

III MAY 1944: ETO – European Theater abcd lmn

A. Chapter 18: The 90-Division Gamble: May 1-15, 1944; Matloff, *Strategic Planning for Coalition Warfare Vol II xyza*

Mentioned elsewhere, official historian Matloff had the task of a “full explanation” of an “inexplicable” gambit made that carried tragic consequences into the ETO from September 1944 through January 1945. It began at SEXTANT. The Joint Logistics Committee predicted serious 1944 service troops shortages from the Pacific war and B-29 program. The committee suggested “a calculated risk to eliminate the fifteen (new) infantry divisions” in 1944 leaving 90 total divisions as: 43 Europe, 7 North Africa, 22 Pacific, and 18 in U.S. reserve. “In a pinch”, service troops were a reserve. **408** A December Strategy Section report “capped” the U.S. Army at 90 divisions as enough to “win the war”.¹ **It was a guess!** Justifications included fears “the Army would be unable to add 15 divisions and remain within the 7,700,000-man ceiling of November”. Selective Service was slow. The Army was 200,000 men short of its 7,700,000 goal. The new “rotation program” required 60,000 men in 1944, the Air Forces needed 130,000 for the B-29 program. The justifications ended at: **“Besides, the Strategy Section concluded, there were no firm requirements for the fifteen additional infantry divisions.”** A cardinal rule is never fight with “just enough” forces – always use “overwhelming forces”! No politician would dare adopt such a career perilous course!

Yet, the fifteen planned divisions were cancelled. Marshall ordered theaters to economize. SOS was 40,000 troops short for ANVIL and 112,000 for the Pacific. There were no increases. The Army was “trying desperately to stay within the 7,700,000 ceiling”. In February, Marshall knew ground forces were short 97,000 men. The Army found 100,000 men from the B-29 program leaving a 100,000-troop shortage for OVERLORD, ANVIL, and Pacific. Marshall estimated the actual shortages was 409 between 350,000 and 400,000 men.

Behind this was an Army college tuition program for enlisted men designed to bail out colleges or the “Specialized Training Program” (STP). It was to “educate some of its more intelligent men in colleges.” Marshall was forced to cut 120,000 men from the 150,000 “scholarships” providing 120,000 highly educated sergeants. By Spring 1944 manpower shortage was “made up”, but then followed:

This still left enough strategic reserve to defeat Germany. **Of all the calculated risks taken by Marshall and his staff ... the greatest gamble was the decision to hold to the 90-division troop**

¹ Other explanations do not quite match. Yet, the decision was made with tragic results when the Germans unexpectedly withdrew to the German border. The explanations stretch credulity. One suspects overconfidence and a belief that German generals would overthrow Hitler were to blame. The coup occurred but failed. The U.S. soldiers who suffered were the ones who lost the bet of the “90-Division Gamble”.

basis. There were uneasy doubts about the gamble ... On 10 May Secretary Stimson raised the issue with General Marshall:

I have always felt that our contribution was an overwhelming appearance of national strength in the critical battle front and reserve. It has been our fate to come in as the final force after others were long engaged. Our men were untested to fight veteran enemies. Such conditions make possession of overwhelming strength on our part important both tactically and psychologically.

Stimson feared this might not happen against fifty-six German divisions in France, the U.S. would have equal number plus large replacements. **Current Army calculations "shave the line of sufficiency rather narrowly instead of aiming at massive abundance."** There would be 14 uncommitted divisions, the only reserve. The British had none. The Germans must perceive overwhelming strength but had a reserve of 11 --- nearly the size of the American reserve. **410** Stimson feared a November stalemate in cold weather. **To forestall a stalemate, Stimson asked if new manpower legislation be sought?** Should not new divisions be activated now?

Three weeks before OVERLORD, Marshall wrote: "We have staked our success on our air superiority, on Soviet numerical preponderance, and high quality of our ground combat units. Air forces are our most effective weapon to convince the German people of the futility of continued resistance". The Army relied on the qualitative, not quantitative superiority of its forces, "Our equipment, high standard of training, and freshness should give us a superiority." The replacement system meant keeping U.S. divisions in the line at full strength.

Shipping limited the increase to four divisions a month. By April 1945, the 59 U.S. divisions would be in battle. Adding 20 British and 10 to 15 U.S. French divisions (and if Italy was quiet) the Allies had 95 divisions versus 56 German divisions. The real problem was the build-up rate -- purely a logistical limitation. **411** If a stalemate occurred, a few more divisions were not enough. New divisions meant "emasculating drafts" of current divisions for cadres upsetting deployments. No far-reaching changes should be made until results of the invasion were clear. "Considering it from all angles, I believe no increase should be made except for replacements." Marshall would stand pat probably because he saw Allied Mediterranean divisions as a part of the strategic reserve to invade Europe as evidenced by his future debate over ANVIL would show. He was adamant to use surplus U.S. and French divisions for the main effort in France.

Behind the calmly reasoned language of Marshall's reply **lay one of the boldest war calculations. How great a risk was shown in the willingness of Gen Marshall and staff to allocate manpower for the B-29 program against Japan, instead of investing in more divisions. Only the future would disclose whether**

the bold calculation would be vindicated by the still largely untested divisions of the U.S. Army, a product of his own faith and struggles.

*(Comment: When this history turns to the September Siegfried Line struggles, the December fight-to-the-death Battle of the Bulge and its companion Operation Nordwind in January 1945, the inexcusable shortage of manpower suggests a huge mistake was made. **Mistakes happen, but this was a gamble with U.S. lives; its result lay somewhere between negligence and recklessness! It is called the "90 Division Gamble" but involved lives, not currency.**)*

B. Chapter 8 Relations with the Occupied Countries; Supreme Command, **Pogue xyza May 1-15**

The history of resistance in German occupied areas is spotty. On one hand, the "underground" railroad return of Allied pilots shot down over Europe was remarkable. Conversely, resistance groups efforts *per se* was limited. There were virtually no resistance efforts in Normandy. Further south and west in the Brittany Peninsula resistance was greater and strong in the south France Alpine area and Paris. But north and west of Paris was difficult to measure. SHAEFE devoted significant efforts to supporting resistance organizations.

1. Allied Liaison Machinery. London held most governments-in-exile (Belgium, Czechoslovakia, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Greece, and Yugoslavia). The French National Committee ("FNC") of Gen de Gaulle claimed the title of French government. COSSAC established direct relations with FNC **138** and in January 1944 it had a SHAEF European Contact Section. Its members supported D-Day planning and post-liberation governments -- general in nature. FDR refused to agree on areas the U.S. would occupy. The British chose North and western Germany, leaving the U.S. West and South Germany. SHAEF missions were set up for France, Belgium and Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Denmark, and Norway once governments were restored. The end of April 1944 Gen Grasett asked the CCS to set the nationality for mission heads in each country, with the nation occupying a liberated country leading the mission. It was premature. The Prime Minister and President made those decisions, but they had not done so. Gen Smith proposed temporary mission "cadres" formed under their chiefs with final arrangements made after British and U.S. zones were created. It was not done before D Day.

2. Civil Affairs Agreements. Before D-Day the U.S. and U.K. negotiated with some exiled governments for temporary rule during fighting, recovery and reconstruction. Some were simple, some complex. Allied forces passed through chasing Germans leaving the pieces to residents. There was no "flood tide" of humanitarian aid since Allied armies lacked enough ports. **139** Agreements were mercenary: 1) reestablish national courts, 2) Allied exclusive legal jurisdiction over their forces, 3) Allied

rights to requisition billets and supplies, use lands, buildings, transportation, and services for military purposes and 4) three of five countries provided officers to advise Allied military authorities.

3. Troubled Relations with the French Committee. France was a problem Pogue forthrightly from “de Gaulle's desire to restore France to the position of a great power with himself as the sole responsible authority.” His 1940 proclamation stated his French National Committee in London had not surrendered creating a fiction of an “independent” France. “Unfortunately, he and his followers alienated ... Frenchmen ... who felt that their efforts at resistance were being overlooked by de Gaulle ... (including) Regular Army officers ... engaged in schemes to aid the Allies in the liberation of France ...” This rivalry for control of **140** French forces outside France made an Allied course difficult. Fortunately, much of this was previously discussed during the invasion of North Africa. Pogue adds that FDR was not “attracted to de Gaulle” -- he was offended and worried over the Committee’s refusal to include others. He ordered Eisenhower to deal with French military; not the French Committee concerning French forces. This reduced de Gaulle to elevate **141** Gen Giraud and increase French factionalism. Pogue states, “The task of Supreme Headquarters ... was thus made more difficult.”

4. Civil Affairs Agreements with France. Gen de Gaulle’s claims hampered civil affair when COSSAC early sought French agreements on operations in August 1943 with no success. **142 143-144 145 146 147 148 149** The official history consumes 13 pages on French post-D-Day governance. There were several French resistance groups, some loyal to de Gaulle, some communist and others. Allied efforts to coordination of French resistance had “varying success.” Much is written with little content revealed. The three most active groups are in the military operations of Allied units.

Gen de Gaulle’s Free French were commanded by Gen Koenig, French 2nd AD and the French D-Day force. Koenig was clearly under Eisenhower’s command. But FDR lost patience with Charles de Gaulle while the British were “flexible”. Gen de Gaulle was able to alienate most leaders. While the British cooperated, little was accomplished. Once Paris was liberated, de Gaulle’s ousted the communist and other contenders. Untrained “guerilla forces” and former military were assembled, trained and dispatched to fight with U.S. Gen Devers in the Alsace-Lorraine. The 10 French African divisions were disbanded and returned to Africa.

5. The Command and Use of French Troops. FDR “agreed, in principle” to arm eight French infantry and three armored divisions under Allied command plus 15,000 French were equipped by the British in after Dunkirk in June 1940. African French forces ended at eight divisions (three armored) with five in Italy. The August 1944 South France invasion used these, while the cross-Channel invasion had Koenig’s French forces that escaped to the UK in 1940.

Difficulties began in 1943 between the Allies and the de Gaulle French Committee of National Liberation when the Committee refused to send the 9th Colonial Infantry Division to Italy, despite Gen Giraud (commander of French 150 Forces) orders. Eisenhower threatened to terminate French military forces when Gen Smith assured that French units had a primary role in the south France invasion, so the French Committee agreed to put “their” forces (which the U.S. paid to raise) under an Allied commander! Next came a demand for the Allied commander to take French interests "into account as completely as possible." FDR was piqued. He ordered the CCS to delegate French issues to a level below the CCS – but the 151 French refused to yield. Hence, there was no agreement on command of French forces before the invasion. Since French forces were not in the assault, it did not matter. But Eisenhower declared supplies for the French in North Africa halted.

6. French Resistance. There were five major resistance groups.

- a. *L'Armée Secrète*, which consisted of four groups in the northern and three in the southern zone;
- b. *Maquis* of young men who had fled to the mountains to avoid German forced labor drafts;
- c. *Francs Tireurs et Partisans*, a Communist-controlled paramilitary section;
- d. *Groupe de a*, of Giraudist in sympathy with former members of the Vichy army; and
- e. *Bureau Central de Renseignements et d'Action (Militaire)* (BCRA) in London and Algiers.

The groups did not coordinate nor trust each other. The British Special Operations Executive (SOE) had fostered the resistance to furnish men, transport, and material since 1942 152 which interestingly was postponed when fighting drifted to Africa and Italy. In March two British organizations merged to become Special Force Headquarters (SFHQ). Gen Koenig took charge of the French Forces in Britain in March 1944 to form a general staff for French Forces of the Interior (“FFI”) and Eisenhower took overall command through a SHAEF G-3 section over six countries (adding Norway), and southern France. 153 Special ops coordinated the 21st or 12th Army Groups for sabotage, morale, enemy military preparations and aid to the invasion. In late May, SHAEF reigned in a Lt. Gen. F.A.M. Browning of the Airborne Troops who sought separate authority. Late fall, SHAEFE created “Jedburgh teams” of three men (with a radio operator) to parachute in to assist Resistance actions. 154 Other units of 34 enlisted and officers dropped to attack specific targets. A third, Special Air Service, had 2,000 British, French, and Dutch to provide command support, organization and expertise to aid local Resistance.

In February 1944, the U.S. was “called out” for lack of support. A priority system began including special operations. The British Minister of Economic Warfare regularized aircraft use as Air Chiefs claimed they were too busy. Tedder questioned this. 155 Gen de Gaulle claimed Eisenhower ignored the French. Marshall became involved, which meant Eisenhower also did. Yet, an estimated 100,000 resistance fighters had arms by mid-April after surviving vigorous German and Vichy police measures. **The major Resistance effort was against railways with 730 locomotives damaged in a three-and-one-half month period.** The Germans sent up to 50,000 German rail employees to France. SHAEF estimated the Germans used 100 trains per day to meet the Invasion. The Joint Intelligence Sub-Committee concluded

meant Resistance efforts were a bonus beyond operational plans. The French had plans against railroads, highways, electrical distribution, **156** phone and telegraph lines, munitions and gasoline dumps, and enemy headquarters. Before D-Day Special Operations sent code words to the groups to listen to the BBC the first and middle of the month. Message "A" announcement were June 1 and 2. Then night of 5 June the second "B" message were sent. The next day, the Allies had real time information of German movements. **157**

C. CHAPTER 9: Final Invasion Preparations; Pogue, The Supreme Command

May xyza

In the final weeks Eisenhower spent time visiting Allied units. He, Montgomery and Bradley, believed commanders should be seen and he found time February to May to visit 26 divisions, 24 airfields, 5 ships plus depots, shops and hospitals. He wanted to see the men to speak of the value of their tasks, larger and brotherhood with the British.

1. Intensified Air Efforts Against the Enemy. Air reconnaissance located defenses, bridges, airfield sites, drop zones, flooded areas, enemy dumps and depots. From 1 April **158 159**AEAF flew over 5,500 photographic - surveillance sorties. In March air forces bombed rail yards and repair stations. May were locomotives and bridges. Mid-April added defenses, radar, radio, ammunition, fuel dumps, camps and airfields. V-weapon attacks increased. The German flew precious few of their own reconnaissance sorties. **160**

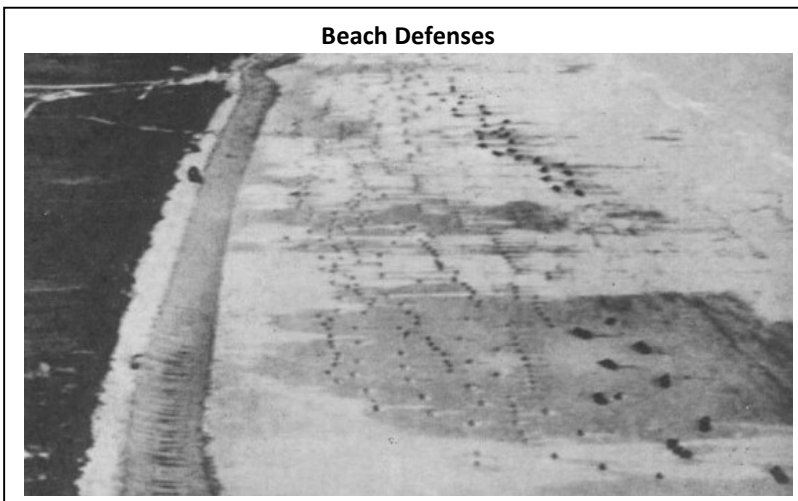
2. Propaganda Efforts Against the Enemy. Propaganda campaigns with BBC encouraged to hit on German morale. War Information broadcast with short-wave radio and leaflet drops --- 2.75 billion leaflets late April to June, a million *Nachrichten fuer die Truppe* with news of defeats on enemy front lines. On 20 May 1944 BBC and ABC began "Voice of SHAEF" broadcasts to collect intelligence --but no revolts. **161.**

3. Security for the Operations. Surprise was impossible given the invasion size as areas were "locked down" in stages starting mid-March. Civilian travel to coasts prohibited, leaves cancelled, troops confined to camps. Gen Morgan enforced compliance: "If we fail, there won't be any more politics--and certainly no more Lend-Lease!" Eisenhower imposed severe punishment and **162** kept anyone with intel out of initial assaults. March saw civilians banned from bases. The War Cabinet objected but recanted to declare a visitor's ban "throughout the coastal region from ... "Mail, news broadcasts and diplomatic travel were suspect. Diplomatic communication and couriers were banned. Then a package with detailed OVERLORD information broke open at a Chicago post office. Panic ceased when the ETOUSA sergeant who mistakenly sent it to his sister was courts martialled. An officer at the Claridge's Hotel on 18 April declared the invasion was before 15 June. **163** This West Point Eisenhower classmate was "busted", sent home.

It turned out the Germans knew of the 1944 OVERLORD via the British Embassy in Turkey *"the Anglo-Saxons are determined to force a show-down by opening the second front in 1944. However, this second front will not be in the Balkans."* On 8 February 1944 German Chief of the Western Intelligence wrote: *"For 1944 an operation is planned outside the Mediterranean ... with all available forces ... under the code name of OVERLORD ... to produce the final military decision within a comparatively short period of time ... On 18 Jan 44, therefore, the Anglo-Saxon command was committed to a large-scale operation which would seek a final decision"* While it lacked "where", the enemy knew it would be from England.

Historian. Pogue wrote: "OVERLORD planners would have realized at 'the end of May everything which appeared in the January and February estimates, except the ... OVERLORD (name), could have been easily surmised from the accounts in the Allied press.'" The enemy knew it was 1944, so Hitler put Kesselring in charge of the Mediterranean for Rommel to build the Atlantic Wall in January 1945.

4. The Patton Episode. Eisenhower had just ended the career of one general when Patton flubbed. **164.** Patton lost his Mediterranean command to Bradley in Sicily by slapping an Army hospital patient. Eisenhower had warned Patton does not make public speeches in England. The incident is described elsewhere, but additional information includes the fact that **Congress war furious** and was just then considering the new general's promotion list that included Patten. Eisenhower reluctantly decided Patton could not reform and decided to cashier him but feared losing "proved ability to conduct 'a ruthless drive,' and ... (he might face) a situation where Patton, despite his lack of balance, 'should be rushed into the breach.'"¹⁶⁵ Marshall covered Eisenhower saying he knew Patton would get the most from his soldiers. **165** Patton was spared. "I do this," Eisenhower added, "solely because of my faith in you as a battle leader and for no other motives." It was applauded by Secretary of War Stimson who praised Eisenhower's judicial poise, good judgment, and great courage! *(Comment: One can now fully understand the "tenterhooks" upon which Patton's fate hung.)*



5. Exercises and Maneuvers. December 1943 began Slapton Sands invasion practice. Rehearsals were held for all D-Day forces from concentration to the beach assaults "and a rapidly advance inland." In one last, a German E-boat attacked seven LST's, sinking two causing over 700 casualties. The final event was a top-secret May 15 briefing at the St. Paul's School with the King, Churchill, British Chiefs, War Cabinet and Allied commanders -- "one of the great military gatherings of the war." Eisenhower, CompleteMilitaryHistory.com

Gen Montgomery, Adm Ramsay, Air Marshal Leigh-Mallory, and Gen Bradley spoke of OVERLORD plans as the King and Prime Minister made short speeches. Eisenhower wrote it ".... seemed to impart additional confidence as each of the ... (audience) learned in detail the extent of the assistance he would receive ... "While sectionalized planning promoted secrecy, OVERLORD may have suffered from "compartmentalization" for naval and air support forces that did not all perform well D-Day, given the lack of opposition to their respective performances.

D. AUTHOR'S COMMENTS ON THE SUPREME COMMAND SITUATION POUQE xyza **May 1-15**

*First there were **"personality conflicts" between the Montgomery and the Bradley forces that negatively impacted operations** the extent of which is still unclear and the impact ambiguous. Yet, it seems certain it existed, and that "official" histories downplay the "in-fighting" amongst theater, army group and army commanders.*

Second, was the British concept of creating a lodgement for further operations vs. the U.S. view of striking into the heart of Germany. To be clear D-Day Normandy OVERLORD "permanently" placed 40 Allied divisions in Europe for future operations. OVERLORD created an Allied Army in Europe and after the "lodgement" was "secure" there were no definite post-OVERLORD plans no agreement on ultimate forces and neither Ally was obligated to add more future divisions for ETO operations. OVERLORD was a staging area for further actions-- nothing more. The "supreme effort" was simply to establish "permanent" army, navy, air force and logistics force in France for that could defend itself against German attacks. OVERLORD was "Plan A"; there was no "Plan B" or "Plan C". OVERLORD's force was large enough to stave off defeat but not necessarily a force strong enough to defeat the Germans.

*The British were correct that an **Allied force of forty divisions would not overwhelm the German Army. Historian Pogue does not contest that the forces planned were insufficient to overwhelm the German Army.** This raises the question of the purpose of the D-Day invasion if it was not to press immediately into Germany to capture Berlin? What was the "Great Crusade" Eisenhower mentioned? The question becomes: "How could 40 Allied divisions defeat several hundred Axis divisions? The answer is unanswered. Yet, one must accept that while 40 divisions was insufficient it was the force to be used.*

Third, there was no third. There was no Plan B; only Plan "A" that vaguely looked on 90 days into the future. There were no "post-OVERLORD" plans! The title "Strategic Planning for Coalition Warfare" might easily have been." Coalition Warfare Negates Strategic Planning". This becomes the problem, because generations after WWII have a different view of "strategic planning" far broader than the 1940's concept greatly limited in scope. As then used, it meant three months out or a period greater than "short term". OVERLORD was not a "strategic plan" as it is portrayed, but an "operational", short

term plan to build a military base in France of 40 infantry, armored and airborne divisions. Hence, there were no “post-OVERLORD” plans.

Fourth, the size and make-up of U.S. forces bore no relationship to the forces required to defeat the Axis. In the end, by luck and good fortune the Western Allies managed to put the minimum forces required to ultimately defeat the German Axis powers into France. “Between the lines” of the “official” histories one truth evolves. Until the Allies crossed the Rhine River in March 1945, they did not have an “overwhelming” force that provided “overwhelming” power.

Fifth, was workforce minimization, the fact that makes the efforts and sacrifices of the soldiers, sailors and airmen so poignant and grand. They fought a war of “minimums”, “just enough” that was “just in time”. It was a war of “efficiency” or the minimum necessary to do the job. Yet, their commanders would all state wars were won with overwhelming power in men and weapons.! So. it was that the United States failed to field an army with overwhelming manpower.

Sixth, the Allies had overwhelming naval and air power. What was lacking was superior ground forces power. In this area, the culprit was the United States. In terms of percentage of total population inducted into ground armies as combat troops, the United States was the slightest, the minimum. In that regard, Canada also fell far short of maximizing its forces who fought in Europe since their servicemen had to “volunteer” to fight in Europe and roughly one-half opted not to do so.

Seventh, it seems fair to state that the “World War” was actually a “World of Developed Countries” War. It was a war among nations with literate and educated populations where citizens broadly had minimum educations, were literate and both capable of reading and understanding basic at least elementary concepts at perhaps an eighth-grade level. Thus, although WWII was nothing more than interesting news to the vast majority of the inhabitants of earth

Eighth, there was a “manpower” shortage in the Allied military primarily because the U.S. set a limit upon the size of its army that bore no relationship to the size of the forces needed for victory against the Axis. In reading of the battles and campaigns one must consider: “What if there had been one, three or maybe five more U.S. divisions?” In asking, one finds the true valor in those who fought the battles. They seldom had an “overwhelming force”, but more typically fought in their zone “on a shoestring” defined as: “a relatively small amount of money for planned spending.” (Webster’s Dictionary).

The Supreme Commander was ordered to land a military force upon the Continent to engage in “... **exploitation will be directed to securing an area that will facilitate both ground and air operations against the enemy.**” Thus, the “Great Crusade” against Nazi Germany was to establish a “lodgment” from which to then launch a “Great Crusade”, but that “Great Crusade” was limited to a “shoestring” budget. Moreover, once OVERLORD secured a French “lodgement”, there were no post-OVERLORD plans

for operations against the enemy. How, when and with what was then unknown. At a minimum, a France lodgement meant fighter protection for strategic bombers and over Germany and put German infrastructure within range of fighter bombers and medium bombers. The lodgement destroyed Kriegsmarine bases outside Germany and depleted the Luftwaffe so fighters and medium bombers could attack German antiaircraft from their bases and bases in France provided better flying weather.

Thus, the case can be made OVERLORD was primarily intended to create French air bases to bomb the Third Reich into submission or weaken it so a small army force could “mop up” as along with the Soviets invading from the East. If so, then an OVERLORD force of about 40 divisions was needed. Then divisions would be added to a nebulous maximum of 90 divisions which was the absolute, but arbitrary, limit of available Allied divisions. There was no determination of an estimated total, only how many more divisions might be delivered in the next six months. The total to be sent was undetermined, but the maximum was known. Yet, there was no apparent analysis if this was sufficient.

A first incontrovertible fact was 40 divisions were too few. A second was the “Great Crusade” was launched on a tight labor budget. One so slim leaders knew their ground forces would endure extended periods on front lines with significant reserves and, unlike WWI, where men spent two weeks on the front lines, two weeks in Paris and two weeks to prepare to return to the front.

This leads to two questions. 1) Did Allied leaders still believe their strategic air forces could bomb Germany into submission? 2) Did Allied leaders intend to use the Soviets as primary instrument to up German land forces as their air forces decimated their war manufacturing and logistical infrastructure?

The official histories fail to analyze the value and impact of the massive Soviets whose armies. The concept of Germany choosing to surrender to the Communist or to the West is not discussed. It is strange that this is so, since the Germans obviously would seek to avoid Soviet retributions who reputation for brutality was equal to that of the Nazi's.

The absence of such analysis in “official” histories is at least “curious”. It is, however, clear the forces planned to defeat Germany in the ETO were not the “overwhelming force” required for victory and that the U.S. limitation of a maximum 90 Army divisions was set with analysis of the force required to defeat Germany or of maximum U.S. manpower resources. The Army was to be “just enough” men!