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ANGLO-AMERICAN CONFLICT DURING OPERATION ANVIL IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR

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ANGLO-AMERICAN CONFLICT DURING OPERATION ANVIL IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR

CHAPTER ONE

THE ORIGIN OF THE CONFLICT

The decision to attack the Germans through the South of France in the summer of 1944 was a hotly debated issue. This operation, called ANVIL, later renamed DRAGOON, generated more friction between the British and the Americans than any other Allied operation throughout the long course of the war. Yet it must be remembered that while the western Allies argued over the wisdom of a thrust into the South of France, nonetheless, they both remained loyal to the Grand Alliance, and at no time did this argument threaten to disrupt the basic concord that existed between London and Washington. They were in complete agreement over their central strategy: obtaining the unconditional surrender of Nazi Germany. And they were of two minds as to how this should be done; at least as far as the British were concerned, the war was not an end in itself, but a means for the restoration of Western influence and values in war-torn Europe. This consideration loomed large in Britain's evaluation of ANVIL.

The beginning of the conflict between the British and the Americans had its inception at the Casablanca conference in January

1943. The purpose of the conference, to which Stalin was invited but declined to attend, was to determine Allied strategy for 1943. Generals Bernard Montgomery and Dwight Eisenhower would conquer Tunesia no later than May, and the principal European strategic question was how best to employ their victorious armies against the Germans. Stalin had been promised a second front in 1942 and 1943 by both London and Washington. Thus Churchill and Roosevelt were quite concerned to make concrete their commitment to the Russian leader. There was no real danger of an immediate Soviet collapse, but the Allies knew that Stalin had come to an agreement with Hitler once before, and they were afraid if Anglo-American armies did not open up a second front that Stalin might be tempted to come to terms with Berlin.[1] Should that happen, the vast Nazi armies fighting in Russia would be free to be transferred to the West; this would, of course, make an invasion of the continent infinitely more difficult to achieve.

The Casablanca conference immediately generated questions about a cross-Channel invasion. The Combined Chiefs ruled out a 1943 invasion of France because of insurmountable difficulties; there was not enough time to utilize fully American resources; in addition to this, the Allies needed time to gain control of the air over Europe. Moreover, some forty Anglo-American divisions would have to be gathered in the United Kingdom, with the United States supplying most of the troops.[2] Thus, under no circumstances could an invasion of France be

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[1] Chester Wilmot, The Struggle for Europe (New York: Harper and Bros., 1952), p. 121.

[2] Ibid., p. 118.

accomplished in 1943. Hence, the major strategic question was where the principal military thrust for 1943 should take place.

The British were most enthusiastic to invade Sicily once North Africa had been cleared of German forces. To the British, the Mediterranean presented the Allies with the greatest opportunity to keep large elements of the German army fully occupied, not only relieving pressure on the Soviet, but preventing Hitler from reinforcing his western wall in France. Moreover, an assault against Italy in strength might very well bring about the collapse of Mussolini's government, and the defection of one Axis power would hopefully weaken German control throughout occupied Europe. There would be an additional advantage in controlling Southern Italy in that the Allies could send in shiploads of supplies to the Balkan partisans who were at that time holding down forty-seven German divisions.[3] In addition to this, should Italy surrender Germany would be forced to send in troops into the Balkans to replace the withdrawn Italian divisions.[4]

The Americans were not impressed with this point of view. The United States wanted above all else to implement at the earliest possible date ROUNDUP (code name later changed to OVERLORD) which was the invasion of the French coast. General George Marshall did not want any wasteful diversions, whether in North Africa, Italy, the Greek Islands, the Balkans, or anywhere else; he wanted a single, concentrated, effort for a cross-Channel attack in France. Marshall feared "the

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[3]Winston S. Churchill, The Hinge of Fate, Vol. IV of The Second World War (6 vols; New York: Bantam Books, 1962), pp. 715-716.

[4]Ibid., p. 716.

creation in Italy of a vacuum into which the resources of the cross-Channel operation would be dissipated as the Germans had bled themselves in the North African campaign."[5] In point of fact, Marshall and his staff felt that if France could not be invaded in 1943 then the Allies should turn their immediate attention to the Pacific where Japan was threatening to engulf China.[6] The Americans were finally persuaded to invade Sicily because of two compelling reasons. Occupation of Sicily would split the Mediterranean in half and give the Allies naval supremacy in that important sea. Secondly, Sicily was a small island, and after the Allies had conquered it, it would not require a large number of troops to occupy it.[7]

The Americans brought to the Casablanca conference a basic suspicion of British intentions and aims. Marshall and his colleagues believed that the underlying motive of the British strategic proposals concerning Mediterranean operations was to delay a cross-Channel attack. American staff members thought the British wanted to abandon altogether any invasion of France.[8]

The dispute over strategic questions in the Mediterranean illustrates fundamental differences in the national temperament of

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[5]General George Marshall, Biennial Report of the Chief of Staff of the United States Army July 1, 1943 to June 30, 1945, to the Secretary of War (New York: Simon and Schuster, n.d.), p. 11; Wilmot, The Struggle for Europe, p. 119.

[6]Wilmot, The Struggle for Europe, p. 119.

[7]Dwight D. Eisenhower, Crusade in Europe (New York: Doubleday and Co., 1948), p. 160.

[8]Hastings Lional Ismay, The Memoirs of General the Lord Ismay (London: Heineman Co., 1960), p. 286.

England and America toward the conduct of the European war. The Americans tended to function in a direct manner. The principal enemy was Germany, and in order to defeat her it was necessary to apply massive and overwhelming force by the shortest possible route. That route was through France. Since German armed strength in France was quite formidable, the Americans reasoned that the Allies should concentrate all of their efforts in building up superior forces in the United Kingdom until they were strong enough to invade France successfully via the Channel. Any excursions in Italy and the Balkans would be a waste of time.[9]

The Americans had an almost religious belief that the great power of their industry would outproduce the Axis war machine. Americans knew from experience that their industrial technology had solved countless problems, and they saw no reason why this same skill could not be quickly brought to bear in operation OVERLORD. They were unaware of how much detailed planning would be necessary for an undertaking the size and scope of OVERLORD.[10]

The British acted on an entirely different basis from the Americans. The United Kingdom possessed limited manpower; she could not possibly hope to match the United States in military personnel. England's commitments were world-wide, and therefore she had to be cautious in her deployment of troops and manpower. By nature the English were reluctant to engage in a head-on assault with Germany; they favored an oblique approach in attacking the enemy. The English knew

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[9]Wilmot, The Struggle for Europe, p. 128.

[10]Ibid., p. 129.

from their long experience in European wars that it was necessary to check the enemy's natural advantage of being able quickly to move his forces on interior lines. The English thought the wise thing to do was to keep the German forces involved in as many theaters as possible in order to prevent Hitler from being able to concentrate his forces in one area. They were favorable to a cross-Channel attack, but only after using to the utmost their newly won advantages in the Mediterranean.[11] Hence, any plan for ANVIL would be greatly effected by the divergent views of the English and the Americans.

The initial plan for ANVIL was formulated by the Combined Chiefs of Staff at the Quebec conference (code name QUADRANT) in August 1943. At that time they recommended:

> Offensive operations against southern France (to include the use of trained and equipped French forces) should be undertaken to establish a logement in the Toulon and Marseilles area to exploit northward in order to create a diversion in connection with 'Overlord.'[12]

Accordingly, they asked Eisenhower on August 24 to outline such a plan by November 1, using as his base the Allied forces which were in the Mediterranean.

At this time, in contrast with his later attitude, Eisenhower was not enthusiastic about an operation in the South of France. Eisenhower argued that a thrust in the South of France could not be considered in isolation from other Mediterranean plans for the Germans could

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[11] Ibid.

[12] John Ehrman, Grand Strategy Vol. V of the History of the Second World War: United Kingdom Military Series, ed. J. R. M. Butler (6 vols.; London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1956), p. 104.

always quickly transfer forces wherever they were needed in the Mediterranean area. He thought an attack might produce, in fact, the opposite effect of what was desired; the Germans could reinforce northern France, as well as meet with force the Allied attack in the South. Eisenhower further argued that the Allies would have to be in possession of the Lombard plain before an attack of more than one division could occur; the weakness of Allied shipping in the Mediterranean ruled out a major attack from the sea. Hence, Eisenhower presented to the Combined Chiefs of Staff a plan recommending two alternatives: should the Allies be in possession of the Lombard plain, they should attack southern France; if they did not hold the plain, they should simply threaten the area, in the hope that the Germans would keep large forces in southern France because of the Allied threat.[13]

At this juncture (November 3, 1943) the British Joint Planning Staff accepted Eisenhower's position, though its acceptance was qualified, as it did not want to prejudge the issue. Therefore it recommended that Eisenhower should draw up operational plans for each of his alternatives; and after further correspondence with Eisenhower, the Combined Chiefs of Staff told him on November 12 that his report would be the basis for future planning.[14]

This was the background of the South of France controversy when the Teheran conference opened on the afternoon of November 28, 1943. To that conference, held in the dry and dusty capital of Iran, Great Britain and the United States brought their different schemes

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[13] Ibid., pp. 104-105.

[14] Ibid., p. 105.

for the termination of the European conflict. The time had now come to make the necessary concrete decisions for the opening of the long awaited, and hotly argued, second front. The Combined Chiefs agreement of November 3 was at best a patchwork compromise, satisfactory to neither Britain nor the United States. The Americans were still suspicious of Churchill's Balkan ambitions, and the English thought that the Americans were all too eager to throw away Britain's hard earned victories in Italy for the sake of a pointless Riviera invasion. But now Soviet Russia appeared on the stage, and the dispute ceased being simply an Anglo-Saxon quarrel. Stalin had very definite views on the post-war Balkans, and these plans excluded the West having any influence or prestige in Eastern Europe. As far as Stalin was concerned, the Red Army alone would "liberate" Eastern Europe; a measure which would guarantee Soviet suzerainty throughout the entire area.[15]

At this juncture only Churchill and Stalin had any real conception of long range political goals for Eastern Europe. To both Russia and the United Kingdom, the war was not simply to drive the Germans out of occupied territory; the war was also being fought to determine the nature of the post-war political life of Eastern Europe. Churchill had a long-standing interest in the affairs of Eastern Europe (too much so for the Americans) and had remarked many times that Great Britain had entered the war to protect Polish freedom. All of this concern for Eastern Europe was lost on Roosevelt. "I see no reason," he stated, "for putting the lives of American soldiers in

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[15]Wilmot, The Struggle for Europe, p. 140.

jeopardy in order to protect real or fancied British interest on the European continent. We are at war and our job is to win as fast as possible, and without adventures."[16]

The first plenary meeting of the Teheran conference laid the foundation for Operation ANVIL. President Roosevelt chaired the meeting and made the opening remarks of the first session. After touching on the war in the Pacific, Roosevelt turned to the course of the European war. He mentioned that a year and a half previously the decision had been reached to cross the Channel for an invasion of France, but the acute problem of Allied shipping and sea transportation had prevented London and Washington from deciding on a definite date for this operation. Roosevelt further remarked that it would be necessary to assemble in England a large force capable not only of invasion, but of penetrating deeply inland. The English Channel had proved to be too disagreeable a body of water to be crossed before May 1, 1944. This was the proposed date for the invasion, which had been decided upon at Quebec. Roosevelt then said that landing craft were the principal factor in all operations, and if a major undertaking in the Mediterranean were decided upon, the cross-Channel invasion would have to be cancelled; and if a lesser Mediterranean operation was implemented, it would cause a delay of two or three months for OVERLORD. Then Roosevelt turned to the problem of future Mediterranean operations, mentioning that many plans had been brought forward--strengthening Allied attacks in Italy, the Balkans, the Aegean, Turkey, and

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[16]Eliot Roosevelt, As He Saw It (New York: Duell, Sloan and Pearce, 1946), p. 186.

other thrusts into Eastern Europe.[17] According to Roosevelt, the most important task of the conference was determining which of these plans to adopt; for this reason he welcomed the observations of Marshal Stalin as to what would be most beneficial for the Soviet Union.[18] It is interesting to note that even this vague reference to a possible Balkans operation alarmed Harry Hopkins who hastily scribbled a note to Admiral King asking who was "promoting that Adriatic business that the President continually returns to?"[19]

Marshal Stalin in his reply to Roosevelt answered the question of how a Mediterranean operation could best help the Soviet. He said the Soviet Government had always felt that the Italian operation had been helpful to the Allied cause in that it opened the Mediterranean. Stalin then emphasized that Italy was not a good place to begin an invasion of Germany because of the Alps. He did not see that there would be any advantage in concentrating large numbers of troops in Italy for any Germany invasion. Turkey would be a better place for such troop concentrations (should Turkey be persuaded to join the Allies), but even Turkey was a long way from the German heartland. Stalin then said the best place to attack Germany was Northwest France, though Hitler would resist with all the forces at his disposal.[20]

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[17]Winston S. Churchill, Closing the Ring, Vol. V of The Second World War, (6 vols.; New York: Bantam Books, 1962), p. 298.

[18]Ibid.

[19]Robert E. Sherwood, Roosevelt and Hopkins, (New York: Harper & Bros., 1948), p. 780.

[20]U. S., Department of State, Foreign Relations of the United States Diplomatic Papers, The Conferences at Cairo and Teheran 1943 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1961), p. 490.

Churchill spoke next and outlined the British position on OVERLORD and the Mediterranean. He began by pointing out to Stalin why it was impossible for the Allies to have launched OVERLORD in 1943. He then carefully explained the British argument in three carefully reasoned stages. First of all, OVERLORD would definitely be launched not later than spring or summer of 1944, with thirty-five strong Allied divisions, of which sixteen would be British. Churchill's second point was that it was impossible for the British, due to their world-wide commitments, to sustain more than sixteen divisions in northwest Europe, and the other divisions would have to be supplied by the United States. At that time seven British and American divisions were in the process of being transferred from the Mediterranean to the United Kingdom for OVERLORD. The Prime Minister said the great question facing the Big Three was how best to use the remainder of British and American forces left in Italy, and how these forces could be employed in support of OVERLORD. The first principal target was Rome, but its capture had been delayed by the transfer of forces out of Italy for OVERLORD. Nonetheless, Churchill believed that the city should be taken not later than January 1944; therefore, some decision had to be made as to future Mediterranean operations. Churchill remarked that the Anglo-Americans intended to stand on a line Pisa-Rimini, and not to invade the Lombard plain (a departure from Eisenhower's plan of October 27). From this point the western Allies faced two alternatives: They could invade or attack southern France, or they might (as President Roosevelt had mentioned in his opening address) move across the head of the Adriatic northeast

toward the Danube and threaten Vienna. The third point made by Churchill was that the Allies should pressure Turkey to bring her into the war; the Dodecanese could then be taken with two or three divisions, which would then open the way to the Soviet ports in the Black sea.[21]

Stalin listened intently to Churchill's argument. He then asked several pointed questions of Churchill about his commitment to OVERLORD:

> Question 1 -- "Am I right in thinking that the invasion of France is to be undertaken by 35 Divisions?"
> Answer 1 -- "Yes. Particularly strong Divisions."
> Question 2 -- "Is it intended that this operation should be carried out by the forces now in Italy?"
> Answer 2 -- "No, Seven Divisions have already been or are in process of being, withdrawn from North Africa to take part in 'Overlord'. These 7 Divisions are required to make up the 35 Divisions mentioned in question 1 above. After they have been withdrawn, about 22 Divisions will be left in the Mediterranean for Italy or other objectives. Some of these could be used either for an operation against Southern France or for moving from the head of the Adriatic towards the Danube. Both these operations will be timed in conformity with 'Overlord'. Meanwhile, it should not be difficult to spare 2 or 3 Divisions to take the Islands in the Aegean."[22]

At this point Stalin turned to the Mediterranean itself. He asked if an operation against the South of France had been given careful thought. Churchill replied that none had been planned in detail, but the general idea was for the operation to assist OVERLORD by attacking the South of France with troops now stationed in Italy. The Prime Minister

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[21] Ibid., pp. 491-493; Ehrman, Grand Strategy, p. 174.

[22] Ehrman, Grand Strategy, pp. 174-175. Quotations are taken from the British minutes which do not always correspond with the American version.

further stated that President Roosevelt's plan for moving northeast from the Adriatic should be given careful consideration.[23]

Stalin then considered the question of Turkish participation in the war, and he wondered how many British and American troops would have to be sent to Turkey should she enter the war on the Allied side. Churchill replied that only two or three divisions would be needed for taking the islands in the Aegean, plus giving Turkey about twenty squadrons of Air Force and several regiments of Flak to defend herself against German reprisal. This answer did not please Stalin.

The Russian leader then gave Churchill his views about Mediterranean operations. Stalin considered it a mistake to weaken Allied strength by dispatching some forces to Turkey, and other forces to the South of France. It would be far better, thought Stalin, to make OVERLORD the primary operation for 1944, with the Allied armies in Italy employed in a Riviera invasion; these forces could then juncture with the OVERLORD forces at the time of the invasion. Stalin further observed that France provided the Allies with the greatest opportunity for a successful invasion. As far as Turkey was concerned, he saw little chance that she would enter the war.[24]

Churchill tried to divert Stalin from considering an operation in the South of France by ignoring Stalin's reference to it; instead Churchill emphasized that the British Government had thought for a long time that the Soviet Government was anxious to get Turkey into the war. The Prime Minister remarked that he was in agreement with

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[23] Ibid., p. 175.

[24] Ibid.

Stalin's observations about the undesirability of dispersion of forces, but it would require only a few divisions to enter Turkey, while the Air Forces which would be used were those which were already stationed in Egypt. Thus, there would be no real depletion of forces from the main task at hand: implementing OVERLORD.[25] Moreover, Churchill said, in order to invade northern France it would be necessary to have the north Italian fields which could provide good fighter cover.[26] Stalin was not taken in by Churchill's ploy; he knew that the Prime Minister was not half as interested in getting Turkey into the war as he was in keeping Anglo-American troops out of the South of France. Stalin intervened at once to remark that he considered it worth the doing to take the Aegean Islands if this operation would not require over three or four divisions, but he stated that OVERLORD was a very serious operation and it was best to help it by an invasion in the South of France.[27]

It is at this point that Roosevelt entered the argument by supporting Stalin. Roosevelt suggested that the timing of the operations was of the utmost importance; moreover, any operation in the Eastern Mediterranean would only delay OVERLORD. He therefore recommended that the military staffs should study Stalin's plan for an attack against southern France; a plan calling for operations to begin

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[25] Ibid.,

[26] U. S., Department of State, The Conferences at Cairo and Teheran 1943, p. 495.

[27] Ehrman, Grand Strategy, pp. 175-176.

there two months before OVERLORD.[28] Hence, Roosevelt began to move toward a firm agreement with Stalin in supporting an invasion of the South of France. The Russo-American "alliance" against Britain was about to be born.

Stalin clinched his verbal victory by pointing out to Churchill that the Soviet Union had learned, from two years of hard fighting, that it was better to launch an offensive from two directions -- one rarely succeeded. Stalin suggested this experience was applicable to this problem.

Churchill fought hard to prevent the discussion from crystallizing into irreconcilable positions. He argued that his suggestion for action in Yugoslavia, as well as Turkey, did not come into conflict with the strategic plan for OVERLORD. However, he absolutely insisted on being placed on record that he could not in any manner agree to sacrifice the Mediterranean activities of the Anglo-American armies, which included twenty British divisions, simply to keep an arbitrary date of May 1 for OVERLORD. He expressed the hope that he would not have to agree to the President's rigid timing of operations.[29]

The interest Stalin had in an attack on southern France came as a surprise to the delegates to the conference. They had not so much as bothered to bring with them Eisenhower's report on military operations in the South of France. There were, however, several good military reasons (in addition to political) for Russian interest in

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[28]U. S., Department of State, The Conferences at Cairo and Teheran 1943, p. 495; Ehrman, Grand Strategy, p. 176.

[29]Ehrman, Grand Strategy, p. 176.

an operation in that region. Their number one concern was to have OVERLORD launched not later than May 1944. The Russians did not really think that Mediterranean operations would greatly relieve the pressure on the Eastern Front. To the Soviets, the best way to crush Germany was by a giant pincer, with the Soviet forces one arm, and OVERLORD the other. And OVERLORD could best be aided by an attack in southern France; other operations in the Mediterranean might weaken the western pincer.[30]

The next morning, November 29, the military staffs of the three powers met to discuss the ideas outlined by the heads of state in their first session. Sir Alan Brooke spoke for the British, Marshal Voroshilov for the Soviet Union, and General Marshall for the United States. Since there were not political advisers present, the meeting solved nothing. It is interesting to observe from the notes of the meeting that the Russians were not slow in realizing the differences between the British and the Americans. The Russians took the opportunity to explore further these differences, and as a result, they were able to give Stalin a comprehensive idea of the abrasive points between the western Allies. Therefore, Stalin was able, at the afternoon session of the second plenary meeting to state his demands in categorical terms, since he had the advantage of knowing his Allies' strategic points of view.[31]

The staff meeting shows to what extent the Russians suspected the British of not really believing in OVERLORD. Marshal Voroshilov

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[30] Ibid., pp. 176-177.

[31] Ibid., p. 177; U. S., Department of State, The Conferences at Cairo and Teheran 1943, pp. 515-528.

pressed Sir Alan Brooke to the wall with questions about British commitment to OVERLORD. Voroshilov told Brooke during this important meeting that Stalin was insistent on an operation in the North of France on the agreed date, though he would not demand an invasion of southern France: nonetheless, Voroshilov thought Southern France the

best location for such an undertaking.

The second plenary session of the Big Three met on November 29. Churchill once again carefully presented his strategic arguments, though he did not have a chance of having them accepted, as positions had hardened into fixed stances. The Prime Minister raised three points: First of all, what were the possibilities of an operation against southern France? Secondly, could landing craft be made available for an Aegean operation when Turkey entered the war? Lastly, could these same craft be used six months later for an attack against southern France? Churchill said he was most eager to hear the views of Marshal Stalin on these questions.[33]

Stalin chose to ignore Churchill's questions, and instead offered three direct statements of his own. First, the date of OVERLORD should be decided immediately; this date should be no later than May. Secondly, the best way to help OVERLORD, in the Russian view, was to land in the South of France. It would be better to land there two or three months before OVERLORD, if this could be done; if not, then Stalin recommended an operation in southern France to coincide

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[32]U.S., Department of State, The Conferences at Cairo and Teheran 1943, pp. 525.

[33]U. S., Department of State, The Conferences at Cairo and Teheran 1943, pp. 535-536; Ehrman, Grand Strategy, p. 179.

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with OVERLORD. Should problems with shipping and landing craft prevent a simultaneous operation with OVERLORD, he thought it would be advantageous if this operation could be launched shortly after OVERLORD. Stalin viewed an attack against the South of France as a secondary operation decidedly helpful to OVERLORD. He did not think the capture of Rome essential, and any other operation in the Mediterranean would only be an unnecessary diversion. Thirdly, Stalin recommended an immediate appointment of a Commander-in-Chief for the entire OVERLORD operation.[34]

Churchill had raised a question to which the British would continuously refer throughout this controversy: the question of where to obtain the needed number of assault landing craft. In a word, where were they to come from? If the assault shipping for the South of France came from the Mediterranean, how could OVERLORD be launched in May? If not, from what source could these ships be obtained?[35] This question bore directly on any operations undertaken in the Aegean, as well as Operation BUCCANEER, the proposed assault on the Andaman Islands, off Burma, which aimed at aiding China. Churchill, therefore, recommended that the British and American Staffs should meet the next morning in order to consider these matters, and to present to the conference a united point of view.

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[34]U. S., Department of State, The Conferences at Cairo and Teheran 1943, p. 537.

[35]Ibid., p. 536; Churchill, Closing the Ring, p. 318.

When the Combined Chiefs of Staff met (November 30) the British, led by Brooke, said that the retention of sixty-eight L.S.T. in the Mediterranean for the South of France invasion would postpone OVERLORD until June 1. This was a reduction from the original British estimate of July 1. The Americans thought ANVIL would postpone OVERLORD to about May 15. The British Chiefs of Staff suggested that the Americans might consider the cancellation of BUCCANEER altogether in order to guarantee an adequate number of L.S.T. for the Mediterranean. However, no real decision about landing craft was reached at this meeting.[36]

The last plenary meeting gathered at four o'clock on November 30. General Brooke, as spokesman for the Combined Chiefs of Staff, read to the delegates their compromised recommendations. OVERLORD was to be launched in May, in conjunction with an attack in southern France. The size and scope of the attack on the South of France would be determined by the number of landing craft available at that time.[37] Roosevelt, Stalin, and Churchill signified their approval of this recommendation.

So the first round of the ANVIL controversy ended in apparent concord. The platitudinous communique which followed the Teheran conference did not reveal the inner dissension which had marked the conference. This turmoil had reached such a peak that Churchill on November

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[36]U. S., Department of State, The Conferences at Cairo and Teheran 1943, pp. 555-564; Ehrman, Grand Strategy, p. 181.

[37]U. S., Department of State, The Conferences at Cairo and Teheran 1943, p. 576.

30 had felt it necessary to have a direct personal conversation with stalin, in order to reassure him that the United Kingdom was firmly committed to OVERLORD.[38] Yet any patchwork communique issued in the interests of public opinion and "Allied solidarity" could not smooth over basic differences in strategy. The generals who had to carry out the politician's decisions knew each other's positions, and suspected them accordingly. Sir Alan Brooke's diary records on November 28 his dissatisfaction with Stalin's insistence on an operation in the South of France.[39] To Brooke, it seemed that Stalin simply wanted to grab Eastern Europe, and did not have any genuine strategic reasons for his insistence upon ANVIL. Lord Ismay also felt that Teheran was a disaster.[40] Ismay thought that the agreement for ANVIL was destined to cause much discord between the British and the Americans; moreover, by allowing the Soviet Union to enter Eastern Europe, Ismay thought the western Allies had placed the entire free world in danger. All of this from an agreement which appeared so innocent at the time; but the war would have to run its course before the consequences of this agreement could be full known.

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[38] Churchill, Closing the Ring, pp. 321-326.

[39] Arthur Bryant, Triumph in the West: A history of the War Years Based on the Diaries of Field-Marshal Lord Alanbrooke, Chief of The Imperial General Staff (New York: Doubleday & Co., 1959), pp. 62-63.

[40] Ismay, The Memoirs of Lord Ismay, p. 340.

CHAPTER II

AN EGYPTIAN INTERLUDE

The decisions reached at Teheran represented far more than the creation of high strategy which, when implemented, would spell doom for Hitler's Germany. In a very real sense they presaged the nature of post-war Europe. For by the closing months of 1943 the U. S. S. R. had recovered from the traumatic shock of Nazi invasion, and was girding her strength to hurl the Germans out of Russia, and quite naturally this increased strength gave the Soviet Union a greater voice in Allied councils.[1] Meanwhile Britain had reached the height of its industrial productivity, and by late 1943 the United Kingdom was in serious economic straits.[2] Britain desperately needed victory in 1944 if she were to maintain her prestige and power.[3] Certainly Britain, having striven for centuries to maintain the balance of power on the continent, would not welcome Soviet armies into the heartland of Europe.[4]

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[1] Maurice Matloff, "The ANVIL Decision: Crossroads of Strategy," Command Decisions, ed. Kent R. Greenfield (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1959), p. 290. This article appeared in different form as "Was the Invasion of Southern France Necessary?" in United States Naval Institute Proceedings, July, 1958.

[2] Ibid.

[3] Ehrman, Grand Strategy, p. xvi.

[4] Hanson W. Baldwin, Great Mistakes of the War (New York: Harper & Row, 1950), pp. 26-27.

Hence, the British viewed Teheran as a strategic setback - one that not only would delay the war against Germany, but would open the gates of central Europe to Stalin's troops. Yet while the British had formally committed themselves to Operation ANVIL and a South of France invasion, they nonetheless hoped that the course of the campaign in Italy would provide an escape from the Teheran agreement. For this purpose the British met the Americans in Cairo (SEXTANT conference) during the first week of December to iron out the important military details decided on in Teheran. High on the agenda was the proper allocation of assault shipping between European operations (OVERLORD, the Aegean, and ANVIL) and the promised Asian venture (Operation BUCCANEER).[5] The simple but acute problem was to find the necessary assault shipping for operations in both Europe and the Pacific.[6] The shipping shortage would continue to plague Operation ANVIL until its actual execution in August, 1944.

The immediate problem discussed by the staffs on December 3 was the minimum scale needed for a successful ANVIL.[7] The only concrete analysis the Combined Chiefs of Staff had was Eisenhower's October report and the rather vague Teheran proposals. Taking these as his point of departure, Sir Alan Brooke recommended a two divisional assault against the South of France.[8] Immediately the shortage of

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[5]Ehrman, Grand Strategy, p. 183.

[6]Ibid.

[7]Ibid., p. 184.

[8]Ibid.; U. S., Department of State, The Conferences at Cairo and Teheran 1943, p. 671

naval craft presented itself. It was estimated that by the middle of January there would only be in the Mediterranean enough assault craft for approximately one and a third divisions.[9] In all probability there would also be a shortage of needed aircraft carriers. To the British adequate sea craft were absolutely essential because the troops for the invasion would have to be transfered by sea from Italy to southern France; a force which might rise as high as ten divisions before the campaign ended.[10] Primarily because of this heavy need for naval craft in order to carry out ANVIL, the British Chiefs of Staff on December 4 advised that BUCCANEER must be cancelled, or if that were not possible, the United States must provide the required shipping.[11] In addition to this, the recommendation was made that British assault shipping should immediately sail from the Indian ocean for the Mediterranean in order to allow for proper reckoning of invasion craft. Finally the British urged a complete re-evaluation of their world-wide assault shipping, based on the assumption that the Americans would do the same.[12]

The Cairo planners faced another difficulty in arriving at a correct assessment for ANVIL because on November 29 Admiral Lord Louis Mountbatten, Supreme Allied Commander South-East Asia, had submitted a new plan for a greatly strengthened BUCCANEER. While Mountbatten

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[9]Ehrman, Grand Strategy, p. 184.

[10]U. S., Department of State, The Conferences at Cairo and Teheran 1943, p. 671.

[11]Ehrman, Grand Strategy, p. 184.

[12]Ibid.

assured the British Chiefs of Staff that no additional forces or men would be required in his theater for this operation, his superiors were alarmed because his plan demanded an increase in ocean and assault shipping.[13] Mountbatten, however, seemed to have been told by Admiral King that the United States naval forces in the southwest would give him six aircraft carriers if he needed them.

When the British Chiefs of Staff evaluated the new plans on December 4 they were concerned that the requested increase in men and ships (even though coming entirely from Mountbatten's theater) would be needed for the primary operations in the Mediterranean.[14] They had no idea how many ships under Mountbatten's command would be needed for the Mediterranean theater, and they were unhappy that he had asked for full utilization of his naval forces as well as the possible use of King's six aircraft carriers.[15] Such a request appeared most inopportune, since many of his ships might have to be transferred from his command to the Mediterranean.

The December 4 recommendation for the cancellation of BUCCANEER presupposed for the British the cancellation of Operation TARZAN, the India-based thrust of the entire offensive against Burma. In essence the British called for a cessation of all large scale operations in the Bay of Bengal based on their conclusions that the scarcity of necessary assault ships precluded major undertakings in both the

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[13] Ibid.

[14] Ibid.

[15] Ibid.

Mediterranean and Southeast Asia. This, of course, was unacceptable to President Roosevelt who, shortly before the Teheran conference, had made a definite commitment to Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek for an operation to aid China.[16]

The plenary meeting between Churchill and Roosevelt opened the morning of December 4. The Prime Minister, now armed with the British Chiefs of Staff's negative appraisal of BUCCANEER, made a strong plea against any venture in the Bay of Biscay.[17] Churchill based his argument on two decisive factors which greatly altered the situation: first of all Stalin had declared that once the Germans were defeated the Soviet Union would enter the war against Japan.[18] Once Russia had joined the lists against Japan she could provide far better bases to operate against Japan than could China.[19] Secondly, OVERLORD, supported by ANVIL, was such an enormous undertaking that Churchill raised the possibility of withdrawing forces from Mountbatten in order to have greater certitude of victory in the European campaign.[20] For this reason Churchill thought it wise to allocate the scarce assault craft to the Mediterranean and the United Kingdom in order to allow for a greater margin of security for OVERLORD and ANVIL.

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[16] Churchill, Closing the Ring, p. 349.

[17] U. S., Department of State, The Conferences at Cairo and Teheran 1943, pp. 675-676.

[18] Ibid.

[19] Ibid.

[20] Ibid., p. 680.

Roosevelt was not concerned about the scarcity of landing-craft, thinking it a "small item" which presented no real difficulty.[21] The British did not take such a cavalier view toward this essential craft, thinking the shortage presented a genuine obstruction to success.[22] The President, after carefully hearing the British position, then made a summation of the strategic situation in both war theaters as he understood it. His first two points were an affirmation of both OVERLORD and ANVIL; his third point a declaration that sufficient landing craft must be found to operate in the Mediterranean should Turkey enter the war; lastly he thought Mountbatten should be told to execute BUCCANEER with the resources already at his disposal.[23] The Prime Minister could not agree to this unless the President could give some positive assurance of the wherewithal for the necessary assault craft. Because the President categorically refused to abandon BUCCANEER, the Prime Minister saw no alternative but to have the staffs look into the whole matter once again.[24]

By that afternoon when the staffs once again reviewed the situation a new and important factor had arisen.[25] During the plenary session earlier in the day Admiral King had offered to provide the

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[21] Ibid., p. 675.

[22] Ehrman, Grand Strategy, p. 186.

[23] U. S., Department of State, The Conferences at Cairo and Teheran 1943, p. 680.

[24] Ehrman, Grand Strategy, pp. 186-187.

[25] Ibid.

necessary landing craft for ANVIL by sending all new landing craft manufactured in America between March 1 and April 1 to Britain.[26] Because of the two to four week postponement of OVERLORD, this could be done, providing twenty-four L.S.T.'s and twenty-six L.C.T.'s, which in fact met the requirements for ANVIL based on a two division assault.[27] These figures were not specifically mentioned during the plenary session, which perhaps accounts for British indifference to his offer. Because ANVIL still existed only in sketchy form, coupled with Allied obligations in Italy and the Aegean, the British thought BUCCANEER should still be cancelled in order to have some margin of naval craft in European waters.[28] Furthermore Sir Alan Brooke seriously doubted the wisdom of the Southeast Asia campaign thinking the Burma operation might very well become a "huge vacuum" which would distort Allied strategy.

These arguments came to a head when the Combined Chiefs met on the morning of December 5. In essence the Americans were displeased that BUCCANEER and TARZAN were resisted because of an alleged lack of assault craft.[29] The British, particularly General Alan Brooke, reiterated their arguments that an offensive in Burma might unbalance

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[26]U. S., Department of State, The Conferences at Cairo and Teheran 1943, p. 678; Ehrman, Grand Strategy, p. 187.

[27]Ehrman, Grand Strategy, p. 187.

[28]Ibid.

[29]U. S., Department of State, The Conferences at Cairo and Teheran 1943, p. 700; Ehrman, Grand Strategy, p. 188.

Pacific strategy.[30] Air Marshal Sir Charles Portal pointed out that if BUCCANEER were cancelled and the amphibious lift of 35,000 men were assigned to Europe it would greatly aid OVERLORD and ANVIL.[31] Therefore, in a superficial sense the British and Americans seemed to have switched sides, with the Americans protesting against the transferring of naval craft for ANVIL's benefit, while the British wanted to abandon BUCCANEER, a campaign they originally supported.[32] The final draft of this session reflected this split: the British proposals emphasizing the importance of a successful invasion of Europe; and the Americans pointing out the political and military need for an amphibious offensive in support of TARZAN.[33]

The decision was bucked upstairs to Roosevelt and Churchill when they met with the Combined Chiefs of Staff in executive session later that morning. Under heavy questioning from Harry Hopkins it became apparent that neither OVERLORD nor ANVIL was as strong as they should be.[34] In fact, neither ANVIL nor OVERLORD equaled in size the assault on Sicily. This revelation seemed to act as a catalyst on the meeting causing the Americans to rethink their position on BUCCANEER, though they still were convinced of the value of TARZAN.[35] Finally

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[30] Ehrman, Grand Strategy, p. 189.

[31] U. S., Department of State, The Conferences at Cairo and Teheran 1943, p. 703.

[32] Ehrman, Grand Strategy, p. 189.

[33] Ibid., pp. 189-190.

[34] U. S., Department of State, The Conferences at Cairo and Teheran 1943, pp. 707-708; Ehrman, Grand Strategy, p. 190; Richard M. Leighton "Overlord versus the Mediterranean" in Command Decisions, p. 204.

[35] Ehrman, Grand Strategy, p. 190; U. S., Department of State, The Conferences at Cairo and Teheran 1943, pp. 707-710.

the meeting ended with the recommendation that the Combined Chiefs of Staff once again examine in depth the plans for OVERLORD and ANVIL in consultation with the commanders for BUCCANEER. Admiral Mountbatten was asked to furnish some plans as to what operations he could undertake if he lost most of his landing craft and assault shipping for Europe.[36] Roosevelt obviously was unhappy at this turn of events.[37]

The morning session thus ended on an indecisive note. When the Combined Chiefs of Staff reconvened the afternoon of December 5 they decided to inform Mountbatten that Europe now commanded first priority, and therefore BUCCANEER might have to be cancelled. Mountbatten was asked if he thought it possible to launch a less ambitious amphibious assault predicated on the return of most of his landing craft to European waters.[38]

The Combined Chiefs then turned to ANVIL and, taking cognizance of Admiral King's redistribution of assault shipping, decided that it was possible to launch an offensive of two divisions if certain shortages could be met.[39] It seemed probable that most of the needed assault shipping could be sent to Europe from the United States by April 15.[40] The Chiefs of Staff were aware that time was precious, and they had very little time in which to gather naval craft. Nevertheless the Combined Chiefs of Staff had produced a concrete plan;

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[36]U. S., Department of State, The Conferences at Cairo and Teheran 1943, p. 710-711.

[37]Churchill, Closing the Ring, p. 351.

[38]U. S., Department of State, The Conferences at Cairo and Teheran 1943, p. 722.

[39]Ehrman, Grand Strategy, p. 191.

[40]Ibid.

and on December 6 Eisenhower was given an order to prepare for a May invasion of southern France with a two division assault simultaneous with OVERLORD. The troops would be drawn from General Alexander's forces south of the Pisa-Rimini line in Italy.[41]

That afternoon in his villa Roosevelt met with the Joint Chiefs of Staff and reluctantly decided to cancel BUCCANEER. The decision was a difficult one for Roosevelt, but Roosevelt thought the British could never be persuaded to accept BUCCANEER.[42] Therefore Roosevelt sent Churchill a short message: "BUCCANEER is off."[43] The next day Roosevelt wired the unwelcome news to Chaing Kai-shek that European operations were of such size and scope that the Allies did not have assault craft to spare for an offensive in Southeast Asia, offering instead to proceed with TARZAN immediately without benefit of BUCCANEER, or to delay TARZAN until November when major assault craft would again be available.[44]

The Western Allies had now fixed military strategy for the conclusion of the European war. This was finalized at the last plenary meeting on the evening of December 6 when the Combined Chiefs of Staff read out their report paragraph by paragraph.[45] Churchill and

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[41] Ibid.

[42] U. S., Department of State, The Conferences at Cairo and Teheran 1943, pp. 725-726.

[43] Churchill, Closing the Ring, p. 352.

[44] Ehrman, Grand Strategy, p. 192.

[45] Ibid., p. 193.

Roosevelt initialed the report and the meeting ended soon after with Churchill remarking that the decisions conformed to the "Classic articles of war." The next day, December 7, the Combined Chiefs of Staff instructed Mountbatten to send most of his amphibious fleet (15 L.S.T.'s and 6 assault transports) back to Europe.[46] As far as Mountbatten was concerned, this dashed all hopes for a worthwhile operation in Southeast Asia.

All unsuspectingly, the British had chained themselves to ANVIL. For by their insistence that ANVIL be strengthened at Asia's expense, they had, in fact, guaranteed that it would be launched. At Teheran they theoretically supported an invasion of southern France in order to aid OVERLORD; at Cairo they created the machinery which made ANVIL a reality. Undoubtedly they hoped the assault craft sent for ANVIL would ultimately be assigned to the Italian campaign -- assault craft which happily could be used for an invasion across the Adriatic against Istria, thereby opening the way to the Danube and Vienna. It was a calculated ploy, and one that failed. As the struggle for Italy unfolded in the spring of 1944 and the British tried desperately to extricate themselves from ANVIL in order to save the Italian campaign, the Americans not only reminded them of their promises made at Teheran, but demonstrated to them that it was too late to stop the machinery set in motion in Cairo. In a word, rather than strengthen the Italian campaign, the British had weakened it.

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[46] Leighton, "Overlord versus the Mediterranean" in Command Decisions, p. 206.

CHAPTER III

THE DEEPENING CONFLICT

When the second Cairo conference closed Churchill and his staff could take pride in their achievements. They had accomplished much. BUCCANEER had been cancelled and most of Mountbatten's assault shipping would soon be making its way back to the Mediterranean to be used, hopefully, for assaults in Italy and the Aegean. In addition, the British were pleased with the now established command structure for Europe -- a structure which gave them operational authority over the Mediterranean. Yet, the Americans left Cairo satisfied as well. For they had won from the British in Teheran and Cairo a solemn agreement to implement OVERLORD no later than May.[1] On this point London and Washington were in agreement. The question that divided them for the next eight months was how best to aid OVERLORD to insure its success: either by a vigorous campaign in Italy to engage as many German divisions as possible; or by an invasion of the Riviera which was calculated not only to draw off German forces from Normandy, but also to allow ANVIL's forces to link with those of OVERLORD.

All of this had been debated at great length in Teheran. But the British thought they held a trump card in the Italian campaign

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[1]Ehrman, Grand Strategy, p. 203, 206.

which in the middle of November appeared so promising. Much of their calculations in Cairo were predicated on General Alexander's capturing Rome no later than January; with Rome in Allied hands it obviously would be much harder to depart from a victorious theater for the hazards of an unknown one.[2] But, fortune did not smile on Alexander. General Alexander ordered an assault on November 12, having strengthened Fifth and Eighth armies for the final drive to Rome. However, the combination of stiffened German resistance, wretched winter weather, and the roughness of the terrain forced Alexander's armies to a halt by the middle of December. By then the Allies faced in Italy a long and costly stalemate.[3]

Meanwhile Eisenhower studied a new report drawn up by the Mediterranean Command which was given to him on December 16. The new plan envisioned a ten division (two of them armoured) landing in southern France. The Supreme Commander drew from the premises of the revised plan that it was necessary to have a much stronger initial assault force if the invasion were to succeed. Ensenhower concluded that the assault force should be increased to three divisions if landing craft could be obtained from any source which did not have higher priority than ANVIL; he therefore requested an immediate gathering of the needed assault shipping because detailed planning should begin no later than January 1.[4] Thus, by mid-December ANVIL for Eisenhower was an "operation of major proportions" which had mushroomed from a mere design

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[2]Ibid., p. 207.

[3]Ibid., p. 209.

[4]Ibid., p. 213.

to an operation second only to OVERLORD.[5]

By January, 1944, strategic planning for the termination of the European war entered the final phase. By then the Americans were confident that their long sought Normandy invasion would come off. In both sectors, northwestern Europe and the Mediterranean theater, the supreme commanders had been selected: Eisenhower in command of OVERLORD, and Wilson directing Mediterranean affairs. General Bernard Montgomery had been appointed Eisenhower's chief ground commander, and General Alexander was field commander of the Italian theater. The subordinate command positions were assigned and the intricate command relationships established for the entire European theater.[6] Because all amphibious operations in Asia and the eastern Mediterranean were off the books by January, only three operations remained to compete for landing craft: OVERLORD, ANVIL, and the campaign in Italy. In a sense OVERLORD and ANVIL were, as then planned, one strategic campaign -- because ANVIL was considered a simultaneous operation justified only as a supportive operation for OVERLORD. Thus of the three possible areas of operation, OVERLORD was the principal theater.[7]

In the first week of January while Eisenhower was in Washington the British and American staffs met in London with COSSAC (Chief of Staff to the Supreme Allied Commander, Designate) to discuss ways to

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[5]Ibid.

[6]Robert W. Coakley and Richard M. Leighton, Global Logistics and Strategy 1943-1945 (Washington: The War Department, Office of the Chief of Military History United States Army, 1968), p. 321.

[7]Ibid.

increase the OVERLORD assault. Before Montgomery went to London he met Churchill and Eisenhower at Marrakech on January 1 and was shown for the first time the COSSAC plan for the invasion of northwest France. The Prime Minister asked Montgomery for a quick evaluation of the plan. Montgomery replied that from his hasty reading of the scheme the assaulting forces were too weak to penetrate the German coastal defences, and the planned area of attack was far too narrow to allow the necessary build up of forces after the initial landing.[8] Eisenhower instructed him to review the entire OVERLORD plan in detail and when he arrived in London to make any recommendations he thought necessary.[9] That night Montgomery discussed the plan with his chief of staff and the SHAEF (Supreme Headquarters, Allied Expeditionary Force) chief of staff, and after carefully considering the proposed plan, they recommended a widening of the assault area.[10]

On January 3, 1944, Montgomery, now in London, formally discussed the COSSAC plan with Eisenhower's chief of staff, Maj. General Walter Bedell Smith and Brig. Kenneth McLean, the principal COSSAC army planner. Montgomery criticized the plan on the same basis that

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[8]Bernard Law Montgomery (Field Marshal The Viscount Montgomery of Alamein), Normandy to the Baltic (New York: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1948), p. 5

[9]Ibid., p. 6; Coakley and Leighton, Global Logistics and Strategy 1943-1945, p. 321.

[10]Forrest C. Pogue, The Supreme Command (Washington: Department of the Army, Office of the Chief of Military History, 1954), p. 108.

he had to Eisenhower and Churchill: that is, the assault area was far too narrow to guarantee success.[11] In addition, Montgomery criticized because he thought OVERLORD had insufficient landing craft assigned to it.[12] Because of this insufficiency Montgomery recommended that ANVIL be reduced to the level of a threat and the landing craft allocated to it be transferred to OVERLORD.[13] General Smith thought that a threat on the Riviera simultaneous with OVERLORD would be as effective during the initial Normandy invasion as an actual assault, but he refused to agree to this proposal until Eisenhower was consulted. Thus on January 5 General Smith wired Eisenhower in Washington reiterating Montgomery's strong argument for a strengthened OVERLORD assault (four or five divisions instead of three) and pointing out to him Montgomery's insistence that the necessary assault craft must come from ANVIL. Smith further stated in his telegram that Montgomery recommended reducing ANVIL to a one division threat, and that he agreed with Montgomery, but would not make that recommendation unless Eisenhower agreed with this assessment.[14] Smith thought a threat would achieve the same purpose as Eisenhower's proposed three division assault. Smith was not alone in thinking ANVIL of little value. Lt. General Sir Frederick Morgan, Chief of

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[11]Gordon A. Harrison, Cross-Channel Attack (Washington: Department of the Army, Office of the Chief of Military History, 1951), p. 165; Sir Francis De Guingand, Operation Victory (New York: Scribner's and Sons, 1947), p. 344.

[12]Harrison, Cross-Channel Attack, p. 165.

[13]Pogue, The Supreme Command, p. 109.

[14]Harrison, Cross-Channel Attack, p. 167.

Staff to the Supreme Allied Commander (COSSAC), thought the ANVIL assault far too removed from the OVERLORD theater to be of any assistance to it.[15] In Morgan's view the Germans would not assign any more than two or three divisions to the South of France to stem the Mediterranean invasion. He agreed with Montgomery that a one division threat would be sufficient for ANVIL.

COSSAC clearly expressed his views on both OVERLORD and ANVIL in a summation issued on January 6 drawn up in consultation with the Joint Planning Staff. First of all he called for a strengthening of the OVERLORD assault force from three to four divisions, with each division on a front of two brigades. In addition to this, he requested a division afloat held in reserve during the D-Day assault, which would be followed by another division. Moreover, COSSAC urged a ten percent increase in supplies and reinforcements from D-Day to D + 6. This would necessitate a marked increase in men and supplies -- an increase in beach groups and headquarters, twenty-seven destroyers, three more cruisers, additional smaller ships, eight more fighter squadrons, two hundred additional transport aircraft, sixty-four more storeships, fifty-four assault ships and 216 assault craft.[16] The Joint Planning Staff, as well as COSSAC, thought that most of these supplies for an increased OVERLORD could come only from the Mediterranean.

In this appreciation COSSAC discussed the original strategy behind Operation ANVIL and he pointed out that to implement it would

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[15] Ibid.

[16] Ehrman, Grand Strategy, p. 233.

require at least one, and possibly two additional assault divisions, as well as a substantial increase in extra shipping -- forces which COSSAC thought should be transferred to OVERLORD. COSSAC dismissed ANVIL's basic argument by stating that he did not think an invasion of the South of France would hold down large numbers of German troops anyway. COSSAC formally urged what he had previously discussed with Montgomery: that ANVIL should become a threat based on one assault division. COSSAC also recommended that the landing craft and support-ive equipment be reassigned to the United Kingdom for OVERLORD's use at the earliest possible date. Naturally the French would resent can-cellation of the South of France operation, but COSSAC thought they would be placated by employing French forces through the Brittany ports after their capture.[17]

This appreciation carried great weight among the British Chiefs of Staff, and in the course of the debate over ANVIL, COSSAC's argu-ments were often repeated. The British Chiefs of Staff telegramed Washington on January 7 that they regarded COSSAC's evaluation as a matter of the utmost urgency.[18]

Eisenhower replied to General Smith on January 6. In his cablegram the Supreme Commander both agreed and disagreed with the recent London conferences. He agreed with Montgomery and COSSAC that

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[17] Ibid., p. 234.

[18] Ibid.

OVERLORD should be more broadly based, but he did not want to reduce ANVIL to the level of a threat.[19]

On January 7, Montgomery again met with British and American commanders, and once more stressed the importance of strengthening OVERLORD.[20] In order to increase OVERLORD strength (the so-called "Montgomery plan"), the commanders thought that at least half of the landing craft allocated to ANVIL should be transferred to Britain.[21] General Morgan once again stated that he viewed ANVIL as a mistake in strategic planning because it detracted forces away from OVERLORD. Two days later Air Chief Marshal Leigh-Mallory and Admiral Bertram Ramsay joined Montgomery in requesting that half of ANVIL's craft be assigned to OVERLORD.[22]

Not all of the British Chiefs of Staff on January 9 were opposed to ANVIL. Both Admiral Andrew Cunningham and Air Chief Marshal Sir Charles Portal supported it: Cunningham because he thought an invasion of southern France would surely draw off German troops from the OVERLORD theater, and Portal because of the need to acquire ports in the South of France for American use.[23]

At this juncture the debate was complicated by two reports which arrived on January 12. On that date the U. S. Joint Chiefs of

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[19]Harrison, Cross-Channel Attack, p. 167.

[20]Pogue, The Supreme Command, p. 109.

[21]Harrison, Cross-Channel Attack, p. 167.

[22]Pogue, The Supreme Command, p. 109.

[23]Ibid.

Staff in Washington suggested to London that since Eisenhower would soon be in England he should review both OVERLORD and ANVIL and make recommendations as to the size and scope of each operation.[24] After discussing the situation with General Wilson, a final decision could be reached by February 1. Secondly, on January 12 the Joint Planning Staff reported that it was possible to change ANVIL to simply a "diversionary" attack, and thereby reduce the assault craft allocated to it.[25] Taking cognizance of this appreciation, Portal yielded, thinking OVERLORD too important to jeopardize. Cunningham did not agree, pointing out that to abandon ANVIL would cause difficulties with the French who had planned to participate in the South of France landing.[26]

Nonetheless, the British Chiefs of Staff by January 14 were convinced that Montgomery and Morgan were correct, and on that date they advised the Prime Minister in Marrakech that it was not possible to strengthen OVERLORD without removing from the Mediterranean assault craft assigned to ANVIL. It would be a mistake to weaken OVERLORD in order to strengthen ANVIL for then both operations might fail; yet the British Chiefs of Staff had not reached an ironclad decision on ANVIL and they urged the matter be discussed in London on Churchill's return.[27]

Meanwhile, Montgomery ordered his staff to make plans to utilize ANVIL's landing craft for OVERLORD should it be released from the

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[24] Ehrman, Grand Strategy, p. 235.

[25] Pogue, The Supreme Command, p. 110.

[26] Ibid.

[27] Coakley and Leighten, Global Logistics and Strategy 1943-1945, p. 322; Ehrman, Grand Strategy, p. 235.

Mediterranean. Montgomery's staff drew up plans based on the assumption that ANVIL should be relegated to the status of a one division assault with the remainder of ANVIL's shipping transferred back to the United Kingdom.[28] All of this, of course, was contingent upon Eisenhower's approval.

Eisenhower himself arrived in the British capital on January 16 to assume command of the armies which would liberate Europe. Turning to OVERLORD, he accepted without question Montgomery's demand and COSSAC's recommendation for a wider front attacked by a five division assault.[29] However, he disagreed with them on the ANVIL question, thinking that it should be abandoned "only as a last resort."[30] On the day after his arrival in London Eisenhower was alarmed to the point that he wrote General Marshall in Washington expressing his fear that Smith and Montgomery and their advisors were determined to seriously reduce ANVIL in order to gain the necessary assault strength for OVERLORD.[31] Eisenhower thought this a great mistake, and he thought the staffs should carefully consider the advantages of a successful south of France invasion with those of strengthening the assault against the

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[28]Coakley and Leighton, Global Logistics and Strategy 1943-1945, p. 322.

[29]Ibid.

[30]Ibid., p. 323.

[31]Maurice Matloff, Strategic Planning for Coalition Warfare 1943-1944 (Washington: The War Department, Department of the Army, Office of the Chief of Military History, 1959), p. 413.

Normandy beaches.[32] Eisenhower was acutely sensitive about ANVIL because his staff in the Mediterranean in the fall of 1943 had prepared the initial ANVIL outline plan and he arrived in London thinking it a very necessary complement to OVERLORD.

The Supreme Commander was also aware that at Teheran the Soviets were solemnly promised an invasion of the south of France and a departure from ANVIL would violate that agreement.[33] Not only the Soviets, but the French too anticipated the Riviera invasion. And the United States had made a sizeable investment in building up the French army.[34] Thus Eisenhower told Marshall he was determined to avoid at almost any cost a truncated ANVIL. This information was welcome news in Washington because Marshall and his staff thought of ANVIL and OVERLORD as essentially one operation -- therefore it was absurd to strengthen one at the other's expense.

On January 23, Eisenhower presented his formal proposal for OVERLORD and ANVIL to the Combined Chiefs of Staff. While accepting a five division assault for OVERLORD, he did not want this increase to come from forces allocated to ANVIL. On the contrary he viewed ANVIL as "an important contribution to OVERLORD," and he denied COSSAC's contention that ANVIL could be successfully reduced to a threat. He further pointed out that ANVIL would insure cooperation from the French Resistance. Eisenhower echoed General Marshall in insisting that both operations constituted a strategic whole and must be seen in

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[32] Ibid.

[33] Ibid.

[34] Ibid.

that light. In fact, Eisenhower re-emphasized his point that ideally ANVIL should be a three divisional assault.[35] If this were not possible, Eisenhower would accept as a last alternative a one divisional ANVIL to be used as a threat until the Germans were weak enough to allow it to be put ashore. He did consent to postponement of the early May invasion date if circumstances forced this decision. Since time now was the most important single factor, the Supreme Commander urged the Combined Chiefs of Staff to reach an early decision.

By the time that Eisenhower had given his formal appreciation the British Chiefs of Staff had concluded that ANVIL should be no more than a one division assault. They were not only convinced by COSSAC's report and Montgomery's assessment, but recent events in the Mediterranean helped them decide against a two or three divisional ANVIL. In the first place they did not see how it would be possible to buttress OVERLORD without that strength coming from the Mediterranean.[36] The only other source for landing craft was the Pacific and the British knew the Americans would not consent to a transfer of resources from that theater. From January 10 to the 23rd the Italian campaign seemed to brighten as Fifth Army had launched an apparently successful offensive. Hence by January 19 the British were convinced the Allies would hold northern Italy by May, which would allow for a thrust to the left toward France in conjunction with an attack on the Riviera.[37] This was, of course, predicated on a successful Italian campaign. Therefore

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[35] Ehrman, Grand Strategy, p. 236.

[36] Ibid., p. 237.

[37] Ibid.

when the British replied to Eisenhower and the Joint Chiefs of Staff on January 26 they urged that OVERLORD should be strengthened to five divisions "whatever the cost to ANVIL," and that ANVIL itself should be a two division plus operation if that were possible.[38] If a two division ANVIL could not be launched the British wanted to maintain the momentum of the Italian campaign.[39] In addition the British asked for a postponement of D-Day until the end of May or early June in order to benefit from the Russian offensive, and to gain another month's production of landing craft.[40] On this point the Joint Chiefs of Staff reluctantly agreed to postpone the invasion to no later than the end of May. They did not, however, initially consent to a June postponement because of the Teheran agreement.[41]

Throughout January London and Washington heatedly debated the proper allocation of landing craft for OVERLORD and ANVIL. This complicated argument boiled down to the fact that the Allies could not agree on the number of ships they would actually have in service during each operation. In essence, the argument became a battle of statistics with different interpretations given to various sets of statistics by British and American staffs. But the course of the argument followed different strategic conceptions: the Americans believing

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[38] Coakley and Leighton, Global Logistics and Strategy 1943-1945, p. 323.

[39] Ehrman, Grand Strategy, p. 237.

[40] Pogue, The Supreme Command, p. 111.

[41] Matloff, Strategic Planning for Coalition Warfare 1943-1944, p. 414; Ehrman, Grand Strategy, p. 238.

that OVERLORD and ANVIL were one and the same undertaking; the British thinking that OVERLORD had first claim on all European resources. Since the heart of the argument was how many vessels were needed to carry a given number of men, and what degree of certitude there was that these ships would be operational, a large unknown factor loomed in the calculation. In a word, absolute certitude was not possible.[42]

It was against this background of a dispute over landing craft when the Joint Chiefs of Staff met in late January to consider the British appreciation of January 26. In the first place they were not happy with the British estimate of serviceability for landing craft -- 90 per cent for L.S.T. and 85 per cent for L. C. T. (Landing craft tank), figures established at Quebec in August, 1943.[43] The Americans thought 95 per cent a realistic figure for all craft based on their experience in the Pacific and the Mediterranean. The British, on the other hand, because of their older ships adhered to the Quebec rate, thinking it better to underestimate than to overestimate. Nonetheless, by the end of January Washington was convinced, despite a month long argument with Eisenhower and the London planners, that sufficient lift would be available to allow OVERLORD to mount an assault of six and a third divisions by May 31; and ANVIL would have at least a two, and possibly two and a third divisional assault.[44] Secondly, the Joint Chiefs of Staff

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[42]Coakley and Leighton, Global Logistics and Strategy 1943-1945, pp. 324-325.

[43]Ehrman, Grand Strategy, p. 237.

[44]Coakley and Leighton, Global Logistics and Strategy 1943-1945, pp. 326-328.

were equally unhappy with London's apparent disinterest in ANVIL, and therefore on January 31 they stated its importance in categorical terms -- pointing out that not only would it hold divisions already stationed in the South of France, but would actually draw German troops from the OVERLORD theater. Likewise they reminded the British, as had Eisenhower previously, of their commitment to the Soviet Union, a promise which demanded a genuine assault, not simply a threat.[45] So insistent were the Joint Chiefs of Staff about ANVIL that they demanded it be launched with not less than two divisions, while commenting that OVERLORD simply be carried out with as many assault craft as possible.[46] The Joint Chiefs of Staff, moreover, thought Eisenhower should be given the authority to distribute surplus lift between ANVIL and OVERLORD.

Churchill was not pleased when he read this telegram and he noted on it that "the two-division lift for ANVIL is given priority over OVERLORD."[47] Immediately he met with the British Chiefs for four days of intensive consultation in order to frame a convincing reply to the Americans. But by the beginning of February the British were no longer thinking in terms of ANVIL versus OVERLORD. A new factor now loomed large: the course of the Italian campaign. The campaign which in mid-January appeared bright and promising was now hopelessly mired down and the outcome did not seem encouraging. General Clark's troops were fighting for their lives on the Anzio beachhead while Fifth Army

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[45] Ibid., p. 330.

[46] Ibid.

[47] Ibid.; Churchill, Closing the Ring, p. 438.

was struggling desperately to capture Monte Cassino. Anglo-American armies were in danger of facing a heavy German counter-attack. Because of this Churchill and the British Chiefs of Staff concluded that the Germans had changed their strategy in the Mediterranean since the Teheran conference. Then the British thought the Germans would resist in Italy only as long as it was possible for them to do so. But by early February the intense level of fighting coupled with the large numbers of German reinforcements sent to Italy convinced London that the Germans were determined to stalemate the Allies. For their own part, while unhappy that victory was being denied them, the British nonetheless thought that the Italian campaign was fulfilling the role assigned it: containing a large enemy force which would otherwise be assigned to France. Thus in a real sense Italy then was performing the task which ANVIL was supposed to do.[48]

By February the British were becoming increasingly disenchanted with ANVIL from any point of view. It was over 500 miles between the scene of ANVIL and the OVERLORD -- too great a distance to be of any real benefit. The Rhone valley was mountainous and the British thought the Germans could easily defend it without large numbers of troops. Moreover, the British no longer believed that an invasion of southern France would be an effective pincer with OVERLORD. On the other hand, the Italian campaign would contain large numbers of German troops, and if successful, Allied armies could penetrate France

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[48] Ehrman, Grand Strategy, pp. 238-239; Coakley and Leighton, Global Logistics and Strategy 1943-1945, p. 331.

from the south. In a word, Churchill and the British Chiefs of Staff now regarded ANVIL as unnecessary.[49]

It was in this vein that the British replied to the Joint Chiefs of Staff on February 4 urging as they had previously that ANVIL, if launched, should be a one division operation -- but they preferred that ANVIL as planned be cancelled. But by now their position differed not only from the Joint Chiefs of Staff, but Eisenhower's as well. Hence, by now there were three different positions on ANVIL. Eisenhower strongly advocated ANVIL, if the means could be found to launch it; but he would forsake it if it were in the interest of OVERLORD to do so, though by now he was beginning to doubt that ANVIL and OVERLORD could be launched simultaneously. The Joint Chiefs of Staff wanted to keep ANVIL at any cost, and sought ways to strengthen OVERLORD without weakening ANVIL. And the British, in fact, no longer had faith in ANVIL, and wanted to strengthen the Italian campaign.[50] Furthermore, the British felt Washington had reversed the order of priorities: the proper task was to strengthen OVERLORD, and then assign the remaining craft to the Mediterranean. Moreover, London denied that Eisenhower should be given authority to assign shipping between OVERLORD and ANVIL as he saw fit; that prerogative belonged to the Combined Chiefs of Staff who viewed the war from a total perspective.[51]

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[49]Ehrman, Grand Strategy, p. 239; Coakley and Leighton, Global Logistics and Strategy 1943-1945, p. 331.

[50]Ehrman, Grand Strategy, pp. 239-240; Pogue, The Supreme Command, p. 112.

[51]Coakley and Leighton, Global Logistics and Strategy 1943-1945, pp. 330-331.

Thus by the first week in February the British and American positions hardened into fixed postures, with the British arguing for an increased OVERLORD, and the Americans for a strengthened ANVIL. This irony was not lost on Marshall who then wrote to Eisenhower stating that "we have become Mediterraneanites and they heavily pro-OVERLORD."[52]

The lengthy telegram sent by London on February 4 made no dent in Washington's thinking. The Joint Chiefs of Staff thought there were sufficient resources to launch both ANVIL and OVERLORD. An invasion of the South of France would assist OVERLORD far better than a renewed effort in Italy, as the ANVIL forces could move directly into the OVERLORD battle area. Thus ANVIL was "strategically interwoven" with OVERLORD and essential to its success.[53] Moreover, Alexander could still hold down the Germans effectively in Italy with his remaining forces even after ANVIL was implemented. At any rate, the Joint Chiefs of Staff did not intend to give up ANVIL regardless of what fate befell the Italian campaign.

Meanwhile, Marshall was becoming increasingly concerned that Eisenhower was being influenced by the British. Despite a telegram from Eisenhower on February 6 reaffirming his intention to cooperate with him on strategic planning, Marshall felt compelled on February 7 to come to an understanding with the Supreme Commander about ANVIL. In a lengthy message to Eisenhower Marshall pointed out that even the

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[52]Matloff, Strategic Planning for Coalition Warfare 1943-1944, p. 417.

[53]Coakley and Leighton, Global Logistics and Strategy 1943-1945, p. 331.

British planners in Washington now agreed that a two division ANVIL was a feasible operation, and he wondered who in London disagreed with this calculation. While he acceded Eisenhower's right to reject these figures if he thought that necessary, in order to insure OVERLORD's success, he nonetheless stated that if ANVIL were cancelled there would be at least eight divisions not fighting the Germans when Eisenhower needed to exert on the enemy all the pressure he could.[54] Moreover, ANVIL might trigger the French to rise against the Germans in southern France. In short, Eisenhower should carefully weigh a continued offensive in Italy against ANVIL's advantages. Finally Marshall tartly asked if Eisenhower might not be suffering from "localities" which may have distorted his judgment.[55] In fact, Marshall was so concerned that Eisenhower was being persuaded by the British that he requested Major General Thomas Handy to telephone Smith in London and ask "how much of this business is Montgomery and how much is Eisenhower?"[56]

General Marshall and the Joint Chiefs of Staff agreed with the British that Rome shculd be conquered as soon as possible, but they insisted that planning for ANVIL begin immediately. They realized that if the Allies were not north of Rome by April ANVIL would have to be cancelled, in order to continue the momentum of fighting.

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[54]Matloff, Strategic Planning for Coalition Warfare 1943-1944, p. 417.

[55]Ibid.

[56]Ibid.

But they knew if ANVIL were immediately cancelled it would be impossible to launch it later in the spring even if the Allies were victorious in Italy.[57] Marshall had warned as early as the Washington conference (May 1943) that the Mediterranean might very well absorb resources intended for OVERLORD.[58] In a sense this suspicion was justified. The British had drawn the Allies from North Africa to Italy in an ever deepening commitment to the Mediterranean -- an involvement which Washington was beginning to think endless.

Bitterly resenting the imputation of "localitis," Eisenhower lost no time in firing back to Marshall a reply affirming his devotion to ANVIL. In his February 8 telegram Eisenhower traced the steps he had taken to secure both OVERLORD and ANVIL, pointing out that he had rejected all efforts to disuade him from ANVIL. If he had to choose between Italy and ANVIL then certainly ANVIL was the desired campaign. Nonetheless, he stated that the Allies must quickly achieve their goals in Italy otherwise there would not be any resources left for ANVIL. Finally he told Marshall that OVERLORD was the critical juncture in the European war; and if it failed the Allies would suffer a severe setback. Moreover, Eisenhower hotly denied that he was under anyone's influence.[59]

Marshall interpreted Eisenhower's reply as somewhat evasive in that he did not answer Marshall's principal question: did Eisenhower

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[57] Ibid., p. 416; Harrison, Cross-Channel Attack, p. 169.

[58] Pogue, The Supreme Command, p. 112.

[59] Matloff, Strategic Planning for Coalition Warfare 1943-1944, p. 418.

think that there would be enough available craft for a two division ANVIL once OVERLORD was strengthened? This question -- to Marshall the most important one of all -- was left hanging "in the air."[60]

By now the British and Americans were at such swords points that it was not possible to resolve the conflict by an exchange of telegrams. Accordingly, on February 6 Prime Minister Churchill requested President Roosevelt to send the Joint Chiefs of Staff to London in the hope that a compromise could be worked out. Because the Joint Chiefs of Staff were in consultation with their Pacific commanders debating Pacific strategy it was not possible for them to leave for London. Therefore they designated Eisenhower to represent them and they dispatched Brig. General John Hull and Rear Admiral Charles Cooke to present their case on the technical questions involved. Because Eisenhower may have been influenced by his British naval advisor, Admiral Cunningham, Cooke was sent to counter British views.

The American planners arrived in London on February 12 for a week's heated negotiation with the British in Norfolk House. For the next seven days there was a great deal of discussion about assault shipping, and whether there was enough for both OVERLORD and ANVIL. The Americans were quite certain there was, if proper use was made of the bulk capacity of the assault craft.[61] The British Admiralty disagreed, and raised technical questions denying the validity of the

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[60]Coakley and Leighton, Global Logistics and Strategy 1943-1945, p. 332.

[61]The details of the debate are discussed in Harrison, Cross-Channel Attack, pp. 170-171.

American statistics. As the debate progressed the Americans presented every possible argument in support of ANVIL, but it quickly became apparent that the British were biased against ANVIL and nothing would persuade them otherwise. On February 15, General Hull sent a memo to General Thomas Handy commenting that the British thought "that OVERLORD is not only the main show but . . . the only one which would pay us dividends."[62] The British saw absolutely no connection between the two operations. General Hull thought that as far as London was concerned, "ANVIL might as well be an operation in the Marshalls."[63] It was obvious to the Americans that in London only Eisenhower had any appreciation for ANVIL.

It was also apparent to the Washington planners that their London colleagues arrived at their figures on assault shipping by basing their calculations for OVERLORD on the assumption that ANVIL would be reduced. Thus the Americans thought that the British planning staff in Norfolk House regarded ANVIL from the first as of little benefit to OVERLORD.[64]

At this juncture (February 16) the staffs were deadlocked and no solution in sight. On this day General Montgomery, with his characteristic intransigency, objected to any modifications of London's plan stating that the American proposals were "not acceptable."[65]

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[62] Matloff, Strategic Planning for Coalition Warfare 1943-1944, p. 419.

[63] Ibid.

[64] Coakley and Leighton, Global Logistics and Strategy 1943-1945, p. 334.

[65] Ibid.

Meanwhile Eisenhower searched for a compromise and on February 19 Eisenhower thought he found one. The day before, the 21st Army Group (British), re-evaluating its requirements, had dropped seven LST's and various other craft from its list. This allowed Eisenhower to recommend manipulation of other naval craft between OVERLORD and ANVIL based on separate serviceability rates, which would leave a shortage of only fifteen LST's for OVERLORD. Eisenhower thought seven of these could be provided by U. S. production and the rest by using LCT's as well as employing more effectively LST's.[66] After some discussion Montgomery reluctantly agreed to this arrangement.[67]

As a result Eisenhower reported to the British Chiefs of Staff that it was possible by stretching resources to the limit to have both a strengthened OVERLORD and a two divisional ANVIL.[68] The British Chiefs of Staff accepted Eisenhower's recommendation, though they regarded both OVERLORD and ANVIL as "skimped."[69]

But by the morning of February 19 the campaign in Italy had taken such a turn for the worse that the British were much more concerned over the Italian campaign than they were over ANVIL's technical

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[66]Matloff, Strategic Planning for Coalition Warfare 1943-1944, p. 420; Coakley and Leighton, Global Logistics and Strategy 1943-1945, pp. 335-336; Ehrman, Grand Strategy, p. 241.

[67]Pogue, The Supreme Command, pp. 113-114.

[68]Ibid., p. 114.

[69]Coakley and Leighton, Global Logistics and Strategy 1943-1945, p. 336.

questions. On February 16, as the debate in London reached its height, the New Zealand Corps attacked Monte Cassino; and simultaneously the Germans, attempting to dislodge the Allies at Anzio, launched a counter-attack.[70] While both of these attacks failed, it seemed obvious that the Italian campaign was miring down into a long stalemate. Thus at this critical juncture in the Italian campaign, the British certainly did not want to weaken Wilson and Alexander at the moment when they needed all the forces at their disposal. As the tempo of fighting increased, the British began to think the possibility of gathering forces for ANVIL "so remote as to be negligible."[71] To ultimately place ten divisions in southern France would leave only twenty divisions for Italy at a time when maximum strength was needed.[72]

Thus when the meetings ended on February 19 Eisenhower cabled Marshall that he was very pessimistic about ANVIL's chances.[73] On that same day Eisenhower informed the Joint Chiefs of Staff, as well as the British, that ANVIL's forces might have to be employed in Italy.[74] The British Chiefs of Staff lost no time in taking advantage of Eisenhower's apparent weakening on ANVIL. After the meeting with the Supreme Commander the British Chiefs of Staff, despite having agreed that ANVIL

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[70]Ehrman, Grand Strategy, p. 241.

[71]Minute, Ismay to Prime Minister, 19 Feb. 1944, as quoted in Harrison, Cross-Channel Attack, p. 171.

[72]Harrison, Cross-Channel Attack, pp. 171-172.

[73]Ibid., p. 172.

[74]Ehrman, Grand Strategy, p. 242.

was technically feasible, formally proposed to the U. S. Chiefs of Staff that the South of France operation be cancelled -- thus freeing Wilson from "the shadow of ANVIL."[75] The British thought it would be "wholly unjustifiable to keep any formation out of Italy on the ground that it was going to be required for ANVIL."[76] They pointed out that Italy presented a golden opportunity of "bleeding and burning German divisions."[77]

Events now moved very rapidly and in a special meeting with President Roosevelt the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the President determined that they would not cancel ANVIL. President Roosevelt instructed Eisenhower to inform the British that ANVIL could not be cancelled without prior consultation with the Soviets.[78] However, the Joint Chiefs of Staff hoped to placate the British by suggesting to Eisenhower and the British that all combat ground forces in the Mediterranean be assigned to Wilson excepting United States and French divisions which must be equipped for ANVIL.[79]

But, the British were as hostile as ever toward ANVIL. On February 21 Montgomery wrote Eisenhower urging that they "throw the whole weight of our opinion against ANVIL. Let us have two really good major campaigns -- one in Italy and one in OVERLORD."[80] The next

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[75] Ibid., p. 241; Pogue, The Supreme Command, p. 114.

[76] Pogue, The Supreme Command, p. 114.

[77] Ibid.

[78] Matloff, Strategic Planning for Coalition Warfare 1943-1944, p. 420.

[79] Ehrman, Grand Strategy, p. 242.

[80] Matloff, Strategic Planning for Coalition Warfare 1943-1944, p. 420.

day General Wilson sent a long telegram to the British Chiefs of Staff pointing out that the military situation in Italy did not permit him to withdraw any troops to train for ANVIL, and he had no idea when circumstances would permit him to do so. He therefore recommended that ANVIL be cancelled.[81]

Eisenhower had no intention of cancelling ANVIL and therefore he once again sought a compromise to allow ANVIL to exist as a strategic possibility. After negotiating with the British a compromise was reached on February 24. The Italian campaign would be the first order of business in the Mediterranean with all other operations second to it. Given this priority General Wilson would prepare alternative plans to OVERLORD. However, the first alternative must be a two division ANVIL launched on the same date as OVERLORD. Assault shipping and landing craft would be distributed between OVERLORD and ANVIL along the lines Eisenhower had outlined on February 19. These craft would sail in April. The Italian campaign would be reviewed on March 20, in relation to ANVIL, and if circumstances did not permit a South of France invasion, most of the naval craft would be transferred to OVERLORD.[82]

This compromise was most satisfactory to the British. Lord Ismay told Churchill that this agreement "supported the British position on all essential points."[83] Still the Americans hoped that ANVIL

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[81] Ehrman, Grand Strategy, pp. 230-231.

[82] Matloff, Strategic Planning for Coalition Warfare 1943-1944, p. 421.

[83] Coakley and Leighton, Global Logistics and Strategy 1943-1945, p. 338.

was not entirely ruled out. Final approval for this compromise came on February 26 when the President, the Prime Minister, and the Combined Chiefs of Staff agreed to this arrangement.[84] The U. S. Joint Chiefs of Staff were determined nonetheless to see that the invasion of southern France became a reality if a way could be found to extricate ANVIL from Italy. But now there was nothing they could do but wait for a few weeks until the Italian campaign ran its course. Thus the immediate future would decide ANVIL's fate.

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[84] Ibid.

CHAPTER IV

WHEN ALLIES CLASHED

This reluctant compromise in late February determined Mediterranean policy until the agreed review date of March 20.[1] Nonetheless, despite formal agreement between London and Washington, the debate over ANVIL continued. This was primarily due to the increased momentum of the Italian campaign which saw in the last week of February intense fighting around Monte Cassino and Anzio. Once again, fortune was unkind to the Allies and Alexander's forces suffered heavy counter-attacks when they attempted to expand the Anzio beachhead. The crisis was so acute that General Wilson sent a message to the British Chiefs of Staff on February 29 asking that thirteen L.S.T.'s scheduled to depart that day for OVERLORD be delayed two weeks in order for them to be used for Alexander's troop movements.[2] Hours later Wilson sent another telegram asking for use of the L.S.T.'s until April 1, as well as requesting that fourteen more L.S.T.'s be retained under his command until they could be relieved by American craft.[3] Thus the British

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[1] Ehrman, Grand Strategy, p. 243.

[2] Coakley and Leighton, Global Logistics and Strategy 1943-1945, p. 338; Pogue, The Supreme Command, p. 115.

[3] Coakley and Leighton, Global Logistics and Strategy 1943-1945, p. 338.

by the end of the month were not only asking that ANVIL be cancelled in order to aid OVERLORD, but that OVERLORD itself be denied needed landing craft to aid the Italian campaign!

The British Chiefs of Staff responded to General Wilson's request by recommending to the Joint Chiefs of Staff that all L.S.T.'s in the Mediterranean remain there, and the twenty-six L.S.T.'s designated for ANVIL be sent directly to Great Britain from the United States.[4] This to the British would prevent "wasting three weeks" transporting L.S.T.'s to the Mediterranean from America, thus allowing Wilson the full use of his assault craft at this critical juncture in the Italian campaign.[5]

Wilson's first proposal was approved by the Joint Chiefs of Staff without argument: he could retain on an emergency basis the thirteen L.S.T.'s stationed in the Mediterranean. They objected, however, to directly sending assault craft to the United Kingdom from the United States until a final decision on ANVIL was reached on March 20.[6]

Meanwhile, Eisenhower was becoming increasingly alarmed by the British proposals to substitute landing craft which he regarded as contrary to the decisions reached at Norfolk House. In an effort to mollify the Supreme Commander the British assured him that fifteen British L.S.T.'s would be transferred from Wilson's command to OVERLORD in early April.[7] The British Chiefs of Staff were convinced

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[4]Harrison, Cross-Channel Attack, p. 172.

[5]Coakley and Leighton, Global Logistics and Strategy 1943-1945, p. 339.

[6]Ibid., p. 338; Pogue, The Supreme Command, p. 115.

[7]Coakley and Leighton, Global Logistics and Strategy 1943-1945, p. 339.

that their proposal actually strengthened OVERLORD. Eisenhower was not impressed by these arguments, and he was more than unhappy at the Joint Chiefs of Staff offer of March 4 to allow Wilson to retain the thirteen L.S.T.'s stationed in the Mediterranean.[8] Telegraphing General Marshall on March 9, Eisenhower stated that he was alarmed at the loss of even four or five L.S.T.'s in Britain and the Mediterranean during the first week of March. He told Marshall that SHAEF had determined only the minimum figures for landing craft and that OVERLORD's requirements went "fifteen L.S.T.'s short in the interest of keeping ANVIL alive."[9] In Eisenhower's judgment OVERLORD now had even less than the minimum requirements for success. Eisenhower added that this dispute over landing craft was "having a marked effect on everyone responsible for planning and executing operation OVERLORD."[10] Furthurmore, Eisenhower informed Marshall that the situation in Italy was such that he thought it highly likely that ANVIL would be cancelled and its resources transferred to OVERLORD. Thus he thought it very unwise to allow demands for ANVIL to curtail planning and preparation for OVERLORD.[11]

The next day, March 10, the U. S. Navy provided an acceptable solution to the problem. By rescheduling the sailing dates for their assault craft, it was possible to send twenty of the twenty-six L.S.T.'s to the Mediterranean by March 31; and the remainder would arrive no later than April 10 -- thus permitting Alexander to strengthen Anzio

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[8] Ibid.

[9] Harrison, Cross-Channel Attack, pp. 172-173.

[10] Ibid., p. 173.

[11] Ibid.

until the spring offensive. OVERLORD would not be stinted because the first thirteen L.S.T.'s now in the Mediterranean could leave for Great Britain on March 20 as previously scheduled. The remaining twenty-eight could depart in early April after they were relieved by craft from America. The British and Americans agreed to this compromise, with the British adding one proviso: any furthur losses among OVERLORD L.S.T.'s would have to be compensated by production in the United States.[12]

The retention of L.S.T.'s for Anzio was a wise move, though not a decisive one for the Italian campaign. The British were able to relieve Allied forces at Anzio by unloading on the beaches a large number of supplies. By the end of March the logistical situation had greatly improved and German counter-attacks had been successfully repulsed. But these victories were more apparent than real: by mid-March Anglo-American armies had been beaten back at Monte Cassino and the Italian campaign remained, as it had been since December, essentially stalemated.

This then was the situation in Italy when in mid-March the British and American staffs began to draw up plans on ANVIL in anticipation of the March 20 review. Certainly by now the Joint Chiefs of Staff were under no illusions that the immediate future would see a major breakthrough in the Italian campaign. It was obvious that Rome could not be threatened before the end of the month.[13] Yet despite the ever deepening commitment in Italy, General Marshall did not think

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[12]Coakley and Leighton, Global Logistics and Strategy 1943-1945, p. 340.

[13]Harrison, Cross-Channel Attack, p. 173.

that Italy could replace ANVIL as a diversionary operation. Marshall expressed his views to General Eisenhower on March 16, pointing out that Alexander had remarked that only six or eight German divisions in Italy could substantially delay his progress. If this were the case, Marshall argued, then Germany could easily transfer ten to fifteen divisions from the Italian front to meet the OVERLORD attack, in addition to those stationed in southern France.[14]

The British did not share Marshall's pessimism on the future of the Italian campaign. When the British Chiefs of Staff met on March 14 they asked General Wilson to submit a detailed critique on the Italian campaign. Because Wilson was deeply involved with the struggle over Monte Cassino he did not respond until March 22.

In his appreciation Wilson stated that he was optimistic about the Allies capturing in the near future Monte Cassino, which would permit a fresh operation towards Rome. However, the preparations for this offensive would not be complete until the middle of April. Wilson thought the fighting would initially be difficult, and he did not anticipate linking up with the Anzio beachhead before May 15, if then. But if all went well Rome should fall to the Allies by June 15.[15]

With the possession of Rome Wilson saw four strategic possibilities open to the Allies. First of all they could execute ANVIL as planned. Secondly, they could launch a major offensive in Italy coupled with amphibious assaults up the Italian peninsula. Thirdly, they could

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[14] Ibid.

[15] Ehrman, Grand Strategy, p. 245.

land either in the Gulf of Genoa or the Po Valley. Fourthly, if the opportunity presented itself they could land in Istria.

Of these four possibilities Wilson rejected ANVIL out of hand. The Supreme Commander did not think it could be launched until after the bridgehead at Anzio was secured, which would place the date in late July -- weeks after OVERLORD. Once ANVIL was launched the Germans would be free of any furthur amphibious threat in the Mediterranean, because the Germans would know an operation of this size would utilize all available Allied assault forces.[16] The Italian campaign, on the contrary, presented a much more attractive opportunity: maximum pressure could be exerted against the enemy, and the smaller landings on the peninsula did not preclude a threat elsewhere. Thus Wilson much preferred an intensification of the Italian campaign, coupled with threats against the enemy's coastal defenses, to ANVIL as it was then planned. He therefore recommended that ANVIL be cancelled though he would invade southern France under Rankin[17] conditions.[18]

Wilson's report carried great weight not only with the British Chiefs of Staff, but with their American counterparts. Its importance was increased by Eisenhower's report on ANVIL submitted the same day, a copy of which he cabled to General Marshall in Washington. Eisenhower now stated that the situation in Italy prevented ANVIL being

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[16] Ibid., p. 246.

[17] "Rankin" was the code name for Allied action if Germany should collapse internally.

[18] Ehrman, Grand Strategy, p. 246.

launched; because of this development he no longer felt obliged to weigh his requests for more assault shipping in light of ANVIL's demands. He also observed that the margin of assault craft he had was very narrow, even after the recent additions provided by the British and American Chiefs of Staff.[19] Thus on March 21 Eisenhower formally recommended the cancellation of a simultaneous ANVIL and the reallocation of Mediterranean craft to England. Moreover, Eisenhower said nothing about launching a later ANVIL, stating only that the Allies should increase offensive operations in the Mediterranean "initially in Italy and extending from there into France as rapidly as we can;" specifically he recommended Wilson engage the maximum number of enemy divisions by increasing the tempo of action in Italy.[20] The next day the British Chiefs of Staff, having carefully weighed both reports, made the same recommendation.[21]

Thus by the evening of March 22 ANVIL appeared doomed. Not only the British, but Eisenhower himself, had recommended the cancellation of the invasion of southern France, and that night the Joint Chiefs of Staff faced a hard choice. But the next day they were spared that decision when the U. S. Navy offered to provide the requested naval craft from new production in America scheduled for the

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[19] Ibid.

[20] Matloff, Strategic Planning for Coalition Warfare 1943-1944, pp. 422-423; Harrison, Cross-Channel Attack, p. 173.

[21] Ehrman, Grand Strategy, p. 247.

Pacific. These ships could replace those sent from the Mediterranean for OVERLORD, and the navy gave assurances that they would arrive in the Mediterranean in late June.[22]

This welcome offer by the American navy greatly strengthened the hand of the Joint Chiefs of Staff when they replied to the British on March 24. They readily agreed to Eisenhower's request for the transfer of assault shipping from the Mediterranean to OVERLORD.[23] But they would not cancel ANVIL, only postpone it. Instead they told the British they would provide for ANVIL the L.S.T.'s and L.C.T.'s which the operation required, but only on the condition "that preparation for the delayed ANVIL will be vigorously pressed and that it is the firm intention to mount this operation in support of OVERLORD with the target date indicated.[24] They suggested July 10 as the target date for a two division invasion of southern France.[25] The Americans emphasized the great sacrifice they were making in withdrawing craft from the Pacific, and they would not make it unless a delayed ANVIL were guaranteed.[26]

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[22]Coakley and Leighton, Global Logistics and Strategy 1943-1945, p. 341.

[23]Ibid., p. 343.

[24]Pogue, The Supreme Command, p. 116.

[25]Ibid.

[26]It was in point of fact no sacrifice at all, the ships coming from surplus U. S. production. See: Coakley and Leighton, Global Logistics and Strategy 1943-1945, pp. 342-343.

The British angrily reacted to what they regarded as a crude ultimatum. Sir Alan Brooke snapped that the Americans were "holding the pistol of withdrawing craft at our heads."[27] Nonetheless, on March 28 in a curt but carefully worded reply the British Chiefs of Staff agreed to "prepare" for a June 10 ANVIL, but meanwhile there should be no interruption in the prosecution of the Italian campaign. Thus they avoided a definite commitment for a June 10 invasion date. The British were forced to reply to the American Chiefs of Staff at a particularly inopportune moment, because they had just received from Wilson a telegram stating that the offensive in Italy would probably not begin until May 14, rather than the middle of April as he had previously planned.[28] This, of course, weakened the British case, and the Joint Chiefs of Staff were quick to insist the British agree to the June 10 date before any more time elapsed.[29] When the British received this telegram they were infuriated at the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

By now a definite undercurrent of resentment had entered the debate. While they had no evidence to prove it, the British were beginning to suspect that the Americans had not stinted the Pacific on assault shipping as they had OVERLORD and ANVIL.[30] On March 27, Brooke told Eisenhower that if the "defeat Germany first" strategy had been adhered to by the Americans, sufficient landing craft would already

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[27]Coakley and Leighton, Global Logistics and Strategy 1943-1945, p. 343.

[28]Ehrman, Grand Strategy, p. 253.

[29]Ibid.

[30]Coakley and Leighton, Global Logistics and Strategy 1943-1945, pp. 343-344.

be in the Mediterranean. Brooke tartly remarked that American failure to adhere to fundamental Allied strategy had delayed the defeat of Germany by six months[31] -- thus the United States was responsible for the shipping shortage, and should therefore not be so sanctimonious with her offer of Pacific ships. But as Sir John Dill candidly observed, what the British really wanted was "to accept their legacy while disregarding the terms of the will."[32]

Therefore, by the last week in March the argument over ANVIL had been reduced to one of timing, with the implications that it would have for the Italian campaign. By and large the British and Americans were in agreement on basic Allied strategy to terminate the European war. Both agreed that OVERLORD claimed first priority (though the Americans were never convinced that the British were as committed to a cross channel attack as they were) and both thought Mediterranean strategy must serve OVERLORD's interests. The question that divided them was what best aided OVERLORD -- Italy or ANVIL. Essentially the argument hinged on what the Germans would do: would they make a major stand south of Rome, as the British expected them to do, or would they, as the Americans thought most likely, retire to the Alps, thus freeing most of their Italian forces for engagement against OVERLORD.[33] Both London and Washington marshaled strong arguments to support their positions.

For their part the British were now convinced that ANVIL was a mistake. Their latest intelligence reports revealed at least nine

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[32] Ibid.

[33] Ibid.

German divisions were stationed in central and southern France to counter the Allies ten divisions.[34] The Allies would have to fight over five hundred miles in very difficult terrain. No plans had yet been drawn up for the initial build up of forces, and no geographical target had been designated for an attack.[35] The British thus thought it highly unlikely that ANVIL would divert forces from OVERLORD. As Wilson had observed previously, it would be the last card the Allies could play in the Mediterranean; once it was launched the Allies would not have sufficient craft for any additional amphibious attacks. Nor would they have the troops, because to agree to the Joint Chiefs of Staff June 10 proviso would mean an immediate weakening of Anglo-American forces in Italy as they would have to withdraw in preparation for ANVIL. In a word, the British thought ANVIL would seriously limit their options in the Mediterranean.

The Americans, on the other hand, expected ANVIL to achieve its goal. Even though it was five hundred miles from the OVERLORD theater, it was far closer to Normandy than any other operation which had been proposed. If the Italian campaign was drawing fresh German divisions, the Americans could see no reason why southern France would not do the same. Moreover, the Joint Chiefs of Staff thought the South of France was the only area where all the remaining disposable Allied troops could be brought directly into action against the enemy.[36]

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[34] Ehrman, Grand Strategy, p. 249.

[35] Ibid.

[36] Coakley and Leighton, Global Logistics and Strategy 1943-1945, p. 344.

If ANVIL's initial assault was successful (and the British had not questioned this), the Americans thought an additional eight divisions could be sent in without difficulty.[37]

Furthurmore, the Joint Chiefs of Staff objected to an indefinite campaign in Italy.[38] They rejected the British argument that the fierce battle soon to be waged south of Rome would fulfill the purpose for which ANVIL was intended. The British had argued that to curtail the offensive at this juncture would reduce the momentum of the Italian campaign; and therefore military logic dictated that it should remain at an intense level. The Americans rejected this line of thought, pointing out to the British that there would be a pause of at least a month before the offensive toward Rome would begin. This would occur at the critical time before OVERLORD was launched, and it might very well permit the enemy to reallocate his forces without the necessity of having to request additional reinforcements. Thus, the American high command thought the British were gambling on the Germans adhering to their same strategy, regardless of what the circumstances of the hour might dictate. What the Americans feared most of all is that the Allies might reach northern Italy only to discover that most of of the German divisions had withdrawn to the Alps, leaving undisturbed the nine German divisions stationed in central and southern France, held in check only by an Allied feint along the Mediterranean coast.[39]

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[37] Ehrman, Grand Strategy, p. 249.

[38] Ibid.

[39] Ibid., p. 251.

This would permit the Germans to seize the initiative in western Europe making OVERLORD's task infinitely more difficult. By now the Joint Chiefs of Staff resented Wilson's postponement of his spring offensive, thinking that he was waiting for "ideal arrangements" which in all probability could never be achieved.[40]

In addition to this, the Joint Chiefs of Staff were aware that the cancellation of ANVIL would cause political difficulties with the French, who surely would not approve of their troops engaged in action outside of France. On March 23 General Roberts had sent General Handy a memo to this effect, having also pointed out to him the inadvisability of having American forces "pointed towards Southeastern Europe," thus raising the old American bugaboo about the danger of involvement in the Balkans.[41] As always, the American staff were fearful of any attempt to sidetrack the main Allied effort of striking at the heart of Germany.

By March 31 the tension between London and Washington had grown so acute the British Chiefs of Staff angrily protested "the implication that in the British view Mediterranean strategy is any less subservient to OVERLORD than the American is particularly painful to us on the eve of this the greatest of our joint ventures. We fully realize and equally deplore that time is being lost, but we think a right decision is even more important than a quick one."[42] But a quick decision was

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[40]Coakley and Leighton, Global Logistics and Strategy 1943-1945, p. 345.

[41]Matloff, Strategic Planning for Coalition Warfare 1943-1944, p. 425.

[42]Ehrman, Grand Strategy, p. 253.

unavoidable as General Marshall was pressing for a definite commitment and would not brook any furthur delays. Therefore, the British on April 3 sent the Joint Chiefs of Staff a cleverly worded telegram in which they agreed to a July 10 ANVIL provided it did not "prejudice" the Italian campaign.[43] This message was accompanied by a telegram from Churchill to Sir John Dill stating that Eisenhower himself had approved the position taken by the British Chiefs of Staff. The Joint Chiefs of Staff easily saw through this transparent ruse and the next day they informed the British that ANVIL must be launched regardless of whether it prejudiced the Italian campaign or not.[44] This, of course, was "quite acceptable" to the British and on April 7 they so informed Washington.[45]

By now feathers were ruffled on both sides of the Atlantic, and a large number of telegrams during the first week of April passed between London and Washington in an attempt to work out an acceptable compromise; but by now the principals were poles apart. Sir John Dill cabled Churchill that "only over his [Marshall's] dead body will you get a change of outlook."[46] And London was equally intransigent. The British were particularly resentful of American efforts to force strategy in an area in which they not only had operational command, but larger forces as well. On April 8 General Wilson informed both London and Washington that he no longer could delay the disposition

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[43] Ehrman, Grand Strategy, p. 254.

[44] Ibid.

[45] Ibid.

[46] Ibid., p. 255.

of his forces for the spring offensive, and this would prevent ANVIL being launched before the last week of July "at the earliest."[47] The Joint Chiefs of Staff replied angrily that they would agree to Wilson's renewed offensive, but since the British would not consent to a July 10 ANVIL, they refused to provide the promised L.S.T.'s for the Mediterranean.[48]

While the British did not regard American assault shipping as essential for their Mediterranean operations,[49] Churchill and his staff were nonetheless reluctant to lose this shipping.[50] Thus on April 10 Churchill declared that he would not make a final decision until he had discussed the matter with General Alexander and the President. Wilson's postponement of his spring offensive had "staggered" the Prime Minister, who knew this had greatly strengthened the American argument for ANVIL.[51] The next day General Alexander arrived in London, and after a lengthy conversation he convinced Churchill that it was impossible to link his main forces with those at Anzio before early June. Therefore it would not be possible for him to prepare in time for a July 10 ANVIL. Churchill was persuaded that Alexander's position was justified, but he did not intend to give up American craft if it were possible to prevent it.

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[47] Coakley and Leighton, Global Logistics and Strategy 1943-1945, p. 345.

[48] Ehrman, Grand Strategy, p. 255.

[49] Coakley and Leighton, Global Logistics and Strategy 1943-1945, p. 345.

[50] Ehrman, Grand Strategy, p. 255.

[51] Ibid.

On April 12, after consultation with his Chiefs of Staff, Churchill wired Marshall in Washington stating the British case. To begin with, the Prime Minister candidly admitted that he did not know what the outcome of Wilson's offensive would be, but he nevertheless thought that nothing should be grudged Alexander in his preparation for the great battle south of Rome. As far as ANVIL was concerned, he felt that a feint on the Riviera would achieve the same result as an actual invasion. What worried him more than anything else was if Wilson should "fall between two stools"; that is, he might be denied the opportunity to exploit his victory south of Rome, and at the same time, not have sufficient strength to make a success of ANVIL.[52] However, it was imperative that the disputed L.S.T.'s be immediately assigned to the Mediterranean, otherwise the option between ANVIL and Italy would not exist.

Churchill's plea elicited only a negative response from Marshall. On April 14 he told the Prime Minister that preparations for ANVIL must begin at once, even at the possible expense of future operations in Italy.[53] Should circumstances dictate that ANVIL could not be launched, the craft would then be assembled for a less difficult operation. However, Marshall emphasized that the U. S. Joint Chiefs of Staff could not sacrifice Pacific craft for anything less than an operation in which they had "complete faith."[54] And the only operation they had faith in was ANVIL.

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[52] Ibid., pp. 573-575.

[53] Ehrman, Grand Strategy, p. 258.

[54] Ibid.

That afternoon Churchill met with his staff and they decided to embark on a twofold strategy to persuade the Americans to abandon a definite date for ANVIL: Churchill would approach Marshall once again, and the British Chiefs of Staff would negotiate with their American colleagues. Though he had been warned by Sir John Dill of the great pressures on the American staffs for stronger action in the Pacific,[55] Churchill nevertheless bluntly told Marshall that it was "painful" for the British to forego this additional shipping.[56] But he particularly objected to breaking off the Italian campaign just at the moment when it was on the verge of great success.[57] Then he took Marshall to task for the Americans having reproached the British over the past several weeks for not supporting ANVIL, as they agreed to do at Teheran. Churchill pointed out to him that the situation in Italy had vastly changed since November. Then they had planned to capture Rome in January. As it was, the battle south of Rome was engaging the eight German divisions that ANVIL was supposed to contain.[58] Finally Churchill quipped that history would never understand how two great nations like Britain and the United States would be hamstrung by a hundred L.S.T.'s[59]

Thus the Joint Chiefs of Staff had to decide if they would go through with their offer of L.S.T.'s for the Mediterranean in the

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[55]Matloff, Strategic Planning for Coalition Warfare 1943-1944, p. 424.

[56]Ibid., p. 425.

[57]Ibid.

[58]Ibid., p. 426.

[59]Ibid.

hope of a later ANVIL, or withdraw them because the British would not consent to the July 10 date. Once again the Americans backed down, and on April 18 they accepted a British compromise whereby Wilson was issued an ambiguously worded directive instructing him to go forward in the Mediterranean "either in support of operations in Italy, or in order to take advantage of opportunities arising in the south of France."[60] No mention was made of additional landing craft from America.

This compromise was, of course, only a temporary solution; one that in no way settled Mediterranean strategy. The principal effect of this directive was to guarantee OVERLORD having a sufficient number of L.S.T.'s for the initial Normandy assault -- ships which had been promised Eisenhower in early February. The British, for their part, were successful in postponing ANVIL, and thus had left the way open for further advances in Italy. The Americans could only hope that ANVIL might be launched early enough in the summer of 1944 to be of some aid for OVERLORD.[61] Yet this agreement was at best a patch-work affair which presaged further controversy between London and Washington.

But ANVIL was far from dead. The Joint Chiefs' of Staff spirits rose when Wilson replied to this latest directive saying that he was planning a "positive threat" to southern France by air units supported by unengaged divisions from North Africa.[62] This would take place during the critical OVERLORD landings. In the meantime Wilson intended to

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[60] Pogue, The Supreme Command, p. 117.

[61] Ibid.

[62] Coakley and Leighton, Global Logistics and Strategy 1943-1945, p. 346.

keep his forces ready to take advantage of any opportunities in Italy, southern France, or the Adriatic.[63] Thus, by the end of April the atmosphere had changed somewhat, and ANVIL was now discussed within the context of possible Mediterranean operations. On April 27 the British informed the Americans that they were favorably disposed to "some form" of ANVIL, if launched three weeks after OVERLORD.[64] The Joint Chiefs of Staff were not slow to seize hold of the British offer, and the next day Admiral King told the Combined Chiefs of Staff that when General Wilson met with British Chiefs of Staffs, if they would consider ANVIL, or a similar operation, he would provide a month's supply of L.S.T.'s.[65] This offer made a great impact on the British and it provided them with a strong incentive to carefully weigh the Admiral's proposal.

Therefore when General Wilson flew to London on May 1 to discuss the entire scope of Mediterranean strategy, there was a strong possibility of achieving an understanding with the Americans because of the new windfall of L.S.T.'s. Hence, from May 3 to 6 the Combined Chiefs of Staff discussed all contingencies for the Mediterranean in the hope of finding a supportive operation for OVERLORD which enjoyed the confidence of both London and Washington.[66] Toward the end of the conference the choices narrowed down to four areas, the final choice depending on the outcome of Wilson's renewed offensive in Italy and OVERLORD. Two areas were in southern France -- Sète in the Gulf of

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[63] Ibid.

[64] Ehrman, Grand Strategy, p. 262.

[65] Coakley and Leighton, Global Logistics and Strategy 1943-1945, p. 347.

[66] Ehrman, Grand Strategy, p. 263.

Genoa, or an assault north of Rome, possibly near Civitavecchia.[67] The later option would, of course, depend on the progress of the Italian campaign. Discreetly omitted was any reference to an operation in the Adriatic. The British assured the Americans that preparations could begin at once for any alternative operation chosen, without waiting for further developments in the Italian campaign. They added diplomatically, despite the recent offer of American naval craft, that it would be an "immeasurable advantage" to have the L.S.T.'s which Marshall had proposed to allocate for ANVIL.[68]

To this compromise the Americans acceded, in the hope that they could, as Admiral King remarked, "keep ANVIL alive."[69] But a month had passed without any definite preparations which ruled out all possibility for a July ANVIL. Thus, ANVIL, on the eve of OVERLORD, was only one of four possible Mediterranean operations by which the Allies hoped to support the invasion of Normandy. In the course of this long and heated debate ANVIL was dropped as one of the two principal operations for 1944, which the British and Americans had decided upon months ago in Teheran. It seems obvious that unless ships were diverted in large numbers from the Pacific, an unlikely possibility in view of the pressure on the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Eisenhower could not have obtained his craft without taking them from the Mediterranean, which made impossible a simultaneous ANVIL. Hence, given the number of

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[67] Ibid.; Coakley and Leighton, Global Logistics and Strategy 1943-1945, p. 347.

[68] Coakley and Leighton, Global Logistics and Strategy 1943-1945, p. 348.

[69] Ibid.

amphibious lift available in England and the Mediterranean, the Teheran scheme for simultaneous assaults was doomed from the beginning. The whole scheme, of course, was greatly complicated by the British failing to win decisively in Italy, either at Anzio or along the principal German front during the winter of 1943-44.[70] The Italian campaign constantly competed with ANVIL for men and ships which were necessary for an invasion of the South of France. It was this competition over too few resources which caused ANVIL to be postponed -- thus bringing to grief Teheran's grand strategy.

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[70] Ibid., pp. 348-350.

CHAPTER V

THE FINAL ROUND

On May 17, General Wilson submitted a preliminary report on the four options, which he had recently discussed with the Combined Chiefs of Staff in London. Wilson now chose ANVIL thinking that a two division assault could be launched against the South of France between the middle of August and the middle of September. From the progress of operations in Italy it seemed this could be realized,[1] though he did warn that if ANVIL were launched not enough resources would remain to launch a major offensive in Italy.[2] It is interesting to note that at this meeting Churchill raised the possibility of an assault on Bordeaux,[3] and though Wilson was not receptive to this idea, the Prime Minister did not lose interest in the scheme.

In the middle of May a major ground offensive was launched by Wilson and by the end of the month the deadlock in Italy was finally broken. The Anzio bridgehead and the Fifth Army battle line were joined, which permitted the Allies to capture Rome by June 4, two days before the Normandy invasion. Three days later Wilson declared that

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[1]Ehrman, Grand Strategy, p. 267.

[2]Pogue, The Supreme Command, p. 219.

[3]Ehrman, Grand Strategy, p. 267.

he was ready to launch "an amphibious operation" by August 15 using all of the resources at his disposal.[4] This statement fell on receptive ears at SHAEF where planners were considering the best possible means to assist OVERLORD. Then, as before, SHAEF preferred some form of ANVIL in order to capture a major Mediterranean port to absorb American divisions then stationed in the United States. All of this was discussed from June 11 to 15 in London when the Joint Chiefs of Staff crossed the Atlantic to join their British colleagues. While they were willing to consider other plans, they were united in thinking ANVIL the best course of action.[5] The British, on the other hand, were divided into two schools of thought, both of them opposed to an invasion of southern France. Field Marshal Brooke explored the possibility of intensifying the Italian campaign in light of General Alexander's statement of June 7 that he could reach the Pisa-Rimini line by July 15, and then move either into southern France or the Danube Basin -- a suggestion which Wilson did not support. Air Chief Marshal Portal speculated about a move northeast into Istria, if Soviet advances made that possible. As a means of preventing another deadlock, and to initiate action, it was agreed on June 14 that Alexander's armies were to halt on the Pisa-Rimini line, and that a three division assault should be launched from the Mediterranean on approximately July 25 (though for

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[4]Pogue, The Supreme Command, p. 219.

[5]Ibid.

where was not specified).[6] This decision was taken despite Wilson's previous statements that he would not be ready for such a task until mid-August.

Meanwhile, Eisenhower continued to prefer some form of ANVIL to any other operations; though he did urge a landing at Sete to one at Marseille because it would be much easier to capture Brodeaux. He ruled out altogether an Adriatic operation, thinking it too far removed from the OVERLORD theater to do much good. And, ANVIL would have the added attraction of reaping "the benefit of French resistance," which Eisenhower thought would be considerable in the South of France.[7]

Such was the state of affairs in the Mediterranean a little over a week after OVERLORD had been launched. Once again nothing definite had been settled other than an absurd agreement to launch an amphibious operation by mid-July against either southern France, the Bay of Biscay coast, or somewhere in the head of the Adriatic, the choice depending on OVERLORD's progress, and the success of the newly launched Russian summer offensive.

The British, however, did not seem to be fully aware of the implications of the July 14 directive for the Italian campaign. During the next ten days they realized they had blundered badly, and they began to reconsider their position. General Alexander was particularly unhappy when he received his orders to withdraw four divisions from his armies in preparation for an amphibious assault, and he drew up

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[6] Ibid.; Coakley and Leighton, Global Logistics and Strategy 1943-1945, pp. 374-375; Ehrman, Grand Strategy, p. 345.

[7] Pogue, The Supreme Command, p. 220.

at once a long and cogent argument against this directive. He pointed out to his superiors that the Italian campaign was on the verge of spectacular success. Regardless of what the enemy did to try and stop him, he was confident that he could conquer all of Italy by August, leaving him in a position to invade the Ljubljana Gap immediately afterwards. Thus, he urged a move to the east, thinking this would assist the Yugoslav partisans, as well as provide an opportunity to link-up with Soviet forces in southeastern Europe. He rejected a move to the west into southern France, thinking that both difficult and unprofitable. Above all, however, he protested against any weakening of his forces at this juncture in the Italian campaign; to do so would seriously unbalance not only the composition of his armies, but the entire momentum of his offensive, thus allowing the Germans to reinforce their defenses which would force Alexander to postpone an attack on the Gothic Line. Hence, there was every reason to proceed with the greatest strength and at maximum speed. No alternative course could offer comparable advantages with Italy.[8]

Even though General Wilson had previously rejected this view, by June 17 he was beginning to be persuaded that Alexander was right. Though inclined toward Alexander, Wilson was not convinced the French would consent to the use of their divisions in southeastern Europe instead of France. That day Wilson discussed Alexander's appreciation with his own staff and with General Marshall. Marshall restated the familiar arguments for ANVIL, but placed great emphasis upon the

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[8]Ehrman, Grand Strategy, pp. 346-348.

necessity of seizing a major port in the Mediterranean for the forty or fifty divisions then stationed in America; British ports and newly captured French ports were far too crowded to readily undertake a disembarkation of this scope.[9] Marshall was unimpressed with Alexander's optimism over future opportunities in Italy, pointing out that morning, and again at another meeting on the 19th, the importance of securing both Toulon and Marseilles.[10] Initially Wilson agreed with Marshall that if the prime consideration was the early capture of a major port, then ANVIL should be launched as planned.[11] Meanwhile, Wilson's staff reported to him that it would be impossible to launch consecutive assaults against both Istria and the South of France. He had to choose either ANVIL or Alexander's proposed campaign.

By June 19, even though his own staff was not entirely in accord, Wilson chose to back Alexander's proposed campaign.[12] While admitting the importance of another major port in the Mediterranean, he nevertheless decided that OVERLORD's main interest would be better served by seizing the initiative in southeastern Europe, rather than sending in American reinforcements through Marseilles and Toulon. Strangely enough, it was Marshall's insistence for another major port which finally persuaded Wilson to endorse Alexander's plan. After extensive consultation with his subordinate commanders and staff,

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[9]Pogue, The Supreme Command, p. 220.

[10]Ehrman, Grand Strategy, p. 348.

[11]Pogue, The Supreme Command, p. 220.

[12]Coakley and Leighton, Global Logistics and Strategy 1943-1945, p. 376.

Wilson still saw no way to launch ANVIL before August 15. Going on the assumption that it would take several months to feed the new American divisions into southern France -- probably extending into 1945 -- he decided that the Joint Chiefs of Staff must have abandoned hope of defeating Germany in 1944.[13] Thus he told the British Chiefs of Staff on June 19 that they were faced with a decision as to "whether our strategy in the coming months was to be aimed at the defeat of Germany in 1944, or in the first half of 1945."[14] And Britain desperately needed victory in 1944. Thus, Wilson formally proposed that the Allies accept Alexander's appreciation and invade southern Hungary through the Ljubljana Gap, together with amphibious and air attacks against the Germans to draw as many enemy divisions into northern Italy as possible. Because the withdrawal of troops for a mid-August invasion of southern France must begin no later than June 28, he requested an immediate decision.[15] During the next four days Field-Marshal Jan Smuts and General Alexander sent telegrams to the British Chiefs of Staff arguing essentially along these lines.

Smuts, in fact, was in London for a Dominion Prime Ministers' Conference when Wilson's July 19 cable arrived. The South African Prime Minister was so impressed with Wilson's arguments that on July 21 Churchill assembled his military staff to hear his views. All the old objections to ANVIL were once again rehashed, the British becoming

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[13] Ibid., p. 377.

[14] Ehrman, Grand Strategy, p. 349.

[15] Ibid.

increasingly reluctant to abandon Alexander's successful campaign for the uncertainties of a South of France invasion. By the time the meeting closed, the Chiefs of Staff were determined to investigate the Italian campaign afresh.[16] Flying to Italy, Smuts dispatched on July 23 a telegram to the Prime Minister, in which, after personal consultations with Wilson and Alexander, he adamantly opposed ANVIL.[17]

On that same day Eisenhower strongly intervened in favor of ANVIL. Eisenhower found ANVIL the best route to northern France, "where the battles for the Ruhr will be fought."[18] ANVIL had far more advantages than any other Mediterranean operation. Not only would it serve to divert German forces away from the OVERLORD area, but it also would gain the Allies a port for American reinforcements. Eisenhower stated that no other theater was as important as France, and moreover, he seriously doubted if Great Britain and the United States had the resources to maintain two major theaters against Germany, each with a "decisive mission."[19] He therefore recommended that ANVIL be launched no later than August 30, and if at all possible, fifteen days earlier. Knowing that the British would advocate an advance in the Adriatic area, the Supreme Commander urged that if ANVIL could not be launched by August 30, the divisions assigned to ANVIL be transferred to OVERLORD.[20] Moreover, Eisenhower did not think that Alexander's proposed

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[16] Ibid.

[17] Winston S. Churchill, Triumph and Tragedy (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1953), pp. 61-62.

[18] Pogue, The Supreme Command, pp. 220-221.

[19] Ibid., p. 221.

[20] Ibid.

campaign would have much effect before 1945, which was a clever reversal of Wilson's position for Italy against the South of France.[21]

The U. S. Chiefs of Staff accepted without question Eisenhower's recommendations, suggesting only that the invasion of southern France be launched on August 1. They told London on June 24 that ANVIL was the only operation which would permit the quick employment of all Allied forces in France.[22] As far as the Italian campaign was concerned, the Joint Chiefs of Staff felt that even after troops for ANVIL had been withdrawn, Alexander would still have sufficient forces left to carry out his offensive.[23]

The British found the American position unacceptable, and after telegraphing Roosevelt that the Joint Chiefs of Staff had raised "very grave questions," Churchill immediately consulted his own staff with the purpose of finding a way to prevent the fruits of Alexander's victory being thrown away.[24] But the immediate problem for the British was to see the battle in Italy through to its conclusion, rather than to dwell on future operations. Thus, when the British Chiefs of Staff telegraphed Washington on June 26, they carefully avoided discussing the consequences of the campaign. Instead, they stressed the importance of a continuous engagement against the Germans, pointing out that to withdraw divisions from Italy for an August 15 ANVIL would be impossible

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[21]Coakley and Leighton, Global Logistics and Strategy 1943-1945, p. 377.

[22]Ibid., p. 378; Pogue, The Supreme Command, p. 221.

[23]Coakley and Leighton, Global Logistics and Strategy 1943-1945, p. 378.

[24]Ehrman, Grand Strategy, p. 350.

without ruining their current operations. They did not agree with the position taken earlier by the Joint Chiefs of Staff that the Allies had sufficient air forces for a concurrent attack on southern France and northern Italy. Consequently, they strongly recommended that the great battle in Italy not be broken off, and that Alexander be allowed to continue his offensive.[25]

This message had absolutely no effect on the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Responding to the British the next day, the Americans restated their previous position, and added that British strategy was unsound. The Americans wanted to send to France the maximum number of United States divisions as quickly as possible; an advance in Italy would not facilitate this any faster. Because time was passing rapidly, they urged that the necessary instructions be given immediately.[26]

The British would not budge. After receiving this note from the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Churchill on June 28 sent President Roosevelt two messages in an attempt to dissuade his colleague from what he regarded as a disastrous course. Pointing out that the Chiefs of Staff were deadlocked, he hoped the President would hear both sides before making his decision. First of all, he told Roosevelt that the British were willing to co-operate with Eisenhower, but not at the cost of ruining "our great affairs in the Mediterranean."[27] Churchill held that the landing place for a supportive Mediterranean operation should

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[25] Ibid., p. 351.

[26] Ibid., p. 352.

[27] Pogue, The Supreme Command, p. 221.

be chosen in relation to both OVERLORD and the strain inflicted on Germany. He reminded Roosevelt that at Teheran the President had been keenly interested in an invasion of Istria. He thought, moreover, political considerations were important and he envisioned revolts in southeastern Europe if the Allies invaded that area. The Prime Minister also elaborated on the great distance from Marseilles to Paris or Cherbourg, and he failed to see how ANVIL could be any direct assistance for OVERLORD. While he admitted an operation in the Adriatic was equally unrelated, he spoke of the importance of capturing Trieste by September, which Wilson thought was feasible. Finally, he stated that to break off the Italian campaign at this critical juncture was a decision of such importance that it could only be made by the President and himself in consultation with their staffs.[28]

Meanwhile, the British Chiefs of Staff had replied simultaneously to the Joint Chiefs' of Staff telegram on June 27. They told their colleagues that they had received that day information from British intelligence that Hitler fully expected the Allies to exploit their victory in Italy, and therefore Hitler was rushing reinforcements to hold the northern Apennines. Should they be penetrated, it would be a grave blow for the Germans, as it was their "final blocking line" outside of Germany.[29] Thus, Alexander's views were vindicated. Meeting in Washington on June 29 with British representatives,

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[28] Ibid., pp. 221-222; Ehrman, Grand Strategy, pp. 352-353; Churchill, Triumph and Tragedy, Appendix D, Book One, pp. 716-721.

[29] Ehrman, Grand Strategy, p. 353.

the Joint Chiefs of Staff considered this report, but were unimpressed by its importance.

But despite the personal appeal from the Prime Minister, Roosevelt would not yield. Before he received Churchill's second message he had met with the U. S. Chiefs of Staff and they found unacceptable the British proposal for a thrust into northern Italy and thence into southeastern Europe. He did recognize the importance of breaking the present deadlock, but since Eisenhower was for ANVIL that should settle the matter.[30] Replying to Churchill on June 29, the President once again reminded him that he could not abandon ANVIL without Stalin's prior consent -- to do so would be a departure from the Teheran accord. He agreed with Churchill that political considerations in southeastern Europe were important, but they were secondary to military ones; and military operations had to be based on striking at the heart of Germany.[31] Moreover, not only would an attack through Istria be a violation of the Teheran agreement, but from a military point of view, the time factor involved in that operation made it undesirable. He did not think it would be possible that more than six divisions could be employed beyond the Ljubljana Gap within "a decisive period."[32] But principally Roosevelt objected to using American troops in Istria and the Balkans, nor did he think the French would agree to their forces being employed there. And if ANVIL were cancelled, the question

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[30]Pogue, The Supreme Command, p. 222.

[31]Matloff, Strategic Planning for Coalition Warfare 1943-1944, p. 471.

[32]Ibid., p. 472.

of where to use French troops would once again have to be decided. Finally, after begging Churchill to adhere to the Teheran plan, he concluded by telling him that he could not survive politically if OVERLORD suffered even a slight reverse, and if it were known that fairly large forces had been diverted to the Balkans."[33]

That day Eisenhower sent a telegram to his superiors in Washington urging them to stand firm, adding that while he was convinced the British sincerely believed that a move toward Trieste would assist OVERLORD more than ANVIL, he did not think they would allow a complete impasse to develop and would ultimately grant their consent.[34] But feeling in London was tense. On June 29 Alexander sent Sir Alan Brooke a cable requesting an immediate decision, and telling him that American front line units were beginning to be withdrawn from combat. By now one side had to yield. Thus, on June 30 the British Chiefs of Staff sent a minute to Churchill advising him that while they still regarded the President's position as unsound, they would give way to the Americans in the interests of Allied unity, should the Prime Minister deem this necessary.[35]

Churchill, nevertheless, made one more attempt to save the Italian campaign. In a message sent to Roosevelt on July 1, the Prime Minister addressed himself to the political implications of a move into southeastern Europe. He told the President in impassioned language that to split the Italian offensive into two indecisive operations

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[33] Ibid.

[34] Pogue, The Supreme Command, p. 222.

[35] Ehrman, Grand Strategy, p. 355.

would be the Allies' first strategic and political error of the European war. He categorically denied that the British wanted to send armies into the Balkans, remarking only that Istria and Trieste were of supreme political and military importance. Churchill saw little value in consulting Stalin, since from a political view he would probably prefer the Anglo-Americans remaining out of southeastern Europe in order that it could fall to him. At this late date the Prime Minister could not see how ANVIL could play any role in OVERLORD's behalf. While telling the President that he would support any operation undertaken, he strongly urged him to reconsider.[36]

But Roosevelt would not reconsider. Replying to Churchill on July 2 the President informed him that both he and the American Chiefs of Staff wanted an early ANVIL. He explained that at Teheran he considered attacking Istria only if the enemy withdrew in force from the Dodecanese and Greece. Because this had not occurred, the President ruled against any splitting of Allied forces in the Mediterranean. Lastly, he reminded Churchill of what he knew from geometry: "a straight line is the shortest distance between two points."[37]

At this juncture ANVIL could be delayed no further. That day the Combined Chiefs of Staff ordered Wilson to prepare to launch a three division attack on southern France by August 15.[38] ANVIL would

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[36]Coakley and Leighton, Global Logistics and Strategy 1943-1945, p. 380; Ehrman, Grand Strategy, pp. 355-357.

[37]Ehrman, Grand Strategy, p. 357; Churchill, Triumph and Tragedy, p. 66.

[38]Ehrman, Grand Strategy, p. 357.

be renamed DRAGOON in August in case the Germans had broken the Allied code. But even though the British had yielded to the Americans, Churchill thought the British had been badly treated.[39] Nonetheless, in early July preparations for ANVIL proceeded without interruption. Assault shipping was divided between Eisenhower and Wilson, and three American and four French divisions were withdrawn from the Italian campaign.[40]

Though consenting to ANVIL, the British throughout July frantically sought means to preserve the Italian campaign by seeking troops from the Middle East, North Africa, and the United Kingdom; but it was to no avail because reinforcements could not be spared before the end of August. Thus, the British were unable to prevent, try as they might, a slowdown in the Italian campaign.[41] But the British Chiefs of Staff remained opposed to ANVIL, and on July 12 they informed Washington that they had given in on July 2 only to avoid the accusation that they were using delaying tactics to gain their objective. Churchill wrote Harry Hopkins a letter on July 19 telling him that they had surrendered under pressure, and expressing the hope that ANVIL "would not ruin greater projects."[42]

OVERLORD, meanwhile, was encountering far less opposition than had been anticipated. By July 27 the German ranks began to break south

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[39] Ibid., p. 361.

[40] Coakley and Leighton, Global Logistics and Strategy 1943-1945, p. 381.

[41] Ehrman, Grand Strategy, p. 361.

[42] Pogue, The Supreme Command, p. 224.

of St. Lo, and by August 4 the Americans were deep into Brittany.[43] The impressive break-through in Normandy suggested to Churchill a new possibility for DRAGOON. On August 4, when the capture of Breton ports seemed imminent, Churchill urged President Roosevelt to send DRAGOON's divisions through these ports, rather than southern France. This, Churchill thought, would bring them directly into action. The Prime Minister did not see any logistical difficulties in this operation because of the extraordinary flexibility the Allies had in air and sea power.[44] The next day the British Chiefs of Staff sent a similar message to Washington. At the same time Churchill asked Wilson if this were a feasible operation.

After six months of uninterrupted debate, which was finally resolved by the British consenting to an invasion of southern France on an agreed date, they were now recommending eleven days before the troops were to embark, that they be sent some 1,600 miles to Brittany! Washington's answer was a complete rejection of this newly hatched scheme. The Americans replied that OVERLORD was behind schedule, and therefore ports in the South of France were still needed. There was no guarantee that Breton ports would be captured soon, and even if they were, divisions were waiting in Britain and the United States which could be sent through them once they had access to them.[45]

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[43] Ehrman, Grand Strategy, p. 362.

[44] Ibid., p. 363; Coakley and Leighton, Global Logistics and Strategy 1943-1945, p. 381.

[45] Coakley and Leighton, Global Logistics and Strategy 1943-1945, p. 381; Ehrman, Grand Strategy, p. 363.

On August 6 Wilson reported to Churchill that while he was not enthusiastic about the prospect of sending troops to Brittany at the last minute, it nevertheless could be done, provided Eisenhower would provide the reception craft.[46] Armed with this appreciation, and seeing a new possibility to end the European conflict in 1944, Churchill telegraphed Harry Hopkins (Roosevelt was in the Pacific) in the hope that Hopkins could influence Marshall. The Prime Minister elaborated at great length on the advantages to be gained by sending DRAGOON's forces through the Breton ports; moreover, Churchill told Hopkins that Italy had already served the purpose set for ANVIL, and to someone unaware of the history of the Italian campaign, it bore the mark of a "great design."[47]

Hopkins was unmoved by Churchill's plea, and he answered him on August 7 telling him that to change strategy at this late date would delay, not assist, the conquest of France.[48] That day the President wired Churchill from the Pacific rejecting the British proposal for a last minute change of plans.[49]

Having failed in Washington, Churchill lunched with Eisenhower on August 7, and once again he deprecated the strategy behind DRAGOON. Arguing as he had previously that the capture of Breton ports made DRAGOON unnecessary, and, in addition, it was far too removed from

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[46] Ehrman, Grand Strategy, p. 364; Coakley and Leighton, Global Logistics and Strategy 1943-1945, pp. 381-382.

[47] Churchill, Triumph and Tragedy, pp. 67-69.

[48] Ehrman, Grand Strategy, p. 367.

[49] Ibid.

OVERLORD to render it any assistance, Churchill repeated his demand for an attack in Italy and the Balkans.[50] Eisenhower, on the other hand, insisted on capturing the port of Marseilles for American troops, and he placed particular emphasis on the need to employ French troops in southern France.[51] After telling Churchill "no" in every way that he knew how,[52] Eisenhower cabled Washington that he would not agree under any circumstances to DRAGOON being cancelled.[53]

Having lost all hope to change either Roosevelt's or Eisenhower's mind, Churchill gave in, and on August 8 he sent the President a telegram promising to do everything possible to see that DRAGOON was a success.[54] However, the next day he made one last effort to persuade Eisenhower to cancel DRAGOON. Summoning the Supreme Commander to 10 Downing Street, Eisenhower was subjected to what he described as one of the most difficult sessions that he endured throughout the war. Churchill angrily declared that the United States was trying to dominate the British, rather than understand their concern over the Italian campaign. The Prime Minister, distraut and depressed, told Eisenhower that his whole administration hinged on the success of Alexander's campaign.[55] If it failed, he might be forced to go to the King and

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[50] Dwight D. Eisenhower, Crusade in Europe (Garden City, New York: Garden City Books, 1948), p. 282.

[51] Ibid., p. 283.

[52] Harry C. Butcher, My Three Years with Eisenhower (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1946), p. 634.

[53] Pogue, The Supreme Command, p. 225.

[54] Churchill, Triumph and Tragedy, p. 71.

[55] Pogue, The Supreme Command, p. 225.

resign.[56] Nonetheless, Eisenhower stood his ground, and told Churchill that for military reasons he was unable to alter plans for an invasion of the South of France. However, he understood that political reasons were important in the formation of strategy, and if these were the real reasons for the Prime Minister's adamant hostility to DRAGOON, he should take these up with the President, otherwise it would be launched.[57] After leaving Downing Street, Eisenhower again cautioned Washington against cancelling or modifying DRAGOON.

Now the die was cast. The Americans would have their long sought invasion of southern France. The British Chiefs of Staff on August 10 sent instructions to Wilson for him to prepare for DRAGOON as planned. The Combined Chiefs of Staff approved this order the next day -- four days before the Allies landed on the Riviera coast.[58] Churchill, meanwhile, had left for the Mediterranean to watch the assault which he had tried hard to prevent from ever taking place.

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[56] Butcher, My Three Years with Eisenhower, p. 639.

[57] Pogue, The Supreme Command, p. 225.

[58] Ibid., p. 226.

On August 15 the U. S. Seventh Army under Lt. General Alexander M. Patch landed in southern France between Cannes and Hyeres with a combined force of three American divisions, seven French divisions, and a mixed airborne division. When the Germans learned of the invasion the German high command immediately ordered their divisions south of the Loire to retire to defensive positions near the German border. Despite Churchill's prediction that the invasion would be a bloodbath, the Allies, in fact, met so little opposition as they moved quickly inland that they joined OVERLORD's troops in northern France by September 11.[59]

This easy victory simply confirmed the British and Americans in their respective views; the Americans arguing that the lack of effective enemy opposition proved their case; the British that OVERLORD's success created the conditions for a successful DRAGOON, rather than the reverse. After returning to England from watching the assault, Churchill told King George VI that it was OVERLORD which created the diversion, which was exactly opposite of what was intended. Eisenhower, on the other hand, thought that no other operation aided OVERLORD as much as ANVIL.[60]

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[59] Matloff, Strategic Planning for Coalition Warfare 1943-1944, p. 474.

[60] Ehrman, Grand Strategy, p. 392; Eisenhower, Crusade in Europe, p. 294.

Meanwhile, the British tried unsuccessfully to save the Italian campaign by scraping together an additional two divisions for Alexander. However, it was to no avail, for the momentum had been lost, and by September his forces were bogged down in a stalemate which lasted until nearly the end of the European war.[61]

After the war Churchill continued to censure the Americans for their failure to support the Italian campaign at the moment when decisive victory was within easy grasp.[62] In this, one American general agrees with Churchill that a supreme opportunity was lost by the Allies' failure to drive into Southeastern Europe before the arrival of the Russian army. General Mark Clark regards this as one of the "outstanding political mistakes of the war."[63]

In the years following the Second World War a number of British writers -- notably Churchill, the late Australian writer Chester Wilmot, and General J. F. C. Fuller -- have dwelt at excessive length on this same theme: that American political and strategic naivete created the conditions for the Soviet Union to dominate eastern Europe. The Americans were guilty of what Churchill called "clear-cut, logical, large-scale, mass-production" thinking.[64] This kind of reasoning, the argument runs, led Roosevelt and his advisors into the simplistic belief that the war was being fought for military objectives alone; the

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[61]Coakley and Leighton, Global Logistics and Strategy 1943-1945, p. 384.

[62]Churchill, Triumph and Tragedy, pp. 99-100.

[63]Mark W. Clark, Calculated Risk (New York: Harper and Row, 1950), p. 368.

[64]Churchill, Closing the Ring, p. 364; Maurice Matloff, "The Anvil Decision: Crossroads of Strategy" in Command Decision, pp. 296-297.

the political consequences of the struggle would be settled after the conflict ended. The task at hand was to defeat Nazi Germany; everything else was secondary. If Churchill's advice had been followed, Alexander's armies would have liberated Austria and the Danube basin, thus frustrating Stalin's designs on southeastern Europe. And the American blunder par excellence was ANVIL, with its concomitant weakening of the Italian campaign -- the one operation which could physically place American and English troops on Eastern soil.

But the British case for the Italian campaign versus ANVIL does not stand analysis. As Sir Alan Brooke and Sir John Kennedy admitted after the war, even if Alexander had conquered Italy in the fall and winter of 1944-45, there was very little chance the Allies could have beaten the Russians into the Danube valley, if the Soviets had in January held up their Polish offensive to concentrate on southeastern Europe.[65] There was nothing at all attractive about what Churchill euphemistically called the "soft underbelly" of Europe; the logistical problems in Slovenia would have been enormous.[66] Furthermore, if a campaign in the Balkans developed into a major operation, it would necessitate building bases in the Middle East to support it. An undertaking of that size would, in all probability, have delayed OVERLORD, thus permitting Hitler to destroy Britain with V-2 rockets launched from platforms in the low countries.[67]

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[65] Trumbull Higgins, Soft Underbelly (New York: Macmillan Co., 1968), p. 220.

[66] Ibid.

[67] Matloff, "The Anvil Decision: Crossroads of Strategy" in Command Decisions, p. 299.

The other side of the British argument, that the Italian campaign was primarily a holding action tying down forty-five German divisions, thus negating ANVIL, is extremely weak.[68] By June 1944 the Allies in Italy had twice as many troops as the Germans.[69] In reality it was the Germans, not the Allies, who were "holding down" troops on the Italian peninsula. The Americans were more than justified in wanting to break off the offensive once the strategic airfields in south Italy were secured. In point of fact, the only achievement the Italian campaign can claim is that its pressure reduced the number of enemy troops in Normandy facing OVERLORD.[70]

Underlying the great debate over ANVIL was American suspicion over British commitment to OVERLORD. Marshall admitted after the war that "our people were always ready to find Albion perfidious."[71] Nonetheless, American distrust of British motives had foundation in fact. Sir Alan Brooke's diary of October 19, 1943 reveals that he received a note from Churchill "wishing to swing the strategy back to the Mediterranean at the expense of the Channel, "a sentiment with which he

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[68] Field Marshal Earl Alexander of Tunis, The Alexander Memoirs (ed.) John North (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1962), pp. 128-129; Field Marshal The Viscount Alexander of Tunis, Report By the Supreme Allied Commander Mediterranean to the Combined Chiefs of Staff on the Italian Campaign 12 December 1944 to 2 May 1945 (London: H. M. Stationery Office, 1951), p. 5.

[69] B. H. Liddell Hart, "Churchill in War," Encounter (London, April, 1966), pp. 20-21.

[70] Ibid., p. 21

[71] Higgins, Soft Underbelly, p. 219.

sympathized.[72] On the very day before OVERLORD was to be launched, Brooke had grave doubts about the invasion, thinking it might be "the most ghastly disaster of the war," and, at best, OVERLORD would fall far short of what was expected of it.[73] Finally, the U. S. Joint Chiefs of Staff concluded that Churchill and Brooke never intended at any time to launch a major cross-Channel attack. British advocacy of Italy over ANVIL as a supportive operation for OVERLORD thus struck the Americans as false coin.

But if the British were not candid with the Americans in framing their arguments against ANVIL, nor sincerely convinced of the wisdom of a powerful frontal attack against the Normandy coast, it was because of the frightful carnage they suffered on the continent during the First World War. Public opinion in Britain would not accept, even for the sake of defeating Hitler, the enormous casualties that Britain endured in 1914-1918.[74] Allied casualties in Italy were relatively low (250,000 for the whole Italian campaign) and the British were understandably reluctant to abandon a theater which was conserving British lives in order to engage in an all-out attack against France.

Thus, despite their commitment to coalition strategy, the British saw the Italian campaign as being in their national self-interest and acted accordingly. Quite naturally, from their point of view,

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[72] Bryant, Triumph in the West, p. 35.

[73] Ibid., p. 152.

[74] Higgins, Soft Underbelly, pp. 220-222.

They objected to ANVIL, an objection which also reflected their growing concern that the balance of power would be upset if the Soviet Union entered the heartland of Europe. But Alexander's campaign was not vital to the national self-interest of the United States. What mattered to Roosevelt and the U. S. Chiefs of Staff was the quick termination of the European war in order to release American forces for the defeat of Japan; and to Washington, ANVIL and OVERLORD were the fastest means to that end. Therefore, in the final analysis, the dispute became a conflict of national self-interests. Because by the summer of 1944 the United States was by far the dominant partner in the Alliance, the British were forced to play a secondary part in determining grand strategy. It was a role they neither welcomed nor could avoid.

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