

WORLD WAR II

THE DEFENSIVE PHASE

The news came as a shock, even as the attack itself had come. About one o'clock in Washington on the afternoon of December 7, 1941, the first news of the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, reached the War Department. It caught by surprise not only the American people at large, who learned of the attack a short while later, but also their leaders, including the very officers who had earlier been so much concerned over the possibility of just such an attack. These officers and their political superiors had expected the Japanese momentarily to use all their forces against weakly held British and Dutch positions in the Far East (and probably, but not certainly, against the Philippines). But without warning in the early morning of December 7, powerful carrier-borne air forces had smashed the U.S. Pacific Fleet at anchor in Pearl Harbor. The same day, about noon on December 8 in the Philippines, the Japanese Air Force targeted U.S. assets in central Luzon. Formosa-based warplanes virtually destroyed the bulk of the U.S. Far East Air Force lined up on the Clark and Iba airfields not far from Manila. For the second time within a quarter-century, Americans found themselves fully involved in a war they had not sought and, although they had had ample warning, one for which they were still woefully unprepared.

The Outbreak of War: Action and Reaction

The Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor was one of the most brilliant tactical feats of the war. From six carriers that had advanced undetected to a position just 200 miles north of Oahu, some 350 aircraft came in through the morning mist, achieving complete tactical surprise. They bombed and strafed the neatly aligned Army planes on Hickam and Wheeler Fields, as well as Navy and Marine Corps aircraft; they carefully singled out as targets major units of the Navy's battle force at anchor in the harbor. Fortunately, the fleet's three carriers were away



The sinking of the USS Arizona came to symbolize the devastation of the attack and the American determination to avenge "a day that will live in infamy."

at the time and the attackers failed to hit the oil tanks and naval repair shops on shore. But the blow was devastating enough. About 170 aircraft were destroyed and 102 damaged; all eight battleships were sunk or badly damaged along with other vessels; and total casualties came to about 3,400, including 2,402 service men and civilians killed. Japanese losses were about forty-nine aircraft and five midget submarines. In an astonishing achievement, the enemy managed to apply in one shattering operation a combination of the principles of surprise, objective, mass, security, and maneuver. In its larger strategic context, the Pearl Harbor attack also exemplifies the principles of the offensive and economy of force. The joint congressional committee investigating the attack justly called it the "greatest military and naval disaster in our Nation's history."

These two attacks, on Pearl Harbor and on the Philippines, effectively crippled American striking power in the Pacific. The Philippines and other American possessions in the western Pacific were isolated, their loss a foregone conclusion. The Hawaiian Islands and Alaska lay open to invasion; the Panama Canal and the cities, factories, and shipyards of the West Coast were vulnerable to raids from the sea and air. Months would pass before the United States could regain a capacity for even the most limited kind of offensive action against its Pacific enemy. As Japanese forces moved swiftly southward against the Philippines, Malaya, and the Netherlands Indies, Japan's Axis partners, Germany and Italy, promptly declared war on the United States, thus ending the uncertainty as to whether the United States would become a full-fledged belligerent in the European war. For the first time in its history, the United States had embarked upon an all-out, two-front war.

Meanwhile, Britain was battling to maintain its hold on the eastern Mediterranean region that lay athwart its historic lifeline to its empire in the Far East. Late in 1940 small British forces based in Egypt gained important successes against Italian armies in Libya, and the Greeks in the winter of 1940–1941 resoundingly defeated an invading Italian army and chased it back into Albania. But German armies quickly came to the aid of their ally. In April 1941 the famous panzer divisions, supported by overwhelming air power, swept through the Balkans, crushing the Yugoslav and Greek armies and a British expeditionary force hastily dispatched to aid the latter. The following month German airborne forces descended on the island of Crete and swamped British and Greek defenders in a spectacular, though costly, attack. In Libya, a powerful German-Italian army under General Erwin Rommel drove the British back across the Egyptian border, isolating a large garrison in Tobruk and threatening the Nile Delta. Against these disasters Britain could count only the final expulsion of the Italians from the Red Sea area and of the

Vichy French from Syria, the suppression of pro-German uprisings in Iraq, and the achievement of a precarious naval ascendancy in the eastern and western portions of the Mediterranean. During the remainder of 1941 the British gradually built up strength in eastern Libya, and late in the year they succeeded in relieving Tobruk and pushing Rommel back to his original starting point at El Agheila.

Since mid-1940 the military fortunes of the anti-Axis powers had declined as the European war expanded. Germany had crushed all its continental European opponents in the west and then attempted to destroy Britain's air forces as a prelude to an invasion across the English Channel. During the air battles over Britain in August and September 1940, the Royal Air Force had won a brilliant but close-run victory. During the following winter and spring the waning threat of invasion had been replaced by the equally deadly and more persistent menace of economic strangulation. German aircraft pulverized Britain's ports and inland cities, while U-boats, surface raiders, and mines decimated shipping. By 1941 the imports on which the United Kingdom depended for existence had dwindled to less than two-thirds of their prewar volume, and the British people faced the prospect of outright starvation.

By June 1941, however, the storm center of the war had moved elsewhere. Only slightly delayed by the conquest of the Balkans, Hitler on June 22, 1941, hurled German might against the Soviet Union, the only remaining power on the European continent capable of challenging his dominance. By early December, when the onset of winter and stiffening Soviet resistance finally brought the advance to a halt, the German armies had driven to the suburbs of Moscow, inflicted huge losses on the Red Army, and occupied a vast expanse of European Russia embracing its most densely populated and industrialized regions. This, as it turned out, was the high tide of German success in World War II; Hitler, like Napoleon, was to meet disaster on the wind-swept plains of Russia. But in December 1941 few were willing to predict this outcome. British and American leaders assembling in Washington at the end of that month to make plans for dealing with the crisis had to reckon with the probability that in the year to come, unless the Western Allies could somehow force Germany to divert substantial forces from the Eastern Front, the German steamroller would complete the destruction of the Soviet armies. Hitler would then be able, with the resources and enslaved peoples of all Europe at his feet, to throw his full power against the West.

American military leaders had already given thought to this grim prospect and to the implications it held for America's role in the war. In the Victory Program, which the Army and Navy drew up at the President's behest during the summer of 1941, the leaders of the two services had set forth in some detail the strategy and the means they considered necessary to win ultimate victory if, as they expected, Soviet Russia suc-



A B-17C Aircraft at Hickam Air Force Base, Hawaii, After the Attack on Pearl Harbor

THE PERSIAN CORRIDOR

In order to ensure that the Soviet Union stayed in the war, the United States and Britain moved troops into Persia (present-day Iran) and established rail and road supply routes into the southern Soviet Union. Huge truck convoys delivered supplies and vehicles to the Soviets, but the majority of the materiel flowed in by train. Only the naval supply route through the Pacific to the Soviet Far East succeeded in delivering more to the Soviets. In third place was the sprint past the Germans in the North Atlantic and around Norway to Murmansk and Archangel. In all, American shipments of aircraft, tanks, trucks, oil, and other Lend-Lease cargo through Iraq and Iran from July 1941 to the end of the war were enough, according to one U.S. Army estimate, to keep sixty Soviet divisions in the fight.

cumbed to the Axis onslaught. The strategy was the one laid down in the RAINBOW 5 war plan: wearing Germany down by bombing, blockade, subversion, and limited offensives while mobilizing the strength needed to invade the European continent and to defeat Germany on its own ground. Japan, meanwhile, would be contained by air and sea power, local defense forces, China's inexhaustible manpower, and the Soviet Union's Siberian divisions. With Germany out of the running, Japan's defeat or collapse would soon follow.

As for the means, the United States would have to provide them in large part, for the British were already weary and their resources limited. The United States would serve not merely, to use the President's catchy phrase, as the "arsenal of democracy," supplying weapons to arm its Allies, but also as the main source of the armies without which no wars, above all this war, could be won. U.S. Army leaders envisaged the eventual mobilization of 215 divisions, 61 of them armored, and 239 combat air groups, requiring a grand total, with supporting forces, of 8.8 million men. Five million of these would be hurled against the European Axis. Victory over the Axis powers would require a maximum military effort and full mobilization of America's immense industrial resources.

Yet the Victory Program was merely an expression of professional military views, not a statement of national military policy. That policy, on the eve of Pearl Harbor, ostensibly was still hemisphere defense. Much of the Army's resources were focused on coastal artillery defenses and the establishment of air bases to defend the Panama Canal and the coasts of America. Much of America's plans and resources throughout the 1930s had focused on this mission and not on a mission of preparing for expeditionary warfare in Europe or the Pacific. The pace of rearmament and mobilization in the summer and fall of 1941 was actually slowing. Signs pointed to a policy of making the American contribution to the defeat of the Axis, as columnist Walter Lippmann put it, one "basically of Navy, Air, and manufacturing," something a great deal less than the all-out effort envisaged in the Victory Program. Public and congressional sentiment, moreover, still clung to the hope that an immediate showdown with the Axis powers could be avoided and that the country would not be forced into full belligerent participation in the war, as evidenced by a near defeat of the bill to extend Selective Service, continuation of a prohibition against sending selectees outside

Public and congressional sentiment, moreover, still clung to the hope that an immediate showdown with the Axis powers could be avoided and that the country would not be forced into full belligerent participation in the war.

the western hemisphere, and apathetic public response to submarine attacks on American destroyers escorting convoys to Britain in September and October.

The Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor and the Philippines changed the picture. A wave of patriotic indignation over Japanese duplicity and brutality swept the country. Isolationism virtually evaporated as a public issue, and all parties closed ranks in support of the war effort. Indeed, in retrospect, despite the immediate tactical success the Japanese achieved at Pearl Harbor, that attack proved to be a great blunder for them politically and strategically.

President Franklin D. Roosevelt took one of the first tangible steps toward equipping America to fight the new war the month after Pearl Harbor. Early in January he dramatized the magnitude of the effort now demanded by proclaiming a new set of production goals: 60,000 airplanes in 1942 and 125,000 in 1943; 45,000 tanks in 1942 and 75,000 in 1943; 20,000 antiaircraft guns in 1942 and 35,000 in 1943; 0.5 million machine guns in 1942 and as many more in 1943; and 8 million deadweight tons of merchant shipping in 1942 and 10 million in 1943. Vanished were the two illusions that America could serve only as an arsenal of democracy, contributing weapons without the men to wield them, or, conversely, that the nation could rely solely on its own fighting forces, leaving other anti-Axis nations to shift for themselves. "We must not only provide munitions for our own fighting forces," Roosevelt advised Secretary of War Henry L. Stimson, "but vast quantities to be used against the enemy in every appropriate theater of war." A new Victory Program boosted the Army's ultimate mobilization goal to 10 million men; and the War Department planned to have seventy-one divisions and 115 combat air groups organized by the end of 1942, with a total of 3.6 million men under arms. As an Army planner had predicted back in the spring of 1941, the United States now seemed destined to become "the final reserve of the democracies both in manpower and munitions."



Medium Tanks on an American Assembly Line

One of the more unpleasant side effects of the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor was the growing clamor on the West Coast for the immediate internment of all persons of Japanese ancestry. In this public fear, racism doubtless played a role. The Japanese, even those born in America and thus citizens, were characterized as not being “real Americans” and of being a dangerous “fifth column” of potential spies and traitors. The fact that there was little to no evidence behind these fears did not seem to matter in the panic immediately after December 7.

The War Department had plans in place for the internment of all aliens of potentially belligerent states including Italy, Germany, and Japan. There were 40,869 Japanese aliens and about 58,000 Italian and 22,000 German aliens in the three Pacific states. In addition, there were 71,484 American-born, American citizens of Japanese ancestry in that region of the country. Initial plans thus only addressed the necessity of detaining aliens, not citizens, from the West Coast and removing them to the Zone of the Interior. During time of war this was a common practice under international law. Numerous Italian and German citizens living in America were also targeted for detention, and hundreds were arrested and interned for a time. Such a program of internment would ensure that there was no chance for such persons who technically were loyal to a foreign government to engage in sabotage or intelligence activities. The main controversy, however, was when this program was extended to U.S. citizens, specifically against U.S. citizens of Japanese ancestry.

The Army was to some degree caught in the middle of this problem. The commander of the Western Defense Command, Lt. Gen. John L. DeWitt, at first opposed any evacuation of U.S. citizens regardless of their ancestry. However, strong pressure from California congressional delegations and an approval of a more draconian evacuation plan by President Roosevelt changed the situation. By February 20 DeWitt and his staff had planned for the forced movement and internment of *all* people of Japanese ancestry, citizens and noncitizens, out of coastal “security” areas. Similar plans to include large numbers of German and Italian aliens in this internment program were in effect scuttled when the War Department decreed first that Italians would be evacuated only with the express permission of the Secretary of War and only on an individual basis. “Bona fide” German refugees would also be exempted. This had the effect of preventing any large-scale internment of Italian or German aliens, although some 187 Germans had been apprehended as security risks by early 1942.

After the President’s Executive Order 9066 of February 19 and the implementing War Department directives of February 20, the mass



President Roosevelt signs the declaration of war on Japan, December 8, 1941.

evacuation of persons of Japanese ancestry—citizens and noncitizens—began. The Army, FBI, and other agencies coordinated the evacuation. Despite the lack of any hard evidence of spying activities or intention to commit sabotage, over 110,000 Japanese Americans were rounded up and interned in camps (“Relocation Centers”) away from the Pacific coast. What little justification was possible for interning noncitizens was not available for interning native-born American citizens, and the program was attacked both at the time and for decades thereafter. It was not until 1988 that this injustice was officially addressed and compensation provided for those who suffered this indignity.

The degree to which such draconian measures were unnecessary can be highlighted by how the military and civilian leadership in Hawaii handled their Japanese-American “problem.” There were over 159,000 Japanese Americans in Hawaii, about 30 percent of the population, and military commanders had feared extensive sabotage by these individuals in the event of war with Japan. On December 7 the Air Corps planes at Hickam Field were parked wing tip to wing tip to keep them close together and make them easier to protect from sabotage. (This made them sitting ducks for the Japanese bombers.)

Immediately after December 7 American counterintelligence and FBI agents rounded up 736 individual Japanese aliens; by the end of January 1942 that total had reached about 1,300. Yet no massive internment of Japanese-American citizens was seriously contemplated or executed. They were deemed vital to the war effort, and military necessity in this instance overrode all concerns. The results of this very different policy in Hawaii led Japanese Americans to flock to the colors to form labor battalions and infantry units. Two of the most decorated units in the American Army in World War II were the 100th Infantry Battalion and the 442d Infantry Regimental Combat Team, both recruited from Japanese Americans. Nineteen individuals in these units were awarded the nation’s highest decoration, the Medal of Honor, in 2000 as a belated recognition of their loyalty and bravery.

Strategic Decisions

Late in December 1941 President Roosevelt and Prime Minister Winston Churchill met with their advisers in Washington (the ARCADIA Conference) to establish the bases of coalition strategy and to concert immediate measures to meet the military crisis. They faced an agonizing dilemma. Prompt steps had to be taken to stem the spreading tide of Japanese conquest. On the other hand, it seemed likely that the coming year might see the collapse of Soviet resistance and of the British position in the Middle East. In this difficult situation the Allied leaders made a far-reaching decision that shaped the whole course of the war. Reaffirming the principle laid down in Anglo-American staff conversations in Washington ten months earlier, they agreed that the first and main effort must go into defeating Germany, the more formidable enemy. Japan’s turn would come later. Defeating Germany would involve a prolonged process of “closing and tightening the ring” about Fortress Europe. Operations in 1942 would have to be defensive and preparatory, though limited offensives might be undertaken if the opportunity presented itself. Not until 1943 at the earliest could the Allies contem-

GERMANY FIRST

At the December 1941 ARCADIA Conference in Washington, Britain and the United States agreed to put the war in the Pacific second to victory in Europe—even if that meant a U.S. withdrawal from the Philippines and its other possessions in the Pacific. Admiral Harold R. Stark, Chief of Naval Operations in 1940, had argued when contemplating such an eventuality, “If Britain wins decisively against Germany we could win everywhere, but ... if she loses, the problems confronting us would be very great; ... we might, possibly, not win anywhere.” This policy was not popular with the many Americans thirsting for revenge against the Japanese for Pearl Harbor, but it was realistic. As U.S. Commander in the Southwest Pacific, General MacArthur would also argue vehemently against the approach; but it remained U.S. policy until Germany surrendered in 1945.

**Image
Not Available
in This
Internet Version**

*Churchill and Roosevelt at the ARCADIA
Conference, 1941*

plate a return to the European continent “across the Mediterranean, from Turkey into the Balkans, or by landings in Western Europe.”

Another important action taken at the ARCADIA Conference was the establishment of the Combined Chiefs of Staff (CCS). This staff element consisted of the professional military chiefs of both countries and answered to the President and Prime Minister for planning and directing the grand strategy of the coalition. Its American members were the Army Chief of Staff, General George C. Marshall; the Chief of Naval Operations, Admiral Harold R. Stark (replaced early in 1942 by Admiral Ernest J. King); and the Chief (later Commanding General) of the Army Air Forces, Lt. Gen. Henry H. “Hap” Arnold. In July a fourth member was added, the President’s personal Chief of Staff, Admiral William D. Leahy. Since the CCS normally sat in Washington, the British Chiefs of Staff, making up its British component, attended in person only at important conferences with the heads of state. In the intervals they were represented in Washington by the four senior members of the permanent British Joint Staff Mission, headed until late in 1944 by Field Marshal Sir John Dill, the former Chief of the British Imperial General Staff. Under the CCS grew a system of primarily military subordinate committees specifically designated to handle such matters as strategic and logistical planning, transportation, and communications.

By February 1942 the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS), consisting of the U.S. members of the CCS, had emerged as the highest authority in the U.S. military hierarchy, though never formally chartered as such, responsible directly to the President. Like the CCS, the JCS in time developed a machinery of planning and working committees, the most important of which were the Joint Staff Planners, the Joint Strategic Survey Committee, and the Joint Logistics Committee. No executive machinery was created at either the CCS or JCS level. The CCS ordinarily named either the British Chiefs or the U.S. Joint Chiefs to act as its executive agent, and these in turn employed the established machinery of the service departments.

In the spring of 1942 Britain and the United States agreed on a worldwide division of strategic responsibility. The U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff were to have primary responsibility for the war in the Pacific and the British Chiefs for the Middle East–Indian Ocean region, while the European-Mediterranean-Atlantic area would be a combined responsibility of both staffs. China was designated a separate theater commanded by its chief of state, Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek, though within the United States' sphere of responsibility. In the Pacific, the Joint Chiefs established two main theaters, the Southwest Pacific Area (SWPA) and the Pacific Ocean Area (POA), the former under General Douglas MacArthur, the latter under Admiral Chester W. Nimitz. The POA was further subdivided into North, Central, and South Pacific areas, the first two directly controlled by Nimitz, the third by Rear Adm. Robert L. Ghormley. Later in 1942 the U.S. air and service troops operating in China, India, and northern Burma were organized as U.S. Army Forces, China-Burma-India (CBI), under Lt. Gen. Joseph W. Stilwell. On various other far-flung lines of communications, U.S. Army forces, mostly air and service troops during 1942, were organized under similar theater commands. In June Maj. Gen. Dwight D. Eisenhower arrived in England to take command of the newly established European Theater of Operations; after the landings in North Africa late in the year, a new U.S. theater was organized in that region.

The British and the Americans had decided at the ARCADIA Conference that Allied forces in each overseas theater would operate as much as possible under a single commander, and this principle was subsequently applied in most theaters. Within theaters, subordinate unified commands were created, in some cases for Allied ground, naval, or air forces and most frequently for task forces formed to carry out a specific operation or campaign. The authority of Allied theater commanders over national forces was always restricted with respect to areas and missions; as a last resort, senior national commanders in each theater could appeal to their own governments against specific orders or policies of the theater commander. In practice, this right of appeal was rarely invoked.

In essence, unified command at the Allied level gave the commander control of certain specific forces for operational purposes, rather than jurisdiction over a given geographical area. Administration of national forces and the allocation of resources were usually handled through separate national channels. In certain cases, interallied boards or committees responsible to the Allied theater commander controlled the common use of critical resources (such as petroleum products) or facilities (such



Generalissimo and Madame Chiang Kai-shek with General Stilwell

as railways and shipping) within a theater. Administration of U.S. forces overseas also generally followed separate Army and Navy channels, except in the Pacific, where from 1943 on supply, transportation, and certain other services were jointly administered to a limited degree.

Even before Pearl Harbor, Army leaders had realized that the peacetime organization of the War Department General Staff, dating back to 1921, was an inadequate instrument for directing a major war effort. Originally, a small coordinating and planning body, the General Staff, and especially its War Plans and Supply Divisions, rapidly expanded during the emergency period into a large operating organization increasingly immersed in the details of supervision to the detriment of its planning and policymaking functions. The Chief of Staff, to whom some sixty-one officers and agencies had direct access, carried an especially heavy burden.

Three additional features of the organization demanded remedy. One, the continued subordination of the Army Air Forces to General Staff supervision, conflicted with the Air Forces' drive for autonomy. Another was the anomalous position of the General Headquarters (GHQ), whose role as command post for the field forces and responsibilities in the fields of training and logistics clashed with the authority of the General Staff at many points. Finally, the division of supply responsibilities between the Supply Division (G-4) and the Office of the Under Secretary of War (with requirements and distribution assigned to the former and procurement to the latter) was breaking down under the pressure of mobilization.

Spurred by the Pearl Harbor disaster, which seemed to accentuate the need for better staff coordination in Washington, on March 9, 1942, General Marshall put into effect a sweeping reorganization of the War Department. Under the new plan, which underwent little change during the war years, the General Staff, except for the War Plans and Intelligence Divisions, was drastically whittled down and limited in function to broad planning and policy guidance. An expanded War Plans Division, soon renamed the Operations Division (OPD), became General Marshall's command post and in effect a superior general staff for the direction of overseas operations. The Army Air Forces had virtually complete control of the development of its special weapon—the airplane. Administering its own personnel and training, it organized and supported the combat air forces to be employed in theaters of operations and came also to exercise considerable influence over both strategic and operational planning. The groundwork was even then being laid for the Army Air Forces' rise to the status of a separate service after the war.

The reorganization of March 9 created two new commands: the Army Ground Forces (AGF) and the Services of Supply, later renamed the Army Service Forces (ASF). The former, headed by Lt. Gen. Lesley J. McNair, took over the training mission of GHQ, now abolished, and absorbed the ground combat arms. To the ASF, commanded by Lt. Gen. Brehon B. Somervell, were subordinated the supply (renamed technical) and administrative services, the nine corps areas, and most of the Army posts and installations throughout the United States, including the ports of embarkation through which troops and supplies flowed to the forces overseas. In supply matters, Somervell now reported to two masters, the Chief of Staff for requirements and distribution and the

LESLEY J. McNAIR (1883–1944)

McNair built a strong reputation as a trainer during World War I and became a close friend of Col. George C. Marshall, Jr. During World War II, General Marshall made him the chief trainer of the U.S. Army, first as Chief of Staff of General Headquarters (1940–1942) and then as Commanding General of the Army Ground Forces (1942–1944). McNair oversaw the development of a systematic training and testing program for the ninety divisions that the Army mobilized during the war. He was killed by a misdirected American bomb while observing operations near St. Lô, France, on July 25, 1944.



General McNair (left) and Maj. Gen. George S. Patton, Jr., Studying a Map

Under Secretary of War, Mr. Robert P. Patterson, for procurement. His subordination to the latter was, in reality, only nominal since most of Patterson's organization was transferred bodily to Somervell's headquarters. Except for equipment peculiar to the Army Air Forces, the ASF thus became the Army's central agency for supply in the United States. It drew up the Army's "shopping list" of requirements, the Army Supply Program. Through the seven technical services (Quartermaster, Ordnance, Signal, Chemical, Engineer, Medical, and Transportation), the ASF procured most of the Army's supplies and equipment and distributed these materials to the Army at home and abroad, as well as to Allies under Lend-Lease. Finally, it operated the Army's fleet of transports and it trained specialists and service units to perform various specialized jobs. General Somervell himself became General Marshall's principal logistical adviser.

All this looked to the future. In the first few weeks after Pearl Harbor, while the Navy was salvaging what it could from the wreckage at Pearl Harbor and striving to combat German submarines in the western Atlantic, the War Department made desperate efforts to bolster the defenses of Hawaii, the Philippines, the Panama Canal, Alaska, and the U.S. West Coast. By the end of December, the danger of an attack on the Hawaii-Alaska-Panama triangle seemed to have waned, and the emphasis shifted to measures to stave off further disasters in the Far East. The British and Americans decided at ARCADIA that the Allies would attempt to hold the Japanese north and east of the line of the Malay Peninsula and the Netherlands Indies and to reestablish communications with the Philippines to the north. To coordinate operations in this vast theater, the Allied leaders created the ABDA (American-British-Dutch-Australian) Command, including the Netherlands Indies (present-day Indonesia), Malaya, Burma, and the Philippines; although in the latter

GENERAL BREHON B. SOMERVELL (1892–1955)

Somervell was a hard-driving engineer officer who made things happen. Heading the huge federal Works Progress Administration in New York City during the Great Depression, he orchestrated the construction of La Guardia Airport. As the Army expanded in the year before Pearl Harbor, he reorganized the Quartermaster Corps' Construction Division to meet the urgent need for new facilities. Somervell took command in March 1942 of what would become the Army Service Forces, an organization of more than 2 million soldiers and civilians. An innovative, decisive, and tough manager, Somervell directed the massive supply operations that were crucial to Allied victory.



General Somervell

case MacArthur continued reporting directly to Washington. British Lt. Gen. Sir Archibald P. Wavell was placed in overall command of ABDA. Through India from the west and Australia from the east, the Allies hoped in a short time to build up a shield of air power stout enough to blunt the Japanese threat.

For a time it seemed as though nothing could stop the Japanese juggernaut. In less than three weeks after Pearl Harbor, the isolated American outposts of Wake Island and Guam fell to the invaders; the British garrison of Hong Kong was overwhelmed; and powerful land, sea, and air forces were converging on Malaya and the Netherlands Indies. Picked, jungle-trained Japanese troops drove down the Malay Peninsula toward the great fortress of Singapore, infiltrating and outflanking successive British positions. Two of the most formidable warships in the British Navy, the battleship *Prince of Wales* and the battle cruiser *Repulse*, sailing without air cover, were sunk by Japanese torpedo planes off the east coast of Malaya, a loss that destroyed the Allies' last hope of effectively opposing Japan's naval power in the Far East. Attacked from the land side, Singapore and its British force of over 80,000 troops surrendered on February 15, 1942, in the greatest single defeat in British history.

Meanwhile, the Japanese had invaded the Netherlands Indies from the north, west, and east. In a series of actions during January and February, the weak Dutch and Australian naval forces, joined by the U.S. Asiatic Fleet withdrawing from the Philippines, were destroyed piecemeal; only four American destroyers escaped south to Australia. On March 9 the last Allied ground and air forces in the Netherlands Indies, almost 100,000 men (mostly native troops, but including one U.S. National Guard field artillery battalion on Java) surrendered to the invaders.

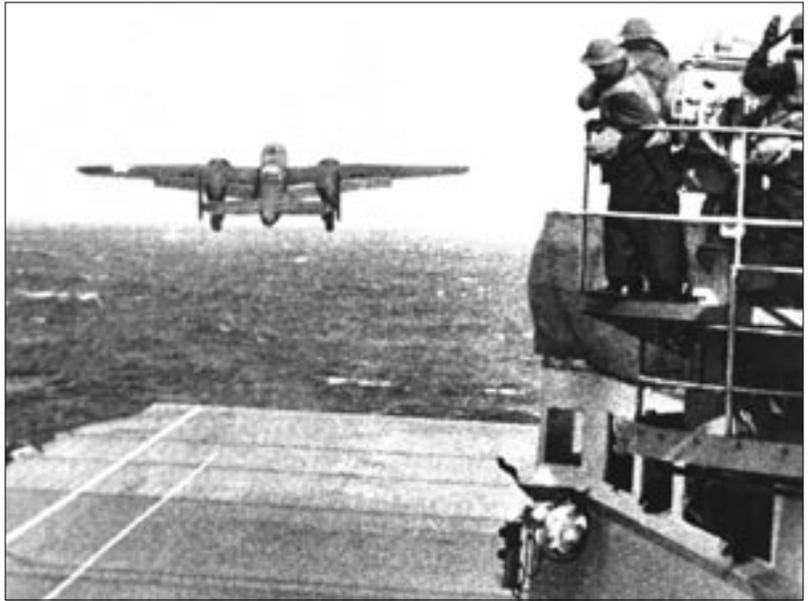
In Burma, the day before, the British had been forced under heavy bombing to evacuate Rangoon and retreat northward. Before the end of April the Japanese had completed the occupation of Burma, driving the British westward into India and the bulk of General Stilwell's Chinese forces back into China. Stilwell and the remnants of other Chinese

units retreated to India, where, living up to his nickname of Vinegar Joe, he announced to the world that his units had taken “a hell of a beating.” In the process the Japanese had won possession of a huge section of the Burma Road, the only viable land route between China and India. Henceforth and until late in the war, communication between China and its allies was to be limited to an air ferry from India over the “hump” of the Himalayan Mountains. During the late spring strong Japanese naval forces reached the coastal cities of India and even attacked Britain’s naval base on Ceylon.

By the end of April 1942 the Japanese had thus gained control of Burma, Malaya, Thailand, French Indochina, the Netherlands Indies, and the Malay Archipelago; farther to the east, they had won strong lodgments on the islands of New Guinea, New Britain, and in the Solomons. They were in a position to flank the approaches to Australia and New Zealand and cut them off from the United States. The Japanese had won this immense empire at remarkably little cost through an effective combination of superior air and sea power and only a handful of well-trained ground divisions. The Japanese had seized and held the initiative while keeping their opponents off balance. They had concentrated their strength for the capture of key objectives such as airfields and road junctions and for the destruction of major enemy forces, while diverting only minimum forces on secondary missions, thus giving an impression of overwhelming numerical strength. They had frequently gained the advantage of surprise and had baffled their enemies by their speed and skill in maneuver. The whole whirlwind campaign, in short, had provided Japan’s enemies with a capsule course of instruction in the principles of war. The Americans were able to launch only a few carrier and submarine attacks on the Japanese, including the Doolittle bomber raid on Tokyo on April 18. These operations, while having a major impact on American morale, were militarily insignificant and failed to slow the Japanese. Only the stubborn defense of the Philippines had significantly disrupted Japanese plans.

The Fall of the Philippines

Only in the Philippines, almost on Japan’s southern doorstep, was the timetable of conquest delayed. When the Japanese struck, the defending forces in the islands numbered more than 130,000, including the Philippine Army, which, though mobilized to a strength of ten divisions, was ill trained and ill equipped. Of the U.S. Army contingent of 31,000, more than a third consisted of the Philippine Scouts, most



An Army B-25 takes off from the USS Hornet to participate in the Doolittle Raid on Japan, April 1942.

of whom were part of the Regular Army Philippine Division, the core of the mobile defense forces. The Far East Air Force before the Japanese attack had a total of 277 aircraft of all types, mostly obsolescent but including 35 new heavy bombers. The Asiatic Fleet, based in the Philippines, consisted of 3 cruisers, 13 old destroyers, 6 gunboats, 6 motor torpedo boats, 32 patrol bombers, and 29 submarines. A regiment of marines, withdrawn from Shanghai, also joined the defending forces late in November 1941. Before the end of December, however, American air and naval power in the Philippines had virtually ceased to exist. The handful of bombers surviving the early attacks had been evacuated to Australia; the bulk of the Asiatic Fleet, its base facilities in ruins, had withdrawn southward to help in the defense of the Netherlands Indies.

The main Japanese invasion of the Philippines, following preliminary landings, began on December 22, 1941. While numerically inferior to the defenders, the invading force of two divisions with supporting units was well trained and equipped and enjoyed complete mastery of the air and on the sea. The attack centered on Luzon, the northernmost and largest island of the archipelago, where all but a small fraction of the defending forces was concentrated. The main landings were made on the beaches of Lingayen Gulf in the northwest and Lamon Bay in the southeast. General MacArthur planned to meet and destroy the invaders on the beaches, but his troops were unable to prevent the enemy from gaining secure lodgments. On December 23 MacArthur ordered a general withdrawal into the mountainous Bataan Peninsula, across Manila Bay from the capital city. Manila itself was occupied by the Japanese without resistance. The retreat into Bataan was a complex operation, involving converging movements over difficult terrain into a cramped assembly area from which only two roads led into the peninsula itself. Under constant enemy attack, the maneuver was executed with consummate skill and at considerable cost to the attackers. Yet American and Filipino losses were heavy, and MacArthur's ill-advised abandonment of

large stocks of supplies foredoomed the defenders of Bataan to ultimate defeat in the siege that followed.

By January 7, 1942, General MacArthur's forces held hastily prepared defensive positions across the upper part of the Bataan Peninsula. Their presence there and on Corregidor and its satellite island fortresses guarding the entrance to Manila Bay denied the enemy the use of the bay throughout the siege. In the first major enemy offensive, launched early in January, the "battling bastards of Bataan" were outflanked and forced to give ground back to a final line halfway down the peninsula. Thereafter combat operations paused until April while the Japanese brought in reinforcements. The defenders of Bataan were, however, too weak to seize the initiative themselves.



General Wainwright broadcasts surrender instructions to U.S. forces in the Philippines.

BATAAN AND CORREGIDOR

One day after the Japanese landings in Lingayen Gulf and Lamon Bay on December 23, 1941, General MacArthur decided he would have to fall back to the Bataan Peninsula and fight a delaying action there until a relief force from the United States arrived in the Philippines. Two corps of the Philippine Army, including seven Filipino infantry divisions, two regiments of Filipino Scouts, and a regiment of U.S. Infantry, defended Bataan against furious assaults launched by elements of the Japanese 14th Army. The attackers, possessing a tremendous superiority in air power, artillery, and armor, finally forced the Americans and Filipinos to surrender on April 9, 1942. The remaining American bastion in the Philippines, the heavily fortified island of Corregidor in Manila Bay, succumbed after a 25-day-long intensive aerial and artillery preparatory barrage followed by an amphibious assault by the Japanese 4th Infantry Division on May 4-5. Corregidor remained in enemy hands until the American 11th Airborne Division liberated the island in February 1945.



Surrender of U.S. Troops at Corregidor, May 1942

Meanwhile, the President ordered General MacArthur to leave his post and go to Australia to take command of Allied operations against the Japanese in the Southwest Pacific. In mid-March he and a small party made their way through the Japanese lines by motor torpedo boat to Mindanao and from there flew to Australia. Command of the forces in the Philippines devolved upon Lt. Gen. Jonathan M. Wainwright.

By April the troops on Bataan were subsisting on about fifteen ounces of food daily, less than a quarter of the peacetime ration. Their diet, mostly rice supplemented by carabao, mule, monkey, or lizard meat, was gravely deficient in vitamins and provided less than 1,000 calories a day, barely enough to sustain life. Weakened by hunger and poor diet, thousands succumbed to malaria, dengue, scurvy, beriberi, and amoebic dysentery, made impossible to control by the shortage of medical supplies, especially quinine. The U.S. Navy made desperate efforts to send food, medicine, ammunition, and other supplies through the Japanese blockade to the beleaguered forces. But during the early weeks, before the enemy cordon had tightened, it proved impossible, despite promises of lavish pay and bonuses, to muster the



The Chaplain in World War II, *Ken Riley, 1975*



Prisoners of War Forced To Participate in the Infamous Bataan Death March from Bataan to Cabanatuan

necessary ships and crews. Only about 4,000 tons of rations ever reached Manila Bay.

At the beginning of April the Japanese, behind a pulverizing artillery barrage, attacked again. The American lines crumpled, and in a few days the defending forces virtually disintegrated. On April 9 Maj. Gen. Edward P. King, Jr., commanding the forces on Bataan, surrendered. For almost another month the garrison on Corregidor, including some 2,000 refugees who reached the island from Bataan when forces there surrendered, held out under air bombardment and almost continuous plunging fire from heavy artillery massed on adjacent shores and heights—one of the most intense artillery bombardments, for so small a target, of the entire war. On the night of May 5, after a final terrible barrage, Japanese assault troops won a foothold on Corregidor; the following night,

when it became apparent that further resistance was useless, General Wainwright surrendered unconditionally. Under his orders, which the Japanese forced him to broadcast, other American commanders in the Philippines capitulated one by one. By early June, except for scattered guerrilla detachments in the hills, some composed of American officers and men who disobeyed the surrender order, all organized resistance on the islands had ceased.

THE VICTORY PLAN

In May 1941 the United States lacked an up-to-date plan for its potential requirements if it were involved in a war in Europe. Maj. Albert C. Wedemeyer, a planner on the War Department General Staff, was assigned to develop a plan within ninety days—an extremely difficult task, since lack of a national consensus on the war had precluded firm strategic guidance from civilian authorities. Wedemeyer, thoroughly prepared by extensive strategic reading and attendance at the German *Kriegsakademie*, determined that the United States would be fighting a two-front war with Germany and Japan and required mechanized and armored forces with a powerful air arm to defeat the enemy. Although slightly overestimating the size and structure of the required land force, his projected Army of 8.7 million troops was presciently close to the actual peak strength of 8.1 million. Wedemeyer's plan (often called the Victory Plan or Victory Program), a wise and essential meshing of politico-military considerations, was used to guide the nation in a war only months away.

Deploying American Military Strength

After more than a year and a half of rearming, the United States in December 1941 was still in no position to carry the war to its enemies. On December 7 the Army numbered some 1,644,000 men (including about 120,000 officers), organized into 4 armies, 37 divisions (30 infantry, 5 armored, 2 cavalry), and over 40 combat air groups. Three of the divisions were overseas (2 in Hawaii, 1 in the Philippines), with other garrison forces totaling fewer than 200,000. By spreading equipment and ammunition thin, the War Department might have put a substantial force into the field to repel an attack on the continental United States. Seventeen of the divisions at home were rated as technically ready for combat but lacked the supporting units and the training necessary to weld them into corps and armies. More serious still, they were inadequately equipped with many weapons that recent operations in Europe had proven indispensable (e.g., tank and antitank guns, antiaircraft artillery, radios, and radar); and some of these shortages were aggravated by lack of auxiliary equipment like fire-control mechanisms.

Above all, ammunition of all kinds was so scarce that the War Department was unwilling to commit more than one division and a single antiaircraft regiment for service in any theater where combat operations seemed imminent. In fact, only one division-size task force was sent to the far Pacific before April 1942. Against air attacks, too, the country's defenses were meager. Along the Pacific coast, the Army had only forty-five modern fighter planes ready to fly and only twelve 3-inch antiaircraft guns to defend the whole Los Angeles area. On the East Coast, there were only fifty-four Army fighter planes ready for action. While the coastal air forces, primarily training commands, could be reinforced by airlift, in the interior of the country, the total number of modern fighter aircraft available was less than 1,000. Fortunately, there was no real threat of an invasion in force, and the rapidly expanding output of munitions from American factories promised to remedy some of these weaknesses within a few months. Furthermore, temporary diversions of

Lend-Lease equipment, especially aircraft, helped to holster the overall defense posture within the first few weeks after Pearl Harbor. The Army hoped by April to have as many as thirteen divisions equipped and supplied with ammunition for combat.

The training of combat-ready divisions was also slowed by the nation's fears about internal security, homeland defense, and factory sabotage. After Pearl Harbor, legitimate concerns about such matters ballooned into a near panic. After the Japanese attack the War Department implemented its plans for continental defense. The President and the Army Chief of Staff quickly assigned nineteen of the thirty-four divisions then undergoing training to the Eastern and Western Defense Commands. Those commands dispersed units to patrol the coastline and guard key defense plants, bridges, and dams. In doing so, these units were removed from their training programs for months.

As the continental defense assignments dragged on with no signs of invasion or sabotage, General McNair, head of Army Ground Forces, argued for returning ground tactical units to their training cycles to prepare them for deployment overseas. When Army Chief of Staff General Marshall undertook the comprehensive War Department reorganization in March 1942, he approved McNair's recommendation and returned most ground forces to training missions under Army Ground Forces command. However, many units suffered from a four-to-six-month interruption of their training due to this diversion. Homeland security and preparations for taking the war to the enemy always pull the nation's leaders in two different directions.

Once the divisions were ready to deploy, U.S. planners faced another dilemma. Although the U.S. Merchant Marine ranked second only to Great Britain's and the country possessed an immense ship-building capacity, the process of chartering, assembling, and preparing shipping for the movement of troops and military cargo took time. Time was also needed to schedule and organize convoys; and, owing to the desperate shortage of escort vessels, troop movements had to be widely spaced. Convoying and evasive routing greatly reduced the effective capacity of shipping. Moreover, vast distances separated U.S. ports from the areas threatened by Japan, and to these areas went the bulk of the forces deployed overseas during the months immediately following Pearl Harbor. Through March 1942, as a result, the outflow of troops to overseas bases averaged only about 50,000 per month, as compared with upwards of 250,000 during 1944, when shipping was fully mobilized and plentiful and the sea lanes were secure.

There seemed a real danger early in 1942, however, that German U-boats might succeed in reducing transatlantic deployment to a trickle—not so much by attacking troop transports, most of which could outrun their attackers, as by sinking the slow cargo ships upon which the forces overseas depended for support. Soon after Germany's declaration of war, the U-boats struck at the virtually unprotected shipping lanes in the western Atlantic and subsequently extended their attacks to the Gulf of Mexico and Caribbean areas and the mouth of the St. Lawrence. During the spring of 1942 tankers and freighters were torpedoed in plain view of vacationers on East Coast beaches, and coastal cities dimmed or extinguished their lights that ships might not provide silhouetted targets for the U-boats. The Navy lacked the

Homeland security and preparations for taking the war to the enemy always pull the nation's leaders in two different directions.

means to cope with the peril. In late December 1941 it had only twenty assorted surface vessels and about a hundred aircraft to protect the whole North Atlantic coastal frontier. During the winter and spring these were supplemented by another hundred Army planes of longer range, several armed British trawlers, and as many improvised craft as could be pressed into service.

But the toll of ship sinkings increased. In March 788,000 deadweight tons of Allied and neutral dry cargo shipping were lost, in June 936,000 tons. Tanker losses reached an all-time peak of 375,000 tons in March, which led to a temporary suspension of coastal tanker movements and to gasoline rationing in the seaboard states. During the first six months of 1942, losses of Allied shipping were almost as heavy as during the whole of 1941 and exceeded new construction by almost 2.8 million deadweight tons. The United States was able by May to balance its own current losses by building new ships; Britain and other Allied countries continued until the following August to lose more than they could build, and another year passed before new construction offset cumulative losses.

Slowly and with many setbacks a system of countermeasures was developed. Convoying of coastal shipping, with ships sailing only by day, began in the spring of 1942. North-south traffic between U.S. and Caribbean and South American ports was also convoyed, on schedules interlocked with those of the transatlantic convoys. The latter, during 1942, were protected in the western half of the Atlantic by the U.S. and Canadian Navies, in the eastern half by the British. Troops were transported across the Atlantic either without escort in large, speedy liners like the *Queen Elizabeth* and the *Queen Mary* (between them, they carried almost a quarter of all U.S. troops sent to Europe) or in heavily escorted convoys. Throughout the war, not a single loaded troop transport was sunk on the United Kingdom run. The slow merchant ships were convoyed in large groups according to speed.

But with responsibility for U.S. antisubmarine operations divided between the Navy and Army Air Forces, effective cooperation was hampered by sharp disagreement over organization and methods and available resources throughout 1942 were inadequate. The U-boats, meanwhile, were operating with deadly effect and in growing numbers. Late in the year they began to hunt in packs, resupplied at sea by large cargo submarines ("milch cows"). The Allied convoys to Murmansk and other northern Soviet ports suffered especially heavy losses on their long passage around the top of the Scandinavian Peninsula. In November shipping losses from all causes soared above 1.1 million deadweight tons—the peak, as it turned out, for the entire war, but few at the time dared so to predict.

In the Pacific, fortunately, the principal barriers to deployment of U.S. forces were distance and lack of prepared bases, not enemy submarines. Japan's fleet of undersea craft made little effort to prey on the Allied sea lanes and probably over the vast reaches of the Pacific could not have inflicted serious damage in any case. The chief goal of American deployment to the Pacific during most of 1942, following the initial reinforcement of Hawaii and the Panama Canal, was to build up a base in Australia and secure the chain of islands leading to it. Australia was a vast, thinly populated and, except in its southeastern portion, a largely

undeveloped island continent, 7,000 miles and almost a month's sail from the U.S. West Coast. It had provided a haven for some 4,000 American troops who on December 7 had been at sea bound for the Philippines. In January a task force of division size (POPPY Force) was hastily assembled and dispatched to New Caledonia to guard its eastern approaches. During the first few weeks the main effort of the small American forces went into sending relief supplies to the Philippines and aircraft and troops to Java to stem the Japanese invasion. Beginning in March, as the futility of these efforts became evident and coincident with the arrival of General MacArthur to assume command of all Allied forces in the Southwest Pacific, the construction of base facilities and the buildup of balanced air and ground forces got under way in earnest.

This buildup had as its first object the defense of Australia itself, for at the end of January the Japanese had occupied Rabaul on New Britain Island, thus posing an immediate threat to Port Moresby, the weakly held Australian base in southeastern New Guinea. In February President Roosevelt pledged American help in countering this threat, and in March and April two infantry divisions (the 41st and 32d) left the United States for the Southwest Pacific. At the same time, construction of air and refueling bases was being rushed to completion in the South Pacific islands that formed steppingstones along the ocean routes to Australia and New Zealand. After the western anchor of this chain, New Caledonia, was secured by the POPPY Force, Army and Marine garrisons and reinforcements were sent to various other islands along the line, culminating with the arrival of the 37th Division in the Fiji Islands in June.

These moves came none too soon: during the spring and summer the Japanese, after occupying Rabaul, pushed into the southern Solomons, within easy striking distance of the American bases on Espiritu Santo and New Caledonia. They also sent forces to establish bases along the northeastern coast of New Guinea, just across the narrow Papuan peninsula from Port Moresby, which the Americans and Australians were developing into a major advanced base in preparation for an eventual offensive northward. The stage was thus set for a major test of strength in the Pacific: American forces were spread thinly along an immense arc from Hawaii to Australia with outposts far to the north in Alaska; the Japanese had secured the vast areas north and west of the arc and with the advantage of interior lines could strike in force at any point.

The first test came in May, when the Japanese made an attempt from the sea to take Port Moresby. This was successfully countered in the carrier battle of the Coral Sea. Thereupon the Japanese struck eastward, hoping to destroy the U.S. Pacific Fleet and to seize Midway in a bid for naval supremacy in the Pacific. A diversionary attack on Dutch Harbor, the most forward U.S. base in Alaska, caused considerable damage; and the Japanese were able to occupy the islands of Kiska and Attu in the foggy Aleutian chain. But the main Japanese forces, far to the south, were crushingly defeated, with especially heavy losses in irreplaceable carriers, aircraft, and trained pilots. The Battle of Midway in June 1942 was one of the truly decisive engagements of the war. By seriously weakening Japan's mobile striking forces, Midway left the Japanese virtually helpless to prevent the consolidation of American positions and the

Midway left the Japanese virtually helpless to prevent the consolidation of American positions and the eventual development of overwhelming military supremacy throughout the Pacific.

eventual development of overwhelming military supremacy throughout the Pacific. Only two months later, in fact, American forces took the first step on the long “road back” by landing on Guadalcanal in the southern Solomons.

Although the RAINBOW 5 plan was put into effect immediately after Pearl Harbor, the desperate situation in the Pacific and Far East and the shortage of shipping and escorts ruled out most of the scheduled Atlantic, Caribbean, and South American deployments. In January reinforcements were sent to Iceland and a token force to Northern Ireland. By June two full divisions (the 34th Infantry and the 1st Armored) had reached Ireland, while the remainder of the 5th Infantry had arrived in Iceland, completing the relief of the U.S. Marine brigade and most of the British garrison on that island. No more divisions sailed eastward until August. Meanwhile, garrisons in the Atlantic and the Caribbean were building up to war strength. But plans to occupy the Azores, the Canaries, and Cape Verdes and to capture Dakar on the west African coast went by the board, primarily for lack of shipping. Also abandoned after lengthy discussion was Project GYMNAST, which Prime Minister Churchill had proposed at the ARCADIA Conference, for an Anglo-American occupation of French North Africa.

Thus, despite the reaffirmation of the “Germany first” strategy at ARCADIA, the great bulk of American forces sent overseas during the first half of 1942 went to the theaters of war against Japan. Of the eight Army divisions that left the country before August, five went to the Pacific. Including two more already in Hawaii and a Marine division at sea bound for New Zealand (eventually for the landings on Guadalcanal in August), eight divisions were deployed against Japan in July 1942. Of the approximately 520,000 Army troops in overseas bases, 60 percent was in the Pacific (including Alaska) and the newly established China-Burma-India Theater; the remainder was almost entirely in Caribbean and western Atlantic garrisons. Of 2,200 Army aircraft overseas, about 1,300 were in the Pacific (including Alaska) and the Far East, 900 in the western Atlantic and Latin America. Not until August did the U.S. Army Air Forces in the British Isles attain sufficient strength to fly a single independent bombing mission over northern France.

Planning for a Cross-Channel Invasion

The Army’s leaders and planners, schooled in a tradition that emphasized the principles of mass and offensive, had been fretting over the scale of deployment to the Pacific since early in the year. Late in January, then Brig. Gen. Dwight D. Eisenhower, a War Department staff officer whom General Marshall had assigned to handle the crisis in the Pacific, noted, “We’ve got to go to Europe and fight—and we’ve got to quit wasting resources all over the world.” In the joint committees Army planners urged that as soon as the situation could be stabilized in the Southwest Pacific, U.S. forces should begin to concentrate in the British Isles for an offensive against Germany. Secretary Stimson and others were pressing the same views on the President. In the middle of March the Joint Chiefs of Staff approved this course of action; in April, at the President’s order, General Marshall and Harry Hopkins, the President’s personal representative, went to London to seek British approval.

Logistical considerations heavily favored both the general strategy of concentration against Germany and the specific plan of invading northwestern Europe from a base in the British Isles. Because the target area was close to the main sources of British and American power, two to three times as many forces could be hurled against northwestern Europe (with a given amount of shipping) as could be supported in operations against Japan. Britain itself was a highly industrialized country, fully mobilized after two-and-a-half years of war and well shielded by air and naval power—a ready-made base for a land invasion and air attacks on Germany's vitals. While invasion forces were assembling, moreover, they would serve to garrison the British Isles. Finally, an attack across the English Channel would use the only short water crossing to the Continent from a base already available and would thrust directly at the heart of Fortress Europe by the main historic invasion routes.

Even so, the plan was a desperate gamble. If northwestern Europe offered the Allies a position of strength, the Germans also would be strong there, close to their own heartland, served by the superb rail and road nets of western and central Europe and shielded by submarines based along the entire length of Europe's Atlantic front. The limited range of fighter aircraft based in southern England narrowly restricted the choice of landing areas. Much hinged on the USSR, where for the present the bulk of Germany's land forces was pinned down. If the Soviet Union collapsed, an invasion from the west would be a suicidal venture. The invasion therefore had to be launched before the Soviet armies were crushed and, moreover, in sufficient strength to draw substantial German forces away from the Eastern Front and avert that very catastrophe.

On the face of it, these two requirements seemed to cancel each other. Allied planners had little hope that the Russians could stand up under another summer's onslaught; it was obvious, in view of the scarcity of shipping, that any attack the Western Allies could mount by the coming summer or early fall would be hardly more than a pinprick. The best solution General Marshall's planners could offer to this dilemma was to set the invasion (ROUNDUP) for the spring of 1943. Until then, through air bombardment of Germany and a continued flow of materiel to the Soviet Union, the Allies hoped to help the Soviet armies stave off defeat. If these measures should fail, and Soviet resistance seemed about to collapse, then, with whatever forces were on hand, the Allies would have to invade the continent in 1942 (SLEDGEHAMMER)—and no later than September, before bad weather closed in over the channel. The Allies would follow the same course in the unlikely event that Germany itself showed signs of serious weakness in 1942.

In London, Mr. Hopkins and General Marshall found the British delighted that the United States was ready to commit itself to a major offensive against Germany in 1943. The British readily agreed that preparations should begin immediately for an invasion the following spring, and they undertook to provide more than half the shipping needed to move about a million American troops and immense quantities of materiel to the United Kingdom. They warned, however, that their first concern at present was to maintain their position in the Middle East, where late in January Rommel's revitalized Africa Corps had inflicted a serious reverse on the Eighth Army. Both sides were now

feverishly building up for a new offensive. The British also expressed deep misgivings over the proposed emergency cross-channel operation in the fall. Nevertheless, the British approved the American plan, essentially the War Department's plan, "in principle"—a phrase that was to give much trouble in the coalition war. The immediate relief General Marshall's staff felt in Washington was reflected by General Eisenhower, then Chief, Operations Division, War Department General Staff, who noted: "At long last, and after months of struggle ... we are all definitely committed to one concept of fighting. If we can agree on major purposes and objectives, our efforts will begin to fall in line and we won't just be thrashing around in the dark."

But there were also strong reservations on the American side. Admiral King did not contest in principle the Germany-first strategy. But he was determined not to allow preparations for the cross-channel invasion to jeopardize "vital needs" in the Pacific, by which, as he candidly stated early in May, he meant the ability of U.S. forces "to hold what we have against any attack that the Japanese are capable of launching." Only the President's peremptory order on May 6 that the invasion buildup in Britain must not be adversely affected (indeed, it had scarcely begun) prevented a large-scale diversion of forces and shipping to the Pacific to counter the Japanese offensive that culminated in the great naval battles of the Coral Sea and Midway. The President himself made it clear, on the other hand, that aid to the Soviet Union would have to continue on a mounting scale, whatever the cost to BOLERO (the American buildup in the United Kingdom) in materiel and shipping. And even Army leaders were unwilling to assign shipping for the movement until the scheduled buildup of garrisons in the western hemisphere and various other overseas stations had been completed, which, it was estimated, would not be until August at the earliest. Until then British shipping would have to carry the main burden.

Not until June 1942, therefore, did the first shiplot of American troops under the new plan set sail for England in the great British luxury liner *Queen Elizabeth*. Almost simultaneously a new crisis erupted in the Middle East. At the end of May, after a four-month lull, Rommel seized the initiative and swept around the southern flank of the British Eighth Army, which held strong positions in eastern Libya from El Gazala on the coast, south to Bir Hacheim. After two weeks of hard fighting in which the British seemed to be holding their own, Rommel succeeded in taking Bir Hacheim, the southern anchor of the British line. During the next few days British armor, committed piecemeal in an effort to cover a withdrawal to the northeast, was virtually wiped out by skillfully concealed German 88-mm. guns. The Eighth Army once again retreated across the Egyptian frontier; on June 21 Tobruk, which the British had expected to hold out behind Axis lines as in 1941, was captured with its garrison and large stores of trucks, gasoline, and other supplies.

News of this disaster reached Prime Minister Churchill in Washington, where he had gone early in the month to tell the President that the British were unwilling to go through with an emergency cross-channel landing late in 1942. General Marshall immediately offered to send an armored division to help the hard-pressed British in Egypt, but it was decided for the present to limit American aid to emergency shipments of tanks, artillery, and the ground components of three combat

"At long last, and after months of struggle ... we are all definitely committed to one concept of fighting. If we can agree on major purposes and objectives, our efforts will begin to fall in line and we won't just be thrashing around in the dark."

air groups. This move required the diversion for many weeks of a substantial amount of U.K. shipping from the North Atlantic on the long voyage around the Cape of Good Hope. But the heaviest impact on the invasion buildup in the United Kingdom resulted from the diversion of British shipping to the Middle East and the retention there of shipping the British had earmarked for the buildup. For the time being, British participation in the BOLERO program virtually ceased.

By the end of August, with only seven months to go before the invasion was to be launched, only about 170,000 American troops were in or on their way to the British Isles. The shipment of equipment and supplies, particularly for the development of cantonments, airfields, and base facilities, was hopelessly behind schedule. There seemed little likelihood that enough shipping would be available to complete the movement across the Atlantic of a million troops, with the 10–15 million tons of cargo that must accompany them, by April 1943 as scheduled. And even if the shipping could have been found, Britain's ports and inland transportation system would have been swamped before the influx reached its peak. Thus, by the late summer of 1942, a spring 1943 invasion of the continent seemed a logistical impossibility.

TORCH Replaces SLEDGEHAMMER/ROUNDUP

By this time, in fact, American military leaders had become discouraged about a cross-channel invasion in the spring of 1943, though not primarily because of the lag in the buildup program. In June the British had decided that SLEDGEHAMMER, for which they had never had any enthusiasm, could not be undertaken except in a situation that offered good prospects of success—that is, if the Germans should seem about to collapse. At the moment, with the German summer offensive just starting to roll toward the Caucasus and the lower Don, such a situation did not appear to be an imminent possibility. The British decision was influenced in part by the alarming lag in deliveries of American landing craft, of which less than two-thirds of the promised quota for the operation was expected to materialize. The British also argued that the confusion and losses attendant upon executing SLEDGEHAMMER—and the cost of supporting the beachhead once it was established—were likely to disrupt preparations for the main invasion the following spring. Since SLEDGEHAMMER, if carried out, would have been in the main a British undertaking, the British veto was decisive. The operation was canceled.

As a substitute, the British proposed a less risky venture—landings in French North Africa—that they were confident could be accomplished in stride, without jeopardizing ROUNDUP. To Stimson, Marshall, King, and Arnold this proposal was unacceptable. Failure would be a costly, perhaps fatal rebuff to Allied prestige. Success might be even more dangerous, the Americans feared, for it might lead the Allies step-by-step into a protracted series of operations around the southern periphery of Europe. Such operations could not be decisive and would only postpone the final test of strength with Germany. At the very least, an invasion of North Africa would, the Americans were convinced, rule out a spring 1943 invasion of the continent. The

Army planners preferred the safer alternative of simply reinforcing the British in Egypt.

The British proposal was nevertheless politically shrewd, for it was no secret that President Roosevelt had long before expressed a predilection for this very undertaking. He was determined, besides, to send American ground forces into action somewhere in the European area before the end of 1942. Already half persuaded, he hardly needed Churchill's enthusiastic rhetoric to win him over to the new project. When General Marshall and his colleagues in the Joints Chiefs of Staff suggested as an alternative that the United States should immediately go on the defensive in Europe and turn its main attention against Japan, Roosevelt brusquely rejected the idea.

In mid-July Hopkins, Marshall, and King went to London under orders from the President to reach agreement with the British on some operation in 1942. After a vain effort to persuade the British to reconsider an invasion of the continent in 1942, the Americans reluctantly agreed on July 24 to the North Africa operation, now christened TORCH, to be launched before the end of October. The President, overruling Marshall's suggestion that a final decision be postponed until mid-September to permit a reappraisal of the Soviet situation, cabled Hopkins that he was "delighted" and that the orders were now "full speed ahead." Into the final agreement, however, Marshall and King wrote their own conviction that the decision on TORCH "in all probability" ruled out an invasion of the continent in 1943 and meant further that the Allies had accepted "a defensive, encircling line of action" in the European-Mediterranean war.

End of the Defensive Stage

With the decision for TORCH, the first stage in the search for a strategic plan against Germany came to an end. In retrospect, 1941–1942 had been a period in which scarcity and the need for defense had shaped the Allies' strategy. The British and American approaches to war had their first conflict, and the British had won the first round. That British notions of strategy tended to prevail was not surprising. British forces had been mobilized earlier and were in the theaters in far greater numbers than American forces. The United States was still mobilizing its manpower and resources. It had taken the better part of the year after Pearl Harbor for U.S. forces to have an appreciable effect in the theaters. Strategic planning in 1942 had been largely opportunistic, hand-to-mouth, and limited by critical shortages in shipping and munitions. Troops had been parceled out piecemeal to meet immediate threats and crises. Despite the Germany-first decision, the total U.S. Army forces deployed in the war against Japan by the end of the year actually exceeded the total U.S. Army forces deployed in the war against Germany. The one scheme to put Allied planning on an orderly, long-range basis and to achieve the concepts of mass and concentration in which General Marshall and his staff had put their faith had failed. By the close of the critical first year after Pearl Harbor, an effective formula for halting the dissipation of forces and materiel in ventures regarded as secondary still eluded the Army high command.

Strategic planning in 1942 had been largely opportunistic, hand-to-mouth, and limited by critical shortages in shipping and munitions.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Why was the United States caught so unprepared by the Japanese attacks against Hawaii and the Philippines? What were the similarities and differences between the two garrisons and the defense each put up?
2. The surrender of U.S. forces at Bataan and Corregidor was the worst disaster in the history of the U.S. Army. Could it have been avoided? How?
3. Why did the United States see Germany as the greatest threat in late 1941? Was this policy correct? Why or why not?
4. When Churchill heard the news about Pearl Harbor, he reportedly said that he immediately thanked God that victory was now sure for Britain. Why did he have such confidence?
5. How did the United States and Great Britain coordinate their forces during World War II? How did the methods differ from those the Allies had adopted in World War I?
6. Under what circumstances could the Allies have launched an invasion of the European continent in 1942? What could the United States have contributed to such an operation? Why did the diversion of resources to the Mediterranean affect the timetable for an invasion of the continent in 1943?

RECOMMENDED READINGS

- Greenfield, Kent Roberts, ed. *Command Decisions*. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Army Center of Military History, 2002, chs. 5–7.
- Kirkpatrick, Charles E. *An Unknown Future and a Doubtful Present: Writing the Victory Plan of 1941*. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Army Center of Military History, 1992.
- Leighton, Richard M., and Robert W. Coakley. *Global Logistics and Strategy, 1940–1943*. U.S. Army in World War II. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Army Center of Military History, 1995, chs. 6–7, 14–15.
- Matloff, Maurice, and Edwin M. Snell. *Strategic Planning for Coalition Warfare, 1941–1942*. U.S. Army in World War II. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Army Center of Military History, 1995, chs. 8, 12, 16–17.
- Prange, Gordon. *At Dawn We Slept: The Untold Story of Pearl Harbor*. New York: Penguin Books, 2001.
- Whitman, John W. *Bataan Our Last Ditch: The Bataan Campaign, 1942*. New York: Hippocrene Books, 1990.

Other Readings

- Churchill, Winston S. *The Second World War*, 6 vols. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1950, vols. 3, 4.
- Cline, Ray S. *Washington Command Post: The Operations Division*. U.S. Army in World War II. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Army Center of Military History, 1990, chs. 5–7.
- Conn, Stetson, Rose C. Engelman, and Byron Fairchild. *Guarding the United States and Its Outposts*. U.S. Army in World War II. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Army Center of Military History, 2000.

- Craven, Wesley F., and James L. Cate, eds. *The Army Air Forces in World War II*, 7 vols. Washington, D.C.: Office of Air Force History, 1983, vol. 1.
- Green, Constance M., Harry C. Thomson, and Peter C. Roots. *The Ordnance Department: Planning Munitions for War*. U.S. Army in World War II. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Army Center of Military History, 1990.
- Gwyer, J. M. A., and J. R. M. Butler. *History of the Second World War*, 6 vols., ed. J. R. M. Butler. London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1964, vol. 3.
- Millett, John D. *The Organization and Role of the Army Service Forces*. U.S. Army in World War II. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Army Center of Military History, 1989, ch. 2.
- Morison, Samuel E. *History of U.S. Naval Operations in World War II*, 15 vols. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2001–2002, vols. 1, 3, 4.
- Morton, Louis. *The Fall of the Philippines*. U.S. Army in World War II. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Army Center of Military History, 1989.
- Pogue, Forrest C. *George C. Marshall: Ordeal and Hope, 1939–1942*. New York: Viking, 1966.
- Watson, Mark S. *Chief of Staff: Prewar Plans and Preparations*. U.S. Army in World War II. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Army Center of Military History, 1991, ch. 15.