit. However, I dwelt upon the tremendous cost in American life and, to a smaller extent, in British life which would be involved in forcing "unconditional surrender" upon the Japanese. It was for him to consider whether this might not be expressed in some other way, so that we got all the essentials for future peace and security, and yet left the Japanese some show of saving their military honour and some assurance of their national existence, after they had complied with all safeguards necessary for the conqueror. The President countered by saying that he did not think the Japanese had any military honour after Pearl Harbour. I contented myself with saying that at any rate they had something for which they were ready to face certain death in very large numbers, and this might not be so important to us as to them. He then became quite sympathetic, and spoke, as Mr. Stimson had to me two days earlier, of the terrible responsibilities that rested upon him in regard to the unlimited effusion of American blood.

My own impression is that there is no question of a rigid insistence upon the phrase "unconditional surrender", apart from the essentials necessary for world peace and future security, and for the punishment of a guilty and treacherous nation.

It has been evident to me in my conversations with Mr. Stimson, General Marshall and now with the President, that they are searching their hearts on this subject, and that we have no need to press it. We know of course that the Japanese are ready to give up all conquests made in this war.'

Finally, at dinner that night,

'Marshal Stalin showed the Prime Minister the Soviet Government's reply to the Mikado's message.

In their reply, the Soviet Government stated that as the Mikado's message had been in general terms and contained no concrete proposals, the Soviet Government could take no action.

From Marshal Stalin's further statements it was evident that Russia intends to attack Japan soon after 8th August. (The Marshal thought it might be a fortnight later.)'

The Western Allies thus received from the Russians the strong impression that the Japanese would not accept unconditional surrender. They were themselves already aware of the fact. For we now know that the Americans held the key to the correspondence between Togo and Sato, and that throughout the last three weeks of July they followed the messages closely. Stimson has remarked that 'information . . . was available to the American Government' of the fact that 'a large element of the Japanese Cabinet was ready in the spring to accept substantially the same terms as those finally agreed

on'<sup>1</sup>—a statement which may or may not refer to this interception. But more specific information comes from *The Forrestal Diaries*, the record kept by the then Secretary of the U.S. Navy. On 13th July, Mr. Forrestal noted that<sup>2</sup>

'The first real evidence of a Japanese desire to get out of the war came today through intercepted messages from Togo, Foreign Minister, to Sato, Japanese Ambassador in Moscow, instructing the latter to see Molotov if possible before his departure for the Big Three meeting, and if not then, immediately afterwards, to lay before him the Emperor's strong desire to secure a termination of the war.'

There follows an accurate précis of Togo's telegram of the 12th, ending:

'Togo said further that the unconditional surrender terms of the Allies was about the only thing in the way of termination of the war and he said that if this were insisted upon, of course the Japanese would have to continue the fight.'

On 15th and 24th July, Forrestal again repeats items accurately from the correspondence.<sup>3</sup> There is thus no question but that the United States Government knew fully of the developments to which Stalin alluded.

These developments may well have strengthened the hand of those who, like Stimson and Forrestal, wished to give the enemy some idea of what would follow his unconditional surrender. But they could make little difference in themselves. Until the Japanese accepted that formula as the *sine qua non* for peace, no approach—and proposals for such an approach were still far from precise—could be entertained seriously. As Mr. Byrnes has stated, in discussing Stalin's information,<sup>4</sup> 'under those circumstances, agreement to negotiate could only arouse false hopes.'

Nevertheless, the Japanese move was not without its effect. For, as we have seen from Mr. Churchill's notes,<sup>5</sup> it stimulated further discussion between the Western Allies on the subject of unconditional surrender itself. It thus leads us to the second occasion on which the question of the Japanese attitude arose: the promulgation of the Potsdam Declaration on 26th July, and its apparent reception in Japan.

For some time, the Americans had been considering if, and how far, they should mitigate the formula of unconditional surrender in

<sup>1</sup> Stimson and Bundy, *On Active Service in Peace and War*, p. 628.

<sup>2</sup> *The Forrestal Diaries*, pp. 86-7. And see Butow, *loc. cit.*, p. 130.

<sup>3</sup> *The Forrestal Diaries*, pp. 87-8.

<sup>4</sup> *Speaking Frankly*, p. 262.

<sup>5</sup> See pp. 302-3 above.

the case of Japan. The Joint Chiefs of Staff and the State Department were each divided on the question, but some of the President's advisers, including Stimson, were clearly in favour at least of defining more precisely the treatment of the Japanese after surrender, although not the terms of surrender themselves.<sup>1</sup> The Americans' doubts were reinforced by Churchill at the conference. Despite his reservation on the subject at the beginning of July, there is no indication that the Prime Minister then questioned the decision to use the bomb as a 'sanction' if an appeal to the Japanese should fail.<sup>2</sup> He tried rather to influence the terms of the appeal so as to render a 'sanction' unnecessary. His advice supported that already tendered by Stimson, and in the course of the next few days the Americans decided, if the British and the Chinese agreed, to issue a declaration from the Allies to Japan in which the terms of her treatment after surrender were developed in some detail. This declaration is of great importance; for, at the last moment and for the first time, it departed significantly from the bare formula of unconditional surrender which had apparently proved the main obstacle to peace. After warning the Japanese that 'the full application of our military power, backed by our resolve, will mean the inevitable and complete destruction of the Japanese Armed Forces and just as inevitably the utter devastation of the Japanese homeland', the declaration continued:<sup>3</sup>

'Following are our terms. We will not deviate from them. There are no alternatives. We shall brook no delay.

There must be eliminated for all time the authority and influence of those who have deceived and misled the people of Japan into embarking on world conquest, for we insist that a new order of peace, security and justice will be impossible until irresponsible militarism is driven from the world.

Until such a new order is established and until there is convincing proof that Japan's war making power is destroyed, points in Japanese territory to be designated by the Allies shall be occupied to secure the achievement of the basic objectives we are here setting forth.

The terms of the Cairo Declaration<sup>4</sup> shall be carried out and Japanese sovereignty shall be limited to the islands of Honshu, Hokkaido, Kyushu, Shikoku, and such minor islands as we determine.

The Japanese military forces, after being completely disarmed, shall be permitted to return to their homes with the opportunity to lead peaceful and productive lives.

<sup>1</sup> See Stimson and Bundy, *loc. cit.*, pp. 622-3, 626-7, 628; Leahy, *loc. cit.*, p. 488. For some of the discussions in Washington in May and June, see *The Forrestal Diaries*, pp. 79-84; and Truman, *loc. cit.*, pp. 346-7.

<sup>2</sup> See p. 298 above.

<sup>3</sup> 'The Times', 27th July, 1945.

<sup>4</sup> See pp. 216-17 above.

We do not intend that the Japanese shall be enslaved as a race or destroyed as a nation, but stern justice shall be meted out to all war criminals, including those who have visited cruelties upon our prisoners. The Japanese Government shall remove all obstacles to the revival and strengthening of democratic tendencies among the Japanese people. Freedom of speech, of religion, and of thought, as well as respect for the fundamental human rights shall be established.

Japan shall be permitted to maintain such industries as will sustain her economy and permit the exaction of just reparations in kind, but not those which would enable her to rearm for war. To this end, access to, as distinguished from control of, raw materials shall be permitted. Eventual Japanese participation in world trade relations shall be permitted.

The occupying forces of the Allies shall be withdrawn from Japan as soon as these objectives have been accomplished and there has been established, in accordance with the freely expressed will of the Japanese people, a peacefully inclined and responsible Government.

We call upon the Government of Japan to proclaim now the unconditional surrender of all the Japanese armed forces, and to provide proper and adequate assurances of their good faith in such action. The alternative for Japan is prompt and utter destruction.'

The text of this declaration was sent to Chungking for approval, probably after 18th July. On the 24th, the President, as he had agreed with Churchill after long discussion between their experts, informed Stalin of the existence of the atomic bomb and of the Western Allies' intention to use it soon unless Japan surrendered—news which the Marshal received with apparent satisfaction. The Chinese agreed to the terms of the declaration on the evening of the 26th, and it was broadcast by wireless that night.<sup>1</sup> A copy was sent immediately to Molotov, informing him of the Allies' action; according to Byrnes, the Russians then asked, unsuccessfully, that the statement should not be released for two or three days.<sup>2</sup>

The Potsdam Declaration (as the statement was known) followed Stimson's recommendation of 2nd July, except that it did not refer to the Emperor. Its reception in Japan has been described.<sup>3</sup> The demand for the unconditional surrender of 'the armed forces', instead of the Government itself, encouraged the peace party to hope that the Emperor's prestige might not be jeopardized. Popular opinion, too, seemed to be that the terms were less harsh than they might have been, even though the Army had managed to prevent the publication

<sup>1</sup> Byrnes, *Speaking Frankly*, p. 206.

<sup>2</sup> *Loc. cit.*, p. 207.

<sup>3</sup> Butow, *Japan's Decision to Surrender*, Ch. 7. See also Kase, *Eclipse of the Rising Sun*, pp. 209-10.

of some of the more lenient passages. Finally, the Emperor himself was reported to have accepted the Declaration 'without hesitation'. Nevertheless, on 28th July the Japanese Prime Minister informed the Press that the Government intended to ignore it entirely. The reason has been given as follows:<sup>1</sup>

'The proclamation . . . was a unilateral announcement of a policy on the part of the three powers. It was not formally addressed to our Government. We received it only through our radio monitoring service. Moreover we did not know what the position of the Soviet Union was regarding it. In fact we were then eagerly awaiting their reply to our proposal of peace. Therefore, after mature deliberation the hastily convened Cabinet decided to keep silence for a while about the Potsdam proclamation pending further developments. This decision was duly reported to and approved by the Emperor. . . .

By this time the military and their sympathisers were getting suspicious of the frequent meetings of the six members of the Supreme War Council and they began to organise an active opposition to the peace party. The aged Prime Minister [Suzuki] seems to have been influenced by the growing opposition, for, apparently in a moment of weakness, he told the Press that it was the policy of the Government to ignore the proclamation entirely. . . .

Had Suzuki been more steadfast or his advisers less stupid we might have been spared the atomic attack. . . . True, the Cabinet decided to "ignore" the proclamation, but to ignore it should have meant simply that we refrained from commenting on it. To state expressly that we would ignore the proclamation was entirely contrary to the purpose of the decision . . .'

The Japanese statement virtually removed the last chance of avoiding the use of the atomic bomb. The Americans felt that they had gone as far as they could in offering reasonable terms, and had met apparently with a flat refusal. It is true that the Potsdam Declaration—in this respect reflecting the division of opinion that still persisted in American circles—made no mention of the Emperor; but in the context that implied leniency, and indeed seems to have been so taken in Japan. Suzuki's statement merely confirmed the belief that the Japanese Army was in control, and would never surrender until all resistance had been eliminated. The Combined Intelligence Committee's estimate of the situation at the beginning of July seemed to have been correct, and there was therefore no alternative to the plans which had been formed as a result. The Americans waited a few more days before giving the detailed orders for the use of the weapon; for, as Byrnes has recorded,<sup>2</sup> 'despite the Japanese Premier's statement, I

<sup>1</sup> Kase, *loc. cit.*, pp. 210-11. See also Butow's discussion of this incident, in *Japan's Decision to Surrender*, pp. 144-7, and particularly p. 146, n. 12.

<sup>2</sup> *Speaking Frankly*, p. 263.

continued to hope the Japanese Government would change its mind.' But the conference ended on 2nd August, without a further statement from the Japanese; and it seemed unlikely that anything would be heard thereafter, when the Allies had dispersed. We now know that the Japanese Foreign Office in fact instructed Sato on the 2nd to approach the Russians again.

' . . . The battle situation', Togo telegraphed on that day, 'has become acute. There are only a few days left in which to make arrangements to end the war . . . For the present, a request was made to the Soviet Union, in accordance with the Imperial will, for her mediation in terminating the war. As for the definite terms, the despatch of a special envoy was . . . decided upon . . . With confirmation of the above, efforts will be made to gather opinions from the various quarters regarding definite terms. (For this, it is our intention to make the Potsdam Three-Power Declaration the basis of the study regarding these terms.) . . . It is requested that further efforts be exerted to somehow make the Soviet Union enthusiastic over the special envoy . . . Since the loss of one day relative to this present matter may result in a thousand years of regret, it is requested that you immediately have a talk with Molotov.'

But this qualified admission of the Potsdam Declaration had no effect. Stalin and Molotov did not return to Moscow until 6th August; and when Sato gained his interview at 5 p.m. on the 8th, it was only to hear from Molotov of Russia's declaration of war on Japan.<sup>1</sup>

We do not know if Togo's message of 2nd August reached the Americans, or if so whom. Forrestal, from whom our knowledge of the earlier interceptions is derived, left Washington after 24th July on an uninvited visit to Potsdam;<sup>2</sup> and there is no further reference in his published diary to the Japanese correspondence. Unless the cypher had been changed in the interval, or there was some technical failure, Washington presumably received the message. Whether or not the translation reached any of the American authorities then in Europe, it is impossible to say. The Potsdam Conference broke up on the 2nd, and the President, Stimson, Byrnes and Forrestal himself were all on the move. It would have been an awkward, though doubtless not an impossible, moment to convene a meeting. But in any case, even 'the intention to make the Potsdam Three-Power Declaration the basis of the study regarding . . . terms' could have made no difference. The Western Allies were bound to the formula of unconditional surrender, and this message—the farthest the peace party could go—offered no particular hope, following Suzuki's open disregard of the Potsdam Declaration, that the Japanese would accept that formula. It was indeed as reasonable to deduce from the latest developments that an

<sup>1</sup> See Kase, *loc. cit.*, pp. 222-3. Butow does not mention this telegram.

<sup>2</sup> *The Forrestal Diaries*, p. 88.

atomic bomb might now enable the peace party to force surrender on its opponents, as it was to deduce that the two parties would together accept defeat without it. Togo and the Emperor were desperate; but still they could not prevail. The situation seemed to have reached the point where the bomb—and perhaps the bomb alone—would have the required decisive effect.

In the last few days of the conference, the Americans accordingly prepared their orders for the use of the weapon, and Stimson submitted the list of ten possible targets to the President.<sup>1</sup> They decided to delete Kyoto, which, 'although a target of considerable military importance . . . had been the ancient capital of Japan and was a shrine of Japanese art and culture'. There were two atomic bombs ready for immediate use, and if necessary both would be dropped, presumably to exploit as far as possible the fear that more would be dropped thereafter. The first target, as already stated, was Hiroshima, before the war the seventh largest city in Japan, with a population of over a quarter of a million, a military, administrative and commercial centre, and the main military shipping point in the Home Islands. The second, third and fourth targets, in that order, seem to have been Kokura (a suburb lying between Moji and Yawata), Nagasaki, and Niigata:<sup>2</sup> all typical targets of modern war, in which military and industrial activities were mingled inextricably in cities of some size.

Meanwhile, the preparations were nearing their peak in the Marianas. The components of the two bombs had been sent from the United States by cruiser in May, and the fissile material was flown out in mid-July. Two American officers, Rear-Admiral N. R. Purnell and Brigadier-General Thomas Farrell, representing the atomic project, had been sent to the neighbouring island of Saipan to co-ordinate arrangements, and Farrell was to take command once he had received the order sent through the Commanding General, U.S. Strategic Air Forces in the Pacific, to carry out the operation. The exact date on which the first bomb would be dropped was left to him, in conjunction with Major-General Curtis E. Le May, commanding Twenty-First U.S. Army Air Force in the central Pacific. The decision would be taken, on meteorological evidence, by noon on the day preceding the attack. The bombing was to be visual, so that good local conditions over the target were essential. For that reason, a secondary target was given in each case. Once the decision had been taken, a B.29 bomber would leave Tinian to reach the target area at about 10 p.m. on the same day, thence reporting the weather. A second would follow, to

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<sup>1</sup> Stimson, *Harper's Magazine*, p. 105; Byrnes, *loc. cit.*, p. 263. See also Leahy, *loc. cit.*, pp. 501-2.

<sup>2</sup> Truman, *loc. cit.*, pp. 351, 357. See Inset to Map VI, facing p. 312.

reach the area at about midnight. Their reports would be relayed from Tinian to the operational aircraft, which by then would have left the island on their eight-hour flight to the target, and would be maintaining radio silence. On receiving the second favourable report, they would make for the chosen target.

The flight itself would be made by three B.29s flying separately, one carrying the bomb, the second parachute-borne measuring instruments, and the third cameras. They would rendezvous off a small island south of Kyushu, proceeding thence in company to the selected targets. If the primary target had been chosen, but visual bombing proved impossible, they would fly on to the secondary target. If that too could not be bombed visually, they would return to Iwo Jima in the Bonins, since the Marianas were too far for a return flight by an aircraft still carrying the bomb.

The British were represented on Tinian by Dr. Penney and by Group-Captain G. L. Cheshire, V.C., both of whom had received permission from Washington in mid-June to join the party. But this did not include permission specifically to accompany the first flight, and there was accordingly no British witness of the explosion of the U.235 bomb. By the time of the second flight, permission had been received, and both British observers flew in the camera plane.

The aircraft in Tinian were commanded by Colonel Paul Tibbits. There were two groups of scientists, under the direction of Captain W. S. Parsons, U.S.N., one for each bomb and working separately from each other. The two bombs alone were on the island, and it was estimated that an interval of about a fortnight must elapse before another, of either type, could arrive.

The flight itself was postponed by unsuitable weather. On 3rd August, the day after the President had ordered the operation, Wilson informed Anderson that 'the date . . . will almost certainly be tomorrow'. But the next day he telegraphed that it had been put off; and it was not until the 5th that Farrell gave the order to carry on.

The greatest hazard of the operation was perhaps the take-off. The bomb was very heavy, and with the extra load a B.29 found it difficult to rise in time even from the specially lengthened runways on Tinian. On 5th August, indeed, three crashed on practice take-offs; and it was with profound relief that the observers saw the operational aircraft that evening mount into the sky. Weather reports were good, and by midnight Tibbits knew that Hiroshima was his target.

The operation went according to plan. At 8.15 a.m. on 6th August, the bomb was dropped on Hiroshima. The results are well known.

When the Japanese appreciated what had happened, which was not for some hours, the Emperor and the peace party tried to persuade the military leaders to surrender.<sup>1</sup> But the Army was determined to resist,

<sup>1</sup> Butow, *loc. cit.*, pp. 50-3; Kase, *loc. cit.*, pp. 212-13.



and on the 7th its Imperial Headquarters issued a non-committal communiqué on the damage. The Americans accordingly bombed Nagasaki on the morning of the 9th. The same measures were adopted as for Hiroshima, Kokura being the first target on this occasion. But the execution was not so good. The three aircraft failed to rendezvous off Kyushu, the camera plane with Penney and Cheshire never finding the others. The bomb-carrying plane eventually went on to Kokura; but after three unsuccessful runs over the target flew on to the secondary target of Nagasaki, some eighty miles to the south-west. The first run-in was again inaccurate; but the bomb was dropped some four miles north-east of the town, exploding, as it happened, on an industrial centre which lay that distance from the target. The camera plane then flew towards the explosion, arriving about ten minutes later.

Meanwhile, on the late afternoon of the 8th Molotov had informed Sato that Russia would declare war on Japan on the 9th.

'The demand of the Three Powers', he then stated,<sup>1</sup> ' . . . on July 26th for the unconditional surrender of the Japanese Armed Forces was rejected by Japan, and thus the proposal of the Japanese Government to the Soviet Union on mediation in the war in the Far East loses all basis.

Taking into consideration the refusal of Japan to capitulate, the Allies submitted to the Soviet Government a proposal to join the war against Japanese aggression and thus shorten the duration of the war, reduce the number of victims and facilitate the speedy restoration of universal peace.

Loyal to its Allied duty, the Soviet Government accepted the proposal of the Allies and has joined in the Declaration of the Allied Powers of July 26th.

The Soviet Government considers that this policy is the only means able to bring peace nearer, free the people from further sacrifice and suffering and give the Japanese people the possibility of avoiding those dangers and destruction suffered by Germany after her refusal to capitulate unconditionally . . .'

The effect of these measures is interesting.<sup>2</sup> On the morning of 9th August, Suzuki summoned the Supreme War Council, in accordance with the wishes of the Emperor. Both the Prime Minister and the Emperor himself were in favour of accepting the Potsdam Declaration. But the military leaders were still reluctant to surrender unconditionally, and after two hours' discussion the Council could not decide if it should accept the Allies' terms outright. The full Cabinet was therefore summoned, but after deliberating from 2.30 p.m. until almost

<sup>1</sup> 'The Times', 9th August, 1945.

<sup>2</sup> The following account is taken from the sources cited on p. 283 above; Stimson and Bundy, *loc. cit.*, pp. 626-7; Byrnes, *loc. cit.*, pp. 209-10; Truman, *loc. cit.*, pp. 358-60; and *Documents on American Foreign Relations*, vol. VIII, ed. Raymond Dennett and Robert R. Turner (Princeton, 1948) pp. 107-8.

10 p.m. could also reach no conclusion. Suzuki thereupon asked the Emperor to convene a further meeting, this time of an 'Inner Cabinet', consisting of the six members of the Supreme War Council with the Chief Secretary of the Cabinet and the President of the Privy Council. This meeting began shortly before midnight, and continued without a break until about 3 a.m. on the 10th.<sup>1</sup> At that point, Suzuki asked the Emperor to state his own opinion. The Emperor then announced that the war must end.<sup>2</sup> The full Cabinet met soon afterwards, and ratified the decision unanimously. The news was despatched through Switzerland at about 7 a.m. on the 10th.

On the 11th, the Americans stated the terms for the surrender itself.

'From the moment of surrender, the authority of the Emperor and the Japanese Government to rule the state shall be subject to the Supreme Commander of the Allied Powers who will take such steps as he deems proper to effectuate the surrender terms.

The Emperor will be required to authorise and ensure the signature by the Government of Japan and the Japanese Imperial General Headquarters of the surrender terms necessary to carry out the provisions of the Potsdam Declaration, and shall issue his commands to all the Japanese military, naval and air authorities and to all the forces under their control wherever located to cease active operations and to surrender their arms, and to issue such other orders as the Supreme Commander may require to give effect to the surrender terms. . . .

The ultimate form of Government of Japan shall, in accordance with the Potsdam Declaration, be established by the freely expressed will of the Japanese people. . . .'

This message was broadcast at about 4 a.m. on 12th August, and was studied<sup>3</sup> at a meeting of the Japanese Cabinet that afternoon. There was still bitter disagreement whether or not to accept the terms, and the Ministers adjourned without reaching a decision. The next day they met again. Thirteen Ministers then accepted the Americans' terms, but three opposed them as not safeguarding sufficiently the Emperor's position, and one abstained from a vote. At the same time, dissident Army officers issued an unauthorized statement declaring that they would continue the war, and the two Chiefs of Staff themselves refused to sign the document accepting the Americans' terms. The Emperor accordingly held an Imperial Conference on the morning of the 14th, which the full Cabinet and the Chiefs of Staff, as well as others, attended. After further dispute, the Emperor repeated the opinion he had expressed on the 10th, and accepted the Americans'

<sup>1</sup> For the probable exact times, see Butow, *loc. cit.*, p. 168, n. 9.

<sup>2</sup> For the probable text of his remarks, see *loc. cit.*, pp. 175-6.

<sup>3</sup> For the background to the translation by the Japanese Foreign Office, see *loc. cit.*, p. 193.





terms.<sup>1</sup> The Cabinet then retired at about noon, and formally accepted them. At about 4 p.m. on the 14th, the news was received in Washington, and on the 15th the Emperor broadcast to the people of Japan.

Until the broadcast had taken place, it was still uncertain if the Army would comply with the Government's decision.<sup>2</sup> On the night of the 14th, part of the Imperial Garrison in Tokyo staged an armed rising to occupy the Palace and to round up the prominent members of the peace party. They were repelled with some bloodshed, after destroying the houses of the Prime Minister and the President of the Privy Council. Other troops occupied broadcasting stations in Tokyo and the provinces, to suppress the recording of the Emperor's broadcast. They too were repelled. As late as 20th August, Army officers planned a *coup* to seize the Palace, and troops were still rising spasmodically in various parts of the country. Meanwhile, officers of the Air Force dropped leaflets urging the people to continue the war, and tried with their colleagues in the Army to set up a 'Government of Resistance'. It was not until the end of the month that all elements in the armed forces finally accepted the inevitable.

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<sup>1</sup> For the probable text of his remarks, see *loc. cit.*, pp. 207-8.

<sup>2</sup> Butow, *loc. cit.*, Ch. 10. Cf. Kase, *loc. cit.*, Ch. XI.



# CHAPTER X

## THE CENTRAL ORGANIZATION

(i)

### The Organization in London

**T**HESE volumes, in showing how strategic decisions were reached, have shown the appropriate machinery in action. But the account would not be complete without a description, and some examination of the development, of the machinery itself. The subject falls into three parts: the organization in London, the working of the Western Alliance, and, as the executive agent of the central system, the great Allied Commands.

The account that follows, forming as it does the conclusion to two volumes on a specific period of the war, has been written with special reference to that period. It does not attempt to provide a balanced survey of the subject for the whole war, but rather to complement the similar surveys which appear, or will appear, in the other volumes of the series. Nevertheless, both the Allied and the British central organizations remained broadly the same for much of the war, and an examination of their main features towards the end must therefore involve some account of their earlier development. To this extent, our account is concerned with a period longer than that covered by the rest of Volumes V and VI. The section on the Commands, on the other hand, applies more strictly to the last two years alone; for important changes were constantly taking place earlier, both in the relations of the theatres with the central authorities and within the theatres themselves, which cannot be covered in a survey of the later developments.

‘Such is the machinery,’ said Mr. Churchill in the House of Commons in February 1942,<sup>1</sup> ‘which, as Prime Minister and Minister of Defence, I have partly elaborated and partly brought into existence. I am satisfied that it is the best that can be devised to meet the extraordinary difficulties and dangers through which we are passing. There is absolutely no question of making any change in it of a serious or fundamental character as long as I retain the confidence of the House and of the country.’ Certainly a system had by then been evolved which responded, and was to respond in the future, satisfactorily to exceptional pressure, without doing excessive violence, as such systems

<sup>1</sup> *Parliamentary Debates (Hansard)*, Vol. 378, col. 42.

may do, to the tried methods of more normal times. The key to this achievement lay in the War Cabinet, on the one hand responsible to Parliament, on the other relating the activities of, and by its composition setting the pattern for, the subordinate committees to which increasingly it passed the detailed business of government. The form of this achievement in turn owed much, as the Prime Minister correctly remarked, to himself. For, within a system of constitutional conventions which favours his authority, the Prime Minister is, in Lord Morley's words, 'the keystone of the Cabinet arch'. His powers within the executive are great in peace, potentially greater in war, and with a Prime Minister such as Lloyd George or Churchill, whom war is apt to produce, very great indeed. Churchill, though erratic in practice, was by experience and nature a very good administrator for war; and the system which emerged between 1940 and 1945 owed much to his observation and his habits of work.

The effect of Mr. Churchill's changes to the central organization, on coming into power in 1940, was to reconcile features of the two earlier systems which then represented the experience of Cabinets in modern war. The first precedent was provided by Lloyd George's War Cabinet of 1916-18. This had consisted of five members, all but one (the Chancellor of the Exchequer) being free from Departmental duties, either as holders of ancient and non-Departmental posts or as Ministers without Portfolio. The intention had been to create a small, supervisory body, unencumbered so far as possible by administrative and Parliamentary duties, and thus 'able', in Lord Hankey's words, 'to devote [its] whole time and energy to the central problems of the war.'<sup>1</sup> The second, and widely different, precedent lay in Neville Chamberlain's Administration of September, 1939 to May 1940, in which a War Cabinet of nine Ministers replaced the peace-time Cabinet of twenty-two; but with five of them responsible for Departments, and with the War Cabinet handling daily business much along the traditional lines. Churchill followed neither of these models, but adopted what has been called a 'compromise' between them.<sup>2</sup> At first he opted for a War Cabinet of five members—smaller than Chamberlain's War Cabinet and equal in size to that of Lloyd George—of whom only one, the Foreign Secretary, held a Departmental post. But within a few months the membership grew to seven, and later to eight and nine, of whom only three Ministers were not responsible for Departments. The pattern survived for the rest of the war, although the exact composition of the War Cabinet at different times changed with personalities and, until May 1945, with the political demands of a coalition. Thus, while Sir Kingsley Wood was not a member as Chancellor of the Exchequer after February 1942, Sir John Anderson,

<sup>1</sup> The Right Honourable Lord Hankey, *Government Control in War* (1945), p. 40.

<sup>2</sup> The Right Honourable L. S. Amery, *Thoughts on the Constitution* (1947), p. 85.



fresh from his highly successful tenure of the Lord Presidency of the Council, at once reappeared in the War Cabinet when he became Chancellor in September, 1943. So too Mr. Attlee, because he was leader of the Labour Party, was a member of the War Cabinet while holding the office of Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs, whereas his Conservative successor, Viscount Cranborne, was not.<sup>1</sup> But the changes throughout, and particularly over the last eighteen months of the Coalition Government, were small. In August 1943, the War Cabinet consisted of eight members—the Prime Minister and Minister of Defence, the Lord President of the Council, the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, the Minister of Labour, the Minister of Production, the Secretary of State for the Home Department, the Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs, and the Minister of State Resident in the Middle East<sup>2</sup>—of whom five held Departmental posts. By the end of the year the Dominions' Secretary and the Minister in the Middle East had gone, and the Chancellor of the Exchequer and the Minister of Reconstruction (the last a new Ministerial appointment) had come in<sup>3</sup>. The membership thereafter remained the same until May 1945, when the Caretaker Government was formed. Both it and the Labour Government (the latter taking office towards the end of July, 1945) discarded a War Cabinet and reverted to the system of a larger Cabinet<sup>4</sup>, whose detailed supervision of military affairs continued to be performed by the subordinate committees which by then had come to exercise much of the responsibility on behalf of the supreme body.

For much of Mr. Churchill's Administration, therefore, some Ministers in the War Cabinet had heavy administrative duties in addition to their duties in Cabinet. This arrangement, which has been criticized during and since the war, was designed to supply a small, supervisory body with that executive experience and responsibility which in the Prime Minister's opinion the Lloyd George model of War Cabinet had lacked. Mr. Churchill, as is well known, strongly opposed the separation of the supervisory and executive functions—that 'exalted brooding over the work done by others'<sup>5</sup>—, and on his accession to power set out deliberately to reconcile them within the same body. In his view, Lloyd George's ideal of freedom to deliberate with power to act was impractical unless both aspects were combined, as Lloyd George had not combined them, in the same agent. But this reaction from the earlier model did not oblige Churchill to repeat all of the features of the Chamberlain Administration. Most of the Ministers in the War Cabinet were still in charge of Departments; but

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<sup>1</sup> See Appendix II (A) below.

<sup>2</sup> For the holders of these offices, see *loc. cit.*

<sup>3</sup> *Loc. cit.*

<sup>4</sup> See Appendix II (B) and (C) below.

<sup>5</sup> *The Gathering Storm* (1948), p. 320.

by the middle of 1941 both Ministers and War Cabinet were functioning differently from before. For in seeking to reconcile responsibility for policy with responsibility for action, the new Prime Minister had to hand an instrument which Lloyd George had lacked and which Chamberlain had not developed.

This instrument was the Cabinet committee system as it was known in 1939. Committees of Cabinet have of course long existed in one form or another, and are indeed probably endemic to a system of government in which the supreme organ is itself a committee. But they assumed a distinctive shape, in which they became a recognized feature of central government, between the two World Wars. The pressure of events, combined with Mr. Churchill's views, gave a marked impetus to this system after May, 1940. For it is in their use of the Cabinet Committees that the Churchillian War Cabinets differ from their predecessors, and form a variant upon, rather perhaps than a compromise between them. The machinery itself soon altered. By becoming Minister of Defence in May 1940, the Prime Minister at once brought the full weight of his office to bear, as hitherto it had not been brought fully to bear, on the military committees; while a thorough reorganization in 1940-41, hastened by criticism in Parliament and beyond, placed the more complex system of civil committees in the same kind of relation to the Cabinet as its military counterpart.<sup>1</sup> But these changes themselves reflected a greater change, in the way in which the machinery was regarded. It was the emphasis now laid upon the committee system, and the rôle which the Prime Minister assigned to it, that were to prove decisive. As in so many cases, the difference from earlier practice may be seen more easily in the results than in the forms themselves.

It was fundamental to the Prime Minister's purpose that the Committees should repeat at the appropriate levels the important feature of the War Cabinet, that combination of power to supervise and capacity to act which alone could bring results. As he remarked early in 1941, bodies set up purely to advise, without disposing of the full resources of the administrative machine and without responsibility for the results, were to be contrasted to, and not compared with, 'Committees of responsible Ministers or Heads of Departments.' The intention in fact was not to weaken the Departments by imposing upon them a nexus of purely advisory bodies, but rather to bring Departments and Committees together from the outset in the formulation of policy. Under proper control and with the appropriate membership, the Committees should provide at each level the link between the Departments and the Cabinet.

The machinery may be said to have answered the demand. Practice did not diverge excessively from theory, and managed to mitigate,

<sup>1</sup> See Appendix IV below.

where it could not avoid, the two obvious and complementary dangers to which the system was exposed: the confusion of Ministers' responsibilities to Parliament, and the confusion of authority within the executive. The detail of Government's relations with Parliament during the war is not our concern, because—and it is a remarkable tribute to the War Cabinet and the Prime Minister—they in fact proved satisfactory enough not to affect the conduct of strategy. There were complaints at different times, as is perhaps inevitable in war today, that the House of Commons was excluded from a reasonable knowledge of affairs, and that Ministers, including the Prime Minister, tended sometimes to be cavalier. But at least there was no abrogation of responsibility from the relevant Minister if Parliament wished to enforce it, although who the relevant Minister might be varied, as it must always vary, with administrative practice.<sup>1</sup> The co-ordinating Ministers in the War Cabinet found, as their predecessors had not found in the First World War, that their Parliamentary increased with their administrative duties, to an extent indeed that some authorities have held interfered unduly with their functions in Cabinet. But they did not thereby replace their Departmental colleagues, and the identification of responsibility was usually not too difficult.<sup>2</sup>

If this was so, it was because the Cabinet Committees did not encroach on the duties of the Departments. Their composition, and clear instructions from the War Cabinet, account for the fact. The practice may perhaps best be illustrated by the activities of the Cabinet secretariat which served the Committees, and whose steady growth reflected their own. Since the outbreak of war, the Secretary of the War Cabinet had presided over an organization embracing a military and a civil section, thus ensuring and symbolizing the unity of administration at the centre of affairs.<sup>3</sup> Until the end of 1943, each section was headed by a Deputy Secretary, of whom the military partner was General Ismay; thereafter the civil section was controlled by two Under-Secretaries. The military section served, the civil contained, the relevant central organs of planning and intelligence—on the military side the Joint Planning Staff, the Joint Intelligence Committee and the Joint Administrative Planning Staff, on the civil side the Economic Section and the Central Statistical Office. But while its duties were thus extensive, and steadily increased, the staff of the War Cabinet Offices continued to act on the principles first laid down for its predecessor in 1917: that it carried no executive responsibility, in no way encroached on the duties of the Departments, and where its activities comprehended their interests must normally inform and consult them fully at each stage. These traditions were maintained,

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<sup>1</sup> See the Rt. Hon. Sir John Anderson, *The Machinery of Government* (1946), pp. 12-13.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> See Appendix V, and Note to Appendix IV, below.

often in circumstances of some difficulty or temptation; and in that respect the fears of earlier critics, that the existence of a Cabinet secretariat would allow the Prime Minister or a group of Ministers unduly to extend their influence, proved unreal in the event. The activities of the War Cabinet staff grew, but not its authority; and one consequence of its elaboration was indeed the establishment after the war of a Ministry of Defence, which again reduced the size and the duties of the Cabinet Office to something approaching the pre-war standard.

Taken as a single entity, and seen from the point of view of other elements of Parliamentary government, we may therefore say that the War Cabinet system, as it developed during the war, met the demands of government without weakening unduly responsibility to Parliament. But if we examine the internal workings of the system, we find that under these demands the relations between its component parts were altering over the later part of the war. As the Committees which the Cabinet had established came increasingly to handle much of its business, they came also to occupy a new status in practice which affected the practice of the parent body. Cabinet government never functioned more vigorously than during these years of war; but the Cabinet itself, as a body, exercised less direct control of affairs than it had exercised in peace.

By the middle of the war, there were three main groups of Cabinet Committees, one in a sense subordinate to the other two: the military Committees, the civil Committees concerned with the 'home front' and economic affairs, and the Committees responsible for production. Their composition may be seen in Appendix IV. We may take the production Committees first, for their position illustrates certain features of the other two groups and of the system as a whole. In the autumn of 1943, the Minister of Production was chairman of two co-ordinating bodies, one a Ministerial Committee called the Minister of Production's Council, the other a Committee of officials called the Joint War Production Staff. The first of these organs, formed 'to consider any matters, in the field of production, of common interest to the members of the Council', and closely associated with the Cabinet Committees of supply, was in practice 'linked with the highest direction of economic policy through the Lord President'.<sup>1</sup> The second, formed 'to advise the Minister on changes in the programmes necessitated by strategic needs, to keep the Chiefs of Staff informed of the state of production, to discuss and reconcile demands for overseas supplies and to feed with information the Ministry's representative on

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<sup>1</sup> M. M. Postan, *British War Production* (1952), p. 143.

combined Anglo-American bodies',<sup>1</sup> was regarded as falling in the military sector,<sup>2</sup> responsible to the Minister of Defence. Thus, even after a separate Ministry of Production had taken over in 1941 the co-ordinating functions which had earlier lain with the civil and military Committees, those Committees still provided the necessary direction. It remained true that 'where supply problems were merely part of general economic policy, the Lord President's Committee . . . could be relied upon to lay down general principles . . . where supply infringed upon the main conduct of the war and on questions of military policy, the directive precepts came from the Defence Committee (Supply), or to be more exact, from the . . . Defence Minister.'<sup>3</sup>

For the Lord President's Committee and the Minister of Defence presided over the other two great sectors of the Committee system. It will be noticed at once that there was a difference between them. The military Committees were subordinate to a single Minister: the civil Committees, in their various aspects, to a Ministerial body. The reasons for this fundamental distinction were expounded by the Prime Minister in the early days of the Lord President's Committee. It would be impossible, in his view, to place a single Minister in charge of the civil sector, where 'the most difficult and dangerous political issues' were liable to arise from the number and complexity of interests involved. The problems of administration were 'far more complicated' than those in the military sector, and their relation to policy did not demand a similar concentration of power at the summit. To establish a single Minister in a position comparable to the Minister of Defence would therefore almost certainly 'cause endless friction'.

This view prevailed until the end of the war, and the Lord President's Committee retained much the same membership as that with which it started. From its foundation in June, 1940 its authority steadily increased; and in the summer of 1942, its functions were redefined in terms which held good for the next three years. It was then charged, first, with 'the general duty of handling, on behalf of the War Cabinet, all questions of domestic policy not specifically assigned to other Committees, and of concerting that of the Civil Committees of the War Cabinet'; secondly, with 'the specific duty of keeping continual watch over the Home Front questions and the general trend of our economic development'. In this second capacity, it collaborated closely with, and in fact was largely in charge of, the Economic Section of the War Cabinet Offices. But as the Committee gained effective supervision over the civil sector, its achievement inevitably was reflected in the status of the presiding Minister whose sole control it had

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<sup>1</sup> *Loc. cit.*, pp. 256-7.

<sup>2</sup> See Appendix IV below.

<sup>3</sup> Postan, *loc. cit.*, p. 143.

been created to avoid. While the Lord President, as Churchill had forecast, never occupied a position similar to that of the Minister of Defence, he came to be recognized as the senior minister in the civil sphere, the apex of the economic and home Committees, one of the three 'civil' Ministers on the Defence Committee and, from September, 1943 when Mr. Attlee became Lord President, the Deputy Prime Minister, chairman of the War Cabinet in the absence of the Prime Minister himself.

The terms of reference for the military Committees remained the same throughout the middle and later stages of the war; and the system may therefore be described in the words of the White Paper on 'The Organization for Joint Planning,' presented by the Prime Minister to Parliament in April, 1942.<sup>1</sup>

'The ultimate responsibility for the conduct of the war rests with the War Cabinet, the Chiefs of Staff being their professional advisers. The Prime Minister and Minister of Defence superintends on behalf of the War Cabinet, the work of the Chiefs of Staff Committee. In this matter he is assisted by the Defence Committee [whose composition in our period may be seen in Appendix IV below]. Other Ministers are invited to attend as necessary.'

But while this hierarchy was not formally disturbed, the positions of its members changed gradually between 1940 and 1945. Unlike its civil counterpart, the military system had its roots in an historical process, beginning with the establishment of the Committee of Imperial Defence in the early days of the century, and established in its essentials before the start of the Second World War. In 1939, indeed, 'the existence of a joint planning system, running up from the Service Departments to the Cabinet', seemed to Mr. Chamberlain to have 'changed the whole problem' of the nature of a War Cabinet.<sup>2</sup> The ease with which that system was adjusted from peace to war—the suspension of the Committee of Imperial Defence, and the absorption of its secretariat with that of the Cabinet into the secretariat of the War Cabinet—justifies his claim, and proved the soundness of the existing arrangements as far as they went. But the disappearance of the Committee of Imperial Defence posed one important question, which was not answered satisfactorily for some time. How was the War Cabinet now to control its committee of professional advisers? And if by an intervening committee, how was that to differ from the Committee of Imperial Defence?

Chamberlain's answer to the problem had been to retain the

<sup>1</sup> *Command 6351.*

<sup>2</sup> Keith Feiling, *The Life of Neville Chamberlain* (1947), p. 421.

separate Minister for the Co-ordination of Defence who had been created in 1936, and to place him in charge of a Ministerial Co-ordination Committee composed of himself and the Service Ministers, with the Chiefs of Staff as advisers. This arrangement, as outlined by the chairman, would save the War Cabinet a good deal of time, would provide a 'clearing-house' for the discussion of strategic ideas, and would ensure the maintenance of political control over military affairs. But it was not a success. The Minister for the Co-ordination of Defence has since stated that he thought himself 'a fifth wheel to the coach';<sup>1</sup> and the Committee soon found that on the one hand it was often duplicating work already done by the Chiefs of Staff, while on the other the War Cabinet itself often interfered with business. Its composition, moreover, did not enable it to deal adequately with problems of supply, which were found to be increasingly necessary to the consideration of strategy. Under the pressure of the Norwegian campaign, it accordingly moved towards the pattern that was soon to be formally adopted. The Prime Minister was obliged often to take the chair in person, and the Committee developed the practice of separating those matters affecting operations from those affecting supply, the latter in consultation with the Minister of Supply. But while these changes of procedure were beneficial, the machinery was ill designed to absorb them. It was finally agreed that the office of Minister for the Co-ordination of Defence should 'lapse'; but his disappearance did not mean the disappearance of the Committee, and it was plain that the problem of authority in the military sphere had still to be solved.

No one understood this better than the new Prime Minister; and he at once altered the machinery to the form it retained for the rest of the war. In place of a Minister for the Co-ordination of Defence and a Ministerial Co-ordination Committee, he substituted a Prime Minister who was himself Minister of Defence, and two Defence Committees, divided into Operations and Supply, which consisted of the relevant Ministers of the War Cabinet and of Cabinet rank, with the Chiefs of Staff in attendance.<sup>2</sup> This organization seemed likely to satisfy some at least of the difficulties which its predecessor had encountered. The combination of Prime Minister and Minister of Defence established the only possible direct link in the chain of responsibility from the Chiefs of Staff to the War Cabinet, removing 'the fifth wheel to the coach' and placing authority where alone it could lie; while the two Ministerial bodies, brought under the chairmanship of the Prime Minister, were properly equipped to deal with the separate but related issues affecting strategy and supply. Whatever the future might hold, the blueprint embodied the lessons of recent experience.

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<sup>1</sup> Admiral of the Fleet Lord Chatfield, *It Might Happen Again*, II (1947), p. 179.

<sup>2</sup> See Appendix IV below.

During the next eighteen months, the Defence Committees played an increasingly important part in the conduct of the war; and by the end of 1941, it could indeed be said that, together with other special bodies summoned on different occasions by the Prime Minister, the Defence Committee (Operations) had largely replaced the War Cabinet in the active direction of military affairs. The contrast with earlier practice was marked. Whereas in the spring of 1940 the distinction between the functions of War Cabinet and Ministerial Co-ordination Committee was ill defined and at times otiose, in February, 1942 the Secretary of the War Cabinet noted that

‘ . . . in recent months the War Cabinet as such has met on very few occasions to consider general policy and . . . nearly all its Meetings had been to dispose of particular operations, which have usually called for the attendance of a good many other Ministers.’

The period was indeed decisive for the War Cabinet. No longer occupying the foreground of the military scene, as the war went on it played a progressively smaller part in the formulation of strategy. I have already stated that, as far as I can see, the only occasion in the last two years of the war on which its opinion was courted on a strategic issue, was during the debate on the air Transportation Plan in the weeks preceding ‘Overlord.’<sup>1</sup> Otherwise, it was not consulted and seldom concerned, and, as a body, knew less and less of the military plans. In January 1944, for instance, the Chiefs of Staff informed the Prime Minister that they proposed to tell the War Cabinet of the design to land at Anzio, but ‘without, of course, mentioning dates’;<sup>2</sup> and when senior commanders visited London, it was with subordinate bodies that they discussed their hopes and their fears.<sup>3</sup> The War Cabinet was always retained (sometimes as a threat) as the last court of appeal,<sup>4</sup> and always exercised without question its general supervision of national policy. But its direct responsibility was apparent more in foreign and economic than in military affairs, which it left with increasing confidence to the Minister of Defence and the military Committees.

But the gradual disappearance of the War Cabinet from the strategic scene did not, after 1941, mean the corresponding elevation of the Defence Committees. The picture may be illustrated by the figures of their meetings and papers.

<sup>1</sup> See Volume V, p. 298.

<sup>2</sup> *Loc. cit.*, p. 220.

<sup>3</sup> See e.g., *loc. cit.*, pp. 262-3, 496-7; and p. 36 above.

<sup>4</sup> e.g. Volume V, pp. 350, 441.



Year	Defence Committee (Operations)		Defence Committee (Supply)		
	Meetings	Memoranda	Meetings	Memoranda	
1940	.. ..	52	—	18	106
1941	.. ..	76	41	15	157
1942	.. ..	20	33	7	106
1943	.. ..	14	24	8	40
1944	.. ..	10	13	8	38
1945 (to end of August)	.. ..	4	9	2	12

Nor were their proceedings of central importance in the last two years. The Defence Committee (Supply) discussed the programmes of aircraft and of landing ships, of the Fleet Train and of ammunition. But in no case was the discussion prolonged, and in most cases it served to review and approve policies already decided elsewhere. The Defence Committee (Operations) was concerned in 1943 mostly with the political and administrative aspects of the plans to counter attack by long-range rockets, and in 1944 with the Transportation Plan—a reflection, in this case, of the submission of the problem to the War Cabinet.<sup>1</sup> Otherwise, it dealt briefly in 1944 with the affairs of the clandestine Special Operations Executive and with miscellaneous matters, and in 1945 mainly with matters affecting the Pacific, which until the summer at least had already been dealt with in detail by other bodies.

The decline of the Defence Committee (Supply) may be explained by the reorganization in 1941 of the machinery for dealing with production and supply: that of the Defence Committee (Operations), by the Prime Minister's use of the Chiefs of Staff. For in fact the substitution of Defence Committees for a Ministerial Co-ordination Committee did not solve the problem of relating professional advice to political responsibility. The answer was found rather in the personal position of the Prime Minister, which dispensed with the need for regular meetings of a Ministerial body. Mr. Churchill himself, indeed, seemed in the later stages of the war to have wished to avoid, or to have forgotten, the existence of such a body; and when he sought Ministerial advice, summoned for the purpose a Staff Meeting or Staff Conference, consisting of the Chiefs of Staff with such Ministers as might be immediately concerned, and treated by the secretariat as an extraordinary meeting of the Chiefs of Staff's Committee.<sup>2</sup> It was usually Staff Conferences, and not the War Cabinet or the Defence Committee, which discussed, on specific occasions at irregular intervals, the problems of the Far East, of 'Overlord' *vis-à-vis* the Mediterranean, and of the shape of the advance into Germany; it was through

<sup>1</sup> See *loc. cit.*, p. 298.

<sup>2</sup> With whose papers the proceedings are numbered.

such meetings, and through attending other meetings of the Chiefs of Staff's Committee itself, that selected Ministers—usually of Defence Committee status—were kept in touch with events; and it is in such meetings, which in fact filled exactly the rôle for which the Defence Committee (Operations) had been created, but only on the occasions for which they were summoned and without the continuity which characterized a Committee, that the effect of Mr. Churchill's personal supremacy may best be observed. Given the current conditions—a Prime Minister of unchallenged capacity and authority, a highly developed system of military Committees culminating in the Chiefs of Staff, and its links with a similar system on the other side of the Atlantic<sup>1</sup>—the results are perhaps not surprising. But it should be appreciated that those results do not form an inevitable step in the evolution of Cabinet machinery, and that while they may have been fortunate they would not necessarily recur. The bones of the Cabinet system, on its military side, were described in the first two sentences of the White Paper of 1942:<sup>2</sup> the addition of Defence Committees, and the alternative of Staff Conferences, were variants within such a system which responded to particular situations. In the last month of the war, indeed, when Mr. Attlee was Prime Minister, there were signs that the Defence Committee was coming back into use.

But how, we may ask, did the combination of Churchill and the Chiefs of Staff work in practice? What were the strong and the weak points? What positions did the different partners occupy, and how in effect was strategy made? Did the Prime Minister normally mould military thought from above? Did the Chiefs of Staff usually take the initiative? Or did both, or either, rely extensively on the work of the experts in the sub-committees, by now highly elaborated?

The system met the demands because the personalities met the circumstances; and to assess its achievements we must try to assess the men who have been the principal actors in our tale.<sup>3</sup> We may take the Chiefs of Staff together, for their power derived from the fact that they formed a close team. Individually and as a body, they convey immediately an impression of strength, largely because they proved able to stand up to the Prime Minister when convinced that professionally they were in the right. The three senior members over the last two years of the war, Brooke, Portal and Cunningham, enjoyed high professional reputations, carried the confidence of their Services, and could not in the last resort be overruled by a single Minister, even the Prime Minister, on a professional matter. Admiral Cunningham

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<sup>1</sup> See section II below.

<sup>2</sup> See p. 322 above.

<sup>3</sup> See Appendix III (A) below.

succeeded Admiral Pound, who had faced with courage the most exacting and often disheartening years. Like his predecessor, and indeed like many sailors on combined committees, he tended to confine his contribution to matters affecting his Service. But he did not hesitate when required to support his colleagues on wider issues, and his unique experience of the Mediterranean, the confidence he inspired in the Americans, and the critical rôle of the Fleet in the British strategy for the Far East, ensured that naval opinion continued to be well represented on the Committee throughout his period of office. Of his two senior colleagues, whose qualities and background fitted them more easily for their task, Air Marshal Portal was widely respected not only for his professional knowledge, but for a calm and lucid judgment and, when he chose, formidable powers of argument. But the Chiefs of Staff were perhaps most fortunate in having for their chairman, in the last four years of the war, Field Marshal Brooke. Indeed, it may fairly be said that, partly because of the growing prominence of land operations in the British effort, and largely because of his own qualities, he normally represented the Committee in questions of grand strategy. Nor was he a spokesman who could be ignored or easily influenced. Possessing a clear and acute mind, great professional integrity, and—a useful attribute on occasions—a strong but controlled temper, his views always commanded the respect of the army, of his naval and air colleagues, and, even when the two men differed, of the Prime Minister. In so far as the Chiefs of Staff designed British strategy, that strategy bore his impress; and when they were required to act as a corrective to Mr. Churchill, it was he who usually bore, and resolutely, the brunt of what ensued.

Individually, therefore, the Chiefs of Staff could be formidable. By the climax of the war in Europe, they had become a formidable team. Possessing by then an unrivalled experience of the problems of a central military Committee, presenting on almost every occasion a single front to the world, and known above all not to intrigue, they exercised an influence, over several difficult years, such as no military Committee in Britain had exercised before. They preserved complete control over subordinate British commanders, enjoyed good relations with the Departments and with other Committees, and in one of the hardest wars in British history steadily increased their authority and reputation within the Government and in the country. Their conduct of business, indeed, embodied the ideal of the Committee's founders, to provide a body with 'an individual and collective responsibility for advising on defence policy as a whole, . . . constituting as it were a super-Chief of a War Staff in commission'.

These were great achievements. But it remains difficult to define what part the Chiefs of Staff played in the formulation of strategy. Perhaps, indeed, it is incorrect to ask about the Committee itself a

question which should rather be asked about its organization, and about the context in which the Committee worked. By the middle of the war, an extensive and elaborate system of military sub-committees had developed under the aegis of the Deputy-Secretary (Military) of the War Cabinet, who in the person of General Ismay was also a full member of the Chiefs of Staff's Committee. First, there were the committees which acted for the Chiefs of Staff in a particular capacity, or when they themselves were absent. In April 1940, the Service Vice-Chiefs of Staff had been combined to form a Vice-Chiefs of Staff's Committee,<sup>1</sup> designed to act for the Chiefs of Staff themselves whenever they, or any of them, were otherwise engaged, and, as it later developed, to deal as far as possible with routine matters of interest to their superiors. The Vice-Chiefs were themselves assisted by Assistant Chiefs of Staff, forming again their own Committee. All papers of these bodies were included in those of the Chiefs of Staff. Another Committee, which was re-established in 1945 after a lapse of almost five years, was that of the Deputy Chiefs of Staff, which dealt with scientific and technical matters affecting the three Services. It did not, however, deputize in general for the Chiefs of Staff.

Secondly, there were the sub-committees which worked for the Chiefs of Staff, the most important of which were composed, like the senior committee itself, of the appropriate officers from each Service: the Joint Planning Staff of the three Directors of Plans (with whom were associated when necessary representatives of Combined Operations, the Foreign Office, and the Ministers of War Transport and Production); the Joint Intelligence Committee of the three Directors of Intelligence under the chairmanship of a member of the Foreign Office, with representatives of the Ministry of Economic Warfare and the Security Services; the Principal Administrative Officers of the three administrative members of the Service Boards, with a senior civil servant; and the Joint Administrative Planning Staff of the three Directors of Administrative Planning, with representatives of appropriate Ministries when necessary. A nexus of other standing and *ad hoc* Committees, responsible or in some sense subordinate to the Chiefs of Staff, covered specific subjects—Research and Development, Technical, Chemical and Biological Warfare, Air, Home and Overseas Defence, the Defence of Bases, the Fire-Fighting Services, Armistice, and Post-Hostilities Planning.

The Staffs for planning and for intelligence had been set up by the Committee of Imperial Defence, on lines which were not materially altered when that body disappeared. The Joint Intelligence Committee was designed

<sup>1</sup> To collate and make reports to the Chiefs of Staff.

<sup>1</sup> See Appendix III (A) below.

2. To consider measures to improve the Intelligence organization of the country as a whole.

3. To draw up periodic reports on the enemy oil position.'

In the last capacity it reported to the Defence Committee (Operations) of the War Cabinet.

The Joint Planning Staff was responsible for the scrutiny of plans communicated to it by the Chiefs of Staff or by the Minister of Defence, and for initiating plans under the guidance of the Chiefs of Staff. It was specifically stated that its members 'will retain their present positions in and contacts with the three Service Departments'.

As the war progressed, a third facet was added to the system in the shape of administrative advice. In 1942, a committee of Principal Administrative Officers was formed,

'In appropriate cases to advise the Chiefs of Staff Committee on the administrative aspects of operational and strategical questions';

and in 1944, the Joint Planning Staff was provided with a Joint Administrative Planning Staff, instructed

'To advise the Joint Planning Staff on administrative matters for their reports to the Chiefs of Staff.

To report to the Principal Administrative Officers Committee in connection with administrative plans and on such other administrative questions as that Committee may remit to them.'

Each of the three main Staffs, of planning, intelligence and administrative planning, was of course subdivided. We need not examine the organization of the Joint Intelligence Committee and of the administrative bodies. But an account of the Joint Planning Staff is of interest, for it was the Joint Planners who were required to examine, and when possible to initiate, strategic designs for their superiors. Omitting the doubtful case of the Post-Hostilities Planning Staff, which was responsible to Ministers as well as to the Chiefs of Staff, and which the latter tended whenever possible to leave alone,<sup>1</sup> the Joint Planning Staff from 1940 contained three sections: the Strategic Planning Section (S), the Future Operational Planning Section (O), and the Executive Planning Section (E). Section (S) was designed

'To examine and report as directed by, and in conjunction with, the Directors of Plans, on the strategic matters relevant to the three Services and to initiate the examination of, and to report on, current and probable future strategical problems.'

It was 'also charged with the specific duty of keeping the general strategical situation constantly under review in order to forecast,

<sup>1</sup> See Volume V, p. 515.

so far as possible, what should be our most promising course of action; and of making recommendations to prepare or put into effect the necessary plans for such action'. Section (O) was instructed 'under the direction of the Directors of Plans to work out future operational plans and subsequently to keep them up to date'.<sup>1</sup> Section (E) was 'to plan all executive action necessary to put into effect operations which have been ordered . . .'

This system was undoubtedly an improvement on its predecessor before May 1940, and was further improved by the creation of an administrative planning staff. Its connexion with the Chiefs of Staff and with the theatres was in practice somewhat as follows. A theatre commander or committee of commanders might send a telegram to the Chiefs of Staff proposing an operation on a given scale. On its receipt, the Chiefs of Staff would normally instruct the Joint Planning Staff to examine and report. The Directors of Plans would then hand the proposals to the relevant sections of their organization—say in this case (S) in conjunction with (O). After considering the report from these sections, they would in turn report to the Chiefs of Staff, after which, as these volumes have shown, the discussion might assume one of several forms. While it was proceeding, the Chiefs of Staff would keep in touch with the commander or commanders concerned, and the final result would appear in an order or directive from themselves or from the Combined Chiefs of Staff.

The Joint Planning Staff in London, of course, had its connexions also with equivalent bodies elsewhere; and indeed one of the advantages of the system inaugurated by the Committee of Imperial Defence was the ease with which it could be extended during the war to the Alliance and to the theatres. Joint Planners, usually with administrative advisers, were established in every great Allied Command embracing the three Services, while the staff of the British Joint Staff Mission in Washington represented the British element on the Combined Staff Planners and the combined administrative bodies.<sup>2</sup> Close official, and often unofficial, relations existed between these organs, so that there was a constant and valuable exchange of information and views between them.

Such a system was bound to exercise considerable influence on the Chiefs of Staff's deliberations. It was perhaps the greater in view of their habits of work. For the Chiefs of Staff seem never to have devised a means of separating the consideration of strategic policy from the press of daily business. As the figures show, they met on most days of the week, usually in the morning at the War Cabinet Offices.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Wording of November 1944, which differs slightly from that used originally in 1940.

<sup>2</sup> See p. 338 below.

<sup>3</sup> These figures represent, for 1940-44 inclusive, the combined total of 'Operational' and ordinary meetings. But the former were sometimes simply part of the latter, minuted separately. There were no 'Operational' meetings in 1945.

1940	476 meetings
1941	494 meetings
1942	573 meetings
1943	472 meetings
1944	416 meetings
1945 (to end of August)	212 meetings

But despite—or perhaps because of—these frequent sessions, there were few occasions on which the Committee found itself free to discuss strategy as such. In the later stages of the war, when the future and the present became ever more closely intertwined, and when strategic plans depended so closely on the development of current operations, the distinction between the two functions was perhaps often unreal. But it was blurred equally in 1941/42, when consideration of the future was less encumbered by immediate commitments. The earlier practice is shown in other volumes of this series. We may illustrate the practice over the last two years of the war by three typical agenda, taken at random.

'(a) 4th November, 1943

1. Relation of 'Overlord' to the Mediterranean.
2. Control of aircraft based on Gibraltar.
3. Immediate requirements of Turkey.
4. Employment of ferry aircraft on the China route on bombing operations.
5. South-East Asia Command—future operations.
6. J.S.M. 1295 [a telegram from the Joint Staff Mission in Washington].
7. Allied Control Commission in Italy.
8. Disintegration [of German resistance]—participation of allied forces in the Mediterranean.
9. The effect of weather conditions on the operation of heavy bombers on Northern Italian airfields.
10. Future business.'

'(b) 10th July, 1944

1. 'Crossbow'.
2. Delivery of supplies to French Resistance Groups.
3. Policy towards Ethiopia.
4. Visit of Admiral Mountbatten to London.
5. Operations to assist 'Overlord'.
6. Bombing of Monaco.
7. Soviet supplies for Marshal Tito.
8. 'Overlord' and 'Anvil'—deception plans.
9. Strategy for the War against Japan—deployment of British forces in India and the Indian Ocean.
10. Employment of Italian prisoners of war by American forces in the United Kingdom.
11. Policy towards Turkey.'

(c) 14th March, 1945

1. Employment of British Pacific Fleet.
2. Classification of Swedish weather reports.
3. Indo-China—visit to London by General Hurley.
4. German will to resist.
5. Release of information to French air mission.
6. Relief for occupied Holland.
7. Future operations in North-West Europe.
8. Repatriation of British prisoners of war from Russia.
9. Seizure of German Embassies and Consulates in neutral countries.
10. Repatriation of long term prisoners of war.
11. Biological warfare.
12. Acceleration of production on new weapons.
13. Meeting with Canadian Joint Staff Mission.'

This was perhaps the price to be paid for the principle of combining advisory with executive responsibility, which neither the subdivision of business into operational and otherwise, nor the assistance of the Vice-Chiefs of Staff, seemed able to relieve. The result was to make the Chiefs of Staff, confronted by a crowded and often miscellaneous agenda, rely heavily on the Joint Planning Staff; and indeed, while the subdivision of that staff was in any case administratively desirable, it also reflected the inability of its superiors to subdivide their own business.

But it must also be remembered that the habits of the Chiefs of Staff did not develop in a vacuum, but in response to a system which included Mr. Churchill as Minister of Defence; and if their arrangements did not encourage speculation on strategy, that was at least partly because the stimulus came often from above. The Prime Minister exercised his influence in the military sphere in various ways: through meetings with and memoranda to the Chiefs of Staff, occasionally through direct contact with the Joint Planning Staff,<sup>1</sup> and through correspondence with commanders in the theatres. Of these methods, the consultations with the Chiefs of Staff were the most important, although this might not seem to have been the case from the number of formal meetings held. As the Prime Minister informed the House of Commons in 1942, he had presided at only 44 out of 462 sessions of the Committee in 1941;<sup>2</sup> and the proportion did not vary much over the following years, although on certain topics or in certain periods there might also be a sudden spate of extraordinary Staff Meetings. But these sessions brought into focus the constant contact and conversation between the Prime Minister and his professional advisers

<sup>1</sup> e.g., Volume V, p. 457.

<sup>2</sup> *Parliamentary Debates (Hansard)*, Vol. 378, col. 42. The discrepancy between the Prime Minister's figure of Chiefs of Staff's meetings for the year and that given on p. 331 above, is accounted for by the fact explained in note 3 to p. 330.





**PLATE VIII. THE PRIME MINISTER AND THE CHIEFS OF STAFF'S COMMITTEE**

*Left to right, standing: General Hollis (secretary), General Ismay.*

*Left to right, seated: Air Marshal Portal, Field Marshal Brooke, Mr. Churchill, Admiral Cunningham.*



which were so marked a feature of Mr. Churchill's Administration, and which in turn were assisted by the other contacts he fostered and enjoyed throughout the military sphere. In all these activities, the Prime Minister worked through the staff of the Minister of Defence under General Ismay.

Before we can consider Churchill's contribution, we must therefore consider that of his Chief of Staff; and indeed the more one examines the machinery of central control, the more important it appears. As Deputy Secretary (Military) of the War Cabinet, Ismay supervised the running of the military Committees and their relations with other interests; as a member of the Chiefs of Staff's Committee, he took his share of responsibility in its decisions, and geared the machine to its demands; as Chief of Staff to the Minister of Defence, he acted as the link between the machine, the Committee and the Minister, and as the link for the Committee with Washington and for the Prime Minister with allies and with commanders. The difficulties of combining such tasks—a combination probably essential to the system of which it formed a part—can easily be imagined. It is the highest tribute to General Ismay to say that he was able to perform all of them unimpaired until the end of the war. He and his two subordinates, Major-General R. M. Hollis and Brigadier E. I. C. Jacob, formed a team which supervised efficiently an elaborate and hard-pressed machine, established excellent relations with the rest of Government and with the theatres, and served impartially their Minister and the Chiefs of Staff. Ismay himself, in addition, became accepted as a patient, level-headed and scrupulously honest intermediary between the political and professional interests. In 1946, the Secretary of the U.S. Navy, Mr. James Forrestal, recorded on a visit to London that the General had told him of the British Government's plans for preserving the Chiefs of Staff's system. 'He thought that his [own] function was the most important function but that it should be carried out by a man relatively obscure and not desirous of power . . .'<sup>1</sup> It was a good description of Ismay's own conduct over the past five years; and if the 'Frocks' and 'Hats' of the First World War do not reappear in the vocabulary of the Second, a not inconsiderable part of the credit must be given to him.

Such was the system which, in a peculiarly personal sense, served the Prime Minister and Minister of Defence. For his massive and uneven genius dominated the later, as earlier, stages of the war. Indeed, his position in the machinery of government, unchallenged at first, in time became unchallengeable. These volumes have shown his intimate participation, and commanding rôle, in strategic discussions throughout the period; and particularly in the crowded and critical months surrounding D-day for 'Overlord', when great issues

<sup>1</sup> *The Forrestal Diaries*, p. 187.

in both hemispheres were simultaneously under debate, his power was exercised as fully and freely as in the summer of 1940. When he refused in May, 1944 to consider a course of action affecting the Far East 'either on my own behalf or on that of the War Cabinet',<sup>1</sup> he in fact described with accuracy the prevailing state of affairs. The War Cabinet and Defence Committee were in the background, the Prime Minister and the Chiefs of Staff conducted the war from day to day, and the Prime Minister dominated that combination.

The position may be illustrated by the Prime Minister's personal papers. For our ideas of the relations between organs of government derive largely from their documents. Certainly the contents and the arrangement of Mr. Churchill's files, compared with those of other authorities, convey a vivid impression of the nature and range of his control. Showing the subjects which engaged his attention, the information on which and the processes by which he acted, they give a picture of the war unlike any to be found elsewhere. It is difficult from the Chiefs of Staff's papers alone, and impossible from those of the War Cabinet, to form a clear view of the development of strategy. The Prime Minister's records, in contrast, provide at once a clear and a balanced picture—necessarily incomplete, but authoritative and remarkably comprehensive—of its evolution. Here, as nowhere else, the pattern emerges; here is the core of power, the unchallenged centre of affairs.

The reasons for Churchill's 'paramount position'<sup>2</sup> are not difficult to find. Within the Government, the Committee system favoured the authority of a masterful Prime Minister; and within the military Committees, the unique combination of his strategical grasp and his intimacy with the professional members—so different from, yet owing so much to, Lloyd George's experience—soon ensured that the mastery was achieved. But this dominance within the Government in turn drew inspiration and strength from Parliament and from the country, in which by 1944 Churchill occupied a position whose nearest equivalent is perhaps provided by the greatest days of Chatham. The circumstances in which he came to power, and the absence of obvious rivals in any of the Parties, offered him the chance of a political supremacy which his own talents thereafter assured; while his friendship with a powerful section of the Press, and the indefinable but important influence of the B.B.C., saved him from the most serious of those embarrassments which for instance Lloyd George had provoked and encountered. These fortunate circumstances allowed Churchill's competence in hard times to be fairly judged. By the climax of the war in Europe, the few threats and challenges to his authority had long been decisively defeated, and as the tide turned, and the

<sup>1</sup> See Volume V, p. 480.

<sup>2</sup> Hankey, *Government Control in War*, p. 17.

fruits of earlier preparations matured, serious criticism on military issues died away. There had been no vote of confidence on the conduct of the war in the House of Commons since early in 1942; and while there was uneasiness, and some opposition, on some aspects of foreign affairs—on British action in Greece in 1944, and, less vociferously expressed, on the agreements at Yalta in 1945—it foundered on the rock of a coalition Government united in support of a determined Prime Minister. Throughout the last two years, in fact, there was broad support for the conduct of the war from Parliament and from the Press. And this support itself reflected, as it helped to form, feeling in the country—the faith in a single man, who seemed to epitomize the British spirit, whose genius for war was accepted, and who gripped the imagination and compelled affection and belief. The mighty speeches in Parliament and over the wireless, the dramatic movements about the world and the hopes which they aroused, the feeling that a grand design and successful commanders were emerging under a skilled and confident leadership, had been the most important facts of life in Britain since the stirring days of 1940. And as the great offensives developed in different theatres, related apparently to a single and coherent plan, it seemed that the faith had not been misplaced, and that a great war Minister matched the needs, as he matched the mood, of the hour. ‘This close connection between energy of speech and vigour of action, which is much more common than the enemies of popular government are willing to suppose, found in him its most splendid exemplification. Without a moment of hesitation, without a twinge of diffidence, he set himself at the head of his countrymen; and they, placing their blood and treasure at his disposal, believing all that he asserted, paying all that he demanded, undertaking everything that he advised, followed him through an unbroken course of effort and victory with an enterprise and a resolution worthy of his own.’<sup>1</sup>

But while the Prime Minister thus dominated the British scene, we must also recognize the paradoxical fact that in the last two years of the war he seldom had his way on an important strategic decision. In January 1944, he personally made it possible to land at Anzio despite all of the difficulties;<sup>2</sup> and later he was behind the decision to postpone ‘Overlord’ from May to June.<sup>3</sup> But neither of these was a fundamental strategic issue, for both turned on the exploitation of a policy already agreed; and when such issues arose, Churchill usually failed to gain his object. He was defeated in the winter of 1943/44 on the course to be adopted in the eastern Mediterranean,<sup>4</sup> in the late

<sup>1</sup> Sir G. O. Trevelyan on Chatham, in *The Early History of Charles James Fox* (1880), p. 23.

<sup>2</sup> See Volume V, pp. 209-21.

<sup>3</sup> *Loc. cit.*, pp. 236-7, 240-1.

<sup>4</sup> *Loc. cit.*, Chapters II, IV, V.

spring and summer of 1944 on the decision to land in southern France,<sup>1</sup> and in the spring of 1945 on the shape of the advance through Germany.<sup>2</sup> Nor was he able to gain more than a stalemate with the Chiefs of Staff, in the first nine months of 1944, on the British policy for the Far East.<sup>3</sup> How, we may ask, can these facts be reconciled with the position we have described, and what may we deduce from their combination?

Much of course can be explained by the gradual change of balance within the Anglo-American Alliance. If it was the course of the battle in Italy which ended the Prime Minister's hopes for the eastern Mediterranean, the Americans also disapproved; and it was the Americans who insisted on landing in southern France, and who supported Eisenhower's plans for the final advance in Germany. But there is another factor to be considered, which had its effect on the British, as well as on the Allied, discussions. It was not only that the Prime Minister was apt to disagree, and now often ineffectually, with the Americans: by the autumn of 1943, the war itself had moved into a different stage, in which his particular contribution was inevitably less well defined than it had been earlier. From the German invasion of Russia in June 1941, and more clearly from the entry of the United States into the war at the end of that year, down to the invasion of Italy in August 1943, a choice of action in Europe remained open to the Allies, and one of various patterns could be accepted or could be imposed on events. In this difficult and formative period, Churchill fulfilled a function without which the military system of control might well have failed. He—and he in particular—could envisage a reasonable design for victory from the possibilities that offered, and by a mixture of flexibility and consistency could carry others with him at each step. He acted on the Chiefs of Staff at that time both as a stimulant and as a discipline, imposing on strategic thought a coherent and reasonable pattern which it would otherwise probably have lacked. But when events had moved farther, when the shape of the strategic offensive had been determined and its demands could be measured, this rôle lost some of its force. It was no longer a question of deciding where and how to attack, but of ensuring the necessary strategic conditions for the success of the design in Europe without destroying the foundations for later success in the Far East. The distinction, as it affected Churchill's position, must not of course be exaggerated. He was not solely responsible for strategy in the earlier period, he did not subsequently abandon the habits and functions of those years, and the very difficulty of isolating his contribution in the later stage may reflect the extent to which he had by then laid his impress on

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<sup>1</sup> *Loc. cit.*, Chapters VII, IX.

<sup>2</sup> See Chapter IV, section III above.

<sup>3</sup> See Volume V, Chapters XI, XII.

professional thought. The combination of Prime Minister and Chiefs of Staff drew strength from both elements, and it would be difficult, perhaps impossible, to define them precisely at any stage. But there was nevertheless a distinct if indefinable change between the former's influence on a period in which the connexion of future strategy with operational planning was indirect or partial, and on one in which it was immediate and constant. In the second period, inevitably, the professional element bulked large.

The Chiefs of Staff, moreover, may have drawn strength from the knowledge that in the last resort the Prime Minister would not move, on a purely military matter, without their consent. For it must be appreciated that Churchill in the Second World War, unlike Lloyd George in the First, was not prepared to adopt on military grounds alone a strategy that ran counter to the views of his military advisers. While his pressure on them, therefore, might be unremitting and prolonged, and indeed might often prove irresistible, it could nevertheless be resisted if they did not give way. In the event, such occasions were rare: when differences persisted, a compromise could usually be reached, at some stage, favourable to one or other of the parties. But it remained true that, in the final stage, the Prime Minister would aim, from his dominant position, to convert and not to dissociate himself from the Chiefs of Staff on a professional issue.

Such was Churchill's position. We need not try to assess his qualities and character. A whole literature exists on the subject, which these histories themselves have served to illuminate. The virtues were on the grand scale; and the defects were peculiarly those of the virtues. Thus, confidence could become dogmatism, resolution obstinacy, and exhortation—despite all protestations to the contrary—interference. Sometimes the genius could turn sour, as for instance in the long debate on Burma and the Pacific in 1944. But that there was genius no one could doubt, or that the flaws occurred in a glass of exceptional strength and brilliance. In the last analysis, the achievement is tremendous. A great war Minister may not necessarily secure great results for the future: despite better management from London perhaps than ever before, the war left Britain weaker in the world than any previous war for a long time. But he remains a great war Minister, not least because he may foresee, and may have to accept, such a result. 'This book . . . is not deeply concerned with the consequences. Its theme is the effort.'<sup>1</sup> We have only to imagine the absence of Churchill from the scene of that effort, to see the effect on the country, on the Government, on the Chiefs of Staff, and on the Alliance.

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<sup>1</sup> Hancock and Gowing, *The British War Economy*, p. 555.

(ii)

## The Western Alliance

For Churchill's position in Britain was paralleled, and materially aided, by his position in the Alliance. The British Commonwealth came to place much the same confidence in him as his own Government and countrymen; with the exiled politicians, and later in the liberated countries of Europe, he disposed of an influence approaching that of the Duke of Wellington after the Napoleonic Wars; he established perhaps the most reasonable *modus vivendi* possible for a British Minister with the Russians, the result of a certain wry respect and affection for himself as well as of the natural attention due to the views of a powerful Head of Government; and above all he symbolized, and did much to mould, the form of the British connexion with the United States. Churchill and Roosevelt stood in a real sense for the combination of their countries; for it was they who largely determined the machinery and the spirit of the Western Alliance.

The essential machinery was set up within a few months of Pearl Harbour. Four civilian bodies were responsible to the President and Prime Minister for 'assisting to muster the economic strength of the United Nations': the Combined Raw Materials Board, the Combined Shipping Adjustment Board, the Combined Production Resources Board, and the Combined Food Board. Canada, already associated with the United States in the allocation of production, became a member of the last two bodies. The British element on these Boards was provided first by the British Supply Council in North America and by Missions subordinate to it, and later also by separate Missions, such as the British Raw Materials, Shipping and Food Missions, which maintained a close connexion with the British Supply Council.

Military co-ordination was placed in the hands of the Combined Chiefs of Staff, of whom the heads of the British Missions in the Joint Staff Mission in Washington formed the British element when their Chiefs of Staff could not be present. The Joint Staff Mission also provided the British members of the various subordinate military organs, in association with the appropriate representatives of the Embassy in cases where membership was both civil and military.<sup>1</sup> Of these 'mixed' bodies, the most important was the semi-independent Combined Munitions Assignment Board, on which a representative of the British Minister of Production acted as head of the British element, itself provided partly by the British Supply Council in North America and partly by the Joint Staff Mission.

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<sup>1</sup>See Appendix VI below.



The Combined Chiefs of Staff, set up in January and established by the spring of 1942, soon acquired a position in the Anglo-American Alliance analogous to that held in London by the British Chiefs of Staff, from whom their organization took its form. Their assumption of power formed indeed a silent revolution in the recent history of Allied control in war. In 1914-18, and again in 1939-40, supreme control had been exercised by a political council; and when Britain and the United States, with other Powers affected in the Far East, became allies at the end of 1941, a political Pacific War Council was formed, in whose name the combined British and American Chiefs of Staff acted. But in practice the Chiefs of Staff managed its affairs during the two months of its effective life; and within the next few months they were granted full powers affecting all theatres of operations, and adjusted their interests in those theatres, in a form which endured almost unaltered until the end of the war.

Although this elevation of the military authorities excited no comment at the time, it was in fact a momentous event. Where formerly they had sat as advisers to or junior members of a political council, they now formed the working supreme military authority, with power to act and to issue orders throughout the military sphere.

'Under the direction of the heads of the United Nations', the Combined Chiefs of Staff recorded in 1942, 'the Combined Chiefs of Staff will collaborate in the formulation and execution of policies and plans concerning:

- (a) The strategic conduct of the war.
- (b) The broad program of war requirements based on approved strategic policy.
- (c) The allocation of munition resources based on strategic needs and the availability of means of transportation.
- (d) The requirements for overseas transportation for the fighting services of the United Nations, based on approved strategic priority.'

The course of the war was to prove the reality of this definition within Britain and the United States, and in the alliance which they formed with the British Commonwealth and with European forces.

Responsible directly to the President and Prime Minister in combination, the Combined Chiefs of Staff derived much, in their relations with their political superiors, from the relations between the American Chiefs of Staff and the President. For despite a strong traditional distrust of the military, despite the fact that the President exercised direct command of the Services as Commander-in-Chief, and despite a less highly organized system of joint co-operation and control than

the British had devised, the American Chiefs of Staff soon found themselves in practice less subject to supervision than their British colleagues. This development arose partly from the organization of government in the United States, and partly from personalities. For although, according to British ideas, the American military authorities had hitherto been related only loosely to Government policy, the structure which allowed this also allowed their easy introduction to the centre of affairs. The very fact that executive power resided so fully in the White House, enabled the White House to delegate that power as it chose. But the use made of the Joint Chiefs of Staff did not spring from that constitutional fact alone. If the President decided to work entirely through them in the military sphere, it was because both President and Joint Chiefs of Staff happened to be the men they were at the end of 1941. With another Chief Executive, and with other professional leaders, different machinery might have been used, or—more probably in view of the arguments for a Combined Chiefs of Staff's Committee—the same machinery might have been used in a different way.

The choice lay with the President; and it was often difficult to read the President's mind in such matters. He seemed to most of his associates to be a haphazard administrator, although his methods may in fact have formed a skilful adaptation of his personality to the complex political world which he understood so well. In military affairs, he was well content to leave detail—and detail was all-important—to the professionals. For although an exceptionally keen student of war for the American political tradition, Roosevelt had not been intimately concerned in its problems for much of his life, had not the feeling for them in his bones, and did not set excessive store by his strategical acumen. Compared with Churchill, therefore, he kept a loose hand on the reins; and, as could not be the case in Britain with its Cabinet system, this ministered to the power of the professional advisers. But that does not mean to say that Roosevelt would have adopted such an arrangement if the conditions had not seemed to him propitious. He left the Joint Chiefs of Staff an exceptionally free hand because he soon came to trust and to like them. The history of Cordell Hull, even the later history of Harry Hopkins, may bear witness to the fact that there was always an alternative.

The President's authority in the military sphere was expressed and exercised, as was typical of his methods, in various ways. The composition of the Joint Chiefs of Staff's Committee itself bore witness to it.<sup>1</sup> For the chairman from 1943, Admiral Leahy, occupied that position because he was Chief of Staff to the President in the latter's capacity as Commander-in-Chief of the United States Armed Forces. Leahy was the first officer to hold this appointment, in some ways

<sup>1</sup> See Appendix III (A) below.

analogous to, in others dissimilar from, Ismay's in London. Like Ismay, he was the personal representative of the Head of Government with the Chiefs of Staff, and their representative with him. But, unlike Ismay, he was not in charge of the Chiefs of Staff's secretariat, and did not enjoy close relations with the Staff. The positions of the two men, indeed, reflect the conditions in which they worked: Ismay deriving his significance from an administrative machine serving and linking the Minister and his professional advisers, Leahy from the fact that he represented the Chief Executive. But this difference gave rise to another. Ismay, secure in his administrative position, acted as the Prime Minister's link with all elements in the military sphere, and often as the spokesman of the military to the civil authorities. Leahy, although standing officially and personally close to the President, could not guarantee that he would be the President's only spokesman in military affairs. In fact, for much of the war he was not, and his influence was confined largely to the Joint Chiefs of Staff's Committee. It is therefore difficult to assess at all exactly his contribution to strategy. Possessing neither the unquestioned authority of Roosevelt's sole personal military representative, nor the authority which representation of a Service gave to his colleagues on the Committee, his rôle seems to have been that primarily of an insurance against other inconveniences: as a respectable professional adviser at the White House to forestall accusations against Harry Hopkins; and as an independent spokesman for the President to the Joint Chiefs of Staff, whose seniority solved what might have been an awkward problem of precedence for the other members or Services. In those rôles, and as a chairman of committee, he was apparently successful. When in the chair at full meetings of the Combined Chiefs of Staff, he brought a dry if circumscribed intelligence to bear upon the problems, and when necessary exercised a sometimes surprising restraint upon other members of the Committee.

The limits to Leahy's influence may have been determined partly by his personality.<sup>1</sup> But they reflect also certain features of the American constitutional scene, and of Mr. Roosevelt's habits of work. A military Chief of Staff might be useful to the President as a professional link with the military; but he was unlikely to be equally useful in the reverse capacity, for neither the military training nor the political system encouraged him to act as that general handyman and confidant whom the absence of Cabinet responsibility made almost inevitable at the White House. Other qualities, and a different background, were needed for such a rôle. At the time of Pearl Harbour, they were already known to exist in the person of Harry Hopkins.

It is thus symptomatic both of the political conditions and of

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<sup>1</sup> Fleet Admiral Leahy has published his diary for the war, under the title *I Was There* (1950).

Roosevelt's methods that an account of the Joint Chiefs of Staff's Committee must include reference to one who was not a member. But, as the President's 'other self', Harry Hopkins played a significant and most helpful part in its development. Hopkins was a remarkable man—probably the most remarkable of the instruments whom either Churchill or Roosevelt employed. Of a singularly quick and clear intelligence, allied to a provocative and ruthless political *expertise*, he devoted himself entirely to interpreting his master to all sections of the Government and the Alliance. The Joint Chiefs of Staff and the Services soon came to trust and appreciate him. Admiral Leahy, who shared his duties in the narrower professional sphere, and who was at first inclined to suspect him, was entirely converted; Admiral King has recorded his 'high regard of [Hopkins'] abilities and a constant appreciation' of his work;<sup>1</sup> and Mr. Stimson, the political head of the largest Service Department, recorded in his diary,<sup>2</sup> 'the more I think of it, the more I think it is a godsend that he should be at the White House.'

From the beginning of 1944, when his habitual ill-health at last removed him for some months from the centre of affairs, Hopkins lost much of his influence; and although his reputation, and a partial readmittance to the inner circle later in the year, combined to keep him in touch with policy thereafter, he was no longer what he had been. But the effects of his decline, though noticeable, were less serious than they might have been in the military sphere, for by that time the Joint Chiefs of Staff were themselves more firmly entrenched in the President's confidence. The reason for this lay largely in General Marshall, whom both the American and the British Chiefs of Staff came to regard as in practice *primus inter pares*. Marshall indeed towered over the military scene in Washington. 'Perhaps', Churchill was reported to have said after the war, 'he was the noblest Roman of them all'; and indeed he shared many of the qualities of Brutus. Like Brutus, he used arguments on occasion which did not meet the needs of the case; but, like Brutus, this was not for want of a comprehensive and honest appraisal of it. The British might temper their very real admiration of his qualities with the suspicion that sometimes—as in the discussions on the Mediterranean, and later in those on the shape of the advance into Germany—he did not see the point of their proposals. But they never denied that his own conclusions were the result of a dispassionate consideration of the arguments as he saw them. It was indeed the impression of strength and maturity—'that ability so characteristic of General Marshall to weigh calmly the conflicting factors in a problem and so reach a rock-like decision'<sup>3</sup>—which

<sup>1</sup> Ernest J. King and Walter Muir Whitehill, *Fleet Admiral King, A Naval Record* (N.Y., n.d. but 1952), p. 400, n. 16.

<sup>2</sup> Stimson and Bundy, *On Active Service in Peace and War*, p. 334.

<sup>3</sup> Eisenhower, *Crusade in Europe*, p. 185.

impressed his associates and subordinates, and which in the United States secured the ready acceptance of his policies. Possessing the entire confidence of the army, of the President, and—perhaps his greatest achievement—of Congress, he filled to the general satisfaction the exacting military and political duties required of the Chief of Staff of the U.S. Army in war. The rumour that he might disappear from Washington aroused intense emotion in 1943,<sup>1</sup> and even when that had died down, Roosevelt felt unable in the last resort to spare him. ‘I could not sleep at night’, he was reported then to have said, ‘with you out of the country’;<sup>2</sup> and when, in the weeks following the Yalta Conference, the President could no longer follow the detail of strategy, it was Marshall who often acted for him and composed many of the messages sent in his name.<sup>3</sup> Something of his position, and of the feeling in the Government and country, may be gained from Stimson’s valedictory remarks on leaving the War Department in the summer of 1945.<sup>4</sup> It was Marshall, he then stated, who built and trained the army, who estimated correctly the size it must eventually attain, and who chose the commanders; he, more than any other professional leader, who insisted on unity between the Services and between allies, an ideal for which he was always willing to sacrifice his own prestige; who, in the act of creating the largest military machine the United States had ever possessed, retained the traditional American distrust of militarism; and who, more than any one man, conceived the American strategy. ‘His views’, the Secretary concluded, ‘guided Mr. Roosevelt throughout.’

While Marshall stood in the widest sense for the American military effort, he was able to do so largely because of his firm alliance with Admiral King. For King was the forceful and unchallenged professional head of the navy in a country where relations between the two Services had long been acrimonious. Nor was he himself an easy man. Of considerable intelligence and experience, he was, as the British had cause to know, notoriously short of temper and difficult to handle. That he and Marshall, dissimilar in character and in outlook, should have combined, after an uneasy start, in the most successful partnership between the Services in American history, is a tribute to both. The combination proved formidable. King brought to the Joint Chiefs of Staff a clarity and sharpness in argument which would otherwise have been lacking; Marshall a firm and patient guidance, and a steady comprehension of the needs of competing interests. By the middle of the war, it was unthinkable that they could be divided, and

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<sup>1</sup> See Volume V. p. 119.

<sup>2</sup> *Loc. cit.*, p. 201.

<sup>3</sup> See p. 149 above.

<sup>4</sup> *On Active Service in Peace and War*, pp. 662-4.

no element in the Services or in the country would willingly have raised a challenge on ground common to both.

Marshall and King in conjunction were indeed effectively the Joint Chiefs of Staff; for Leahy's rôle was to explain rather than to formulate strategy, and General Arnold, the other member of the Committee, was fully conscious that, as Commanding General of the Army Air Forces, he was head of a Service which was itself a branch of the army. An able airman, he thought of himself as subordinate to Marshall on wider issues, contributed little to the larger decisions on strategy, and was not regarded in Washington or in London as on the same level as his greater partners.

Roosevelt's control of his military advisers was thus normally indirect. He did not change any of them in the course of the war, and in the last two years it is difficult to find many occasions on which he overruled or even disagreed with them. In December 1943, he decided reluctantly, in deference to British objections, to abandon the seaborne operation in the Bay of Bengal which he and the Joint Chiefs of Staff had recently promised the Chinese;<sup>1</sup> and in July 1944, he intervened in the discussions on the American strategy in the Pacific, on which the Joint Chiefs of Staff themselves had not yet come to a decision.<sup>2</sup> But in general American strategy after the First Quebec Conference emerged from the White House much as it had emerged from the Pentagon. Nor can it be said, as it can of Churchill, that the difficulty of identifying Roosevelt's personal contribution arose partly from the fact that his impress had already been stamped on his advisers' thought. He entered the process of planning at a later stage, and worked in a different way. But that does not mean to say that Roosevelt did not control the military hierarchy, and did not affect the strategic decisions. The Joint Chiefs of Staff were always well aware that they depended entirely on his support, both for their position within the Government and for the promulgation of their views within the Alliance. If they were accorded considerable freedom, so were other executive agencies over which Roosevelt maintained as indirect but as effective an ascendancy. His great experience in the Presidential office, his dominant personality, and his unique knowledge of interlocking interests which the very ambiguity of his administration fostered, ensured his control of national policy from a vantage that none other could enjoy. In a manner and in conditions very different from Churchill's, he exercised an equal national supremacy, which supported, and in turn was supported by, his contribution to the Alliance.

For Roosevelt, like Churchill, reached the summit of his authority on the international stage. 'Franklin Roosevelt and Winston Churchill',

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<sup>1</sup> See Volume V. pp. 191-2.

<sup>2</sup> See pp. 204-5 above.



PLATE IX. THE PRESIDENT AND HIS MILITARY ADVISERS  
*Left to right:* Admiral King, Admiral Leahy, Mr. Roosevelt, General Marshall.





Leahy has remarked,<sup>1</sup> ' . . . really ran the war.' 'On the whole', wrote Stimson,<sup>2</sup> 'he [Roosevelt] has been a superb war President—far more so than any other President of our history. His rôle has not at all been merely a negative one. He has pushed for decisions of sound strategy and carried them through against strong opposition from Churchill, for example, and others.' But this position in military affairs arose again not so much from Roosevelt's direct intervention in the plans, as from the authority he commanded by his achievements in a wider sphere. 'In Roosevelt's life and by his actions', Churchill stated after the war, 'he changed, he altered decisively and permanently, the social axis, the moral axis, of mankind by involving the New World inexorably and irrevocably in the fortunes of the old.'<sup>3</sup> Acting virtually as his own Foreign Minister, and controlling at the summit the complementary policies of production and allocation of material, the President was able to act as he did in military decisions by virtue of his position as arbiter in international affairs. He, and he alone, could decide in the last resort how far to press an American strategy already perhaps composed by his advisers, how to handle business at the highest level with the British and with the Russians, and what weight to attach to their opinions and to the many other factors—political, diplomatic and economic—affecting strategic choice. The plans might emanate from the Joint Chiefs of Staff. But their final acceptance as Allied policy depended, in a very real sense, on the President. If we turn to the American scene to understand the working of the Alliance, we must return to the Alliance to explain this important feature of the American scene.

The prominence accorded to the Combined Chiefs of Staff, and the fact that their headquarters were in Washington, laid a heavy responsibility on the representatives of the British Chiefs of Staff, who conducted business with the Joint Chiefs of Staff between the Allied conferences. The British Joint Staff Mission in Washington followed the pattern of the Chiefs of Staff's organization in London, modified where necessary to conform to American practice. From June, 1941 it consisted of four members: the head of the Joint Staff Mission, who from the end of that year until his death in November, 1944 was Field Marshal Dill and thereafter Field Marshal Wilson, and the heads of the three Service Missions in Washington, the British Admiralty Delegation, the British Army Staff and the R.A.F. Delegation.<sup>4</sup> A representative of the Chief of Combined Operations, and a senior

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<sup>1</sup> *I Was There*, p. 131.

<sup>2</sup> *On Active Service in Peace and War*, p. 666.

<sup>3</sup> 'The Times', 13th April, 1948.

<sup>4</sup> See Appendices III (A) and VI below.

member of the British Supply Council in North America, also attended meetings of interest to them. Individually, the four full members owed separate allegiances: the head of the Joint Staff Mission to the Minister of Defence, the heads of the Service Missions to the professional heads of their Services. Together, they acted as representatives of the British Chiefs of Staff's Committee—the head of the Mission with full access to all meetings of the Combined Chiefs of Staff, the heads of the Service Missions to those meetings which the British Chiefs of Staff could not attend—and disposed of an inter-Service secretariat modelled on the lines of the Chiefs of Staff's secretariat in London.

The members of the Joint Staff Mission soon established intimate relations with the Americans. From the foundation of the Combined Chiefs of Staff's Committee until the end of the war, there was an average of one Combined Chiefs of Staff's meeting a week; and of these, rather more than half were held in Washington between Allied conferences, and were attended by the members of the Joint Staff Mission for the British. Such regular consultation, and the close and varied contacts that went with it, fostered a growing confidence and sense of partnership between different members of the combined organization. In particular, and of great value to both Allies, a warm friendship sprang up between General Marshall and Field Marshal Dill. Dill indeed proved the ideal interpreter of British views and feelings to the Americans, and, in collaboration with Marshall, an excellent interpreter of American views and feelings to the British. On his death, Leahy went so far as to say that 'Dill was considered by the American Chiefs of Staff as practically irreplaceable'; and his achievement received a fitting memorial in his burial, at the Americans' request, in the Military Cemetery of the U.S. Army at Arlington.

Thus accepted as an integral part of the military scene in Washington, the Joint Staff Mission enjoyed experiences which illustrate and reflect the problems confronting the system of control by Combined Chiefs of Staff. It is interesting, and at first sight perhaps surprising, that in the last two years of the war the difficulties should steadily have increased. They were not, however, of the same kind throughout. For most of 1944, they were caused by the fact that the Combined Chiefs of Staff's organization was being used to the full in circumstances of some strain. The long debate on the Italian campaign and the landings in the south of France,<sup>1</sup> and the no less lengthy, if for Americans less important, debate on British policy in the Far East,<sup>2</sup> placed a heavy burden on Dill and his colleagues, exposing them to impatience and misunderstanding from both sides. In their opinion, indeed, only the Second Quebec Conference in September saved the Combined Chiefs of Staff from deadlock; and although this was avoided, and

<sup>1</sup> See Volume V, Chapters IV, V, VI, VII, IX.

<sup>2</sup> *Loc. cit.*, Chapters IV, V, XI, XII.

comparative harmony reigned in the autumn, the Joint Staff Mission viewed the future with misgivings. 'The end of 1944', its record reveals, 'was incomparably more gloomy than one had supposed possible, and the Joint Staff Mission were full of forebodings.'

Intermediaries in a dispute are likely to be sensitive, and it is improbable that either set of Chiefs of Staff took the situation at that time quite so seriously as did the Joint Staff Mission. But its forebodings were in fact justified, although not precisely for the reasons that it had adduced. Conditions in 1945 were no longer such as to cause the lengthy disagreements on strategy which had been a feature of 1944: the Joint Staff Mission's difficulty now was rather to gain a proper hearing for strategic discussion. For as the campaigns in Europe and in the Far East gathered momentum, the Americans became increasingly reluctant to consult the Combined Chiefs of Staff, and regarded the British attempts to intervene in what they now considered to be local strategy with increasing and ill concealed impatience. By the end of the war against Germany, they seemed anxious to limit the functions of the Committee as far as possible; and when in July, 1945 the British raised the possibility of its continuation after the war, they returned only unofficial benevolent replies. In the last six months of the war, when the pace of events was greater than ever before, the Combined Chiefs of Staff were indeed of less importance than at any time since their foundation.

The difficulties in 1944 and 1945 reflected, in their different ways, the weaknesses inherent in an organization with the virtues of the Combined Chiefs of Staff. Its greatest achievement was to fill a constitutional gap between the higher and lower orders of responsibility. For the Committee formed the link between Governments with very different constitutional problems, and it is indeed difficult to see how otherwise the two systems, one based on Cabinet responsibility and the other on the full responsibility of a President, could have combined so effectively to control military affairs. But the Combined Chiefs of Staff also solved the problem—the most difficult that allies in war have to face—of how to exercise control in the theatres of operations. Their authority replaced that of the Governments themselves with the Supreme Commanders, under whom in turn the forces and commanders of different nations could be combined. A firm and simple chain of responsibility was thus created which satisfied the complex and delicate demands of an alliance. As the Chiefs of Staff's system met the needs of each partner, so the Combined Chiefs of Staff proved the cement of the Alliance.

But the system which thus eased the difficulties of its superiors and subordinates, was itself subject to other difficulties as a result. For if the partners should disagree, a military committee is perhaps weaker than its political counterpart. If the disagreement arises from, or

includes, factors outside the strictly military sphere, the members' inevitable lack of competence in the political, diplomatic and economic spheres forces them to refer to another authority. But even in the military sphere itself they are liable to reach a deadlock, which can be resolved only by some higher authority. From its composition, therefore, any committee composed solely of military members must be of limited competence and may be weak; and these dangers are increased rather than diminished, the wider the powers assigned to it.

Difficulties of this nature must inevitably have attended a military committee placed in the position of the Combined Chiefs of Staff, whatever the nationalities of its members. The form they took in this case arose from the difference in background between the British and the Americans. This was reflected in the ways in which each regarded the organization. The British, while not at first particularly enthusiastic, soon came perforce to place their faith in the Combined Chiefs of Staff. As the weaker partner, they appreciated that, in the words of one of the British Chiefs of Staff, 'the combined organization . . . give[s] us the constitutional *right* to discuss our needs on equal terms', whatever the relative strengths of the two nations. The Americans, on the other hand, were not under the same stimulus in the last two years of the war to keep in touch with British intentions; and their attitude towards the Committee accordingly tended to reflect more precisely their views on the subject of its business.

Much of the disagreement and misunderstanding between the Western Allies arose from two facts. The first has been widely discussed. Attention has often been focused on the different attitudes of the British and American military authorities to the relation between diplomatic and military affairs. Some American writers, in reaction against the American tradition, have indeed claimed too much for the British system. But certainly it allowed for regular consultation between the diplomatic and military interests, whereas the American did not. The U.S. Army in particular, from Marshall downwards, ignored—and deliberately—the diplomatic future. 'The Americans', an American historian has written,<sup>1</sup> 'tended to separate military from political ends by an all but impassable barrier. Indeed, American generals often seemed to regard war as a game after which, when it had been won and lost, the players would disperse and go home.' The effects of such an attitude were particularly serious in Europe, whose problems were less well understood in Washington than those affecting the Far East, during the later stages of the war.

The other fundamental difference between American and British strategic thought arose from the contrast between the strength of the two nations. American policy took shape against a background of

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<sup>1</sup> William Hardy McNeill, *America, Britain and Russia: Their Co-operation and Conflict, 1941-6* (Royal Institute of International Affairs, 1953), p. 750.

plenty in men, materials and techniques, and of the confidence which such resources inspired: the British, aware always of the limits to their effort in a war across two hemispheres, as naturally envisaged their strategy in the appropriate terms. The two Allies, in fact, worked to entirely different margins, even when the demands on the Americans increased and when the British could count increasingly on the Americans' contribution. The results were to be seen, in varying forms, throughout the period of the strategic offensive.

There were also, of course, less important differences, of the kind which must affect any dealings between nations, and which assume the greater prominence the closer the association. They should not be overrated; but they existed, and at times could be significant. Administrative habits and ideas, customs and modes of thought, shaped the work of the Alliance and the attitudes of the partners to it. Their effects were sometimes the more noticeable from the possession of a common language, which each nation might use in a different way from the other. 'The barrier of a common speech' has often been cited, and with some reason, as an impediment to understanding between the English-speaking peoples. But perhaps more important was a habit of mind which was also common to both nations. It was not only that British and Americans sometimes meant different things by the same phrases, but that both were so slipshod in their use of language. Official documents on both sides of the Atlantic were often dismally obscure; and the obscurity too often reflects an obscurity of thought. Papers were verbose and imprecise because their arguments were imprecise; and the fact that neither side was obliged to translate into another tongue encouraged both to tolerate phrases which they might otherwise have had to define.

'With shabby equipment always deteriorating  
In the general mess of imprecision of feeling',

the authorities' frequent misuse of language to mask a frequent looseness of thought was a factor in the Second World War which should not be ignored.

Such difficulties help to explain the obstacles which the Combined Chiefs of Staff encountered to the full use of their organization. Other facts may explain its decline. Roosevelt's death, and the subsequent changes in the Presidential *entourage*, may have weakened, if only temporarily, British links with the White House. A growing attention to Congressional criticism, particularly once the war in Europe was over, may have influenced the behaviour of some senior American officers and officials. But there was also a strictly military reason for this military development. We have noted the effect of the Combined Chiefs of Staff's system on the Allied Commands: their success reacted in turn on the Combined Chiefs of Staff's system. For here again,

Americans and British differed in their conception of its purpose. British tradition and experience defined fairly closely the limits within which theatre commanders were free to move without reference to London. The Americans, on the other hand, preferred to delegate to the theatres powers as wide as they could be expected to control. The separation of diplomatic from military responsibility in Washington was paralleled by the concentration of interests within the Command, under a single Supreme Commander disposing of a highly developed and extensive organization. Each set of Chiefs of Staff therefore viewed the competence of the theatres in a somewhat different light. As long as strategy was in the making, the British view prevailed. But as the Allies began to close on Germany and on Japan, the Joint Chiefs of Staff became increasingly anxious to leave decisions on operations as far as possible to the men on the spot. By the spring of 1945, the conditions seemed favourable. The defeat of Germany had by then become entirely, and that of Japan increasingly, a matter of local strategy; and the diplomatic implications in Europe seemed irrelevant to authorities in Washington who were not accustomed to consider them. In the last months, the Joint Chiefs of Staff accordingly viewed with growing impatience their colleagues' efforts to refer decisions on operations to the Combined Chiefs of Staff; and as Washington's influence predominated, London's contribution declined rapidly in comparison with that of the Supreme Commanders. Both in Europe and in the Far East, the views of the theatres were decisive in the closing stages of the war.<sup>1</sup>

But it would be unreal to suggest that these differences between the partners produced an unsatisfactory alliance. On the contrary, it was remarkable for the success with which they were kept in check. When all is said and done, the Western Alliance formed the closest and most far-reaching combination of sovereign States in war, on the basis of equality, that has yet been seen. It was an outstanding example of opportunities grasped and of difficulties subdued. The opportunities were considerable. The course of the war presented the two nations with a vivid common danger, which at the same time did not so weaken or undermine either (as for instance the French had been undermined in 1917) that their alliance was threatened. The cause remained obvious, and the conditions favourable. The Governments moreover could count on strong links between their countries as well as on some differences. Indeed, the strength of the Alliance was shown by the surprise with which many on both sides, who had taken the former for granted, greeted the latter. Upon these foundations, it was possible for professional interests, military and civil, to join forces, to narrow the gaps between national positions, and often to form and defend a combined policy which overlapped purely national

<sup>1</sup> See, e.g., pp. 145, 160, 269-70 above.

distinctions. In the council and in the field, there were strong incentives to unity.

But when the national distinctions could not be ignored, the course of the Alliance proved that they could still be mitigated. For the two nations were perhaps most fortunate in the fact that effective control on both sides of the Atlantic was in the hands of sensible men, who handled the difficulties with moderation, and when necessary adjusted themselves to a result that favoured one side. The small group which has occupied our pages evolved a system of collaboration that withstood disappointment and defeat, and at least postponed the inevitable consequences of success. It is perhaps impossible to say how much this owed to Roosevelt and Churchill; but it is obvious at least that their influence should not be underestimated. Each secure at the summit of power, they formed a partnership which other authorities could not attack, and which impressed upon all levels of the Alliance the knowledge, and when necessary the warning, that military unity mattered above all else and that it knew no boundary of effort. Each might at times be suspect to the other nation: the British might at times deplore Roosevelt's diplomacy, the Americans might suspect, even when they did not reject, Churchill's strategic plans. But the suspicions and misunderstandings which the two men together removed, outweighed those which individually they might raise. Forming at the highest level their own professional interest, and thoroughly appreciating each other's problems and capacities, they surveyed the whole range of the Western Alliance from a vantage unique to themselves. It was a type of association which placed an immense burden upon Heads of Government; but in this case the Heads of Government were well equipped to shoulder burdens, and, each in his own way, to control the developments he had fostered. 'Nations touch at their summits.'<sup>1</sup> At the end of 1941, the material for an Anglo-American Alliance might have been considered to be full of promise; but the promise could scarcely have been so abundantly fulfilled, and the dangers so firmly held in check, without the restraint and the guidance of President Roosevelt and Mr. Churchill.

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## The Allied Commands

To examine the machinery of the various Allied Commands in detail would demand a separate treatise, and a knowledge of the domestic affairs of each which the author of this volume does not possess.

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<sup>1</sup> Walter Bagehot, *The English Constitution* (1867), p. 152.

They will be discussed here rather as an extension of the central system of control to the theatres, the executive arm of a particular organization for planning.

The Western Allies conducted operations through three broad types of Command. First, sea communications throughout the world were guarded by naval and air forces operating directly under the orders of the two Naval Departments, which themselves might (as in the Atlantic) share strategic control.<sup>1</sup> Although the Admiralty and the U.S. Navy Department reported when required to the Combined Chiefs of Staff, they were not immediately responsible to that Committee, and did not act on directives from it. Secondly, long-range air operations were controlled for the most part by various air authorities responsible to the Combined Chiefs of Staff. This control might, as in the Pacific until almost the end and in Europe for much of the time, be vested in Washington or London respectively; or, as in the Pacific for the last month in 1945 and in Europe for part of 1944, it might be vested in a local commander.

Thirdly, operations within theatres involving forces of all three Services were commanded by theatre commanders, again responsible to the Combined Chiefs of Staff. These great Allied Commands, all deriving distinctive features from, and in turn contributing to, the pattern at the centre, reflect indeed in certain ways the parent organization. As has been remarked earlier, one broad system covered them all for most of the last two years of the war. 'The period of the main Allied offensives was also the period of the Supreme Command.'<sup>2</sup> Whatever the differences between them, all shared two characteristics which distinguished them from other systems: all were controlled by a single commander, commanding—sometimes with reservations—the forces of all Services within his theatre; and all were responsible to the same Committee, through the British or American Chiefs of Staff or directly to the Combined Chiefs of Staff themselves.

But within this pattern, the Supreme Commands fell into two broad groups, distinguished from each other by two important differences. First, in Europe and in south-east Asia, both British and Americans had definite national interests which made them wish to participate in, or to follow closely, operational strategy, even when they did not dispose of comparable forces in a theatre. In the Pacific, on the other hand, the American strategic interest so predominated that other Governments never participated in the making of strategy, and other Allied forces—at first chiefly Australians and New Zealanders, later British as well—acted in purely subordinate capacities even when, as at first in the south-west Pacific, they were stronger than the Americans. Secondly, the nature of operations in Europe and in south-east Asia

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<sup>1</sup> See Appendix III (B) below.

<sup>2</sup> Volume V, p. 205. For the appointments, see Appendix III (B) below.



demanded the integration of the three Services on a basis of equality within each theatre, and from time to time a definition of the relations between a given theatre and naval and air activities beyond it. In the Pacific, by contrast, both Nimitz and MacArthur were concerned mainly with one Service—the former with the navy and its air, the latter with the army and its air—and neither had to consider, until near the end of the war, the impact on his operations of the long-range air operations against Japan, which until the summer of 1945 were the concern of a separate Command in the separate theatre of China. While therefore Nimitz and MacArthur, like the Supreme Commanders elsewhere, controlled the Allied forces of all Services within their theatres, control itself presented a rather different problem; so much so indeed, that when in April, 1945 the strategic plans began to demand a closer collaboration between the two Commands and a closer liaison with the long-range air operations, the Joint Chiefs of Staff did not appoint a single Supreme Commander for the assault on Japan, but—if only as a temporary measure—placed each of the existing theatre Commanders in charge of all forces of his own Service throughout the Pacific, and later gave to a new strategic air commander a roughly equal measure of control over his own forces.<sup>1</sup>

The relations between the theatre and other types of Command therefore differed broadly in Europe and south-east Asia on the one hand, and in the Pacific on the other. Such adjustments of responsibilities might naturally pose serious problems. An obvious potential source of friction lay in the position of the Chiefs of Staff's system in relation to that of older systems of authority. It is easy enough to envisage the difficulties that might have arisen, particularly in Britain where Ministerial responsibility to Parliament gave a particular form to the chain of responsibility from the Government to the commanders. But it was not the least remarkable feature of the 'silent revolution' at the centre,<sup>2</sup> that Departmental authority was in fact reconciled in almost every instance with the authority of a professional committee. This was perhaps particularly remarkable in the case of the navy; for the Admiralty, with its commitments for the maintenance of sea communications, was necessarily a jealous guardian of its rights over areas which included, but might not be contained by, the theatre Commands. It was not therefore surprising that the most explicit challenge to the principle of the Supreme Command should have come from a naval source.<sup>3</sup> Admiral Sir James Somerville, commanding the British Eastern Fleet over an area which included the waters of the South-East Asia Command, felt obliged, in his dealings with the Supreme

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<sup>1</sup> See Appendix III (B) below.

<sup>2</sup> See p. 339 above.

<sup>3</sup> See Volume V, p. 144; and p. 170 above.

Commander, to point out his independent responsibilities, and to define the occasions on which the Supreme Commander might exercise direct control over units of the Fleet. Admiral Mountbatten, while recognizing these responsibilities in certain circumstances, objected equally strenuously to the method in which they were put to him, since he was sensitive to a threat, as he thought, to his authority in conditions of some personal embarrassment, and so soon after the creation of a new Allied Command. The disagreement was resolved in the event with the arrival of a new naval Commander-in-Chief. But it pointed the dangers in a situation which elsewhere—in the Mediterranean and in north-west Europe—had been avoided by a more flexible attitude on the part of the commanders concerned. Definition in such a case was more likely to raise than to settle fundamental problems.

But the interest of this incident derives from the fact that it was an isolated case. The main complication for the theatre Commands arose not from the claims of another system of authority, but rather from those of other operations, by whatever system they were controlled, which affected but were not included entirely within their own. Indeed, the most awkward of such problems arose over air operations, which also lay directly within the purview of the Combined Chiefs of Staff. The connexion here might take one of several forms. In south-east Asia, the bulk of the transport aircraft was reserved immediately for an object—the supply of China—which was only the final object of other Allied forces, and which meanwhile detracted from the attainment of their immediate aims. In Europe, the operations of the strategic air forces had to be reassessed and adjusted on several occasions to those of the 'Overlord' Command. In the main operations against Japan, the long-range bombers in China formed for long a force separate from the other Allied forces whose measures they were coming increasingly to complement. These different strategic situations led to different solutions: control in some cases (Twentieth U.S. Army Air Force against Japan, 'Pointblank'<sup>1</sup> before February and after September, 1944) being vested in a central authority, national or Allied; in others ('Pointblank' between February and September 1944, the transport aircraft in south-east Asia), being vested in a local commander, with varying reservations by a central authority.

Such problems, of course, would affect the form of the theatre Command whether it was controlled by a committee of Commanders-in-Chief or by a Supreme Commander. But their impact upon it would be felt somewhat differently in either case. The pyramidal structure of the Supreme Command, culminating in a single commander, might provide for control—partial or complete—of a semi-independent force more easily than might a committee of equal

<sup>1</sup> See p. 8 above.

commanders. On the other hand, the extent to which such arrangements must thereafter form an integral part of the Supreme Command might complicate both its own structure and its relations with the Combined Chiefs of Staff, more than might the looser arrangements possible to a committee of Commanders-in-Chief. The Supreme Commander might provide the convenient and apposite point at which to reconcile semi-independent but correlated activities. But the process might place a severe strain on the Command itself.

In Europe and in south-east Asia, an agent of reconciliation lay to hand in the Deputy Supreme Commander, who also symbolized Allied unity by the fact that he was of the opposite nationality to his superior. But he was not in fact used as fully as he might have been. In the different theatres, he performed different, and not equally important, tasks. In the Mediterranean, the American Generals Devers and McNarney were concerned largely with administration and the affairs of the American forces; in north-west Europe, Air Chief Marshal Tedder concentrated mainly on one important aspect of the Command, the co-ordination of air operations; in south-east Asia, General Stilwell carried out a number of separate duties, including the supervision of air supply to China, each of which stood in a different relation to the Allied Command. Thus, while the Deputy Supreme Commanders were used in special capacities on different occasions within the theatres, as well as to act for the Supreme Commanders when required, they were not used at all regularly, despite their apparent convenience for the purpose, as agents for the Supreme Commanders in their relations with external authorities.

The Supreme Commander's control over all of the forces placed directly under his command was always exercised through Service Commanders-in-Chief. He might, or might not, act as one himself. General Eisenhower (except for the first few months in North Africa) and later Generals Wilson and Alexander in the Mediterranean, and Eisenhower at first in north-west Europe, were not personally in charge of operations. Later in north-west Europe, Eisenhower assumed direct control of operations by land, and, through his Deputy, a more direct control than at first of tactical air operations.<sup>1</sup> In south-east Asia, Admiral Mountbatten found himself obliged at different times to accept direct control of the General commanding on the northern front, and to co-ordinate his activities with those of the other fronts in Burma;<sup>2</sup> but this arrangement was a temporary exception to the general rule of the theatre, whereby the Supreme Commander was not in direct command of any forces. In the Pacific, on the other hand, the predominance of a single Service was reflected in the direct command which Admiral Nimitz and General

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<sup>1</sup> See Appendix III (B) below.

<sup>2</sup> See Volume V, pp. 146, 418; and p. 172 above.

MacArthur exercised over their naval and land forces respectively.

Whether or not they operated on two levels simultaneously, the Supreme Commanders in Europe and in the Pacific followed the central pattern of planning, by making use, as Supreme Commanders, of the Service staffs in combination. An exception occurred for a time in south-east Asia, where Mountbatten on his arrival set up a Supreme Commander's combined staff separate from the staffs of the Commanders-in-Chief, designed to produce plans and assessments which they were required only to assist or to criticize. This arrangement, on which Mountbatten himself was at first enthusiastic, was devised to meet several difficulties thought to apply with particular force to his Command. The separate nature of its various fronts and operations in 1943/44 made it almost impossible for the Commanders-in-Chiefs and their staffs all to live in the same place; planning for the campaign in Burma and for the operations after its close were of an entirely different nature from each other, but had still to be carried on simultaneously; and Mountbatten's mission in the autumn of 1943, to stimulate new thought and higher spirits within a jaded Command, seemed to him to justify, and perhaps to demand, some such measure. But despite the arguments in its favour, the system was not a success. The existence of separate staffs serving separate masters was soon found to increase rather than diminish the inevitable difficulties which had led to its adoption, and tended further to confuse the already complicated discussions on British strategy in the Far East which lasted for so long between the theatre, London and Washington.<sup>1</sup> The arrangement was therefore abandoned after a year, with some regret by Mountbatten but with unaffected joy by the Commanders-in-Chief.

The merits of the system of the Supreme Command have sometimes been debated, particularly vis-à-vis those of a committee of equal Commanders-in-Chief. As we have seen, Supreme Commands might in fact differ significantly from each other, according to the conditions. But a brief examination of those conditions may perhaps suggest at least some of the reasons for the success of the organization which was common to all.

For the system of the Supreme Command was undoubtedly successful, whatever the merits of an alternative. It stood a variety of severe tests remarkably well. But it was by no means an inevitable outcome of modern war. Paradoxically enough, indeed, it was in the Pacific, where large conjunct seaborne operations first produced a version of the Supreme Command, that it was later abandoned at a time when elsewhere the system had become the undisputed rule. Both

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<sup>1</sup> See, e.g., Volume V, pp. 436-7, and Appendix VIII to that volume.

developments may be explained by the circumstances of the case. On the outbreak of war in the Far East, the Allies set up the first Allied Command (the A.B.D.A. Command), comprising the forces of all opponents of Japan under the control of General Wavell. The organization soon disappeared in the general collapse; but it was not without its influence either on the development of the Combined Chiefs of Staff's system,<sup>1</sup> or on that of the subsequent Pacific Commands. When however these arose in 1942, they followed a somewhat different pattern in response to new opportunities. For co-operation between land, sea and air forces in the Pacific was at once complicated and simple—complicated because of the immense sea distances involved, simple because the activities of all Services were focused on a series of island strongholds whose circumvention and assault engaged all aspects of their attention. There was no question, until much later in the campaigns, of maintaining simultaneously an air campaign against Japan with other air operations in support of the conjunct assaults; nor were naval responsibilities sharply distinguished from conjunct responsibilities, over an area in which the boundaries of the Commands followed initially maritime considerations. There were thus both the need for and the conditions to satisfy integrated Commands under single commanders. Such an organization moreover solved the awkward problem, hitherto something of a nightmare to Washington, of precedence between the Services. When the army and the navy cherished a fierce traditional jealousy of each other, a Supreme Commander controlling equally the forces of both Services within his theatre offered a convenient method of satisfying rival claims.

The system, developed primarily to meet American needs, also solved those of the Alliance in the Pacific. The short-lived A.B.D.A. Command had shown the possibilities inherent in the Supreme Command when confronted by the claims of several Governments; and the same powers that had been entrusted to Wavell were at once confided, by Australia and New Zealand, to the commanders in the South-West and South Pacific Areas respectively.<sup>2</sup> Under their own national commanders, the forces of all Services of both nations were absorbed entirely into the structure of the Commands, while their Governments accepted the right of the Joint Chiefs of Staff in Washington to decide the Allied strategy against Japan.

But the circumstances which had moulded the shape of the two great Commands in the Pacific led to their dissolution as the Americans approached Japan herself. The need to combine directly the activities of the two theatres, and to fit into the pattern the large strategic air force which was now able to operate from bases in the Pacific, raised

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<sup>1</sup> See *loc. cit.*, p. 18.

<sup>2</sup> See Appendix III (B) below.

problems which the Joint Chiefs of Staff could not at once resolve. The old rivalry between the Services, evaded hitherto by the obvious predominance of one or other in the separate Commands, made it difficult to choose a single Supreme Commander from Nimitz and MacArthur; while the status of the long-range bombing forces, whose operations had so far been controlled directly from Washington, demanded a further revision of command if they were to be regarded as part of a new theatre. After much discussion, therefore, the theatres were replaced by independent land, sea and air commands for the whole Pacific—the last still under the strategic direction of Washington—whose commanders in fact formed a committee of Commanders-in-Chief.<sup>1</sup> And while it is possible, indeed probable, that this solution would not have endured for long—for the proponents of a Supreme Command over all operations against the Japanese Home Islands were important and still vocal in Washington—it is interesting that the Americans, who in 1943 had advocated the extension of the system of the Supreme Command to embrace the whole of Europe,<sup>2</sup> should have abandoned that system, at least temporarily, when first confronted by the opportunity for such an extension in the war against Japan.

Operations in Europe and in south-east Asia posed different problems from those in the Pacific. But the success of the Supreme Commanders in that ocean led the Americans, and many British, to favour the adoption of a similar organization when the time came for offensive action elsewhere. In the event, the demands both of the campaigns and of the Alliance developed it into something more complicated and more extensive than the earlier pattern. The necessity on the one hand to combine Allied forces of all Services on a basis of Allied and Service equality, and on the other to reconcile Allied interests within a theatre (neither of which applied in the same degree to the Pacific), meant that many and diverse lines of responsibility converged upon the Supreme Commander himself. Both his military and his civil organizations were more complex than in the Pacific, and in north-west Europe in particular he found himself in close and constant touch with a whole system of government in London. It is perhaps not a gross oversimplification to say that while in the Pacific it was the concentration of activities that called for a single commander, in Europe, and to a lesser extent in south-east Asia, it was their variety.

In these complicated circumstances, the Supreme Command may be held to have enjoyed several advantages over a committee of equal Commanders-in-Chief. Could such a committee, it may be asked, deal with two great and several lesser Governments? Could it establish satisfactory relations with other Commands, such as those of the strategic air forces, whose activities were closely but not always

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<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>2</sup> See Volume V, pp. 168-9.

directly related to its own? Could it supervise effectively the diplomatic and administrative problems of a great campaign? Could it indeed see the campaign itself with a single eye, and judge the inevitable controversial issues between the Services? In the last resort, could a committee, whose members disagreed, have taken the decision to invade north-west France which a Supreme Commander took on 5th June, 1944?

The Supreme Command, in fact, might seem to have offered the most satisfactory, because the simplest, solution to such problems. But the Committee system could claim some positive advantages of its own, apart from the possible disadvantages attaching to the alternative. In the first place, as Admiral Cunningham—who had considerable experience of both systems—has pointed out,<sup>1</sup> the existence of a Supreme Commander may allow the respective Commanders-in-Chief of the Services to drift apart from each other. 'Without one they have to get together, and if they settle and loyally strive after the same object they are bound to get agreement.' Since commanders must work in any case by committee, there is in fact much to be said for placing the responsibility fairly on a committee. This argument perhaps applies more easily to a committee of national than of Allied Commanders-in-Chief, whose co-operation is likely to be complicated at times by the divergent interests of Allied Governments. But it should not be underestimated in any circumstances, particularly if the Supreme Commander cannot persuade the Commanders-in-Chief easily to settle their differences.

A committee, moreover, is perhaps less likely than a single commander to find itself involved in precise and complicated arrangements with other Commands. Where the system is both extensive and monolithic, the relations between its parts and with other organizations tend to be defined more accurately and even pedantically than would otherwise be the case. A committee may not appear so concentrated and powerful an agent as a Supreme Commander; for that very reason, it may prove more flexible in its dealings with other agents.

Thirdly, a committee provides the natural machinery for co-operation between Services, on which a single commander has to be artificially imposed. He is indeed, in this sense, an excrescence on a natural form; for while a committee can function without him, he cannot function without a committee. For this reason, too, a committee of Commanders-in-Chief can easily be called into operation at short notice, for the Commanders-in-Chief are already there.

The merits of the two systems of command, although of general application, can perhaps be argued more exactly for each theatre in the light of its separate conditions. But whatever those conditions may be, there remain two essentials for the success of the Supreme

<sup>1</sup> *A Sailor's Odyssey* (1951), p. 402.

Command. First, the Supreme Commander himself must be able to shoulder the exceptionally heavy responsibilities which the system places upon him. It is no doubt always possible to find the right man for the job, given time and error; but the Western Allies in the Second World War were exceptionally fortunate in that none of the Supreme Commanders was a failure. This indeed was surprising, for high command in war is a hard test, and perhaps the harder in some of these cases because the problems in their combination were unfamiliar to military men. The concentration of so many varied activities within his Command meant that the commander, while still required—to an extent indeed that has sometimes been underrated—to conduct or to take decisions on operations, was also required to take a more direct interest than usual in the diplomatic and administrative repercussions of his campaign. He was now largely a co-ordinator, of Service interests and, in a restricted field, of military and Governmental interests. The archetype of this sort of commander was General Eisenhower, whose handling of the forces and Governments of two great, and several lesser, Allies was unrivalled in its blend of simplicity and skill; but all Supreme Commanders had to perform the same type of duties, which differed from those of the commander in the past in the proportion of the activities outside his own Service and nation which he was now called on to judge and control.

The task indeed called forth a particular combination of qualities, whose possession may well be essential to its successful performance. Lord Wavell has written of the attributes of a general in war, that he should be robust, have physical and moral courage, 'a touch of the gambler', and good judgment—the knowledge of what is and what is not possible.<sup>1</sup> The Supreme Commander needs all of these qualities, some in greater measure than earlier commanders. He must have exceptional moral courage, optimism and fortitude; experience and ability in the higher reaches of administration; and, as a judge of different interests, imagination combined with knowledge. And he must possess a further attribute, which applies particularly strongly because he is supreme. He must be a fortunate commander, in the sense that he commands fortune. This quality, which Napoleon put first in his reports on the generals in the Italian Campaign, is difficult to describe or assess; but it is potent none the less. It is not directly the product of military ability, although military ability is necessary for its enjoyment: as an illustration, we may say that Eisenhower and Mountbatten were fortunate commanders, while Wavell himself, with all his virtues, was not. Where so much responsibility was concentrated in one man, the effect of this quality should not be underestimated. Committees, on the other hand, neither share nor need it.

But secondly, and as important as the qualities of the commander,

<sup>1</sup> Field Marshal Earl Wavell, *Soldiers and Soldiering*. (n.d., but 1953), pp. 15-24.



the success of the Supreme Command must depend heavily upon the success of the system at the centre. The Commands in the Pacific derived their authority and their strength from the Joint Chiefs of Staff, working with Allied approval: the Commands in Europe and in south-east Asia, from the Combined Chiefs of Staff. If either body had failed to settle its disputes, or to give timely instructions to the Supreme Commanders, the latter would have been rendered impotent—perhaps more easily, because of the concentration of power, than a committee of Commanders-in-Chief. Conversely, if the Supreme Commander had been allowed to usurp some of the functions of the central authority,<sup>1</sup> the ensuing confusion could have ended only by weakening both. The system of the Supreme Command worked well very largely because the Combined Chiefs of Staff's system worked well. Had the latter been less successful, or the limits between the two levels of authority improperly defined, the former might have proved a peculiarly vulnerable link in the chain. As we look at the Allied theatres of operations from 1943 to 1945, we may conclude that success bore witness not only to the ability of the commanders, but to the unusual strength, in its inevitable trials, of the Allied machinery for the central direction of the war.

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<sup>1</sup> See, e.g., Volume V, pp. 170-2, 238; and pp. 97, 132-3 above.



# Appendices

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## APPENDIX I

### Code Names Mentioned in the Text

Argonaut .	The Malta and Yalta Conferences, January-February 1945
Bamboo .	Plans for operations against the Kra Isthmus in the area Hastings Harbour/Victoria Point
Capital .	Plan for advance into central Burma from the north
✓Clinch .	Plan for operations against the Kra Isthmus in the area Mergui/Tavoy
Coronet .	Plan to invade Honshu
Crossbow .	German preparations for, and Allied measures against, attack by rockets and pilotless aircraft
Dracula .	Plan to capture Rangoon from the sea
Eureka .	The Teheran Conference, November 1943
Mailfist .	Plan to capture Singapore
Manna .	Plan for the occupation of Greece on the Germans' withdrawal
✓Noah's Ark	Plan to attack a German withdrawal in Greece
Octagon .	The Second Quebec Conference, September 1944
Olympic .	Plan to invade Kyushu
Overlord .	The liberation of north-west Europe
Pointblank .	Bombing of Germany
Python .	Scheme to repatriate men and women of the British armed forces from theatres oversea
Quadrant .	The First Quebec Conference, August 1943
✓Ratweek .	Plan to attack a German withdrawal in Yugoslavia
Roger .	Plan for a seaborne attack on Phuket Island
Romulus .	Plan to clear Arakan as far as Akyab
Sextant .	The Cairo Conference, November-December 1943
Talon .	Plan for a seaborne attack on Akyab
Terminal .	The Potsdam Conference, July 1945
✓Tiger Force	Force of British long-range bombers in the Pacific
✓Tolstoy .	Meeting between the Prime Minister and Marshal Stalin in Moscow, October 1944
Zipper .	Plan for operations against the area Port Swettenham / Port Dickson

## APPENDIX II

### Ministerial Appointments

(A) October, 1944—May, 1945

*(Members of the War Cabinet are in italics)*

Prime Minister and First Lord of the Treasury, Minister of Defence	}	<i>Mr. Winston S. Churchill</i>
Admiralty, First Lord of the Admiralty, First Lord of the Agriculture and Fisheries, Minister of . . . . .	.	Mr. A. V. Alexander
Air, Secretary of State for . . . . .	.	Mr. R. S. Hudson
Aircraft Production, Minister of . . . . .	.	Sir Archibald Sinclair
Burma, Secretary of State for . . . . .	.	Sir Stafford Cripps
Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster . . . . .	.	Mr. L. S. Amery
Chancellor of the Exchequer . . . . .	.	Mr. Ernest Brown
Civil Aviation, Minister of . . . . .	.	<i>Sir John Anderson</i>
		Viscount Swinton (appointed 9th October, 1944)
Colonies, Secretary of State for the Dominion Affairs, Secretary of State for . . . . .	.	Colonel Oliver Stanley
Economic Warfare, Minister of . . . . .	.	Viscount Cranborne
Education, Minister of . . . . .	.	The Earl of Selborne
Food, Minister of . . . . .	.	Mr. R. A. Butler
Foreign Affairs, Secretary of State for . . . . .	.	Colonel J. J. Llewellyn
Fuel and Power, Minister of . . . . .	.	<i>Mr. Anthony Eden</i>
Health, Minister of . . . . .	.	Major G. Lloyd George
Home Department, Secretary of State for the . . . . .	.	Mr. H. U. Willink
India, Secretary of State for . . . . .	.	<i>Mr. Herbert Morrison</i>
Information, Minister of . . . . .	.	Mr. L. S. Amery
Labour and National Service, Minister of . . . . .	.	Mr. Brendan Bracken
Law Officers:		<i>Mr. Ernest Bevin</i>
Attorney-General . . . . .	.	Sir Donald Somervell
Lord Advocate . . . . .	.	Mr. J. S. C. Reid
Solicitor-General . . . . .	.	Sir David Maxwell Fyfe
Solicitor-General for Scotland . . . . .	.	Sir David King Murray
Lord Chancellor . . . . .	.	Viscount Simon
Lord President of the Council . . . . .	.	<i>Mr. Clement Attlee</i>
Lord Privy Seal . . . . .	.	Lord Beaverbrook

Minister of State . . . . .	Mr. R. K. Law
Minister without Portfolio (until 18th November, 1944)	} Sir William Jowitt
Minister of National Insurance	
Paymaster-General . . . . .	Lord Cherwell
Pensions, Minister of . . . . .	Sir Walter Womersley
Postmaster-General . . . . .	Captain H. F. C. Crookshank
Production, Minister of . . . . .	<i>Mr. Oliver Lyttelton</i>
Reconstruction, Minister of . . . . .	<i>Lord Woolton</i>
Scotland, Secretary of State for . . . . .	Mr. Thomas Johnston
Supply, Minister of . . . . .	Sir Andrew Duncan
Town and Country Planning, Minister of . . . . .	Mr. W. S. Morrison
Trade, President of the Board of . . . . .	Dr. Hugh Dalton
War, Secretary of State for . . . . .	Sir James Grigg
War Transport, Minister of . . . . .	Lord Leathers
Works, Minister of . . . . .	Lord Portal
	(until 22nd November, 1944)
	Mr. Duncan Sandys

## MINISTERS OVERSEAS:

Middle East, Minister of State Resident in the . . . . .	Lord Moyne (until 22nd November, 1944) Sir Edward Grigg
Washington, Minister Resident for Supply in . . . . .	Mr. Ben Smith
Allied Force Headquarters, Mediterranean Command, Minister Resident at . . . . .	Mr. Harold Macmillan
West Africa, Minister Resident in	Viscount Swinton (until 22nd November, 1944) Captain H. H. Balfour
House of Lords, Leader of the . . . . .	Viscount Cranborne
House of Commons, Leader of the	<i>Mr. Anthony Eden</i>

## (B) May—July, 1945

*(Members of the Cabinet are in italics)*

Prime Minister and First Lord of the Treasury, Minister of Defence	} <i>Mr. Winston S. Churchill</i>
Admiralty, First Lord of the	
Agriculture and Fisheries, Minister of . . . . .	<i>Mr. Brendan Bracken</i>
Air, Secretary of State for . . . . .	<i>Mr. R. S. Hudson</i>
Aircraft Production, Minister of . . . . .	<i>Mr. Harold Macmillan</i>
	Mr. Ernest Brown

Burma, Secretary of State for . . .	<i>Mr. L. S. Amery</i>
Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster . . . . .	Sir Arthur Salter
Chancellor of the Exchequer . . . . .	<i>Sir John Anderson</i>
Civil Aviation, Minister of . . . . .	Viscount Swinton
Colonies, Secretary of State for the Dominion Affairs, Secretary of State for . . . . .	<i>Colonel Oliver Stanley</i>
Education, Minister of . . . . .	<i>Viscount Cranborne</i>
Food, Minister of . . . . .	Mr. R. K. Law
Foreign Affairs, Secretary of State for . . . . .	Colonel J. J. Llewellyn
Fuel and Power, Minister of . . . . .	<i>Mr. Anthony Eden</i>
Health, Minister of . . . . .	Major G. Lloyd George
Home Department, Secretary of State for the . . . . .	Mr. H. U. Willink
India, Secretary of State for . . . . .	<i>Sir Donald Somervell</i>
Information, Minister of . . . . .	<i>Mr. L. S. Amery</i>
Labour and National Service, Minister of . . . . .	Mr. Geoffrey Lloyd
Law Officers:	<i>Mr. R. A. Butler</i>
Attorney-General . . . . .	Sir David Maxwell Fyfe
Advocate-General . . . . .	Mr. J. S. C. Reid
Solicitor-General . . . . .	Sir Walter Monckton
Solicitor-General for Scotland . . . . .	Sir David King Murray
Lord Chancellor . . . . .	Viscount Simon
Lord President of the Council . . . . .	<i>Lord Woolton</i>
Lord Privy Seal . . . . .	<i>Lord Beaverbrook</i>
Minister of State . . . . .	Mr. William Mabane
National Insurance, Minister of . . . . .	Mr. Leslie Hore-Belisha
Paymaster-General . . . . .	Lord Cherwell
Pensions, Minister of . . . . .	Sir Walter Womersley
Postmaster-General . . . . .	Captain H. F. C. Crookshank
Production, Minister of . . . . .	<i>Mr. Oliver Lyttelton</i>
Scotland, Secretary of State for . . . . .	<i>The Earl of Rosebery</i>
Supply, Minister of . . . . .	Sir Andrew Duncan
Town and Country Planning, Minister of . . . . .	Mr. W. S. Morrison
Trade, President of the Board of . . . . .	<i>Mr. Oliver Lyttelton</i>
War, Secretary of State for . . . . .	<i>Sir James Grigg</i>
War Transport, Minister of . . . . .	Lord Leathers
Works, Minister of . . . . .	Mr. Duncan Sandys
MINISTERS OVERSEAS:	
Middle East, Minister of State Resident in the . . . . .	Sir Edward Grigg
West Africa, Minister Resident in . . . . .	Captain H. H. Balfour
House of Lords, Leader of the . . . . .	<i>Viscount Cranborne</i>
House of Commons, Leader of the . . . . .	<i>Mr. Anthony Eden</i>



## (C) July—August, 1945

*(Members of the Cabinet are in italics)*

Prime Minister and First Lord of the Treasury, Minister of Defence	<i>Mr. Clement Attlee</i>
Admiralty, First Lord of the	<i>Mr. A. V. Alexander</i>
Agriculture and Fisheries, Minister of	<i>Mr. Thomas Williams</i>
Air, Secretary of State for	<i>Viscount Stansgate</i>
Aircraft Production, Minister of	<i>Mr. John Wilmot</i>
Burma, Secretary of State for	<i>Lord Pethick-Lawrence</i>
Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster	<i>Mr. J. B. Hynd</i>
Chancellor of the Exchequer	<i>Dr. Hugh Dalton</i>
Civil Aviation, Minister of	<i>Lord Winster</i>
Colonies, Secretary of State for the	<i>Mr. G. H. Hall</i>
Dominion Affairs, Secretary of State for	<i>Viscount Addison</i>
Education, Minister of	<i>Miss E. C. Wilkinson</i>
Food, Minister of	<i>Sir Ben Smith</i>
Foreign Affairs, Secretary of State for	<i>Mr. Ernest Bevin</i>
Fuel and Power, Minister of	<i>Mr. Emanuel Shinwell</i>
Health, Minister of	<i>Mr. Aneurin Bevan</i>
Home Affairs, Secretary of State for	<i>Mr. James Chuter Ede</i>
India, Secretary of State for	<i>Lord Pethick-Lawrence</i>
Information, Minister of	<i>Mr. E. J. Williams</i>
Labour and National Service, Minister of	<i>Mr. G. A. Isaacs</i>
Law Officers:	
Attorney-General	<i>Mr. H. W. Shawcross</i>
Lord Advocate	<i>Mr. G. R. Thomson</i>
Solicitor-General	<i>Major Frank Soskice</i>
Solicitor-General for Scotland	—
Lord Chancellor	<i>Lord Jowitt</i>
Lord President of the Council	<i>Mr. Herbert Morrison</i>
Lord Privy Seal	<i>Mr. Arthur Greenwood</i>
Minister of State	<i>Mr. P. H. Noel-Baker</i>
National Insurance, Minister of	<i>Mr. James Griffiths</i>
Paymaster-General	—
Pensions, Minister of	<i>Mr. Wilfred Paling</i>
Postmaster-General	<i>The Earl of Listowel</i>
Scotland, Secretary of State for	<i>Mr. Joseph Westwood</i>
Supply, Minister of	<i>Mr. John Wilmot</i>
Town and Country Planning, Minister of	<i>Mr. Lewis Silkin</i>

Trade, President of the Board of	.	<i>Sir Stafford Cripps</i>
War, Secretary of State for	.	<i>Mr. J. J. Lawson</i>
War Transport, Minister of	.	<i>Mr. Alfred Barnes</i>
Works, Minister of	.	<i>Mr. George Tomlinson</i>
House of Lords, Leader of the	.	<i>Viscount Addison</i>
House of Commons, Leader of the	.	<i>Mr. Herbert Morrison</i>

## APPENDIX III

### A. British and United States Chiefs of Staff; British Vice-Chiefs of Staff; British Joint Staff Mission in Washington; October, 1944 – August, 1945

#### BRITISH CHIEFS OF STAFF

Chief of the Imperial General Staff (Chairman of the Chiefs of Staff's Committee) . . .	Field Marshal Sir Alan Brooke
Chief of the Air Staff . . .	Marshal of the Royal Air Force Sir Charles Portal
First Sea Lord and Chief of the Naval Staff . . . . .	Admiral of the Fleet Sir Andrew Cunningham
Deputy Secretary (Military) of the War Cabinet and Chief of Staff to the Minister of Defence . . .	General Sir Hastings Ismay
Chief of Combined Operations <sup>1</sup> . . .	Major-General R. E. Laycock
<i>Secretary</i> . . . . .	<i>Major-General L. C. Hollis</i>

#### BRITISH VICE-CHIEFS OF STAFF

Vice-Chief of the Imperial General Staff . . . . .	Lieut.-General Sir Archibald Nye
Vice-Chief of the Air Staff . . .	Air Marshal Sir Douglas Evill
Vice-Chief of the Naval Staff . . .	Vice-Admiral Sir Neville Syfret

#### UNITED STATES JOINT CHIEFS OF STAFF

Chief of Staff to the Commander-in-Chief of the U.S. Armed Forces (Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff's Committee) . . .	Admiral William D. Leahy (Fleet Admiral from December, 1944)
Chief of Staff of the U.S. Army . . .	General George C. Marshall (General of the Army from December, 1944)
Commander-in-Chief of the U.S. Fleet and Chief of Naval Operations . . . . .	Admiral Ernest J. King (Fleet Admiral from December, 1944)
Commanding General, U.S. Army Air Forces . . . . .	General Henry H. Arnold (General of the Army from December, 1944)
<i>Secretary</i> . . . . .	<i>Brigadier-General A. J. McFarland</i>

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<sup>1</sup> Attended those meetings of concern to him.

## BRITISH JOINT STAFF MISSION IN WASHINGTON

## Head of the British Joint Staff

Mission . . . . .	Field Marshal Sir John Dill (until November, 1944) Field Marshal Sir Henry Maitland Wilson (from January, 1945. Field Marshal from December, 1944)
Head of the British Admiralty Delegation . . . . .	Admiral Sir Percy Noble Admiral Sir James Somerville (from October, 1944)
Head of the British Army Staff .	Lieut.-General G. N. Macready
Head of the R.A.F. Delegation .	Air Marshal Sir William Welsh (until October, 1944) Air Marshal D. Colyer (from January, 1945)
Secretary . . . . .	Brigadier A. T. Cornwall-Jones

## B. Allied Commanders, October, 1944 – May/August, 1945

## I ALLIED EXPEDITIONARY FORCE, NORTH-WEST EUROPE

(October, 1944 – May, 1945)

Supreme Allied Commander <sup>1</sup>	General Dwight D. Eisenhower (General of the Army from December, 1944) (U.S.)
Deputy Supreme Allied Commander <sup>2</sup> . . . . .	Air Chief Marshal Sir Arthur Tedder (Br.)
Commander-in-Chief, Allied Naval Expeditionary Forces . . . . .	Admiral Sir Bertram Ramsay (Br.) Admiral Sir Harold Burrough (Br.) (from January, 1945)
Commander-in-Chief, Twenty-First Army Group	Field Marshal Sir Bernard Montgomery (Br.)
Commanding General, Twelfth Army Group .	General Omar Bradley (U.S.)
Commanding General, Sixth Army Group . . . . .	General J. L. Devers (U.S.)

<sup>1</sup> And in operational command of Allied land forces.<sup>2</sup> And co-ordinating air operations.

- I ALLIED EXPEDITIONARY FORCE, NORTH-WEST EUROPE—cont.**  
 Commander-in-Chief,  
 Allied Expeditionary Air  
 Forces . . . . . Air Chief Marshal Sir Trafford  
 Leigh-Mallory (Br.) (until Octo-  
 ber 1944, when appointment  
 lapsed and control was exercised  
 by the Deputy Supreme Com-  
 mander)
- II MEDITERRANEAN COMMAND**  
 (October, 1944 – May, 1945)  
 Supreme Allied Commander . . . . . General Sir Henry Maitland Wilson  
 (Br.)  
 General Sir Harold Alexander (Br.)  
 (from November, 1944. Field  
 Marshal from December, 1944)
- Deputy Supreme Allied  
 Commander . . . . . Lieut.-General J. T. McNarney  
 (U.S.)
- Commander-in-Chief, Allied  
 Naval Forces . . . . . Admiral Sir John Cunningham (Br.)
- Commander-in-Chief, Allied  
 Armies in Italy . . . . . General Sir Harold Alexander (Br.)
- Commander-in-Chief, Fif-  
 teenth Army Group . . . . . General Mark Clark (U.S.) (from  
 December, 1944)
- Commander-in-Chief, Medi-  
 terranean Allied Air  
 Forces. . . . . Lieut.-General Ira C. Eaker (U.S.)  
 Lieut.-General J. K. Cannon (U.S.)  
 (from March, 1945)
- III SOUTH-EAST ASIA COMMAND**  
 (October, 1944 – August, 1945)  
 Supreme Allied Commander . . . . . Admiral Lord Louis Mountbatten  
 (Br.)
- Deputy Supreme Allied  
 Commander . . . . . Lieut.-General J. W. Stilwell (U.S.)  
 Lieut.-General R. A. Wheeler (U.S.)  
 (from November, 1944)
- Commander-in-Chief, British  
 Eastern Fleet . . . . . Admiral Sir Bruce Fraser (Br.)
- Commander-in-Chief, British  
 East Indies Fleet . . . . . Admiral Sir Arthur Power (Br.)  
 (from November, 1944)
- Commander-in-Chief,  
 Eleventh Army Group . . . . . General Sir George Giffard (Br.)

III SOUTH-EAST ASIA COMMAND—*cont.*

- Commander-in-Chief, Allied  
Land Forces . . . . Lieut.-General Sir Oliver Leese (Br.)  
(from November, 1944)  
Lieut.-General Sir William Slim  
(Br.) (from May, 1945. General  
from July, 1945)
- Commander-in-Chief, Allied  
Air Forces . . . . Air Chief Marshal Sir Richard  
Peirse (Br.)  
Air Marshal Sir Guy Garrod (Br.)  
(from November, 1944)  
Air Chief Marshal Sir Keith Park  
(Br.) (from February, 1945)
- Commanding General, U.S.  
Army Air Forces in the  
(U.S.) China-Burma-  
India Theatre . . . . Lieut.-General G. E. Stratemeyer  
(U.S.) (until June, 1945)

IV SOUTH-WEST PACIFIC AREA  
(October, 1944 – April, 1945)

- Commander-in-Chief<sup>1</sup> . . . General Douglas MacArthur (U.S.)  
(General of the Army from Dec-  
ember, 1944)
- Commander, Allied Land  
Forces, and Commander-  
in-Chief, Australian Mili-  
tary Forces . . . . General Sir Thomas Blamey (Aus.)
- Commander, U.S. Seventh  
Fleet<sup>2</sup> . . . . Vice-Admiral T. C. Kincaid (U.S.)
- Commanding General, U.S.  
Far East Air Forces and  
Allied Air Forces South-  
West Pacific Area . . . Lieut.-General George C. Kenney  
(U.S.) (General from March,  
1945)

V PACIFIC OCEAN AREAS  
(October, 1944 – April, 1945)

- Commander-in-Chief, and  
Commander-in-Chief,  
U.S. Pacific Fleet<sup>3</sup> . . . Admiral Chester Nimitz (U.S.)  
(Fleet Admiral from December,  
1944)

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<sup>1</sup> And in operational command of Allied land forces.

<sup>2</sup> Under orders of C.-in-C., S.W.P.A. from C.-in-C., U.S. Pacific Fleet.

<sup>3</sup> In direct command of all Allied forces in Central and North Pacific.

V PACIFIC OCEAN AREAS—*cont.*

- Commanding General, U.S.  
Army Forces . . . . Lieut.-General R. C. Richardson  
(U.S.)
- Commanding General, U.S.  
Army Air Forces, and  
Deputy Commander,  
Twentieth U.S. Army Air  
Force . . . . Lieut.-General M. F. Harmon  
(U.S.) (until February, 1945)
- Commander, South Pacific  
Area<sup>1</sup> . . . . Admiral W. F. Halsey (U.S.)

## VI PACIFIC COMMANDS

(April – August, 1945)

- Commander-in-Chief, Army  
Forces in the Pacific . General of the Army Douglas  
MacArthur (U.S.) (from April,  
1945)
- Commander-in-Chief, Naval  
Forces in the Pacific . Fleet Admiral Chester Nimitz (U.S.)  
(from April, 1945)
- Commanding General, U.S.  
Strategic Air Forces in the  
Pacific . . . . General Carl Spaatz (U.S.) (from  
July, 1945)
- Commanding General, U.S.  
Army Forces in the Cen-  
tral Pacific . . . . Lieut.-General R. C. Richardson  
(U.S.) (from June, 1945)
- Commanding General, U.S.  
Army Forces in the West-  
ern Pacific . . . . Lieut.-General W. D. Styer (U.S.)  
(from April, 1945)
- Commanding General, U.S.  
Army Air Forces, Pacific  
Ocean Areas, and Deputy  
Commanding General,  
U.S. Strategic Air Forces  
in the Pacific . . . . Lieut.-General B. McK. Giles (U.S.)  
(from May, 1945)
- Commanding General, U.S.  
Far East Air Forces . General George C. Kenney (U.S.)

<sup>1</sup> In direct command, under C.-in.-C., P.O.A., of all Allied forces in South Pacific.

## VII ALLIED STRATEGIC AIR FORCES IN EUROPE

(October, 1944 - May, 1945)

Commander-in-Chief, Bom-  
ber Command . . . .Air Chief Marshal Sir Arthur Harris  
(Br.)Commanding General, U.S.  
Strategic Air Forces in  
Europe . . . .

General Carl Spaatz (U.S.)

## VIII ALLIED NAVAL FORCES IN THE ATLANTIC

(October, 1944 - May, 1945)

*British Zone*Commander-in-Chief, West-  
ern Approaches . . . .

Admiral Sir Max Horton

*U.S. Zone*Commander-in-Chief, U.S.  
Atlantic Fleet . . . .Admiral R. E. Ingersoll  
Admiral J. H. Ingram (from Nov-  
ember, 1944)







## NOTE TO APPENDIX IV

Sir Edward Bridges, the Secretary of the War Cabinet throughout the war, makes the following comments on this diagram.

'The effectiveness of the War Cabinet Committee organization, viewed as a whole, depended in no small measure on its Secretariat. Practically every War Cabinet Committee had as its Secretary, or as one of its Secretaries, a member of the War Cabinet Staff. Those members of the staff who did secretarial work were a comparatively small and compact body.

During most of the war years civil and military staffs alike worked, slept and had their meals in the same building. They worked and lived together and shared the same thoughts far more than is usual with an office staff. Though little stimulus was needed, Secretaries of Committees were encouraged by their superiors to maintain the closest touch day by day with the Secretaries of other Committees which dealt with subjects having common interests.

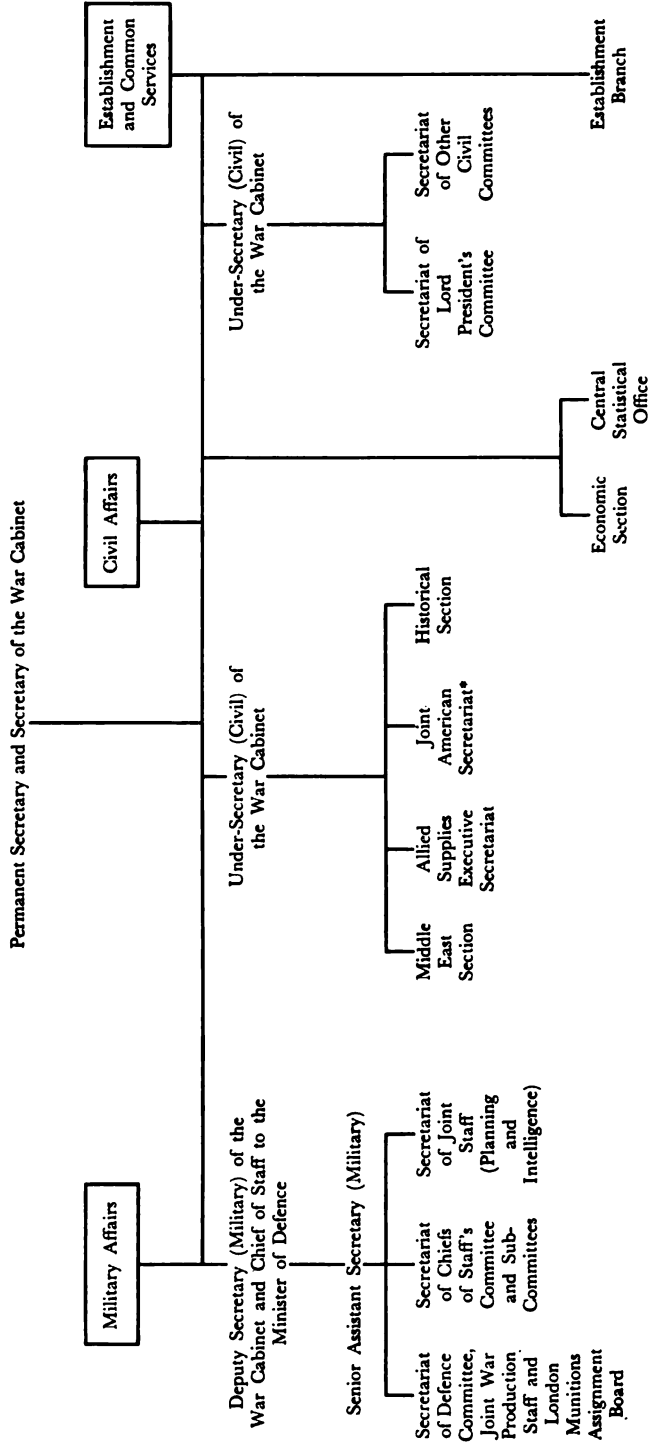
It was this day to day or hour to hour contact between all the members of the Secretariat which prevented overlapping or gaps arising between the work of different Committees: which enabled any subject to be steered towards the Committee which could deal with it most expeditiously: and which avoided any conflicts of jurisdiction.

There was nothing rigid or inflexible about the organization itself, or the people who ran it. If speed or convenience demanded that a paper should not follow the normal course but should be submitted to some other Committee: or that a joint meeting of two bodies should be held: or that a paper should skip a stage and go direct to the Defence Committee or the Cabinet: then it was so arranged.

In this and other ways the Secretariat achieved what I believe to have been a very high degree of coherence and of swift and harmonious working. Further, the members of the Committees came to place a very high degree of confidence in the Secretariat and were disposed to accept willingly the advice of their Secretaries as to how business should be handled.'

# APPENDIX V

## Offices of the War Cabinet and Minister of Defence



\*The responsibility for this Secretariat was shared between the Offices of the War Cabinet and the Ministry of Production.



## APPENDIX VII

### Background to the British Estimates of the Date for the End of the War in Europe, 1944-1945

All estimates produced in the spring and early summer of 1944, for the forces which would be needed one year after the defeat of Germany, were based on the assumption that the war in Europe would be over by the end of 1944.

- 1944
- 15th June Prime Minister to Chancellor of the Exchequer (Chairman of the War Cabinet Manpower Committee). 'For the present, we must base our plans on the continuance of the war in Europe throughout the first half of 1945 . . .'
- 14th August War Cabinet. 'For purposes of manpower and production planning, we should assume that the European war will be over by 30th June, 1945.'
- 4th September War Cabinet amends previous assumption to date 31st December, 1944.
- 16th September Prime Minister to Minister of Production. 'I doubt whether Germany will be defeated in fact by the end of the year. But we should continue to plan on this basis for manpower and production.'
- 18th October Note from Sir Edward Bridges to General Hollis. 'In fact, we are already acting on the assumption that the war will continue into 1945.'
- 29th October Joint Planning Staff paper (approved next day by the Chiefs of Staff). 'On the most optimistic basis, the war will end by 31st January, 1945. At the worst, by 15th May, 1945.'
- 14th December War Cabinet Manpower Committee. 'The Prime Minister has asked that planning should be on the basis of the war ending by 30th June, 1945.'
- 1945
- 12th January War Cabinet discusses the possibility of the war in Europe not ending before 31st December, 1945.
- 22nd January Chiefs of Staff's paper. 'Because of the new Russian offensive, the position has been transformed. It now appears that on the most optimistic basis the war will be over by mid-April. A more reasonable date, however,

would be mid-June, and at the worst it would be early November. We recommend the two latter dates as the limits for planning.'

- 25th January War Cabinet agrees to the dates recommended by the Chiefs of Staff for planning production and manpower, except in the case of the aircraft industry, which may plan on the basis of the war being over by 30th June, 1945.
- 6th February Combined Chiefs of Staff, at the 'Argonaut' Conference, agree on 1st July and 31st December, 1945 as the two limiting dates for the end of the German war—a compromise between the British and the American estimates.
- 29th March Prime Minister to Chancellor of the Exchequer. '... Your Manpower Committee should plan now on the assumption that the European war will end not later than 31st May . . .'
- 12th April Chiefs of Staff agree (reluctantly) to accept 31st May as the planning date for production.
- 12th April Joint Planning Staff estimates that all operations in Europe will be over by the end of June, except for local resistance in the Southern Redoubt, Norway and other isolated places.
- 14th April Prime Minister's Directive. 'Because of the recent German collapse on all fronts, and the exhaustion of the enemy's oil stocks, 31st May, 1945, should be taken as a firm date for planning.'

## APPENDIX VIII

### Some Prime Minister's Minutes and Telegrams Hitherto Unpublished, of which Extracts are Quoted in the Text

*Prime Minister's Minute to General Ismay for Chiefs of Staff's Committee,  
of 30th October, 1944*<sup>1</sup>

One of the absurd things in all the plans which are submitted by A.F.H.Q. [Mediterranean], is the idea that if they move in February they will be in time to effect anything. In the three months which they say must elapse before they are capable of movement, the whole of Yugoslavia will be cleared of the Germans, who will either have been overwhelmed or made their escape to the north. Very likely this will take place in six weeks. The Yugoslavs will then occupy Trieste, Fiume and other towns which they claim. So what will be the need of an expedition and all the landing-craft, and so on?

The days of these slow-moving, heavy-footed methods are over, but we still cling to them with disastrous results.

*Prime Minister's Minute to General Ismay for Chief of Staff's Committee,  
of 24th January, 1945*<sup>2</sup>

1. It is represented by the C.O.S. that if orders are given after the conference at Malta, one division can be moved physically from the Italian to the Western front, and thereafter one division a fortnight up to six if they can be spared. It seems impossible to credit the fact that it would take 2½ months for General Mark Clark to send a division from Leghorn via Marseilles to General Devers' Army. General Eisenhower should be asked how long it would take him to move a division from Marseilles to his front, and a report should be obtained from General Clark as to the time necessary to move it to Leghorn or other ports of embarkation. The actual voyage cannot be more than three or four days. We should also know how many divisions from America are being carried into France by the two double-lines of railway running north from Marseilles during the six months following February 1, i.e., how far are these lines free for the movement of troops.

2. It is clear that if the rate of movement estimated is the best that can be achieved, the transfer of troops from Italy to France will be so scanty and so tardy as not to be an important factor in the main operations, unless these should be protracted beyond the now-judged reasonably probable date for the end of the German War, viz. :—June 30. For the sake of this, the Army in Italy is to go over to the defensive at once and play only a holding rôle. This would also be true if Kesselring's Army is withdrawn as rapidly as possible, in whole or in part, through the Alps. Therefore instead of having an Army in Italy which would be capable of taking a strong offensive in April, whether Kesselring is weakened or not, we shall have

<sup>1</sup> See p. 51.

<sup>2</sup> See p. 86.



a static Army capable only of following up rearguards. From every point of view the entire Army in Italy is to be wrecked and paralyzed.

3. In his latest telegram, Field Marshal Alexander goes even farther and suggests that the movement, even of a single division, will expose his Army to the danger of an offensive southward by Kesselring, unless the latter has already had his forces largely reduced. Field Marshal Alexander will argue against the removal even of the forces above mentioned and at the rate above mentioned.

4. The plan, as it stands at present, seems, first, to deprive the 15th Army Group with its vast establishments throughout the Mediterranean, especially in Egypt, of all opportunity of offensive action till the end of the War; secondly, to keep three or four divisions out of all operations anywhere during the most decisive months, and this doubtless applies to other divisions preparing to follow in the northward stream once it is open. If for instance the German War ends in May or June, practically no appreciable help will be given to the main front and the secondary front will be thrown entirely out of active operations.

5. If this is the last word in the proposed plan, it is quite certain that something else ought to be thought of. As long as Allied troops are fighting Germans, they are doing something; but when they are merely sprawled out on a 2½ months' journey from Italy to France, or else recovering from the effects of the movement to France and therefore not able to play any part anywhere during what is agreed to be the most decisive period, i.e. April, May and June, the plan seems open to overwhelming military and commonsense objections. The movement of British troops by sea from Italy to Antwerp with trans-shipment in the United Kingdom will, I am sure, make it impossible not to grant at least a fortnight's leave, which is stated as not being allowed for, thus still farther lengthening the process.

6. Let me have the casualties of the 15th Group of Armies from the renewal of the fighting in August to the present time and, if possible, in the last two months. The statement made by Field Marshal Alexander that his Army is virtually incapable of action is very serious, and certainly requires searching examination.

7. It seems to me impossible to take any decisions on this matter until the above points are clarified, until Field Marshal Alexander has had an opportunity of putting forward new plans for the use of the very large Army which he has at his disposal, and until we can see more clearly what the results of the Russian advance produce upon the movements of Kesselring's Army. It seems to me very hard to believe that they will be left intact south of the Alps when they are so vitally needed at home.

8. To sum up, I was attracted by the idea of moving eight divisions of the 15th Group of Armies in about one month or six weeks from Italy to the Western front, and quite prepared to make preparations for such a move in advance of Kesselring's retreat. But I see no advantage at all, having regard to the general state of the War, in destroying all possibility of action in or from Italy for the sake of getting a couple more divisions into France in three months' time. I could not approve the plan on its present basis.

## APPENDIX IX; Chronological Table

This Table does not give a full list of events and

N.W. EUROPE	MEDITERRANEAN	EASTERN FRONT	AIR WAR
<p><b>1944 October</b></p> <p>1. 1st. Canadian and 2nd. British Armies begin attacks to clear Scheldt estuary.</p> <p>Early. Plan for counter-offensive in Ardennes produced in Hitler's headquarters.</p> <p>10. Canadians reach entrance to S. Beveland.</p>	<p><b>1944 October</b></p> <p>1. 5th. Army begins attack on Bologna.</p> <p>Early. Small Allied forces land on some Greek islands and on coast.</p> <p>5. P.M. visits Italy, <i>en route</i> for Moscow.</p> <p>7. 8th. Army attacks beyond Rimini. Germans decide to evacuate Greece.</p> <p>9. Provisional arrangements at 'Tolstoy' (<i>see Miscellaneous</i>) for demarcation between Allies in S.E. Europe.</p> <p>10. Wilson reports on future in Mediterranean.</p> <p>13-14. Greek troops occupy Piraeus.</p> <p>15. Allied forces enter Greece.</p> <p>18. Greek Government enters Athens.</p>	<p><b>1944 October</b></p> <p>1. Tolbukhin reaches Yugoslav Partisans.</p> <p>3. Warsaw rising ends.</p> <p>5. Malinovsky crosses Hungarian frontier.</p> <p>Mid-late. Malinovsky reaches Danube south of Budapest. Petrov advances through Carpathians.</p> <p>13. Russians take Riga.</p> <p>15. Russians and Partisans take Nis. Russians take Petsamo.</p> <p>16. Russians attack along E. Prussian frontier.</p> <p>17. Germans begin to fall back in Yugoslavia.</p>	<p><b>1944 October</b></p> <p>Mid-late. Discussions in London on bombing policy in Europe.</p>

## of Selected Events and Planning Dates

planning dates. It is designed only to illustrate the text.

WAR AT SEA	S.E. ASIA AND CHINA	PACIFIC	MISCELLANEOUS
<p><b>1944 October</b></p>	<p><b>1944 October</b></p> <p>Throughout. 15th. Corps attacking in Arakan, in preparation for fresh offensive. 14th. Army advancing south towards river Chindwin. Forces in north advancing south from area of Myitkyina.</p> <p>Mid-late. 14th. Army fighting south of Tiddim, and developing bridgehead over river Chindwin near Sittaung.</p>	<p><b>1944 October</b></p> <p>3. J.C.S. decide on landings in Leyte in October.</p> <p>15-17. Americans and Russians discuss preparations for Russia's entry into war against Japan, during 'Tolstoy'.</p>	<p><b>1944 October</b></p> <p>9. 'Tolstoy' Conference begins in Moscow.</p>

N.W. EUROPE	MEDITERRANEAN	EASTERN FRONT	AIR WAR
<p><b>1944 October</b></p> <p>21. 1st U.S. Army takes Aachen.</p> <p>22. Canadians take Breskens.</p> <p>27. Germans counter-attack w. of river Maas.</p> <p>28. Eisenhower issues new directive to Command.</p> <p>30. Montgomery objects to Eisenhower's plan.</p> <p>31. Canadians clear S. Beveland.</p>	<p><b>1944 October</b></p> <p>19. 8th. Army takes Cesena.</p> <p>21. P.M. meets commanders in Italy, on way back from Moscow.</p> <p>25. 8th. Army's advance halted. 5th. Army four miles from Bologna.</p> <p>27. 5th. Army's advance halted.</p> <p>28. 'Floydforce' lands in Yugoslavia.</p>	<p><b>1944 October</b></p> <p>20. Russians and Partisans enter Belgrade.</p> <p>Last week. Germans hold new line in Yugoslavia.</p> <p>28. 'Floydforce' lands in Yugoslavia.</p>	<p><b>1944 October</b></p> <p>23-4. Essen bombed heavily.</p> <p>27. Americans accept British bombing force for Pacific.</p> <p>28-1st. November. Cologne bombed heavily.</p>
<p><b>November</b></p> <p>1. Assault on Walcheren.</p> <p>2. Fighting ends in 'Breskens pocket'. Eisenhower issues new orders to 21st. Army Group.</p> <p>6. Germans surrender in Walcheren.</p>	<p><b>November</b></p>	<p><b>November</b></p> <p>First week. Russians close slowly on Budapest.</p> <p>5. Russians held along E. Prussian frontier.</p>	<p><b>November</b></p> <p>1. New directive on the strategic bombing of Germany.</p>

WAR AT SEA	S.E. ASIA AND CHINA	PACIFIC	MISCELLANEOUS
<p><b>1944 October</b></p> <p>23-6. Battle of Leyte Gulf.</p> <p>Late. Admiralty forecasts new U-boat offensive in December.</p>	<p><b>1944 October</b></p> <p>20. Mountbatten discuss future with P.M. in Cairo.</p> <p>28. Stilwell relieved in China by Wedemeyer, and in S.E. Asia by Sultan.</p> <p>29. Mountbatten submits to British C.O.S. plans for winter and spring.</p>	<p><b>1944 October</b></p> <p>20. Americans land on Leyte.</p> <p>23-6. Battle of Leyte Gulf.</p> <p>27. Americans accept British bombing force for Pacific.</p>	<p><b>1944 October</b></p> <p>20. 'Tolstoy' Conference ends.</p> <p>23. British and American Governments recognize de Gaulle's Administration as Provisional Government of France.</p>
<p><b>November</b></p>	<p><b>November</b></p> <p>Beginning. Northern forces halted at Bhamo.</p>	<p><b>November</b></p>	<p><b>November</b></p> <p>4. Dill dies in Washington.</p> <p>7. President Roosevelt elected for fourth term.</p>

N.W. EUROPE	MEDITERRANEAN	EASTERN FRONT	AIR WAR
<p><b>1944 November</b></p> <p>8. 3rd. U.S. Army begins attack on Saar. 1st. and 9th. U.S. Armies begin attack towards Rhine.</p> <p>9. Walcheren cleared.</p> <p>19. 1st. French Army breaks through Belfort Gap. Eisenhower broadcasts to U.S. on ammunition shortage.</p> <p>22. 3rd. U.S. Army takes Metz. 7th. U.S. Army attacks towards Colmar.</p> <p>Late. 1st., 3rd. and 9th. U.S. Armies halted. Germans hold bridgehead around Colmar.</p> <p>28. First convoy reaches Antwerp up Scheldt estuary.</p>	<p><b>1944 November</b></p> <p>9. 8th. Army takes Forli.</p> <p>15. Wilson orders preparations for military measures in Greece.</p> <p>22. Wilson proposes new directive for Mediterranean Command.</p> <p>25. Alexander appointed Supreme Commander, to succeed Wilson.</p> <p>Late. 8th. Army renews attack.</p> <p>29. Greek Government dissolves.</p>	<p><b>1944 November</b></p> <p>Mid-late. Petrov advancing through Carpathians. Malinovsky held near Budapest. Russians and Partisans held in Yugoslavia.</p>	<p><b>1944 November</b></p> <p>12. 'Tirpitz' sunk by bombing.</p>

WAR AT SEA	S.E. ASIA AND CHINA	PACIFIC	MISCELLANEOUS
<p><b>1944 November</b></p> <p>12. 'Tirpitz' sunk by bombing.</p> <p>22. British Pacific Fleet formed.</p>	<p><b>1944 November</b></p> <p>8. Allied Land Forces Command set up.</p> <p>13. 14th. Army reaches Kalemyo.</p> <p>Mid. Northern forces reach river Irrawaddy near Shwegu.</p> <p>22. Wedemeyer in China asks for air transport from S.E. Asia.</p> <p>23. Chiang Kai-shek asks for 2 Chinese divisions from S.E. Asia.</p>	<p><b>1944 November</b></p> <p>22. British Pacific Fleet formed.</p>	<p><b>1944 November</b></p> <p>25. Wilson appointed Head of British Joint Staff Mission in Washington, to succeed Dill.</p>

N.W. EUROPE	MEDITERRANEAN	EASTERN FRONT	AIR WAR
<p><b>1944 December</b></p> <p>16. Germans counter-attack in Ardennes.</p> <p>20. American and British forces in Ardennes placed under Montgomery.</p> <p>22-5. Germans' counter-offensive halted.</p> <p>End. Tedder sent to Moscow for consultations.</p>	<p><b>1944 December</b></p> <p>2. C.C.S.' new directive to Alexander.</p> <p>4. Martial law declared in Athens. Fighting develops. 8th. Army takes Ravenna.</p> <p>6. 8th. Army takes Faenza.</p> <p>10. Alexander visits Athens.</p> <p>Mid. 8th. Army's attack halted.</p> <p>25-8. Churchill and Eden visit Athens.</p> <p>30. Archbishop Damaskinos appointed Regent in Greece.</p>	<p><b>1944 December</b></p> <p>3. Malinovsky and Petrov join at Miskolcz.</p> <p>Russians prepare for attack on Budapest.</p> <p>20. Tolbukhin and Malinovsky join behind Budapest.</p> <p>Late. Germans begin counter-attack around Budapest.</p>	<p><b>1944 December</b></p> <p>2. 'Bomb line' in S.E. Europe decided by C.C.S.</p>



WAR AT SEA	S.E. ASIA AND CHINA	PACIFIC	MISCELLANEOUS
<p><b>1944 December</b></p> <p>10. First elements of British Pacific Fleet reach Australia.</p>	<p><b>1944 December</b></p> <p>2. 14th. Army takes Kalewa.</p> <p>4. J.C.S. confirm Wedemeyer's requests for China.</p> <p>First week. 14th. Army crosses river Chindwin and moves towards Yeu and Shwebo.</p> <p>6. Mountbatten cancels seaborne operations until after monsoon.</p> <p>8. Wedemeyer makes further requests for China.</p> <p>10. Northern forces reach Katha and Indaw. Northern forces reach Siu.</p> <p>12. 15th. Corps renews offensive in Arakan.</p> <p>15. Northern forces take Bhamo. 15th. Corps takes Buthidaung.</p> <p>16. 14th Army joins northern forces near Indaw.</p> <p>End. Northern forces near Namhkam. 15th. Corps reaches area of Kanzauk.</p>	<p><b>1944 December</b></p> <p>Early. American planning team arrives in Moscow, to plan with Russians for entry into war against Japan.</p> <p>10. First elements of British Pacific Fleet reach Australia.</p> <p>Late. Americans clear Leyte.</p>	<p><b>1944 December</b></p>

N.W. EUROPE	MEDITERRANEAN	EASTERN FRONT	AIR WAR
<p><b>1945 January</b></p> <p>3. Allies' attack in Ardennes begins.</p> <p>6. British plans for future in N.W. Europe sent to Americans.</p> <p>16. Allied forces from north and south join in Ardennes.</p> <p>20. Eisenhower submits plans for future to C.C.S.</p>	<p><b>1945 January</b></p> <p>3. New Greek Government formed.</p> <p>Early. Americans agree to take a zone in Austria.</p> <p>8. Alexander submits plans for future in Italy to British C.O.S.</p> <p>11. Truce signed in Greece, to take effect from 15th.</p> <p>Mid. 'Floydforce' withdrawn from Yugoslavia.</p>	<p><b>1945 January</b></p> <p>12. Russians open offensive on central front. Konier attacks around Sandomierz.</p> <p>14. Russians attack in E. Prussia.</p> <p>17. Zhukov takes Warsaw.</p> <p>18. Russians enter Pest.</p> <p>19. Russians take Cracow, and Tilsit.</p> <p>20. Hungarian Government signs armistice.</p> <p>26. Russians reach Baltic in E. Prussia.</p>	<p><b>1945 January</b></p> <p>15. C.C.S. propose arrangements to Russians for 'bomb line' in Europe.</p>
<p>30. 'ARGONAUT' CONFERENCE BEGINS IN MALTA, BETWEEN BRITISH AND AMERICANS</p>			

WAR AT SEA	S.E. ASIA AND CHINA	PACIFIC	MISCELLANEOUS
<p><b>1945 January</b></p>	<p><b>1945 January</b></p> <p>Early. 15th. Corps reaches river Kaladan.</p> <p>3. 15th. Corps takes Akyab unopposed.</p> <p>10. 14th Army takes Shwebo.</p> <p>12. 15th. Corps attacks Myebon peninsula.</p> <p>15-18. Discussions in London on transfer of forces from S.E. Asia to China.</p> <p>16. Northern forces take Namhkam.</p> <p>21. Wedemeyer returns some transport aircraft from China to S.E. Asia. 15th. Corps attacks Ramree island.</p> <p>22. Burma Road to China opened.</p> <p>Last week. British C.O.S. decide to send transport aircraft from U.K. and Mediterranean to S.E. Asia.</p>	<p><b>1945 January</b></p> <p>9. Americans land on Luzon.</p> <p>22. J.C.S. produce new timetable for operations.</p>	<p><b>1945 January</b></p> <p>25. War Cabinet decides to plan for war against Germany ending between mid-June and early November.</p>

30. 'ARGONAUT' CONFERENCE BEGINS IN MALTA, BETWEEN BRITISH AND AMERICANS

N.W. EUROPE	MEDITERRANEAN	EASTERN FRONT	AIR WAR
<p><b>1945 February</b></p> <p>1. C.C.S. approve plan of campaign for N.W. Europe.</p>	<p><b>1945 February</b></p> <p>2. Varkiza Agreement signed in Greece.</p> <p>3. C.C.S. send new directive to Alexander.</p>	<p><b>1945 February</b></p> <p>Early. Zhukov forms front on middle Oder, Koniev enters Silesia.</p>	<p><b>1945 February</b></p>
<p>4. YALTA PART OF 'ARGONAUT' CONFERENCE BEGINS, BETWEEN BRITISH, AMERICANS AND RUSSIANS</p>			
<p>6. Russians agree with Western Allies' proposals for zones in Germany.</p> <p>8. British and Canadians open offensive towards Rhine.</p> <p>10. French given a zone in Germany.</p>			<p>5-6. Discussions with Russians on 'bomb line' in Europe.</p> <p>9. Russians' proposals for 'bomb line' not accepted by West. Arrangements of 15th January stand.</p>
<p>11. 'ARGONAUT' CONFERENCE ENDS</p>			
		<p>13. Russians clear Budapest.</p>	<p>13-14. Dresden bombed heavily.</p>

WAR AT SEA	S.E. ASIA AND CHINA	PACIFIC	MISCELLANEOUS
<b>1945 February</b>	<b>1945 February</b>  Throughout. Northern forces clear area north of Lashio.  3. C.C.S. send new directive to Mountbatten.	<b>1945 February</b>        4. Americans enter Manila.	<b>1945 February</b>
<b>4. YALTA PART OF 'ARGONAUT' CONFERENCE BEGINS, BETWEEN BRITISH, AMERICANS AND RUSSIANS</b>			
	6. Mountbatten issues new directive to Command.        9. Japanese abandon Myebon peninsula in Arakan.	Second week. Americans and Russians make plans for Russia's entry into war against Japan.        11. 'Yalta Agreement' on Far East signed.	
<b>11. 'ARGONAUT' CONFERENCE ENDS</b>			
	12. 14th. Army starts main operations across river Irrawaddy.        16. 15th. Corps clears Ramree island.        Mid. 15th. Corps clears islands south of Ramree, and attacks in southern Arakan.        20. 14th. Army begins to move on Mandalay from north.	17. Americans clear Batan.	

N.W. EUROPE	MEDITERRANEAN	EASTERN FRONT	AIR WAR
<p><b>1945</b> <b>February</b></p> <p>23. 1st. and 9th. U.S. Armies join offensive towards Rhine.</p> <p>26. 9th. U.S. Army reaches Rhine south of Düsseldorf.</p>	<p><b>1945</b> <b>February</b></p>	<p><b>1945</b> <b>February</b></p> <p>End. Zhukov attacks north towards Baltic.</p>	<p><b>1945</b> <b>February</b></p> <p>22. Heavy attack on communications throughout Germany and Austria.</p>
<p><b>March</b></p> <p>5. 1st. U.S. Army reaches Rhine at Cologne. 3rd. U.S. Army begins attack towards Rhine.</p> <p>7. 3rd. U.S. Army crosses Rhine at Remagen.</p> <p>10. Germans evacuate west bank of Rhine in northern sector.</p> <p>14. 3rd. U.S. Army crosses lower Moselle. 7th. U.S. Army begins attack in Saar.</p>	<p><b>March</b></p> <p>8. German General Wolff starts negotiations for surrender in Italy.</p>	<p><b>March</b></p> <p>6. Russians set up new Government in Rumania.</p> <p>12. Zhukov occupies most of Kuestrin.</p>	<p><b>March</b></p>

WAR AT SEA	S.E. ASIA AND CHINA	PACIFIC	MISCELLANEOUS
<p><b>1945 February</b></p>	<p><b>1945 February</b></p> <p>23. Decision taken in S.E. Asia to advance on Rangoon by land.</p> <p>24. 14th. Army makes further crossings of river Irrawaddy.</p> <p>26. Mountbatten submits future plans to British C.O.S.</p>	<p><b>1945 February</b></p> <p>24. Americans clear Manila.</p>	<p><b>1945 February</b></p>
<p><b>March</b></p>	<p><b>March</b></p> <p>Throughout. 15th. Corps clears southern Arakan towards Taungup.</p> <p>1. Chinese ask for all American and Chinese troops in S.E. Asia to be transported to China.</p> <p>2. British protest to Washington on Chinese demands.</p> <p>7. Northern forces take Lashio.</p> <p>9. 14th. Army enters Mandalay.</p>	<p><b>March</b></p>	<p><b>March</b></p>

N.W. EUROPE	MEDITERRANEAN	EASTERN FRONT	AIR WAR
<p><b>1945 March</b></p> <p>22-3. 3rd. U.S. Army crosses Rhine at Oppenheim.</p> <p>23-4. 21st. Army Group crosses Rhine near Wesel.</p> <p>24. 1st. U.S. Army crosses Rhine between Bonn and Coblenz.</p> <p>28. Eisenhower sends outline of plans to Moscow.</p> <p>28-30. Eisenhower's plans discussed in Washington.</p> <p>29. 3rd. U.S. Army takes Frankfurt. 7th. U.S. Army takes Mannheim. Germans begin retreat in north.</p>	<p><b>1945 March</b></p> <p>20. Partisans begin offensive in Yugoslavia.</p>	<p><b>1945 March</b></p> <p>18. Zhukov takes Kolberg. Tolbukhin and Malinovsky renew offensive.</p> <p>29. Tolbukhin enters Austria.</p> <p>30. Rokossovsky takes Danzig.</p>	<p><b>1945 March</b></p> <p>27. Last V.2 rocket lands in England.</p>
<p><b>April</b></p> <p>1. British proposals for future sent to Washington. 1st. and 9th. U.S. Armies join near Lippstadt.</p> <p>2. 1st. French Army crosses Rhine near Karlsruhe. Battle of Ruhr begins. Eisenhower issues new directive.</p>	<p><b>April</b></p>	<p><b>April</b></p>	<p><b>April</b></p>



WAR AT SEA	S.E. ASIA AND CHINA	PACIFIC	MISCELLANEOUS
<p><b>1945 March</b></p> <p>23-20th April. British Pacific Fleet employed in bombardment of Ryukyus.</p>	<p><b>1945 March</b></p> <p>21. 14th. Army clears Mandalay.</p> <p>25. Cocos Islands taken unopposed.</p> <p>28. 14th. Army clears Meiktila area.</p> <p>30. Northern forces' advance ends.</p>	<p><b>1945 March</b></p> <p>Mid onwards. Bombardment of Ryukyus, and landing on Iwo Jima.</p>	<p><b>1945 March</b></p> <p>23. British advised by their representatives in Washington that an atomic bomb likely to be ready by late summer.</p>
<p><b>April</b></p>	<p><b>April</b></p> <p>2. Mountbatten decides to attack Rangoon by sea as well as by land.</p>	<p><b>April</b></p> <p>1. Americans land on Okinawa.</p>	<p><b>April</b></p>

N.W. EUROPE	MEDITERRANEAN	EASTERN FRONT	AIR WAR
<p><b>1945 April</b></p> <p>4. 1st. U.S. Army takes Kassel.</p> <p>6. British cross Ems river and canal.</p> <p>11. 1st. U.S. Army reaches river Mulde. 3rd. U.S. Army takes Weimar.</p> <p>12. 9th U.S. Army takes Brunswick, and crosses river Elbe.</p> <p>14. Eisenhower prepares to halt on river Elbe and consolidate his flanks.</p> <p>16-18. British and Eisenhower discuss future.</p> <p>18. Battle of Ruhr ends. British take Soltau and Lüneburg. British close on Hamburg. 9th. U.S. Army takes Magdeburg. 3rd. U.S. Army reaches Czechoslovak border.</p> <p>19. 1st. U.S. Army takes Leipzig.</p>	<p><b>1945 April</b></p> <p>4. Yugoslav Partisans take Bihac.</p> <p>6. Partisans clear Sarajevo.</p> <p>9. 8th. Army in Italy opens offensive.</p> <p>14. 8th Army takes Bastia and Imola. 5th Army in Italy opens main offensive.</p>	<p><b>1945 April</b></p> <p>7. Malinovsky reaches outskirts of Vienna.</p> <p>9. Russians take Königsberg.</p> <p>13. Malinovsky clears Vienna.</p> <p>Mid-late. Germans retreat through western Carpathians.</p> <p>17. Russians renew offensive in central sector.</p>	<p><b>1945 April</b></p> <p>9-10. 'Admiral Scheer' sunk by bombing.</p>

WAR AT SEA	S.E. ASIA AND CHINA	PACIFIC	MISCELLANEOUS
<p><b>1945 April</b></p> <p>9-10. 'Admiral Scheer' sunk by bombing.</p>	<p><b>1945 April</b></p> <p>3. J.C.S. announce they will not transfer U.S. aircraft from S.E. Asia to China, other than for transport of forces, before 1st. June.</p> <p>First week. 14th. Army begins attacks towards Rangoon.</p> <p>10. Japanese start retreating towards Rangoon.</p> <p>13. 15th. Corps takes Taungup, in Arakan.</p> <p>19. 14th. Army takes Magwe.</p>	<p><b>1945 April</b></p> <p>6. J.C.S. issue new directive on Commands to MacArthur and Nimitz.</p> <p>13. J.C.S. propose attack by British and Australians on North Borneo.</p> <p>J.C.S. propose revision of Command boundaries in S.W. Pacific.</p>	<p><b>1945 April</b></p> <p>12. British C.O.S. agree to plan for war against Germany ending by 31st. May. President Roosevelt dies.</p>

N.W. EUROPE	MEDITERRANEAN	EASTERN FRONT	AIR WAR
<p><b>1945 April</b></p> <p>20. Canadians clear most of N.E. Holland. 7th. U.S. Army takes Nuremberg. C.C.S. send instructions to Eisenhower for temporary demarcation with Russians.</p> <p>21. 1st. French Army takes Stuttgart.</p> <p>22-4. French reach Swiss frontier. 7th. U.S. Army crosses Danube.</p> <p>24. French take Ulm.</p> <p>25. Americans meet Russians at Torgau. Himmler's offer of surrender reaches London.</p> <p>26. British take Bremen. 3rd. U.S. Army takes Regensburg.</p> <p>28. 7th. U.S. Army takes Augsburg.</p> <p>29. British cross river Elbe near Lauenburg.</p>	<p><b>1945 April</b></p> <p>20. 5th. Army reaches Lombard Plain.</p> <p>21. 5th. Army takes Bologna.</p> <p>22-3. 5th. and 8th. Armies reach river Po.</p> <p>25. 5th. Army takes Verona. Yugoslav Partisans attack Fiume. Alexander proposes to put troops into Istria.</p> <p>27. 8th. Army crosses river Adige. Germans begin to surrender in Italy. Yugoslav Partisans take Brod.</p> <p>28. Mussolini killed.</p> <p>29. Germans sign terms of surrender in Italy, to take effect from 2nd. May.</p>	<p><b>1945 April</b></p> <p>20. Goering and Himmler leave Berlin.</p> <p>22. Hitler decides to stay in Berlin.</p> <p>25. Russians enter Stettin, encircle Berlin, and meet Americans at Torgau. Russians inform Eisenhower of their intention to take Prague.</p>	<p><b>1945 April</b></p>

WAR AT SEA	S.E. ASIA AND CHINA	PACIFIC	MISCELLANEOUS
<p><b>1945 April</b></p>	<p><b>1945 April</b></p> <p>21. 14th. Army takes Pynmana.</p> <p>22. 14th. Army takes Yenangyaung.</p> <p>25. 14th. Army reaches Pyu.</p> <p>29. 14th. Army reaches Pegu. Rains break.</p>	<p><b>1945 April</b></p> <p>22. Campaign in central Philippines ends.</p>	<p><b>1945 April</b></p> <p>25. San Francisco Conference of United Nations opens. President Truman first considers in detail possibility of dropping atomic bomb.</p>

N.W. EUROPE	MEDITERRANEAN	EASTERN FRONT	AIR WAR
<p><b>1945 April</b></p> <p>30. Eisenhower arranges for relief of Dutch. 7th. U.S. Army takes Munich. P.M. suggests Americans should take Prague.</p> <p>End. Canadians advance on Wilhelmshaven.</p>	<p><b>1945 April</b></p> <p>30. Partisans reach suburbs of Trieste. Alexander informs Tito of his intentions.</p>	<p><b>1945 April</b></p> <p>30. Hitler shoots himself.</p>	<p><b>1945 April</b></p>
<p><b>May</b></p> <p>2. British meet Russians at Wismar. British take Lübeck.</p> <p>3. British take Hamburg. 7th. U.S. Army takes Innsbruck. French in Austria.</p> <p>4. Germans sign terms of surrender in northern sector, to take effect from 5th. 3rd. U.S. Army prepares to attack Pilsen. 7th. U.S. Army joins 7th. U.S. Army takes Salzburg.</p> <p>5. Russians ask Eisenhower to halt in Czechoslovakia.</p> <p>6. Eisenhower halts in Czechoslovakia.</p> <p>7. Germans sign terms of surrender to Allies, to take effect on 9th. P.M. again suggests Western Allies take Prague.</p>	<p><b>May</b></p> <p>1. Partisans meet Allied troops at Monfalcone.</p> <p>2. Partisans receive Germans' surrender in Trieste. German surrender in Italy takes effect.</p> <p>5th. Army from Italy.</p>	<p><b>May</b></p> <p>2. Russians meet British at Wismar. Berlin surrenders.</p> <p>5. Russians ask Eisenhower to halt in Czechoslovakia.</p> <p>7. Russians take Breslau.</p>	<p><b>May</b></p>

WAR AT SEA	S.E. ASIA AND CHINA	PACIFIC	MISCELLANEOUS
<p><b>1945 April</b></p>	<p><b>1945 April</b></p>	<p><b>1945 April</b></p>	<p><b>1945 April</b></p> <p>30. British in Washington confirm that an atomic bomb will be ready by August, and may then be used against Japan.</p>
<p><b>May</b></p> <p>1-25. British Pacific Fleet employed in bombardment of Ryukyus.</p>	<p><b>May</b></p> <p>1. Japanese leave Rangoon.</p> <p>2. 14th. Army takes Promc. Seaborne attack launched on Rangoon.</p> <p>4. Mountbatten submits new plans for operations in Malaya to British C.O.S.</p> <p>6. Troops from Rangoon join 14th Army south of Pegu.</p>	<p><b>May</b></p> <p>Throughout. Americans fighting in Okinawa.</p> <p>1. Australians land at Tarakan, in North Borneo.</p> <p>First week. Discussions begin in London on British rôle in invasion of Japan.</p>	<p><b>May</b></p>

N.W. EUROPE	MEDITERRANEAN	EASTERN FRONT	AIR WAR
<b>1945 May</b>	<b>1945 May</b>	<b>1945 May</b>	<b>1945 May</b>
<b>9. RATIFICATION OF GERMAN TERMS OF SURRENDER IN BERLIN</b>			
<b>June</b>	<b>June</b>	<b>June</b>	<b>30. Americans offer base in Luzon for British bombing force.</b> <b>June</b>
<b>July</b>	<b>July</b>	<b>July</b>	<b>July</b>



WAR AT SEA	S.E. ASIA AND CHINA	PACIFIC	MISCELLANEOUS
<b>1945 May</b>	<b>1945 May</b>	<b>1945 May</b>	<b>1945 May</b>
9. RATIFICATION OF GERMAN TERMS OF SURRENDER IN BERLIN			
<b>June</b>	<p>Mid onwards. Japanese contained N.E. and S.E. of Rangoon.</p> <p><b>June</b></p> <p>1. Mountbatten reports intention to attack Singapore on 9th. September.</p> <p>7. J.C.S. suggest revision of boundaries between S.E.A.C. and S.W.P.A.</p>	<p>30. Americans offer base in Luzon for British bombing force.</p> <p><b>June</b></p> <p>10. Australians and Americans land at Brunei Bay, in North Borneo.</p> <p>14-21. Discussions on future plans for Pacific held in Washington.</p> <p>21. Main fighting ends on Okinawa.</p> <p>29. President approves plans for invasion of Kyushu on 1st. November.</p> <p><b>July</b></p> <p>1. Australians and Americans land at Balik Papan, in North Borneo.</p> <p>2. Stimson's memorandum on the 'Proposed Program for Japan'.</p> <p>4. P.M. approves British plans for participation in invasion of Japan.</p>	<p>23. 'Caretaker Government' formed in Britain.</p> <p><b>June</b></p> <p>26. World Security Charter signed at San Francisco.</p> <p><b>July</b></p> <p>1. British consent to dropping of an atomic bomb.</p>
<b>July</b>	<b>July</b>	<b>July</b>	<b>July</b>

WAR AT SEA	S.E. ASIA AND CHINA	PACIFIC	MISCELLANEOUS
<p><b>1945 July</b></p> <p>Mid-late. British Pacific Fleet employed in bombarding Japanese Home Islands.</p>	<p><b>1945 July</b></p>	<p><b>1945 July</b></p> <p>5. Main fighting ends in Philippines.</p> <p>Mid onwards. Bombardment of Japanese Home Islands.</p>	<p><b>1945 July</b></p> <p>5. General Election in Britain.</p> <p>16. Atomic bomb exploded in test at Alamagordo.</p>
17. POTSDAM CONFERENCE BEGINS			
<p><b>August</b></p>	<p><b>August</b></p> <p>2. C.C.S. send new directive to Mountbatten.</p>	<p><b>August</b></p> <p>17. Americans agree to British participation in invasion of Japan.</p> <p>26. 'Potsdam Declaration' broadcast.</p>	<p><b>August</b></p> <p>26. Labour Government takes office in Britain.</p>
2. POTSDAM CONFERENCE ENDS			
		<p>6. First atomic bomb dropped on Hiroshima.</p> <p>8. Russia declares war on Japan, to be effective from 9th.</p> <p>9. Second atomic bomb dropped on Nagasaki.</p>	
14. JAPANESE GOVERNMENT SURRENDERS			
<p><b>September</b></p>	<p><b>September</b></p> <p>12. Japanese sign terms of surrender for S.E. Asia, in Singapore.</p>	<p><b>September</b></p> <p>2. Japanese sign general terms of surrender in Tokyo Bay.</p>	<p><b>September</b></p>

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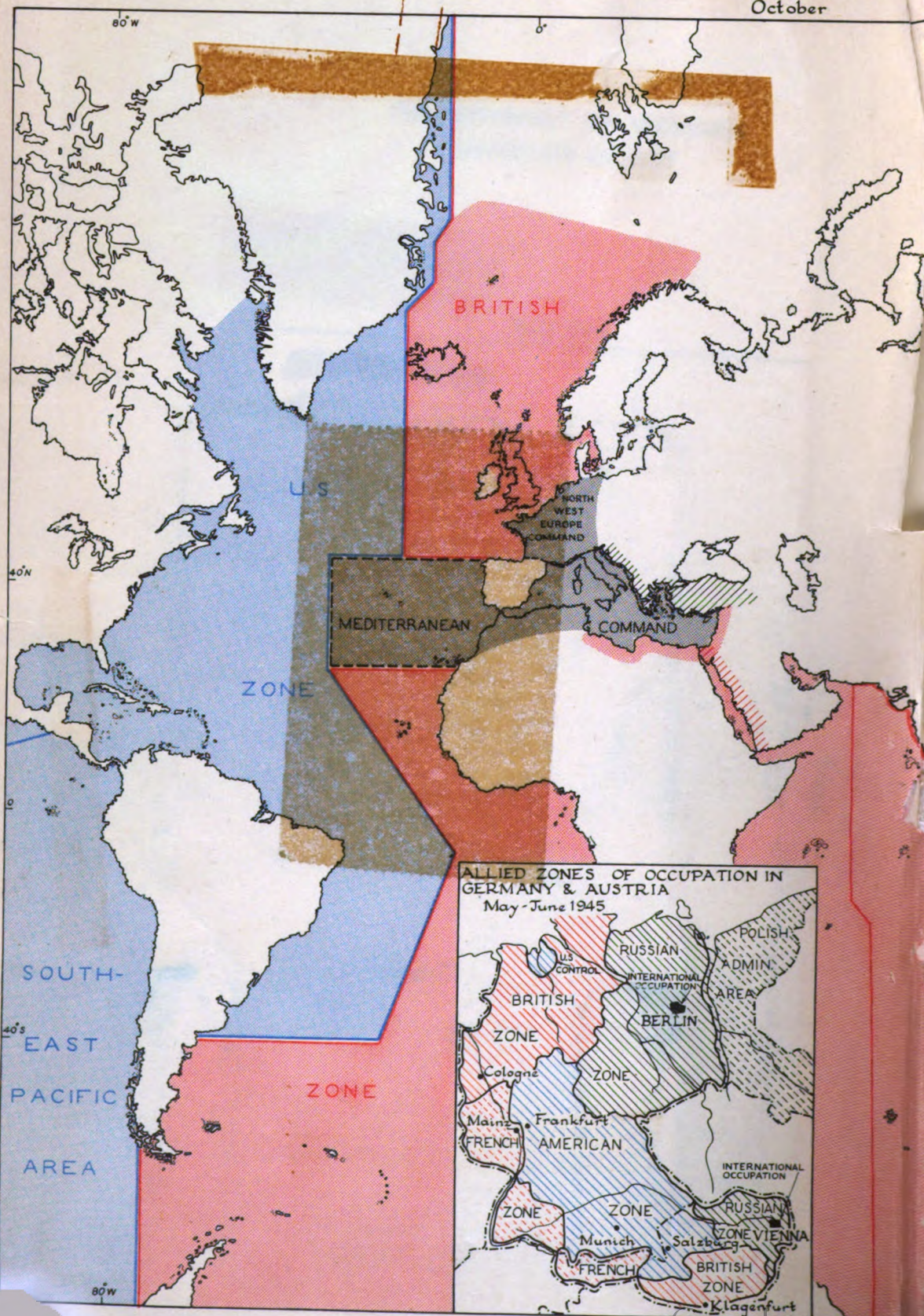
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