

pre-invasion planning. The planning and training for "JUBILEE" (the code word for the raid as executed) will, therefore, be reviewed in very broad outline and the narrative will then pass directly to a consideration of the influence which the operation had on later planning for "OVERLORD".

105. Preparations for a raid on Dieppe, known at first as Operation "RUTTER", began at C.O.H.Q. in April 1942.

This project had a far closer relation to the future invasion of the continent than any raid yet attempted. It would illuminate what was considered in 1942 the primary problem of an invasion operation: that of the immediate acquisition of a major port. It was on a sufficient scale to afford a test of the new technique and material (including tank landing craft) which had been developed. Such a test was felt to be essential before attempting full-scale amphibious operations, for there had been no major assault landing since those at Gallipoli in 1915, and the small raids so far made had thrown no light on the handling of a large naval assault fleet in action. (209)

In short: "A practical test of equipment and technique under battle conditions was considered essential" (210).

106. When planning began for "RUTTER", G.H.Q. Home Forces was represented at C.O.H.Q.; but, at an early stage, military planning was delegated to the G.O.C.-in-C. South Eastern Command, Lt-Gen B.L. Montgomery. Available evidence indicates that two plans were originally considered: "one providing for no frontal attack on Dieppe itself, but based upon landings on the flanks at Puys, Pourville and Quiberville, and the other comprehending a frontal attack, supplemented by flank attacks at Puys and Pourville, and by attacks by parachute and airborne troops on two coast defence batteries situated near Berneval, five miles east of Dieppe, and near Varengeville, four miles west of it" (211). The second plan was adopted -- with the important provision that "Churchill" tanks would be included in the frontal assault -- at a formal meeting held on 25 Apr at C.O.H.Q. (212).

107. It was not until after this meeting that Canadian officers participated in the planning. At the end of the month, General Montgomery discussed the raid with Generals Crerar and McNaughton and they agreed that the 2nd Canadian Division could carry out the task.

108. With the concurrence of G.O.C.-in-C. South Eastern Command, the Chief of Combined Operations recommended the adoption of the Outline Plan by the Chiefs of Staff Committee. Lord Louis Mountbatten pointed out that the operation would "be of great value as training for Operation 'Sledgehammer' or any other major operation as far as the actual assault . . . [was] concerned", although he added that it would not "throw light on the maintenance problem over beaches" (213). The Chiefs of Staff approved the Outline Plan on 13 May; at the same meeting they appointed Major-General J.H. Roberts (G.O.C., 2 Cdn Div) and Air Vice-Marshal T.L. Leigh-Mallory (A.O.C., No. 11 Group, R.A.F.) as the Military and Air Force Commanders for the operation. Later, Rear-Admiral H.T. Baillie-Grohman was appointed Naval Force Commander; in July, he was succeeded by Captain J. Hughes-Hallett, who had been intimately connected with the earlier planning as Naval Adviser at C.O.H.Q.*

109. The specific objectives of the Dieppe Raid, and details of the plan for the attack, are given in another place (214). The military formations involved (both from the 2nd Canadian Division) were the 4th and 6th Infantry Brigades, assisted by the 14th Canadian Army Tank Regiment (Calgary Regiment) of the 1st Army Tank Brigade and other supporting elements.

110. Strenuous training for Operation "RUTTER" was carried out in the Isle of Wight:

The syllabus was designed to 'harden' the troops as well as train them. Training on a battalion basis having gone as far as it could be carried in the time available, a large-scale exercise, which was, in fact, a dress rehearsal for the raid, took place on 11-12 June near Bridport, Dorset, on a stretch of coast resembling the Dieppe area. The result was far from satisfactory; units were landed miles from the proper beaches, and the tank landing craft arrived over an hour late. In these circumstances, Lord Louis Mountbatten decided that further rehearsal was essential and that no attempt, therefore, would be made to carry out the operation during June, as had been the intention. The troops remained in the Isle of Wight, and the second exercise was carried out at Bridport on 22-24 June. The results were much more satisfactory. (215)

It is interesting to note an opinion of the training which was expressed at C.O.H.Q. on 7 Jul. It was felt that "the exercises which had been set had been more

*Rear-Admiral Baillie-Grohman was appointed Naval Force Commander for "SLEDGEHAMMER" (6 Jul 42).

difficult than the operation itself, and the results of these exercises had given the impression that the forces were not sufficiently trained" (216). Experience was to modify this impression of the required standard for an assault landing.

111. "RUTTER" was to have taken place on, or shortly after, 4 Jul. However, bad weather intervened and this, together with the passing of the favourable period of tidal conditions, necessitated the cancellation of the operation on 8 Jul. Since the troops had been fully "briefed", and complete secrecy could no longer be maintained, General Montgomery recommended that the operation "be off for all time" (217). At this stage the raid appeared to be but another link in the long chain of frustrated operations with which the Canadian troops had been identified during their training in the United Kingdom.

112. There were, however, powerful reasons why plans for the raid were revived on 14 Jul by C.O.H.Q.

The Dieppe project had, as already noted, been an important element in the programme looking towards a future invasion of the continent; and its cancellation was a setback to that programme as well as a disappointment to the Canadian troops. Apart from these considerations, there were obviously others which made a major raid expedient at this moment. The public in the Allied countries . . . was calling loudly for action, and considerations of morale suggested the desirability of meeting the demand as far as it was practicable to do so. At the same time, the German successes in Russia rendered it essential to give any diversionary aid possible to our Soviet allies. There is no evidence that the Russian situation was actually an important factor in the decision to revive the Dieppe project, but the news that a large distracting raid in the west was again in prospect was welcomed by the British Prime Minister, who shortly after the decision was taken found himself faced with the somewhat formidable task of informing Marshal Stalin that there was to be no Second Front in Europe in 1942. (218)

The decision to revive the operation (henceforth known as "JUBILEE") was approved by the Chiefs of Staff Committee on 20 Jul -- five days before the British and American authorities had agreed to shelve "SLEDGEHAMMER" in favour of "TORCH".

113. There was a grave security problem involved in remounting the operation when so many fully informed troops had already disembarked, following the cancellation of "RUTTER". However, largely by avoiding a preliminary concentration of the force, thereby

eliminating a "noticeable assembly of shipping", it was thought that preparations for the raid would escape detection (219). The success of this deception was afterwards apparent when the German records of the raid were investigated (220).

114. Certain significant alterations in the original plan had occurred before "JUBILEE" was finally launched on the night of 18-19 Aug. Due to the fine weather conditions and time for briefing which they required, paratroops had been eliminated in favour of Commando units. Consequently, the latter assumed the vital role of neutralizing the enemy's coastal batteries on both sides of Dieppe.

115. Another change in the plan was to have far-reaching effect on the operation. Even before the cancellation of "RUTTER" a preliminary heavy bombing attack, which had been a feature of the support provided for the military force, had been deleted on the grounds that the enemy might be warned of the amphibious assault, that the requisite degree of accuracy could not be guaranteed and that the resulting debris might restrict the movements of the tanks in the town. This fateful decision was confirmed as a result of further discussions between the Force Commanders before the operation took place. On the other hand, the only available naval support comprised the armament of six small destroyers ("Hunt" class) and H.M.S. "LOCUST", a shallow-draught gunboat.

The elimination of the air bombardment had removed from the plan the one element of really heavy support contained in it. The assault would now be backed by nothing stronger than 4-inch guns and Boston bombers. Surprise, rather than striking power, was to be the chief reliance in this operation. In the main attack much would also depend upon the most exact co-ordination between the attack by cannon-firing fighters, the landing of the infantry and the arrival of the first flight of tanks. (221)

This assault technique was severely tested, and found inadequate, during those crowded, tragic hours at Dieppe on 19 Aug 42.

116. The present narrative is not concerned with a description of what Mr. Churchill afterwards called the "hard, savage clash"* at Dieppe. Full details of the bloody struggle on the beaches, culminating in the withdrawal of the remnants of the

*Speech in the House of Commons on 8 Sep 42.

shattered force, are contained in Chapter V of The Canadian Army 1939-1945: An Official Historical Summary. However, the present account is much concerned with the influence which this important operation had on pre-invasion planning -- for it will be remembered that "a practical test of equipment and technique under battle conditions" had been considered essential for a later full-scale invasion.

117. Few operations have been studied in greater detail, or with more attention to the "lessons learned", than the Dieppe Raid. Two months after the raid, C.O.H.Q. produced the (printed) C.B.04244: Combined Report on the Dieppe Raid 1942.* Part V of this report contained an exhaustive study of "The Lessons Learnt". These may now be summarized in the light of later opinions of "JUBILEE" as a preparation for "OVERLORD".

118. The Combined Report was emphatic about one aspect of the raid:

The Lesson of Greatest Importance is the need for overwhelming fire support, including close support, during the initial stages of the attack. It is not too much to say that, at present, no standard Naval vessel or craft has the necessary qualities or equipment to provide close inshore support. Without such support any assault on the enemy-occupied coast of Europe is more and more likely to fail as the enemy's defences are extended and improved. (222)

There has been general agreement that the foregoing was the "paramount lesson" of Dieppe (223). In the words of Rear-Admiral L.E.H. Maund:

After Dieppe it became clear that a much heavier armament would be required to engage the defences being built by the Germans on the French coast. Furthermore, the army pointed out that in a modern land battle the guns supporting an attack were in density axle to axle. If an assault from the sea was to be made on a defended beach something similar in gun-power would be needed to enable the infantry to cross the beach. Long range warship fire and bombing might or might not destroy coast defence batteries, but warship fire must be lifted when the craft were at least 500 yards from the shore. Guns must therefore go in with the assaulting troops and engage the beach defences until the

*Lord Louis Mountbatten's Foreword was dated 15 Oct 42.

troops landed. Even after that calls for supporting fire to liquidate strong points and enable the advance to go forward would come from the troops on shore. (224)

119. The supreme importance of greatly increased fire support was stressed by General H.D.G. Crerar (G.O.C.-in-C. First Canadian Army, 20 Mar 44 - 30 Jul 45). Referring to "the bitter lessons of Dieppe", he stated:

They showed, beyond a shadow of doubt, that without complete surprise -- which should not for a moment be counted upon -- there was absolute need for overwhelming fire support, including close fire support, to get assaulting forces on to the beach and through the beach defences. For such results, it was clear that special weapons, sea-craft and technique required to be developed. It was nearly a year before these commenced to become available, and in consequence it was not until July 1943 that the 1st Canadian Corps was given the responsibility of evolving and demonstrating, with the necessary Naval and Air components, the tactics and technique which would promise success in the assault and landing on a strongly defended enemy coastline. (225)

120. Dealing with the support given by "special vessels or craft working close inshore", the Combined Report pointed out that:

It is during these vital minutes while troops are disembarking, cutting or blasting their way through wire, clearing beach mines and finding routes over obstacles that the need for close support is at its greatest. At the same time it is during this very period that the troops are least able to support themselves because there has not been time to organize and deploy supporting arms. The support that is so necessary must, therefore, come from outside sources; for without it, the assault will almost inevitably lose momentum and may end in a stalemate with the troops pinned to the beaches, unable either to advance or to withdraw. (226)

It was obvious that the "Support Craft" available in August 1942 were not adequate to the task. The Combined Report suggested that "a shallow-draught armoured gun-boat" or "a specially designed small mobile fort" might achieve the object; namely, "to batter a way through in the shortest possible time" (227).

121. At this point brief mention may be made of certain craft which were built, partly as a result of the Dieppe Raid, to help solve the difficult

problem of providing close support for an assault.* Some L.C.T. were "converted into bombarding vessels by decking them in and mounting two 4.7-in. naval guns on each" -- these became known as L.C.G.(L), or Landing Craft Guns (Large), and they provided useful support when the full-scale landings took place in Normandy (228). Another, more spectacular, craft was the L.C.T.(R), or Landing Craft Tank (Rocket). The latter fired a salvo of approximately 1,000 five-inch rockets at a fixed range. The devastating fire of these craft afterwards contributed to the partial neutralization of the Normandy coastal defences. There was also the L.C.A.(H.R.), or Landing Craft Assault (Hedgerow), which carried 24 mortars with 60-pound bombs to destroy beach mines and wire. Still another development as a result of "JUBILEE" -- and one in which Canadian artillerymen were to have a special interest -- was a modification of L.C.T. so that self-propelled guns could provide continuous support during the assault. An elaborate L.C.G.(M), or Landing Craft Gun (Medium), was also designed with "two 25-pounder or 17-pounder guns in armoured turrets". However, these craft were not available in sufficient numbers to be of assistance to "OVERLORD" (229).

122. In addition to the study of the close support which could be given by "special vessels or craft working close inshore", the Combined Report of October 1942 considered the use of heavy and medium naval bombardment, air action and military support during the vital period of the assault. It was clearly realized that the preliminary naval bombardment at Dieppe had been inadequate.

It was neither heavy nor accurate enough to flatten strong defences, nor could destroyers follow the landing craft in close enough to support the actual assault at short range by dealing directly with such elements of the enemy's defences as had survived. (230)

This lesson was emphasized by the Naval Force Commander's report that "a battleship could have operated off Dieppe during the first hours of daylight without undue risk and would probably have turned the tide ashore in our favour" (231). From this time forward increased attention was given to the accuracy and the volume of fire which could be produced by naval bombardment in an assault landing. There is no need, here, to stress the significance of this lesson in terms of the tremendous naval resources which were available, some two years later, in support of Operation "NEPTUNE".

*Later developments in connection with the problem of fire support are examined in greater detail in paras 315 ff.

123. Reference has been made to the reasons why high-level bombing, prior to the assault, had been deleted from the "JUBILEE" plan. The raid proved that this type of bombing was essential to the success of such operations (232). Here, again, the influence of the Dieppe experience on later planning for the invasion of Normandy was easily apparent. For more than 11,000 tons of bombs were dropped in twenty-four hours by the British and American Bomber Commands in support of "NEPTUNE" (233).

124. Although there had been no high-level bombing at Dieppe, the attack had been supported by cannon-firing "Hurricanes". The Combined Report pointed out that:

Such support has considerable moral results and is effective in that the enemy's attention is drawn away for a few invaluable minutes from the craft coming into land or the troops forming up to attack. At the same time, the enemy's attention cannot wholly be given to the cannon-fighters and experience showed that A.A. fire was much less intense than usual. (234)

However, the Report also emphasized that this type of air action was "essentially fleeting in its nature":

For instance, it cannot be expected to keep the enemy's defences quiescent for sufficient time to allow the leading troops to disembark and cut their way through beach wire, mines or other obstacles. Neither can cannon fighters be expected to put fixed defences out of action. Furthermore, cannon-fighters cannot at present operate in close support under cover of darkness and their activities are thus restricted to daylight action. (235)

125. The forward control of aircraft in an assault received close study at a later stage of pre-invasion planning. On this point the Dieppe experience was of some value. Thus, the record of a Staff Exercise held at Headquarters Fighter Command in January 1943 contains the following note: ". . . At Dieppe it was found most successful, and even essential, to have some R.A.F. officer further forward than the Combined Headquarters . . . There was an Air Commodore on the Headquarters Ship" (236). However, "JUBILEE" also suggested the magnitude of the problems connected with a much larger assault. Writing nearly a year and half after the raid, Air Marshal J.H. D'Albiac (then Air Officer Commanding, 2nd Tactical Air Force, R.A.F.) observed:

In an operation such as the Dieppe Operation, the control of Air Forces during the assault was comparatively simple, because the military assault forces were commanded by one Commander

located in a Headquarters Ship. Consequently it was possible to locate an R.A.F. representative in the same ship, to advise the Military and Naval Commanders on Air matters and to co-ordinate the control of Air Forces over the anchorage and the beaches. In an operation involving two or more divisions more or less independently of each other with the Divisional Commanders in separate Headquarters Ships, and each being responsible to a Commander located ashore in U.K., the problem is more complex. (237)

126. On the possibilities of military support during a landing, the Combined Report commented: "Self-propelled mobile artillery provided that it is put ashore immediately will prove of great assistance in covering the initial assault" (238). Nevertheless, as already mentioned, the use of artillery was afterwards considerably extended so as to provide continuous support while these guns were still seaborne. This was to be an important feature of the "NEPTUNE" attack. Although the idea of using artillery in this manner cannot be traced back to a specific recommendation as a result of "JUBILEE", the later development was undoubtedly an indirect result of the raid's emphasis on the need for overwhelming fire support.

127. "JUBILEE" also had profound effect on other aspects of military support in an assault. For example, "as a result of lessons learned at Dieppe", the Assault Brigade, Royal Engineers, was formed during the summer of 1943 (239). The role of these engineers was afterwards described by Field-Marshal Montgomery:

One of the recommendations made as a result of the Dieppe raid had been that engineers should be carried behind armour up to the concrete obstacle which had to be breached. This idea was developed so that mechanical means could be used for placing or projecting charges from tanks without exposing the crews. Tank-carried bridges for crossing anti-tanks ditches were developed as well, and were launched mechanically from behind armour. (240)

128. The Combined Report also considered the employment of tanks in the assault, a feature of "JUBILEE", and arrived at the conclusion that "unless overwhelming fire support is available, tanks should not be landed until defences have been captured and the obstacles cleared" (241). Certain methods afterwards developed to provide heavier fire support, and to clear obstacles, have been outlined. In due course, the armour found its own solution to the problem of an early landing during an assault. The essence of the

problem was that, "if the tanks were brought ashore first in L.Cs.T. they would be destroyed piecemeal as they left the craft. It was realized that no concentration of gun fire and air bombardment would be sufficient to ensure that all the enemy-prepared defences would be knocked out" (242). The solution was found in the famous D.D.* tanks, which swam ashore with the leading waves of the "NEPTUNE" assault. Here, too, it may be noted that Canadian units participated in this specialized training and that two Canadian armoured regiments landed in D.D. tanks on 6 Jun 44.

129. Apart from the question of fire support, one of the major lessons of the Dieppe Operation was the recognition that "large-scale amphibious operations in the Channel called for something better than ad hoc naval assault forces, formed from pools of landing craft based on and administered by Combined Operations establishments" (243). The Combined Report stated:

For any amphibious campaign involving assaults on strongly defended coasts held by a determined enemy it is essential that the landing ships and craft required for the assaults shall be organized well in advance into Naval assault forces. These must have a coherence and degree of permanence comparable to that of any first-line fighting formations . . . It is also essential that Army formations intended for amphibious assaults against opposition should be trained in close co-operation with the Naval assault forces that will carry them to the attack. The ideal to be aimed at is that they should think and act as one. (244)

Five months after the raid, at the Casablanca Conference of the British and American leaders (infra, para 185), Lord Louis Mountbatten stated that the conception of "proper assault fleets" was "the overriding lesson of Dieppe" (245). At this conference he also told the Combined Chiefs of Staff:

It was of great importance that the Channel Assault Force should be kept in being . . . Otherwise there would be no force available for cross-channel operations. Once broken up, this force would be very difficult to re-form again. (246)

130. It must be remembered that experience gained from amphibious warfare in the Mediterranean -- "where there was no tidal stream and visibility was normally good" -- was of limited value to the planning of cross-Channel operations (247). As described by Admiral Hughes-Hallett:

*I.e., "Duplex Drive", so called because both propellers and tracks were driven while the tank was swimming.

It was therefore decided to set up a permanent Channel Assault Force, capable of lifting a Brigade Group, furnished with its own light escort and close support-craft, and commanded and administered through the ordinary naval channels. The object of this Force was at once to carry out future raids, to act as an operational training ground for landing-craft Commanders destined for the Mediterranean, and to form the nucleus of the naval forces eventually needed to invade France. A division of troops and at least two Commandos were normally affiliated to the Force, which also maintained direct liaison with the Air Officer Commanding No. 11 Group.

The establishment of Force J. as it was named, naturally resulted in a simplification of the system for mounting raids. The provision of intelligence and for obtaining the approval of the Chiefs of Staff, continued to rest with C.O.H.Q. But Force Commanders were now permanently in existence and had adequate staffs to undertake planning at all stages. Furthermore, the forces required to carry out an operation were in theory permanently available. (248)

Later developments in the Mediterranean theatre tended to interfere with the use of Force "J" in raiding operations across the Channel. However, it is important to realize that the "prime function" of Force "J" was "training and preparation for [the] invasion" of North-West Europe (249).

131. The organization of Force "J" had a special significance for First Canadian Army. The nucleus of that Force was the naval component of the "JUBILEE" force which had carried and supported troops of the 2nd Canadian Division on the Dieppe Raid. Later, as will be seen, the 3rd Canadian Division was to train with Force "J" for "NEPTUNE". And, on D Day, it was Force "J" which carried and supported that formation during the Normandy landings (250).

132. Many other important lessons were learned at Dieppe which were to influence "OVERLORD" planning. Some of these had far-reaching ramifications for both German and Allied Staffs:

Dieppe served . . . to confirm the Germans in the belief that a basic consideration in the Allies' minds at the very outset of an invasion would be the capture of a major port, and thus encouraged them to devote their best efforts to developing heavy defences about such places. Thus the Germans were, as a result of the raid, centring their defence upon the ports when simultaneously the Allies,

also in part as a result of the raid, were increasingly turning their attention to the possibility of invading over open beaches without immediately gaining a major port. The great conception of the prefabricated harbour owes something to the lessons learned at Dieppe concerning the difficulty of capturing a German-held port. (251)

Recent research on German documents corroborates the view that the raid strengthened Hitler in his resolution to build an "Atlantic Wall" as a bulwark against the Allied invasion (252).

133. The Combined Report recognized that there was a "vital difference" to the planning of a Combined operation when this was done on an Inter-Service basis with "Force Commanders and their staffs working and living together"; that the military plan, itself, must be flexible "in order to enable the Commander to apply force where force has already succeeded"; and that "whenever the conditions permit the assaults should be planned to develop round the flanks of a strongly defended locality, such as a town, rather than frontally against it" (253).

134. Two other lessons, not so specifically stated in the official document, decidedly affected our later planning. First, it had been made pretty clear that the classical plan of securing a beach by landing infantry at dawn was not practicable in the face of well-organized defences. A new technique of landing and support was required, and largely on the basis of the Dieppe experience it was developed before the Normandy assault of 1944. Secondly, it had been shown that the military plan in such operations must not depend upon precise timing of the landings. Although in general a very high standard of precision was attained at Dieppe . . . in at least two cases relatively slight inaccuracies in timing had most serious results. This possibility was avoided in planning the 1944 assault. (254)

135. In the preceding paragraphs an attempt has been made to estimate the important influence of the Dieppe Raid on pre-invasion planning for "OVERLORD". Mr. Churchill's judgment is conclusive:

Dieppe occupies a place of its own in the story of the war, and the grim casualty figures must not class it as a failure. It was a costly but not unfruitful reconnaissance-in-force. Tactically it was a mine of experience. It shed revealing light on many shortcomings in our outlook. It taught us to build in good time various new types of

craft and appliances for later use. We learnt again the value of powerful support by heavy naval guns in an opposed landing and our bombardment technique, both marine and aerial, was thereafter improved. Above all it was shown that individual skill and gallantry without thorough organization and combined training would not prevail, and that team work was the secret of success. This could only be provided by trained and organized amphibious formations. All these lessons were taken to heart.

Strategically the raid served to make the Germans more conscious of danger along the whole coast of Occupied France. This helped to hold troops and resources in the West, which did something to take the weight off Russia. (255)

In the present report emphasis has been laid on the effect which the earlier operation had on the development of an assault technique for the invasion of Normandy. This was a continuing influence during the period of nearly two years which separated the two operations -- for, as already indicated, the solutions to many problems of an assault landing were slowly evolved. Throughout that long period First Canadian Army remained closely identified with the training and preparations for a full-scale invasion of North-West Europe.

THE INFLUENCE OF THE MEDITERRANEAN DIVERSION

136. In August 1942, immediately before the Dieppe Raid, the British Prime Minister went to Moscow to inform Marshal Stalin that there could be no "Second Front" in the West during that year, and to advise him of the plans for the "TORCH" operation in North-West Africa. This was a difficult mission for Mr. Churchill in view of the communiqué issued at Washington on 11 Jun (supra, para 55). In a conversation with the Marshal, Mr. Churchill stressed his "good reasons against an attack on the French coast in 1942":

We had only enough landing-craft for an assault landing on a fortified coast -- enough to throw ashore six divisions and maintain them. If it were successful, more divisions might be sent, but the limiting factor was landing-craft, which were now being built in very large numbers in the United Kingdom, and especially in the United States. For one division which could be carried this year it would be possible next year to carry eight or ten times as many We could land six divisions, but the landing of them would be more harmful than helpful, for it would greatly injure the big operation planned for next year. War was war but not folly, and it would be folly to invite a disaster which would help nobody. (256)

But Marshal Stalin was not easily convinced; in particular, he appeared to have difficulty understanding the special problems inherent in a cross-Channel operation. The difference in outlook was summed up in Mr. Churchill's pithy observation: "Russia is a land animal, the British are sea animals" (257). After further discussions the Russian leader showed more enthusiasm for the "TORCH" alternative in 1942 and Mr. Churchill was able to advise President Roosevelt that the meetings had terminated in a spirit of good will. The Dieppe Raid, which occurred only three days after Mr. Churchill's departure from Moscow, certainly corroborated his appreciation of the difficulties attending a cross-Channel invasion; but there is no available record of the effect, if any, which the raid had on Marshal Stalin and his advisers.

137. Apart from the decision to abandon "SLEDGEHAMMER" in favour of "TORCH", there was an appreciable change in British raiding policy after the Dieppe operation. Cross-Channel raids ceased to be part of the British "main strategy" -- partly because of preparations for amphibious operations in the Mediterranean, but mainly because of the need to concentrate on planning and training for a full-scale invasion of North-West Europe (258). Yet plans for raids across the Channel were not altogether neglected during the autumn of 1942. As an illustration of this continuing interest, reference may be made to Operation "CLAWHAMMER".

138. In September plans were being considered for an operation ("CLAWHAMMER") in the Cap de la Hague Peninsula. The object was to capture certain Radio Direction Finding and Beam Wireless installations used by the enemy in his bombing attacks on the United Kingdom, to destroy coast defences and to capture prisoners (259). In the background there was a "strategic requirement" for the raid: "a combined operation against the French coast in late October or early November was considered most desirable in view of TORCH" (260). On 29 Sep Captain J. Hughes-Hallett, fresh from the experience of the Dieppe Raid, was appointed "Naval Force Commander and Chief Naval Planner" for the operation (261). In a letter to the Chief of Combined Operations, Captain Hughes-Hallett stated that, with the exception of the Dieppe Raid, "CLAWHAMMER" was "the largest combined operation that has yet been attempted in this war against fortified positions held by Germans" (262). The military component of the raiding force was to be five Commandos, with airborne and artillery support. Naval support included six destroyers ("Hunt" Class) and H.M.S. "LOCUST", which had participated in the Dieppe Raid; air support was planned on a scale comparable to that employed at Dieppe (263).

139. It is safe to assume that the Dieppe experience was reflected in the Naval Force Commander's critical survey of the "very hazardous" plan for "CLAWHAMMER" (264). Referring to the impossibility of guaranteeing that the initial assault could be made at the correct place, Captain Hughes-Hallett stated that such a failure would "not necessarily lead to disaster, but rather to fiasco" (265). Another "major risk in the operation" concerned the enemy's coast defence batteries which, in his opinion, were "much stronger than was the case in the Dieppe raid" (266). He feared that they might prevent the withdrawal of the force. Finally, there was the very great problem of weather conditions in the Channel; the Naval Force Commander wrote:

... It is understood that even assuming accurate forecasting, and correct decisions, the required weather conditions have only a 1 in 9 chance of occurring during the period for the operation in an average year. It seems unusual that so large an operation should be mounted with so slender a chance of its taking place. I should have thought that unless more latitude can be expected over the weather it is hardly worth while going on. In practice the only way of getting more latitude, is to take bigger risks with fighter cover by accepting any type of cloud conditions. (267)

140. Lord Louis Mountbatten submitted the plan for "CLAWHAMMER" to the Chiefs of Staff Committee on 11 Oct. He pointed out that "the strength or otherwise of the defences was a very important consideration indeed as the military force would have to be landed from unarmoured craft since all the armoured craft had been given up to TORCH" (268). Two conflicting factors had emerged:

In the first place recent air cover shows that the defences are stronger than was supposed and that they are thus less suitable for assault by unarmoured craft. Secondly, the importance of carrying out an operation at about the end of October had been particularly stressed by the Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary. (269)

After examining the advantages and disadvantages of the contemplated operation, the Chief of Combined Operations stated that it was "impossible to switch to a new objective requiring a comparable force" -- even though "CLAWHAMMER" was "an extremely hazardous and difficult" operation (270).

141. In view of the opinions expressed by Lord Louis Mountbatten and Captain Hughes-Hallett, it is scarcely surprising that the Chiefs of Staff Committee decided to abandon "CLAWHAMMER" (271). Fresh in their minds were the lessons of Dieppe. Although recognizing the "strategic requirement" of a diversionary operation to assist "TORCH", they could not afford to ignore the risks involved in a further assault during uncertain weather, with the available resources, against formidable coastal defences. Moreover, as already indicated, the requirements of pre-invasion planning were gradually shifting the emphasis from preparations for raids to preparations for a full-scale invasion of North-West Europe.

142. Meanwhile, the Canadian role in relation to Operation "ROUNDUP" (still the code name for the Allied invasion of France) had received further consideration. Early in August 1942, Lt-Gen K. Stuart, C.G.S., and Lt-Gen A.G.L. McNaughton, G.O.C.-in-C. First Canadian Army, discussed this operation with Lt-Gen A.E. Nye, V.C.I.G.S. On this occasion, the cautious British attitude with respect to large-scale operations across the Channel was again evident. General Nye was of the opinion that "'ROUNDUP' would be possible in 1943 only if there should be a definite and pronounced crack in morale within Germany itself as a consequence of bombing, hunger and other hardships" (272). However, he added that "if this occurred we should have been guilty of unpardonable lack of preparation if we were not in a position to take advantage of the situation to launch an attack in North-West Europe" (273). It was thought that 1 Jun 43 might be an acceptable target date for the operation.

143. A prime consideration with General McNaughton at all times was the necessity of bringing First Canadian Army up to full strength and, if possible, avoiding any commitment which might lead to splitting up that formation for operational use.*

... Any reduction from this composition would mean that the Cdn force proceeding abroad would, from necessity, be allotted a less important role and probably would be decentralized under British or other Allied cmd. This could only result in an acceptance by Canada of an inferior role in the total allied war effort, which would reflect adversely upon public opinion generally at home and abroad. (274)

144. During September the Army Commander discussed the Canadian role in "ROUNDUP" with General Brooke and General Paget. At this time it was understood that the initial Canadian task would be to "follow

*On the build-up of First Canadian Army see, supra, para ~~70~~ 71.

up" through a bridgehead secured by an American Army (275). General McNaughton endeavoured to obtain clarification of future strategy from the C.I.G.S. The latter then revealed that the existing basis for his work was "so unstable" that "it was impossible to say definitely what were the actual plans";

There had been an American shift in emphasis away from 'ROUNDUP' and towards operations in the South Pacific but now the viewpoint was moving back to Europe and to Hitler as the Number One Enemy. (276)

It thus appeared that "ROUNDUP" was still under discussion, although the operation might not be launched until a later date than anticipated.

145. The explanation of the uncertainty surrounding "ROUNDUP" is to be found in the growing significance of the Mediterranean. Although the invasion of French North Africa did not take place until 8 Nov 42, the Allied leaders were naturally concerned with long-range plans beyond that operation. In September Mr. Churchill cabled "his conception of future strategy" to Mr. Roosevelt:

He was considering two possibilities after the assumed success of TORCH: attack into the [Axis] 'underbelly' by invasion of Sardinia, Sicily, or even Italy, and attack on Norway with the idea of giving more direct aid to Russia. ROUNDUP, he understood, was definitely off for 1943, but there still remained the possibility of an emergency cross-Channel operation and he believed that all the arguments advanced for SLEDGEHAMMER in 1942 would be even more valid in 1943-44. (277)

The prospect of exploiting the Mediterranean venture was equally attractive to the President. However, the inevitable result of extending the Allied commitment in that theatre was, of course, to delay the invasion of North-West Europe. Consequently, it was significant that, when Field-Marshal J.C. Smuts visited General McNaughton early in November, the South African leader "queried the availability of large enough forces to undertake an invasion of North West Europe in 1943 and indicated his own belief that the Canadian Army should be prepared to serve elsewhere than in Europe" (278).

146. Meanwhile, General McNaughton reviewed the progress of planning for various operations (including "ROUNDUP", "SLEDGEHAMMER", "METBOB", "JUPITER REVIEW" and "TORCH") at a meeting held in his office on 3 Oct. This meeting was attended by the Canadian Minister of National Defence (Colonel J.L. Ralston) and the C.G.S. (Lt-Gen K. Stuart). Dealing with "ROUNDUP",

General McNaughton pointed out this operation envisaged a full scale invasion of the continent of Europe on the general frontage incl. Pas-de-Calais, Seine North, Seine South, Cherbourg. The forces involved would include British, U.S. and Cdn divisions.

The Cdn Army role in "Round-Up" would be the follow up through a beach head gained by U.S. Army. General McNaughton gave a brief outline of one of the proposed plans for subsequent action after initial landings.

General McNaughton pointed out that owing to the decline in the rate of movement of U.S. formations and units to the U.K. the target date for 'Round-Up' had now been postponed. He pointed out, however, that the administrative planning staffs were still proceeding with their studies. (279)

The plans for both "SLEDGEHAMMER" and "WETBOB" were, of course, "dormant" (280). General McNaughton stated that the existing Canadian policy was "to look to operation 'Round-Up' as their future task and that the organization and training of the Cdn Army was proceeding on this line with a view to producing a self contained army from base to fighting formations" (281).

147. Parallel with these developments, pressure was growing for more active employment of First Canadian Army. This was partly due to the diminishing threat of a German invasion of the United Kingdom; but it was mainly due to the forward policy adopted by the Canadian Government. On 15 Oct the Minister of National Defence and the C.G.S. saw Mr. Churchill and the Secretary of State for War (Sir James Grigg) in London. At this meeting the Canadian Minister "requested that active employment should be found for the Canadian Army at the first opportunity" (282). Colonel Ralston emphasized that the Canadian Government was ready to consider any proposals for the use of Canadian troops.

148. The "growing divergence of view" between G.O.C.-in-C. First Canadian Army and the Canadian Government over the "Army's overall operational role" has been described as follows:-

General McNaughton, while willing to authorize operations by detachments if and when it could be demonstrated that they would advance the common cause, was in general convinced of the desirability of the Canadians operating as far as possible as a national entity, and envisaged as their great task an important share in the ultimate invasion of North-West Europe. The Canadian Government, on the other hand, was being plied with reasons for

getting its forces into action as soon as possible. It was urged that considerations of self-respect, as well as regard for Canada's influence in the post-war world, which would be based largely upon her contribution to victory, dictated such a policy; while the powerful argument of the desirability of gaining large-scale battle experience before committing the army as a whole to operations was also employed. (283)

In due course (April 1943) the British and Canadian authorities decided to send the 1st Canadian Division and the 1st Canadian Army Tank Brigade to the Mediterranean theatre. This commitment was afterwards expanded, with the addition of the 5th Canadian Armoured Division, into the 1st Canadian Corps. However, during the last months of 1942, other aspects of the Canadian role were still under consideration.

149. On 19 Nov General McNaughton again discussed plans for the future employment of First Canadian Army with the C.I.G.S. Throughout this conversation "a note of high optimism was evident -- Germany might crack in the early spring -- possibly in the summer -- certainly in the fall of 1943" (284). Consequently, as recorded by General McNaughton, it was agreed that Canadian plans should be based on the following programme:

By April 1943 - Large scale raids of limited scope and duration on the U-Boat Bases in Bay of Biscay ports. The 3 Inf and 2 Armd Divs should be up to strength with reasonable reinforcements available in the U.K.

By 1 August 1943 - We should be ready to go on the Continent in strength to stay there holding a bridgehead of limited depth from the coast, should a definite crack in German morale be evident. We need not have full Army, L. of C., etc. tps, as under the conditions envisaged, these might be extemporized; nor would we need under these conditions a large scale of reinforcements. (285)

The British authorities hoped to see First Canadian Army built up to full strength by 1 Oct 43.* Nevertheless, the magnetic influence of the Mediterranean was already evident. Henceforth, General McNaughton was compelled "to give serious consideration to the possibility that Canadian formations might have to be detached to serve with British corps or armies" in that theatre (286).

*See supra, para 77.

150. At this point reference may be made to Canadian participation in the planning of another amphibious operation ("TONIC") during the last three months of 1942. This aspect of the Canadian role has already been described in earlier reports (Hist Sec (C.M.H.Q.) Report No. 167, paras 26-51; Report No. 182, paras 98-107). Since these preparations were only indirectly related to the invasion of North-West Europe, the Canadian aspect will be summarized in the present narrative.

151. It will be recalled that, early in 1941, the British authorities had been considering an operation (then known as "PILGRIM") against the Canary Islands (supra, paras 19, 22). These preparations were necessitated by the continual German threat, in suspected collaboration with the Spanish Government, to Gibraltar -- the great fortress so vital to Allied strategy in the Mediterranean. The resulting significance of the Canary Islands has been stressed by Mr. Churchill:

So great was the danger that for nearly two years we kept constantly at a few days' notice an expedition of over five thousand men and their ships, ready to seize the Canary Islands, by which we could maintain air and sea control over the U-boats, and contact with Australasia round the Cape, if ever the harbour of Gibraltar were denied to us by the Spaniards.
(287)

152. At a meeting held on 17 Oct 42 General Brooke advised General McNaughton of the plans to counter any move which might neutralize Gibraltar. "One alternative was to seize Spanish Morocco with a British 'Northern Task Force' of two infantry divisions and an armoured brigade. The other was to occupy the Canary Islands -- an operation [now] given the code name 'TONIC'" (288). The C.I.G.S. explained that, as a result of the Canadian Government's recently expressed desire to find active employment for First Canadian Army, he was offering the "TONIC" operation to the Canadians (289). The reason why they were offered the operation against the Canaries rather than the operation against Spanish Morocco has some significance for the present report. General Brooke was of the opinion that the "Northern Task Force" might be employed in "a continuous operation involving close association with British, American and other troops"; he was anxious to avoid any protracted separation of the Canadian participating force from First Canadian Army because he "attached great importance to keeping them as a well-balanced, self-contained organization for Home Defence and eventual employment on the Continent" (290).

153. In reply General McNaughton stated the Canadian position as follows:

... what we desired, and I was sure this was the view of the Government and people of Canada also, was that Cdn Army should be so used as to make the maximum contribution of which it was capable; we would act in whole or part and would give most careful consideration to any project; we could not act without the approval of our Government except as regards Home Defence and raids on the Continent of Europe of limited duration. (291)

After studying the Joint Planning Staff's appreciation for "TONIC", General McNaughton received authority from Ottawa to undertake the operation.

154. On 23 Oct G.O.C.-in-C. First Canadian Army appointed General Crerar (then G.O.C. 1st Canadian Corps) as Military Force Commander for "TONIC".* The specific object of the operation was "to seize and hold the Islands of Grand Canary and Teneriffe, with a view to securing for our own use the harbours at La Luz and Santa Cruz, and the flying boat bases in Grand Canary" (292). The bulk of the Canadian force for "TONIC" comprised elements of Headquarters, 1st Canadian Corps, and of the 1st and 3rd Canadian Divisions.

155. A Canadian Planning Staff was quickly established at the War Office to work out details of the operation. For purposes of security and deception an official announcement stated that this Staff had been organized to give selected Canadian officers "practice in planning possible operations" and to establish "a desirable liaison . . . with the appropriate branches at the War Office" (293). Early in December General Crerar commented on the work of the Canadian Planning Staff: "I am quite sure that the knowledge these officers are now obtaining will serve a most valuable future purpose, whatever happens to 'TONIC'" (294).

156. The fate of the operation was not long delayed. On 19 Dec the Chiefs of Staff Committee were advised by the Joint Planning Staff that it was "most improbable . . . Germany would attempt to move into Spain against Spanish resistance during the winter, even if she had the necessary forces, and that next spring she is unlikely to have the forces available unless unexpectedly Russia collapses" (295). Thereupon, "TONIC" was virtually shelved, although the plans were completed under General Crerar's direction and were kept available for any later emergency.

157. Although the Canary Islands were never occupied, and although this project fell outside the range of cross-Channel operations, "TONIC" nevertheless has a certain significance for any study of pre-invasion planning. Canadian participation in the planning arose out of British recognition of the Canadian claim for more active employment. By the same token, the preparations for "TONIC" forecast the division of First

*Rear-Admiral H.L.H.K. Hamilton was appointed Naval Force Commander (he had held the same appointment for "PILGRIM"); but no Air Force Commander was appointed.

Canadian Army in the spring of 1943, when large formations left General McNaughton's command for the Mediterranean theatre. Indeed, on the last day of 1942, the C.I.G.S. "told General McNaughton that the Chiefs of Staff Committee were considering the possibility of mounting an operation against Sardinia or Sicily, and suggested that one Canadian division might take part" (296). On the other hand, even late in 1942, the C.I.G.S. anticipated the return of any Canadian force in time to preserve First Canadian Army as "a well-balanced, self-contained organization" for "eventual employment on the Continent". (Supra, para 152).

158. Other aspects of "TONIC" contributed to pre-invasion planning experience. Although a Naval Force Commander had been appointed for the expedition other duties prevented him from taking an active part in the planning of "TONIC". Even worse, no Air Force Commander had been appointed. Thus, General Crerar and the Canadian Planning Staff were compelled to carry on their work without the direct benefit of that inter-Service opinion so essential to all planning for combined operations. Moreover, the grave shortage of landing craft had hampered training. On 23 Dec Lord Louis Mountbatten wrote to General McNaughton: "The fact of the matter is that, largely due to the North African expedition, Combined Operations Command has got into very low water both as regards crews and craft" (297). Political factors had denied the taking of detailed air photographs of the selected beaches for the assault. All of these matters were remedied in later planning for the invasion of Normandy.

159. Finally, it may be noted that "TONIC" provided an opportunity for closer liaison between British and Canadian planning staffs. This was valuable experience in view of the intimate relationship of these staffs in later stages of the preparations for "OVERLORD". Furthermore, the improvement of liaison facilities was not confined to relatively junior ranks. As a direct result of "TONIC", arrangements were made between the C.I.G.S. and G.O.C.-in-C. First Canadian Army whereby the latter received fuller information on all operational planning which affected his command (298).

160. Meanwhile, the "TORCH" landings had been successfully carried out in French North Africa on 8 Nov. The present narrative is not concerned with details of the planning and execution of this great Allied assault, in which no Canadian unit as such participated. However, "TORCH" had an important influence on certain aspects of pre-invasion planning and these may now be briefly considered.

161. Perhaps the most significant "lesson" of the North African attack, from the point of view of combined operations, was "the need for sufficient craft to unload the ships and the importance of a Beach Group

Organization" (299). The delayed capture of certain small ports necessitated the unloading of supplies directly over the beaches -- "from there the Pioneer companies loaded them on to lorries, which was the germ of the beach group" (300). This conception of beach maintenance was afterwards developed extensively for the Sicilian landings (*infra*, para 306); it was ultimately to banish the bogey of considering that port facilities were essential for the preliminary phase of an invasion of the Continent (301). There were, of course, certain differences in the problems of Beach Organization in the English Channel and in the Mediterranean:

Those at home were concerned with a large rise and fall of tide, heavy defences and a highly developed hinterland, those in the Mediterranean with no rise and fall of tide, few defences, a rough countryside and almost tropical conditions. The general conclusions reached in each case were, however, similar both in regard to personnel and technique. (302)

"TORCH" focussed attention on another aspect of administration and supply in an assault landing. The operation clearly demonstrated that armies and corps should attack through their own fronts and not through bridgeheads established by other formations. This conclusion, based on the necessity of avoiding any intermingling of British and American supply systems, was to have a significant influence on the preparations for the Normandy assault (303).

162. "TORCH" influenced "OVERLORD" planning in other important ways. The operation had shown that an enormous amount of shipping -- "what might be called the Port of London floating in the ocean" -- could be assembled and could be directed against a wide coastal front without loss of complete surprise (304). Moreover, the naval forces had demonstrated their precision with respect to both the timing and the location of the landings. Before the American naval component had sailed from the United States, Maj-Gen George S. Patton Jr (commander of the "Western Landing Force" for "TORCH") had roundly declared: "Never in history has the Navy landed an army at the planned time and place. If you land us anywhere within fifty miles of Fedhala [one of the objectives] and within one week of D-day, I'll go ahead and win . . ." (305). In point of fact, however, this colourful commander was "pleasantly surprised to have his prediction disproved by a landing at the target and on time . . ." (306).

163. The North African landings also emphasized the value of preliminary beach reconnaissance by specially trained personnel. It has been stated that "the Combined Operations Pilotage Party was born, to a large extent, through the North African campaign" (307).

The essential nature of this work was afterwards stressed by Maj-Gen R.E. Laycock (Chief of Combined Operations, 10 Oct 43 - 1 Jul 47):

Not only was it necessary for us to have accurate information with regard to the physical features of the selected landing places -- the nature and depth of the soil on the beaches, the beach gradients, the practicability of beach exits, and the existence or otherwise of off-shore rocks and shoals -- but it was also essential to find out the exact location and nature of the defences erected by the enemy, such as beach mine-fields, tank traps, or under-water obstacles.

Much preliminary information of a general nature was of course obtained from normal methods of Intelligence such as that provided by aerial photographic interpretation, but the essential details could be filled in by personal reconnaissance and by personal reconnaissance alone. (308)

Extensive reconnaissance with these objectives was afterwards an indispensable aid to "OVERLORD" planning.

164. American experience in "TORCH" confirmed earlier British conclusions on the need for close inter-Service co-operation.

In this particular operation, the American Naval headquarters and Army headquarters were 100 miles apart throughout the planning stage and hardly met until they embarked in their headquarters ships. However, they learned their lesson. (309)

It was also evident that the assaulting troops carried too much equipment ashore. Referring to the American Army's experience at Fedhala, Samuel Eliot Morison wrote:

Perhaps the 'most definite and conclusive lesson' was the danger of overloading troops who have to go over the side of a transport into a tossing landing craft, and debark on a surf-swept beach. (310)

165. Both the special headquarters ship and the L.S.T. proved their worth during the landings. On the other hand, there were still far too few landing craft for training and operational purposes. Consequently, training suffered and "a number of crews sent to North Africa at the end of 1942 had in fact never seen a landing craft until they embarked in their ships for the expedition" (311). In spite of the great construction

programme in the United States, this serious shortage of landing craft continued to be a severely limiting factor in all pre-invasion planning.

166. The victory at El Alamein (23 Oct - 4 Nov) and the success of Operation "TORCH" (8 Nov) opened the door to further, far-reaching developments in the Mediterranean -- and these developments were to have a vital effect on the invasion of North-West Europe. While determined to exploit their advantage in North Africa, the British and American leaders were uncertain about the policy to be adopted with respect to "ROUNDUP". In the latter part of November Mr. Churchill was disturbed by an apparent lack of American interest in this operation for 1943. He expressed his views in a cable to Mr. Roosevelt:

He said that TORCH could be considered no substitute for ROUNDUP. He conceded that it might not be possible to mass the necessary strength for an invasion of Northern France in 1943, but 'if so it becomes all the more important to make sure we do not miss 1944'. (312)

The President's reply contained the following passage:

Of course we have no intention of abandoning the plans for ROUNDUP. It is impossible for anyone to say now whether or not we will be given the opportunity to strike across the Channel in 1943. But we must obviously grasp the opportunity if it comes. Determination as to the strength of the forces that we should apply to BOLERO in 1944 is a matter requiring our joint strategic considerations. My present thought is that we should build up our present striking force in the United Kingdom as rapidly as possible, this force to be available immediately in the event of a German collapse. We should build up a very large force for later use in the event of Germany remaining intact and assuming a defensive position. (313)

He also suggested that "a military strategic conference" should be arranged, with Russian as well as British and American representatives, to co-ordinate Allied strategy (314).

167. In due course arrangements were made for the conference to be held in January 1943 at "a group of excellent villas" near Casablanca (315). The Prime Minister and the President, together with their principal advisers on strategy, were to attend the conference, which was given the code name "SYMBOL". Because of the critical situation on the Russian front

Marshal Stalin was unable to join the Allied leaders. In the course of his transatlantic flight with President Roosevelt to the African rendezvous, Mr. Harry Hopkins wrote:

On the assumption that we are going to drive the Germans out of Africa it became clear to me that there was no agreed-upon plan as to what to do next. We had to strike somewhere -- across the Channel, at Sardinia, Sicily or through Turkey. But where? (316)

"SYMBOL" was to answer this question -- and was to throw more light on the problem of invading North-West Europe.

THE CASABLANCA DELIBERATIONS

168. The principal decision taken by the British and American leaders at the "SYMBOL" Conference (12-23 Jan 43) was to pursue their Mediterranean strategy by invading Sicily in either June or July 1943 (317). However, this great conference did not confine its deliberations to the problems of the Mediterranean theatre. At the end, Mr. Churchill said "it was the first instance he knew of when military leaders had remained together so long, free from political considerations, and had devoted their full thought to the strategic aspects of the war" (318). Allied victories at El Alamein and Stalingrad had been matched, in the Pacific, by the Japanese defeat at Guadalcanal. Thus, at Casablanca, Mr. Churchill, Mr. Roosevelt and their advisers were concerned with new strategic problems on a global scale. Moreover, they met at a time when the initiative was finally passing, in all theatres, from the enemy to the Allies. For this reason the detailed consideration which was given at Casablanca to the future invasion of North-West Europe has a special significance.

169. Three plenary meetings, attended by the Prime Minister and the President, were held on 15, 18 and 23 Jan. Before, and during, this period, the Combined Chiefs of Staff held a total of 15 meetings (14-23 Jan), at which the senior British and American Service advisers endeavoured to reach agreement on various aspects of the war. At the first of these, General Brooke reviewed the overall situation:

The security of the United States and the United Kingdom had always been basic factors in our strategy. The threat to the United Kingdom had been at one time serious, but as a result of our latest review of this danger it was felt that the forces in the United Kingdom could be re-oriented from a defensive to an

offensive basis. The greatest danger at the present time was to our communications. The shortage of shipping was a stranglehold on all offensive operations and unless we could effectively combat the U-boat menace we might not be able to win the war . . .

Taking all these factors into account, it seemed at least possible that the precarious internal situation of Germany might make it possible to achieve a final victory in the European theatre before the end of 1943. The immediate problem was how best to apply our available resources in order to take advantage of Germany's present situation.

The means we had at our disposal were broadly three in number. First there was Russia, which constituted the largest land Power; her efficiency was rising and the work of moving Russian manufacturing plants to the eastward away from the German invasion had been very well carried out. Russia's oil situation was now more satisfactory than had seemed likely earlier in the year, but she was short of grain. In order to get the best value out of Russia we must support her in every way we could. Our second main weapon was air bombardment, by United States and British forces. This we must exploit to the maximum. Our third means of striking at Germany was by amphibious operations, which included invasion of the continent. The possession of sea power enabled us to threaten the enemy at several points, and thereby compel him to disperse his forces. Once committed to a point of entry, however, the enemy would be able to concentrate his forces against us, and it was therefore necessary to choose this point of entry with the greatest care at the place where the enemy was least able to concentrate large forces. (319)

The C.I.G.S. then examined the comparative advantages of amphibious operations in the Mediterranean and the North-West Europe theatres:

As a point of re-entry to the continent, France had great advantages. In the first place the sea-crossing was short and we had better facilities for giving air support to our invasion. On the other hand, the German defences in this area were most strong and Germany's power of concentrating against us was greatest. A recent study had shown that the East-West communications across the continent enabled Germany to move seven divisions simultaneously from the Russian front to the West in about twelve to fourteen days. The North-South communications on the continent were not nearly so good. Not more

than one division at a time could be moved from the North to the Mediterranean front. The Italian railways were close to the coast and vulnerable to interruption from the sea, and in the Balkans there was only a single line of railway passing through Nish. From this point of view, therefore, the Southern front seemed to offer better prospects for amphibious operations. (320)

However, he pointed out that the situation would be changed if there was "a crack in Germany in the late summer":

There were already indications of considerable German withdrawals from France to the eastward. If Germany were compelled to withdraw considerable numbers of troops from France, the possibilities of an invasion across the Channel would be much greater. The estimate of the British Chiefs of Staff was that by August 1943 there would be available for cross-Channel operations some 13 British and 9 United States divisions whether or not we undertook limited operations in the Mediterranean. Mediterranean operations, however, would produce other shortages, notably in Assault Shipping, and it might be difficult, if not impossible, to transfer landing craft from the Mediterranean to the United Kingdom or to the Burma front in time.

In all amphibious operations the provision of landing craft was the critical factor. Not only had the crews to be provided, but the naval crews to man them had to be trained and the land forces had to be trained to work from them; this training was a slow process. (321)

170. At a further meeting of the Combined Chiefs of Staff on the following day (15 Jan) General Brooke stated that three invasion areas in northern France had been considered:

- (a) The Calais-Boulogne area, which, although heavily defended, was within fighter cover of the United Kingdom.
- (b) Cherbourg Peninsula, which could be seized by a comparatively small force.
- (c) Brest Peninsula, which was a more worthwhile objective, would require a much larger force, say, at least 15 divisions, to hold the 150 kilom. of front. (322)

Unfortunately, with the available resources in the United Kingdom, there was no possibility of invading France before the early autumn of 1943. Consequently, no aid could be given to Russia during the crucial summer months.

171. There was, however, what the C.I.G.S. described as "the other broad possibility" -- namely, "to maintain activity in the Mediterranean while building up the maximum air offensive against Germany from the United Kingdom and putting in as many troops as could be spared with a view to undertaking a comparatively small operation such as seizing Cherbourg Peninsula" (323). Presumably he had in mind an operation similar to "WETBOB" (supra, paras 99-103), which might achieve a "permanent" foothold on the Continent. This policy would permit the Allied Air Forces to concentrate on heavy bombers -- using the British Isles as a gigantic airfield for the strategic bombing of Germany -- rather than to concentrate on lighter types of bombers and ground support planes such as would be required for a large-scale invasion of France.

172. In his review, General Brooke made it clear that the British representatives did not favour a full-scale attack in North-West Europe during 1943. Instead, they looked to the Mediterranean as the theatre in which they could exploit their superior naval power and thereby weaken the enemy by striking at the so-called "soft underbelly" of the Axis. Only when Germany had been sufficiently weakened by a combination of this indirect strategy and pulverizing air bombardment would they risk an all-out assault across the Channel. This policy was a further manifestation of the caution which the British authorities had exhibited during the spring and summer of 1942 with respect to an invasion of the Continent.

173. For their part, the American representatives were equally consistent in their resistance to any alteration in the plan for an invasion of North-West Europe in 1943. General Marshall presented their point of view at a meeting of the Combined Chiefs of Staff held on 16 Jan. He and his colleagues believed that "Germany must be defeated by a powerful effort on the Continent, carrying out the 'BOLERO' -- 'ROUNDUP' plans" (324). Commenting on the British appreciation, General Marshall suggested that German use of "East-West communications in northern Europe" would be "subject to severe interference by heavy air attacks from England";* he also thought there was a danger that, if Germany cracked after the Mediterranean operations began, this disintegration might "occur so rapidly that full advantage could not be taken of it" (325). He was particularly concerned about the effect of an extension of the Mediterranean strategy on the Allied concentration in the United Kingdom, and he asked: "Was an operation against Sicily merely a means towards an end or an end in itself?" (326).

*This opinion may have influenced the development of the Allied "Transportation Plan", which afterwards restricted the movement of German reserves into the battle area when "OVERLORD" began. (See, infra, paras 415 ff.)

174.

In reply General Brooke stated that:

. . . on the Continent Russia is the only Ally having large land forces in action. Any effort of the other Allies must necessarily be so small as to be unimportant in the overall picture. He felt that ground operations by the United States and the United Kingdom would not exert any great influence until there were definite signs that Germany was weakening. (327)

The C.I.G.S. pointed out that there were still 44 German divisions in France with "sufficient strength to overwhelm us on the ground, and perhaps hem us in with wire or concrete to such an extent that any expansion of the bridgehead would be extremely difficult" (328). In his opinion the extension of Allied policy in the Mediterranean -- with the object of eliminating Italy and of bringing Turkey into the conflict -- would compel the Germans to disperse their forces on the Continent with corresponding relief to the Red Army.

175.

Another aspect of the British case was presented by Air Chief Marshal Sir Charles Portal, Chief of the Air Staff. Referring to the American suggestion that "inferiority in land forces in Northern France" might be offset by "the greatly superior air forces which could be operated from the United Kingdom", he said:

So far as the Brest Peninsula was concerned, no fighter support could be given from the United Kingdom, since it was out of range. The Cherbourg Peninsula was better from this point of view and offered some possibilities as a preliminary operation. Nevertheless, with the limited air facilities in the Peninsula we should probably find ourselves pinned down at the neck of the Peninsula by ground forces whose superiority we should be unable to offset by the use of air. We should certainly be opposed by strong German air forces there. Once we were committed in Northern France the Germans would quickly bring up their air forces from the Mediterranean, realizing that we could not undertake amphibious operations on a considerable scale both across the Channel and in the Mediterranean. On the other hand, by threatening in the Mediterranean we should cause a far greater dispersion of German air forces. (329)

The Chief of the Air Staff emphasized that the Continent must be treated "as a fortress and that heavy initial bombardment would be required to break into it" (330).