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HISTORICAL SECTION  
ARMY HEADQUARTERS

The Development of Allied Grand Strategy in the Second World War  
(With Special Reference to the Drfeat of Germany)

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The Development of Allied Grand Strategy in the Second World War (With Special Reference to the Defeat of Germany)

1. During the three years that have elapsed since the German surrender in the Second World War, an increasing amount of authentic information has been released bearing on the Allied strategy which produced that result. Some has been revealed in official publications, some in the increasingly numerous memoirs written by officers or civilians who were in positions to know. The object of the present survey is to summarize the information now available on the development of Allied strategy and the great strategic decisions. It is based mainly upon the published sources mentioned above. It makes no attempt to go into detail, and treats the subject only in broad outline. It deals only with strictly military decisions on the Combined Chiefs of Staff level.

2. More exclusively Canadian aspects of these matters are dealt with in Report No. 182 of Historical Section, Canadian Military Headquarters. Many of the sources used in the present report were not available when No. 182 was written. The two should be read in conjunction.

3. With a view to convenience in the event of a decision to publish this report, references to sources of information have been concentrated at the end.

## THE OPENING PERIOD OF THE WAR

4. Of the first year of the war we need say comparatively little here. The strategic initiative rested with the Axis, and the Anglo-French alliance was limited to the defensive until it was destroyed by the Germans in the summer campaign of 1940. Thereafter, Britain and the Commonwealth, left alone to confront a Germany which now controlled Western Europe, continued to be limited to defensive action (and primarily to the defence of Britain). However, they were able to exercise a degree of strategic initiative against the Italians in Africa.

5. The most important strategic decision taken in this period was probably that to build up the forces in North Africa, at the expense of the security of Britain, as soon as the immediate invasion crisis passed in the early autumn of 1940, and even before. In August 1940 three armoured regiments were dispatched from the United Kingdom to Egypt. The 2nd Armoured Division (one of two such divisions available in the United Kingdom) followed in the autumn, reaching Egypt at the New Year of 1941.<sup>1</sup> The units sent out in August played important parts in General Wavell's successful offensive which was launched in December.

## THE BEGINNINGS OF ACTIVE ANGLO-AMERICAN COOPERATION

6. The very severe shock administered to the United States by the collapse of France and the apparent imminence of a German attempt at the invasion of Britain produced certain American domestic decisions which deeply affected the ultimate outcome of the war. The United States Congress proceeded to introduce universal military service (16 September 1940), thereby laying the foundation for the great American armies which made possible the defeat of the

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<sup>1</sup>"Operations in the Middle East from 7th February, 1941 to 15th July, 1941" (Dispatch by Gen Sir Archibald Wavell, C.-in-C. Middle East, 5 Sep 41: London Gazette, 3 Jul 46).

Axis power. About the same time came the famous "deal" by which 50 American destroyers were handed over to Britain in exchange for leases on certain Atlantic bases. A few months later the Lend-Lease legislation (approved 11 March 1941) placed the tremendous economic strength of the United States behind the countries opposing the Axis.

7. The new circumstances also permitted the initiation of serious military "conversations" between the British and American military authorities. These conversations commenced as early as August 1940, and more definite discussions began in Washington late in January 1941. A specific "staff agreement" known as ABC-1 was arrived at (27 March 1941) and formed the basis for Anglo-American cooperation thereafter.<sup>2</sup> The basic concept of this agreement was the determination to beat the Germans first. It was recognized that Germany was the predominant member of the Axis and that even in a "global" war the decisive theatre would be Europe and the Atlantic. This concept had been agreed upon by the U.S. political and service leaders among themselves in November 1940, and was stated in the United States Joint Army and Navy Basic War Plan, drafted in May 1941.<sup>3</sup> It was perhaps fortunate that this decision was made, and to a large extent implemented, before Pearl Harbor. Had it been left until after the Japanese attack, an American historian suggests, "emotion and public opinion might then have dictated a concentration of American armed forces against Japan, as all fascist sympathizers in the United States vociferously advocated".<sup>4</sup>

8. To this same period belongs the Canadian-American rapprochement. The Ogdensburg meeting of the Prime Minister of Canada and the President of the United States (17-18 August 1940) produced the Permanent Joint Board on Defence, which has served since that time as an effective organ for

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<sup>2</sup>Samuel Eliot Morison, History of United States Naval Operations in World War II, Vol I: The Battle of the Atlantic, September 1939 - May 1942 (Boston, 1947), 46.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid, 46.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid, 47.

consultation between the two countries upon policies for the defence of North America.

9. On 9-12 August 1941 came the "Atlantic Meeting" of Mr Roosevelt and Mr Churchill at Argentia, Newfoundland. During the discussions there the two leaders talked over the application of their countries' strength in the event of the United States actually becoming a belligerent. In general, the earlier agreements were confirmed, "and thereafter the principle was accepted that, assuming the United States became involved, the defeat of Germany was to be given priority until such time as the combined strength of the two countries was sufficient to deal with both the Atlantic and Pacific theatres on an equal basis".<sup>5</sup>

10. The decision to defeat Germany first, and deal with Japan afterwards, was thus taken before either the United States or Japan became an actual belligerent. This was certainly one of the most vital and fundamental strategic decisions of the whole war.

#### DEVELOPMENTS AFTER PEARL HARBOR:

##### THE COMBINED CHIEFS OF STAFF

11. On 7 December 1941 came the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbour and on other American and British bases in the Pacific. Although the Germans had not been told in advance of Japan's intentions, they and their Italian allies now joined her in open war against the United States. Thus the American Republic, which had already been giving the Allies very active economic aid (and, in the form of protection to convoys, a measure of military aid), became an active participant in the war.

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<sup>5</sup>John J McCloy, "Turning Points of the War: The Great Military Decisions" (Foreign Affairs, Vol 26: October 1947).

12. Shortly after the Japanese attack, Mr Churchill went to Washington and the meetings known by the code name "Arcadia" took place there between the British and American leaders (24 December 1941 - 14 January 1942). During these meetings, "greatly to the relief of Mr Churchill", who had feared that the new situation might alter the earlier conclusions, the decision to beat Germany first was again confirmed.<sup>6</sup> In the course of these Washington discussions, it was apparently agreed between Churchill and Roosevelt that "a major military operation against Germany must be attempted in 1942".<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup>Ibid. The "ARCADIA" meetings are described in detail in Robert E Sherwood, "The Secret Papers of Harry L Hopkins, Part VII" (Collier's, 10 Jul 48).

<sup>7</sup>Morrison, op cit, Vol II: Operations in North African Waters, October 1942 - June 1943, 12.

13. During the military conversations early in 1941, it had been settled that, if and when the United States entered the war, an Anglo-American body to be known as the Supreme War Council would be formed to conduct top-level planning for the Allied nations. This body now duly came into existence, but its name was changed from Supreme War Council to Combined Chiefs of Staff.<sup>8</sup> This body was composed of the Chiefs of Staff of the American armed forces and British permanent representatives of equal standing (in the first instance, Field-Marshal Sir John Dill and Admiral Sir Andrew Cunningham). The Combined Chiefs of Staff met for the first time on 23 January 1942, at Washington, and proceeded to consider the question of where, when and how to hit the Germans.<sup>9</sup>

14. The Combined Chiefs had their permanent headquarters in Washington throughout the war. Their most important decisions were taken in a series of conferences, mostly held elsewhere, at which Mr Churchill and Mr Roosevelt were normally present and exercised decisive influence. Theatre commanders frequently attended these conferences also.

15. Although the U.S. State Department had suggested a Supreme War Council representing the four great Allied powers,<sup>10</sup> in the event neither China nor Russia was represented on the Combined Chiefs of Staff. The Russian leaders were never ready to agree to a really free interchange of information with their allies, and in consequence military cooperation with them was always on a limited; formal and somewhat difficult basis. We learn, for instance, that though the Russians were told in April 1944 the approximate date of the Normandy D Day, they were not told the exact point of attack.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>8</sup>Ibid. Vol I, 48.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid. Vol II, 12.

<sup>10</sup>The Memoirs of Cordell Hull (N.Y., 1948), Vol II, 1116.

<sup>11</sup>Harry C Butcher, My Three Years with Eisenhower (N.Y., 1946), 514-15. 21



16. The British Dominions likewise were not represented on the Combined Chiefs of Staff. It is true that Lord Halifax, British Ambassador to Washington, suggested to the U.S. Secretary of State that they would probably have to be given a status in the proposed Supreme War Council "similar to that given Britain"; but it was explained to him that "if the Council should comprise a large number of representatives it would become unwieldy and ineffective".<sup>12</sup> Mr Churchill's recorded views on the machinery for the conduct of war suggest that on this issue he would have agreed with the Americans. Harry Hopkins reported that "everybody and his grandmother want to be on the joint body".<sup>13</sup> In the end, nobody got on it except the English (as distinct from the British Commonwealth) and the Americans.

#### THE FUNDAMENTAL DECISIONS OF 1942

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<sup>12</sup>Hull, II, 1121.

<sup>13</sup>Sherwood, "The Secret Papers of Harry L Hopkins, Part VII" Report No. 21

17. During the year 1942, in a series of Allied conferences, decisions were taken which vitally affected the whole subsequent conduct of the war. In April General George C Marshall, Chief of Staff of the United States Army, "made a special trip to London to press home the necessity for an attack across the Channel as quickly as the essential lift and power could be mustered".<sup>14</sup> In these London discussions general agreement was reached that "the final blow must be delivered across the English Channel and eastward through the plains of western Europe".<sup>15</sup> (It may be recalled that, the month before, General McNaughton, in the course of a visit to Washington, had had a conversation with the Acting Chief of the War Plans Division of the War Department, Brig-Gen Dwight D Eisenhower, who told him that "he had racked his mind to discover how we could present Germany with a second front, and that the more he thought it out the more firmly had he been driven to the conclusion that it would be possible to do so only by attacking Europe from the British Isles".<sup>16</sup> The full-scale offensive against the Germans in France was tentatively set in the London conversations for the summer of 1943. It was known at this time as Operation "ROUNDUP", while the code name "BOLERO" was used for the American build-up in the United Kingdom in preparation for this operation.<sup>17</sup>

18. At this time the Germans were developing heavy pressure against the Soviet armies, and the later were falling back. It was agreed at the conference in London that it was of great importance to reduce pressure on the

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<sup>14</sup>McCloy.

<sup>15</sup>General Marshall's Report: The Winning of the War in Europe and the Pacific (n.p., n.d.), 8.

<sup>16</sup>C.P. Stacey, The Canadian Army 1939-1945: An Official Historical Summary (Ottawa, 1948), 47.

<sup>17</sup>Henry L Stimson and McGeorge Bundy, On Active Service in Peace and War (N.Y., n.d.) (1948) gives the mistaken impression that "BOLERO" was the designation for the cross-Channel operation instead of for the administrative preparation for it.

Russians in order to stave off the possibility of their collapsing. With this in view, emergency plans were made for a "diversionary assault" on the French coast before 1943 "if such a desperate measure became necessary to lend a hand toward saving the situation on the Soviet front".<sup>18</sup> The scheme was to use half-a-dozen divisions to establish a permanent limited bridgehead - a "Tobruk" - on the coast of France. At least two different plans were elaborated with this in view: Operation "SLEDGEHAMMER" being designed for use in case of a crack in German morale, and Operation "WETBOB" being planned in case action became necessary even though German morale remained unaffected. The former comprehended an attack on the Le Havre area, the latter on that of Cherbourg.

19. Many Americans were, it is clear, anxious for some large operation in North-West Europe in 1942. Their anxiety was perhaps reflected in a sentence of the communique issued from the White House on 11 June, reporting on the President's conferences with M. Molotov:

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<sup>18</sup>Marshall, 8.

In the course of the conversations a full understanding was reached with regard to the urgent tasks of creating a second front in Europe in 1942.<sup>19</sup>

The British on the other hand, it appears, were pretty fully convinced that a second front in Europe that year was out of the question, and that the most that could be compassed was large-scale raids. They preferred, however, not to present this view too baldly to their American colleagues, leaving it to the hard facts of the situation to convince them in due course.<sup>20</sup> In this same month of June, Vice-Admiral Lord Louis Mountbatten, Chief of Combined Operations, visited Washington with at least one member of his staff (Capt J. Hughes-Hallett, R.N.) and discussed the situation with General Marshall and other American officers and officials. (It was this visit to Washington that prevented Mountbatten from attending the first rehearsal of the Dieppe raid on 11-12 June). He found the Americans deeply wedded to the idea of an early invasion.<sup>21</sup> A reference in the memoirs of Mr. Stimson, the U.S. Secretary of War, indicates that President Roosevelt spoke to Mountbatten of "the possibility of having to make a 'sacrifice' cross-Channel landing in 1942 to help the Russians". This greatly disturbed the British Prime Minister.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>19</sup>The Times (London), 12 Jun 42.

<sup>20</sup>Report No. 182 of Hist Offr, C.M.H.Q., para 37.

<sup>21</sup>Report No. 159 of Hist Offr, C.M.H.Q., Appx "A", para 7.

<sup>22</sup>Stimson and Bundy, 423.

20. On or about 19 June<sup>23</sup> Mr Churchill himself arrived in Washington, accompanied by the Chief of the Imperial General Staff (General Sir Alan Brooke). The Allied leaders now proceeded to discuss both the long-term and short-term plans for invasion of North-West Europe as well as the possibility of operations in the Mediterranean. At this point, the British in North Africa suffered serious reverses, and the discussions were largely devoted to immediate measures for meeting the crisis there. When Churchill returned to England, it had been agreed that preparations for a cross-Channel operation should continue, with a final decision to be made later in the season.<sup>24</sup> On 23 June General Dwight D Eisenhower flew to England with instructions to begin preparations for United States participation in the cross-Channel attack.<sup>25</sup>

21. On 10 July what Stimson called "a new and rather staggering crisis" arose in Washington, in the form of a cable from London indicating that the British were "weakening" on the cross-Channel attack and proposing instead the invasion of North Africa. Stimson and Marshall were both "very stirred up" and actually recommended threatening the British government with a revocation of the basic decision to beat Germany before Japan. Stimson wrote in his diary, "As the British won't go through with what they agreed to, we will turn our backs on them and take up the war with Japan." On later reflection, Stimson was "not altogether pleased" with his own part in this scheme; and his sober second thought seems more than justified. "Mr Roosevelt was not really persuaded, and the bluff was never tried."<sup>26</sup> If it had been, the British would not have taken it seriously; the "BOLERO" build-up was already too far advanced.

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<sup>23</sup>The Times (London), 20 Jun 42.

<sup>24</sup>Stimson and Bundy, 424.

<sup>25</sup>Butcher, 40.

<sup>26</sup>Stimson and Bundy, 425.

22. General Marshall, Admiral King and Mr Hopkins now took off for London to engage in what were in some respects the most momentous strategic discussions of the war. They carried "written instructions not to accept any substitute unless and until all means of obtaining the cross-Channel operation were exhausted".<sup>27</sup> The discussions lasted for several days, and the Americans pressed strongly for the emergency proposal for a second front in France in 1942; their argument is said to have been to the effect that "the Russians' situation may become so desperate as to make even an unsuccessful attack worthwhile!"<sup>28</sup> The British would have none of it. Finally, on 22 July apparently, the Prime Minister and the British service chiefs "made it clear ... that they would not cooperate in any stabs on the Continent in that year".<sup>29</sup>

23. At the same time, the necessity for "a major operation against Germany in 1942" still remained. American forces in considerable numbers were by this time available for action and several divisions had moved or were moving to the United Kingdom. President Roosevelt now, it appears, intervened in 1942".<sup>30</sup> From the beginning, the President had liked the idea of an American or Allied occupation of French North Africa. This scheme had been discussed earlier in the year, and rejected; and as we have just seen the British had lately proposed it again. Now it was accepted by the conferences as a substitute for the cross-Channel invasion. This was a most basic decision, for it entailed committing Allied resources to the Mediterranean to an extent that would probably require the postponement of the full-scale invasion of France from 1943 to 1944.

The important decision was made at London by the Combined Chiefs of Staff on 25 July 1942: A combined Anglo-American occupation of French

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<sup>27</sup>Morison, Vol II, 15.

<sup>28</sup>Butcher, 28.

<sup>29</sup>McCloy.

<sup>30</sup>Ibid.

Morocco, Algeria, and possibly Tunisia, to take place within four months; the supreme commander to be a United States Army officer; detailed planning to begin immediately. That night Harry Hopkins cabled to President Roosevelt in code the one word: AFRICA.

"Thank God!" was the President's reply to the Prime Minister.<sup>31</sup>

24. This very fundamental strategic difference of opinion was not purely Anglo-American. It was between the British and some Americans, of whom President Roosevelt was not one. Stimson had recorded on 21 June that the African operation was "the President's great secret baby";<sup>32</sup> and the known Roosevelt predilection for this project had assisted the British negotiators in substituting it for the emergency landing in France, which they regarded with good reason as a desperately foolhardy scheme.

25. It is rather curious that American officers who pressed strongly for "SLEDGHAMMER" or "WETBOB" should have thought the North African project "fantastic".<sup>33</sup> The scheme - Operation "TORCH" - was indeed a tremendous undertaking, involving as it did moving a large expeditionary force directly from the United States to conduct an assault landing in Africa; such an operation would certainly have been considered impracticable a few years before. Yet the opposition to be apprehended in Africa was of an altogether different order from that which would certainly be met on the coast of France.

In the light of later events, who can doubt that in the discussions of July 1942 the British were right and the Americans wrong?

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<sup>31</sup>Morison, Vol II, 15.

<sup>32</sup>Stimson and Bundy, 425.

<sup>33</sup>Ibid, 47.

26. To begin with, there was in 1942 an extreme shortage of amphibious equipment and particularly landing craft. "The vitally important 'lift' for a full scale invasion simply did not then exist",<sup>34</sup> and the shortage of craft was a major factor in the decision not to try even a more limited assault in Europe. Nor had we established anything like control of the air above the Channel in 1942. To attempt to maintain a permanent bridgehead on the French coast would have meant committing every existing element of Allied air strength to a continuous battle against the Luftwaffe in which all the odds would have been in favour of the latter. (It may be recalled that we now know that in the Dieppe air battle we lost more than twice as many aircraft as the enemy.)<sup>35</sup> The scheme for an assault in 1942 might have produced disaster which would have set our preparations for the full-scale attack back almost to where they were after Dunkrik; at best, it would have been a bottomless pit into which the resources needed for that operation would have been poured without result.

27. On this general question of the invasion of North-West Europe, it seems hard to question the judgement of Mr John J. McCloy, the United States Assistant Secretary of War: "The reasons both for the attack, and for its postponement until 1944, seem to be sound."<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>34</sup>McCloy.

<sup>35</sup>Stacey, 55.

<sup>36</sup>McCloy.



28. During the period between the decision to invade North Africa and the actual invasion, there took place the Dieppe raid (19 August 1942). This project was not directly related to the schemes just mentioned for major invasions either in France or in Africa, except that the British Chiefs of Staff considered it an essential preliminary to full-scale operations, and so advised Mr Churchill.<sup>37</sup> It was part of the tactical program of Combined Operations Headquarters rather than of the strategic programme of the Combined Chiefs of Staff. But the plan for the raid certainly reflected the relative optimism concerning the problems of invasion which was current in high places in 1942, and its result certainly did much to prick that balloon. It seems probable that if the raid had taken place before the discussions in July, a good many Americans might have been less enthusiastic concerning the project for an immediate invasion of France.

29. As it was, landings in French North Africa took place on 8 November 1942. Along with the British victory at El Alamein a few days before, they represented the beginning of the end of Axis power in Africa, although there was to be a long battle before the final victory in Tunisia in May 1943.

30. One abortive project of 1942 remains to be noted. This was Operation "JUPITER", the scheme for a large-scale amphibious operation directed at the German airfields in Northern Norway from which the Luftwaffe was harrying our convoys carrying supplies to Russia. General McNaughton spent much time studying this project (to which Mr Churchill was greatly attached) at the request of the British authorities, and Lord Louis Mountbatten discussed it during his visit to Washington.<sup>38</sup> It was shelved in the course of the summer,

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<sup>37</sup>Stacey, 55.

<sup>38</sup>Ibid, 91. Sherwood, "Secret Papers of Harry L Hopkins, Part VIII" (Collier's, 17 Jul 48).

but long remained on file as a possibility for revival as a major Allied enterprise.

THE SICILIAN CAMPAIGN AND THE PLANNING  
OF THE INVASION OF FRANCE

31. In January 1943 Mr Roosevelt and Mr Churchill met with the Combined Chiefs of Staff at Casablanca, in the conference known as "SYMBOL". With the North African campaign nearing its end, it was necessary to decide the next step. The decision was to attack Sicily "with the target date as the period of the favourable July moon".<sup>39</sup> The point must be made, however, that the planners at Casablanca considered the Sicilian project merely a continuation and completion of the North African strategy, designed to open the Mediterranean to our shipping and provide a base for future attacks on Southern Europe.

32. At the same time, the decision was taken to resume concentrating in the United Kingdom the forces required for the invasion of North-West Europe. As a most important part of the preparation for that great assault, it was also resolved at Casablanca to order the British and American air forces to launch the strategic bombardment of Germany. "In order of priority, targets for the long-range heavy bombers were submarine construction yards, the aircraft industries, transportation, oil plants, and other critical war industries."<sup>40</sup> The basic object was to reduce the enemy's capacity to resist when the day came to invade the Continent.

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<sup>39</sup>Marshall, 10.

<sup>40</sup>Ibid, 10.

33. Before the Sicilian invasion was actually launched, the Allied strategic concept had been further developed. In May 1943 the Allied leaders met in the "TRIDENT" Conference at Washington. In the course of this meeting the decision to attack Germany in North-West Europe was reaffirmed, and the target date for the operation, now designated "OVERLORD", was fixed for planning purposes as the spring of 1944.

34. At the same time, however, further action was ordered in the Mediterranean. The resolve was taken to go on from Sicily into Italy, exploiting the conquest of Sicily in such a way as to (a) eliminate Italy from the war, and (b) contain the maximum number of German divisions. With a view to building up in the United Kingdom a properly seasoned force for "OVERLORD", nevertheless, the Supreme Commander in the Mediterranean (General Eisenhower) was instructed to send thither in the autumn of 1943 seven of his experienced divisions; the number finally sent was actually eight.<sup>41</sup>

35. It will be observed that it had definitely been decided, before the invasion of Italy or even of Sicily, that the Italian campaign was to be a subsidiary operation. It was to be subordinate and auxiliary to the great assault in North-West Europe. One of its two great objects - the elimination of Italy from the war - was achieved in short order; the other - to contain as many German troops as possible - remained in force until the end of the war as the strategic basis of the Italian campaign.

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<sup>41</sup>Stacey, 97.

36. In April 1943 Lieutenant-General F.E. Morgan of the British Army began work on detailed plans for "OVERLORD" under a directive from the Combined Chiefs of Staff. General Morgan was designated COSSAC (Chief of Staff, Supreme Allied Commander); but the Supreme Allied Commander himself had not yet been appointed. The COSSAC staff had completed by July an outline plan for an attack in the Caen area of Normandy. This plan was approved by the Combined Chiefs and the political leaders during the "QUADRANT" Conference held at Quebec in August. Again, however, no Supreme Commander had been appointed for "OVERLORD"; although agreement was reached on the commander's nationality. He was to be an American. Mr Churchill agreed to this, even though he had already "tentatively promised the position to Field-Marshal Brooke".<sup>42</sup>

37. It was the definite impression of the Americans that at all stages the British strategists were less convinced than themselves of the essentiality of a great cross-Channel operation, and that there was a strong British partiality for operations against Germany from the Mediterranean. Mr McCloy suggests that this British "attitude of mind toward a continental campaign" was in itself a good reason for the appointment of an American Supreme Commander. (A better one, perhaps, was the prospective American numerical predominance in the North-West Europe theatre.) It should be added that McCloy and other informed American observers all record that once the decision to invade was finally taken the British stood by it loyally and "there was no question in anyone's mind of hold back".<sup>43</sup> More information from British sources is required before it will be possible to attempt a full discussion of this fundamental difference of opinion, between the proponents of a cross-Channel assault and those who favoured a Mediterranean strategy.

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<sup>42</sup>McCloy.

<sup>43</sup>Ibid. For Mr Churchill's preference for attack through the Balkans, for which he "continued to argue up to the Tehran Conference", see Hull, Vol II, 1231. Here and elsewhere it is stated that he was apprehensive of the "frightful casualties" which the cross-Channel operation might involve.

38. In November 1943 the matter was further advanced as the result of the "EUREKA" meeting at Teheran, at which Churchill, Roosevelt and Stalin were all present. "Premier Stalin made it quite clear ... that he took no stock in the Allied avowed intentions as long as no commander had been appointed."<sup>44</sup> Following the Teheran Conference, an Anglo-American discussion ("SEXTANT") took place at Cairo and here the question of the commander was settled. For a time, after the decision that he was to be an American, it had seemed that General Marshall was the likely choice; but it now fell upon General Eisenhower, who had shown in the Mediterranean extraordinary gifts for the coordination of the efforts of allies. The decision was essentially President Roosevelt's.<sup>45</sup> General Eisenhower's appointment was announced on Christmas Eve 1943.

39. After Cairo there were fewer great strategic decisions affecting the campaign in North-West Europe; the basic resolves had been taken, and the development of the invasion plan belongs to the field of grand tactics rather than of strategy. Some account must however be taken of the discussions concerning the attack on Southern France and the relationship of the Italian campaign to that in North-West Europe.

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<sup>44</sup>McCloy.

<sup>45</sup>Stimson and Bundy, 440-43.

40. No strategic question was more lengthily discussed on the highest level than this one of the Mediterranean invasion of France (Operation "ANVIL", later redesignated "DRAGOON"). The original plan was to assault on the Mediterranean coast simultaneously with the attack in Normandy. This decision was taken at Cairo, and in order to make the necessary landing craft available for the European operations the Combined Chiefs of Staff decided to postpone until 1945 amphibious operations which had been tentatively scheduled for 1944 in the Bay of Bengal.<sup>46</sup> As it turned out, however, the shortage of assault shipping was such that, even after robbing the South East Asia Command in this manner, the simultaneous assaults were out of the question. After some discussion of the possibility of conducting "ANVIL" on the basis of an assault by only one division, late in February 1944 a new directive from the Combined Chiefs of Staff advised the Supreme Allied Commander in the Mediterranean that the campaign in Italy would for the moment be given "overriding priority" over all other existing and future operations in the Mediterranean.<sup>47</sup>

41. Strategic discussion and detailed planning both continued, and it was not until 14 June 1944 (eight days after the Normandy D Day) that a firm decision was reached to launch the assault on Southern France later in the summer. On 2 July the Supreme Commander in the Mediterranean was ordered by the Combined Chiefs to carry it out on 15 August if possible. The Supreme Commander in North-West Europe was directed at the same time to release to him the additional amphibious resources required for the purpose. On 5 July the Commander-in-Chief, Allied Armies in Italy, was informed that overriding priority would now be transferred from his battle in Italy to the new

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<sup>46</sup>Report by the Supreme Allied Commander Mediterranean to the Combine Chiefs of Staff on the Operations in Southern France, August 1944 (London, 1946), 1.

<sup>47</sup>Ibid, 11.

operation, and that a maximum of three United States and four French divisions would be removed from his command for that purpose.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>48</sup>Ibid, 24. An additional U.S. (negro) division and a Brazilian division were subsequently allocated to Italy. 23

42. These decisions were taken by the Combined Chiefs of Staff in spite of the recommendation of the Supreme Commander in the Mediterranean, General Sir Henry Maitland Wilson, that the assault on Southern France be cancelled in favour of continuing the offensive in Italy through the Gothic Line and mounting an amphibious operation against the Trieste area which would facilitate exploitation "through the Ljubljana Gap into the plains of Hungary".<sup>49</sup> The theory behind this suggestion was that a threat to the Danube basin might be developed rapidly enough to cause German withdrawals from France. "In our view", writes Field-Marshal Wilson, "although the support thus offered General Eisenhower would be less direct, it would prove to be the more effective".<sup>50</sup> It was suggested that the Ljubljana scheme might serve to ensure the defeat of Germany in 1944, whereas concentration of France might defer the victory until 1945. The decisive consideration leading to the rejection of this scheme was the desire of General Eisenhower for a major part in Southern France through which he might bring in American divisions still in the United States (see below, para 43).

43. At the very last moment, developments in North-West Europe threatened to disrupt the Southern France project. The Allied break-through in Normandy began on 25 July; and in the first week of August the suggestion was suddenly made that the whole "DRAGOON" effort should be diverted to the Brittany ports, the idea being that through them these new forces could obtain "an unopposed and rapid entry ... into the decisive battle area of Northern France".<sup>51</sup> The British Chiefs of Staff directed General Wilson to begin examination of this course, which they had not yet had time to discuss with the American Joint Chiefs of Staff. This change of plan Mr Churchill strongly favoured. On 7 August, it appears, he discussed the question with General Eisenhower, whose

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<sup>49</sup>Ibid, 22.

<sup>50</sup>Ibid, 23.

<sup>51</sup>Ibid, 32.



Naval Aide records, "Ike said no, continued saying no all afternoon, and ended saying no in every form of the English language at his command".<sup>52</sup> The U.S. Chiefs of Staff, it transpired, also said No, and in view of the fact that the Germans decided to hold the Brittany ports, and did hold them for a long time to come, it is fortunate that they did. The decisive element in the situation was again General Eisenhower's requirement for additional port capacity, to be obtained in Southern France, to enable him to bring in fresh American divisions from the United States. General Wilson writes:

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<sup>52</sup>Butcher, 634.

It was the same reason which had been decisive in June when I had proposed as an alternative that all resources allocated to the invasion of Southern France be diverted to the support of General Alexander's land battle in Italy, with the purpose of exploiting though the Po Valley and the Ljubljana Gap to threaten the plains of Hungary. General Eisenhower's requirements for additional port capacity in the south and the direct increment of strength to his forces in the land battle in France naturally prevailed.<sup>53</sup>

44. Operation "DRAGOON" duly went in on 15 August. Considerable German forces having been withdrawn from the south to meet the crisis in Normandy, it had immediate and relatively easy success. The armies from the southern coast joined hands with those from Normandy on 11 September.

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<sup>53</sup>Report by Supreme Allied Commander Mediterranean on the Operations in Southern France, 46.

45. After the launching of "DRAGOON", the chief military decisions required of the Combined Chiefs of Staff in connection with the defeat of Germany seem to have taken the form of further consideration of the balance between Italy and North-West Europe. The former theatre, as noted above, had been deprived of large forces for the sake of the invasion of Southern France. Early in 1945 it was decided to go further in this direction, strengthening the decisive theatre at the expense of the subordinate one. At the beginning of February, just before the meeting of the political chiefs of Yalta ("ARGONAUT") in the Crimea, the Combined Chiefs of Staff met at Malta and issued a directive ordering the transfer of five British and Canadian divisions to North-West Europe. (A later modification sent three to France and one to the Eastern Mediterranean, and retained one in Italy.) "This movement of more than 125,000 combat troops was accomplished in complete secrecy and gave Field-Marshal Montgomery's Northern Army Group on the Rhine additional power to the surprise of the enemy."<sup>54</sup> It was this decision which brought the 1st Canadian Corps to North-West Europe and permitted the concentration of all Canadian field formations under the command of First Canadian Army in the final phase of the campaign there.

46. In spite of the successive reductions in his force, Field-Marshal Alexander in Italy continued to contain German divisions in larger numbers. When his final offensive began in April 1945 he had available 17 divisions, plus nine independent brigades and four Italian combat groups, against 23 German and four Italian divisions in Italy.<sup>55</sup> A large and formidable German army this remained tied up in Italy until the end.

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<sup>54</sup>Marshall, 24.

<sup>55</sup>Stacey, 166.

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