Fleet Admiral King

A NAVAL RECORD

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CHAPTER THIRTY-SEVEN

The Cairo and Teheran Conferences

ATLANTIC CROSSING IN BATTLESHIP *Iowa*. VISIT WITH EISENHOWER AT CARTHAGE. CAIRO CONFERENCE. GENERAL STILWELL AND AID TO CHINA. FIRST MEETING WITH STALIN AT TEHERAN. THE SECOND FRONT. RETURN TO CAIRO VIA JERUSALEM. THE BROKEN PROMISE TO CHINA. EISENHOWER DESIGNATED TO COMMAND OVERLORD. KING RETURNS BY WAY OF BRAZIL.

Part 1. Atlantic Crossing in Battleship Iowa

AT SIX minutes after midnight on Saturday, 13 November 1943, U.S.S. *Iowa*, one of the newest and largest battleships in commission, hoisted her anchor and got under way for North Africa from Hampton Roads. Among her passengers were the President of the United States, the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Harry Hopkins, and many other persons who were on their way to the Mediterranean for a series of international conferences with the Prime Minister, with Chiang Kai-shek, and with Marshal Stalin.

Since the Quebec meeting in August, major changes had taken place in the strategic situation. The Pacific offensive was about to begin, and, as the President and his party were leaving for North Africa, Admiral Spruance's fleet was steaming westward in the Pacific for the assault upon the Gilbert Islands. The successful am-

phibious assault upon Sicily in July had made possible landings at Salerno, on the mainland of Italy, on 9 September. Italy had already been eliminated as a factor in the European war, and resistance in that country was being made chiefly by German troops. The Italian fleet, which had so notably failed to give a good account of itself in the day of battle, had surrendered at Malta to its dogged and skillful adversary, Admiral of the Fleet Sir Andrew Cunningham. Planning for the invasion of northern Europe had been progressing satisfactorily, although no commander had yet been designated, in spite of frequent speculation in the press.

The forthcoming conferences with the Chinese and the Russians involved complicated planning, for though the Chinese were at war with Japan, and the Russians with Germany, the Chinese had no part in the European conflict and the Russians, as yet, had no avowed interest in the Pacific. Consequently it was arranged to meet the Chinese at Cairo and then, as Marshal Stalin refused to go farther from his native country than Iran, a second conference was scheduled with him at Teheran.

King, Marshall and Arnold had left the Washington Navy Yard aboard King's flagship *Dauntless* early in the morning of 11 November 1943, the twenty-fifth anniversary of the armistice that had concluded hostilities in World War I, and by midafternoon were alongside *Iowa,* off Point Lookout, near the mouth of the Potomac. The Joint Chiefs transferred to the great battleship, which remained at anchor awaiting the arrival of the President the following morning. In order better to preserve the secrecy of the impending meetings in the Mediterranean the President left Washington after dark, and made the trip down river in his yacht *Potomac* by night. At 9 o'clock on Friday morning, the 12th, *Potomac* came alongside *Iowa* and the President, with Admiral Leahy and Harry Hopkins, boarded the battleship. She immediately proceeded down Chesapeake Bay to Hampton Roads, and here the fuel oil, which had been off-loaded to achieve a draft that would permit passage up the Chesapeake Bay to the mouth of the Potomac River, was replaced. *Iowa* was ready for sea by 10 o'clock that evening, but as the President did not wish to sail on a Friday—preferring a Saturday even though it were the 13th—Captain John L. McCrea, who had been the President's Naval Aide before assuming command of

Iowa, waited until just after the stroke of midnight before standing out to sea.

During the Atlantic crossing, *Iowa* was escorted by three destroyers that, because of the 25-knot speed of the battleship, required relief by a fresh division at intervals, to avoid the delay that would have been occasioned by refueling them. Three relays were required for the voyage, each one of which rendezvoused smartly at the appointed time and place, whereupon the group being relieved proceeded at economical speed to refuel, their duty completed. The voyage was without incident save for an embarrassing occurrence that took place on Sunday afternoon, 14 November.

The President and his party were on deck after luncheon watching the antiaircraft battery conduct practice fire at large black aerological balloons. Suddenly the battleship listed from the effect of full rudder, pulsed with flank speed, and the general alarm clanked loudly. All hands rushed to their battle stations, and there was considerable excitement until the cause of all this could be ascertained. King, on the bridge, turned to the commanding officer, and inquired: "Captain McCrea, what is the interlude?"

It developed that the screening destroyer on the starboard bow, engaged at drill, had accidentally discharged a live torpedo directly at *Iowa,* which had, unfortunately but quite naturally, been used as the drill target. The torpedo missed, but exploded in the disturbed wake of *Iowa* with such a thud that many people thought the ship had been hit. That it did not run hot and straight saved the United States Navy the embarrassment of having torpedoed their Commander in Chief and the Joint Chiefs of Staff! King wished to relieve the commanding officer of the destroyer at once, but, to his great amazement, the President told him to forget it. Consequently no steps were taken.

During the voyage the Joint Chiefs of Staff met daily to consider the problems that would later be discussed with the President, and, at Cairo, with the British Chiefs of Staff. The President held frequent conferences with them, besides spending considerable time on deck enjoying the sea air.

The Straits of Gibraltar were traversed at night and Oran, *Iowa*'s destination, was reached about eight o'clock in the morning of 20 November. After disembarking, the presidential party went by car

to the airport. Vice Admiral H. K. Hewitt, Commander Eighth Fleet, and Admiral Sir John Cunningham who had met King at the dock, rode with him to the plane and used this opportunity to discuss current matters in his theater of operations. As a precaution, the travelers were scattered among four C-54 planes.

Part 2. Visit with General Eisenhower at Carthage

The first hop was to Tunis, where cars were in readiness to take the President and his party to their quarters ten miles outside the city, near the ruins of ancient Carthage. By coincidence, the President's villa was known locally as the White House. After luncheon Marshall and King walked to Roman ruins near by, but their great interest was in discovering what could be seen of Carthage. They remembered the destruction of the city by the Romans in 146 B.C. and the order of the great Scipio to sow the site with salt. From the meager Carthaginian remains that they found, it appeared that Scipio's planting had been very effective.

Along the beach west of the hotel they found the broken-down tops of some ten ancient brick cisterns. These were round, tapering toward the top, and seemingly had been used as magazines for storing grain. On the castle-hill above the beach, they visited first the cathedral containing the relics of the saintly crusading King of France, Louis IX, who had died there of the plague in 1270, and then the Grand Séminaire de Carthage, tended by the Pères Blancs. The old monk who accompanied King and Marshall about the seminary museum displayed many Roman objects to them, but in reply to their questions, said there were only a few Carthaginian relics to be found. He managed to produce some potsherds, and showed them a statue of a Carthaginian deity, half woman and half fish, made of white marble and polished and tinted until it shone. These archaeological researches, although in one sense unsatisfactory, indicated to Marshall and King the thoroughness of their Roman predecessors in the region.

That evening they were both happy to accept General Eisenhower's invitation to dine with him and spend the night at his little cottage at La Marsa, near Carthage, thus escaping momentarily the restrictions that necessarily surround travel in the company of the President. The evening was an agreeable one. They ate and drank

relatively little, and talked a great deal, chiefly about the command of the forthcoming invasion of Europe—operation OVERLORD. The choice of the Supreme Allied Commander had still not been made, and this was inevitably a subject for speculation. In the earlier stages of planning for this operation it had been generally assumed that the Supreme Commander would be British, since the command in North Africa, Sicily, and the early phases of the attack on the Italian mainland, had, by common consent, been given to Eisenhower. However, at the Quebec Conference the Prime Minister had agreed that the supreme command of OVERLORD should go to an American, in view of the fact that, although in the original landing force British troops would be about equal in strength, if not superior to the Americans, in all subsequent operations on the continent the number of American forces would be greatly increased, so that they would outnumber the British by a ratio of approximately five to one. The President and the Prime Minister had discussed the matter repeatedly, and both seemingly favored Marshall for the command. King felt that Marshall too wanted it, although he never said so. It was only natural, in King's view, that he should want it, as it was the most enviable duty that could come to any military man during the war.

Nevertheless King felt strongly that Marshall was indispensable as a member of the Joint and Combined Chiefs of Staff, and could not be spared, however desirable he might be as Supreme Commander. During the Quebec Conference when Secretary Knox, who had by exception been present for a couple of days, spoke to King about the possibility of Marshall commanding in Europe, King had insisted forcibly that Marshall could not be spared, as he was a key-man, both in the United States and in the Allied organizations, and it seemed a poor idea to swap horses in midstream. Secretary Knox had countered that no one remembered the name of the Chief of Staff of the Army during World War I, whereas everyone knew General Pershing. King had pointed out, however, that World War II was very different from World War I, since now there were many oceans and many continents to be considered, against the single Atlantic Ocean and the single continent of Europe in the previous war. In due time Secretary Knox had come to understand and sympathize with King's viewpoint. Meanwhile Leahy and Arnold had

independently reached the same conclusion, and they and King had gone separately to the Citadel and told the President their views, which were essentially the same—that Marshall could not be spared from the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

After dinner at Carthage, King brought up the subject in conversation, and gave Eisenhower his views about the top commander for operation OVERLORD. He said first that it must be an American general, with a British general or perhaps a British air marshal as his deputy, and that the time had come, in his view, for the President and the Allies to decide upon their man. He told Eisenhower about his conversation at the Quebec Conference with Secretary Knox, and how he had told the President why Marshall should not have the command. During this explanation Marshall remained completely silent and, according to Eisenhower's published recollections,[1] naturally seemed somewhat embarrassed. King definitely told Eisenhower that *he* was the proper man to become Supreme Commander of the Allied Forces on the continent of Europe, particularly in France and in Germany, although the President had tentatively decided to give the command to Marshall. King, dreading the consequences of Marshall's withdrawal from the Joint and Combined Chiefs of Staff, said that it was only because Eisenhower was slated to take Marshall's place in Washington that he could view the plan with anything less than consternation. He still, however, felt it to be a mistake to shift the key members of a winning team, and intended to renew his arguments to the President. The conversation continued until about ten o'clock, and then since King had been up at five o'clock that morning, he felt that it was time to go to bed. He never did know how long Marshall and Eisenhower may have talked after he retired, but the next morning he was up at 6:30, as all hands had to be ready for a full day ahead.

The four planes took off for Cairo in the morning, heading south and then east, following in a general way the contour of the southern shore line of the Mediterranean. Realization that German-held airfields were not far away was brought home by the escort of some eight to ten fighter planes that took position above and on either side of the transport planes, and duplicated their every move. If there had been a leak in the plans and movements in connection with the

[1] *Crusade in Europe*, p. 196.

conference, any one of the huge but defenseless transports would have made a tempting target to Nazi aerial gunners—hence the fighter escort. The flight to Cairo proved to be a most interesting one. Most of it was made at a height of about 5000 feet so that the passengers could see the country below. The tracks of battle could be seen clearly in the sands, marking the ebb and flow of the tide of conflict as Montgomery and Rommel had contested for supremacy in this area, barren but none the less strategically important. As mute evidence of the ferocity of the struggle, the carcasses of tanks, planes and trucks still dotted the field of battle. Benghazi was circled shortly after noon, and a good view was had of the unrepaired destruction that had been wrought on that city. King was particularly anxious to see the ridge where the desert drops in western Egypt, because that had been the scene of several battles between the Germans and the British, although he was unable to make out the site of Montgomery's great victory of El Alamein, won a year previously inside Egypt, not far from Cairo.

Part 3. The Cairo Conference

Cairo was reached without incident in the late afternoon, and the planes landed at a huge Army airfield to the east of the city. It was necessary to traverse the city, for the quarters assigned the party were to the southwest, near the town of Giza, in the shadow of the great pyramids. There villas had been rented from private owners in the vicinity of the Mena House, which had been taken over in its entirety for the conference headquarters. The President had a large villa to himself, the American Navy and Army groups had two small villas each, while the British were in other quarters in the direction of Cairo. Certain staff members were accommodated on the upper floors of the Mena House, although the greater part of the hotel was devoted to office space and conference rooms.

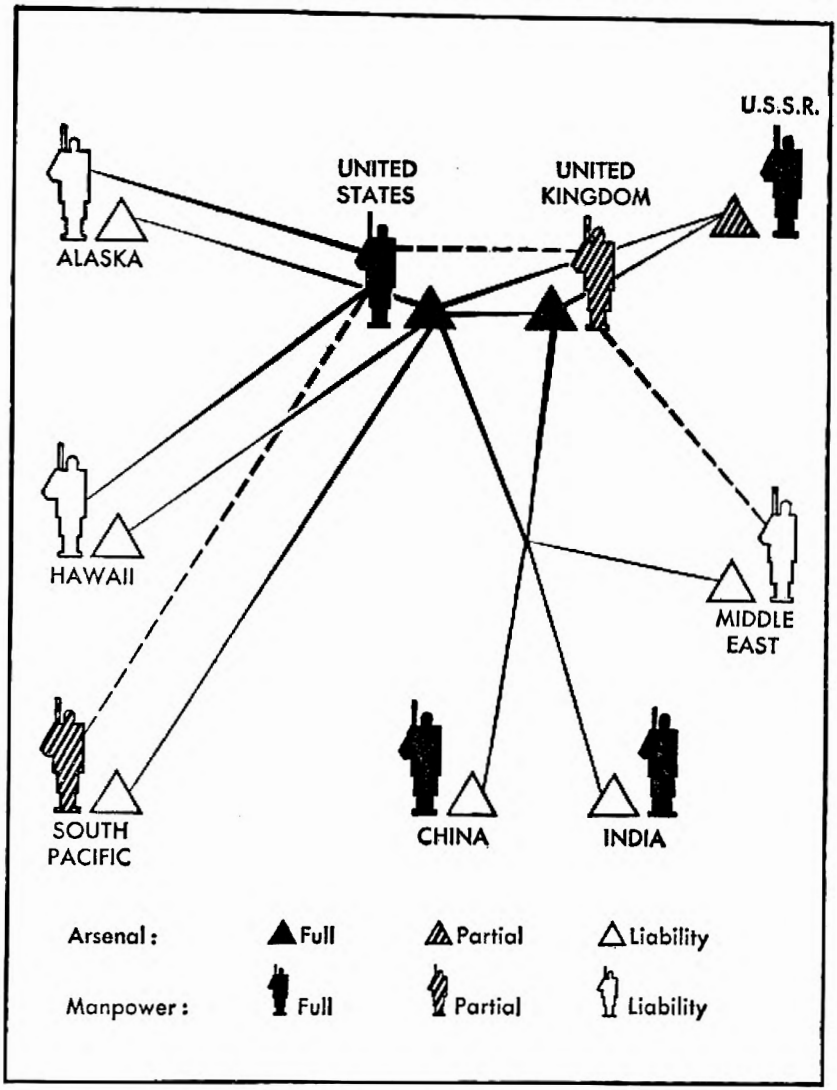
Generalissimo and Madame Chiang Kai-shek, accompanied by two Chinese generals and an admiral, together with a small staff, had arrived in Cairo before the British and American representatives, and were quartered in a group of villas near the Mena House. General Stilwell and Major General Chennault were also present in Cairo, as was Lord Louis Mountbatten, the Supreme Allied Commander for Southeast Asia.

The forthcoming discussions of operations in aid of the Chinese promised to be of particular interest to King, for from the beginning of the war he had felt strongly that China had both the manpower and the geographic position whereby, given munitions and equipment, that manpower could be applied on the continent of Asia against the Japanese Army. An awareness of these possibilities on the part of the Combined Chiefs of Staff had been responsible for the struggle to reconquer Burma, for the airlift over the Hump into China, and for the construction of pipe lines from Assam. Similar planning for the future had engendered the construction of the Ledo road, which joined with the old Burma road. And finally it was King's realization of the reservoir of manpower that was China, and his perception of China's geographical position in relation to Japan that caused his unceasing endeavor to reach China by sea.

This situation was graphically represented in the diagram "Munitions vs. Manpower vs. the Eight Fronts as of April 1942," [2] which King had first used in 1942 to indicate the global war situation in a broad way. This showed the United States with a full supply of manpower and a full arsenal of munitions, the United Kingdom with a full arsenal of munitions and a partial supply of manpower, the Soviet Union with a full supply of manpower and a partial arsenal of munitions, whereas China, with a full reservoir of manpower, had, so far as munitions went, an arsenal that was a complete vacuum. That diagram generally illustrated the magnitude of the problem. China from the beginning had been very much on everyone's mind, for the sake of the Allies.

King was further interested in the Chinese problem because he really believed in General Stilwell, who had, very early in 1942, been made Chief of Staff to Chiang Kai-shek. Stilwell, who had spent some years in China, had learned to speak and write Chinese. He needed all his knowledge of the country, because he held no less than five different jobs, each of considerable magnitude. In addition to serving as Chief of Staff for Chiang Kai-shek, Stilwell was in command of all United States Army troops serving in China, he was

[2] *U.S. Navy at War*, p. 35. Although not published until it was included in King's first report to the Secretary of the Navy in 1944, this diagram had been drawn according to King's direction when Dr. Evatt, the Minister of External Affairs of Australia, first came to Washington in the spring of 1942. King subsequently used it on various occasions during the year in Washington.



Munitions versus Manpower versus the Eight Fronts as of April 1942

Deputy of the British Army commander in Burma (and later Deputy to Lord Louis Mountbatten when he became Supreme Allied Commander, Southeast Asia), he was in charge of all Lend-Lease supplies entering China and finally, he was also in command of a few Chinese divisions which he had contrived to train (with

available United States munitions) in the area of Kunming, in Yunnan Province.

Stilwell was a fighter, and he knew his China. He was not a man of tact, but he often had provocation for his lack of it. He had no love for the Chinese addiction to graft, and was consequently disliked by the Chinese war lords, who were riddled with it, and who had relatively little interest in obtaining good food and proper equipment and clothing for the fighting men. Some of the war lords were really not generals at all, and matters did not progress satisfactorily. Nevertheless, Stilwell managed to get together seven or eight divisions that could really fight, and in the fall of 1942 he had been able to engage the Japanese, who had worked up to the Salween River and crossed over to the Me-Kong River in Yunnan Province and threatened to get at Chungking itself. In this emergency, various Chinese generals would not obey Stilwell's orders unless each and every order had first been sent to Chiang Kai-shek for approval. At one time Stilwell, because of circumstances beyond his control, was beaten so badly that he crossed upper Burma on foot with two small Chinese divisions that were the only forces he had left, and ended up in the Maingkwan area where the natives were friendly. There he carried on for some time, training such Chinese troops as drifted to that area as a result of having sensed that a real fighter was in command. Stilwell had always insisted that Chiang Kai-shek had no military competence, and that, although he was accepted as a political leader throughout China, he was totally lacking in the basic concepts of political thought that had been familiar to the British and Americans for centuries.

At the time of the Cairo Conference it appeared that Stilwell was making good progress in his dealings with the Chinese. King personally approved of what Stilwell was doing, and told him so, although later King was forced to change his ideas about Stilwell, but still without coming to agree with the military ideas of Chiang Kai-shek, which seemed to King entirely too entangled in Chinese politics.

Immediately after the Casablanca Conference in January 1943, Arnold and Sir John Dill had proceeded to China, and as a result of that visit, the Army Air Corps began to give help to the Chinese by flying the largest American planes from Assam across the mountains

over the Hump into Kunming, where trucks and carts loaded the air-borne supplies and carried them inland. This traffic over the Hump caused further controversy between Stilwell and Major General Chennault. The latter was one of those United States Army Air Corps officers so firmly convinced bombing would cause the enemy to quit that he thought all one had to do in preparation for any war was to accumulate planes and gas and oil. Stilwell had other ideas. He believed in bombing, but to him the basic idea of war was to hit the enemy with everything that was available, especially with troops and guns. Furthermore, while the Air Corps was mainly concerned with supplies of gas and oil, Stilwell had considerably more evolved ideas of logistics. The amount of cargo that could be flown into China was limited by the necessity of carrying sufficient gas to get back over the Hump into Assam after unloading, and a controversy arose between Stilwell and Chennault over the type of supplies that were most needed. Stilwell insisted that at least half of everything brought in should go to the fighting troops, whereas Chennault maintained that a far larger proportion should be used to build up new air units to make more planes available. Through all this controversy Chiang Kai-shek cherished the simple belief that all his troubles would melt away like magic if Mr. Roosevelt would only decide how much gas and oil should be sent to China.

These were but some of the problems in the background of the first plenary meeting of the SEXTANT Conference. This was held on the morning of 23 November, with the President, the Prime Minister, the Combined Chiefs of Staff, the Generalissimo and Madame Chiang Kai-shek and their Chinese staff officers present.[3] On this occasion Vice Admiral Mountbatten, who had flown from India, outlined the operations that were proposed for Burma, while Chiang Kai-shek, Mr. Churchill and others joined in the discussion. At the

[3] In the first meeting of the Combined Chiefs of Staff at Cairo on 22 November, Marshall reported that Chiang Kai-shek would like to have a Chinese military representative on the Combined Chiefs, and suggested the possibility that it might facilitate the development of good faith and mutual understanding if the Soviet Union and China were each invited to have a permanent military representative. King pointed out, however, that the question involved a basic principle that might lead to the permanent expansion of the Combined Chiefs of Staff into a four-power body. Clearly the Chinese and Soviet representatives could not sit at the same table, since they were not engaging the same enemies. The Chinese could not discuss the war against Germany, nor could the Soviet representatives attend the deliberations of the Combined Chiefs of Staff dealing with the war against Japan.

Casablanca Conference in January, President Roosevelt and the Joint Chiefs of Staff had been vitally interested in operation ANAKIM, that was conceived to drive the Japanese out of Burma and reopen land communications with China, and King, for one, had felt it imperative that this operation be undertaken not later than November 1943, in order to prevent the Chinese from dropping out of the war. At the TRIDENT conference in May 1943 the American enthusiasm and British disinclination for ANAKIM was even clearer, and it became apparent that the operation neither would nor could be undertaken before the end of the year. In August at the QUADRANT Conference in Quebec Vice Admiral Mountbatten had been appointed Supreme Allied Commander in Southeast Asia, and here at Cairo in November when, according to King's timetable, operations should have been beginning, plans were still being discussed. These envisaged a land offensive in northern Burma by Chinese, British and American troops (known as operation TARZAN) in conjunction with amphibious operations commanded by Mountbatten in the Bay of Bengal (designated as operation BUCCANEER). The previous enforced inactivity of the British Eastern Fleet due to lack of aircraft carriers could now come to an end, for the elimination of the Italian fleet had released for possible operations in the Indian Ocean strong forces of the Royal Navy that had hitherto been occupied in the Mediterranean. The Joint Chiefs of Staff favored an amphibious assault on the Andaman Islands or—better still in King's view—a break straight for the area of Bangkok which would radically cut off Japanese supplies and hamper lines of sea communication.

To King it seemed that the capture of Bangkok would prove the key to the utilization of India, Burma and Thailand against Japanese land forces on the mainland of Asia, and such an operation seemed to him far more promising than Mr. Churchill's suggestion of obtaining a foothold in the northeast corner of Sumatra.[4] Chiang Kai-shek apparently felt that the success of the Allied ground troops in Burma depended greatly upon simultaneous naval operations by British forces in the Indian Ocean—a view that was not shared by Mr. Churchill, who saw no necessary connection between the two.

[4] This flanking operation, known as CULVERIN, appeared to Mr. Churchill to offer possibilities similar to the North African landings of November 1942. It will be recalled that at the Quebec Conference in August, when he had proposed it, he suggested that CULVERIN would be the TORCH of the Indian Ocean.

It appeared to King that the "Missimo" had, without particularly understanding them, a kind of childlike faith in amphibious operations. He had evidently read about them, or had been told what was being done in the Mediterranean and against the Japanese in the Pacific. Apparently his idea was to drive the Japanese out of the area around Rangoon, and then gradually to push the enemy out of China itself. In order to get naval help from the British in the Bay of Bengal, he assented to putting a very few Chinese trained divisions in the area of Yunnan under Stilwell's command for the northern Burma land campaign. After some of these ideas had been ventilated, and a group of photographs had been taken, the Combined Chiefs of Staff took their leave, and the real discussion was begun between the President, the Prime Minister, and the Chinese, but most particularly between the President and the Chinese after Mr. Churchill had left.

The Chinese generals were invited to be present that afternoon at a meeting of the Combined Chiefs of Staff, and were given a chance to tell their story. Apparently acting under instructions, they found relatively little to say. To judge by Stilwell's diary, the occasion was anything but a happy one, for on 23 November he recorded:

> 2:30 To preliminary meeting. G-mo phoned, 'do not present proposals.' Message the G-mo would come. Then he wouldn't. Then he would. Christ. Brooke got nasty and King got good and sore. King almost climbed over the table at Brooke. God, he was mad. I wish he had socked him.
>
> 3:30 Chinese came. Terrible performance. They couldn't ask a question. Brooke was insulting. I helped them out. They were asked about Yoke and I had to reply. Brooke fired questions and I batted them back.
>
> At 6:00 went to G-mo's and helped Chinese get questions ready. Tired.[5]

King had very few direct contacts with the Chinese after these meetings, but he was told that Mr. Chuchill had been very cool toward their request for help against the Japanese, who were working into upper Burma in order to cut off the route from Yunnan toward Kunming. President Roosevelt, as was his nature, was always hopeful that something could be done to assist the Chinese, especially in upper Burma, and obtained the Prime Minister's reluctant

[5] *The Stilwell Papers*, p. 245.

assent to help the Generalissimo with some British amphibious and naval units in the Gulf of Martaban and around Bassein. This definite commitment was ultimately to cause trouble by non-fulfillment.

In a second plenary meeting between the President, the Prime Minister, and the Combined Chiefs of Staff on 24 November, at which the Chinese were not present, forthcoming operations in Europe were discussed. The supreme command for OVERLORD had not been settled. The Prime Minister observed that when Italy fell, cheap prizes were open to us, and General Wilson [6] had been ordered to improvise and dare in the Mediterranean.[7] Mr. Churchill made it clear that OVERLORD remained at the top of the bill, but felt that this operation should not be such a tyrant as to rule out every other activity in the Mediterranean.

During the stay in Cairo, King observed his sixty-fifth birthday on 23 November. Another touch of home occurred two days later, for Thursday the 25th happened that year to be Thanksgiving Day, and, out of politeness to the American visitors, the British residents of Cairo had arranged for a Thanksgiving service to be held in the British cathedral.

Part 4. The Teheran Conference

On 27 November the first and somewhat inconclusive Cairo conferences were concluded. The manner in which the support promised to Chiang Kai-shek for the recapture of Burma was to be fur-

[6] General Sir Henry Maitland-Wilson (now Field Marshal Lord Wilson of Libya), British Commander in Chief of the Middle East, succeeded Eisenhower as Supreme Allied Commander in the Mediterranean in December 1943, and continued there until January 1945, when, after the death of Field Marshal Sir John Dill, he was named as British Staff representative in Washington.

[7] Immediately after the surrender of Italy slender British forces had boldly attempted to seize islands of strategic importance in the Aegean. Troops were put ashore on Cos, Leros and Samos, but after gallant resistance they were dislodged by superior German strength. Although both Maitland-Wilson and Mr. Churchill had been most anxious to capture Rhodes and the other islands of the Dodecanese, it was the opinion of President Roosevelt and the Joint Chiefs of Staff that forces and landing craft could not be diverted from Italy without prejudicing both operations there and the future of OVERLORD. This was a bitter disappointment to Mr. Churchill, who has recorded in *Closing the Ring* that it constituted, although "happily on a small scale, the most acute difference I ever had with General Eisenhower."

nished still remained undecided, but the Chinese took their departure at once, in confidence that the promises made to them would be fulfilled. On the same day the British and American groups took off for the flight to Iran, where the conference with the Russians was to take place. The Americans left from the Allied air base to the eastward of Cairo. King went in the same plane in which he had traveled from Oran, and with him were Arnold and a few aides. Marshall was in a second plane and the President in a third, while a fourth carried secret service operatives. All four were escorted by a prudent number of fighters. In the meantime the British had taken off from an air base to the northwest of Cairo.

The flight to Teheran took a little over five hours. First the planes crossed the Suez Canal, flew over the southern part of Palestine, over the Dead Sea and Trans-Jordan and Iraq. The Euphrates River seemed to have relatively little water in it, but the Tigris was reasonably full. As the planes' route led to the northward of Bagdad, King asked Arnold if they might not detour and get a glimpse of that famous city. Arnold was very glad to oblige, and so their plane dropped down to a height of about six thousand feet and made a circuit of Bagdad, although it was not possible to see many details of the city. Immediately after that the plane climbed again, as it was approaching rather steep mountain ranges. On nearing Teheran the Elburz range of mountains could be seen to the north, topped in the northeast by the peak of Demarent. When the planes arrived at an airport outside Teheran, the President was met by the Hon. Louis G. Dreyfus, United States Minister to Iran and Major General Connolly, commanding United States Army forces in Iran.[8] The President wished to stay during his visit in the United States Legation at Teheran. As this was outside the city, it was not considered safe for him to remain there, although he insisted that he must spend one day with the Minister. Mr. Churchill was lodged in the British Minister's house in Teheran, but that was too small to accommodate the President as well. At this point Stalin came to the fore and offered to install Mr. Roosevelt in the house of the Soviet Minister

[8] These were engineer troops that had been sent into Iran to manage and repair the railroad that ran from the Persian Gulf through Teheran to the Caspian Sea.

to Iran, where he had been living, and take for himself a small house inside the Soviet compound. The principal meetings of the conference were held in the house of the Soviet Minister.

The Joint Chiefs of Staff, except for Leahy, who remained with the President, were quartered some five or six miles northwest of the city at Camp Parker, the headquarters of the Persian Gulf Base Command, United States Army. It was by now early December 1943, and the season of the year plus the elevation of the camp resulted in a brisk atmosphere that became quite wintry as soon as the sun set. The only heat came from old-fashioned kerosene stoves which nevertheless served to keep the chill out of the rooms. Those living at Camp Parker took their meals in the officers' mess, which was in a long building where there was a bar, and at the end, the kitchen. There were Army cooks, but the waitresses were neat and tidy Polish refugee girls, displaced from their homes and country by the war, who could not speak English. The meals were good, particularly when a successful hunting trip added some delicious venison to the menu.

The party had arrived in Teheran on Saturday, 27 November. After the noon meal on Sunday Marshall and Arnold decided to take a drive into the country to the northeast of the city, a distance of some thirty miles. They asked King to accompany them, but he declined, as he had some work to do with his aides. About 2:30 a message was received from the President requesting the Joint Chiefs of Staff to come to the Russian Legation where he was staying. Since Marshall and Arnold were absent, King went alone and joined Leahy, who was living in town with Harry Hopkins, "Pa" Watson and the members of the President's personal staff. When King arrived in the Soviet compound he found it guarded by innumerable Russian troops. Inside, the Soviet secret police were much in evidence. They were not in uniform, but were dressed in ordinary street clothes with a kind of working cap flattened down with a bulge and a peak, and in addition a uniformed guard that seemed to be Stalin's personal bodyguard was on duty both inside and outside the main building. It was not easy to get inside the main gate. Although King was in uniform, he had to be accompanied by a United States Army colonel to vouch for his being the person that he represented himself to be! After being looked over by the Soviet guards, he had to write

his signature and his rank. Once he was inside the gate, the secret police did not seem particularly concerned by him.

On the ground floor of the main building of the Russian legation he found a large hall, with other rooms opening out of it, in some of which the President was living. Apparently the President, the Prime Minister and Stalin had finished their luncheon and were still talking, but it was not easy to follow the conversation, as all three of them had their own interpreters. Mr. Churchill's was a British major, Stalin had a young man, Pavlov, who spoke English quite well, and with the President was Charles E. Bohlen of the State Department, who had been on duty in Moscow for some time, and who not only knew the language but seemed particularly skillful in understanding the drift of the discussion.

Assembling for the first plenary session of the Teheran Conference, known under the code name of EUREKA, some twenty people took their places at a large round table in the main hall. Stalin was flanked on his right by Marshal Voroshilov and on his left by Mr. Molotov; behind him stood his interpreter, Pavlov. To the right of the Russians sat Mr. Eden, Mr. Churchill and the British interpreter, followed by the British Chiefs of Staff. At Mr. Molotov's left sat Leahy, the President, and King. Consequently King was seated some three seats away from Stalin, where he could observe him readily. There was a momentary silence when everyone had sat down.

The President, wishing to break the ice, said to Mr. Bohlen—for at these meetings each person spoke through his own interpreter—"Perhaps Marshal Stalin would like to make a few opening remarks." The reply came through the Russian interpreter, "No, he would rather listen." Consequently the President made some observations about the historic occasion, welcoming Stalin and the Prime Minister, and noting that, for the first time, the heads of the three great Allied nations were sitting around a table as a family. He then passed the conversational ball to Mr. Churchill, who ran with it with his accustomed dexterity and skill, saying that the company present represented a concentration of great worldly power, in whose hands lay perhaps the shortening of the war, and, beyond any doubt, lay the future of mankind. He prayed that the group might be worthy of this God-given opportunity. The President then turned again to

Marshal Stalin and suggested that he, as host, might like to say a few words. Stalin spoke briefly to his interpreter, who presently got up, looked at his notes, and reported, "I take pleasure in welcoming those present. I think that history will show that this opportunity has been of tremendous import. I think the great opportunity which we have, and the power which our people have invested in us, can be used to full advantage within the frame of our potential collaboration." At this point the interpreter looked slightly embarrassed, gulped, and said, "The Marshal Stalin says, 'Now let's get down to business!' "

Most of the first conference was devoted to the question of what could be done about helping the Russians at once. The discussion ranged widely,[9] however, and included mention of OVERLORD, the possibility of an invasion of southern France, and of bringing Turkey into the war. Early in the discussion Stalin mentioned that "We Soviets welcome your successes in the Pacific, but unfortunately we have not been able to help because we require too much of our forces on the western front, and are unable to launch any operations against Japan at this time." He stated that the Russian forces then in the east were more or less satisfactory for defense, but that they would have to be increased threefold for any offensive action, and that this reinforcement could not take place until Germany had been forced to capitulate. *"Then,* by our common front, we shall win."

Although the President asked King a few questions in the course of the meeting, King's major occupation was listening, and he was greatly interested in watching Stalin at close range. Stalin professed not to understand English, but King noted at least a few occasions on which he made some remark in Russian when an interpreter had been speaking in English. He noted also that Molotov and Marshal Voroshilov, who flanked Stalin, would talk to him very freely, although King did not observe Stalin replying to them. He discovered from the vantage point of his seat at table that Stalin was a doodler, scratching, on a piece of the square crossed paper that the Russians had brought with them, words in Russian that he would write and rewrite. He would cross and recross his words, fold and refold the paper until he had made it into a compact wad. When that wad had

[9] These remarks are summarized in Fleet Admiral Leahy's *I Was There,* pp. 204–205, and in Sherwood's *Roosevelt and Hopkins,* pp. 778–781.

reached the smallest possible dimensions, he would put it in his pocket. At the last meeting of the conference, however, Stalin forgot to put his doodling in his pocket. King wanted to get hold of that sheet of paper in the worst way, and was already heading over to appropriate it when the President asked him a question. By the time he had finished replying, the doodles had been abstracted by one of the British party. There had been reports that Stalin, like the Kaiser, suffered from a withered hand; that his left hand was somewhat smaller than his right, and that he did not have the full use of it, but King saw no evidence of this, and on occasion observed him to be smoking and holding cigarettes in his left hand.

After the first meeting, Russian tea and cakes were served. The next day the British provided the tea, with cream (undoubtedly milk), and on the third day the Americans supplied it, with lemon, but Stalin appeared vastly to prefer his own national brew to the British or American version.

The second plenary session, held on the afternoon of 29 November, got to the gist of the discussion. Stalin soon asked the all-important question of who would be the Supreme Allied Commander in operation OVERLORD. When told by the President and Prime Minister that this had not yet been decided, he observed firmly, "Then nothing will come out of these operations." The question of a commander was further discussed, and Stalin let it be known that if that matter could not be settled on the spot at Teheran, it should be done within a week. In reply to a question from Stalin as to how many days the conference would continue, the President said that he was willing to remain in Teheran until its business was finished, while the Prime Minister, with greater emphasis, said that he would stay forever, if necessary. The discussion became prolonged, and the President, in an effort to accelerate matters, observed that in an hour a good dinner would be waiting, and suggested that the staffs meet the next day for discussions. Stalin said that was unnecessary—that the staffs would not in any way speed the work of the conference—that they would only delay matters, and that it was proper to make decisions more quickly. Stalin's insistence upon a decision concerning the command of OVERLORD, and his constant hammering about the second front caused heated discussion. It appeared that he liked to exasperate Mr. Churchill, and at one point in the meeting Mr.

Churchill became so angry that he got on his feet and told Stalin that he could not talk to him, or any other Britisher, in that manner, and proceeded to stump up and down the room for a few moments until Mr. Eden rose and spoke with him in a low tone, after which Mr. Churchill resumed his seat and appeared somewhat calmer.

During this second meeting it became apparent that Stalin had no real understanding of the magnitude of operations that would be involved in crossing the English Channel. Seemingly he thought it would be very much like crossing a large river, which the Russians had done many times. This made it clear that he had very little idea of what would be involved in getting a foothold in France. In order to educate the company, Stalin proceeded to tell them of the Russian technique for crossing a river, which involved a three-pronged attack. Sometimes the prongs would be separated by as much as one hundred miles, but usually only sixty miles, in order to give room to maneuver. They would get together all the available medium and large guns, and keep a close watch over the enemy's movements. After the situation had been carefully scrutinized, Stalin and his generals would then reach a decision as to the point of crossing, and, under cover of night or fog, would move the reserve of guns behind the place designated for the operation until the guns were so close together that hubs practically touched hubs. They would of course also move all the available boats and barges around the key areas. Then, after a bombardment of these areas, they would launch an attack across the river, still maintaining the heaviest bombardment that the guns could keep up. Apparently they did not use very many airplanes, although they understood their use. What they wanted was force, aided by the guns, but especially the troops with their rifles and bayonets. What interested them most was numbers of men.

This somewhat inappropos discussion was brought back into focus by Marshall, who commented:

> The difference between a river crossing, however wide, and a landing from the ocean is that the failure of a river crossing is a reverse, while the failure of a landing operation is a catastrophe.

Marshall, as quoted by Robert E. Sherwood,[10] went on to say:

[10] *Roosevelt and Hopkins,* pp. 783–784.

> My military education and experience in the first World War has all been based on roads, rivers and railroads. During the last two years, however, I have been acquiring an education based on oceans, and I have had to learn all over again. Prior to the present war I had never heard of any landing craft except a rubber boat. Now I think about little else.

The most dramatic incident of this EUREKA Conference was the presentation by the British to the Russians of a special sword of honor commemorating the Russian defeat of the Nazis at Stalingrad. This ceremony took place on the 29th, in the great hall of the Russian legation where the conference meetings had been held. First there entered the room some twenty of the largest British non-commissioned officers that could be found in Iran, armed with rifles with fixed bayonets. These men were ranged on one side of the room, while on the other were twenty of the largest Russians available, mostly over six feet three inches in height, who all looked to be under twenty years of age, and each had a Tommy gun. The President was in the center of the room, flanked by Mr. Churchill and Stalin. Mr. Churchill made what was, for him, a short speech, telling what the Russians had done at Stalingrad and saying that it was for those deeds of valor that the British Parliament, with the approval of the King, had determined that a sword of valor should be fashioned of the finest Sheffield steel and chased with gold. With the sword was presented an engrossed scroll of parchment, handsomely illuminated.

War produces strange bedfellows, but few stranger than Mr. Churchill and Marshal Stalin, for it was only six years before this ceremony that Mr. Churchill, referring to the visit of Lady Astor and Bernard Shaw to Russia, had written, ". . . and Arch Commissar Stalin, 'the man of steel,' flung open the closely-guarded sanctuaries of the Kremlin, and pushing aside his morning's budget of death warrants, and *lettres de cachet,* received his guests with smiles of overflowing comradeship." [11]

Stalin, on receiving the sword from Mr. Churchill, raised it to his lips to kiss the blade, before passing it to Marshal Voroshilov, who dropped it. The gigantic soldiers of the guard of honor made appro-

[11] *Great Contemporaries* (London, 1937), p. 55.

priate salutes to the sword, and concluded with what appeared to be a Russian equivalent of "Hoorah for Stalin!"

The third plenary session of the EUREKA Conference took place on the afternoon of 30 November. The Combined Chiefs of Staff had met earlier in the day, and had recommended the launching of operation OVERLORD against northern France during May 1944, in conjunction with supporting operations against the southern French coast. The President said that he and the Prime Minister would take up the matter of a Supreme Allied Commander with their staffs, and make a decision in the course of three or four days—certainly soon after their return to Cairo. In the course of the meeting Stalin mentioned the Red Army's use of radio deception, which caused the Prime Minister to observe that "In wartime truth is so precious that she should always be attended by a bodyguard of lies." Stalin remarked, "That is what we call military cunning," but the Prime Minister observed that he considered it rather to be military diplomacy.

Stalin promised to organize a large scale offensive against the Germans in May 1944, to keep them from moving against OVERLORD, although he seemed reticent about the details of his own plans against the Nazis. It appeared that he liked the idea of the Allies going into southern France simultaneously with the invasion of northern France.

As the last of the EUREKA Conference, 30 November, was Mr. Churchill's sixty-ninth birthday, he gave a dinner for the top members of the conference, in the British Legation, at 8:00 P.M. There were, in accordance with the magnitude and importance of the celebration, a great many toasts, and King was amused to note the manner in which Stalin would leave his place and run around the table to clink glasses with everyone who proposed a toast. It was, to some extent, a family party even though in a remote region, as Mr. Churchill's second daughter, Sarah, had accompanied him to Teheran.

Part 5. Visit to Jerusalem

Although the military part of the conference had been completed and it had been agreed that the Combined Chiefs of Staff should go off to Cairo at once, it appeared that the Big Three still had certain political matters to talk over. Upon the decision of the President and the Prime Minister to remain in Teheran for another day, the British

Chiefs of Staff invited the United States Chiefs of Staff to spend a day and night in Jerusalem, on their way back to Egypt. This they could do, and still arrive in Cairo before the President and the Prime Minister. The Joint Chiefs of Staff were very happy to accept this invitation. Beyond looking over a train that happened to be in the Teheran railroad station King had not had time to do any sight-seeing in Iran. He had no opportunity to go to the Shah's palace, nor did he explore the city, and his only diversion was to buy a few objects in the officers' mess that had been sent in from India by the Army.

On leaving Teheran, Arnold returned in a large British plane in order to observe how the Royal Air Force managed such craft. Consequently King did not have his company on the return journey, but he enjoyed the many sights that could be seen of the historic area over which he was flying. While in the air he was constantly observing the ruins of ancient cities in what is now Iraq and the southern part of Syria, and also saw parts of the modern oil pipe line that crosses southwest Iraq and the western part of Trans-Jordan. On arriving at Lidda airport, some thirty miles from Jerusalem, King's plane was about twenty minutes ahead of schedule, and on getting in touch with the airfield by radio, the pilot was asked to remain in the air, since the other planes had been late in starting and the British, who were the hosts, wished to arrive before the American planes landed. Consequently King asked his pilot, as there were some minutes to kill, to make a detour so that he might see Damascus from the air, and in the far distance the mountains of Lebanon and, nearer at hand, the range called Hermon. Around Damascus the trenches used by British troops in World War I were still visible. They were intact, since the earth was a kind of soft stone. Then King went south to make a circuit of the Sea of Galilee, flew over the town of Nazareth, and saw something of the River Jordan before returning to the airfield at Lidda.

There the British Chiefs of Staff had everything ready. Each member of the Combined Chiefs of Staff was attended by a special aide, and the officer assigned to King was a British Army captain who was very familiar with political matters, especially those concerning Palestine. This officer proved to be very helpful, for en route to Jerusalem he told King a great deal about the situation in Palestine, what the Jews were doing there at that date, and what they had

done in the past. He spoke of certain Jews who had remained in Palestine throughout the Arab domination, and had lived in the vicinity of Jerusalem maintaining their own traditional faith, but wearing the same costumes and observing the same agricultural practices as the Arabs, so that for many centuries they had worked well together except in religious matters, and even in that field had avoided quarrels. The Zionists, who had returned to Palestine in numbers after World War I, tried to persuade these old-time Jews to change their ways to more modern ones, although there were still some sixty thousand of this older group that had lived in and about Jerusalem for centuries.

The Chiefs of Staff arrived in Jerusalem about 1300, and were put up at the excellent King David Hotel, situated on a ridge from which one could overlook the points of interest of the old city. After a substantial luncheon, they went down to the old city, under the guidance of a monk who was well informed about its history and antiquities. They were taken outside the walls to Saint Stephen's Gate, where they entered the Holy City within which they saw the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, the Citadel, and the Jaffa Gate. They observed in particular the narrow streets, which were always crowded, and the Stations of the Cross. Late that afternoon Sir John Dill, Marshall and King went to call on the British governor of the Mandate of Palestine, who was an old friend of Dill's. That evening the British Chiefs of Staff gave their American colleagues a most sumptuous formal dinner in the King David Hotel, and altogether the day had furnished an enjoyable relaxation from conference cares.

As the Chiefs were due to leave from Lidda for Cairo at noon, they were under way at nine the next morning in order to see something more of Jerusalem. The whole party went into the Moslem quarter and saw both the exterior and interior of the Dome of the Rock Mosque, which is one of the great holy places of the Islamic world. They also entered the Arab El Akso Mosque, and in both of these used felt slippers over their shoes in order not to taint even the floors of Islam. Then they were taken to the surviving wall of Solomon's temple, that has since become the Wailing Wall. As time was getting short, the party left the Holy City and were driven slowly down across the Brook of Kidron, and then up to the Grove of Gethsemane, where they saw half a dozen very old olive trees that might

have been there at the time of Christ's agony in the garden. Then they went down through the Valley of the Kidron to see the Pool of Siloam.

King, having a car to himself, was able to get a ten minute start of the rest of the party, and because of this was able to visit one of the crusaders' fortified churches, which was about ten miles outside of the city on the main road. The monks there were extremely agreeable, and took him into the crypt of the church where there was a large spring that had doubtless been the main reason for erecting this fortified church on this particular site, for with water available the building could have stood a long siege. The hospitable monks produced wine and cakes, as well as their guest book for signature, and the amenities were continued until the absolutely necessary time for departure was reached. On leaving the church, King's British aide pointed out in the distance the village of Emmaus, where Christ had supped with the disciples after the resurrection. By the time he arrived at the airfield his British hosts were already wondering what had become of him. The flight from Lidda to the airfield east of Cairo took only about an hour and a quarter, so even after the drive through the city, the Chiefs of Staff reached their quarters, in the region of Giza, in time for a late luncheon.

Part 6. The Return to Cairo

On the return to Cairo from the EUREKA Conference, the Combined Chiefs of Staff spent from 3 to 6 December completing the work of the SEXTANT Conference. During these four busy and contentious days the Joint Chiefs would deal with their own problems in the mornings, and after luncheon, about two o'clock, the sessions of the Combined Chiefs would begin.[12] On the 3rd, the British Chiefs of Staff undertook, without success, to persuade their American colleagues of the wisdom of abandoning the Andaman Islands amphibious operations that had been promised to the Chinese, and sub-

[12] When these concluded, about half past four, King would usually drive about the region with some members of his own staff, and see such ruins or pyramids as time allowed. One afternoon he went far enough afield to see part of Fayum, and on another day drove near the Cairo citadel, but did not try to enter it, since the Egyptians did not like the presence of strangers. In the course of driving through Cairo a general impression of the city was obtained, although without many specific details.

stituting an attack upon Rhodes. When the Joint Chiefs reported this fruitless discussion to President Roosevelt in the evening they found him equally opposed to the Aegean Sea venture, and apparently still firmly committed to supporting the Chinese in Burma. The next day the tussle continued, with neither side budging. Admiral Leahy has well remarked that "at no time in previous or later conferences had the British shown such determined opposition to an American proposal." [13] When the Combined Chiefs met with the President and Prime Minister at noon on the 4th, Mr. Churchill indicated that, as Stalin had voluntarily proclaimed that the Soviet Union would make war on Japan the moment that Germany was defeated, it was necessary to concentrate on making operation OVERLORD a success. Chiang Kai-shek had left Cairo under the impression that operation BUCCANEER was to be carried out, but since that time new facts had changed the picture. The Soviet Union had declared itself ready to go to war with Japan immediately after the collapse of Germany; it had been definitely decided to carry out operation OVERLORD across the English Channel in May 1944, and also simultaneously to undertake operation ANVIL in the south of France. The Prime Minister felt that, in view of Stalin's promise, the operations in the Southeast Asia command had lost a good deal of their value, for Russian participation in the war against Japan would give better bases than could be obtained in China. He was very anxious lest the Russian promise should leak out. The President agreed to the necessity of secrecy, and added that it was impossible to tell the Chinese, and that Lord Louis Mountbatten must be told to do his best with the resources already allocated to him. King reminded the conference that there had been a definite commitment to Chiang Kai-shek that there would be an amphibious operation in the spring.

In the course of these discussions the Prime Minister's constant preoccupation with an attack upon the so-called "soft under-belly of Europe" rather than upon southern France came into consideration. Clearly Mr. Churchill much preferred the idea of squeezing the Germans by proceeding through north Italy and crossing into northern Yugoslavia to landing on the southern French coast. At the same time he constantly reverted to Rhodes and the Dodecanese Islands

[13] *I Was There,* p. 213.

in the Aegean Sea that had been overrun by the Germans. This preoccupation with the area of Rhodes did not greatly impress King, although he readily understood Mr. Churchill's dislike—that was so completely shared by the British Chiefs of Staff—of having Germans there. Mr. Churchill knew, of course, and in this he was correct, that the Allies could not do everything, but the problem that perplexed the Cairo Conference was to decide what things must be eliminated.

Mr. Churchill always seemed to be rather cool toward the Chinese, and toward operations in northeastern Burma, but the agreement had been made, while Chiang Kai-shek was still in Cairo, that operations in Burma were to be undertaken. Nevertheless, Mr. Churchill did not like the agreement, and kept on hammering at the President, who was getting a little tired, until Mr. Roosevelt seemed rather inclined to agree with him. This continued until the last day of the SEXTANT Conference when, in the middle of the morning, the President sent for the Joint Chiefs of Staff and asked them what the effect would be of changing the agreement with the Chinese. After the matter had been discussed, and Mr. Churchill had pressed his points, Leahy and Arnold gradually came to concur, although Marshall still wished to think the matter over. In the end he also agreed, but King remained obdurate, and would not give an inch, because he knew that the Chinese, headed by Chiang Kai-shek, would feel that they had been sold out—which was the case—and consequently would not do anything to aid Stilwell. Late in the afternoon of 6 December, Mr. Roosevelt informed the Joint Chiefs of Staff that he had, with reluctance, concluded to abandon the Andaman Islands operation and would propose some substitute to Chiang Kai-shek.[14] In the end, none of these substitutes were carried out, for the Japanese left first Assam and then Burma as the result of sea power projected from the United States, half around the world, through the Pacific. This broken promise to China, which greatly distressed King, was the one instance during the war in which he felt that the President had gone against the advice of his Joint Chiefs of Staff. Hindsight is futile, but in the light of subsequent events it is permissible to speculate as to what might have occurred in postwar

[14] The President's draft message to Chiang is reproduced in facsimile in Sherwood, *Roosevelt and Hopkins,* p. 801.

years had the promise to the Chinese not been broken in the second half of the SEXTANT Conference, for, after all, the commitment made to them in the early stages of the Cairo Conference was overturned because of the Russian agreement to enter the war with Japan, which was first broached at Teheran.

The question of assistance to Turkey came under discussion in the last two days of the SEXTANT Conference, and Turkish representatives came to a site outside of Cairo to consider what might be done if the Germans decided to invade Turkey. Although Mr. Roosevelt and Mr. Churchill had lengthy and fruitless conversations with the Turkish President and Foreign Minister, the Combined Chiefs of Staff did not even see any Turkish representatives, for Turkey was at that time neutral.

Among the distinguished officers present at the SEXTANT Conference was Field Marshal Jan Christian Smuts of South Africa, and the last night of the conference Mr. Churchill asked King and others to meet him at dinner.

Before leaving Cairo, the President made the momentous decision regarding the supreme command for operation OVERLORD. Concluding in the end that Marshall could not be spared from the Joint Chiefs of Staff, he designated Eisenhower in his place.[15]

At the conclusion of the conference the President flew to Tunis, then to Malta and Sicily, eventually making his way by plane to Dakar, where he later boarded the battleship *Iowa*. The entire party did not return with him, as Marshall, Arnold and some members of their staff, accompanied by Rear Admiral C. M. Cooke, King's Deputy Chief of Staff, went another way in order to check up on various matters in the Pacific. Arnold spent some time in the area of Burma looking into the functioning of the airlift over the Hump from Assam to Kunming. Marshall and Cooke, with a small staff, took off from Colombo on the island of Ceylon for a long flight, landing in northwestern Australia, close to Broome, in order to get in touch with General MacArthur, who was then working up to New Guinea.

King went in still another direction, for on 8 December, with a few members of his staff, he took off for Khartoum in company with

[15] The circumstances of this decision are well described by Robert E. Sherwood, *Roosevelt and Hopkins,* pp. 802–803.

Field Marshal Sir John Dill, and followed the Nile to the junction between the Blue Nile and the White Nile, taking time for a detour around the ruins of Luxor. They arrived in Khartoum after a five hour flight, and dined there with the Governor-General of the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan.[16] An eight hour flight directly across the desert and above Lake Chad brought them to the mud-walled city of Kano. Although this city of fifty thousand souls had grown up at the crossing point on an ancient caravan trail between the sources of the River Niger and Northeast Africa, it had acquired, by 1943, a United States Army Air Corps post, at which the travelers lunched. From Accra, on the Gold Coast, where they spent a most interesting evening with the British governor and learned much of the schools by which the British were educating the natives, they took off very early in the morning of 10 December for Ascension Island. From a distance, the island appeared to be a high, rounded peak, and on landing the difficulty of having built an airfield there could readily be appreciated. The field was not particularly good, for it had been dug out of a ridge, and one had to land on a slope of rising ground and then avoid sliding down the opposite slope. As soon as the plane had been gassed and oiled King took off for Recife, Brazil, where after a flight of six hours, he was greeted by his good friend Vice Admiral Ingram, in command in the South Atlantic, who had had much to do with the construction of the Ascension Island airfield. Upon arrival, he went on board Ingram's flagship, an unusual naval vessel that had furnished a degree of innocent amusement during the previous year.

When Ingram had gone to the South Atlantic at the beginning of the war his force had consisted of a few old cruisers and destroyers, engaged in antisubmarine work and, on occasion, the successful pursuit of German blockade runners coming from the Far East. As an important part of Ingram's work in Brazil was of a quasi-diplomatic nature, he felt keenly the lack of an appropriate flagship in which to entertain his Brazilian allies in a becoming manner. He

[16] This officer, who was an old friend of Sir John Dill's, had had that duty earlier and had been recalled to it during the war. In driving from the airfield, which was about twenty miles from Khartoum, King and Dill noted, on the bank to the west of the city, the site where General Gordon had had his great battle with the Mahdi's fanatical troops. In fact the building in the city of Khartoum in which Gordon was killed is still standing.

had complained to King about this difficulty during an earlier visit, and King had regretfully told him that no more elegant vessel than the destroyer tender that he then had could be spared for such duty. However, on his return to Washington King had asked Edwards to see if something could be found that would serve as a flagship for Ingram. It presently appeared that the Navy had been offered a large and luxuriously appointed Mississippi River houseboat. Its immediate naval usefulness was not apparent, until it dawned on Edwards that if the craft could by some means be transported to Brazil, it would furnish Ingram with commodious quarters, without immobilizing a combat ship useful for more active duty. Consequently, by one means or another, this houseboat *was* brought to Recife, where everything except its name gave extraordinary pleasure. In its civilian manifestation the houseboat had been called *Big Pebble,* and this name was liberally inscribed on rubber mats and other appurtenances. King saw to it that the name remained unchanged, although Ingram did his best to have it altered to *Perseverance,* because it had taken him so many months to get the ship. In spite of her name, *Big Pebble* turned out to be a very good flagship, although King subsequently never failed to tease Ingram about it. After inspecting various United States naval activities in the region, and paying official calls on Brazilian officials, King dined and spent the night on board *Big Pebble.*

The following morning, 11 December, he took off from Recife for Zhandery, in Dutch Guiana, some twenty miles from Paramaribo. Reaching there after a flight of a little less than eight hours, he lunched while the plane was being refueled, and continued to San Juan, Puerto Rico. Although King did not have time for any inspections of naval installations, he spent the night with the Commandant of the Tenth Naval District and on the following day, the 12th, returned to Washington, thus concluding the last of his major flights for the year 1943.