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HISTORICAL SECTION (G.S.)

ARMY HEADQUARTERS

5 Mar 52

The Preliminary Planning for Operation "OVERLORD": Some Aspects of the Preparations for an Allied Re-entry to North-West Europe, 1940-1944

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1. The present report is a brief account, in very broad outline, of the preliminary planning for the Allied invasion of North-West Europe which began with the landings on the coast of Normandy during the night of 5-6 Jun 44. The scope and ramifications of this great operation ("OVERLORD") -- the largest and most complicated operation in the history of warfare -- are so vast that no attempt can be made here to discuss any aspects of the planning in detail. Considerations of time and space preclude all but brief mention of such very important aspects as the administrative planning, the logistics and the relationship of military to civil authorities. Similarly, this outline does not pretend to do more than suggest the principal contributions made to the invasion plans by the different Services; nor has any attempt been made to provide more than a very general assessment of the overall contributions made by the principal Allied Powers. The viewpoint adopted throughout the narrative has been strictly "operational" in the sense of attempting to describe the solutions which were found to those perpetual problems of warfare: where to attack; when to attack and how to attack.

2. To the extent that some emphasis has been allowed, the background of planning has been considered with special reference to the evolution of a combined assault technique for "NEPTUNE", the assault phase of "OVERLORD". In this connection, the narrative will endeavour to describe and estimate the role and influence of the Canadian contribution to the Allied cause.

3. The present account deals only with the preliminary planning leading up to, but not including, the Initial Joint Plan (1 Feb 44) which was finally adopted and successfully executed. Consequently, this report is not concerned with that plan (described in Hist Sec (C.M.H.Q.) Report No. 147), except to the extent that certain fundamentals were influenced by the earlier planning.

4. The object has been to provide an explanatory index to a portion of the very considerable mass of material, unpublished as well as published, which already exists on this subject. Apart from published despatches, memoirs and other works (1), this narrative is based principally upon research carried out on various official records in London. Draft narratives, dealing wholly or in part with the subject, have been studied at the Historical Section, Cabinet Office, and at the Air Historical

Branch, Air Ministry. Papers in the important and voluminous 21st Army Group "Top Secret" series, at the Archival Branch of the Cabinet Office, have been examined carefully; some attention has also been given to papers in the G.H.Q. Home Forces "Overlord" series at the Archival Branch (2). Additional research has been carried out at Combined Operations Headquarters. A close study of the British records of the principal Anglo-American Conferences, held at intervals during the war, has provided indispensable material on the most significant issues of grand strategy (3). Finally, it should be noted that this narrative has been prepared without access to any unpublished records of the United States of America, although this void has been partially filled by the recent publication of Gordon A. Harrison's United States Army in World War II: The European Theater of Operations: Cross-Channel Attack (Washington, D.C., 1951).

THE BACKGROUND

5. From the earliest times the inhabitants of the British Isles have been accustomed, indeed compelled, to study the implications of offensive and defensive operations across the English Channel. This narrow strip of turbulent water - at once an invitation and a warning - has invariably exercised a magnetic influence on the sea-minded peoples and nations of Western and Mediterranean Europe. Norsemen and Romans, Normans and French, Spaniards and Dutchmen and, of course, Germans have all considered, at one time or another, the problems connected with the launching of an amphibious attack across the Narrow Seas. The reverse is also true: down through the centuries the people of the British Isles have frequently planned and executed seaborne operations against their neighbours on the Continent. To take but two examples, the campaigns which led to Crécy and Agincourt were founded on solutions to the problem of cross-Channel attack. Later, the disastrous expedition against Walcheren (1809), and in a wider sphere, the controversial attack at Gallipoli (1915), emphasized the need for the most careful study of the special problems of combined operations.

6. It would be a great mistake to assume that, down through the centuries, there has been any fundamental change in the essential problems of launching an operation across the English Channel. Whether in 1066 or in 1944, those essential problems were the same - namely, the selection of a suitable target area; the timing of the operation and the method of conveying the assaulting force (that is, the type and availability of suitable landing craft). Furthermore, it may be noted that the final decisions of both William the Conqueror at St. Valery, and General Eisenhower at Portsmouth, depended on the same overruling consideration - the very great difficulty of predicting suitable weather in the Channel

area during the period of the operation. On this question of the timing of a cross-Channel attack it is interesting to note the opinion expressed in 1846 by the Duke of Wellington on a French invasion of England:

> They start at midnight, and arrive off our coast just before sunrise. The dawn, which renders everything clear to them, will not enable us to observe what they are about. They will have a full half-hour of light before we shall be able to distinguish between the line of beach and the line of sea; far less to observe boats in motion. And let me tell you, that in calm weather, and with preparations well settled beforehand, a great deal may be done towards throwing troops ashore on an open beach in half an hour. (4)

As will be seen, the precise timing of a cross-Channel attack in relation to "nautical twilight" was still a vital aspect of the planning for "NEPTUNE". Even modern methods of transporting an amphibious force are not altogether dissimilar from those employed in former times. Field-Marshal Montgomery has referred to "an old print showing a British Army landing in France in 1260, under Henry III; it shows the horses being put on the beach from a 'Landing Ship Horse', which looks very like our present 'Landing Ship Tank'." (5)

7. Although the essential problems of a cross-Channel attack remained the same in 1944, there was one great difference between "OVERLORD" and all the large-scale amphibious operations which had preceded the War of 1939-1945. That difference may be summed up in two words: Air Power. The Allied Air Forces made a tremendous contribution to the planning of "OVERLORD". Here it will suffice to point out that this contribution extended to widespread aerial reconnaissance in aid of Intelligence; to strategical bombardment of enemy-held Europe on an unprecedented scale; and to plans for crippling the German Air Force, for dropping large airborne formations in the target area and for neutralizing the enemy's defences before, during and after the critical period of the assault. Never before had plans been made for the exercise of Air Power on such a scale. It is, therefore, not surprising that, even in the earliest days of planning for "OVERLORD", the Allied Air Forces exerted a significant influence on the fundamental problems of where, when and how to make the cross-Channel attack.

THE ORIGINS OF PRE-INVASION PLANNING, 1940

8. There is no need, here, to describe the early phases of the War of 1939-1945 - the swift German campaign in Poland, the long static period of "Maginot Line" warfare and the sudden resumption of mobile operations in the spring of 1940, when the enemy's ruthless blitzkrieg forced the rapid capitulation of Denmark, Norway,

the Netherlands, Belgium and France. For the purposes of this narrative, the beginning of preparations for the Allied re-entry to North-West Europe may be considered to date from the last day of Operation "DYNAMO", the evacuation of British and Allied troops from Dunkirk. On that day (4 Jun 40) the British Prime Minister, Mr. Winston Churchill, wrote a characteristic statement of policy from which the following passage is taken:

> The completely defensive habit of mind which has ruined the French must not be allowed to ruin all our initiative. It is of the highest consequence to keep the largest numbers of German forces all along the coasts of the countries they have conquered, and we should immediately set to work to organize raiding forces on these coasts where the populations are friendly. Such forces might be composed of self-contained, thoroughly-equipped units of say one thousand up to not more than ten thousand when combined. Surprise would be ensured by the fact that the destination would be concealed until the last moment. What we have seen at Dunkirk shows how quickly troops can be moved off (and I suppose on to) selected points if need be. How wonderful it would be if the Germans could be made to wonder where they were going to be struck next, instead of forcing us to try to wall in the Island and roof it over! An effort must be made to shake off the mental and moral prostration to the will and initiative of the enemy from which we suffer. (6)

Thus, even at a time when the last troops were being extricated from the fury of Dunkirk, when the capitulation of France was rapidly moving from a possibility to a certainty, and when nothing but the prospect of even greater disaster loomed ahead, the British Prime Minister was urging offensive operations against the enemy-held coast. It is true that Mr. Churchill's statement referred to "raiding forces" and not to an all-out invasion of the Continent which, of course, was quite impossible at this time; but it was the planning and the experience of just these "raiding forces" which, throughout the following years contributed to the evolution of a plan for the launching of "OVERLORD" on so large a scale in June 1944. As Mr. Churchill, himself, commented on the statement quoted above: "Out of it gradually sprang a policy" (7) In the evolution of that policy it is not possible to divorce the plans which were made for "raiding forces" from those which led to the adoption of the final plan for "OVERLORD".

9. Although the question of an Allied re-entry to Europe did not arise until the evacuation of Dunkirk, it must be remembered that, even before the outbreak of war, some experience of amphibious operations had been acquired. In the United Kingdom the first "Inter-Service Manual, on Coastal Operations and Command" had been compiled well before the war and, in 1938, an "Inter-Service Training and Development Centre" had been organized, responsible directly to the Chiefs of Staff Committee, with specific instructions "to study and advance the technique of combined operations" (8). The I.S.T.D.C. did valuable work. It was responsible for producing the L.C.A., or "Landing Craft Assault" ("a 10-ton lightly armoured craft, able to land troops in 18 inches of water"), the L.C.S., or "Landing Craft Support" (similar to the L.C.A. in design, but intended to produce smoke screens) and the L.C.M., or "Landing Craft Mechanized" ("a 20-ton craft, capable of landing a vehicle or stores in shallow water") (9). In spite of this work, which included a report on what ships could be converted to "Infantry Assault ships", the I.S.T.D.C. was promptly disbanded at the outbreak of war - the explanation being that "there would be no combined operations in this war"! (10).

10. In considering the experience which had been obtained before the evacuation of Dunkirk, mention must also be made of the fruitless Narvik operation of April 1940. It is unnecessary, in this narrative, to discuss the reason for, and the execution of, this operation - beyond noting that the 1st Canadian Division, recently arrived in the United Kingdom under the command of Major-General A.G.L. McNaughton, had prepared for a co-ordinated attack against the port of Trondhjem and that this "desperate venture" was afterwards cancelled (11). However, at this point, attention may be drawn briefly to the "lessons" of the Narvik operation as they are described by a British naval participant:

> First, the importance of following the policy outlined in the Manual of Combined Operations on the subject of Command.
>
> Second, the need for clear instructions to the Commanders taking part in a combined operation.
>
> Third, the importance of proper planning by the staffs of all three Services in collaboration....
>
> Fourth, the real importance of proper training for troops and sailors alike...
>
> Fifth, the importance of loading an expeditionary force tactically and not giving it a fresh role once it had sailed.
>
> Sixth, the need for proper equipment in landing craft, in maps and in intelligence.
>
> Seventh, the degree to which aircraft might be expected to influence naval, landing and military operations.

> And finally, providing the craft, special equipment and adequate fighter protection are available, a landing on a hostile shore is as practicable to-day as it was in the year 1759 when a landing at an almost impossible place gave us Quebec and Canada. (12)

These lessons, and many new ones, were the subject of meticulous scrutiny during the four years which elapsed between the evacuation of Dunkirk and the launching of "OVERLORD".

11. Throughout the fateful summer of 1940, the British Prime Minister persisted in his efforts for "a vigorous, enterprising and ceaseless offensive against the whole German-occupied coastline"; he issued specific directives such as the following: "Tanks and A.F.V.s [Armoured Fighting Vehicles] must be made in flat-bottomed boats, out of which they can crawl ashore, do a deep raid inland, cutting a vital communication, and then back, leaving a trail of German corpses behind them" (13). As a direct result of the offensive spirit engendered by the Prime Minister, the "Commandos" were organized for raiding purposes. Henceforth, they were to have an increasingly important role in operations against the Continent. Moreover, although the Allies had suffered so shattering a defeat on the Continent - and had lost so much valuable equipment at Dunkirk - the preparations for offensive operations across the Channel were given increased impetus. Small-scale and, of necessity, ineffectual raids were carried out during the summer against the French coast south of Boulogne, and against the island of Guernsey. "If little was in fact done it did prove that raids were practicable" (14). A more ambitious expedition was despatched against Dakar (23-25 Sep). Although a failure, this effort did serve to underline "the difficulties of combined operations, especially where allies are involved" (15). It also contributed an important lesson for future operations: "the importance of having a headquarters ship which would not be drawn off to battle at the critical moment when the landing was being made" (16).

12. Work was also proceeding on the development of amphibious craft. By October 1940 the first L.C.T., or "Landing Craft Tank" ("a craft of 300 tons able to ferry vehicles and stores across a channel or from ships to the beach") was undergoing its trials; this was later followed by the building of the L.S.T., or "Landing Ship Tank" ("a ship of 3,000 tons capable of landing 500 tons and more of tanks, vehicles and stores".) (17).

13. Apart from all this activity, Mr. Churchill had taken two important decisions during the summer of 1940. The first, which had a fundamental influence on all later planning for the invasion of North-West Europe,

was the creation in July of a separate Combined Operations Command, under Admiral of the Fleet Sir Roger Keyes. This Command was placed directly under the Chiefs of Staff "for the study and exercise of this form of warfare" (18). The Command, afterwards Combined Operations Headquarters (19), was to make an immense contribution to pre-invasion planning. The second decision affected the Joint Planning Committee (the principal planning organization) which, hitherto, had worked under the Chiefs of Staff. Mr. Churchill now (August 1940) issued instructions for the Committee to come directly under him, in his joint capacity as Minister of Defence. The Prime Minister clarified the new arrangements in a minute to the Secretary of State for War:

> There is no question of the Joint Planning Committee 'submitting military advice' to me. They are merely to work out plans in accordance with directions which I shall give. The advice as to whether these plans or any variants of them should be adopted will rest as at present with the Chiefs of Staff. (20)

It will be apparent that the functions of the Joint Planning Committee were not, by any means, restricted to planning for cross-Channel operations.

14. The first reference to a plan for a return to the Continent in force was contained in a Note, dated 5 Oct 40, from the Joint Planning Staff to the Chiefs of Staff Committee. After pointing out that "a list of future operational plans in order of priority" had been submitted to the Prime Minister, and that he had "expressed his general agreement", the Joint Planning Staff referred to "the establishment of a bridgehead in France, e.g. - on the Gironde or in Brittany and the Cherbourg Peninsula, from which subsequent offensive operations could be launched" (21). The "basic assumptions" of this plan were:

> The local populations of these areas are ready to assist an invading British Force.
>
> The German land and air force are still in being but their mobility and fighting value has been reduced to the extent of weakening their powers of resistance in theatres distant from Germany and their control over occupied France. (22)

15. There is no need to stress the fact that, although prophetic, the second assumption was an exceedingly optimistic one in October 1940. At that time, and for many months to come, the British Commonwealth stood alone, in magnificent but precarious

isolation, against the Berlin-Rome Axis. The aerial Battle of Britain had been won and the immediate danger of a German invasion had subsided. Contrary to French military opinion, the neck of the English "chicken" had not been wrung (23). Nevertheless, with a broken, ill-equipped Army, with no reserves of landing craft and, above all, with no powerful Allies outside the Commonwealth, the United Kingdom could not consider the early implementation of such plans as that produced by the Joint Planning Staff in October 1940. At the very most, a beginning had been made - yet the prospect was not altogether depressing. Throughout succeeding months the plan for a re-entry to the Continent (originally known as Operation "ROUNDUP")* was the subject of continuous study. Progress was also made in other directions; Mr. Churchill has written:

> By the end of 1940 we had a sound conception of the physical expression of amphibious warfare. The production of specialized craft and equipment of many kinds was gathering momentum, and the necessary formations to handle all this new material were being developed and trained under the Combined Operations Command. Special training centres for this purpose were established both at home and in the Middle East. All these ideas and their practical manifestation we presented to our American friends as they took shape. The results grew steadily across the years of struggle, and thus in good time they formed the apparatus which eventually played an indispensable part in our greatest plans and deeds. (24)

1941: AMERICAN INTERVENTION

16. From almost every point of view two events made 1941 one of the most important years of the entire war. It is difficult to imagine anything of significance, in any subsequent operations in any theatre, which was not profoundly affected by the German invasion of Russia (22 Jun) and the Japanese attack at Pearl

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*The name of this operation is also given as "ROUND-UP" and "ROUND UP" by various writers; the spelling retained throughout this narrative (except in quotations) is that adopted by General Eisenhower (Crusade in Europe).

Harbour (7 Dec). Within those six months the vast panorama of the war changed completely. Thereafter, the immeasurable resources of the United States and Russia, added to those of the British Commonwealth, were a virtual guarantee of ultimate Allied victory. Germany and Italy had gained the unpredictable, if at first impressive, assistance of Japan - but, henceforth, Russian manpower and American industry weighed in the scales against the Axis. The results were to be seen, within the following year, in the sands of El Alamein and the rubble of Stalingrad. Consequently, it is against this background of intensely dramatic developments in international affairs during 1941 that the next stage of pre-invasion planning must be seen. The entry of Russia, Japan and the United States into the war within so brief a period introduced many new factors into that planning. Of these, the most important was undoubtedly the influence which Washington now brought to bear on the projected cross-Channel operation.

17. American neutrality in the early stages of the conflict had been more apparent than real.

> The very severe shock administered to the United States by the collapse of France and the apparent imminence of a German attempt at the invasion of Britain produced certain American domestic decisions which deeply affected the ultimate outcome of the war. The United States Congress proceeded to introduce universal military service (16 September 1940), thereby laying the foundation for the great American armies which made possible the defeat of the Axis power. About the same time came the famous 'deal' by which 50 American destroyers were handed over to Britain in exchange for leases on certain Atlantic bases. A few months later the Lend-Lease legislation (approved 11 March 1941) placed the tremendous economic strength of the United States behind the countries opposing the Axis. (25)

As early as August 1940 there had been high-level military "conversations" between British and American authorities; these continued in Washington during January 1941 and resulted in the "staff agreement" known as ABC-1 (American- British Staff Conversations) of 27 Mar, which "formed the basis for Anglo-American co-operation thereafter" (26)

> The basic concept of this agreement was the determination to beat the Germans first. It was recognized that Germany

was the predominant member of the Axis and that even in a 'global' war the decisive theatre would be Europe and the Atlantic. (27)

Although, for obvious reasons, ABC-1 did not formally bind either the British or American Governments it was significant that the United States War and Navy Departments accepted these decisions "as a basis for planning in the event of U.S. participation in the war" (28)

18. The importance of ABC-1 in any stuly of pre-invasion planning will be apparent. Nearly nine months before the United States, under President Franklin D. Roosevelt, had declared war on Germany and Italy (11 Dec 41), unofficial agreement had been reached on a matter of high policy which profoundly affected the future of all Allied amphibious operations. Since Germany had been selected as the chief antagonist, it was inevitable that the possibility of cross-Channel operations would figure largely in any strategic considerations of where, when and how to attack the common enemy. Moreover, by implication, the great resources of American manpower and industry could be geared to the requirements of such large-scale operations. Although ABC-1 did not single out North-West Europe as the principal target area for a future assault - and a tremendous tug of war was to develop between the Mediterranean and the North-West Europe theatres in this connection- the agreement did give greatly increased significance to the planning of all amphibious operations based on the United Kingdom. Of these, the plans for a cross-Channel attack were ultimately of the highest importance.

19. During the early part of 1941 further progress was made in the United Kingdom with the problems of combined operations. The first Combined Training Centre was functioning at Inveraray, where it had been established in August 1940, and the first full-scale brigade exercise was carried out in February 1941 (29). Practical experience of amphibious warfare was also obtained from a small-scale raid which was carried out on 4 Mar against military and economic objectives in the Lofoten Islands (30). Yet, the true magnitude of the problem was just beginning to be realized. As the British Prime Minister afterwards observed: "In the summer of 1941 the Chiefs of Staff pointed out that the programme of landing-craft construction was related only to small-scale operations and that our ultimate return to the Continent would demand a much greater effort than we could then afford" (31). Another aspect of the same problem was the diversity of types of craft required. For amphibious operations were also being considered against such distant objectives as the Azores, the Canaries and even Pantelleria.* The problem has been

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*See, infra, para 151

described as follows:

> One battle ahead was certainly going to entail a Channel crossing, but even before that became a possibility we might want to undertake an operation in the Mediterranean. The crossing of a channel presents problems different from the crossing of a sea and these are again different from the crossing of an ocean. A channel can be crossed in small craft, shore-based fighters giving the craft fighter protection; and whereas submarines need not be greatly feared, mines and shore defences may present extremely serious obstacles. In a Mediterranean crossing the smaller craft must be carried over the sea in big ships capable of the sea passage; our shore-based fighters may not be able to give adequate protection to our ships and aircraft carriers may be needed; submarines and torpedo bombers are likely to prove a serious menace to the expedition on passage and during the landing. Mines and shore defences will not be as difficult as in a channel crossing for the enemy cannot defend thoroughly so extensive a coastline. (32)

20. The realization of these problems led to an important change in one planning authority. During the autumn of this same year, Captain Lord Louis Mountbatten was in the United States with authority to discuss the British "preparations for landings on the Continent" (and Mr. Churchill's own plans to that end) with the American President (33). Mountbatten was now recalled to London, in October 1941, to become Adviser on Combined Operations, thus succeeding Lord Keyes who had previously held the title of Director. In December the A.C.O. was placed "in command of all Landing Craft and Crews in Home Waters":

> The build-up of the amphibious fleet continued as a Joint Admiralty C.O.H.Q. responsibility, whilst the Admiralty retained the task of accustoming naval thought to the administrative and logistic requirements of amphibious forces and of seeing that these requirements were met. (34)

Thereafter, Lord Louis Mountbatten's headquarters expanded and had increasing influence on all pre-invasion planning.

21. Although not yet at war, the United States was actively co-operating with the United Kingdom in the construction of large numbers of landing craft. In a telegram of 25 Jul 41 to the American President, Mr. Churchill referred to the

advisability of plans for "coming to the aid of the conquered populations by landing armies of liberation when opportunity is ripe" and he added: "For this purpose it will be necessary not only to have great numbers of tanks, but also of vessels capable of carrying them and landing them direct on to beaches" (35).

22. Early in August 1941 the basis of British-American co-operation was further strengthened by the "Atlantic Meeting" of Prime Minister Churchill and President Roosevelt at Argentia, Newfoundland. At this meeting the two leaders confirmed the earlier understanding that, if the United States and Japan became involved in the war, Germany would be dealt with before Japan (36). Moreover, as recorded in an authoritative American account:

> The British did . . . acquaint the Americans with their own plans for the immediate and far-distant future, and among the latter was an extremely tentative and remote plan for an operation to be known as 'Roundup', an invasion of the continent of Europe. For this, 'there would not be needed vast armies on the Continent such as were required in World War I. Small forces, chiefly armoured, with their power of hard hitting, would be able quickly to win a decisive victory'. (37)

The Prime Minister also outlined "the dangers of a German incursion into the Iberian peninsula"- with the attending threat to Gibraltar - and explained the British plans (Operation "PILGRIM") for countering such action by occupying the Canary Islands (38). The latter project was to be a matter of urgent Canadian concern more than a year later (39).

23. When Japan finally struck at Pearl Harbour, and the United States entered the war, immediate steps were taken to ratify and extend the arrangements already made for Allied offensive action. Under the code name of "ARCADIA", the first of a series of important conferences held during the war by the British and American leaders and their principal Service advisers, meetings were held in Washington (22 Dec 41 - 14 Jan 42) to determine Allied strategy. This conference reaffirmed the fundamental decision to concentrate on Germany before Japan with the statement that "only the minimum of force

necessary for the safeguarding of vital interests in other theatres should be diverted from operations against Germany" (40) The United States and British Chiefs of Staff also agreed that the "essential features" of Allied grand strategy included the following:

(c) Closing and tightening the ring round Germany

(d) Wearing down and undermining German resistance by air bombardment, blockade, subversive activities and propaganda.

(e) The continuous development of offensive action against Germany. (41)

However, their conclusions contained this note on the development of land offensives on the Continent:

> It does not seem likely that in 1942 any large scale land offensive against Germany except on the Russian front will be possible. We must, however, be ready to take advantage of any opening that may result from the wearing down process . . . to conduct limited land offensives.
>
> In 1943 the way may be clear for a return to the Continent, across the Mediterranean, from Turkey into the Balkans, or by landings in Western Europe. Such operations will be the prelude to the final assault on Germany itself, and the scope of the victory programme should be such as to provide means by which they can be carried out. (42)

In the course of the discussions between the United States and British Chiefs of Staff, Field-Marshal Sir John Dill, Head of the British Staff Mission in Washington, explained that

> . . . preliminary study had been given to the landing of armies on the Continent of Europe, from which it seemed that something in the neighbourhood of fifteen to seventeen Divisions, including Armoured Divisions, would be the maximum force which could be landed and maintained if the operations were to take place towards the end of 1942 or early in 1943. Later on it might be possible to increase the forces

> up to forty Divisions, but this was not in any way a firm figure. The general idea was that it would not be possible to undertake land operations on a large scale in Europe until the Germans showed signs of cracking, and then the governing factor in the size of the forces to be employed would be transportation and maintenance. (43)

24. An enduring achievement of the "ARCADIA" Conference, having a decisive influence on subsequent planning for the invasion of North-West Europe, was the setting up of the Combined Chiefs of Staff Committee. It is not necessary here to consider in detail the organization and functions of this very important body, which "rapidly became a fully developed instrument for the co-ordination of land, sea, and air warfare in a world-wide war" (44). "It was composed of the Chiefs of Staff of the American armed forces and British permanent representatives of equal standing (in the first instance, Field-Marshal Sir John Dill and Admiral Sir Andrew Cunningham)" (45). The Combined Chiefs of Staff were to "develop and submit recommendations" for areas in which the United Nations decided "to act in concert", they were to

> (a) recommend the broad programme of requirements based on strategic considerations;
>
> (b) submit general directives as to the policy governing the distribution of available weapons of war. . .
>
> (c) settle the broad issues of priority of overseas military movements. (46)

At the great Allied strategic conferences which were held periodically throughout the war the Combined Chiefs of Staff Committee, under the direction of the British and American leaders, took decisions which were to have profound effect upon plans for the Allied re-entry to the Continent. Stemming from these decisions came the directives which ultimately decided where, when and how the tremendous assault was to be launched against the enemy across the Channel.

25. The Prime Minister's views on future strategy, at this time, were contained in three papers which he gave to President Roosevelt in Washington. The following is the author's summary of these papers:

> The first paper assembled the reasons why our main objective for the campaign of

> 1942 in the European theatre should be the occupation of the whole coastline of Africa and of the Levant from Dakar to the Turkish frontier by British and American forces. The second dealt with the measures which should be taken to regain the command of the Pacific, and specified May 1942 as the month when this could be achieved. It dwelt particularly upon the need to multiply aircraft-carriers by improvising them in large numbers. The third declared as the ultimate objective the liberation of Europe by the landing of large Anglo-American armies wherever was thought best in the German-conquered territory, and fixed the year 1943 as the date for this supreme stroke. (47)

In his third paper, "The Campaign of 1943", Mr. Churchill made further suggestions regarding an amphibious assault against the Continent:

> In principle, the landings should be made by armoured and mechanized forces capable of disembarking not at ports but on beaches, either by landing-craft or from ocean-going ships specially adapted. The potential front of attack is thus made so wide that the German forces holding down these different countries cannot be strong enough at all points. An amphibious outfit must be prepared to enable these large-scale disembarkations to be made swiftly and surely. The vanguards of the various British and American expeditions should be marshalled by the spring of 1943 in Iceland, the British Isles, and, if possible, in French Morocco and Egypt. The main body would come direct across the ocean.
>
> It need not be assumed that great numbers of men are required. If the incursion of the armoured formations is successful, the uprising of the local population, for whom weapons must be brought, will supply the corpus of the liberating offensive. Forty armoured divisions, at 15,000 men apiece, or their equivalent in tank brigades, of which Great Britain would try to produce nearly half, would amount to 600,000 men. Behind this armour another million men of all arms would suffice to wrest enormous territories from Hitler's domination. But these campaigns, once started, will require

> nourishing on a lavish scale. Our industries and training establishments should by the end of 1942 be running on a sufficient scale.
>
> Apart from the command of the sea, without which nothing is possible, the essential for all these operations is superior air-power, and for landing purposes a large development of carrier-borne aircraft will be necessary. This however is needed anyhow for the war in 1942. . . (48)

It is interesting to note that, even at this early stage of planning, the Prime Minister was thinking in terms of landings "not at ports but on beaches". This idea was to lead ultimately to the construction of the great artificial harbours known as "Mulberries" (49)

26. Even as Mr. Churchill was presenting his views at the White House on future strategy, the British Joint Planning Staff was submitting an outline plan for Operation "ROUNDUP" to the Chiefs of Staff. This was a plan "for landing a force on the Continent in the final phase" with the object of"a rapid advance into the Ruhr should there be a severe deterioration in German military power" (50) Apart from Naval and Air support, the plan required the following military commitments:

> 6 Armoured Divisions
> 6 1/3 Infantry Divisions
> 6 Army Tank Brigades
> 19 1/3 Heavy Anti-Aircraft Regiments
> 40 Light Anti-Aircraft Regiments
> Commando and special Cliff Climbing Troops
> Airborne Troops. (51)

The assault would take place on the French coast between Dieppe and Deauville. "The object would be initially to dominate an area between Calais and the Seine 75 to 100 miles deep. The invasion forces would then push north, take Antwerp and proceed into Germany across the Meuse River north of Liege" (52)

27. This early version of "ROUNDUP" was considered at a meeting of the British Chiefs of Staff Committee held on 2 Jan 42. The Chief of the Imperial General Staff, General Sir Alan Brooke, did not agree with "the tactical role allotted to the forces when established on the Continent"; but he felt that "there was much useful information in the Report which would prove of great value, irrespective of how the forces were to be employed after landing" (53). He was also of the opinion that preparations should be made for earlier action than the report contemplated (54). As a result of its deliberations, the Committee invited the Commander-in-Chief, Home Forces, in consultation with the Commander-in-Chief, Portsmouth, and the Air Officers Commanding-in-Chief, Bomber

and Fighter Commands, "to examine and comment on the Report" and "to make proposals for the preparations which should . . . [then] be put in hand" (55). The C.-in-C., Home Forces, was further invited "to prepare an outline plan for operations on the Continent in the final phase and to review the plan periodically with a view to being able to put it into effect if a sudden change in the situation should appear to warrant such a course" (56).

28. The deliberations of the Chiefs of Staff led to a significant development in pre-invasion planning. As a result of the invitation to C.-in-C., Home Forces (Lt-Gen Sir Bernard Paget), an informal planning body came into existence during the spring of 1942 which was known as the Combined Commanders. In addition to General Paget, this body originally included Vice-Admiral Sir Bertram Ramsay, C.-in-C., Portsmouth, and Air-Marshal Sir Sholto Douglas, afterwards A.O.C.-in-C., Fighter Command. Later Lord Louis Mountbatten, as Chief of Combined Operations,* and the Commanding General of United States Forces in the European Theatre were added to the group (57). For nearly a year (May 1942 - March 1943) the Combined Commanders were to exercise an important influence on all British planning for Allied operations against North-West Europe.

THE CANADIAN ROLE, 1940 - 1941

29. At this point it is necessary to digress slightly in order to outline the role of the Canadian military force in the United Kingdom during the year and a half following the evacuation of Dunkirk. That role had fluctuated with the course of events on the Continent. Reference has been made to the abortive plans for participation of the 1st Canadian Division in an amphibious attack on Trondhjem (April 1940) (58). However, up until the collapse of France, the intention had always been that the Canadians would fight in France with the British Expeditionary Force (59). Only the 1st Brigade Group of the 1st Canadian Division actually reached France during the hectic days of June 1940, and that formation was quickly withdrawn when the magnitude of the Allied disaster became apparent.

30. In the long, anxious months following June 1940, General McNaughton's command was primarily concerned with its share of the defence of Britain; but "this was the result of compelling circumstances, not of planning or negotiation" (60). During the full year which intervened before the momentous entry of Russia into the war, the threat of a German invasion of the United Kingdom was of paramount concern. Even after

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*Lord Louis Mountbatten became Chief of Combined Operations, with the rank of Vice-Admiral, on 18 Mar 42. See, infra, para 86.

Hitler attacked Russia the threat diminished slowly -- with periodic crises at different seasons of the year -- so that, although planning for such operations as "ROUNDUP" retained a theoretical interest for offensive action in the future, the immediate, practical problem was still one of defence against amphibious and airborne attack.

31. In the meantime the Canadian force had expanded with the arrival in the United Kingdom of the 2nd Canadian Division during the latter part of 1940. This led to the formation of the Canadian Corps (later the 1st Canadian Corps), under General McNaughton on Christmas Day 1940 (61). These formations were joined, during the following summer, by the 1st Canadian Army Tank Brigade and the 3rd Canadian Division. Referring to the new Corps, in a letter written to the Canadian Prime Minister during February 1941, Mr. Churchill stated: "They lie in the key positions of our National Defence" (62). The considerably increased Canadian commitment, together with the gradually decreasing threat of German invasion, led in the following summer to a reconsideration of the Canadian role.

32. As early as March 1941, when the possibility of the Canadians assuming responsibility for the defence of the coast of Sussex was under consideration, General McNaughton had told General Sir Alan Brooke (then C.-in-C. Home Forces) that he hoped "the claims of the Canadian Forces to form the spearhead of any offensive would not be forgotten" (63). General McNaughton had then received a reassuring reply. At the end of June, in the same year, a discussion between British and Canadian military representatives settled the broad question of whether the Canadian troops were "available for employment elsewhere than in the United Kingdom" (64). The War Office was advised that the Canadian Government "would consider any proposals put forward by the Government of the United Kingdom"; that the Canadian Government would be guided, to a large degree, by General McNaughton's advice, and that in the latter's opinion, while "it was not the province of the Canadian Army Overseas to initiate suggestions for its employment", he would always be prepared "to advise the Canadian Government in favour of the employment of the Canadian Forces in any theatre where the need of their services could be demonstrated by the authorities responsible for strategic planning" (65). These views were confirmed by the Canadian Prime Minister, Mr. Mackenzie King, when he stated publicly:

> Mr. Churchill understands . . . that as far as the dispositions of the troops are concerned, the Canadian Government places no restrictions whatever upon any decision that may be made, other than that the Government itself shall have the opportunity of knowing what is contemplated and an opportunity of expressing views (66).

33. From the foregoing it will be apparent that, by the summer of 1941, the way had been cleared for Canadian participation in operations against

the Continent. Although the threat of a German invasion of the United Kingdom persisted, and although there was no possibility, in the near future, of launching a large-scale amphibious attack from the British Isles, the growing Canadian military force was henceforth an important factor in long-range plans for a re-entry to the Continent. The changed policy was reflected in a discussion between General Paget and General McNaughton (6 Sep), when the possibility of Canadian participation in raids against the French coast was considered. General McNaughton welcomed the proposal but "considered it essential that each raid must have a clearly defined object and must be carefully planned down to the last detail" (67).

34. For the time being, however, there was little opportunity of active employment for the Canadian Corps outside the United Kingdom. In August and September 1941 the Canadians provided the bulk of a small Canadian-British-Norwegian force which was despatched to Spitsbergen. This expedition achieved its "modest objects" without meeting the enemy and without suffering any casualties (68). Plans were also made for two small raids against the French coast in the early months of 1942; but the lack of landing craft led to the cancellation of these operations. The main role of the Canadian Corps continued to be the defence of the Sussex coast. When the Canadian Minister of National Defence, Colonel J.L. Ralston, visited the United Kingdom in October he discussed the future operational role of the Canadian Corps with General McNaughton and the latter was compelled to state that "there was very little information available" (69).

> The Corps Commander expressed the view that 'it appeared unlikely that the Corps would be able to go abroad in the near future as part of an expeditionary force as it would weaken the position here'. It had been repeatedly impressed upon him that 'the best service which the Canadian Corps can render is in the United Kingdom until an appropriate opportunity for active employment abroad develops.' He suggested the possibility of 'raiding' on the Continent during the winter months and said that 'excluding the Spitsbergen Expedition all previous expeditions had been cancelled subsequent to plans being laid due to changes in the situation' . . . he reiterated his view that the 'best employment of the Canadian Corps for the coming winter was to remain in Great Britain', but that in the spring 'it might be practicable to participate in operations elsewhere . . . as a Corps . . .'(70)

35. Meanwhile, the strength of the Canadian Army Overseas had been steadily growing. The 5th Canadian (Armoured) Division arrived in the United

Kingdom during November 1941 and, by the end of that year, there was a total of nearly 125,000 Canadian troops in Britain (71). These developments were to lead to the formation of Headquarters First Canadian Army in the spring of 1942 -- and to a much more significant role for the Canadians in pre-invasion planning.

THE PERIOD OF ALLIED INDECISION, JANUARY - JULY 1942

36. 1942 has been described as "the climactic year of the war" -- "the pattern of the Allied grand strategy evolved only gradually; but it was in 1942 that the most vital decisions were taken" (72). Those decisions had a fundamental effect upon all aspects of the planning for an Allied return to the Continent. Viewed from this angle, the year's strategical developments may be seen as a gigantic tug-of-war between American impatience and British caution. It was a tug-of-war which was finally won by the British authorities, but only after a hard struggle lasting many months. The measure of the British success was the fact that a plan, urged in certain high-level circles at Washington, for an Allied invasion of North-West Europe in 1942 was postponed in favour of an attack in French North Africa during the same year. The significance of this new Allied adventure in the Mediterranean, in terms of planning for the cross-Channel operation, was that it ultimately delayed the launching of "OVERLORD", not merely until 1943, but until the middle of 1944.

37. The caution which characterized the official British attitude towards future operations in North-West Europe was reflected in a passage of a memorandum which Mr. Churchill wrote, in January 1942, while still in the United States.

> Hitler has had the time to prepare, perhaps in very great numbers, tank-transporting vehicles capable of landing on any beach. He has no doubt developed airborne attack by parachutes, and still more by gliders, to an extent which cannot easily be measured. The President, expressing views shared by the leading American strategists, has declared Great Britain an essential fortress of the United Nations. It is indeed the only place where the war can be lost in the critical campaign of 1942 about to open. It would be most imprudent to allow the successful defence of the British Isles to be hazarded. . . (73).

He felt that the immediate Allied object should be "the wearing down by continuous engagement of the German air-power", and he added: "Indeed, like General Grant in his last campaign, we can almost afford to lose two for one, having regard to the immense supplies now comming forward in the future" (74).

38. As already noted (supra, para 23), the "ARCADIA" Conference had reaffirmed the cardinal principle of concentrating Allied strength against Germany before dealing with Japan. It was also agreed that during 1942, German resistance would be worn down by bombardment from the air, by assistance to Russia, by blockade and by "the maintenance of the spirit of revolt in the occupied countries, and the organization of subversive movements" (75). A suggestion of Allied planning beyond 1942 was contained in the following paragraph:

> In 1943 the way may be clear for a return to the Continent, across the Mediterranean, from Turkey into the Balkans, or by landings in Western Europe. Such operations will be the prelude to the final assault on Germany itself, and the scope of the victory programme should be such as to provide means by which they can be carried out (76).

39. It was, of course, true that "offensive plans necessarily remained vague so long as the needs for defence of the United Kingdom and, after Pearl Harbour, of American bases in the Pacific absorbed not only all resources on hand but the bulk of those immediately in prospect" (77). However, it was significant that, at the "ARCADIA" Conference, President Roosevelt exhibited a keen interest in an operation called successively "GYMNAST" and "SUPER-GYMNAST" (later "TORCH") against French North Africa. At one stage it was even considered that this expedition, to consist of three British and three American divisions, could be launched as early as March 1942 (78). Although this operation did not finally take place until November of that year, it was to have a profound effect upon all planning during the intervening months for an Allied invasion of North-West Europe.

40. In the background of all Allied planning from this time forward was what Mr. Churchill has called "that harsh and despotic factor" -- shipping (79). This very great problem which, perhaps more than any other, limited the timing and development of Allied offensive action in all theatres of the war, was not limited to any one class of shipping -- although it naturally imposed a particular difficulty as regards landing craft. The crippling effect of this great problem was shown by an estimate of L.C.T. production which was prepared by the Admiralty in February 1942. This estimate revealed that "previous forecasts had been over optimistic and that by May 1943 it was calculated that only 270 of a target of 370 would be produced" (80). From an operational point of view, "this rate of production would be only just sufficient for raiding operations if no L.C.T. were used for training or for net defences at

Scapa Flow" (81). Fortunately, the enormous productive capacity of the United States was eventually able to cope with the great gap in Allied resources. Partly as a result of a special British mission sent to the United States in November 1941 -- but especially because of the representations made in Washington, during the following January, by Lord Beaverbrook (then Minister of Supply) -- President Roosevelt approved the construction of a large number of tank landing craft and vehicle ferries for British, as well as American, use (82). As American construction gathered momentum the difficult situation eased; but, throughout the two and a half years which preceded the launching of "OVERLORD", the scarcity of available shipping and landing craft was frequently the decisive factor in the consideration of Allied plans for a return to the Continent in force.

41. In the early part of 1942 the British and American planning staffs became increasingly worried about the prospects of Russian resistance to German aggression. A Brigadier-General Dwight D. Eisenhower, who was then Assistant Chief of Staff, War Plans Division, at Washington -- and who was later to become the Supreme Commander of the Allied Expeditionary Force which landed in Normandy -- wrote an appreciation which contained the following: "Russia's problem is to sustain herself during the coming summer, and she must not be permitted to reach such a precarious position that she will accept a negotiated peace, no matter how unfavourable to herself, in preference to continuation of the fight" (83). General Eisenhower noted that the two ways of assisting Russia were Lend-Lease aid and "early operations in the West to draw off from the Russian front large portions of the German Army and Air Force"; "he was dubious whether a sizable ground attack from England could be mounted soon, but at least, he thought, air operations could be initiated" (84).

42. Although General Eisenhower doubted the possibility of an early large-scale assault based on the United Kingdom, there were many in Washington (including the American Joint Planners) who "believed that a considerable land attack could be launched across the English Channel in 1942" ( ). (85). It was thought that the operation could begin between 15 July and 1 August, after a large-scale air attack ("the strategic purpose of which would be to divert the German Air Force from the east"), and that the invading force could occupy the general area of Calais - Arras - St. Quentin - Soissons - Paris - Deauville (86). An American historian has pointed out that "the critical problem of landing craft received little attention" in this plan (87). There were points of comparison between this American plan and the early British version of "ROUNDUP" which had been prepared at the end of 1941 (supra, para 26), notably as regards the general area of the proposed bridgehead in Northern France. However, there was a vast difference between the two plans as regards timing: the Americans were thinking of an attack to be made

within a period of five months, while the British Joint Planning Staff had in mind an operation "in the final phase" which would only occur after "a severe deterioration in German military power". Both plans appear to have been somewhat vague as to the actual method of mounting the assault.

43. The American plan for action in 1942 had already been formulated when, in March of that year, General McNaughton visited Washington. In the course of a discussion with the Chief of Staff of the United States Army, General McNaughton emphasized that, although the immediate task of his command was the defence of the British Isles, "he constantly kept before him the ultimate role of the Canadian Army, which was of an offensive character, namely, a landing and attack against Western Europe" (88). He reiterated these views when, on the same day (9 Mar), he had an interview with President Roosevelt. It was on this occasion that the President, after reviewing the broad field of British-American strategy, referred to the political importance of opening another front against Germany in order to assist Russia (89). At a meeting on the following day General Eisenhower stated his belief that it would be possible to open a "second front" against Germany "only by attacking Western Europe from the British Isles" (90). For his part, General McNaughton repeated his conviction that "an offensive would sooner or later have to be launched from the United Kingdom across the narrow seas" (91). In spite of this unanimity with respect to the general area of the assault, it soon became evident that there was a widening gulf between the British and American planners as regards the timing of the operation.

44. On the same day that President Roosevelt discussed the war situation with General McNaughton, the former sent a personal cable to Prime Minister Churchill stating that he was "more and more interested in plans for the establishment of a new front on the European continent this summer" (92).

> He said that such a front provided the shortest distance from the United States for supply lines of any possible front anywhere in the world, and while the development of it would undoubtedly involve heavy losses, he considered that these could be compensated by at least equal losses for the Germans and 'by compelling Hitler to divert heavy forces of all kinds from the Russian front'. (93).

Shortly afterwards (14 Mar), Mr. Harry L. Hopkins, who held what has been described as an "extra-official position of authority" (94) at Washington, wrote a memorandum for the President in which he stated: "I doubt if any single thing is as important as getting some sort of a front this summer against Germany" (95).

45. Although a section of high-level American opinion was rapidly veering towards the necessity of undertaking a large-scale operation against Germany during 1942, plans were also being made by the War Department for an invasion of the European Continent in 1943. It appears that the latter was to be "projected as the basis for the deployment of forces and as a guide for strategy" (96). This design for future operations was contained in a memorandum, warmly endorsed by both Mr. Hopkins and Mr. Henry L. Stimson (the United States Secretary of War), which General Marshall submitted to President Roosevelt at the beginning of April (97). General Marshall's memorandum focussed attention on the problem of cross-Channel operations. There were, he thought, two distinct contingencies: first, an Allied assault in force ("ROUNDUP"), which could not be mounted until the spring of 1943, as a prelude to a decisive offensive against Germany; second, a limited operation ("SLEDGE-HAMMER") which would only be justified in 1942 if either the Russian situation became desperate or if German strength in Western Europe became "critically weakened" (98).

46. The essentials of the "ROUNDUP" plan have been described as follows:

> The operation was conceived in three phases: a preparatory phase, the cross-Channel movement and seizure of bridgeheads between Le Havre and Boulogne, and, finally, consolidation and expansion of the bridgehead. Logistics set the earliest possible date for the beginning of phase two at 1 April 1943, except under emergency conditions. The preparatory phase would begin at once with the organization, arming, and overseas movement of the necessary forces. [The preliminary build-up of American forces in the United Kingdom was to be known by the code name of "BOLERO".] During the summer of 1942 small task forces would raid along the entire accessible enemy coastline. General Marshall attached great value to these preparatory raiding operations which he defined as the 'establishment of a preliminary active front.' He thought they might serve to draw German troops from the east and so 'be of some help to Russia.' They might also be useful for deception either in persuading the Germans that no all-out offensive would be attempted or else in keeping them on tenterhooks for fear that any one of the raids might develop into a full-scale invasion . . . .
>
> The main attack in the spring of 1943 was planned to employ 48 divisions supported by 5,800 combat aircraft. Landings would take place between Etretat north of Le Havre and Cap Gris Nez with the object of seizing the lower valley of

> the Somme and the high ground forming the watersheds of the Seine-Somme river system. Two main assaults were planned, on either side of the mouth of the Somme. The bridgeheads would be expanded to the south-west in order to seize Le Havre and the line of the Seine River . . . . The main purpose of the Marshall Memorandum was to pin down a strategic idea sufficiently so that production, training and troop allocations and movement could be 'co-ordinated to a single end'. There was time for planning, but none for delaying the basic decision. (99)

This version of "ROUNDUP" proposed an attack in a target area considerably north of that afterwards selected and more than a year earlier than eventually was possible.

47. While "ROUNDUP" was intended to be a deliberate attack on a massive scale, "SLEDGEHAMMER" was thought of as an emergency operation to take place only in either of the contingencies already mentioned. Of these, the possibility of a Russian crisis heavily outweighed any prospect of weakened German strength in 1942. The British Chiefs of Staff were also considering "SLEDGEHAMMER" in March of that year and it was significant that they defined the object of the operation as: "To assist the Russians as much as possible by forcing Germany to divert the maximum sea, land and air forces from the Eastern front" (100). When they considered plans for an operation in the Pas de Calais, Le Havre, Channel Islands or Cherbourg Peninsula areas, it was stated that the examination had been based "on the assumption that we should attempt to maintain a permanent bridgehead on the Continent" ~~(101).~~ (101). The difficulties were emphasized by the C.I.G.S.

> SIR ALAN BROOKE said that, even assuming it was tactically possible to establish a bridgehead, it seemed most unlikely that we should be able to hold it indefinitely against the forces which the Germans could eventually bring against us. We could not afford to lose a force of this size consisting of our best trained units and armed with special types of equipment, including the latest cruiser tanks, which it would take some time to replace. He suggested that the object might be achieved by a raiding operation with an even more reduced scale of vehicles and that this would prove less expensive in the shipping and naval resources which would be required for maintenance. (102)

Throughout the next four months the possibilities of "ROUNDUP" and "SLEDGEHAMMER" were uppermost in the minds of the senior Service representatives in both London and Washington.

48. Although he continued to be interested in the possibility of a North African operation, President Roosevelt approved the War Department's plans for North-West Europe (103). He then despatched Mr. Hopkins and General Marshall to London for consultation with Mr. Churchill and his advisers (8-15 Apr 42). The British reaction to the American plan has been summarized by Mr. Churchill in these words:

> We were all relieved by the evident strong American intention to intervene in Europe, and to give the main priority to the defeat of Hitler. This had always been the foundation of our strategic thought. On the other hand, neither we nor our professional advisers could devise any practical plan for crossing the Channel with a large Anglo-American army and landing in France before the late summer of 1943. (104)

In short, the "ROUNDUP" plan met with general approval; but there were misgivings over "SLEDGEHAMMER".

49. The highlight of this London Conference was a meeting of the American representatives with the Defence Committee (Operations) of the British War Cabinet at 10, Downing Street, on the night of 14-15 Apr.

> Churchill said that the enormous preparations for the trans-Channel operations that would have to go forward in the United Kingdom would hardly escape the attention of the enemy, particularly in and around the ports of Southern England which were so readily accessible to German reconnaissance planes. However, this problem might well be overcome by obscuring the true objectives of the enterprise in a cloud of rumours. He said: 'With the whole coast of Europe from the North Cape to Bayonne [the French-Spanish border] open to us, we should contrive to deceive the enemy as to the weight, timing, method, and the direction of our attack.'. . .
>
> General Marshall then spoke, expressing the great relief that he and Hopkins felt that agreeement had been reached on basic principles for a frontal assault on the enemy in Northern France in 1943. In the meantime, he said, much would depend upon the development and intensification of the air offensive against Germany, and he also emphasized the desirability of repeated Commando-type raids all along the coast, not only for the purpose of harassing and confusing the enemy, but, even more importantly, to give our own troops combat experience. He foresaw no shortage of troops for the major operation, but he did believe there would be difficulty in making available the necessary shipping, naval escorts, landing-craft, and aircraft. However, these were problems to be faced in the United States, and he and Hopkins were confident they would be solved.

> Marshall spoke at some length of the possibility that they might be compelled to launch the emergency operation, known as SLEDGEHAMMER, some time before the autumn of 1942. If this were necessary, he said, the American contribution in troops would necessarily be a modest one, since there was not enough shipping to transport a substantial force across the Atlantic within the next five months. He said that the President was opposed to any premature operation, involving such great risks, but that if such an operation were made necessary by developments on the Russian Front, American troops should take part in it to the fullest possible extent. (105)

50. The crux of the "SLEDGEHAMMER" problem, as afterwards described by Mr. Churchill, was as follows:

> I was in complete accord with what Hopkins called 'a frontal assault upon the enemy in northern France in 1943'. But what was to be done in the interval? The main armies could not simply be preparing all that time. Here there was a wide diversity of opinion. General Marshall had advanced the proposal that we should attempt to seize Brest or Cherbourg, preferably the latter, or even both, during the early autumn of 1942. The operation would have to be almost entirely British. The Navy, the air, two-thirds of the troops, and such landing craft as were available must be provided by us. Only two or three American divisions could be found. These, it must be remembered, were very newly raised. It takes at least two years and a very strong professional cadre to form first-class troops. The enterprise was therefore one on which British Staff opinion would naturally prevail. Clearly there must be an intensive technical study of the problem.
>
> Nevertheless I by no means rejected the idea at the outset; but there were other alternatives which lay in my mind. (106)

The "other alternatives" which the British Prime Minister was considering were operations against French North-West Africa ("GYMNAST", later known as "TORCH") and the liberation of Northern Norway ("JUPITER") as a "direct aid to Russia"; in his words:

> My own choice was for "Torch", and if I could have had my full way I should have tried "Jupiter" also in 1942.