

176.] The great argument reached its climax at a meeting of the Combined Chiefs of Staff held on 18 Jan.

GENERAL MARSHALL stated that, in his opinion, the British Chiefs of Staff wished to be certain that we keep the enemy engaged in the Mediterranean and that at the same time maintain a sufficient force in the United Kingdom to take advantage of a crack in the German strength either from the withdrawal of their forces in France or because of lowered morale. He inferred that the British Chiefs of Staff would prefer to maintain such a force in the United Kingdom dormant and awaiting an opportunity rather than have it utilized in a sustained attack elsewhere. The United States Chiefs of Staff know that they can use these forces offensively in the Pacific Theatre. He felt that the question resolved itself into whether we would maintain a large force in the United Kingdom awaiting an opportunity or keep the force engaged in an active offensive in the Pacific. (331)

The competing demands of the different theatres arose less over troops than over landing craft and shipping. General Brooke and his colleagues were of the opinion that "an all-out Mediterranean effort" was the best policy; but General Marshall was "opposed to immobilizing a large force in the United Kingdom, awaiting an uncertain prospect, when they might be better engaged in offensive operations" elsewhere (332). Above everything else, he was "most anxious not to become committed to intermingled operations in the Mediterranean"; "he wished Northern France to be the scene of the main effort against Germany -- that had always been his conception" (333).

177. Nevertheless, British policy again prevailed. Later on the same day, at the second plenary meeting of the "SYMBOL" Conference\*, General Brooke summarized the views of the Combined Chiefs of Staff on "the general strategic policy for 1943" (334). As regards the North-West Europe and Mediterranean theatres, the principal conclusions were:

Our efforts in defeating Germany will be concerned first with efforts to force them to withdraw ground and air forces from the Russian front. This will be accomplished by operations from North Africa by which Southern Europe, the Dodecanese Islands, Greece, Crete, Sardinia, and Sicily will all

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\*The first plenary meeting (15 Jan 43) was concerned exclusively with "The Situation in North Africa".

be threatened, thus forcing Germany to deploy her forces to meet each threat. The actual operation decided upon is the capture of Sicily.

At the same time, we shall go on with preparing forces and assembling landing craft in England for a thrust across the Channel in the event that the German strength in France decreases, either through withdrawal of her troops or because of an internal collapse . . .

The maximum combined air offensive will be conducted against Germany from the United Kingdom. By this and every other available means, attempts will be made to undermine Germany's morale. (335)

General Marshall explained the American acceptance of operation "HUSKY" (the invasion of Sicily) partly on the ground that the Allies had a large number of troops available in North Africa, but mainly because the operation would "effect an economy of tonnage", which was "the major consideration" (336).

178. It is interesting to note that even at this late date -- and after the decision to attack Sicily had been taken -- the British and American leaders showed a revived interest in "SLEDGEHAMMER":

Mr. CHURCHILL then discussed Operation 'SLEDGEHAMMER'. He thought it should be given a 'sharper point', and that plans should be made to undertake it, including the appointment of a Commander and the fixing of a target date. He had not been in favour of such an operation in 1942, but he felt that it was our duty to engage the enemy on as wide a front and as continuously as possible, and as the only way of stopping[?] an operation with the full force of the British Metropolitan air forces and the United States air forces in Great Britain is to do a 'SLEDGEHAMMER', he thought we should do everything we could to make the operation possible this summer.

THE PRESIDENT agreed with the Prime Minister and further suggested that we join together to build up forces in the United Kingdom. He said that it would be desirable to prepare a schedule of the build-up of forces by month in order that we would know what the potential effort might be at any time, and plans should be made for utilizing this potential at any time that there are signs of Germany's deterioration. (337)

Their interest in these plans was doubtless related to a fear which was expressed at the final plenary session of the conference (23 Jan):

THE PRIME MINISTER said that he feared the gap of perhaps four months during the [approaching] summer when no United States or British troops would be in contact with the Germans.

THE PRESIDENT agreed and said that this gap might have a serious effect all over the world. (338)

However, the very limited scope of the plans under contemplation was indicated by the Prime Minister's remark: "For the type of operations which would be undertaken in France in 1943, a big advance was not likely. Fighting men for the beaches were the prime essential" (339).

179. In point of fact, the revived "SLEDGE-HAMMER" never became more than a plan for a remote contingency. The increasing Allied commitment in the Mediterranean involved a further drain on the restricted resources in the United Kingdom. Reluctantly recognizing this disability, General Marshall said: "Unless there is a complete crack in German morale, operations across the Channel will have to be extremely limited" (340). His appreciation was confirmed when Lord Louis Mountbatten revealed that "the landing craft resources would only permit of an initial assault by 2 brigade groups with an immediate follow-up of one brigade group and some armour" (341).

180. A review of the conclusions reached at the Casablanca Conference indicates that, apart from the increased impetus given to Allied operations in the Mediterranean, "SYMBOL" exerted a significant influence on planning for the invasion of North-West Europe. The Conference reaffirmed the fundamental principle of defeating Germany before Japan (342). In Europe, "HUSKY" was given precedence over "ROUNDUP" as the "all-out" Allied effort in 1943 -- thereby postponing the Normandy invasion by a full year. Thus, the great tug-of-war between American impatience and British caution had reached another decisive stage. Major-General (then Brigadier) E.I.C. Jacob, the British representative on the secretariat at the plenary meetings of the "SYMBOL" Conference, afterwards summed up the opposing points of view:

Our view was quite clear, and it had nothing to do with politics, or with some imaginary idea of saving the British Empire at the cost of our Allies. Before we would fight on the mainland of Europe, where full-scale German armies would be engaged, the shipping situation had to be brought under control, the Middle East had to be made secure, and Anglo-American production had to have reached a level at which the great invasion could be adequately sustained.

The Americans, fresh in the fight and feeling their enormous potential strength stirring, naturally saw things differently. For them, a landing in Northern France would not be the final bolt, which, if it miscarried, could not be shot again. They were ready to go in head on and if necessary take a bloody nose, relying on their power to recoil and strike again with redoubled force.

Who can say that either of us was wrong?  
(343)

In the end the British view prevailed. But although they accepted the extension of Allied commitments in the Mediterranean, the Americans still looked towards the greater enterprise in North-West Europe. Mr. Harry Hopkins "was always solidly with Marshall in the conviction that there was no really adequate substitute for the opening of a Second Front in France" (344).

181. Curiously enough, the "SYMBOL" discussions disclosed a reversal of attitudes on the prospect of an early termination of the war. It will be remembered (supra, para 169) that General Brooke had mentioned the possibility of "a final victory in the European theatre before the end of 1943". However, Lt-Gen H.H. Arnold (Commanding General, United States Army Air Force) told a meeting of the Combined Chiefs of Staff that "it looked very much as if no continental operations on any scale were in prospect before the Spring of 1944" (345). Later, the C.I.G.S. conceded that "an all-out offensive across the Channel" could hardly be attempted before 1944 (346).

182. Although Mr. Churchill and Mr. Roosevelt had stated that everything possible should be done to carry out "SLEDGEHAMMER" during the summer of 1943, they were not thinking of a decisive operation in North-West Europe. "SLEDGEHAMMER" depended entirely on a sudden deterioration of German strength. Subsequent events were to show what little basis there was for such optimism. Moreover, the severe limitations imposed by "TORCH" and "HUSKY" on landing craft and shipping resources in the United Kingdom robbed "SLEDGEHAMMER" of any reality as a serious plan for an attack across the Channel in 1943 (347).

183. Nevertheless, the Casablanca Conference looked beyond the immediate future of operations in North-West Europe. The Combined Chiefs of Staff considered three possible areas for a full-scale invasion of the French coast; they also gave particular attention to the Air aspect of operations in those areas. The implications of the "BOLERO" build-up received further study with the object of expediting the concentration of American troops and equipment in

the United Kingdom for "ROUNDUP". The necessity of giving these troops special training in amphibious warfare was also recognized and Lord Louis Mountbatten pointed out that "flat beaches, changes of tides, and all means of possible defence" were available in the United Kingdom "to ensure the thoroughness of the training" (348). Throughout their discussions the British and American representatives never lost sight of the essential fact that all pre-invasion planning depended upon adequate provision of landing craft and shipping.

184. The "SYMBOL" Conference had an important bearing on other aspects of invasion planning. First, there was the old question of whether one of the first objectives of an Allied assault should be the capture of a major port. As already mentioned, the experience of the Dieppe Raid and the North African landings had increased Allied doubts about the necessity of securing a port during the early stages of the invasion. At Casablanca this problem arose again in connection with plans for transporting American troops from the United States directly to France; it was suggested that these plans depended on "the capture of sufficient port facilities" (349). General Marshall was of the opinion that, once the operation began, "it would probably be necessary to conduct separate operations to gain additional port facilities" (350). However, a further indication of the ultimate solution came from General Brooke, who said

... he thought it would be easier to establish a bridgehead and widen it out by overland operations in order to capture the ports that would be necessary. He said that at least two or three ports would be required before any attempt could be made to advance further inland. He thought that the ports from Calais to Bordeaux were the most desirable. (351)

This line of thought led to the conception of an invasion over open beaches, disregarding the early capture of port facilities, which became a feature of the "OVERLORD" plan.\*

185. Another subject of the "SYMBOL" discussions was closely connected with the Dieppe experience -- namely, the need for a permanent assault force. At Casablanca Lord Louis Mountbatten referred to the latter as one of the "three important lessons of amphibious operations which had so far emerged"; he described the requirements of the force in these terms:

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\*Following the invasion of Normandy, in June 1944, First Canadian Army captured the ports of Dieppe, Le Tréport, Ostend, Le Havre, Boulogne and Calais and opened the Scheldt Estuary for Allied use of the great facilities of Antwerp (September-November 1944).

For any amphibious campaign involving assaults on strongly defended coasts held by a determined enemy it is essential that the landing ships and craft shall be organized well in advance into proper assault fleets. These must have a coherence and degree of permanence comparable to that of any first-line fighting formation. Discipline training and tactical flexibility are just as necessary for assault fleets as for naval, military and air combat formations. This was the overriding lesson of Dieppe. (352)

As previously mentioned (supra, paras 129-131), the conception of "proper assault fleets" led to the organization of Force "J" -- a Force which had an intimate association with the Canadian troops who landed in Normandy on D Day.

186. The other "important lessons" to which the Chief of Combined Operations referred at Casablanca were "adequate beach reconnaissance" and "adequate fire support for the assault" (353). Operation "TORCH" had demonstrated the need for beach reconnaissance parties with special training; Operation "JUBILEE" had left no doubt about the necessity of heavier fire support for amphibious operations against strongly defended coasts. In this connection Lord Louis Mountbatten revealed that "a scale of 100 guns (48 self-propelled in L.C.T. and 52 in the new gun craft to be known as L.C.G.)\* for each assault brigade had been recommended" (354). It was evident that earlier lessons were being put to good account by the authorities concerned with pre-invasion planning.

187. Finally, mention must be made of another matter, discussed at the "SYMBOL" Conference, which was to have a profound effect upon the preparations for the invasion of North-West Europe. At a meeting of the Combined Chiefs of Staff held on 21 Jan Admiral E.J. King expressed the opinion that the appointment of a supreme commander for the invasion was "urgent" (355). As a result of a decision taken at this meeting, the Combined Chiefs of Staff prepared a Note on the "Proposed Organization of Command, Control, Planning and Training for Operations for a Re-entry to the Continent across the Channel, beginning in 1943" (356). This Note recommended an organization for:

(a) Small-scale amphibious operations, such as the progressive reoccupation of the Channel Islands . . .\*\*

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\*Supra, para 121.

\*\*The Note added that "raids are already adequately taken care of by the existing organization".

- (b) The need to re-enter the Continent with all available forces at the shortest possible notice in the event of a sudden and unexpected collapse of German resistance. The aim would be to seize critical political and military centres in Germany in the shortest possible time;
- (c) Operations to seize a bridgehead late in 1943, leading up to a rapid exploitation; or
- (d) an invasion in force in 1944. (357)

The Note emphasized that the first essential was "a clear directive from the Combined Chiefs of Staff setting out the objects of the plans and the resources likely to be available"; but the Note added that all plans and preparations must be "extremely flexible" (358). On principles of command and planning the Combined Chiefs of Staff suggested that small-scale operations "could adequately be dealt with by C.C.O's organization on the same lines as was the Dieppe Raid" (359). However, as regards the larger operations mentioned in sub-paragraphs (b), (c) and (d), above, the Note stated that "the governing principle should be that the responsibility for planning and training should rest with, or under the direction of, the Commanders who will have to carry out the plans, who will be the same Commanders for all three operations. These should be designated at once" (360).

188. The Combined Chiefs of Staff considered that, when the operations mentioned in sub-paragraphs (b), (c) and (d) became "reasonably imminent", it would be necessary to appoint a Supreme Commander. Their Note added:

He should have a small combined staff of British and American officers of all three services, and under him will be subordinate commanders, air, land and sea, corresponding to the organization just approved for the operations in the Mediterranean.

It is considered desirable that the Supreme Commander should be appointed at once. If this is not feasible, his Chief of Staff or Deputy and a nucleus of the combined staff should be appointed immediately to give the necessary impetus and cohesion to planning. (361)

189. At the second plenary meeting of the Casablanca Conference (18 Jan), President Roosevelt suggested that Operation "ROUNDUP", if undertaken, should be under British command. The record of this meeting continues:

THE PRIME MINISTER said that he thought the question of command in 'ROUNDUP' operation might be determined later, but he agreed that it would be advisable to designate a British commander at this time who could undertake the planning of the operation. In his view, the command of operations should, as a general rule, be held by an officer of the nation which furnishes the majority of the forces. (362)

This principle undoubtedly had a direct bearing on the later selection of the Supreme Commander, Allied Expeditionary Force (General Dwight D. Eisenhower).

190. When amphibious operations from the United Kingdom were discussed at the final plenary session of the Conference (23 Jan) the question of command arose again. The following extract is taken from the British record of the resulting discussion:

On the question of command THE PRESIDENT enquired whether sufficient drive would be applied if only a Chief of Staff were appointed. He hoped there would not be a long delay before a Supreme Commander was selected.

GENERAL MARSHALL said he understood it was a question of the availability of the right man.

SIR ALAN BROOKE thought that the Chief of Staff, if a man with the right qualities were chosen, could do what was necessary in the early stages.

THE PRIME MINISTER suggested that in any case an American Deputy to the Supreme Commander should be appointed.

SIR ALAN BROOKE and GENERAL MARSHALL agreed. (363)

It was not until eleven months later that General Eisenhower was appointed Supreme Allied Commander. For much of the intervening period a British officer (Lt-Gen F.E. Morgan), as "Chief of Staff to the Supreme Allied Commander (designate)", was to bear the heavy responsibility of preparing detailed plans for the invasion of North-West Europe.

#### THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE COMBINED COMMANDERS

191. Before describing the developments which led to COSSAC, it is necessary to consider the important influence of the Combined Commanders on pre-invasion planning. The origin and certain aspects of the preliminary work of the Combined Commanders have been outlined in earlier sections of this

narrative.\* The substance of their recommendations for a full-scale attack across the Channel was contained in a series of papers which they prepared during the early part of 1943.

192. In a Staff Study of 5 Feb the Combined Commanders examined the "constant factors" in "The Selection of Assault Areas in a Major Operation in North-West Europe" (364). The introduction to their paper contained the following statement: "This study . . . is intended to form the basis on which future appreciations can be made and to which it may be attached" (365).

193. The Staff Study first reviewed the general considerations applicable to an invasion of the Continent. The paper stressed the importance of the air aspect:

An invasion of the Continent is vitally dependent on good air cover over the shipping and beaches. In the initial stages a large effort of tactical air support will have to be provided by bombers and fighter bombers, which will require fighter escort. (366).

This factor limited the possible areas of assault to the coast between Cherbourg and Knocke. The same consideration made the "early provision of airfields within the bridgehead a major factor in the selection of an assault area" unless arrangements could be made for "adequate fighter cover . . . for an extended period by aircraft based in England" (367). Of greater significance, in the light of later preparations for the invasion, was the opinion that "the extreme importance of air cover could be lessened only if the German Air Force were very weak and if the airfields required by the enemy to operate fighters over the assault area were denied to him" (368). Methods of achieving these objectives were afterwards features of the "OVERLORD" Plan.

194. The Combined Commanders expressed the opinion that, from the naval point of view, an invasion area between Calais and Cherbourg would be preferable.

The naval difficulties of an assault on the West coast of the COTENTIN Peninsula or on the North coast of BRITTANY are greater than elsewhere. As regards the former, it would be essential to have first captured or completely neutralized ALDERNEY. It might also be found that the prior capture of GURNEY would become equally essential if it were desired to land and maintain considerable forces on the West COTENTIN beaches. (369)

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\*Supra, paras 28, 90 ff and 99 ff.

195. The factors having a vital effect on the military aspect of an invasion received detailed treatment in the Combined Commanders' paper. As a basis for their study of the German defences the Combined Commanders had prepared a "diagrammatic comparison . . . of the amount of concrete, wire, mines and light artillery deployed, and also of the strength of the garrison and divisional frontages compared with the length of beach within the sector that could be used in the assault" for the entire European coastline from the Spanish frontier to Den Helder (370). In view of the Dieppe experience (supra, para 132), it was significant that the Staff Study anticipated the construction of further formidable defences, by the spring of 1943, "along all sectors of the coast liable to assault, and for the protection of the major ports" (371).

196. Three paragraphs of the Staff Study had a direct bearing on later planning for "OVERLORD":

It will be seen that the only sectors of the coast with comparatively weak defences, but within reasonable fighter cover, are the East and West beaches of the COTENTIN sector (North of the line LESSAY - CARENTAN) and the CAEN sector. It is to be observed, however, that the CHANNEL ISLANDS are very strongly defended and they, particularly ALDERNEY, cover the sea approaches to the West beaches of the COTENTIN sector.

No purely seaborne assault against strong beach and coast defences is likely to succeed unless those defences are either reduced or neutralized. To this end every available means of preparation and support must be brought to bear including, in particular, airborne troops, when the terrain and objective permits, and special support craft.

If our resources in airborne troops were large, it would enable us to assault more strongly defended beaches than would otherwise be the case. They could not, however, ensure success against the most strongly held sectors, such as the PAS DE CALAIS, where precautions against airborne assaults have been considerably developed. (372)

The selection of beaches in the Caen - Cotentin sectors, the emphasis on overwhelming fire support and the suggestion of the airborne role all bore a remarkably close resemblance to corresponding aspects of the final "OVERLORD" plan.

197. The Combined Commanders also examined other important factors in detail. For example, they considered the possibilities of defensive inundations in the Cotentin Peninsula and noted that "whichever

side held the area liable to inundation in the South-East of the Peninsula could control its effectiveness as an obstacle" (373). When "NEPTUNE" (the assault phase of "OVERLORD") was afterwards launched this same vital area was an important objective for American airborne formations. Again, dealing with the probable movement of enemy reserves, the Combined Commanders laid down a cardinal principle for later planning:

In any assault on the Continent it is essential that our rate of build-up and progress through his coastal defensive belt shall compete with the rate at which the enemy can engage his reserves. (374)

The Staff Study recognized that "some maintenance" would "have to be carried out over beaches, supplemented, when possible, by air supply"; but the paper revealed that the planners were still thinking in terms of the early capture of a major port (375).

198. The remainder of the Staff Study of 5 Feb 43 was a detailed consideration of the Dutch, Belgian, Pas de Calais, Seine, Caen, Cotentin and Brittany and Biscay sectors. The close relationship of the invasion area selected by the Combined Commanders to that adopted for the "NEPTUNE" assault gives great importance to their reasons for rejecting other areas. The Dutch sector was thought to be unsuitable because, in the words of the Staff Study:

- (a) It is out of range of satisfactory fighter cover.
- (b) The beaches have very limited exits, are backed by extensive sand dunes, and have too small a tidal range for beaching coasters.
- (c) The beaches are exposed.
- (d) If the enemy so decided he could inundate a very large part of the country. (376)

The Belgian coast was ruled out because of "limited port and unreliable beach capacities", the danger of inundation, the strength of the enemy's defences and the ease with which he could concentrate his mobile reserves against any landing (377).

199. The reasons for the rejection of the ostensibly attractive Pas de Calais sector have a special significance for any study of pre-invasion planning. The objections were:

- (a) Most of the beaches are exposed to the prevailing winds.

- (b) The beach defences are very strong.
- (c) All the beaches are overlooked by high ground on which much coast and field artillery has been placed.
- (d) The bigger beaches are backed by extensive sand dunes which would severely hamper our operations.
- (e) The ports in the area have insufficient capacity for a large force. (378)

Nevertheless, the Combined Commanders recognized that this was an area over which Allied fighter cover could be maintained under extremely advantageous conditions. This factor led them to suggest that the Pas de Calais was suitable for "a feint or, if the casualties to men and craft . . . [could] be accepted, for diversions" (379). As will be seen, the threat of an Allied attack directly across the Straits of Dover -- in aid of the main assault elsewhere -- was to be the principal element in the later deception plan for "OVERLORD". (It was, incidentally, a plan to which the later movements of the 2nd Canadian Corps were directly related.

200. The Staff Study of 5 Feb did not favour a main assault in the Seine sector because the beaches had a small capacity, they were exposed to the prevailing winds and were overlooked by cliffs on their flanks.\* The enemy's defences were also known to be strong. However, the Combined Commanders did consider that "a limited force" might support a main assault further west (in the Caen sector) by "outflanking the River Seine and obtaining the use of the ports of Havre and Rouen" (380). Similarly, they rejected the Brittany and Biscay sectors because of difficulties in connection with air cover, beach capacity and lengthy communications subsequent to the assault.

201. The opinions of the Combined Commanders with respect to the Caen and Cotentin sectors must be quoted at length:

CAEN Sector.

This is suitable for an assault by a large force in that:-

- (a) The beaches are of large capacity and sheltered against Westerly and South Westerly winds, so that a large force could be put ashore rapidly and maintained over them. This is so in spite of the fact that those to the East of CABOURG could not be used on account of their being under fire from coast defences in the HAVRE area.

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\*Cf Dieppe area.

- (b) The defences are relatively weaker than elsewhere.
- (c) The CAEN group of airfields would not only provide bases quickly for some of our fighters but also, once denied to the enemy, considerably hamper his fighter effort over the COTENTIN Peninsula and the HAVRE area. Further, the ground appears to be suitable for the construction of new airfields.
- (d) The River SEINE assists the protection of the East flank of a force assaulting in this area.

On the other hand this sector suffers from the disadvantage that the ports in the area are insufficient. While some small ports would fall early into our hands, the capture of CHERBOURG would be necessary and would entail an extension of the operation . . . Even then the port capacity would not be sufficient for a large force, so that either the North SEINE or the BRETON group would also be required later. The former involves the successful crossing of the River SEINE or an assault in the SEINE Sector. The latter involves either a long move in the opposite direction to GERMANY or an assault in BRITTANY.

A decision as to which of these groups of ports should be secured or whether both should be, must depend on the final objectives of the operations and the degree of enemy opposition to be expected while the base is being developed. Lines of communication from ports in BRITTANY could only be accepted for an advance Eastwards if it were essential to build up a large force West of and protected by the River SEINE. Such lines of communication would take a long time to develop.

#### THE COTENTIN Sector

This is less suitable for an assault by a large force for the following reasons:

- (a) The Eastern beaches, though well sheltered, have insufficient capacity to pass a large force ashore rapidly.
- (b) The bottleneck at the base of the COTENTIN Peninsula, which could be made narrower by inundations, would make a break-out difficult.

The fact, however, that the Peninsula is covered by this bottleneck, contains port capacity sufficient for a force of seven

divisions, and that the East and West beaches are relatively weakly held, makes it a possible sector for one of two purposes:-

- (a) In the event of greatly decreased GERMAN resistance, to make an opposed landing with a comparatively small force with the intention of advancing Eastwards opening up further ports successively.
- (b) To stage a limited operation to seize and hold a general line across the bottleneck, provided sufficient airfield sites can be developed quickly.

Owing to the limited beach capacity on the East of the Peninsula, an operation limited to seizing a bridgehead might involve the use of the Western beaches. This would require the neutralization of the Island of ALDERNEY. If this is not possible, the capture of the Island would be necessary. If considerable forces are involved the capture or neutralization of GUERNSEY may also be necessary. It must further be noted that weather conditions which would enable the East and West Beaches to be used simultaneously are infrequent.

If the main assault is to be made in the CAEN Sector, it would be necessary to extend that operation to include the Eastern Beaches of the COTENTIN Peninsula in order to capture the port of CHERBOURG early . . .

#### Relationship between the CAEN and COTENTIN Sectors

It will be observed that a limited operation by a small force would only be possible in the COTENTIN Sector, and that an assault by a large force in an unlimited operation would only be possible in the CAEN Sector. These two sectors are adjacent. The possible effects of the former operation on the latter unless it were mounted only a very short period beforehand would require careful consideration. . .\*

**202.** The foregoing was a highly significant contribution to the development of the invasion plan. According to an official British narrative the Staff Study "embraced all the facts and concentrated knowledge which had been assimilated in the months of planning that had gone before" (381). An authoritative American account also pays tribute to this Study as "the basic

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\*Extracts from paras 52-58 and 67 of Combined Commanders' Staff Study of 5 Feb 43.

appreciation for subsequent cross-Channel planning" (382). Following their detailed investigations the Combined Commanders had selected the Caen - Cotentin sectors -- the same general area afterwards chosen for the Normandy landings -- well over a year before the invasion was launched. Their conclusions were based on a new approach to the problem: "abandoning the ROUNDUP idea of many separate regimental and commando assaults, they assumed one main landing in an area capable of development into a lodgment for the whole Allied invasion force" (383). Moreover, the Combined Commanders appear to have been the first to point out the importance of co-ordinating the main assault in the Caen area with a subsidiary attack against the eastern beaches of the Cotentin Peninsula. This aspect of invasion planning was to be the subject of further profound study before the "OVERLORD" plan was finally adopted.

203. In addition to the Staff Study of 5 Feb 43 the Combined Commanders prepared an appreciation for an operation known as "SKYSCRAPER" (384). The object of this operation was to capture the Cotentin Peninsula and the Caen sector with a bridgehead which would include Lessay, Périers, St. Lô, Caumont, Caen and the prominent feature of Mont Pincon. Four divisions would make simultaneous assaults on the beaches in the Caen and Eastern Cotentin sectors; six more would have a follow-up role. While Commandos created diversions in the Cabourg area, east of the Orne River, not less than four airborne divisions would interfere with the movement of German reserves. It was, in fact, intended that the follow-up divisions would meet the enemy's reserve divisions "some 25 miles from the beaches" (385). The appreciation visualized the early capture of Cherbourg, to be followed by a pause of three weeks for maintenance requirements to be built up, airfields developed and further build-up divisions landed. Then there would be an advance with the object of seizing the Seine ports. In the course of this advance "a seaborne and airborne landing North-East of Havre" was "to be timed concurrently with operations to force the passage of the River Seine" (386). With the Seine ports secured, "a detachment" might even be sent to capture Paris (387). After a further pause of possibly three months for maintenance requirements (during which period the Loire ports might be captured), operations would be directed towards opening the tremendous shipping facilities of Antwerp and menacing the Ruhr.

204. The opinion has been expressed that "SKYSCRAPER set its sights deliberately high" (388). The evident intention was to stress the outstanding problems of a full-scale invasion of France -- of these the most pressing was certainly the provision of landing craft. The Combined Commanders' requirements were stated as a virtual ultimatum: "If we are to plan and prepare for the invasion of Western Europe against opposition, it must be on the understanding that the

resources considered necessary are fully realized and that it is the intention to provide them . . . . To defer the decision is to decide not to be ready" (389). Nevertheless, the Chiefs of Staff Committee evidently decided that the available resources fell so far short of the requirements for "SKYSCRAPER" that any further study of the plan would be unrealistic (390).

205. Although "SKYSCRAPER" was shelved -- the responsibility for subsequent planning was shifted to the COSSAC organization -- the plans for that operation bore a striking resemblance to those finally adopted for "OVERLORD". In particular, the area chosen by the Combined Commanders for the assault closely resembled that selected for D Day. Moreover, following out the principles of the Staff Study of 5 Feb 43, "SKYSCRAPER" emphasized the vital relationship of the Eastern Cotentin beaches to those further east, in the Caen sector. Here, it may be noted that the later COSSAC appreciation was unable, with the available resources, to provide for an assault against the Cotentin beaches. Yet it was partly considerations affecting these beaches which afterwards led to an important modification of the invasion plan so as to include the Eastern Cotentin beaches in the assault. Again, as regards the scale of the invasion, it is significant that the four seaborne divisions required by "SKYSCRAPER" (one more than the COSSAC appreciation was able to provide) was a close estimate of the number (five) ultimately considered necessary for the great task. In point of fact, the total number of assaulting divisions, under the "SKYSCRAPER" plan, was identical with the number employed on D Day. The reason was that the Combined Commanders were planning to use four airborne divisions, by comparison with the three which were afterwards dropped in Normandy. In its use of specialized troops (Commandos) to protect the left flank of the invasion, east of the Orne, "SKYSCRAPER" also foreshadowed "NEPTUNE" -- although the latter used airborne troops for this purpose. Finally, notice must be taken of the close parallel between the objectives subsequent to the assault, as outlined in the "SKYSCRAPER" appreciation, and those of the Supreme Commander after the Battle of Normandy. In both cases the need for the ports in the Seine sector -- and, more especially, the urgent necessity of obtaining the great facilities of Antwerp -- was recognized as an essential goal of Allied strategy.

206. From this brief analysis it will be apparent that the work of the Combined Commanders is of very great significance in any study of pre-invasion planning. Unfortunately, it is difficult to establish a direct connection between "SKYSCRAPER" and the final "OVERLORD" plan. There is no evidence yet available to prove that the last important adjustments to the "OVERLORD" plan were made as a result of direct reference to the earlier work of the Combined Commanders (391). Nevertheless, it is, perhaps, fair to assume that any planning group which included such influential

representatives as General Paget, Admiral Ramsay, Air-Marshal Douglas and Lord Louis Mountbatten must have exercised considerable influence on subsequent planning for the invasion. This impression is strengthened by the fact that the later Supreme Commander, Allied Expeditionary Force, was, himself, a member of the Combined Commanders during the period that he held the appointment of Commanding General of United States Forces in the European Theatre. It is true that by the time the "SKYSCRAPER" appreciation was prepared, General Eisenhower was in North Africa. But it is almost inconceivable that he was unaware of the trend taken by the planning of those senior British officers -- one of whom was to become the Allied Naval Commander, Expeditionary Force -- with whom he had been closely associated in London. Finally, it may be argued that, regardless of whether any direct connection between "SKYSCRAPER" and "OVERLORD" can be established, great credit is due to the Combined Commanders for the foresight and imagination which characterized their proposals for an invasion of Normandy.

"SPARTAN" and "PRIMROSE"

"SPARTAN"

207. Brief mention may now be made of two important exercises, carried out in the United Kingdom during March - April 1943, which revealed the progress of training for the invasion. In the first of these ("SPARTAN") First Canadian Army played a prominent role and General McNaughton's command included the 12th British as well as the 1st and 2nd Canadian Corps.\*

208. For the purposes of the exercise England was considered to represent "part of the Continent of Europe adjacent to the British Isles" (392). Reference has been made to the prevailing opinion, during the latter part of 1942, that First Canadian Army would be given a "fellow-up" role in the invasion. This view influenced the arrangements for "SPARTAN", and "General McNaughton was assumed to be advancing from a bridgehead on the Continent of Europe, already established by another . . . Army" (393). The defending ("German") Army, under the command of Lt-Gen J.A.H. Gammell, was composed of the 8th and 11th British Corps. The resulting "battle" was fought over much of central England between the Cotswolds, in the west, and the Chilterns (and outskirts of London) in the east.

209. "SPARTAN" was "the greatest offensive exercise" ever staged in the British Isles (394). It was distinguished by extreme mobility under the most favourable conditions of weather for that season of the year. However, it is unnecessary, in the present

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\*The 2nd Canadian Corps had recently been formed (15 Jan 43) under the command of Lt-Gen E.W. Sansom.

narrative, to describe the manoeuvres in detail. General McNaughton afterwards reported to the Minister of National Defence and the C.G.S.:

This large scale exercise was designed as a strict test of the physical condition and endurance of the troops, their proficiency in movement and tactics and of the ability of commanders and staffs to administer, handle and fight their formations and units . . . (395)

He added that he felt the Canadians had "learnt most valuable lessons for the future" (396).

210. Apart from emphasis on the "follow-up" role of First Canadian Army in an invasion, "SPARTAN" gave troops, commanders and their staffs much-needed experience of operations on a large scale. Valuable lessons were learned, particularly in connection with the administration and maintenance of large formations, and these were afterwards studied in considerable detail (397).

211. One aspect of "SPARTAN" deserves particular mention for its influence on later invasion planning. In his report General McNaughton stated:

One of the important matters of organization tested was the new composite group of the Royal Air Force. In this for the first time I see a possibility of providing the Army with the air support which it requires. (398)

The function of the Royal Air Force Composite Group was "to provide complete unity of planning, and action at all levels, between the Army and the Royal Air Force" (399). The Chief Umpire on "SPARTAN" (Lt-Gen H.C. Loyd) commented as follows:

The conception of a Composite Group appears to be sound, although its application as demonstrated in this exercise is designed for a particular set of circumstances which may not occur in practice. It is considered that, under the conditions in this exercise, the composition of the Group would, in fact, have required certain functional modifications. In addition, were an invasion of the Continent to occur within fighter range of this country, it is probable that both tac R and close support bomber aircraft, with their longer range, would operate from home bases during the initial phase, due to the over-riding necessity for air superiority over the bridgehead and invasion ports. (400)

212. Shortly after the exercise it was announced that No. 83 (Composite) Group had been formed in Fighter Command "to provide facilities for training ground units and squadrons to work together under field

conditions, and to provide a means of working out the full requirements and organization of a Composite formation" (401). Later, in the course of a meeting held at G.H.Q. Home Forces (and attended by Air Marshal Sir Arthur Barratt, A.O.C.-in-C., Army Co-operation Command, and Air Marshal Sir Trafford Leigh-Mallory), General Paget suggested that "the early formation of the second Composite Group was necessary so that both Cdn Army and Second [British] Army should have a R.A.F. Commander and Staff to work with" (402). Headquarters No. 84 (Composite) Group R.A.F. was not fully formed until 15 Jul 43. It was this Group which afterwards supported the operations of First Canadian Army in North-West Europe.

213. Meanwhile, an important decision was to have a fundamental effect on the scope of Canadian planning for the invasion. On 23 Apr General Brooke advised General McNaughton there was little prospect of an operation against North-West Europe in 1943. However, in view of the "insistent requests" of the Canadian Government, Mr. Churchill had directed that Canadian troops were to participate in the next operation (403). Accordingly, General McNaughton was invited to consider the participation of one infantry division, one army tank brigade and ancillary units from First Canadian Army in Operation "HUSKY". The Army Commander agreed to forward this request to the Canadian Government.

214. A personal cable of 24 Apr from the C.I.G.S. to General Eisenhower (then Supreme Allied Commander in the Mediterranean) stated:

You will appreciate that it is essential on both political and military grounds that Canadian forces should be brought into action this year. It had been hoped to employ them in operations across the channel from U.K. but likelihood of such operations has now become extremely remote owing to recent addition to HUSKY of practically all remaining landing craft.

It has therefore been decided that 1 Canadian Division and a tank bde. similarly organized to 3 Division and its tank bde. will replace latter in the Eastern Task Force for the HUSKY operation subject to confirmation from the Canadian Government which we hope will be immediately forthcoming . . .

The Canadian Division is in a more advanced state of combined training than 3 Division and the Canadian planning staff have already started work with full assistance of 3 Division so no time is being lost. (404)

215. The Canadian Government quickly signified its approval of Canadian participation in "HUSKY". By the end of April arrangements were well advanced for the 1st Canadian Division and the 1st Canadian Army Tank

Brigade to join the assaulting force in the Mediterranean. In a discussion with General Sir Hastings Ismay (Chief of Staff to Mr. Churchill, in the latter's capacity as Minister of Defence), the Army Commander enquired about the possibility of restoring these Canadian formations to First Canadian Army after Operation "HUSKY". "General Ismay replied that no one yet knew what would come after 'HUSKY'; in any event, it would be a good thing for Canada to have a division in an active theatre so that officers from other Canadian formations could be rotated for experience" (405). In fact, as the Mediterranean operations developed, the Canadian commitment in that theatre expanded into a full Corps -- the 1st Canadian Corps, including the 5th Canadian Armoured Division -- and it was not possible to restore these formations to First Canadian Army until long after the invasion of Normandy.

216. Thus, from April 1943 onwards, Canadian planning for the invasion could not be based on any firm expectation that an all-Canadian Army would be available for the task. In these circumstances certain developments were inevitable. It became evident that formations would be detached from General McNaughton's command and would be placed under British command for the "NEPTUNE" assault. Moreover, it was apparent that when First Canadian Army moved to the Continent for its "follow-up" role the Army would, of necessity, include large British formations.

#### "PRIMROSE"

217. Another important exercise carried out during the spring of 1943 was "PRIMROSE" (406). This exercise, organized by G.H.Q. Home Forces and C.O.H.Q., consisted of a series of assault landings against "mock up" German defences at Kilbride Bay. The primary object was to test the use of seaborne C.D.L. (that is, "Canal Defence Light") as a means of concealing an assaulting force by surprising and dazzling the enemy defenders. However, the exercise showed that C.D.L. was "too uncertain to be depended upon as the main feature of an invasion" and that, if used, "it should be employed on one or possibly two carefully selected Brigade fronts" (407).

218. Of greater significance were certain other lessons of "PRIMROSE" which had a direct bearing on the problem of supporting fire for amphibious attack. They arose directly out of "the need for overwhelming fire support" which had been considered "the lesson of greatest importance" from the Dieppe Raid (*supra*, para 118). At Kilbride Bay (4 Mar - 10 Apr), these exercises and experiments were carried out during the C.D.L. trials:

1. Area neutralization by 25-pounder S.P. artillery firing from L.C.Ts;
2. Direct close supporting fire by L.C.F.(1);\*

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\*Landing Craft Flak (1): An L.C.T. fitted with A.A. armament to give protection against close-range attack from the air or from E-boats.

3. Beach barrage by L.C.F. (1);
4. Indirect supporting fire by L.C.F. (1);
5. A supporting fire plan combining 1, 2 and 3 above. (408)

It is interesting to note that the artillery used in these exercises was provided by the 142nd (Self-Propelled) Field Regiment R.A., which later supported Canadian operations in Sicily.

219. The special task of the waterborne field regiments was described as follows:

The major bombardment of the selected beaches will be carried out by the Bombarding ships of the Royal Navy, preceded, it is hoped, by an air attack on the heaviest possible scale.

Owing to the safety requirements the heavy guns of the Royal Navy will have to lift from the beaches some time before the Infantry touch down, and it is suggested that it will be the task of the S.P. 25 prs to continue the bombardment so that the CDL craft and Close Support Craft can approach and position themselves with some chance of survival. (409)

In view of the importance afterwards attached to this form of close support, the technique tested during "PRIMROSE" may be described somewhat more fully:

The method employed was for 4 guns to be lined up on the fore and aft line of the L.C.T. which was steered directly at the target or, if nothing could be seen, by compass. The initial range was calculated from a navigational fix and a Coventry Clock was used to compute the rate as the craft closed the beach. Spotting was usually carried out by an F.O.O. in a landing craft close inshore and the first four rounds were usually 'air bursts' to facilitate observation. An accuracy of + or - about 200 yards on a small area being engaged was usually achieved. (410)

This method was an interesting suggestion of that employed, over a year later, in the "NEPTUNE" assault.

220. The trials at Kilbride Bay showed that, under suitable weather conditions, a seaborne field (S.P.) regiment could put down effective fire either as a beach barrage (that is, a neutralization in depth, utilizing the forward movement of the craft to produce the depth) or as a concentration on an area approximately 250 yards square. It was calculated that each regiment could put down between 28 and 37 tons of high explosive on the target area (411).

221. Exercise "PRIMROSE" contributed important information on other aspects of an amphibious assault. The experience of the infantry (the 6th Battalion, Royal Scots Fusiliers) led to the conclusion that "during training live ammunition must be fired" (412). This adaptation of the "battle inoculation" principle was afterwards extended on important exercises such as "PIRATE" (infra, paras 315 ff). It was reaffirmed that "the closest possible liaison" was "essential between the crews of the assaulting craft and the assaulting infantry" (413). The infantry suggested that "a Close Support Craft fitted with Spigot Mortars or with a similar type of weapon, in which an O.C. Assaulting Company could travel, would be of great assistance in engaging unforeseen enemy targets" (414). "PRIMROSE" also clarified many of the problems anticipated by the engineers in an assault against wire defences, minefields and pillboxes. Discussing methods of dealing with these obstructions the report on the exercise stated:

The organization for the removal of obstructions on the beach must be flexible, and must depend to a great extent on what it is possible to forecast will be the type of defences confronting each Assault Bn.

The principle to be adopted is, that the Infantry should be responsible for clearing wire obstacles separating them from their immediate objective with rabbit netting and 2" bengalores, and that they should be accompanied by sufficient Sappers to deal with any concrete defences liable to be found in the area they propose to assault.

The primary task of the Assault Sappers will be to clear exits for the following waves simultaneously with the infantry assault on their first objective.

Time is the essential factor and the R.E. must be prepared to deal with obstructions in the quickest possible manner. (415)

The truth of the last observation was verified by later experience. Unfortunately, even by D Day, a completely satisfactory solution to this problem had not been found.

222. "PRIMROSE" was only one -- although an important one -- of a series of exercises which expanded and clarified the assault technique. Another exercise ("KRUSCHEN"), carried out during the spring of 1943 by the 54th British Division, provided "a technique for the assault on [inland] prepared defences" which was used as a basis for later training (416). Later exercises, such as "PIRATE" and "FABIUS", were to carry the assault training through its final stages.

223. The influence of earlier exercises, and the experience of operations such as "JUBILEE" and "TORCH", was reflected in a paper, "Tactical Problems of an Invasion of North-West Europe", which was prepared by G.H.Q. Home Forces. This paper was circulated to Headquarters First Canadian Army for study during May 1943. As the title suggested, the study was

mainly concerned with details of tactics, rather than with the broader aspects of invasion planning. However, it contained the following useful definitions:

'Assault' formations or forces are those which begin to land on the first tide of the seaborne assault.

'Follow-up' formations are those which are landed after assault formations, and to which is made a complete allocation of shipping and craft, independent of that used by the assault formations.

'Build-up' formations are those landed after follow-up formations. For them there can be no complete pre-allocation of shipping and craft. (417)

Discussing "the attacker's problem" the paper stated:

The commander of an attacking force must look at the start well beyond the initial assault, and consider the battle between his follow-up and build-up force, and the GERMAN reserves. The follow-up force must get quickly through the beach-head area and fight the enemy well out beyond it; otherwise there will not be room for formations following behind to land and deploy in their turn. This need to gain room for the landing and assembly of the follow-up divisions also governs the size of the area which the assault divisions must seize:

As a measuring stick for the task likely to be demanded of an assault division, it is likely to be required to:-

- (a) Assault landing beaches on a front of, say, three miles. The total frontage will depend partly on the size of, and distance separating, suitable landing places, and partly on the number and capacity of vehicle exits, and routes inland . . .
- (b) Penetrate inland to a depth of about five miles, and there hold a defensive perimeter to allow the follow-up force to pass through the beaches and assemble quickly.
- (c) Clear vehicle exits from the beaches, repair craters, etc., so that wheeled vehicles can run directly inland to their assembly areas.
- (d) Do all this, and be ready to receive the follow-up force within twelve hours of the first craft of the assault touching shore.

. . . It should be appreciated that the first problem of the assault is to win a fire fight: the next is the engineering one of making a means of passage through the various obstacles. The latter problem cannot be solved if the engineers are subjected to accurate fire at close range. Hence we must, from the outset, dominate the fire of the defence at each successive stage; the coast defences, the beach defence localities, the artillery firing on the beaches, and the fire from reserves rushed up to reinforce the defence at points where we are forcing a landing. The seaborne assault can only succeed if we win this fire fight.

It must, moreover, be appreciated that whereas in a land battle we would approach this problem by deploying a powerful force of artillery, in the seaborne assault we cannot do this. Therefore other means such as air bombing, gun support craft, gun tanks to give the first covering fire from shore, airborne troops, etc., must be relied on to produce the results expected from the artillery in an ordinary land battle. (418)

224. Two other contemporary developments vitally affected later preparations for "OVERLORD". First, "the task of developing a technique and training for the assault of a defended beach" was given to the 1st British Corps (419). Later (1 Dec 43) the 3rd Canadian Division came under the command of this Corps and trained with that formation for the Normandy assault. Second, a directive issued to Maj-Gen P.C.S. Hobart, G.O.C. 79th Armoured Division, stated:

Your object is to develop a technique for the specialized units which have been placed under your command and to train them to form part of formations assaulting either beach defences or inland defended areas in WESTERN EUROPE. (420)

In addition to the paper on "Tactical Problems of an Invasion of North-West Europe", this directive specifically referred General Hobart to the reports on the Dieppe Raid and Exercise "PRIMROSE" for information on the assault technique. From the 79th Armoured Division were to come those unique military machines -- the "Crocodiles", A.V.R.Es and "Flails" to name only a few -- which afterwards played an important role, not only on the invasion beaches, but throughout the entire campaign in North-West Europe.

THE COSSAC APPOINTMENT AND THE "TRIDENT" CONFERENCE

225. As a result of the Casablanca Conference Lt-Gen F.E. Morgan, who had previously commanded the 1st British Corps, was selected as "Chief of Staff to the Supreme Allied Commander (designate)" for the invasion of North-West Europe. At a meeting of the Chiefs of Staff Committee held on 12 Mar 43 it was announced that the Prime Minister and Secretary of State for War had approved the nomination of this officer (421). After the Combined Chiefs of Staff had concurred, General Morgan received confirmation of his appointment on 13 Apr (422).

226. The directive to COSSAC, as General Morgan's appointment soon came to be known, was approved by the Combined Chiefs of Staff and was issued to him on 26 Apr. The essence of this important paper is contained in the following paragraphs:

The Combined Chiefs of Staff have decided to appoint, in due course, a Supreme Commander over all United Nations forces for the invasion of the Continent of Europe from the United Kingdom.

The Supreme Commander will be responsible to the Combined Chiefs of Staff for planning and executing such operations, and for the co-ordination of the training policy of forces to be employed in amphibious operations against the Continent in accordance with this Directive.

Pending the appointment of the Supreme Commander or his deputy, you will be responsible for carrying out the above planning duties of the Supreme Commander. You will report direct to the British Chiefs of Staff with whom will be associated the United States Commander of the European Theatre of Operations acting as the direct representative of the United States Chiefs of Staff in the United Kingdom.

OBJECT

Our object is to defeat the German fighting forces in North-West Europe.

To this end the Combined Chiefs of Staff will endeavour to assemble the strongest possible forces (subject to prior commitments in other theatres) in constant readiness to re-enter the Continent if German resistance is weakened to the required extent in 1943. In the meantime the Combined Chiefs of Staff must be prepared to order such limited operations as may be practicable with the forces and material available.

PREPARATION OF PLANS

You will accordingly prepare plans for:-

- (a) An elaborate camouflage and deception scheme extending over the whole summer with a view to pinning the enemy in the West and keeping alive the expectation of large scale cross-Channel operations in 1943. This would include at least one amphibious feint with the object of bringing on an air battle employing the Metropolitan Royal Air Force and the U.S. 8th Air Force.
- (b) A return to the Continent in the event of German disintegration at any time from now onwards with whatever forces may be available at the time.
- (c) A full scale assault against the Continent in 1944 as early as possible.  
(423)

The directive was afterwards amended, in certain vital respects, by the Combined Chiefs of Staff. The first of these changes occurred at the fourth meeting of Prime Minister Churchill, President Roosevelt and their advisers, which was held in Washington (under the code name "TRIDENT") during the period 12-25 May 43.

227. "TRIDENT" has been described as "by far the largest gathering of high ranking officials and officers that had yet taken place in the war" (424). By this time, as a result of the decision taken four months earlier at Casablanca, the preparations for the invasion of Sicily were far advanced. The question which now concerned the Allied planners was the course of operations beyond "HUSKY". It was perhaps inevitable that the Anglo-American discussions on this point immediately revived the old competition between the requirements of the Mediterranean and the North-West Europe theatres.

228. The Allied leaders came to the conference with a clear realization of their respective aims. Admiral William D. Leahy, then Chief of Staff to President Roosevelt, has described the final American Conference in preparation for the visit of the British representatives:

It was determined that the principal objective of the American Government would be to pin down the British to a cross-Channel invasion of Europe at the earliest practicable date and to make full preparations for such an operation by the spring of 1944. We had heard that the British Chiefs would not agree to such an invasion until Germany had collapsed under pressure from Russia and from the Allied air attack. (425)

On the other hand, Mr. Churchill has recorded that:

The [British] Chiefs of Staff were convinced that an attack upon the mainland of Italy should follow, or even overlap, the capture of Sicily. They proposed the seizure of a bridgehead on the toe of Italy, to be followed by a further assault on the heel as prelude to an advance on Bari and Naples. A paper setting out these views and the arguments which led up to them was prepared on board ship and handed to the American Chiefs of Staff as a basis for discussion on our arrival in Washington. (426)

The exigencies of the campaign in the Far East (in particular, the attempted recovery of Burma), and the need for air bases in the Azores to give increased protection to the Atlantic Convoys, also weighed heavily on the minds of the Prime Minister and his advisers.

229. At the first plenary meeting Mr. Churchill reviewed the favourable course of the war which, he said, had produced "the authority and prestige of victory" (427). He then listed five objectives for consideration. It was significant that the first of these lay in the Mediterranean.

The great prize there was to get Italy out of the war by whatever means might be the best. He recalled how in 1918, when Germany might have retreated to the Meuse or the Rhine and continued the fight, the defection of Bulgaria brought the whole of the enemy structure crashing to the ground. The collapse of Italy would cause a chill of loneliness over the German people, and might be the beginning of their doom. (428)

The Prime Minister emphasized that the collapse of Italy would have a profound effect on the Turkish attitude and the Balkan situation as well as eliminating the Italian Fleet.

230. The other objectives suggested by Mr. Churchill were the necessity of relieving Russia, of continuously applying the great weight of Allied strength against the enemy, of giving aid to China and of completing the arrangements for the invasion of North-West Europe. In the latter connection he said:

He could not pretend that the problem of landing on the Channel coast had been solved. The difficult beaches, with the great rise and fall of tide, the strength of the enemy's defences, the number of his reserves and the ease of his communications, all made the task one which must not be underrated. Much, however, would be learned from 'HUSKY'. The

question arose whether anything could be done this year before the weather broke in August or September. All the British landing craft had gone from the United Kingdom to 'HUSKY', and . . . only one United States Division was so far available in the United Kingdom. Nevertheless, plans were being made for an operation to provoke an air battle, and we were standing ready to exploit a German collapse, should this by any chance take place. He wished to make it absolutely clear that His Majesty's Government earnestly desired to undertake a full-scale invasion of the Continent from the United Kingdom as soon as possible. They certainly did not disdain the idea, if a plan offering reasonable prospects of success could be made. (429)

231. Replying to these observations, President Roosevelt stated that "he had always shrunk from the thought of putting large armies in Italy. This might result in attrition for the United Nations and play into Germany's hand" (430).

The President said that regardless of operations undertaken in the Mediterranean there would be a surplus of man-power. He said that this surplus should be used to build up 'BOLERO'. Preparations for such build-up should begin at once. He felt that all were agreed that no 'ROUNDUP' or 'SLEDGEHAMMER' was possible of accomplishment this year, but if one or the other were to be mounted in the Spring of 1944, preparations should begin now. 'ROUNDUP' and 'SLEDGEHAMMER' have been talked about for two years, but as yet none of these operations have been accepted as a concrete plan to be carried out at a certain time. Therefore he wished to emphasize that 'SLEDGEHAMMER' or 'ROUNDUP' should be decided upon definitely as an operation for the Spring of 1944.

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The President said, with regard to taking weight off Russia, that the United Nations [should] continue with strategy which would compel the Germans to fight. It was for that reason that he questioned the occupation of Italy, feeling that this might result in releasing German troops now in that country. He said he felt the most effective way of forcing Germany to fight was by carrying out a cross-channel operation. (431)

232. The issue was debated at some length in successive meetings of the Combined Chiefs of Staff. Pointing out that "shipping remained the stranglehold on all our operations", General Brooke urged the adoption of the British view of future strategy in the face of strong opposition from the American representatives.

Sir Alan Brooke said that he believed that if we did not continue operations in the Mediterranean, then no possibility of an attack into France would arise. Even after a bridgehead had been established we could get no further. The troops employed would for the most part be inexperienced. The force available, some 15 to 20 divisions, was small and could not be regarded in the same category as the vast continental armies, which were counted in 50's and 100's of divisions. Before undertaking operations across the channel, it was essential that we should create the right situation to insure its success. (432)

General Marshall replied:

He felt deeply concerned that the landing of ground forces in Italy would establish a vacuum in the Mediterranean which would preclude the assembly of sufficient forces in the United Kingdom to execute a successful cross-channel operation, and Germany would not collapse unless this occurred from air bombardment alone. If further Mediterranean operations were undertaken then in 1943 and virtually all of 1944, we should be committed, except for air attacks on Germany, to a Mediterranean policy. This would entail a very serious state of affairs in the Pacific. It would mean a prolongation of the war in Europe, and thus a delay in the ultimate defeat of Japan, which the people of the United States would not tolerate. We were now at the cross-roads -- if we were committed to the Mediterranean, except for air alone, it meant a prolonged struggle and one which was not acceptable to the United States. (433)

He conceded that, if "SLEDGEHAMMER" had been undertaken in 1942, "the landing of 25 divisions in France at that time might have been suicidal"; but he maintained that the situation had completely altered during the intervening year and that "now there was the possibility of concentrating our vast air superiority in direct support of the land forces in the bridgehead, thereby materially altering the balance of force in our favour" (434).

233. There is evidence that, while the great argument was proceeding, the British representatives produced a "statement of requirements for a 1944 cross-Channel invasion" which "included 8,500 landing ships and craft to provide a lift for ten divisions simultaneously loaded for the assault" (435). This estimate was apparently based on the plans prepared by the Combined Commanders for operation "SKYSCRAPER", although those plans had been rejected as academic by the Chiefs

of Staff Committee (*supra*, para 204). Further consideration of the shipping requirements for "ROUNDHAMMER"\*\* led the American Joint Chiefs of Staff to submit a drastically reduced estimate.

The planners reported that . . . landing craft could be made available in the United Kingdom by the spring of 1944 sufficient to lift five divisions simultaneously, three for the assault and two for the immediate follow-up. (436)

They thought that a second "follow-up" force of two divisions could be provided by utilizing craft from the initial assault together with miscellaneous shipping in the United Kingdom.

234. On 19 May General Brooke was able to announce that the Combined Chiefs of Staff had "reached an agreement which provided for a build-up in England of a sufficient force to secure a bridgehead on the Continent from which further offensive operations could be carried out" (437). Nine divisions would make the assault: five divisions simultaneously loaded in landing craft, together with two additional divisions in a follow-up role and two airborne divisions. The assaulting formations would be joined by 20 more divisions (and possibly one French division) in the build-up (438). A target date of 1 May 44 had been selected for the mounting of the operation. It is interesting to note that, at a later conference, General Brooke remarked that "the 1st May had been settled at 'TRIDENT' as the date for 'OVERLORD' by splitting the difference between the United States suggestion of the 1st April and the British suggestion of the 1st June. It had not been based on any particular strategic consideration" (439).

235. The solution adopted at the Conference really represented a form of compromise: operations in the Mediterranean were to continue with the objects of eliminating Italy from the war and of containing the maximum number of German divisions; but a specific date had finally been chosen, and certain resources allotted, for the invasion of North-West Europe, which was henceforth known as "OVERLORD". Moreover, the Allied Commander-in-Chief in North Africa (General Eisenhower) was instructed to hold seven of his battle-hardened divisions in readiness for despatch to the United Kingdom in order to provide a leavening of experienced formations for "OVERLORD". (The number actually despatched was afterwards increased to eight.) The Conference also approved "a tremendous increase in the bombing of Germany and German-occupied Europe by the R.A.F. and the U.S.

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\*The code name, combining "ROUNDUP" and "SLEDGE-HAMMER", for the invasion as frequently used during the initial stage of the conference. (It was much used during later planning by Mr. Stimson, the U.S. Secretary of War.)