

be possible to rely on Eighth Army, assaulting across the Straits of Messina, but that would depend on what shape it was in after the Sicilian campaign. It would be better to have fresh forces available for exploitation, if at all possible, and our two spare Corps Headquarters, of 5 and 10 Corps, could plan the operation, since Eighth Army was not in a position to do so. It was therefore proposed to study two operations, both to be mounted from North Africa: against Reggio by 10 Corps (Operation BUTTRESS) and against Cotrone\* by 5 Corps (Operation GOBLET). These two headquarters came under my command on 5th June, together with one armoured and four infantry divisions.† The Cotrone landing was intended to hasten the capture of the airfields in that area, the only useful ones in Calabria, and would take place about a month after the original landing. Target dates were 1st September and 1st October respectively. The operation against Sardinia (Operation BRIMSTONE), only to be undertaken if success on the mainland appeared unlikely, was entrusted to the United States Fifth Army under General Mark W. Clark. He was ordered on 10th June to prepare a plan for this operation, employing VI United States Corps of two infantry divisions and the British 5 Corps, composed as for the Cotrone landing. General Giraud‡ on 15th June was asked, and agreed, to nominate a commander and staff to prepare a plan for the capture of Corsica (Operation FIREBRAND). I kept in touch with all this planning activity for operations which, if mounted, I should be required to command, but could do little more since this was now the critical period just before the Sicily invasion.

A clearer conception of the detailed implications of future operations is set out in a memorandum from the Executive Planning Section of Allied Force Headquarters dated 30th June. This represents the stage to which Allied strategic thought and planning had been brought before the actual experience of the invasion of Sicily allowed modification in a more optimistic direction. The possibility of such a future modification is fully realised in the opening paragraph: experience alone would show the value of the Italian forces, the extent to which Germany was prepared to reinforce Italy and what Allied resources, particularly in landing craft, would still be available and when. In the circumstances appreciation of Allied capabilities could scarcely be over sanguine. Exploitation into Calabria was estimated as likely to be slow, since the first assaulting force was not expected to be within striking distance of Cotrone, only eighty air miles from the original landing point, by the end of the first month and a subsidiary landing was therefore planned to seize that port thirty days after the original landing. Even if these two operations should be successful the terrain and the weather were likely to offer severe difficulties to our advance, while the number of landing craft available would be so diminished as

a result of them that further amphibious operations on a scale large enough to seize a major port such as Naples or Taranto would be impracticable. The maximum number of divisions we could maintain in Calabria was reckoned as six. There were, therefore, now two reasons for invading Sardinia: one, if it was decided that resistance on the mainland would be so strong as to make any landing impracticable, and the second if it was appreciated that, though a landing could be made, the result would be to lock up six divisions in the Toe of Italy without prospect of being able to exploit rapidly either towards Naples or Taranto. I was, however, most reluctant to be forced back into so unproductive a course.

More optimistic possibilities were, of course, considered, based on the possibility of an Italian "collapse", a term never specifically defined. It was the view of the Joint Intelligence Committee that, although Italian morale, both civilian and military, was then low and would sink still further as a result of the loss of Sicily, no complete collapse was likely until the Allied forces had landed on the mainland and had made a considerable advance northwards.\* However, it was necessary to be prepared for such an eventuality. If Italian resistance ceased, our aim was to move rapidly overland on Naples with the minimum force necessary to seize the airfields and port, to build up our forces to a strength of six divisions and forty-three squadrons of the Tactical Air Force and then to exploit to seize Rome. Subsequent operations could be either into North Italy or across the Adriatic. The timing envisaged on the "most optimistic" development, which gave us Naples by 1st October, hit on the right day with an accuracy rare in the forecasts of the best inspired oracles. On the timing considered more likely, that date would see us just assaulting Cotrone and, in the worst case, we should be just appearing off the coast of Sardinia.

#### *Effect on Planning of the Progress of Operations in Sicily.*

The result of the first few days fighting in Sicily brought a breath of actuality into the process of planning, hitherto tentative and rather academic, and with it a full gale of optimism. Two of the questions which had dominated previous planning were answered: what was the value of the Italian forces on their own soil and what would remain of our own resources after the reduction of Sicily. Both answers were more favourable than we could have hoped. The Italian coastal divisions, whose value had never been rated very high, disintegrated almost without firing a shot and the field divisions, where they were met, were also driven like chaff before the wind. Mass surrenders were frequent. Moreover, the civilian population seemed well disposed and, when once we were firmly established, were prepared to welcome the Allies as liberators. On the other hand our casualties in men and equipment, and particularly in the all-important categories of landing craft and assault equipment generally, were much lighter than had been expected. We were, however, fully prepared to exploit this

\* Also known as Crotone, which, as nearer to the classical form, was favoured by Mussolini.

† 1 and 4 British Infantry Divisions for 5 Corps, to be supplemented later by part of 82 (United States) Airborne Division and 78 Division from Sicily; 7 Armoured, 46 and 56 Infantry Divisions for 10 Corps.

‡ Général d'Armée Henri H. Giraud—Commander-in-Chief French Forces in North Africa and Joint President of the French Committee of National Liberation.

\* This was a correct reading of popular feeling, which was marked by complete apathy and inertia, but had failed to allow for a "palace revolution".